


Representing state identity with journalistic attitudes: a corpus-assisted linguistic analysis of CGTN's trade dispute coverage

Jiannan Song

Xi'an International Studies University (China) ✉ 

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EN Abstract: This research explores the relationship between journalistic attitudes and the state identity of China Global Television Network (CGTN). It undertakes a corpus-assisted study of the linguistic representation of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation in the trade dispute coverage of CGTN and the US media outlets at two levels: (1) prosody and social actors; (2) the preference for appraisal relations. It shows that CGTN manifests its state identity in attitudinal officialization and harmonization. Highlighting collectiveness in the choice of news agendas, actors, and prosody, CGTN prioritizes the appraiser's role of the group mind when expressing journalistic attitudes and is more inclined to draw on Judgment to stress the moral basis. A survey of journalistic attitudes in CGTN's trade dispute coverage enables us to elaborate on how the Chinese state media constructs its identity in news discourse.

Keywords: state identity; CGTN; attitudes; trade dispute.

CH 新闻语料库辅助下国家身份的态度表征研究： 基于CGTN贸易争端报道的个案研究

摘要：本研究通过分析中国环球电视网（CGTN）对中美贸易争端的新闻报道，探讨其态度表达形式的符号化过程。采用语料库辅助分析方法，重点探讨情感、判断与鉴赏等态度意义在语义韵、社会参与者关系以及在评价偏好上的表征特征。研究结果表明，CGTN在新闻议程、社会参与者和语义韵的选择中，赋予群体评价者角色，通过道德框架突出其态度评价的理性基础。贸易争端报道的态度表达模式为系统分析中国国家媒体身份提供了有力依据。

关键词：CGTN；态度；贸易争端；国家媒体

Index: 1. Introduction. 2. Journalistic attitudes. 3. Contextualizing the state identity of CGTN in an international setting. 4. Methodology. 4.1. Theoretical background and research questions. 4.2. Data collection and analytic procedures. 5. Findings. 5.1. Representing the majority: collectiveness in CGTN's attitudes. 5.2 Rationalizing CGTN's attitudes through Judgmental prosody. 6. Discussion. 7. Conclusion. Acknowledgments. CREdIT authorship contribution. Bibliographic references.

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1. Introduction

In 2019, CGTN news anchor Liu Xin joined Fox Business Network news host Trish Regan for a live television discussion on China-US trade issues. It was the first time that news anchors from China and the US had faced off live. The much-anticipated dialogue sparked widespread attention from audiences across the world. As a national flagship station broadcasting in English, CGTN, with the advertisement slogan “see the difference,” has always been a primary drive to disseminate China's observations on essential issues. Traditionally, there has been an important topic in Chinese journalism studies, i.e., how a content-based analysis of news reports can reveal the state-owned media's negotiation of national identities and ideologies (Wang & Ge, 2020; Li, 2021). In a different light, this study probes into the linguistic attribution of state media's national identity. It brings a corpus-assisted study that compares the coverage of CGTN with those of America-based media outlets about the China-US trade dispute regarding the selection of social actors and semantic prosody. In

particular, this study specifies the attitudinal construction of CGTN's coverage of the China-US trade dispute and explores the public diplomacy-inspired motivations of CGTN's journalistic attitudes. For this article, state identity is the perception of the state and its interest and action in the global community (Wendt, 1999).

2. Journalistic attitudes

In the production and dissemination of news discourse, journalistic attitudes convey values, feelings, or judgments, including evaluations and emotions of all kinds (Biber et al., 2000), and reflect the plurality of news values and newsworthiness (Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 2013; Hartley, 2019). The concept of attitudes in most journalism studies is typically related to emotionality and always brings into focus the violation of objectivity in news reporting (e.g., Pantti, 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). It is inevitable for a media outlet to narrate and infuse narratives with emotions (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013) and shape public opinions (Fairclough, 1995; Hartley, 2019). A piece of news to deliver information is in passing an instigator of emotions (Song, 2021). A growing body of research has demonstrated that emotionality can operate alongside objectivity because emotional expressions can be heavily policed and strategically disciplined in journalistic discourse (Bednarek, 2006; Stenvall, 2008; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). Bednarek (2006) notices that the news discourse of Anglo-American or Western media is more ethnocentric. Lombardo (2008) finds that when reporting the Iraq war, CBS is prone to associate the US with democratic and humanitarian values by using a set of attitudes connoting patriotism. Journalistic attitudes may vary through time to a degree and across media at any moment in time. In British society, some right-leaning tabloids tend to express unfavorable attitudes to Islamic people between 2004 and 2006 but favorably to them between 2005 and 2008 (Baker et al., 2013). Media outlets have become more devoted to the diversity of emotional styles, the acceptability of journalistic involvement, and the audience's reaction to journalistic attitudes (Peters, 2011). It is worth noting that Martin and White (2005) argue that attitudes in discourse are an important resource for addressing appraisals and realizing interpersonal purposes. Some linguists have found that many linguistic and discursive resources can realize, background, obscure, or suppress journalistic attitudes, such as lexical items, dramatic tension, detailed descriptions, anecdotal leads, juxtaposition, and personalized storytelling (Bednarek, 2008; Koivunen et al., 2021).

