

## Chapter 2

# Studies on the Advertising and Ideology

### Introduction

The literature review chapter offers the rationale for conducting research into the ideological values of Chinese household appliance advertising and an overview of scholarly approaches.

As advertisements have long been tackled diversely from a variety of perspectives, the overview of approaches adopted in the different texts in this chapter has to be selective. The basic linguistic approaches which this survey covers are primarily concerned with the linguistic analysis of advertising because this embeds the ideological and social orientation which is the groundwork for my thesis. Meanwhile, some approaches to advertising will be presented. Although these approaches are not directly concerned with language, they are concerned with ideological values of advertising in the sociological aspect. In making this survey, the approaches to the language of advertising and ideological values are divided into three groups. One is concerned with the nature of linguistic orientation—specifically with Chinese scholars' approaches to advertising—and includes a discussion of their approaches to discourse. The second group concerns the social orientation of language, and is mainly concerned with ideology in advertising. Similar to the second group, the third group concerns Chinese scholars' approaches to ideological values in advertising. However, this survey of approaches is not a pure description per se. It is primarily an evaluation of the theoretical and methodological notions adopted by researchers which will allow me to make a decision about the most appropriate approach including some appropriate parts of the other approaches for my research into Chinese advertising.

## Review of Language Studies of Chinese Advertising

The retreat of Chinese advertising during the Cultural Revolution, and its increasing presence and boom since the political and economic reforms in China in the late 1970s has aroused people's interest in different aspects of consumerism including economics, marketing, psychology, sociology, semiotics, mass media and linguistics. However, compared with the history and development of advertising in western countries which is thought to be mature, the Chinese advertising industry is rather immature due to the damaging effects of political movements in the past. Therefore, the research on advertising still requires more work and application.

As far as the study of advertising in the linguistic domain is concerned, Chinese scholars have published very few books. For instance, in the Beijing National Library one can find four volumes of the *Language of Advertising* edited by Cook (2008) which is a collection of more than 80 articles by leading scholars who have conducted their research into western advertising practices, but there are no books like these in Chinese. There are books on the language of advertising in both Chinese and English languages most of which examine linguistic forms and provide interpretation at a superficial level. But the number is limited. According to the records of the Beijing National Library, from 1992 to 2007, there are only 15 books about the language of advertising discourse written by Chinese scholars. In the four volumes of *The Language of Advertising* edited by Cook (2008), 74 books were published on the language of advertising from the 1950s to 2007. This comparison shows that the number of Chinese publications is less than that of English publications at the ratio of 1: 3.4. Regarding the scale of research, the study of English scholars is diverse. They study advertising discourse through sociology, psychology, communicative theories, and across culture. With the emergence of the advertising industry of China since 1978 books on advertising have been published, but most of them are publications concerning advertising in business, marketing, public relations and the mass media. A few works are about the language of advertising and these provide us mainly with descriptions of linguistic forms and functions in advertising, their work lacks the critical discourse perspective which this thesis will develop. According to the aims and contents of the works published in China, approaches to advertising language can be divided into three categories: of general description of the language of advertising, rhetorical figures of advertising, and the production of advertising. Since this trend is representative of the current state of research into the language of advertising in China, it is worth making a more detailed critical review of these approaches in the first part of this section. The following discussion on the approaches to the advertising language in China is carried out with reference to the three features mentioned: that is, the language of advertising, the rhetorical figures of advertising, and the production of advertising.

## Approaches to the Advertising in China

### *Description of the Language of Advertising*

*Advertising English and Expressions* by Sun (1995) aims to present basic information about the language of advertising in both English and Chinese and to introduce the general concept of advertising, and its linguistic elements such as characteristics of grammar, function and rhetoric. 1000 commonly-used expressions in advertising are presented to show that the author attempts to be comprehensive. But if we consider the factors that influence advertisers in shaping the forms of language and its meanings, few answers are given. Secondly, the introduction of advertising often identifies the examples with one linguistic feature separate from others. For instance:

Come into the circle. J&B are Scotch Whisky. (Whisky)

The author's interpretation is: "This advertisement is concise, offering a sense of emotion" (Sun 1995: 118). It is obvious that this simple and general explanation lacks any analysis of either the form of the language or of its deep meaning. It tells us only what, but not how and why. This kind of interpretation and analysis of the language of advertising also occurs in other studies.

In *Chinese and Foreign Elegant Advertising Expressions—10,000 Golden Expressions* edited by Zhang (1995) the author introduces 25 techniques of writing advertising headlines. A large sample of 10,000 headlines of advertising is collected, but unfortunately, the quality of their interpretation remains questionable. There is usually only one interpretation of a headline given in each case. For instance:

Try every style. (Clothes company)

The only interpretation for this headline is, "This is a headline of temptation."

(Zhang Xiuxian 29)

Bite Johnson. You must be too excited. (Cake)

This interpretation is, "This is an effective headline, but it is too much exaggerated."

(Zhang 71)

There are other cases like these in books written by Chinese scholars and they hardly satisfy the need for more information about the language of advertising by their superficial comments. Like Sun Xiaoli, Zhang Xiuxian offer only the "what" in their interpretation, not the "how" or the "why". This kind of interpretation is merely a brief note but not an analysis.

## ***Rhetorical Analysis of Advertising***

*Tactics of Rhetoric for Advertising* by He (2003) covers the subjects of psychology, linguistics, rhetoric, aesthetics, but it discusses the ways in which the tactics of rhetoric are realized by lexical, syntactic items and style. His analysis unfolds the relationship between rhetorical devices and meanings, because he believes that rhetorical expressions are taken as the vehicle of meaning. Meaning is the most important element in advertising and it reflects people's attitudes and thoughts (2003: 2).

He Xinxiang illustrates 50 tactics under 11 categories concerning business, emotion, cognition and language properties which constitute a system of rhetorical devices. Although his 50 tactics are extensive, they cannot be said to be exhaustive. The author should have suggested that there are more strategies which are either unknown to us or which will occur with the development of people's cognition, attitude and the technology of the mass media. It is also questionable that the classification of a single expression of rhetorical tactics corresponds to a unique strategy. It is possible that one expression may involve more than one tactic simultaneously. There are also some explanations of language which need deeper analysis. In terms of dialect and slang, the author claims that "the use of slang and dialect aims to make people feel familiar with the text through having easy access to its meaning" (He 2003: 395). Such a conclusion is radically subjective. In sociolinguistic terms the function of slang and dialect is more than simply to create intimacy and a colloquial register in communicative events. Slangs and dialects are also symbols of identity and can be used to stress the quality of products. For example, if a farmer advertises a dairy product using a local dialect customers, it may gain a positive impression of the product's quality, that is because it is most likely to make viewers believe the goods are produced locally and naturally. Such a claim may be correct only under certain circumstances: consumers from other regions unfamiliar with such colloquialisms will find this advertisement meaningless, or do not make any difference between the standard language and local dialect.

Further description of rhetorical figures can be found in *Rhetoric Technique and Advertising Language* by Ni (2001). By contrast to He Xinxiang who adopts a notional functional approach for his description, Ni Baoyuan outlines a variety of rhetorical techniques in the structural and functional manner. Ni discusses the value of rhetoric used in advertising and suggests methods of identifying rhetorical usage.

Ni argues that to deal with the production and understanding of rhetorical figures, requires not only skill but the knowledge of how to exploit register (mode, tenor, field), advertising tactics, creativity and market investigation, etc. The principles identified by Ni Baoyuan are helpful for all who are interested in rhetoric and advertising analysis. Although Ni mentions that for understanding and analysis of rhetorical figures one should take into account the factors mentioned above, most of his introduction is based on the structural approach to linguistic analysis.

Regarding the relationship between rhetorical devices and the language of advertising, Ni suggests that these are separate but should be connected; and that

the rhetorical device is more crucial than language (Ni 2001: 7). But it can also be argued that the rhetorical figure is one object with two aspects: it is both a trope and a linguistic form. It is hard to treat these in isolation, because the meaning of rhetorical figures emerges from the interaction between trope and language forms.

Ni wants to classify rhetorical figures and separate them with clear boundaries; but to create tidy rhetorical categories may be idealistic. A single rhetoric figure might have only one meaning or function semantically, but one expression could mean different things in different situations, or conversely different rhetorical expressions can mean the same thing. Thus, contextual information has to be employed in rhetorical analysis. The focus of rhetorical devices ought to be shifted from purely identifying the boundaries of different features to their relationships and interactions between them.

### ***The Production of the Language of Advertising***

*Types and Production of TV Advertising Language* by Liu (2004) is dedicated to classifying language properties and the way that advertising language is formulated. Liu first makes an analysis of the linguistic features of advertising, identifying two ways of defining the language of advertising: a micro-view which refers to grammar, sentence and vocabulary, and a macro-view which refers to other elements besides language, such as image, sound, music, color etc.

Liu's study follows the micro-view. Therefore, she gives a detailed description of the language used in TV advertising adopting a structural approach, and showing great interest in "the forms of language and structures of advertising as a text consisting of patterns of contents, such as caption, headline (lead, main headline, subtitle), slogan, warning, main body and appendix" (2004: 6). Her examination of the language mainly remains at the descriptive level and identifies the subject, predictor, and the logical connections between sentences.

The second part of her work is on the production of the language of advertising. Liu offers insights into this issue, saying:

to make a successful advertisement one should start from the market survey and analysis of the market structure, product characteristics, competitors, supply, consumption, etc. and different phases of the product's entrance into the market which impacts on the formation and style of the language of advertising.

(Liu 2004: 177)

Lin Xisheng in *Production and Critical Study of Advertising Expressions* (2007) presents a similar argument but is mainly concerned with the specific principles and policies of language when it is oriented to consumers and the market-place.

Lin emphasizes the importance of morality and responsibility which also affect the style of the language of advertising. She argues that advertisers should avoid playing with empty words and thoughts in writing advertising copy and instead pay attention to the consumers' demands. That means a successful advertisement also

relies on honesty, and the responsibility of the advertiser. Lin's comments reflect the general attitudes of the public who expect transparency and honesty in advertising. But in reality things are more complicated. Instead of talking about the emptiness or the transparency of language, we should think about its meaning and ask why language is sometimes used to contradict to our morality by being deceptive and evacuated of its ostensible meaning.

