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## LANGUAGE



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# Critical Discourse Analysis of *People's Daily* and the *New York Times*' Headlines on the Beijing Winter Olympics<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** This paper examined the headlines of the Chinese newspaper, *People's Daily*, and the American newspaper, the *New York Times*, about the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022. To investigate the possible ideological biases of news headlines, this paper performs corpus-based critical discourse analysis. It hypothesizes that Chinese media will use positive strategies to report the event, whereas American media will maintain a neutral stance. Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis model and sentiment analysis tools via Google apps were applied to analyze news headlines of the two newspapers. With "Beijing Winter Olympics" as the keyword, *People's Daily* generated 261 results and a sentiment score of 60.2 whereas the *New York Times* produced 235 results and a sentiment score of 0.1 from February 3 to 20, 2022. The analysis reveals that *People's Daily* predominantly uses positive language and active voice, frequently quoting authoritative figures to reinforce the success and international approval of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Notable features include a high frequency of positive words, reinforce China's high-power position in the sentence structure. Conversely, the *New York Times* presents a more balanced perspective, with both positive and negative sentiments. It often employs passive voice and indirect language to highlight controversies and challenges, such as human rights issues and the political implications of the Games. *The New York Times*' headlines also exhibit the use of metaphors and euphemisms to subtly convey skepticism about China's intentions. The conclusion of this study is that *People's Daily* is committed to establishing and maintaining the image of a strong and capable Chinese government, while the *New York Times*, although striving for journalistic objectivity, still exposes ideological differences towards China, which also reflects the geopolitical tensions between China and the United States.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, *People's Daily*, *New York Times*, news headline, Beijing Winter Olympics

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## 1. Introduction

The 24th Winter Olympic Games took place in Beijing, China, from February 10 to 20, 2022. In China, the government, media, and people all regard the Winter Olympics held in Beijing as highly significant (Deng & Zhang, 2023). The Chinese public and media generally have a positive attitude towards the Winter Olympics, hoping to continue the reputation of the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Yang, Ruan, & Zhang, 2023). The spirit of the Beijing Winter Olympics helps realize the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Zhao, Ma, & Shen, 2023). The success of this Winter Olympics made Beijing the only city to host both the Summer and Winter Olympics. The Chinese government's goal in hosting the Winter Olympics is to demonstrate to the world and its citizens that the capital, Beijing, has the capability to host a global event and benefit from it (Xin & Kunzmann, 2020). Hosting the Olympics is seen as a crucial project for enhancing China's image, particularly in countering the "bias" from Western media (Qing et al., 2023).

The Beijing Winter Olympics, held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, marked the second consecutive Olympics closed to the public, with limited attendance for some events. The Games were also controversial, particularly due to China's human rights violations, such as the Uyghur issue, prompting calls for a boycott, and the IOC was criticized for awarding the Olympics to China (Li & Xu, 2023). Jirouchova (2022) argued that Beijing used the event to whitewash its poor human rights record. Vishnevskaya et al. (2023) found that the success of the Games did not alter the predominantly negative views of the American public towards China. Although Beijing aimed to demonstrate its strength and confidence by hosting the Winter Olympics, this also highlighted complexities, cultural essentialism, and even narcissism (Chong & de Kloet, 2024). The opening ceremony discourse also exhibited contradictions between expressions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism-focused patriotism (Hwang & Huang, 2024).

However, this international event offered a chance to compare the perspectives of Chinese and American media on the same issue. This study selected the English version of *People's Daily* from China and the *New York Times* from the United States. It aimed to identify, through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the headlines of these two representative newspapers, their ideological positions, which are reflected in their language usage.

*People's Daily* is the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It was established in 1946 and is managed by the Central Committee. Its fundamental purpose is to actively promote the political theories and policies of the Communist Party, publicize the major decisions and plans of the Central Committee, and convey timely information from all sides at home and abroad. As a party newspaper, *People's Daily* has a clear position as an important media tool for the CCP to build and maintain the guiding position of Marxism in the ideological field. It can even be said

that the news content of *People's Daily* directly reflects the attitude of the CCP and the Chinese government toward specific events<sup>2</sup>.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* is an American business newspaper based in New York, founded in 1851. It holds the record for the most Pulitzer Prizes won with 137<sup>3</sup>. As a private newspaper whose aim is to make a profit, the *New York Times* must adhere to its philosophy of running a newspaper that attracts more customers with eye-catching headlines, but it also cannot diverge from readers' expectations of objective news reporting to demonstrate its credibility and gain long-term support. He and Huang (2024) note that the *New York Times*, described as "the most respected newspaper in the world" (Bennett, 2012), impacts the international news choices of other U.S. mainstream media (Golan, 2006), the policy decisions of American bureaucratic agencies (Van Belle, 2003), and a vast readership. Groseclose & Milyo (2005) employed a quantitative research approach by calculating the frequency with which specific media outlets cited various think tanks and policy groups. *The New York Times* was categorized as having a left-leaning liberal ideology.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Analyzing News Headlines

Newspaper headlines are an important part of news discourse. They set the agenda of the news media, allowing readers to decide whether to read the whole article (Boczkowski, 2010). They are usually written in sentence form and generally should not exceed 14 words (Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2017). To capture the reader's attention, headlines may use specific linguistic and stylistic strategies, such as action verbs, alliteration, puns, and rhetorical questions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Moreover, a headline may be interpreted differently depending on readers' backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences (Van Dijk, 1988).

Develotte & Rechniewski (2001) emphasized the importance of headlines in attracting readers' attention and interest and illustrated the clear advantages of headline research over full-text-news research. They believed that longitudinal studies of news headlines can reveal the evolution of the media's emphasis on a topic and the social and cultural representations of a society circulating at a given time. Van Dijk (1988a) presented a concept of news schemata (superstructure schema) to highlight the importance of news headlines and lead paragraph research. He viewed news stories as having a specific narrative structure in which "relevance" pertains to the more important parts that appear at the front of the story, and "the headline and the lead paragraph

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is summarized from the "Newspaper Introduction" section of the *People's Daily* official website. For details, see: <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/104580/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Data is as of 2023, from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_New\\_York\\_Times](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times)

express the most important information of the cognitive model of journalists, that is, how they see and define the news event" (1988a, p. 248).

## 2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

This paper follows Fairclough's (1989, 1992) CDA paradigm, which has its roots in critical linguistics (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979), a branch of discourse analysis. It is not a critique of discourse but rather a critical examination of how and why discourse is produced. CDA, a term Fairclough coined in his 1989 book *Language and Power*, not only articulates the dialectical relation between language and ideology and power but also the central idea of "discourse as social practice."

