

A Study on Reporting Verbs in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Lining Jiang¹

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, China

Correspondence: Lining Jiang, School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, China.

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Abstract

Based on a self-constructed corpus and a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, this study systematically examines reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*, exploring their discourse functions and role in constructing national image. The findings show that neutral reporting verbs are used most frequently, enhancing the objectivity of news discourse while implicitly shaping an image of China as rational and open. Positive reporting verbs rank second, highlighting the importance of information, strengthening discourse authority and persuasiveness, and portraying China as an active participant in global food security governance. Negative reporting verbs are used least frequently, serving to counter unfounded accusations, maintain national image, and emphasize the urgency of food security issues. Overall, the using of reporting verbs in *China Daily* not only conveys information but also constructs and disseminates national image at the discourse level. The study suggests that reporting verbs are important discursive resources for ideological expression and national image construction in news media.

Keywords: news discourse, reporting verbs, national image, global food security

1. Introduction

National image refers to the perceptions and evaluations of a country held by domestic and international audiences in terms of its politics, economy, culture, and society. It is fundamentally determined by a country's overall national strength (Sun, 2002), while also depending on the active construction and dissemination by mass media (Liu, 2002). In other words, national image can be shaped through discourse. Discourse constitutes the symbolic dimension of social practices. As a particular type of discourse, news discourse does not simply transmit knowledge or truth; rather, the knowledge and truth it disseminates are, in essence, manifestations of certain "ideologies" and serve the interests of specific power groups (Fishman, 1989; Fowler, 1991; Yan & Zheng, 2022; van Dijk, 1988). Therefore, although objectivity is regarded as the primary principle of news reporting, communication has always been closely intertwined with politics, adhering to the principle of prioritizing national interests (Liao, 2017). News discourse reflects established ideologies and contributes to the construction of particular national images.

News discourse is essentially a form of reported speech (Floyd, 2000), which involves various elements, including reporting structures, reporting verbs, news sources, and reported content. Volosinov argued that the meaning of reported speech is not fixed but is dynamically shaped by social ideologies and characterized by an "evaluative orientation" (Volosinov, 1973). Thompson further pointed out that reporting verbs are the most direct means through which reporters express their evaluative attitudes (Thompson, 1996). The choice of different reporting verbs not only reflects the discursive practices of news sources but also reveals the attitudes and positions of the media and journalists toward the sources and reported information. Such choices embody underlying ideologies and influence readers' cognition, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (Chen, 2010), thereby contributing to the construction of anticipated national images.

Studies on reporting verbs are mainly conducted in two levels: classification and empirical studies. At the level of classification, Geis categorized reporting verbs into positive and negative reporting verbs based on affect. He argued that positive reporting verbs contribute to the construction of news source images characterized by caution, authority, success, accuracy, or composure, whereas negative reporting verbs construct images of news sources as impulsive, powerless, unsuccessful, inaccurate, or reckless (Geis, 1987). Although this classification provides a foundational framework for subsequent research, it overlooks the semantic and pragmatic functions of certain verbs. Based on pragmatic functions, Thompson classified reporting verbs into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral reporting verbs. Positive reporting verbs indicate reporters' affirmation and trust toward news sources, whereas negative reporting verbs convey skepticism or doubt. Neutral reporting verbs do not carry affective meanings but merely function to report speech (Thompson, 1996). Thompson further noted that reporters' choices of reporting verbs with different semantic orientations can indicate not only their attitudes toward the reported content but also their attitudes toward the news sources themselves.

In a comparative study of Chinese and American news reports, Xin Bin and Gao Xiaoli classified reporting verbs from a semantic perspective into three categories: speech reporting verbs, which emphasize the objective reproduction of news discourse; mental/thought verbs, which represent the internal processes or mental states of news sources; and speech act reporting verbs, which indicate the illocutionary force of reported speech. Through the use of the latter category, journalists can convey implied meanings, thereby exerting a stronger influence on readers' attitudes and perceptions of the reported content (Xin & Gao, 2019).