3. Contextualizing the state identity of CGTN in an international setting

Chinese state media is affiliated with government institutions (Zhao, 2012). It plays the role of provider of advisory attitudes from the Communist Party of China (Hong et al., 2009; Chen, 2017) and has the authoritative and solemn discretion of setting the tone (Liu & Leung, 2021; Meng, 2018) for the orientation of public opinion (Zhao, 2012). In other words, it is the official attitudes of the state as publicized by the media rather than the private attitudes of the staff working with the media. It is found that state media always supports official diplomatic policies (Hocking, 2005; Rawnsley, 2015). In a report published in 2011, Zhang Lisheng, the director of research and development of China's state media, confirms faith in international broadcasting's capacity to play an essential role in China's public diplomacy activities and in changing the global conversation about the country (Rawnsley, 2015). To some extent, attitudes from Chinese state media are a weathervane of China's diplomatic signals. McEneaney et al. (2013) discover that as the instant context of diplomatic relations varies, the state media's attitudes change accordingly. They find that its journalistic attitudes toward the UK's economic activities have switched to positive during the London Olympic Games. Likewise, Wang and Ge (2020) note that China has different images in the coverage of the China-US trade dispute, such as the victim of the trade war, defender of free trade, the driver for negotiations, and beneficiary of cooperation, in the hope of demonstrating China's active role in de-escalating the trade dispute. A proper understanding of the features of CGTN's journalistic attitudes requires us to situate them in the journalistic contexts in which they are embedded. One issue of journalism studies in China is how the state and state-owned media communicate official ideology to international and domestic audiences (Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2003; Meng, 2018). Some media studies have focused on the different profiles of the image that Chinese state media endeavor to project and enhance (d'Hooghe, 2014; Yang, 2017). The concepts of sovereignty, mainstream ideology, and public diplomacy always interconnect with Chinese state media's news reporting. As CGTN continues to grow globally, it has made considerable efforts to balance the Anglophonic power of discourse on international affairs and to communicate directly to the foreign public with China's distinctive attitudes. Communications from CGTN to foreign audiences have become more critical and are becoming the primary force of China's soft power with the foreign public to safeguard and promote national interests (d'Hooghe, 2014; Wang, 2011). The objective of Chinese state media is to be an authoritative and reliable provider of information, analyses and comments for global readers with a particular focus on China (Yang 2017). Chinese state media positions itself in support of communist universalism over liberal universalism and is responsible for national solidarity, reputation, and development (Vollmer, 2012). Nye (2012) notices that public diplomacy is essential in winning hearts and minds on the ground that it attracts others in world politics. The central government has developed instructions for news media in the form of an official line aimed at creating support for the goals and policies pursued by the CPC (Stockmann, 2013). Yet, few follow-up studies have been conducted to prove how journalistic attitudes in news reporting can be drawn on to identify the state media.

4. Methodology

4.1. Theoretical background and research questions

The linguistic analysis of journalistic attitudes stands on: (1) Appraisal Theory, which locates the study of journalistic attitudes within an appraisal relation; (2) the connection of social actors and prosody, which actualizes

the analytical procedures for scrutinizing attitudes in CGTN's news. A complete appraisal relation has three components: the appraiser, the appraised or trigger, and the relevant evaluative dimensions (Bednarek, 2009). The appraisers engender attitudes towards the appraised targets against the evaluative dimensions. Attitudes analysis in news reporting is required to ascertain the social actor's role as an appraiser or appraised in an appraisal relation. An attitude is an appraisal of a person, behavior, place, or thing with an individual's predisposed state of mind regarding a value, ranging from negative to positive (Bednarek, 2006). The attitude system in Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) is a lexically-based but discursively-oriented analytical tool for specifying evaluative dimensions. It generally involves three semantic categories—Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, which correspond to emotion, ethics, and aesthetics in a rhetorical sense. Affect mainly deals with emotional responses, signifying reactions to and feelings about things (Martin & White, 2005:42). Judgment is concerned with ethical or moral assessments of human behaviors according to “norms about how people should and shouldn't behave” (Martin, 2000:155). Appreciation attends to aesthetic reviews of “products, performances, and naturally occurring phenomena” (Martin, 2000:159). Attitudinal categories can be further identified with several valences (Martin & White, 2005). Affect is framed with four defining features, i.e., inclination, happiness, satisfaction, and security; Judgment is assessed either by social esteem (i.e., normality, capacity, and tenacity) or by social sanction (i.e., veracity, propriety). Appreciation is interpreted from the structural properties of an object or event, i.e., reaction, composition, and valuation. Moreover, Martin and White (2005:67) also clarify the distinction between inscribed and invoked attitudes. The former is always clearly denoted, but as to the latter, attitudes are connoted, implied, or triggered by narratives. The semantic system provides a canonical reference for identifying and classifying most kinds of attitudes in news discourse.

