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*Newspapers' narratives based on wire stories:
facsimiles of input?*

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Abstract

Variation in news narratives can provide the empirical testing ground for investigating news production processes, such as selecting and adapting input stories from external sources. In taking a comparative approach this paper maps changes between final newspaper output and original input supplied by news agencies as well as differences in dealing with the same source material by various news groups. While some texts are taken over verbatim, others are scrambled, reduced in size or amended. Reasons for any divergence may be of a purely practical or an ideological nature. If particular patterns of editorial adjustments are detected with a regular occurrence, it can be assumed that they are ideologically inspired and/or that fixed editorial preferences or directives are at play. The analysis is based on a study of language and ideology in news accounts about the Hong Kong transfer of sovereignty from the British Crown to China in 1997, which as a major international news event garnered worldwide media attention. For this paper's purpose I look into a set of foreign news agencies' articles adopted by two Taiwanese English-language newspapers, the input versions of which were retrieved from the Associated Press archives.

Key words:

Editorial intervention, news writing process, discursive practice, domestication, ideological transformation, news agency input, Taiwanese media, Hong Kong handover

1. Introduction

During a former study into the interplay of language and ideology in the two Taiwanese English-language newspapers' coverage of the 1997 Hong Kong transfer of sovereignty from the British Crown to China¹, it appeared that news articles stemming from the same input source differed consistently between both newspapers. This begged the question where this divergence originated. Somewhere along the articles' journey some intervention had to have taken place. Could it be traced to the editorial process at the various news outlets and if so, which paper was responsible for the amendments? This could only be answered by retrieving the input articles from the original source, the news agencies. In the news production cycle an article does indeed follow several steps from the initial draft to the final version passing through various hands² and very often from international news agencies to national or local news desks.³ This paper is concerned with tracing particular 'structures of transformation' (Bruck: 89:117) to investigate how "primary materials are used by newsmakers as sources to build on, process and deliver" (Jacobs: 99:256). It aims to discuss transformations of texts across 'intertextual chains of discursive practices' (Fairclough, 92).

¹ Lams (2004) examined all Hong Kong handover news stories, editorials and opinion articles over an eight day period (from 27 June to 5 July 1997) in three English-language papers, namely *The China Post* (Taiwan), *The China News* (Taiwan) and *The China Daily* (PRC).

² For a detailed description of the news cycle and the number of people contributing to one story, see Bell 91:44-46.

³ Retracing these steps is far from easy. Problems may already arise at the practical level of approaching news workers who are forever fighting deadlines, or getting access to the news agencies' archives, some of which can only be accessed via costly training sessions. A second problem relates to the technological aspect in the production process, i.e. hard copies of consecutive drafts are no longer stored. All files are processed electronically without leaving a trace of amendments, at least not in 1997.



Since in this study we are dealing with an international event, and a sizeable amount of input from international wire agencies, the obvious divergence between newspapers within national boundaries seems not to fit with some of the claims made in the domestication model of global news theory, as forwarded by Lee et al. (1999, 2000, 2001), which holds that international news is often treated as a variation of domestic themes in consonance with national interests and the foreign policy agenda of home countries. Most importantly, it is argued that media differences across the ideological divide within a nation tend to be dwarfed by media differences between nations (Lee et al., 2000). The findings of my comparative analysis of input and output stories will fine-tune the domestication model when applied to the English-language media landscape in Taiwan.

This paper first outlines the theoretical framework which combines insights from the field of pragmatics, critical linguistics, critical discourse analysis with concepts from global media theories, such as the tension between domestication and globalization. It formulates the central research question probing into the extent to which categorization processes of 'us' and 'them' are sustained in the journey from source text to output text. A second part sheds some light on contextual factors influencing production processes. It first looks into the wider context of historical and sociopolitical structures and processes determining the news workers' ideological lines of vision concerning the meaning of China and the political status of the island territory Taiwan, as it is precisely in this respect that divergences between the media outlets emerge. Although the complexity of the problematic relationship between China and Taiwan cannot be adequately addressed within the scope of this paper, this section should provide the bare essentials to better understand the sensitivities involved in language referring to the actors involved in the cross-Strait (or Taiwan Strait) issue.

Following this brief contextualization of the Taiwan Strait issue, a next section sketches the institutional background of the news organizations, the mission statements of both outlets, and the organizational context in which the news workers operate. Much insight in journalistic and personal considerations was provided by interviews with professionals in action. Understanding international affairs and knowledge about elements of identification themes of their receiving audience are essential competences in the selection and production of international news information (Clausen, 2005:106). Furthermore, as Clausen argues, their personal attitudes, values and beliefs have great impact on the angle and choice of sources (2005:127).

A third part lists some findings of the text analysis conducted on two levels: 1) comparison of newspaper stories originating from the same source material, 2) comparison of wire input and newspaper output. In the conclusion, homogenization and domestication theories will be checked against the findings of the editorial amendments. An answer will be provided to the question whether these emendations fit the overall ideological picture of both newspapers. Specifications related to the size of corpus are provided in the introduction to the textual analysis.

1. Theoretical and methodological observations

1.1. Mental scripts and categorization processes in framing reality



Media practitioners' internalized schemata⁴ about (inter)national events and professional journalistic practices influence news production. For example, the selection of news categories is guided by these schemata, which provide information as to how aspects of social identity of participants to a certain event are perceived and/or portrayed based on individual experience of the newswriters. In addition, how journalists choose to report a particular media event and what they decide to ignore about it, how they "frame arbitrary slices from the stream of ongoing activity and make this into meaningful news" (Goffman, 86:10) reveals much about news agendas and how they are generated by ideological and wider cultural assumptions. The concept of frame offers a "framework which explains meaning production in media texts and in social practices as individual and as socially shared knowledge –inner scripts of individuals (models in the mind) and outer world scripts (models in the world)" (Clausen, 2003:63). These world scripts are properties of 'mind in society' (Verschuere, 96:592; 99; Vygotsky, 78). Frame analysis has been employed in ethnographic news production studies as it is believed to bring insights into the principles of organization that underlie the selection and definition of news events (Tuchman, 72, 78). The way news workers perceived and framed the significance of the Hong Kong handover is traceable through conceptualization patterns of social structures, processes and relations, which underlie the handover narratives, such as group relations, identity formation, nationalism, colonialism, political ideologies like communism and democracy.