Research on reporting verbs has placed greater emphasis on empirical investigations, mainly examining reporting practices in relation to reporting modes and news sources. These studies have explored topics such as political news, public events, and diplomatic news, which compare how mainstream media construct national images or reveal their reporting positions and ideological tendencies through the use of reported speech (Guo & Tian, 2007; Kang & Li, 2018; Li, Zhao & Lou, 2023; Pan & Dong, 2017; Xin, 2006; Xin, 2008; Xin, 2014; Xin & Shi, 2018).

In summary, studies on reporting verbs have primarily focused on their classification, as well as studies on integrating reporting verbs with reporting structures and news sources for empirical analysis. Relatively few studies have examined reporting verbs as an independent research object, and investigations into the specific types and usage patterns of reporting verbs in news discourse remain fragmented.

Food is the most fundamental necessity for human survival, and food security constitutes an essential foundation for national security and global stability. On March 11, 2021, the *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035* incorporated the implementation of a food security strategy into the national five-year plan for the first time in China. On June 1, 2024, the *Food Security Law of the People's Republic of China* came into effect, aiming to ensure national food security, enhance the capacity to prevent and mitigate food security risks, and safeguard economic and social stability as well as national security. As China's major English-language media outlet, *China Daily* plays a central role in reporting global food security issues to international audiences and demonstrating China's responsibility as a major global actor. However, research on reporting verbs in new reports of global food security in *China Daily* remains relatively limited. This study investigates news reports on global food security in *China Daily* from March 11, 2021, to December 31, 2024, analyzes the types and distribution of the reporting verbs used in these reports, discusses the underlying social and cultural causes, and uses this analysis to reveal the image of China that is shaped by these reports.

2. Method

2.1 Research Corpus

China Daily is one of the major English-language news media outlets in China. Its reports of major events is characterized by high reliability and validity, and it is the only Chinese newspaper that has gained effective access to the international mainstream media sphere and achieved the highest rate of reprinting among overseas media. This study selects news reports on food security in *China Daily* from March 11, 2021 (the adoption of China's *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035*) to December 31, 2024 as the research corpus. Relevant reports were retrieved using keywords including food security, food shortages, food insecurity, food crisis, grain, rice, corn, and agriculture. After manual reading, identification, and screening, a total of 351 news reports were selected.

The titles, images, audio, and video materials of the news reports were removed, with only the textual content retained for analysis. The corpus files were named chronologically according to publication dates. For example, "20210323" represents a news report published on March 23, 2021. If multiple reports were published on the same day, sequential numbers were added, such as "2021032301" and "2021032302". After data cleaning, the final corpus consisted of 204,422 tokens.

2.2 Research Methods and Analytical Framework

This study adopts a corpus-based research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative analyses, as well as manual examination with computational tools.

For quantitative analysis, AntConc 4.3.1 was employed as a concordance and frequency analysis tool. In combination with manual reading, the study identified verbs introducing reported speech. Descriptive verbs (e.g., indicate) were excluded from the analysis. In addition, verbs with inflectional variations were processed through lemmatization; for instance, says, saying, and said were all normalized and counted under the lemma say.

For qualitative analysis, this study adopts the classification frameworks of Geis and Thompson and categorizes reporting verbs into three types: positive reporting verbs, neutral reporting verbs, and negative reporting verbs. Furthermore, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework (Fairclough, 1989)—description, interpretation, and explanation—is employed to guide the analytical procedures of news discourse analysis. Through contextual analysis of specific news examples, this study examines how different types of reporting verbs contribute to the expression of journalistic stance and the construction of evaluative meanings. In this way, it aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth investigation of reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*.

2.3 Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

First, what are the types and distribution of reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*?

Second, how do these types and distribution of reporting verbs contribute to the construction of national image of China?

Third, what specific national image of China is constructed through such discourse practices?

