

Attitude Analysis of News Discourse from the Perspective of Appraisal Theory: A Case Study of China Daily's Report on COVID-19

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Abstract

Based on Martin's Appraisal Theory, this study takes the English news reports of COVID-19 on the official website of the overseas edition of China Daily as the research corpus, and classifies the corpus from its subsystem, that is, attitude system to conduct the discourse analysis, so as to explore the distribution law of attitude language resources in the corpus, and interpret the attitude hidden behind the news reports. It is found that in the report of COVID-19 in China Daily, the use of affect resources accounts for the largest proportion, followed by judgement resources, and the use of appreciation resources is the least. And the proportion of positive attitude resources is much larger than that of negative attitude resources.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory; News Reports; COVID-19; China Daily; Attitude System.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, the pneumonia epidemic caused by Novel Coronavirus broke out in China, and in March 2020, the epidemic was basically controlled in China, but a large number of outbreaks began in the world. In the face of unknown, sudden and menacing natural disasters, China decisively launched a battle of epidemic prevention and control, putting people's life safety and health first, taking the most comprehensive, strict and thorough prevention and control measures with firm courage and determination, and effectively blocking the chain of virus transmission.

In the era of social information explosion, mass media plays an increasingly important role in transmitting information to the public. Language is the most important carrier for mass media to realize the function of transmitting information [1]. As one of the mass media, news reports provide us with an important way to obtain information. News reports have the characteristics of authenticity and timeliness. China Daily, as an authoritative media and high-quality news release platform in China, is the first to respond to the hot spots of social concern and the epidemic situation that people pay close attention to.

In the 1990s, Martin et al. put forward Appraisal Theory, which is a new development of

interpersonal function in systemic-functional grammar. Appraisal theory itself contains three subsystems, namely "attitude", "engagement" and "gradation", among which attitude system is the core of Appraisal Theory and the focus of this paper. All attitude evaluation resources are divided into positive and negative [2]. Appraisal Theory focuses on interpersonal meaning in discourse. In the past decades, many scholars have studied discourse in different fields, from discourse analysis to translation studies, from foreign language teaching to Chinese and other language studies. Appraisal theory provides a new framework and method for discourse analysis, and has been applied to many fields, including mass media and newspaper text research. Facing the global spread of COVID-19 pandemic, major newspapers and magazines reported a large number of epidemics and made different voices. There is little analysis and research on news discourse about novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic. Therefore, it is of great significance to objectively and profoundly analyze the news discourse about novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic from the perspective of attitude resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies on Appraisal Theory Worldwide

Appraisal Theory can be traced back to 1990s, when J.R.Martin and his team members completed a scientific research project called "Write It Right". It

was not until J.R.Martin's paper *Beyond Exchange Appraisal Systems in English* was officially published that global linguists paid constant attention to "Appraisal Theory" [3]. In the following research, J.R. Martin found that the research on interpersonal function expression in Systemic Functional Linguistics has the shortcoming of ignoring the speaker's own feelings. Finally, J.R. Martin published *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. In this book, they further elaborate on Appraisal Theory and explain in detail the contents of its three subsystems. "Appraisal theory is about evaluation, that is, various attitudes negotiated in discourse, the intensity of emotions involved, and various ways to show value and unite readers." It contains three subsystems, namely engagement, attitude and graduation [4].

Besides J.R.Martin, some foreign linguistic researchers have explored Appraisal Theory in multi-dimensional fields. Peter White applied Appraisal Theory to analyze news discourse in his doctoral thesis, which is the earliest case of Appraisal Theory applied to discourse analysis [5]. C.Painter used Appraisal Theory to explore the interaction between implicit attitude and explicit attitude construction in mother-child conversation [6]. Martin and Hood published *Invoking Attitude: The Play of Graduation in Appraising Discourse*, which attempts to apply Appraisal Theory to academic discourse analysis and further improve the graduation thesis system [7]. M. Ademilokun used Appraisal Theory as a theoretical framework to study the attitude significance in President Harry's speech [8].

In conclusion, Appraisal Theory is a very useful analytical tool. It is of great importance to use Appraisal Theory to reveal interpersonal meaning in different fields. The wide application of this theory proves its practicability in the study of discourse analysis.