As news stories are produced from within a specific interpretative framework, reporters and editors alike are not only mediators of input material, but also 'managers of meaning' (Clausen, 2003:236). News points out problems and achievements of society and creates common realities. It helps to develop and sustain 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 91) and in doing so, it positions 'us' in relation to 'them' and to changing identities of the self. This study addresses the question whether categorization processes of 'us' and 'them' are sustained in the journey from source text to output text. Are the in- and outgroups constituted of the same participants in both papers and is there any divergence between in- and output? To answer this question, the study combines a text analysis with other qualitative methods, such as interviews with the editors of both newspapers. When investigating diverging categorization processes between input and output stories, various modes of transformations are to be considered. The analysis thus examines the entextualization process (Bauman & Briggs, 90; Silverstein & Urban, 96) or how the source text is 'embedded into' the target text (Fairclough, 95:68). Therefore, it looks into the linguistic 'uptake' (Bell, 91) of wire stories by newspaper editors. Examples of linguistic changes are switches in syntactic position, selections and deletions, relexicalization (Halliday, 76), reformulations, dilution of expressions of causality or agent deletion with reinterpretive explanations of events described in the original text as a result (Trew, 79:103). In some cases the rewording maintains the original ideological line while in others it involves ideological transformation. To determine ideological significance in transformation, the change should not be a one-off occurrence but constitute a systematic pattern or structured sequence of changes. This is, according to Trew, the first premise from which an analysis of the ideological character of newspaper discourse should start. A second premise is that "ideology is best understood not by analysis of given texts, but by analysis of the processes of which the texts are a part. [...] The field of analysis therefore contains sequences of texts and related discourses, representing discourse in progress" (79:154-155). Yet another premise is that

⁴ In discourse analysis based on cognitive psychology, this term is referred to as 'mental scripts', or 'cognitive/emotional conceptualization patterns' (Schank & Abelson, 77; Goffman, 86; Graber, 84; Van Dijk, 89).



“ideological difference does not simply consist in variation, with the existence of separate texts and discursive practices expressing distinct ideologies, but it involves also ideological conflict of various modes. [...] This includes lexical variation, where the occurrence of one option involves the rejection of known alternative options, the use of the same word with different meanings and overt conflict, manifested linguistically in ways that mark terms as unacceptable [...]” (79:155).

The process of selecting and rejecting information is part of a larger knowledge negotiation, depending on personal experience and ability to prioritize and contextualize information (Clausen, 2003:128). Selection processes not only involve choice of people and views quoted but also choosing one meaning over another. This negotiation happens on various levels: (a) between the writer's own preconceived ideas (mental frames) and actual experiences of the event; (b) between reporter's/editor's perceptions and preconceptions of colleagues and superiors/publishers; (c) between own understanding of experience and stories of competitors (Clausen, 2003:202). It is this feature of language negotiability in the process of meaning generation, which is deemed to be of crucial importance in a pragmatic language analysis (Verschueren, 2001:29).

1.2. News flow and domestication of international news events

Even though media conglomerates have enormous potential to transform regional events into global media events, these occurrences may still be told through domestic lenses, marked with an imprint of their political systems and ideological beliefs. As Cohen et al (96) point out, the same event may be given distinct media representations by various nations through the prisms of their dominant ideologies as defined by power structures, cultural repertoires and politico-economic interests.

This constitutes the core of what Lee et al. (99) call 'news domestication', i.e. treating international news as a variation of domestic themes in consonance with national interests and the foreign policy agenda of home countries. When applied to the journey from an international wire story to the final newspaper narrative, domestication issues are particularly relevant. On this level a tension arises between the notions of globalization or homogenization of global images and domestication or heterogenization. International comparative studies state that a vast majority of 'spot news' items originate from a limited number of international news agencies. In the news flow process there is a historically rooted news dependency relationship between Asia (the former 'periphery' countries) and Europe (former 'center')⁵.

Describing the situational context of news production processes, part two in this paper explores the reasons of the Taiwanese English-language dailies' heavy reliance on Western news agencies. Studies of international news flow have found that, in the context of market-oriented media organizations, proximity (geographical, psychological or cultural) is a major news value to determine which stories get reported (Atwood & Bullion, 82; Stevenson & Shaw, 84). The relevance of the Hong Kong story to the ROC home constituency is also confirmed by the large number of handover stories in the Taiwanese media (Lams, 2004). For the English-language press, one may wonder whether the Western

⁵ Model of Mowlana in: McQuail & Windahl, 93



wire stories affected frames of reference. Paterson argues that “the agency material often constitutes the bulk of a story, including the spin of the story” (98:85). As information wholesalers and agents of globalization international news agencies are thus said to have considerable influence on national media agenda setting with a homogenization effect as result. The domestication theory, on the other hand, holds that production practices give global images local meaning. This begs the question to what extent the catering to a domestic political environment and the political character of the media outlets will prevail over this global impact of international agencies? As Clausen puts it, will the homogenization of world audiences through mass media be met with different cultural filters or gate-keeping mechanisms (2003:8)? Lie and Servaes emphasize that “globalization / localization is a linked process, an interpretative process and a process of changes taking place in people's perceptions of time and space” (2000:329) and point out the lack of insights into how the processes of cultural globalization and localization actually operate in locally defined public spheres. The present comparative study of wire input and newspaper output stories provides a useful starting point to probe into these interpretive processes.

2. Contextual factors influencing production processes

This section looks into the wider socio-political context at the time of the Hong Kong handover news coverage in so far as it may have contributed to the mental scripts of the journalists and editors (2.1) as well as into the professional and organizational background of the news workers (2.2).

2.1. Sociopolitical background influencing wider lines of vision

From a linguistic perspective, semantics can be said to play a dominant role in the Taiwan- China relationship. How is China to be defined and who should have sovereignty over the island of Taiwan? Both sides across the Taiwan Strait are extremely careful in phrasing policies, because the ‘wrong’ use of territorial references to ‘country, state, province, nation’ can spark a cross-strait crisis instantly. Before looking at how both sides perceive the issue, a historical outline should clarify the diverging perspectives.