Social actors are usually represented by classes, a group of members, such as political figures, officials, celebrities, personalities, and other specific, identifiable individuals (Bell, 1991; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2007). Media-oriented preference in specifying the social actors engaged in the event can reflect different social structures and environments in communication at all levels. Van Dijk (2009:72) argues that social actors may activate many associated properties, such as specific abilities, knowledge, and other social representations shared by the group. Several journalistic research has made evident the ubiquity of media's linguistic creation of an environment for understanding the object within it (Chemero, 2003; Nerlich et al., 2012). The ecological niche in context offers or furnishes the recognition or perception of an attitude. Two notions of corpus linguistics are worth revisiting: semantic preference and prosody. The former is the restriction of regular co-occurrence to items that share a semantic feature (Sinclair, 2004). As Bublitz (1995:11) notes, “constantly using a word in the same kind of context can eventually give rise to a shift in its meaning: the word adopts semantic features from an adjacent item.” The appraisals toward a given object are related to the chronic collocates of specific attitudes (Oster, 2010; Xiao & McEnery, 2006). Related to semantic preference is semantic prosody, also known as attitudinal prosody (Cheng, 2013; Shin, 2020). Semantic prosody refers to an extended unit of meaning established through consistent collocates that may express the speaker's attitudes (Louw, 2000; Shin, 2020). The analysis of semantic preference is the cardinal rule to sort out the attitudinal prosody (Adolphs, 2006; Hunston, 2007; Sinclair, 2004; Partington, 2015). The current study attends to the following research questions:

1. Compared with the major media outlets in the US, how does CGTN express journalistic attitudes about the trade dispute using social actors and semantic prosody in its coverage?
2. How does CGTN articulate the state identity by deploying journalistic attitudes?

4.2. Data collection and analytic procedures

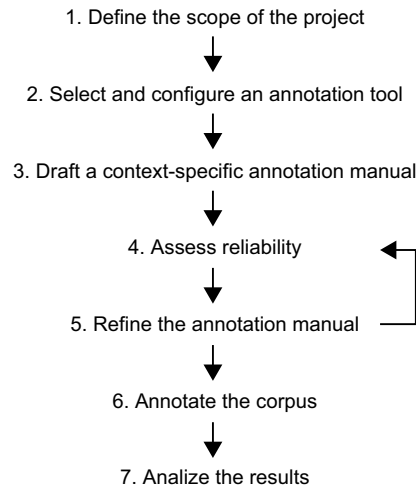
I manually collected the corpus data from the CGTN news website (<http://www.cgtn.com/>). I only selected the China-US trade war news reports that had “trade,” “war,” and “China-US trade” incorporated in the headlines or keywords from March 2018 to November 2019, during which the two sides had simultaneously debated this issue.

Dataset 1 consisted of 54 news texts (4384-word types, 34,325-word tokens). A reference corpus dataset was collected similarly from the websites of the mainstream media outlets in the US (CNN News; the New York Daily News (NYDN); Voice of America (VOA) etc.) for the equivalent reportage. To balance the two datasets, Dataset 2 consisted of 56 news texts (4233-word types, 32,227-word tokens). I chose CGTN to represent Chinese state media for three reasons. Firstly, it has relatively intensive English reporting about the US-China trade dispute. Secondly, it is an influential player in the global news arena and is now accessible in more than 130 countries via the internet. Its online news can reach millions of households worldwide and enjoy popularity in the news market. More importantly, CGTN integrates China's national and international TV and radio networks to form a new organization known internationally as the “Voice of China” (Li & Wu, 2018). As for the comparable dataset, I chose the news reports from CNN, NYDN, and VOA, the news outlets that can represent the Anglophone climate of pluralism. I compared the two distinct datasets for mainly pinning down CGTN's unique way of officializing attitudes in news reports.