Previous Studies on Appraisal Theory in China

Since the introduction of Appraisal Theory into China, Chinese scholars have made great contributions to the development of it. Zhang Delu published *On the Scope and Embodiment of Discourse Tone* in the *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research* [9]. Wang Zhenhua wrote *Evaluation System and Its Operation-New Development of Systemic Functional Linguistics*, which gave a detailed introduction to the evaluation system. So far, the research on Appraisal Theory in China has officially started and has been applied in various fields [10].

In China, the development of Appraisal Theory has attracted the attention of many scholars. Among them, the most important is Li Zhanzi who summarized the application types including commercial packaging discourse, historical discourse, and autobiographical discourse of Appraisal Theory. In

addition, Li Zhanzi also pointed out some problems in discourse analysis. In other words, in the analysis of news discourse, we need to further understand the interpersonal meaning of attitude [11].

There are also many scholars who are devoted to the application of the theory from different aspects. Appraisal Theory is mainly applied in translation, English teaching, social phenomenon research, rhetoric research, discourse analysis theory, discourse analysis practice, news report and so on. Liu Shizhu and Han Jinlong discussed Appraisal Theory and characteristics of news discourse. He pointed out that readers should make it clear that any news discourse is not objective, and no matter where the news comes from, it will have the subjective tendency of the evaluator (author). Readers must learn to infer the author's position, viewpoint and attitude and have certain sensitivity to the evaluation resources in the text [12]. In the practice of discourse analysis, Appraisal Theory has been applied to many kinds of discourses, such as news media (13 articles, such as Chen Xiaoyan, 2007) [13], literature (10 articles, such as Wang Zhenhua, 2004) [14], academic (8 articles, such as Li Zhanzi, 2001)[15], law (4 articles, such as Wang Zhenhua, 2006) [16], advertising (3 articles, such as Guan Binyao, Yang Yuchen, 2011)[17]. Li Wangying, Liu Shuning and Wang Hongli used the attitude system of Appraisal Theory to make a comparative analysis of the relevant reports of "the belt and road initiative" International Cooperation Summit Forum in *China Daily* and the *New York Times*. They explored the distribution characteristics and significance of the three subsystems in the attitude system in related reports, so as to reveal the views of the mainstream media in China and the United States on the "the belt and road initiative" and to provide a useful reference for the further publicity of the initiative[18]. Zeng Yaping and Xie Tingting used Appraisal Theory, from the aspects of attitude system and intervention system, compared eight reports on China's fight against COVID-19 in *China Daily* and *Time*, analyzed the attitudes and viewpoints contained in the news report[19].

RESEARCH METHODS

Data collection

All of the news data in this study are collected from the official website of the overseas edition of *China Daily*. *China Daily* publishes news reports about COVID-19 almost every day, which provides a large amount of sufficient corpus for this study. The author inputs the keyword "COVID-19", and then set the date range from February 1, 2020 to July 31, 2020 from the advanced search, and randomly select 10 news articles from 7718 retrieved news articles for analysis.

Data analysis

A synergy of qualitative and quantitative researches on the news reports regarding COVID-19 unfolds in this thesis. Firstly, a quantitative analysis was

conducted and the distributions of three sub-systems of attitudinal resources were analyzed by means of corpus tool AntConc 3.5.8. A qualitative study was also carried out in this research to explain the characteristics and specific use of attitudinal resources in news reports of China Daily according to specific contexts. The focus of this research is to analyze the attitudes and viewpoints contained in the news language about COVID-19 in China Daily, to help readers understand the discourse rules of media news reports and to analyze the discourse construction of Chinese foreign media. Finally, explorations were made on how Chinese foreign media shape the national image, show the national position, and improve the national soft power by constructing the foreign discourse system.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In order to make the whole results more concise, the author makes the following tables indicating the frequency and percentage of the three subsystems of attitude resources and the frequency and percentage of positive and negative resources in each subsystem. Then, based on the above quantitative results, the author makes a further qualitative analysis of the selected texts in order to help readers understand the discourse rules of media news reports and analyze the discourse construction of Chinese foreign media.

Overview of Attitude Resources on COVID-19 in China Daily

Table-1: Distribution of Attitude Resources in China Daily

Attitude Type	Number	Percent
Affect	151	42.54%
Judgement	108	30.42%
Appreciation	96	27.04%
Total	355	100%

According to Table-1, we can see that attitude resources in China Daily's news reports about COVID-19 are ample. The table displays that there are entirely 355 attitude resources in 10 pieces of news in China Daily. Among the three subsystems of attitude resources, affect occupies the largest proportion. There

are 151 types of affect resources in China Daily with the proportion of 42.54%. Judgement takes the second place, and there are totally 108 judgement resources in China Daily, occupying =30.42%. Appreciation is the last one. There are altogether 96 appreciation resources in China Daily, accounting for 27.04%.