CDA inherited its views on ideology from Gramsci's (1971) emphasis on the importance of ideology for modern societies to maintain and reinforce their social structures and relations and Foucault's (1972) assertion that language becomes the primary vehicle for the transmission, enactment, and reproduction of ideology. Fairclough (1992) argued that ideology is present within texts and that the form and content of a text, whether written, spoken, or otherwise communicated, are influenced by ideological processes and structures. Thus, by analyzing linguistic structures and discursive strategies in the broader social context in which the two interact, we can unlock ideologies and recover the social meanings expressed in discourse.

## 2.3 Fairclough's Three-dimensional Framework

This paper adopted Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (1989). According to Fairclough, every communicative event encompasses three dimensions: first, it is a text (encompassing speech, writing, visual images, or a combination of these); second, it functions as a discursive practice involving the production and consumption of texts; third, it operates as a social practice. He delineated three stages of CDA corresponding to these dimensions: description, interpretation, and explanation. Fairclough views discourse as a form of social practice that embodies social structures. He conceptualizes discourse as a unity of "context, interaction, and text," with the text being the outcome of interaction, and both production and interpretation processes dependent on context (Fairclough, 1992).

### 2.3.1 Text (Description)

Fairclough (1989, P. 26) describes this stage as focusing on the formal properties of text, exploring vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures in detail. Vocabulary analysis deals with word choice; grammar focuses on grammatical features, closely related to Halliday's systemic-functional grammar; and textual structures concern the overall structure of the discourse. Texts are examined for active and passive verbs, modality, and nominalizations, where processes are converted into nouns, potentially obscuring

agency (Fairclough, 2001, p. 103, 105). Modality is also explored in terms of relational and expressive modality and modalized questions (Fairclough, 2003, p. 168). This dimension involves analyzing textual components at both the macro and micro levels. Fairclough (1992) asserts that any textual feature is potentially significant in discourse analysis (p. 74).

### **2.3.2 Discursive Practice (Interpretation)**

Discursive practice involves two main processes: institutional processes-- editorial procedures and discourse processes-- changes during production and consumption. Intertextuality is key to understanding these processes, highlighting the relationships among discourses, texts, and settings. Discourse is not just a linguistic entity but a practice that encompasses production and interpretation, including the roles of news sources and reporting modes (Fairclough, 1995). According to Fairclough (1989), “interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction, seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation” (p.26). This stage involves examining how discourse is produced and consumed, considering both linguistic features and elements like speech acts and intertextuality that connect the text to its context.

### **2.3.3 Social Practice (Explanation)**

Fairclough (1993) describes the social practice aspect as presenting the broader structural and social perspectives of the relationship between text and discursive practice. According to Fairclough (1989, P. 26): “Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects.” This stage involves analyzing the historical, social, and cultural contexts that influence the production and consumption of texts. News discourse, as a form of social practice, is shaped by social and institutional factors that affect how news reports are created and understood. The aim is to uncover power dynamics, ideologies, and language use within these contexts (Fairclough, 1995).

Fairclough draws on Althusser’s (1970) theory of ideology and Gramsci’s (1971) theory of hegemony, emphasizing that dominant ideologies spread through consent and ongoing struggles against those ideologies. This means that language and symbolic forms can help establish hegemony, or the dominance of certain ideologies, but these conditions are fluid and subject to change. Power is always contested and maintained through “uneasy equilibrium” (Fairclough, 2013).

## **2.4 CDA in Headline Analysis**

In the field of CDA, research has demonstrated that news headlines possess significant power and reflect underlying ideologies. Dragaš’s (2012) analysis of American

newspaper headlines found that the images of women in American media are still “as victims or in outdated, stereotypical roles” (p. 104). Hassan (2018) examined the news bulletin headlines of 9 p.m. in Pakistan and found that Pakistani news channels create a different world for their viewers by propagating different ideologies, keeping their vested interests intact. Teo (2000) analyzed the headlines of two Sydney-based newspapers and detected racism against Vietnamese migrants. Develotte and Rechniewski (2001) highlighted the benefits of using a corpus of headlines for quantitative analysis, as seen in their study of French and Australian media. Gopang and Bughio (2017) found that linguistic analysis of newspaper headlines reveals hidden cues for readers.

Hackett (1991) examined media in the United States and Canada, concluding that mainstream media act as “agents of hegemony” (p. 56), maintaining dominance by persuading the public to support the ruling class. This dynamic also applies in socialist countries; for instance, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses the press as a propaganda tool to perpetuate its governance (Shambaugh, 2007). Chinese scholars recognize that the party newspaper system is integral to the CCP’s organization, guiding public opinion and ensuring ideological security (Chen & Yang, 2015). Thus, news headlines have been proven to shape public perception and reinforce ideological frameworks, guiding readers towards specific interpretations and maintaining social and political hegemony.

## 2.5 Sentiment Analysis

The ability of CDA to maintain objectivity has faced criticism. Van Dijk (2001) noted that CDA is susceptible to the researcher’s ideological biases because it focuses on exposing covert power connections and ideologies, which could lead to selective interpretations. Similarly, Wodak and Meyer (2009) argued that impartiality might be compromised by researchers’ subjective judgments in classifying and interpreting discursive elements. Fairclough (2001) also acknowledged that scholars inevitably contribute their perspectives and assumptions to the analysis, potentially influencing how discourse is interpreted. These criticisms suggest that CDA’s focus on uncovering power structures and ideologies may hinder complete objectivity. To address these concerns, sentiment analysis can be implemented in CDA research as a supplement to typical qualitative approaches, adding a quantitative component through numerical sentiment scores and patterns. This combination can enhance the rigor and objectivity of CDA research. Sentiment analysis, or opinion mining, assesses a writer’s general attitude about a specific topic, product, or event by evaluating words, phrases, and sentences to determine the polarity of the expressed sentiment, whether positive, negative, or neutral (Mäntylä, Graziotin, & Kuuttila, 2018).

This study chose Google News API to analyze the sentiment of news headlines. News API is a free script from Google Sheets that can help users perform sentiment analysis on news headlines. It uses the Google Cloud Natural Language API to perform sentiment analysis on each headline, where algorithms detect the polarity of a text’s sentiment using natural language-processing techniques and machine learning.



### 3. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to analyze the news headlines from *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* regarding the Beijing Winter Olympics. Data were collected from the official websites of these newspapers, covering the period from the day before the opening to the day after the conclusion of the event (February 3-20, 2022), and subsequently divided into two sets. Fairclough's three-dimensional model serves as the research framework, examining discourse at the levels of text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Utilizing corpus linguistics and sentiment analysis, the news headlines were thoroughly analyzed across these levels.

