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**RECONSTRUCTING NEWS VALUES OF THE FRENEMY  
THROUGH JOURNALISTIC TRANSLATION ON  
WECHAT**

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PhD

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

2024

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies

**Reconstructing News Values of the Frenemy through  
Journalistic Translation on WeChat**

Weixin Zeng

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2023

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\_\_\_\_\_ (Signed)

\_\_\_Zeng Weixin\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of student)

## Abstract

This research began with a general interest in exploring the complex relationship between journalistic translation and journalism, as well as the impact of social media on journalistic translation practices. Translation scholars have unanimously recognized the interdisciplinary nature of journalistic translation research (JTR), situated at the intersection of journalism and translation studies. However, interdisciplinary dialogues between news translation and journalism studies remain relatively limited in scale. This thesis aims to expand the research scope of JTR and identify potential new research agendas shared by journalism and translation studies. Furthermore, this research seeks to address the gap in the investigation of translated news on social media. While JTR has become a well-established subdiscipline in translation studies, there is relatively little literature dedicated to translated news on emerging new media platforms like WeChat and TikTok.

To this end, the current project examines translated news articles published by *Reference News* (RN), a prestigious and popular Chinese newspaper, on the WeChat public account platform. Specifically, the study analyzes the most read translated news reports (those with 100,000-plus clicks) covering the United States that were published on RN's WeChat account between January 1st, 2020, and December 31st, 2020. The analytical framework adopted in this project is built upon the conceptualization of news translation as a two-level gatekeeping practice proposed by Valdeón (2021). The macro-level gatekeeping analysis takes the form of content analysis, seeking to investigate the sources selected, topics covered, and tones conveyed by the collected translated news stories concerning the United States. The micro-level gatekeeping analysis then draws on the discursive news value analysis (DNVA) framework developed by Bednarek and Caple (2017) to provide an account of news values foregrounded in the source and target texts, and, more importantly, reveals how news values embedded in both verbal and non-verbal resources were (re)constructed through translation. Possible factors that may have prompted RN's journalistic translation practice on the WeChat public account platform are also discussed using the gatekeeping theory proposed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009).

The macro-level analysis revealed that RN tends to translate news stories originally produced by leading news agencies, well-established and mainstream news organizations, and media outlets with pro-China stances. In addition to regularly translating popular and elite media sources, RN occasionally selected tabloid, extreme right-wing, and anti-China media to cover news about the United States. Further investigation into the topics and stances presented in the collected news indicated that the majority of popular translated news stories related to America could be categorized as hard news. Furthermore, news stories emphasizing the negative aspects of the US predominated in the data.

The micro-level analysis revealed several prominent patterns in RN's Chinese renditions and their corresponding English counterparts regarding the construal of news values. Unlike the English headlines, RN's renditions of the collected headlines displayed a lesser emphasis on the news value of *Proximity*, as all the covered stories centered around the United States. The lower frequency of *Timeliness* in TTHC can be attributed to the lack of grammatical tense in Chinese and RN's deliberate use of sensational headlines to capture readers' attention. *Negativity* and *Superlativeness* were enhanced in TTHC to portray the United States in a more negative light. The analysis of the images collected also showed similar patterns of *Proximity* and *Negativity*, which exhibited statistical significance between STIC and TTIC. The examination of the verbal-visual relationship between headlines and accompanying images emphasized the importance of verbal and non-verbal resources in establishing news values, as they often reinforced or complemented each other. STFTC mainly exhibited the news values of *Eliteness*, *Proximity*, and *Timeliness*, while TTFTC emphasized *Eliteness*, *Timeliness*, and *Negativity*, aligning with the results from the headline analysis. The case study on concordances pertaining to the Trump administration revealed that RN's renditions tended to omit any China-related elements that might depict the country in a negative manner.

The gatekeeping theory proposed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) was utilized to analyze the patterns of RN's newsworthiness construction practices in reporting the United States via translation. It is argued that the gatekeepers at RN, as individuals, have limited influence on the decision-making process of producing translated news, as they are part of a collective undergoing a similar socialization process

and therefore sharing similar perspectives. Factors such as the journalistic principles emphasized in China, RN's distinctive position as an official news organization providing translated news, the target audience on WeChat, and the broader journalistic landscape in China have all played a role in shaping RN's gatekeeping practices of (re)constructing the news values related to the United States.

This research provides a specific case study of translated news on Chinese social media from an interdisciplinary perspective. On the one hand, it examines the news translation practices of a representative Chinese media outlet on WeChat. Despite the development of JTR in the past two decades, translated news published on social media has rarely been researched in the existing literature (Zeng & Li, 2023). On the other hand, this research contributes to the field of digital journalism studies by offering a non-Western and translation-oriented perspective. In journalism studies, specifically in digital journalism studies, aspects such as language, discourse, and other humanities-centered perspectives are seldom explored (Steensen & Westlund, 2020). Furthermore, this study proposes an interdisciplinary framework built upon a broadened conceptualization of translation, the DNVA approach, and the gatekeeping theory. While translation scholars have introduced notions such as framing, gatekeeping, agenda-setting, and tabloidization into JTR, the overlap between JTR and journalism studies deserves further exploration. Moreover, this study is expected to serve as a reference material for journalism students and journalists in terms of enhancing audience engagement.

### **Publications arising from the thesis**

Weixin Zeng & Dechao Li (2023) Exploring an interdisciplinary interface between journalistic translation and journalism studies: insights from discursive news values analysis, *Perspectives*, DOI: 10.1080/0907676X.2023.2215935



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## List of abbreviations

DNVA: discursive news value analysis

JTR: journalistic translation research

RN: *Reference News*

TS: translation studies

ST: source text

STs: source texts

TT: target text

TTs: target texts

SI: source image

SIs: source images

TI: target image

TIs: target images

STHC: ST headlines corpus

TTHC: TT headlines corpus

STFTC: ST full-text corpus

TTFTC: TT full-text corpus

STIC: ST Image corpus

TTIC: TT image corpus

*Associated Press: AP*

*Xinhua News Agency: XNA*

*United Press International: UPI*

*Agence France Presse: AFP*

*The New York Times: NYT*

*The Washington Post: WP*

*The Wallstreet Journal: WSJ*

*South China Morning Post: SCMP*

*Newsweek: NW*

*Politico: PL*

*The Hill: HL*

*Bloomberg: BG*

*German Press Agency: DPA*

*Lianhe Zaobao: Zaobao*

*Central News Agency: CNA*

*Fox News: FN*

*USA Today: UT*

*People's Daily: PD*

*Global Times: GT*

*China Daily: CD*

*The Daily Beast: DB*

*The Daily Caller: DC*

The United States Agency for Global Media: USAGM

*The Guardian: GA*

*Financial Times: FT*

*The Times: TS*

*The Independent: IT*

*Daily Mail: DM*

*The Daily Telegraph: DT*

*The Economist: EC*

*Daily Star: DS*

The Office of Communications: Ofcom

*Professional Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists: PCECJ*

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter serves as an overall review of the thesis. It first focuses on the general research background of this study, elaborating on the development and current trends of journalistic translation. Section 1.2 further explains the research rationale from three aspects, followed by Section 1.3, in which the research aims and questions are presented. The potential contributions of this study are displayed in Section 1.4. Finally, an outline of the thesis is given at the end of this introductory chapter.

### 1.1. Research background

Back in 2015, in a review of mapping news translation research, Valdeón (2015) highlighted that this subarea of Translation Studies (TS) “is in its infancy” (p. 634). Eight years later, journalistic translation research (JTR) has probably grown into its teenage years, given the increasing scholarly attention it has garnered worldwide. In Valdeon’s words (2020a), JTR “has gone truly global” (p. 334). This research was inspired by an interest in journalistic translation within the Chinese social media context. The prevalence of social media has prompted media outlets to exploit these new platforms for a greater impact (Huang & Lu, 2017). This social media turn will surely affect “journalists’ practice of information presentation” (Wu & Pan, 2022, p. 2). Scholars in journalism studies have noted the influence of social media on journalism (Kilgo et al., 2018; Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2019b; Zayani, 2021). However, the concept of social media has rarely been broached as an essential factor impacting news translation practice (Zeng & Li, 2023). This gap has also been underlined in an edited volume by Davier and Conway (2019a, p. 1), in which they argued that news translation is unaware of “the paradigm change brought about by convergence” (p. 1). The lack of attention to the convergence of social media and news translation is a case in point. Considering the now indispensable status of social media in news consumption (Al-Rawi, 2017), it is assumed that journalistic translation is not immune to the changes elicited by social media. On the micro-level, studying journalistic translation practice on Chinese social media might provide a general picture of China’s changing media environment and journalistic ecology. On the macro level, it may even facilitate our understanding of “China’s politics,

culture, and society” (Zhang, 2021, p. 2623). This study aims to approach journalistic translation practice on Chinese social media by analyzing translated news reports published on the WeChat subscription account of *Reference News (RN)*, a prestigious and popular official Chinese news agency. Moreover, this research seeks to expand the research scope of JTR, drawing on the notion of news value and incorporating the analysis of visual resources. On the one hand, translation is seldom discussed at length or meticulously analyzed in journalistic research (Valdeón, 2018), leaving a void for further exploring news translation through the lens of concepts and frameworks from journalism studies. After all, journalism studies is a more theoretically and methodologically mature discipline than the young TS. Instead of embedding JTR in the TS paradigm, research grounded in journalism might open up novel perspectives. This research approaches translated news on social media within the scope of news values, a concept often neglected in “most linguistic research on news discourse” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 36), including JTR. It investigates how news values are re-established via translation in the translated news reports published on RN’s WeChat account. On the other hand, although visual resources have formed a crucial part of news discourse, they have seldom been examined, deserving more academic attention in JTR (Riggs, 2021). Non-verbal elements function as effective sites to convey meaning, making “the multimodal code a fruitful platform for researching translated communication” (Sidiropoulou, 2020, p. 296). Social media lend itself well to investigating translated multimodal news discourse since social media posts usually consist of visual elements such as photos and videos. Hence, this study explores verbal and non-verbal modes involved in translated news to better understand news translation practice in Chinese social media.

To summarize, this study conducts a case study of RN’s journalistic translation practice on the WeChat public account platform. Specifically, the study analyzes the most read translated news reports (those with 100, 000-plus clicks) covering the United States published on RN’s WeChat account between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, through the lens of news values. This study, following Valdeón (2020; 2022a), considers news translation a two-level gatekeeping practice. It first interrogates the news agencies selected for RN’s rendition and the topics and tones of the collected popular translated news stories, presenting the macro-level gatekeeping of translation. It then draws on the discursive news

value analysis (DNVA) framework developed by Bednarek and Caple (2017) to explore and compare the discursive construction of newsworthiness in the source and target texts, examining visual and textual resources. This level of analysis documents the establishment of news values via semiotic resources from the discursive aspect, examining the micro-level gatekeeping of translation. Possible factors that may have prompted RN's journalistic translation practice on the WeChat public account platform will also be discussed, borrowing the gatekeeping theory proposed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009). This study is expected to shed insights on JTR by incorporating social media platform affordances and concepts, theories, and methods from journalism.

## **1.2. Research rationale**

This section explains the three strands of the rationale for conducting this research, emphasizing the necessity and usefulness of the current study.

### **1.2.1. The interdisciplinary nature of JTR**

Interdisciplinarity is a vital feature of JTR (Wu, 2018). The term journalistic translation readily indicates the necessity of examining news translation within an overlapped space between journalism and translation studies. Embracing interdisciplinary research is a must-do for understanding the mechanism of news translation (Tsai, 2015). Although translation was integrated into journalistic production when journalism first emerged (Valdeón, 2015), interlingual transactions involved in the process have barely received scholarly attention from media and journalism studies (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2008). Journalism scholars have been relatively indifferent to journalistic translation compared with the TS world. The neglect translation has experienced in journalism, according to Valdeón (2018), could be attributed to an outdated conceptualization of translation that sees it as a purely linguistic transfer. Contrarily, translation scholars have been dedicated to highlighting the role of translation in manipulating news narratives and exploring the complex socio-cultural constraints governing news translation practice. Some have even stood at the forefront of interdisciplinary JTR, drawing on concepts from journalism and communication studies like framing (Liu, 2018; Wu, 2018) and gatekeeping (Song, 2017; Valdeón,



2022a) to explore news translation practice from novel aspects and extend the shared interdisciplinary interface between journalism and news translation studies.

This study takes up this interdisciplinary initiative and seeks to expand JTR from two aspects. On the one hand, this study accepts an interdisciplinary conceptualization of news translation, “combining journalism and translation approaches” (Valdeón, 2021b, p. 32). In this thesis, news translation is regarded as a dual-function gatekeeping practice that consists of filtering news materials to be translated on the macro level and the more specific transformations the selected news articles undergo before publication on the micro level (Valdeón, 2021b, 2022a). On the other hand, the research focuses on the construction of news values, a crucial concept in journalism that determines how news stories are presented (Bell, 1991). News values represent a set of criteria essential in news selection and production. Considerable literature concerning news value can be found in journalism and communication studies, and, more recently, news values have emerged as a trending topic in news discourse analysis (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Wang et al., 2021). In JTR, however, news values have seldom been the research focus in analyzing translated news discourse when it may forge a potential path to explore journalistic translation from a refreshing perspective. This study examines whether newsworthiness construction can be another interdisciplinary lens for approaching translated news.

### **1.2.2. The marketization and digitalization of journalism in China**

Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up in 1978, the Chinese media environment has experienced many changes, among which marketization and digitalization are probably the most salient transformations observed. Media commercialization can be primarily attributed to the paradigm shift from a planned economy to a market economy in China (Zhao, 1998). Instead of relying entirely on state subsidies as they used to, Chinese news agencies gradually became economically independent by profiting from other channels such as subscriptions, advertising, and sponsorships (Wang & Sparks, 2019a; Zhao, 1998). Simultaneously, a less constrained media environment has propelled the emergence of “‘quasi-official’ or popular press, which is market-driven and readership-oriented” (Li, 1998, p. 308). The boom of the journalistic industry in China has led to a much more fierce and intense market in

which even official media like *People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency* have to compete for popularity with many new rivals. As a result, the list of techniques adopted by the mainstream press to better fit the Chinese market is constantly being updated and modified since the journalistic industry never stops evolving and keeps facing new challenges.

In addition to marketization, technological innovations such as the internet and mobile phones have pushed Chinese journalism into a digital age. According to *the 50th statistical report on China's Internet development*, the number of online news users in China had reached 788 million by June 2022, accounting for 75.0% of all Internet users; most Internet users access the media using mobile devices (CNNIC, 2022). Media outlets, either party-oriented or market-oriented, have adjusted their news gathering, production, and dissemination practices accordingly to survive in the digitalized journalistic industry. News organizations have become accustomed to publishing their news on various online platforms like their websites, applications, and social media accounts. This trend of embracing new media is even more salient in China's traditional mainstream media like the *Xinhua News Agency*, as news consumers online are exposed to various types of news and information posted by other sources (Tang et al., 2017; Xin, 2018). Social media, in particular, have empowered the audiences to “voice their concerns, participate in public decision making and policy making” (Zheng, 2013, p. 375), which means that visibility on social media is highly vital for the press responsible for effectively disseminating mainstream narratives and ideologies. Given the fast development of new media, the Chinese government proposed the media convergence strategy to enhance the transformations of traditional official media and deepen their impact on the numerous new media platforms (Zhao & Sun, 2018). Traces of popular journalism with Chinese characteristics can be frequently observed in the content published online by the official media (Wu & Pan, 2022; Zeng & Li, 2023). This convergence strategy has greatly succeeded as party-oriented newspapers like *People's Daily* and *Global Times* are popular and influential on social media. According to a report released in 2021 by the *Research Institute of the People's Daily Online*, the Weibo account of *People's Daily* has attracted more than 120 million followers, and nearly 120 million users have followed its Tiktok account; the WeChat account of *Global Times* in 2020 has captured more than 1 billion views (People.cn, 2021). Analyzing news discourse

custom-made by the Chinese mainstream press prevalent in new media can help us better understand the affordances of different platforms, sketch the unique media environment in China and figure out practical strategies for more effective news dissemination.

While scholarly attention has been spared to the journalistic practices of the official press like *People's Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency*, and *CCTV News* on social media (Huang & Lu, 2017; Wu & Pan, 2022; Xin, 2018), similar studies concerning JTR are relatively scarce. It is necessary to consider “the impacts of digital media” to further develop translation theory (Qi, 2021, p. 13), a principle believed to also apply in JTR. Thus, this study investigates the journalistic translation practice on WeChat by *Reference News* (RN), a Chinese official media outlet known for publishing translated news. It aims to analyze how RN, a state-owned news agency, has adapted to the marketized and digitalized media landscapes, specifically to the fierce competition on the WeChat public account platform. Journalistic practices set in a social media era have to consider the target readers since “journalism has shifted from a one-way to a two-way conversation” (Adornato, 2021, p. 7). The various social media analytics, such as the number of comments, views, reposts, and likes, display the attitudes and preferences of the target readership. These analytics are of great value for researchers to locate popular stories favored by the audiences and hence help news workers in the journalistic industry understand their readers and publish more popular stories. This research also includes an interactive perspective to make this investigation of translated news on WeChat more interesting and highlight the uniqueness of social media. It mainly analyzes the translated news reports capturing over 100,000 clicks, the maxim traffic number shown by WeChat, and a core indicator for judging the popularity of a WeChat article. It is hoped that analyzing popular translated news reports published by RN on WeChat could contribute to understanding Chinese readers' preference for international news, especially news concerning the United States.

### **1.2.3. The complex China-US relations**

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1979, China, the world's second-largest economy and the most influential developing country, has been in an unstable and fluid love-hate relationship with the United States, also known as the world's largest economy. Considering

the pivotal status of both countries, it is fair to claim that China-US relations are “the most important bilateral relationship in the world,” which can impact the development path of the two countries and even the whole world (Zhang, 2020, p. 1). One prominent feature concerning the China-US relationship lies in its complexity and dynamicity, as this bilateral relationship is never static but constantly changing based on different times and situations (Wang & Ge, 2019). According to Zhao (2005, p. 21), China and the United States are caught up in “a relationship of wary interdependence” involving bilateral cooperation from all aspects on the one hand and vigilance and distrust on the other hand. With the rise of China in recent years, the United States tends to regard China as a threat that might replace its dominant role in the world. For over a decade, China-US relations have been deteriorating: a relationship that used to be epitomized by collaboration has turned into one full of hostility, confrontation, and conflict (Wang & Hu, 2019). The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the trade war initiated by the Trump administration in the first place have witnessed a new lowest point in China-US relations (Lau, 2020). Thus, frenemy, the portmanteau of friend and enemy, might be a more suitable term to describe the United States from China’s perspective, considering the “antipathy, distrust, competition, and volatility” involved in China-US relations (Medeiros, 2019, p. 94).

The domestic mass media could significantly affect and shape the public’s perceptions of a foreign country (Zhang & Boukes, 2019). In China, international news coverage published by central media like *People’s Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency*, to some extent, represents the stance of the Chinese government and influences Chinese people’s attitude and understanding of the foreign countries concerned. It is assumed that the ever-changing relationship status between China and the United States will inevitably influence the image of America in the Chinese press. An investigation of news discourse concerning the United States produced by Chinese media can reflect how the official and the public perceive America, revealing the complex nature of China-US relations.

This study explores the image construction of the United States in translated news discourse published on RN’s WeChat account. Though often described and assumed by most people as innocent, translation practices could be powerful enough to impact journalistic products and eventually “shape international relations” (Zanettin, 2016, p. 314). This study concentrates on translated news reports concerning the

United States produced by RN, a state-owned outlet sponsored by the *Xinhua News Agency*, to explicate how America is represented to Chinese readers via translation and expound the China-US relations using an interdisciplinary approach.

#### **1.2.4. Summary**

To summarize, this study is proposed due to mainly three reasons. Firstly, the advancement of JTR requires more interdisciplinary attempts, particularly insights from journalism and communication studies, to broaden the research scope and open up novel perspectives. In addition, as the Chinese press strives to fit into a more marketized and digitalized media environment, their journalistic practices are constantly adjusted and updated, facing various challenges like converging with emerging social media. This unique context provides researchers with opportunities to examine the affordances of new media and comprehend the changing landscapes of the journalistic industry in China. This thesis attends to the impact of social media on translated journalistic discourse within the Chinese context. Moreover, it is believed that an investigation of translated news discourse concerning America in the Chinese media can facilitate our understanding of the Chinese government's and the public's perceptions of the United States and sketch out the complex and dynamic China-US relations which are essential in maintaining a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Asia-Pacific region and the entire world. Hence, this research analyzes the semiotic resources involved in the most read translated news reports about America published on RN's WeChat account from news gathering and processing aspects, drawing on theories and concepts from journalism and communication studies, including news values and gatekeeping. This interdisciplinary and multimodal attempt is expected to present a general picture of an official media outlet's (RN) reactions to the highly marketized and digitalized context, readers' preference of news values in consuming news relevant to the United States, the government, and the public's perceptions of America, and more importantly, the various stakeholders and factors influencing the journalistic and translational practices in RN.

### 1.3. Research aims and questions

Through the lens of gatekeeping and news values, this study aims to document the patterns of journalistic translation practice on Chinese social media by analyzing translated news reports published by *Reference News* (RN), one of the most prestigious official Chinese media outlets, on its WeChat subscription account. This study examines journalistic translation practice as a double-layered gatekeeping mechanism whose macro-level is concerned with selecting the materials to be published and micro-level shaping the chosen texts into the final published news reports using various techniques such as addition and omission (Valdeón, 2021b). Specifically, it examines RN's patterns of selecting sources for rendition, the topics covered, and the tones conveyed in the collected news stories. It then explores how news values are reconstructed via translation from the discursive level in the most popular translated news articles published on RN's WeChat account covering the United States. It also attempts to figure out the possible reasons causing the journalistic translation practice under question drawing on the gatekeeping theory proposed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009).

This study is expected to map out the social media “route that a news text might follow from source language to target language” (Holland, 2013b, p. 336). Platform plays a vital role in shaping “journalistic practices on social media” (Xu & Löffelholz, 2021, p. 5). An investigation of translated news on social media could further our understanding of the affordances of social media on journalism and journalistic translation within the Chinese context. The current analysis pertains to journalistic translation practices on the WeChat public account platform, one of the major channels for Chinese netizens to access information. Moreover, news translation is said to be governed by “a double mediation (journalistic and translational),” to which other forms of mediation can be introduced following the development of journalism (Hernandez Guerrero, 2010, p. 228). This research is expected to trace other types of mediation brought about by a marketized and digitalized media environment in China.

Furthermore, this study investigates both textual and visual elements in the collected translated news published on RN's WeChat account and their corresponding English counterparts from foreign news agencies. It is hoped that such a multimodal perspective can reveal how news values are (re)constructed

to (re)present the image of the United States in different modes drawing on the DNVA framework and how texts and images interact to convey meanings and make the collected articles newsworthy.

Last but not least, this research proposes possible factors prompting the (re)construction of news values in the most read translated news reports concerning the United States published on RN's WeChat account. Since translation is examined as a two-level gatekeeping practice in news production, the gatekeeping theory developed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) comes in handy for explaining the news translation practice under investigation.

In light of the above aims and objectives, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What are the media sources selected by RN in the collected news stories concerning the United States? What topics have been covered in the collected reports? What tones are conveyed in these popular translated news stories?
2. What are news values discursively embedded in the examined English and Chinese texts and their accompanying images covering America? What are their text-image relations? What are the differences and similarities between the Chinese renditions and their English counterparts concerning the discursive construction of newsworthiness?
3. Based on the gatekeeping theory, what are some possible factors leading to RN's (re)construction practice of newsworthiness via translation?

#### **1.4. Significance of the research**

*Theoretically*, this study will enhance JTR by providing a Chinese perspective of news translation practice on social media. Social media has become a significant platform for people to access information and receive news (Lee, 2020; Yuan, 2020). However, research concerning the affordances of social media on news translation is few and sparse (Zeng & Li, 2023). This study can trace “the implicit and the assumed, the blank spaces between words” (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2008, pp. 5-6) involved in RN's journalistic translation practice on WeChat and thus reveal various constraints and mediations RN is subject to, such as social media logic and state-media guidelines. Additionally, it bridges translation and journalism studies through the notion of news values, a classical concept in journalism,

attempting to channel “the developing views on the concept of translation” into journalism studies (van Doorslaer, 2018, p. 223) and highlighting the importance of injecting journalistic concepts and theories into news translation research. The Chinese media environment is characterized by unique features different from its western counterparts. This study can make news values favored by Chinese journalists and readers on social media, especially on WeChat, more transparent and visible.

*Methodologically*, it has built an interdisciplinary and holistic framework to approach translated news from a more journalistic angle, drawing on the gatekeeping theory and the material and discursive approaches to news value. News translation is “a relatively young discipline” (Caimotto & Gaspari, 2018, p. 207), which means innovative methodologies and frameworks are needed to further the development of the subject. Hopefully, this study could bear out the necessity and plausibility of grounding news translation research in a more journalism-oriented paradigm to gain refreshing insights, like employing the notion of news values.

*Pedagogically and practically*, since this study concentrates on the (re)construction of news values in RN’s most popular WeChat articles, the findings of this research can be employed to inform the curriculum design in journalism and news translation programs and provide a toolkit with journalists and translators to make reports on social media popular and newsworthy. In the past, readers’ expectations could only be assumed (Floros, 2012), but now the features of social media like sharing, like, and comment functions can help researchers “evaluate audience reception and interaction with news content” (García-Perdomo et al., 2018, pp. 1180-1181). The examination of news values embedded in the collected texts and images, especially those with high click-through rates, can help “to trace emerging trends in news consumption” (Molek-Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021, p. 775) and hence shed light on effective ways to enhance “news engagement in the digital context” (Wu & Pan, 2022, p. 14).

### **1.5. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is organized as follows.

Chapter 1 serves as an overview of this doctoral project, demonstrating the motivations and goals of conducting this research. It covers the research background, rationale, aims, questions, and significance



of this study.

Chapter 2 focuses on identifying the research gaps in the existing JTR literature and introducing some crucial concepts and theories used in this project. It first recapitulates relevant literature concerning the conceptualizations of translation in news production and summarizes some of the emerging trends and existent gaps in JTR. The inextricable relations between news translation and journalism studies are underlined in the following section, justifying the potential of channeling more interdisciplinary insights from journalism studies to JTR. News value, the core concept in this project, is further elucidated with a concise summary of the different aspects of investigating newsworthiness and a brief introduction to the DNVA approach. This chapter well-documents the lack of scholarly attention to translated news on social media, the potential of further enlarging the interdisciplinary interfaces between journalism and translation studies, and the prospects of employing DNVA in JTR.

Chapter 3 displays the data and the integrated analytical framework employed in the project. This section introduces the research materials analyzed in the study, translated news published on RN's WeChat subscription account. The history and development of RN are demonstrated, followed by a detailed description of how the data is collected and processed for further investigation. This methodological chapter also explains and justifies the analytical framework drawing on the gatekeeping theory and the DNVA approach.

Chapter 4 concerns the macro-level analysis of the collected translated news articles from RN's WeChat account, which conducts a content analysis of the collected translated articles regarding their sources, topics, and stances. This section analyzes translation as a macro-level gatekeeping practice in RN's news production process.

Chapter 5 chronicles findings derived from the micro-level analysis of the collected data based on the DNVA approach, which inspects translation as a micro-level gatekeeping practice in news production. News values established in the collected English news texts and their corresponding Chinese counterparts are scrutinized and compared to locate similarities and differences in discursive newsworthiness construction practices between English and Chinese journalistic texts. This part investigates translation as a micro-level gatekeeping practice.

Chapter 6 interprets RN's journalistic translation practice on the WeChat public account platform within the scope of the gatekeeping theory. It draws on the findings from previous sections and some metadata about RN's journalistic and translation practices to present an in-depth discussion of translation as a dual-level gatekeeping practice performed by RN on the WeChat public account platform.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by succinctly summarizing the current research, recapping the key findings, mentioning some pitfalls of the study, and proposing some research avenues worthy of further exploration.

## **Chapter 2 Literature review**

This chapter underpins the necessity and innovative aspects of the current research, mainly surveying the existing literature, introducing concepts and theories related to JTR and news values, and identifying the research gaps this study seeks to address. It first recaps the evolving conceptualization of translation, particularly in journalism studies and news translation, and then reviews some relevant studies concerning JTR, specifying what has been done and needs to be done in this emerging area. The second section highlights the changing media landscapes due to the social media boom, explicating various challenges and opportunities posed by the various novel platforms to the journalistic industry and research, including the production of translated news. News value, the core notion employed in this study, is also elucidated by expounding the different approaches to this crucial concept in journalism, recapitulating crucial literature relevant to news values, and underlining its value to JTR.

### **2.1. Conceptualizing journalistic translation**

#### **2.1.1. The evolving conceptualization of translation**

Since translation studies found an established and independent academic status in the 1980s, many changes can be observed in its development trajectory. The two most salient trends are probably manifest in the broadened conceptualization of translation and the extension of research focus (Gambier, 2016). It is never easy to define translation. Nevertheless, scholars have attempted to accomplish this arduous task via various methods, which has occupied a large proportion of translation studies research (Tymoczko, 2005). Discussion concerning the development of TS cannot escape from touching upon the concept of equivalence. The notion of equivalence implies that a translation can perfectly reproduce the value of a source text without any transformations (Pym, 2007). Equivalence is deemed a crucial concept in the linguistic-oriented approach to translation. According to Catford (1965), the primary goal in translation practice is to “find TL translation equivalents” and, in translation theory, to define “the nature and conditions of translation equivalence” (p. 21). It is believed by TS scholars from the linguistic-oriented school that acknowledging the indispensability of equivalence contributes to

highlighting the research focus of the discipline, distinguishing translation from other similar activities like paraphrasing and summary and thus underlining the status of “translation as an independent phenomenon” (Halverson, 1997, pp. 212-213). However, TS scholars from the non-linguistic strand have criticized and rejected the notion of equivalence (Munday, 2016). In Snell-Hornby’s words (1995), this term per se is “imprecise and ill-defined,” displaying only “an illusion of symmetry between languages” that can never be realized and even blurs the essence of TS research (p. 22).

The more source-oriented and linguistic-centered equivalence paradigm prevailed in the TS world until the emergence of the cultural turn in the 1980s (Gambier, 2016), which calls for considering “the constraints that enter into play during the process of both the writing and rewriting of texts” (Lefevere & Bassnett, 1990, p. 12). Thus, the conventional belief that upholds “equivalence-oriented and prescriptive notions of translation” has been contested and abandoned (Zwischenberger, 2019, p. 264). The TS world started to embrace a broader conceptualization of translation, considering more socio-cultural aspects than purely textual ones. For example, the skopos theory, developed by German scholars such as Katharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer, and Christiane Nord, has boldly dethroned the “sacred” status of source texts and underlined the importance of the translation purpose (Munday, 2016). Descriptive translation studies (DTS) advocated by Toury (2012) have become one of the most influential research strands in modern TS. According to Toury (2012), “translations are facts of target cultures” (p. 23), which deprives of the “privilege” of the source texts. Tymoczko (2014) argues that we should move beyond the western-oriented traditions and regard translation as a fluid and cluster concept, given that different cultures may have their unique conceptualizations of translation. These updated conceptualizations signal that translation is done via a zigzag course inextricably interwoven with “text, context, and myriad agents” instead of a linear one (Gambier & Kaspere, 2021, p. 41).

The research scope of translation studies has also been enlarged due to technological advances and the renewed conceptualization of translation and translation studies, echoing Tymoczko’s (2005, p. 1095) view that translation is a fluid and flexible concept and translation studies “an open field”. It is necessary and crucial for the TS world to explore “the multilingual, multicultural, and multidirectional aspects of translation,” demonstrating the true essence of translation (Gentzler, 2011, p. 139). While the early stage

of translation studies was mainly dedicated to analyzing the translation of religious or literary texts, new genres and forms of translation have been noted and investigated (Zethsen, 2007), ranging from audiovisual to game translation and danmaku translation. Journalistic translation, the focus of this review, has also garnered some scholarly interest. Besides, the technological evolution in this digital era has prompted the increasing multimodality of nearly every type of communication, including translation activities. TS scholars have just started to study the power of images, sound, layout, font, and other multimodal resources in meaning-making. Most existing multimodal translation research is relevant to audiovisual translation and sign interpreting, meaning it remains an underexplored and fertile ground for other TS subareas (Zhang & Feng, 2020, p. 3). To briefly conclude this section, translation studies have evolved from a relatively rigid discipline to a more flexible and open status, embracing the broadened research scope and new opportunities for conceptual renewal and technological development.

### **2.1.2. Defining journalistic translation**

The theorization and conceptualization of news translation have followed the development of TS as an established discipline. As has been recapitulated by Gambier (2021), the two prominent trends observed in TS are the evolved understanding of translation since the cultural turn and the digitalization and multimodality of translation activities and translation products. These two paradigm changes are observed in the evolution of JTR as well.

On the one hand, the legitimacy of using the notion of translation has been challenged in news translation, considering the heavy transformations involved in the journalistic production process (Schäffner & Bassnett, 2010) and the difficulty of reconstructing or even locating the sources (van Doorslaer, 2010a). The questioned applicability of translation in describing journalistic translation practice boosted the coinage of many different terms referring to the transformation process of news texts from one language to another. The most widely used one is probably the concept of transediting proposed by Stetting (1989) to explain the involvement of both translation and editing and highlight the changes made by translators/transeditors in rendering various genres of texts from one language to another. Stetting (1989) argued that a “certain amount of editing” (p. 371) is inevitable and should be

legitimized in translating texts, especially non-fictional texts. This substitute demonstrated the complexity of “news production and translation” and was later employed by many scholars in news translation (Valdeón, 2014, p. 52). While the concept of transediting has partially revealed the essence of journalistic translation as practices intertwined with myriad mediations and adaptations, it has also blocked the development of TS. As mentioned in the previous section, the notion of translation has already been enlarged to account for various activities and genres that may not even be regarded as translations from a rather traditional perspective. The overuse of transediting as an alternative might halt the broadening of the concept of translation, making it continue “to be understood in a narrower sense of a purely word-for-word transfer process” (Schäffner, 2012, p. 881). Similarly, Pym (2004, p. 4) has indicated that foreign news published by local media outlets can be considered “as a localization of foreign-language texts” concerned with more than translation in a traditional sense. Following Pym (2004), Orengo (2005) suggested that the notion of localization be applied to describe news translation as it functions as a practical framework to interpret the numerous factors and forces manipulating news translation. Kuo and Nakamura (2005) employed the term transformation to describe the changes and differences between the source media text and their Chinese renditions. The title of their study, *Translation or transformation? A case study of language and ideology in the Taiwanese press* directly indicates their take on comprehending translation as a rigid linguistic transfer.

Although many terms have been introduced to illustrate news translation, we should be aware of the danger of “static, reductive definitions” of translation in limiting “insight and growth” (Gentzler, 2011, p. 130). The overabundance of these terminologies might only be detrimental to JTR and the development of TS as they fail to highlight the readily complex nature and enlarged scope of the notion of translation per se. Besides, a narrow and equivalence-oriented definition of translation makes it seem possible to separate interlingual transfer from other forms of transformations (van Doorslaer, 2022) when they are actually in an intertwined relationship. As a matter of fact, traces of translation can be tracked at various stages of news production, including “the initial newsgathering stage” and “the handling stage” (van Doorslaer, 2010b, p. 181). Instead of coining new terms, a holistic understanding of news translation requires extended conceptualizations of translation and acknowledgments of the

complexity of journalistic translation.

Therefore, this study accepts a broadened definition of translation to account for the various transformations in translating news texts. More specifically, drawing on Valdeón (2021b), news translation is understood as a double-level gatekeeping practice: it first shoulders the responsibility of selecting contents to be published and then transforms the chosen articles into the intended versions using various techniques such as adaptation, addition, and omission (Valdeón, 2021b). Moreover, in this study, translation does not only occur at the language level but also considers the resources of other modes. In his seminal work, *On linguistic aspects of translation*, Jakobson (1959/2012, p. 127) proposed three ways to interpret verbal signs: interlingual translation, intralingual translation, and intersemiotic translation, which have greatly expanded the research scope of TS. Such extended scope is frequently manifest in journalistic translation practices. News texts, including translated news reports, are highly dependent on multimedia elements, making them excellent sources for analysis beyond the linguistic level. This trend is even more salient in online news. The research focus of this study, social media news, in particular, hinges on visual resources to convey meaning and attract readers. Thus, it is deemed necessary to conduct analysis from a multimodal perspective.

### **2.1.3. Journalistic translation and journalism**

This section aims to bridge translation studies and journalism studies, pinpointing common ground shared by these two disciplines. It briefly introduces the understanding of translation within the journalistic world and underlines the necessity of more interdisciplinary interaction to advance JTR and eliminate bias towards translation in journalism studies.

#### **2.1.3.1. Translation in journalism**

A glimpse of the concept of news translation suffices to tell that it is closely connected with journalism. Even though “the connection between news and translation can be traced back to the birth of journalism itself” (Valdeón, 2012, p. 851), translation barely receives any attention from journalism scholars or professional journalists. In a study highlighting the lack of interaction between journalism and

journalistic translation, Valdeón (2018) argued that the negligence of translation in journalism studies could be primarily attributed to the inferior status of translation practice and the rigid conceptualizations of translation in news production.

In the professional context, translation is an integral part of news production (Schäffner, 2005). van Doorslaer (2012) even proposed the concept of *journalator* to indicate the omnipresence of translation in journalistic settings. However, journalists are unwilling to acknowledge their work as translators because of their stereotyped assumptions of considering translation a mechanistic and robotic process (Gambier & Van Doorslaer, 2016). Journalists do not accept the notion of translation, given that they believe translation equals “equivalence, linguistic correspondence, fidelity to the source text, and no re-contextualization” (Gambier, 2016, p. 901). According to Schäffner and Bassnett (2010, p. 9), the journalistic world’s “ambiguous” attitude towards translation is manifest in the rejection of the term “translation” by news workers and the lack of relevant translation training in the press.

In academia, a similar understanding of translation as carrying fixed meanings from source to target texts has also been widely accepted by researchers in journalism (Valdeón, 2018) as they know little about the happenings in the TS world (Gambier, 2016). For instance, in a study published in *Journalism*, a top-tier journal in journalism studies, van Leeuwen (2006) distinguished translation from adaptation, with the former related to linguistic choices and the latter transformations concerning style, culture, and ideology, while analyzing the rendition of news texts from Vietnamese to English. Obviously, van Leeuwen (2006) has opted for a narrow definition of translation as a simple transfer across languages. In another contribution from *Journalism* examining the BBC world service, Baumann et al. (2011a) proposed a framework to analyze translational practices involved in news production, including “transporting, translating, transposing/trans-editing, and transmitting” (p. 137), which again considers translation within a very limited and language-centered scope. As mentioned in the previous section, translation studies have readily moved beyond the equivalence-oriented and language-centered era and accepted that news translation is much more than linguistic transfer (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2008). While JTR has drawn on some insights from journalism studies to design more diverse research methods and enlarge the research scope, journalism studies rarely note the recent developments of TS. This imbalance,



according to van Doorslaer (2018), can be addressed by “engaging in dialogue with other disciplines about the developing views on the concept of translation” (p. 223). In other words, it is crucial to inform journalism studies of this broadened notion of translation if any balanced interdisciplinary outreach or future collaboration is desired.

Until now, the affordances and impact of translation in journalistic production have not received much attention from journalism scholars, with only a few exceptions. One typical example frequently mentioned is the second issue of the twelfth volume in 2011 published by *Journalism*, which mainly interrogates the translation practices within the BBC World Service. Podkalicka (2011) has devised three metaphors to narrate the “story” of translation involved in the BBC World Services: translation as factory, dialogue, and network. The contribution by Thiranagama (2011) focuses on translation practices of BBC Tamil and Sinhala to explore the BBC’s role in a somewhat fragmented region like Sri Lanka. Jaber and Baumann (2011) are interested in BBC Arabic, providing a detailed account of BBC’s politics of translation in the middle east from a holistic perspective. Bulić’s study (2011), situated within the Serbian context, seeks to determine why the Serbian readership has opted for BBC to access western journalistic resources. While the translation of jihadist speeches from Arabic to English in news discourse is examined by Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2011), Cheesman and Nohl (2011) have investigated how the 2008 presidential election was presented and translated into other languages by BBC. These research papers have noted the role of translation in journalism, but their conceptualizations of translation remain relatively rigid and narrow. Nevertheless, this themed collection has noted that “the implications of ‘translation’ for the study of journalism are far wider and deeper” (Baumann et al., 2011b, p. 238). A recent research paper by a journalism scholar has explicitly discussed the negative role of translation in disseminating disinformation and fake news (Zou, 2021). In light of an enlarged conceptualization of translation, Williamson Sinalo (2022) conducted a comparative analysis among five online news agencies based in different regions to demonstrate how Burundi’s 2015 coup was translated, presented, and framed differently in journalistic discourse. These previous attempts have displayed the potential of bridging translation and journalism. Notwithstanding, in journalistic academia, “the interest in translation is, for the most part, negligible” (Valdeón, 2018, p. 265).

As mentioned previously, van Doorslaer (2018) has indicated that TS scholars have to keep other disciplines updated about the evolved conceptualizations of translation. One of the effective methods to achieve this objective is probably to publish in journals in journalism studies. Inspiring achievements have been accomplished by some news translation scholars who managed to publish in prestigious journalism journals, making the voice of translation heard in the journalistic world. Valdeón (2018; 2020b; 2022a) has pioneered the efforts to break the wall between translation and journalism studies, exploring possible reasons for the negligence experienced by translation in journalism studies and giving prominence to the power of translation in journalistic production. Valdeón (2018) has explored how the notion of translation is employed and discussed by journalism and communication scholars, arguing that translation is understood differently within translation and journalism studies. In another contribution published in *Journalism Studies*, R. A. Valdeón (2020b) chronicled the role of translation in journalism from a historical perspective and detailed some methodological and theoretical challenges involved in interdisciplinary inquiries into news translation. Valdeón (2022a) has also managed to channel some broadened and interdisciplinary conceptualizations of translation into journalism studies, contending that translation functions as a two-level gatekeeping mechanism in news production, which determines the selection of texts to be translated and the manipulation of how selected source texts are presented to the target readers in another language. Hong (2021) noted the impact of translating attribution in influencing the credibility of news agencies, which again bears witness to the necessity of research translation in journalism. These “expeditions” by translation scholars into journalistic academia have made the common ground shared by translation and journalism studies more visible.

Even more exciting news is the publication of the seventh issue of the twenty-third volume of *Journalism* in 2022, a special issue dedicated to JTR and edited by Valdeón. Contributions in this collection have drawn on diverse methods, theories, and concepts “to analyze translation practices from many complementary perspectives” (Valdeón, 2022b, p. 1399). Kalantari (2022) has detailed the part-whole relationship between translation and news production through the lens of gatekeeping, underscoring the necessary inclusion of translation to develop news gatekeeping theory further. Scammell and Bielsa (2022) have investigated the reception of translated news produced via different

translation strategies, concluding that foreignization is more effective in enhancing cross-cultural engagement. Based on ethnographic data collected from semi-structured interviews with Indian journalists, Wright (2022) has examined journalists' skopos in multilingual reporting and the existence of creative agency in manipulating news texts into versions presented to the target readership. Vandendaele et al. (2022) gathered first-hand accounts of journalistic practices within another multilingual context, Belgium, to investigate journalists' perception and employment of language and translation. For her part, Hernández Guerrero (2022) has examined the rendition of multimedia digital news stories from English to Spanish by considering verbal and non-verbal elements, which better suits the features of journalistic discourse on new media. Ping (2022a) has designed an interdisciplinary framework drawing upon corpus-based critical discourse analysis and framing analysis to delineate how the 2014 Hong Kong protests are reframed in translated Chinese news by media outlets in China, the UK, and the US. The contribution by Daghigh and Amini (2022) has also resorted to critical discourse analysis, but in tandem with the actor-network theory, looking into the interaction between the various human and non-human actants and the manipulative power of ideology exerted on political news translation within the Iranian press. Ideology is a core concept in Kamyane's case study of BBC news (2022): the comparison of translated news from English into Russian and Ukrainian has shown the different adaptation techniques employed by BBC's Ukrainian and Russian services and revealed the underlying ideological differences hidden behind these transformations. Rodríguez-Espinosa (2022) has provided in-depth profiling of interpreters and translators who have assisted foreign correspondents covering the Spanish civil war, dedicating another valuable piece to the historical approach to translation in journalism. This special issue in JTR has exemplified the many diverse and novel research avenues generated from "various types of academic interaction" (Valdeón, 2022b, p. 1407). Despite the relentless efforts made by news translation scholars to boost the border-crossing interaction, as Valdeón (2022b, p. 1407) has indicated, "a close cooperation" with translation studies has yet to emerge in the journalistic world.

