

A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of the Differences between China Daily and the New York Times on COVID-19

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Abstract:

A self-built tiny corpus is used to undertake a comparative analysis of the chosen reports on COVID-19 in the China Daily and New York Times using the method of combining corpus and critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's three-dimensional model as analysis theory and the lexicon and consistency feature of the corpus software Antconc were used as analysis tools. This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of the corpus in terms of three dimensions: text, interaction analysis, and contextual analysis which examines the word preferences of Chinese and American mainstream media, reveals the political ideologies of the two most influential newspapers, and then examines whether discourse analysis of reports will alter between 2020 and 2023. The study found that China Daily tended to use words with positive or neutral meanings to report on the epidemic, while the New York Times tended to use neutral or negative words to highlight the epidemic issue, indicating an ideological difference between seemingly neutral and objective media reports.

Keywords: COVID-19; Critical discourse analysis; Corpus;

1. Introduction

The new crown pneumonia outbreak started towards the end of 2019. A novel Coronavirus known as “SARS-CoV-2” is the cause of the condition known as Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The media is primarily to blame for the widespread anxiety over the Covid-19 epidemic, a public health disaster that has gripped the entire world. Because Media is a powerful avenue for the dissemination of wellness education (Thomas et al., 2018). It serves as a conduit for information between authorities, health organizations, and citizens and is crucial to the public's response to the pandemic. As a result, we should pay attention to and conduct a study on news reports on COVID-19. However, the media coverage of COVID-19 varies among nations due to many reasons like political stance and philosophy. As a result, this article chooses the mainstream media publications China Daily and The New York Times to represent China and the United States, and it carefully gathers pertinent reports on the recent outbreak of new crown pneumonia. First, I will review and summarize the previous and recent corpus-based critical discourse analysis of the news media and sort out and interpret domestic and foreign news reports on COVID-19. Next, I shall go into detail about the research approach and data collection procedure. Finally, I will discuss data.

2. Literature Review

This section will provide an overview of previous corpus-based critical discourse analyses of news media reports on COVID-19 news coverage.

2.1 Previous Studies of Corpus-based CDA of News Reporting

Since the covid-19 epidemic, there have been an increasing number of news stories on it, and numerous academics have gathered and examined these news stories. Additionally, a growing number of academics are using corpus technology for critical discourse analysis.

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For instance, Yu et al. (2021) used corpus-based critical discourse to examine covid-19 in Chinese and English media sources, choosing China Daily and The Guardian. The British media's description of covid-19 is more neutral and objective than before, according to a comparison of the discourse before and after the blockade. The words employed by the Chinese media in the face of the epidemic include a strong fighting spirit, but the British media are more pessimistic, according to the analysis of keywords, synonyms, collocations, etc. Furthermore, Wang (2021) adopted Fairclough's three-dimensional framework and Halliday's systemic functional grammar as the theoretical basis to study the critical discourse analysis of the People's Daily and New York Times on the Covid-19 outbreak. The study discovered that both Chinese and American media outlets frequently utilized disparaging terminology to describe COVID-19 in other countries during the description stage. People's Daily is more likely to discuss the spread of the pandemic and the inefficiency of US anti-epidemic policy during the interpretation stage. The New York Times will counter China's spread of misleading information by citing a huge number of specific sources, including the statements of others.

Moreover, Zhang et al. (2021) used Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and Wang Zhenhua's Appraisal Theory as analysis tools, Wang discusses news articles from China Daily and Times Weekly from December 2019 to January 2021. The study argued that China and the United States operate quite differently on the world stage as well as having significant disparities in how effectively they combat the disease domestically. China helps several countries fight epidemics, whilst the United States refuses to work with superpowers.

In addition, Kheovichai (2022) gathers the discourse construction of the WHO on covid-19, creates and analyzes its collocations in accordance with the semantic categories and representations of covid-19 and self-built corpus, and the results reveal that covid-19 is frequently defined as a world faces major diverse risks. Additionally, WHO has taken action to address covid-19. As can be observed from several collocated linguistic elements, discourse is strategically used to characterize covid-19 and enhance WHO's reputation.

Obviously, there is still scientific significance even though the outbreak is essentially over today. This study compares the data from China Daily and The New York Times using a self-built corpus and Fairclough's three-dimensional framework in order to explore the following issues:

- (1). What is the difference between lexical selection made when China Daily and The New York Times published COVID-19?
- (2). What ideologies are concealed beneath these languages, and what opinions and beliefs do they represent?
- (3). From these selected texts spanning 2020 to 2023, has the discourse of the New York Times and China Daily in reporting on the epidemic changed?

