

# **A Comparative Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis of American and Chinese News in The Economist.**

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## **Abstract**

The political and economic developments in China and the United States are closely followed and reported on by news magazines and newspapers around the world, including The Economist, a reputable weekly newspaper with wide circulation globally. However, while The Economist now has editorial offices in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, is regarded as having little reporting bias, and exercises rigorous fact-checking, it is evident that the way The Economist reports on China often differs to the way it reports on the United States. In order to examine these differences in more detail and examine whether they are informed by certain underlying ideological beliefs, this study developed and analysed two corpora based on The Economist's news reports in 2019; one containing The Economist's reports on China and another containing The Economist reports on the United States. It involved a corpus-based critical discourse analysis carried out using the online corpus analytical tool Sketch Engine. The results show that The Economist's attitudes towards China still, in part, reproduce the Western oppositional thinking about, and rejection of communist governments that emerged during the Cold War.

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### **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:  Date: 16/12/2021

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# **Chapter 1:**

## **Introduction**

### **1.0 Overview**

This dissertation uses corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to examine how The Economist, an international news magazine, employs language in different ways to report on China and the United States. The aim is to examine how The Economist's language choices when reporting on these two countries are often shaped by certain underlying ideological beliefs. The focus, in particular, draws attention to the way that often negative beliefs about China impact on The Economist's reports about the country, although, and in comparison, attention will also be given to the types of beliefs that impact on The Economist reports on the United States.

In order to provide a background and motivation for the analysis, the first part of this introductory chapter will discuss the Western media, in particular those news organisations that publish in English, and the way they report on China. Following that, the motivation for the study will be discussed, after which a description of the organisation of this dissertation will be provided.

### **1.1 English-language media and the reproduction of ideology**

Since the rise of colonialism, the global influence of English has continuously expanded. In contemporary world relations, English is not only a national language, but also a medium of world communication (Pennycook, 1994). This increasingly pivotal role of English has also heightened the global influence of a number of English language news media, including the Times, the New York Times, and The Economist. While these English-language news media make claims to fair and balanced reporting about world events, research has shown that their

reports, albeit often unconsciously, tend to reproduce the social and political biases of the English-speaking countries in which they are published (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984; Fairclough, 2001; De Beer, 2008; Lazaridou & Krestel, 2016; Lazaridou et al., 2017; Islentyeva, 2021). Although their international readers will not necessarily be swayed by the beliefs and values reproduced in one or two news reports, the influence of news is accumulating. If the news media maintain the reproduction of a particular political orientation or ideology for a sustained period, this can inevitably affect their readers' views (Fairclough, 2001).

## **1.2 The image of China in western media discourse**

Western media are often accused of not being able to objectively report foreign news, especially the news of third world countries (De Beer, 2008). They also often hold western stereotypes about developing countries and communist countries (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984). The image of China in the western media, especially in English media discourse, is particularly problematic. This is because compared to the western countries, China has a particularly unique history and uniquely different cultural traditions, which is difficult for those outside of China to fully comprehend. Similarly, in terms of politics, China has a distinctly different political system.

As a result, China and the Chinese government tend to be widely criticised in western media discourse. Hewitt (2011), for example, found that in interviews and investigations with western journalists that there is indeed a phenomenon of reporting bias against China. When questioned on the reasons for this bias, some interviewees said that they were affected by editors' stereotypes about China, some said it was due to a reporting overemphasis on certain topics, such as human rights issues, while others said it was due to ignorance of the country's real news. A number of Chinese scholars have also examined the image of China in western media. Guo (2012), for example, found that negative reporting was often the result of global concerns, pointing out that in 2008, the tense relationship between China and the western media was due to the Tibet issue. In another example, Tian and Chao (2012) analysed The

Economist's report on the Xinjiang incident and found that although the news was timely and comprehensive, the report also contained misleading pictures and a degree of bias. In another example Zhou (2021), analysed the New York Times, the Times, the BBC and six other western news media reports on China's response to the novel coronavirus epidemic issues. She found that in their news discourse, the western media typically reported China as covering up or losing control of the pandemic, and strategically used rhetoric to establish a negative Chinese narrative.

### **1.3 The Motivation for the research**

From a Chinese perspective, western news media are often regarded as a homogenous group. In this view, they are not news companies in a competitive relationship, but news collectives united by ideology to carry out a biased narrative about China. As a Chinese student studying in an English-speaking country, I am no stranger to English and English media, and often find that some English-language reports exhibit an unwarranted prejudice against China. In some cases, I suspect the bias might be borne out of size limitations, and the lack of cultural or historical background information, which is often able to locate the focus of an article in its wider context. That is, if we do not have the same historical or cultural background knowledge, it can often be difficult for us to understand each other. In other cases, I would suggest that some of the biased reporting results from an unfamiliarity with the nuances of Chinese politics. People who grew up in a western context, for example, tend to have difficulty understanding the meaning of the party and the state to China and Chinese people.

In light of these concerns, I have become interested in the language used to report on China, how it might differ from language used to report on other countries, and whether there is really a latent ideology in these reports. My particular interest lies in the language choices which typically go unnoticed by readers, for example verb choice, collocation, repetition of certain words. These types of linguistic features can be revealed through the resources of Corpus Analysis (McEnery et al. 2006; Baker, 2006; Gee & Handford, 2012; Baker, 2012;

McEnery & Hardie, 2012) and are the focus of the critical discourse work of Fairclough (1989, 1992a, 1995, 2013) that examines the relationship between language choice and ideology. Further details of the corpus-assisted critical discourse analytical methodology used in this study will be provided in Chapter 3.

The Economist was chosen as the focus for the study. The Economist is an English-language news media with a long history and strong influence. It has editorial offices in most parts of the world, which ensures that its news reports are timely and accurate. It is also regarded as lacking prejudice and being loyal to facts. The Economist has established two independent reporting columns for China and the United States. In terms of circulation, the Audit Bureau of Circulations (UK) states that he Economist issued an average of 1,583,955 copies per issue in the second half of 2020, and an average of 1,643,771 copies per issue in the second half of 2021. Among them, North America accounts for the largest distribution share, with 53% and 55% respectively, followed by the United Kingdom with 17% and 16%, and continental Europe third with 16% (Audit Bureau of Circulations UK, 2021, 2022). This indicates that the main readership of The Economist is North American and European readers. The Economist is also different from many other daily news newspapers, in that it provides an analysis of the news and openly presents journalistic opinion in news reports (The Economist, 2022). It is also worth noting that The Economist still reports news anonymously, which suggests that the views of The Economist's articles can be regarded as its unanimous views as a news collective (Arrese, 2022). Taking these details into account, it is possible that the Economist's analysis of news might be influenced by ideology and include analytical bias, a reason why The Economist provides an interesting object of analysis.

In order to respond to my research motives, I decided to compare The Economist's news reports on the US news and Chinese news, using a corpus-assisted methodology. To date there has also been no research that critically examines the different language choices found in The Economist online news reports of China and the United States using a corpus-analysis.

Finally, as an avid reader of The Economist, I am also familiar with the type of data collected for the analysis.

The study seeks to answer two questions:

How does The Economist use language to differently report on China and the United States?

What does this different language use reveal about the underlying ideologies and attitudes of The Economist towards these two nations?

#### **1.4 Organization of the chapters**

The remaining chapters of this research are divided into eight parts. The second chapter reviews a number of relevant scholarly texts related to this research. The literature review will begin with a focus on the power and influence of English and English news media. This will be followed by a focus on critical discourse studies and the analysis of news media. After that this chapter will discuss studies which examine the image of China in western news media, followed by a brief discussion of the importance of The Economist.

As indicated, Chapter 3 introduces the research methods employed for this study, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, and critical discourse studies. It also details the two corpora established for analysis, the process of data collection and the resources used for the analysis. Finally, shortcomings of the methodology used for this dissertation are raised.

Chapter 4 is the first part of the analysis, and also its foundation. In this chapter, the frequency list and keyword list of the two corpora are introduced. The findings of this chapter will play a decisive role in the analysis carried out in chapters 5 to 7.

Chapter 5 focuses on the language used by The Economist in reporting on Chinese and American political figures and political events. Chapter 6 focuses on the verbs used by The Economist when reporting on news about China and the United States. Chapter 7 analyses the use of adjectives in The Economist's reports about the two countries.

The final discussion chapter, Chapter 8 draws conclusions on the main observations in Chapters 4 to 7, and concludes by discussing the limitations of this study, but also its potential impact on future research.

# **Chapter2:**

## **Literature review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview of scholarly literature that analyses the discourse of the news media, The Economist, and the use of critical discourse analysis and corpus analysis to investigate news media discourse. The chapter begins by reviewing studies that discuss the importance, impact and power of the English language and its media. Following that it will examine research that uses critical discourse analysis, as well as a combination of discourse analysis and corpus analysis to investigate the news media. It will then look at critical discourse studies of the media which examine portrayals of China in the news media, and conclude with a review of discourse analytical studies of The Economist.

### **2.1 Power and the discourse of the news media**

According to Fairclough (2001), in contemporary society, the mass media, including newspapers, television, radio and film, are able to exercise a type of hidden power over their consumers. He states that this is because the producers of these media have sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented, and even the subject positions of their audiences (Fairclough, 2001). He goes further, however, and points out that for the newspaper in particular, it is perhaps not the individual journalist or editor who is actually exercising power in the article, but the news media itself, the institution. The consequence is that the news institution plays a crucial role as the bridge between the news and audiences. It is worth noting that during this transmission, news organizations can selectively report the facts they want to present to the audience. Given that the media is typically owned by the government, wealthy individuals, or wealthy families, it operates as a means for the expression and reproduction of the power of the dominant class

and clique. In the British news media, for example, the balance of sources and perspectives and ideology is overwhelmingly in favour of existing power-holders (Fairclough, 2001). While, the news media may have a certain ideological or political orientation, a single text does not significantly affect the audiences. Instead, the effects of media power are cumulative. In other words, if the news reports news events with an ideological or political orientation over a long period of time, readers' views on the relevant events may be influenced.

The primary way in which the news media is viewed as influencing audiences is through discourse. Gunther Kress (1994), for example, showed how the news media explains events in order to "make sense of the world for their audiences" (p. 24). Kress states that this sense making primarily involves providing explanations for the events; explanations that reproduce a news organisation's particular view of the events. According to Kress:

These are the events to attend to; and, by implication 'don't bother yourself with the rest'. The selected events have to be 'mediated', and this involves a second, different kind of explanation. It consists of saying: 'That's what this event is like, and that's how it is best understood' (Kress, 1994, p. 24).