### **2.1.3.2. The inextricable relations between translation and journalism**

If scrutinized and compared in detail, journalism studies, in fact, share many similarities with TS. Firstly, the drafting of news stories undergoes the same steps as the journalistic translation procedure. Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden (2018), for their part, have briefly enumerated journalists' interventions in news production, which include information selection, positioning, augmentation, and tailor-made arrangements to draft news stories with certain journalistic styles (p. 482). In capturing these interventions, they have traced five transformations, namely, "evaluative, political, cultural, emotive, and professional" (p. 481), which can be exploited by media outlets with disparate journalistic styles to produce diverse news stories pandering to audiences of different tastes. In this paper, the various textual materials involved in news writing are even labeled as "source texts" by Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden (2018). These transformation steps in news authoring are similar to journalistic translation, which results from the editing and handling "of textual, paratextual and multimodal elements from different sources" (R. A. Valdeón, 2020b, p. 1655).

In addition, journalistic translation and journalism studies are both characterized by interdisciplinarity. News translation scholars have navigated the interdisciplinary terrain by absorbing and integrating insights from various research strands, such as journalism and communication studies (Liu, 2017, 2018; Wu, 2018), critical linguistics (Al-Hejin, 2012; Elewa, 2019; Ping, 2021), and imagology (Valdeón, 2016a). These previous accounts bear witness to the embracing of adjacent disciplines and continuous innovation in news translation research. Similarly, the vigor and growth of journalism studies as an established discipline should be partly attributed to the border-crossing moves in the field. Many theoretical and methodological tools have been culled from other fields to inquire about journalism, such as "sociology, history, language studies, political science and cultural analysis" (Zelizer, 2004, p. 8). In a word, JTR and journalism studies have benefited tremendously from interdisciplinary collaboration regarding research scope expansion and theoretical and methodological innovation.

Furthermore, analogous changes have been witnessed within the profession of translators and journalists (Gambier, 2021). Instead of passively receiving information like they used to, ordinary people are now

tremendously empowered to do non-professional translation activities like fansubbing and machine translation post-editing (Jiménez-Crespo, 2019). The situation is no better for journalists as netizens can post anything via social media, including the most up-to-date news content. In the digital age, “blogging, tweeting, posting comments, uploading videos and other forms of communication” enacted by ordinary people can all be categorized as citizen journalism (Harcup, 2022, p. 65). The notion of citizen journalism captures the threats and challenges faced by professional journalists. Considering these unprecedented changes in both fields, it might be reasonable to contend that the professional landscapes of translators and journalists have been transformed due to technological advances and the social media boom.

The shared properties “between translation and journalism as professional practices and academic disciplines” (Valdeón, 2022b, p. 1407) partly explain why some journalistic concepts and models can be applied to news translation and confirm the intimate relations between JTR and journalism studies. Classical concepts from journalism and communication studies, like gatekeeping and framing, have been proven effective in inspecting translated news discourse. For instance, as a central concept in Liu’s (2017) contribution, framing has been exploited to elucidate how financial news is mediated via translation. In another monograph, Liu (2018) furthered her exploration of connecting framing studies and news translation by developing a transframing model to analyze journalistic translations. Wu (2018) has identified three framing variations in the translated news from English to Chinese concerning the China-Japan dispute by a Chinese newspaper, showcasing how stance is mediated via translation. The value of gatekeeping in theorizing and investigating news translation was acknowledged in the works of Vuorinen (1997), Song (2017), and Valdeón (2021b, 2022a).

For his part, Valdeón (2021b, 2022a) has conceptualized translation in news production as a dual-level gatekeeping practice: at the macro-level, translation shoulders the responsibility of source selection, and at the micro-level, translation is concerned with the many textual transformations undergone by translated news discourse. More recently, concepts like convergence (Davies & Conway, 2019b) and agenda-setting (Ping, 2022b; Valdeón, 2021b, 2023a) have been brought up in JTR: the former for boosting the communication between journalism and translation and the latter for understanding the

complex mechanism in news translation. Tabloidization, another buzzword often broached in discussing the changing practices of broadsheets, has been adopted by Valdeón (2023c) to examine the impact of translation in facilitating the evolution of a more tabloidized Spanish version of the *New York Times*. The employment of these notions in JTR has contributed to locating “part of the common ground” that might encourage cooperation between JTR and journalism studies (R. A. Valdeón, 2020b, p. 1656). Nevertheless, journalism studies are more than framing, gatekeeping, convergence, or agenda-setting. Back in his review article of JTR, Valdeón (2015) readily argued that “the interface between translation and communication studies is yet to be fully exploited” (p. 648). In other words, a larger space is waiting to be explored in bridging news translation and journalism studies and identifying refreshing border-crossing research venues. This study attempts to experiment with some journalism-oriented concepts, theories, and methods less or seldom employed in JTR.

## **2.2. A review of journalistic translation research**

JTR is now booming, as seen from the increasing number of JTR-related papers, book chapters, entries in many TS handbooks, monographs, and special issues. The past two decades or so have witnessed the enlarged research object of JTR, the emergence of custom-made and interdisciplinary theoretical models, and the growing interest in this subarea from TS scholars. This section is a general review of news translation research, elaborating on the existing literature and pinpointing some research gaps this study aims to fill. It first recaps studies opting for either product- or process-oriented approach, the two primary methods employed in JTR (Holland, 2013a). This section also briefly summarizes relevant JTR from cultural, historical, medium-oriented, and reception-based perspectives. Relevant literature concerning the Chinese context is also discussed, and research gaps noted in this regard are mentioned.

### **2.2.1. Product-oriented approach**

Product-oriented JTR mainly focuses on analyzing the final published news products and sketch patterns of news translation via close textual analysis. Most research within this strand can be categorized as case studies that compare news texts concerning a specific event “across national, linguistic and

institutional boundaries” (Holland, 2013a, p. 336). They have each contributed a unique piece to the puzzle of news translation from various aspects.

#### **2.2.1.1. Searching for translation strategies**

Some studies have attempted to identify the diverse strategies employed in translating news texts and reveal the complexity of journalistic translation. Bassnett (2005), for instance, has explored suitable translation methods in journalistic settings from a rather macro perspective, arguing that acculturation is more appropriate in news translation compared with foreignization that might lead to “textual violence” (p. 129). Interestingly, Scammell (2018) has taken a different stance regarding the selection of foreignization- or domestication-centered strategies in journalistic translation. She boldly challenges the prevailing domestication norm and indicates that the foreignized approach can provide readers with more accurate and objective coverage and a taste of closer foreign realities (Scammell, 2018, p. 94). More studies were dedicated to locating specific translation strategies through detailed textual analysis and close reading. Hursti (2001) has summarized four types of alterations frequently observed in news translations made by the Finish News Agency, namely, reorganization, deletion, addition, and substitution. Valdeón (2005, 2008) has identified three translation strategies, including addition, omission, and permutation, by comparing collected English news texts from the website of BBC world and their corresponding Spanish translations published on BBC Mundo. Techniques like “omission, addition, re-perspectivization, generalization and particularization” (p. 220) were noted by Kang (2007) in her interrogation of translating news reports about North Korea. In an investigation of the translational practice of a Spanish print media outlet in handling foreign interviews, Hernandez Guerrero (2010) observed the frequent use of “addition, omission, synthesis and reorganization” (p. 225). Wu and Zhang (2015) have compared English headlines published on the English website of *Financial Times* and their Chinese translations, locating strategies of substitution, omission, explicitation, and systemic-functional changes. Within the scope of narrative theory, Qin and Zhang (2018) summarized four methods, including addition, omission, generalization, and specification adopted by *China News Service* in rendering news about Snowden published by official Chinese news agencies from Chinese into English.

The studies reviewed above are not exhaustive but a peep at the prevalence of tracking news translation strategies in JTR. While these analyses are concerned with different language pairs, news outlets, and media contexts, they have displayed mostly overlapped and slightly disparate results considering translation methods (Hernández Guerrero, 2021). Admittedly, translation is not done in a vacuum, including journalistic translation. Researching translation strategies alone is not enough, and other aspects need to be drawn to extend the research scope and bring fresher looks to JTR.

#### **2.2.1.2. Contextual exploration and theoretical innovation**

Despite the usefulness of updating the inventory of available translation strategies, a more critical aspect of JTR is exploring the reasons for adopting those strategies and their influences on (re)constructing narratives and shaping the target readership's perception. Therefore, contextual analysis is often supplemented to interpret the results of textual analysis. This type of research moves beyond tracing translation strategies and is dedicated to proving that journalistic translation is more of an act governed by myriad forces and factors. In the pursuit of these goals, journalistic translation scholars have borrowed concepts and theories from other disciplines and built custom-made frameworks to examine news translation practice. TS scholars often exploit insights from linguistics “for theoretical input” (Malmkjær, 2017, p. 15), considering the inseparable connection between translation and language. JTR embraces many linguistic approaches and often combines them with concepts and theories from other disciplines to build custom-made analytical models, tracing transformations from the discourse level and then surveying the elaborate power relations concerning the investigated translation practice from the context aspect.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as an approach interested in “the relation between language and power” (Wodak, 2001, p. 2), lends itself well to revealing the various factors constraining news translation practice, primarily political and ideological ones (Al-Hejin, 2012; Chen, 2009; Elewa, 2019; Kang, 2007; Kuo & Nakamura, 2005). While CDA can effectively debunk ideological implications, it is criticized as often too subjective and cherry-picking in selecting texts and evidence (Mason, 2015). In order to counter these shortcomings, corpus linguistics that makes access to a large number of texts



possible is frequently integrated with CDA to generate more objective, convincing, and generalizable findings. This corpus-based CDA approach is often adopted in product-oriented JTR (Kim, 2017; Ping, 2020).

In addition to the corpus-based CDA method, JTR scholars have also been actively looking for insights from appraisal theory (Kamyanyets, 2020; Qin & Zhang, 2020; Zhang, 2013), the narrative theory (Hijjo & Almanna, 2021; Qin & Zhang, 2018; Zeng, 2020) and imagology (Ping, 2021; Valdeón, 2016a) to analyze translated news discourse. Some concepts from journalism and communication studies were also introduced to channel inspiration into JTR by aspiring researchers.

In this regard, gatekeeping (Fujii, 1988; Song, 2017; Vuorinen, 1997) and framing (Liu, 2017; Spiessens & van Poucke, 2016; Wu, 2018) are probably the two most employed concepts in the existing JTR literature. Amid the ongoing interdisciplinary and rigorous interaction, a more typical situation is the combination of useful theories and concepts from different research strands for designing innovative and tailor-made analytical models in JTR. For example, Pan (2014b) has noted the connection between appraisal theory, CDA, and narrative theory to build an integrated framework to examine ideological positioning in translating sensitive news discourse. Spiessens and van Poucke (2016) have connected CDA with different framing mechanisms to explore the translation patterns in representing the Crimean crisis via Russian news translation. These reviewed studies have described a more detailed picture of the interplay between news translation and power within various contexts and boosted the development of JTR via innovative theoretical models.

The above review shows that product-oriented JTR is rooted in various linguistic disciplines like discourse analysis, pragmatics, and communication and journalism studies. This dynamic interdisciplinary interface has been a constant source of innovation regarding research methods and models in JTR. Nevertheless, compared with the dialogues that JTR has engaged with discourse analysis and other linguistic strands, the interaction between JTR and journalism studies seems very limited. The common ground shared by JTR and journalism studies is definitely not only restricted to gatekeeping and framing. As studies mentioned in Section 2.1.3.2. have demonstrated (Ping, 2022b; Valdeón, 2023a, 2023c), concepts like agenda-setting and tabloidization could also become analytical points of entry to

explore news translation through an interdisciplinary prism. The current project contends that the interface between JTR and journalism studies remains to be fully explored.

### **2.2.1.3. Emerging trends in product-oriented JTR**

In addition to examining different types of journalistic writing such as news stories (Valdeón, 2019), news backgrounders (Manfredi, 2018), interviews (Hernandez Guerrero, 2010), and opinion articles (Kamyants, 2020; Valdeón, 2016b), JTR has also zoomed in other journalistic elements or even paratexts such as headlines (Khanjan et al., 2013; Sidiropoulou, 2018), metaphors (Van Poucke & Belikova, 2016), culture-loaded items (Linder, 2014), quotations (Elewa, 2019; Matsushita, 2021; Robertson, 2022) and photo captions (Park, 2016). Another salient trend in product-oriented JTR is the inclusion of visual resources in analyzing translated news discourse (Davies, 2019). After all, multimodal resources also convey meanings and should not be simplified “as window dressing or style” (Bouvier & Machin, 2018, p. 186).

Spiessens and her colleagues (Spiessens, 2019; Spiessens & van Poucke, 2016, 2021), for instance, have conducted several studies to compare translated news texts in Russian and the accompanying visual elements with their counterparts in other languages, concluding that intended narratives could be reframed via manipulating visual images in news translation. Valdeón (2019) has taken photographs into account to examine BBC’s journalistic translation practice from English to Spanish in covering the death and funeral of Margaret Thatcher. Under the framework developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2005), he figured that photographs also participate in representing news events and ideological mediations. Based on a model incorporating the appraisal theory and narrative theory, Boeri and Fattah (2020) have verified the propagandistic role of journalistic translation in an Arabic newspaper, arguing that both textual transformations and manipulation of multimodal resources like images and layout have legitimized the narratives the news agency in questions aims to disseminate. Sidiropoulou (2020) analyzed translated news headlines from English to Greek and the images involved, demonstrating the multimodal reframing of news stories and the impact of visual resources on pragmatic inferences. Similarly, Altahmazi (2020) identified four multimodal re-contextualization strategies to reconstruct the

realities in translated news, highlighting the importance and interconnection of verbal and non-verbal elements in news discourse. Hernández Guerrero (2022) has noted the substitution of multimedia content in the journalistic translations produced by a Spanish digital newspaper. In her case study, while the written texts of the sources were respected, other multimedia resources like audiovisual materials were replaced, recreated, and inserted into the translated news to serve a new group of target readers better. These studies have analyzed multimodal sources of various types in news translation and uncovered their impact on reframing news narratives and shaping readers' perceptions. In a word, meaning-making through translated news also hinges on visual elements, which can be "a fruitful platform for researching translated communication" (Sidiropoulou, 2020, p. 296).

New media, especially social media, are probably the most suitable site to explore how verbal and non-verbal resources interact and collaborate to convey meanings, considering the multimedia and multimodal nature of these platforms. However, JTR is just beginning to investigate translated news on social media. The affordances of social media "on news translation remains underexplored" (Zeng & Li, 2023, p. 3). Moreover, as Zanettin et al. (2015) have indicated, although multimodal translation has garnered some academic interest, it still lacks appropriate and updated methods "to cater for the increased complexity of empirical research in these cases" (p. 181). A similar problem is manifest in news translation. While the mentioned studies in the previous section have confirmed the impact of non-verbal resources in meaning creation via translation, they fail to provide in-depth analyses of the interaction of various semiotic resources, a crucial aspect of multimodal analysis. More customized and comprehensive methodologies are needed for multimodal analysis of translated news discourse, especially interrogating the interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements.

### **2.2.2. Process-oriented approach**

Compared with product-oriented JTR, the process-oriented approach is more challenging as it often involves questionnaires, interviews, and field trips to the headquarters of the news agencies under investigation, all of which are hard to access. However, considering its complementary nature to the findings from the product-oriented perspective, process-oriented JTR is currently on the rise (Davies et

al., 2018).

### **2.2.2.1. Surveying the process**

Process-oriented JTR is interested in exploring “how translations are produced, by whom and in what contexts” (Holland, 2013a, p. 336). Under this category, ethnographic and sociological methods are frequently adopted to gain detailed and first-hand information about the working routines of journalists and translators and the mechanisms of journalistic production processes. In their seminal monograph, Bielsa and Bassnett (2008) have devoted a chapter to display the findings of their field trips to the (regional) headquarters of *Agence France Press*, *Inter Press*, and *Reuters* in which they have observed the operations of journalistic translation, interviewed and disseminated questionnaires to the journalists and translators participating in the processes. Pan (2014a) has provided us with a valuable account of the working routines and the perception towards translation of news translators based in an official Chinese news agency via questionnaires and interviews. This investigation has displayed a different side of news translation which is highly visible and conducted in a more unique media environment. Davier (2014) also took an ethnographic approach to observe the news translation practices and conduct semi-structured interviews with two news agencies based in Europe, *Agence France-Presse* and *Agence télégraphique suisse*. Her fieldwork has offered a detailed account of the multilingual nature of news agencies, highlighted the invisibility of translation, and specified some risks involved in journalistic production/translation processes. In a more recent ethnographic contribution, Davier (2022) has examined the strategies journalists employ to tackle possible risks, especially linguistic ones like linguistic interference concerning news production in a highly complex bilingual environment like Canada. With a case study of a European news website whose translation activity is highly visible, Sánchez Nieto (2021) has followed the five-Ws structure to present a detailed account of the translation procedures on this digital platform aided by interviews with the translation agents involved and other accessible information. For their part, van Rooyen and van Doorslaer (2021) have paid attention to the multilingual context of South Africa, exploring the collaborative translation activities involved in community radio stations via two case studies of radio stations from an ethnographic perspective. Van

Rooyen is a scholar active in revealing the impact, features, and mechanisms of translation in journalistic production via ethnographical and sociological methods, with a particular focus on the journalistic landscape of South Africa (van Rooyen, 2013, 2018, 2019): her 2018 article has demonstrated the general situation of the various multilingual community radio stations in the Free State province of South Africa and the traces and patterns of translation in their journalistic operations; the contributions published in 2013 and 2019 have both borrowed theories from sociology such as the structuration theory and the actor-network theory to interpret the translation activities occurring in community radio of South Africa. These accounts of journalistic translation processes within different news organizations and media contexts have shed insights into how translation is performed by “journalators” (van Doorslaer, 2012, p. 1049) and contribute to complementing the findings based on textual analysis.

#### **2.2.2.2. Triangulation**

Acknowledging the effects of qualitative data obtained via fieldwork to corroborate the findings and hypothesis formulated from textual analysis, Davier and van Doorslaer (2018) have accentuated the importance and value of triangulation in news translation. This mixed method combining product and process analysis has gained its currency in JTR. Manfredi (2018) conducted a qualitative textual analysis of news backgrounders in English-Italian news translations by comparing attitudinal resources between the source and target texts. Based on the translation interventions located, her contribution has further explored the possible factors causing these evaluative shifts by interviewing the translators who performed the news translation tasks for the Italian media outlets under investigation. For her part, drawing on the concept of risk management, Matsushita (2019) has analyzed translations of direction quotes from former American presidents’ speeches in major Japanese newspapers, exploring the translation and risk management strategies involved, which are then compared with the accounts of journalist and translators working for the newspapers. In his account of news translation practices of a Chinese official news organization, Xia (2019) has exploited critical discourse analysis and an ethnographic approach to investigate both the new translation product and process of *Reference News*, a prestigious official media outlet mainly publishing translated news discourse for Chinese readers. In

a similar vein, Bazzi (2019) employed critical discourse analysis to analyze translated news texts produced by Lebanese news organizations. The findings based on textual analysis are then explained based on the interviews with journalists and editors participating in the news production processes. Hernández Guerrero (2022) has tracked the transformations of multimedia content concerning journalistic translations published in a Spanish digital newspaper. The multimodal comparison is complemented with qualitative data generated from an interview with a director from the agency that provides more contextual information and a first-hand explanation of the translation process. While these inquiries about journalistic translation may focus on different media outlets worldwide, they have shared similar methods that count on textual analysis drawing on mainly linguistic concepts and theories for preliminary conclusions and then verify them with qualitative data obtained from fieldwork. It is fair to claim that triangulation is effective in describing journalistic translation and generating findings from a more comprehensive and scientific perspective. Thanks to these studies, we have become closer to “the black box” of the press, understanding the complexity of journalistic production and the myriad agents and factors controlling journalistic translation supported with textual evidence and self-accounts from people inside the media outlets.

### **2.2.3. Other approaches**

In addition to the two major research strands introduced previously, news translation can be approached through the lens of culture, history, reception, and medium. The cultural approach in JTR is curious about how translation contributes to “shaping perceptions and interpretations of cultural and social identities” and “the role of journalists, agencies, and audiences in the representation of culture” (Zanettin, 2021, p. 105). Conway (2010, 2012, 2015a, 2015b) has been dedicated to promoting this research strand in JTR. According to Conway (2010), news translation is a kind of cultural translation performed by journalists to reinterpret and explain a foreign culture for a new target readership. It is “a fundamentally hermeneutic act” (Conway, 2012, p. 1003). The concept of cultural translation has been contested by Davier (2015), given that not all the transformations and mediations in news translation can be elucidated, and other factors like time constraints and readability are highly overlooked within the scope

of cultural translation. Despite its controversy, this approach has broadened the scope of translation, moving JTR from linguistic transfer to cultural transfer, where “journalists try to explain to one group how another sees the world” (Conway, 2012, p. 998). This conceptualization is adopted by Riggs (2021) to examine how European news agencies represent a terrorist event in France to their target readerships from a multimodal analysis of news headlines and images.

Another potential research avenue lies in deepening the dialogue between history and JTR (Valdeón, 2015). Valdeón (2012; 2020b; 2021a) has published several historical overviews of the close link between translation and journalism, all of which have confirmed translation’s pivotal role in the development trajectory of journalism. In a recent article, Valdeón (2022c) discussed the invisibility and complexity of indirect translation in news production through the historical prism, further testifying to the necessity of giving prominence to translation in journalism. González Núñez (2022) is interested in identifying traces of translation in border periodicals published during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which contributes another firm proof to confirming the centrality of translation in historical journalism.

News translation scholars might also be interested in the target readers’ reactions toward journalistic translations. The answers to questions like whether the audience is aware of the transformations undergone by the final news products and how their perceptions and attitudes are shaped via translation depend on reception studies (Manfredi, 2018, p. 200). For instance, Conway and Vaskivska (2010) analyzed the comments posted by readers about a story published in the New York Times and its translated version, exploring whether journalistic translation can enhance cultural interaction. Conway (2012), in another contribution, drew on the concept of cultural translation to examine a series of long-form journalistic articles concerning Muslim women published by a Canadian media outlet, and the readers’ responses to these articles were also interrogated to check the impact of the articles on facilitating cross-cultural understanding. Following the cultural translation approach, Tian and Chao (2012) have looked into the comments regarding a news report published by *The Economist* on Xinjiang, elucidating how the readers reacted to the biases in the story. The reception approach provides a perspective to investigate the influence of translated news discourse and might shed insight on strategies to boost cross-cultural communication.

Moreover, the platforms where journalistic translations are disseminated deserve more scholarly attention in JTR. The existing literature has covered television news (Tsai, 2005, 2012, 2015; van Doorslaer, 2012), radio news (Van Rooyen, 2011, 2018, 2019; van Rooyen & van Doorslaer, 2021), and digital news (Hernández Guerrero, 2020, 2022). While some related studies can be found in the current literature, comparative studies demonstrating the uniqueness and affordances of different media are scarce (Valdeón, 2015). Lee (2006) has compared news translation practices of broadcasting and newspapers within the Korean context, demonstrating their differences in rendering news leads and proposing possible factors causing those disparities. Manfredi (2018) has tracked the disparate journalistic translation practices between an Italian magazine and an Italian website, triangulating her findings based on textual analysis with qualitative data from interviews with translators involved. Research of this type is of great value to enhance our understanding of the unique features and affordances of different media platforms and lend support to guide the journalistic practices of journalists and translators.

#### **2.2.4. JTR within the Chinese context**

Considering that this research is grounded in the Chinese context, this section is devoted to reviewing relevant literature covering the translation practice by Chinese media outlets. A large proportion of Chinese news translation research is concerned with *Reference News* (RN), also known as *Cankaoxiaoxi* (参考消息) in Chinese, regarding the prominent status and popularity of RN in China. RN is an official media outlet and a newspaper title with the largest circulation in China, which publishes translated news and informs Chinese readers of the happenings in other countries. The earliest attempt to investigate RN's journalistic translation practices can be traced back to the research by Schwarz (1966) in which he looked into news covered in RN when it was still an internal publication accessible to Party members only. Rudolph's contribution (1984) examined the image of China per se demonstrated in RN's news content. Drawing on appraisal theory, narrative theory, and the three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, Pan (2014b) explored stance mediations in the translations of sensitive English news discourse by RN and indicated the influences of political and cultural contexts on RN's translation



practice. Pan (2015) developed an integrated framework using appraisal theory and the three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis to analyze how evaluative resources were exploited to resist and reconstruct ideologies hiding behind the English news in RN's Chinese renditions. Wu (2018) investigated translated reports on the China-Japan territory dispute by RN and their English counterparts to uncover how various types of stances in the sources are reframed towards a more pro-China direction in RN's renditions. Chase (2018) noticed the unique function of RN as a translation institution, providing an overview of how RN has evolved and transformed in a highly digitalized and marketized era. Xia (2019) examined RN's translations and people involved in the translation tasks with textual analysis and ethnographic approaches, which again elucidated the interplay of powers and ideologies in news translation. Pan and Liao (2021) have exploited a critical corpus-based approach to examine how relabelling strategy contributes to (re)positioning in translating news concerning the Tibet riots from English to Chinese for RN's readers. Ping (2022b) drew on agenda-setting theory from communication studies to interrogate how cultural agendas were (re)set via translation, using a corpus containing translated news by RN.

Some scholars are interested in exploring how RN's journalistic translation practice differs from other news agencies. For instance, Zeng (2020) has compared translated news concerning the China-US trade dispute published by RN and *Liberty Times* from Chinese Taiwan through narrative theory. For her part, Liu (2018) has collected data from RN and the Chinese version of *Financial Times* to experiment with her transframing framework, verifying the applicability of this model to translated news discourse. The three contributions concerning JTR published by Ping (2020, 2022a, 2023) focus on translated Chinese-language news coverage of Hong Kong published by news agencies like RN, BBC from the UK, and the *New York Times* from America.

In addition to RN, other news organizations that produced translated news either from English to Chinese or Chinese to English were investigated mainly from the product-oriented aspect. Chen (2009, 2011) has conducted several case studies of news agencies based in Chinese Taiwan, attending to the ideological aspect of news translation. Qin and Zhang (2018) focus on translated English-language news discourse produced by Chinese official news agencies, examining the framing strategies exploited to

reframe news narratives for a new target readership. *Xinhuanet* was the research focus in the contributions by Qin and his colleague (Qin, 2020; Qin & Huang, 2021), which examined Chinese-English translated news discourse concerning the South China Sea dispute published on *Xinhuanet* drawing on a framework integrating the appraisal theory and framing strategies. Headline translation is the research focus of the contribution by Qin and Zhang (2020), in which they explored how Chinese media outlets mediate stances through the lens of the engagement system in appraisal theory. In his case study, Ping (2021) took a corpus-based critical analysis approach to explore how images of Hong Kong are represented via translation by BBC Chinese. Li (2022) moved beyond the scope of linguistic analysis, attending to translations of news videos by CGTN and comparing them with those produced by its western counterparts, including BBC and CNN. These investigations of journalistic translation practices have provided descriptive accounts of journalistic translation practices within the Chinese media landscape, which is very different from its western counterpart.

Despite a growing amount of literature on news translation within the Chinese context, little attention has been paid to journalistic translation practice on various emerging social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok, all of which could contribute further to the development and conceptualization of news translation in a digital era. The only exception might be the research published by Zeng and Li (2023), in which they analyzed translated comments inserted in news reports published on RN's WeChat account platform, one of RN's most influential social media channels. This study attempts to fill this gap concerning the intersection between Chinese social media and journalistic translation by examining the translated news published by RN on its WeChat subscription account, analyzing both verbal and non-verbal resources.

### **2.3. Social media, journalism, and journalistic translation**

As mentioned in the previous section, this study examines news translation on social media, making it necessary to briefly recap the interconnection between social media and journalism and highlight the importance of researching journalistic translation on social media. Social media is a byproduct due to the emergence and prosperity of the Internet (Adornato, 2021). It has become an indispensable part of

our daily life, or more precisely, it “stands at the forefront of much of what we do online” (Caple, 2019, p. 428), including news consumption. Social media has become a crucial channel for people to receive and for the press to disseminate information. In what follows, we summarize the impact of social media on journalism and underline the cruciality of social media for JTR.

### **2.3.1. The affordances of social media on journalism**

Journalism has to keep abreast of technological development. In Pavlik’s words (2000), “journalism has always been shaped by technology” (p. 229), which has initiated the transformations and changes regarding journalists’ working routines, news content, and the relationships among “audiences, competitors, news sources, sponsors and those who seek to regulate or control the press” (Pavlik, 2000, p. 229). As one major channel for people to access news (Kilgo et al., 2018), social media cannot be absent from the discussion concerning the technological affordances on journalism. The prosperity of social media has dramatically altered journalism in many ways (Weaver & Willnat, 2016), which might partly explain the surge of academic interest in analyzing the impact of social media on journalism in recent years. After all, in an age of digital media, “virtually every aspect of news gathering, writing and reporting” has been reshaped (Franklin, 2013, p. 1).

The reshaped media landscapes triggered by social media have opened up some novel perspectives for journalism research. Journalists were observed, interviewed, or investigated to explore how their daily routines, habits, or perceptions have changed due to social media (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016; Lee, 2015; McGregor, 2019). Social media references were also interrogated, given an increasing share of these information resources in news reports (Hladík & Štětka, 2017; Paulussen & Harder, 2014). Some scholars looked into methods of making students more social media literate through curriculum design (Bor, 2014; Larrondo Ureta & Peña Fernández, 2017). Another emerging aspect regarding the impact of social media on journalism is probably to investigate how the social media accounts run by various news agencies and the news they published on these platforms have adapted to the rules and norms of a new world (Kilgo, 2016; Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2019a; Zayani, 2021). After all, social media has become the primary channel for people to consume news, compelling news agencies to transform their

journalistic practice for popularity (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). For instance, traditional news agencies have opted for multimedia journalism to “compete with the new journalism brands and new technology platforms” (Dunham, 2019, p. 10). This multimedia trend has left much room for multimodal discourse analysis of news discourse on social media.

Furthermore, the audiences in the social media age are greatly empowered as they can voice their opinions towards news content via comments, likes, and shares, unique functions provided by the versatile social media platforms. Media outlets must learn to flatter their target audience, sticking to consumer-oriented or traffic-centered logic to survive a highly competitive journalistic field (Tandoc, 2014, p. 572). Audience metrics have become vital in determining “news selection and presentation” (Fürst & Oehmer, 2021, p. 802). Under such a circumstance, including an interactive aspect in analyzing news discourse on social media (Liu et al., 2021) might enhance our understanding of the reader-journalist relationship in the digital era.

Embracing social media has become a global trend for media outlets worldwide, including Chinese ones. Social media is essential to “China’s politics, culture, and society” (Zhang, 2021, p. 2631). The public has become more aware of the function of social media in expressing opinions and participating in agenda-setting, which compels official media to exploit these emerging platforms to communicate with Chinese citizens more effectively (Zheng, 2013). The Chinese press has cooperated enthusiastically with social media (Wu & Pan, 2022), accustomed to engaging with platforms “to realize the social media transformation” (Huang & Lu, 2017, p. 777). Huang and Lu (2017) have examined the Weibo account run by *CCTV News* to elaborate on the challenges this state media faces and their accomplishments when converging with social media. Xin (2018) located the traces of popular journalism in the social media content produced by *Xinhua News Agency*, another prestigious official outlet in China. Wu and Pan (2022) focused on the digital presence of *People’s Daily* on the WeChat public account platform, exploring the news values constructed in the published reports from a discursive perspective. The WeChat accounts run by party-oriented media are also the research focus in Fang’s (2022) contribution, in which he traced the features of tabloidization in news content produced by *CCTV* and *People’s Daily* on WeChat. While the mentioned literature may focus on different agencies, they have all confirmed the

initiatives taken by the Chinese press to exploit social media for more influence and popularity.

### **2.3.2. Social media and news translation**

The evolution of translation theory cannot be possible without discussing “the impacts of digital media” (Qi, 2023, p. 13). In other words, social media, an indispensable part of digital media, has to be considered in advancing TS and JTR. Despite the crucial role of social media, it has seldom been broached in JTR. Compared with the bulk of literature in journalism studies, studies concerning the relationship between social media and news translation are surprisingly rare, not to mention those against the background of the Chinese media environment. Abudayeh and Dubbati (2020) have included some data from social media in their contribution, which analyzed how offensive remarks Donald Trump posted on Twitter were rendered into Arabic by four well-known news networks. Hernández Guerrero (2020) was interested in translating tweets as social media references in the news texts published by a Spanish digital newspaper. In her contribution, she categorized the translation strategies adopted to render the selected tweets and indicated that the screenshots of the quoted tweets displayed the visibility of translation. Zeng and Li (2023) explored how RN’s journalistic translation practice has adapted to the media logic of the WeChat subscription account platform by publishing soft news reports containing comments posted by overseas netizens on foreign social media and reframing these social references towards a more pro-China direction via translation. It seems fair to claim that little has been done to explore news translation on social media.

Nevertheless, such medium-specific research is of great value to journalistic translation research (Valdeón, 2015) as it may help redefine the role of translation in an ever-changing media landscape that has catalyzed the birth of myriad types of journalism (Hernandez Guerrero, 2017). The current JTR literature has seldom taken into account visual resources and journalistic practices on social media, leaving “ample room for further research” (Davier, 2021, p. 195). Thus, this study takes a multimodal approach to analyze translated news published by *Reference News* on WeChat, seeking to explore how the media logic of this social media platform has affected the translation practice by an official news agency in China through the lens of news values.

## **2.4. News values**

News value is a core concept for this research. In the following parts, the development of the notion of news value is briefly summarized, and different approaches to news values are reviewed. The discursive news value analysis (DNVA) framework developed by Bednarek and Caple (2017) is then introduced, and its connection with JTR is also underlined.

### **2.4.1. Different approaches to news values**

News value has been a classic and enduring research topic in journalism studies. News values refer to a set of criteria that decide “what makes something newsworthy” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 40). The paper by Galtung and Ruge (1965), which explored the various possible factors prompting foreign events to be selected for news coverage, marked the beginning of news value research (Bell, 1991). According to Galtung and Ruge (1965), the selection of events to be reported as news hinges on mainly 12 factors, including “frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons, and reference to something negative” (pp. 70-71). Following this seminal work, many scholars have been dedicated to investigating journalistic production processes, revising, and refining their list of news values (Mast & Temmerman, 2021), “which typically rearrange or rename bits of the original twelve criteria, drop some, and add others.” (Parks, 2021, p. 822)

For instance, drawing on a literature review concerning news values, a case study of the newspapers in the UK and their own experiences, Harcup and O’Neill (2001) have proposed a new list of news values, which include “the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up and newspaper agenda” (p. 279). Brighton and Foy (2007) have considered the numerous features and new genres of journalism due to the transformed media environment, putting forward a set of new news values including “relevance, topicality, composition, expectation, unusualness, worth, and external influences” (pp. 25-29). In another contribution, Harcup and O’Neill (2017) have revised the previous taxonomy of news values based on content analyses of newspaper

stories and most shared stories on social media. In addition to the previous ten requirements in their 2001 study, five new elements are added to this updated contemporary list of news values, namely, “exclusivity, conflict, audio-visuals, shareability, drama” (p. 1482).

The various taxonomies of news values have contributed to “making more transparent a set of practices and judgments which are otherwise shrouded in opacity” (O’Neill & Harcup, 2019, p. 215). They do, however, have some shortcomings. On the one hand, these attempts to develop revised lists of news values fail to elucidate the necessity and reasons for coming up with new ones when there are apparent overlapped areas with the old taxonomies (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). On the other hand, these conceptualizations of news values are pretty confusing as they often contain many different dimensions of news values (Bednarek et al., 2021), ranging from values intrinsic to an event, journalists’ perception towards newsworthiness, news agencies’ preference to the employment of multimodal resources. It is of great importance to distinguish the different aspects of news values to stop it from “becoming ineffectual as an analytical approach” (Caple & Bednarek, 2016, p. 436).

Based on a thorough literature review regarding news values research, Bednarek and Caple (2017) have distilled four dimensions of news values, namely, material, social, cognitive, and discursive aspects. The material dimension approaches news values as they are embedded in “the actual events and people who are reported on in the news” (Caple & Bednarek, 2016, p. 435). Therefore, investigations concerning the material perspective of newsworthiness are mostly content analysis, examining the various factors prompting the news coverage of an event (Caple & Bednarek, 2016). For instance, based on the news values framework developed by Shoemaker and Cohen (2012), Park and Kaye (2021) have demonstrated a typical content analysis of news stories, delineating newsworthiness construction patterns of stories published by mainstream Korean newspapers on Facebook and news values more likely to garner readers’ attention and engagement. For their part, Boukes and Vliegthart (2020) looked into the construction of newsworthiness in economic news published by nine Dutch newspapers, whose large-scale content analysis has identified news factors favored by newspapers differing in types. In another contribution, Boukes et al. (2022) manually coded and compared news factors involved in Dutch economic news produced by outlets of different types, quantitatively examining the relations of

newsworthiness with the position and length of news stories. García-Perdomo et al. (2018) were interested in interpreting popular social media news through the lens of the audience, analyzing and comparing news values construed by agencies from different regions. Trilling et al. (2017) adopted automated content analysis methods to interrogate social media news within the scope of newsworthiness, testifying to the power of news values to predict the popularity of news articles.

Social and cognitive perspectives of news values are more relevant to people involved in news production: the former focuses on newswriters' application of news values in journalistic practices, and the latter examines what beliefs newswriters "hold about newsworthiness" (Bednarek et al., 2021, p. 704). Given that both dimensions are closely related to the various stakeholders participating in news production, the ethnographic approach comes in handy to help researchers gather qualitative data concerning the actual practice undertaken by newswriters and their understanding of news values (Caple & Bednarek, 2016). For instance, Schultz (2007) collected ethnographic data by observing journalistic and editorial practices in a Danish newsroom, based on which he identified both explicit and implicit news values that have guided journalists in news production. In a similar vein, Hatcher and Haavik (2014) accounted for the popularity enjoyed by Norwegian newspapers via interviews with local journalists, presenting an inner scoop of the news creators' views on news values. For his part, Dick (2014) focused on interactive journalism, more specifically, what news stories were more likely to be covered using interactive infographics in British media. Drawing on observations and interviews in various UK newsrooms, his research displayed news values often considered in creating interactive journalism. In addition to the ethnographic approach, experimental research concerning news values seems another potential avenue for further exploration. Helfer and Aelst (2016) brought up a group of Swiss and Dutch political journalists to determine the newsworthiness of some fictional press releases from different parties, which reveals crucial news values for journalists to make editorial decisions concerning political news via a well-controlled experimental setting.

The discursive dimension of newsworthiness investigates news values established by verbal and non-verbal resources in news stories. This aspect mainly addresses the construal of news values from a linguistic-oriented perspective which has seldom become the research focus in the bulk of existing



literature in “non-linguistic disciplines such as journalism and communications studies” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 4). The lack of scholarly attention to the role of semiotic resources in establishing news values prompted the development of the discursive news values analysis (DNVA) framework. Note that the discursive aspect of news values represents an alternative approach to news values, which complements material, social and cognitive dimensions of newsworthiness (Bednarek & Caple, 2012b). While discussions concerning news values became a prevalent research strand in journalism studies, this notion was only mentioned in passing in JTR. This study argues that news values might become a potential research avenue for further expanding the interdisciplinary interface shared by journalism and translation studies. In particular, this research seeks to test the applicability of the DNVA framework in analyzing translated news.

#### **2.4.2. The DNVA framework**

##### **2.4.2.1. Introducing DNVA**

News values can be traced through the lens of the language employed to present the news (Bell, 1991). The DNVA framework was proposed to resolve the lack of methodological tools to track news values embedded in discourse, which facilitates the investigation of “how newsworthiness is created for the audience through language, image, layout, typography, and so on” (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 139). The primary focus of DNVA concerns the contributions of verbal and non-verbal resources to construing different news values and repackaging an event as worth being covered (Bednarek et al., 2021). The news values list conceptualized in DNVA is not a newly created one; instead, based on the consensus reached by previous news values research (Caple & Bednarek, 2022). Bednarek and Caple (2017) devised a news values list containing eleven elements, namely, “positivity/negativity, impact, superlativeness, proximity, timeliness, unexpectedness, eliteness, personalization, consonance, and aesthetics” (p. 53).

*Positivity* is discursively construed when an event is described as positive, and *Negativity* is established when a negative event is depicted via semiotic resources. *Impact* highlights a news event’s “significant

effects or consequences” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 55). *Superlativeness* is constructed when an event is delineated as “being of high intensity or large scope/scale” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 55). The construal of *Proximity* relies on the degree of an event’s cultural or geographical relevance to the target audience. *Timeliness* refers to the newness or timeliness of an event. *Unexpectedness* can be realized, depending on the novelty of an event, whether it is “unusual, strange or rare” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 55). *Eliteness* can be traced in news discourse when an event involves famous people or organizations. The opposite of *Eliteness* is *Personalization*, whose construction concerns ordinary people and focus often spared to more human-oriented aspects. *Consonance* is more of a news value related to stereotypes, as it is displayed in news discourse when the described entities conform to the stereotypical or expected images the audiences hold. All the news values in DNVA can be established via both linguistic and visual resources except for *Aesthetics*, which can only be constructed via non-verbal elements in news discourse that underline the beauty of an event. To better capture the traces of these news values in news reports, Bednarek (2015) and Caple (2016) developed two coding manuals for identifying news values construed via verbal and non-verbal resources, respectively, which were employed and referenced for the analysis of discursive newsworthiness construction in the current research. More detailed explanations concerning the coding schemes adopted in the thesis were provided in Chapter 3.

#### **2.4.2.2. Relevant literature concerning DNVA**

The DNVA framework was initially developed for analyzing English news texts. Thus, a large proportion of the current literature is dedicated to discursive investigations of newsworthiness construction in English journalistic discourse published by Australian (Bednarek & Caple, 2012b; Bednarek et al., 2021), American (Potts et al., 2015), British (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Dahl & Fløttum, 2017), and Chinese newspapers (He & Caple, 2020). In addition to examining news items published in newspapers, other types of journalistic discourse, such as broadcasting news (Bednarek, 2016b), social media news (Bednarek, 2016a, 2019; Bednarek & Caple, 2017), science magazine (Molek-Kozakowska, 2017), populist news feed (Molek-Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021), podcast (Apirakvanalee & Zhai, 2022)

and covers of news magazines (Zhang & Cheung, 2022a), have also been analyzed via DNVA in the existing literature.

Notwithstanding an English-oriented framework, DNVA has been proven helpful in interrogating news texts published in other languages, such as Persian (Makki, 2019, 2020) and Chinese (Chen & Liu, 2022; Guo et al., 2022; He, 2021; Wu & Pan, 2022). Makki's (2019, 2020) discursive inquiries of newsworthiness construction in Iranian crime news reports revealed the impact of the socio-political environment in manipulating journalistic discourse, providing a unique account of Iranian journalism. Wu and Pan (2022) exploited the DNVA approach to identify news values construed in popular news content published by *People's Daily* on WeChat, delineating the patterns adopted by an official media outlet to attract and engage with readers on social media. Likewise, social media news was the research focus of He's contribution (2021), in which she examined a news story of a high-profile event posted on *People's Daily's* Weibo account and its accompanying comments within the scope of DNVA and the appraisal framework. For their part, Guo et al. (2022) undertook a computer-assisted DNVA of Chinese news coverage of the Kunming terrorist attack and compared the differences concerning newsworthiness construction between market-oriented and party-oriented newspapers. Chen and Liu (2022) collected Chinese news texts published by mainstream media during the COVID-19 pandemic to explore how news values were discursively constructed in different pandemic phases to maintain the public's trust. These previous attempts bore out the applicability of using DNVA to analyze Chinese news discourse.

Another stream of the existing research is devoted to cross-cultural and cross-linguistic DNVA, comparing discursive newsworthiness construction practices between media outlets in different contexts. For instance, Zhang and Caple (2021) focus on the newsworthiness construction of Li Na in English news reports published by *China Daily* and western media outlets, including *The New York Times*, *The Australian*, and *The Guardian*. Zhang and Cheung (2022b, p. 282) have noted the lack of scholarly attention to "the diachronic and cross-cultural differences" in establishing newsworthiness. In their research, the diachronic differences are investigated via news coverage regarding SARS and the COVID-19 pandemic, and cross-cultural differences are manifest by comparing the English epidemic

reporting published by Chinese and American newspapers during the outbreaks of the two viruses. For their part, Yu and Chen (2021) drew on the DNVA approach to compare news values constructed in the photo galleries of *Xinhua News Agency* and *Associated Press* in the coverage of international and domestic floods.

Cross-linguistic research concerning DNVA was also undertaken, although its number remains sparse. The monograph authored by Huan (2018) has devoted a chapter regarding a cross-lingual comparison of news values construed in Chinese and Australian news. Caple et al. (2020) opted for a cross-lingual corpus-based DNVA approach to explore how Chinese and Australian newspapers have constructed news values concerning the Chinese and Australian National Day, which has testified to the possibility of applying DNVA to cross-linguistic analysis.

In light of the fruitful results of previous literature, this study seeks to experiment with the DNVA approach in JTR, which often involves cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analysis. It is assumed that DNVA can shed light on interpreting the transformations noted in journalistic translation from a refreshing perspective. As indicated by Molek-Kozakowska and Wilk (2021, p. 775), research concerning newsworthiness construction needs to be diversified with explorations into different thematic areas, modes, and channels of journalism so that we can discern “emerging trends in news consumption” (Molek-Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021, p. 775). Following this initiative, this research aims to tie DNVA with translated news, describing the trends in consuming translated news in China, especially those capturing the maximum traffic number on social media.