This study aimed to answer three primary research questions:

- (A) How do the language strategies and devices used in the headlines of *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* about the Beijing Winter Olympics shape readers' attitudes and opinions about particular events?
- (B) What political stances exist in the headlines of *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* about the Beijing Winter Olympics?
- (C) What are the underlying power relations and ideologies in the construction of news headlines in *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* about the Beijing Winter Olympics?

This study searched the keyword "Beijing Winter Olympic" in <http://en.people.cn> and <https://www.nytimes.com> and set the period from February 3 to 20, 2022. Every headline in the results was recorded, and the main part of the report was reformatted and pasted into a Word document. Afterward, duplicates and headlines whose content was not related to the Beijing Winter Olympics were checked and eliminated. This research compiled the corpora using Voyant Tools, an open-source Web-based text analysis and visualization tool that allows users to explore and study textual data. It offers different tools and features to assist researchers with text data visualization, including information on word frequency, keywords, and text co-occurrence. After collecting the data and eliminating irrelevant results by manual checking, two corpora were built, named the "Chinese People's Daily Corpus" and the "U.S. New York Times Corpus."

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1. Text (Description)

#### 4.1.1. Vocabulary

The word frequencies were summarized first by the corpus tool. Then by the following aspects of the experiential value of the vocabulary: ideological controversy and ideological significance. I also checked the relational value of the vocabulary for euphe-





In contrast, the high-frequency words in the *New York Times* reflect the newspaper's focus on various fields during the Olympics. Primarily, the sports domain is highlighted, including terms like "figure skiing" and "snowboarding" for different events. Second, the coverage extends to three countries: the United States, China, and Russia. Finally, smaller fonts reveal clearly negative terms such as "hard," "worst," and "tricks".

#### Controversial Ideological Terms

In the *New York Times*, there is an abundance of terms with controversial ideological implications, most of which are related to China or Russia. For example, in the phrase "Is Biden's Strategy With Putin Working, or Goaded Moscow to War?" the term "Goaded" implies that Moscow's extreme reactions are provoked by American strategies. Terms like "Divide" in "Eileen Gu Is Trying to Soar Over the Geopolitical Divide" and "Divisive" in "In a Divisive Games, an Opening Ceremony in Search of Unity" clearly express the worsening political relations between China and the United States. The term "Side-Effect" in "A Side-Effect of China's Strict Virus Policy: Abandoned Fruit" and the quotation marks around "Zero Covid" in "A 'Zero Covid' Olympics" subtly convey discontent with China's strict pandemic policies. Furthermore, "shadow" in "A Russian figure skater's failed test casts shadow over the Games" and "Lingerin" in "Dispute Over Test Results Hints at Lingering Mistrust of Russia" reinforce negative perceptions of Russian athletes.

In the *People's Daily*, there is only one term with controversial ideological implications: "boycott" from the phrase "Beijing Winter Olympics become the most watched games in U.S. despite 'diplomatic boycott'." This sentence emphasizes the success of the Chinese Olympics, highlighting that they still achieved significant viewership in the U.S. despite the diplomatic boycott by the American government.

#### Ideologically Significant Terms

The *New York Times* features multiple sets of ideologically significant synonyms in its headlines about China and Russia. For instance, terms like War, Invasion, and Crisis appear in the following headlines: "Macron Tries to Avert a European War and Reshape European Security," "U.S. Warns of Grim Toll if Putin Pursues Full Invasion of Ukraine," "White House Warns Russian Invasion of Ukraine Could Happen at Any Time." and "Both Sides of Taiwan Strait Are Closely Watching Ukraine's Crisis." It is evident that, even before Russia officially invaded Ukraine, the *New York Times* used the term "Invasion" to describe potential Russian actions, while other political entities were using more neutral terms to describe the geopolitical situation.

The next set comprises antonyms: Win, Worst, Fervor, and Fake Accounts. These terms appear in "The 2022 Olympics Are Already a Win for China," "NBC Opens Olympics With 'Worst Hand Imaginable'," "Eileen Gu fervor takes over China's social media" and "Bots and Fake Accounts Push China's Vision of Winter Olympic Wonderland." These contradictory headlines, based on different subjects, reflect the *New York Times'* general disapproval of China's sense of satisfaction and success regarding certain events.

In *People's Daily*, two sets of ideologically significant synonyms have been identified. The first set consists of terms used to praise the success of the Chinese Winter Olympics by various world leaders, including: Praise, Cheer, Embraces, Amazing, Impressive, Good job, Speak highly, Successfully organized, and Exemplary organization. The second set focuses on the unity achieved among different nations' peoples during the Chinese Winter Olympics, including: Cooperation, Unite, Global unity, and Get-together. Since *People's Daily* hardly features terms with negative connotations, there are no antonym sets found.

#### Euphemistic Expressions

The headlines "In Beijing, the Subject on Everybody's Mind but Not Lips," "In Yanqing, the Wind Blows and the Skiers Wait. And Wait. And Wait" and "Beijing Got All Ready for Olympic Curling. But About the Ice ..." from the *New York Times* are non-objective statements about Beijing. These deliberately euphemistic expressions provide readers with strong implications through association. *The New York Times* intentionally leads readers to question what the unspoken topic in Beijing might be, what the true situation with the snow in Yanqing is, and what issues might exist with the ice for Olympic curling in Beijing. This technique subtly influences readers' perceptions based on the newspaper's own stance towards Beijing.

In contrast, no euphemistic expressions were found in the *People's Daily* headlines. This indicates that *People's Daily* does not employ indirect or ambiguous language in its headlines about the Beijing Winter Olympics. Instead, it avoids using vague terms and does not shy away from directly addressing negative or sensitive topics. This approach aligns with the Marxist view of journalism practiced by the Chinese media.

#### Formal or Informal Language

*The New York Times*, aside from quoting others' words or presenting established facts, sometimes uses formal language, potentially with varying intentions depending on the specific content. Let's examine the following example: "A Beijing Games first: Real snow in Zhangjiakou." The term "real" in the *New York Times* is clearly formal, echoing the newspaper's previous environmental concerns about the Yanqing venue for the Winter Olympics. Other examples include "Declare" in "For Xi Jinping, the Olympics is a moment to declare, 'China is ready'" and "Loaded" in "Bearing an Olympic Torch, and a Politically Loaded Message." These examples reflect the *New York Times*' practice of formally expressing uncertain, speculative viewpoints, indicating the newspaper's firm subjective opinions about China.

In terms of informal language, the *New York Times* often employs colloquial expressions in headlines related to American athletes. Examples include "Bounce Back" in "Can Mikaela Shiffrin Bounce Back Like Bode Miller?," "Blunder" in "Long Known for a Blunder, Jacobellis Rewrites Her Story in Gold" and "Frog Princess! Chen No. 3!" in "Fly High, Frog Princess! Well Done, Chen No. 3!" These informal expressions help bridge the gap between the readers and the media, fostering a sense of familiarity

and inclusiveness. They portray American athletes like Nathan Chen and the nationality-controversial Eileen Gu, who represents China but grew up in the U.S., as part of the media and readers' "our group," carrying a narrative with a touch of nationalism.