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overall Types and Distribution of Reporting Verbs

Drawing on the classification frameworks proposed by Geis and Thompson, this study categorizes reporting verbs in the corpus into three types: positive reporting verbs, neutral reporting verbs, and negative reporting verbs. Positive reporting verbs indicate reporters' affirmative attitudes toward news sources and reported content, contributing to the construction of positive and credible images of news sources. Negative reporting verbs convey reporters' doubts or even opposition toward news sources or reported content; their use may, to some extent, undermine the image of news sources and reduce the perceived credibility of the reported information. Neutral reporting verbs objectively reproduce reported information without conveying affective meanings. The statistical results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types and Frequency of Reporting Verbs in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Classification	Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Reporting Verbs	acclaim, acknowledge, affirm, agree, approve, advocate, assure, assert, commend, confirm, encourage, endorse, emphasize, hail, highlight, hope, pledge, praise, promise, recommend, reaffirm, reassure, stress, thank, understand, vow, wish (27 kinds)	366	9.4%
Neutral Reporting Verbs	according to, add, address, advise, allow, analyze, announce, answer, argue, ask, believe, brief, call, cite, command, comment, concerned about, conclude, consider, consult, convey, correspond, declare, demand, demonstrate, describe, disclose, discuss, dub, expect, explain, expound on, express, forecast (that), inquire, introduce, joke, know, make the remark, mention, name, note, order, point out, predict, propose, quote, realize, recall, refer to, reflect, reiterate, remember, remind, reply, report, request, require, respond, reveal, say, share, show, speak, state, suggest, summarize, talk, tell, think, underline, underscore, urge, write (74 kinds)	3446	88.7%
Negative Reporting Verbs	accuse, admit, allege, blame, caution, claim, complain, criticize, deny, disrupt, oppose, reject, threaten, warn (14 kinds)	75	1.9%

Total	115 kinds	3887	100%
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As shown in Table 1, the frequencies of reporting verbs used in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*, ranked from highest to lowest, are neutral reporting verbs (88.7%), positive reporting verbs (9.4%), and negative reporting verbs (1.9%). The reporting verbs identified in the corpus demonstrate considerable lexical diversity and relatively high overall frequency.

First, neutral reporting verbs occur most frequently. Since objectivity is the primary principle of news reporting (Gao, 2013), news discourse generally maintains its representations of “neutrality” and “truthfulness” by reducing the use of overtly evaluative language (Bell, 1991). From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, linguistic forms function not only as tools for information transmission but also as mechanisms through which ideologies operate (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, the extensive use of neutral reporting verbs without explicit evaluative meanings creates an apparently “de-positioned” discursive effect at the surface level, thereby reinforcing readers’ perceptions of the media as objective and impartial. This strategy of constructing objectivity indirectly contributes to the representation of China as an open and rational actor.

Positive reporting verbs rank second in frequency. As a state-affiliated international communication outlet, *China Daily* undertakes the responsibility of communicating China’s perspectives to the international community and actively shaping global public discourse. Given China’s significant role and contributions to global food security, positive reporting verbs are frequently employed in relevant reports, following neutral reporting verbs in frequency.

Negative reporting verbs occur least frequently and show the lowest lexical variety. Such verbs often carry implications of questioning, criticism, or warning, which may undermine the image of news sources and generate negative communicative effects (Yu, 2024). They may also influence international audiences’ perceptions and attitudes toward governments and media organizations. Therefore, their use is relatively restrained in news reporting. The low frequency of negative reporting verbs reflects the overall preference of *China Daily* for a stable and rational reporting style when addressing global food security issues.

Overall, news reports of global food security in *China Daily* follows the journalistic principle of prioritizing objectivity while simultaneously engaging in the construction of a positive national image and avoiding discourse practices that may damage the representation of news sources.