It should be noted that DNVA attends solely to the discursive dimension of news values, meaning that it does not make the other three perspectives of newsworthiness (material, social, cognitive) less valuable (Bednarek & Caple, 2012b). Instead, the four aspects of news values complement each other “in terms of their conceptual canon, and in terms of their methodological tenet” (Huan, 2016, p. 115). For instance, findings from the discursive perspective can be combined with an ethnographic investigation of the journalistic production process to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relations involved in news production and consumption (Bednarek & Caple, 2012b). The discursive dimension may also be tied to the material scope of news values, examining the degree of

more prominence given to a news event that it deserves regarding “its material reality.” (Caple & Bednarek, 2016, p. 451). The DNVA approach, in tandem with the other three perspectives, may achieve a better effect of triangulation to debunk the myth of complicated newsworthiness construction practices. For instance, with a collection of materials consisting of policy documents, ethnographic data, interviews with journalists, and Chinese news texts, Huan (2016) integrated the various facets of news values to explore the role and function of news values in the Chinese journalistic environment. Nevertheless, existing literature opting for DNVA has seldom embraced other dimensions of news values to triangulate the findings and results.

#### **2.4.2.3. Interconnecting JTR and the DNVA framework**

In a recent bibliometric study of news discourse analysis research in the past three decades, Wang et al. (2021) have noted several trends in this area, namely the employment of appraisal theory, multimodal analysis, and DNVA. As a particular type of news discourse, translated news has been examined within the scope of the appraisal framework (Boeri & Fattah, 2020; Pan, 2015) and multimodal analysis (Alahmazi, 2020; Sidiropoulou, 2018). DNVA, however, is a less heard term in JTR. The only exception might be the study by Riggs (2021), which approaches news discourse from the aspect of cultural translation. For her part, Riggs (2021) drew on the DNVA approach to identify news values established in the images accompanying the headlines by multiple English and French news agencies in the coverage of a terrorist attack.

This study seeks to test the usefulness of DNVA in examining translated news, which has also been suggested as a promising area by Bednarek and Caple (2017) “for applying and developing DNVA” (p. 247). This tool could facilitate the process of figuring out how news values are re-established via translation and how the construction of news values differs between the source texts and target texts. It is argued that investigating news translation through the lens of news values might open up some novel perspectives to advance JTR and interpret the mechanism of this essential activity in international news coverage.

The following four aspects can justify the prospect of DNVA in JTR. Firstly, despite being an enduring

and critical research topic in journalism, news values have rarely been the research focus of news translation. Most existing research concerning translated news discourse only broaches this notion in passing when interpreting patterns of journalistic translation practices discerned. The only contribution in JTR that has highlighted the usefulness of news values is probably the methodological article on the corpus-based approach to news translation by Caimotto and Gaspari (2018), in which the 2012 paper by Bednarek and Caple (2012a) was cited, also their earliest attempts to theorize the multifaceted and complex features of news values. The paper by Caimotto and Gaspari (2018) tries to underline that the different dimensions of news value summarized by Bednarek and Caple (2012a) are effective in “trying to establish the Skopos of news translation” (Caimotto & Gaspari, 2018, p. 212) without bringing up the DNVA framework and newsworthiness construction as a possible research focus in JTR. This void leaves ample room for exploring the potential of DNVA and newsworthiness (re)construction via translation in JTR.

Secondly, the product-oriented approach remains a dominant research strand in JTR, which relies on close textual analysis to identify translation strategies or locate the patterns of deviations and mediations. Under such circumstances, the DNVA approach can function as a new and helpful toolkit to conduct discourse analysis of translated news, trace news value shifts, and explore the differences in journalistic practices of disparate contexts. While DNVA was initially developed for analyzing English news discourse, several attempts have been made to examine its applicability to news discourse in other languages, including Persian (Makki, 2019, 2020) and Chinese (Chen & Liu, 2022; Guo et al., 2022; He, 2021; Wu & Pan, 2022). Cross-linguistic studies that compare Chinese and Australian news discourse within the scope of DNVA have also been witnessed in academia (Caple et al., 2020; Huan, 2018). Therefore, news translation research, which often involves cross-linguistic analysis and comparison of source and target texts, is deemed possible and feasible for exploiting the DNVA framework. In addition, comparative studies between different languages might contribute to developing more tailor-made and suitable inventories for languages other than English, a necessary and urgent agenda in DNVA (Bednarek & Caple, 2017).

Furthermore, although visual resources play a huge part in “repositioning or relocating the news event

for the target audience” (Valdeón, 2019, p. 93), non-verbal material remains an underexplored aspect in JTR and deserves more scholarly attention (Riggs, 2021). DNVA, a framework for tracing new values established via semiotic resources, is of great value in approaching translated news from a multimodal perspective. According to Zanettin et al. (2015), despite an increasing academic interest in non-verbal resources, research methods have not been adjusted to better serve the needs for interrogating translation from a multimodal perspective. This methodological issue is also salient in news translation research: most JTR contributions that have devoted some space to visual elements attend to the non-verbal resources from a relatively superficial level without in-depth and consistent analyses of the interaction of textual and visual resources, a crucial aspect of multimodal analysis. DNVA, an approach that focuses on the establishment of news values via both verbal and non-verbal resources, might help solve this methodological issue and prompt systematic analyses of semiotic resources in translated news discourse. The methodological perks provided by “a unified framework when considering the interplay between language and image” are undeniable (Dahl & Fløttum, 2017, p. 125).

Moreover, it is necessary to “nuance and diversify studies of the construction of newsworthiness to tackle specific areas, modes and channels of news mediation and remediation” (Molek-Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021, p. 764). The existing DNVA literature has attended to news on different platforms, such as newspapers (Makki, 2019), broadcasting (Bednarek, 2016b), and social media news (He, 2021). News covering specific topics such as climate change (Dahl & Fløttum, 2017), terrorist attacks (Guo et al., 2022), and the Australian national day (Bednarek et al., 2021) are interpellated through DNVA to trace unique patterns of newsworthiness construction relevant to different areas and news agencies. In the case of journalistic translation, more scholarly attention can be paid to some booming yet underexplored platforms such as social media (Zeng & Li, 2023), tracing technological and platform-specific affordances on news translation as well as “emerging trends in news consumption.” (Molek-Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021, p. 775). As a result, JTR might make its own contributions to journalism studies and DNVA research.

In a word, DNVA fits in the recent trends in JTR, making it a good match for investigating news translation. According to Caple and Bednarek (2016), a discursive investigation of newsworthiness

construction can display “how an event has been packaged and sold to audiences as news” (p. 445). Based on the above account of the connection between DNVA and JTR, this paper argues that a comparative study of the discursive construction of news values between source and target texts can help us look into the repackaging and representation of translated news from a novel perspective.

## **2.5. Summary**

The above literature review has demonstrated several research gaps concerning journalistic translation research. To summarize, the first step to comprehending journalistic translation is to accept the broadened conceptualizations of translation. News translation should be understood as a complex practice involving various socio-cultural factors. This study opts for the conceptualization proposed by Valdeón (2022a), considering news translation as a dual-level practice that includes selecting news reports to be translated at the macro-level and mediating the chosen news reports from one language into another via various types of transformations at the micro-level.

While translated news on different platforms and by different agencies has been extensively analyzed by translation scholars using diverse methods, social media, as an emerging and curial channel for people to access information, remains an underexplored aspect of translated news. This study addresses this gap by undertaking a case study of translated news published on WeChat, one of the most pivotal social media platforms in Chinese people’s life. Additionally, social media news is a perfect site to conduct multimodal analysis, considering the abundant visual resources employed to produce more eye-catching news content. As an essential part of meaning-making, non-verbal resources in news discourse deserve more scholarly attention in JTR. Therefore, this research will take into account both verbal and non-verbal resources for multimodal analysis of the collected translated news.

Furthermore, given the close connection between news translation and journalism studies, the current interdisciplinary interaction is not satisfying. While gatekeeping and framing from journalism studies have been borrowed and employed to inform JTR, there is ample room for further communication between the two disciplines. This study employs the notion of news values as the analytical point, which has become a classic topic in journalism studies but has barely been researched within JTR. In particular,



the DNVA approach is employed to undertake the micro-level gatekeeping investigation of translation. To conclude this chapter, this thesis intends to fill the gaps mentioned above with a case study of the translation practice of RN on WeChat through the lens of news values, a concept frequently discussed in journalism, taking into account both verbal texts and visual resources to gain a more comprehensive picture of the operation of news translation practice at both macro and micro perspectives. It is hoped to expand the interdisciplinary interface between translation and journalism studies by discussing news values' prospects in cultivating possible joint research agendas. More specifically, it delineates the translation practices performed by a Chinese official media outlet on social media, examining the affordances of social media on Chinese journalism and the specific role of translation in facilitating Chinese mainstream media's expedition into social media.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

This methodological chapter first introduces the Chinese news agency (*Reference News*) under investigation, elucidating its history, development, and uniqueness within the Chinese media landscape. The data used for analysis is also presented, supplemented with a detailed description of the data collection procedure. Based on the research gaps identified in the previous section, a tailor-made analytical framework drawing on theories and concepts from translation and journalism studies is built to address the research questions of this study. Finally, the analysis procedure is illustrated in a step-by-step manner.

### 3.1. Data

This section first introduces *Reference News* (RN), the media outlet under investigation, elaborating on its history, development, and features. A more specific introduction to RN's WeChat account is also provided, followed by an explanation concerning what translated news stories were selected for analysis and how they were collected.

#### 3.1.1. The news agency: *Reference News* (RN)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study explores journalistic translation practices within the Chinese social media context. While it is impossible to include every Chinese news agency in the investigation to gain a holistic picture, this study opts for a media outlet that could represent the overall situation. *Reference News* (RN) is probably one of China's most popular, prestigious, and oldest newspaper titles. RN distinguishes itself from its other counterparts in the Chinese press by being one of the official channels for Chinese readers to know about international affairs and other countries' perceptions of China in media coverage (Pan, 2015). RN, run by *Xinhua News Agency* and *Global Times* by *People's Daily*, are the only two newspapers in the Chinese mainland that enjoy the exclusive rights to publish news reports by foreign media (Chang et al., 2015). Other Chinese media outlets disseminate information about China and the world through the lens of Chinese people; RN, on the contrary, is a

conduit to display how China's and international affairs are perceived in the foreign press. As a result, journalistic content published by RN mainly includes translations of news reports originally produced by foreign media and sometimes the latest news and commentaries by Chinese-language media other than those based in the Chinese mainland (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021c). Given its uniqueness of focusing on news content published by the foreign press, RN is also called "a summary of international news" ("guo ji xiao xi zong hui") or "a newspaper of numerous newspapers" ("wang bao zhi bao").

As a news agency granted exclusive rights to reprint journalistic content by the foreign press, RN possesses unprecedented resources to produce high-quality journalistic products. RN's correspondents and news selection staff are located in more than 100 countries and regions, providing readers with carefully chosen information and featured news from dozens of news agencies, hundreds of newspapers, periodicals, and websites (Paper.news.cn, 2018). When RN was first established in 1931, it depended on one translator to do all the work involving many languages. RN is probably among the few Chinese media outlets with an in-house translator team. RN's excellent translation team covers nearly all languages, including English, French, Japanese, Russian, German, Spanish, and other minority languages such as Flemish, Polish, Hungarian, Burmese, and Romanian (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021e).

More than ninety years have passed since the establishment of RN in Ruijin, Jiangxi. RN was and is still a distinctive and popular newspaper in China. RN's traces could even be noted in Chinese political discourse and literature. For instance, a large number of commentaries and pieces written by Chairman Mao Zedong for *Xinhua News Agency* and *Jiefang Daily*, both of which are crucial official media in China, were based on the information provided by RN (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021g). RN, as resourceful reference material, was even frequently mentioned in some classical Chinese literature, including *The Ordinary World (Ping Fan De Shi Jie)* by Lu Yao and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out (Sheng Si Pi Lao)* by the 2012 Nobel prize for literature winner Mo Yan. In Lu Yao's book, one of the main characters, Sun Shaoping, often immersed himself in the big world presented by RN. The protagonist in Mo's work was willing to take the night shift for reading RN. In these stories, RN is valuable resources for gaining knowledge and information. RN is also the standard-setter for translating the names of foreign countries, political figures, and organizations. For example, RN's translation team should be credited with

translating the names of all the foreign athletes and officials in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games; the Chinese translations of a lot of key political figures, including some familiar names such as Te Lang Pu (Trump), Bai Deng (Biden), and Pu Jing (Putin), are all brilliant work done by RN's translators (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021i). These concrete facts concerning RN suffice to give prominence to the influence and importance of this official news agency.

RN had long topped the selling chart of newspapers, occupying the position of the newspaper with the largest circulation in China. RN's success is "a unique phenomenon not only in the PRC, but also internationally" (Rudolph, 1984, p. 23). As a unique mainstream newspaper in China, RN offers a platform for Chinese people to grasp how foreign media report China and the world. This special role played by RN is an essential ingredient in RN's recipe for popularity in China (Rudolph, 1984; Zhou et al., 2021). Along the ninety-year growth path of this popular and household newspaper, many revolutionary transformations have taken place to facilitate RN's smooth transition into China's highly competitive, marketized, and digitalized media landscapes (Chase, 2018). It might shed great insights into improving the performance of media outlets by looking into the various strategies RN adopted to maintain the dominant status among Chinese media outlets. In this study, attention is spared to RN's journalistic translation practices on social media, which is now an indispensable site for people to receive information.

### **3.1.2. RN's development trajectory**

RN's story began in 1931 when it was founded in Ruijin, Jiangxi, under the operation of the formerly *Red China News Agency (Hongzhong She)*, known as the current *Xinhua News Agency* (Xia, 2019). The first issue of RN consisted of many (translated) news reports published by foreign news agencies and Chinese-language ones based in regions other than the Chinese mainland, which were all contents received via two radio stations seized by the *Red Army* (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021h). On 7 November 1931, this newly-born publication was distributed to representatives of the first national congress of the Chinese Soviet Republic for their reference (Zhou et al., 2021). RN's very first appearance was not in the newspaper format. Instead, it was a mimeographed internal periodical with a limited number of

copies (around 400) whose primary responsibility was to keep high-ranking officials informed of the most up-to-date international and domestic affairs (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021d, 2021k). Considering RN's special status, many news reports deemed unsuitable to be publicly published were seen in RN, such as those with sensitive information, unreliable sources, or even incomplete original texts, which fulfilled RN's function as reference materials for crucial political and military figures in China (Wan, 2013). The development of RN echoed the revolutionary trajectory of China; more importantly, during the revolutionary war period, RN played a pivotal role by providing useful information to help top leaders make policies and decisions (Zhou et al., 2021).

Following the proposal made by Chairman Mao Zedong to expand RN's circulation range, in March 1957, RN officially transformed from a periodical to a formal newspaper that more organizations and cadres could subscribe to (Su, 2002). It was hoped that by reading RN, Party members and cadres would gain knowledge about other parts of the world, especially knowing opinions and views quite different from those disseminated in China (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021b). In Mao's words, RN was published to get Party cadres and ordinary people "vaccinated" so that they could become immune to "the temptations of capitalist and imperialist ideology" (Chase, 2018, p. 142). The enlarged readership prompted the skyrocketing selling number of this unique newspaper. The 1970s witnessed many of RN's record-breaking moments: RN's circulation exceeded one million in 1970, five million in 1971, and eight million in 1975, and the highest circulation record eventually reached more than nine million in 1979 (Xiao, 2013; Zhou et al., 2021). Such a tremendous circulation surge, according to RN's editorial team, should be attributed to two aspects: on the one hand, after the cultural revolution, more people became qualified to subscribe to this newspaper; on the other hand, RN was granted with the exclusive right to cover several significant events, especially China's Self-Defense War Against Vietnam (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021a). Although readily a popular newspaper in China, RN remained an internal publication available to limited groups of people. In 1985, the "internal publication (nei bu kan wu)" tag was removed from RN's printed version, facilitating RN's transition from a secretive newspaper to a household title in China (Zhang, 2011). Since then, RN has gradually evolved into a publicly available newspaper, attracting readers from all walks of life (Zhou et al., 2021). Up till now, RN is still the

newspaper with the largest circulation in China.

Confronted with the challenges posed by the increasingly marketized and digitalized media environment, as an essential part of China's legacy media, RN has actively engaged with innovative methods to promote its news products and captivate news consumers. RN is no longer limited to printed editions but is available on various platforms and in various formats. In response to "a rapidly evolving media market amid profound social, economic and technological change" (Chase, 2018, p. 141), RN pooled all its resources to facilitate the migration to various digital platforms while maintaining the momentum of its printed version. RN's Weibo account, created in November 2011, has more than 24 million followers. In January 2012, the official website of RN ([www.cankaoxiaoxi.com](http://www.cankaoxiaoxi.com)) was launched and instantly became a favorite once able to capture daily page views of more than 15 million (Zhou et al., 2021, p. 25). RN entered another competitive "battlefield", the WeChat public account platform, in October 2012, harvesting more than 6 million loyal fans over the past decade (Cankaoxiaoxi, 2022). A tailor-made application for RN was developed and debuted in May 2014. In addition to the ones mentioned above, RN ensured its visibility on nearly every mainstream digital platform, including Tiktok, Toutiao, and Baijiahao, to name a few, on which RN has all attracted millions of followers (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021j). Another move RN took to adjust to the digitalized media market is the launch of RN's digital newspapers that can be subscribed to via RN's WeChat account in September 2021. The purpose of publishing digital newspapers with a paywall is to attract new groups of readers, especially young Chinese students and overseas Chinese, and innovatively deepen RN's media convergence initiative (Zhou et al., 2022). RN's popularity and visibility on various emerging social media platforms lend firm evidence to its determination and success in implementing the media convergence strategy advocated by the Chinese government. The following section focuses on RN's WeChat subscription account, the research focus of the current study.

### **3.1.3. RN's WeChat subscription account**

RN's unique and essential status makes it an optimal site to explore journalistic translation practice within the Chinese context. Indeed, journalistic translations by RN from its printed newspapers and

official website practice have captivated the attention of many translation researchers (Pan, 2014b, 2015; Wu, 2018; Xia, 2019). However, news reports distributed on RN's social media platforms have received scarce attention, although these novel channels have captured many fans. The only exception might be the research by Zeng and Li (2023), which examined the translation of comments published on RN's WeChat account. In an era when the rise of social media and technological development are believed to influence significantly and even revolutionize journalistic production (Bednarek, 2016a), it is necessary to investigate news translation within this under-researched area. This study seeks to investigate RN's translation practice in this transformed media environment with a case study of its WeChat account.

Since the debut of its first version in 2011, WeChat has gradually grown into a pivotal and popular social media platform in China, with more than 1.2 billion monthly active users. The WeChat official account platform launched in 2012 has allowed individuals and organizations to set up their subscription accounts and provide diverse content to the public, which has thus significantly altered the way information is promoted and received (Su & Xiao, 2020). WeChat is now not only an application providing messaging service but has also evolved into "a major news source for Chinese readers" (S. Wang, 2021). RN did not miss out on the opportunity to become a trendsetter on this emerging platform, setting up its WeChat account in 2012, which performs very well in the WeChat arena. RN's WeChat account was ranked fourth regarding communication influences in *The 2019 Communication Index Report of Chinese Newspaper Convergence* (People.cn, 2020); it is one of the most popular and read accounts on the WeChat public account platform according to *the 2018 annual WeChat account report* (Gsddata, 2018). According to the most recent data released by RN, its WeChat account has garnered more than six million followers (Cankaoxiaoxi, 2022). Given RN's impact and popularity, a large proportion of the WeChat articles published on RN's account could capture more than 100,000 clicks, "the maximum traffic number shown by WeChat", which is an essential indicator for judging the value and success of an article (S. Wang, 2021).

As manifest in the slogan RN used to promote the WeChat account, "an overview of selected daily news reports by the foreign press (zong lan wai guo mei ti mei ri bao dao jing xuan)", like its printed version, RN's WeChat account mainly offers translations of news coverage by foreign media. Although taking

a similar role and responsibility, RN's WeChat account differs from the printed newspaper in the following aspects. On the one hand, the followers of RN's WeChat account are mostly newcomers who do not read RN's printed newspapers. Winning the hearts of the younger generation growing up in the digital era is high on the agenda of the to-do list of RN's WeChat branch. Thus, RN has resorted to innovative changes and formats of news coverage to gain popularity, including recruiting young news staff for the new media center and posting more interactive and "down-to-earth" content (Guo, 2015). On the other hand, the new media team running RN's WeChat account is independent of its printed counterparts, enjoying a certain extent of freedom to produce contents that may not be suitable in RN's printed newspapers (Guo, 2015). Over a decade of development, in addition to publishing translations based on news coverage by foreign media, RN's WeChat account has produced several original "star" columns, such as "Rui Can Kao", "Can Kao Man Tan" and "Can Kao Bao Fu Pu". While traditional news coverage in RN's printed newspapers is serious, formal, and static, these new media products on RN's WeChat account conform to social media features and Chinese netizens' preferences. For instance, "Can Kao Man Tan" takes the form of posters and comics, mainly employing non-verbal resources to "convey news content and emotions" (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021f). Explaining and discussing news via Chinese-style talk shows is the charm of "Can Kao Bao Fu Pu". Also, unlike traditional media, news coverage on social media enjoys nearly unlimited space. Thus, RN's WeChat account often supplements translated news with additional information to contextualize news events covered, such as explanations of certain terms and further reading following the main content (L. Liu, 2015). These news formats and experiments of news dissemination have displayed RN's efforts on the WeChat public account platform to fulfill the goal of the media convergence initiative.

Meanwhile, these revolutionary moves demonstrate RN's tendency towards popular journalism on WeChat. When selecting news content, the editors of RN's WeChat account aim to balance the proportion of hard and soft news. While "hard topics" like politics and military affairs are more likely to capture a high click-through rate, softer content such as fun anecdotes and helpful life tips can be seen on RN's WeChat account as well (L. Liu, 2015). Besides, in another media report covering the journalistic practices of RN's WeChat account, the user-oriented principle and the importance of



attractive or even sensational headlines are highlighted by RN's news staff (zgjx.cn, 21 June 2017). The contribution by Zeng and Li (2023) also noted the traces of soft news in RNs' journalistic products on WeChat, arguing that RN opted for "popular journalism with Chinese characteristics" (Li, 1998) to maneuver its route in social media. Unquestionably, RN's WeChat account is quite different from its printed counterpart in terms of style, content, and format. It makes sense to spare more scholarly attention to this emerging platform for news dissemination and consumption. Considering RN's unique status, role, and function in the Chinese press, exploring the popular social media account run by this mainstream official media outlet can also provide a general picture of the practices and strategies embraced by Chinese press on social media, especially those affiliated with the government. Thus, this project opts for the WeChat account of *Reference News* (RN) as the analytical site for exploring journalistic translation practices within the Chinese social media context.

#### **3.1.4. The news stories under investigation**

A proper study of news discourse "involves the sampling, collection and analysis of a dataset according to a particular set of criteria" (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 19). The WeChat articles collected from RN's subscription account need to fulfill the following requirements: they were published between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020; they must be translated news stories covering the United States; they have captured more than 100,000 clicks (a key traffic indicator for the popularity of a WeChat article). Several tools were employed to identify data satisfying the three principles, which will be further explained in what follows.

The first step is to collect all the articles published on RN's WeChat account throughout 2020, done via the help of a software named *WeChat Article Assistant* (<https://www.juyimv.cn/>), whose interface is displayed in Figure 3.1.2.1. This scraping tool, tailor-made for retrieving data from the WeChat public account platform, enables researchers to gather large amounts of data produced by any WeChat subscription account with just a few clicks and export these data in various file formats, including HTML, PDF, and WORD. Another valuable function of this powerful software is the compilation of an Excel file that contains meta information on selected WeChat articles, which includes elements like

articles titles, publication time, click-through rate, link to the article, and other dimensions of interactive data. The meta-information is crucial in locating the articles needed for the actual analysis. A data-collection procedure was performed on RN's WeChat account using *WeChat Article Assistant*, leading to a dataset of 12,354 articles after setting the filtering time range between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. While the export function of the scraping tool can quickly help us download the WeChat articles needed for analysis, it could not access data previously deleted or hidden by the account operators. Note that two articles from RN's 2020 WeChat contents were deleted or removed during the data collection phase. Thus, they were accessed via other channels of RN by searching the headlines of these articles in the powerful Google and Baidu search engines. Thanks to *WeChat Article Assistant*, a dataset consisting of the Word files of all the WeChat articles published by RN's WeChat account in 2020 was built.

The following step was to extract translated news stories about the United States published on RN's WeChat account in 2020, which was realized with the help of another software named *FileLocator Pro* (<https://www.mythicsoft.com/filelocatorpro/>), an effective tool for searching and locating documents in a fast manner. To ensure every WeChat article mentioning America was included, a keyword search of "mei guo" (the United States in Chinese) was conducted in the folder of the complete 2020 RN WeChat article dataset, as shown in Figure 3.1.2.2. The keyword search led to a corpus of 6465 WeChat articles. Based on this smaller dataset, further filtering steps were taken to locate America-oriented translated news reports produced by RN, including deleting reposted WeChat articles from other Chinese media outlets, removing RN's original contents and those without mentioning specific sources, and excluding non-news items, most importantly, keeping only those about the United States. These cleaning steps will be illustrated one by one in the following part.

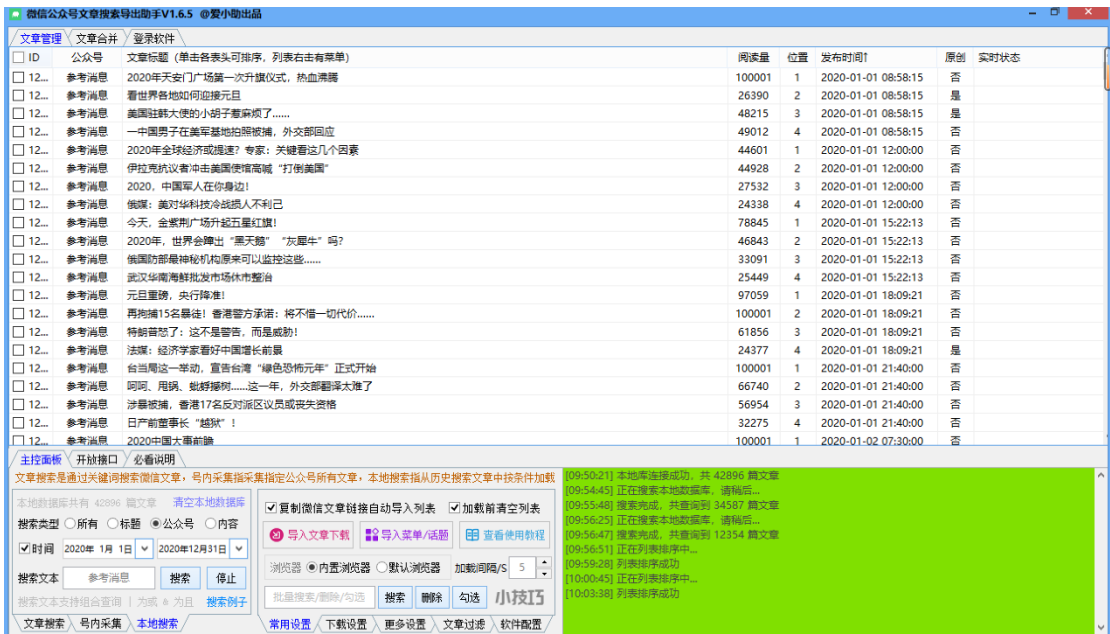


Figure 3.1.2.1. The interface of WeChat Article Assistant

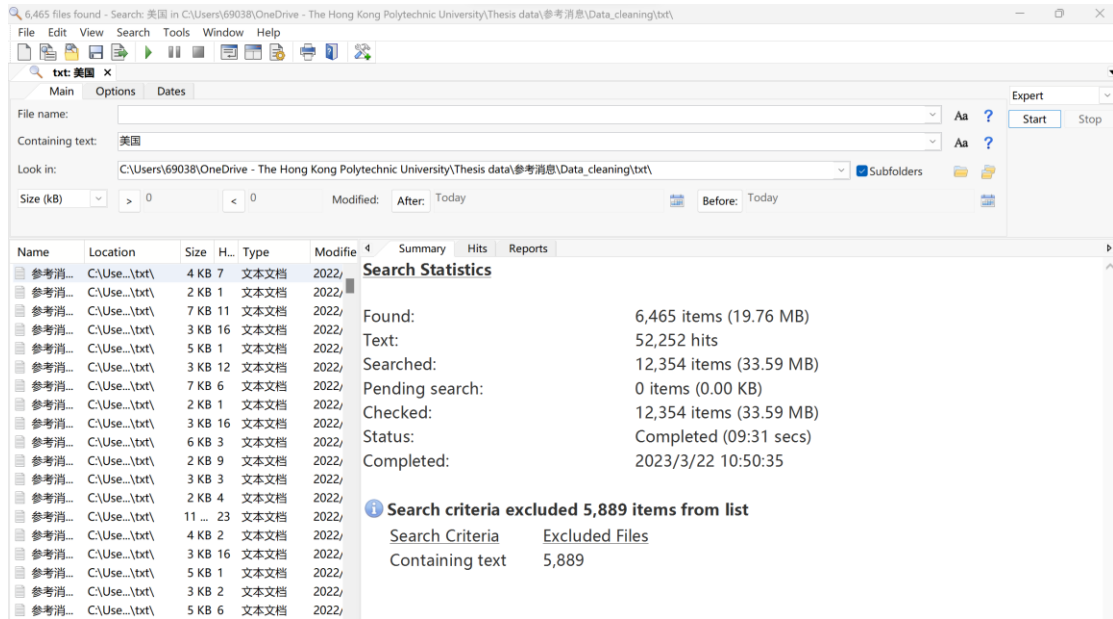


Figure 3.1.2.2. The keyword search in FileLocator Pro

RN’s WeChat account sometimes reposts WeChat articles produced by other Chinese news agencies like *People’s Daily*, *CCTV News*, and *Xinhua News Agency*, the traces of which were noticed in the collected data. These reposted items were also deleted to ensure the remaining data was one-hundred-percent made-by-RN. The sources were mostly credited as the authors of the WeChat articles reposted by RN. As a result, filtering the author column of The Excel file containing the metadata of the 2020

RN WeChat articles could remove the entries that RN did not produce.

As elucidated in Section 3.1.1.2., RN's WeChat account embraced novel formats of news dissemination, prompting an increasing proportion of original journalistic content other than translated news. Since journalistic translation remains the focus of this study, those original news columns posted on RN's WeChat account should also be eliminated. Some news reports by RN were based on synthesized sources which were generalized into something like “综合美媒报道 (a comprehensive summary of American media coverage)”. Even though they could be regarded as translations, they were excluded as the exact sources were not specified. Moreover, the 2020 RN WeChat article dataset compiled in the previous stage comprises journalistic content of various genres, such as traditional news stories, opinion articles, visual-centric pieces, and videos. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the DNVA framework was drawn to analyze the collected data for the micro-level analysis of news translation. Hence, it is necessary to remove items that cannot be examined through the lens of DNVA, whose “communicative function is not to construct events as newsworthy” (Bednarek, 2016a, p. 234). In line with Bednarek and Caple (2017), only traditional news stories were kept, with non-news pieces like opinion articles, editorials, videos, interviews, and book reviews excluded. Although the keyword search of “mei guo” helped locate WeChat articles that may potentially focus on the United States, a thorough reading of each document exported was still needed to retain translated news articles concerning America, and those mentioning the country in passing were deleted from the dataset.

The removal of irrelevant WeChat articles corresponding to the above criteria could only be conducted via manual checking. The author employed the links provided in the filtered Excel form and reviewed each remaining article to keep only those needed for the current analysis. In the process of (de)selecting WeChat articles, several problems were encountered. The first difficulty was concerned with determining the genres of the WeChat articles. On many occasions, genres of journalistic translations by RN are introduced at the beginning, which makes it a simple task to decide whether the article should be kept. However, cases without specific genre information then rely on going over the content carefully or referring back to the source texts. The two methods could simultaneously be adopted to double-check RN's translated news from English media. However, when it comes to news texts translated from

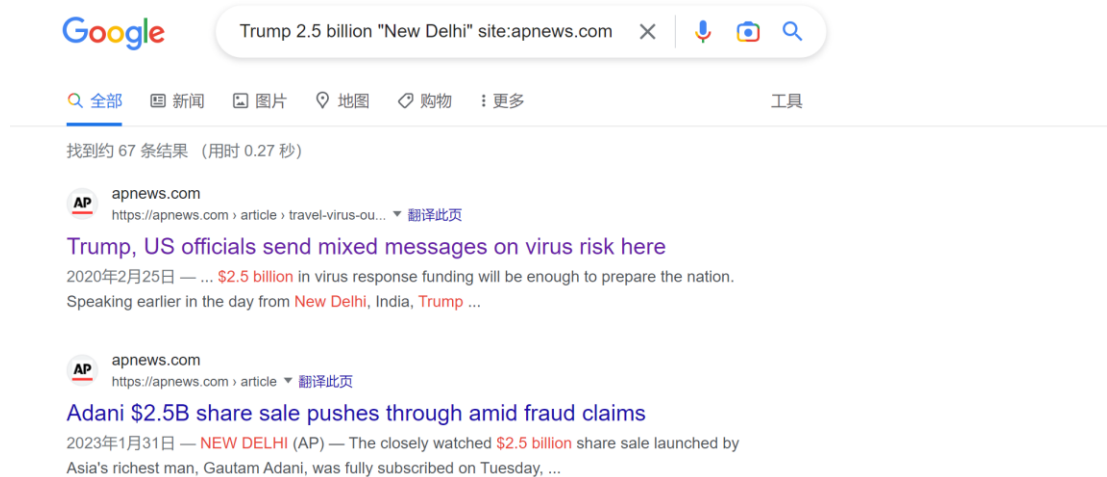
languages other than English, the author could only depend on the Chinese translations to make the data selection decisions. Besides, a lot of translated news stories on RN's WeChat account were based on multiple source texts. RN often gives credit to the sources referred to in their Chinese renditions, with some exceptions that contain unclear information about the source texts or mention the original using very general expressions like "a comprehensive recap of American media (zong he mei mei bao dao)". Under these circumstances, the translated news stories without clear cues of the sources should be deleted from the data.

The last data filtering stage involves discarding articles that failed to capture more than 100,000 clicks on WeChat, a vital traffic number for evaluating the popularity of a WeChat article. Social media is a site where netizens are greatly empowered to impact news production by using various interactive features and indicators to demonstrate their preference for journalistic products (García-Perdomo et al., 2018). Articles that have gone viral on social media "can shape public opinion and impact public policy" (Park & Kaye, 2021, p. 2). Popular translated news stories about America, China's frenemy, on RN's WeChat account, form a conduit to identify crucial factors that captivate readers' attention and develop strategies to maximize RN's dissemination effects. Thanks to *WeChat Article Assistant*, the click-through rate of each article could easily be accessed. All the filtering steps mentioned above were done via the 2020 RN full texts Excel file with unnecessary and irrelevant entries tagged using different labels. The filter function of Excel played a huge part in fastly locating and keeping the 515 translated news stories about the United States capturing 100,000 plus clicks on RN's WeChat account in 2020, which form the basis for the macro-level analysis of this research.

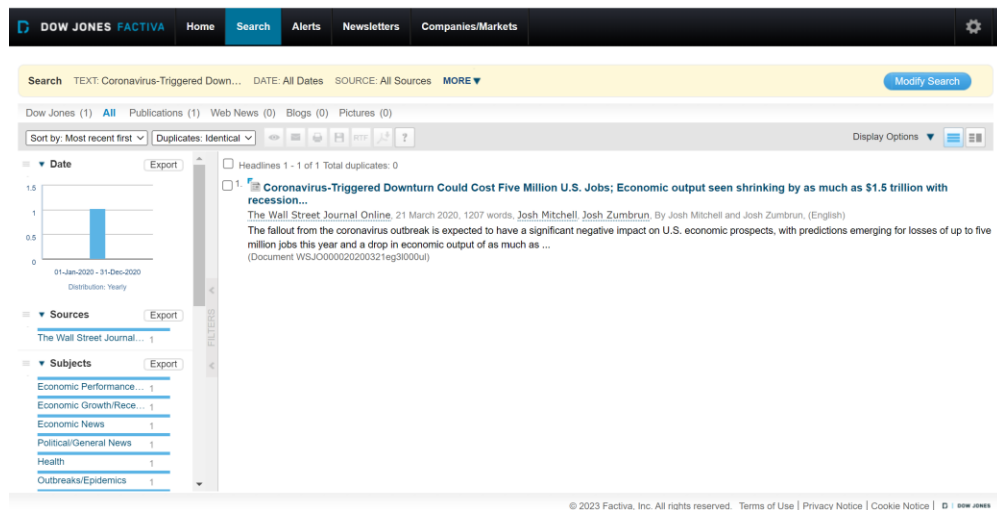
Since the translated texts produced by RN were ready, the following step was to collect their corresponding counterparts from the foreign media. The ST and TT will be examined and analyzed through the lens of DNVA at the micro-level analysis of the current study. The remaining 515 WeChat articles were taken from news agencies worldwide and written in various languages. Instead of tracing every single source text, this research focuses on news reports rendered from English to Chinese and translated from only one ST. The reason for opting for these journalistic texts is two-fold. Firstly, the author is only adept at two languages, Chinese and English, making it impossible to analyze texts in

other languages. Besides, while information about STs was offered in RN's Chinese renditions, it is still quite an arduous task to locate the original texts with only the title of the news agency and a vague date. Two steps were taken to obtain the data required for the micro-level analysis. A thorough reading of the 515 WeChat articles was undertaken to remove news stories based on multiple sources and languages and keep those translated from only one English original text. In the end, 220 WeChat articles were collected, forming the TT data for analysis via DNVA. One objective of this research is to explore the interaction of verbal and non-verbal resources in construing news values. Therefore, visual elements involved in the news texts were also included in the data, but only the thumbnails accompanying the WeChat article headlines. Some images accompanying the WeChat articles were more like banners containing words like “最新消息 the newest information” instead of pictures establishing news values. These cases were omitted from the WeChat image dataset. In the end, 216 pictures were discerned. The combination of the headline of a WeChat article and the attached image is probably regarded as the most pivotal attention-grabbing device for a WeChat article. To some extent, an investigation of news values embedded in these resources could deepen our understanding of news stories with satisfying audience metrics on WeChat, especially coverage relevant to the United States. In gathering the images needed, *WeChat Article Assistant* lent support by putting together a column of the links to the thumbnails of the collected WeChat articles in the exported Excel file, making it a simple task to build an image dataset. Once these translated news stories have been collected, their corresponding English counterparts from foreign media outlets can be identified accordingly. RN did not provide links to the sources on which translated news is based. Thus, a relatively coarse method was employed to find the STs, as displayed in Figure 3.1.2.3.: the original articles were found by searching titles of news agencies, publication dates, and some keywords mentioned in RN's news translations using the Google search engine and its refined web searches. Nevertheless, many news stories RN drew on for translation were published by media outlets with a paywall, such as the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *Wallstreet Journal*, making it hard to access the content directly via the original links. Under such circumstances, *Factiva*, a database maintained by Dow Jones that contains news coverage by the local and international press across the world, was opted for to collect the full texts of the sources identified previously. As showcased by Figure

3.1.2.4., the free text search column of *Factiva* was employed to locate news texts that matched the headlines of the sources. The images accompanying the headlines of the English sources were also collected. Note that many news reports were accompanied by videos rather than images, which were not included in the visual data. On some occasions, the English headlines are followed by photo galleries. Under such circumstances, only the first picture of the gallery was collected since it is the first visual element readers can access. Eventually, the ST visual dataset consisted of 137 pictures. After going through this rather complicated and time-consuming process, the 220 pairs of English ST and their corresponding Chinese counterparts rendered by RN were successfully collected. The ST and TT image datasets were compiled as well.



**Figure 3.1.2.3.** Refined web searches in the Google Search Engine



**Figure 3.1.2.4.** The interface of Factiva

The raw data was almost ready: 515 WeChat articles were fetched for the macro-level analysis, and the micro-level analysis gathered 220 pairs of English and Chinese news texts. Note that *WeChat Article Assistant* exported nearly every element involved in a WeChat article, including bylines, promotional materials, and captions, as demonstrated in Figure 3.1.2.5., which are not the research focus of the study. These irrelevant and unnecessary details were manually deleted to clean the collected news texts further. Besides, as broached in Section 3.1.1.2., supplemental materials often accompany the main news story to provide readers with more information and knowledge about the stories reported (L. Liu, 2015). Figure 3.1.2.6. gives an example of supplemental reading offered on RN’s WeChat account. In order to ensure the comparability of RN’s Chinese renditions and their English sources, supplemental news texts accompanying the main news story in each WeChat article were also manually eliminated. After the manual cleaning, the remaining texts were saved as plain texts in UTF-8 encoding, readable in Antconc, the corpus software employed to analyze the data. Furthermore, the Chinese texts should be segmented for further corpus analyses. Unlike English, Chinese sentence units are not separated by white spaces (McEnery et al., 2003), making segmentation the basis for performing any corpus techniques and avoiding ambiguous results (Huan, 2018). The NPLIR package (<https://github.com/NLPIR-team/NLPIR>), developed by Dr. Huaping Zhang from the Beijing Institute of Technology, facilitated the segmentation of the Chinese texts.



Figure 3.1.2.5. Irrelevant information that needs to be removed



## 美国加州宣布进入紧急状态

参考消息 参考消息 2020-03-05 14:45 发表于北京



据美联社消息，在出现首个新冠肺炎死亡病例后，美国加州宣布全州进入紧急状态。加州州长加文·纽瑟姆4日在记者会上说，此举目的是加快物资采购。目前加州有53个确诊病例。

### 早前报道

#### 华盛顿州宣布进入紧急状态

据法新社报道，在美国华盛顿州一名新冠病毒感染者死亡后，华盛顿州州长杰伊·英斯利当地时间2月29日宣布紧急状态。他向死者亲属表示慰问，并表示要对相关机构动用经费提供便利，如果必要，允许动用华盛顿州的国民警卫队。

**Figure 3.1.2.6.** An example of supplemental reading following the main news story

To briefly summarize, the dataset used for the macro-level analysis is made up of 515 translated news reports on America capturing more than 100,000 clicks published on RN's WeChat account. The micro-level analysis attends to English-Chinese news translation, examining 220 WeChat articles produced by RN and their corresponding English counterparts through the lens of DNVA. For the micro-level analysis, several corpora were compiled to approach the data from various aspects. The 220 pairs of collected English sources, their Chinese renditions, and the relevant images were drawn on to build six sub-corpora, namely ST headlines corpus (STHC), TT headlines corpus (TTHC), ST full-text corpus (STFTC), TT full-text corpus (TTFTC), ST Image corpus (STIC), and TT image corpus (TTIC). The headlines corpora consist solely of the main headlines of the texts. While the sampled English news texts often use sub-headlines to provide other details or contextualization concerning the covered story, most translated versions on RN's WeChat account primarily depend on main headlines to convey information. The two full-text corpora include the complete texts of the English source texts and their Chinese renditions by RN, respectively. Pictures accompanying the headlines of the English and Chinese texts collected previously form the content of the STIC and TTIC. The data collected following the above steps were approached from various aspects and with diverse methods in the analysis, which will

be further elucidated in the upcoming sections.

### **3.2. The analytical framework**

This section introduces the analytical framework custom-made for analyzing the collected data from a macro- and micro-level. It first elaborates on the concepts and theories involved and then justifies the feasibility of this combined analytical framework.

#### **3.2.1. Gatekeeping and journalistic translation**

This part focuses on gatekeeping, the critical concept forming the basic structure of the research. The notion is introduced first, followed by a recap of previous literature concerning the gatekeeping research strand in journalism, especially the gatekeeping theory developed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009). The connection between gatekeeping and journalistic translation is then highlighted, supplemented with some existing studies conceptualizing journalistic translation through the lens of gatekeeping.