I processed the two datasets with the assistance of the AntConc software program, a powerful platform for examining linguistic features. It started with automatically ranking the most frequently used keywords in Dataset 1 (CGTN corpus) according to their keyness values. The same process was applied to Dataset 2 (the US News corpus). The keywords of Database 1 and Database 2 were compared in parallel. Those that function as social actors, such as specific nations, institutions, or people, were selected for more analyses.

Considering that we needed to decipher the attitudes from the reportage, a corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) approach was adopted for the data analysis. A CADS provides a quantitative corpus method with detailed qualitative research, which enables researchers to make richer observations than are typically analyzed using qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Kim, 2014).

Figure 1. An overview of the stepwise method for annotating appraisal (Fuoli, 2018)



Firstly, the social actors were identified from a list of keywords automatically generated by the AntConc software; subsequently, the collocates inscribing or invoking attitudes towards the social actors within each concordance line were manually checked and extracted according to a stepwise approach to annotating appraisal (Fuoli, 2018) (Figure 1). Finally, the candidate attitudinal collocates were identified and grouped according to the attitudinal categories. This attitude-coding scheme was applied to Dataset 1 and Dataset 2 alike. The attitudinal prosody of the significant social actors was displayed and put together to examine the differences.

5. Findings

5.1. Representing the majority: collectiveness in CGTN's attitudes

Keywords are the more frequent words employed in a dataset compared to another dataset according to log-likelihood calculation (Scott & Tribble, 2006:55-58). The AntConc program automatically set the "cut-off" point at $p = 0.05$ for obtaining a manageable yet informative list of keywords. The linguistic and textual evidence is suggestive of the aboutness of a particular dataset and the salient social actors of news stories. Table 1 shows that CGTN favors the social actors characteristic of collective identities in the dispute (e.g., US, sino, China, people, government, countries, etc.) and has positive views about the ongoing conflicts (e.g., development, strategic, constructive, etc.). The keywords analyses have revealed a marked preference in the news agenda about the China-US trade dispute. Meanwhile, China's diplomatic guidelines were manifested in how CGTN observes and understands the trade dispute issue. CGTN attempts to clarify the benefits of bilateral cooperation by underplaying the adverse effects of the dispute. As for Dataset 2, many efforts are paid to elaborate on the underlying reasons that caused the trade dispute. For instance, the steel overcapacity, the North Korean nuclear problem, and unbalanced tariffs on aluminum and steel products. Significant concerns are put on the specific aspects of the trade dispute but not on diplomatic levels.

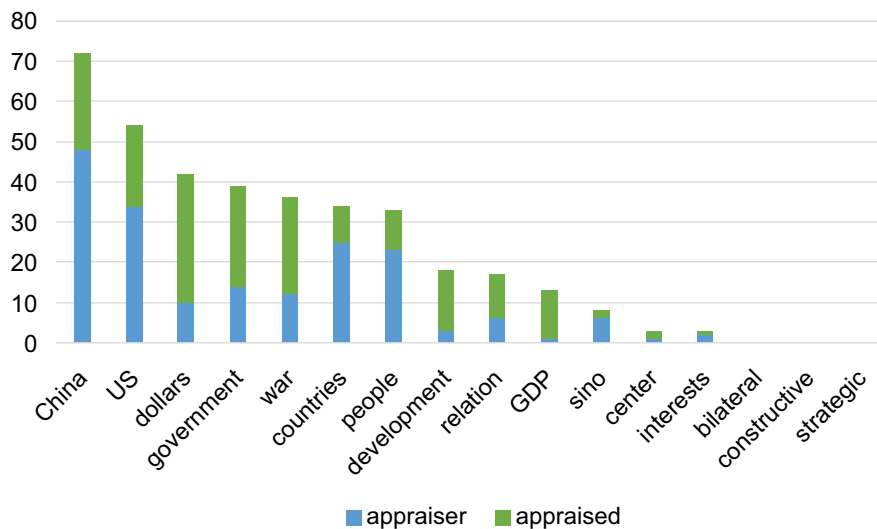
Table 1. Keywords list of CGTN and the US media reporting China-US trade dispute

Rank	Keywords in Dataset 1	Frequency in Dataset 1	Frequency in Dataset 2	p	Keywords in Dataset 2	Frequency in Dataset 2	Frequency in Dataset 1	p
1	dollars	84	3	0.004	Trump	336	155	0.021
2	US	704	370	0.040	steel	86	9	0.006
3	war	258	103	0.015	Beijing	129	29	0.008
4	sino	26	0	0.001	Korea (North)	103	0	0.004
5	relations	46	4	0.002	aluminum	60	3	0.004
6	development	45	6	0.002	administration	91	6	0.006
7	GDP	45	0	0.001	action	32	4	0.002
8	China	730	499	0.041	tariffs	226	1	0.015