At the risk of oversimplifying the historical roots of the cross-Strait issue, it can be argued that the most salient point of conflict between the two territories is to be traced back to 1949, when the ruling Kuomintang government of the Republic of China (ROC), headed by General Chiang Kai-shek, lost the mainland to the Communist Party in the Civil War and retreated to the island of Taiwan. This year marks the establishment of the Communist-led People’s Republic of China under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung. Meanwhile, General Chiang Kai-shek continued his nationalist regime on the island of Formosa (Taiwan), which thus became the only representation of the ROC. The 1.5 to 2 million mainlanders who followed in the general’s footsteps, were led to believe Chinese territory would some day be recovered. Clashes with the local population on Taiwan were of a cultural as well as political nature, as Chiang installed martial law and Taiwan was subjected to several decades of ‘White Terror’ (Lams, 2004; Peng, 72). Whether Taiwan at that time belonged to the ROC is the topic of historiographical debates, depending on varying interpretations of international treaties vaguely touching upon the fate of Taiwan after the surrender of its Japanese colonizer in 1945. Although Formosa was in theory left ‘undecided territory’ (Kerr, 66), as it was not specified who Japan had to return Taiwan to, in practice, it was generally deemed part of the ROC and enjoyed international



diplomatic recognition, with a seat in the UN Security Council as the sole representative of China. When in the seventies it became clear that the communist government on the mainland was there to stay and the ROC had not been able to recover the mainland, most countries switched diplomatic allegiance to the PRC for pragmatic reasons. The ROC was no longer viewed as the representative of China in the UN, but the representation in the international community of Taiwan and its 20 million inhabitants was not explicitly broached. This explains the repeated requests by Taiwan since the nineties to participate in international organizations, such as the WHO. The absence of international breathing space also clarifies why some pro-independence voices argue that the Taiwanese citizens were kept hostage and denied UN representation by the Kuomintang's adherence to its principle of representing China.

After this historical intermezzo we can now elaborate the various perspectives on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Since 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has viewed the island as a 'renegade' province occupied by an 'illegitimate' government. In Taiwan or the Republic of China (ROC), there are various lines of thinking in this respect with two major orientations carried by the two main political alliances, the blue group, consisting of the KMT (Kuomintang) and its allies, and the green group, comprising the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) and some affiliated parties. The news articles under investigation for this study (1997 Hong Kong transition) find themselves in the midst of a democratization process started since the late eighties and consolidated in 2000, with the peaceful government transfer after a one-party rule of 50 years.

The two main ideological creeds broadly run as follows. From 1949 until 1991, the Kuomintang held that the ROC represented all of China. In 1991, the KMT government on the ROC formally abandoned the myth of representing the entire territory of China and recognized PRC representation of mainland China. Beijing did not reciprocate by recognizing the ROC as the legitimate regime on Taiwan. The KMT still hopes that China can be reunified in the future under a democratic system. The main stumbling block for unification, in the eyes of the KMT, is the PRC's adherence to communism. Although its former Cold War rhetoric along the antagonizing lines of 'Red Bandits versus Free China' disappeared, its discourse throughout the nineties still centered around the Cold War polarization of the communist 'them' versus the democratic 'us'.

In a non-political sense, the KMT stresses the historical, cultural, linguistic and ethnic ties between both sides of the Taiwan Strait. This China-centric position holds that there is only one China in the world, though in actual fact this is only a cultural China, a geographical China. For proponents of unification, it is a future China, as for the time being, politically there are still two legitimate Chinas or regimes (PRC and ROC). For those who harbor a Taiwan-centric feeling the island of Taiwan has a separate history with socio-political, cultural, and ethnic differences from the mainland. These Taiwanese citizens emphasize a local identity, featuring a pluralistic, multicultural and democratic society, and resist any attempt to classify Taiwan as part of China.⁶

⁶ According to Peng, "The last fifty years have further shaped this distinctive identity of all the inhabitants of Taiwan (including the mainlanders who arrived since 1945), which makes the "inhabitants of Formosa as Chinese as Americans or Australians are British" (Peng, 72:241).



These divergent ideological orientations underlie lexical choice-making in denoting the mainland ("Mainland China", "PRC", "China") and the island territory ("Taiwan", "ROC").⁷ For lack of historical background knowledge, some language users in the foreign community are not particularly aware of the political and cultural implications of a particular choice for one of the alternatives. Others intentionally reserve the terms 'China' for the PRC and 'Taiwan' for the island, thus making political statements. The English-language dailies *Taipei Times* and *Taiwan News* (formerly *the China News*) were the first papers to consistently make metapragmatic distinctions between both terms ('China' and 'Taiwan'), one proper noun excluding the other. A last category of interpreters consists of those who take an a-political approach and choose to use 'China' in an exclusively cultural sense, which embraces Chinese societies everywhere. In doing so, they acknowledge that there is a distinction between the political concept of 'country' and cultural notion of 'transnational civilization and heritage'. For this category of users, lexical variation between the terms 'China' and 'PRC, mainland China' is thus inspired by the semantic distinction between 'China' as a cultural concept and 'mainland China' referring to the regime on the mainland. A consistent choice for one of these lexical alternatives is a hint to implicit meaning generation concerning identity and nation-building in the Taiwan Strait issue (Lams, 2004). These findings have been confirmed by the growing trend since the late nineties to replace the term 'ROC' by 'Taiwan' and 'mainland China' by 'China' (Lams, 2006).

2.2. Situational context of the production process

In examining news production processes special concern should go to the situational process of reporting. As news is a collective and organizational product, it is shaped by occupational practices in an institutional setting with specific performance demands as well as limits of time and resources. One thus has to look into the house 'production formula' which can be defined as the 'shared values and criteria of news producers, and their collective strategies in making news' (Clausen, 2003:72). This section of the paper first discusses the general media landscape in the nineties before looking into particulars of the English-language press, such as ownership structures, mission statements, target readership, ideological stance, and reasons of high number of wire stories. A more extensive elaboration of professional and organizational context can be found in Lams (2004). The following paragraphs equip the reader with essential background for the editorial changes between input and output narratives, as outlined in part three.