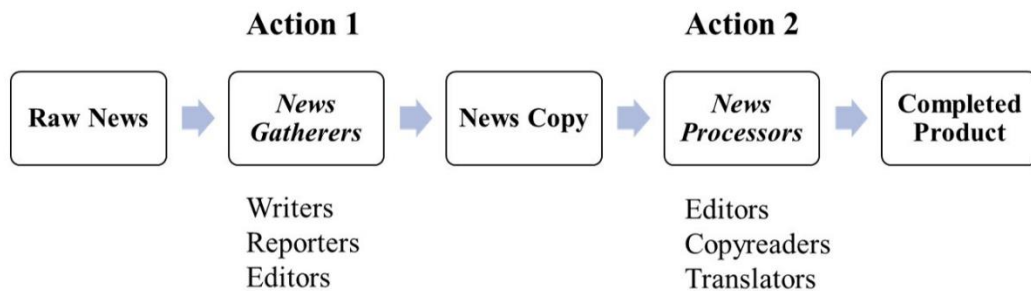
##### **3.2.1.1. Gatekeeping and gatekeeping theory**

In news production, gatekeeping refers to the shaping and molding of numerous information before turning it into media messages presented to their target readership, which involves various transformations and (de)selection decisions (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). People in charge of compiling news by selectively editing and manipulating information are known as “journalistic gatekeepers” (Vos, 2019, p. 90). The notion of “gatekeeper” was initially coined by Lewin (1947) to refer to the decision-makers important in determining what food comes to the table of a family. According to Lewin (1947), the most effective and feasible way to change a group’s food habits is not to implant the ideas into everybody’s mind; instead, the focus should be put on those gatekeepers who have a say in what food to eat and purchase, a strategy of which is applicable to resolve “nearly all problems of social management” (Lewin, 1947, p. 143). The gatekeeping mechanism also exists in news production, given that a news item must undergo many communication channels before reaching a reader’s table (Lewin, 1947). This term, originally raised in social psychology, turned out to be “a household term in journalism

scholarship” (Zelizer, 2004), which should be primarily attributed to White (1950), the first scholar to explore the practices undertaken by a gatekeeper in news production. In his seminal work, White (1950) observed the working routines of a news editor, Mr. Gates, and conducted a content analysis of the (de-)selected dispatched and interviews with the editor, aiming to reveal the forces that shaped the gatekeeping practices of the news editor. It was argued that the gatekeeping process was somewhat subjective, relying on the gatekeeper’s own “experiences, attitudes and expectations” of news (White, 1950, p. 390). Gatekeeping is powerful in interpreting and describing the complex news production process, such as the (de-) selection of news items and the various transformations undergone by news before publication (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Given the usefulness of this “theoretical construct”, gatekeeping has constantly been broached in examining the processing of journalistic products despite its history of more than 70 years (Vos, 2015).

Over the decades, many scholars attempted to expand the gatekeeping research strand and develop nuanced frameworks to theorize gatekeeping. Replicative gatekeeping studies of White’s 1950 pioneer research can be found in the existing literature. For instance, Snider (1967) examined the gatekeeping practices performed by the same wire news editor that White investigated to explore whether his news selection patterns had changed after 17 years. For her part, Bleske (1991) replicated White’s 1950 study but focused on a female wire editor working for a newspaper with a more extensive circulation, which noted her similar selection tendency towards certain news categories as Mr. Gates. The notion of gatekeeping was proposed in an era when news options and channels were limited, technology less advanced, and audiences much more passive (Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016). With the fast-paced development of the journalistic field, gatekeeping, “as a journalistic role, a model that describes the flow of news, and a theory that explains the process of news selection” (Tandoc, 2018, p. 235), has been constantly challenged and updated. For example, Bass (1969) noted the problematic aspects of White’s study, indicating that White oversimplified the complex nature of gatekeeping by focusing on only the wire editor, who played a relatively small part in news production. To counter the one-sidedness of White’s conceptualization of gatekeeping, Bass (1969) proposed a double-action internal newsflow, as shown in Figure 3.2.2.1.1, to underline the indispensable status of the news-gathering process and other

stakeholders involved in news-making. Bass' (1969) gatekeeping model consists of news gathering and news processing phases, with the former responsible for searching and collecting information based on fixed standards and the latter editing and modifying the materials into published forms. The experiment conducted by Whitney and Becker (1982) to test the impact of wire services on the news selection choices made by local media lent support to Bass' argument, concluding that wire services as crucial resources in the news-gathering procedure and editors of these news agencies important gatekeepers for local media and their target readers. With a case study of the high-profile Clinton–Lewinsky scandal, Williams and Delli Carpini (2000) underlined the declining gatekeeping power of mainstream American media facing the prevalence of alternate channels for information. Bruns (2003) challenged the effect of gatekeeping by looking into online collaborative news editing and gathering practices undertaken by people without professional journalistic training, whom he termed “gatewatchers”. These previous studies significantly enhanced gatekeeping research and highlighted the complexity involved in gatekeeping practices in the press.



*Figure 3.2.1.1.* The double-action internal newsflow (Bass, 1969, p. 72)

The influential monograph co-authored by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) has to be mentioned in discussing gatekeeping research as they have theorized gatekeeping by proposing a five-level analysis model which underlined the multifaceted nature of journalistic gatekeeping (Vos, 2015) and “stabilized gatekeeping’s place in journalism research” (Tandoc, 2018, p. 238). According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009), the five dimensions of gatekeeping include the individual level of analysis, the communication routines level of analysis, the organizational level of analysis, the social institution level of analysis, and the social system

level of analysis. The individual level undertakes a close examination of the people involved in the gatekeeping process, investigating their “characteristics, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 33). News routines are inspected at the communication routines level, considering aspects like deadlines and news values. The organizational level concerns factors such as media ownership patterns and target market features. The social institution level is relevant to analyzing elements ranging from government and audiences to advertising. As for the social system level, the analysis mainly focuses on the interplay of ideology, culture, political and economic systems. These five levels proposed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) have displayed a gatekeeping framework that looks into various agents and channels pivotal in reshaping messages into news items, enhancing detailed and nuanced analysis of the gatekeeping process.

The gatekeeping theory was proposed in 2009, and the global media landscapes have incessantly evolved and transformed mainly due to the development of technology. Considering these happenings, gatekeeping seems less relevant or at least outdated. Nonetheless, as Heinderyckx and Vos (2016) have indicated, certainly, gatekeeping is still worth being studied and researched “as long as news will be processed and disseminated to an audience” (p. 36), provided that we constantly update “revisit, reassess and rethink the process of gatekeeping” by considering the most up-to-date developments and trends in the journalistic field (Bro & Wallberg, 2015, p. 93). Thus, this study draws on the five-layer gatekeeping theory to interpret the journalistic translation practices undertaken by RN on WeChat without taking the framework for granted. In other words, the transformations of Chinese media landscapes prompted by digitalization and marketization will be included and broached to avoid mechanically employing the gatekeeping theory to elucidate the patterns observed.

### **3.2.1.2. Journalistic translation as a dual-level gatekeeping practice**

Gatekeeping, a concept frequently discussed in journalism studies, is also relevant to journalistic translation. Without translation, Chinese readers who cannot speak languages other than Chinese will have no idea about the various events that have occurred in other parts of the world. It is translation that makes cross-linguistic communication and interaction possible. Despite being an integral part of news

production, translation has rarely been mentioned in discussing the journalistic gatekeeping process. The only exceptions might be the contributions of McNelly (1959) and Bass (1969). McNelly (1959) formulated a gatekeeping model to describe the gatekeepers participating in reshaping news stories for the target readership. While his model did not specify translators' role as "intermediary communicators" or gatekeepers in producing journalistic products, he did mention that the act of translation might occur in producing news stories. As displayed in Figure 3.2.2.1.1., the role of translators was quite conspicuous in the gatekeeping model proposed by Bass (1969), demonstrating that translation cannot be ignored in discussing journalistic gatekeeping. And many aspects frequently analyzed in journalistic gatekeeping resemble those in translation studies, such as sociocultural factors and the impact of individuals and organizations (Valdeón, 2023b). Despite an elephant in the newsroom, translation has often been ignored in examining gatekeeping. In JTR, quite the contrary, news translation scholars noted the intimate connection between translation and gatekeeping and drew on this notion to shed interdisciplinary insights on JTR.

Fujii (1988) was probably the first translation scholar to tie gatekeeping together with news translation, employing the concept to examine news translation practices within the context of Japan and summarizing four gatekeeping functions of translation, including "controlling, transforming, supplementing and reorganizing messages" (Fujii, 1988, p. 37). The idea of interconnecting gatekeeping and translation was later picked up by Vuorinen (1997), who reviewed Fujii's 1988 article and other relevant gatekeeping literature to offer a different understanding of translation in news production compared with Fujii's. While Fujii (1988) concluded that the actual gatekeeping functions in news translation were much more than translation, implying that translation was only a matter of word-for-word faithful transfer, Vuorinen (1997) argued that the various "gatekeeping operations" observed in news translation should be regarded as an inextricable part of translation. Such a conceptualization, according to Vuorinen (1997), frees translation from "a narrow definition" (Vuorinen, 1997, p. 170). Following these early interdisciplinary attempts, gatekeeping has been frequently brought up in JTR. For instance, Song (2017) bridged gatekeeping and translation by investigating the selection of English news articles for translation by a Koran official news agency and private ones, indicating that power

relations play a huge part in determining materials chosen for selection in producing translated news and thus influence the gatekeeping operations performed by media outlets. Valdeón (2022a) maintained that selecting materials for rendition was another macro gatekeeping level relevant to translation and should be included in researching translated news. His study borrowed the concept of “ideological affinity” to examine how translation as a first-level gatekeeping mechanism influences the content covered by the English edition of a Spanish newspaper. Kalantari (2022) drew on the five-level gatekeeping framework developed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) and discussed the role of translation at each gatekeeping level, underlining that translation should not be absent in investigating the gatekeeping process and will elicit a more comprehensive description of the complex journalistic field. The conceptualization of translation in news production proposed by Valdeón (2020, 2021, 2022) is of particular relevance for this research. According to R. A. Valdeón (2020b); Valdeón (2021b, 2022a), translation plays a double-function role in journalistic translation: the macro-level monitors the selection of materials to be published or rejected, and the micro-level involves the modification and editing of the chosen materials and shapes them into publishable formats. This double-function mechanism echoes the double-action newsflow model by Bass (1969), which again testifies to the common ground shared by journalism and journalistic translation. Translation, as a double gatekeeping role in news production, serves as the basic structure of the analytical framework. This study examines translation from the macro and micro levels for a more comprehensive sketch of news translation on social media, particularly on RN’s WeChat subscription account.

### **3.2.2. The DNVA approach**

As mentioned in Section 3.2.1.2., this study approaches news translation from both the macro and micro aspects, considering translation as a two-level gatekeeping practice. The discursive news values analysis (DNVA) framework was employed to explore RN’s translation practices on WeChat from the micro level. The DNVA approach was developed by Bednarek and Caple (2017) to “systematically analyze how semiotic resources construct newsworthiness in texts” (p. 77). Bednarek and Caple (2017) argued that news values could be approached from four aspects: cognitive, material, social, and discursive

perspectives. Note that these three dimensions display different research aspects for analyzing news values, and each can complement the other two approaches (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). The DNVA framework is concerned with the discursive approach to newsworthiness which attends to how different semiotic modes are embedded in news discourse to construe myriad news values. The DNVA framework is employed to conduct the micro-level analysis of RN's journalistic translation practice, investigating how textual and visual resources are exploited to construct the newsworthiness of America in both the Chinese renditions and their English counterparts. Table 3.2.2.1. demonstrates the news values and their definitions summarized by Bednarek and Caple (2017). These values can be construed with various linguistic and visual devices. The complete inventory of linguistic and visual devices summarized by Bednarek and Caple can be accessed on the official website of DNVA (<https://www.newsvaluesanalysis.com/>).

It should be noted that DNVA was originally a framework custom-made for explaining English news reporting. However, this study deals with two languages, Chinese and English, for a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analysis using DNVA. A handful of studies that employed DNVA to analyze Chinese news discourse could be found (Chen & Liu, 2022; Guo et al., 2022; He, 2021; Wu & Pan, 2022), lending support to confirm that DNVA could be applicable in Chinese news reporting. Nevertheless, to avoid completely accepting the English-oriented framework to analyze the collected Chinese news stories, this research followed Caple et al. (2020) by assuming the news values also exist in Chinese news discourse and seeking to identify unique Chinese semiotics resources effective in construing these news values. Thus, instead of solely relying on the coding manuals by Caple (2016) and Bednarek (2015), coding schemes tailor-made for the current research were developed to chronicle inventories that facilitate comparative analysis of two languages “without automatically taking English as the starting point” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 257).

A comprehensive and ideal DNVA study is relevant to three aspects, corpus-assisted, multimodal, and manual analysis: the various corpus techniques enable us to search for typical patterns in a large amount of data that human eyes cannot usually spot; without manual analysis of patterns observed, it is impossible to figure out the more concrete newsworthiness construction practices performed by semiotic



resources; and multimodal analysis fills the limitation of linguistic-oriented approach, displaying the essential role in establishing news values fulfilled by visual elements and the relations between verbal and non-verbal resources (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). This research aims to cover the three aspects to obtain a relatively complete picture of newsworthiness construction within the collected English and Chinese news texts.

<i>News value</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Aesthetic Appeal</i>	The event is discursively constructed as beautiful (visuals only)
<i>Consonance</i>	The event is discursively constructed as (stereo)typical (limited here to news actors, social groups; organizations, or countries/ nations)
<i>Eliteness</i>	The event is discursively constructed as of high status or fame (including but not limited to the people; countries, or institutions involved)
<i>Impact</i>	The event is discursively constructed as having significant effects or consequences (not necessarily limited to impact on the target audience)
<i>Negativity</i>	The event is discursively constructed as negative, for example, as a disaster, conflict; controversy, criminal act
<i>Personalization</i>	The event is discursively constructed as having a personal or 'human' face (involving non-elite actors, including eyewitnesses)
<i>Positivity</i>	The event is discursively constructed as positive, for example, as a scientific breakthrough or heroic act
<i>Proximity</i>	The event is discursively constructed as geographically or culturally near (in relation to the publication location/target audience)
<i>Superlativeness</i>	The event is discursively constructed as being of high intensity or large scope/scale
<i>Timeliness</i>	The event is discursively constructed as timely in relation to the publication date: as new, recent, ongoing, about to happen, or otherwise relevant to the immediate situation/time (current or seasonal)
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	The event is discursively constructed as unexpected, for example, as unusual, strange, rare

**Table 3.2.2.1.** News values and their definitions (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 55)

### 3.2.3. An integrated framework

This part introduces the analytical framework adopted in this study, as shown in Figure 3.2.3.1., which was mainly built upon the conceptualization of translation as a dual-level gatekeeping practice, the DNVA approach, and the gatekeeping theory. Before explaining this integral and interdisciplinary framework, it is necessary to elaborate on the connection between gatekeeping and news values, two closely related concepts (Kristensen & Bro, 2023). A core goal of undertaking gatekeeping research is to survey how news has been culled and shaped into its current published forms (Vos, 2015). Therefore, the existing gatekeeping literature is full of investigations regarding the various processes and disparate

selection standards for making news, among which news values research might be considered a by-product of the gatekeeping strand (Bro & Wallberg, 2015). After all, news values are often understood as criteria or factors that impact what news events can be reported and how they are presented (Bednarek, 2006). Both gatekeeping and news values are closely concerned with the selection and presentation of news texts, which makes it reasonable and feasible to combine these two concepts for analyzing news discourse, in this case, an investigation of journalistic translation as a double-function gatekeeping practice.

All gatekeeping studies are concerned with the rejection or selection of information and its reshaping and transformation (Shoemaker et al., 2009), which unquestionably include investigating translation as a dual-level gatekeeping practice. Translation in news production concerns not only the textual manipulation of the news texts before publication but also determines what materials will be chosen for rendition (Valdeón, 2023b). The double gatekeeping function of translation forms the basic structure of this study. The macro-level analysis examines the media sources, topics, and stances that have passed the gate of RN's WeChat account in covering the United States. The micro-level analysis then investigates the collected Chinese news stories and their English counterparts through the lens of DNVA. Since translation is explored within the scope of gatekeeping, the gatekeeping theory offers a nuanced framework to interpret the patterns observed from the macro and micro level analyses.

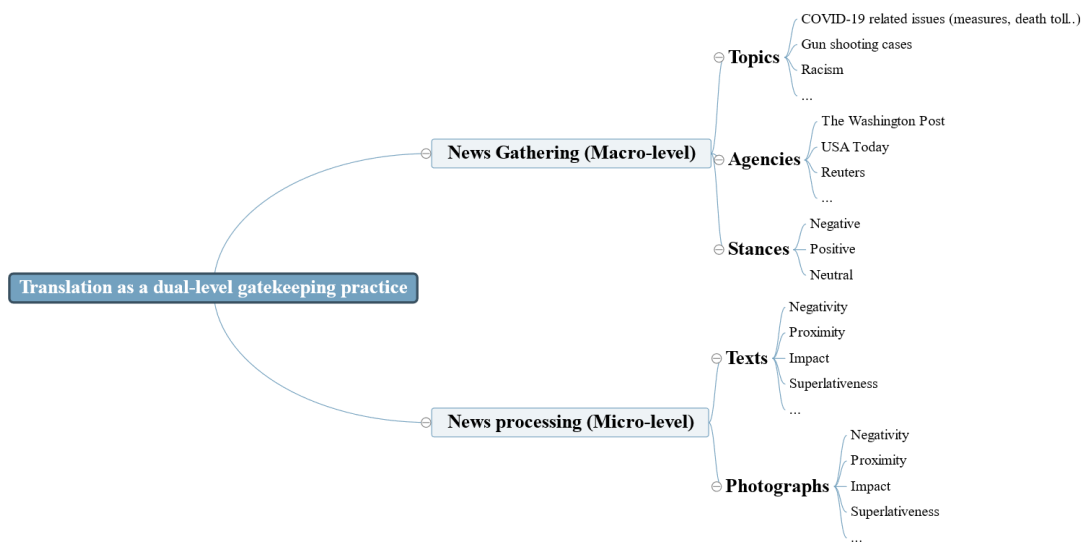


Figure 3.2.3.1. The analytical framework

### **3.3. The analytical procedure**

This section explains the more concrete steps and methods taken at each data analysis stage. The macro-level analysis undertakes a content analysis of the collected dataset containing 515 WeChat articles, while the micro-level analysis zooms into the English-Chinese journalistic translations identified for investigation via DNVA. The patterns observed are then interpreted within the scope of the five-level gatekeeping theory.

#### **3.3.1. The macro-level analysis**

The macro-level analysis focuses on the news reports concerning the United States that passed the gate of RN's editorial flow and eventually became popular on RN's WeChat account. The image-building work of a country or culture cannot be separated from the reported topics about it in the press (van Doorslaer, 2012). The sources, topics, and stances concerning the coverage of the U.S. disseminated by RN on WeChat provide an angle to observe the image of this frenemy constructed by China's mainstream media, especially within the scope of translation, a perspective rarely touched upon in journalism studies. This first-phase examination answers the first research question via a content analysis of the collected translated news stories about the United States that have captured more than 100,000 clicks on RN's WeChat account. Content analysis helps researchers to "describe, categorize, and/or make inferences about communication messages" in an organized manner (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2018, p. 176). The key inquiry concerning this project is to understand news sources, topics, and stances favored by RN's news staff and the followers of RN's WeChat account in translating the image of the United States into Chinese. Investigations of these three aspects were undertaken via different coding methods and criteria.

The first dimension analyzed is the sources employed by RN to cover matters concerning the United States. Though relevant to America, the 515 collected articles were translated from news reports in different languages and news agencies worldwide. It will be interesting to look into the frequency, geographical distribution, and prominent features of these agencies and explore the possible reasons for

their selection. The identification of sources relied on a careful and thorough reading of the texts to capture the traces of sources employed by RN for rendition. An Excel file that contains three columns, including the headlines of the collected news stories, the links to them, and the news agencies selected, was prepared beforehand. The full texts of these news stories were accessed via the links to their published versions on RN's WeChat account, and the mentioned news sources were recorded accordingly in their corresponding Excel column entry. After going through the whole dataset, a column of the news sources selected by RN for translation was completed. A Python script was written to extract all the news sources RN employed from the agency column and calculate the frequency of each news agency recognized in the data. The origin of the media outlets recognized was then tagged one by one, which helped explore the geographical distribution of the news sources. High frequency was not the only factor in delineating RN's selection patterns of information for rendition; features with lower frequency but stood out as salient were also illustrated in Chapter 4.

```
import pandas as pd
report=pd.read_excel('News Sources.xlsx')
agencies=report['Agency'].tolist()
agency_list=', '.join(agencies)
agency_list= agency_list.replace(',',' ').replace(', ',' ').split()
from collections import Counter
freq_count= Counter(agency_list)
freq_count_dict= dict(freq_count.most_common())
agency_df = pd.DataFrame.from_dict(freq_count_dict, orient='index')
agency_df.to_excel('agency_List.xlsx')
```

**Figure 3.3.1.1.** The screenshot of the Python script for new source extraction and calculation

Similar to investigating the sources, examining the topics and stances of the sampled news stories depended on close reading. The same Excel file employed in the source analysis was still valuable for coding topics and tones of the collected news stories but with the addition of two columns, namely, topics and story tones. Links to the retrieved news reports were consulted to access the full texts and determine their themes and overall tones. The categorization of news topics opted for an open coding process, which means the news topic codes were developed along the coding process and then grouped into different categories. The recognition of news topics relied on the news actors and events mainly covered in the news reports. After a first round of initial categorization of the sampled news stories,

twelve general topics were determined, including COVID-19, China-US relations, US presidential election, international affairs, US politics, military affairs, finance, US-Iran tensions, George Floyd's death, and technology. Some instances from the 515 WeChat articles could not be categorized under any of the abovementioned headings. Thus, they were coded as other. Once the topic list was confirmed, another round of coding was performed to re-categorize the data based on the list. Note that the discerned topic labels were only developed to categorize the data in an organized manner. A new report may sometimes cover more than one of these topics, and the topics per se are not entirely independent from each other. For instance, a news report coded under the node of military affairs may contain information about how the US military handled the confirmed cases in the army; technically speaking, the US presidential election is a part of US politics, or the label of international affairs readily accounts for China-US relations and US-Iran tensions. However, since these topics are relatively prominent in the data, they were coded separately as independent nodes. Such a coding procedure might offer us a more in-depth glimpse into the collected translated news.

Three categories of stance nodes were pre-set for coding the stances the collected news stories displayed, including positive, negative, and neutral. News stories covering the United States in a rather negative manner or reporting negative events that took place in America were categorized under the negative code. Those with a positive tone in the coverage of the US belonged to the positive set. The neutral code was assigned to reports without a conspicuous attitude toward the matter covered. Such an in-depth exploration of these news stories regarding sources, topics, and stances could display the image of America disseminated by an official and popular Chinese newspaper.

### **3.3.2. The micro-level analysis**

The micro-level analysis looks into the collected Chinese and English news texts within the scope of DNVA. As highlighted in Section 3.2.2., this study seeks to examine the data in terms of manual, multimodal, and corpus-assisted analysis, respectively. Factors such as co-text, context, and target readers must be considered in identifying and coding news values construed by semiotic resources (Caple et al., 2020). Tracing news values from a discursive perspective in RN's Chinese renditions shall

not be problematic as the author is a native Chinese speaker. Difficulties, however, lie in coding news values in the collected English sources. While STs selected by RN for translation were published by media outlets from various countries and regions, the number of sources from American media was still dominant, covering about sixty-eight percent of the data. Thus, regarding identifying news values established in the English texts, the viewpoint of a general American audience was adopted. However, it should be noted that even readers from the same country might hold different attitudes toward certain issues and agendas. In the U.S., for instance, readers' political affiliations greatly impact their attitudes toward the remarks and behaviors of former President Donald Trump. Hence, the analyses undertaken to trace news values in the texts and images did not include *Consonance*, considering the complexity relevant to figure out elements that might be conceived as stereotypes when the target readers are in favor of different political stances, not to mention that the coder is not "a member of that target audience" (Bednarek, 2015, p. 7). In addition, subjectivity is inevitable when manual coding is performed. Previous DNVA literature frequently broached this limitation and managed to solve it by ensuring intra-coder reliability. Instead of including multiple coders to achieve a satisfying number of inter-coder agreement, Bednarek (2015) suggested that the top priority be to maintain the "consistency, transparency and persuasiveness of the coding" (Bednarek, 2015, p. 6). As indicated by Bednarek (2015), the inter-coder agreement can only testify to the usefulness of the coding scheme rather than make the problem of subjectivity disappear. As a result, this research concentrates on making the coding procedure consistent, transparent, and persuasive, a goal that requires a custom-made coding scheme for the cross-linguistic analysis involved, multiple rounds of coding, and sometimes discussion with other researchers. In other words, a tailor-made coding manual (see appendix) for linguistic resources in English and Chinese was developed by revising and adapting the one by Bednarek (2015). The identification of news values construed in images resorted to the inventory developed by Caple (2016). In line with Makki (2019) and Zhang and Cheung (2022a), data that needed to be manually coded were examined for three rounds at different stages of this research and ambiguous cases were discussed with other researchers. The manual and multimodal analyses concern the news headlines and their accompanying images. A manual DNVA analysis was undertaken using SHTC and TTHC. NVivo 12 was employed for coding

the news values established in the 220 pairs of headlines. NVivo 12 is a software assisting researchers to observe patterns from all kinds of data, including texts, images, and videos, by creating their own sets of codes. The flexibility and versatility of NVivo 12 make it a valuable tool for exploring research materials from multiple aspects. The micro-analysis began with headlines because of their indispensable status in capturing readers' attention on WeChat. A glimpse of these attention-getting devices could reveal news values perceived as crucial by the press. And an examination of those popular ones on RN's WeChat account demonstrated news values that appeared more captivating to the readers in covering the U.S. Notice that new values repeatedly construed in the same headline via different resources were still coded only once, given that this manual analysis sought to understand the distribution of news values across the texts under investigation.

The analytical focus was then on the images collected. Images in STIC and TTIC were imported into an Access database for exploring the visual patterns of news values. The Access database is a powerful tool that enables researchers to conduct various complex queries for data comparison. The investigation of verbal-visual relations between the headlines and their accompanying images was undertaken in a tailor-made Access database that included the results from the textual and visual analysis of the data. The linguistic and visual analyses and comparison among the four corpora could display news values constructed in the English and Chinese data and, more importantly, demonstrate the differences and similarities concerning newsworthiness construction practices between STs and TTs regarding covering America. Corpus-assisted analysis of the full-text corpora, STFTC, and TTFTC drew on only two corpus techniques from Antconc, including word frequency and concordance, to further enhance our understanding of the news values construed in the collected data. A word frequency list could provide an overview of the newsworthiness construction practices between the STs and TTs. English and Chinese concordances concerning the Trump administration from STFTC and TTFTC were then retrieved for a more specific case study.

### **3.3.3. The five-level gatekeeping analysis**

The last step is relevant to the discussion part of the thesis, answering the last set of research questions.

The macro- and micro-level analyses yielded interesting findings concerning RN's journalistic translation practices on WeChat, which deserves further interpretation drawing on various sociocultural factors to reveal a general picture of China's journalistic field and, more specifically, RN's journalistic translation practices. The five-level gatekeeping theory developed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) was employed to do so, proposing possible factors impacting RN's translation practices on a highly digitalized and marketized social media platform.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, triangulation has become a trend in JTR, which can greatly complement product-oriented analyses for a more comprehensive understanding of news translation. Undoubtedly, an ethnographic investigation conducted in RN's editorial office can offer the insiders' viewpoint to interpret the findings from the product-oriented investigation. However, RN's identity as an official newspaper makes it arduous to access people involved in the journalistic production process. A meta corpus was built to resolve this methodological defect. Few studies published earlier contained ethnographic and fieldwork data obtained in RN's headquarter, such as the contributions by Pan (2014a) and Xia (2019). Although published years ago and not about RN's new media team, these valuable accounts could still offer insights into understanding RN's translation practices on the WeChat public account platform. In addition, many Chinese materials, including news coverage of RN's new media team, research articles elaborating on RN's features and policies, and other relevant publicly available resources about RN, were gathered to enhance the gatekeeping interpretation stage.

### **3.4. Summary**

This chapter elaborates on the methodological and theoretical aspects of this study. It gives a detailed introduction to the news agency, RN, under investigation, especially its unique role in the Chinese press and its measures to fit into an increasingly digitalized media environment. The data used for the macro- and micro-level analyses and how they were collected were also briefly illustrated. An explanation of the analytical framework that draws on concepts and theories relevant to gatekeeping and news values was presented, followed by step-by-step guidance of the analytical procedure, which contains information about the tools employed and the concrete examination methods of the data.



## **Chapter 4 The macro-level analysis of gatekeeping**

Chapter 4 focuses on translation as a macro-level gatekeeping practice in news production. Thus, this section presents the results of the content analysis of the collected data, aiming to answer the first set of research questions. Based on the popular translated news stories about the United States published on RN's WeChat account, the content analysis could contribute to revealing news agencies, news events, and story tones frequently selected for translation and favored by RN's news staff and followers on the WeChat public account platform when it comes to covering China's top frenemy.

### **4.1. News sources selected for translation**

The first section is concerned with news sources opted for by RN to cover the United States on WeChat. A general overview of the sources selected for rendition is first provided, especially aspects like the geographical distribution of the selected sources and the frequency of the media outlets chosen. Then more in-depth analyses are undertaken to examine some prominent patterns displayed by the prevalence of news sources, not only those frequent ones but also the infrequent ones that may reveal the unique features of RN's news translation practices.

#### **4.1.1. An overview**

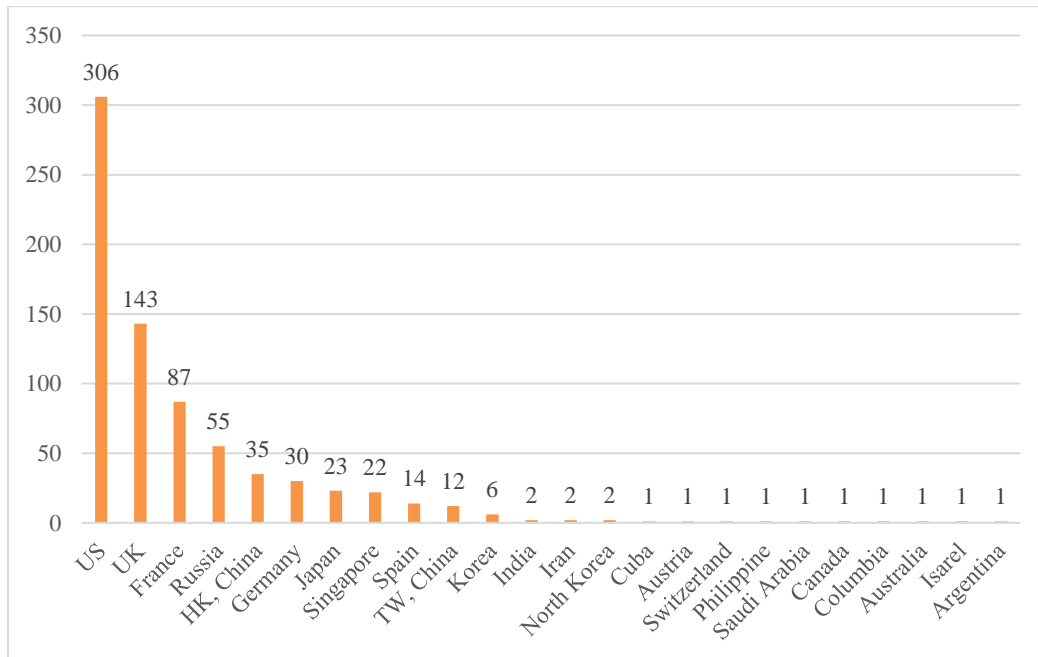
Figure 4.1.1.1. showcases the geographical distribution of news sources that RN translated to cover the United States, listed from the most to the least. The top 20 sources RN selected for producing translated news stories concerning America are displayed in Figure 4.1.1.2. A content analysis of the collected data indicates that news sources from about 48 countries and regions passed RN's editorial gate, and their translations became popular on the WeChat public account platform. In addition to drawing on resources from mainstream and prestigious media from the United States and the United Kingdom, less visible media sources from countries like India, North Korea, Cuba, Iran, Columbia, Argentina, and the Philippines were also selected for rendition by RN, though scarce in number. RN did not only translate English sources, but news texts initially published in languages like Japanese, German, Korean, Spanish,

and Chinese were also selected for rendition. It seems that RN attempted to counter the western-centric media landscapes by including diverse sources, especially those produced by non-western news organizations.

Many of the collected texts for the macro-level analysis were based on multiple sources, usually in varied languages. For instance, a translated news story about America's killing of the Iranian General Qassem Suleimani published on RN's WeChat account (RN, 4 January 2020) drew on eight different sources, including *DPA* from Germany, *AFP* from France, *Sputnik* from Russia, *Reuters* from Britain, *Lianhe Zaobao* from Singapore, *USA today* from America, *Hindustan Times* from India and *Haaretz* from Israel. The multi-source nature often observed in translated news makes it challenging to interrogate ST-TT relations. While the current study removed the stories based on various sources from the micro-level analysis, the complexity of analyzing these texts deserves more scholarly attention and requires innovative methodological approaches in expanding JTR. The diverse use of STs also corroborates RN's identity as an official Chinese newspaper that enjoys unprecedented resources to access news content produced by news agencies across the world. RN's ST resource pool covers hundreds of English media and also journalistic content in other languages, like Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian; and RN's in-house translators are all translation talents with exceptional expertise in not only most spoken languages but also minority ones to fulfill tasks concerning multiple languages (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021e).

The top ten countries and regions that provided media resources for RN's translations include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Hong Kong SAR, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Spain, and Chinese Taiwan, consisting of more than ninety-seven percent of the sources identified. The substantial percentage of the American, British, and French press is no surprise, given that the "Big Four" news agencies, including "*Reuters*, *Associated Press (AP)*, *United Press International (UPI)*, and *Agence France Presse (AFP)*" are all from the above three countries (Bell, 1991, p. 48). While *UPI* gradually lost its impact, went bankrupt, and was eventually sold to another company in 2000 (Palmer, 2019), the rest of the three remain the most important news agencies in the world. Figure 4.1.1.2. further supports this argument, demonstrating that the three news agencies RN constantly resorted to are *Reuters*, *AP*,

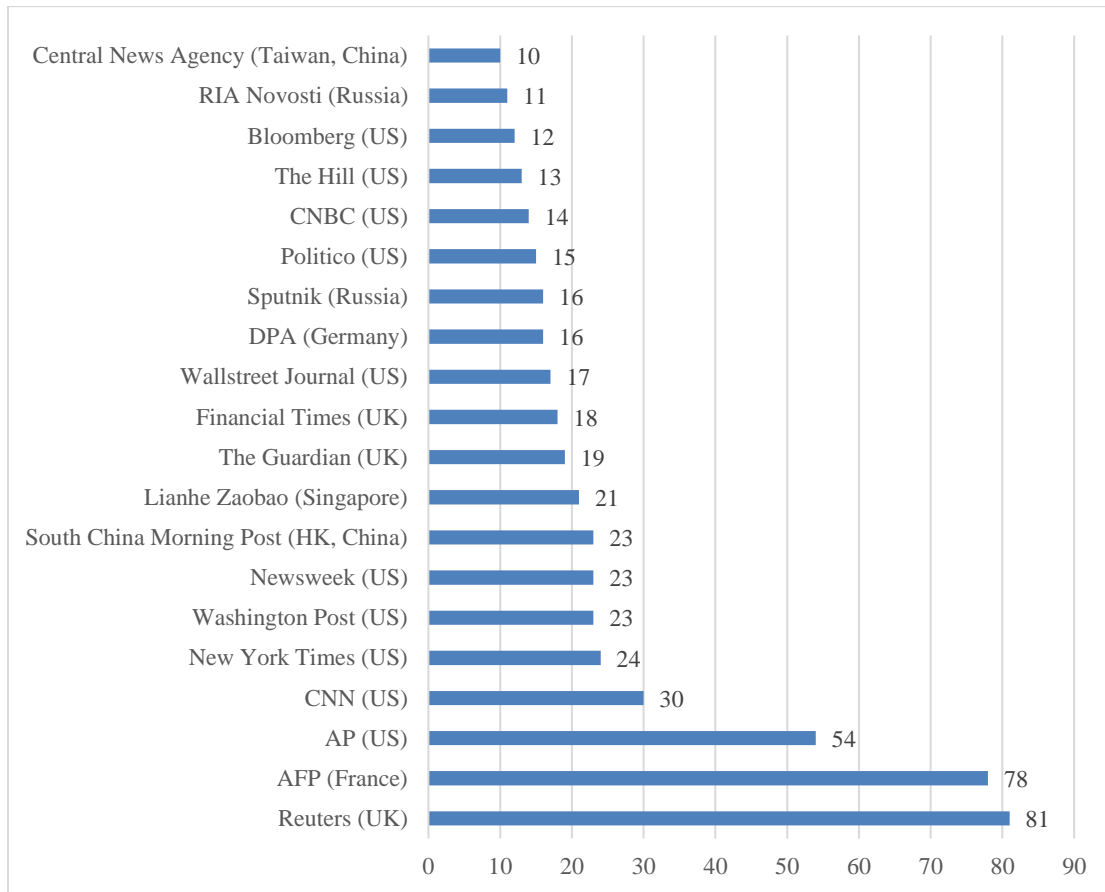
and *AFP*. The western media have long dominated the global journalistic field since the 1990s, especially the “Big Four” that play vital roles in providing information to media outlets worldwide, in particular those from “Asia, Africa and Latin America” (Meng, 2021, pp. 57-58). Even now, translations based on news reports distributed by these large-scale and leading news agencies are still popular among Chinese readers or, at least, the over six million followers of RN’s WeChat account.



**Figure 4.1.1.1.** The geographical distribution of news sources selected

American sources account for about forty percent of the composition. Among the 20 frequently employed media resources, American media has occupied half of the positions. In addition to *AP*, news sources RN favored in selection encompass *CNN*, the *New York Times (NYT)*, the *Washington Post (WP)*, *Newsweek (NW)*, the *Wallstreet Journal (WSJ)*, *Politico (PL)*, *CNBC*, the *Hill (HL)*, and *Bloomberg (BG)*. The plurality of the U.S. media is expected as the translated reports under investigation are all concerned with the United States. Journalistic content produced by British and French media makes up around thirty percent of the overall data. *Reuters* surpassed *AP* and *AFP*, ranking as the most translated source by RN. Other British media sources rendered by RN frequently on WeChat comprise the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times*, two media outlets both enjoy world-renowned fame. The overwhelming number of western media sources in our data seems to imply that RN, like numerous

news media in other parts of the world, heavily relies on western news organizations in news production. Does that mean the image of the United States presented by RN in its popular translated news reports conforms to the western narratives? Do Chinese readers accept and favor the perception of the frenemy promoted by the western press? The answers to these questions require a more detailed analysis of the story tone and events reported in the collected news stories, which concerns the content of Section 4.2.



**Figure 4.1.1.2.** The top 20 media sources

While it is understandable to see sources disseminated by the western press to report the United States via translation in RN’s journalistic output, Russian media stands out as another frequently employed source to cover America in translated news reports with 100, 000 plus clicks, especially *Sputnik* and *RIA Novosti*. Both *Sputnik* and *RIA Novosti* belong to *Rossiia Segodnya*, the most influential media conglomerate in Russia and probably one of the news giants in the world. *Sputnik* is an international brand run by *Rossiia Segodnya*, which provides news in various languages and aims to present untold

stories and “different voices” to their readers (Rossiyasegodnya). As a leading Russian news agency, *RIA Novosti* is a site for accessing Russian and global news whose mission, as underlined in its introduction page on the website of *Rossiia Segodnya*, is to demonstrate “an accurate picture of the day as it unfolds” (Rossiyasegodnya). These two agencies have maintained friendly and cooperative relationships with Chinese media. As early as 2006, *Xinhua News Agency* signed a cooperation agreement with *RIA Novosti*, promising to share and exchange Chinese, English, and Russian news content (Sputnik, 7 November 2006). In 2018, the collaboration between Chinese and Russian media was further enhanced following the media cooperation agreement signed by *China Media Group* and *Rossiia Segodnya*. This agreement has highlighted the importance of collaboration between China and Russia in social media journalism and promoting each other’s news products “in the fields of humanities, economy and sports” (CGTN, 15 September 2018). The close cooperation between Chinese and Russian media might partially justify the high percentage of Russian journalistic content employed in RN’s translations. Furthermore, Russian and Chinese media hold similar beliefs that western media coverage of the two sides tends to be biased and untrue. Editors of Russian mainstream media like *Russian Gazette* and *Sputnik* have expressed their criticism of western media in interviews with *Xinhua News Agency*, underlining the necessity of fighting for global discursive power in presenting the images of Russia and China (Xinhua, 3 September 2019, 19 July 2018). Likewise, western media like *BBC* and *CNN* has been delineated as arrogant, untrustworthy, and heavily biased in Chinese media, as can be seen from the numerous Chinese journalistic pieces revealing the “ugly faces” of the western press (People.cn, 15 October 2021; Xinhua, 3 November 2019, 10 February 2023). A report introducing RN’s translation resources and team indicates that Russian mainstream media is often prioritized in RN’s news selection process, as they are more “objective and rational” in reporting China and China-related international affairs (Cankaoxiaoxi.com, 2021e). It might be argued that reporting of the United States by the Russian press was selected by RN and succeeded in attracting much traffic because they were more in favor of China’s stance, an assumption that needs support from a content analysis of the actual news stories.

Traces of media outlets from Hong Kong SAR were also prominent in the collected data, with *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) ranking as one of the top ten sources translated by RN to cover the United

States. Other selected Hong Kong media sources entail both English-language newspapers like *Asia Times* and Chinese-language newspapers such as *DuoWei News*, *Ming Pao*, *Sing Tao Daily*, and *Hong Kong Economic Journal*. The following analysis focuses on the media source with the highest frequency, *SCMP*. *SCMP*, founded in 1903, is one of the most influential English-language newspapers headquartered in Hong Kong SAR, which provides timely global news coverage with a specific goal to “lead the global conversation about China” (*SCMP*). Over its 120-year history, *SCMP* earned a reputation for quality journalism and won recognition from various editorial awards. In 2020, *SCMP* broke another record by becoming the first Asian news organization in the Trust Project, an alliance of world-leading media companies that promise to make reliable, credible, and accurate news with explicit criteria (Low, 18 March 2020). In 2015, *SCMP* was purchased by Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba with an acquisition worth 266 million dollars, which caused western media like *Reuters* to doubt its potential impact on *SCMP*’s editorial practices (*Reuters*, 14 December 2015). Nevertheless, *SCMP* and Alibaba repeatedly underlined that the acquisition deal would not affect the journalistic content produced by *SCMP*, and reporters and editors could enjoy the highest freedom in doing their job (Chow, 11 December 2015; Lhatoo, 1 December 2018). According to the most recent data released by the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey (2022), the Chinese University of Hong Kong, *SCMP* still tops the chart of credible paid newspapers in Hong Kong voted by citizens. In their study comparing the attitudinal resources embedded in news coverage of the anti-extradition-bill movement by *China Daily* and *SCMP*, Cao et al. (2022) noticed not only a lower degree of subjectivity but also a tendency to conform to the stance of the local and central government in *SCMP*. The contribution by Nguyen and Hekman (2022) displayed the differences between *SCMP* and *WP* in presenting the image of China and America regarding reporting A.I.-relevant news: *WP* depicted China more negatively, but *SCMP* was less likely to do so in constructing the image of the United States. The high percentage of news produced by *SCMP* in RN’s “successful” output on WeChat might be attributed to its trustworthy journalistic practices and pro-China tendency.

Following Hong Kong media resources are German ones, among which the *German Press Agency (DPA)* is the most frequent German news agency and one of the top 20 media sources where RN drew materials

for translation. The dominance of *DPA* in the identified German media resources is expected, considering that *DPA* is the largest newsroom in Europe and one of the major news agencies in the world (Iglhaut, 7 April 2020). Other German sources include media outlets like *Der Spiegel*, the news magazine with the largest circulation in Germany, and Germany's state-owned media, *Deutsche Welle*. Many Japanese media sources were also discerned in the collected data. Japan possesses a rather vibrant media environment, with newspapers selling impressive numbers of copies and a massive readership enthusiastic about accessing various information (McNeill, 2019, p. 59). Speaking of Japan's newspaper industry, the big five Japanese national dailies must be mentioned, including "*Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun, Sankei Shimbun, and Nikkei Shimbun*" (Guo et al., 2020, p. 100). The five crucial newspapers account for around seventy-four percent of the identified Japanese media sources, which demonstrates RN's tendency to rely on mainstream media in foreign countries to present international affairs via translation. Traces of *Kyodo News* and *Nikkei Asia* were also discerned. *Kyodo News* contributed to over twenty percent of Japanese sources rendered by RN. It makes sense for RN to frequently selected news stories *Kyodo News* produced for translation, given that it is one of the two wire services and "the most reliable news agency" in Japan (Kyodonews; Matsushita, 2019).

Singaporean media stood out as another frequently used media source. Two Singaporean newspapers were discerned in the data, including the Chinese-language newspaper *Lianhe Zaobao (Zaobao)* and the English-language newspaper *The Straits Times*. The analysis below mainly attends to the use of *Zaobao* in RN's journalistic output, as *Zaobao* is one of the top ten media outlets opted for by RN, and *The Strait Times* appeared with a much lower frequency. As one of the most influential Chinese-language newspapers in Singapore, *Zaobao's* history can be traced back to 1983. Until now, *Zaobao* has garnered a readership of 40,000 in Singapore and many fans from other countries and regions, including China (Lianhezaobao). While the printed edition of *Zaobao* is only circulated on a small scale in locations other than Singapore, its website is accessible to and welcomed by readers proficient in Chinese. The online version of *Zaobao* has attracted numerous loyal readers in China, who contribute to nearly eighty-five to ninety percent of the daily traffic the website has secured (Chyi et al., 2019). Furthermore, *Zaobao* has always been a foreign Chinese-language newspaper with a friendly and positive attitude

toward China and China's development, an aspect conspicuously emphasized on the introduction page of *Zaobao* (Lianhezaobao). The popularity among Chinese readers and amiable ties with China make *Zaobao* an excellent media source to translate on RN's WeChat account.