Rank	Keywords in Dataset 1	Frequency in Dataset 1	Frequency in Dataset 2	p	Keywords in Dataset 2	Frequency in Dataset 2	Frequency in Dataset 1	p
9	people	65	18	0.004	president	131	3	0.008
10	strategic	18	0	0.001	billion	127	134	0.008
11	countries	103	41	0.006	official	35	5	0.002
12	center	15	0	0.001	ZTE	27	2	0.001
13	government	56	2	0.021	Washington	60	3	0.004
14	interests	10	2	0.021	missile	15	0	0.001
15	bilateral	7	0	0.001	Huawei	32	6	0.002
16	constructive	10	2	0.001	technology	58	23	0.004

I specifically focus on the keywords eligible to be social actors. CGTN would habitually identify the social actors of the trade dispute by country’s names (e.g., US, sino, China, etc.) and unspecific groups (e.g., people, government, countries, etc.). By contrast, American news reports mostly use celebrities (e.g., Trump, president, etc.), particular places (e.g., Beijing, Washington, etc.), and institutions (e.g., administration, ZTE, Huawei, etc.) as the primary social actors. Partially influenced by the social context of Chinese collectivism (Triandis, 2018), there is a tendency in CGTN’s reporting to have the social actors identified as groups. However, in an individualistic society, the tradition of representative government has taken root, and in most cases, Dataset 2 identifies the social actors as individuals. It is worth noting that the prominence of collective identities in the coverage of the trade dispute underpins CGTN’s cognitive connection with a broader community, practices, and institutions, for which the China-US trade dispute can be appraised and commented on from a unifying perspective. The unifying view established by the social actors works collaboratively with appraisal relations to highlight solidary attitudes. CGTN shows different preferences in assigning the social actors an appraiser or appraised role when it expresses journalistic attitudes over the China-US trade dispute. Figure 2 and Figure 3 suggest the salient parts of the social actors in appraisal relations.

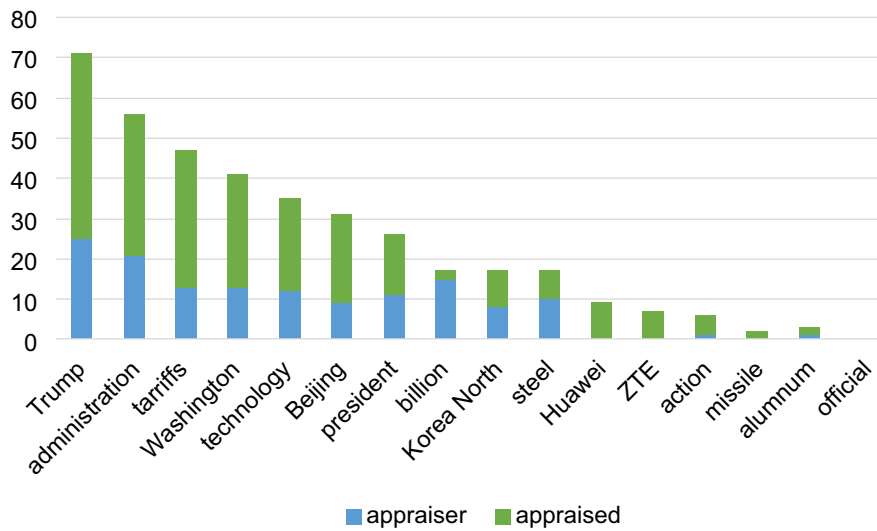
Figure 2. Salient roles as appraiser or appraised in CGTN's coverage



According to Figure 2 and Figure 3, I noticed a discrepancy in how social actors designate as appraisers or appraises. “China,” “US,” “countries,” “people,” and “sino,” in CGTN’s coverage over the trade dispute, would be assigned the roles of the appraiser that act as the source rather than the target of appraisals. In Dataset 2, most social actors are likely to be the targets that receive the appraisals. In particular, “Trump,” “administration,” “Washington,” “Beijing,” and “president” occur as the most frequently appraised actors in the tenor of the trade dispute. The following excerpts are illustrative examples.