Table-2: Distribution of Attitude-polarity in China Daily

Attitude-polarity	Number	Percent
Positive	306	86.2%
Negative	49	13.8%
Total	355	100%

When it comes to the attitude-polarity in Table 4-2, it obviously can be concluded that positive attitude outweighs negative attitude. In general, there are 306 positive attitudes in China Daily, accounting for 86.2% and 49 negative attitudes, taking up 13.8%. The distribution and frequency of attitude-polarity can indicate that Chinese reporters and people have positive attitudes towards COVID-19, believing that we can overcome the current difficulties and overcome the epidemic together.

Analysis of Attitude Resources on COVID-19 in China Daily

Attitude resources, as the center of appraisal system, consist of three subsystems: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation. This chapter focuses on the analysis of each subcategory of attitude resources on COVID-19 in China Daily through adequate exemplification to reveal the distribution of attitude resources in this kind of news discourse, analyze the attitudes and viewpoints contained in the news language, and help readers

understand the discourse rules of media news reports and analyze the discourse construction of Chinese foreign media.

Affect of China Daily Report on COVID-19

Affect refers to the expression of people's emotions and feelings. The value of affective expression lies in that it clearly reveals the speaker's attitude towards a certain phenomenon. The speaker uses these language resources to express the influence of an event or phenomenon on his emotion, and evaluates the event or phenomenon from the perspective of affect [20]. Affect, as the core of attitude resources, has to do with positive and negative feelings: do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored [21]? According to people's feelings, they can be divided into three categories: un/happiness, dis/satisfaction and in/security. The detailed statistics of affect resources on COVID-19 will be displayed in the following table.

Table-3: Distribution of Affect Resources in China Daily

Affect type	Positive		Negative		Total	Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Un/happiness	2	1.32%	0	0%	2	1.32%
In/security	117	77.48%	24	15.89%	141	93.38%
Dis/satisfaction	7	4.64%	1	0.66%	8	5.30%
Total	126	83.44%	25	16.56%	151	100%

According to Table-3, it can be found that there are 151 types of affect resources in China Daily, of which there are 126 positive resources, accounting for the vast majority, that is, 83.44%, while there are 25 negative resources, accounting for 16.56%. All the three subsystems of affect system are involved, 2 of them are un/happiness, accounting for 1.32%, 141 of them are in/security, accounting for 93.38%, and 8 of them are dis/satisfaction, accounting for 5.30%.

COVID-19, as a new disease with extremely high infectivity and great harm to society, it hinders the acquisition of social individual happiness and satisfaction. Therefore, in China Daily' report, the lack of happiness and satisfaction makes it greatly reduce the language resources of happiness in the use of affect language resources, and instead greatly increase the language resources of security.

Example 1: In addition to Serbia, countries including Peru, Bangladesh, Algeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea have welcomed (Affect:happiness) Chinese medical teams, who have shared China's successful experience in fighting the virus to contribute to global pandemic control.

Examples 1 is the happiness resources in the affect language resources of China Daily. The above example shows that many countries welcome China's medical teams. Since the outbreak, China is willing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other countries, including the United States, to jointly meet the challenges of the epidemic, especially in the research and development, production and distribution of vaccines and specific drugs, so as to make due contributions to blocking the spread of the virus. China has always adhered to the concept of a community with shared future for mankind, shouldered the responsibility of a big country, and made great contributions to the fight against the epidemic in various countries.

Example 2(a): With its rapid spread in many parts of the world, COVID-19 has put lives and health of people around the world under grave threat (Affect:insecurity), seriously disrupted (Affect:insecurity) the flow of people worldwide and the global economy, and posed a severe challenge (Affect:insecurity) to us BRICS countries.

Example 2(b): To overcome the global challenge posed by the coronavirus pandemic, China's envoy to the United Nations called for solidarity

(Affect:security), cooperation (Affect:security), mutual support (Affect:security) and assistance (Affect:security), while saying "beggar-thy-neighbor or scapegoating will lead us nowhere", and "any acts of stigmatization and politicization must be rejected" out of hand.