Four Spanish media sources, including *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *EFE News Agency*, and *Rebelión*, were discerned in the collected texts. While Spanish media was the ninth most frequent news source adopted by RN in translating news stories about America, none of the outlets mentioned above was among the top twenty media sources. However, the trend of exploiting media sources with a high social presence was still noted. Except for *Rebelión*, an independent and non-profit news website with only one occurrence in the data, the rest of the three outlets may all be regarded as mainstream Spanish media sources. *El País*, founded in 1976, is a leading and prestigious newspaper with the largest readership in Spain (Eurotopics). *La Vanguardia*, with a history traced back to 1881, is one of the oldest newspapers in the Spanish press (Eurotopics). According to a 2018 report concerning Spanish news media published by Pew Research Center, both *El País* and *La Vanguardia* were considered reliable and trustworthy media sources by Spanish readers, ranking third and seventh place, respectively (Mitchell et al., 2018). *Agencia EFE*, the most influential Spanish news agency and the world's fourth-largest wire service (Reuters, 4 November 2019), was also identified as one of the key Spanish media sources translated by RN on WeChat.

News stories produced by agencies based in Chinese Taiwan, including *Central News Agency (CNA)*, *China Times* and *UDN News* were discerned as another media strand RN frequently rendered. *CNA*, in particular, accounted for more than eighty percent of the identified media sources from Chinese Taiwan, while the other two agencies were respectively mentioned once in the collected texts. *CNA* was established in 1924 in Guangzhou by the Chinese Kuomintang party and later relocated to Taiwan in 1949; it has now become the most influential and authoritative news agency in the Taiwan region (www.taiwan.cn, 2006). The prevalence of *CNA* in media sources from Taiwan can be ascribed once again to its extensive impact as an official news agency in Chinese Taiwan. The selection of news distributed by such a dependable wire service attests to RN's efforts in providing quality news products to consumers on WeChat. Furthermore, the importance of the Taiwan question for China-US relations



should be conceived as another critical factor leading to the high percentage of media sources from Taiwan. China has repeatedly emphasized that the Taiwan question is China's internal affair, yet the U.S. has been highly involved in cross-strait relations. Following China's rise and advocacy for peaceful reunification in recent years, the U.S. tried to gain more influence and engage with Taiwan-relevant matters (Xiying Zuo, 2021), which often receives a lot of media coverage. In the collected data, for instance, news stories regarding Trump's signing of the Taipei Act, the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary's controversial visit to Taiwan and American military planes' flight over the Taiwan Straits were spotted, highlighting the crucial status of the Taiwan question in China-US relations and America's constant manipulation of it.

This overview briefly delineates the media sources from the top ten countries and regions identified in the collected data that RN employed to translate news stories about the United States. It was noticed that American and British media covered over sixty percent of the news sources discerned. Traditional elite news agencies with a worldly reputation, including *Reuters*, *AP*, and *AFP*, contribute to the majority of media sources RN rendered into Chinese. In addition, two criteria were recognized in RN's source selection: the media source should be a significant and highly influential outlet in its corresponding location, or the chosen publication should offer news coverage more in favor of China. The above analysis provides a general look at RN's (de)selection of news sources considering reporting America. The following two sections undertake case studies of American and British media, two dominant sources RN translated, respectively, to present more detailed examinations of media sources selection.

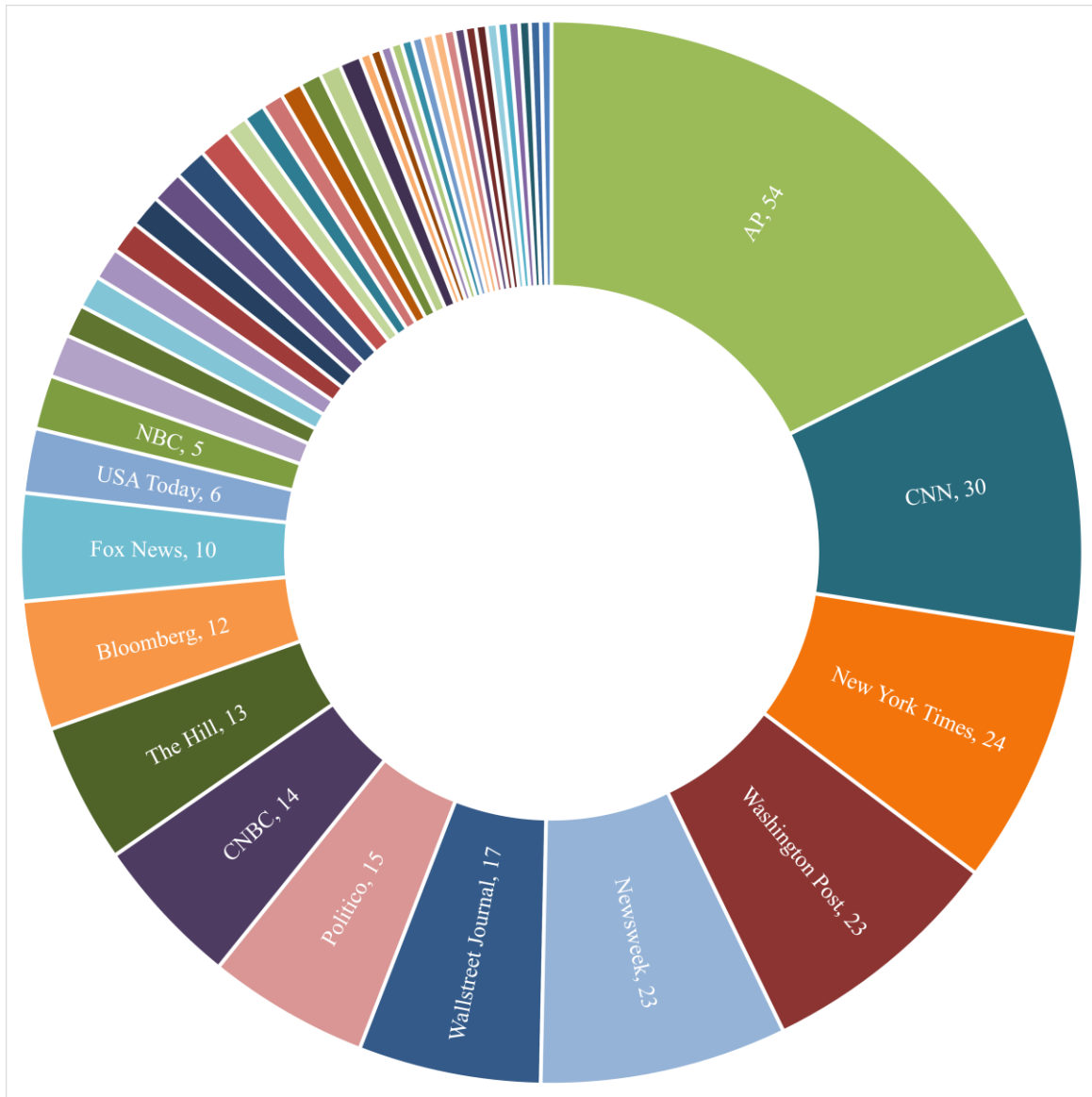
#### **4.1.2. American media sources**

This part elaborates on the American sources identified, which made up two-fifths of the overall data. As mentioned in the previous part, American media accounts for half of RN's top twenty frequently employed sources. About forty-seven American media sources of different types and stances were discerned, demonstrating the diversity of news reports RN resorted to for translation. The various publications selected by RN range from traditional legacy media like *NYT*, *WSJ*, and *WP* to digital-native news organizations such as *Buzzfeed* and *the Daily Beast*. Figure 4.1.2.1. showcases the

prevalence of American media sources. The analysis first zooms into media resources with a frequency of more than five times, as they have covered more than eighty percent of the American sources recognized. In addition to the frequent ones, news organizations with lower frequency but salience were broached to delineate some of RN's unique selection standards and RN's target readers' preference for media coverage concerning the United States.

AP has made up more than seventeen percent of the data, making it the most frequent American media source in the translated news reports under examination. AP's high visibility in newsrooms across the world, which rely on their subscription to AP for getting the most up-to-date news content, partly resulted in AP's dominance of the identified American sources. The worldwide influence of AP can be understood by looking at the following numbers: seventy-eighty percent of AP's revenue comes from licensing content to outlets and organizations worldwide in 2022 (AP, 2022); more than 3900 media organizations receive journalistic content AP delivers (AP); about four billion people, nearly half of the global population, are exposed to news AP produces on a daily basis (AP, 2022). Moreover, as one of today's leading news agencies, AP has maintained a collaborative relationship for more than fifty years with China's most potent and crucial news agency, *Xinhua News Agency (XNA)*. In AP's letter addressing inquiries from the U.S. Congress concerning AP's relations with XNA, it was mentioned that the agreement between the two parties allowed their use of each other's content conditioned on the maximum use of five photos and stories every day (Easton, 10 January 2019). By signing an agreement with XNA in 1972, AP became the first American news organization to exchange news content with the Chinese press since 1949 (NYT, 19 July 1972). In addition to the 1972 agreement, AP and XNA committed to further enhancing their collaboration with a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2018 by the two sides (Xinhua, 25 November 2018). As the President of XNA, Fu Hua, emphasized in a recent meeting with AP's vice president, the two parties' mutually beneficial collaboration has been expanded to many aspects, from personnel exchanges to news exchanges (Xinhua, 23 April 2023). This recap of the cooperative relations between AP and XNA suffices to demonstrate the vital status of AP in the Chinese press, especially China's official media. Note that RN is a news organization affiliated with XNA. Given AP's enduring impact as the world's leading news agency and its long-term partnership

with XNA, it seems understandable to observe a high percentage of AP in RN's journalistic translations, not to mention that these reports are closely related to America, where AP headquarters.



**Figure 4.1.2.1.** The distribution of American media sources

On top of AP, traces of news organizations such as CNN, NYT, WP, and WSJ, some representative and familiar names concerning American media, were quite salient in the translated news reports under question. The list, from large to small numbers, includes CNN, NYT, WP, NW, WSJ, PL, CNBC, HL, BG, Fox News (FN), USA Today (UT), and NBC, all of which belong to the category of popular American news organizations and account for over sixty-two percent of the identified American sources.

According to a 2021 Pew Research Center report (Mitchell et al., 2021), during the period from October to December 2020, the average monthly unique visitors to the websites of most of the outlets have surpassed 50 million, except for *NW*, *CNBC* and *BG*; while *NW* did not capture an audience of more than 50 million, its website still attracted a high traffic number of over 30 million average monthly unique visitors. It might be argued that the majority of American sources with high frequency in the collected popular translated news reports are also regarded as prevalent and major media outlets in the United States.

Another point worth examining is the political leaning of these news organizations, a crucial aspect of profiling the American press. The AllSides Media Bias Ratings (AllSides) were consulted to determine whether a news organization is left-leaning, right-leaning, or without political bias. The media bias data gets updated each year by AllSides. The 2020 media bias ratings were employed in this study to maintain consistency since all the collected reports were selected and published by RN in 2020. The most recent ratings were adopted for those without data from 2020 (*NBC*, *WSJ*, *CNBC*). According to AllSides, six out of the twelve media outlets, including *CNN*, *NYT*, *WP*, *PL*, *BG*, and *NBC*, are left-leaning; news organizations like *NW*, *UT*, *WSJ*, *CNBC*, and *HL* offer somewhat balanced coverage; *FN* remains the only right-leaning media outlet in the examined twelve sources. Note that the news section of *WSJ* is categorized as neutral, but its analysis and opinion content was considered right-leaning, according to AllSides. In the 2021 Pew Research Center report, Mitchell et al. (2021, p. 90) presented a general picture of the different types of readers the mentioned American sources tend to attract: news organizations like *NYT*, *PL*, *WP*, *CNN*, *HL*, and *NW* are more likely to capture Democrat-leaning American readers; outlets such as *UT*, *NBC*, and *WSJ* have garnered a mixed audience with both conservatives and liberals; *FN* is the most representative right-leaning media outlet, securing a large number of Republican supporters. In an earlier 2014 report by Pew Research Center, *BG* was identified as a news organization more trusted by a liberal and Democrat-leaning audience (Mitchell et al., 2014). The information concerning the ideological affiliation and partisanship of the news outlets demonstrates that RN's selection of sources is inclined to neutral and left-leaning U.S. media. The fact that the number of neutral and liberal media sources outweighs the conservative ones indicates that RN distrusts

Republican-leaning news organizations to cover America. Such a tendency may be explained by drawing on previous literature investigating the trustworthiness of American media with different ideological affiliations. As Motta et al. (2020) have indicated, right-leaning American media like *FN* tends to promote inaccurate or even fake information. In other words, selecting conservative news organizations as media sources might increase the risks of violating the principles of quality and reliable journalism. RN's preference for liberal outlets and media without salient biases is indicative of its resolution to carry out the mission of a trustworthy news organization.

Besides consideration concerning the quality of news, another aspect that deserves further inspection in exploring the low presence of conservative media sources is the then-U.S. President, Donald Trump. Since Trump took office in 2016, the U.S. government has regarded China "as a 'revisionist power' and a 'strategic rival' of the U.S." (Wang & Hu, 2019, p. 4). The heavy tariffs imposed on imported Chinese goods since 2018, the proposal to ban Chinese companies like Huawei and Bytedance, and unfriendly remarks about China made by American political figures like the former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, to name a few, all indicate the Trump administration's hostile attitude toward China. The year of 2020 witnessed a new low in China-US relations when Trump labeled COVID-19 as a "Chinese virus" and tried to attribute the worsening pandemic in America to China's faults. These actions and measures have pushed China and US, two countries supposed to collaborate closely, into an antagonistic zone. The deteriorating US-China relations have significantly impacted how American people perceive China and vice versa. A 2020 Pew Research Center report noted a nearly twenty-percent surge in unfavorable stances considering China in America since the inauguration of the Trump administration (Silver et al., 2020). In another research investigating Chinese people's views of the U.S., Fang et al. (2022, p. 43) argued that negative views of America became increasingly prevalent among the Chinese public, especially since Trump took office in 2016, which might partly be ascribed to Trump's remarks and policies concerning China. Considering the negative image of Trump, it seems reasonable to observe a lower share of left-leaning American media sources in the collected data, which are often accustomed to disseminating narratives favoring the Trump administration. On the one hand, less selection of Republican-leaning media conforms to the ideological square developed by van Dijk (2011) by de-

emphasizing the positive aspect of the other. Meanwhile, the tendency to employ fewer media sources supporting the Trump administration has considered the preferences of the Chinese readership, who might be unhappy to read positive news stories about an irrational leader in their opinion.

Another point worth mentioning is that some of the elite American news organizations RN opted for to cover the United States, such as *CNN* and *NYT*, have been heavily criticized in China, especially for their coverage of China. *CNN*, the second most frequent media source discerned, has long been a notorious news outlet in China, reprimanded for the fake information it has disseminated and its lack of sufficient fact-checking. As early as 2008, *CNN* was blamed for using false visual information to cover the 2008 riots in Tibet, which enraged Chinese people and prompted the launch of the anti-*CNN* movement in China (Lin & Zhao, 2016). At that time, “做人不要太 *CNN* (Don't be too *CNN*)”, a catchy phrase mocking *CNN*'s unreliable journalistic practices, went viral on the Chinese internet. Over the years, many articles delineating the malpractice of *CNN* can be found in the Chinese press. For instance, a report entitled “*CNN*, 我们知道你这几年使了多少坏! (*CNN*, we know how many bad things you have done in the past years!)” (Xinhua, 3 November 2019), which elaborates on the unprofessional journalistic practices performed by *CNN* and its affiliated journalists, were published by many Chinese mainstream news organizations including *XNA* and *People's Daily*. A glance at the comment section of the post linking the above article on *PD*'s Weibo account provides a general idea of the image of *CNN* perceived by the general public: the top-liked comment is “*CNN*!垃圾中的战斗机!! (*CNN*! A bizarre jet in the garbage!!)”, followed by “He tui” which shows contempt by imitating spit sounds. Likewise, *NYT* was often condemned for its double-standard coverage in reporting China and other international affairs. The denouncement of *NYT* was also quite pronounced in Chinese media. A *CCTV* report demonstrated how *NYT* covered the quarantine policies in Italy and China differently: the former should be praised for containing the virus at the expense of the economy, while the same move in China became something negative that severely influenced people's life (*CCTV*, 12 March 2020). Another piece by *Global Times (GT)*, a Chinese official news organization, illustrated *NYT*'s double standards in using different narratives to cover protests in India and Canada, supplemented with additional materials to

support the claim (Suo, 19 February 2022). In addition to *CNN* and *NYT*, over the years, other mainstream American sources, such as *WP*, *WSJ*, and *BG*, have all received some media coverage in China for the inaccurate and fabricated information they disseminated. For example, *XNA* published an article to show how *WP* created a narrative consistent with its aim of demonizing Huawei via misinterpreted and out-of-context information (*XNA*, 12 May 2021). *WSJ* was criticized in a report by *China Daily (CD)*, which condemned *WSJ*'s use of unverified and false information to promote the "lab-leaked" theory of COVID-19 (*CD*, 25 July 2021). A more high-profile fake news scandal covered by many Chinese outlets is relevant to *BG*, which published the shocking "Russia invades Ukraine" fake headline in February 2022.

Given the above information, it seems reasonable to conclude that American mainstream media is often considered unreliable by Chinese media and ill-famed news organizations by the Chinese public. However, U.S. media still accounts for the majority of the discerned sources. While the fact that the collected translated reports are concerned with the U.S. might explain the overwhelming number of American sources, *RN*'s love-hate feelings for American media deserve some attention. *RN* needs to fulfill its role as a conduit for Chinese readers to know about international and domestic affairs, in this case, coverage regarding America through the lens of these mainstream, elite, and traditional American outlets. It also means that *RN* needs to be cautious when dealing with news products by the chosen outlets which do not enjoy a good reputation in China. How *RN* transformed the selected American sources to resist the narratives constructed by the U.S. media and set its own desired agenda requires a detailed analysis of the collected STs and TTs showcased in Chapter 5.

Other than outlets with high frequency, this study is interested in less frequent American media sources. While traditional mainstream American media accounts for a large percentage of the data, traces of "less mainstream" news organizations, though merely visible, shall not be ignored, as they might reveal some unique patterns of *RN*'s source selection practice and target readers' preferences. Among the forty-seven American sources noted in the data, thirty-four news organizations appeared less than five times, including some popular American news organizations such as *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *Business Insider*, *NPR*, *VOX*, and *Buzzfeed*, whose websites garnered over 30 million average monthly unique visitors

between October 2020 and December 2020 (Mitchell et al., 2021). Nonetheless, many names unfamiliar to Chinese readers, like *Daily Beast*, *Wired*, and *Axios*, were traced. Because of the space limitation, it is impossible to go over every media outlet identified in the data. The analysis below concentrates on some unique patterns of RN's selection practice revealed by the less frequent batch of media outlets.

Firstly, news organizations focusing on military and defense news were identified. For instance, *Stars and Stripes*, a military newspaper sponsored by the Pentagon (the U.S. Department of Defense), was tracked in four translated news reports concerning America-related military and defense coverage. Other American media sources concerning military and defense affairs, such as *Military Times*, *Defense News*, *Defense One*, *The War Zone*, and *Air Force Magazine*, were also discerned in the data. The salience of military news sources in the translated news reports securing over 100,000 clicks lent further support to the claim that RN's WeChat followers favor "hard news" content, especially those relevant to military affairs, which are more prone to capture a higher number of clicks (Guo, 2015).

In addition, though relatively scarce, traces of tabloid media and extreme right-wing media, and news organizations with pronounced anti-China stances were noticed among the outlets with lower frequency. For example, *the Daily Beast (DB)*, a digital-native media outlet founded in 2008, was identified thrice in the data. *DB* is a relatively unique news organization. While other competitors are busy proving their objectivity, *DB* boldly claims that its journalism is "not neutral" (*DB*). Unlike the media sources with high frequency, which often label themselves as quality journalism, *DB*'s former editor-in-chief, Noah Shachtman, considers *DB* a "high-end tabloid" (Johnson, 13 November 2018), when the notion tabloid is often associated with "negative connotations" (Rowe, 2011, p. 458). Despite these traits that might prevent *DB* from being selected as a reliable source, RN still opted for some news stories published on *DB*'s website for rendition on WeChat. The appearance of *the Daily Caller (DC)*, though only once, was another surprise. *DC*, co-founded by Tucker Carlson and Neil Patel, is another representative right-wing or even far-right news site (Kaiser et al., 2020). As introduced on its website, *DC* aims to provide news coverage through the "center-right" lens, which can counter the overwhelming amount of leaf-leaning news in the American press (*DC*). Despite *DC*'s claim of following "the highest standards of journalism" (*DC*), *DC* fails to adhere to journalistic norms quite often (Benkler et al., 2018, p. 14).



Again, a far-right news site with “extreme positions” (Kaiser et al., 2020, p. 428), like *DC*, passed the editorial gate of RN’s WeChat account, which is a phenomenon worth further scrutiny. Furthermore, journalistic institutions with evident anti-China stances, like *VOA*, were also part of RN’s sources to cover the United States. *VOA*, a key branch of The United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM), is a media outlet funded and controlled by the U.S. government. As a state-owned news organization, *VOA* has produced journalistic content that reflects the White House’s animosity toward China and the rapidly declining China-US relations (Jia & Lu, 2023).

The previous analysis of American sources frequently seen in the data, such as *AP*, *NYT*, and *CNN*, displayed RN’s overall tendency to select highly established and traditional American mainstream media when translating news stories concerning the United States. However, a look into the less frequent sources proved that few exceptions existed, as shown by the employment of tabloid and far-right media. Moreover, in Section 4.1.1., it is argued that RN favors sources with pro-China positions. Nonetheless, an extreme right-wing site like *DC* and a state-affiliated institution like *VOA*, which are considered pronounced anti-China media, were still chosen by RN.

To conclude, this specific case study of American sources showcased several patterns of RN’s news selection practice. Most of the noted patterns align with the findings summarized in Section 4.1.1. Mainstream American news organizations, such as *AP*, *CNN*, *NYT*, and *WP*, account for most of the discerned sources, displaying RN’s adherence to journalistic norms for producing quality journalism. In addition, compared with right-leaning media, liberal and neutral media outlets are more likely to be chosen and rendered for RN’s WeChat account in the coverage of the United States. The dominance of media with left-leaning and neutral positions might result from the lack of trust in conservative media and the negative image of Trump in China. Meanwhile, traces of news sites such as tabloid, far-right, and anti-China media, which were assumed to be de-selected by RN, were detected, though with a relatively low frequency.

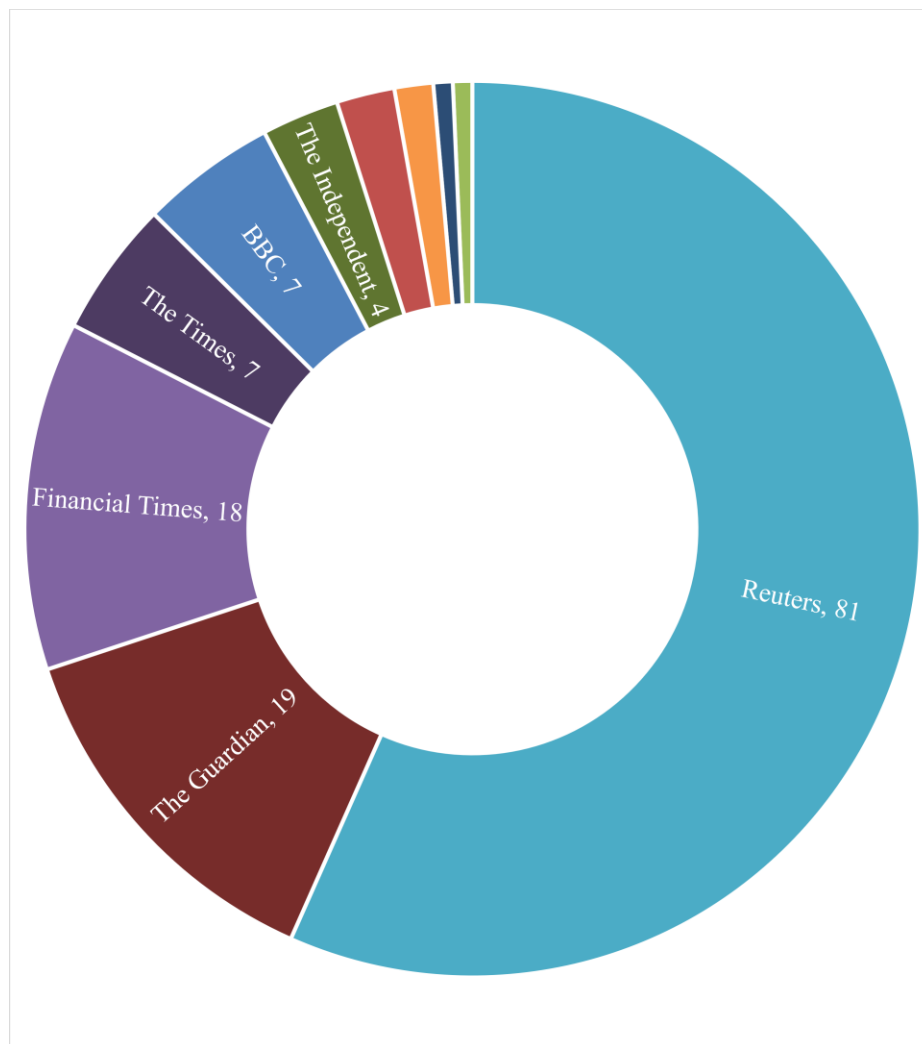
#### **4.1.3. British media sources**

British news organizations comprise about nineteen percent of the sources identified in the collected

data, ranking as the second most frequently employed source in the translated news reports under investigation. Compared with American media, which constitutes half of the top twenty sources, only three British sources are prominent in the list, including *Reuters*, *the Guardian (GA)*, and *Financial Times (FT)*. Similar to the investigation of the identified American sources, this part first examines British media outlets that appeared more than five times in the collected data, followed by an analysis of those with lower frequency. As shown in Figure 4.1.3.1., *Reuters*, *GA*, *FT*, *the Times (TS)*, *BBC*, and *the Independent (IT)* consist of around ninety-five percent of the discerned British media sources. The U.K. news organizations with a lower presence include *Daily Mail (DM)*, *the Daily Telegraph (DT)*, *the Economist (EC)*, and *Daily Star (DS)*, covering only over four percent of the overall data. The British media sources identified are less diverse and frequent than their American counterparts, which is understandable considering the translated news reports are all relevant to the United States. Nonetheless, British media in the collected data has reflected some salient features concerning RN's selection of news stories in reporting America.

One prominent pattern is the dominance of *Reuters*, which accounts for more than half of the British sources discerned and is the news organization with the highest presence among the press noted in the data. Like *AP* and *AFP*, *Reuters* remains one of the most influential news agencies in the world, whose reputation has probably helped *Reuters* earn a top position among all the sources noted. Founded in 1851, the London-born *Reuters* enjoys a long-established reputation and impact in the world's journalistic field (Jansen, 2013). With a history of over 170 years, the global development of *Reuters* synchronized with "the expansion of the British Empire" (Watanabe, 2017, p. 141). In today's world, *Reuters* has garnered an almost "hegemonic influence" in news distribution and dissemination due to its long history and prominent status in the journalistic field (Jansen, 2013, p. 91). This world-renowned news agency can reach billions of people every day, consisting of numerous individual news consumers, broadcasters, newspapers, and media outlets (Reuters). One of the primary principles *Reuters* upholds and values is providing "unbiased and reliable news services" to its customers and subscribers (Reuters). As highlighted on Reuters' introduction page, the journalistic content delivered by *Reuters* is accessible in almost all the famous and popular newspapers and "every major U.S. TV network" (Reuters). The

emphasis on the presence of *Reuters*-made content in U.S. media implies *Reuters*' indispensable role in American newsrooms. After all, *Reuters* is not only a British news agency but also an international one, serving customers worldwide. *Reuters*, like *AP*, has collaborated with media outlets worldwide to expand its readership and impact. *XNA*, a crucial part of China's media ecology, has partnered with *Reuters* since 1957 by signing their first news exchange agreement (Xinhua, 19 October 2018). Considering *Reuters*' pronounced visibility in global newsrooms and its over-six-decade collaboration with *XNA* to which *RN* is affiliated, the dominance of *Reuters* in *RN*'s news selection practices seems somewhat normal and expected.



**Figure 4.1.3.1.** The distribution of British media sources

*The Guardian (GA)* covers about thirteen percent of the discerned British sources, making it the second most frequent British news organization *RN* opted for to cover the United States. With a history that can

be traced back to 1821, *GA* has remained a popular news organization trusted by readers worldwide. According to a Pew Research Center report, *GA* was named one of the top four British media sources trusted by British people as a major channel to access information (Matsa, 2018). *GA* distinguishes itself from other counterparts by being a part of an independent media group solely possessed by one shareholder, which according to *GA*, ensures that *GA*'s journalism is immune to political and commercial constraints (GA). In addition, the journalistic content produced by *GA* can be accessed by readers without paying subscription fees. Instead of relying on paywalls to make profits, *GA*'s operations are supported by readers' donations, which contribute to over half of *GA*'s revenues (GA). Although *GA*'s model is somewhat unique, it has established a name as a site for quality journalism. According to recent research by The Office of Communications (Ofcom) in the U.K., *GA* was considered by readers the most trustworthy newspaper offering accurate and in-depth coverage (Gayle, 28 July 2021). The printed version of *GA* has secured the place of one of the highest-circulation newspapers in the UK, favored mainly by professionals, and garnered a relatively gender-balanced audience (Hine, 2020). *GA*'s news website ([theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)) is equally popular and thriving in a competitive digital media market. As one of the largest and leading British quality journalism platforms, *GA*'s website has not only captivated many domestic readers but also attracted clicks from other parts of the world, whose traffic accounts for over sixty percent of *GA*'s digital audience (GA, 6 November 2020). *GA*'s reporting regarding the United States is quite popular and has been recognized with prestigious awards. In 2014, *GA* won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the Snowden leaks, making history by becoming the first British news outlet to win the highest honor in journalism (Cole, 2015, p. 19). In 2020, the traffic *GA*'s website captured broke records because of the coverage concerning the US presidential election and the pandemic. November 3, 2020, witnessed the highest-traffic day of *GA*'s website, which attracted over "190 million page views and 52.9m unique browsers" (GA, 6 November 2020). Such impressive accomplishments should be mainly attributed to *GA*'s live coverage of the US presidential election, lending support to confirm the impact of *GA*'s reporting regarding America. *GA*'s reputation in high-standard journalism, particularly its award-winning and well-liked reporting of US-related events might have prompted *RN*'s selection of *GA* as a crucial British source.

Furthermore, the presence of *FT* is relatively conspicuous in the collected data. *FT* is a prestigious British broadsheet widely known for its high-quality coverage of financial and business issues, which could even influence the policy-making of the British government (Zhang & Wu, 2017). The impact of this 135-year-old newspaper is not limited to the U.K., as it is also well-received by readers worldwide. *FT*'s print edition can be accessed in many countries and regions, such as "Europe, Asia, and North America," the circulation of which outnumbered the British figures as early as the 1990s (Zhang & Wu, 2017, p. 34). *FT* has garnered a group of loyal digital audiences globally thanks to the internet and technological development. *FT* has become a successful example in transitioning into a digital era. When influential news organizations like *NYT* struggled to profit from charging for online content, *FT* readily saw a surge in its digital subscribers and revenues (Preston, 3 August 2014). Around 22.5 million readers now access the most up-to-date reporting of economic and international affairs via *FT* every month (FT). Although a British news site, *FT* has reached a readership of more than 7 million in America, the size of which is similar to that in the U.K. (FT). On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, *FT* announced its accomplishment of amassing 1 million digital subscribers, more than fifty percent of which are international readers, especially those from America (Guaglione, 14 March 2022). Like many well-known news organizations *RN* adopted, *FT* journalism was selected due to its large audience in the United States and its global impact.

Other noticeable British media sources identified in the collected data include *TS*, *BBC*, and *IT*. *The Times* (*TS*) is the oldest British newspaper title with a history of over 200 years and a best-selling national quality newspaper in the U.K (TS). According to the Digital News Report 2022 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, *TS* has attracted a digital-subscription audience of over 40,000 and was rated as a relatively reliable media source but with a trust score lower than *BBC*, *GA*, and *FT* (Newman et al., 2022). According to the 2020 Ofcom survey, *TS* was considered the second most reliable and trustworthy newspaper, second only to *GA* (Ofcom, 2020). *BBC*, another household British media brand and the world's leading media outlet, occurred in seven of the collected translated news stories. In the domestic market, *BBC* has been "the most widely used news source" (Newman et al., 2022, p. 17); British news consumers rated the BBC website and application as the most trustworthy

internet source (Ofcom, 2020). As an internationally-known news organization that disseminates BBC-made journalism to over 200 countries and regions, including America, BBC undoubtedly has a global impact with its widely distributed journalistic products (BBC). *The Independent (IT)* may not be as famous and influential as the media outlets mentioned above, but it is a title with relatively high visibility among various British newspapers. Starting in 1986 as a news title offering high-quality journalism, *IT* became the first national newspaper to opt for the digital-only path in 2016 (IT, 12 February 2016). According to the 2020 Ofcom report, *IT* was the fourth most-read digital newspaper in the UK, less popular than *DM* and *GA*, but capturing more online audience than *FT*. However, in contrast with other organizations that enjoy a reputation for reliable journalism in the UK, the credibility of *IT* journalism is questionable, considering the unsatisfying trust score it received in the 2020 Ofcom survey: only fifty-eight percent of users regarded *IT* as a trustworthy source (Ofcom, 2020).

The following analysis concentrates on news organizations with lower frequency, which might expose other features concerning RN's source selection practices. The remaining four media outlets comprise *DM*, *DT*, *EC*, and *DS*. *Daily Mail (DM)* is one popular British tabloid newspaper with the second-largest circulation (Hine, 2020, p. 684). The monthly visitors to *DM*'s online portal have exceeded 191 million, making it "the most widely-read newspaper website in the world" (DM). Despite *DM*'s popularity among British readers, *DM* journalism is deemed unreliable and untrustworthy news consumers (Newman et al., 2022). *The Daily Telegraph (DT)* is a quality British newspaper title founded in 1855. Though not as prevalent as *DM*, *DT* has earned a name for its high-quality and accurate coverage and thus has been a crucial channel for British people to get information (Ofcom, 2020). Established in 1843, *The Economist (EC)* is a British media outlet targeting an international readership (EC). In the UK, it became the primary magazine option people opted for reading the news (Ofcom, 2020). Compared with other rivals mentioned above, *Daily Star (DS)*, a tabloid newspaper, is probably the least favorite, capturing a tiny fraction of the British audience: only five percent of British readers nominated *DS* as one of their news sources (Ofcom, 2020). In addition, according to a 2017 survey released by *BBC*, *DS* was at the bottom of the chart concerning impartiality and trustworthiness of media, a position slightly higher than *the Sun*, another tabloid newspaper barely trusted by British readers (BBC, 2017).

The selection patterns observed in the discerned British media sources resemble those in American media. The dominant media resources analyzed above have showcased *RN*'s adherence to well-established and credible British media sources like *Reuters* and *TT*, and some even have a prominent presence in the American media market, such as *GA* and *BBC*. Occasional occurrences of tabloid media distrusted by British news users were also recognized, such as *DM* and *DS*. Another aspect worth broaching is the negative perception concerning British media in China. Like their American counterparts, many British sources analyzed previously have been criticized by Chinese media as unreliable and untrustworthy, including *Reuters* and *GA*, the two most frequent news organizations identified in the data. For instance, the CCTV news portal once published an article analyzing how some British media, such as *DM*, *BBC*, and *GA*, opted for inaccurate, unverified, and even fabricated information to cover China-relevant matters (CCTV, 28 July 2020). A 2019 editorial published by *GT* denounced *Reuters* for exploiting unnamed sources and fake information to cover Hong Kong issues; an assumption that *Reuters* was in complicity with western intelligence agencies to interfere in China's internal affairs was also proposed in that article (GT, 31 August 2019). On Chinese social media, netizens often mock and condemn *BBC* for using "underworld filters" in visual information to report China. In February 2021, *BBC* World News was barred from airing in China, demonstrating China's resentment toward *BCC*'s impartial and biased coverage of China (GT, 12 February 2021). The images of British media in China and perceived by Chinese people probably resemble those of American media, which might be summarized as unreliable and untrustworthy, especially regarding news coverage of China. Nonetheless, it is nearly impossible for *RN* to circumvent American and British media in reporting international affairs through the prism of translation, given that news organizations from these two regions are still the most influential batch of news media across the world. Under such circumstances, appropriately dealing with narratives produced by these outlets is the key for *RN* to shield Chinese readers from some western-centric ideologies embedded in the STs. Chapter 5 will be dedicated to tracing some of the *RN*'s techniques in fulfilling that task.

## **4.2. Topics and tones of the translated news stories**

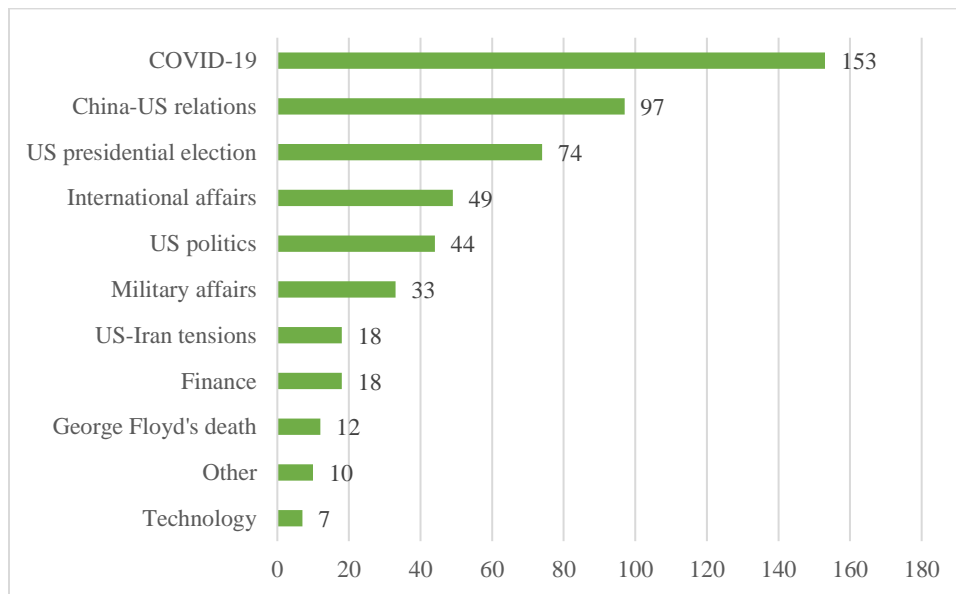
This part investigates the topics covered and the tones conveyed in the collected translated news stories about the United States, which could supplement additional information for observing RN's selection patterns. The following analysis first presents an overview of the topic and stance distribution in the popular translated news reports concerning America. Then three prominent patterns noticed from the topic and stance analyses are elucidated in detail. Pre-existed images and knowledge concerning a country exert an influence on reporting of that nation and the various transformations involved in relevant news production (van Doorslaer, 2012). Hence, these analyses could present the images of America promoted by RN on WeChat, well received by Chinese readers, and prevailing in Chinese society.

### **4.2.1. Topics covered in the translated news reports**

Figure 4.2.1.1 demonstrates the distribution of the news topics. The top five topics discerned include news related to COVID-19, China-US relations, the presidential election, international affairs, and US politics, constituting over eighty percent of the data. COVID-19 is probably one of the keywords when speaking of 2020, which disrupted our daily life and changed the world permanently. Thus, the prominence of COVID-19 seems pretty reasonable in RN's reporting of the United States with a high traffic number. Given that RN is a Chinese news organization, news coverage regarding China-US relations would surely capture Chinese readers' attention. When assessing China-US relations, aspects concerning Chinese Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, and the South China Sea are often broached (Tao, 2017). Relevant news was also relatively conspicuous in the translated news reports under the heading of China-US relations. In addition, news reports regarding Huawei and TikTok were discerned, both of which were accused of harming America's national security by Trump and were subject to many restrictions in the US (Cohen, 2020; Miao et al., 2023). The US presidential election and other issues associated with America's international affairs with countries like Germany and Russia, as well as US politics, were also attractive to RN's followers. Other less frequent topics in the news stories concern



military affairs, relations between the US and Iran, finance, the murder of George Floyd, and technology.



**Figure 4.2.1.1.** The distribution of news topics

Generally speaking, the topics noted in the 2020 popular US-related translated reports on RN’s WeChat account covered many high-profile news events that made headlines in the international news. The two major news topics considering America in 2020 were probably the pandemic and the US presidential election, both of which were quite salient in the data under investigation. For another instance, in January 2020, Trump decided to kill the high-ranking Iranian General, Qasem Soleimani, in Iraq; Iran then retaliated by attacking the US military base in Iraq with several missiles. News stories relevant to this event comprised a large share of the content under the heading of US-Iran tensions. And the death of George Floyd, a tragedy reflecting the deeply rooted racism problem permeating US police and resulting in protests across America, received some attention from RN’s WeChat account and its followers. Most of the topics mentioned above could be considered hard news, which according to Patterson (2000), is a notion that describes coverage of breaking events relevant to “top leaders, major issues, or significant disruptions in the routines of daily life” (p. 3). In an article introducing RN’s WeChat account, RN’s staff mentioned that hard news concerning military and foreign affairs was more likely to capture higher traffic and clicks (Guo, 2015). The prevalence of hard news topics in the popular translated news stories under question also reflects this pattern. Moreover, RN’s popular coverage of

the United States in 2020 seems consistent with news that US people cared about. According to Google, the top five trending 2020 news topics googled in America are “election results, coronavirus, stimulus checks, unemployment, and Iran” (Google, 2020), out of which three were also noted in the topic analysis of this research. In addition to hard news topics, traces of soft news was noted though somewhat scarce. Soft news is characterized by sensationalism, focus on human interests, and less dependence on timeliness (Patterson, 2000). Under the heading of other, two news stories might be labeled as soft news. Example 1 and 2 are the headlines of the discerned soft news stories. Example 4.1 and Example 4.2 are retrieved from two news stories concerning the color of Trump’s hair which seems relatively irrelevant to politic-oriented issues. The only attractive element of these new reports was probably the mentioning of Trump, whose identity as the American president has made him newsworthy. The eliteness and prominence concerning the US top leader have afforded the presence of even the most mundane things about the president in media coverage (Parks, 2020), in RN’s case, Trump’s hair. To summarize, RN’s WeChat followers were mainly interested in the most up-to-date journalistic content about China’s frenemy; occasionally, soft news relevant to elite figures might also capture readers’ attention.

#### ***Example 4.1***

特朗普头发颜色咋变了? [Why has the color of Trump's hair changed?] (RN, 16 July 2020b)

#### ***Example 4.2***

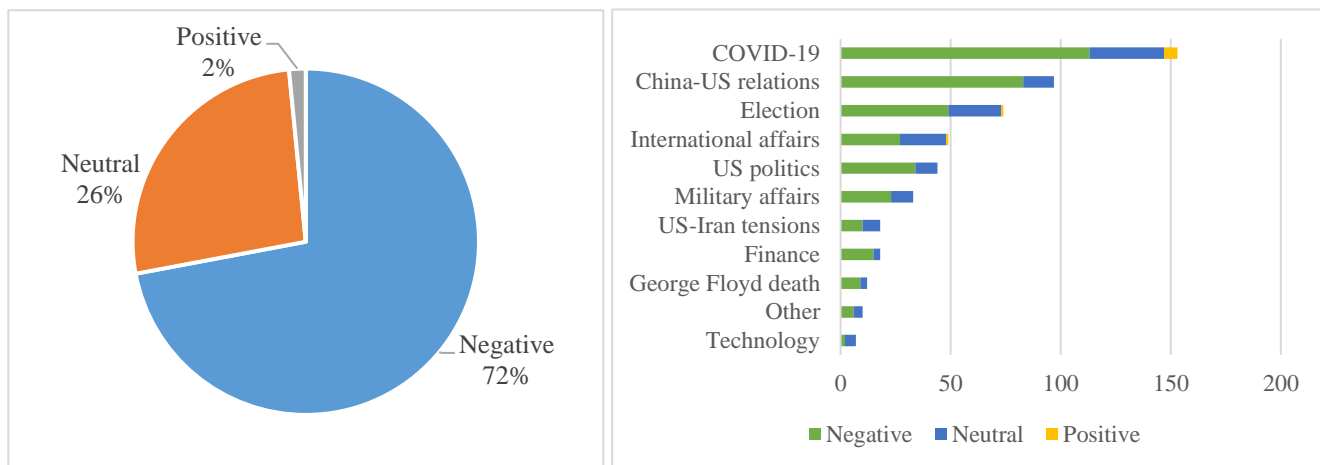
特朗普“愁”白了头? [Trump is so "worried" that his hair has turned grey?] (RN, 14 November 2020a)

### **4.2.2. Story tones of the translated news reports**

In addition to identifying topics covered in the translated news reports, their stances toward the United States as a country or other involved US figures and organizations (e.g., Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, CDC, and the White House) were examined. Figure 4.2.2.1. shows the distribution of stances in the news stories under question. Over seventy percent of the data gave prominence to negative aspects of

the United States, such as underlining Trump's incapable image as the president (e.g., Trump's frequent visits to golf court, his irresponsible remarks about disinfectants, and his incessant mentioning of Chinese virus), highlighting the worsening pandemic situation and the gloomy prospects of the US economy (e.g., the death rate and confirmed case number in America, and the crash of the stock market), and criticism regarding America's various moves of deliberate provocation targeting (e.g., America's arm selling to Chinese Taiwan, the appearance of US aircraft carrier in South China sea, cancellation of Chinese students' visas, and the diverse restriction imposed on Huawei and TikTok).