In *People's Daily*, the vast majority of news headlines are written in a formal style, frequently using words such as official, diplomatic, committee, state, council and president. Excluding quotes from interviewees, only the informal term "fans" appears. Here are a few examples: "Beijing Winter Olympics excites U.S. hockey fans with high expectations", "Turkish athletes' wonderful glimpses of Beijing Winter Olympics feast fans' eyes" and "Winter Olympians' northeastern accent delighting fans." The use of this term does not reveal any obvious ideological bias.

#### Expression Value of Vocabulary

I used B. Liu's *Opinion Lexicon* (2004) to identify positive and negative words. As shown in Figure 1, in *People's Daily* sports news, "win(s)" appeared 13 times and "break-through(s)" 6 times, followed by "praise(s)" (5), "good," (5), and "cooperation" (4). Also, many positive words appeared 3 times: "thank(s)," "support," "confidence," and "champion." Negative words rarely appeared, with only "ailing" used more than 3 times. Words related to COVID-19, such as "pandemic" and "COVID," appeared a total of 7 times. In sum, the types and frequency of positive words in *People's Daily* headlines were much higher than those of negative words. Meanwhile, Figure 2 shows that in the *New York Times*, except for the 34 occurrences of "win(s)" and "winning," which are common in sports news, "success" and "best" appeared 4 times, while "positive" appeared 3 times.

On the contrary, negative words appeared more frequently in the *New York Times*. For example, "hard" appeared 8 times, "worst" appeared 6 times, and "warning," "fear," "failure," and "stumble" appeared 4 times each. Words related to the corona-virus, such as "COVID," "corona-virus," and "virus," appeared 16 times. In summary, the *New York Times* headlines have more negative words than positive words but are not significantly different in terms of number.

#### Metaphors

In the case of the *New York Times*, the headline "A Succession Drama, Chinese Style, Starring Xi Jinping" uses the metaphor of "Drama" to describe the political process that Xi Jinping is preparing for his third term. The term "Drama" implies a designed and performative nature, clearly carrying a sense of political satire. Similarly, "Fly High, Frog Princess! Well Done, Chen No. 3!" uses metaphorical language to add a vivid, imaginative layer to the description.

In *People's Daily*, out of 245 news headlines, only one uses metaphors. It is: "Interview: 'Athletes should fight like tigers,' says Swiss artist celebrating Beijing Winter Olympics." In the Chinese context, comparing an athlete to a tiger is a compliment. It means that the athlete is expected to have a strong physique and fierce competitive spirit like a tiger.

#### 4.1.2 Grammar

According to Fairclough's viewpoint, the power exerted by news organizations in media practice is often invisible and must be discerned by analyzing grammatical forms to determine if the media is subtly exercising manipulative power in headlines. In grammatical terms, this involves analyzing features that carry experiential, relational, and expressive value, as well as how simple sentences are connected. The goal of grammatical analysis is to clarify causality, thus determining how events are attributed (Fairclough, 2001, P.120-132). This section analyzes the grammatical features of news headlines in both newspapers that embody these factors, comparing their grammatical strategies and examining how they use grammar to conceal power relations and perform ideological manipulation.

In a simple sentence, "subject (S) followed by a verb (V), then V may or may not be followed by one or more other elements from this list: object (O), complement (C), adjunct (A)(Fairclough, 2001, P.121)." The SVO structure allows for the most direct attribution of responsibility, indicating that S is responsible for the action V performed on O. In cases where V is a non-living entity, we can rely on common sense and contextual knowledge to identify the specific object responsible related to V. Additionally, it is important to consider that media organizations might obscure their ideology by providing unclear information, using nominalizations, or passive constructions.

The most commonly used grammatical feature in the *New York Times* is the passive voice. For example, "U.S. figure skaters are rejected in a bid to be awarded their team medals" uses the word "rejected" Without stating the subject, it emphasizes that American athletes are the objects experiencing the consequences rather than causing them. In the case of Russian athletes, there are examples of neutrality: "Star Russian Figure Skater Tested Positive for Banned Drug." This headline uses the passive voice to convey that it cannot directly accuse Russian athletes of intentionally using banned substances. Ambiguous headlines frequently appear in China-related titles, such as "The Year of the Tiger overshadows the Olympic panda" and "In Beijing, the Subject on Everybody's Mind but Not Lips." These examples lack a clear subject to attribute responsibility. However, considering the context and the *New York Times*' political stance, the subject(S) overshadowing(V) the Olympics (O) could be China, the host country, since few countries use the lunar calendar for celebrations. Similarly, the subject that prevents people in Beijing (S) from speaking certain things could only be the Beijing authorities.

By contrast, the most commonly used grammatical feature in *People's Daily* is the active voice. The use of the active voice strengthens the subjectivity of China-related concepts and enhances the sense of national identity and collectiveness, as illustrated by the following examples: "Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics ready to unite and inspire," "Chinese FM meets Turkmen counterpart in Beijing," "China lose to reigning champions Canada in mixed doubles curling at Beijing 2022," and "Xi's vision helps boost nation's winter sports." These sentences place China-related subjects in the subject position, reinforcing readers' subjective identification with China-related ideas,

presenting a patriotism ideology centered on collectivism and nationalism. The active voice also aids in positive political propaganda. For instance, “Xi replies to letters from U.S. mayors” emphasizes that Xi Jinping (S) replies to letters (V) from U.S. mayors (O), highlighting Xi’s superior position in the power relationship.

#### Grammatical Features with Relational Value

Fairclough (2001, P125) emphasizes three aspects of grammatical features in discourse: modes of sentence, modality, and pronouns. This study does not involve pronunciation issues, so the last aspect is not considered. Regarding the first two grammatical features, interrogative and imperative sentences can reflect systemic asymmetry in participant relations. For example, the information seeker may have a higher power status than the information provider, and the issuer of an obligation may have a higher status than the obligation receiver. Such expressive modality can be identified through corresponding modal verbs. Some grammatical features also decorate unequal power relations as equal to persuade the information recipient to accept the purpose represented by the information provider. Van Dijk (1988b) discusses this in detail in his description of the ideological matrix.