Fairclough (2001) has also pointed out the 'top-down' nature or 'one-sidedness' of mass media discourse where, through the lack of interaction between 'interpreters' of text and its 'producers', the former simply evolve into text 'consumers' (p. 41). Fairclough theorises that as a result, the language of the news can be manipulated by those in power to serve their interests, and that this impacts widely upon society and its values (Fairclough, 2001, p. 74).

## 2.2 Power and the English language

English, as a global language, has powerful cultural, political and ideological force. The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language, published in 1987, describes English in this way:

English is used as an official or semi-official language in over 60 countries, and has a prominent place in a further 20. It is either dominant or well-established in all six continents. It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertising. Over two-thirds of the world's scientists write in English. Three quarters of the world's mail is written in English. Of all the information in the world's electronic retrieval systems, 80% is stored in English. English radio programmes are received by over 150 million in 120 countries. Over 50 million children study English as an additional language at primary level; over 80 million study it at secondary level (these figures exclude China). In any one year, the British Council helps a quarter of a million foreign students to learn English, in various parts of the world. In the USA alone, 337,000 foreign students were registered in 1983. (Crystal, 1987, p. 358)

Pennycook (1994) reviews the evolution of English from a national language to a global medium of communication. He identifies English as having a sense of 'worldliness'. This refers to the worldly character of English due to its widespread global expansion, and as a result, its ability not just to reflect, but to constitute the affairs of the world. As a result, the use of English involves engaging in a type of social action which produces and reproduces certain types of social and cultural relations. This is because there is a strong relationship between 'English' and global discourses of capitalism, democracy, education, and development. English, therefore, is not only a communicable language, but also a habit of thinking.

### **2.3 Power and the English language news media**

According to Pennycook (1994), the combination of English and the news media, i.e., the

English news media, is extremely powerful. He states that discourses of colonialism, as well as those of contemporary world relations have both facilitated and been facilitated by the production and distribution of English. This worldliness of English enables the media to proliferate around the world, and hence the influence of English media is felt globally rather than necessarily being restricted to a country where English is the mother language. The widespread influence of English, particularly in China, is one of the primary reasons why I was interested in analysing the English news media coverage.

## **2.4 News values and journalistic practice**

The values of a news organisation have been discussed as combining a reflection of organisational, sociological and cultural standards with economic factors (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). In 2007, Schultz, for example, considered six news values, timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict, sensation and exclusivity, to be the most important. Schultz' describes timeliness as new information, while relevance is seen as the direct relationship the audience has with the news. Niblock and David (2007), however, pointed out that business pressures also influence the choice of news stories, and as such viewed the objectivity of news as difficult to achieve. While expounding the news, reporters and editors are also often constrained by many factors, including political values, which can introduce bias into news reports (Boudana, 2011). Whether influenced by factors such as economics or politics, news media inevitably struggle to be objective when selecting and elaborating on news events. Ultimately, the construction of news stories is ideologically influenced.

## **2.5 The critical analysis of news media discourse**

Following the work of Fairclough (2001) and Kress (1994), there has been a burgeoning use of the resources of critical discourse analysis to analyse the English language news media. Power et al. (2019), for example, analysed *Forbes*, *Fortune* and *Bloomberg Business Week's* coverage of women between 2015 and 2017. They randomly selected 21 issues from each

magazine to form a corpus of 2,317 articles and analysed this corpus using critical discourse analysis. Their study found that women were mentioned significantly less than men in those journals. However, in more than half of the mentions, women were in charge of the action, the subject of the verb. These magazines also focus more on what women do than what women might say. In the end, they found that although women were underrepresented in these journals, they were not misrepresented.

In another example Zhou and Qin (2020) collected twenty New York Times reports on the Trade war between China and the United States as language samples, constructed a corpus, and used UAM Corpus Tool to tag the data. They found that the New York Times described China as a centralized state in its news discourse. In addition, the New York Times emphasizes its position by identifying and obscuring sources of information, using semi-specific and unidentified sources to construct a negative image of China.

Some researchers have focused on the use of CDA to analyse the ideological beliefs and values behind news media reports in non-western countries, or western news media reports in eastern countries. Fauzan (2014), for example, used critical discourse analysis to examine the news reports of Indonesian Metroty and found that ideologically their strategy is to amplify the shortcomings of news events and downplay the advantages. According to Shojaei et al. (2013), western newspapers, especially British and American newspapers, such as the Daily Mirror and the New York Times, exhibit a pronounced degree of ideology when reporting on the conflict of ideas between Iran and western countries. A number of studies have focused on the British and American media reports on vulnerable groups, such as refugees. Boeva (2016) for instance, found that in the United Kingdom and the United States, conservative news reports on refugees are excessively negative. In addition, Ozdora-Aksak et al. (2021) also pointed out that when reporting on refugees, the British news media regularly hints at the connection between the arrival of a large number of refugees and the potential destruction of the country.

More recently the use of critical discourse analysis has been combined with corpus analysis to critically analyse the English language news media. Wang (2018) used corpus-based critical discourse analysis to compare China's air pollution reports published by China Daily before and after October 22, 2011, when Pan Shiyi, CEO of Sohu China, posted a message on Weibo criticizing air pollution in China. He used the corpus tool AntConc to process the two corpora he collected and analysed them by keyword function, word frequency and word collocation. He found that after October 22, the word *fog* was replaced by *haze* in the China Daily which also admitted that haze was the harmful result of human action and not a simple weather phenomenon. However, despite no significant improvement in China's air pollution, China Daily succeeded in projecting a responsible Chinese government to the public and demonstrated the Chinese government's determination to tackle air pollution. His research found that the Chinese government effectively uses the official English-language media, the China Daily, to frame China's air pollution in the public discourse and tilt the coverage toward the government.

Also focusing on the issue of air pollution in China, Liu and Li (2017) compared reports in China Daily with three major newspapers in the United States and Britain, the New York Times, the Times, and the Guardian. They collected all the reports on air pollution in China from the four newspapers from 2011 to 2014 and built two corpora: one representing China Daily and the other representing the three other newspapers. Using the corpus software Wordsmith 5.0 and the Britain National Corpus as a reference corpus, they found that the English language media in China takes opposite positions on environmental reports compared to the UK and US. The China Daily tends to project a positive image of the Chinese government's climate action, for example, praising China as having taken relevant actions compared with the past. However, the British and American media focus on Chinese government's lack of action and shortcomings on environmental pollution.

## **2.6 Portrayals of China in the western news media**

One particular area of interest in critical discourse studies analysing the news are those that focus on the way that countries, in particular China, are represented by the English news media. Xu (2018), for example, carried out a semiotic analysis of images of China published on the covers of Time, The Economist, Der Spiegel, and China Today in order to establish differences in how these magazines portray China. He found that five oppositional themes of China could be identified by comparing the signs on these magazine covers. They are a threatening China versus a friendly China, a collectivistic China versus an individualistic China, a paradoxical China versus a progressive China, a capitalist China versus a communist China, and a dark China versus a promising China. The study also found that Time and other western magazines construct a threatening, dark and contradictory China through political cultural symbols, such as the Chinese national flag and its colours, the national emblem, the image of the Western dragon, Mao Zedong and so on. However, in China Today, more ordinary photos are used, such as college graduates, a young girl flying a kite and other covers showing ordinary life in China, which construct an image of a friendly and progressive China. He also found that these western magazines often employ contradictory images of China.

Huang and Wang (2014) carried out a critical discourse analysis of news reports concerning the Sino-Japanese dispute over the Diaoyu Islands by China Daily and The Washington Post. The purpose of this study was to reveal the underlying relationship between the language used by these newspapers and ideology. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, including a focus on lexical classification and modality, they found that reports were never neutral or value-free and that both newspapers were biased in their coverage of the other.

Similarly, Tian and Chao (2012) explored the news trustworthiness and credibility of news about the Chinese Xinjiang riots, reported in The Economist's on 9 July 2009, as well as the

communicative roles of 846 readers' responses. Using a discourse analytical examination of the themes presented in the articles and responses, they found that although The Economist's coverage of the riots was comprehensive and timely, it violated the core journalism value of media credibility and journalistic objectivity by providing misleading pictures and significant unreliable and biased coverage. They also found that the major communicative roles of the online readers' responses generally match Dahlberg's six conditions of an ideal online public sphere, one of which requires those posting in the online discussion forums not to be affiliated with any political party or interest group. Most discussion forum participants discussed Xinjiang issues in the form of rational dialogue, showing a certain amount of critical self-reflection and empathy and being able to engage in meaningful communication from the other side's perspective. However, there is still inequality and exclusion in the discourse of online forums, particularly in the way that many online discussion forums (as in this case, The Economist), selectively delete comments.

Jin (2019) examined a corpus of reports in the New York Times about the relationship between China, the United States and North Korea, in particular, reports on the relationship between China and North Korea during the visit to China by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and appraisal theory, he found that the New York Times presents China as acting in its own interest, regardless of the overall situation, on the North Korean peninsula issue. It also found that the news constructed Americans as unhappy to see the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un frequently visit China. Jin concludes that New York Times is largely hostile to China.

The next section focuses in particular on The Economist, one of the most important English media publications globally, and the way that it reports on news related to non-western nations.

## 2.7 The Economist

The Economist is an influential and long-established publication read by an elite audience worldwide of politically and economically powerful people and their supporters (Moore, 2002). While The Economist now has editorial offices worldwide, is regarded as having very little reporting bias and exercises rigorous fact-checking, it was initially established to campaign for free trade, laissez-faire economics, and individual responsibility through the medium of rational analysis applied to facts (Edwards, 1993, p. xi). According to De Goede, The Economist is a more 'conservative' competitor to Newsweek on social and economic issues (1996), and for some Asian researchers, The Economist magazine has a North-Atlantic perspective or worldview and is a strong advocate of globalization (Moore, 2008).

Given that The Economist has a powerful impact on its audience, there is a lack of discourse analytical research which analyses how this impact is manifested through the language used by The Economist writers. One exception is Deligiaouri (2019) who examined articles about the Greek crisis in The Economist in 2019. He pointed that The Economist repeatedly used lexis such as 'contagion', 'corruption' and lack of 'credibility' to attribute extremely negative characteristics to the Greek crisis. In another example, Moore (2002) explored the underlying beliefs and values of The Economist by analysing its obituaries. In this study, he established a corpus of 100 obituaries and investigated two of these in particular. He concluded that the choice of obituary subject was clearly not random, and largely focused on white, English-speaking males from Western industrial countries. Moore stated that although The Economist's international readership has continued to expand in recent years, the patterns of subject selection emerging over the first 100 obituaries have continued with very little variation. Importantly The Economist's obituaries do not only simply describe the facts about the life of the subject, but they also provide evaluations. Moore found that The Economist tends to favour native Speakers of English, and suggests that it would worth considering whether this focus on non-white or Non-native English speaking countries' social figures is biased.