Both Liu and Lin illustrate advertising production, showing the relationship between language and the market-place. Their insights can be helpful for our understanding of advertising language in a broader context. Language analysis should cross the boundaries of language by linking up with other disciplines which might have some impact on the advertising language and its production. However, it is not enough to illustrate how the superficial factors that drive market demand can influence the style and use of the language of advertising. It is necessary to examine the meaning coded in the language, such as ideological, cultural conceptions.

From this discussion of approaches to the study of the language of advertising in China, we can infer that scholars in China have shown a greater interest in linguistic items in isolation than in in-depth analysis of meaning. Most of them focus on the semantic description of the language of advertising and this constitutes a weakness in the scholarly analysis.

For, although a basic linguistic knowledge of advertising may be necessary, when focusing at the superficial level, omitting any reference to the contextual components may prevent analysis of the deep meaning of the language.

However, besides the mainstream studies, there are some scholars who have adopted different approaches to the language of advertising in China, such as *Theory and Practice of Discourse Analysis: A Study in Advertising Discourse* by Huang (2001), which takes a functional approach. In addition, there are a number of papers concerned with the changes of society reflected in the language of advertising, such as *Changes of Advertising Language and Society* by Mao (2005). The weakness of such papers is that they are intuitive and general, lacking systematic study and critical analysis. There are also essays on and analysis of the adopted theories and analytical frameworks suggested by foreign scholars. That means Chinese scholars have not established their own particular approaches and they have a long way to go in this area, though adoption of foreign theories indicates the openness and active attitude of the Chinese scholars towards new views and theories.

We have to admit that borrowing new theories can lead to advantages for Chinese scholars in analyzing the discourse of advertising, e.g. Huang Guowen's employment of Halliday's functional grammar for his analysis on advertisements quite early in China. He is well-known in this respect. In order to have a better understanding of Chinese advertising discourse we need to undertake the analysis in a critical manner, but most of the Chinese scholars are likely to rely on pure linguistic description of the language of advertising. In recent years along with the opening of China to the outside world in the respect of economy, culture and ideology, some Chinese researchers have started to pay attention to the ideological values and changes in the Chinese advertisements. There are also articles published

recently by Chinese scholars who examine Chinese advertisements through an ideological approach and explore ideology embedded in advertisements. For instance, *Advertising and Ideology* by Ye Qing (Journal of Xiaogan University 2008); *The Double Metaphor in the Age of Consumerism—Ideological analysis of advertisements on female fashion magazines* by Shang Xiangyu (Journal of Jishou University 2007); *Ideology in Advertising* by Yang Jinglan (Modern Transmission 2002).

These articles offer a general description of the concept of ideology and help readers and scholars open their mind about the ideological meaning and power of advertising. However, what we need more is also the detailed examination of advertisements through a time span of several decades, the linguistic or discursive evidence of the presence of ideology and its mechanism in the process of advertising. It is optimistic to see that Liu (2006), and some Chinese scholars have conducted intensive and systematical research into the Chinese advertisements at the ideological level, such as Li (2009), Zhao (2012), Lin (2012) Chen (2012) and so forth. Their approaches to advertising will be introduced in some detail in the following section of approaches to ideology in advertising.

We should remember the point made by Cook (2001: 3), “Although the main focus of discourse analysis is on language, it is not concerned with language alone” and examine the texts in a wider social context rather than in isolation. For this, while treating advertising as discourse, we should notice that advertising is immersed in ongoing social activities. It is an instrument by which to influence the consumer’s consciousness as well as an ideological form of communication. Ideology, for deeper understanding of advertising, can be seen as one of the important aspects. Therefore, in the following sections of the chapter, my discussion will be focused on the basic concepts of ideology, its relationship with advertising, and approaches to it in advertising and critical discourse analysis which are related to my research.

## Notions of Ideology

### *Karl Marx’s Concept of Ideology*

The current usage of the term “Ideology” was originally proposed by Karl Marx which can be found in *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels 1962). His concept of ideology is one of the most influential notions in the field of philosophy and political domain.

“Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (Marx and Engels 1962). In the critique of the idealism of Hegelianism, Marx and Engels intend to claim that all human consciousness (ideology) is rooted in material conditions, and can be changed only by transforming these conditions (Terry 1996: 23). Marx’s

assertion regards ideology as dependent on material circumstances in which people live in their daily life being engaged in social and economic activities. These material conditions determine the human consciousness and form their system and framework of ideas through which they can understand the world and their positions in the world.

In addition to the material conditions, ideology is also determined by the class relations of production. "Ideology, according to the epiphenomenal conception, is a system of ideas which expresses the interests of the dominant class but which represents relations in an illusory form" (Thompson 1990: 37). The system of ideas in this sense means the ruling class or dominant social groups attempt to maintain their ruling position and achieve control of subordinate classes, they articulate their theories of economics and society which misrepresent the actual class relations but in favour of the interests of a minority. The notion of "false consciousness" is derived from the misrepresentation of class relations.

Through his criticism of "false consciousness", Marx unmasked the hidden nature of capitalism by condemning ideology as an illusion to cover capitalist exploitation. "In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" (Marx and Engels 1962: 36). His criticism of false consciousness (i.e. ideology), expresses his strong opposition towards capitalism and his adversaries. This led to the pejorative use of ideology.

### ***Antonio Gramsci's Concept of Ideology***

Gramsci, in his definition of ideology, maintains:

Indeed the meaning which the term "ideology" has assumed in Marxist philosophy implicitly contains a negative value judgment and excludes the possibility that for its founders the origin of ideas should be sought for in sensations, and therefore, in the last analysis, in physiology. "Ideology" itself must be analyzed historically, in terms of the philosophy of praxis, as a superstructure.

(2007: 376)

Apparently, Gramsci does not hold the same view for the notion of Marx's ideology as "false consciousness". Although Gramsci cannot be regarded as the original advocate, being one of the great Western Marxists, he raised the notion of "hegemony". Based on the functional perspective of ideology, the term hegemony means ideological domination (Heywood 2007: 7) and cultural domination of the bourgeoisie over the rest of the society (Blommaert 2005: 166). According to Gramsci, ideology is valid, necessary and a superstructure for the dominant class to secure their exercise of political leadership and control of the subordinate classes, because this kind of rule is based on "the 'active consent' of the subordinate classes and to integrate the various factions of the dominant class into a relatively stable power bloc" (Thompson 1990: 94).



It is notable that hegemony can play an equally effective role in the system of state apparatuses but in practice, hegemony when overstated will not always work well. Hegemony should be seen as flexible and dynamic in terms of degree. Therefore, to some extent Gramsci's interpretation is rather theoretical and optimistic. Nevertheless the existence and role of hegemony cannot be denied and overlooked in the critical discourse analysis.

### ***Louis Althusser's Concept of Ideology***

Louis Althusser, the leading Marxist philosopher of his day, incorporated some aspects of Gramsci's concept of hegemony into a strikingly novel theoretical synthesis, which along with Gramsci drew heavily on structuralism and psychoanalysis (Terry 1994: 14, 87). As for Althusser, he elaborated the concept of ideology in his influential essay on "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy* (Althusser 1971). His work provides us with remarkable insights into the forms and functions of ideology. Althusser describes his conception of ideology in a neutral, and ontological way and insists that it cannot be taken as a spiritual and ideal existence, but is material, that is, "Ideologies are not pure illusions, but bodies of representations existing in institutions and practice" (Althusser 1976: 155 cited by Resch 1992: 206). He believed that ideology is neither necessarily seen as true or false, but is a matter of the real and an "imaginary", "lived" relation between men and their world. (Althusser 1969: 232–233 cited by Resch 1992: 206). For this, Althusser adds:

All the State Apparatuses function both by repression and by ideology, with the difference that the (Repressive) State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by repression, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology.

(1971 cited by Resch 1992: 214)

From his point of view, ideology has an epistemological status and also a material existence to serve as an apparatus for social relations to be formed and developed through the forms of force and a system of beliefs and ideas. These two kinds of apparatuses: the State Apparatuses (SA) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), both consist of material existence or reality and spiritual existence or ideas, which are not opposed but combined into one body. In this sense, "ideas are real and not 'ideal' because they are always inscribed in social practices and expressed in objective social forms" (languages, rituals, etc.) (Terry 1994: 116). In Althusser's statement about ideology we can find its materiality.

Another important assertion Althusser made about ideology is the concept of imaginary relations: "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1971: 162). As Terry explains (1994: 120) what ideology represents is men's lived relation to their conditions of existence. This lived relation is, Althusser insists, an "imaginary" relation. The

imaginary can be regarded as a kind of state in which one establishes his relation to the absent world and makes it present. Therefore, the imaginary relationship between the person and the world is both absent and present. To make it easier for understanding, we can borrow the notion mentioned by Terry (1994: 121) “as if”. Someone thinks he is living in the realm of “as if” (imaginary), and becomes a part of it, so this imaginary relation exists. It can be a matter or an idea, it can be true or false. “In living ‘as if’, subjects do not live in illusion, this ‘as if’ is the reality of their existence as subjects” (Terry 1994: 121).

Althusser’s assertions about ideology have made a contribution to the theoretical basis of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which “provides theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2008: 60). His notion of “imaginary relation” has given insight into the way why advertising discourse always depicts the world in fantasy. Advertisers want to affect viewers’ minds, by leading them into an “as if” (imaginary) realm to believe what they are being offered is the best. We cannot simply define this state as a “false consciousness”, but as a hegemonic strategy to lead the consumers to dream about fantasy and to articulate a present world.

### ***The Ideology of John B. Thompson***

Based on the critical analysis of ideological theory from Marx, and Mannheim, to Horkheimer, Adorno and Habermas, Professor Thompson claims (2007: 10) that ideology is an integral part of this struggle; it is a creative and constitutive feature of a social life which is sustained and reproduced, contested and transformed, through actions and interactions which include the ongoing exchange of symbolic forms. Ideology is necessary for establishing and sustaining relations of power in the social life. It is a branch under the broad concept of struggles which aim at sustaining social relations and take place through words and symbols even through the use of physical force. Thompson views “struggle” in a wider perspective and a more neutral manner than in Marx’s concept of class struggle.

### ***Norman Fairclough’s Perspective on Ideology***

If we say that social practice is one of the most important dimensions in Fairclough’s critical approach to discourse, then ideology can be thought of as the core of this dimension which exists in social practice and makes a contribution to creating and sustaining (unequal) relations of power between social groups. For Fairclough, it is invested in discourse “to be significations/constructions of reality [...] which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of

relations of domination” (Fairclough 2006: 87). In order to make sense of any text people draw on features of their own ideological positions, which Fairclough calls “members’ resources (MR)”, hence ideological values are implicit in (and reproduced by) the circulation of texts such as advertisements. Being unstated, these features appear to be common sense.