2.2.1. Partisan press and political bias in new forms

The emergence of partisan newspapers in the ROC can be considered as a positive move from a totalitarian media system until the late eighties to an open and liberal media system as it has created space for a plurality of voices. Yet, despite the increased scope for government criticism since the late 80s, genuine media pluralism around the time of the Hong Kong handover still appears to be hampered by state power in combination with the newly emerged phenomenon of 'market censorship'. The excessively rapid expansion of the media after the lifting of the martial law in 1987 led to

⁷ By using all terms interchangeably ('mainland China, PRC, China' for the mainland and 'ROC, Taiwan' for the island) we avoid an explicit choice.



overcrowding⁸, fierce competition⁹, market saturation, and escalation of operating costs. This resulted in monopolization and a wave of buyouts and takeovers. Only business tycoons were able to accumulate enough capital to invest in the growing media industry.

2.2.2. Ownership of the English-language press

THE CLEAR LINK BETWEEN MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION IN THE CHINESE-LANGUAGE MEDIA AS WELL AS BETWEEN THE PUBLISHER'S PROVINCIAL ORIGIN ('WAISHENG-REN' VERSUS 'BENDI-REN'¹⁰) AND POLITICAL STANCE IS PARALLELED IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS.¹¹ BOTH THE *CHINA POST* AND THE *CHINA NEWS* WERE FORMERLY OWNED BY WAISHENG-REN FAMILIES ROOTED IN THE MAINLAND, AND STARTED OFF UNDER THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION OFFICE (GIO). AT THE TIME OF THE HONG KONG HANDOVER IN 1997, THE *CHINA POST*'S PUBLISHER AND CHAIRMAN WAS THE SON OF THE FOUNDER WITH CLOSE LINKS TO THE KMT. WHEN THE *CHINA NEWS* RAN INTO FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES IN 1996, IT RECEIVED LARGE CAPITAL INJECTIONS BY A LOCAL FOOD AND BEVERAGE CONGLOMERATE WITH A STRONG TAIWANESE IDENTITY, BUT THE MANAGEMENT WAS STILL LEFT IN THE HANDS OF A PUBLISHER WITH KMT TIES. IN 1998, WHEN THE *CHINA NEWS*' EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MOVED TO THE NEWCOMER IN THE MARKET, THE *TAIPEI TIMES*, THE POSITION WAS FILLED BY AN EDITOR WHO CHANGED THE EDITORIAL STANCE BACK TO THE OLD KMT-LINE. THE PAPER'S NEXT BIG SHAKE-UP WAS THE MAY 1999 BUYOUT BY THE FOOD COMPANY, WHICH PROMPTLY CHANGED THE NEWSPAPER'S NAME INTO *TAIWAN NEWS*. SINCE THE TAKEOVER, THE EDITORIAL SLANT CHANGED AGAIN, WHICH POINTS AT THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OWNERSHIP AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON EDITORIAL POLICY. THE HONG KONG HANDOVER STORY FALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS TRANSITION PERIOD FOR THE *CHINA NEWS*.

⁸ In 1999, Taiwan, with a population of 22 million people, had 121 radio stations, 140 cable TV operators with 70 channels, 384 newspapers, 242 news agencies, and 6463 magazines ("Internet Monthly Bulletin: D-4 Mass Media Services", Taipei: Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and statistics, 23/03/01).

⁹ The competition war grew so fierce that the paper market started giving away free prizes, a phenomenon that is not uncommon to Western newspaper readers. Teng (97) points out how in one promotion, anyone ordering a three-year subscription for NT\$16,000 could buy an NT\$ 32,000 motorcycle for half price or in other words could buy a motorcycle, thereby getting three years of newspapers for free.

¹⁰ The term 'Waisheng-ren' (literally "People from other provinces than Taiwan") refers to that part of the Taiwanese population, which came from the mainland since 1945 along with their descendants. They are distinguished from the 'Bendi-ren', the local population already residing in Taiwan before the waves of Waisheng-ren arrived after the second World War.

¹¹ Provincial origins may inform us about political allegiances since the former are commonly believed to affect political stance and ideological beliefs about identity and cross-Strait issues. This does not only hold for publishers but also for Taiwan journalists, who are over-represented by those of Mainland origins ('Waisheng-ren') (Lo, 98). A survey of Taiwan journalists conducted by Lo, revealed that 48% of the examined journalists identified themselves as Mainlanders compared with 14% of the total population claiming mainland origins. About 51% of the journalists identified themselves as Taiwanese compared with 84% of the total population. Taiwanese and aboriginal journalists were thus all under-represented.



2.2.3. *Raison d'être of the English-language dailies and target readership*

The *China Post* was founded as a “channel of communication between the foreign residents and the local populace” (Chu, 82). The objectives of the *China News* were “to keep both Chinese and non-Chinese readers informed about international affairs” and “to make the increasing number of foreigners in Taiwan aware of local developments”¹². The mission statement of *the Taipei Times*, published on 14 June 1999 and closely affiliated with the Taiwan-centric Chinese-language daily, *the Liberty Times*, argued that Taiwan was in need of a paper that would help Taiwan stand up and speak its mind in the international community, using English “both to take Taiwan to the world and bring the world to Taiwan”, a function which was not served by the Chinese papers. The *Taipei Times* would “unlock the Taiwan experience to the world” (Teng, 99). Significantly, one of its first foreign editors was Anthony Lawrance, the editor-in-chief of the *China News* at the time of the handover.

