From National Policy to Individual Practice: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Three Levels

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Abstract. Enlightened by critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective and intertextuality analysis, this article puts forward Institutional logic-Cognition-Discourse-Practice Approach as a framework for the study of connection and transformation process involved in multi-level-subjects’ policy discourse, and explains how national policy is implemented across multiple levels. To do this, a case analysis of the agricultural entrepreneurship in Guangdong Province was conducted. Policy discourse from three levels were collected as analysis data. By probing the traces of previous text in subsequent text, this article explains how intertextuality is formed across three levels of subjects.

1. Introduction

During the process of policy making and implementation, subjects from different organizations make their interpretation according to their own identity and cognition. It remains a question how subjects represent their interest through linguistic strategies. The agricultural entrepreneurship policy and practice in China provides a suitable background for the research on this discursive practice. Enlightened by CDA perspective and intertextuality analysis, this article aims to discover the connections and transformations among three subjects from different organizations, including the nation level, the local government, and the entrepreneur on individual. More specifically, the research question is:

How does national policy become individual practice. Specifically, in policy discourse, what are the transformations and connections among three subjects: the central government, the local government and the entrepreneur?

As a widely used perspective in sociology, literature and other fields, CDA perspective can reveal the relationship between discourse and power. This study believes that participants at all levels take specific cognition on agricultural entrepreneurship based on their identities, and produce new discourse based on the initial text, so CDA provides a fundamental framework for analyzing discourse, cognition and social structure.

To answer the research question, this research takes a case study on agricultural entrepreneurship in Guangdong Province. The research data include government documents, interviews and official reports. After theme analysis and intertextuality analysis, this study suggests that in policy implementation progress, subjects make different interpretation of agricultural entrepreneurship and produce corresponding discourse and behavior based on their institutional logic and cognition.
2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Policy Analysis and Political Discourse Analysis

Making policies that match organization is the source of competition, but the implementation of policies is equally important for organization development, which requires all participants’ involvement. However, studies on public policy focus on what kind of policy to maintain the development of organization, emphasizing on policy-making and policy-makers’ cognition\(^1\), ignoring the response of the local government and individuals. Based on former study, Weatherley and Lipsky\(^2\) began to study the local government’s implementation and grassroots’ behavior. The further studies gradually formed interactive perspective and regarded policy implementation as a negotiation process between policy-makers and local governments\(^3\).

As a typical genre in public, policy text plays a guiding role in understanding the cognition and power of organizations from different levels. Through discourse analysis of policy texts, we can reveal characteristics in language usage as well as its social practice. However, current studies on policy discourse analysis focus on diachronic change as well as constitutive characteristics, ignoring implementation. So policy implementation involves participation of multi-subjects, who hold different cognition on policy and linguistic representation.

2.2. Institution Logic, Cognition and Language

Institutional logic refers to a series of basic assumptions that provide "organizational principles" for social systems in a certain field\(^4\), described as "socially constructed models of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules"\(^5\), so that institutional logic provide meanings of daily activity for organizations and individuals, that is, individuals under certain institutional logic make decision and make sense according to their implicit concepts. Thornton et al.\(^6\) proposed a series of institutional orders to define institutional areas with unique logic, including family, community, religion, market, profession, and enterprise. Each institution has a central logic, but there are often multiple logics in organizations\(^7\), leading to multiple logical behaviors in the government and enterprise.

Apart from beliefs and rules, each institutional logic covers a set of symbols and meanings, providing actors with words to understand the world\(^4\). In this way, institutional logic owns a language system to state their ideas and actions. As the subject in strategy sense-making, the government and the enterprise’s cognition to entrepreneurship are affected by the multiple institutional logic they follow, and ultimately reflect as linguistic representation.

2.3. CDA Perspective and Intertextuality Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was first formally used by Fairclough\(^8\). Subsequently, CDA perspective was widely used in sociology, literature and other fields. As CDA perspective can reveal the relationship between discourse and power, it provides us with framework for analyzing discourse, cognition and social structure\(^9\) (as shown in figure 1). Fairclough\(^10\) regards language as a way of social practice, that is, language is not only restricted by social practice, but also construct practice. This study believes that participants take specific cognition on agricultural entrepreneurship based on their identity, and product new discourse. Therefore, intertextuality analysis provides a way to test the connection and transformation across texts.
The concept of "intertextuality" was first proposed by Kristeva[11], who believes that text is pieced together by citations. The concept of intertextuality points to text production, that is, a new text is transformed and reconstructed from the prior text. This process is restricted by the social structure and power relations of the individual[10]. Intertextuality analysis can help us clarify the interrelationships between different texts, so as to comprehend convergence and divergence of producers’ cognition. Bakhtin[12] and Kristeva[11] distinguish horizontal and vertical dimensions of intertextuality. Horizontal dimension refers to dialogical sort between a text; the vertical dimension refers to intertextuality between the historical texts. Also, Fairclough[10] distinguishes manifest and constitutive intertextuality. Manifest intertextuality is the case where specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text, by strategies like direct or indirect quotation, metaphor, reference, allusion or allusion; constitutive intertextuality refers to the combination of different genres.