Acknowledging notions of ideology proposed by a group of influential philosophers and sociologists (e.g. as already outlined, Althusser, Gramsci and Thompson) Fairclough (2006) formulates his three claims of ideology in discourse:

- (1) Discourse is the form of ideology;
- (2) Ideology effects subjects through discourse;
- (3) Ideology effects not only relation of people but the orders of discourse.

Regarding the notion of ideology, Fairclough’s claims are not strikingly different to those of other philosophers and sociologists. But a significant difference is that he is not the theoretical interpreter of particular notions but a practitioner combining the theory with reality in order to examine the relationship between language and ideology as well as that between social and cultural change: these are considered two major aspects of CDA, but do not want to suggest that pure description and interpretation of ideology are less important. If they only remain at the theoretical level this is not helpful for discourse analysts. Fairclough’s contribution is that besides his theoretical interpretation of ideology, he offers an approach to practical analysis. This can be seen from his studies, *Language and Power* (1994) and *Discourse and Social Change* (2006).

In sum, the leading sociologists, politicians and linguists understand and define ideology from a variety of perspectives. The most important thing is not the various definitions of the term, “ideology”, but the accounts of its attributes, effects, production and shifts at different layers and phases of social development. Nevertheless the different perspectives upon ideology can offer us particular ideological framings for exploring meanings of discourse. In addition, Fairclough’s interpretation contains an acceptable set of definitions which includes “common-sense” (e.g. beliefs, views, attitudes, thoughts, assumptions, themes, values) and “word meanings” (e.g. explicit, implicit, profound, potential meanings in language) for ideology that exists in different forms, at different levels and which is invested in different degrees in discourse. Fairclough’s interest is not in the purely theoretical argument on ideology but in its events and processes.

## **Ideologies in China**

### ***The Traditional Chinese Ideology***

In terms of the history of civilization over the last 5000 years, China has shown itself to be full of doctrines, which have either developed into ideologies or have vanished. The doctrines of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism still affect

peoples' thinking, worldview and behaviour. However, these three ideologies cannot be considered as the most influential in China today. Since the Opium War (1840–1842), China has been invaded by other countries, and suffered government bankruptcy, economic poverty, and social turbulence. Under these insecure circumstances, an “ideology of risk” was formulated which had the function of “reflecting reality, clarifying situations and directions, motivating society and starting action” (Ji 2005: 16).

### ***Ideology of Modern Chinese Society (1919-)***

Upon entering modern society, China introduced western theories of science and evolution. These were more powerful than the traditional Chinese doctrines of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism in developing the country's economy and human understanding of the world and solving social problems and natural disasters. The critical functions of these doctrines were accepted by the Chinese culture and formulated into ideologies in China.

However, the most favorable and influential doctrine in modern Chinese history was Marxism, because it met the practical needs of the Chinese political organization—the Chinese Communist Party—and helped the Party to solve problems in the Chinese revolutionary movement. The communist ideology also offered the Chinese political organization a theoretical foundation and the Chinese people spiritual support against imperialism, feudalism and capitalism. In addition, the victory of the Soviet Revolution of 1918 strengthened the Chinese people's belief in Marxism and the doctrine of class struggle.

Having taken its basic elements from Marxism, Leninism and ideas developed in the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party, over the four decades of its history, has made its ideology into a systematic set of ideas which it has used to create its own organization and to achieve its goals.

(Schurmann 1968: 19)

During the period from 1949 to 1978, before China's economic reform, The Chinese Communist Party, the largest powerful political organization in China, took Marxism and Leninism as the theoretical foundation for its principles, and Mao's thoughts as the practical guidance for its movements and the people's thoughts. Party members should regard all kinds of social, political, economic and mental problems basically as phenomena of the class struggle between capitalism and socialism. Such an ideology was one of the main factors causing the Political Movement in 1957 against the intellectuals who dared to criticize the policies of the Communist Party and the Cultural Revolution in China, for their failure to solve the problems of social relationships, the economy and people's world-values.

## ***Chinese Ideology After 1978***

Since October 1976 and particularly since the Third Plenary Session of the Party's Eleventh Central Committee held in 1978, China has returned to the path of healthy development. "Good progress has been made in the reform of our economic structure and mechanisms" said by Deng Xiaoping in 1980 (Deng's selected works 1995: 357). Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, China started its economic reform and open door policy aiming to construct China into a rich and modernized country. At that time Deng Xiaoping held:

Accordingly, in building socialism we must do all we can to develop the productive forces and gradually eliminate poverty. Constantly raising the people's living standards. Otherwise, how will socialism be able to triumph over capitalism?

(Deng's collected works 1994: 21)

Based on Deng's doctrine, the Chinese government and the Communist Party followed a market economy to develop China into a harmonious and wealthy country. This has replaced the traditional class-oriented ideology. Chinese people were encouraged to open up their minds, to concentrate on economic construction and national modernization. Deng's system of ideas, unlike Mao's and Marx's, can be defined as neutral, aimed at developing the Chinese economy rather than perpetuating the class struggle between capitalism and socialism. The achievements during the past 30 years have proved that the newly-introduced ideology after social and economic reform in China is practical and accepted by the Chinese people.

As I propose to conduct this research into the ideology of Chinese advertisements, I will, in addition to the mainstream ideology in China, discuss the issues concerning ideological phenomena in advertising and approaches to them in advertising.

## ***Political Situation in China Before and After 1978***

As stated by Cheek (2006: 27): "China is a socialist state, led by a one party Leninist regime that still claims Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought as its ideology." Here I should explain that in the realm of ideology and in the Chinese people's mind there was only one unique political theory and one predominant thought: these were known as Mao Zedong thought. Mao Zedong was the chief leader of the Chinese Communist Party, the People's Army and the People's Republic of China after 1949, and the founding of New China. Therefore, it was believed that Mao's thought was the truth without any doubt. Even after 1976 when Mao Zedong passed away, some leading members of the Central Party Committee called on the whole country to believe that whatever Chairman Mao said was the truth and should be implemented in the practice of one's work and everyday life.

The conception of “class struggle” was still emphasized as the guiding principle of the majority of the entire national workforce.

The concept of “class struggle” was adopted by the Chinese Communist Party from Marx’s doctrine. Another political word as popular as “class struggle” was “revolution”. Through 1949–1976 when Mao was in power these two terms reached their apogee.

During this period there were a series of events which caused the Chinese economy to its weakest point. Firstly, around 1957, the Anti-Rightist Movement was launched to denounce and punish those intellectuals of China who made suggestions or expressed disagreements with the Party.

Then, in 1958, an economic development movement, the Great Leap Forward, was carried out to launch China into the era of modern socialism from feudalism across capitalism: this resulted in a large waste of time, labour and material. Later, in the 1960s Mao Zedong declared, “Never forget the class struggle.” In 1966 he declared, “It is right to rebel” and started his last campaign, the Cultural Revolution which caused the biggest disaster in many aspects in China since 1949. In the later stages of the Cultural Revolution, the Gang of Four (a leftist political faction composed of four Chinese Communist Party officials: Jiang Qing, who was Mao’s wife, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan) controlled the power organs in the Chinese Communist Party Committee. They were blamed for the worst excesses of chaos. In those days, the Chinese economy and ideological realm were deeply affected by these political movements and suffered greatly until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. The arrest of the Gang of Four after Mao’s death marked the end of the chaos in this period of turmoil in China. There is no doubt that no commercial activities and advertising could survive, because they were thought to be counter to socialism.

The policy introduced by the then Communist Party of China, Chairman Hua Guofeng, Mao’s successor, was simplified as “The Two Whatevers” referring to the statement that: “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave” (*People’s Daily* 7 February, 1977). This policy proved unpopular with the general public who wanted to end the influence of the Cultural Revolution and start economic reform. In May 1978, a nationwide debate on the “truth criterion” was launched by the Communist Party. Most of the Chinese Communist Party members and Chinese people started to accept the doctrine that “Everything should be done and considered according to reality. Link theory with practice, see truth from facts, try and develop truth in practice” (Chinese Communist Party Regulations 1982: 15). This doctrine was then put into the Regulations of the Chinese Communist Party and identified as the ideological principle which has not been changed today. The establishment of this principle was a landmark indicating the criticism of dogmatism and the amendment of traditional “class-struggle” doctrines and “left thinking” (Deng 1994). People would find a new way of thinking. They started to think the opposite to examine socialism using a practical criterion with individual choice. Deng Xiaoping, (the Party leader after Mao Zedong 1979–1997) criticized,

“That was a serious mistake, and we suffered because of it (i.e. left thinking)” (1994: 140) and he also emphasized:

One of our shortcomings after the founding of the People’s Republic was that we didn’t pay enough attention to developing the productive forces. Socialism means eliminating poverty. Pauperism is not socialism, still less communism. [...] Our political line is to focus on the modernization program and on continued development of the productive forces.

(1994: 73)

The Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee held in December 1978 denied the principle of taking the “class struggle” as the central doctrine for all the work and life in China and decided to concentrate the Party’s and the country’s work on the construction of modern China through firmly insisting on the open-door policy and economic reform.

“The facts confirm that we have done much hard work and achieved tremendous successes in the political sphere in the last three years. In the economic sphere also the last three years have witnessed significant achievements” (Deng 1984: 246). Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, China started its reform and the “open door” policy aiming to construct China into a wealthier and modernized country. At that time Deng Xiaoping’s famous quotation of about white or black cats was popularly shared among the public, “I don’t care if it’s a yellow cat (later ‘white cat’ was popularly used) or a black cat. It’s a good cat as long as it catches mice”, uttered by Deng Xiaoping at the meeting of General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, 1962 (Deng 1994: 323). Deng Xiaoping on his investigation tour to Southern China emphasized:

A planned economy is not equivalent to socialism, because there is planning under capitalism too; a market economy is not capitalism, because there are markets under socialism too. Planning and market forces are both means of controlling economic activity.

(Deng 1994: 362)

Deng’s purpose is to let the people take development in the priority, which is more important than to elaborate whether China follows a socialist or capitalist ideology.