3. Methodology

The New York Times and China Daily were chosen for this study's coverage of the new coronavirus outbreak, which spanned the months of January 2020 and March 2023. The author created two little corpus . Using "COVID-19," "Virus," and "Chinese COVID-19" as search criteria, this study chooses 25 items from China Daily and 12 articles from the New York Times. The New York Times offers fewer conversation options than China Daily due to its shorter length. The corpus of the New York Times has 15609 characters, whereas the corpus of the China Daily has 15677 characters. Then, news stories in the two main newspapers were analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model as analysis theory and the word list and concordance features of the corpus software Antconcas analysis tools.

4. Results and Discussion

The study findings and comments will be the main topics of this chapter. The author does a contrastive analysis of the two corpora using Fairclough's three-dimensional model. This chapter is primarily broken down into three sections: text analysis, which includes lexical classification and high-frequency content words; interaction analysis, which is primarily illustrated by the source of the news; and social practice analysis, which is explained by institutional and social-cultural contexts.

4.1 Text Analysis

In the text analysis stage, it is divided into lexical selection and high-frequency Content Words. Lexical selection mainly focuses on adjectives, verbs.

4.1.1 Lexical Classification

According to Fairclough (2001), a text creator can represent his or her conception of the social world, his or her social connections, and his or her assessment of reality through lexical classification. Lexical classification is used in news discourse analysis to examine the viewpoints that language makers aim to convey. Because they don't just pick words at random, authors' and journalists' choices will be in line with their ideologies. As shown in the picture below, this research analyzes chosen texts from the New York Times and China Daily from the standpoint of critical discourse analysis. The author will analyze from the perspective of adjectives and verbs.

4.1.1.1 Adjectives in China Daily and The New York Times

The following table is a list of two adjectives used in newspaper reports.

Table 1

China Daily	The New York Times
Common, positive, major, further, stable, transparent, fully, follow-up, better, Leading, active, responding, strenuous, thematic,	Ill, isolated, stringent, precise, lurid, strangled, hardscrabble, imperative, high-risk, fateful underlying, vulnerable, ruling fast-spreading, misleading

From Table 1, it can be clearly seen that the two media use different adjectives in news reports, including positive, neutral, and derogatory. Journalists in news reports express the same event in different ways. Therefore, the media can reflect different social relations and convey their positions and opinions. Here are some specific examples:

China Daily

(i) China will take **further** steps to control the new coronavirus-related pneumonia, and the disease will be put under management as an infectious disease in accordance with law, as was decided at the State Council's executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Jan 20.

(ii)

The adjective "further" means "to a greater degree or extent", which is a positive word. After giving a speech, the leader moved forward with his plans. China has historically implemented anti-epidemic efforts, and only future progress is apparent. Additionally, it is clear that the Chinese government is proactive and values stopping this virus to ensure the public's health and safety.

The New York Times

(iii) Many in China are terrified of any infection because the country's vast propaganda apparatus has spent the entire pandemic instilling terror of the virus with **lurid** reports of mass death and numerous "long Covid" cases in other countries.

The adjective "**lurid**" in the text means "shocking, deliberate", which is a negative word. The US media's emphasis on the news of massive deaths and long-term infection cases made Chinese people fear that the infection was attributed to China's propaganda agencies, but the US media misinterpreted the Chinese propaganda agencies, and the US media used this negative term "**lurid**" to cause people's dissatisfaction with the Chinese propaganda agencies to mislead readers.

4.1.1.2 Verbs in China Daily and The New York Times

Table 2

China Daily	The New York Times
Increase, prevent, contact, cooperate, provide, receive, set, build up, shape, boost, win, control, safeguard, hope, adopt, curb, improve, promote, treat, deploy, ensure	Drag, disrupt, spread, cause, disclose, isolate, distort, question, line up, flock to , expose, dismiss, overwhelm, terrify, worry, warn, provoke, corrupt, declare, concern

Here are some specific examples:

China Daily

(i) Despite flaws that are noted and will **shape** future actions, the general mobilization of the Chinese government has been impressive and is internationally acknowledged.

The verb “shape” means “ to develop”. In this sentence, This sentence serves as an objective report. Even though the Chinese government has various shortcomings, the rapid implementation of policies and the construction of shelter hospitals in response to the epidemic can be seen in the specifics of its timely and proactive actions. The perspective on the epidemic has gained international recognition.