3.2 Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China’s National Image

3.2.1 Neutral Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China’s National Image

News discourse is grounded in authenticity and credibility. It emphasizes the factual nature of events, reinforces the relational structures among facts, and conveys attitudes and emotions (Tuchman, 1978). Neutral reporting verbs do not carry affective meanings; instead, they enable reporters to reproduce information objectively and accurately while minimizing their intervention in readers’ perceptions and emotions. Therefore, neutral reporting verbs constitute the largest category and occur with the highest frequency in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Top Ten Neutral Reporting Verbs in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Neutral Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Neutral Reporting Verbs	Frequency
say	1734	note	91
according to	266	urge	71
add	216	share	62
call	106	tell	58
address	104	show	56

As shown in Table 2, say has the highest frequency of occurrence (1,734 times), which is consistent with Bell’s findings (Bell, 1991), and is the most frequently used reporting verb in news discourse. In news reports, the sources introduced by “say” are generally explicit, and no descriptions of body language are provided. Therefore, “say” is regarded as one of the most objective, credible, and restrained reporting verbs (Cole, 1974; Xin, 2008). By employing this verb, reporters objectively reproduce information while avoiding overt evaluations at the linguistic level. This strategy reduces potential misinformation, thereby enhancing the objectivity, transparency, persuasiveness, and accuracy of news discourse.

Example 1: “Last year, the profit from my 13 hectares of rice was 170,000 yuan (\$26,400),” he said. “With the help of modern agricultural technology and machinery, such as unmanned rice planters, I believe I will see high-quality rice and high yields this autumn.” (20210517)

Example 2: “Chinese hybrid rice seeds are high-yield and are more drought resistant. I can earn 100,000 Pakistani rupees (\$426) from planting one season of hybrid rice,” said Zizam Jagsi, a Pakistani farmer who buys over 800 kg of Chinese hybrid rice seeds each year. (20230126)

Examples 1 and 2 take domestic and international farmers respectively as news sources. Through detailed quantitative information, both examples demonstrate that farmers have benefited from advanced agricultural technologies, equipment, and high-quality seeds, achieving relatively satisfactory economic returns. This indicates that China actively promotes and shares advanced agricultural technologies to improve livelihoods and benefit local communities, thereby demonstrating its commitment as a major country to promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity. Through the neutral reporting verb “say”, *China Daily* presents farmers’ individual experiences, which not only enhances the authenticity of news reports but also makes the broader issue of global food security more concrete, relatable, and persuasive.

The reporting expression “according to” has the second-highest frequency (266 times), following “say”. Xin Bin argued that the expression “according to” can function both as a reporting expression and as an indicator of news sources, which are generally authoritative. Its use can therefore enhance the credibility of news reports (Xin, 2008). In the relevant reports in *China Daily*, the sources introduced by according to can mainly be categorized into three groups: (1) international organizations, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute, the United Nations, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; (2) official national sources, including national leaders, official media, government officials, and institutional organizations; and (3) experts and scholars.

Example 3: According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, smallholder farmers, or family farmers, operate more than 90 percent of the world’s farms, covering 70 to 80 percent of the global agricultural land area, and their food production value accounts for more than 80 percent of the world’s total. (20241118)

The United Nations is the most universal, representative, and authoritative intergovernmental organization in the world and plays an important role in addressing global issues such as climate change, food security, and human rights. Its Food and Agriculture Organization focuses on global food security through rule-making, food assistance, and information dissemination, playing a central role in global agricultural governance. In Example 3, the use of according to not only objectively presents statistical information but also emphasizes the authority and credibility of the reported data.

Example 4: China is working toward more breakthroughs in breeding research as the world’s biggest grain importer races to develop more homegrown varieties of crops and livestock to better feed the country’s 1.4 billion people, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. (2022112302)

In Example 4, the news source is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, a central government department responsible for implementing national policies and strategic decisions concerning agriculture, rural areas, and farmers. By using “according to” to introduce information from this official source, the report maintains objectivity while strengthening the authority and accuracy of the information.

Example 5: According to Xie, significant progress has been made globally in salt tolerance research in crops, whereas much remained unknown about the mechanisms of alkaline tolerance in crops before their study. (20240507)

Example 5 objectively use an expert’s statement, thereby enhancing the persuasiveness of the report and highlighting China’s contribution to the global development of salt- and alkali-tolerant crop cultivation.