In a later study, Moore (2008) collected and examined articles about Cambodia from The Economist that were published in 2008. According to Moore, when covering Cambodia, The Economist is more likely to talk about concerns of democracy and peace. These reports, however, tend to ignore the local history, tradition and culture. He also discovered that the prime minister of Cambodia was negatively portrayed in reports, and his views were rarely reported. When he was allowed to ‘speak’ his voice was highly controlled by the language of The Economist. Moore concluded that, although The Economist does good work reporting on the issues of democracy, the rule of law, and free markets in Cambodia, there is nevertheless a danger in relying too heavily on The Economist as a principal source of information about countries such as Cambodia.

Given that The Economist has a powerful impact on its audience, there is a lack of discourse analytical research which analyses how this impact is manifested through the language used by The Economist writers. In particular, there is no research that uses the analytical resources of corpus analysis and critical discourse analysis, examines differences in The Economist reports on China and reports on the United States, and what this might suggest about the underlying ideologies and attitudes of The Economist towards these two nations. This dissertation attempts to fill this gap in the research.

The next section reintroduces the research questions that are the focus of this study, and provides details of the corpus-based and critical discourse analytical methods employed to answer these questions.

# **Chapter 3:**

## **Methods**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore how *The Economist*, a widely influential British news magazine, employs language in different ways to report on China and the United States. In doing so, the study is also interested in examining what these different language choices reveal about the attitudes and ideological beliefs of *The Economist* on Sino-US issues, and how they might potentially influence the reader of the news magazine. Therefore, and as indicated in Chapter 1, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does *The Economist* use language differently to report on China and the United States?
2. What does this different language use reveal about the underlying ideologies and attitudes of *The Economist* towards these two nations?

In order to answer these questions, this study will combine corpus-based discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Baker & McEnery, 2005) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1992a, 1995, 2013) of two purposely constructed corpora; one consisting of *The Economist* reports on China, and the other consisting of *The Economist* reports on the United States. This chapter will begin by discussing the research paradigm that underpins this study. After that, it will provide details of the collection and compilation of the two corpora analysed in this study. Next, it will discuss each of the methods used to carry out the analysis, including a definition of the concept ‘discourse’. Finally, it will offer a brief reflection on the problems and deficiencies of the methods used.

### **3.1 Research paradigm**

The methodology for this study involves a corpus-based critical discourse analysis, which, as indicated, involves a combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis (also now referred to as critical discourse studies). According to Baker (2006), corpus-based research is a mixed research method. This is because initial insights into the data are typically generated quantitatively using statistics about the frequency and keyness of words that occur in the corpora, and then further expanded qualitatively using interpretative methods that considers specific language usage within its wider context. As Burr (1995) states:

Our ways of understanding the world come not from objective reality but from other people, both past and present. We are born into a world where the conceptual frameworks and categories used by the people in our culture already exist. These concepts and categories are acquired by all people as they develop the use of language and are thus reproduced every day by everyone who shares a culture and a language. This means that the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language they use. (pp. 6-7)

Mixed method research is increasingly popular with researchers. This is firstly because the complexity of the problems faced by researchers continue to expand, and simple quantitative or qualitative research is often not viewed as capable of solving these multifaceted problems. According to Creswell (2009), “there is more insight to be gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research than either form by itself. Their combined use provides an expanded understanding of research problems” (p. 188). Secondly, mixed method research is associated with triangulation. The use of triangulation can strengthen the reliability and internal validity of the research (Creswell, 2009).

### **3.2 Data**

In order to analyse and study the discursive differences in way that The Economist reports on China and the United States, as the attitude and underlying beliefs of The Economist that shape these reports, this study compiled two specialist corpora. The texts contained in these two corpora are from all 51 issues of The Economist published in 2019. One corpus contains all articles focusing on the topic ‘China’ from The Economist (hereinafter referred to as ECA), and the other corpus contains all articles focusing on the topic ‘The United States’ (hereinafter referred to as EUSA). The corpora were compiled from 2019 Economist articles because 2019 is an important year for China and the United States. In this year, serious protest marches took place in Hong Kong, and some of the measures taken by the Chinese central government and local governments in Hong Kong in responding to protests were criticized by western news media. The US Congress is also investigating Trump's impeachment. At the same time, the Sino-US trade war has strained the relationship between China and the United States.

The ECA Corpus contains 161 articles on China issues published by The Economist in 2019, with a total of 101,490 English words. The EUSA Corpus contains 296 reports about the United States published in the same year, with a total of 180,905 English words. The compilation of these two corpora follows the guidelines of Baker (2006). This included the process of tidying up the data, including the deletion of any images and website addresses, and then saving them in plain text format before uploading them to the corpus programme. This is because most corpus programmes usually work best when dealing with plain text formats (Baker, 2006).

### **3.3 Corpus-based discourse analysis**

Although corpus linguistics is not directly related to the study of any particular aspect of language, corpus-based methods are used in a range of linguistic areas, such as grammatical

analysis, syntactical analysis, or semantic analysis. Corpus analysis can also be used to examine texts from a range of topic areas, including political texts, academic texts or news texts (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). More recently, researchers have used corpora for discourse analysis (Baker, 2006). Baker and McEnery (2005), for instance, used a corpus-based discourse analysis to analyse the descriptions of refugees on the United Nations website and the British news media in 2003; Sylvia and Ramesh (2012) used this method to analyse the way feminism was portrayed by the British and German news media from 1990 to 2009, and Islentyeva (2021) analysed how the British media discursively constructed immigration.

There are certain advantages to corpus-based discourse research. Firstly, the quantitative dimension of corpus analysis can help reduce the personal biases of researchers in the research process (Cheng, 2013). Secondly, the difficulty a researcher faces identifying the existence of discourses in a large collection of texts can be reduced through the tools of corpus analysis. Compared to a traditional reading, corpus analytical tools can quickly identify collocations and repetitions, and in doing so provide the researcher with evidence of potential discourses (Baker, 2006). Thirdly, discourses are not stagnant and constantly change their status. By using diachronic corpus analysis to examine changes in language use over time researchers can identify discursive shifts in a collection of texts, for example, the shifting meanings of a particular metaphor (Baker, 2006). Finally, and as mentioned above, corpus-based discourse analysis is a research method that blends and correlates quantitative and qualitative forms. However, mixing these two methods does not mean simply collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, but strategically connecting these two methods in series (Baker, 2006). As a result, corpus-based discourse analysis can produce more powerful results than any single quantitative or qualitative study.

### *3.3.1 The Sketch Engine*

The corpus tool used for this study is the online platform Sketch Engine. Sketch Engine is a leading corpus tool with a history of nearly 20 years. It is also extremely accessible for researchers. According to Kilgarriff et al. (2014), Sketch Engine “offers many ready-to-use

corpora, and tools for users to build, upload and install their own corpora” (p. 7). They also state that it is particularly useful for discourse analysis. To carry out this study, the ECA corpus and EUSA corpus were uploaded to Sketch Engine. The main corpus analytical tools offered by Sketch Engine, and used in the examination of The Economist texts, were frequency analysis, concordance analysis and collocation analysis. These are described in the sections below.

### *3.3.2 Frequency Analysis*

According to Baker (2006), one of the important analytical tools of corpora analysis involves the calculating of a language item’s frequency in a collection of texts. As a result, frequency is a useful starting point for any corpus-based discourse analysis. According to Baker (2006), “frequency data can help to give the user a sociological profile of a given word or phrase” (p. 47). This can help researchers better understand the meaning of these words and phrases in a specific text. It can also establish a more accurate understanding of the uses of word and phrase in their wider contexts (Baker, 2006). The development of a frequency list, that ranks words according to their frequency in the corpus, can also play a helpful role in determining the particular focus of the text.

### *3.3.3 Concordance Analysis*

A concordance, also known as key-word-in-context (KWIC), is a specific search term (i.e., a word or phrase) presented in a list of lines showing the textual context in which the search term appears in all the texts of a corpus (Baker, 2006). The textual context is generally a few words to the left and right of the search term. A concordance can help the researcher discover evidence of certain patterns in the corpus which may lead to the observation of the particular beliefs and values of the writers of the texts (Baker, 2006). Researchers can also sort the concordances in various ways, and different perspectives will reveal new information. Concordance analysis involves a more qualitative analytical approach compared to frequency analysis, which is largely quantitative. Throughout this dissertation, unless stated otherwise, concordance lines are randomly selected using a tool on Sketch Engine.

### *3.3.4 Collocation Analysis*

Collocation refers to a phenomenon in which one word frequently appears near another word, statistically more than it tends to occur elsewhere in the text or corpus. A collocation analysis can help the researcher identify the most important combination of words in a corpus, and the examination of the way a word frequently collocates with other words can provide insights into the particular meaning and use of that word (Baker, 2006). Furthermore, when two words are frequently combined, it can suggest that this collocation typically occurs in a writer or reader's mind; that is, when one word is mentioned, it is associated with the other. The typical collocational choice of a writer or speaker may also provide insights into their particular beliefs or values (Baker, 2006)

The statistical measure used for measuring collocation throughout this study is logDice (Gablasova et al., 2017). LogDice is the default collocation statistic on Sketch Engine and is now the preferred statistical measure for measuring collocation in large corpora. It measures the typicality with which two items are likely to co-occur, but does not tend to emphasise low frequency collocations, as do other commonly used collocational measures, such as Mutual Information (MI).

### *3.3.5 Keyword analysis*

A keyword analysis statistically compares the frequencies of words in a target corpus (e.g., The Economist) to the frequency of words in a larger reference corpus (e.g., a corpus of general English). A reference corpus is usually a balanced corpus; that is, it contains a variety of different spoken and written genres, and is designed to represent the language use of a wider speech community (e.g., English speakers). By comparing the specialist corpus to a larger, more evenly balanced corpus, we can identify the ‘salience’ or ‘aboutness’ of the specialist corpus, which may lead the researcher to the presence of certain discourses.

Keyness is evaluated in Sketch Engine using a ‘simple maths’ formula (Kilgarriff, 2009). This formula includes a variable which enables a focus on higher or lower frequency words. For

this study the variable is set to 100, the default used by Sketch Engine. The reference corpus used for this study is the enTenTen18 corpus. The enTenTen18 corpus is an extremely large English reference corpus, and it contains 21.9 billion words.