1. **CGTN:** The bottom line, however, is that even if China’s economy would be severely affected by US tariffs, which it won’t be, the Chinese **people** would still *not submit to pressure, threats, coercion, or intimidation*. (15 July 2019)
2. **NYDN: Trump** should abandon its *costly and ill-conceived* steel and aluminum tariffs, which have alienated numerous countries and triggered widespread retaliation against American exports. (6 December 2018)

Figure 3. Salient roles as appraiser or appraised in the coverage of the US media



The social actors in examples (1) and (2) do not play the same role when CGTN and NYDN appraise the trade dispute. Collective actors (e.g., “Chinese people”) can directly enact attitudes (e.g., “not submit to”) about the US’s responses to China. Individual actors (e.g., “Trump”) are mainly recognized as the carrier of attitudes (e.g., “costly,” “ill-conceived”). The analysis of appraising relations makes CGTN’s particular way of expressing solidarity in the news discernible. Journalistic attitudes toward the trade dispute have usually been addressed by collective actors rather than by separate individuals. There are entire communities (e.g., the Chinese people) joining together to share similar values, and CGTN is representative of the attitudes coming from the majority. The collective consciousness accompanies CGTN’s selection of the significant concerns and social actors. In line with the cultural preference for communitarianism (De Burgh, 2017), CGTN highlights the group-oriented identities of social actors. It is opposite to American media, whose social actors are prominently played by separate individuals and who value in-group interests (such as communal, societal, or national interests) over the interests of individual members. As a state-owned media outlet, the diplomatic considerations exceed the causal analyses of the China-US trade dispute in CGTN’s coverage. The divergence between CGTN and America-based media in how they assign social actors the roles of the appraisal relation is indicative of Chinese state media’s efforts to prioritize the appraiser role of the group mind while expressing journalistic attitudes.

5.2. Rationalizing CGTN’s attitudes through Judgmental prosody

Next, to answer whether CGTN conceives unique semantic prosody towards the salient social actors in the coverage of the China-US trade dispute, I have chosen a collocates analysis for this inspection. I set a five-left, five-right horizon to locate evaluative words of the salient social actors in Datasets 1 and 2. To make the analysis practicable and manageable, I focused on (1) the frequency of the evaluative collocates in each dataset; (2) the semantic categories of the evaluative collocates (i.e., Affect, Judgment and Appreciation). The results were grouped according to the characteristics of social actors (i.e., collective or individual). In this way, attitudinal preferences regarding the social actors were recognized in co-text, and the semantic prosody of the trade dispute actors was described.

Table 2. Attitudinal collocates to social actors in concordance

	CGTN		The US News Media		p
	individual	collective	individual	collective	
AFFECT	16	21	51	15	0.001*
JUDGMENT	14	59	67	9	0.000*
APPRECIATION	7	11	31	19	0.090*

*P<0.005

Table 2 contains a helpful message on how CGTN and American News Media construct semantic prosody for social actors. The chi-square test has been used for testing the association between the row and column variables in a two-way table. The prosodic preference in Affective words to collocate with individual actors is substantially weaker in CGTN’s coverage (p<0.005). Noticeably, CGTN has more Judgmental comments collocated with collective actors than individual ones, but the news media in the US has more with individual

actors than with collective ones ($p < 0.005$). The collocative preference of social actors for Appreciative words between the two datasets is not salient in statistical significance ($p > 0.005$), indicating that Appreciation does not play a key role in characterizing CGTN's prosodic difference. Attitudes in CGTN's coverage always connect with the moral systems advocated by the Chinese government. Collective actors are appraised in more Judgmental ways. In Aristotle's view, the ability to judge practical matters is essential for those who would govern (Cascardi, 2006). Influenced by the collective consciousness, CGTN does not always refer to subjective feelings but to a shared understanding of social norms when expressing journalistic attitudes in the coverage of the China-US trade dispute. To probe more deeply into how Judgmental words have been distributed in CGTN's coverage for rationalizing CGTN's attitudes, I performed a detailed survey for the semantic valences of Judgmental collocates of the social actors.

Table 3. Frequency and context of Judgmental collocates by semantic valence in CGTN's coverage

Prosodic attitudes		Frequency	Examples
inscribed			
social esteem	normality	7	The ministry also said that the fundamental purpose of the US side's unwarranted accusations against China is to suppress China's peaceful development. (2 August 2019)
	capacity	26	The same, however, cannot be said for developing nations caught in the crossfire of the trade war that Trump has <i>instigated</i> between the world's largest and second-largest economies. (13 May 2019)
	tenacity	14	In the long run, US credibility and trustworthiness would be at risk if they are not ready. (27 May 2019)
social sanction	veracity	7	The US economy languishes from its self-inflicted wounds, and rather than blaming themselves and taking corrective action, politicians – and pundits – have found a convenient <i>scapegoat</i> in China . (11 November 2019)
	propriety	4	The US economy <i>ironically</i> could dive deeper, possibly into a recession, because postures without credible reasons are doomed to fail. (17 June 2019)
invoked			
social esteem	normality	3	Martin Wansleben has warned the US against “ <i>the game with fire</i> ” in the dispute over tariffs. (15 May 2019)
	capacity	3	The US move raises the risk of a global downturn <i>fueled</i> by protectionism. (13 June 2019)
	tenacity	4	US President Donald Trump announced on Friday that the US is contemplating <i>slapping</i> China with additional tariffs of 100 billion US dollars. (6 April 2019)
social sanction	veracity	3	The past week was brimming with <i>high drama</i> as the US president's trade sanctions on China tumbled out and sparked a storm of backlash from the international community. (31 March 2018)
	propriety	2	China has to fight the war when necessary to <i>safeguard</i> the country's interests and its people. (5 July 2018)