The following analysis takes news coverage of COVID-19 as a specific example to elucidate the salience of negativity concerning the US in RN's translated news with more than 100,000 clicks. Under the heading of COVID-19, news reports covering various aspects concerning the pandemic in America were noticed, such as those about the number of deaths and confirmed cases in the US, the Trump administration's slow response to the pandemic, and the gloomy prospects faced by the US economy, which mostly foregrounded the image of a country facing a pandemic out of control and led by incapable politicians to handle the crisis, as shown in the three examples below. In 2020, COVID-19 stormed nearly every corner of the world, throwing every country and region into social distancing and lockdown. The United States, in particular, was walloped hard by the virus, facing many confirmed cases and deaths. On top of the detrimental impact of the virus on American society, COVID-19 became a site where China confronted the US in a narrative battle. The Trump administration tried to ascribe the spread of the virus in America to China, frequently resorting to "Chinese virus" or "Wuhan virus" to refer to COVID-19 and promoting rumors about the origin of the virus. Chinese media responded to these claims with news coverage that blamed America for propagating conspiracy theories, refuted accusations made by US officials, and mocked the Trump administration (El Damanhoury & Garud-Paktar, 2022). RN, as an official Chinese newspaper, displayed this tendency by translating content produced by news organizations from other countries and regions. Furthermore, negative descriptions concerning the pandemic in America contribute to "reflecting well on China," given that China did a better job containing the virus in 2020 (Colley & Moore, 2022, p. 16).



**Figure 4.2.2.1.** The distribution of stances

**Example 4.3**

美国医院拉响警报：年轻患者越来越多 医生向黑市求购防护装备 [American hospitals sound the alarm: young patients are increasing; doctors turn to the black market for PPE] (RN, 30 March 2020)

**Example 4.4**

美国国家战略储备中的个人防护装备几乎耗尽 拜登：“国家耻辱” [PPE in US strategic stockpile nearly depleted; Biden: “A national disgrace”] (RN, 10 April 2020b)

**Example 4.5**

美国确诊病例超 50 万，纽约死亡病例快速上升 [America has more than 500,000 confirmed cases; death toll in New York surges] (RN, 11 April 2020)

To summarize, the dominance of negative depictions of the United States in the collected translated news aligns with previous literature examining how other Chinese media outlets, such as CGTN (Colley & Moore, 2022), *GT* (Zeng & Sparks, 2020) and *CD* (Pan et al., 2020), have framed Trump and his America. The ultimate aim of this type of negative coverage concerning America by Chinese media is to present the image of a country in decline and thus give prominence to the rise of a more powerful,

responsible, and prosperous China, which might even enhance the sense of patriotism and nationalism among Chinese readers (Zeng & Sparks, 2020). The dissemination of patriotism in RN's journalistic translations is also consistent with RN's status as a popular national newspaper, which is supposed to promote mainstream ideologies (Zeng & Li, 2023). Furthermore, RN's tendency to negatively construct images of the US mirrored the deteriorating China-US relations resulting from the trade spats and the pandemic (Lau, 2020). The popularity of these negative news stories is a telling testament to the charm of *Negativity* as a powerful news value in media coverage.

Although negative news coverage accounts for most of the data, positive news stories appraising ordinary or elite Americans were also noted. The eight news reports under the heading of positive covered Bill Gates' donation to WHO, New York's slow recovery from the pandemic, Biden's positive response to China's congratulation message on his winning election, a US farmer's donation of a mask to the governor of New York State and the various collaborations between China and America. Half of the positive news stories are related to China-US cooperation among doctors and researchers rather than those at the state level. Example 4.6 and Example 4.7 are the headlines of two news stories that positively delineate the cooperation between Chinese and American doctors and researchers, praising their efforts in fighting against the virus and tracing the origin of COVID-19. Compared with news reports foregrounding the negative images of the US, these stories emphasized the importance of solidarity during a global public health crisis. While they have put American doctors and researchers in a positive light, these stories simultaneously highlighted China's endeavor to build a community with a shared future through active engagement in international cooperation to contain the virus (CD, 16 April 2020). Example 4.8 and Example 4.9 are retrieved from two news stories whose appraisal focus is put on Bill & Melinda Gates and an American farmer, respectively. The former delineated how the elite US couple supported WHO with a sizable donation; the latter presented the kind and touching move of donating a mask by an ordinary American farmer to New York State. The two reports underlined the necessity of every individual's participation in fighting COVID-19. Instead of pinpointing the news value of *Negativity*, these reports construed *Positivity*. Compared to a considerable amount of popular negative news about America on RN's WeChat account, these positive stories are unique, revealing RN's

attempt to produce constructive journalism even in covering a frenemy by embedding positive information concerning a global pandemic. Nevertheless, the positive and negative coverage of the US remains unbalanced. A question to ask is whether it is necessary for Chinese media to publish news stories about America that trace the silver lining of a cloud facing a challenge imposed on all human beings (Parks, 2021).

***Example 4.6***

美媒：中美医生一直在“悄然”联手抗疫 [US media: Chinese and American doctors have been “quietly” collaborating to fight against the virus] (RN, 14 April 2020)

***Example 4.7***

“病毒猎手”与中国科学家联手追查新冠起源 [“Hunter of virus” cooperates with Chinese scientists to figure out the origin of COVID-19] (RN, 28 April 2020)

***Example 4.8***

追捐 1.5 亿美元！比尔·盖茨夫妇用实际行动反对特朗普“断供”WHO [Another donation of 150 million dollars! Bill & Melinda Gates have taken actions to oppose Trump’s “termination” of WHO funding] (RN, 17 April 2020)

***Example 4.9***

七旬老农的一个举动，令纽约州长落泪 [A 70-year-old farmer’s move brought the governor of New York State to tears] (RN, 26 April 2020)

**4.3. Summary**

The analysis of media sources has displayed several patterns concerning RN’s source selection practices in covering America via translation. Firstly, the discerned media sources are from diverse regions and

of various types. While western media has covered most news sources identified, traces of less influential news outlets, like those from Argentina and Cuba, were also tracked. In addition to traditional legacy media like *NYT* and *BBC*, traces of internet-native news organizations such as BuzzFeed were detected. The overview of the media sources has displayed *RN*'s tendency to select well-established and globally-renowned media resources and news organizations with pro-China stances in covering America. The case studies of American and British sources further attested to *RN*'s preference for elite and mainstream news sources. On top of a regular pattern of translating popular and elite media sources, *RN* occasionally opted for some tabloid, extreme right-wing, and anti-China media, such as *DM*, *DC*, and *VOA*, to cover the United States. Generally speaking, *RN* adheres to journalistic norms in selecting sources for rendition, considering the dominance of prestigious media outlets.

Further investigation of the topics and stances concerning the collected news demonstrated several patterns concerning *RN*'s editorial practices and the target readers' preferences. Most popular translated news stories regarding America could be categorized as hard news, affirming the attraction of hard news topics on *RN*'s WeChat account. In addition, news stories underlining the negative aspects of the US dominated the data, which reflected the worsening China-US relations and testified to the power of *Negativity* as a fundamental news value in journalism. These negative news stories have constructed negative images of America. Meanwhile, they contribute to reflecting well on China by covering stories foregrounding the US as a waning country, which might further enhance nationalism and patriotism among *RN*'s Chinese readers. The few traces of positive stories concerning America displayed *RN*'s efforts in highlighting China's role in facilitating international collaboration and publishing constructive journalism, even in the coverage of China's frenemy.

## **Chapter 5 The micro-level analysis of gatekeeping**

Chapter 5 concerns the micro-level analysis assisted by the DNVA framework, which figures out answers to the second set of research questions. As mentioned in Chapter 3, manual analysis and corpus techniques are both employed to trace the patterns of news values embedded in the collected STs and TTs. The first step is to undertake a manual analysis of the collected headlines, identifying news values discursive established in the English headlines and their corresponding Chinese counterparts and tracing their differences concerning newsworthiness construction. The pictures accompanying the headlines are manually analyzed to add a touch of multimodality to the current research, which complements the results of the headline analysis to present a picture of verbal-visual relations between headlines and the images attached to them. Corpus techniques, including word frequency and concordances, are employed to examine news values construed in the full-text corpora.

### **5.1. Analysis of the headlines and the accompanying images**

The first section examines news values constructed in the headlines of the collected English and Chinese news reports, delineating their similarities and differences concerning newsworthiness construction in one of the most crucial elements of a news story. Then the analysis of news values established in the images accompanying the headlines is presented, following an investigation of the verbal-visual patterns of the headlines and the attached images. In this case, the study could observe whether STs and TTs resemble or differ from each other regarding news values constructed in headlines, their accompanying images, and the verbal-visual relations formed.

#### **5.1.1. Headline analysis**

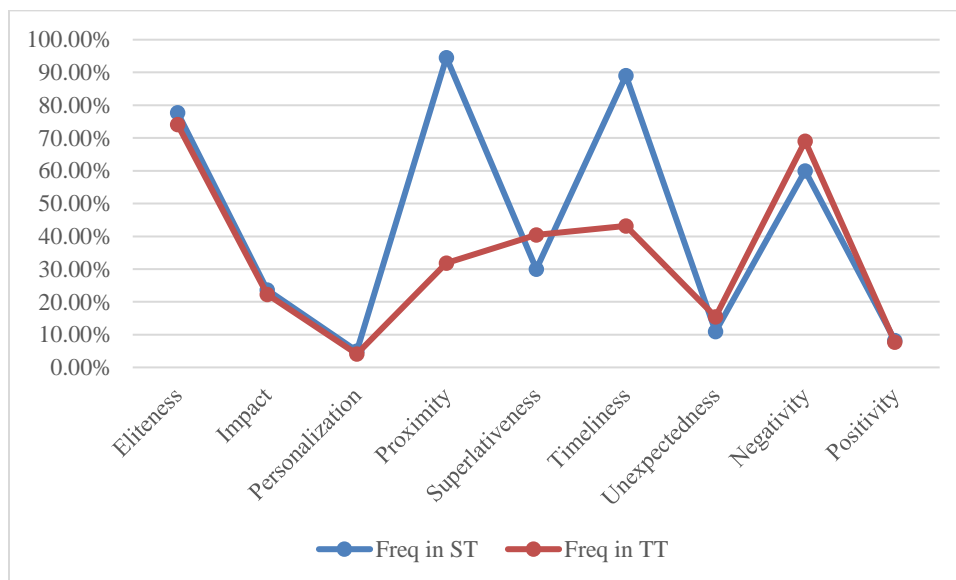
Figure 5.1.1.1. and Table 5.1.1.1. provide a general overview of news values embedded in the English headlines and their Chinese counterparts. Note that subjectivity is an inevitable factor involved in manual analysis. Thus, the numbers presented below should be considered tendencies or trends instead of objective facts (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). The four most pronounced news values established in the



collected English headlines include *Proximity*, *Timeliness*, *Eliteness*, and *Negativity*. In the STs, *Proximity* was mainly construed with the mentioning of America (e.g., US and America), names of US politicians (e.g., Trump, Pompeo, and Biden), as well as places and organizations in America (e.g., Tennessee, New York, California, CDC, and DHS). The present tense and contextual information implying recentness (e.g., coronavirus, pandemic, and election) accounted for most of the devices establishing *Timeliness* in the English headlines. The frequent occurrence of high-status US political figures and elite organizations (e.g., Hilary Clinton, Navy admiral, NYC Mayor, pentagon, and FBI) contributed to the construction of *Eliteness* in the English STs. Negative lexis (e.g., death, loser, and illegal) and depictions of negative behaviors and consequences (e.g., police have killed over 1,000 People, and US has world's worst death toll) made up the major devices to construe *Negativity*. Generally speaking, the sampled English headlines have highlighted the relevance, newness, high profile, and negative nature of the stories to present critical information and attract readers' attention, two functions a headline is expected to fulfill (Lee, 2022).

The four news values underlined in RN's Chinese renditions are *Eliteness*, *Negativity*, *Timeliness*, and *Superlativeness*. The construal of *Eliteness* in the TTs should primarily be attributed to the appearance of American politicians and organizations (e.g., 奥巴马 Obama, 纽约州长 Governor of New York, CIA, and 华尔街 Wall Street) with occasional mentioning of elite individuals and organizations more familiar to Chinese readers (e.g., 华为 Huawei, 华春莹 Hua Chunying, and 解放军 People's Liberation Army). The establishment of *Negativity* in RN's renditions resembled their English sources, depending on linguistic sources with negative implications (e.g., 馊点子 bad idea, 说三道四 make irresponsible remarks, and 大屠杀 massacre) and descriptions of negative happenings and behaviors (e.g., 美国搅局 America created chaos, and 特朗普政府再下黑手 the Trump administration did something terrible again). *Timeliness* was established in the Chinese headlines via mainly contextual information relevant to the pandemic (e.g., 病毒 virus, 口罩 mask, 阳性 tested positive, and 确诊病例 confirmed cases), America's presidential election (e.g., 选举, 大选 election, 竞选广告 election campaign ads and 给拜登

的贺电 congratulation messages to Biden) and the death of George Floyd (e.g., 黑人之死 death of black people and 弗洛伊德之死 death of Floyd), which were all vital news topics concerning the US back in 2020. The construction of *Superlativeness* in RN's renditions relied on linguistic devices underlining the high intensity of reported events (e.g., 最可怕的一天 the scariest day, 强烈警告 stark warnings, and 更残酷卑鄙 more cruel and contemptible). RN's translated headlines gave prominence to the involved elite figures or organizations as well as the recency and negative aspects of the news reports. Considering that the articles with the analyzed Chinese headlines have all achieved the highest traffic benchmark on WeChat, it seems reasonable to claim that negative and timely reports concerning America, especially those involving elite American politicians, are more likely to attract RN's WeChat account followers. The subsections below focus on discussing the establishment of the four news values that displayed statistical significance between the collected English and Chinese headlines.



**Figure 5.1.1.1.** The construal of news values in the English and Chinese headlines (by percentage)

<i>News value</i>	<i>Freq in STHC</i>	<i>Freq in TTHC</i>	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Eliteness</i>	171	163	0.7954	0.3725
<i>Impact</i>	52	49	0.1157	0.7338
<i>Personalization</i>	11	9	0.2095	0.6471
<i>Proximity</i>	208	70	186.0592	0.0000***
<i>Superlativeness</i>	66	89	5.2690	0.0217*
<i>Timeliness</i>	196	95	103.5181	0.0000***
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	24	34	1.9859	0.1588
<i>Negativity</i>	132	152	3.9726	0.0462*
<i>Positivity</i>	18	17	0.0310	0.8601

Statistical significance: \*p < 0.05 and \*\*\*p < 0.001.

**Table 5.1.1.1.** The distribution of news values in STHC and TTHC (by raw number)

#### 5.1.1.1. *Proximity*: Reflecting China in a positive light

The construal of *Proximity* in the source and target headlines has shown statistical significance. *Proximity* is the news value that highlights a news story’s geographical and cultural connection with the target readership (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). *Proximity* was noted in more than ninety percent of the English headlines, the establishment of which mainly resulted from the occurrence of political figures (e.g., Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, Barack Obama), organizations (e.g., FOX, CNN, and CBS), and locations (e.g., Alaska, New York, and America, US) geographically or culturally familiar to American audiences. The high number of English headlines construing *Proximity* shall not be a surprise given that the collected English sources all involved the United States. The presence of linguistic sources establishing *Proximity* could improve the relevance of the news story to the potential target readers, making them “feel more geographically proximate to the event” (Makki, 2019, p. 451) and thus captivate their attention.

However, *Proximity* was tracked in only over thirty percent of the Chinese headlines compared with their English counterparts. The construction of *Proximity* in RN’s renditions should be attributed to the various label referring to figures (e.g., 华春莹 Hua Chunying, the spokesperson for China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs; 孟晚舟 Meng Wanzhou, Huawei’s CFO), locations (e.g., 亚洲 Asia, 南海 South China Sea, and 台湾 Taiwan), and other entities (e.g., TikTok, and 微信 WeChat) that might prompt a sense

of familiarity and nearness among Chinese readers. Despite a lower percentage of linguistic devices establishing *Proximity* for Chinese readers, the translated news headlines managed to capture more than 100,000 clicks on WeChat. While the US is not a country culturally or geographically near to Chinese readers, the collected translated news about America still performed exceptionally well on RN's WeChat account. The handful of linguistic sources suggesting *Proximity* may have contributed to capturing Chinese readers' attention, corroborating with findings of the topic analysis of RN's popular translated news reports regarding America. After all, coverage concerning China-US relations was discerned as the second most frequent topic. Meanwhile, the prevalence of news stories about a country like the US, far away and extremely different from China, indicates the significance of China-US relations and Chinese readers' genuine interest in international news about America. Superficially, the news coverage of America functions to inform Chinese readers of what has happened in one of the largest economies in the world. Nevertheless, we argue that the underlying purpose of reporting China's top frenemy is to "provide a sense of what China is not" (Pan et al., 2020, p. 63).

ST 5.1 and ST 5.2 are concerned with the coronavirus issue, the former about the high infection rate in the US military and the latter about the virus's dreadful impact on New York and the world. In addition to the information mentioned in the original, RN's rendition of ST 5.1 added descriptions of the US military's passive responses to the virus outbreak. Similarly, TT 5.2 omitted the exact number of global death, which, if translated into Chinese, may weakly construe *Proximity* for RN's Chinese followers on WeChat; instead, it gave prominence to a surge of confirmed cases and the constantly increasing death toll in New York. The decline of America's economy is delineated in ST 5.3 and ST 5.4. TT 5.3 has kept the core message in the original headline, which is already a pretty negative delineation of America's economic prospects. ST 5.4 implies the looming depression with the word "downturn" and a large number, "five million," while RN's translation opted for a Chinese four-character idiom ("板上钉钉 cast in stone") to highlight the *Superlativeness* of the impending crisis in the US. Compared with Trump's America, China in 2020 has done a better job containing the virus and fulfilling the role of a global player amid a worldwide crisis. In the end, the image of an America with miserable economic prospects, a surge of confirmed cases, and a high death toll depicted in RN's journalistic translations

function to “reflect well on China” (Colley & Moore, 2022, p. 16). While national unity can be strengthened by foregrounding *Proximity* (Guo et al., 2022), RN’s translation of English news discourse construing *Proximity* for American readers yet implicitly leading to a positive reflection of China, may be another way to boost national pride, as shown in the examples below.

### **Example 5.1**

ST 5.1: Coronavirus cases in the US military surpass 1,500 (Dickstein, 6 April 2020)

TT 5.1: 美军队确诊破 1500, 军方仍不提供口罩 [US military has more than 1,500 confirmed cases, but masks are still not provided] (RN, 8 April 2020)

### **Example 5.2**

ST 5.2: New York area walloped as global virus deaths pass 100,000 (Sedensky et al., 11 April 2020)

TT 5.2: 美国确诊病例超 50 万, 纽约死亡病例快速上升 [America has more than 500,000 confirmed cases; death toll in New York surges] (RN, 11 April 2020)

### **Example 5.3**

ST 5.3: The US economy has come to a standstill, satellite imagery shows (Sheetz, 28 March 2020)

TT 5.3: 美媒: 卫星图像显示美国经济已陷入停滞 [US media: Satellite imagery shows America’s economy has come to a halt] (RN, 29 March 2020)

### **Example 5.4**

ST 5.4: Coronavirus-triggered downturn could cost five million U.S. jobs (Mitchell & Zumbun, 21 March 2020)

TT 5.4: 美媒: 美国陷入衰退 “几乎板上钉钉” [US media: It is “nearly cast in stone” that America will slip into recession] (RN, 23 March 2020a)

### 5.1.1.2. *Timeliness*: Linguistic disparity and traffic-driven media environment

The news value of *Timeliness* accentuates the immediacy, recency, or newness of an event, often construed via temporal references, present and present perfect tense, as well as references to current trends (Bednarek et al., 2021, p. 707). In our data, the frequency of *Timeliness* constructed in the English headlines outnumbers that of their Chinese counterparts. The discrepancy in constructing *Timeliness* might be interpreted from two aspects: the linguistic difference between Chinese and English and the traffic-oriented social media logic RN's WeChat account has followed to capture more clicks.

A large share of the identified traces of *Timeliness* in the English headings should be attributed to the occurrence of the present tense. The present tense has nearly become a default setting in English headlines, aiming to enhance a news story's recency and immediacy (Chovanec, 2014). More than 70% of the English headlines under investigation have adopted the present tense, which partly explains the substantial disparity regarding the frequency of *Timeliness* between the Chinese and English datasets. After all, the construal of *Timeliness* via the present tense is absent in RN's Chinese renditions, given that Chinese, unlike English, lacks grammaticalized tense (M. Liu, 2015). Primarily temporal references (e.g., September 20, this year, May 25) and other indicators to the then current and timely events (e.g., the pandemic, the US presidential election, G20 summit) have established *Timeliness* in the collected Chinese headlines. Example 5.5 and Example 5.6 have demonstrated this linguistic difference concerning grammaticalized tense between Chinese and English. The presence of *Timeliness* in ST 5.5 and ST 5.6 is ascribed to the marker of the present tense (-s). Since no such markers are available in Chinese, *Timeliness* is absent in the Chinese renditions of ST 5.5 and ST 5.6.

#### Example 5.5

ST 5.5: As he seeks to punish China, Trump faces criticism at home over his own attacks on democratic values (Nakamura, 29 May 2020)

TT 5.5: 美媒：特朗普寻求“惩罚中国”但他的讲话在开始前就破产了 [US media: Trump seeks to “punish China” but his speech becomes useless before getting started] (RN, 31 May 2020)

### Example 5.6

ST 5.6: Marine 3-Star *hits* back at claims that corps' future design is too China-focused (Harkins, 2 June 2020)

TT 5.6: 美海军陆战队制定“锁定中国”战略被批“过于狭隘” [US marine corps' "China-focused" strategy was criticized for being "too narrow"] (RN, 4 June 2020)

In addition to the present tense, *Timeliness* was constructed in the English headlines via references to ongoing issues or events in America, such as the pandemic, the 2020 presidential election, the protests for George Floyd, and temporal references (e.g., Nov 1, Saturday night). Despite an unavailable toolkit of grammatical markers accompanying verbs (e.g., -s, -ed) to indicate tense relations, Chinese depends on “time expressions” or “contextual information” to indicate time (M. Liu, 2015, p. 275). In other words, if RN kept contextual information from the English source texts, *Timeliness* could still be established without the participation of grammaticalized tense relations. However, in our data, many RN's renditions have deliberately discarded references indicative of recency in their English counterparts to create more attention-grabbing headlines, which might form another reason for the lower frequency of *Timeliness* in RN's Chinese WeChat headlines.

On top of the present tense, *Timeliness* was displayed in ST 5.7 and ST 5.8 with references to the then-current issues: ST7 mentions the ongoing pandemic, and ST8 is relevant to the police's killing of George Floyd, both of which are high-profile news topics at the time of publication. ST 5.9 and ST 5.10 are concerned with Trump's contracting coronavirus and Trump's accusation of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election, respectively. RN's renditions of these English headlines could have established *Timeliness* by rendering the contextual information from their sources. Notwithstanding, any details potentially indicating the currency or immediacy of the news stories were omitted, leading to very eye-catching yet uninformative Chinese headlines on WeChat. Headlines like TT 5.7, TT 5.8, TT 5.9, and TT 5.10 might even be labeled as clickbait. Traditionally, headlines are expected to “reflect as exactly, briefly and clearly as possible the most important points of the story” (Khanjan et al., 2013), which is not the case in some of RN's renditions on WeChat, as shown by the examples below. When discussing

journalistic translations on WeChat, we must factor in the features of Chinese social media. The various platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok are all highly dependent on traffic to generate revenues and increase impact, which prompted many sensational headlines online, aiming to garner more traffic and excellent audience metrics (Zhang et al., 2020). The omission of contextual information concerning time in RN's WeChat headlines has partly demonstrated RN's employment of sensational headlines or clickbait to capture clicks on WeChat at the risk of violating journalistic principles of quality journalism. Facing a fiercely competitive market, an official media outlet like RN cannot escape the traffic-oriented principle of social media if popularity and success are desired.

#### **Example 5.7**

ST 5.7: Trump *tries* to walk back speculation about injecting disinfectants to *fight coronavirus*, claims he was being sarcastic (Higgins, 24 April 2020)

TT 5.7: 特朗普 *改口了*? [Trump *withdrew his previous remarks*?] (RN, 25 April 2020)

#### **Example 5.8**

ST 5.8: Democrats *propose* sweeping *police overhaul*; Trump *criticizes* (Mascaro, 8 June 2020)

TT 5.8: 特朗普: 民主党人 *疯了* [Trump: Democrats have *gone crazy*] (RN, 9 June 2020a)

#### **Example 5.9**

ST 5.9: Hillary Clinton under consideration for *Biden's U.N. ambassador*: report (Dorman, 12 November 2020)

TT 5.9: 希拉里也要“出山”了? [Hillary is also “coming back”?] (RN, 14 November 2020b)

#### **Example 5.10**

ST 5.10: The Times called officials in every state: No evidence of *voter fraud* (Corasaniti et al., 10 November 2020)



TT 5.10: 特朗普又迎来“一记重击” [Trump again has taken “another hard hit”] (RN, 11 November 2020)

### 5.1.1.3. *Negativity and Superlativeness: Foregrounding negative aspects of the United States*

*Negativity* is construed when “negative aspects of an event” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 42) are described with linguistic sources like negative attitudes, emotions, and evaluative language. *Superlativeness* refers to “the high intensity or large scope” of a news event (Bednarek, 2015, p. 4), whose establishment hinges on indicators like intensifiers, quantifiers, intensified lexis, metaphor, simile, comparison, and repetition (Bednarek, 2015, p. 4). A tendency to strengthen *Negativity* and *Superlativeness* was observed in RN’s Chinese headlines, consistent with the ideological square developed by van Dijk (2011) by emphasizing the “bad things” of the United States.

ST 5.11 has presented the remarks made by a high-profile US military figure on competing against Russia and China, which involves no linguistic resources signaling *Negativity*. Its Chinese counterpart, however, has explicitly established *Negativity* by describing the US strategy as “毒计 (vicious plan)”. Similarly, ST 5.12 says the US will sell weapons worth billions of US dollars to Taiwan. *Negativity* was conveyed in TT 5.12 by a four-character Chinese idiom, “一意孤行 (stubbornly take its own course)”, showcasing a rather negative evaluation of America’s behavior. Example 5.13 and Example 5.14 are typical instances of further emphasizing *Negativity* via *Superlativeness* in RN’s Chinese renditions. While ST 5.13 has demonstrated a certain degree of *Negativity* via the word “sanction”, the emphasis in TT 5.13 was on the highly negative consequences of America’s actions. Thanks to the four-character Chinese expression “触犯众怒 (made everybody angry)”, news values, including *Negativity*, *Superlativeness*, and *Impact*, were simultaneously constructed. The pattern observed in Example 5.14 resembles Example 5.13. ST 5.14 has shown *Negativity* concerning Mike Pompeo and the US military via linguistic resources like “impeding actions” and “war crimes”. TT 5.14, based on the readily negative content of the original, further established *Superlativeness* using a four-character Chinese idiom, “百般阻挠 (try everything someone could do to prevent something from happening),” to highlight Pompeo’s

desperateness to fulfill his purpose. Previous literature concerning RN's news translation practices testifies to the tendency of othering countries, like the US (Zeng, 2020) and Japan (Wu, 2018), in its translated reports. For a party-oriented Chinese newspaper like RN, which takes the responsibility of disseminating the official “ideological values and preferences” (Chase, 2018, p. 142), it is no surprise to see the playing up of a negative tone concerning coverage of the United States, especially considering the worsening China-US relations in recent years amid the trade spat and the pandemic.

#### **Example 5.11**

ST 5.11: Ray: Great power competition is an ‘infinite game’ with Russia, China (Oprihory, 10 December 2020)

TT 5.11: 对付中俄，美上将想出一条“毒计” [To deal with China and Russia, US General comes up with a “vicious plan”] (RN, 13 December 2020)

#### **Example 5.12**

ST 5.12: US announces planned \$2.37 billion weapon sale to Taiwan (Burns, 27 October 2020)

TT 5.12: 一意孤行! 美宣布对台出售“鱼叉”导弹系统 [Stubbornly take its own course! The US announces sale of “Harpoon” missile systems to Taiwan] (RN, 27 October 2020)

#### **Example 5.13**

ST 5.13: US sanctions International Criminal Court officials (Hansler, 2 September 2020)

TT 5.13: 美国再一次 触犯众怒! [US has once again made everybody angry] (RN, 4 September 2020)

#### **Example 5.14**

ST 5.14: Pompeo signals impending action against ICC for investigating alleged U.S. war crimes (Forgey, 1 June 2020)

TT 5.14: 国际刑事法院获准调查美军蓬佩奥 百般阻挠 [International Criminal Court gets permission

to investigate US forces; Pompeo has *tried everything he could do to prevent that*] (RN, 3 June 2020)

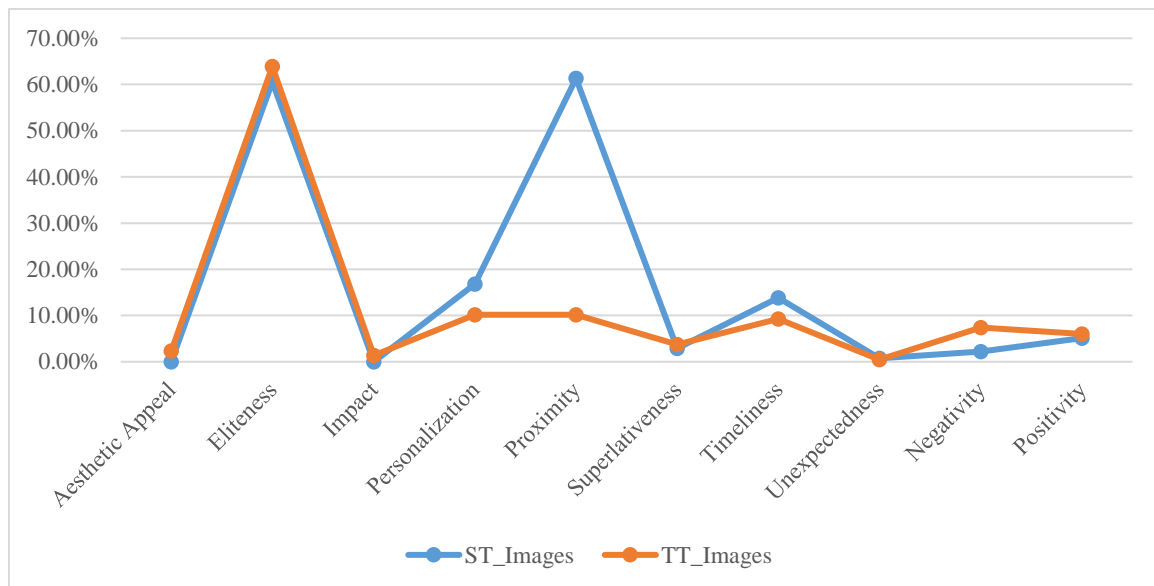
### 5.1.2. Image analysis

This section presents the distribution of news values in the pictures accompanying the collected headlines. The ST Image corpus (STIC) and TT image corpus (TTIC) consist of 137 and 216 pictures, respectively. Figure 5.1.2.1. and Table 5.1.2.1. provide an overview of the news values constructed in STIC and TTIC. The four news values prioritized in STIC are *Proximity*, *Eliteness*, *Personalization*, and *Timeliness*. In STIC, the construction of *Proximity* should be mainly ascribed to the pictures containing American politicians, especially Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, and Joe Biden. Other visual resources that contributed to establishing *Proximity* in STIC include visual presentations of other famous Americans (e.g., Ivanka Trump, Melania Trump, and the then governor of New York, Andrew Mark Cuomo), landmarks (e.g., the White House, New York Central Station, and the Time Square), logos of influential US companies (e.g., Facebook and Amazon), and other US-related cultural references (e.g., the flag and the map of the United States, New York City subway and the US military uniforms). The second most frequent news value discerned in STIC, *Eliteness*, was primarily established via elite figures and organizations depicted in the photographs under investigation. Identifiable American politicians, well-known Americans, and US organizations and companies accounted for most of the visual resources constructing *Eliteness* in STIC. In addition to elites from the United States, *Eliteness* was also construed in photos capturing Chinese President Xi Jinping, WHO and ICC officials, Iran general Qasem Soleimani, and some Chinese entrepreneurs. Traces of *Personalization* was noted in 23 pictures from STIC, construed by visual elements delineating ordinary people, such as protestors in George Floyd Protests, Trump supporter, nurses, a child being vaccinated, passers-by in New York Grand Central Terminal, and a passenger on New York metro. In addition to visual presentations of ordinary people within the setting of America, photographs of ordinary Chinese people (e.g., Chinese delivery guys, a Chinese couple shopping in a store, Chinese live streamers, a female Chinese worker producing PPE, and passers-by in different locations of China) made up more than thirty percent of the images establishing *Personalization* in STIC. Images that showed masks or

people wearing masks constituted over eighty percent of the photos embedded with *Timeliness*. The rapid spread of COVID-19 in 2020 forced everyone to get used to social distancing and wearing masks. The image of masks or people covering their faces with one would remind readers of the ongoing pandemic. On top of masks, other *Timeliness*-related visual resources discerned in STIC are photos of the coronavirus, piles of PPE, and vaccine, all of which could be associated with the pandemic.

The four most prominent news values in TTIC are *Eliteness*, *Proximity*, *Personalization*, and *Timeliness*. *Eliteness* was noted in over sixty percent of the photographs in TTIC. Similar to the situation in STIC, images of US politicians greatly contributed to establishing *Eliteness* in TTIC. The top three politicians in TTIC are also Donald Trump, Joe Biden, and Mike Pompeo. Sixty-one photos with images of the-then American president were identified in TTIC, covering more than twenty-eight percent of the overall visual data and accounting for over forty percent of the discerned photographs construing *Eliteness*. Photographs capturing other elite US politicians and figures (e.g., Barack Obama, Mike Pence, CDC officials, Anthony Fauci, Henry Kissinger, Tiffany Trump, Melania Trump, the founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos) and well-known buildings related to elite US organizations (e.g., United States Capitol, FBI building, and the White House) also played a pivotal part in constructing *Eliteness* for RN's Chinese readers on WeChat. Besides US-related visual resources, images of famous Chinese figures and organizations (e.g., CGTN's senior host Liu Xin, the spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hua Chunying, Huawei's CFO Meng Wanzhou, logos of Tenecent, TikTok and its parent company Bytedance) were discerned as pointers to establish *Eliteness* for the Chinese readership. Nevertheless, visual information concerning American elites made up most of the elements constructing *Eliteness* in TTIC. *Proximity* is another salient news value identified in TTIC, which relies on visual resources creating either cultural or geographical connections for the target readers (Caple, 2016). The national flag of China was identified as the most frequently appeared visual resource contributing to construing *Proximity* in TTIC, followed by images of Hong Kong SAR and logos of leading Chinese companies, including Huawei and TikTok. Photos concerning elite and ordinary Chinese people (e.g., Meng Wanzhou, Hua Chunying, Liu Xin, a Chinese delivery guy, and a Chinese female worker producing masks), places and organizations familiar to Chinese people (South China Sea, Beijing

National Stadium, and China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the former US ambassador to China, Gary Faye Locke, also covered a large proportion of visual data embedded with *Proximity*. The construction of *Personalization* in TTIC was dominated by three types of depictions regarding ordinary people, including medical workers, passers-by, and protesters, followed by visual images of other ordinary individuals like patients and conference attendees. Over eighty percent of the pictures constructing *Timeliness* contained the image of masks, symbols strongly correlated with the ongoing pandemic. Other photographs categorized as implying *Timeliness* include the ones capturing election campaign posters for Joe Biden, the presidential debate between Biden and Trump, and images of the coronavirus: the former was related to the 2020 presidential election and the latter once again the pandemic.



**Figure 5.1.2.1.** The distribution of news values in images (by percentages)

An overview of the news values distributed across STIC and TTIC showcases that both corpora prioritized the same four news values, including *Proximity*, *Eliteness*, *Personalization*, and *Timeliness*, though with different frequencies. This overlap of news values established in images accompanying the STs and TTs indicates a trend of globalization in news production (Yu & Chen, 2021). Nonetheless, subtle differences in newsworthiness construction via visual images were noted between STIC and TTIC. Table 5.1.2.1 shows that statistical significance was observed in the construction of *Proximity* and *Negativity* between STIC and TTIC, which will be further elucidated in the sections below.

<i>News value</i>	<i>Freq in STIC (137 pictures)</i>	<i>Freq in TTIC (216 pictures)</i>	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Aesthetic appeal</i>	0	5	3.2169	0.073
<i>Eliteness</i>	83	138	0.3911	0.532
<i>Impact</i>	0	3	1.9191	0.166
<i>Personalization</i>	23	22	3.2861	0.070
<i>Proximity</i>	84	22	104.2979	0.000***
<i>Superlativeness</i>	4	8	0.1569	0.692
<i>Timeliness</i>	19	20	1.8123	0.178
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	1	1	0.1061	0.745
<i>Negativity</i>	3	16	4.4812	0.034*
<i>Positivity</i>	7	13	0.1296	0.719

Statistical significance: \*p < 0.05, \*\*\*p < 0.001.

**Table 5.1.2.1.** The construction of news values in STIC and TTIC (raw numbers)

### 5.1.2.1. *Proximity*: The frenemy matters

Similar to the headline corpora, the gap concerning the frequency of *Proximity* is conspicuous between STIC and TTIC. The visual construal of *Proximity* depends on images of landmarks, settings, or any cultural references familiar to the target readers (Caple, 2013). Traces of *Proximity* was discerned in over sixty percent of the photos in STIC but only about ten percent in TTIC. Notice that the news reports under investigation are US-centered coverage. Thus, a low frequency of pictures construing *Proximity* in TTIC is expected, given that the United States is neither geographically nor culturally proximate to China. Example 5.15, Example 5.16, and Example 5.17 demonstrate the key differences in constructing *Proximity* between STIC and TTIC. SI 5.15 and SI 5.16 are photos of Donald Trump, and SI 5.17 displays the image of Mike Pompeo, which contributed to establishing both *Proximity* and *Eliteness*. As the then US president and secretary of state, Trump and Pompeo are not only high-status American politicians but also the faces of America. For American readers, the images of these two crucial political figures could draw their attention via *Proximity* and *Eliteness*. However, the effects of similar pictures created different effects among Chinese readers. TI 5.15, TI 5.16, and TI 5.17 are the photos accompanying RN's translated versions of the English texts SI 5.15, SI 5.16, and SI 5.17 attached. Although RN used different photos, they depicted similar political elites. TI 5.15 is a picture of Trump wearing a suit with a pin of the US national flag, establishing *Eliteness* for Chinese readers but not *Proximity*. TI 5.16 captured two top leaders of the UK and the US shaking hands, and TI 5.17 presented

another image of Mike Pompeo, which likewise contributed to construing *Eliteness* but not *Proximity* for RN's Chinese readers. The target audience is critical in determining news values established in texts and images. RN's WeChat account is a platform mainly serving Chinese readers. Hence visual resources concerning American politicians or locations can hardly result in the establishment of *Proximity* for Chinese readers, which is the primary reason for the considerable gap concerning the construction of *Proximity* between STIC and TTIC.

**Example 5.15**

SI 5.15	TI 5.15
 <p>Stanley Chera, friend of President Trump, dies of coronavirus (Anonymous, 12 April 2020)</p>	 <p>特朗普好友因感染新冠病毒去世 [Trump's good friend died of COVID-19] (RN, 13 April 2020)</p>

**Example 5.16**

SI 5.16	TI 5.16
 <p>The UK rejects Trump's offer to help with Boris Johnson's coronavirus treatment (Bienkov &amp; Colson, 7 April 2020)</p>	 <p>特朗普提议帮助约翰逊治疗新冠病毒 英国政府拒绝 [Trump offers to help Johnson with coronavirus treatment The British government has rejected the offer] (Wang, 8 April 2020)</p>



**Example 5.17**

SI 5.17	TI 5.17
	
Pompeo says U.S. may never restore WHO funds after cutoff over pandemic (Brunnstrom & Pamuk, 24 April 2020)	蓬佩奥对世卫组织发起新的攻击—— [Pompeo launches new attack on WHO] (RN, 24 April 2020)

In TTIC, the establishment of *Proximity* relies on images of geographical and cultural symbols familiar to Chinese audiences, such as logos of Chinese companies, landmarks in China, and Chinese elites, the effect of which will be achieved on a group of American readers. Example 5.18 and Example 5.19 are two typical instances. SI 5.18 is the photo accompanying the headline of a Reuters business news story that involved both China and America. The image displayed a landmark in Beijing, the CCTV headquarters, which could arouse a sense of familiarity among Chinese readers, but surely not American audiences. For American readers, SI 5.18 might solely construct *Personalization* via the couple captured by the photo. TI 5.18, on the other hand, presented visual information like China’s national flag and a painting of the Great Wall, one of the most iconic Chinese landmarks, thereof establishing *Proximity* for RN’s Chinese readers. Similarly, although SI 5.19 and TI 5.19 displayed the images of Huawei’s crucial figure, Meng Wanzhou, the news values construed in the two photos varied: the former only *Eliteness* for a US readership and the latter both *Eliteness* and *Proximity* for RN’s Chinese audiences.



**Example 5.18**

<p>SI 5.18</p>  <p>China to leapfrog U.S. as world's biggest economy by 2028: think tank (Reuters, 26 December 2020)</p>	<p>TI 5.18</p>  <p>英智库：中国对美“经济超车”，提前了 [British think tank: China's "economic overtaking" of the United States is ahead of schedule] (RN, 26 December 2020)</p>
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**Example 5.19**

<p>SI 5.19</p>  <p>U.S. in talks with Huawei Finance Chief Meng Wanzhou about resolving criminal charges (McNish et al., 4 December 2020)</p>	<p>TI 5.19</p>  <p>美媒披露：美司法部计划让孟晚舟回家，但有个条件—— [US media reveals: US Justice Department plans to let Meng Wanzhou go home, but under one condition] (Ji, 4 December 2020)</p>
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Example 5.20 is a rare case in which pictures of the same figure established *Proximity* in both the SI and TI. SI 5.20 and TI 5.20 presented the images of Gary Locke, the former US Secretary of Commerce, governor of Washington State, and one of the cabinet members in Obama's administration. He also served as the tenth US ambassador to China between 2011 and 2014, an identity that resulted in the construal of *Proximity* via his image in Chinese-language news. In other discerned cases where *Proximity* was constructed both in SI and TI, it was different visual resources that led to the establishment of the news value, as shown in Example 5.21. Although the news stories accompanied by SI 5.21 and TI 5.21 are on the same subject, disparate visual resources were adopted to construe *Proximity* for American and Chinese readers, respectively: SI 5.21 is a photo of the US president,

Donald Trump, while TI 5.21 shows China’s national emblem and the symbol of an elite Chinese governmental organization.

**Example 5.20**

SI 5.20	TI 5.20
 <p>New Trump attack ad appears to suggest Washington state’s former Asian American governor is a Chinese official (Wagner, 10 April 2020)</p>	 <p>美媒：错把骆家辉当中国官员 特朗普竞选广告被批“种族主义” [US media: mistakenly take Gary Locke as a Chinese official Trump campaign AD criticized as “racist”] (RN, 12 April 2020)</p>

**Example 5.21**

SI 5.21	TI 5.21
 <p>Trump says he is ‘not interested’ in trade talks with China (Beech &amp; Lawder, 15 July 2020)</p>	 <p>美国总统称对中美下阶段贸易谈判“没兴趣” 外交部回应 [US President says he is “not interested” in the next phase of US-China trade talks Ministry of Foreign Affairs responds] (RN, 16 July 2020a)</p>

Although the collected news reports covered mostly US-related affairs, China often occurred in these stories. It seems reasonable to assume that RN might opt for images that create cultural and geographical nearness among Chinese audiences to make Chinese readers feel related and click on the articles, especially when the translated stories are relevant to China. However, many of the images retrieved from RN’s translated news stories involving China examined in the manual analysis did not highlight *Proximity* via any visual resources, a pattern of which could be observed in the four examples below. Example 5.22 and Example 5.23 are images from translated news reports regarding exceptional Chinese

scholars and Chinese companies, respectively. Instead of using photos of elite scientists and leading companies that could construe cultural *Proximity* for Chinese readers, RN selected images of the White House and Trump, a US landmark and the top US leader, to construct *Eliteness*. Likewise, the photographs in Example 5.24 and Example 5.25 were taken from two WeChat articles highlighting the importance of US-China collaboration in containing the virus. RN could have offered visual information to underline the relevance of the news content to Chinese audiences. However, Example 5.24 did not construe any salient news values, and Example 5.25 showcased traces of *Positivity* via the visual presentation of hand-shaking.