In addition, “add” is another frequently used neutral reporting verb, ranking after “say” and “according to”. According to the definitions provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Collins English Dictionary*, “add” means “to say another thing” and “to say something more when speaking.” These definitions suggest that the verb does not convey explicit evaluative meanings but merely functions to provide additional information and make the reported content more complete.

Example 6: Specifically, the introduction of the eight hybrid rice varieties from China has elevated the rice yield from 3 to 4 tons per hectare to 9 to 10 tons per hectare, mitigating the hunger and malnutrition challenges in Burundi, Niyokwishimira added. (20240530)

In Example 6, a Burundian agricultural expert states that Chinese hybrid rice varieties have increased agricultural productivity in Burundi and helped alleviate challenges such as hunger and malnutrition. This form of agricultural cooperation demonstrates China’s image as a responsible major country in addressing global food security challenges.

Overall, the news reports of global food security in *China Daily* incorporates statements and evaluations from various international organizations and social groups both within and outside China. Through the use of diverse neutral reporting verbs, the reports reduce explicit evaluation while emphasizing the authority of information sources. At an implicit level, these linguistic choices participate in the construction of China's national image, representing China as a rational, objective, and credible actor.

3.2.2 Positive Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China's National Image

Thompson argued that positive reporting verbs not only convey information but also enhance the authority and persuasiveness of discourse by highlighting the significance of specific content (Thompson, 1996). Such emphasis increases the authority and credibility of news sources' statements, thereby strengthening the legitimacy and rationality of national actions in readers' perceptions. Therefore, the selection of positive reporting verbs contributes to the positive construction of national image. In news reports of global food security in *China Daily*, positive reporting verbs occur relatively frequently (366 times) and demonstrate considerable lexical variety (see Table 3).

Table 3. Positive Reporting Verbs and Frequency in news reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Positive Verbs	Reporting	Frequency	Positive Verbs	Reporting	Frequency	Positive Verbs	Reporting	Frequency
stress		86	confirm		7	endorse		3
highlight		62	hail		6	hope		3
emphasize		55	recommend		6	assure		2
encourage		44	understand		5	promise		2
pledge		19	praise		4	acclaim		1
agree		13	reaffirm		4	affirm		1
approve		12	reassure		4	assert		1
advocate		10	acknowledge		3	thank		1
vow		8	commend		3	wish		1

The three most frequently used positive reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* are "stress", "highlight", and "emphasize". According to the definitions provided by *Collins English Dictionary*, these three verbs respectively mean: "If you stress a point in a discussion, you put extra emphasis on it because you think it is important"; "If someone or something highlights a point or problem, they emphasize it or make you think about it"; and "to emphasize something means to indicate that it is particularly important or true, or to draw special attention to it." All three verbs convey the meaning of emphasizing the importance or truthfulness of particular information. Statistical analysis shows that these verbs frequently co-occur with authoritative news sources, such as national leaders and government officials. Therefore, positive reporting verbs not only transmit information but also attribute authority and legitimacy to the reported content, enhancing its discursive influence at the cognitive level and contributing to the positive construction of China's national image.

Example 7: He *highlighted* the importance of self-reliance in food security, *saying* that party and government officials must assume the same responsibilities. (2021122702)

Example 8: Xi *emphasized* that food security must be safeguarded by stabilizing the land acreage for grain production and increasing the yields per unit. (20231221)

Example 9: Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong has *stressed* efforts to ensure autumn grain production and consolidate the country's poverty alleviation achievements. (20240912)

The news sources in Examples 7 and 8 are Chinese national leader Xi Jinping. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict have exerted significant impacts on global food security. In Example 7, Xi highlights the importance of self-reliance in ensuring food security and calls on Party and government officials to assume corresponding responsibilities, thereby reducing the potential impact of external uncertainties on China's food security. In Example 8, he emphasizes the crucial role of maintaining grain production acreage and increasing per-unit yields in safeguarding food security. In Example 9, the news source is Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong, who stresses the importance of ensuring grain production and consolidating China's achievements in poverty alleviation. These three examples involve clearly identified and highly authoritative news sources. Through the use of positive reporting verbs, they highlight the Chinese government's emphasis on food security

and the continuous implementation of related policies.