*The New York Times* used 36 interrogative sentences in 219 news headlines, six of which adopted a self-answered format. The frequent use of interrogative sentences reflects the higher power relationship the *New York Times* constructs as an information provider compared to its readers. Although there are a few self-answering forms, these answers still demand acceptance from readers rather than inviting an equal dialogue for discussion. Examples of such headlines include: “What Will Move Markets Now?”, “How to watch today’s opening ceremony,” and “How to watch the closing ceremony, and what to expect when it begins.” These headlines tend to guide readers to accept *New York Times*’ exclusive answers to the questions. There is only one instance of using the first-person pronoun: “The Morning: Why we travel.” This reflects that the media institution does not actively engage in nationalist narratives. It also uses second-person pronouns to add a personal touch: “Your Monday Briefing: The Olympics Begin.” Of course, the *New York Times* mostly uses third-person pronouns, including conveying controversial information. This can be explained by the *New York Times* prioritizing its neutral and objective stance in reporting news. However, from the analysis of a total of 219 news headlines, some uses of third-person pronouns are intended to create or amplify divisions: “Thomas Bach Won’t Request an Inquiry of Peng Shuai’s Accusations Unless She Asks: ‘It’s Her Life’” and “Who Is the Real China? Eileen Gu or the Chained Woman?”

*People’s Daily* used only four interrogative sentences: “What does Beijing 2022 hold for China and the world,” “How China developed snow-making technology for Beijing 2022 amid complex climate conditions,” “How technology helps Chinese athletes make breakthroughs at Beijing Winter Olympics,” and “What makes Gu Ailing a genius skier.” The first three headlines use questions to convey positive views, implying that the answers are affirmative, positive, and worthy of recognition. The last interrogative sentence genuinely poses a question about the nationality controversial

Chinese athlete Eileen Gu, known by her Chinese name Gu Ailing. By introducing her with pinyin, *People's Daily* emphasizes her Chinese identity and uses the interrogative form in the headline to indicate that the content will convey a Chinese-style introduction to the Chinese athlete Gu Ailing.

Regarding pronoun usage, *People's Daily* exclusively uses third-person pronouns, avoiding first-person and second-person pronouns altogether. This reflects the writing style of *People's Daily*, which aims to pursue the utmost objectivity and neutrality.

#### **Grammatical Features with Expressive Value**

This section's grammatical features also appear in the form of modal verbs, often in conjunction with modal adverbs. In media reporting, the media typically convey events as absolute facts, which aligns with the journalistic principle of truth in reporting. Both news agencies adhere to the basic principle of truth in journalism, with no modal verb grammatical features significantly distorting the truth, so this section will not be discussed further.

#### **Simple Sentence Connections**

Connecting sentences requires at least two simple sentences or a compound sentence. The *New York Times* frequently uses compound sentences, often with logical connectors such as "and, but, as, or," and "while." In some cases, the compound sentences in the *New York Times* contain ideological assumptions. For instance, "unless" in "Thomas Bach won't request an inquiry of Peng Shuai's accusations unless she asks: 'It's her life'" assumes that Peng Shuai's accusations exist and that she has not requested an inquiry for other reasons. This assumption supports the coherence of the sentence. Similarly, "if" in "U.S. Warns of Grim Toll if Putin Pursues Full Invasion of Ukraine" suggests that Russia will initiate an invasion. Such headlines published before the actual outbreak of war indicate the *New York Times*' ideological assumption that Russia will start a war and the United States will justly protect the invaded Ukraine.

In *People's Daily*, all news headlines are presented as a complete sentence, with no connections between multiple sentences.



## 4.2. Discursive Dimension

### 4.2.1. Power Relations in *People's Daily*

This dimension focuses on the broader discourse or ideology that is reinforced or challenged through news headlines. In *People's Daily* headlines, the discourse was about China's active role in the international community and its success in hosting major sporting events. This reinforces the idea of China's growing global influence and power.

First, *People's Daily* provides many straightforward statements about the success of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Headlines such as "Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics ready to unite and inspire" present a positive image of the Winter Olympics, portraying it as a unifying event that inspires people. Other headlines, such as "Commentary: Beijing 2022 illuminates ideal of shared future," "Tech ensures 'green' fireworks show," "Beijing Winter Olympics mirror of positive, prosperous, open China," and "Lantern festival lights up unity at Beijing 2022" constantly reinforce the Chinese government's strength in various aspects and portrays it as politically enlightened, economically prosperous, technologically advanced, and socially united.

Second, one headline from *People's Daily* on the United States, "U.S. should not go further down the wrong path: Chinese UN ambassador," reflects the Chinese government's criticism of the U.S. government while also showing that China is welcomed by Americans. The purpose was to argue that China is in a superior position in its power relations with the United States. This headline positions China as a critical voice in relation to U.S. policy, using language suggesting that the United States is making mistakes. The use of the phrase "wrong path" implies that China has a superb understanding of what is right and wrong, putting it in a position of power. In addition, the use of the phrase "should not" suggests that the United States must accept China's advice, demonstrating China's power over the United States. The headline "Beijing Winter Olympics become the most watched games in U.S. despite diplomatic boycott" uses the word "despite" to convey the idea that the United States is inferior to China in terms of cultural influence. In context, the *People's Daily* report also described U.S.–China relations as dominated by China and welcomed by the American public.

Third, *People's Daily* uses many quotes to highlight the international influence of the Beijing Winter Olympics and its success, from government staff to leaders, athletes, media, international institutions, and experts. Examples include the headlines "Ugandan official believes China to host successful Winter Olympics"; "Feature: Hungary's former president embraces spirit of Beijing 2022"; "Competition at Beijing 2022 makes Spanish freestyle skier's 'lifelong dream' come true"; "Egypt's media hail Beijing Winter Olympics opening show as 'amazing,' 'impressive'"; "Athletes praise organization of Beijing Winter Olympics: IOC official"; and "Beijing Winter Olympics opening ceremony shows China's determination, boosts the world's confidence to tackle challenges, say experts." This study found 32 quotations expressing praise but none with critical meaning. One can easily see that the use of quotes in *People's Dai-*

ly is biased. Those citations can be grouped into three based on their sources: China, foreign sources, and international organizations/non-government organizations, with a ratio of 1:5:2. This result may echo Brady's (2003) viewpoint that the CCP has a long-standing tradition of "making the foreign serve China" with the purpose of providing international endorsement for the positive reporting of *People's Daily*.

Finally, *People's Daily* added details to reinforce China's international influence and strength by covering other groups or areas of nonathletes in the Beijing Winter Olympics. Such headlines include "Feature: Road to Beijing 2022, from baker to snow groomer operator," "Popularity of e-CNY at Beijing Winter Olympics reflects China's ambition to broaden its use," "Feature: Overseas athletes in food frenzy at Beijing Winter Olympics," "Cut-resistance equipment from E China's Shandong helps Olympian skaters pursue their dreams," and "22 Games enjoy flurry of creative insurance."