Example 2(a) and Example 2(b) are the in/security resources in the affect language resources of China Daily. In Example 2(a), "grave threat", "seriously disrupted" and "severe challenge" denotes insecurity and emphasizes the characteristics of rapid, wide spread and great harm of the epidemic. In Example 2(b), "solidarity", "cooperation", "mutual support" and "assistance" mean security. The global spread of the epidemic is worrying. Facing the serious threat of COVID-19 to human life safety and health, it is imperative to unite and cooperate to overcome the epidemic. Whether it is to stop the spread of the virus or resist the worsening global economic recession, it needs the solidarity and cooperation of the international community. We all need to adhere to multilateralism and promote the building of a community with shared future for mankind. China has proved with practical actions that unity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon for the international community to overcome the epidemic.

Example 3(a): Senior Sao Tome and Principe officials, including the prime minister and health minister, expressed their gratitude (Affect-satisfaction) for China's assistance, the commission said.

Example 3(b): "During the toughest time in China's fight against COVID-19, many countries came forward with sincere help and solid support. We are grateful for (Affect-satisfaction) the valuable help," he said.

Example 3(a) and Example 3(b) are the dis/satisfaction resources in the affect language resources of China Daily. Example 3 illustrates that other countries are grateful to China for its assistance, and Example 4 illustrates that China thanks other countries for extending a helping hand to China and giving China favorable help and firm support at the most difficult time in fighting the epidemic. It also shows that the most powerful weapon for the international community to overcome the epidemic is to help each other, improve the efficiency of the fight against the epidemic, strengthen cooperation in an all-round way and jointly fight against the epidemic.

Judgement of China Daily Report on COVID-19

Judgement involves our attitude towards behavior, which we appreciate or criticize, praise or condemn. Judgement can be divided into judgment related to “social esteem” and judgement related to “social sanction”. Social esteem deals with normality, capacity and tenacity. Normality has to do with unusual people; capacity means someone’s ability; tenacity refers to a person who is determined. Social sanction is related to veracity and propriety. Veracity refers to an honest person; propriety means that a person has morality. More importantly, when it comes to

judgement, a feature must be considered. Like affect, judgement also is divided into positive evaluation and negative evaluation. Positive evaluation is about appreciation and praise, while negative evaluation is in regard to criticism and condemnation.

Judgement resources are the evaluation made by various countries on the moral character and values of the Chinese nation and China’s national image. The following table will present the distribution of judgement resources on COVID-19 in China Daily.

Table-4: Distribution of Judgement Resources in China Daily

Judgement Type	Positive		Negative		Total	Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Social Esteem	62	57.41%	15	0%	77	71.30%
Normality	1	0.93%	2	15.89%	3	2.78%
Capacity	32	29.63%	12	0.66%	44	40.74%
Tenacity	29	26.85%	1	16.56%	30	27.78%
Social Sanction	31	28.70%	0	0%	31	28.70%
Veracity	14	12.96%	0	0%	14	12.96%
Propriety	17	15.74%	0	0%	17	15.74%
Total	93	86.11%	15	13.89%	108	100%

As shown in Table-4, there are 108 types of judgement resources in China Daily, of which there are 93 positive resources, accounting for the vast majority, that is, 86.11%, while there are 15 negative resources, accounting for 13.89%. All the three subsystems of judgement system are involved, 77 of them are social esteem, accounting for 71.30%, of which there are 3 normality, accounting for 2.78%, 44 capacity, accounting for 40.74% and 30 tenacity, accounting for 27.78%. 31 of them are social sanction, occupying 28.70%, of which there are 14 veracity, occupying 12.96%, 17 propriety, occupying 15.74%. According to Table 4, China Daily uses more social esteem resources and less social sanction resources in the use of judgement resources. Among the social esteem resources, capacity and tenacity resources account for a large proportion, which reflects China’s strong anti-epidemic strength and indomitable anti-epidemic spirit.

Social Esteem

Example 1(a): In addition to Serbia, countries including Peru, Bangladesh, Algeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea have welcomed Chinese medical teams, who have shared China’s successful (+Judgement-Social esteem- capacity)experience in fighting the virus to contribute to global pandemic control.

Example 1(b): The fact that China has been a strong (+Judgement-Social esteem-capacity) force behind international anti-epidemic cooperation is because our own experience has made us fully empathetic with other peoples suffering from similar difficulties.