Example 10: He *praised* China's efforts to send agrotechnicians to Africa as part of the broader Belt and Road Initiative to help bolster food production in hunger-prone regions as a boon to global food security. (20231112)

The verb "praise" is a commonly used positive reporting verb. *Collins English Dictionary* defines it as "If you praise someone or something, you express approval for their achievements or qualities." The use of this reporting verb directly conveys approval of the achievements or qualities of the news source, thereby contributing to the construction of a positive national image. In Example 10, *China Daily* reports the statement of Bram Govaerts, Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, and employs the positive reporting verb praise to highlight China's assistance to African countries in agricultural development. Through this representation, China is constructed as a responsible, committed, trustworthy, and cooperative major country contributing to global food security.

Overall, news reports of global food security in *China Daily* employs clearly identified and authoritative news sources to present China's active efforts and constructive role in safeguarding national food security and promoting global food security cooperation. Through the use of various positive reporting verbs, *China Daily* strengthens positive evaluations of China's food security policies and international agricultural cooperation initiatives, demonstrating a clear positive discursive orientation. Consequently, these linguistic choices contribute to the construction of China's national image as a country characterized by self-reliance, people-centered governance, and proactive international assistance, while highlighting its sense of responsibility as a major global actor.

3.2.3 Negative Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China's National Image

The overall frequency of negative reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* is relatively low (75times), and the lexical variety of negative reporting verbs is also limited (see Table 4).

Table 4. Negative Reporting Verbs and Frequency in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Negative Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Negative Reporting Verbs	Frequency
warn	26	threaten	3
disrupt	12	blame	3
criticize	6	admit	2
oppose	6	caution	2
accuse	5	complain	1
claim	4	deny	1
reject	3	allege	1

Kang Junying and Li Fengqin define negative reporting verbs as "reporting verbs that undermine the public image of discourse sources and represent them as arrogant, domineering, emotionally unstable, or irrational" (Kang & Li, 2018, p. 28). However, this study finds that negative reporting verbs in news reports in *China Daily* serve two distinct functions.

First, negative reporting verbs are used to portray news sources as unreasonable or domineering, thereby weakening their social influence and maintaining China's national image.

News discourse represents ideological positions and provides an authoritative basis and framework for interpreting textual meanings. As media institutions are constrained by systems of knowledge and power, they tend to selectively represent content and perspectives that support existing power structures (Fairclough, 1989; Yan & Zheng, 2022) and protect their own national interests. Semantically, negative reporting verbs often imply uncertainty, skepticism, or negative evaluation, thereby reducing the credibility of information sources (Thompson, 1996). Therefore, the use of negative reporting verbs is not merely a strategy for reporting information but also a mechanism of stance construction. By weakening the authority of other parties' discourse, such verbs indirectly reinforce the legitimacy of one's own position. For example:

Example 11: Senior US officials in charge of international development cooperation and multilateral affairs have recently delivered several speeches on global food security, *accusing* China of hoarding food, which they *claim* has pushed up food prices and exacerbated the global food crisis. Demanding that China provide debt relief for poor countries, they have been *criticizing* China's foreign aid policy. (20220802)

Example 11 contains three reporting verbs: accuse, claim, and criticize. In 2022, China-US relations experienced

heightened tensions, with the United States adopting restrictive measures toward China in multiple areas. Regarding food assistance, US officials repeatedly made statements at various international forums, accusing China of hoarding food and driving up food prices, thereby contributing to the global food crisis. They also criticized China's foreign aid policy. Through the use of a series of negative reporting verbs, the report presents discursive disagreements between China and the United States regarding food assistance and international responsibility. These verbs represent attempts by US officials to question China's foreign policy and challenge China's international image.