(ii) China is working hard to battle poverty despite COVID-19 and to **ensure** that its poverty eradication targets will be met as scheduled.

The verb “ensure” means “to make sure”. Here, in the face of the new crown plague, the Chinese government has labored arduously to eradicate poverty and has succeeded in speaking with actions to provide the people with a secure life.

The New York Times

(i) Beijing’s leaders were looking for ways to adjust the stringent measures that have isolated the country from much of the world, **dragged** its economy down and **disrupted** the lives of millions of citizens.

The verb “**dragged**” means “to move something” . “**disrupted**” means “prevent” . This sentence makes the reader aware of the Chinese government's poor management by emphasizing the seriousness of the situation, highlighting the issues brought on by the epidemic there, and highlighting how the isolation measures have damaged people's lives.

The data analysis of tables 1 and 2 shows that there are differences between the use of adjectives and verbs in China Daily and New York Times. China Daily basically reports the outbreak using some upbeat and impartial language. The New York Times emphasizes the negative aspects of the outbreak by using more neutral and negative language. Of course there must be "bias" in news coverage. This article is classified lexically, and various viewpoints and ideologies will use reports to infer its implicit meaning.

4.1.2 High-frequency Content Words

According to Bartsch&Evert (2014), the discourse attitude, ideas, and ideology of the speaker are revealed by a comparative examination of the collocation of similar high frequency words. The top 15 high-frequency content terms are then kept after some non-functional function words are screened out using the Antconc tool, leaving content words. Antconc's Concordance feature compares the discrepancies between the two media stories and the opinions contained in them using the same content words.

Figure 1 High-frequency Content Words of China Daily (Corpus A)

Rank	Freq	Word
1	214	china
2	111	covid
3	101	people
4	92	country
5	89	health
6	74	medical
7	71	control
8	67	chinese
9	64	epidemic
10	59	measure
11	56	outbreak
12	56	virus
13	55	disease
14	50	prevention
15	48	pandemic

Figure 2 High-frequency Content Words of The New York Times (Corpus B)

Rank	Freq	Word
1	167	china
2	96	chinese
3	91	virus
4	83	official
5	82	covid
6	81	people
7	60	case
8	57	pandemic
9	51	government
10	49	health
11	47	wuhan
12	46	year
13	45	country
14	42	expert
15	42	party

From data 1 and 2 above, we can see that "China" ranks first in both Chinese and American newspapers, but "government" and "Wuhan" are also in the list of high-frequency words in The New York Times, but not in China Daily. You can see the difference in the focus of their reporting. With Antconc's Concordance, we chose "China" to compare the reports of the two major newspapers.

Figure 3 Concordance of “China” in China Daily

recently returned from	China had transmitted the coronavirus to her husband	CD 2020.04.18.txt
containment measures, but	China has a different epidemic containment mentality	CD 2023.03.10.txt
against COVID-19. It said	China has accomplished a remarkable feat in the fight	CD 2023.01.04.txt
against a rare phenomenon,	China has already achieved a lot. Public health officials	CD 2023.03.10.txt
origin tracing, he said.	China has also held more than 300 epidemic containment	CD 2023.01.04.txt
break of the epidemic,	China has been actively participating in international	CD 2020.02.txt
mission. Liang said that	China has been closely monitoring the changes in the	CD 2023.03.23.txt
continuously evolving situation,	China has been dynamically optimizing its control measures	CD 2023.03.06.txt
that since the outbreak,	China has been in close communication and cooperation	CD 2023.03.23.txt
in the short term," he said.	China has been providing updates about the disease	CD 2023.03.06.txt
line, which proves that	China has been timely releasing information on COVID-19	CD 2023.02.24.txt
the city of Guangzhou, said	China has coordinated medical resources to increase	CD 2023.02.24.txt
efforts. Since the outbreak,	China has firmly supported the United Nations plan	CD 2023.03.24.txt
of the Chinese people.	China has left no stone unturned in minimizing the	CD 2023.03.24.txt
cooperation maintained	China has maintained pragmatic cooperation and	CD 2020.04.18.txt
has taken decisive action.	China has mobilized resources for prevention and	CD 2020.04.18.txt
local administration, said	China has revised guidelines on COVID-19 nucleic acid	CD 2023.03.06.txt
cases generally diminished,	China has seen consolidated momentum for economic	CD 2023.03.06.txt
national health emergency,	China has set an example of a highly efficient	CD 2023.03.06.txt
such economic vitality,	China has set an impressive gross domestic product	CD 2023.03.24.txt
countries fight COVID-19.	China has shown support to more than 130 countries	CD 2023.03.24.txt
Confusion haunts the world,	China has stimulated more hopes for a broader	CD 2023.03.10.txt
outbreaks has passed.	China has stood the test of the pandemic,"	CD 2023.03.10.txt
"What policy a failure? No!	China has succeeded, more than any other countries	CD 2020.02.txt
element, "The measures	China has taken are good not only for	CD 2020.02.txt

