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A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports on Covid-19 from *The New York Times* and *China Daily*

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Abstract

A multimodal critical discourse analysis of *The New York Times* and *China Daily*'s news reports of Covid-19 was conducted to identify the ideologies in Covid-19 news reports. The Covid-19 pandemic was divided into three phases: China's anti-pandemic phase, first global outbreak, and second global outbreak. The NYT and CD's Covid-19 news reports not only conveyed facts but also served different ideologies which shifted over each phase. Both the NYT and CD news media employed lexical devices, images, and metaphors to convey different ideologies, shaping people's perceptions of the pandemic and government measures to control it. The NYT's Covid-19 reporting implied that China's pandemic measures were irrational and extreme, and that the Trump administration's policies during the outbreak were ineffective, while feminism and racism also appeared. CD's news reports of the pandemic portrayed efficiency by the Chinese government's in controlling Covid-19 and a positive attitude toward government officials.

Keywords

multimodal critical discourse analysis – semiotic resources – ideology – Covid-19 – *The New York Times* – *China Daily*

1 Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has completed its second year, and in its short time there has been substantial research, from both the linguistics and discourse analytic communities, that has contributed to a wider comprehension of the pandemic (e.g., Jones 2021). To add to this body of work, the present study offers a multimodal critical discourse analysis that compares Covid-19 news articles in the *New York Times* (NYT) and the *China Daily* (CD). News articles are an important channel in giving people a better understanding of the world and the environment they live in (Richardson 2007). This study is not only focused on how news agencies report things differently but on how they handle “science” or “facts”.

The study adopted multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin and Mayr 2012), in order to illustrate the differences in how news agencies articulate facts through manipulation of both text and images (Kress 2000). As Kalantzis and Cope (2020) note the study of meaning should draw attention to how all meaning is multimodal. To reveal the ideology of news reporting on Covid-19 from NYT and CD, the study examines what different semiotic choices news reports on Covid-19 from *The New York Times* and *China Daily* used to develop ideology, and what changed over time.

2 Literature Review

To develop a critical approach to news discourse, the study adopted a framework rooted in critical approaches to discourse analysis that privilege multimodality. To that end we examine multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) of news discourse and discourse on Covid-19.

2.1 MCDA of News Discourse

News discourse is constructed by headlines, introduction, and body, forming an inverted pyramid that is displayed in terms of importance from top to bottom (Teo 2000). News discourse is an important channel to give people a better understanding of facts in the world, and the environment they live in

(Richardson 2007). Richardson (2007) points out that if the news provides more information than people need, and serves the interests of powerful elites, then the news ceases to be news, but a tool for the powerful to convey their ideologies for their own purposes. Fowler (1991, 2, 10–12) believes that there is no neutral news discourse: All news is selected from a particular perspective, thus unconsciously conveying and guiding “ideas” and “beliefs”.

Ideology is formed from a belief system and the values of a group of people which are shared, spread, and influences their social practices (van Dijk 1997). A group who shares the same ideologies have similar standards to evaluate what is good or bad, true or false, and permitted or forbidden (van Dijk 1997). Titscher et al. (2000, 151) point out that power and ideology influence every contextual level in discourse; therefore, power is a main focus of CDA. Machin and Mayr (2012) explain that power is identified as receiving privileged access to education, wealth, and knowledge to receive high social status and have the right to control and dominate subordinate groups. Power plays an important role in controlling and dominating the subordinate group, persuading them to accept unequal or illegal rule and guidance (Machin and Mayr 2012, 21). In other words, power can unconsciously control the thoughts and ideologies of others through “persuasive discourse or by other means”. These means also lead to the limitation and control of people’s perception of information or events (van Dijk 1993). The power which is used to convey ideologies and control people and their social practices is also called hegemony. Williams (1973, 8) identifies hegemony as an ideology that is deeply engrained in people’s minds. Blommaert (2005) states that hegemony is the main point of the analysis of ideology.

CDA is problem-oriented and not limited to a fixed theory or research method (Fairclough, Mulderring and Wodak 2011). Fairclough (2001, 5) argues that critical language studies are focused on revealing and proving covert “connections between language, ideology, and power”, and explaining how authorities use language strategies to convey the ideologies in discourses. Many critical linguistic studies focus on how power relations invisibly convey ideology and achieves persuasiveness in discourse (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 272). Within the last twenty years the multimodal turn has influenced nearly every tradition of social science research, including critical discourse analysis.

Humans communicate and convey information not only through words, but also through different semiotic resources, for example words and images (Machin and Mayr 2012). Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) has its roots in CDA. It focuses on revealing the ideologies hidden in semiotic resources and how these make holistic meaning and further ideologies (Machin and Mayr 2012). Machin (2013) has developed a critical approach to discourse that

incorporates multimodality. It is influenced by a number of different traditions of discourse analysis, most notably systemic functional linguistics and, more specifically, social semiotics.

By focusing upon how texts are materialized semiotic resources derived from the integration of multiple semiotic modes, we can identify how the authors of such texts develop covert ideological meanings (Ledin and Machin 2018; 2020). Machin and Mayr's (2012) approach to CDA combines textual approaches with analysis of images into a holistic multimodal framework. This framework includes such textual analytical concepts as overlexicalization, personalization, metaphor, quantification, and quotatives. Firstly, when a concept or idea is expressed in different words or similar words, the meaning expressed goes beyond the concept itself and is called "overlexicalization". Teo (2000, 20) points out that when overlexicalization appears in news discourse it can "give a sense of over-completeness".