#### 4.2.2. Power Relations in the *New York Times*

The *New York Times* headlines did not attempt to construct U.S. power internationally and remained neutral on topics relevant to the U.S. government. However, headlines about China and Russia were both complimentary and critical. The *New York Times* also questioned *People's Daily*'s discussion of "Chinese power," arguing that China's motives were not purely benign but rather part of a larger effort to improve its global image.

First, the *New York Times* headlines about the U.S. government are neutral in character, such as "The opening ceremony drew world leaders despite a U.S. diplomatic boycott." The diplomatic boycott issued by the United States did not prevent world leaders from participating in the opening ceremony of the Olympics, clearly showing that the *New York Times* does not believe that it needs to glorify the U.S. government as a media outlet.

Second, while the *New York Times* acknowledged China's strength in some areas, it also raised more questions. Examples include "For Xi Jinping, the Olympics is a moment to declare, 'China is ready,'" and "For China, hosting the Olympics is worth every billion." Both headlines seem to praise the Beijing Winter Olympics, attempting to make a thesis that China has demonstrated its great strength by hosting the Games. However, this description emphasizes that "China feels good about itself" without explicitly stating whether this "self-aggrandizement" is also shared by others. The headline in this case is designed to pique the reader's curiosity before leading them to think about some of the negative points the *New York Times* is prepared to make. For example, in the headline "In a divisive Games, an opening ceremony in search of unity," the word "unity" is "in search," implying that "unity" is not originally available or reliable. In addition, the "divisive" nature of the Games is definite. The headline "Bots and fake accounts push China's vision of Winter Olympic wonderland" provides a direct answer: there is some form of deception or manipulation in Chinese propaganda, Beijing's primary goal is political.

Third, the *New York Times* has clear limits when praising China-related topics, which would likely lead the reader to form a negative opinion. In terms of criticism, the *New York Times* directly allows negative terms. The “chained woman” is an unabashedly negative term that directly expresses criticism of certain matters in China. The headline “NBC opens Olympics with ‘worst hand imaginable’” also uses quotes to directly convey a negative assessment of the Olympics. In the collected data, the *New York Times* did not cite information praising the Beijing Winter Olympics, and this selective quotation reveals the objectivity of the *New York Times*’ reports on China cannot be fully proven.

A similar situation is seen in news headlines about Russia. While reporting on the excellent performance of Russian athletes, the *New York Times* referred to controversies in headlines such as “A Russian figure skater’s failed test casts shadow over the Games,” “Russia claims team figure skating medals ‘are not subject to revision’”, “As Russian wins mount, so does the scrutiny,” and “‘It’s all just so unfair,’ the coach of a U.S. skater says of the call to let Valieva skate.” These four headlines revolve around the alleged doping of Russian figure skaters, reporting attitudes without giving conclusions and directing readers’ thoughts toward the idea that Russian athletes are at fault.

Finally, the *New York Times* reinforced the idea of nationhood by focusing on U.S. athletes, directly reflecting a nationalist stance in certain headlines. “Fly high, Frog Princess! Well done, Chen No. 3!” uses emotionally loaded language to praise athlete Nathan Chen’s performance as well as nicknames to increase affinity and highlight the fact that Nathan Chen deserves praise even though he did not win the championship. The headlines “Americans take gold and silver in men’s slope-style skiing” and “U.S. figure skaters are rejected in a bid to be awarded their team medals” bring the reader closer by emphasizing the subject’s American identity, clearly promoting American nationalism. In other headlines, the *New York Times* directly mentions the names of U.S. athletes, indicating that they are household names in the country while also providing extremely detailed information that satisfies readers’ need to know more about them, which is also a way to enhance nationalism.

### 4.3. Social Dimension

#### 4.3.1 Beijing Winter Olympics and Diplomatic Boycott

In terms of social practices, the differences between the two newspapers reflect the narrative positions of China and the United States and the broader geopolitical context. *People’s Daily* emphasizes China’s role as a responsible global power and leader in addressing various issues as well as the international community’s recognition of China’s contributions. The *New York Times*, meanwhile, often portrays China as a threat to U.S. interests and values as well as uses unorthodox means to create a false impression. This section discusses the diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

First, the diplomatic boycott is mentioned once in a *People’s Daily* headline but in a weakened state: “Beijing Winter Olympics become the most watched games in

U.S. despite 'diplomatic boycott.'" This headline clearly emphasizes the success of the Olympics as the "most watched games in U.S." and allows readers to ignore or doubt the reliability of the diplomatic boycott, even using quotation marks to indicate a special meaning, possibly negative or sarcastic. In addition, the diplomatic boycott appears only once in the *New York Times* but is described as a message of an objective position: "The opening ceremony drew world leaders despite a U.S. diplomatic boycott."

However, the Winter Olympics faced a diplomatic boycott from several countries. Through a BBC report, we found that a total of 14 countries did not send government officials to the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, of which six explicitly boycotted, six cited the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse, and two cited other reasons and that the U.S. government, which initiated the diplomatic boycott, still sent officials to support American athletes. This confirms that a diplomatic boycott did take place and was not small, but *People's Daily* did not objectively describe the boycott in its headline. In addition, the timing of the report was not immediate as it was released 13 days after the opening ceremony. The *New York Times*, meanwhile, reported on February 4, the day of the opening ceremony. This also shows that *People's Daily* deliberately downplayed the fact that the Winter Olympics was being diplomatically boycotted and expressed some denial.

#### 4.3.2 Beijing Winter Olympics and the Global Pandemic

It is well-known that the Beijing Winter Olympics took place when the world was still enduring the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast to the Tokyo Summer Olympics, which was delayed a year, the Beijing Winter Olympics was not delayed, perhaps indicating that Beijing did a good job of dealing with COVID-19, but a clear dichotomy can be observed between the two media reports on the matter.

*People's Daily* has a total of five reports on COVID-19, all of which convey that the Chinese government has responded well. These headlines are as follows: "Feature: Festivity returns to Macao in Chinese New Year amid COVID-19 pandemic," "Beijing Winter Olympics shows resilience of sport amid pandemic: Reports," "Philippine Olympic chief commends effective COVID-19 response of Beijing Winter Olympics," "IOC highly appreciates China's 'good job' in complex epidemic prevention at Beijing 2022," and "China poised to succeed in Winter Olympics COVID-19 test."

The *New York Times* has nine stories on COVID-19 with varying perspectives but mainly questioning China's epidemic prevention policies: "A 'zero Covid' Olympics," "Zero Covid in China," "Winter Olympics open amid walls, masks and clouds of disinfectant," "The coronavirus continues to sideline Olympic athletes as they gear up for competition," "Coronavirus cases spiked, and then sputtered, at the Winter Games," "A side-effect of China's strict virus policy: Abandoned fruit," "An anti-vaxxer dies of Covid. Do you Empathize?," and "Two years after his death, the Chinese doctor who warned of the virus is remembered."

