Critical Discourse Analysis of Cyber-bullying__in the "Liu XX Incident"

Yan Jin, Zhanghuan Lei, Nini Zhang

Northwest Normal University Lanzhou Gansu 730070

Abstract: In recent years, cyber-bullying incidents have emerged one after another, and the cyber environment has deteriorated sharply. Based on social issues, Critical Discourse Analysis analyzes the occurrence process of discourses as well as the social reasons, which can provide strong theoretical support for the study of cyber-bullying. This paper takes Critical Discourse Analysis as the theoretical framework, uses the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Grammar and AntConc 3.5.9 corpus software as analytical tools, and uses cyber-bullying and a news report related to the "Liu XX Incident" as corpus to analyze the relationship among language, power, and ideology and examine the text structure, discourse practice and sociocultural practice of cyber-bullying, providing a reference for building a healthy and harmonious cyber environment.

Keywords: Cyber-bullying; Transitivity; Intertextuality; Generation mechanism

1. Introduction

Belsey (2004) first used the term "cyberbully" to define cyber-bullying as an intentional, repeated, and aggressive act by an individual or group to harm others through information communication technology. Liu Wenyu, and Li Ke (2017) defined cyber-bullying as "the use of the Internet as a medium to physically and mentally harm others or groups, including name-calling, discrimination, denigration, contempt, ridicule, harassment, assault, insult, bullying, pornography, sexual discrimination, and other behaviors". We define cyber-bullying as a speech act in which language users, by virtue of their personal power and position on the Internet platform, exercise linguistic hegemony in an unethical manner, depriving others of their right to speak and replacing them with their own will, causing physical and psychological harm to others. Cyber-bullying is characterized by violent language as a symbol of power and a tool to scream at the public, with the aim of verbally attacking the discontented social reality by violent means. Extreme speech is a common form of language violence, mostly manifested as slanderous rumors, malicious vilification, abuse and ridicule, and other insulting language, and is commonly found in public online game chats, news follow-up comments, forums and microblogs. Under the influence of the current fragmented reading habits of Internet users, some Internet users have difficulty in distinguishing the truthfulness and objectivity of news reports, and their emotions are easily stirred up, and they are easily led by ill-intentioned people to turn to the rhythm and output intense language expressions, forming extremely bad cyber-bullying.

2. Data Collection

This study uses the cyber-bullying and news reports related to the "Liu XX Incident" on MicroBlog as the corpus. Liu XX was sold by his biological parents at birth, and his adoptive parents died in an accident when he was 4 years old, but he found his biological parents when he was 15 years old, but he was mercilessly subjected to cyber-bullying and finally chose to end his unfortunate life.

3. Description Stage: Transitivity Process Distribution of Violent Language

The collected corpus of cyber-bullying was labeled into 132 clauses based on the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Grammar, and the process distribution is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Distribution of Process Types in Cyber-bullying

Types of Process	Material process	Relational Process		Mental Process	Verbal Process	Behavioral Process	Existential Process
		Attributive	Identifying				
Number	34	25	23	20	16	9	5
Percentage	25.76%	18.94%	17.42%	15.15%	12.12%	6.82%	3.79%

According to Table 1, relational processes (36.36%) accounts for the highest proportion, which is followed by material process (25.76%) and mental process (15.15%), and the existential process accounted for the lowest proportion (3.79%). The above distribution is in fact closely related to the typical characteristics of the six processes. As far as the relational process is concerned, the study found that when the abusers commented on MicroBlog, they tried to use the attributive process to impose negative attributes on the victims of cyber-bullying. The abusers used the identifying process to present the victim's identity and the abuser's distorted value. Online perpetrators invoke material processes to provoke group conflict, which is also seen as a negative outcome of the extended objects and actions of material process. Given the close connection to the empirical world, mental processes focus primarily on the cognitive and emotional aspects of the participants. In the process, emotions such as anger, hatred, and ridicule are further conceptualized, which makes it easier to arouse the emotional resonance of other netizens (Yang Yi, 2020). Thus, the transitivity process distribution of violent language shows that the connotative features of the corresponding process are highly consistent with the denotative meanings of the violent behaviors.

4. Interpretation Stage: Intertextuality Analysis of the Media Report

Intertextuality refers to cross-references between different texts or texts of different types, which is reflected in news reports as cross-references between different viewpoints and facts. Media reports often include other people's opinions, the author's own opinions and news facts, etc., and it is impossible to be absolutely fair. Facts and opinions in online texts are blurred, which has caused Internet users to be deeply influenced by potential tendencies. They regard the opinions in the original text as correct assertions of truth, and express their own opinions according to the opinions in the original text.