Second, "personalization" refers to how authors address various assumed audiences in a specific way that can improve the audience's sense of identity, empathy, and consensus on the matter (Fowler 1991, 15). According to Bednarek and Caple (2012), personalization can be construed through emotional words, quotes from ordinary people, and references to individuals.

Third, metaphor is prevalent within news discourse (Richardson 2007; Bednarek and Caple 2012). The present study for example, examines the emergence of the war metaphors in news discourse on Covid-19. The war metaphor is used in this situation to build the perception of the virus as an invading enemy, with the purpose of rallying people to fight against it (Sontag 2001, 76). The war metaphor not only points out that these problems are extremely harmful to human beings and society but also implies that solving this problem is difficult and therefore requires people to pay a great price (Jia 2015).

Fourth, Scollon et al. (2012) argue that quantification is a part of "the Utilitarian discourse system" and affords a kind of authority which they suggest is "epistemological authority", because it is believed that numbers appear neutral and without discrimination (Jones 2013). Jones (2013), on the other hand, argues that quantification is not neutral. As it attempts to reflect reality, quantification is a rhetorical device to make representations of the world seem standardized while concealing other aspects. It also alludes to what is worth counting.

Finally, Machin and Mayr (2012) point out that the choice of quotations reflects speakers' or writers' own purposes and how they shape a concept of an event. That is verbs show speakers' emotions (Caldas Coulthard 1994; Fairclough 1995). Caldas Coulthard (1994) classified five kinds of quoting verbs: neutral structuring verbs, meta prepositional verbs, metalinguistic verbs, descriptive verbs, and transcript verbs.

In sum, the devices lexical analysis, personalization, war metaphors, quantification, and quotatives are employed in this study to analyze the textual aspects of the news reports. Another analytical means employed in this MCDA is image analysis, which enables us to develop text/image relations.

An integral part of MCDA has been the integration of the analysis of image and text relations. The approach developed by Machin and Mayr is influenced by the work of both Barthes and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) in this area. Barthes (1977) emphasized that press photographs are used as a separate piece of messaging, but such photographs are also linked to news articles to produce a complete message. The content presented by the photograph is associated by the recipient with the traditional symbols they know, at the same time, the photograph has been processed or composed by professionals and as such contains certain ideologies (Barthes 1977).

Examination of the composition of an image focuses on how the image is organized to represent meaning, including: information value, salience, and framing (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). The work of Kress and van Leeuwen was groundbreaking in that it offers us a set of concepts to apply to visual information that is related to grammar and discourse. For example, information value regards how the position of an element in an image represents different meanings according to the relationship between left and right, top and bottom, and center and margin. Salience regards the most important element in an image. The framing of an element is strong when it can represent a given piece of information as distinct from other elements in an image. Conversely, the elements that are consecutive or connected in an image indicate that they are together and, as such, expressing the same information (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).

2.2 *Discourse on Covid-19*

Despite Covid-19 emerging only in 2019, there has been a deluge of sociolinguistic research covering it, for example the move from in person to on-line classes during lockdowns (Jocuns et al. 2020) as well as the of linguistic methods in education to research Covid-19 (Hua Tan et al. 2020; Rampton 2020). One theme from this body of work involves the discourse multimodal representations of wearing masks (Dynel 2020; Wang, Feng, and Ho 2021) which also features prominently in news discourse about Covid-19. Two blogs which emerged early on during the pandemic focusing on discourse topics regarding Covid-19, PanMeMic (Adami et al. 2020) and Viral Discourse (Viral Discourse 2020; Jones 2021). Several linguistics journals have devoted special issues to Covid-19 research. For example Multilingua drew attention to the challenges and disruptions related to language during the pandemic (Piller, Zhang, and Li

2020). One of the contributions made by sociolinguists during the pandemic involved the use of audio and video diaries to capture narratives of personal experience (Hall-Lew et al. 2022; Sneller, Wagner, and Ye 2022). There is also a forthcoming edited volume on crisis discourse during pandemic containing an entire section related to the war metaphor and Covid-19 discourse (Musolff et al. 2022), a discourse theme which emerged in the present study.

Covid-19 and the war metaphors have been the focus of several studies (Abdel-Raheem 2021). The ubiquity of Covid-19 war metaphors can be seen in such phrasing as “crisis”, “threat”, and “attack”, the meanings of which are amplified when juxtaposed with images, e.g., an image of soldiers setting up field hospitals (Martikainen and Sakki 2021). Several functions of war metaphors include preparing the public for hard times, persuading citizens to change their behavior, showing compassion and empathy, and constructing enemies to shift the blame (Castro Seixas 2021). Militaries, wars and aggression are the most extreme examples of dealing with opponents and, because of this, it is not too surprising to see the war metaphor emerge in Covid-19 discourse (Semino 2021). This research examines how the NYT and CD, employed multimodal semiotic assemblages to construct different ideologies about the pandemic. Before we can discuss how such ideologies emerged in the NYT and CD, we must first discuss the methods used to collect and analyze such semiotic assemblages.