Figure 4 Concordance of “China” in The New York Times

check, American officials have blamed	China for mishandling the coronavirus	NYT 2020.03.18.txt
Twitter that "I don't understand why	China gets upset because we refer to the	NYT 2020.03.18.txt
confusion, said in May 2020, according to	China Global Television Network. "But	NYT 2021.11.18.txt
the understanding of what he told them. As	China grapples with a mysterious coronavirus	NYT 2020.02.14.txt
the World Deserves Answers From	China hampering the work of the World	NYT 2021.06.txt
Health, that the pending visit showed that	China "has always been dedicated to	NYT 2021.03.29.txt
the widespread expressions of dissent."	China has long used censorship and	NYT 2023.02.28.txt
there's also a question of resources.	China has not clearly detailed who	NYT 2023.11.22.txt
two shots and a booster last year,	China has not yet moved on to admir	NYT 2022.12.09.txt
and poor data collection. Officially,	China has reported nearly 79,000 cases	NYT 2023.01.31.txt
awards and promotion purely on merit.	China has sold this system as its own	NYT 2020.02.14.txt
endangering all humanity. Just getting into	China has taken the W.H.O.'s	NYT 2021.06.txt
what has less than 1 percent of people in	China have had Covid through Novem	NYT 2022.12.09.txt
the country." Government officials in	China have publicly cast doubt on wh	NYT 2020.03.18.txt
administration, some officials who are	China hawks have privately discusse	NYT 2020.03.18.txt
is expected to promptly rejoin. It is	China, however, that bears the prima	NYT 2021.06.txt
Wednesday that President Xi Jinping of	China in early January repeatedly ref	NYT 2020.03.18.txt
questioned of not being sufficiently critical of	China. In fact, the W.H.O. is	NYT 2021.06.txt
the virus most likely emerged in	China in November or December, an	NYT 2020.03.18.txt
the Chinese side of the W.H.O.-	China investigation who led the inter	NYT 2021.11.18.txt
hundreds of angry tourists at an airport.	China is facing its largest flare-up of	NYT 2022.11.07.txt
China as a mature superpower. "The	China is open, frank and sincere," Xi	NYT 2021.03.29.txt
source of the erroneous perception that	China is the cause of the virus. "The	NYT 2020.03.18.txt

According to the above figures, the verbs in China Daily that begin with “China”—such as "transmit," "achieve," "provide," and "support," among others—all denote actions that have already been completed. The Chinese government has taken a variety of steps to address the challenges caused by the pandemic, which is generally a good thing. Additionally, positive news stories are frequently featured in Chinese media, which encourages people to work together to combat the disease.

The New York Times, on the other hand, describes "China" negatively, using phrases like " mishandling," "get upset," "hamper," "has not clearly," etc. The epidemic scenario is covered in American media in a bad way that amplifies the Chinese government's measures. There are few reports that the Chinese government has actively assisted the rest of the globe in fighting the disease and preventing it from spreading.

4.2 Interaction analysis

According to Hodges (2015), in the interpretation of news reports, intertextuality is a crucial component. It is also the stage of interaction in Fairclough's three-dimensional model (Fairclough, 1992). Specific sources, semi-specific sources, and unspecified sources can all be considered news sources. Because they speak with authority, specific sources are very trustworthy. Typically, references to specific sources are made to a nation's leaders, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. The speaker's use of ambiguous language to describe reports could be the cause of ambiguity. Unknown sources are the least credible because the speaker cannot cite any supporting data for them and can only suggest their legitimacy.