In the course of 50 years of history, the intended readership changed both for the *China Post* and the *China News* from an exclusive focus on the foreign community in Taiwan to a mixed readership of foreigners and local population. Anthony Yuen, former editor-in-chief of the *Taiwan News*, and Patrick Kearns, assistant managing editor at *the China Post*, both assert that the category of students of English, gradually made up the lion's share of readership.¹³ However, Anthony Lawrance, former editor of the *China News* at the time of the Hong Kong handover, insisted that the main target readership for all their stories remained the foreign community.¹⁴

2.2.4. *Ideological stance of the English dailies*

Bringing objective information appears to be an essential ingredient of self-perceived journalistic ethos. This professed objectivity is clear from the 13 May 1999 edition of the *Taiwan News*, writing that “Though initially only a crude mimeograph publication, the *China News* soon became trusted as an objective and accurate source of information” and the following message features on the *China Post*'s website:

“With our 24-hour newswire network and team of seasoned journalists, the China Post delivers the latest breaking news and info from around the globe with persistent accuracy and objectivity. In line with our founders' commitment to unbiased reporting, the China Post continues to bring comprehensive news to our readers without the industry puffery or political slant”.

Yet, the ardent resistance by the *China Post* to change its name, against the backdrop of the name change of *China News* into *Taiwan News* (1999) and the government publication *China Review* into *Taiwan Review* hints at a China-centric orientation, which is confirmed in our text analysis. Similarly, the swing to a pro-independence stance in 1999 in the *China News*, promptly changing its name into *Taiwan News*, rested on new management by the local food company, which turned over ownership to a DPP hardliner with a staunch ‘Taiwan-first’ ideology.¹⁵

¹² *The Taiwan News*, 13 May 1999

¹³ Interviews with author, April 1999

¹⁴ Interview with author, May 2001

¹⁵ This was confirmed in an interview with Rex Wang, the editor-in-chief and Vice-President of the *Taiwan News*, as from July 1999 (29 May 2001).



Concerning the professional and organizational situation in which the managing editor of the *China News* operated at the time of the Hong Kong handover, Lawrance insists that he was the person to sign off on the final copy. Even though management in 1997 was still in hands of KMT supporters, he was given complete editorial freedom. In his opinion, this differentiated their newspaper from the *China Post*, where the publisher's son, as the 'editor-in-chief' ran the paper according to the old KMT 'Great China' idea. Lawrance argues that the *China News* was in better touch with Taiwanese 'mainstream' opinion, which opposed autocratic regimes in the interest of the Taiwanese people themselves. Thus, whilst both the *China Post* and the *China News* were anti-PRC and held that Taiwan was not Hong Kong, their underlying reasons differed. Whereas the *China Post* was pushing the official ROC view, focusing on the legitimacy of the ROC regime which had been in existence since 1915, and a commitment to the reunification of a 'divided China', the *China News* was saying that the majority of Taiwanese people and their democratically elected leader did not want to have anything to do with the PRC under the "one country, two systems" principle.

Both papers follow the AP style-guide for editorial directives and they have their house style guide for spelling, proper use of titles, and group labeling. A directive on editorial policy by Jason Blatt, editor at the *China Post* at the time of the Hong Kong handover, discusses the use of 'Taiwan', 'ROC', 'Mainland China', 'communist China'. The interview with Anthony Lawrance of the *China News* clarifies his rationale for editorial policy regarding these terms. He maintains that "Taiwanese people" should not be referred to as "Chinese". Kearns, editor at the *China Post* at the time of the interview, claims that whereas the *China Post* stance used to be pro-KMT, it had adopted a more neutral ideology than most other Chinese papers by the time of the handover.¹⁶ Justification for use of terms such as 'ROC' and 'Mainland China' was that they wanted to adhere to historical references and the way words were used in the official Chinese language. Lawrance noted the following on the different approach between the *China Post* and the *China News* in referring to the Beijing leadership:

"The China Post often used to talk about the communist dictatorship in Beijing, whilst the China News tried to avoid that kind of word. If we ever had to do characterizations of China, it would be along the lines that they are dictators, not that they are communists. China is not communist, it went out a long time ago".

This editorial position explains the distinctive treatment of the wire versions in the descriptive characterization of the 'communist' other.

2.2.5. Reasons for the high number of wire stories in the English-language dailies

Only a handful of self-generated news stories are written by staff writers in the *China Post* and *China News*. Lawrance pointed out that the ratio of own stories versus borrowed material was a matter of resources. Apart from the lack of financial means to post correspondents abroad and to pay for qualified personnel with not only a journalistic background, but also the necessary language skills and a good grasp of the local way of life, other factors play a role, such as the high turnover of foreign editorial

¹⁶ It has to be acknowledged that in contrast to Lawrance, who had left his editorial position at the time of the interview, Patrick Kearns was still working as editor at the *China Post* when interviewed.



staff, and the absence of an English speaking environment as is the case in Singapore, the Philippines or Hong Kong. An extra problem arises with the costs and difficulties involved in producing good translations from Chinese news articles.

3. Textual analysis wire input / final newspaper output

Copy flow between newsrooms is rather complex. Unfortunately, the different steps in the editing process at the two newspaper outlets under investigation are untraceable, as in 1997 input stories of the wire services were kept only one week at the *China Post* and three weeks at the *China News* and editorial changes of originals written by reporters were made electronically without leaving any trace. For our research the original input had to be retrieved from the archives of the Western wire agencies. In total there were 256 wire stories, 71 for the *China News* (CN) and 185 for the *China Post* (CP), the latter newspaper counting more pages. As most wire stories originated from Reuters and Associated Press (AP), we contacted both Taipei branches and were granted access to the archives of AP by Bureau Chief, William Foreman, who explained the basics of how to browse the AP archives.¹⁷ Yet, tracing the right input story as well as the final input version felt like looking for a needle in a haystack, given the countless stories about the handover in the AP database, the lack of titles or diverging titles from the headlines in the papers, different versions of the same accounts (several leads or intermediate texts), different dates, and cryptic codes as to the history of the story. In some cases the final input story was just irretrievable, while all the same allowing for possible oversight of the right copy, given the time constraint to use the editor's database, as long as a PC was available in the hectic working environment at the news agency¹⁸. It should be noted that training is called for to decipher all codes marking the article as well as the history of its genesis.

The first part briefly sketches differences in output of both dailies stemming from the same input. This is followed by an outline of changes between text pairs, comprising input (AP accounts only) and output.