<p><b>Example 5.22</b></p>  <p>中国顶尖学者或被白宫“新排华法”赶走 美国高校十分担忧……[Top Chinese scholars may be expelled by White House's “new Chinese exclusion act” US universities are very worried] (RN, 9 June 2020b)</p>	<p><b>Example 5.23</b></p>  <p>限制中企在美上市的法案，特朗普签了 [Bill that restricts Chinese companies from listing in America signed by Trump] (RN, 19 December 2020)</p>
<p><b>Example 5.24</b></p>  <p>近百名美前高官和学者联署呼吁与中国合作抗疫 [Nearly 100 former US officials and scholars have signed a joint petition calling for cooperation with China in fighting against the virus] (RN, 10 April 2020a)</p>	<p><b>Example 5.25</b></p>  <p>美媒：中美医生一直在“悄然”联手抗疫 [US media: Chinese and American doctors have been “quietly” collaborating to fight against the virus] (RN, 14 April 2020)</p>

RN's inclination to use visual resources other than those implying cultural or geographical nearness for Chinese readers in translated news stories concerning China and America might be interpreted from the following two aspects. Firstly, news coverage concerning China's top frenemy is readily captivating enough for RN's Chinese readers on WeChat. As elucidated in Section 5.1.1.1., given that the analyzed WeChat articles all performed exceptionally in terms of traffic, it might be argued that RN's Chinese readers care about China-US relations and are interested in news coverage about the US. Thus, America-related visual resources alone suffice to capture Chinese audiences' attention. The tendency of America-oriented international news coverage was observed in a study by Atad (2017), which examined and compared the English international newscast of four media outlets, including *CNN*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, and *France 24*. It was found that the US was the country covered most by all of the four news organizations. According to Atad (2017), the dominance of US-related topics might be attributed to geographical proximity and the country's political and economic influence. An earlier study concerning RN when it was still an internal publication found that RN devoted much space to covering America, especially its domestic news (Schwarz, 1966). The news coverage of the world's largest economy informed the target readership of the updated information about a country with strong political and economic power, though mainly from a negative perspective. More importantly, negative delineations of America "contribute to a positive framing of China *vis-a-vis* Trump's America" (Pan et al., 2020, p. 63). Furthermore, the absence of *Proximity* in some of the images accompanying news stories concerning China might be attributed to the linguistic resources readily construing *Proximity* in the headlines. *Proximity* could be tracked in all of the four news headlines accompanied by images from Example 5.22-5.25. Instead of reinforcing *Proximity*, RN opted for establishing other news values in the images of the news stories.

#### **5.1.2.2. Negativity: Othering the US and mocking Trump**

Statistical significance was also noticed in the construal of *Negativity* between STIC and TTIC. The percentage of photographs from TTIC establishing *Negativity* is higher than that from STIC, displaying

RN's tendency to underline the negative aspects of America through visual resources. The visual construction of *Negativity* should be attributed to depictions of negative emotions and actions (Caple, 2016). Compared with their corresponding English counterparts, photographs employed by RN are inclined to foreground the negative aspects of the Black Lives Matter protests, the pandemic in America, and the then US President Donald Trump. Example 5.26 is a typical instance of RN's giving prominence to the negative aspects of the reported event. The English news story SI 5.26 has accompanied is related to the protests in Minneapolis resulting from the death of George Floyd. *Personalization* was tracked in SI 5.26 via the visual presentations of a protestor standing in front of the police. Unlike the relatively peaceful scenario displayed in SI 5.26, the rendition by RN opted for a picture that demonstrated a miserable protestor lying on the ground with painful facial expressions and surrounded by the police. All visual resources from TI 5.26 combined led to the construction of *Personalization*, *Negativity*, *Impact*, and *Superlativeness*. The contrast in Example 5.27 showcased RN's tendency to underline the negative aspects of the pandemic via visual images. The countless boxes of PPE in SI 5.27 led to the construal of *Timeliness* and *Superlativeness*, highlighting the high demand for necessary equipment to contain the virus. Instead of employing a picture related to PPE, RN resorted to a photograph capturing fully-equipped medical workers moving gurneys with dead bodies, which established *Timeliness*, *Personalization*, and *Negativity*. A picture like TI 5.27 gave prominence to the negative aspects of the pandemic.

**Example 5.26**

SI 5.26	TI 5.26
 <p>Pentagon ready to send troops to Minneapolis if state asks (Laporta &amp; Burns, 30 May 2020)</p>	 <p>五角大楼下令宪兵部队随时待命“黑人之死”掀全美抗议浪潮 [Pentagon orders military units to be on standby as "death of black man" sparked wave of protests across the United States] (RN, 30 May 2020b)</p>



**Example 5.27**

SI 5.27	TI 5.27
 <p>US strategic national stockpile nearly out of personal protective equipment (GA, 9 April 2020)</p>	 <p>美国国家战略储备中的个人防护装备几乎耗尽 拜登：“国家耻辱” [PPE in US strategic stockpile nearly depleted; Biden: “A national disgrace”] (RN, 10 April 2020b)</p>

In STIC, thirty-five pictures containing the visual presentations of Trump were identified, accounting for about one-quarter of the data. Sixty-one pictures capturing the image of Trump were noted, making up over twenty-eight percent of the visual data in TTIC. The dominance of Trump-related photographs bore out the newsworthiness of the US president. In US journalism, the president’s involvement can take away the spotlight of almost any event (Schudson, 1995). This crucial political figure is not only an elite but also “a representative of the nation” (Schudson, 1995, p. 60). Considering the newsworthiness correlated with the country’s top leader, it is no wonder to observe the high visibility of Trump’s images in news corpora concerning the United States. *Negativity* was tracked in only one Trump-related image from STIC, as shown in Example 5.28. The photograph captured Trump bathed in red light with his finger pointing at something, foregrounding *Negativity* by creating a tense and negative setting. In TTIC, Trump-related photographs accounted for over thirty-five percent of the pictures construed *Negativity*. Example 5.29 is a typical instance displaying the disparate ways of constructing Trump’s images. SI 5.29 depicted a scenario where a neutral-expression Trump sat in his oval office with a US national flag pin on his suit and the US national symbol in the background, establishing *Eliteness* and *Proximity*. TI 5.29, however, conveyed a completely different image of the US president, who looked extremely angry and aggressive with his mouth open and finger pointing at

something. This image foregrounded news values, including *Eliteness*, *Negativity*, and *Superlativeness*, by showing “extreme emotions” through Trump’s furious “facial expression and gesture” (Caple, 2016, p. 8).

**Example 5.28**



Exclusive: Donald Trump's martial-law talk has military on red alert (Arkin, 24 December 2020)

**Example 5.29**

SI 5.29	TI 5.29
 <p>Trump replaces HHS watchdog who found ‘severe shortages’ at hospitals combating coronavirus (Rein, 2 May 2020)</p>	 <p>美媒：特朗普动手“清洗”美卫生部高官 [US media: Trump starts to ‘purge’ top health U.S. officials] (RN, 4 May 2020)</p>

The same patterns of newsworthiness construction could also be observed in Example 5.30 and Example 5.31. In Example 5.30, Trump seems in a state of rage, with his face twisted and mouth open to utter something. A photograph like this displayed the image of a grumpy US leader, again construing the news values of *Eliteness*, *Negativity*, and *Superlativeness* via Trump’s extremely negative facial expressions. The visual presentations of Trump in 5.31 followed the same formula, underlining Trump’s negative and extreme sentiments in the picture. As a result, *Elitenss*, *Negativity*, and *Superlativeness*

were construed. Example 5.32 and Example 5.33 showed two interesting cases of presenting negative images of Trump. The picture in Example 5.32 delineated an unhappy Trump with a rather childish facial expression: his lips were pouted, and his eyebrows frowned, constructing *Eliteness* and *Negativity*. Instead of affection or respect, such visual presentations will likely arouse mockery of the US president among Chinese readers. Example 5.33 displayed another derisive image concerning Trump. In the picture, Trump looked tired and dispirited, and his hair, something he often bragged about, was now blowing in the wind and quite messy. On top of *Eliteness*, this sardonic photograph of Trump established *Unexpectedness* for RN's Chinese readers, as it demonstrated a relatively astonishing and hilarious image of a leader of the world's largest economy.

Example 5.30	Example 5.31
 <p>“美国人很慌,说点什么?” 特朗普: 你是个糟糕的记者 [“Americans are very terrified, say something?” Trump: You are a terrible reporter] (RN, 22 March 2020)</p>	 <p>特朗普: 别再囤呼吸机了 [Trump: Stop stocking up on ventilators] (RN, 30 May 2020a)</p>

Compared with those in STIC, photos in TTIC demonstrated a slightly higher propensity for showcasing negative images of the United States and the top American leader. Since the beginning of his administration, Trump has proposed a series of targeted measures to constrain China regarding economic and scientific development as well as “people-to-people and cultural exchanges” (Xiying Zuo, 2021, p. 108). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the downturn of China-US relations following the remarks made by the Trump administration about the origin and naming of the virus. Factoring in all these aspects, it is no surprise to see the negative depictions of the US and even sardonic and mocking visual presentations of Trump in RN's WeChat articles. On the one hand, foregrounding



the negative aspects of the US conforms to RN's identity as an official news organization. Moreover, negative coverage of America, especially mocking Trump, is more likely to capture traffic and win the heart of WeChat users. On Chinese social media, Donald Trump has been rendered with many labels by creative Chinese netizens, such as “懂王 (all-knowing King)” and “川建国 (a person named Chuan who helps to construct China),” which prevail on the internet and are widely used by Chinese netizens, especially the young generation, to address the US president. Even Chinese official media have occasionally opted for these labels to cover news concerning Trump. For instance, in 2021, *GT* published an article entitled “真“懂王”! 特朗普二度回应拜登摔倒: 事实上, 我早已预料到这一点 (*Real “all-knowing king”! Trump for the second time responded to Biden's fall: Actually, I have readily seen this coming*)” (*GT*, 23 March 2021). In a time when Chinese people's perception of America reached a new low (Fang et al., 2022), negative visual presentations of Trump also emotionally satisfied Chinese readers. RN ingratiated itself with the target readership on WeChat by employing photographs reflecting bad images of the US and Trump.

Example 5.32	Example 5.33
 <p>玩儿不起? 特朗普拒绝承诺大选后和平交接权力 [Can't afford to play the game? Trump refuses to promise a peaceful transfer of power after election] (RN, 24 September 2020)</p>	 <p>纽约时报: 特朗普在危机时刻放弃美全球领导地位 [New York Times: Trump abdicates US global leadership at time of crisis] (RN, 24 March 2020b)</p>

### 5.1.3. Verbal-visual patterns

The previous sections have examined the news values construed in the headlines and their accompanying images of the collected English and Chinese news stories. Now the focus is switched to investigating how verbal and non-verbal resources are combined for newsworthiness construction. Table 5.1.3.1 and Table 5.1.3.2 demonstrate the distribution of news values across semiotic modes in the English and Chinese news reports under investigation. For the analyzed STs, it is observed that the establishment of *Eliteness* and *Proximity* tends to be constructed across both headlines and images. Table 5.1.3.1 also suggests that the construal of *Impact*, *Superlativeness*, *Timeliness*, *Unexpectedness*, *Negativity*, and *Positivity* mainly relies on linguistic resources from the headlines. The establishment of *Personalization*, however, largely depends on visual images accompanying the headlines. As for the verbal-visual relations noted in the 216 TT news stories, *Eliteness* is the news value frequently reinforced by simultaneously being constructed across semiotic modes. According to Table 5.1.3.2, *Impact*, *Proximity*, *Superlativeness*, *Timeliness*, *Unexpectedness*, *Negativity*, and *Positivity*, on most occasions, are only construed in the headlines. Like their English counterparts, *Personalization* is more frequently established via visual resources. The above analyses highlight that verbal and non-verbal resources are mutually crucial in construing news values, as the two modes cooperate to “construe different, complementary aspects of an event as newsworthy” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 219).

A few cases where news values construed in the headlines and their accompanying pictures contradicted were also discerned in STIC and TTIC. Similar to a previous study by Bednarek and Caple (2017), the clashes concerned establishing *Negativity* and *Positivity*. Example 5.34 and Example 5.35 are retrieved from STIC. *Negativity* was construed in the headline in Example 5.34 via the occurrence of “biggest losers,” an expression embedded with negative denotations. However, the photo attached to this headline displayed the image of an elite Chinese entrepreneur with a big smile, which established *Positivity*. Likewise, the word “leaving” in the headline from Example 5.35 constructed *Negativity*, but the photograph captured the news actor involved with a happy face, resulting in the establishment of *Positivity*. The clash between *Negativity* and *Positivity* was observed in RN’s renditions, as shown in

Example 5.36 and Example 5.37. *Negativity* could be tracked in the headlines from both examples, thanks to verbal resources like “突遭解职 (abrupt firing)” and “搅局 (performs spoiling operation).” Instead of reinforcing *Negativity* in the accompanying photos, RN employed visual presentations of elite figures with smiley faces to construe *Positivity*. Traces of cases of clashes might be attributed to some practical limitations in news production, such as “availability and quality of the images” (Mäenpää, 2021, p. 2238).



<i>News value</i>	In image only	In headline only	In both the image and headline
<i>Aesthetic appeal</i>	0	0	0
<i>Eliteness</i>	10	31	73
<i>Impact</i>	0	31	0
<i>Personalization</i>	22	7	1
<i>Proximity</i>	3	48	81
<i>Superlativeness</i>	2	34	2
<i>Timeliness</i>	1	101	18
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	1	14	0
<i>Negativity</i>	1	76	2
<i>Positivity</i>	6	12	1

**Table 5.1.3.1** Correlation in the construction of news values across semiotic modes of STs (out of a total of 137 ST stories that include both language and image)

<i>News value</i>	In image only	In headline only	In both the image and headline
<i>Aesthetic appeal</i>	5	0	0
<i>Eliteness</i>	12	35	126
<i>Impact</i>	2	47	1
<i>Personalization</i>	20	7	2
<i>Proximity</i>	0	46	22
<i>Superlativeness</i>	4	84	4
<i>Timeliness</i>	5	79	15
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	1	34	0
<i>Negativity</i>	3	135	13
<i>Positivity</i>	12	16	1

**Table 5.1.3.2** Correlation in the construction of news values across semiotic modes of TTs (out of a total of 216 TT stories that include both language and image)

<b>Example 5.34</b>	<b>Example 5.35</b>
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 <p>Biggest losers from China Delisting Law may be small American investors (Flannery, 22 May 2020)</p>	 <p>General manager Daryl Morey leaving Rockets on Nov. 1 (Riekenap, 16 October 2020)</p>
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<p><b>Example 5.36</b></p>  <p>美议员：美国务院督察长突遭解职另有原因 [US representative: the abrupt firing of US State Department Inspector General might be attributed to other reasons] (RN, 19 May 2020)</p>	<p><b>Example 5.37</b></p>  <p>不出所料，又是美国搅局！ [As expected, it is US that performs spoiling operation again!] (RN, 30 October 2020)</p>
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**5.2. Corpus-assisted analysis of full texts**

This section undertakes a corpus-assisted news values analysis of the two full-text corpora. The first investigation phase examines the 200 most frequent words and bigrams in STFTC and TTFTC, identifying news values they have contributed to construing. This overview of news values distributed across the full texts is followed by a focused case study of the newsworthiness construction practices regarding the Trump administration.

**5.2.1. Comparison of frequent words**

The first step of analyzing the full texts opted for interrogating the most frequent words from STFTC and TTFTC, which could reveal repeated verbal patterns that offer a newsworthy touch to the covered

stories (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Following Bednarek and Caple (2014), this section focuses on words and two-word clusters with high frequency in STFTC and TTFTC. Instead of attending to the top 100 words and bigrams like Bednarek and Caple (2014) did in their research, this study further extended the scale of the data by investigating the 200 most frequent words and two-word expressions. The wordlists generated by Antconc (Anthony, 2022) formed the basis for identifying potential words and phrases that could establish news values. Functions words without conspicuous lexical meaning, like pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions, often occupy the top positions of a frequency list of a corpus (Ping, 2020). These function words might still be relevant to the construal of news values: for instance, “we” is one of the most frequent words in STFTC, which might be relevant to the construction of *Proximity*; “have” and “has,” as two common auxiliary verbs, are concerned with the present perfect tense, resulting in the establishment of *Timeliness*. The analysis below tried to tie words and expressions with specific news values. The categorization of words and expressions relied on the linguistic DNVA inventory developed by Bednarek (2015), the tailor-made coding scheme for this study, and the lists that recorded potential Chinese and English lexical indicators for construing news values made by Guo et al. (2022) for their DNVA research (<https://github.com/laceyjam/Chinese-LINV>). The examination did not include words and bigrams without conspicuous connection with a news value. Analyses of the prominent words and expressions in STFTC and TTFTC could provide an overview of news values frequently construed in the two corpora and reveal whether differences or similarities could be observed concerning the discursive construction of newsworthiness regarding the United States.

Table 5.2.1.1. offers an overview of the potential news values established by words and bigrams frequently occurring in STFTC. It seems that the majority of the examined words and two-word clusters contributed to constructing *Eliteness*, *Proximity*, and *Timeliness*, a pattern also observed in the English headline dataset. Many words and bigrams contributed to construing *Eliteness* by mentioning US political figures (e.g., Trump, Biden, and Pompeo) and labels implying high status (e.g., administration, government, official, and President-elect), some of which led to the establishment of *Proximity* as well. In addition, the top 200 English words and two-word clusters concerning *Proximity* included references to America-related locations and events (e.g., New York, Washington, and election), pronouns, and

adjectives like we, our, and national. The potential of constructing *Timeliness* was noted in frequent temporal references such as last week, this week, on Monday, this year, and on Thursday. Other words and bigrams that might result in establishing *Timeliness* contain those implying ongoing events (e.g., coronavirus, election, and pandemic) and present tense (e.g., has been, have been, and I think). The 200 most frequent words and two-word clusters consisted of some instances that could potentially construct *Superlativeness*, *Negativity*, and *Impact*, though with a lower percentage of the three salient news values discussed above. Most candidates establishing *Negativity* were related to COVID-19 (e.g., pandemic, tested positive, and virus). The repeated occurrences of COVID-19-related vocabulary in STFTC are consistent with the results of the macro-level analysis, which discerned the pandemic as the topic with the highest coverage in RN’s translated news articles. Only a few top 200 words and bigrams were categorized as potential linguistic resources to construct *Positivity* and *Unexpectedness*, and none were relevant to the establishment of *Personalization*. A general overview of news values embedded in STFTC indicates that the chosen English news stories by RN foreground *Eliteness*, *Proximity*, and *Timeliness*, which might be considered the criteria RN’s gatekeepers prioritized to cover matters concerning the United States.

<i>News value</i>	<b>English words and bigrams</b>
<i>Eliteness</i>	Trump, president, Biden, administration, officials, government, military, White House, Donald Trump, Trump administration, department, official, secretary, Pompeo, President-elect, vice president, the CDC
<i>Impact</i>	cases, outbreak, global, million, at least, lot of
<i>Proximity</i>	Trump, president, we, Biden, US, state, American, election, our, national, U.S., White House, United States, New York, Donald Trump, Trump administration, the country, Washington, Pompeo, President-elect, vice president, the CDC,
<i>Superlativeness</i>	more than, most, many, outbreak, global, million, the most, at least, lot of
<i>Timeliness</i>	is, has, have, are, coronavirus, virus, election, now, pandemic, it’s, has been, have been, that’s, he’s, COVID-19, campaign, going, say, on Friday, says, know, I think, last week, there’s, President-elect, this week, on Monday, this year, on Thursday
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	new, the first
<i>Negativity</i>	coronavirus, virus, pandemic, COVID-19, disease, tested positive, declined to
<i>Positivity</i>	to help

**Table 5.2.1.1.** Frequent words and bigrams establishing news values in STFTC

Table 5.2.1.2. demonstrates the news values that might be constructed by the 200 frequent words and

bigrams in TTFTC. The three most conspicuous news values recognized included *Eliteness*, *Timeliness*, and *Negativity*, to which TTHC also gave prominence. Expressions that could potentially establish Eliteness in the Chinese dataset were similar to its English counterpart, primarily including labels referring to US elite politicians (e.g., 特朗普 Trump, 拜登 Biden, and 副总统 vice president) or references to elite status (e.g., 官员 officials, 白宫 White House, and 海军陆战队 Marine Corps). Candidacy for establishing *Timeliness* was noted in references to timely events such as 疫情(pandemic), 选举(election), and 抗议活动(protests), as well as temporal references like 现在(current), 今年(this year), and the mentioning of specific dates. As mentioned in Section 5.1.1.2., Chinese is a language without grammatical tense (M. Liu, 2015), making it impossible to rely on the present tense for establishing *Timeliness* like English news discourse. For the headline analysis part, this vital linguistic difference was deemed one of the reasons for the frequency disparity of construing *Timeliness* between the English headlines and RN's Chinese renditions. In addition, the traffic-oriented principle followed by news organizations on social media was proposed as another factor resulting in the lower frequency of *Timeliness* in TTHC and many sensational Chinese headlines without contextual information. However, in the Chinese full-text news stories, *Timeliness* was often established at the very beginning by mentioning the specific dates when the original English stories were published, as shown in Figure 5.2.1.1. Various direct references to COVID-19 (e.g., 疫情 pandemic, 新冠病毒 coronavirus, and 病毒 virus) made up of the majority of Chinese words and bigrams potentially leading to the construal of *Negativity*. The linguistic resources regarded as potential resources establishing *Proximity* showcased that many of RN's selected news stories were not only US-related but also China-related, testifying to the importance of China-US relations. Words and two-word clusters that may prompt the construction of *Impact*, *Superlativeness*, *Unexpectedness*, and *Positivity* were also noted, but with a relatively small pool of linguistic resources. Like TTFTC, no traces of *Personalization* were tracked in the top 200 words and bigrams in TTFTC, highlighting that ordinary people were seldom the focus of RN's popular translated news stories about America in 2020.

*News value*

**Chinese words and bigrams**

<b>Eliteness</b>	特朗普(Trump), 总统(president), 政府(government), 官员(officials), 拜登(Biden), 白宫(White House), 特朗普政府(Trump administration), 美国总统(US president), 美国政府(US government), 海军(navy), 民主党(democrat), 副总统(vice president), 高级官员(high officials), 海军陆战队(Marine Corps)
<b>Impact</b>	病例(cases), **万人(thousands of people)
<b>Proximity</b>	中国(China), 中美(China-US), 两国(the two countries), 中国企业(Chinese companies)
<b>Superlativeness</b>	更多(more), 最大(the biggest), 所有(all), **万人(thousands of people)
<b>Timeliness</b>	月(month), 日(day), 年(year), 疫情(pandemic), 新冠病毒(conronavirus), 病毒(virus), 当地时间(local time), 新冠肺炎(COVID-19), 现在(current), 竞选(election), 选举(election), 口罩(mask), 今年(this year), 新型冠状病毒(COVID-19), 抗议活动(protests), 病毒检测(testing)
<b>Unexpectedness</b>	新的(new)
<b>Negativity</b>	疫情(pandemic), 新冠病毒(conronavirus), 病毒(virus), 新冠肺炎(COVID-19), 感染(infect), 严重(serious), 危机(crisis), 死亡(death), 新型冠状病毒(COVID-19), 呈阳性(tested positive)
<b>Positivity</b>	合作(cooperation), 帮助(help)

**Table 5.2.1.2.** Frequent words and bigrams establishing news values in TTFTC

据 美联社 4	月 27 日	报道, 美国 南卡罗来纳州 官员 当地时间 周
据 美国 全国广播公司 ( NBC ) 5	月 22 日	报道, 美国 总统 特朗普 有一个 印有 总统 印
据 美国 《 华盛顿邮报 》 网站 6	月 5 日	报道, 美国 官员 当地时间 5 日 撤回了 严格 隔
据 路透社 华盛顿 6	月 15 日	报道, 美国 当地时间 周一 ( 15 日 ) 证实了
据 《 今日美国报 》 网站 7	月 4 日	报道, 美国 说唱 歌手 “ 侃 爷 ” 坎耶·韦斯特 当
据 美国 《 华盛顿邮报 》 网站 7	月 10 日	报道, 美国 民主党 总统 候选人 乔·拜登 当地 时
据 美国 《 国会山 》 日报 网站 7	月 12 日	报道, 美国 总统 特朗普 当地时间 7 月 12 日 一
作 增多。据 香港 《 南华早报 》 网站 7	月 23 日	报道, 美国 和 澳大利亚 的一个 研究 小组 研究
据 福克斯商业网 9	月 18 日	报道, 美国 商务部 当地时间 周五 宣布, 美国
据 路透社 华盛顿 12	月 2 日	报道, 美国 特朗普 政府 在 确认 所谓 “ 与 中国
据 美国 《 空军杂志 》 月刊 网站 12	月 10 日	报道, 美国 空军 “ 全球 打击 司令部 ” 司令 蒂莫
据 美国 商业内幕 网站 12	月 22 日	报道, 美国 高级 军事 指挥官 11 月 声称, 美国
据 英国 《 卫报 》 网站 12	月 23 日	报道, 美国 联邦 调查局 ( FBI ) 在 一份 被 行
发生 争执。据 《 今日美国报 》 网站 4	月 13 日	报道, 在 里德 质问 特朗普 关于 其 政府 在 新
据 英国广播公司 ( BBC ) 4	月 24 日	报道, 在 美国 总统 特朗普 “ 暗示 ” 消毒剂 或
报告。据 美国 《 华盛顿邮报 》 网站 5	月 3 日	报道, 在 当地时间 5 月 1 日 晚间 的 声明 中,

**Figure 5.2.1.1.** The construction of *Timeliness* through date-mentioning (\*月\*日/\*month\*day)

## 5.2.2. Constructing news values of the Trump administration

Section 5.2.1. provides a general view of news values foregrounded and backgrounded in STFTC and



TTFTC through the lens of the top 200 words and bigrams from each corpus. This section narrows the focus to the concrete newsworthiness construction practices concerning the Trump administration in the collected English news stories and their Chinese counterparts on RN’s WeChat account. Previous sections noted that the strengthening of *Negativity* and *Superlativeness* was often hand-in-hand with RN’s version of headlines and accompanying images compared with their corresponding English counterparts. This section sets out to explore whether similar patterns could be noticed in TTFTC with a particular focus on the newsworthiness construction of concordances concerning the “Trump administration” in STFTC and “特朗普政府” in TTFTC. *Eliteness* is readily embedded in Trump and its Chinese rendition, “特朗普,” considering Donald Trump’s identity as the top American leader. Therefore, *Eliteness* was not discussed in the analysis below. Table 5.2.2.1. demonstrates news values distributed across the English and Chinese concordances under investigation. Statistical significance was noticed in the construction of *Proximity* and *Timeliness*, echoing the results from the previous section interrogating headlines and their accompanying images.

<i>News value</i>	<i>Freq in English concordances</i> (139)	<i>Freq in Chinese concordances</i> (83)	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Impact</i>	65	48	2.5476	0.1105
<i>Personalization</i>	12	6	0.1375	0.7108
<i>Proximity</i>	139	24	134.5718	0.0000***
<i>Superlativeness</i>	84	52	0.1078	0.7426
<i>Timeliness</i>	117	53	11.9598	0.0005***
<i>Unexpectedness</i>	36	19	0.2523	0.6155
<i>Negativity</i>	105	71	3.1652	0.0752
<i>Positivity</i>	14	5	1.0880	0.2969

Statistical significance: \*\*\*p < 0.001.

**Table 5.2.2.1.** The distribution of news values in concordances regarding the Trump administration (by raw number)

### 5.2.2.1. *Negativity*: Source selection plays a role

*Negativity*, which showed statistical significance in investigations concerning the collected headlines and photographs, was not salient in the analysis of concordances concerning the Trump administration, which might be interpreted from RN’s selection of sources in less favor of Trump’s government. The

macro-level analysis in the previous chapter discovered that RN was prone to select Democrat-leaning media sources, which are more likely to “criticize the Trump administration” and sometimes even more critical than the foreign press in covering matters concerning foreign policy (Ha et al., 2023, p. 8). ST 5.38 and ST 5.39 were retrieved from news stories produced by *PL* and *CNN*, respectively, both of which are left-leaning. The two excerpts have established *Negativity* via linguistic resources like slam and most aggressive. RN rendered these elements in Chinese, establishing *Negativity* for a Chinese audience.

### Example 5.38

ST 5.38: Other groups ***have slammed*** the Trump administration’s dismantling of much of the U.S. refugee resettlement program, its aversion to accepting asylum-seekers, its travel bans on people from several Muslim-majority countries, and its treatment of migrants in general. (Toosi, 1 July 2020)

TT 5.38: 其他一些组织则对特朗普政府取消大部分美国难民安置计划、不愿接受寻求庇护者、对几个人口以穆斯林为主的国家实行旅行禁令，以及对移民的总体态度***提出强烈批评***。 [Other groups ***have expressed strong criticism*** of the Trump administration’s cancellation of most of the U.S. refugee resettlement program, its reluctance to accept asylum-seekers, its travel bans on several Muslim-majority countries, and its general attitude toward immigration.] (RN, 12 July 2020)

### Example 5.39

ST 5.39: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday announced sanctions against two International Criminal Court officials – the Trump administration’s ***most aggressive move*** yet to try to ***deter an ICC investigation into possible war crimes by US military and intelligence officials***. (Hansler, 2 September 2020)

TT 5.39: 美媒称，美国国务卿蓬佩奥当地时间 9 月 2 日宣布制裁国际刑事法院两名官员。这是特朗普政府迄今***最咄咄逼人的举措***，意在***阻止该法院调查美国军方与情报官员可能犯下的战争罪行***。 [According to American media, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced sanctions

against two officials of the International Criminal Court on September 2 local time. It is the Trump administration's *most aggressive move* yet to *block the court from investigating possible war crimes committed by US military and intelligence officials.*] (RN, 4 September 2020)

#### **5.2.2.2. *Timeliness*: Repetition does not equal foregrounding**

The percentage of the English concordances related to the Trump administration that have constructed *Timeliness* outnumbers that in the Chinese concordances, which again could be ascribed to the linguistic difference between Chinese and English. English news texts can always use the present tense to establish *Timeliness*, while Chinese lacks grammatical tense. Meanwhile, it should be noted that other news values like *Superlativeness* and *Unexpectedness* could be repeated and construed in various ways in a news story; if a specific temporal reference is mentioned in a report, it will not be emphasized repeatedly (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). As mentioned in Section 5.2.1., specific dates were often provided at the beginning of RN's translated news articles, construing *Timeliness* for the whole texts. Thus, the stark contrast concerning the construal of *Timeliness* in terms of frequency does not necessarily mean STFTC tends to foreground the news value more than TTFTC.

#### **5.2.2.3. *Proximity*: Omitting China-related elements**

The construal of *Proximity* has displayed statistical significance in the analyses concerning the collected headlines, their accompanying images, and the sampled concordances. Investigations regarding the headlines and pictures indicate that the ultimate purpose of RN's coverage concerning the United States, especially the negative depictions of the pandemic situation, is to reflect China well, highlighting "what China is not" (Pan et al., 2020, p. 63). In examining concordances relevant to Trump's government, it is found that resources that could establish *Proximity* for Chinese readers in the original English sources were omitted, which might be explained from two aspects. Firstly, RN seldom translates a lengthy news text without deletion. For instance, RN's WeChat account published a translated news story regarding Trump's remarks on August 12, 2020, based on a CNN news story. The original English text is over a thousand words, while RN's rendition is much shorter, with only a few sentences. Omission is an

overarching technique for RN in producing journalistic translations, as it could help RN fulfill its role as “a summary of international news” (“guo ji xiao xi zong hui”) or “a newspaper of numerous newspapers” (“wang bao zhi bao”). To put it another way, deletion makes it possible for RN to present “as much information and diversified views as possible” (Pan, 2014a, p. 556) to the target readers. In addition, short news stories could better capture readers’ attention on social media and thus influence their opinions compared with long texts (Gabore & Deng, 2018), which prompts RN to post short translated pieces on the WeChat public account platform. RN’s economical use of space and consideration of the target readership on WeChat could partly explain the omitted parts, including those concerning China, as shown in Example 5.40 and Example 5.41. ST 5.40 and ST 5.41 mentioned China, which, if translated into Chinese could have established *Proximity* for RN’s Chinese readers. Instead, they were omitted in RN’s renditions.

#### **Example 5.40**

ST 5.40: The WHO has denied the Trump administration’s charges and China insists it has been transparent and open. (Brunnstrom & Pamuk, 24 April 2020)

TT 5.40: Omitted (RN, 24 April 2020)

#### **Example 5.41**

ST 5.41: The Trump administration has long seen China as a U.S. foe, and relations with the ruling Communist Party have hit new lows since the coronavirus pandemic began. (Toosi, 1 July 2020)

TT 5.41: Omitted (RN, 12 July 2020)

Another possible interpretation for omitting China-related elements is relative cliché, as many case studies of RN’s news translations have noted RN’s tendency to eliminate negative descriptions concerning China (Pan, 2015; Pan & Liao, 2021; Wu, 2018; Zeng, 2020). This pattern was noted in this study, regarded as a potential reason for the lower visibility of *Proximity* in the examined Chinese concordances. The four examples below are typical instances of deleting depictions that could harm

China's image. ST 5.42, ST 5.43, and ST 5.44 presented conspiracy theories about the virus's origin and China's handling of the pandemic that China has been trying hard to rebut as facts. Likewise, ST 5.45 resorted to "provocative," a relatively negative adjective, to evaluate China's measures of defending its interests in the face of the Trump administration's provocative acts. These negative China-related elements were eliminated in RN's translations. RN, as an official news organization, must prioritize national interest. Additionally, if rendered into Chinese, negative elements regarding China could infuriate Chinese readers who are proud of China's accomplishments in fighting against the virus and China's counterattacks against Trump's bullying actions. Therefore, omission is an appropriate way for RN to deal with information tarnishing China's image.

#### **Example 5.42**

ST 5.42: Asked on Feb. 25 about the spread of the COVID-19 virus, *which is believed to have originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan*, Kudlow told CNBC that the Trump administration has kept the U.S. "pretty close to airtight." (Breuninger & Stankiewicz, 23 March 2020)

TT 5.42: 据美国消费者新闻与商业频道网站 3 月 23 日报道, 2 月 25 日, 库德洛曾告诉媒体, 特朗普政府一直把美国保护得“密不透风”。[According to the website of US media, CNBC, on March 23, on February 25, Kudlow told the press that the Trump administration has been protecting the United States in an “airtight” mannerr.] (RN, 24 March 2020a)

#### **Example 5.43**

ST 5.43: Pompeo was unlikely to face tough questioning about the Trump administration's own performance during the Covid-19 crisis and would be given space to *criticise China's lack of transparency over the origins of the pandemic* (Hurst, 25 May 2020).

TT 5.43: 蓬佩奥不大可能面对有关特朗普政府在新冠疫情危机中表现的刁钻提问。[Pompeo is unlikely to face tough questions about the Trump administration's handling of the coronavirus crisis.] (RN, 27 May 2020)

#### Example 5.44

ST 5.43: One disease expert told Reuters he was skeptical that the U.S. resident adviser would have been able to get earlier or better information to the Trump administration, *given the Chinese government's suppression of information.* (Taylor, 23 March 2020)

TT 5.43: Omitted (RN, 23 March 2020b)

#### Example 5.45

ST 5.44: Yet even as the administration ratchets up pressure, Trump himself has declined on multiple occasions to *condemn some of China's most provocative moves.* (Liptak, 11 August 2020)

TT 5.44: Omitted (RN, 12 August 2020)

### 5.3. Summary

This section undertook manual and corpus-assisted DNVA approaches to explore news values prioritized in RN's Chinese renditions and their corresponding English counterparts. A close look at the news values construed in STHC, TTHC, STIC, and TTIC displayed several prominent patterns. *Proximity* was less pronounced in RN's renditions of the collected English headlines, as the covered stories were all US-centered. The lower frequency of *Timeliness* in TTHC should be ascribed to the lack of grammatical tense in Chinese and RN's efforts to capture readers' attention via sensational headlines. *Negativity* and *Superlativeness* were strengthened in TTHC to other the United States. The news values construed in the collected images demonstrated similar patterns with *Proximity* and *Negativity*, showing statistical significance between STIC and TTIC. The analysis of the verbal-visual relations between the headlines and their accompanying images showcased the importance of verbal and non-verbal resources in establishing news values, as, on most occasions, they reinforce or complement each other. Corpus-assisted analysis of STFTC and TTFTC focused on the top 200 words and bigrams from the two datasets. STFTC is inclined to foreground *Eliteness*, *Proximity*, and *Timeliness*, and TTFTC *Eliteness*, *Timeliness*, and *Negativity*, echoing the results from the headline

analysis. The case study of concordances concerning the Trump administration demonstrated that RN's renditions tended to omit China-related elements that might depict the country negatively.

## Chapter 6 Discussion

Chapter 6 dedicates to interpreting the patterns observed from the macro and micro analyses in the previous chapters within the scope of the five-level gatekeeping theory proposed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009). This well-structured and detailed framework looks into various agents and channels pivotal in reshaping messages into news items, enhancing detailed and nuanced analysis of the gatekeeping process. In what follows, factors and elements concerning the five aspects of gatekeeping, including the individual level of analysis, the communication routines level of analysis, the organizational level of analysis, the social institution level of analysis, and the social system level of analysis will be broached in a detailed manner.

### **6.1. The individual level: relatively limited impact of RN's news staff**

The individual level of gatekeeping analysis concerns the various stakeholders participating in the process, whose “characteristics, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors” are expected to impact the decisions made in news production (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 33). Multiple hands have shaped translated news that eventually appears on *RN's* WeChat account. In *RN's* news translation workflow, several roles can be named, such as news selectors, translators, and editors (Xia, 2019, p. 104). News selectors are responsible for digging out information from numerous sources and channels, which the editor can then review and determine what texts to be translated; translators are then assigned specific tasks accordingly, and their translations are later sent to the editor's task and receive further revision, adjustments and proofreading before getting permission for publication (Xia & Wang, 2015). It looks like each party involved could significantly impact *RN's* editorial practices. Although every relevant gatekeeper participates in decision-making, it is the media outlet that recruits them and lays down the law (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). In other words, gatekeepers make decisions primarily based on the interests of the news organization with which they are affiliated. The same is applicable to journalistic translation: texts selected for translation and the transformations the chosen ones have undergone, all of which rely on gatekeepers' decisions, are eventually subject to “institutional policies of the news media”



(Kalantari, 2022, p. 1419). Thus, it is fair to say that *RN*'s news translation practices, although undertaken by various individuals, should be regarded as “a group activity” that obeys the same set of made-by-*RN* rules (Xia & Wang, 2020, p. 86).

As an official Chinese media with over ninety years of history, *RN* has devised mature training systems and institutional rules to facilitate the socialization of its news workers (Pan, 2014a; Xia & Wang, 2015). Take the training of translators as an example. Before independently performing translation tasks, newly recruited translators must submit their translations to a senior translator for review, no matter how exceptional their translation skills are; an initial training phase usually lasts two to three years (Pan, 2014a). On top of being supervised by veteran translators, beginners are required to familiarize themselves with the various rules and directives *RN* has prescribed (Pan, 2014a). An institutionalized training system like this ensures that *RN*'s in-house translators are capable of producing translations that conform to *RN*'s goals and interests. Therefore, it is argued that individual gatekeepers determining the texts to be translated and their transformations for *RN*'s WeChat account have a quite limited impact on the actual gatekeeping process. Regardless of their individual differences concerning disposition and characteristics, *RN*'s gatekeepers “speak the language of their group, think as their group thinks” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 100), thanks to the time-consuming and standardized socialization process.

## **6.2. The communication routines level: standard practices of Chinese media**

The communication routines level of gatekeeping analysis looks into practices widely accepted by the press rather than those unique to particular media outlets or individual gatekeepers (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 31). By making decisions aligning with the dominant traditions and patterned practices, gatekeepers “represent their profession or society” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 52). Therefore, this section concentrates on established norms and patterned behaviors that guide Chinese news staff to perform their jobs (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In what follows, drawing on some official documents and previous research, this part elaborates on some overarching principles Chinese media are expected to follow. These patterned practices are also tied to the findings from previous chapters, facilitating our

understanding of the logic behind RN's gatekeeping practices.

The *Professional Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists* (PCECJ) is a crucial document explaining the do's and don'ts for Chinese journalists. One vital aspect repeatedly underlined in PCECJ is that journalists should always prioritize the interests of the Chinese people and the government (PCECJ, 2019). As the world's two largest economies, China and the US are supposed to embrace and enhance cooperation, forging a stable and friendly bilateral relationship. However, the pursuit of collaboration has been replaced by hostility and competition since Trump's implementation of the "maximum pressure campaign" on China (Xiyang Zuo, 2021, p. 120), which involves imposing heavy tariffs on Chinese products, frequent interference in China's internal affairs, criticizing China for the pandemic and even using labels like "Wuhan virus" and "Chinese virus" to refer to COVID-19 when no hard proof existed to support such claims (Sullivan & Wang, 2023). In response, China enacted retaliatory tariff policies on America, and Chinese diplomats repeatedly made remarks showing China's resolution to defend its national interests. Facing the downturn of China-US relations, China has promoted a narrative that bullying behaviors from the west will not be tolerated by a rising and stronger China (Jaworsky & Qiaoan, 2021). This pattern of defending China and criticizing America can also be observed in Chinese official media like *GT* (Zeng & Sparks, 2020) and *CD* (Pan et al., 2020). Note that RN's translated news stories under investigation were all published in 2020 when China-US relations were probably at the lowest point due to the frequent spats between the two countries. RN, as a crucial and unique part of Chinese official media, took a similar path like its counterparts to foreground the negative images of a country that often resorts to hostile and even vicious strategies targeted at China. The goal of defending the national interests prompted RN to dedicate much space to the negative coverage of the United States and the Trump administration and foreground news values like *Negativity* and *Superlativeness*.

In addition, the emphasis on embracing new technology and new media is relatively conspicuous in the newest version of PCECJ (PCECJ, 2019). Chinese journalists are expected to "break free from the old mindset," fully grasp the logic of emerging new media platforms and become adept at new technologies (CD, 15 December 2019). Chinese media, regardless of commercial or official outlets, have actively participated in "partnering with social media" (Wu & Pan, 2022, p. 130), given people's increasing

reliance on these emerging channels to access information. On social media, news agencies are expected to produce and repackage news in a way that conforms to the features and logic of the corresponding platforms (Frampton, 2015). Platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok rely on a traffic-based economic model highlighting “both the maximization of and the control over traffic or user attention” (Zhang et al., 2020, p. 60). A traffic-oriented media environment results in the prevalence of clickbait or sensational headlines that seek to capture clicks by creating suspense and omitting crucial information (Adornato, 2021). A typical move of adapting to social media logic observed in the news published by mainstream Chinese news organizations is the employment of sensational headlines. For instance, Wu and Pan (2022) captured the traces of typical features of sensational headlines, including forward-referring terms and speech acts of assertives plus expressives, in the news headlines published on *PD*’s WeChat account. For his contribution, Fang (2022) analyzed WeChat articles posted by *PD* and *CCTV News* and interviewed relevant editors who admitted that sensational headlines must be employed to captivate readers on social media. Likewise, *RN*’s WeChat account also opted for sensational headlines to better promote the content and garner popularity in a competitive media market. As *RN*’s new media staff pointed out, “without attractive titles and appearance, even the best content could be rotten in the pot, and no one cares about it” (zgjx.cn, 21 June 2017). It is argued that the negative coverage concerning the US and the sensational style *RN*’s WeChat account adopted could partly be attributed to some of the standard practices advocated by the official and thus prevailing in Chinese journalistic landscapes.

### **6.3. The organizational level: a unique player in the Chinese media environment**

While communication routines concern pretty universal norms and behaviors institutionalized across news organizations, the organizational level of gatekeeping analysis attends to specific features concerning the examined media outlet (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). As mentioned in Section 6.1., *RN*’s gatekeepers undertake the assigned tasks based on the same rules and regularities. This section focuses on the codes of conduct specified by *RN*.