Based on this value, the Chinese government and communist party began to pursue the market economy to develop China into a harmonious and wealthy country. This has replaced the traditional class-oriented ideology which was shown above to be disastrous in the history of Chinese society after 1949. Since 1978, Chinese people have been encouraged to open their minds, focus on economic construction and national modernization. Deng’s ideology is not like Mao’s, his doctrine should be defined as neutral, pragmatic aiming at developing Chinese economy rather than class struggle between capitalism and socialism. Deng Xiaoping favoured a harmonious environment rather than a society of antagonism. In order to sustain the increase of people’s living standard, he also regarded himself as a follower of Marxism but did not enjoy endless debate on whether the Chinese should take the route of capitalism or socialism.

Therefore, it is common to hear and read the phrase “the socialism with Chinese characteristics” from the Chinese official articles and documents of the Party, (e.g. in the Chinese Communist Party Regulations) meaning that constructing a market-oriented economy which contains socialist characteristics is the central task for China. This doctrine reflects that “The Chinese Communist Party upholds the general theory of Marxism and joins it with the Chinese specific practice for implementing its socialist revolution and construction” (Zhao 2012: 161).

Apart from the mainstream Chinese ideologies centered by Marxism and Socialism mentioned above, there are other kinds of basic ideologies as acclaimed by Zhu (2012: 86), such as “Work is glorious. Mutual wealth, social harmony, liberating and developing productivity, illuminating the social polarization, realizing social justice; building the wealthy, democratic, civilized and socialist modernized country.” These basic ideologies can be considered to be the common sense remaining in the Chinese people’s value system. They are also used by the producers and advertisers in the Chinese advertisements.

The achievements during the past 30 years have proved that the newly introduced ideology after the economic reform in China is practical and has been accepted by Chinese people. This offered the opportunity for a Chinese market economy and also led to the emergence and growth of Chinese advertising.

## **Ideologies Perpetuated in Chinese Advertising**

Advertising is ideological. Advertisements reflect and mould our life and thoughts, Judith Williamson maintains:

Obviously it (advertising) has a function, which is to sell things to us. But it has another function, when I believe in many ways replaces that traditionally fulfilled by art or religion. It creates structures of meaning. Here the “meaning” stands for “ideology”.

(2005: 11)

Besides the function of selling commodities, advertisements also transmit ideological meanings, either in an implicit or explicit manner. For example, a headline in an advertisement says, “Your choice for every occasion” (Williamson 2005). There is no doubt that this expression aims to promote the sale of the product, but the possessive pronoun “Your” (“Your” can be understood as a single pronoun or a plural pronoun. Being plural, “Your” stands for separate individuals) and “every” is used to create the concept of individualism. That is, no-one can make the choice for you except yourself and there is no obligation and limitation upon the choice you make. You (singular or plural), the consumer/s are free to do it at every occasion.

From this example given by Williamson, we see that advertisements have more functions than plainly just to sell material commodities; rather they also transform a sort of commodity into an ideologically acceptable concept which can be appreciated as such before it can be bought.



Wernick (1991) suggests that ideology embedded in advertisements shifts along with social developments. In the early 1900s when the assembly line was introduced, the advertising industry was thought by Ewen (1976 quoted by Wernick 1991: 24) to be relevant to this development and to the boom in the production of consumer durables. Advertising then had the function of encouraging people to become customers through maintaining an effective demand and managing their consciousness. This is considered as ideological hegemony.

The primary purpose of creating hegemony in advertising is to sell goods and make a profit through persuading undecided customers to demand their products and services. This is in contrast to the purpose of the institutions of religion, education and politics. In this sense, the ideology of advertising plays an instrumental function which “leads advertising to engage with the values, norms, goods and dreams of those to whom it is addressed” (Wernick 1991: 26).

Ideology perpetuated in advertisements aims to set up an interaction between producers and customers and to encourage the sale of goods: this is seen as the potential ideology of advertising in a general sense. But in the specific and concrete sense advertisements can be seen as ideological because they are vehicles transmitting message of commodity; linking consumers’ wants and desire to the product; influencing the audiences’ consciousness and world values as well as making commodities symbolize social and cultural significance.

## Comprehension of Ideology in Advertising

Although an explanation about ideology and its existence in advertisements has been provided, questions as to why and how advertisements are understood by readers who are unable to talk to advertisers face to face need to be asked.

Dyer (1993: 123) suggests that advertising, like language, is a system consisting of distinct signs by which the ideological meaning is understood. This kind of sign is called a symbol: e.g. a rose can be a symbol of love. The colour red symbolizes luck and happiness in Chinese culture. Forestry means nature, mountains mean longevity. Symbolization is another linking process between signifier and signified.

According to Vestergaard and Schröder (1985), denotation and connotation are two levels of analysis to be used for advertising analysis. The former refers to the literal meaning and the latter to meanings beyond the literal or ideological. For explanatory purposes they are likely to be separated, but in analysis connotation is

**Table 2.1** Frame of denotation and connotation

Property	Denotation	Connotation
Rose	Flower	Love
Forestry	Plantation	Nature
Mountain	Landscape	Longevity
Red	Color	Luck/happiness

conducted on the plane of denotation so they are not in isolation. If we take the properties of rose, forestry and mountain in the frame of denotation and connotation they mean (see Table 2.1):

Dyer maintains:

Ads as a means of representation and meaning construct ideology within themselves through the intervention of external codes which are located in society. The advertisements will use image, notions, concepts, myths, etc. already available in the culture. An advertisement does not simply reflect ideology: it reworks it, thus producing new meanings [...] its connotational process depends on our knowledge of the forms of ideology that advertisements employ.

(1993: 129)

For this, we can refer to Guy Cook's statement (2001: 178), "In fact, any text must make assumptions about the knowledge of its reader". That is, the advertisers formulate a number of things and views related to the commodity, known to the general public.

Participants in an advertising discourse (producers and readers) can understand each other by means of shared knowledge and information which "constitute the shared ideology of the participants" (Althusser 1971: 136 cited by Cook 2001: 179). Even if there is something omitted in the advertising discourse, people are still able to figure out its meaning. Therefore, the ideological meanings of advertisements are not always stated explicitly but readers and consumers are expected to expose and grasp such meanings. Generally speaking, the receivers of advertising should be able to use their cultural and social knowledge and coherent assumptions to spell out what is unspoken and omitted from advertisements.

It is evident that advertisements contain ideological values or elements at different layers, either in words or images, although they embedded and produced in them is not equally as serious as that of education, religion and political institutions.

## **Approaches to Ideology in Advertising**

This section is organized around the introduction and review of some approaches taken by the scholars to ideology in advertising. In the final part, I focus on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in the respect of his research principles and methodology. The primary aim of this section is to lay a ground for building a theoretical framework for my research into Chinese advertising. I propose to take advantage of the strengths of these different approaches in combination with the main methodological framework of CDA which will be discussed later in the chapter of research methodology.

## ***The Approach of Geoffrey Leech***

In the domain of advertising discourse analysis, the first approach to be mentioned is that of Geoffrey Leech and his work: *The English of Advertising* (1966), which is acclaimed by Cook (2008: 1), as “one of the most influential works on advertising language.” Leech offers basic knowledge about the traditional linguistic approach to advertising discourse upon which more recent approaches have been built.

Leech provides a detailed introduction to the commercial language used in advertising which covers various levels of linguistic features, from simple to complex, such as grammar, morphemes, lexis, phonology, groups of words, sentences, styles and contexts which show the relationship between language and the world at large. Significant is the fact that Leech focuses on linguistic features of advertising without limiting himself within the domain of pure linguistic description; rather his interest expands to accommodate a sociological viewpoint, showing the connection between language, its setting and its function.

Leech undertakes a thorough description of linguistic features in English advertising, constructing a framework for linguistic description called the advertising situation. This consists of four elements—participants, relevant object, medium, purpose—and he also makes available some findings yielded by this framework.

Unfortunately the research is limited by Leech’s focus on description which remains at the level of “What” and “How” about the language forms, but lacks “Why”; that is, the reasons for the use of the language in a particular form. According to critical linguistics: “Discourse is socially constructive, constituting social subjects, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief, and the study of discourse focuses upon its constructive ideological effects” (Fairclough 2006: 36). Leech’s work should have examined the relations between advertisers and consumers, and shown some ideological processes and functions of the language, and their affects on meaning. Therefore, his point of view on advertising language does not enable any insights into advertising at a deep level, for he has not touched the potential properties of advertising in his work.

## ***Judith Williamson’s Approach***

*Decoding Advertisements—Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (Williamson 1978, 2005) is “a widely read and generally appreciated analysis of meaning in advertisements” (Barr 1994: 4). As Cook (2001: 67) remarks, “The popular phrase *Decoding Advertisements* was first used by Judith Williamson as the title of a book published in 1978, and it has been echoed widely in courses and publications ever since.”

Williamson offers a detailed explanation of ideology in advertisements. While exposing negative parts of advertisements such as dishonesty and exploitation, she

aims to help the advertising audience in discerning that some deeper, social and political meanings exist in the commercial content. Williamson provides some fresh ideas as well as skills for improving our perception of advertisements. She argues (2005: 17): “We can only understand what advertisements mean by finding out how they mean, and analyzing the way in which they work.” Advertisements contain two functions: the overt economic function which makes us want to buy things; and the ideological function that makes us feel like “individuals in perpetuating the ideas which endorse the very economic basis of our society” (Williamson 2005). For instance, Williamson takes an advertisement of a car (2005: 53) to illustrate the concept of individuality and uniqueness. This ad tells a group of people that they will be unusual if they buy a Fiat car. The headline is: “There’s an awful lot of sheep on the roads these days.” Therefore, the purchase of a car can make you stand out as different from the multitude.

Williamson assumes that readers of advertisements fail to see the issue, so she enthusiastically encourages the audience’s reading skills for decoding ads through over 100 illustrations attached to detailed explanations:

The information that we are given is frequently untrue, and even when it is true we are often being persuaded to buy products which are unnecessary; [...] A criticism of advertising on these grounds is valid, and I would support it. However, such a criticism is in many ways the greatest obstacle of all to a true understanding of the role of advertisements in our society, because it is based on the assumption that ads are merely the invisible conveyors of certain undesirable messages, and only sees meaning in the overt “content” of the ad rather than its “form”—in other words, ignoring the “content” of the “form”.

(Williamson 2005: 17)

Williamson’s assertion aims to correct our stereotyped or sometimes false perceptions of advertisements. While recognizing the inherent backwards of advertisements (i.e. to create illusion), we must be aware that there is a gap between the meaning of an advertisement and the audience’s perception. People only decode advertisements from their surface form and content. They should learn to see advertisements differently.