3.1. Divergence CP / CN perspective in news accounts from the same input stories

This section discusses dissimilarities between the CP/CN perspectives in accounts stemming from the same original input story. The availability of the original input from the Associated Press allowed an investigation into agency of amendments. Variations in terms of stylistic tone, choice of quotation, semantics in lexical and syntactical options, insertion/deletion of information, headlines and page placement were all taken into account. The analysis reveals consistent linguistic strategies that encode diverging perspectives as well as minor variations, which reflect non-ideological variability in the process of newspaper production.

¹⁷ The incumbent Reuters Taipei Chief of Bureau could not grant us access to the Reuters files without a lengthy and costly training service of how to decipher a complex coding system in their archives.

¹⁸ We are most grateful to the Taipei AP Bureau Chief, William Foreman, for granting access to the database.



Ideologically inspired editorial processing is exemplified by lexical variants between 'ROC' and 'Taiwan', 'mainland China' and 'China', 'reunification'/'unification'¹⁹ in the CP and CN respectively, as well as differences in descriptive specifications of China. Ideological implications of these variations have been explained above. The CP displays a 100% consistency over the entire corpus in its differential use of 'China' and 'mainland China'. Comparison of a CP and CN story originating from the same input source²⁰ illustrates this ideologically-driven denotational choice. Depending on the contextual semantics underlying the term 'China', the CP either leaves the original phrasing intact, such as 'rejoined China' and 'on the Chinese side', which both refer to cultural China, or changes "China" into "PRC", "mainland China", or "Beijing", as in '*Mainland Chinese President*', which relates to the political regime on the mainland. Most indicative of the pro-cultural China ideology underlying this labeling practice of the CP is the change of 'anti-*China* demonstrations' into 'anti-*Beijing* demonstrations'. The CN retains the term 'China', as it is used in the AP stories.

Concerning the reference to the island, rarely does the CN use the official noun 'ROC' except in quotations. Similarly, the consistent preference for terms like "Taiwan" and 'Taiwanese' instead of "ROC" and 'Chinese' in the CN reveals ideological investment in the sense that these categories are mutually exclusive, especially since the alternative appellation for citizens on Taiwan ('ROC nationals'), as they are called in the CP, is rejected. Consistency in this type of editorial amendment is most salient in the accounts "*Five nations offer visas from Taipei*" (China News, 2/7, p. 2) and "*ROC welcomes changes of distribution points*" (China Post, 2/7, p. 20), both originating from CNA, the official news agency in Taiwan.²¹ The CP includes the indirect complement 'to ROC nationals' whilst this is missing in the CN. Similarly, reference to 'ROC nationals' in the CP is replaced three times by the denotation 'Taiwanese' in the CN and the term 'ROC visitors' in the CP becomes 'Taiwanese visitors' in the CN. 'Relations with the ROC' in the CP are termed 'relations with Taiwan' in the CN. Also the headlines of these two articles choose different terms for the authorities on the island: 'ROC' (CP), 'Taipei' (CN). Similar to the above example of referential choices concerning "China", a comparison between these two texts reveals differentiation between 'mainland Chinese rule' in the CP and "Chinese rule" in the CN.

In its predicational practices in describing China, the CP repeatedly adds the attribution 'communist' to the original version. As the AP input stories are available for comparison, agency for this transformation can be attributed. This transformation is a recurrent and most eye-catching feature of the CP's editing process. Even within the same text, one can find multiple additions of the qualification 'Communist' (e.g. 'The communist Chinese flag', 'communist Chinese troops').²²

¹⁹ Clearly one of the papers changed the input version, as this term does not feature in a quote. The reiterative 're-unification' carries a presupposition about the original state of affairs, viz. Taiwan used to be part of China, and thus naturalizes the need for unification by foregrounding the previously unified state. The term 'unification', on the other hand, starts from another premise, that two separate entities might unify on an equal footing.

²⁰ "*British bade farewell as Prince, Patten sail into night*", China News, 1/7, p.1; "*Chinese resume Hong Kong sovereignty as Prince Charles, Patten board Britannia*", China Post, 1/7, p.1; "*Hong Kong returns to China*", Associated Press, Thomas Wagner, 30/6

²¹ The Central News Agency was established by the Kuomintang Party and became autonomous in 1996, no longer receiving donations from the KMT. This implies that some remnants of KMT ideology might underlie the CNA stories and linguistic choice-making might still be congruent with the official use, e.g. in labeling practices of 'ROC' and 'mainland China'.

²² The above-mentioned comparison between the CN and CP articles originating from the same AP input is a telling example of this editorial intervention. See footnote 21.



Ideological differences also appear in choice of quotes from the same input version.²³ Additionally, retention or deletion of propositions concerning certain themes tally with the newspapers' overall discursive hierarchy of themes.²⁴

Non-ideological variations relate to structural concerns, such as spatial constraints, paragraph restructuring for cohesion, style embellishment, grammatical considerations, consistence with house style. The CN, for example, consistently adheres to tense transformation rules in reported speech, whereas the CP prefers to use the simple present to show that the events are still in effect at the time of writing and to bring the story closer to the reader, which enhances the news values of proximity and timeliness. Editorial consistency is also evident in the structural mechanisms of temporal references. The CP uses calendar time indications (e.g. 'on Tuesday') whereas the CN prefers deicticals relative to the publication date ('yesterday'). As the CP usually inserts datelines for news agency stories, the calendar indication avoids confusion that deicticals might cause. The CN does not include any datelines. Therefore, the change of absolute time references in the wire stories into deictical shifters should not normally hinder interpretation.

3.2. Comparison input stories from Associated Press news agency and output stories in CP/CN

In total, we were able to retrace the input versions of 27 CN/CP stories in the AP archives.²⁵ Ten articles were common to both the CN and the CP, stemming from five wire stories sent to each newspaper. For one of the stories, different input versions must have been received. Twelve articles featured in only one of both papers (four in the CN and eight in the CP) and five articles gave rise to a problematic comparison, probably owing to a lack of final input version (four in the CN and one in the CP).