From Table 3, the norms of social esteem have been primarily applied to rationalize social actors' performance and behaviors according to normality, capacity, and tenacity. CGTN's attitudes about the trade dispute tend to be policed by established values that are shared by social communities regarding how unique (e.g., peaceful), how capable (e.g., instigate), and how dependable (e.g., credibility and trustworthiness). Social sanction is often codified as regulations and laws surveilled by civic duty and religious observances (Martin & White, 2005). It is more concerned with how honest (e.g., scapegoat) and far beyond reproach (e.g., ironically). According to Table 3, CGTN rationalizes how collective actors judge the trade dispute with the help of rules, customs, requirements, and shared knowledge that the general public would naturally abide by while downplaying the role of ethical codes or obligations stipulated by documents or institutions.

Of equal significance in Table 3 is that CGTN frequently inscribes Judgment by denotative words more than invokes Judgment by connotations (e.g., fuel, slap, high drama, safeguard) or idioms (e.g., the game with fire). These words connote Judgment rather than denote it. Provided that attitudes are not characterized by evaluative terms but induced by social context, cultural implications, slang, clichés, or metaphors (Bullo, 2019), invoked Judgment is a unique range of attitudes. If CGTN publicizes the attitudes in more invoking ways, many journalistic attitudes in news reporting can be primarily blurred. As I compared news texts of the two datasets and teased out the results from the above Tables and Figures, the contour of how social actors and semantic prosodies are interconnected reveals the state identity in CGTN's journalistic attitudes about

the China-US trade dispute can be noticed. First, social actors in the name of collective identities are largely drawn on in CGTN's coverage, avoiding specific persons, places, and institutions from being involved in appraisal relations. Second, collective actors enact appraisals and are recurrently furnished with collocates of Judgmental words. The prosodic preference reveals CGTN's self-positioning as a rational and trustworthy agent providing authoritative attitudes.

3. **CGTN:** The **US** may either *rescind* the planned tariffs and take a *humiliating* defeat or continue down the road to a trade war that will give back all of the market gains over the past 18 months. (27 May 2019)
4. **NYDN:** The United States could lead a coalition of large trading partners and allies against China. But with these tariffs, the Trump **administration** appears to be *content* to go it alone. (17 March 2018)

CGTN's way of publicizing attitudes in the coverage of the China-US trade dispute is more official than NYDN. When setting forth the disputed issue, CGTN relies on the US to serve as a primary social actor who prominently stands for the American side. The US is in a position to take responsibility for launching the trade dispute. CGTN confines its prosodic attitudes about the US to a limited scope. It is more inclined to use Judgmental words, but Affective words are rarely used. CGTN rationalizes most of its attitudes towards the US according to social esteem and sanction (e.g., *rescind*, *humiliating*) but not feelings or emotions (e.g., *content*). The US's actions in the trade dispute can be assessed according to the political stances and established norms (Hommerberg & Don, 2015). At the same time, NYDN is more concerned with the human-interest spin (Harris, 2006) and sacrifices accuracy for sensation (Turner, 1999). For example, Trump's dynamic response to the trade dispute is always favored in NYDN's coverage.

6. Discussion

CGTN's approach to conveying journalistic attitudes is understandable when considering the inseparable relationship between media and the government (MacKinnon, 1997), which motivates Chinese state media to bear the responsibility for a fully authoritative and trustworthy source of approved attitudes and foster a measured appraiser in line with the Chinese government's stances. CGTN strives to promote an officialized voice by valuing collectiveness in news agendas, actors, and prosody choices. The preference for collective actors and the frequent assignment of collective actors with the role of attitudes-initiator confers the voice of appraisals to the group mind, intending to ensure CGTN's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, practices, and institutions.