Example 1(a) and Example 1(b) are capacity resources in the judgement language resources of China Daily. Example 1(a) shows that China has helped many countries fight COVID-19, shared successful experience in fighting the epidemic, and made great contributions to the prevention and control of the world epidemic. It also shows that China has a strong ability to fight the epidemic and has the responsibility of a big country. Example 1(b) means that China has a strong anti-epidemic force and does its utmost to lend a helping hand to the international community. Because we have experienced hardships and are well aware of the difficulties involved, we will help other countries fight the epidemic with empathy.

Example 2(a): We are confident that under the firm (+Judgement-Social esteem-tenacity) stewardship of BRICS leaders, with the united, painstaking efforts (+Judgement-Social esteem-tenacity) of our peoples, and the strong support of the global community, we will overcome the difficulties, and mankind will defeat the virus.

Example 2(b): In addition to making personal visits to guide COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control efforts (+Judgement-Social esteem-tenacity), Chinese public health experts have also maintained exchanges with their counterparts in many other countries and regions affected by the pandemic over the past few months through means such as organizing and attending video seminars and publishing academic research papers in international journals.

Example 2(a) and Example 2(b) are tenacity resources in the judgement language resources of China

Daily. Example 2(a) is the speech delivered by Wang Yi, China's state councilor and foreign minister, at an extraordinary meeting of BRICS ministers of foreign affairs. "firm" shows the firmness and confidence of China in fighting the epidemic, and "painstaking efforts" shows the unrelenting endeavors made by the Chinese people in fighting the epidemic, revealing the unity of the Chinese people and their strong sense of national pride.

Social Sanction

Example 1: "They took concrete action to interpret China's principal of building relations with Africa based on sincerity (+Judgement-Social sanction-veracity), practical results, affinity and good faith (+Judgement-Social sanction-veracity), and China's efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind," Zhang says.

Example 1 is veracity resource in the judgement language resources. Example 1 reveals Chinese companies and Chinese community in Senegal actively participated in Senegal's fight against COVID-19 with genuineness and trust, showing that China is a friendly and responsible big country.

Example 2(a): On top of paying its assessed contributions to the WHO on time and in full, China donated (+Judgement-Social sanction-propriety) \$20 million to the WHO, and this was followed by another donation (+Judgement-Social sanction-propriety) of \$30 million announced just a few days ago.

Example 2(b): As representatives of major emerging countries with global influence, we BRICS countries must act in the interest of the well-being of humankind, and stand by justice (+Judgement-Social sanction-propriety) and equity (+Judgement-Social sanction-propriety). We must make the right call and do the right thing. This is us living up to our due responsibilities. It is also what our peoples and the global community expect from us.

Example 2(a) and Example 2(b) are propriety resources in the judgement language resources. Example 2(a) demonstrates that in addition to paying its assessed contributions to WHO in full and on time, China has also donated funds to WHO on many occasions, reflecting China's selfless dedication and its role as a big country. Example 2(b) reveals the BRICS countries' determination to uphold fairness and justice. The global epidemic prevention and control war has become a war to safeguard global public health security, a war to maintain human health and well-being, a war to defend world prosperity and development, a war to stand up for international moral conscience, which is related to the future and destiny of mankind. The international community should strengthen confidence, unite and cooperate, fulfill its duties, and strive for a great victory against the epidemic.

Appreciation of China Daily Report on COVID-19

Appreciation system belongs to aesthetic category, which refers to the evaluation of text/process and phenomenon, and has both positive and negative meanings. The system is formed around three aspects, namely, reaction, composition and valuation. Reaction is oriented towards interpersonal meaning, describing the emotional influence of discourse on readers/listeners/viewers. Halliday thinks that reaction is emotional reaction^[22]. Reaction has two aspects: impact and quality. Impact refers to the degree of attractiveness of the text/process; Quality refers to how much influence the text/process has on feelings. Composition is discourse-oriented, describing the complexity and details of objects. There are also two aspects of composition: balance and complexity. Balance refers to whether the text/process is commensurate; Complexity refers to whether the text/process is too complicated to understand. Valuation refers to judging whether the text/process is important and valuable when looking at the text/process by social standards. The following table will offer the distribution of appreciation resources on COVID-19 in China Daily.