The comparative analysis for the non-problematic cases reveals the following findings. The ideologically most significant divergences between in- and output are situated in the thirteen CP narratives, which have all undergone consistent amendments of the term 'China' depending on context. Other results indicate that most articles either run the input story verbatim (including typographical errors²⁶) or delete some paragraphs or individual sentences. Deletion of entire paragraphs may be inspired by structural reasons of space constraints or concerns of overall coherence, as some comments

²³ In the news account "*Jiang hails Hong Kong handover as Chinese triumph*" (CP, 1/7, p.1), the CP foregrounds direct quotes of President Jiang referring to Chinese nationalist issues, such as China's unity and drops the quotes where Jiang pledges to maintain Hong Kong's way of life, as they appear in five extra paragraphs in the CN.

²⁴ For example, the AP descriptions of 'the dwindling British Empire' are kept in the CP, given its special interest in the 'end-of-empire' angle to the handover story. They are deleted in the CN. Other instances are the retention of the CP of themes about the arrival of communist Chinese troops and anti-Beijing demonstrations, which are deleted in the CN. ("*British bade farewell as Prince, Patten sail into night*", CN, 1/7, p.1; "*Chinese resume Hong Kong sovereignty as Prince Charles, Patten board Britannia*", CP, 1/7, p.1; "*Hong Kong returns to China*", AP, 30/6, Wagner, T.).

²⁵ For the period under investigation, a total of 52 articles originate from AP wire accounts, 20 and 32 for the CN and CP respectively.

²⁶ The following clause found in both versions, "Investors will *be* also *be* able to ..." [author's mark] illustrates how texts travel between newsrooms electronically and do not have to be retyped. The input version is simply taken over entirely or pasted into the new text. The situational context as outlined above (e.g. time constraints, lack of staff) must be at the origin of this editorial neglect.



digress from the topic at hand. Alternatively, the topics may not be deemed important or newsworthy enough or may not fit the thematic hierarchy in the overall newspaper's coverage of the handover.²⁷

Minor amendments in temporal references as well as in syntax appear. In the nine CN articles, there are two 'straight lifts' (identical accounts), one of which includes an original typo, and five stories with adjustments in temporal references (absolute time indication is substituted by relative shifters). Two other articles show syntactical changes.²⁸ Editorial amendments may have been made to reduce the length,²⁹ to maximize news value, to make the writing more crisp and compelling, to clarify, simplify or to standardize the language according to the house style.

The trajectories between input and output can be divided into five categories: (1) straight lifts (facsimiles); (2) nearly identical stories, but with ideologically significant lexical substitutions and minor syntactical and deictic changes; (3) deletion of information; (4) same source but different input version (different 'leads')³⁰; (5) problematic comparison, because of significant change in tone, owing to ideological editorial intervention or missing final input version.

To exemplify the second category, we briefly examine the changes between the following two texts, "*Fear not the PRC, allays Hong Kong executives*" (China Post, 30/6) and "*HK executives, US academics calm post-1997 fears*" (AP, Terril Yue Jones, 26/6). The in- and output stories are virtually identical, barring the most significant pattern of lexical amendments to the term 'China'. Depending on the context, the term 'mainland' has been added nine times. This consistence is striking in that it takes precedence over stylistic concerns, as in "60 percent of mainland China's exports and 50 percent of U.S.-mainland China trade". In two instances the name 'China' has been metonymically substituted by 'Beijing', each time preceding nouns with negative connotations, like 'takeover' and 'communist'. The only instance where 'China' has not been altered, even if it denotes the PRC only, occurs in a direct quote, which the CP duly does not alter.

The following paragraphs take a closer look at articles belonging to the fifth category, which concerns the problematic journey from the wire text "*Beijing bids troops bound for Hong Kong a stern farewell*" (AP: C. Hutzler, 29/6) to the output text "*China bids HK-bound troops farewell – Jiang Zemin sends*

²⁷ These three texts provide an illustration: "*Final marathon Legco session hears call for democracy*" (CN, 29/6) / "*HK lawmakers urge democracy in final session*" (CP, 29/6) "*Hong Kong lawmakers call for democracy in final marathon session*" (AP: Kathy Wilhelm, 28/6). Some paragraphs deleted in the CN have been retained in the CP, such as Hong Kong sensitivities about the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops and their distrust of the Chinese military because of "vivid memories of the PLA's 1989 crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Beijing". The CP adds extra comments about the PLA troops and its tarnished image, as this can solidify the newspaper's framing process of the negative 'other'. This editorial move corresponds with the general negative depiction mode in the CP of the 'communist mainland'.

²⁸ Grammatical amendments appear, for example, in reversing the order of finite verb and subject, following direct quotes or adding a missing direct object. In one instance, a prepositional object, "the balcony of the legislature" replaces the shorter attributive structure, the "legislature balcony".

²⁹ The *China News* does not print as many pages as the *China Post*.

³⁰ In the following texts, "*Hong Kong reflects as page turns*" (CN, 1/7), "*History turns another page – Varying moods of anxiety and expectancy prevail*" (CP, 1/7), divergences between both newspaper stories are traceable to different input versions of the same story "*Hong Kong reflects and anticipates as history's page turns*" (AP: John Leicester, 30/6). The AP second lead was sent to the CP and lead three, written one hour and a half later, was transferred to the CN. Indications of the different input can be found throughout the texts, e.g. extra direct quotes in CN only appear in lead three. A quote of Chris Patten in the CP has been deleted by the AP reporter in lead three and thus cannot appear in the CN.



military off to fulfill their 'sacred mission' " (CN, 1/7). It illustrates transformation between several leads or between input and output story.

The input text has been restyled and scrambled beyond recognition, except for some pointers that indicate parts of this version have still been used as source for the output. Some paragraphs are taken over literally or with slight alterations. Remnants of metaphorical language use in the original are still present in the output, such as (a) 'sea of uniforms', depersonalizing the soldiers (CN, § 2; AP, § 5); (b) people 'streaming' into the [Tiananmen] square (CN, § 12; AP, § 8).

Apart from the reshuffling of most paragraphs, many others have been either added or deleted. The extra paragraphs in the CN highlight the tight security in the PRC and frame its authoritarian state policy negatively by adding a quote of a dissident claiming that his phone line has been cut. The appearance of the latter quote suggests that the rewriting process is not an editorial intervention of the CN, but a restyling of the AP correspondent. If the CN had acquired this quote from another source, the latter would have appeared in the by-line, which is common practice, also in the CN, when combining data from different sources.