3 Research Methodology

Figure 1 is a visualization of how lexical analysis and multimodal analysis were operationalized in the present study. The study selected a total of 30 Covid-19 news reports from the websites of NYT and CD. Following the WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard (2020), the study divided the Covid-19 event into three phases: the first phase was China’s anti-pandemic phase from December 2019 to 10 March 2020; the second phase is defined by the first global outbreak from March 2020 to September 2020; and the third phase is defined by the second global outbreak of Covid-19, from October 2020 to December 2020. From each phase, 5 news reports were selected totaling 15 analyzable news reports from each news agency’s website. The analysis followed the three phases to juxtapose how the different news agencies reported on the pandemic. Checklists were designed in order to operationalize multimodal discourse analysis in this study and were divided into two tables, lexical analysis and image analysis following similar guidelines discussed in Norris (2019).

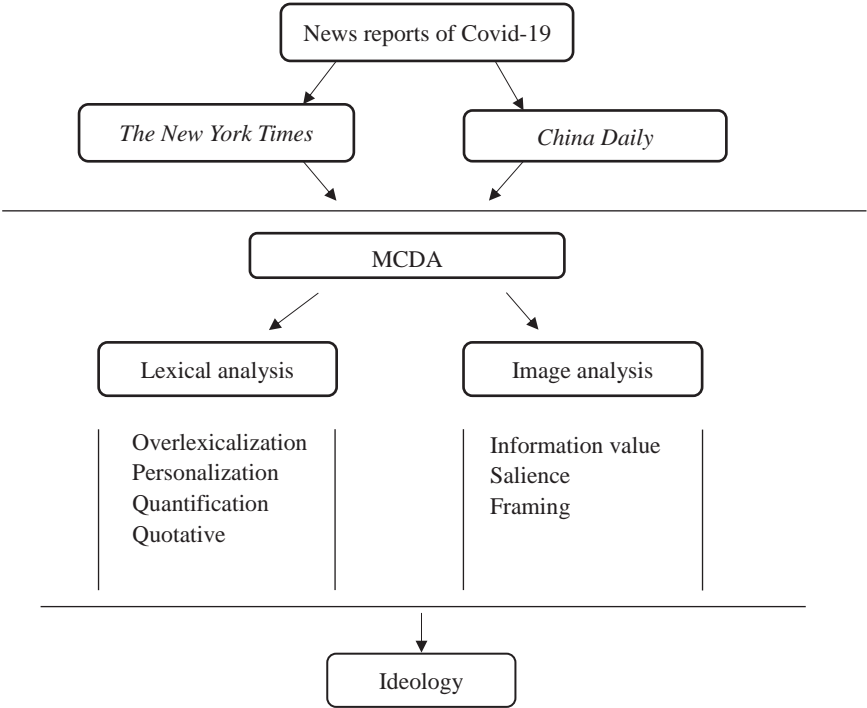


FIGURE 1 A conceptual framework for the analysis of Covid-19 news reports

4 Research Findings and Discussion

Based on the theory of MCDA, the findings are presented in following themes: measures of controlling the pandemic, the war metaphor, origins of Covid-19, quotations from experts, differences in government authority, racism and feminism.

5 Different Measures of Controlling the Pandemic

The NYT expressed that China’s anti-pandemic measures were extreme and irrational, thereby raising humanitarian issues. With respect to the outbreak in the U.S.A., the NYT indicated the Trump administration was ineffective in controlling the pandemic. The CD stressed that the anti-pandemic measures taken by the Chinese government were effective.

The overlexicalization of the China’s anti-pandemic measures in the NYT, as exemplified by (1) and (2), was used to represent the measures taken by

the Chinese government as “extreme measures”, which were unnecessary and unreasonable, and as “the urgent”, “seemingly improvised steps”, thereby not adequately prepared, causing the outbreak; China’s anti-pandemic measures also raised “a worsening humanitarian crisis”.

- (1) The Chinese authorities resorted to increasingly extreme measures in Wuhan..... (NYT, 25/02/2020)
- (2) The urgent, seemingly improvised steps come amid a worsening humanitarian crisis in Wuhan. (NYT, 25/02/2020)

A large amount of data about China’s anti-pandemic measures is also shown in the NYT to imply the measures were extreme and irrational in face of the outbreak. In excerpt (3), “only seven manufacturers” implies that China’s situation was insufficient. The NYT stressed the outbreak in China. Take excerpt (4) as an example, “as sickened at least 73,000 people and killed at least 2,000”, and in excerpt (5) which portrayed anti-pandemic measures in China as irrational, “more than 100 people waited in nearly 90-degree heat”, implying that Chinese residents were forced to do nucleic acid testing, even under the inappropriate circumstances.

- (3) Only seven manufacturers have government approval to make test kits for the coronavirus. (NYT, 09/02/2020)
- (4) The coronavirus spreading from China has made sick at least 73,000 people and killed at least 2,000, setting in motion a global health emergency. (NYT, 19/02/2020)
- (5) In the Hongshan district, more than 100 people waited in nearly 90-degree heat on May 18, said Zhou Chengcheng, a resident. (NYT, 03/06/2020)

Quotations were also used to express the judgment and opinion of China’s anti-pandemic measures from both ordinary people and experts. As an example, excerpt (6), “a growing sense of abandonment and fear” implies the Chinese residents were hopeless, and China’s anti-pandemic measure was ineffective. The discourse quoted from Andres Gomez and “experts have questioned” in excerpt (7) and (8) showed that such authorities disapproved of China’s anti-pandemic measures. Chinese resident “Mr. Tu” in excerpt (9) showed opposition to the testing and used personalization in the form of the pronouns “we” and “you” in order to arouse empathy.