3. Research Method

3.1. Case Background and Text Collection

China government attaches great importance to issues relating to agriculture, rural areas and farmers and publishes No. 1 Central Document for many years to guide agricultural development and urge local governments to pay attention to relevant issues. The local governments, however, refines nation’s overall policy for its own purposes and directly affects entrepreneurs’ behavior. The entrepreneur in this case study returned to his hometown to establish a cooperative on fruit production and received government funding. Driven by the cooperative, most of the villagers got rid of poverty, and in 2020, the entrepreneur was appointed as village branch secretary.

As shown in table 1, three types of data were collected, including government documents, interviews and official reports. Firstly, on the central government level, this study chooses No. 1 Central Document as it is acknowledged as the authoritative document in the agricultural sector. Secondly, the author took an interview with the county official, at the same time, official reports on the entrepreneur were collected as analysis data on the local government level. Thirdly, the author took an interview with the entrepreneur, the text being our analysis data on the individual level.
Table 1. Text source in this study.

| Text | Subject        | Content                                                                 | Source          | Date  |
|------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| G1   | Central government | Central government’s plan and cognition on agriculture, rural areas and farmers | No. 1 Central Document | 2020.1 |
| L1   | Local government  | Local government’s report on entrepreneur in this case                   | Official website | 2020.7 |
| L2   | Local government  | Local government’s understanding on agriculture                          | Interview       | 2020.9 |
| E1   | Entrepreneur     | Entrepreneur’s experience                                                | Interview       | 2020.9 |

3.2. Discourse Analysis Procedure

This study obtains CDA perspective in data analysis procedure. Theme analysis was first applied to code the text[13], resulting in three categories: the farmer, the rural areas, and the agriculture. Secondly, cognition and institutional logic are attached to these code categories. Thirdly, mark the traces of previous text in subsequent text, and confirm the cognition and logic in the texts.

4. Findings

4.1. Central Government

Through the critical analysis of No. 1 Central Document, the study finds that the text focuses on the following four aspects: farmers, rural areas, agriculture and technology, as well as local government. In stating the above issues, the central government adopts vertical intertextuality to connect agricultural entrepreneurship and rural issues with war, in order to emphasize its aim to solve poverty problem and fundamental tenet of serving the people through agricultural entrepreneurship, thereby extending significance and value of agricultural entrepreneurship as well as arousing emotional connection among readers. At the same time, the central government also emphasizes leading role of the local government in poverty alleviation, and it actually assigns assessment task to the local government.

4.1.1. The Farmers

No. 1 Central Document concentrates on rural issues, but poverty alleviation is the first proposed issue, suggesting that farmers are the main objects in poverty alleviation. Furthermore, as shown in example 1 and 2, war metaphor is employed to attach victory or defeat result and cruelty to poverty alleviation task, emphasizing central government’s determination to overcome poverty.

(1) 绝大多数贫困人口已经脱贫，现在到了攻城拔寨、全面收官的阶段。

Most poverty population has got rid of poverty, it is time to make further ground and face the ending war. (G1)

(2) 扶贫工作方式由集中作战调整为常态推进。

Adjust poverty alleviation work model from the masses of the whole army to normal progress.(G1)

4.1.2. The Rural Areas

As shown in example 3, war metaphor is employed in public service statement, suggesting central government’s determination to serve the people.
(3) 推进农村厕所革命。

Promote revolution in rural restroom. (G1)

4.1.3. The Agriculture and Technology

In agriculture and technology, as shown in example 4 and 5, war metaphor is employed to attach planning and layout characteristics to agriculture development, emphasizing that agriculture and technology are highly valued in central government, and the agricultural technology is elevated as strategic planning.

(4) 加强农产品冷链物流统筹规划、分级布局。

Make overall planning and hierarchical layout of agriculture cold chain logistics. (G1)

(5) 加强农业关键核心技术攻关，部署一批重大科技项目，抢占科技制高点。

Step up breakthroughs in key agricultural core technologies, deploy a series of scientific and technological projects, and seizing the commanding point of science. (G1)

4.1.4. The Local Government

As shown in example 6 and 7, the central government emphasizes leading role of the local government in rural issues, and by doing this, it actually assigns assessment task to the local government.

(6) 农村基层党组织是党在农村全部工作和战斗力的基础。

The primary Party organizations in rural areas is the basis for the battle effectiveness in rural work. (G1)

(7) 县级是“一线指挥部”……

Local government is the front line command. (G1)

4.2. Local Government

Through the critical analysis of local government’s discourse, the study finds that local officials quote national policy frequently to express their cognition to rural issues, but adjusted some of the texts. On the one hand, the central government emphasizes better service for people by supporting agriculture; Local government further emphasizes improving industry to ensure achievement of rural revitalization. On the other hand, the central government emphasizes the decisive period of 2020, but it turns into performance assessment pressure in local officials’ discourse.