4.2.1 Sources of Attribution

Table 3 Proportions of Different Specific Source in China Daily

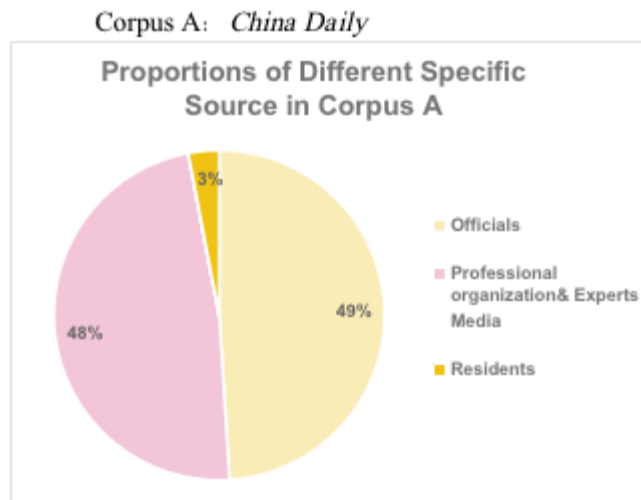
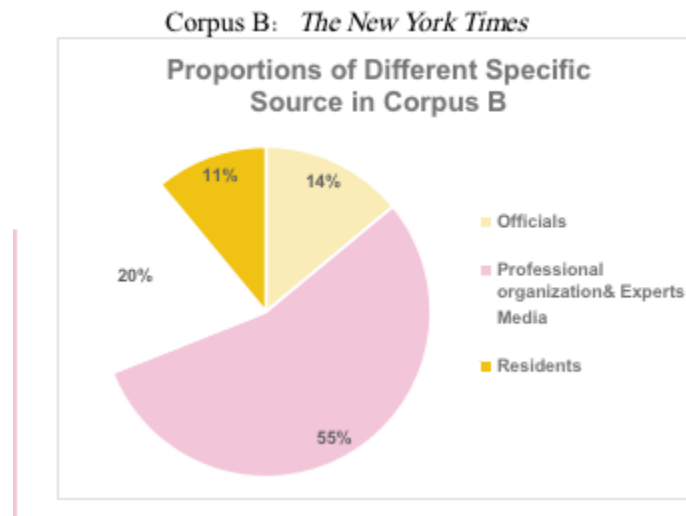


Table 4 Proportions of Different Specific Source in The New York Times



The above is a pie chart of media information sources of the two sides. China Daily's specific sources and semi-specific sources occupy the majority, while the New York Times's semi-specific sources occupy the majority.

4.2.1.1 Specific Source

Specific sources can be classified as government officials including leaders representing the national image, foreign ministry spokesmen, secretaries, and state governors. In addition, proper nouns refer to state authority, such as Beijing, the Chinese government, the Communist Party of China, Xi, President Trump, the United States, etc. Specific sources are very reliable and persuasive. The specific sources of China Daily account for half, while the specific sources of the New York Times account for 14%, which greatly reduces the persuasive power of news in it. Let's examine some specific instances.

China Daily

(i) President Xi emphasized that the world is a community with a shared future. In fighting a disease that threatens the people of all countries, solidarity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon.

(ii) "Some people in the US must have a clear understanding that their enemy is the virus not China," Geng said at a daily news briefing, urging such people to respect the facts, science and the international consensus.

These two phrases are taken from the Foreign Ministry and speeches by top Chinese officials. In response to the epidemic that threatens humanity, China freely shares its knowledge of how to combat it with the rest of the world and firmly refutes any criticism leveled at it by the United States in the interest of respecting the truth. From the side, it is clear that the Chinese government has created a favorable and positive impression.

The New York Times

(i) Donald Trump contributed to the politicization of the pandemic by regularly referring to the coronavirus as the "Chinese virus" and suggesting that it might have escaped from a Chinese laboratory.

(ii) Mr. Pompeo six times referred to the coronavirus as the "Wuhan virus".

The two examples above are from American leaders. The virus was referred to as "Chinese" and Secretary of State Pompeo as the "Wuhan virus" by US President Donald Trump. As a prominent public figure, news outlets choose to report because of their aggressive propaganda, leading the American public to believe that China is the virus's source when this is untrue. They refer to the virus as the "Wuhan virus" without conducting a thorough investigation, which indicates that they want to deceive readers and shift the blame to China.

4.2.1.2 Semi-specific Sources

China Daily

(i) Liang Wannian, head of the National Health Commission's expert panel on COVID-19 control, said the "decisive victory" in COVID-19 epidemic control means that the country has withstood the impact and test of the recent outbreak, with its people achieving herd immunity.

use expert-sourced examples to illustrate how the outbreak was progressing at the time, stabilize the situation, instill confidence in readers, and demonstrate that COVID-19 can be controlled.