*RN* was founded in 1931 by *XNA*, China’s most authoritative news agency. After several decades of reforms and transformations consistent with the development of China and the official directives (Chase,

2018), *RN* has become a household newspaper with the largest circulation in China. This news brand is unique in the Chinese media environment in that it promotes mainstream narratives and ideologies mainly through the lens of the foreign press. This unique method of disseminating information distinguishes *RN* from other Chinese counterparts as *RN* could detach from the views expressed in the translated news reports based on foreign resources and claim that the views cannot represent *RN*'s stances. As a result, when it comes to critical views about another country in *RN*'s renditions, they may be considered more convincing because of the foreign-made label (Zeng & Sparks, 2020). Given its identity as an official, unique, and popular media outlet, *RN* enjoys many privileges: an in-house translator team of over a hundred exceptional translators covering diverse languages (Guo, 2015) and access to news sources worldwide, including big names like *AFP*, *Reuters*, and *AP* (Xia, 2019). Considering *RN*'s uniqueness and high status in the Chinese media landscape, it is no wonder to observe diverse media sources in *RN*'s WeChat news reports concerning the United States.

One key feature of *RN* that has been highlighted repeatedly in its promotional and advertising materials is “the original taste” (“yuan zhi yuan wei”) that *RN* can offer to Chinese readers. In an *RN*'s subscription advertisement, it is underlined that *RN* translates the foreign media coverage faithfully in terms of facts and styles so that the stance and views of the original authors can be genuinely and honestly conveyed, fulfilling *RN*'s role as reference materials (Paper.news.cn, 2018). While claiming to be faithful and objective in translating the original texts, *RN* adheres to other principles that seem to contradict the former, such as being guided by politics and executing self-censorship to avoid making mistakes on sensitive issues. According to *RN*'s deputy editor, although *RN* faithfully conveys messages via “the voices of the foreign press,” *RN*'s journalistic content should still prioritize politics, meaning that a certain degree of censorship is inevitable to refrain from generating a negative impact on society, especially in covering significant, sensitive, or hotly-debated topics and events (Tao, 2018). Editors and translators in *RN* interviewed by Xia (2019) also admitted that an acute awareness of political issues is a pre-condition to perform their jobs. Another factor considered in *RN*'s editorial decision is the importance of revealing the negative aspects and deeply-rooted social problems in the western world, which is deemed an effective method to highlight the strength of China's political system and improve

China's confidence (Tao, 2018; C. Wang, 2021). Based on the findings of this research, RN did manage to fulfill this task of proving that China's model was much more successful by posting negative WeChat articles about the US and giving prominence to *Negativity*. Delineations of chaos in the United States in 2020, such as the worsening pandemic situation, the irrational remarks and behaviors of Trump, and America's gloomy economic prospects, could form a stark contrast with China which did a great job in containing the virus in 2020.

#### **6.4. The social institution level: the changing audience**

The social institution level of gatekeeping analysis is relevant to external forces that could impact the decisions made by a media outlet, like the market, the target readers, the sources, and the government (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Instead of covering every possible factor determining RN's gatekeeping practices, this section intends to mainly elucidate the influence of the audience, "a rather dominant criterion" for any news organization aspiring to survive in a highly marketized and digitalized media environment (Wendelin et al., 2017, p. 136).

The 1978 reform and opening-up policy boosted many remarkable changes in China, including a revolutionized media environment. Instead of relying on state subsidies like they used to, Chinese media outlets started to embrace a more market-oriented model that hinges on subscription and advertising to make profits (Wang & Sparks, 2019b). Besides the influence of marketization, the social media boom has brought unprecedented changes to journalists and traditional journalistic norms (Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2019b). China's highly commercialized media environment that demands news organizations to be omnipresent puts the audience's interests under the spotlight (Ha et al., 2023, p. 2). The fact that *RN* is a prestigious title sponsored by *XNA* does not free the outlet from joining the competition to garner clicks and traffic in a highly competitive media environment. Alternatively speaking, RN needs to flatter the audience.

Previous sections indicate that RN's gatekeepers are constrained by rules and principles the official has made, which could partly explain the considerable amount of negative coverage about America and the highlighting of *Negativity* in the examined semiotic resources. Nonetheless, the impact of the target

readership on RN's editorial decisions cannot be neglected. This study has noted RN's fingerprints of adapting to the readers' preferences on WeChat. According to the gatekeepers of RN's WeChat account, WeChat articles covering hard news tend to capture readers' attention and perform well regarding traffic (Guo, 2015). The macro-level analysis of this study indicated that RN's popular translated news stories about America mainly covered topics like COVID-19, international relations, and military affairs, corroborating RN's inclination to satisfy the readers' craving for hard news on WeChat.

In addition, while RN's affiliation with the government might have prompted the othering of the U.S. in the examined translated news, Chinese readers' deteriorating perception of the country per se could be another force to influence RN's gatekeepers in reporting America. User profiling is necessary before devolving into the sentiments of RN's readers on WeChat regarding the United States. It is worth mentioning that most of the followers of RN's WeChat account did not overlap with the subscribers of RN's printed newspapers (Guo, 2015). RN's WeChat account posted an article in 2019 describing the features of its followers: according to RN, young readers aged eighteen to twenty-five accounted for the largest proportion of the audience (RN, 21 October 2019). In other words, if RN wants to maintain its dominant and prevalent status on the WeChat public account platform, its journalistic output should cater to the needs and interests of younger and tech-savvy audiences. America used to symbolize affluence, prosperity, and technological innovation, which is no longer the case in China. The majority of Chinese people have now altered their way of viewing the country, which frequently bullies China (Xiyang Zuo, 2021). The young generation, in particular, does not fall for America-made products and has negative thoughts about the US political system; they are proud of China's progress and "value being patriotic" (He, 20 March 2021). From the perspective of RN's young readers on WeChat, the audience's negative attitude towards the United States could form another possible reason to justify the dominance of negative coverage and the strengthening of *Negativity* in RN's US-related translated news. While state-led nationalism might have played a part in guiding RN's gatekeepers, bottom-up nationalism impacted by the audience also deserves further attention, especially in a context where target readers are of great importance.

### **6.5. The social system level: popular journalism with Chinese features**

The social system level of gatekeeping analysis taps into “society-level influences” on news production, such as ideological and cultural factors (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 105). News media content is not made in a vacuum, meaning that discussion concerning journalism cannot divorce from the general social environment it is produced. It is worth mentioning again that despite a more marketized and digitalized media environment, Chinese media outlets are still subject to government supervision and should primarily serve a political purpose (Sparks et al., 2016). Under such circumstances, “the intertwining of the Party logic and market logic” has prompted the appearance of “popular journalism with Chinese characteristics,” which aims to satisfy the target readership’s preference and fulfill the propaganda goals of the Party at the same time (Li, 1998, p. 315). This model balancing popularity and politics is considered more suitable for China’s unique media environment. RN’s WeChat account has opted for popular journalism with Chinese features to fit the Chinese social media context (Zeng & Li, 2023), a trend confirmed in this study as well.

Representations of America in the translated news about America published on *RN*’s WeChat account were consistent with the mainstream narratives and ideologies. Following the trade spats and other conflicts concerning various issues, US-China relations have already experienced a downward spiral. The pandemic further exacerbated the worsening of the China-US relationship: American politicians sought to blame China and invented racist labels to refer to the virus; China tried its best to refute conspiracy theories and condemned Trump’s politicizing and mishandling of the virus. The back-and-forth of this narrative battle between China and the US “further aggravates US-China competition over matters of governance, values, and ideals” (Gill, 2020, p. 97). As a way of counteracting America’s stigmatization of China, Chinese media turned to new media platforms to emphasize China’s firm stances, promote China’s voice and stories, and highlight the threats posed by the US. As a result, the negative images of America were not only reinforced but the strength of the Chinese system that could mobilize resources and people to contain the virus was foregrounded as well (Wang, 2022; Xiyang Zuo, 2021). In the end, coverage concerning the US led by an irrational leader, hit hard by the pandemic, and

facing an economic downturn, could be boiled down to highlighting the advantages of the socialist system. On top of reflecting well on China's political system, accounts of negative aspects regarding the largest economy could result in "nationalistic emotions" (Wang, 2022, p. 389). Generally speaking, RN's translated news stories under question resonated with the pro-China stance, representing an America in decline and hence underlyingly demonstrating China in a positive light. In a word, RN has completed its task as an official media outlet.

News stories are expected to be consumed by readers (Tandoc, 2014). Without a captivated audience, ideologies embedded in the news could not be spread and shared. Considering the rapid expansion of social media in China, it is urgent and necessary for the press to adopt "more popular styles and forms" to effectively disseminate mainstream narratives, especially to the younger generation (Xin, 2018, p. 9). A previous study by Zeng and Li (2023) found that RN's WeChat account opted to translate comments posted by foreign netizens on social media platforms like Youtube and Twitter as a new technique to popularize its journalistic content. This study noted the traces of sensational headlines, another method adopted by RN to pursue a greater reach of its translated news on WeChat that was expected to display a positive image of China via the negative coverage of the US.

## **6.6. Summary**

This chapter interprets some of the patterns and findings observed from the collected translated news within the scope of the gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The five levels of gatekeeping analysis undertaken in this section indicated that RN's gatekeepers, like translators and editors, could scarcely influence the gatekeeping process as they tend to make decisions based on the interests of the news organization. Other forces that could contribute to impacting RN's gatekeepers include some of the overarching journalistic principles promoted by the government, RN's special status and identity as an official media outlet that represents the voice of the foreign press, the changing audience with negative sentiments about the United States and China's unique media environment.



## Chapter 7 Conclusion

Chapter 7 concludes this research by briefly summarizing findings and results from the macro- and micro-level analyses and the interpretations of those noted patterns. The contributions and implications of this research are also elucidated. Then, the limitations and pitfalls concerning this study are discussed, followed by a section elaborating on future research avenues to extend the current project further.

### 7.1. Summary of results, findings, and contributions

This part focuses on recapitulating the results and findings of the current research project, followed by a subsection devoted to illustrating the methodological, theoretical, and practical contributions of the study as well as its implications for JTR and journalism.

#### 7.1.1. Results and findings

This study undertook macro-level and micro-level analyses of the collected news stories, considering news translation as a two-level gatekeeping practice. The macro-level analysis took the form of content analysis, which examined collected translated news stories from aspects including media sources, story topics, and tones. The micro-level analysis drew on the DNVA approach to investigate the (re)construction of news values within the sampled STs and TTs within the scope of manual and corpus-assisted analyses. Finally, based on the patterns and results arising from the above investigations, the gatekeeping theory was borrowed to interpret some of the reasons and factors that resulted in RN's translation of US-relevant news stories.

The first section of the macro-level analysis is concerned with news sources opted for by RN to cover the United States on WeChat. Generally speaking, RN tends to translate news stories originally produced by leading news agencies (e.g., *Reuters*, *AP*, and *AFP*), well-established and mainstream news organizations (e.g., *NYT*, *WP*, *GA*, and *FT*), and media outlets with pro-China stances (e.g., *Zaobao* and *Sputnik*). The dominance of media outlets with a worldwide reputation attested to RN's loyalty to traditional journalistic norms. Besides reliance on world-renowned media sources, traces of digital-only

news sites (e.g., *Buzzfeed* and *DB*) were discerned, demonstrating RN's embrace of the trends in the journalistic field in translating news for Chinese readers. Another aspect worth mentioning is the selection of less-expected media sources such as tabloid newspapers (e.g., *DB*, *DM*, and *DS*), far-right (e.g., *DC*), anti-China media (e.g., *VOA*), and also some news organizations from countries like Iran, Columbia, Argentina, and the Philippines. The employment of these media sources showcases that RN, as an official Chinese media outlet, possesses unprecedented resources in producing translated journalism. Although a large percentage of the identified sources are world-renowned news organizations, many of them are not considered reliable and trustworthy in China, particularly outlets such as *NYT*, *WP*, *BBC*, and *GA*, which in Chinese readers' opinion, often produce biased coverage of China and are often criticized by Chinese mainstream media. Nevertheless, the global media landscapes are still largely western-centric, meaning that RN cannot avoid using made-in-the-west journalism to cover international affairs via translation. However, RN's resistance to west-centrism can be observed via traces of diverse media sources produced by various news organizations, including those less-privileged ones, and the transformations the selected news stories underwent before publishing into translated forms.

In addition, the macro-level analysis zooms into the topics and story tones embedded in the collected news stories. Considering that the news reports retrieved from RN's WeChat account were published in 2020, it is unsurprising to see many stories concerning COVID-19 and the pandemic in the United States. Other topics noticed include some high-profile news events regarding America made to the headlines of international news (e.g., Trump's killing of Iranian major general Qasem Soleimani, the death of George Floyd, and the 2020 presidential election), some crucial issues frequently broached in China-US relations (e.g., the Taiwan question, affairs concerning Hong Kong and China-US trade spats), finance (e.g., the US stock market and the prospects of US economy after the pandemic), military and foreign affairs (e.g., the operations of US military bases and US relations with other countries). Generally speaking, most of the topics reported in the data belong to hard news, with few cases of soft news, indicating that RN's followers favor hard news topics and the most up-to-date reporting in accessing information about the US. Another salient pattern noted from the content analysis is the

overwhelming number of news stories negatively reflecting America or the involved American figures (e.g., Trump, Pompeo, and other US officials/politicians). News reports highlighting the negative aspects of America outnumber those with positive and neutral stances, which conforms to the ideological square proposed by van Dijk (2011). The negative coverage seems to strengthen the image of an America in decline. From another vantage point, negative delineations of China's long-time frenemy reflect a positive image of China that did a better job containing the virus and acted as a responsible country enhancing international cooperation. Such a move might further enhance nationalism and patriotism among Chinese readers, a task RN as an official news organization is expected to fulfill. Not every translated news story was categorized under the negative node. The positive news stories discerned, which only account for a tiny fraction of the data, depicted events like the collaboration between Chinese and American researchers and doctors during the pandemic and individuals' contribution to fighting against the virus. While a considerable amount of data was closely related to negative descriptions of the US, these positive reports reflected sparse traces of constructive journalism in RN's translated news.

The micro-level analysis through the prism of DNVA displayed patterns of newsworthiness construction manifest in the collected STs and TTs as well as the image accompanying their headlines. This dimension of investigation concerns both manual and corpus-assisted analysis. The manual analysis and comparison of news values construed in the English headlines and their corresponding Chinese counterparts revealed three notable differences. Firstly, *Proximity* is not as pronounced in the Chinese headlines as in the original English texts, attesting to the importance of US-China relations and Chinese readers' interest in America-related matters. Secondly, *Timeliness* is less prominent in Chinese headlines than in the English STs, which should be ascribed to the lack of grammaticalized time markers in Chinese and RN's adherence to traffic-oriented principles. Moreover, *Negativity* and *Superlativeness* are more foregrounded in RN's renditions than in their English counterparts, indicating RNs' tendency to highlight the negative aspects of news coverage concerning America.

The images accompanying the analyzed headlines were also examined through the lens of DNVA. The news values distributed across the images are less diverse and frequent than those in the headlines.

*Proximity*, *Eliteness*, *Personalization*, and *Timeliness* were founded to be frequently established in the pictures from STIC and TTIC. Statistical significance was noticed in the construction of *Proximity*, which further testified to the Chinese readership's interest in matters concerning the US and the importance of China-US relations. In addition, the construal of *Negativity* between STIC and TTIC displayed statistical significance. The images employed by RN highlight the negative aspects of the pandemic, the protests, and the top leader in the US. The move of othering America and even mocking the US president reflected RN's stance as an official media outlet and RN's efforts to captivate the attention of Chinese readers on WeChat.

The visual-verbal relations established in the STs and TTs were interrogated as well. *Proximity* and *Eliteness* were often reinforced in the examined English news stories, as the two news values were frequently tracked in the headlines and the accompanying images. The construal of *Personalization* in the English sources hinged more on the visual resources than linguistic ones. Linguistic resources from the English headlines contributed to constructing other news values, including *Impact*, *Superlativeness*, *Timeliness*, *Unexpectedness*, *Negativity*, and *Positivity*. Similar patterns were traced in RN's renditions: *Eliteness* has been repeatedly reinforced thanks to the mutual participation of verbal and non-verbal resources; *Personalization* was established mainly in the visual images; and the linguistic mode was primarily responsible for establishing *Impact*, *Proximity*, *Superlativeness*, *Timeliness*, *Unexpectedness*, *Negativity*, and *Positivity*. This snapshot of verbal-visual relations in the STs and TTs bore out the necessity of bringing together linguistic and visual analyses concerning newsworthiness construction as both modes "construe different, complementary aspects of an event as newsworthy" (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 219).

On top of manual analyses of news values established in the headlines and the accompanying images, the two full-text corpora were examined through the lens of several corpus techniques. The first-layer analysis focused on the word frequency lists. The top 200 words and bigrams from TTFTC and STFTC were examined. It was noted that TTFTC gave prominence to *Eliteness*, *Proximity*, and *Timeliness*, and TTFTC *Eliteness*, *Timeliness*, and *Negativity*. These patterns were

consistent with the major findings from the investigation of the collected English and Chinese headlines. An investigation of concordances regarding the Trump administration further highlighted the importance of source selection and RN's inclination to delete negative China-related elements.

The gatekeeping theory developed by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) was then drawn on to interpret the patterns of RN's newsworthiness construction practices in reporting the United States through the prism of translation. It is argued that RN's gatekeepers, as individuals, can barely influence the decisions made in producing translated news as they are a group of people undergoing the same socialization process and thus thinking alike. Factors like the promoted journalistic principles in China, RN's unique status as an official news organization offering translated news, RN's target audiences on WeChat, and China's journalistic landscapes have shaped RN's gatekeeping practices of (re)constructing the news values of the United States.

### **7.1.2. Contributions and implications**

This section summarizes the potential contributions and implications of this study. This research has brought insights into JTR and journalism studies theoretically, methodologically, pedagogically, and practically. From a theoretical aspect, this research has provided a specific case study of translated news on Chinese social media. Despite the development of JTR in the past two decades, translated news published on social media has rarely been researched in the existing literature (Zeng & Li, 2023). Moreover, this research contributes to enriching digital journalism studies by offering a non-western and translation-oriented perspective. In journalism studies, specifically digital journalism studies, aspects like language, discourse, and other humanities-centered perspectives are seldom broached (Steensen & Westlund, 2020). This study approaches translated news discourse on WeChat from an interdisciplinary perspective, which might channel more diverse perspectives and voices into digital journalism studies (Eldridge et al., 2019).

Methodologically, this study proposes an interdisciplinary framework built upon a broadened conceptualization of translation, the DNVA approach, and the gatekeeping theory. While translation scholars have introduced notions such as framing, gatekeeping, agenda-setting, and tabloidization into JTR, the overlapped space shared by JTR and journalism studies deserves further exploration. This study draws on an interdisciplinary conceptualization of translation as a two-dimension gatekeeping practice in news production to investigate the role of translation in selecting news sources and transforming the chosen ones. The notion of news values and DNVA were also introduced, and their potential for expanding the research scope of JTR was highlighted. This study seeks to bridge JTR and journalism studies by underlining the prospects of borrowing other concepts and theories from journalism studies to enrich JTR, such as news values and the gatekeeping theory.

Furthermore, this study is expected to function as reference material for students in journalism and journalists in terms of enhancing audience engagement. The findings of this research might deepen our understanding of social media and hence improve our social media literacy. Note that the data examined are mainly translated news stories about America that have achieved the highest traffic benchmark on RN's WeChat account. In a digital era that has posed significant challenges and opportunities to newsrooms and journalists, results and findings from analyzing news values and topics distributed across popular WeChat articles might offer inspiration for news staff. Trainee students might also benefit from the patterns summarized from the investigation, which could better equip them with tips and knowledge about "contemporary journalism" and "un/successful practices for multimodal news storytelling" before entering the journalistic industry (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 224). For instance, since hard topics about America are more likely to garner traffic, journalists might consider increasing relevant content in their news products. Since news values, including *Eliteness*, *Negativity*, *Timeliness*, and *Superlativeness*, were frequently discerned in the headlines of collected popular WeChat articles, linguistic resources construing these news values may make a news story more popular on WeChat, especially in reporting countries that have unfriendly relations with China.

Meanwhile, this research has raised some questions concerning journalistic standards and the quality of news. The emergence of digital media, especially various social media platforms, has brought profound

changes and nearly reshaped the journalistic industry (Franklin, 2013). While RN has relied chiefly on media resources with established fame to produce journalistic translations concerning the US, traces of less credible media like tabloid and far-right outlets (e.g., DM and DC) were tracked. It might be argued that RN was trying to diversify the sources it employed. Nevertheless, the participation of less trustworthy media sources in producing translated news necessitates fact-checking, which is deemed a vital journalistic activity to assess the accuracy of the information and maintain high-quality journalism (Mena, 2019).

The dominance of negative news stories in RN's 2020 popular translated news concerning America posed another question: whether it is necessary to post more positive information in a time of crisis. After all, positive news headlines are effective in making readers less angry and anxious compared with negative ones (Overgaard, 2021). In this research, news reports depicting the United States in a negative light dominated the data, which could enhance nationalism and patriotism among Chinese readers but with some risks of exacerbating hatred and exerting negative influences on "the unity and collaboration of the international community" (Yu & Liu, 2023, p. 17). However, in the data of this research, a handful of positive stories capturing over 100,000 clicks were relatively conspicuous among a large number of the WeChat articles that delineated the pandemic situation in the US as chaotic, awful, and out-of-control. The existence and popularity of these positive news stories about the importance of collaboration and individuals' contributions to fighting against the virus testified to the potential constructive journalism and RN's attempts to perform constructive journalistic practices even in reporting matters concerning China's top frenemy. Nevertheless, negative news stories still outnumber the positive ones in the collected data. The problem of imbalanced coverage of other countries is also relatively pronounced in western media. For their contribution exploring how *NYT* and *CD* covered the pandemic through domestic and international lenses, Yu and Liu (2023) noted *NYT*'s tendency to delineate China's pandemic as the worst. *Negativity* as a crucial news value has been pursued and prevailed in news production for a long time. It is time journalists moved beyond the practices of looking for selling points from negativity and started embracing the power of positive coverage. Parks (2021), for instance,

suggested that joy should become a news value as it may redirect our focus to aspects related to “well-being, delight, and even courage” (p. 821).

An official media outlet like RN, which enjoys numerous resources and privileges, has to sacrifice some journalism values (e.g., clickbait) for better performance of its news products on WeChat. After all, in a highly competitive media environment like the WeChat public account platform, more traffic means more profits, impact, and higher visibility. While sensational headlines or clickbait effectively arouse readers’ curiosity and prompt them to click on the full texts, they might lead to disappointed readers who expect a shocking story but get a standard narrative with an exaggerated headline. Furthermore, prioritizing attractive headlines in news production may lead to “systematic misrepresentations of news events,” given that the audiences are more prone to click articles whose headlines are eye-catching rather than those that matter to the world and society (Lee, 2022, p. 895). On top of captivating headlines, other factors like news topics and genres that could enhance the performance of news stories on social media should be considered (Kuiken et al., 2017). While clickbait headlines are more likely to yield a higher click-through rate, RN might factor into news topics and genres when producing journalistic content media to balance the quality and popularity of the news stories published on the WeChat public account platform.

Bell’s remarks in his 1991 seminal monograph are still insightful and inspiring in today’s journalistic world: in order to avoid misreporting, newswriters should produce headlines that are not too sensational and exaggerated, sustain the quality of statements, and detail temporal and geographical information (Bell, 1991). On top of these essential aspects, Bell (1991) pinpointed that it would require a long-term reshaping of news values guiding the gathering, organization, and presentation of news production if real change was desired. In RN’s case, instead of actively fitting into the social media battlefield by adhering to traffic-oriented principles, this official news organization may experiment with other novel forms of news content that maintain high-quality journalism and remain attractive to the target readership simultaneously.

The TS world has been calling for journalism studies to spare more attention to translation in news production. While news translation scholars have dedicated themselves to advancing JTR through



interdisciplinary lenses, similar initiatives could be barely witnessed from the non-TS side. The few exceptions barely touched the surface and essence of news translation by solely broaching concepts like transediting and translation (Valdeón, 2023b). In a digitalized and globalized journalistic field, translation is indispensable for the press to increase global impact and disseminate information and narratives in favor of their stances (R. A. Valdeón, 2020b; Valdeón, 2022a). However, compared with the initiative of translation scholars, journalism studies still seem indifferent to “the importance of language, let alone translation, in journalistic news processes” (van Doorslaer, 2022, p. 171). Journalism studies have become a full-fledged discipline thanks to “the large disciplinary frames from which they borrow” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 43). It is necessary for journalism studies to move beyond “traditional objects of study” if further development in the discipline is desired (Witschge et al., 2019, p. 975). As an inseparable part of news production, translation could become a crucial piece of the puzzle to enriching and advancing journalism studies. Considering the negligence that translation experienced in journalism studies, this study argues that journalism scholars might become more aware of the pivotal role of translation in news production if translation scholars can actively engage in the interdisciplinary dialogue and attest to the applicability of journalistic theories and concepts in researching journalistic translation. JTR, in tandem with news values and gatekeeping research, could be a good start.

## **7.2. Limitations and pitfalls of the research**

The data employed to perform the macro-level analysis contains news stories translated from multiple sources. Translated news like this testifies to the multi-source reality in journalistic translation, which has resulted in many methodological challenges in JTR (Davier & van Doorslaer, 2018). Given that multiple sources in multiple languages often contribute to making up one news story, it is tough to identify the STs involved, not to mention an in-depth comparison between STs and TTs. These issues are often considered “disturbing factors” in JTR for formulating methodology (Davier et al., 2018, p. 157). It is necessary and urgent to develop methodological approaches applicable to analyze the data with complex ST-TT relationships rather than eliminate them in the analysis. One possible solution to resolve the issue is to call for more “multilingual collaboration,” as Matsushita and Schäffner (2018)

suggested. It is a pity that this study did not analyze news stories with traces of more than one ST, which may display more prominent features of RN's translation practices, especially considering that translated news stories with multiple sources make up most of RN's journalistic output. In the future, I may invite scholars with expertise in languages other than English and Chinese to incorporate multilingual cooperation in researching RN's journalistic translation practices.

The Chinese news stories collected from RN's WeChat account are those about the United States, with more than 100,000 clicks and published in 2020. While these conditions set for data collection ensured the concentrated research focus of this study, they constrained the possibility of making any relatively general conclusions about RN's translation practices on WeChat. It might be argued that the collected news stories were distributed across different periods in 2020, and since they garnered the highest traffic, they could be considered representative of RN's WeChat output. However, a more effective solution to resolve the issue is investigating a larger dataset, for instance, all the translated news published on RN's WeChat account in 2020 and their corresponding sources. Meanwhile, the considerable amount of data available on digital media platforms calls for more advanced methodological tools beyond traditional manual approaches (Boumans & Trilling, 2016). The study involved manually filtering and selecting the needed data from a massive dataset, and the various layers of investigation concerned manual analyses. As much as the researcher has tried her best to avoid subjectivity and locate the data satisfying the selection criteria, it should be emphasized that DNVA did not guarantee exact numbers and results, and the findings should be considered as trends, not definitive facts or answers (Bednarek, 2016a; Bednarek et al., 2021). In the future, advanced techniques, such as automatic content analysis and topic modeling, could be employed to facilitate the investigation of translated news.

As mentioned in Section 3.1.2., only traditional news stories were retained for the analyses. In filtering the data, it is noted that RN often selected opinion articles for rendition, which according to Valdeón (2022a, p. 128), fulfill the task of influencing the target readers instead of informing them. Future studies might compare the selected sources for translating news stories and opinion articles and the transformations they have gone through. The genre issue was rarely broached in the existing literature concerning RN's translation practices, which often categorized traditional news stories and opinion

articles under the more general label news texts without telling them apart in analysis. Opinion articles and news stories are journalistic genres with distinctive writing styles and features. Thus, more nuanced analyses and comparative studies of renditions of disparate news genres might reveal genre-specific patterns and transformations.

This study did not incorporate other factors that might have impacted the click-through rate of a WeChat news article, like the position and the publication time of news stories. Moreover, the traffic number of over 100,000 clicks is only one indicator of a WeChat article's popularity. The number of likes, comments, and favorites could also be used to gauge the prevalence of a WeChat article. These aspects could be incorporated for more nuanced analyses of translated news on WeChat.

Furthermore, the image analysis through the prism of DNVA only attended to the pictures accompanying the collected English and Chinese headlines, leading to a somewhat unbalanced number of images between STIC and TTIC. Instead of static images, many English news reports have supplemented videos to accompany the headlines. The current study did not include these videos, which might display other patterns of newsworthiness construction in the dataset. In the future, we might analyze both video and images to present a more comprehensive picture of the establishment of news values by the press in the era of digital journalism.

### **7.3. Future research avenues**

An enhanced and deepened interaction between journalism and translation studies by “drawing on cross-disciplinary concepts” might lead to more novel research avenues in both fields (Valdeón, 2023b, p. 13). In order to open up JTR, besides news values and gatekeeping, two notions discussed in this research, other concepts and notions often broached in journalism studies, might bring other refreshing insights. For instance, Valdeón (2023c) drew on tabloidization, a trend observed in many legacy news organizations, to explore how NYT acclimated to the Spanish media context. Agenda-setting, another enduring concept in journalism and communication studies, was employed by Ping (2022b) to examine the role of translation in facilitating RN's practices to set the cultural agenda for Chinese readers. In addition to these interdisciplinary attempts, journalistic concepts like sensationalism, platformization,

popular journalism, emotional journalism, and constructive journalism, to name a few, might be potential analytical points of entry to expand JTR further.

This study only attended to the translated news produced by one Chinese news organization and relevant to one specific country. In other words, the data could be enlarged in multiple ways to explore the (re)construction of news values mediated by translation. For example, a diachronic perspective can be channeled into the current project by comparing *RN*'s journalistic translations about the US on WeChat in 2019 and 2020. As a result, we can observe whether any disparate patterns of newsworthiness construction could be discerned before and after the outbreak of COVID-19 in China and America. Other comparative studies can also be undertaken: translated news about one topic produced by *RN* can be compared with news organizations such as *NYT* and *BBC*, which are media outlets of disparate ideologies. Cross-cultural comparative studies like these can help us identify similarities and differences concerning newsworthiness construction practices by outlets in different journalistic landscapes. The focus can also be put on comparing *RN*'s newsworthiness construal via translation of China's friends and frenemy: translated news concerning Serbia, for instance, can be examined through the lens of DNVA and contrasted with those about the US. The research subject can also be more specified: the focus could zoom into the discursive newsworthiness construction of a specific event or news value. It will be of great interest to explore how news values are foregrounded and deprioritized in covering a high-profile news event, like the US presidential election, in translated news published by *RN* on WeChat. In addition to the "topic-based approach to DNVA" (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 253), we can opt for examining the establishment of one particular news value. For instance, how *Timeliness* is reconstrued from English to Chinese in news translation is worth further exploration, given that Chinese is a language without grammaticalized tense (M. Liu, 2015).

Previous literature concerning DNVA has conflated with other theories and concepts for more targeted analyses and focused research scope. For instance, Bednarek (2016b) has discussed the possible integration of DNVA and attribution strategy analysis, a crucial journalistic element for news credibility. Zhang and Caple (2021) draw on the social actor-network and DNVA to compare the newsworthiness construction practices between Chinese and foreign English-language media in the coverage of Li Na.

Molek-Kozakowska and her colleague have combined the DNVA approach with stylistic analysis to analyze the linguistic resources employed to attract readers in different types of news, including environmental science journalism (Molek-Kozakowska, 2017) and populist newsfeed (Molek-Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021). Evaluation is another concept that often co-occurs with DNVA, considering the tremendous impact of evaluative language on discursive newsworthiness construction. For their part, He and Caple (2020) have explored how appraisal resources contribute to implementing *Negativity* and *Positivity* in the English reports published by *China Daily*. DNVA-oriented JTR can draw many inspiring insights from these previous attempts, exploring novel research avenues in news translation and extending the research scope.

Moreover, this study barely demonstrated the potential of various corpus techniques in informing investigations concerning news values. Corpus techniques like keywords, semantic tags, and part-of-speech (POS) tagging might result in novel findings concerning newsworthiness (re)construction involved in news translation. Natural language processing (NLP) methods have also been suggested to enhance corpus-based DNVA (Bednarek et al., 2021). DNVA is considered a complementary approach to newsworthiness investigations from the material, social and cognitive dimensions (Caple & Bednarek, 2016). Thus, DNVA, as a product-oriented approach to news translation, can be “tied to ethnographic and cognitive research” (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 139) to triangulate the research and gain a more holistic view of newsworthiness construction in journalistic translation.

In line with technological development, newsrooms have started to embrace the tech-savvy trend by using various automatic tools to tackle tasks that human journalists used to fulfill (Wu et al., 2019). RN has been pioneering the technological revolution by developing a patented machine-translation system to improve the efficiency of the translation workflow (RN, 27 October 2021). Future research might look into the role of machine translation in RN’s journalistic translation practices, which could shed light on establishing a standardized practice for performing news translation tasks.

## Appendices

News value coding scheme for Chinese and English linguistic resources

<i>News values</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Linguistic devices</i>	<i>Examples from English news headlines</i>	<i>Examples from Chinese news headlines</i>
<b>Eliteness</b>	<i>Eliteness</i> is construed when a news event involves “the high status of the individuals, organizations or nations” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 43).	High-status-markers such as role labels, recognized names, important organizations, status-indicating adjectives, and descriptions of fame (Bednarek, 2015, p. 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, Nancy Pelosi, Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Hilary Clinton, Kanye West</li> <li>• former <b>top</b> Obama official, a <b>global</b> leader, Navy admiral, President, Marine 3-Star</li> <li>• WHO (World Health Organization), White House, CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), Pentagon, Wall Street, Facebook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 特朗普(Trump), 拜登(Biden), 奥巴马(Obama), 华春莹(Hua Chunying, the spokesperson for China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 孟晚舟(Meng Wanzhou, Huawei’s CFO)</li> <li>• 纽约市长(The Mayor of New York City), 第一夫人(the First Lady)</li> <li>• 中国<b>顶尖学者</b>(<b>top</b> Chinese scholars), 巨头(tycoon)</li> <li>• 华为(Huawei), 五角大楼(Pentagon), 美海军陆战队(United States Marine Corps), 白宫(White House), 美众议院(United States House of Representatives), 华尔街(Wall Street)</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<i>Impact</i> is concerned with an event's severe or significant consequences (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 43).	Linguistic resources that display assessments of significance or depictions of highly severe consequences, especially <b>explicit</b> references to the effects of an event (Bednarek, 2015, p. 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <b>major</b> crisis, a <b>gilded petri dish</b> for <b>a global disease</b>, world’s <b>worst</b> death toll, A <b>national</b> crisis</li> <li>• Coronavirus-Triggered Downturn Could <b>Cost Five Million U.S. Jobs</b> (the profound impact of the pandemic)</li> <li>• Coronavirus Could <b>Infect 650,000 People in the U.S. by May</b>, Even If Transmission Is Cut in Half: Study (the high number of infected cases in America)</li> <li>• Coronavirus cases in the US military <b>surpass 1,500</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>惊人内幕</b> (the <b>shocking</b> inside scoop), 一个<b>令人震惊的事实</b> (an appalling fact), 触犯众怒 (made everybody angry), <b>超级传播事件</b> (a <b>super-spreader</b> event), 这是<b>大屠杀</b> (This is a <b>massacre</b>), 致命一击(a deadly strike)</li> <li>• 美国<b>确诊病例超 50 万</b> (America has <b>more than 500,000 confirmed cases</b>)</li> <li>• 亚马逊<b>近 2 万名员工阳性</b> (Amazon has <b>nearly 20,000 employees who tested positive</b>)</li> <li>• 蓬佩奥引发美澳<b>外交风暴</b> (Pompeo has caused a US-Australia <b>diplomatic storm</b>)</li> </ul>
<b>Personalization</b>	<i>Personalization</i> is established when a news story is relevant to “personal or human aspects” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 44).	References to ordinary people (Bednarek, 2015, p. 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gift of the Mask: Cuomo lauds <b>retired farmer’s</b> gesture</li> <li>• Trump pushes conspiracy theory about <b>Buffalo protester</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>9 名纽约市民</b>的 24 小时(<b>Nine New York residents’</b> 24 hours)</li> <li>• <b>七旬老农</b>的一个举动令纽约州长落泪(<b>A septuagenarian farmer</b> has made the Governor of New York cry with his move.)</li> </ul>
<b>Proximity</b>	<i>Proximity</i> is	References to places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• America, US, Americans, California, New</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 武汉(Wuhan), 中国(China), 北京(Beijing), 香</li> </ul>

	constructed when a news story is culturally or geographically close to the target readership (Bednarek & Caple, 2012a, p. 42).	geographically or culturally near the target readers; references to the nation/community via deictics, generic place references, adjectives; inclusive first-person plural pronouns (Bednarek, 2015, pp. 3-4)	<p>York, Alaska, Georgia (the establishment of geographical <i>Proximity</i> for American readers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White House, Pentagon, Trump, Pompeo, Biden, Obama, democrats, republicans, Twitter, Facebook (the establishment of cultural <i>Proximity</i> for American readers)</li> <li>• <u>Trump's</u> German withdrawal <u>endangers us all</u></li> </ul>	港(Hong Kong), 台湾(Taiwan), 南海(South China Sea), 亚洲(Asia) (the establishment of geographical <i>Proximity</i> for Chinese readers)
<b>Superlativeness</b>	<i>Superlativeness</i> is construed when a news event is “of high intensity/large scope” (Bednarek, 2015, p. 4).	Intensifiers, quantifiers, intensified lexis, metaphor and simile, comparison, repetition, lexis of growth, and only/just/alone/already + time/distance or related lexis (Bednarek, 2015, p. 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <u>much bigger</u> threat, <u>global</u> pandemic, world's <u>worst</u> death toll, <u>Biggest Losers</u> From China Delisting Law, <u>sweeping</u> police overhaul</li> <li>• Trump's Florida sanctuary becomes <u>a gilded petri dish</u> for a global disease; <u>A city under siege, a diplomatic storm</u></li> <li>• <u>So</u> anxious</li> <li>• Susan Rice <u>Bashes</u> Pompeo Over ‘Wuhan Virus’</li> <li>• New York area <u>walloped</u> as <u>global virus deaths pass 100,000</u></li> <li>• President's intelligence briefing book <u>repeatedly</u> cited virus threat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 政府抗疫措施 <u>太迟太少</u>(The government's measures taken to contain the pandemic was <u>too late and too few</u>); 美国人 <u>很慌</u>(American are <u>very flustered</u>.)</li> <li>• 历史上 <u>最大谎言</u>(<u>the biggest</u> lie in history), <u>重大危机</u>(a <u>significant</u> crisis), <u>国家耻辱</u>(<u>a national disgrace</u>), <u>强烈警告</u>(<u>strong warning</u>)</li> <li>• 美国新冠病毒检测 <u>乱作一团</u>(America's coronavirus testing is <u>a scene of chaos</u>)</li> <li>• 美国陷入衰退几乎 <u>板上钉钉</u>(It is nearly <u>cast in stone</u> that America will slip into recession)</li> </ul>
<b>Timeliness</b>	<i>Timeliness</i> highlights a news story's newness, recency, or immediacy (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 55).	Temporal references; Present and present perfect tense; implicit time references through lexis; current trends, newness, seasonality, change (Bednarek, 2015, p. 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The flu is a much bigger threat than <u>coronavirus, for now</u>.</li> <li>• <u>New Trump attack ad</u> appears to suggest Washington state's former Asian American governor is a Chinese official</li> <li>• NYC Mayor de Blasio's daughter arrested during <u>Saturday night protests</u>; Tiffany Trump joins #blackoutTuesday movement in solidarity with <u>George Floyd protesters</u></li> <li>• Trump angrily <u>defends</u> his handling of <u>coronavirus pandemic</u></li> <li>• Five Doctors From Around The Country Who Went To A Conference In New York <u>Now</u> Have <u>COVID-19</u></li> <li>• Explicit references to the coronavirus; references to the presidential election; references to George Floyd protests,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 疫情(pandemic), 新冠疫情(the COVID-19 pandemic), 新冠肺炎(coronavirus), 病毒(virus), 防疫物资(epidemic prevention supplies), 确诊病例(confirmed cases), 抗疫(fight against the pandemic)</li> <li>• <u>本周</u> (<u>this week</u>), <u>10 天内</u>三人确诊 (three confirmed cases <u>in 10 days</u>)</li> <li>• 蓬佩奥对世卫组织发起 <u>新的</u>攻击(Pompeo launches a <u>new</u> attack on the World Health Organization)</li> <li>• 蓬佩奥必须 <u>立刻</u>辞职(Pompeo must <u>immediately</u> resign)</li> <li>• <u>G20 峰会</u>才开一半特朗普却为这件事逃了 (Only halfway through G20 summit, Trump ran away for this)</li> <li>• 在这个领域中国 <u>首超</u>美国成为第一 (In this area, China has <u>surpassed America for the first time</u> and become No.1)</li> <li>• Explicit references to the coronavirus; references to the presidential election</li> </ul>

<p><b>Unexpectedness</b></p>	<p>The establishment of <i>Unexpectedness</i> is relevant to news events that are very unusual, rare, or unexpected for the target readers (Bednarek &amp; Caple, 2017, p. 55).</p>	<p>References to unusual happenings/surprises, evaluations of unexpectedness, and comparisons demonstrating unusuality (Bednarek, 2015, p. 5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President Trump <u><i>shaken by scenes from New York hospital</i></u></li> <li>• <u><i>85 Times Higher Than Reported</i></u></li> <li>• Trump's health secretary says US has world's worst death toll <u><i>because Americans are so unhealthy</i></u></li> <li>• US government is <u><i>funding website spreading Covid-19 disinformation</i></u></li> <li>• <u><i>Kanye West announces he's running for president in 2020 bombshell</i></u> book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u><i>惊人内幕</i></u>(the <u><i>shocking</i></u> inside scoop); 一个令人震惊的事实(an appalling fact)</li> <li>• 特朗普侄女<u><i>爆炸性</i></u>新书爆料(Donald Trump's niece's <u><i>explosive</i></u> new book)</li> <li>• TikTok 美国用户: <u><i>因为教中国孩子英语我可能会坐牢</i></u>(American TikTok users: <u><i>I could go to jail for teaching Chinese kids English</i></u>)</li> <li>• 特朗普: <u><i>美国新冠确诊病例全球最多是“荣誉勋章”</i></u>(Trump: <u><i>America's highest number of COVID-19 confirmed cases is “a badge of honor”</i></u>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Negativity</b></p>	<p><i>Negativity</i> is related to “negative aspects of an event” (Bednarek &amp; Caple, 2012a, p. 42).</p>	<p>Negative attitude/emotions/evaluative language/lexis; Descriptions of negative behaviors (Bednarek, 2015, p. 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trump, US officials <u><i>send mixed messages</i></u> on virus risk here</li> <li>• California <u><i>declares emergency</i></u> after <u><i>1st coronavirus death</i></u></li> <li>• <u><i>Stocks remain lower</i></u> after trading resumes</li> <li>• <u><i>Confusion and chaos</i></u> surround coronavirus testing in the US</li> <li>• Pompeo, G-7 foreign ministers <u><i>spar over</i></u> ‘Wuhan virus’</li> <li>• Trump <u><i>angrily defends</i></u> his handling of coronavirus pandemic</li> <li>• Another <u><i>Virus Victim</i></u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 蓬佩奥屡提“武汉病毒”<u><i>别有用心</i></u>(Pompeo's repeated mention of "Wuhan virus" <u><i>has ulterior motives</i></u>)</li> <li>• 美国国土安全部 <u><i>发出警告</i></u>(The U.S. Department of Homeland Security <u><i>has issued a warning</i></u>)</li> <li>• 国际刑事法院获准调查美军蓬佩奥 <u><i>百般阻挠</i></u>(International Criminal Court gets permission to investigate U.S. forces; Pompeo <u><i>has tried everything he could do to prevent that</i></u>)</li> <li>• 美国暗杀伊朗将军的行为 <u><i>非法</i></u>(The assassination of an Iranian general by the United States is <u><i>illegal</i></u>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Positivity</b></p>	<p><i>Positivity</i> is established when a news event is “discursively construed as positive” (Bednarek &amp; Caple, 2017, p. 55).</p>	<p>Positive attitude/emotions/evaluative language/lexis; Descriptions of positive behaviors (Bednarek, 2015, p. 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home delivery <u><i>has helped China through its coronavirus crisis</i></u></li> <li>• 24 hours in <u><i>the fight to save New York</i></u></li> <li>• Gift of the Mask: Cuomo <u><i>lauds</i></u> retired farmer’s gesture</li> <li>• US and Chinese researchers <u><i>team up</i></u> for hunt into Covid origins</li> <li>• China is <u><i>Winning the Trade War</i></u> With Trump</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 特朗普:我们收到了来自中俄的物资 特别好 (Trump: We have received supplies from China and Russia <u><i>Very good</i></u>)</li> <li>• 纽约市疫情最严重时期正在过去(New York is <u><i>getting over with the worst pandemic situation</i></u> )</li> <li>• 中国引领全球油市 <u><i>惊人反弹</i></u>(China has led a <u><i>stunning rebound</i></u> in global oil markets)</li> <li>• <u><i>超越政治紧张今年中美科研合作不减反增</i></u> (<u><i>Go beyond political tensions China-US scientific cooperation has increased rather than declined</i></u>)</li> </ul>



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