Although a news report is noted as "impersonality and objective reference to information sources" (Marín-Arrese & Nunez-Perucha, 2006:226), media outlets inevitably project their attitudes on the way the world is and the way it is supposed to be with certain ideologies (Jakaza, 2013). When it comes to CGTN, with the collective consciousness in the way CGTN expresses journalistic attitudes over the China-US trade dispute, it aims to communicate with the foreign public on a collective and institutional level. Collective names usually identify social actors of the China-US trade dispute without specific referents (e.g., China, US, countries, people, government, etc.) in CGTN's reporting. Therefore, CGTN ensures the stakeholders in the dispute are discerned mainly from the "country to country" or "group to group" relationship. Removing particular people, things, companies, or institutions from being prominent social actors assists in minimizing the occurrence of having Chinese state media frequently engaged in the appraisals of the American president, administrations, and private affairs. By so doing, CGTN avoids conflict of interests or diplomatic inappropriateness, and the official design of state media representatives of the Chinese government in global communications may be affected. Abstracting agendas about the dispute and collectivizing actors in reporting trade disputes enable CGTN to align with China for engendering communal attitudes.

The findings have provided one of the many pieces of linguistic evidence that support the general conclusion advanced by Hartig (2017) that English-language media in China is now embracing the concept of public diplomacy with enthusiasm rarely seen in other parts of the world. CGTN has been in line with the Chinese diplomatic ideology of harmonization. It stems from China's commitment to a harmonious world, aiming to find more common ground but fewer conflicts in the face of international disputes. Harmonization has affected Chinese state media, especially in how they appraise the trade dispute. Referring to the keywords list, CGTN's top agendas in the coverage of the China-US trade dispute are more general and broader than those set by American media. CGTN is devoted to reporting the visible benefits of trade cooperation, hoping to highlight the importance of peace for economic development and thereby generate public support for settling the bilateral dispute. A series of policies-oriented agendas (e.g., relations, development, GDP, strategy, countries, government, interests, bilateral, and constructive) has been frequently proposed in CGTN's coverage to reshape and influence the significant concerns of the foreign public. It is somewhat different from the commercial design of American news media, which cares about the details of the trade dispute and comments on specific social actors (e.g., the administration, president, Washington, etc.) with more emotions and Appreciation. The non-trivialized concerns with fewer emotionalizing elements delimit CGTN's appraisal scope of the trade dispute. The keywords analysis provides linguistic evidence to Jakobson's (2013) view that China's initial approach to international relations is one of defense rather than offense or diplomacy activism.

CGTN enjoys attitudinal leverage for indirect engagement with diplomatic issues that aim to convince targeted sectors of foreign opinions to understand or support the government's objectives. CGTN mobilizes semantic prosody to safeguard the credibility of its attitudes about the trade dispute by ascribing more Judgmental words to collective actors. It is in a position to boost a moral framework that underpins its trustworthy guidance

for public opinions and supports its journalistic attitudes with rational analysis. Affect and Appreciation remain subordinate to Judgment in the attitudinal prosody of collective actors, mainly when the social reaction has been frequently referred to appraise collective actors' actions. The ideal values of journalism and a professional self-image have traditionally emphasized the rational and informative dimensions of journalistic practices over the affective or "therapeutic" ones (Zelizer, 2004: 112). The collaboration of collective actors and Judgmental prosody contributes to CGTN's image as an objective commentator with solidary attitudes coming from the group mind, not so much overwhelmed by emotions. In the practice of journalistic appraisals, CGTN endeavors to be essentially conscious and rational. There has been a long-established view in China that the state media is entitled to be the most prestigious public intellectual and remains the Chinese people's dependable source of journalistic attitudes. Spencer-Bennett (2018) argues that our moral judgments and commitments are to signal virtuousness, so they are equivalent to the methods of advertisers. Instead of commenting by making emotional appeals, CGTN uses morally evaluative language to advocate what it believes to be virtuous and socially worthy in the China-US trade dispute. It has arguably made a balance in circulating its valued ideology and publicizing China's official attitudes among the pluralist media of the Western-European type.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, this research has achieved two objectives: (1) to reveal how CGTN deploys social actors and semantic prosody for officializing and harmonizing its attitudes, and (2) to evidence the state identity in CGTN's way of expressing journalistic attitudes in the news discourse. The link between social actors and prosody in the coverage of the China-US trade dispute becomes an explanatory variable for observing state identity in the news. A corpus-assisted exploration of journalistic attitudes in CGTN's trade dispute coverage feeds into the linguistic realization of state identity. It is found that CGTN's endeavor to officialize and harmonize journalistic attitudes in the face of the bilateral dispute has manifested in how it generalizes news agendas and builds journalistic attitudes upon morals and ethics. This research has not been able to systemically analyze the distinctive features of invoked attitude used by CGTN and the American counterparts in the dispute context. Future studies on this problem should be conducted.

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CREDiT authorship contribution

Jiannan Song: conceptualization, research, methodology, formal analysis, software, visualization, and writing (original draft preparation, review, and editing).

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