### **3.4 Critical Discourse analysis**

#### *3.4.1 Introduction*

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), increasingly referred to as critical discourse studies (CDS) is, as the name implies, a focus on an examination of discourse for the purpose of carrying out a critical analysis of its usage. As Blommaert (2005) states, CDA “should be an analysis of power effects, of the outcome of power, of what power does to people, groups, and societies, and of how this impact comes about” (pp. 1-2). Furthermore, according to Fairclough (1995, p. 132), CDA should aim “to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power”. For Wodak (2001) “CDA aims at investigating critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse)” (p. 11).

#### *3.4.2 Definitions of discourse*

Discourse is typically defined in two related ways. In the first meaning discourse refers to “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (Baker, 2006. p. 4). In the second meaning, a discourse is often defined as a collection of statements that provide a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic (Du Gay, 1996). As such, a discourse can be said to be representative of the beliefs and values of a particular individual or group. Furthermore, for Fairclough (1992a) discourse is viewed as a kind of social practice. What this means is that the social background, that is, culture and the associated power structures of society, may affect, and be affected by, language.

### *3.4.3 Theoretical Underpinnings of CDA*

CDA attempts to combine linguistic analysis with relevant historical context to discover the underlying ideology of language (Li, 2016). Language is understood as having social meaning, and language choice is inevitably connected to the social, political and economical. Discourse, therefore, is viewed not only a reaction to social practice, but also a part of social practice. At the same time, language and thought are closely related. Ideology could be learned through language, reiterated through language use, and is ultimately embodied in language. Importantly, practitioners of CDA also view discourse as the main instrument of power, where power refers to social rights; that is, the power to influence the actions and thoughts of others (Wodak, 2001; Fairclough, 1989).

### *3.4.4 Methods of critical discourse analysis*

CDA analyses the details of texts to reveal what kinds of discourses are being presented to the public (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The purpose of CDA is often to investigate social inequality including its expression, constitution, and so on by language use or in discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). A three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis has been established by Fairclough (1989). This model contains three interrelated analysis processes. They are the actual texts, the processes by which humans produce and receive texts, and the social and historical conditions that govern these processes. According to Fairclough (1992b), each dimension requires different types of analysis, text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation). More often than not, CDA, including the work of Fairclough himself, tends to involve a description and analysis of the language choices made in the text or texts produced for a certain context (e.g., lexical choice, collocational tendencies, repetition of certain words), followed by a discussion of the social and historical conditions, including issues of power and ideology, that might explain these language choices.

This research uses CDA to guide the examination of The Economist's reports on China and the United States. As indicated in Chapter 2, critical discourse analysis has been regularly

used to analyse news discourse. Power et al. (2019), for example, used CDA to critically analyse Forbes, Fortune and Bloomberg Business Week's coverage of women between 2015 and 2017, Zhou and Qin (2020) critically analysed the New York Times reports on the trade war between China and the United States, and Tian and Chao (2012) critically explored news about the Chinese Xinjiang riots, reported in The Economist on 9 July 2009.

### **3.5 Methodological issues**

As a method of discourse analysis, corpus linguistics still has some shortcomings. Firstly, the reasons for the production of the text, such as the author's personal motivations, could be seen as an important factor for discourse research. Corpus-based discourse analytical methods cannot provide an understanding of the original author's motivations for the writing a text (Baker, 2006). Secondly, the corpus itself does not interpret the text or propose new ideas, so there are certain requirements for the researcher's interpretative capability as well as the researcher's ability to interpret the texts as neutrally as possible (Baker, 2006). However as indicated in section 3.6 below which addresses the issue of interpretative bias, it is often argued that the subjective interpretations of the researcher in critical discourse analyses are at times difficult to avoid.

Critical Discourse Analysis is also often viewed as too selective, partial and qualitative. For example, a common procedure for CDA is that the analyst looks through the text first, then makes a decision as to its critical interpretation, and then subsequently uses CDA tools to demonstrate this interpretation (Fairclough, 2013). For some, this means that critical discourse analysis lacks academic rigor, as it is easy for analysts to use their own preconceived notions and presuppositions to influence the results of the analysis. Rogers (2011) is also critical of the fact that CDA researchers often draw conclusions by only analysing a small number of texts, which makes the research lack of objectivity. However, and as seen in this study, using a large corpus or corpus linguistics may be able to solve this problem (Baker, 2006).

### **3.6 Critical Analysis and Interpretative Bias and critical analysis**

While the quantitative nature of corpus linguistics may help to reduce the potential for researcher bias in the qualitative methods of CDA (Fairclough, 2013; Baker 2006), the subjective interpretations of the researcher in critical discourse analyses are at times difficult to avoid (Simpson, 1993; Schegloff, 1997), and should ultimately be acknowledged.

According to Simpson:

The purpose of much critical linguistic analysis is to lay bare the ideological structure of discourse and to expose the (invariably right-wing) political bias that is encoded therein. Such ‘diagnostic’ readings employ linguistic analysis to explain what is missing from texts, thus highlighting what is being concealed or kept from non-academic or ‘lay readers’. *What is needed is explicit recognition that these diagnostic readings may themselves be ideologically motivated and that the analyst has a political stance which informs their particular interpretation.* In other words, writing about ideology does not automatically mean release from ideology. (Simpson, 1993, p. 107, italics added).

This study, therefore, needs to be considered with in the context of my own background. As a Chinese student, I was living and studying in China before starting my Master's studies in New Zealand. Hence, I am cordial and affectionate towards China. These factors may have unconsciously impacted on the results in the following study. It should also be pointed out that while most critical discourse analysis is conducted by researchers from a Western background, this study involved a Chinese researcher examining a Western news magazine, with a predominant Western readership (see section 1.4) that frequently reports on China. As such, the findings might not always necessary align with those often found in other similar CDA studies.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter provided details about the research method, corpus-based critical discourse analysis, used in this study to respond to the research questions. This study uses this combined method as it is increasingly, and successfully, being used to study news discourse. Furthermore, because of its advanced functionality the corpus analysis tool, Sketch Engine, is employed to assist with the analysis. The next chapter will conduct a preliminary frequency and keyword analysis on the two corpora, ECA and EUSA.

# **Chapter 4:**

## **Frequency and Keyword Analysis**

### **4.0 Introduction**

Obtaining frequency and keyword lists from corpora is often seen as a useful first step in a corpus analysis (Baker, 2006). It is often crucial for identifying the most common themes and topics communicated in the corpus and can provide a direction for further analysis (Aluthman, 2018). This is because high frequency lexical words can indicate the most common themes represented in a corpus (Scott, 1999), while keywords can help to reveal the presence of salient discourses in a corpus (Baker, 2006). As a result, in the first part of this chapter, the frequency lists of the ECA and the EUSA corpora will be presented and analyzed. Following this, the two corpora's keyword lists will be studied. These frequency and keyword analyses will provide the basis for a more in-depth analysis of primary areas of interest using the resources of corpus analysis such as concordance and collocation analysis.

### **4.1 Frequency analysis**

As Baker (2006) points out, the development of a frequency list is a good starting point for a corpus-based discourse analysis. However, the most frequent words in a corpus are typically grammatical words, that is, functional words such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and qualifiers, which rarely convey specific information about the nature of a corpus (Baker, 2006). Therefore, following Baker's recommendation, the frequency word lists of the ECA and the EUSA corpora only contain lexical words. Table 4.1 shows the 20 most frequent lexical words in the ECA, and Table 4.2 provides a list of the 20 most frequent lexical words in the EUSA. For comparison, both tables also include the relative frequency of each word. The relative frequency indicates the frequency per million words.

**Table 4.1:**

*The 20 most frequent lexical words in the ECA corpus.*

Rank	Item	Frequency	Relative frequency
1	china	1550	10532.04
2	chinese	835	5673.711
3	say	683	4640.891
4	year	470	3193.586
5	mr	451	3064.483
6	hong	432	2935.381
7	government	424	2881.022
8	kong	380	2582.048
9	people	345	2344.228
10	country	328	2228.715
11	official	324	2201.536
12	party	317	2153.972
13	make	250	1698.716
14	america	247	1678.331
15	city	223	1515.254
16	beijing	216	1467.69
17	xi	213	1447.306
18	use	207	1406.537
19	take	203	1379.357
20	new	202	1372.562

**Table 4.2:**

*The 20 most frequent lexical words in the EUSA corpus.*

	Item	Frequency	Relative frequency
1	have	3382	11635.55
2	mr	2266	7796.024
3	trump	1191	4097.557
4	say	1041	3581.492
5	do	967	3326.9
6	state	784	2697.3
7	year	745	2563.123
8	america	733	2521.838
9	new	632	2174.354
10	president	554	1906
11	make	502	1727.098

12	people	465	1599.802
13	city	419	1441.542
14	american	369	1269.52
15	republican	365	1255.758
16	only	352	1211.033
17	time	351	1207.592
18	take	344	1183.509
19	first	343	1180.069
20	democratic	340	1169.748

From these two lists, it could be seen that most of the high-frequency words are related to politics, such as *government* and *official* mentioned in the ECA corpus, and *republican* and *democratic*, the two main American political divisions, mentioned in the EUSA corpus. This shows that The Economist may be concerned about the particular relationship or problems between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in the United States, while for China it pays more attention to the Chinese government itself. In the ECA corpus, *China* and *Chinese* are the two most frequently occurring items, while in contrast *America* and *American* are only the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> most frequently occurring words respectively. Furthermore, both *China* and *Chinese* occur just over four times more frequently in the ECA corpus than *America* and *American* do in the EUSA corpus. This suggests that The Economist may employ the items *China* and *Chinese* metonymically or metaphorically to refer stereotypically to the Chinese people (Wang, 2020), more often than occurs when the magazine refers to the United States. Furthermore, both frequency lists mention the leaders of China and the United States at the time, *Trump* and *Xi*. It is of interest that the frequency of *Trump* in the EUSA corpus is particularly high. *Trump* is the third most frequent lexical word in the corpus, however in comparison, *Xi* is mentioned relatively less frequently in the ECA. The Economist may talk more about the political events surrounding Trump, while for China, they will focus on the country rather than the Chinese president himself. *Beijing*, as the capital of China, is another of the high-frequency words in the ECA corpus. As Yu and Wang (2017) point out, in the discourse of foreign (non-Chinese) media Beijing is often seen as a metonym for China. Taking their study in to account this may again suggest that The Economist frequently uses the metonym *Beijing* to refer to the Chinese government, while the metonymical use of

*Washington* to represent the US government occurs less frequently in the news magazine.