One of her examples is the advertisement, (2005: 133) with cows and their dairy product, butter, together in a field, framed with plants. While Williamson (2005) says, “No attempt is made to be realistic, ‘natural’ in the actual representation”, she interprets this as displaying something deeper through “surrealistic pictures”. With this interpretation in the framework of surrealism (also called “a referent system”), such advertisements can be seen as emanating from the positive qualities of nature, science and culture, all of which are connected within a natural order.

Semiotics has been employed by academic writers on analytic approaches to advertisements, an approach which is also noticeable in Williamson’s work. Williamson essentially seeks to unveil through analysis what she calls the “real” meaning of the words and images of an ad (Cook 1996: 67). For this, she illustrates “A2 Color tells a story” (Williamson 2005: 21), another example of a semiotic interpretation of the visual image rather than words. Williamson’s visual-centered analysis is dominant and she has little interest in the whole system of advertising

which is emphasized by other advertising analysts, such as Guy Cook whose book titled *The Discourse of Advertising* (1996) is distinguished by its broad handling of advertisements.

But in some respects, because advertisements consist of images, words and structures, a linguistic analysis can back up the finding of semiotic analysis. Ideology not only exists in images and words, but also in structures. The “real” meaning of advertisements derives from all the components in their different layers. In an advertisement both words and images are major components reliant upon each other. One dominant method of semiotic analysis cannot fulfill the task.

However, as mentioned in the blurb of *Decoding Advertisements* (Williamson 2005), Williamson “provides not an ‘answer’, but a ‘set of tools’ which we can use to alter our own perceptions of one of society’s subtlest and most complex forms of propaganda.” There is no doubt that Judith Williamson provides a valuable starting point for analysis of advertisements concerning ideology. Therefore, her claims and methodology although often criticized, are nevertheless often quoted.

### ***Gillian Dyer’s Approach***

In 1980s another scholar, Gillian Dyer, in *Advertising as Communication* (1988), also provided some basic concepts, ideas and examples for research into advertising. However, all the work revolves around the core concept of communication, and advertising is taken to be a form of communication between participants like producers, advertisers, readers and consumers. For this, their communication is examined in a broader cultural and economic context. In addition to a chronological survey on advertising from history to modern society and some suggestions of basic solutions to interpreting advertisements, Dyer’s intention is virtually to provide “enough groundwork for readers to pursue some of the issues raised in more depth and decode one of the most ubiquitous and tenacious forms of communication and ideology in society” (Dyer 1993).

Therefore, while identifying ideology in advertisements and the way in which ideological meanings perpetuated by advertising are decoded, Dyer also provides a clear interpretation of the basic terms of advertising and their relations, such as signs and signifiers, langue and parole, denotation and connotation. By illustrating some samples of advertising, Dyer concludes (116) that texts result from the dynamic interplay of various internal semiotic, aesthetic, social and ideological processes which also operate externally in the culture. One of the crucial factors in exploring the meaning of advertisements is the quality of the receiver or reader, including his or her personal knowledge, social position and ideological perspective as well as the depth of involvement in reproduction of the meaning of advertisement.

It is obvious that decoding advertisements consists of a dynamic interplay of internal components (e.g. language, image, products, price, quality, discourse structure) and external communication between readers and advertisers (Dyer 1993). For decoding advertisements, Dyer also recommends various approaches,

one of which is called iconographic analysis. This notion comes from the art critic Panofsky (1970 cited by Dyer 1993) who studied the iconography of paintings and suggested three levels of meaning in an image. Dyer designed an approach according to this, “By unpeeling the first and second you can get at the third” (Dyer 1993: 93). In her view, level one is the denotative, level two the connotative and level three the ideological. Her approach might be of some help to our decoding of advertising in a critical way. What she offers can be taken as general principles, but what is really needed as well are more concrete procedures and mechanism to identify how these three levels interact with each other.

Dyer conducts a historical survey on the development of advertising from the 15th century to the late 20th century, offering a general view of the advertising industry of western culture. Dyer’s survey and discussion help us to see that the changes in advertising not only occurred in the surface style and content, but also in the deeper meaning and values.

### ***Torben Vestergaard and Kim Schröder’s Approach***

While analyzing advertising language from a sociolinguistic perspective, the focus of Vestergaard and Schröder is not limited to linguistic forms of print advertisements, but concerns the content of the discourse level, such as the structure of advertisements and the functions (e.g. the poetic function, the informational function, and directive function) which the organization of contents reflects. The most significant part of their work (*The Language of Advertising* 1985) is the elaboration of the ideological mechanisms which are exploited in advertisements. The following expressions demonstrate how the notion of “nature” is connected to the product in advertising:

- (I) Product ingredients are natural, (e.g. shampoo);
- (II) The product improves on nature;
- (III) The processes of nature can be reversed;
- (IV) There is a connection between the product and nature where none actually exists (e.g. automobiles).

(Vestergaard and Schröder 1985)

Their attention is directed to the social issues and popular beliefs. They claimed (Martin 2006: 29) that advertising does not try to tell us that we need products as such, but rather that the products can help us obtain something else which we do feel that we need.

They also maintain (Martin 2006) that an advertisement can gain credibility through the claim that its product is compatible with generally recognized goals. The need to save energy, to fight the switch from non-renewable to renewable resources are recent examples of such goals, and particularly in the US, these goals are now making their way into advertising.

Vestergaard and Schröder's work is criticized by Fan (1996: 14) who argues that the process of interpreting those messages is pragmatic, and it therefore needs a consideration of both individual situations in advertising and the social ideology. However, their interpretation also implies that they have not provided a systematic framework for the analysis of the social values concealed in advertising. Their method used for analyzing advertisements is basically a case study of selected examples without a highly-structured study and without a theoretical framework to which the advertising discourse analysis may refer.

### ***Robert Goldman's Approach***

Robert Goldman's *Reading Ads Socially* (2002), is in part an extension of Williamson's work, showing how analysis of advertisements can help us understand the commodity system. As evaluated by Myers (1994: 11): "The theory may be difficult, but the examples are clear and well presented." Goldman's textual analyses of advertisements intend to make people understand, "Advertising is a key social and economic institution in producing and reproducing the material and ideological supremacy of commodity relations" (1994: 2). From his point of view, a society is "fundamentally structured by commodity relations" and advertisements offer not only information of commodities but also reflect social relations and produce ideological values. To promote commodities, advertisers must join the two meaning components, one a named product and the other ideological concepts. Goldman (2002: 61) exemplifies the relation between commodity and ideology with the cigarette advertising "The Marlboro Man" which links "the meanings of commodity-object (cigarettes) to meaningfully arranged images symbolizing glamour, sophistication, popularity or rugged individuality." From this, we can be impressed by the quality of the commodity and the deep ideological structure in the "key social and economic institution" (Goldman 2002: 61). As for McDonald's story about family, Goldman claims that corporations also seek popular legitimacy by joining cherished values and social relations to their corporate images. (2002: 85) The advertisement is intended to offer the public a set of ideal social images. It imposes the value of family integrity and stability in its advertising via illustrations (photos) and captions (lyrics, singing voice).

In most parts of his book Goldman gives a detailed description and interpretation through his approach (e.g. contemplating frame, layout and mortise) to advertisements, revealing deep meanings and values in them such as freedom, democracy, feminism, power. But these analyses appear to be more relevant to traditional and normal types of advertisements. In his later discussion of advertisements produced during the late 1980s, Goldman's criticism provides little explanation about ideological working process, and little about the mechanism and social relations behind their production. He depicts more their superficial value and process of production. As claimed by Myers (1994) the main problem with his semiotic interpretation is that "he stresses the visual". This is not very different from Williamson who shows

less interest in other components of advertisements such as linguistic units and styles. However, compared with Williamson, Goldman's approach may be more sophisticated.

There is no doubt that Goldman's theories and approaches, as well as those of Williamson, have provided significant ground for understanding ideological and social issues in advertisements and their work contributes to the creative consideration of my research design. However, to overcome their limitations it is necessary to treat advertising as more than just a visual system. In fact, from Dyer's assertion in *Advertising As Communication* (1993) we can see that the visual sign is only one part of ads. In addition to the visual, advertisers also draw upon verbal signs, rhetorical figures, to create a public message.

### ***Keiko Tanaka's Approach***

Keiko Tanaka, a lecturer in Japanese linguistics published her book *Advertising Language*, in 1994; this has been highly praised for providing, for the first time, a linguistic analysis of advertising within the framework of Relevance Theory, a stimulating new approach in the domain of pragmatics (1994 the blurb). The idea that new or newly presented information is processed in a context of existing assumptions is central to Sperber and Wilson's definition of relevance. However, while analyzing samples of advertisements, Tanaka raises a challenge to Relevance Theory.

Tanaka conducts a detailed analysis of the written language of advertisements drawn from Britain and Japan, on the ground of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986 a). She focuses on certain key words and concepts about images of women in an attempt to see how their literal meanings are extended and shifted by advertisers in Japan and whether they are affected ideologically through advertising.

She (1994: 111) observes that the words "intelligence and intelligent" have different meanings when applied to women. They are defined as "appearance rather than mental capacity", and as synonyms of "elegance", "femininity" or "sophistication", but not synonyms of "brightness" and "cleverness". It is evident that the potential function of these advertisements is to assert that the desirable quality defining the stereotype of women in Japan is beauty rather than brightness. There is no radical change in the female stereotype. Women are still closely tied to the ideological image of beauty, and fashion.

With a close examination of frequently used words such as "intelligence" and "individualism" in women's magazines, Tanaka's analysis shows that the change of meaning is superficial, the stereotype of women still remains or is reinforced without dramatic change at ideological level.

However, there may be some exceptions. In identifying an apparent case of ideological phenomenon Tanaka claims (1994: 118) that there has long been a strong emphasis on the group over the individual in Japan, yet an increasing number of advertisements in young women's magazines emphasize individuality



(i.e. do one's own thing and behave uniquely, not as society and others usually want.) Tanaka's words suggest that there might be some potential challenge to the group ideology followed by the Japanese in the following examples:

1. Good Italian color and shape, Gussini.  
For women who enjoy their life in an individual life.
2. Let's design our own hair this summer.  
As American girls do.  
As European girls do.