As shown in example 8, the local government adjust central government’s policy on public service: from the national perspective, public service and agricultural entrepreneurship have the same status, and provide guarantees for rural revitalization. However, from the local perspective, improving public service cannot attract talents. Only by encouraging agricultural entrepreneurship can talents be attracted. It can be concluded that the local government also follows service logic, however, it focuses on implementation behaviors, which differs from the central government.

(8) 习总书记提出来要搞乡村振兴，公共服务要上来，要把人能够吸引回去。小孩要上学，病了要有医疗，这是基本的。要用什么吸引回去？产业，要回来搞产业……所以就是，你要回来搞产业，政府要扶持，人オ才能回来。
General Secretary Xi puts forward rural revitalization, which means public services must be promoted to attract qualified person back. Their children’s education, medical treatment is the fundamental service. But the question is how to attract them back? We should put forward industries…..To set up industries need local government’s support and assist, so that the qualified person come back. (L2)

On the other hand, as shown in example 9, the local officials cite rural revitalization and poverty alleviation policy, but they are not to state their policy implementation behavior, but to turn to government performance evaluation. It suggests that the local government not only complies with service logic of the central government, but also bear performance pressure and comply with performance logic.

(9) 乡村振兴这块，几个政策, 这个直接考核书记的。一考核就考核你县委书记……

Rural revitalization becomes assessment criteria for us government secretary. Directly…..(L2)

4.3. Entrepreneur

Through the critical analysis of entrepreneur’s discourse, the study finds that the entrepreneur quotes and transforms national and local government’s texts according to his cognition. On the one hand, the entrepreneur adapts government’s rural revitalization strategy, however, he regards it as access to resources rather than way to serve for the people. On the other hand, he transforms government’s discourse so as to attach profound meaning and legitimacy to profit-driven behaviors.

Firstly, as shown in example 11 and 12, the entrepreneur transforms the policies of the central government and local government into opportunities to start business. Specifically, the entrepreneur uses rural revitalization strategy and local government’s project to show that they can obtain information and financial support. The market logic this entrepreneur follows promotes him to interpret government policy as a resource acquisition, which leads to entrepreneurship behavior. In addition, the entrepreneur emphasizes his family’s planting history, implying his love for agriculture, reflecting life meaning logic.

(10) 就是看这个大势, “振兴乡村”战略, 政府肯定支持。现在回来, 城镇还有农业局的全部都是很认真的把我们集合起来。

Based on this trend, rural revitalization strategy, the government will definitely support us. When I came hometown, the towns and agricultural bureaus earnestly summoned us together. (E1)

(11) 我们发挥这个‘一村一品’的优势……我父亲深山种 20 多年, 已经种了 2500 多亩了, 不断扩张种植的面积。

We took advantage of local government’s support policy……My father had planted this fruit in mountains for 20 years, covering 2500 acres, and we continue to expand the planting area. (E1)

Secondly, as shown in example 13 and 14, entrepreneur transforms national environment protection and agriculture policy discourse, attaching higher value to his business behavior. Specifically, the entrepreneur introduces environment protection policy into fruit tree planting, emphasizing that their profit-making behavior can prevent soil erosion.

(12) 它有一个果树的效益, “又有青山绿水，能够真正变成金山银山”。

It provides earning and benefit of fruit tree, so that we not only possess lucid waters and lush mountains, but also can transform it into invaluable assets. (quote General Secretary Xi’s saying: Lucid waters and
lush mountains are invaluable assets) . (E1)

(13) 现在我们要做的就是如何 “联农带农”，一、二、三产业的融合。第一产业我已经全部解决了，现在是第二产业。

We should consider how to “help farmers out of poverty through cooperatives”. The government encourage us to integrate the primary, secondary and tertiary industries. We are doing well in planting, so, it’s time to consider the secondary industry.

Table 2. Institutional logic-Cognition-Discourse-Practice analysis on three levels

| Subject | Institutional logic | cognition | Linguistic representation | Policy practice |
|---------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Agriculture, rural area, farmer | Service logic | Tenet connection | As a way to alleviate poverty | Extension | Make policy + settle direction + assign mission |
| Agricultural entrepreneurship | Service + performance logic | Task connection | As a way to fulfill task | Adjustment | Refine policy + be assessed + provide support |
| Local government | Service + performance logic | Task connection | As a way to fulfill task | Adjustment | Refine policy + be assessed + provide support |
| Entrepreneur individual | Market + life meaning logic | Profit + Emotion connection | As a way to make profit | Transformation | Help to implementation + gain resource |

5. Conclusion

This case study is an exploration of connection and transformation process involved in agricultural entrepreneurship policy implementation. Through detailed analysis on multi-level-subjects’ policy discourse, this study explains how intertextuality is formed across three levels of subjects as well as their linguistic representation and subjects make different interpretation of agricultural entrepreneurship and produce corresponding discourse and behavior based on their institutional logic and cognition.

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