It is also worth noting that Hong Kong is mentioned with a higher frequency in the ECA corpus. This study predicts that, as expected, a large number of the articles in the ECA corpus may be related to Hong Kong, given the specific political events that took place there in 2019. Furthermore, in the ECA corpus, a word that frequently occurs is *America*. The Economist's focus on China may be more biased towards reports and discussions on China-US issues. Nevertheless, in the EUSA corpus, *China* is not mentioned as frequently. The EUSA also contains a greater number of high-frequency words about domestic politics in the United States, such as *Trump*, *President*, *Democratic* and *Republican*.

#### 4.2 Keyword analysis

Although a frequency analysis can help reveal the existence of certain utterances in a corpus, comparing the corpus with a larger reference corpus is a more useful way to determine the salient discourses or ‘aboutness’ of the corpus (Baker, 2006). Similarly, as Baker points out (2006. p. 139), a keyword analysis can also foreground words of interest that may otherwise be “under-represented in the data”. As a result, the next stage of this research will involve listing the keywords of ECA and EUSA corpus. Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 provide the top 20 keywords from The Economist Chinese Articles corpus (ECA corpus) and The Economist US Articles corpus (EUSA corpus), both referenced against the English web TenTen 18 on Sketch Engine. These words illustrate the particular priorities of The Economist when it reports on China and the United States of America.

**Table 4.3:**

*The top 20 keywords in the ECA, when referenced against the English web TenTen 18 on Sketch Engine (SE).*

	Item	Frequency (focus)	Frequency (reference)	Relative frequency	Relative frequency	Keyness Score

				(focus)	(reference)	
1	kongers	42	702	285.3843	0.02718	278.806
2	xinjiang	79	28868	536.7942	1.11781	253.939
3	jinpings	77	28004	523.2045	1.08435	251.495
4	lam	86	47145	584.3582	1.82552	207.168
5	pro-democracy	35	10431	237.8202	0.4039	170.112
6	uighur	33	9015	224.2305	0.34907	166.952
7	bri	39	15783	264.9997	0.61114	165.1
8	tiananmen	37	14624	251.4099	0.56626	161.154
9	xi	213	218797	1447.306	8.47213	152.902
10	think-tank	36	16271	244.6151	0.63004	150.681
11	hong	432	493063	2935.381	19.09209	146.146
12	zhongguancun	21	909	142.6921	0.0352	138.806
13	baijiu	21	1065	142.6921	0.04124	138.001
14	quanjian	20	413	135.8973	0.01599	134.742
15	kong	380	491901	2582.048	19.04709	128.849
16	guangdong	40	29194	271.7945	1.13043	128.047
17	hotpot	18	3140	122.3075	0.12159	109.94
18	linxia	16	348	108.7178	0.01348	108.259
19	mainlander	16	2193	108.7178	0.08492	101.13
20	taiwanese	41	47500	278.5894	1.83927	98.472

**Table 4.4:**

*The top 20 keywords in the EUSA, when referenced against the English web TenTen 18 on Sketch Engine (SE).*

	Item	Frequency (focus)	Frequency (reference)	Relative frequency (focus)	Relative frequency (reference)	Score
1	buttingieg	43	979	147.9387	0.03791	143.499
2	biden	113	48684	388.769	1.88511	135.097
3	mr	2266	1487279	7796.023	57.58952	133.079
4	ocasio-cortez	37	5808	127.2961	0.22489	104.741
5	impeachment	91	54222	313.0795	2.09955	101.331
6	think-tank	45	16271	154.8195	0.63004	95.593
7	klobuchar	29	3380	99.77259	0.13088	89.11
8	attorney-general	47	23998	161.7004	0.92924	84.334
9	mueller	104	94555	357.8052	3.6613	76.975
10	pelosi	55	40893	189.2239	1.58343	73.632
11	zelensky	21	131	72.24911	0.00507	72.879

12	barr	59	47355	202.9856	1.83365	71.987
13	giuliani	39	26375	134.1769	1.02128	66.877
14	foreign-policy	22	4744	75.68955	0.18369	64.788
15	democrats	263	341005	904.8342	13.20419	63.772
16	mulvaney	25	10021	86.01085	0.38803	62.687
17	impeach	40	33899	137.6174	1.31262	59.94
18	indian-american	19	3242	65.36825	0.12553	58.966
19	civil-right	20	5502	68.80868	0.21305	57.548
20	social-media	20	7733	68.80868	0.29943	53.722

#### 4.3 Politicians and Political Events

According to these two keywords list, the politicians of each country could be seen as a key concern of the articles. This is particularly evident in the EUSA corpus, where the top 20 keywords contain nine American politicians, such as Biden, who was once the then president, Donald Trump's, opponent and is now the current President of the United States.

Interestingly, however, the name of Trump, who served as President of the United States in 2019, does not appear in the top 20 keywords. Instead, *trump* is ranked at number 23 on the keyword list, which is most likely because he is also regularly referenced in the English web TenTen 18 reference corpus. In contrast to the relatively high number of politicians occurring in the EUSA keyword list, there are only two politicians, the President of China, Xi Jinping, and Carrie Lam, the chief executive of Hong Kong in the top twenty keywords of the ECA corpus.

If we compare the ECA keyword list in Table 4.3 with the ECA frequency list in Table 4.1, there are some identical results, such as *Hong Kong* and *Xi*. Overall, however, there are more political event words in the ECA keyword list, such as the province *Xinjiang*, and the acronym *bri*, both of which are related to China's Belt and Road Initiative, as well as *Quanjian*, a Chinese company that has come under scrutiny for its fraudulent marketing practices. Similarly, we find that the items *impeachment* and *impeach* occur in the EUSA keyword list in Table 4.4, but do not occur in the EUSA frequency list in Table 4.2. These words are specifically related to the impeachment of the US president Donald Trump during

his 2019 term. These political figures and political events will be further examined in detail in the next chapter. It will be of interest to analyse the way that The Economist reports on these figures and events, to see if they are discursively represented in a way which can tell us something about the underlying ideological views of The Economist towards these two countries.

#### 4.4 Verb analysis

Most of the items in these two corpora's keyword lists are nouns, and only a few verbs appear in their frequency lists. However, as Priyadarshana and Ranathunga (2017) have suggested, verbs can provide insights into the emotional content of a corpus. They are also seen as central in the construction of experiential processes; that is, the use of language to construct our experiences of the world (Eggins, 2004). Therefore, it is of interest to examine the 20 most frequent verbs in EUSA and ECA corpora (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5:**

*The top 20 most frequent verbs in EUSA and ECA corpora*

	ECA			EUSA		
	Verb	Frequency	Relative Freq.	Verb	Frequency	Relative Freq.
1	be	4545	30882.65	be	8644	29739.11
2	have	1748	11877.42	have	3382	11635.55
3	say	682	4634.097	say	1038	3571.171
4	do	333	2262.689	do	967	3326.9
5	make	249	1691.921	make	498	1713.336
6	take	202	1372.562	take	344	1183.509
7	use	170	1155.127	get	320	1100.939
8	see	170	1155.127	go	314	1080.296
9	call	160	1087.178	come	270	928.9172
10	become	135	917.3065	include	260	894.5129
11	include	129	876.5373	see	255	877.3107
12	try	116	788.2041	seem	250	860.1085
13	help	111	754.2298	find	247	849.7872

14	want	108	733.8452	want	242	832.585
15	grow	106	720.2555	use	217	746.5742
16	involve	105	713.4606	give	214	736.2529
17	work	105	713.4606	become	209	719.0507
18	get	101	686.2812	pay	208	715.6103
19	give	101	686.2812	help	206	708.7294
20	find	97	659.1017	work	189	650.242

The table shows that the six most frequent verbs in the two corpora, *be*, *have*, *say*, *do*, *make* and *take*, are identical. However, while the frequencies per million of *be*, *have* and *make* are relatively similar, it is of interest that the frequency per million of *say* is considerably higher in the ECA, while the frequency per million of *do* is considerably higher in the EUSA corpus. As indicated above, relative frequency (frequency per million words) can enable comparisons of the frequency of the same items in differently sized corpora.

There are also some other notable differences of interest in between most frequent verbs in EUSA and ECA corpora (Table 4.5). The verbs *call*, *try*, *grow* and *involve* occur in the ECA list, but not in the EUSA list, while the verbs, *go*, *come*, *seem* and *pay* occur in the EUSA list and not in the ECA list. A discussion on the verbs identified as of interest in this section will be carried out in Chapter 6.

#### 4.5 Adjective analysis

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the use of adjectives in a text are viewed as subjectivity markers which can be explained as reflecting their users' world views and bias (Ajmi, 2014). As a result, it is also of interest to focus more specifically on the most frequent adjectives in the two corpora. Table 4.6 shows the 20 most frequent adjectives in the two corpora.

**Table 4.6:**

*The frequency wordlist of top 20 adjectives for EUSA and ECA corpora*

	ECA			EUSA		
	Verb	Frequency	Frequency Per Million	Verb	Frequency	Frequency Per Million
1	chinese	754	5123.327	more	455	1565.397
2	such	304	2065.638	other	426	1465.625
3	many	269	1827.818	many	381	1310.805
4	more	248	1685.126	new	339	1166.307
5	other	231	1569.613	democratic	321	1104.379
6	new	167	1134.742	such	320	1100.939
7	foreign	154	1046.409	american	318	1094.058
8	big	140	951.2808	political	282	970.2024
9	american	138	937.6911	first	272	935.7981
10	last	134	910.5117	last	254	873.8703
11	local	131	890.1271	good	251	863.549
12	few	128	869.7425	few	228	784.419
13	political	123	835.7682	big	223	767.2168
14	first	115	781.4093	high	219	753.4551
15	good	113	767.8195	most	219	753.4551
16	western	112	761.0247	federal	215	739.6933
17	own	102	693.076	republican	196	674.3251
18	recent	98	665.8966	former	189	650.242
19	central	88	597.948	public	186	639.9207
20	national	79	536.7942	likely	148	509.1842

In this table, 8 of the 20 most frequent adjectives in the ECA and EUSA corpus, *such, many, more, big, American, last, few* and *first*, are the same. Of these items, the difference in the frequency per million of *such* is particularly large and warrants further investigation. It is also of interest that the adjectives *foreign* and *western* exhibit a high level of frequency in the ECA corpus, but do not appear with such high frequency in EUSA corpus. Furthermore, *democratic, federal* and *republican* appear as the 5th, 16th and 17th most frequent adjectives in the EUSA corpus. These might be considered political adjectives of a particularly American nature, with ‘Democratic’ and ‘Republican’ representing the only two major political parties in America. The analysis of these words of interest will be carried out in Chapter 7.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Frequency and keyword lists can help researchers to identify salient discourses in a particular corpus, as well as specific differences between corpora (Baker, 2006). However, robust conclusions about the role of certain items of interest cannot be drawn from frequency and keyword lists alone, and such items must be analysed in their wider textual contexts, using collocation or concordance analysis (Baker, 2006) In the next three chapters, this study will use Sketch Engine to further develop the analysis of certain items of interest that have emerged from the preliminary frequency and keywords analysis in this chapter in order to come to some conclusions about the ways that The Economist differently constructs the Chinese and American news.