We take a related report from the Beijing News as an example to analyze how inappropriate intertextuality has triggered cyber-bullying. In the example, the seemingly objective report actually contains the ideology of the media itself. When paraphrasing what Liu XX said, it used the word "claimed", implying "unreliable", and hurriedly passed it by only one sentence. When relaying the words of his biological mother, it used words such as "told", "expressed", and "said", which increased the credibility of the discourse, and used a large amount of space to report the content of his speech in detail, and its tendency was obvious. The position reported by the official media will naturally exert a subtle influence on audiences who do not know the truth, thus triggering cyber-bullying against Liu XX.

For example: I really don't understand. The views I described are all reported in the media. Am I wrong?

It is true that the media reports are authoritative and correct in the eyes of most netizens, and the position of the media strongly influences the positions of many people. The above netizen clearly mentioned the media report and used it to defend his views. It can be seen that media reports are the catalyst for cyber-bullying.

5. Explanation Stage: the Generation Mechanism of Cyber-bullying in Sociocultural Practice

The third dimension of Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model (TDM) is explanation, which aims to reveal the implicit ideology behind cyber-bullying under sociocultural context.

Wei Naixing (2011) argues that semantic prosody is the repeated co-occurrence of a nodal word with a certain class of words or grammatical phenomena that accumulate to form a constant pattern, thus expressing a specific attitudinal meaning. As a functional choice, semantic prosody is closely related to the communicative purpose of the speaker and dominates the co-option of the surrounding linguistic forms. In view of this, this study analyzes the features of semantic prosody around the target words. With the help of Antconc 3.5.9 software, the authors extracted from the self-built corpus index rows of netizens' attitudes and evaluations of Internet users towards the party of the incident ("you", "he", "Liu XX"), and lists the top 5 in Table 2.

Table 2 Netizens' Attitudes and Evaluations towards "You", "He", "Liu XX"

No.	Attitudes and Evaluations		Items
1	... can really <u>pretend</u>.	You	can be an <u>actor</u>.
2	... and then claimed that you have no living place,	You	are so <u>calculating</u>.
3	... Why do you have to rely on your parents? It only means that	You	are too <u>spineless</u>!!!
4	His parents could not afford a house,	He	made trouble! ... Such a <u>two-faced person</u>! Really <u>not a thing</u>!
5	It was obvious that	Liu XX	first <u>led public opinion</u>, exerted cyber-bullying on his parents …

Looking at above index rows, from semantic preferences like "actor" and "two-faced people", we find that "labeling" and "stigmatization" are common phenomena in the Internet opinion field. In the process of discussing such hot events, netizens are accustomed to labeling the groups or individuals in an orgiastic manner. This labeling phenomenon of characterizing things regardless of facts presents a tendency of cyber-bullying, which pushes and misleads netizens in online events, thus leading them to make irrational evaluations in the public opinion field in order to seek group identity and emotional resonance. As Le Bon (2017) argues, people who gather in group all take the same direction in their emotional thoughts, their conscious individuality disappears, and the unconsciousness of the group replaces the conscious behavior of individuals.

Based on this premise, the relationship between reason and emotion in the public sphere should be re-examined. When the information of the event is not yet clear, the initial blind interaction has already formed a certain emotional impact and accumulated immediate violence participants. As the capital of cyber-bullying accumulates, media capital groups tend to expand the negative impact of an event. Admittedly, blind audiences are keen to believe the voices conveyed by the media. Based on the media voices, the audience begins to judge which voice is the mainstream (Liu XX directs public opinion, hypes, and is calculating), and then begins to converge toward this opinion pole.

6. Conclusion

Cyber-bullying has become an urgent problem for the whole society, and the MicroBlog helps to understand negative social public opinion more easily and effectively in a dynamic way. In this paper, the authors introduce the corpus tool into critical discourse analysis, achieving an organic combination of quantitative and qualitative research. Guided by Fairclough's TDM, starting with transitivity characteristics of cyber-bullying, this study deconstructs the interactive process of it and explores the generation mechanism of it. Based on the findings of this paper, some suggestions for the prevention and control of cyber-bullying are put forward here: First, education should be strengthened to improve the morality and information judgment ability of netizens. Netizens should be guided to look at media reports with critical thinking, so as to speak rationally on the Internet, not to follow the trend, not to create and spread rumors. Second, the platform should strengthen supervision and audit to improve the quality of information from media and netizens. Third, more perfect relevant laws should be formulated and the punishment for violence language users should be intensified. There is still a long way to go to prevent and control cyber-bullying, and we still need to discover more and more effective prevention and control measures, and to put them into practice, so as to build a truly clear and clean cyber environment.

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