The New York Times

(i) "The most important issue this outbreak exposed is the local government's lack of action and fear of action," said Xu Kaizhen, a best-selling author who is famous for his novels that explore the intricate workings of China's bureaucratic politics.

The above example shows that when American media report the epidemic in China, they will focus on the negative side. For example, they say that the local government of China lacks action, but in fact, they do not report the series of actions and successes of the local government. Instead, they chose to cover the epidemic from a negative perspective and confuse readers.

The role of Semi-specific Sources is that journalists can use their views to express their positions and ideologies. Through these resources, the Chinese government maintains upbeat and constructive attitudes and actions that help to calm people's fears and terror, and create social order. On the other hand, Western media have emphasized the consequences and impact of the epidemic in China, hyped up such negative reports, and downplayed the role of the Chinese government and people in fighting the epidemic.

4.2.1.3 Unspecified Sources

China Daily

- (i) My husband and I have trouble using smartphones to purchase food online. The committee helps us order food and donates daily necessities to us. We're grateful, & quot; said a resident surnamed Gu.
- (ii) Each of the 27 workers in the team climbed at least 80 floors each day of the testing in these neighborhoods without lifts to help the groups in need," said LyuYubo, a doctor from the hospital's imaging department.

These two examples, quoting residents and doctors, well show the picture of volunteers and medical workers working together to fight the epidemic during the epidemic, giving the Chinese people confidence.

The New York Times

- (i) They will definitely lock down hard again if cases get out of control," he said, adding, "It's really hard to see how they get out of it."
- (ii) I know before long this country will go back to being a peaceful, prosperous society. We will hear many people screaming how proud they are of its prosperity and power," a Wuhan resident wrote on the social media site Weibo. "But after what I have witnessed, I refuse to watch the applause and commendation."

These two examples are to complain about the epidemic and the lock down brought by the epidemic, but they fail to see the good results. China's large population base, lack of strict control and strong mobility will lead to more infections and deaths. Quoting these intentional or unintentional remarks has become a contribution to disparaging the Chinese government.

4.2 Context Analysis

Context Analysis is the final stage of the "three-dimensional model", through which different descriptions and viewpoints in Chinese and American news discourse can be explained. The news coverage of the same event, COVID-19, by The China Daily and The New York Times is highly dissimilar in many areas, however it appears that both media outlets are justified. Because newspapers in many nations represent those voices, the government has an influence over them all, and various groups support various political agendas. Since the two publications are from two distinct nations, their news reporting reflects the ideologies of each respective government. China Daily speaks for China and protects the Party's and the nation's interests. So when reporting an epidemic, they tend to be proactive. The New York Times represents the position of the United States government, and when reporting on controversial topics or outbreaks in other countries, it preferentially takes the side of the authorities.

5. Conclusion

This thesis adopts the three-dimensional model as the theoretical basis and uses Antconc as the analysis tool to solve the two research questions: (1). What is the difference between lexical selection made when China Daily and The New York Times published COVID-19? (2). What ideologies are concealed beneath these languages, and what opinions and beliefs do they represent? (3) From these selected texts spanning 2020 to 2023, has the discourse of the New York Times and China Daily in reporting on the epidemic changed?

First, in terms of vocabulary, we carefully examined the classification of adjectives, verbs, and high-frequency content words in news reports in the chosen texts and concluded that China Daily tends to use words with positive or neutral meanings to report on the epidemic, whereas the New York Times uses neutral or negative words to emphasize the epidemic's problems.

Second, the political stances of China and the United States are reflected in Chinese and American newspapers, respectively. In order to communicate the responsible attitude of the Chinese government directly, China Daily rarely chooses undefined sources but instead selects a sizable number of specific and semi-specific sources. The New York Times, on the other hand, opted for a sizable number of vague sources to alert readers to the serious issues and harm brought on by the epidemic, encourage them to contact reporters with inquiries and highlight the Chinese government's obligations that cannot be disregarded.

Third, according to the function of concordance in Antconc, we can see from the selected texts in this paper that China Daily is from 2020 to 2023, from the beginning of planning the anti-epidemic plan to analyzing experience and

cooperating with the world. The course of the outbreak and the optimistic approach to collaborating to battle the disease are the main topics of news stories. And from 2020 to 2023, The New York Times attributed the illness's negative effects to a Chinese virus. The epidemic will be in check and medical resources will have significantly improved by 2023. The New York Times, however, will downplay these benefits and continue to highlight the problems with the Chinese government.

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