# **Chapter 5:**

## **Politicians and Political Events**

### **5.0 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, a number of items related to politicians and political events appeared in the frequency and keyword analyses of both the ECA and EUSA. As a result, this chapter will firstly examine how politicians are described in the two Economist corpora. It will then examine the way that the ECA and EUSA report on political events identified in the keyword tables, such as the Hong Kong protest and the US impeachment of Trump. To assist in the analysis of these events, the chapter will examine the association between keywords and certain political events.

As Richardson (2007) states, like the general public, the focus of news writers, journalists, or news publishing organizations is not to provide objective reports of news events. Instead, their purpose is to persuade people to agree with their opinions (Richardson, 2007). Hence, as far as language is concerned, ideology has a universal role in the reporting of the news (Fairclough, 2001). This chapter will show in particular, with reference to The Economist's reports on China and the United States, how such underlying ideologies may be revealed in the way that politicians and political events are referred to in the news.

### **5.1 Politicians**

As indicated in the previous chapter (Chapter 4, Section 4.2), the highest 20 keywords of both the ECA and EUSA corpora contained a number of political figures. This was particularly evident for the EUSA, where 10 politicians appeared amongst the top 20 keywords (nine American politicians and one Ukrainian politician). Given that this study collected corpus data from the 2019 Economist, the appearance of these particular political figures in the

corpus can be attributed to their 2019 activities. Hence, the American politicians in the EUSA corpus not only include the US president Donald Trump's main political opponent at the time, Joe Biden, but also Pete Buttigieg (Mayor of South Bend), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Member of the U.S. House of Representatives), Amy Klobuchar (United States Senator from Minnesota), Robert Mueller (Special Counsel for the United States Department of Justice), Nancy Pelosi (Speaker of the United States House of Representatives), William Barr (United States Attorney General), Rudy Giuliani (Trump's attorney) and Mick Mulvaney (White House chief of staff). Interestingly, however, the then President of the United States, Donald Trump, himself does not occur in the top 20 keywords, instead appearing in the 23rd place of the keyword table, which suggests that Trump also frequently occurred in the reference corpus. Most interestingly, however, compared with the number of keywords representing US politicians in the EUSA corpus, the ECA corpus contains only two Chinese politicians, the current Chief Executive of Hong Kong Carrie Lam and the Chinese President Xi Jinping. In addition, *Xi* appears in Table 4.1 (Chapter 4, Section 4.1), the frequency list of the ECA corpus.

Given the disproportionate representation of US political figures in the EUSA keyword list, compared to the number of Chinese figures represented in the ECA keyword list, it was decided to return to a more general frequency analysis of political figures appearing in The Economist corpora to examine whether similar results were to be found. Table 5.1 therefore shows the frequency and relative frequency of the ten most frequent US political figures and only three explicitly Chinese political figures in the EUSA and ECA respectively.

**Table 5.1:**

*The frequency of top ten politicians and main politicians in the EUSA and ECA*

Rank	EUSA			ECA		
	Item	Frequency	Relative frequency	Item	Frequency	Relative frequency
1	trump	1189	4090.676	xi	213	1447.3058
2	warren	152	522.946	lam	86	584.35823

3	obama	125	430.0543	mao	40	271.79452
4	clinton	119	409.4117			
5	biden	113	388.7691			
6	sanders	109	375.0073			
7	mueller	104	357.8051			
8	barr	59	202.9856			
9	pelosi	55	189.2239			
10	harris	54	185.7834			

It should be noted that some of the politicians, such as *Warren and Obama*, that appear in this table with a high frequency, do not appear in the keyword list (Table 4.4, Chapter 4, Section 4.2). This is because the keyword list is sorted by keyness score, obtained by calculating how much more frequently a word appears in the target corpus when compared to a reference corpus. Comparing this table with the keyword list of the EUSA (Table 4.4), a number of American political figures, such as, *Biden, Mueller* and *Barr*, who appear in both tables have a high frequency. The same phenomenon also appears in the ECA. *Xi* and *Lam* have high frequencies, but the relative frequency of *Xi* (1447.3) is much higher than that of *Lam* (584.4).

What is evident from this table is that The Economist's reporting on political figures in United States is broad and, apart from Trump, there is also a degree of consistency in the number of words used to report on each of these figures. Furthermore, those listed not only belong to the two main rival political parties in the United States, the Democratic Party, and the Republican Party, but are representative of all political areas of the United States, for example, the state government, the Supreme Court, the Congress and the president. In contrast, and supporting the results of the keyword analysis, it can be seen that when reporting on China, The Economist tends to only pay attention to a single political figure, the Chinese President Xi Jinping. The exception is perhaps Carrie Lam, who was spotlighted by the media around the world due to the Hong Kong protests in 2019.

The result is that Economist readers are less exposed to information about the political actions and remarks of other political figures in China. It could be argued then, that The Economist constructs Xi Jinping as singularly representing the Chinese government. In other words, it

conceives China as an overly centralised country, with the president representative of its will. However, this is not the case. China has a different form of democracy than electoral democracy, referred to as Xieshang Minzhu (Deliberative Democracy). Due to differences in language and culture, non-Chinese may not fully understand this form of democracy, which encourages non-Chinese news discourses about China to construct China as an undemocratic country (Li & Zhou, 2020). In fact, the Deliberative Democracy system has given the public the right to participate in political affairs, in addition to voting (electoral (representative) democracy) (Li & Zhou, 2020). Voting is not a vote of the western electoral (representative) democracy system, but a vote of support and opposition for decision-making. The opinions of representatives and the people are repeatedly considered before the local and central governments make major decisions, and voting is used in the final stage of the Deliberative Democracy (Li & Zhou, 2020). Through Deliberative Democracy, the ruling party and government can also be monitored.

The Economist reports selected in this study are all texts from 2019. At that time, Xi and Trump were the leaders of China and the United States. Therefore, it is not surprising that the items *Xi* and *Trump* also appeared in the frequency word table of the ECA and the EUSA respectively, and these items will now be examined in more detail. Table 5.2 provides a list of verb collocates with *Trump* from the EUSA and *Xi* from the ECA, according to the logDice statistic that identifies collocational typicality. All collocates occur 5 places to the right of the node words.

**Table 5.2:**

*Verb collocates with Xi and Trump (0/+5)*

	Trump (EUSA)	Freq	logDice	Xi (ECA)	Freq	Log Dice
1	have	134	10.0176	take	8	9.42257
2	be	146	8.97642	call	7	9.39796
3	want	14	8.70932	wage	3	9.03037
4	do	22	8.62892	see	5	8.87072

5	say	21	8.50662	declare	3	8.87072
6	win	11	8.43845	launch	3	8.85025
7	take	12	8.35855	become	4	8.70079
8	make	13	8.29956	appear	3	8.6841
9	seem	10	8.2134	have	22	8.54654
10	claim	8	8.1143	preside	2	8.49221

The table indicates that the top collocate with *Xi* is *take*. In The Economist's narrative, *take* often appears in the form of the bi-grams *take over*, *take power* and *take office*, as seen in the concordance lines in Table 5.3 below. The use of *take over* and *take power* are both used to indicate that *Xi* has become the leader of China, however these particular expressions convey something different from the notion of being elected. Again, The Economist's narrative implies that the selection of Chinese leaders is undemocratic. In fact, the decisions of the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party are not made by a few people, but by the Xieshang Minzhu (Deliberative Democracy) mentioned above. Xieshang Minzhu (Deliberative Democracy) is a process by which the Communist Party of China communicates and listens to opinions with other parties (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, CPPCC), National People's Congress (NPC), non-governmental organizations, and governments at all levels based on the scope of the decision-making discussion (The CPC Central Committee, 2021). According to the nature of the decision, although perhaps more focused on local issues, the final decision needs to be passed by the grassroots, such as villagers committee, the political consultation conference, or the people's congress at all levels.

**Table 5.3:**

*The concordance of xi and take in the ECA*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	on a network of bases and aircraft carriers. Mr	Xi	took aim at these by establishing a new service
2	legally registered in 2012. That was the year	Xi	Jinping took over as China's leader. Since then
3	state lotteries earned between them.	Xi	took office in 2013, sales have

	Since Mr		almost doubled (
4	elsewhere in China. In 2013, not long after Mr	Xi	took power, hundreds of people gathered
5	official. Guangdong's current party chief, Li	Xi	, who took over in 2017, is an ally of Mr Xi and
6	opening. But this is no political thaw. Since	Xi	Jinping took over as China's leader in 2012, he
7	competing voices. In 2012, the year Mr	Xi	took over, the Hong Kong government tried to
8	given it more room to manoeuvre in them. Since Mr	Xi	took office in 2012 the country has

The verb *wage* is also a typical verb collocate with *Xi*. Using the enTenTen18 reference corpus, Table 5.4 provides a list of common collocates with *wage* as a verb. The most typical words are *jihad*, *warfare* and *war*, which indicates that semantically *wage* is used when discussing negative contexts. This is evident in Table 5.5 below, which provides concordance lines containing *Xi* and *wage*. In brief, it is of interest that two of the top three collocates with *Xi* in the ECA tend to convey a negative semantic association. The verb *call*, the second highest collocate with *Xi*, will be discussed separately in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.

**Table 5.4:**

*Collocates of wage (as a verb) in the enTenTen18*

Rank	Collocate	Freq	Log Dice
1	jihad	889	8.01954
2	all-out	163	6.5632
3	warfare	855	6.50568
4	war	14932	6.25928
5	guerrilla	208	6.12286

**Table 5.5:**

*Concordance lines with Xi and wage in the ECA*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	and separatism. Since he took over as	Xi	has been waging a campaign

	China's leader in 2012, Mr		against corruption as well as perceived
2	. That was the year Xi Jinping took over as China's leader. Since then Mr	Xi	has been waging a campaign against Western influence and to instil "
3	and stability and the advancement of civilisation." Meanwhile Mr	Xi	has been waging a ruthless campaign against human-rights activists,

Table 5.2 shows that the top three collocates with Trump are *have*, *be* and *want*. While it is difficult to examine *have* and *be* from an ideological perspective, *want* warrants further attention. In The Economist's reports on the United States, *want* is used to convey negative narratives about Trump. This can be seen in Table 5.6 which provides a list of concordance lines containing *Trump* and *want*. The concordance lines show that according to The Economist, Trump's 'wants' are either rejected by Congress or violate American law. The Economist, therefore, constructs the US president as always 'wanting' things he cannot have, and stubbornly insisting on his personal ideas.