- (6) With the sick being herded into makeshift quarantine camps, with minimal medical care, a growing sense of abandonment and fear has taken hold in Wuhan, fueling the sense that the city and surrounding

province of Hubei are being sacrificed for the greater good of China. (NYT, 25/02/2020)

- (7) “Even if one of these jumps is a rare occurrence, there are millions and millions of contacts that occur every day in these types of markets,” said Andres Gomez, an ecologist and veterinarian at ICF International, a global consulting services company based in Virginia. “You’re playing with fire.” (NYT, 25/02/2020)
- (8) Experts have questioned whether the government’s actions are imposing undue hardship on people while doing little to slow the epidemic. (NYT, 25/02/2020)
- (9) “We’re totally opposed to it,” Mr. Tu said of his family. “Because, even if you weren’t infected to begin with, this testing just means contact.” (NYT, 03/06/2020)

Quotations used in the NYT also play a role in conveying an ideology that China’s anti-pandemic measures were irrational. The assertive verbs “acknowledge” (excerpt 10) appears in the Chinese government’s explanation of the outbreak, implying that the Chinese government had to admit its failure to control the pandemic in the face of the outbreak. The other usage of “acknowledge” (excerpt 11) in the form of a quotation from the supporters of the Chinese testing drive implies that they are not supporting Chinese anti-pandemic measures but “the true value of the campaign was not so much medical as psychological”.

- (10) China is racing to screen ever more patients in Hubei Province, acknowledging that delays in diagnosing the virus are a major obstacle to controlling the epidemic. (NYT, 25/02/2020)
- (11) Some supporters of the testing drive acknowledged that the true value of the campaign was not so much medical as psychological.” (NYT, 03/06/2020)

Images related to the Chinese anti-pandemic measures in NYT showed a sense of chaos in China. For example, Figure 2 shows that residents’ lives have been changed because of China’s anti-pandemic measures, and Figure 3 shows doctors are put on the streets to do nucleic acid testing, while people are asked to do the same in crowded places. These images present the most realistic situation of China under the pandemic; however, they are selective and, as such, support the NYT’s disapproval of China’s anti-pandemic measure in phases 1 and 2.

Moreover, the NYT indicated Trump’s government was ineffective in controlling the pandemic, and people were living in hopelessness and fear. Excerpt



FIGURE 2 Food sales over a security fence separating a residential area and a street on Tuesday.

CREDIT...ROMAN PILIPEY/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK (NYT, 17/04/2020)

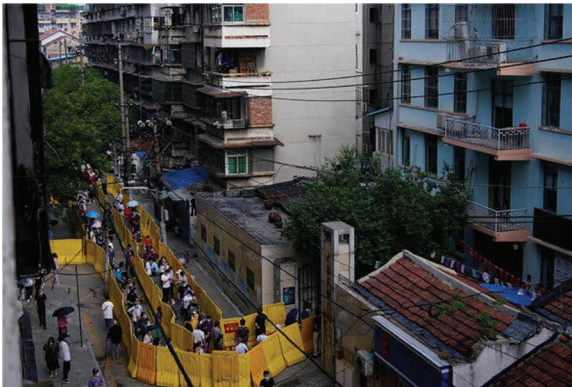


FIGURE 3 Residents lining up for nucleic acid testings at a residential compound in Wuhan on May 17.

CREDIT...ALY SONG/REUTERS (NYT, 03/06/2020)

(12) and excerpt (15), for example, mention “the highest coronavirus death toll in the world” and that “100,000 to 200,000 Americans could die”, implying that the Trump administration had failed in controlling the pandemic, which caused the outbreak. A quotations from a nurse in excerpt (13) shows the hopelessness and frustration with the government: “Our days are filled with fear and doubt”, and “has downplayed” in excerpt (14) shows the dissatisfaction with Trump’s response to the pandemic. Also, the quotation from experts in excerpt

(15), “if significant action is not taken”, implies that Trump didn’t take effective measures to control the pandemic.

- (12) The United States now has the highest coronavirus death toll in the world. (NYT, 19/02/2020)
- (13) Although soiled N95s are sterilized each day with ultraviolet light, Chris Rubesch, 32, a cardiac nurse, says the masks invariably sag after two or three shifts, leaving gaps that can allow the virus to seep through. “Our days are filled with fear and doubt,” Mr. Rubesch said. “It’s like driving a car without seatbelts.” (NYT, 20/12/2020)
- (14) President Trump has downplayed the steep rise in cases, attributing much of it to increased testing. (NYT, 20/12/2020)
- (15) Experts are warning that another 100,000 to 200,000 Americans could die from the virus in the next few months if significant action is not taken. (NYT, 20/12/2020)

The CD expressed that the Chinese government’s measures to control the pandemic were effective and rigorous. One way that this was accomplished was from the use of overlexicalization regarding China’s anti-pandemic measures which indicated that the anti-pandemic measures were “strict measures”, “utmost efforts” and “disease prevention and control” in excerpt (16) and (17). Moreover, there is an implication that China’s anti-pandemic measures achieved effective results and can help others. For example, excerpt (18) states, with regards to China’s anti-pandemic measures, “the central government’s help in its battle against COVID-19”.

- (16) Strict measures taken amid the outbreak. (CD, 23/01/2020)
- (17) Xi urged utmost efforts to admit infected patients, optimize diagnostic and treatment plans and uphold social stability by strengthening social governance and properly dealing with the problems arising in the process of disease prevention and control. (CD, 11/02/2020)
- (18) The city also announced tougher rules against the pandemic and sought the central government’s help in its battle against COVID-19. (CD, 27/06/2020)

Qualification provided in CD mainly indicated that China’s anti-pandemic work was efficient. Take excerpts (19) and (20) for example, “the second such meeting in 10 days” indicates the Chinese government’s emphasis on the pandemic, while “the first such case in 35 days” implies the pandemic has been successfully controlled by the Chinese government.