(1994: 119–120)

It is clear that these advertisements which encourage “individualism” tend to emphasize the concept of elitism. In another word, one can be individual through buying western goods and doing what western girls do; Tanaka's analysis of these advertisements offers a stimulating approach to advertising and reveals the ideology relevant to Japanese society and women.

Unfortunately, the results of her analysis can be hardly taken as universally persuasive, most significantly because the size of her data collection is inadequate. There are only 14 advertising expressions concerning the concept of “intelligence”, “elegance” and “sophistication” and 13 advertising expressions for “individualism”.

It is true that her comprehensive study of advertising language covers not only the forms and functions of language but also other relevant features, but in contrast to Williamson Tanaka's analysis fails to draw attention to the illustrations, visual parts (photographs, pictures) of her advertising examples.

In effective advertising, it is not just words that need to communicate—it is the visuals, too. And they must work together to present the creative concept (Wells, Burnett Moriarty 2006: 422). At present, not only language but also images can gain ground where the meanings derived from their interaction. Cook (2001: 44) argues, “[...] pictures are part of the discourse of ads, and to ignore or downplay them is a serious distortion.” Tanaka could have made more satisfactory findings of the advertising language if she could have further explored the relationship between captions, illustrations and ideology rather than treating these features in isolation.

### ***Guy Cook's Approach***

Guy Cook has constructed a complex approach to advertising discourse. In *The Discourse of Advertising* (2001), Cook aims to give a precise definition of advertising discourse. From his point of view, advertising consists of two main parts: text and context. Text refers to “linguistic forms, temporarily and artificially separated from context for the purposes of analysis”. Context includes, “substance, music, pictures, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants function” (2001: 4). These elements are brought together meaningfully by the participants in

communication. Cook's study is based on the belief that language is always meaningful in context, and there are no acts of communication without the elements as mentioned above (2001: 5).

The analysis of advertising discourse is complex and tough, because all the elements have to be tackled. Cook has drawn up a diagram of his approach (see Fig. 1.1 Interaction of elements in ads; Cook 2001: 6) which seems comprehensive and includes all the features that can be counted. This offers analysts an insight into the structure and functions of ads and is helpful for other researchers.

Cook's focus on ideology in advertising discourse analysis can be seen in his assertion that music and pictures are two other modes of advertising and which he describes in broad terms as signifying or creating "cheerfulness" or "gloominess". The connotations of music can create or overshadow both pictures and words. As for pictures (2001: 54) they do far more than carry a story. Cook found that the advertisement of Wrigley's Spearmint Gum, to be a classic example (2001: 58).

The information that advertisements convey through music and pictures without any words and utterance is known as unspoken information, but as it is probably known to advertisers and consumers it becomes shared assumptions. Cook takes the unspoken information and shared assumptions as "an index of ideology", suggesting that the absence of reference to shared information has led to the observation that it is what is omitted in discourse, the gaps within it, which constitute the shared ideology of the participants (2001: 179). The receiver can understand what is unspoken by the producer because the music and pictures help to fill the gap and produce the shared knowledge and ideology in ads. These make the discourse coherent.

One thing I have to mention is that Cook's diagram illustrates only "a synchronic snapshot of a moment in time" (2001: 6) but I would really like Cook to offer us some ideas about the changes of advertising through the time. There might be some reasons for ignoring the diachronic aspect in his book, for "advertising in the era of colour magazines, television, and the Internet is a new phenomenon, both in nature, quantity and effect" (2001: 6). But in my study I still hope that while emphasizing "this interdependence of elements" (2001: 6) of the present advertising discourse I also need to think about the relationship between the advertising discourse and the context of history.

In order to promote research into advertising discourse, analysts should take all elements into consideration. But diachronic study is also needed. It can help us observe the changes of advertising in relation to changes in the economy and ideology because advertising is able to mirror social change to some extent. Research has been carried out in different countries, such as China, New Zealand (Fay 1999, 2003), although when based on one (text) or two dimensions (text and physical context) they are not enough to offer a deep and dynamic view of advertising.

It should be remarked that all these approaches have different strengths and limitations, I have decided in my research to draw from them according to their relevance to my project, but Fairclough offers the more systematic and well-grounded model for constructing an explanatory and analytical framework.

In the following section, some scholars' approaches to Chinese advertising are reviewed. They are approaches taken by Liu (2006), Zhao (2012), Lin (2012), Chen Baisu (2012), Pang (2011) and Li (2009).

### ***Liu Hong's Approach***

Liu (2006), a sociologist provided the concept of mutual interaction between advertising and society. Liu's study of advertising is based on sociology and focuses on the relationship between advertising and commodities, advertising and human beings, advertising and social life, advertising and public culture, advertising and social control and postmodernism.

Liu insisted on taking the sociological approach to advertising and explored these dimensions in depth. He claimed that the multiple dimensions of society and ideological values also construct the research objectives and basic trend of the interaction between society and advertising. He divided the language function in advertising into two levels. One plays the indexical function to name the product, the other one has the ideological function of adding new meaning to the product. With the example of Malboro, he explained that at the first level, the language of Malboro refers to the product, the cigarette. At the second level the language of Malboro expresses the value of bourgeois masculinity. Therefore, the language at the second level also plays the function of naturalization and adds value to the product. He also held that "consumers today pay a great attention to the value, concepts, ideas and connotations of products" (Liu 2006: 76–78).

From his analysis we can see that with the ideological function the interaction between advertising and consumers exceeds the convention of selling and buying products, but it promotes and consumes certain implicit meanings and values.

### ***Zhao Jinjing's Approach***

The researcher, Zhao Jinjing studied the consumerism embedded in Chinese advertising. For this, he constructed a comprehensive theoretical framework based on the theory of consuming society in the combination of the semiotics of structuralism, the culture of postmodernism, the diffusion of communication and consuming psychology. In his research some issues were tackled, such as the relationship between consumer culture and sustainable development in Chinese advertising, fair and objective evaluation of consumerism in Chinese advertising and so on.

His study presents the changes in the ideological value of consumerism in China in the various phases from 1953 to 2010. During the entire period the consuming ideological values underwent several changes from encouraging frugality and cautious consumption to curbing consumption, from encouraging consumption to

guiding and fully stimulating consumption (Zhao 2012: 39–44) through the Chinese social progress. Zhao analyzed advertising verbal expressions through which evidence for a set of values related to consumerism were found. The practical methods adopted by Zhao (2012) were content analysis, interviews, document study and case study.

Although his major interest is in the study of economic value of consumerism in the Chinese advertising rather than the language itself, his analytical methods, illustrations of ideological changes in consumption could offer some practical and valuable suggestions for my research.

### *Lin Shengliang's Approach*

The study of advertisements conducted by the scholar Lin Shengliang was concerned with specific cases at different periods of time. Lin argued that advertisements are the carrier of culture, and can mirror current life, ideas, create power to shape social life and ideas, and influence culture, but also exaggerate particular life styles. I read Lin's work during the final stage of my research (2013); however I found his study and methods to be consistent with my research in some ways, especially in exploring the features of ideological values of different phases.

But there is difference between his division into phases and mine. My division into phases was based on the economic and political development of society while Lin divided the phases according to the advertising operation view. My division resulted in three phases, while he divided the time periods into five, namely, power of product (1979–1973), power of culture (1984–1993), power of media (1994–1997), power of marketing (1998–2003), and power of brand (2004–2011). His aim was in “exploring the fluctuation of consumption view and operation view in every stage, and seeking out the root cause of the outlook of times, which correlates the operation view and consumption view” (Lin 2012: 3). Despite our differences in the division into phases, our purposes were similar; it was necessary that we both display changes of the potential values in advertising chronologically.

For his chronological study, Lin selected fifteen cases since the reform and explored them in depth through document analysis, and interviews; by these means a clear outline of the impact of advertising on Chinese ideological values was depicted. His study also proved that the opening up of the Chinese economy and the advance of production could also influence these values in a certain time period, in the domain of consumption.

But the study inevitably has its own limitations. As he said, although these fifteen cases were carried out by interviews and questionnaires it is still hard to deduce whether and how much they could objectively and truly reflect reality, because everyone's life experience, comprehension of the world and opinions differ. Due to the restrictions of historical time, the researcher can only refer to second-hand material for his analysis and this is not strong enough to confirm his viewpoints. From my point of view the benefit of his analysis is in his theoretical

discussion of the background information of the social and economic development that influenced Chinese advertising at different phases. Although he presented many linguistic features of popular advertising slogans used in the different phases, he did not analyse or interpret them in his discussion of views of the advertising operation.

### ***Chen Subai's Approach***

The study of mass media by Chen Subai (2011) is concerned with the advertising consciousness, which can be defined as consumer's attitudes, cognition and behavior (Chen 2011). Although in her study a clear borderline was drawn between advertising consciousness and ideology, she focused her attention mostly on the relationship between these two elements, on the issue of how Chinese advertising consciousness was influenced by the Chinese mainstream ideologies in the different time periods. She (2011) also maintains: "Consumer's advertising consciousness to a large extent mirrors the advertiser's guidance and even the trend of the national mainstream ideologies." This suggests that the advertising contents can reveal the colourful historical imagery and mainstream ideologies which in turn react to the human attitudes, cognition and behaviour of advertising.

Chen's study was conducted on a chronological basis from 1979 to the present mainly through analysis of the relevant documents. It depicted the development of the Chinese advertising industry over the last 30 years or more which was considered to be the era of Chinese political and economic change from a politically oriented society to an economically oriented one. In addition to the analysis of changes in advertising consciousness, Chen (2011: 120) presented the verbal advertising expressions and texts which she used as evidence of the relationship between consciousness and historical events.

Her research exposed features of advertising consciousness on the one hand, but also on the other hand confirmed (2011: 182) that advertisements function as a mirror reflecting the vivid deep marks of times. The study of advertising is not to summarize things but to discover values behind things.

These above-mentioned approaches of Chinese scholars at present demonstrate similar features to the study of advertisements in a chronological manner, employing verbal advertising discourse as supportive data for their arguments. Since they are not linguists it is hard for them to explore the advertising language further and find more information in it. However, their researches and findings have provided a great deal of knowledge of the Chinese advertising industry in relation to aspects of ideological changes and the relationship between historical events, mainstream ideological values and advertising discourses. All these will be beneficial for my research.