**Table 5.6:**

*The concordance of trump and want in the EUSA*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	, occasioned by Congress's refusal to grant Mr	Trump	the billions he wants for a border wall, points
2	deliver half the \$5.7bn of wall-funding Mr	Trump	wants. Yet that, by turn, overestimated the
3	, suggested the writing was on the wall. Mr	Trump	said he wanted to "go in a tougher direction".
4	know who that is? It's me." The problem is that Mr	Trump	seems to want to do things that American law does
5	wall. However, the new book also claims that Mr	Trump	wants to adorn the barrier with electrified,

Verb collocates with *Trump* as the object are also worth noting. Table 5.7 provides a list of the top verb collocates with *Trump* as the object in the EUSA, according to the logDice statistic.

The top four verbs are *beat*, *impeach*, *help* and *remove*. In the context of The Economist reports, these four verbs, when associated with *Trump*, all have negative connotations. The verb *beat* is a synonym of win, but has metaphoric connections with violence, *impeach* is related to the investigation and impeachment of Trump for political wrongs, (election and impeachment will be discussed in the next section of this chapter), *remove* is used to construct Trump as being in political danger, while *help* is used to construct an image of Trump who lacks political ability and needs assistance.

**Table 5.7:**

*Verb collocates with "Trump" as object*

Rank	Collocate	Freq.	log Dice score
1	beat	11	10.73
2	impeach	9	10.48
3	help	7	9.82
4	remove	4	9.3
5	let	4	9.26
6	give	5	9.04
7	allow	3	8.63
8	want	3	8.62
9	say	7	8.54
10	hold	3	8.49

To conclude this section, The Economist discursively constitutes Xi as the only noteworthy representative of the Chinese government who guides China's development without consensus. In contrast, it discursively constitutes Trump as an incompetent leader who is stubbornly wedded to his own ideas. At the same time, it shows Trump is in deep political trouble and needs help.

## 5.2 Political Events

As seen in Table 4.3 (Chapter 4, Section 4.2), the vast majority (95%) of the ECA corpus'

keywords are nouns, and they are often used, either directly or indirectly, when referring to Chinese political events. It was therefore decided that a focus on the relationship between keyword and specific political event would be considered further. Table 5.8 shows the top 20 keywords in the ECA corpus and the particular event with which each keyword is most associated. The association between keyword and event was established by examining the keywords in the context of the reports in the corpus.

**Table 5.8**

*Top 20 keywords in the ECA referring to political events*

	Item	Frequency	Keyness Score	Event
1	kongers	42	278.806	Hong Kong protest
	lam	86	207.168	
	pro-democracy	35	170.112	
	hong	432	146.146	
	kong	380	128.849	
	mainlander	16	101.13	
2	xinjiang	79	253.939	Muslim
	uighur	33	166.952	
	linxia	16	108.259	
3	bri	39	165.1	China's foreign policy
4	jinping	77	251.495	Chinese government
	tiananmen	37	161.154	
	xi	213	152.902	
	think-tank	36	150.681	
5	baijiu	21	138.001	Chinese food
	hotpot	18	109.94	
6	zhongguancun	21	138.806	China's economy
	quanjian	20	134.742	
	guangdong	40	128.047	
7	taiwanese	41	98.472	Mainland and Taiwan

The largest number of keywords in the table, including *Lam* and *pro-democracy* are associated with the 2019 Hong Kong protest and the extradition of Hong Kongers. Other keywords words, such as *Xinjiang*, *Uighur*, *Linxia*, touch on ethnic issues in China, in

particular those regarding China's Muslim population. The keywords *Jinping* and *Xi* refer to the name of president of China (*Jinping* is the first name and *Xi* is the family name) and are related to the Chinese government. Some keywords are also related to Chinese enterprises. For example, *BRI* (the Belt and Road Initiative), is one of the world's largest infrastructure projects and will economically link China and Southeast Asia, the South Asian subcontinent, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe (Thürer et al., 2020). The keyword *Taiwanese*, an inevitable topic in China's international affairs, is also a keyword. The election of Donald Trump as US President strained relations between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, and in the last year or two, China has been accused of "squeezing" Taiwan's "international space" (Gries & Wang, 2020). Other keywords such as *Quanjian*, refer to a Chinese company that is involved in a corruption case. In short, these keywords all refer to a number of different major political and economic events in China throughout 2019.

Table 5.9 shows the top 20 key words in the EUSA and the political event they are mostly associated with.

**Table 5.9:**

*EUSA top 20 keywords referring to political events*

	Item	Frequency (focus)	Keyness Score	Event
1	buttingieg	43	143.499	The campaign
	biden	113	135.097	
	klobuchar	29	89.11	
2	impeachment	91	101.331	Investigate and impeach Trump
	attorney-general	47	84.334	
	mueller	104	76.975	
	pelosi	55	73.632	
	zelensky	21	72.879	
	barr	59	71.987	
	impeach	40	59.94	
3	think-tank	45	95.593	US government
	foreign-policy	22	64.788	
	social-media	20	53.722	

4	mr	2266	133.079	No unique event
	ocasio-cortez	37	104.741	
	giuliani	39	66.877	
	democrats	263	63.772	
	mulvaney	25	62.687	
	indian-american	19	58.966	
	civil-right	20	57.548	

It can be seen from Table 5.9 that fewer events in total are associated with the top 20 keywords of the EUSA than was seen in Table 5.8 with the ECA. Table 5.9 shows that the event represented by the largest number of keywords in the EUSA is related to the investigation and impeachment of the US president at the time, Donald Trump. Other keywords, such as *Buttigieg* and *Biden*, are politicians, and an examination of these keywords in context found that most of the reports they appear in are about the presidential campaign, and the three keywords, *think-tank*, *foreign-policy* and *social-media* were more generally associated with the US government. As seen in the table, there were also a number of other keywords, that when examined in context, did not clearly relate to a single specific event.

Given that a keyword analysis is able to uncover the ‘presence of discourses’ (Baker, 2006, p. 121) or the ‘aboutness’ (Scott and Tribble, 2006, p. 79) of a collection of texts, the relationship between the keywords and the different events that they are associated with in the two corpora may reveal information about the underlying beliefs and values of The Economist towards the two countries. In reporting on the United States, for example, The Economist chose not to emphasise as key, a range of different negative narratives about the United States. The one exception is the investigation and impeachment of Trump. In contrast, The Economist when reporting on China, emphasises as key, a range of different major issues and problems that China encountered during 2019, including the protests in Hong Kong, the Chinese government’s policies towards Muslims, various aspects of China’s economy, including the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ Policy (the political system practiced by the Chinese government in Hong Kong) and certain religious issues. Nevertheless, for the United States, the only key focus is the bipartisan election and the impeachment of the president.

In short, this section analyses The Economist's reports on political events in China and the United States. It is worth noting that for China, The Economist focuses on descriptions of various political events, while for the United States, they mainly focus on the specific characters and personalities in the events. In the ECA corpus, most reports of political events are sensitive topics for China, for example, the Hong Kong protests, the government's attitude to the Chinese Muslim community, as well as the relationship between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. In these reports, the Chinese government often plays an oppressive and persecuting role. In reports on the United States, the impeachment of Trump has become the main focus of the reports, and is largely negatively focused on the personality of Trump.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the analysis of The Economist's different attitudes towards Chinese and American politicians and political events. For Chinese politicians, The Economist focused on China Leader Xi, and through its narrative, conveyed to readers a seemingly authoritarian and undemocratic Chinese government and someone who leads the country according to his own will. In addition, through the use of certain verb choices, The Economist constructs an image of Trump who is arbitrary, lacks ability and appears threatened.

The Economist's reports focus on many aspects of Chinese political events, in particular the protests in Hong Kong. It is also concerned about China's foreign policies, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, and its ethnic policies. The chapter shows that The Economist's concern for the United States is less extensive and limits its key focus to the political events of Trump's impeachment and the U.S. presidential campaign. Although The Economist's coverage of the United States (250,503 words) is much longer than that of China (127,537 words), it does not cover the United States as widely in terms of politics, economy, religion, and international relations as it does for China.

# **Chapter 6:**

## **Verb Analysis**

### **6.0 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, Section 4.4, a preliminary comparison of the most frequent verbs used in the ECA and EUSA was carried out to establish initial differences that might be further explored to provide insights into the salient discourses that impact on The Economist's reporting on China and the United States. This chapter now focuses on a more detailed examination of the prominent differences found in the use of verbs in the two corpora. Verb choice is an important discursive component of the news article, as it can convey the author's attitude about the news story and hint to the readers as to how the news might be inferred (Goatly & Hiradhar, 2016). As a result, the occurrence and distribution of verbs in news discourse can provide useful information for the analyst to evaluate the type, content and ideological salience of news articles (Klavans & Kan, 1998). The corpus analytical resources of frequency and concordance analysis can play particularly useful roles for the analysis of verb usage, and when a high-frequency verb is made the subject of concordance analysis, interesting results may begin to emerge (Baker, 2006).

### **6.1 High frequency verbs in the ECA and the EUSA**

As indicated in Table 4.5, the four highest frequency verbs occurring in both the ECA and USAC are *be*, *have*, *say* and *do*. Given that the verbs *be* and *have* are typically the most frequently occurring verbs in the majority of corpora, this is not surprising. Nevertheless, one notable use of these two items in the ECA and EUSA is related to the structure *have been*, which frequently appears in both corpora. Grammatically, this structure belongs to the present perfect continuous, which is typically employed to refer to activities that began in the past and which are conceptualized as ongoing. As The Economist is a news magazine and repeatedly

reports on ongoing events, such grammatical usage is also to be expected.

The third most frequent verb in both corpora is *say*. Again, this is not necessarily surprising, as *say* which is conventionally used to report the words of those referred to in the news, is often the most common reporting verb found in news articles (Bell, 1991). *Say* also tends to be used as a neutral reporting verb and typically does not indicate the stance of the speakers (Uba, 2020). Nevertheless, the relative frequency of *say* in ECA Corpus (4634.10 words per million) is significantly higher ( $p\text{-value} = 3.210419 \times 10^{-7}$ ) than in the EUSA (3571.17 words per million) and therefore its particular salience in the ECA warrants further examination.