- (19) It was the second such meeting in 10 days regarding the battle against the outbreak, with the number of cumulative confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland reaching 17,205, including 361 deaths as of Sunday. (CD, 04/02/2020)
- (20) Wuhan added one new domestic case involving an 89-year-old man on Saturday, the first such case in 35 days. (CD, 15/3/2020)

Quotations provided in the CD showed the recognition and support for controlling the pandemic. For example, the quotation from Bruce Aylward in excerpt (21), “probably prevented at least tens of thousands even hundreds of thousands, of cases”, demonstrates agreement with China’s anti-pandemic measures.

- (21) Bruce Aylward, senior adviser to the director-general of the WHO and head of the foreign expert panel... “This approach of all-of-government and all-of-society is very old fashioned and has averted and probably prevented at least tens of thousands even hundreds of thousands, of cases,” he said. “It is extraordinary.” (CD, 25/02/2020)

Images provided in the CD also showed the efforts to contain the outbreak in China. For example, Figure 4 shows the active cooperation of medical staff and Chinese residents in controlling the pandemic.



FIGURE 4 Telecom workers receive nucleic acid tests for novel coronavirus in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Thursday.
WEI LAI/ FOR CHINA DAILY (CD, 15/05/2020)

In this section we noted how overlexicalization, quotations, personalization, and image/text relations were employed by these different news agencies to construct different ideologies regarding the effectiveness of measures in controlling the pandemic.

6 War Metaphor

The study found that both the NYT and CD used war metaphors but in different ways. Compared to the NYT, CD used more war metaphors in its Covid-19 news reports. In the China anti-pandemic phase, the war metaphor appeared in direct quotations from the Chinese government. Take excerpt (22) as an example: “wartime conditions” and “no deserters” implies that the Chinese government’s attitude to controlling the pandemic is imperative, requiring all people to follow orders. The reference to “no deserters” creates a trope in which Chinese citizens who do not follow orders are no different than deserters, although the consequences of being a deserter here is shame as opposed to military tribunal.

- (22) “The city and country face “wartime conditions,” Ms. Sun said. “There must be no deserters, or they will be nailed to the pillar of historical shame forever.” (NYT, 25/02/2020)

In the first global outbreak, the focus of the NYT moved to the measure of control of the pandemic in different countries and acquiesced to the idea that pandemic control is a war. In this phase, for example, “countries led by women” in excerpt (23) and “Mr. Trump” in excerpt (24), the national leader is metaphorically considered the commander, and the success or failure of the fight against the pandemic is attributed to the leader’s method of controlling the pandemic.

- (23) Countries led by women seem to be particularly successful in fighting the coronavirus. (NYT, 13/08/2020)
- (24) Mr. Trump has tried to anthropomorphize the virus into a foe he can rail against, calling it a “brilliant enemy.”(NYT, 13/08/2020)

In the second global outbreak, take excerpt (25) as an example. Here, American people and health care workers were constructed as warriors in the fight against the pandemic in NYT “new phase of the city’s battle against the coronavirus”.

- (25) The closure pointed to the start of an alarming new phase of the city's battle against the coronavirus. (NYT, 19/11/2020)

The CD mainly used war metaphors in the Chinese anti-pandemic phase and the first global outbreak, and there are a few war metaphors that appeared in phase 3. In the first two phases, health care workers and Chinese residents are likened to warriors, for example excerpt (26), “a people's war against the epidemic”, and the national leader is the commander, for example excerpt (27), “under Xi's strong leadership”. Each person has to participate in this fight as a soldier, implying that the success or failure of the fight lies with the people, effectively constructing Chinese citizens as conscripts in the fight against the Covid-19.

- (26) He also commended the all-around efforts in the prevention and control of the contagion and expressed respect for medical workers fighting on the front line, saying the nation has launched a people's war against the epidemic. (CD, 04/02/2020)
- (27) Alvi congratulated the Chinese people for their great progress in the fight against the disease under Xi's strong leadership. (CD, 18/03/2020)

In this section we discussed the discursive construction of the pandemic as a war.

One notable difference between the news agencies was in how they mentioned the war metaphor. In excerpt (24), Trump was noted to anthropomorphize the pandemic into a war but in later phases constructed healthcare workers as fighters in the pandemic. The CD on the other hand constructed Chinese citizens as soldiers, effectively conscripts, whose compliance or non-compliance with the pandemic measures was likened to desertion—a crime usually punishable by death during wartime.

7 Origins of Covid-19

The NYT attributed the outbreak to the wildlife trade in China, in contrast there is no judgment on the origin of the outbreak that emerged in the CD. The overlexicalization of Covid-19 in excerpt (28) and (29) “invisible enemy sprung from China”, “the coronavirus spreading from China”, these phrases “sprung from” “spreading from” attribute agency to the virus originating from China.