### ***Li Juyuan's Approach***

Of all the Chinese researchers, Li (2009) is the only one who has claimed to be the first linguist to be engaged in the critical analysis of advertising discourse following the theory and methods of Norman Fairclough. Just as I stated about my reasons for conducting the research into advertising discourse in China, Li was motivated by the current situation in the field of discourse analysis which he claimed was mainly concerned with vocabulary, sentence structure, rhetoric, culture, texts and functional grammar, but not with the ideological meaning of advertising discourse. He maintains:

In the perspective of critical analysis, language can be used to express information, reveal internal and external experiences and set up relations between addressors and addressees. Meanwhile it can also speak about ideological value, belief, attitude and control receiver's thoughts.

(2009: iv)

Li's research framework for analyzing advertising discourse was built on Fairclough's three dimensional model (2006) (i.e. text, discursive practice and social practice). The major linguistic elements analyzed in his research included modality, transitivity and intertextuality. His data for analysis was collected from the on-line English magazines, *Harvard Business Review*, *Woman's Day* and *The Chinese magazine, the 21st Century* (2006). The sample size was twenty-two advertisements. His major concern was with the analysis of the language items from the perspective of functional grammar and common advertising operation views, but not with the historical and political factors, and not with the time periods, he examined his advertisements only as separate cases. Although there were obvious features of ideological meanings in the illustrations which could have been explored fruitfully, he ignored them. However, I should admit that his analysis on the advertising language in the critical framework is a significant start in this domain of advertising discourse study.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the previous sections I have examined several approaches to the language of advertising and ideology both in China and abroad identifying their strengths and weaknesses. CDA, as a recent approach to discourse analysis, is more relevant to my aims in analyzing Chinese advertising than the traditional approaches, for it deals with the relationship between social relations, ideology and language use as its fundamental objective. It also provides a highly-structured and concrete framework.

My research aims to combine the study of advertising discourse with the social and ideological factors embedded in the discourse and language through the

three-dimensional framework of CDA. In introducing CDA in this section, I do not wish to suggest that CDA is a uniquely perfect approach to advertising, rather I intend to describe its methods, and discuss its basic principles and theoretical underpinning.

## *Notions of CL and CDA*

Traditional discourse analysis has been widely discussed by linguists and discourse analysts, with the aim of describing texts—pieces of discourse (e.g. linguistic items, forms and structures) and how they work (including contextual elements and meaning). Dissatisfied with pure description as the primary goal for discourse analysis and stimulated by the different views of and awareness about language and discourse analysis, researchers became more critical of research on language and discourse. Two groups emerged in the late 1970s, representing critical linguistics or CL (Fowler et al. 1979 *Language and Control*; Hodge and Kress 1993 *Language as Ideology*) and critical discourse analysis or CDA (Fairclough 1989, 1992 *Language and Power, Discourse and Social Change*; van Dijk 1985 *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*).

Fowler, an exponent of CL, is interested in the questions about the relationship between language functions and ideological meanings. Fowler applies the principles of Halliday's "Systemic and Functional Grammar" to language analysis, such as the aspect of "transitivity" relevant to ideational meaning for expressing reality and that of "modality" referring to interpersonal meaning which reflects social relations and social identities in clauses. However, CL cannot be considered to be a perfect system of language study. The limitations are argued by Fairclough:

... emphasis upon the text as product rather than upon the processes of producing and interpreting texts. 2. ... a one-sided emphasis upon the effects of discourse in the social reproduction existing social relations and structures. 3. the language–ideology interface is too narrowly conceived.

(2006: 28)

Recognizing these limitations, two other CL scholars, Hodge and Kress, in the second edition of *Language as Ideology* (1996) recognized as a fundamental work of CL, and a comprehensive account of the theory of language that underpinned CDA after its first publication in 1979, added a chapter "Reading Power" which explored the operation of ideology and power in discourse in order to remedy the weakness pointed out by Fairclough.

The two terms, CL and CDA are often used interchangeably. But CDA tends to be more concerned with the relation between language and power and extends beyond the written monologue. This new trend in discourse studies rather than a new school is a complex, more interdisciplinary approach to discourse and covers more aspects of discourse, so the term CDA is preferred by discourse analysts.

The publication of *Language and Power* by Fairclough (1989) is considered to be the CDA landmark. Fairclough offers an innovative framework for examining the interaction between language and social practice, not available in other approaches, such as linguistic, functional, pragmatic ones and conversation analysis. Other scholars engaged in the critical analysis of the advertising discourse, as examined in the previous sections, are not as highly systematic as Fairclough's framework despite their approaches in terms of grounded theory and methodology.

### *Theoretical Discussion of CDA*

CDA does not have a unitary theoretical framework itself. It is diverse in theories and methods. But with respect to its general aims, the common consensus is that CDA takes social theory as its starting-point. In addition to linguistic analysis CDA practitioners situate discourse in society. Thus, they show great interest in power, ideology, politics, race, discrimination, social structures. As for Fairclough, the theoretical bases of his CDA are mostly developed from Michel Foucault's (e.g. 1975, 1982) formulations of "orders of discourse" and "power/knowledge"; Gramsci's (1971) notion of "hegemony"; Althusser's (1971) concepts of "ideological state apparatuses" and "interpellation" (Blommaert 2005). All this has played a role in the formation of CDA.

One of Foucault's fundamental concerns is the relationship of discourse and power although later he shifted the emphasis to the relationship between knowledge and power. He holds, "in every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable, materiality" (1984: 109 cited by Fairclough 2006: 51). Influenced by the perspective of Foucault, Fairclough focuses his attention on the relationship between power and language, as well as ideology which is in service of power. He states, "the exercise of power, in modern society is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through ideological workings of language" (1989: 2).

However, besides the consensus about the perspectives on the discourse of Foucault and Fairclough, the critical approaches to discourse analysis differ. From the sociological point of view, Foucault's approach is more abstract in contrast with Fairclough's textual oriented discourse analysis (TODA) (2006: 37). As a philosopher and sociologist, Foucault's interest is in "revealing the rules of formation, the regularities, and modes of organization of thought which lay beneath particular formations of knowledge, rules which eluded the consciousness of the scientist and yet were fundamental to the constitution of 'scientific' knowledge and discourse" (Smart 2002: 37). Smart suggests that it is not easy for one to simply apply Foucault's perspective to linguistic discourse analysis. In order to overcome the weakness of Foucault's work, Fairclough built discursive and linguistic studies of real texts in addition to Foucault's social analysis of discourse.



In this, discourse analysis may have grown into a more critical phase, because TODA is likely to support social analysis with cultural and linguistic evidence and it also helps to explain linguistic features in social context and unfold the relation between language and power at an ideological level. The study of discourse is conducted by Fairclough in a three-dimensional model (textual analysis, discursive practice and social practice).

The third dimension of Fairclough's CDA regards discourse as social practice relevant to a view of power which derives from Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Gramsci 1971 cited by Fairclough 2006: 10). Fairclough applied the conception of hegemonic power to CDA, arguing that participants in discourse, "construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms" (2006: 29). It is obvious that hegemony can be understood as a sort of strategy for people to keep a harmonious state rather than "dominance" or "struggle" through which the potential values are transmitted and shared in a naturalized common sense. For this, orders of discourse have to be adjusted and intertextuality is adopted in the production of discourse which is centered upon in the second dimension (discursive practice) of Fairclough's CDA.

Althusser's perspectives of ideology are taken by Fairclough as the theoretical basis for his three important claims about ideology in CDA (Fairclough 2006): first, it opens up the way "to investigate discursive practices as material forms of ideology". Second, "one of the more significant ideological effects", which linguists ignore in discourse, is the constitution of subjects. Third, it points to "struggle in and over discourse as a focus for an ideologically-oriented discourse analysis."

However, Fairclough does not totally accept Althusser's view (1971) of "ideology in general" as a form of social cement which is inseparable from society itself. Ideologies are formulated on the basis of social relations of classes, groups of people. While they can affect people's world view, thinking and behavior, they can also be transcended by people. In this sense, ideologies are not always in a dominant position in a society, because power relies on human beings. Although each of these theories and perspectives have their own weakness and limitation they have nevertheless laid the theoretical foundation for CDA.

### ***Norman Fairclough's Approach***

In contrast to other scholars and philosophers of ideology, Norman Fairclough's contribution is to use ideological doctrines in analyzing everyday texts. Besides political articles, commercial texts are also material for his analysis because "It should not be too difficult to show that advertising is in broad terms more heavily invested (in the respect of ideology) than the physical sciences" (Fairclough 2006: 91).

Fairclough has examined advertisements within the framework of CDA. (see Fairclough 2006: 113, 210, 1989: 202; Jogensen and Phillips 2008).

In his analysis, Fairclough focuses on ideology as contributing to the meaning of advertising discourse. He also criticizes the Advertising Standards Authority which is in charge of the British Code of Advertising Practice for ignoring the “societally more important ideological work of advertising”, for it is believed that advertising constructs consumption of commodities “through ideology” or “implicit assumption”. Following this, Fairclough gave a detailed explanation of the mechanism of ideology in advertising with reference to a washing machine advertisement: building images, building relations, building the customers (Fairclough 1989: 203).

Building images is one part of ideological process in which the product image is constructed ideologically to be a frame of modern life style.

The frame packages together – everyone (Fairclough 1989: 206).

The most important characteristic of modern life should be of efficiency, elegance, economy and the best way of life.

The major and final ideological work of advertising is to construct the consumers of the commodity which is based on the other two parts of work (i.e. building images and relations). The object of building the customers is to make the reader of the advertisement into a customer of “commodity which is preoccupied with the easification of life at the least possible costs” (Fairclough 1989: 207). This naturalized common sense is generally accepted by consumers. The formation of ideological process of advertising is not merely to construct people into consumers whose relationship with producers are just sellers and passive buyers but to provide them with lifestyles which are more fantastic than they expect.

Advertising discourse is made up of properties perpetuated in the world: languages, images, sound and products. But these are not valuable without meanings, which are closely related to our views, ideas, beliefs of the world. It is even possible to make advertising analysis merely through linguistic approach (e.g. Leech 1966) which could offer us some insight into the superficial mechanism and denotative meaning (e.g. Dyer 1988) of the object but separate us from the world out there. Therefore, I intend not to take language description as the final goal in the analysis of advertisements. What the scholars, sociologists and linguists mentioned in this section recommend is to employ different skills and methods for discourse analysis (e.g. semiotic, pragmatic, communicative approaches and CDA) in order to decode advertisements (e.g. Williamson 2005) at the deep level. The ideological meaning that is the most significant part of the work which requires elaboration of the ideological working process in advertisements (e.g. Vestergaard and Schrøder 1985), because this is not usually as transparent as other elements (e.g. Goldman 2002). We should not reject any approach, out of hand, even the linguistic approach, but learn to consider the contextual and social factors in pragmatic way for examining ideological meanings (e.g. Tanaka 1994).