*People's Daily* cites the positive comments of the Philippine Olympic chief and the IOC as evidence of the Chinese government's good work in preventing the disease and the festive atmosphere and resilience of sports in Macau as examples. However, there is no mention of specific actions of the Chinese government. Meanwhile, the *New York Times* provides some information related to this—"zero Covid," which reads "Amid walls, masks and clouds of disinfectant."

#### 4.3.3 Beijing Winter Olympics and Artificial Snowfall

Beijing's lack of water and snow in the winter raised questions regarding its ability to host the Winter Olympics. For the Winter Olympics, Beijing set some of its mountain events in Chongli District, Zhangjiakou City, located northwest of Beijing, and used artificial snowfall on a large scale. Two media outlets have expressed opposing voices regarding the use of artificial snowfall at the Winter Olympics.

Regarding environmental issues related to "snow," *People's Daily* has six headlines: "New course, good snow conditions thrill Alpine skiers at Beijing 2022," "Recycling water resources, storing snow for snowmaking help achieve efficient utilization of snow during Beijing 2022," "China ensures normal operation of Olympic venues amid first snow in Year of Tiger," "Snowy Beijing 2022 well protected by meteorological, operations teams," "Former French Alpine ski champion says artificial snow at Beijing 2022 a 'success': HuffPost," and "How China developed snowmaking technology for Beijing 2022 amid complex climate conditions." *People's Daily* is clearly trying to convey the idea that artificial snow is scientifically reliable. The headlines clearly mention the use of specialist technology to effectively use water resources and quote former athletes to demonstrate the advantages of good-quality snow for use in Olympic competition.

The *New York Times* stands right across the street. Three related headlines ironically express the lack of good natural snow for the Beijing Winter Olympics: "Beijing wanted the Winter Olympics. All it needed was snow," "A Beijing Games first: Real snow in Zhangjiakou," and "Olympic venues get real snow, a rarity." However, the *New York Times* also did not express a clear criticism of artificial snow as the question of whether it actually causes environmental damage is a controversial topic that must be studied more thoroughly by scientists. Nevertheless, according to BBC, the annual snowfall at Beijing's Yanqing Ski Center was 21 centimeters, so Yanqing was the first Winter Olympics venue to use 100% artificial snow.

#### 4.3.4 Beijing Winter Olympics and Xinjiang Athletes

There is widespread international controversy over how the Chinese government has treated the Uyghurs and other minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The *New York Times* has repeatedly reported that the Chinese government has committed genocide, forced education camps, and other human rights abuses against several

ethnic minorities, mainly Uyghurs, in Xinjiang. However, *People's Daily* has firmly refuted this view, arguing that Beijing's central government has steadfastly supported the construction of Xinjiang and that all ethnic groups in Xinjiang live happily and enjoy human rights guarantees. In this 2022's Olympic Games, the Chinese team sent an Uyghur athlete as the torchbearer to light the main Olympic torch, which captured the attention of all sides.

The current data were also consistent with this tendency. Three news headlines from *People's Daily*, "Female athlete from China's Xinjiang competes in Winter Olympics for second time," "Bearing of Olympic torch by Uighur athlete mirrors true Xinjiang," "Athlete from Xinjiang region refutes rumors, shares interesting stories in Olympic Village," are informative and clearly expressed, faithfully reflecting the content of the news. By using "true Xinjiang," the "refutes rumors" approach emphasizes that the situation in Xinjiang reported by *People's Daily* is correct, implying that the negative reports of other media are false.

The *New York Times* has only one relevant headline, "Hanging the Olympic torch to send a political message." Although this headline does not explicitly refer to the Uyghur torchbearer, the social context of the information adds to the newspaper's position; however, by adding the social context, the *New York Times* clearly takes the position that the runner and his actions represented a political signal, suggesting that the Winter Olympics are politically charged and expressing distrust of Beijing's intentions to host the Games.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 A Pronounced Positive Emotional Tendency in *People's Daily*

*People's Daily* headlines showed significantly more positive words than negative words, while the reverse is true for the *New York Times*. The results of New API's sentiment analysis of all news headlines in both media were similar to those of the lexical dimension. The numbers reflected the polarity of the sentiments expressed in the titles, and sentiment scores were typically expressed as numbers between -1 (strong negative sentiment) and 1 (strong positive sentiment), with 0 corresponding to neutral sentiment. As shown in Table 1, *People's Daily* has 104 positive, 130 neutral, and only 13 negative sentiments, with a total score of 60.2, representing a significantly positive bias. Figure 3 shows a pie chart of this distribution.

**Table 1.** Results of the Sentiment Analysis of *People's Daily* and the *New York Times*

	Headlines	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total score
<i>People's Daily</i>	247	104	130	13	60.2
The <i>New York Times</i>	219	35	150	34	0.1



The large number of positive words in news headlines can convey a sense of optimism and drive the public toward a positive psychological preconception about the events, with the purpose of creating a happy social environment. Combined with the attributes of *People's Daily* as a party newspaper, its reports and discourse often portray the government's image and actions, and the use of positive words is also generally relevant and distinguishable to China-related subjects. Positive terms can promote and emphasize the favorable significance of government actions, thus increasing the government's credibility and trust among the public. However, this practice also prevents various issues and conflicts in society from being discussed in the court of public opinion, which does not facilitate readers' access to information about negative events, reduce discourse, and suppress dissenting voices or critical views.

Notably, the word "wrong" appears only once among all *People's Daily* headlines in the title "U.S. should not go further down the wrong path: Chinese UN ambassador." This is clearly an expression of the Chinese government's displeasure with the United States.

Correspondingly, as shown in Table 1, the sentiment analysis results of the *New York Times* headlines were 35 positive, 34 negative, and 150 neutral with an overall score of 0.1, or extremely neutral, which is partially consistent with its lexical strategy. As a representative media of liberalism, the *New York Times* claims to pursue journalistic integrity and objectivity; hence, its choice of positive and negative words was roughly equal in number, reflecting a balance of attitudes that can help avoid overt ideological positions or biases. Moreover, the significant frequency of "win" and its variants in the positive vocabulary was highly diverse in terms of subjects, be it athletes from the United States, China, Russia, or other countries, indicating that the use of positive words was nondiscriminatory and consistent with the principles of journalistic objectivity and fairness.