- (28) If Mr. Trump were to wear a mask, he wrote, that “would signal that the United States is so powerless against this invisible enemy sprung from China that even its president must cower behind a mask.” (NYT, 13/08/2020)
- (29) The coronavirus spreading from China made sick at least 73,000 people and killed at least 2,000. (NYT, 09/02/2020)

The images of wildlife trade in the NYT showed many smuggled pangolin scales seized in Hong Kong, illustrated with the caption “...Pangolins may have been the intermediate source for transmitting the new coronavirus to humans in China, scientists have suggested” (Figure 5). The image became compelling evidence for the illustrations, proving that there is a large amount of wildlife smuggling in China and that it caused the outbreak. Furthermore, Figure 6 and 7 show pangolins and fruit bats in a cage where animals are the salient and central elements constructing a strong visual impact, implying cruelty to wild animals. These images support the opinion of the NYT about the virus originated from China.



FIGURE 5 Customs officers in Hong Kong with a record seizure of pangolin scales last February. Pangolins may have been the intermediate source for transmitting the new coronavirus to humans in China, scientists have suggested.

CREDIT...ANTHONY WALLACE/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE—ETTY IMAGES (NYT, 19/02/2020)



FIGURE 6 More than 5,500 species of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles—many threatened and endangered—are sold worldwide.

CREDIT...GATHA GINTING/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE (NYT, 19/02/2020)



FIGURE 7 Fruit bats.

CREDIT...PAUL HILTON/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK (NYT, 19/02/2020)

8 Experts

Experts represent the highest authority on the judgment of Covid-19 events in the NYT, for example excerpts (30), “Dr. Joseph Tsang Kay Yan, an infectious disease specialist in Hong Kong” and (31), “Crystal Watson, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security”. A few expert judgments of the pandemic appeared in the CD, for example, in excerpt (32), “Zhong Nanshan, a leading expert tackling the virus”.

- (30) Dr. Joseph Tsang Kay Yan, an infectious disease specialist in Hong Kong, said the health authorities in China should use the testing kits more widely to get a clearer picture of the epidemic. (NYT, 25/02/2020)
- (31) “It feels very similar to the spring,” said Crystal Watson, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. Dr. Watson said she worried that hospitals in many cities would soon become overwhelmed, as they were in New York City and other places on the East Coast during the spring peak. (NYT, 16/11/2020)
- (32) The novel coronavirus outbreak may reach its peak in the next 10 to 14 days, Zhong Nanshan, a leading expert tackling the virus, said on Sunday, amending his previous prediction on Jan 28 that the epidemic would peak in seven or 10 days. (CD, 04/02/2020)

Where the NYT focused its attention on experts who were doctors or epidemiologists, the CD attributed expert status to government officials. For the latter this falls in line with other ways the CD discursively constructed the pandemic, giving more voice to Chinese bureaucrats. Take for example, excerpt (33), “Xi”, except (34), “Yao Hanhua, Party secretary of Qiaokou’s Shuichang community”, and excerpt (35) “local government officials”.

- (33) The epidemic’s prevention and control is not only a matter of medical treatment, but involves all-around efforts, so all work should support fighting the virus, Xi said, urging local governments and Party committees at various levels to obey the command of the CPC Central Committee. (CD, 04/02/2020)
- (34) Yao Hanhua, Party secretary of Qiaokou’s Shuichang community, said the mass campaign will enable officials to understand the true scale of undetected infections in each area. “The results will help us take more targeted epidemic control measures,” he told Hubei Television. (CD, 15/05/2020)
- (35) The novel coronavirus found to have infected the Tianjin patient was very similar to the strain that spread in North America between March and June, local government officials said. (CD, 11/11/2020)

This contrast in who is attributed agency as an experts is striking and one of the major differences in news reporting between these two agencies regarding the pandemic. In excerpts (33) and (35) we observe how the CD also uses anonymity in reference to “local government officials” or “local governments”. Despite not giving the officials a name, the CD still places more emphasis on party and local government officials than the NYT. The focus on party officials

and anonymous local government officials also has the effect of suggesting they are a looming presence in the everyday lives of Chinese citizens.

9 Differences in government authority

The Trump administration has been represented as ineffective in controlling the pandemic and improving the value of female leaders in the *NYT*. The Chinese government was represented as the higher authority on controlling the pandemic and achieved positive results in *CD*.

In phase 2, Figures 8 and 9 are in sharp contrast: Female leader Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand is the central element in Figure 8, but President Trump is not identified in Figure 9, which implies that female leaders are more imposing and capable, while male leaders are ineffective. One of the effects of this difference is that Figure 8 grants Jacinda Ardern more agency in showing her face, while Figure 9, in contrast, shows Trump surrounded by members of congress, his face directed at them, implying a lack of agency.

Quotations from medical workers, supply chain specialists, and public health experts showed their distrust of Trump. The directive verb “urging”(-excerpt 36) implies that medical workers, supply chain specialists, and public health experts have a high level of authority in society and that they expressed their support for Biden.



FIGURE 8 Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand has been praised for her leadership style during the pandemic.

CREDIT...POOL PHOTO BY MARK MITCHELL
(*NYT*, 13/08/2020)



FIGURE 9 President Trump talks with members of Congress at an airport in Pennsylvania on Thursday.
CREDIT...DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES
(*NYT*, 13/08/2020)

- (36) Medical workers, supply chain specialists and public health experts are urging President-elect Biden to make good on his campaign promises to use the Defense Production Act to boost domestic manufacturing of personal protective equipment, test kits, vaccines and the medical supplies needed to immunize hundreds of millions of Americans". (*NYT*, 20/12/2020)

The CD used a lot of directive verbs to express the rigorous and aggressive attitude of the Chinese government, for example, in excerpt (37), "Xi urges". The overlexicalization of China's anti-pandemic measures also implies their effectiveness, for example, "Xi's strong leadership" in excerpt (38). CD mainly used government officials as individuals, implying that government officials played an important role in controlling the pandemic. Take excerpt (39) as an example, "Ye Qing, a member of the Standing Committee of the Hubei Provincial Committee of the CPPCC and deputy director of the Hubei Bureau of Statistics", as well as use of "our" and "we" by officials, in, for example, in excerpt (40), "Our residents are very supportive. We aim at leaving nobody out of the screening," which implies a close relationship between the government and the people.