In fact, China has consistently emphasized its commitment to maintaining world peace, promoting common development, and building a community with a shared future for humanity, while providing food assistance and offering financial, technological, and human resource support to countries facing food shortages. The use of these negative reporting verbs in *China Daily* reduces the perceived authority and credibility of the US discourse, challenges accusations against China, and contributes to the maintenance of China's positive national image.

Second, negative reporting verbs are used to represent news sources' attitudes toward crises or unjust situations, thereby constructing positive images of these sources as responsible and justice-oriented actors. This function occurs more frequently in news reports in *China Daily* (41 times). For example:

Example 12: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador recently *criticized* the US for being quick to send billions to Ukraine, while dragging their feet on development aid to Central America. Some Western countries are reluctant to honor their long-standing commitment to spending 0.7 percent of their gross national income on official development assistance, which helps promote agricultural production in developing nations, especially in Africa and the Middle East, to ensure food security. (2022051202)

The escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has intensified food security challenges in some developing countries. In Example 12, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador criticizes the United States for providing substantial financial assistance to Ukraine while delaying development aid to Central America (dragging their feet on development aid to Central America). In this context, criticize does not portray the news source as unreasonable or aggressive; rather, it constructs the Mexican president as an actor who opposes unfair practices and expresses concern about global development issues.

Example 13: He then *warned against* the tendency among some officials of neglecting the issue of food security. "This just won't do." (20230307)

The reporting verb in Example 13 is "warn (against)". *Cambridge Dictionary* defines "warn" as "to make someone realize a possible danger or problem, especially one in the future." The use of this verb highlights the urgency and seriousness of the reported issue. In Example 13, Chinese President Xi Jinping directly addresses some officials' tendency to neglect food security and explicitly rejects such practices ("This just won't do"), expressing a strong critical stance. Given the high authority of leaders' statements, the use of warn reinforces the seriousness of the position and constructs an image of a responsible government that demonstrates commitment and accountability.

Overall, while *China Daily* generally avoids generating negative representations of other countries, it employs negative reporting verbs to explicitly challenge accusations and criticisms from certain Western countries, particularly those led by the United States. These linguistic choices emphasize the urgency of safeguarding global food security and promoting international cooperation in this field. Through such discourse practices, *China Daily* constructs an image of China as a country concerned with people's livelihoods, opposed to hegemonic practices, and actively committed to building a community with a shared future for humanity.

4. Conclusion

The selection of reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* demonstrates a clear evaluative distribution pattern: neutral reporting verbs occur most frequently, followed by positive reporting verbs, whereas negative reporting verbs are relatively less frequent. This distribution reflects the role of reporting verbs in constructing journalistic stance during the process of information representation.

Specifically, neutral reporting verbs reduce explicit evaluation and enhance the objectivity and credibility of news discourse, thereby implicitly constructing an image of China as a rational and trustworthy actor. Positive reporting verbs highlight the importance and legitimacy of specific issues or actions, reinforcing China's image as a responsible and cooperative participant in global food security governance. Negative reporting verbs are mainly employed to challenge the authority of external negative discourses while emphasizing the urgency of food security issues, thereby maintaining China's national position and image.

The findings demonstrate that reporting verbs are not merely linguistic devices for organizing news discourse but also important discursive strategies through which media outlets convey values, transmit ideologies, and

construct national images. By strategically allocating different types of reporting verbs, *China Daily* maintains journalistic objectivity while simultaneously achieving the implicit dissemination of national image and the construction of China's international discourse representation.

This study further extends the application of reporting verb research in news discourse analysis and international communication studies. It also provides new corpus-based evidence for understanding how China's mainstream English-language media participate in national image construction through linguistic strategies. Future research could expand the corpus scope and compare reporting strategies employed by mainstream media from different countries in global issue reports, thereby enhancing the explanatory power and generalizability of research findings.

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