## 5.2 The *New York Times*' Criticisms of the Beijing and it's Winter Olympics

The *New York Times* has expressed numerous criticisms regarding the Beijing Winter Olympics through its choice of words, grammar, and syntax. Regarding the Olympics themselves, the *New York Times* has criticized the event for environmental issues, poor viewership, and lack of entertainment. Here are examples: "The Environmentally Unfriendly Secret of the Beijing Olympics," "A Beijing Games first: Real snow in Zhangjiakou," "Why the Beijing Olympics Are So Hard to Watch" and "With Olympics Closing Ceremony, China Celebrates a Joyless Triumph." This analysis reveals that the *New York Times* has not entirely checked its objectivity; that is, the *New York Times* tends to incorporate a biased perspective in its coverage related to China. The *New York Times* does not recognize China's achievements and instead focuses more on China's shortcomings, which influences its reporting strategy on anything involving China to varying degrees.

Although this study focuses on the Winter Olympics, the *New York Times*' coverage of the Olympics is still full of other topics. For example: "For Companies, Winning in China Now Means Losing Somewhere Else" and "This Is the Russia-China Friendship That Nixon Feared." Who Is the Real China? Eileen Gu or the Chained Woman?", "Thomas Bach won't request an inquiry of Peng Shua's accusations unless she asks: 'It's her life.'" "Eileen Gu Is Trying to Soar Over the Geopolitical Divide" and "Bearing an Olympic Torch, and a Politically Loaded Message." These off-topic discussions start from the point of the Winter Olympics but veer away from sports, delving into issues such as business, geopolitics, human rights, and minority issues. These digressions stem from the *New York Times*' overall political disagreements with China, resulting in aggressive public opinion driven by ideological differences. This may be the *New York Times*' interpretation of "free journalism," but it also contains serious political bias.

### **5.3 *People's Daily* builds and maintains the Chinese government's powerful influence in the world**

The headlines in the *People's Daily* play a crucial role in constructing and maintaining the strong influence of the Chinese government on the global stage. This construction is achieved not only through the content of the news itself but also through specific grammatical structures and discourse strategies. The headlines in *People's Daily* typically adopt a "subject-verb-object (SVO)" sentence structure, which clearly positions the Chinese government and its leaders as the subjects, emphasizing their active role and leadership in international affairs. Moreover, when discussing Xi Jinping, *People's Daily* never explicitly states his political role or position but instead implies Xi's authority through the positions of other political figures mentioned alongside him, as in "Xi congratulates Mattarella on re-election as Italian president." This strategy not only highlights the interactions (mostly positive) between Chinese leaders and leaders of other countries but also showcases China's significant role in global politics.

When addressing controversial topics, *People's Daily* never engages in open discussion with two opposite opinions but rather requires readers to accept the viewpoints by asserting their correctness. To achieve this goal, *People's Daily* enhances the legitimacy of its views by quoting authoritative figures. Examples include: "Beijing 2022 makes good progress in gender balance, says IOC chief," "Chinese embassy rebuts Washington Post editorial on Beijing Winter Olympics," and "IOC, ISU to appeal against Russian Anti-Doping Agency lifting suspension on figure skater." However, this strategy of empowering viewpoints through high-power individuals, rather than through successful argumentative defense, does not necessarily validate the correctness of these views.

In sum, it is clear that *People's Daily* headlines portray the power of the Chinese government as paramount in the international arena, to the extent that they hosted a successful Winter Olympics with widespread satisfaction, even exceeding expect-

tations. The countries that are dissatisfied are portrayed as subordinate in the power hierarchy because their discontent does not change the fact that the Olympics was a significant success. For example, while only the U.S. government expressed dissatisfaction with the Winter Olympics, U.S. athletes were satisfied, a U.S. mayor sought advice from President Xi, and their diplomatic boycott failed to achieve any tangible results.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this critical discourse analysis of news headlines from *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* reveals significant differences in how each newspaper frames the Beijing Winter Olympics. The analysis reveals that *People's Daily* predominantly uses positive language, active voice, and quotes from authoritative figures to shape readers' attitudes positively towards the Beijing Winter Olympics. Headlines such as "Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics ready to unite and inspire" highlight the success and international approval of the event. Conversely, the *New York Times* employs a mix of positive and negative sentiments, often using passive voice and indirect language to bring attention to controversies and challenges. The use of metaphors and euphemisms in the *New York Times*' headlines subtly conveys skepticism about China's intentions, thus shaping readers' opinions in a more critical light.

In reference to political stances, *People's Daily* headlines consistently emphasize China's positive image and its role in promoting global unity. This sentiment is evident in headlines like "Commentary: Beijing 2022 illuminates ideal of shared future." The political stance is clear in promoting China's successes and downplaying controversies. In contrast, the *New York Times* maintains a relatively balanced approach but does not shy away from criticizing China's policies and actions, particularly regarding human rights and political issues. Headlines such as "Bots and Fake Accounts Push China's Vision of Winter Olympic Wonderland" reflect this critical stance. The *New York Times* also tends to highlight geopolitical tensions, as seen in "This Is the Russia-China Friendship That Nixon Feared."

This study finds that *People's Daily* constructs a narrative that portrays the Chinese government as a competent and influential global player. This narrative structure is very complete: the CCP and the government have achieved countless accomplishments domestically, and foreign authoritative figures frequently praise China. This strategy effectively reinforces the ideology of China's growing global influence and leadership. In contrast, the *New York Times*, while striving for journalistic objectivity, reflects underlying power dynamics and ideological differences between the U.S. and China. By using passive voice and focusing on controversies, the *New York Times* headlines often question the legitimacy and intentions of the Chinese government. This reflects an ideological stance that aligns with broader Western perspectives on China's political and human rights issues. Additionally, the *New York Times*' occasional use of emotional

language and increased focus when reporting on American athletes also shows that the media does not entirely reject the use of a somewhat nationalistic style of narrative.

This study showed that the construction of news headlines about the Beijing Winter Olympics in *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* was influenced by underlying power relations and ideology. The events reported by *People's Daily* were heavily influenced by the Chinese government's agenda to uphold the CCP's leadership in journalism and defend the party and the state as the top priority in an attempt to construct power relations in which China leads the world. In contrast, the *New York Times*'s coverage manifested the neutral stance of a liberal press, reflecting the paper's objective assessment of governments, including the United States, focusing on criticism of issues such as China's political system and human rights record and attempting to form power relations in which the United States is above both China and Russia. These underlying ideologies influenced the media's representation of the event and led to differences in discourse between the two newspapers.

Ultimately, the findings of this study underscore the role of media in shaping public perceptions and the importance of critically examining news discourse to understand underlying ideologies and power dynamics. By employing different discourse strategies, both newspapers influence how readers perceive the Beijing Winter Olympics and, more broadly, the nations involved. This study contributes to the field of critical discourse analysis by providing insights into the ideological functions of media language in the context of international sports events.

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