- (37) Xi urges joint efforts to fight pandemic. (CD, 18/03/2020)
(38) Alvi congratulated the Chinese people for their great progress in the fight against the disease under Xi's strong leadership. (CD, 18/03/2020)

- (39) Ye Qing, a member of the Standing Committee of the Hubei Provincial Committee of the CPPCC and deputy director of the Hubei Bureau of Statistics, submitted 25 proposals in the two months after Wuhan, Hubei's capital, was locked down on Jan 23. (CD, 04/02/2020)
- (40) "Our residents are very supportive. We aim at leaving nobody out of the screening," Wang Kaiqi, the community's Party secretary, told Hubei Television. (CD, 5/05/2020)

Images from the CD show the positive characteristics of the Chinese government. In Figure 10 from phase 1, President Xi, waving to the crowd, is the central element and is surrounded by the masses wearing masks. Xi shows his affinity to the masses and the focus of the people around him who show happiness and admiration through by clapping their hands. This implies that the leaders of the country and the people have a close and trusting relationship. Surrounding the leader are older adults, whose satisfaction with the leader can influence the reader more convincingly.

The news articles about the Chinese government supplying residents shows the effort it attaches to controlling the pandemic in the face of the outbreak, and its willingness to support the care and help for its people. Take excerpt (41) as an example, especially the part, "thanks to the coordination of the central government".



FIGURE 10 President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, greets residents during an inspection of novel coronavirus pneumonia prevention and control work at the Anhuali residential community in Beijing's Chaoyang district on Monday.

PANG XINGLEI/ XINHUA (CD, 11/02/2020)

- (41) Thanks to the coordination of the central government, a large number of materials have been introduced to Wuhan recently to ensure the city has an abundant supply of daily necessities. They include 2,000 metric tons of central reserved meat, 80,000 tons of rice, 80,000 tons of flour, 120,000 tons of edible oil, 29,000 tons of vegetables, 2,900 tons of eggs and 12 million packs of instant noodles, officials said. (CD, 21/02/2020)

Similar to the previous section which showed how experts were granted agency differently in the NYT and the CD, we observe also how CD uses vague or general referents to invoke the Chinese government. Excerpt (41) “the central government” is one such example where the government as an authority is invoked in a manner which is vague and general.

10 Racism

In phase 2, racism appeared on the Covid-19 news report in the NYT. The report provided comparative data on the prevalence of infection among children of color and white children in the NYT. The data indicate that children of color have higher rates of infection than white children, for example, in excerpt (42), “Black children were twice as likely to test positive as white children,” and (44), “Black children were hospitalized at a rate five times that of white children”. Excerpt (43) also implies that white children are in a more privileged position than children of color: “Hispanic and Black children also had higher rates of underlying health conditions: 45 percent and 29 percent, respectively.”

- (42) Dr. Goyal's study reported that Hispanic children were six times more likely to test positive for the coronavirus than white children who came to the testing site in Washington. Black children were twice as likely to test positive as white children. (NYT, 11/09/2020)
- (43) Among the hospitalized children whose race and ethnicity were known, nearly half were Hispanic, and 29 percent were Black. Hispanic and Black children also had higher rates of underlying health conditions: 45 percent and 29 percent, respectively. Among white children, 15 percent had underlying health problems. (NYT, 11/09/2020)
- (44) Hispanic children were at greatest risk of severe disease: they were hospitalized at a rate nearly eight times that of white children, according to the C.D.C. Black children were hospitalized at a rate five times that of white children. (NYT, 11/09/2020)

Although some experts have shown that the infection is not genetically related to race, “Dr. Goyal said: ‘There’s nothing to indicate that there’s some sort of genetic predisposition to Covid based on race or ethnicity’”(excerpt 46), but the family background is specified as the cause of the high rate of infection in children of color: “Children in minority communities are much more likely to become infected and severely ill” (excerpt 45), “Immigrants may hesitate to seek medical care” (excerpt 47), “ ‘What you have is the perfect recipe for fast transmission of Covid-19 in the Latino community,’ he said”(excerpt 47).

- (45) Children in minority communities are much more likely to become infected and severely ill. Many have parents who are frontline workers, experts say.
- (46) Dr. Goyal said: “There’s nothing to indicate that there’s some sort of genetic predisposition to Covid based on race or ethnicity.”
- (47) Immigrants may hesitate to seek medical care, and employees who work in the food service industry often lack adequate paid sick leave, said Jose Figueroa, assistant professor of health policy and management at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.“What you have is the perfect recipe for fast transmission of Covid-19 in the Latino community,” he said.

11 Feminism

Notions of feminism emerged in phase 2 in NYT in the use of overlexicalization in referring to female leaders with phrases such as, “a new leadership style” (excerpt 48), “people of diverse backgrounds” (excerpt 49), and “the women’s success” (excerpt 50). Such overlexicalization implies that women leaders are better at learning from different sources of information to deal with crises and that the country needs such leaders. The quotation from experts also gives support to female leaders, while images provided in the NYT portray a positive and competent image of female leaders (for example, Figure 8).