However, a complex approach, such as, Cook’s (2001) can be a good choice for understanding advertising discourse, because ideology is not only hidden in language but also comes out of images, music, color and sound. The description of certain values embedded in advertising discourse is not the destination of this

research but I agree with Fairclough that exploring the mechanisms and processes of ideological production is of considerable benefit (e.g. Fairclough 2006).

It is evident that applying the theoretical and analytical frameworks of CDA is increasingly becoming an important trend for advertising discourse study. Talking about perspectives of ideology initiated by contemporary influential sociologists, linguists, politicians, and historians is to see how people's beliefs, ideas, world values and common sense are organized. By considering the way how they are created and contained in advertising discourse, we can also discover that true meaning of advertising exists both within and outside the discourse. These are the reasons for my intention to examine Chinese advertising discourse through CDA, to which the next section is dedicated.

## *Methods of CDA*

In *Discourse and Social Change*, Fairclough (2006) lays down the theoretical foundation of CDA program, and he also provides a methodological blueprint for CDA called a three-dimensional framework: (see Fig. 3.1 in 2006: 73 for Fairclough's Three-dimensional conception of discourse)

1. Discourse-as-text,
2. Discourse-as-discursive-practice,
3. Discourse-as-social-practice.

The first dimension is concerned with choices of vocabulary, grammar cohesion and text organization; the second dimension with speech acts, coherence, and intertextuality which are connected to the social context; the third with the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate. This third dimension obviously represents Fairclough's theoretical claim about CDA.

In addition to the three dimensions, Fairclough constructs three phases in research procedure:

1. Description,
2. Interpretation,
3. Explanation

In the descriptive phase, CDA focuses on the textual dimension (e.g. the mode of linguistic features). CDA at the discursive practice level involves interpretation of the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption (e.g. from casual talks to formal official reports which are produced in different social contexts and through different routines, reaching different participants and treated differently by them.) (Xin 2005; Blommaert 2005; Wodak 2001; Fairclough 2006).

As for discourse analysis in its third dimension—social practice—the researcher draws on social theory to spell out the connection of ideology and power to

discourse. The purpose of this dimension is to provide a rich framework for investigating discourse.

In summary, Fairclough's three-dimensional model with its three phases of research procedure aims at exploring the links between language use and social practice. According to Jørgensen and Philips:

The model is based on, and promotes, the principle that texts can never be understood in or analyzed in isolation – they can only be understood in relation to webs of other texts and in relation to the social context.

(2008: 70)

In addition, it illustrates the relationship between text and social context in a dialectical way. This is one reason why I have chosen this model as an appropriate analytic tool for my analysis of advertising discourse.

### ***Critical Discussion of Fairclough's CDA***

To my understanding the significant contribution of CDA to discourse analysis is that it integrates critical studies with discourse analysis rather than purely describes discourse in terms of linguistic form and its function.

CDA expands from the communicative context to social context based on political and ideological notions, such as power, hegemony and inequality. It is believed that there are no approaches to discourse analysis which are absolute. It is the same to CDA which also receives criticisms from other researchers. First of all, in the articles of Widdowson (1998) he criticizes that CDA does not analyze how a text can be read in many ways, or under what social circumstances it is produced and consumed. Similar criticism is made by Jørgensen and Phillips (2008) that Fairclough does not sociologically examine the ways in which texts are produced or decoded.

I quite agree with their argument. For the most part of his discourse analysis, Fairclough focuses on textual analyses but has not analyzed the process and ways how the texts are produced and decoded though in his assertion that discursive practice involves processes of text production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough 2006: 78). This criticism reminds us of attitudes, and common sense of participants which shall be considered in research on the advertising discourse. Furthermore, some single cases of CDA have been conducted in turn but the number of texts is small. Therefore, the universal representativeness of his findings is still open to doubt, because limited amount of data cannot be sufficient enough to reveal a system of views which are the premise for ideology. One way to solve this methodological problem is to expand the size of data. This will be contemplated in the following chapter of methodology. However, Widdowson also accuses:

analysts in practice simply define their own conditions of significance as the spirit, or political commitment, takes them and identify ideological positions in reference to their

own. [...] if you know the provenance of a particular text you will obviously, as a matter of rudimentary pragmatic fact, position yourself accordingly and be primed to find confirmation of your own prejudice.

(1998: 148)

In addition, Schegloff (1999) assumes that analysts project their own political biases and prejudices onto their data and analyze them accordingly (cited from Blommaert 2005).

In their sense, CDA analysts do not have their own theoretical framework and their analysis is based on “ideological commitment, their own spirit” and “biases and prejudice”. So their interpretation is prejudiced and the data which are selected and examined ought to support their preferred interpretation. There might be some cases of CDA in which analysts yield their biased interpretation, but there is no fixed cause and effect link between prejudice and CDA, because prejudice and biased interpretation can be created in other approaches and it is undeniable that there may be cases of fair and reasonable interpretation made by CDA analysts. The formulation of prejudice is complicated. Besides what approaches to be used, it also depends on how the approaches are to be used. For the most time, personal experience, academic background and social context can effect one’s interpretation of discourse. The purpose of CDA is already explicitly stated to be socially and politically oriented, offering corresponding analytical framework for analysts. Therefore, criticism of prejudice of CDA analysts is oversimplified.

To some extent, the above mentioned criticisms could reflect the weakness of CDA. As an analytical system for discourse, the criteria (e.g. explicitness, objectivity, reliability, and testability) should be fundamental. It is hoped that CDA could provide a standard mode of analytical system, in particular, for social practical dimension. To overcome prejudice and present more objective views, especially on the advertisements that were issued a few decades ago, it is necessary for us to refer to the authoritative documents and officially published literature.

One question to deserve discussion is the linguistic origin of CDA. In a number of articles written by Fairclough in particular, the claim of linguistic use is repeatedly made for Halliday’s systemic-functional linguistics. But Blommaert (2005: 34) takes it as one of the problems in CDA, criticizing, “The first one (problem) is the linguistic bias in CDA. It has been noted several times above: CDA puts a very high price on linguistic-textual analysis, more specifically on systemic-functional linguistics.” It is not acceptable to consider the reliance on Hallidayan linguistics in CDA as a problem.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough state that CDA’s unique critical capacity is connected to Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics (SFL):

It is no accident that critical linguistics and social semiotics arose out of SFL [systemic-functional linguistics] or that other work in CDA has drawn upon it – SFL theories language in a way which harmonies far more with the perspective of critical social science than other theories of language.

(1999: 139)

It is not surprising that CDA adopts only one theory of language, other discourse researchers, if critical, have the same choice in taking SFL as their linguistic origin, because both SFL and CDA have similar objective to uncover linguistic structures of social relations and ideological functions in discourse. SFL offers a critical framework for linguistic study. However, in contrast with Hallidayan linguistics, the other two mainstream linguistic theories: the Chomskian paradigm and sociolinguistics cannot treat language in a critical way. In this, other linguistic theories are overlooked and do not qualify for CDA. I quite agree with the statement made by Tischer, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter:

CDA must be intelligible in its interpretations and explanations. The way in which investigators have arrived at their results must be recognizable. In addition, the validity of CDA results is not absolute and immutable but always open to new contexts and information which might cause the results to change.

(2007: 164)

As a quite newly established approach CDA transcends the conventional notions and methods of discourse analysts. It is concerned more with the social problems and ideology which are usually hidden between the lines of language. That is the reason why besides “description” and “interpretation”, “explanation” is added to discourse analysis. The question now is not only whether there are influences of social and ideological factors in discourse, but also it is how such factors can exert an influence on human utterances and what kind of relationship between society and language there is; this can be hardly seen in other approaches.

### ***Taking CDA Approach for My Research***

As for applying CDA to the present research, there are reasons as follows:

- (1) The traditional approaches to discourse, which concentrate on description of linguistic and functional features of discourse cannot offer us a complete view and adequate meaning of discourse. If we want to go deeper for the meaning which may be hidden behind the language we should take a more critical and social insight into its ideological properties and hegemonic functions which are emphasized by CDA. Compared with other approaches to critical discourse analysis, “Fairclough, in our view, constructed the most sophisticated framework for analysis of the relationship between language use and societal practices in general” (Jørgensen and Philips 2008: 89). Therefore, Fairclough’s CDA will be taken as the core approach to advertising discourse in my research.
- (2) CDA attempts to “shed light on the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomenon and processes of change in late modernity” (Jørgensen and Philips 2008: 61). It covers discursive practices in political, social and commercial areas at present. China has witnessed a historical change

from a state-planned economy to market-oriented economy in its reform of 30 years. There must be some changes in people's lives, beliefs, world values and relationships. As the language used in discourse should reflect these changes, it is necessary to adopt the mode of CDA to make a chronological and dynamic study of Chinese discourse in commerce and the mass media.

- (3) CDA accepts that "texts may be heterogeneous and ambiguous and configurations of different discourse types" during their production and consumption (Fairclough 2006: 35). These different types of discourse will be treated socially and ideologically rather than merely textually in isolation. That is through interpretation of intertextuality CDA intends to reveal the implicit assumptions and ground rules existing behind discursive practice but impact the style and structure of the discourse.

It is impossible to list all the reasons exhaustively at once, but the crucial point that the dialectically critical perspective emphasized by CDA is valuable to the exploration of my research questions and aims.

## Summary

In this chapter I have introduced and reviewed the notions of CDA, ideology and approaches to advertising suggested by the Chinese and other international leading scholars which are concerned with language use and ideology, attempting to formulate a rich and applicable resource of theoretical perspectives and methods for studying the Chinese advertising. I hope that the review of literature can provide some knowledge of the issues in some respects. However, there is always a gap between one's expectation and reality. It is difficult to make a perfect and satisfactory review of the theories and methods suggested by others unless one applies them in one's own practice. Thus, I believe that literature review must be continued throughout the whole process of research and that my personal views and criticisms will be validated by the research findings. The next chapter of the thesis will be dedicated to the methodology and research design of the analysis concerning the Chinese household appliance advertisements.

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from 1981 to 1996

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