Most significantly, a different tone is adopted through representational processes describing the police activities in Beijing. The CN suggests a forceful and imposing attitude of the police force. The police are given negative semantic roles, since they are framed as agents to actions with negative connotational value, such as 'jogged in formation on to the square', 'gave a shout', 'started moving in waves across the square', 'forcing out crowds', 'clear Tiananmen Square'. The intertextual echo to the collective consciousness of troops forcing out crowds on Tiananmen Square in 1989 enhances the negative ring. By contrast, the image of the police conjured up in the original AP version is less confrontational ("Police kept a visible but low-key presence on Tiananmen and throughout the city. Six trucks for paramilitary armed police waited behind the Museum of Revolutionary History"). Furthermore, it is the crowds that, in the AP version, are syntactically placed in agentive position to force the police to stop cars ("Crowds forced police to stop cars from coming within 3 kilometres").

Another ideologically important element is the move of the illocutionary force of President Jiang's 'warning' higher up the scale of authoritativeness into an 'order'. The linguistic action verbal (LAV) 'warned' (AP) has been altered into 'ordered' (CN). Moreover, authoritarian attitude is highlighted in the reiteration of the directive speech act, each time in a structurally parallel fashion, fronted to the beginning of the sentence and paragraph. The AP version places LAVs like 'warned' and 'exhorting [the troops]' only behind other complements or in a complement position. Whoever carried responsibility for the changes -AP or CN- was metapragmatically aware of the difference in illocutionary force underlying lexical choices such as 'message' or 'order'. Even though responsibility cannot be attributed with certainty to the CN for the amendments in this text, as the input version may not have been the final one sent to the CN, the divergence between both versions at least indicates linguistic strategies in the genesis of a text as well as the complexity of copy flow within and between newsrooms.



4. Conclusion

Changes made to the source material provide clear evidence of the domestication process, provided this concept is not defined along general 'national' lines as in Cohen et al. (96) and Lee et al. (99, 2000), but narrowed down to smaller 'home' constituencies. The theoretical observation in Lee et al. (99) that core national values are reinforced in international news reporting is only partly sustainable in the Taiwanese case due to the problematic nature of core values in Taiwan. Even though there might be a common understanding as to what constitutes the national interest, no consensus can be found regarding the cultural self and the link between culture and nationhood. The wire stories are thus domesticated in the narrow sense that transformations encode the cultural values of each newspaper and its intended readership.

The present study provides tangible evidence of editorial policy, as laid out in the editorial 'home style' directives and confirmed during the interviews with the editors. Amendments to the original input material support findings about meaning generation processes in our extended language pragmatic analysis of ideological undertones in the Taiwanese English-language press (Lams, 2004). Based on the mental scripts and cultural frames of the journalists and editors, the *China News* sets up the democratic 'us' against the autocratic 'them', but has abandoned all references to communism. The *China Post*, on the other hand, has retained the former Cold War discursive antagonism against communist regimes, which is most salient in its consistent transformations of input stories.³¹ Whereas the *China Post* harbors 'China first' allegiances and implicitly privileges all frames of reunification with China over commitment to local Taiwanese affairs, the *China News* is invested with a 'Taiwan first' perspective.

Regarding the tension between homogenization of global images and heterogenization and the effect of communication flow from the West, the Taiwanese corpus largely follows perspectives embedded in the Western wire stories, especially when compared with political and historical positions on Hong Kong 1997 in the Mainland Chinese press, which primarily relies on local copywriters and the Chinese Xinhua News agency. This cannot entirely be put down to the papers' intended readership (partly foreign community) or the Western origin of the articles. The same ideological orientation underlie several news accounts and opinion articles written by local Taiwanese journalists as well as narratives in the Chinese-language media in Taiwan. The particular view on the colonial history of Hong Kong and the British legacy to the crown colony along with an admiration for the last Governor, Chris Patten, standing up against the Beijing leadership in his fight for more democratic participation, was part of the cultural frames making up the official ROC discourse as well as public opinion in Taiwan civil society at the time of the handover and can therefore not be called a 'Western' derivative. In addition, the study demonstrates that the handover accounts in the *China Post/China News* also distinguish themselves from Western newspaper coverage on the handover. The particular preference for some articles, paragraphs and propositions over others as well as the lexical emendations reveal domestic variations of identical input and localization of the source material in consonance with the newspapers' editorial line.³²

³¹ Over the last decade, however, the outspoken anti-communist stance, which characterized the CP's editorial line in 1997, has made way for a more positive portrayal of common features between Taiwan and China in terms of cultural, religious, ethnical and commercial ties (Lams, 2006:156).

³² For an account of thematic differences between the Western and the Taiwanese media coverage of the handover, see Lams, 2004.



The analysis of a crucial juncture on the road to the final output stories in the Taiwanese English-language press shows how social identities and group relations are either maintained from the original input or reconstructed in congruence with the ideologies the newspapers assume they share with their readership. Particularly the consistent amendments expose conscious audience design or accommodation to the imaginary interlocutor. Non-ideological transformations, such as deictical changes to absolute time references or temporal shifts in reported speech, relate to stylistic considerations or house style directives. Deletions of paragraphs or propositions can either be ideologically driven or based on structural considerations of coherence or space constraints. No general conclusions on reasons for textual emendations between input and output can be drawn, as priorities vary at different editorial offices, depending on social and institutional conditions controlling production (organizational factors as number of copy writers, editors, size of news outlet and resources, time constraints). Changes have to be analyzed case by case, and ideally, follow-up interviews with the editors concerning every single change should be conducted. Given the time pressure in the production process, this procedure would be too time-consuming for the editors. However, some follow-up correspondence with the former *China News* and *China Post* editors was carried out and confirmed our findings concerning reasons for editorial changes to group categorizations. Moreover, the underlying conflict between two opposing perspectives concerning identity issues also manifested itself explicitly in the metapragmatic marking of some terms as unacceptable in *China Post* editorials published a few days after the period covered by the present corpus. But most significantly, it is the consistency of some amendments to the original input, which provides clear evidence of intentional meaning construction in the linguistic production process.



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