Table-5: Distribution of Appreciation Resources in China Daily

Type	Positive		Negative		Total	Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Reaction	3	3.13%	0	0%	3	3.13%
Impact	2	2.08%	0	0%	2	2.08%
Quality	1	1.04%	0	0%	1	1.04%
Composition	14	14.58%	5	5.21%	19	19.79%
Balance	1	1.04%	2	2.08%	3	3.13%
Complexity	13	13.54%	3	3.13%	16	16.67%
Valuation	70	72.92%	4	4.17%	74	77.08%
Total	87	90.63%	9	9.37%	96	100%

From Table-5, it can be found that in China Daily, valuation takes the priority in number, occurring 74 times, occupying 72.92%, while the frequency of valuation in positive and negative is roughly different,

occurring 70 and 4 times respectively. When it comes to the subcategories of composition (occurring 19 times, taking up 19.79%), it can be classified into balance and complexity. Moreover, the reaction occurs 3 times,

occupying 3.13%, and the positive obviously outweighs the negative. The following is an analysis of specific examples of appreciation resources.

Example 1: “The Extraordinary (+Appreciation-reaction-impact) China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19 just took place, and it was such a success. At this time, we want to fully implement the ‘defeating COVID-19 with solidarity and cooperation’ theme of the summit,” chief of the Chinese technical assistance team Gong Zhen says.

Example 2: In Zimbabwe, the team also prepared detailed (+Appreciation-composition-complexity) written suggestions on COVID-19 control and prevention, which were presented to the country’s health minister. The document was based on China’s experiences — including carrying out early testing, reporting and the isolation and treatment of patients — and took into account the situation in Zimbabwe, said Zhu, also deputy head of the Hunan Provincial Health Commission.

Example 3: “In Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea, local officials and experts strongly applauded China’s achievements (+Appreciation-valuation) in COVID-19 control and prevention, and valued our experiences in fighting the pandemic,” said Zhu Yimin, who headed a 12-member expert team to the two African countries in May.

In Example 1, “Extraordinary” shows that China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19 is of great significance and has been a complete success. Developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, especially African countries, have weak public health systems, which make it difficult to independently cope with the severe challenges brought by the epidemic. Helping them improve their ability and level of epidemic prevention and control is the top priority of global anti-epidemic. China has always been a responsible big country, providing continuous assistance to countries and regions with weak ability to cope with the epidemic.

As can be seen from Example 2, “detailed” indicates the seriousness and prudence of the Chinese foreign support expert team in the prevention and control of the epidemic in other countries, which is always the style of China. They are calm, cautious, courageous and decisive in face of crisis, demonstrating China’s strong national soft power.

Example 3 shows that although the COVID-19 epidemic situation is serious and rapidly spreading all over the world, becoming a global public health crisis, China is not afraid of danger, showing the world China’s speed, efficiency and ability, and setting an example for the global fight against the epidemic, which has been widely praised by the world.

CONCLUSION

Attitude system is applied in the analysis of the news reports about COVID-19 epidemic in China Daily, a mainstream media in China. The research shows that, firstly, among the 306 attitude resources in the corpus, affect resources account for the largest proportion, followed by judgement resources, and finally appreciation resources, while the three types of attitude resources are mainly positive discourse, which reflects China’s positive emotional and positive attitude tendency towards fighting the epidemic. Secondly, attitude resources of the corpus have the function of building the national image. The evaluation discourse of China itself and other countries on China’s fight against the epidemic has built a united, cooperative, self-giving, capable, responsible and reliable image of China through a large number of positive affect, judgement and appreciation resources.

Appraisal Theory is a supplement and new development to traditional Systemic Functional Linguistics, and there are few researches on attitude system analyzing news report about COVID-19 using corpus tools. In addition, as a major global emergency, the corpus about COVID-19 pandemic is time-sensitive. At present, most of the related researches on COVID-19 pandemic are medical researches, and the research combined with linguistics is rare.

Although the present research provides a new perspective for the application of Appraisal Theory, it is not without limitations. There is still room for further research, for example, the research perspective of this paper is only positive discourse analysis, and the corpus obtained is mainly positive discourse of China’s fight against the epidemic. However, there are still many critical voices in the international community, which is worthy of us to conduct discourse research from a critical perspective. In addition, the COVID-19 epidemic is not over yet, and the analysis results of the corpus can only represent part of the epidemic stages, which can provide a reference for follow-up research.

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