

Abs-83

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Discursive constructions of the low-carbon economy in the UK, US and Chinese press

The term low-carbon economy first came into being in the UK Energy White Paper "Our energy future: creating a low carbon economy" in 2003. The background of the coinage of low-carbon economy was the severe challenge that the global warming had brought to the human existence and development. From the "Kyoto Protocol" to the "Bali Road Map", all countries in the world are doing their efforts to find a solution to climate change.

Scholars from various disciplines have conducted a plenty of valuable researches, but few of them are from linguistics perspective. This study focuses on the discursive constructions of low-carbon economy in the UK, USA and Chinese press by merging corpus methods and critical discourse analysis. The purpose of this study is to explore how media construct the discourses around low carbon economy in developing and developed countries and how discourse is socially shaped while socially shaping.

The newspapers in the UK and USA started to report low-carbon economy in 2004. One year later the term appeared in Chinese newspapers. How discourses of low-carbon economy are filtered via a wider range of phenomena including national interest and other political and social factors? How do these newspapers construct discourses around low-carbon economy? What are the value and policy orientation in each country? In order to answer these questions, this study focuses on the texts relating to low-carbon economy from major newspapers in China, UK and US.

By doing so, we will merge corpus techniques and CDA methods. Corpus techniques and CDA methods are able to complement each other. Corpus techniques such as keyness, clusters, collocation and concordance, can be applied to identify frequent and significant language patterns, which are indications of linguistic traces of particular discourses. While CDA methods examine the relevant political, economic, social and cultural process. This contextual analysis is invaluable, adding quantitative balance to the more quantitative analyses.