- (48) A new leadership style offers promise for a new era of global threats. (NYT, 13/08/2020)
- (49) Having a female leader is one signal that people of diverse backgrounds—and thus, hopefully, diverse perspectives on how to combat crises—are able to win seats at that table. (NYT, 13/08/2020)

- (50) But experts say that the women's success may still offer valuable lessons about what can help countries weather not just this crisis, but others in the future. (NYT, 13/08/2020)

Data comparing the rate of confirmation in countries with male leaders and the rate of diagnosis in women leaders appeared in the NYT. The data showed the effectiveness of controlling the pandemic was higher under female leadership than in male-led countries. Take, for example, excerpt (51), "has had fewer than 10 percent as many deaths as".

- (51) Finland, where Prime minister Sanna Marin, 34, governs with a coalition of four female-led parties, has had fewer than 10 percent as many deaths as nearby Sweden. (NYT, 13/08/2020)

In contrast with the CD there were no such references to feminism, which is not surprising given the tendency noted in the previous two section for the CD to refer to government officials in a vague and general manner.

In this section we conducted a lexical and multimodal discourse analysis of news reports in the NYT and CD during three phases of the pandemic. Our analysis focused on several themes that emerged including different measures in controlling the pandemic, war metaphor, origins of Covid-19, experts, differences in government authority, racism and feminism. In the next section we offer a discussion centered around our two research questions.

12 Discussion

In this section we revisit the research questions, offering explanations of how they were answered.

12.1 *What are the Different Semiotic Choices Used to Develop Ideology in News Reports on Covid-19 from The New York Times and China Daily?*

The study found that both the NYT and the CD used overlexicalization, personalization, quantification, quotations, war metaphor and image/text relations as ideological implements to develop ideology in Covid-19 news reports.

The NYT indicated China's anti-pandemic measures are extreme and irrational by overlexicalization, objections and doubts quoted from experts and ordinary people, and Chinese anti-pandemic related images. The NYT used related images of wildlife trade, and overlexicalization of Covid-19 to imply that the pandemic originated in China. Trump's government was represented

as ineffective in controlling the pandemic by related images and quotes that noted people's distrust of Trump. The NYT expressed recognition and support for women leaders, noting the ability of female leaders to contain the outbreak. Reports showed a positive image of female leaders, with the data given on such leaders demonstrating success in controlling the pandemic. The NYT used data and expert quotations to claim that children of color are more likely to be infected than white children because of their family background. Most of the judgments on controlling the pandemic in the NYT were quoted from doctors or scientists. The quotes from experts seem to make the judgment more objective and authoritative, but the words of the experts appearing in the Covid-19 news all indirectly supported the NYT's view. In contrast the CD granted agency to experts who were government officials and in some cases these officials were referenced in vague or anonymous ways, such as "local government officials" and "party officials".

China's anti-pandemic measures have been represented effectively in the CD by overlexicalization and quantification. The Chinese government was constantly positioned as having the highest authority in controlling the pandemic. The newspaper portrayed, by qualification and images, President Xi and China's anti-pandemic measures in a positive light. Through the war metaphor, people were represented as taking on the role of warriors in the fight against the pandemic, with the success or failure lying in the cooperation of the people. Chinese citizens who were not compliant with the Covid-19 containment measures were labelled as "deserters". The use of the war metaphor in this manner with regards to the pandemic effectively position Chinese citizens as if they were cannon fodder.

12.2 *What Changed Over Time?*

In the China's anti-pandemic phase, Covid-19 news reports from the NYT focused on China's anti-pandemic measures and origins of the virus. In this phase, NYT showed disagreement with China's anti-pandemic measures, indicating the extreme measures taken by the Chinese government and suggesting that it had caused a humanitarian crisis in China. The outbreak was blamed on the wildlife trade in China. The NYT began to shift the focus to the state of the pandemic in the United States and other countries in first global outbreak and second global outbreak, and expressed dissatisfaction with the Trump administration's measures to control the pandemic but expressed its support for Biden. The NYT used the war metaphor to point out that the success or failure of controlling the pandemic lies in the guidance of national leadership in controlling the pandemic. Political bias also emerged. In the face of the outbreak

in the United States, feminism and racism also appeared. The emergence of feminism is a side note to the incompetence of the Trump administration.

The CD are mainly focused on China's anti-pandemic events in phase 1 and 2, expressing that China's anti-pandemic measures are effective and achieved a positive results. Here, the Chinese government plays the most important role on controlling the pandemic. In phase 2, the newspaper portrayed China as a helper in controlling the pandemic, even for other countries. In phase 3, there was reporting on the outbreak in other countries and claims that the outbreak has been controlled in China.

13 Conclusion

The study found that both the NYT and the CD utilized overlexicalization, personalization, war metaphor, quantification, quotatives, and images as ideological implements to convey differing ideologies in their reporting on Covid-19. Moreover, the finding of the study confirmed that ideologies with different purposes are likely to be present in many scientific or authoritative media. What this study ultimately contributes to CDA is that news reporting regarding a constantly changing and emergent phenomenon such as the Covid-19 pandemic affords different semiotic resources relative to different news agencies. While it is not surprising that different news agencies reflect different ideologies, how different news agencies afford or constrain different semiotic resources is also reflective of such ideologies.

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