Table 6.1 shows the top ten words that collocate immediately to the left of the verb *say* in the ECA and EUSA according to the logDice statistic which indicates collocational typicality. The collocate immediately to the left tends to represent the subject of the verb *say*, that is, those whose voices are being reported on (Goatly & Hiradhar, 2016) in the two corpora.

**Table 6.1:**

*The top ten collocates of say in ECA and EUSA (one-word on the left)*

	ECA			EUSA		
	Collocate	Freq	logDice	Collocate	Freq	logDice
1	he	91	11.27898	he	157	10.83929
2	she	35	10.36939	she	59	10.34737
3	they	15	8.52968	who	14	7.85899
4	official	11	8.48502	cohen	5	7.27753
5	it	20	8.47018	trump	10	7.19975
6	university	5	7.60768	once	5	7.17345
7	organiser	4	7.55706	have	18	7.06009
8	zhang	4	7.52832	court	4	6.68939
9	government	6	7.47383	carhart	3	6.55568
10	wang	4	7.43776	to	23	6.54879

It can be seen from the table that The Economist uses certain voices or news sources to construct the news stories in the two corpora. In the ECA, the voices being reported are often

official or government representatives. To examine this further, Table 6.2 contains 10 concordance lines with *say* as the node word and Chinese government or Chinese officials as the subject of the verb.

**Table 6.2:**

*Concordance lines containing government or Chinese officials and the node word say.*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	an ecologically sensitive area. Officials	say	the new road will also be of help for the Winter
2	to map out economic policy for 2019, they	said	their priority would be to stabilise
3	In November China's Centre for Disease Control	said	that 850,000 people were known to be
4	of recipients. By 2016 they made up 61%. China	says	it reserves 10,000 of its scholarships every
5	language (see article). In Xinjiang officials	say	the main purpose of the saohei effort is to fight
6	and hamper private firms. Authorities	say	its fault was hosting training courses without
7	. In April 2018 the southern city of Zhongshan	said	the technique had led to the arrests of 341 drug
8	lists the shops in ranking order. The officers	say	that well-behaved ones can enjoy free
9	cosmopolitan cities. In 2016 the authorities	said	there would be three tiers of classification
10	few years' working experience. The government	said	the aim was to "encourage the top, control the

In this table, it can be seen that when reporting on China, The Economist draws upon government organizations or collectives as opinion-makers, which guides readers to believe that this is a collective point of view; one that reflects the views of the wider Chinese population. This reporting of information about China as consistently reflecting the voices of official organizations also works to position the Western reader in a contrary position to such information, given their perception of the authoritarianism of the Chinese government.

Furthermore, the two surnames, *Zhang* and *Wang*, also appear in the list of ECA collocates, and generally report the voices of non-political figures as a way of highlighting issues or injustices in China. In the ECA, for example, *Zhang* represents two people; one is Zhang Qianfan, a professor of law at Beijing University, and the other is Zhang Xiao, the founder of Beijing Hefeng Charity. The Economist reports that Zhang Qianfan's legal textbooks were restricted because of his advocacy of constitutional reform ("China tries to stop academics from taking its constitution literally," 2019), and that Zhang Xiao, due to increasing homelessness throughout China, provides help to those who are homeless in Beijing ("Homelessness has become a problem in China's cities," 2019).

The surname *Wang* represents three people in the ECA, Wang Zhi, a cross-dresser, Larry Wang (the president of one of China's biggest immigration companies, Well Trend) and Wang Yisehakai (the ahong or imam of a mosque near Guilin). Their remarks touch on three more sensitive Chinese issues, homosexuality, wealthy immigrants, and the Muslim community. Their voices are reported in references to the problems facing China, however while much of the Economist readership is likely to be interested in these issues, from the perspective of many Chinese readers, these remarks are perhaps seen as being used to indirectly criticize the Chinese government.

In contrast, in the EUSA, most of the speakers reported are political individuals, for example, *Cohen*, *Trump* and *Carhart*, and the voices of other non-political individuals, (such as those represented by Wang or Zhang in the ECA), are not as typically reported using the verb *say*. Interestingly, and unlike the ECA, when these political individuals are reported, they tend to be used to support the description of current political events, often in non-evaluative ways. This can be seen in Table 6.3, containing 10 concordance lines with *say* as the node word, and *Trump* as the subject of the verb.

**Table 6.3:**

*Concordance lines containing Trump and the node word say*

		Left	KWIC	Right
1	abusers and corrupt actors." Mr Trump, he	said		, was "declaring a national emergency with
2	limited curb on late-term abortions Mr Trump	says		he wants, by contrast, could be popular. Polls
3	an urgent response". Not only did Mr Trump	say		he did not need to declare an emergency, he
4	, suggested the writing was on the wall. Mr Trump	said		he wanted to "go in a tougher direction". After
5	. During a trip to Europe in 2018, Donald Trump	said		that immigration has "changed the fabric of
6	in the 2020 presidential election? Mr Trump	says		he is eyeing the state. He came within only
7	months of growing tensions. Although Mr Trump	said		that talks with the Taliban were "dead", they
8	gut instincts into policy. Mr Trump	says		he will name Mr Bolton's replacement-the
9	with Mr Zelensky, then newly elected, Mr Trump	said		he was "convinced the new Ukrainian government
10	, Volodymyr Zelensky, on July 25th Mr Trump	said		, "I will have Mr Giuliani give you a call."

As seen in Table 6.1 above, The Economist also typically uses *say* to report on the voices of the US courts. The concordance lines in Table 6.4, which lists concordances involving *court* with the node word *say*, also shows that The Economist's reports of the US courts are everyday news statements, containing no ideological or attitudinal preferences.

**Table 6.4:**

*The concordances with court and the node word say*

		Left	KWIC	Right
1	had written in 1802. This means, the court	said		a century and a half later, that the government
2	being released. The law, the appeals	said		, permitted ICE to swoop in only at

	court		the time of the
3	, Justice Elena Kagan wrote that what the court	says	"can't be done has been done". Lower-court
4	on December 2nd. But after the Supreme Court	said	it would review the constitutionality of the

Hence, it could be concluded that when The Economist reports on the United States, it tends to report the words of American political individuals or institutions, often as part as an uncritical discussion of current events or circumstances, for example, the relationship between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. However, when reporting on China, while foregrounding an apparently collective governmental voice, The Economist also typically includes the voice of the general public. However, the public voices selected by The Economist often point to the shortcomings and problems faced by the Chinese government. The Economist uses this to construct for their readers an image of China where the government and the public are not aligned.

## 6.2 Four high frequency verbs occurring in the ECA corpus

While Table 4.5 (Chapter 4, Section 4.4) indicates that many of the verbs that frequently occur in the ECA also occur with similar frequencies in the EUSA, there are four verbs *call*, *try*, *grow* and *involve* that have a considerably higher frequency in the ECA, than they do in the EUSA. Furthermore, there are four verbs, *go*, *come*, *seem* and *pay* that have a considerable higher frequency in the EUSA than they do in the ECA. Table 6.5 provides a comparison of the raw and relative frequencies of *call*, *try*, *grow* and *involve*.

**Table 6.5:**

*Comparative differences in the frequencies of call, try, grow, and involve.*

verb	Raw Freq.	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Relative Freq.	p-value
	ECA	EUSA	ECA	EUSA	
call	160	176	1087.178	605.51639	0.0000
try	116	153	788.2041	526.38641	0.0014

grow	106	100	720.2555	344.0434	0.0000
involve	105	59	713.4606	202.98561	0.0000

The table shows an observable difference in relative frequencies between the two corpora. The table also indicates the significance of the difference between the frequencies of these verbs measured by the *p-value* statistic. A p-value which is less than 0.05 indicates that the difference in the frequencies of the item between the two corpora is statistically significant and unlikely to have happened by chance (McEnery et al., 2006). Following this method, the differences in the p-value of *call*, *grow* *involve* and *try* are all indicated as significant, and identify a salience in the ECA that warrants further examination. As a result, this section will focus on these four verbs.

A concordance analysis (Table 6.6) shows that *call* is often used in the ECA to provide the name given to Chinese objects that need to be explained and elaborated on in English.

**Table 6.6:**

*Concordance of call in the ECA corpus (top 10 & sorted by the first token to the right)*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	reasons.) For months Mr Li has sworn off what he	calls	"flood-style stimulus", (ie, deluging the
2	in China for its bawdiness. A common routine is	called	"The 18 Touches". One variant of this involves a
3	, which was also used to host a sister project	called	"955.wlb" (standing for "work-life balance")
4	from other jurisdictions-an operation China	calls	"Fox Hunt". Agents have been sent undercover to
5	show, of works by gay Chinese artists, was	called	"Love is Blue." The colour has gay associations
6	In 2005 the government adopted a new policy	called	"balancing leniency and severity". This meant
7	power". The China Pavilion, as the structure is	called	, is for an international flower festival in
8	or "black society", as organised crime is often	called	, are common in China. But officials have been at

9	March anonymous activists created a webpage	called	996.icu (the letters standing for "intensive
10	conference on June 18th Mrs Lam offered what she	called	a "most sincere apology" to Hong Kongers, who,

It can be seen from the concordance lines in Table 6.6 that, *call* as a verb, often functions to indicate an ‘explanation’ in the ECA corpus. This also might explain why *call* is less frequent in the EUSA corpus, as vocabulary and discourse is generally better understood when it refers to the same socio-political context in which the language used is located. However, the explicit and often unnecessary attention to the direct translation of words and phrases from the Chinese language, for example, *balancing leniency and severity*, *The 18 Touches*, *black society* and *flood-style stimulus* as seen in the concordances in Table 6.6, which may appear strange or alien to The Economist readers, could be argued as complicit in constructing a foreignness or Otherness about the Chinese community for The Economist readers, particularly those whose first language is English.

The verb *try* also frequently occurs in the ECA Corpus and is often followed by the preposition *to*. Indeed, of the 116 occurrences of the verb *try* in the ECA Corpus, 99 are part of the bigram *try to*. A random selection of concordances with *try to* (Table 6.7) shows that the subjects of *try to* are phenomena related to the Chinese government, such as local official, mainland authorities, and local government. The use of *try to* in this context implies an attempt to do something that is not necessarily easy. By repeatedly associating *try to* with the actions of the Chinese government, it could be argued that The Economist not only suggests to its readers that China regularly faces a number of difficulties and challenges, but conveys a lack of confidence in the ability of the Chinese Government to govern. Moreover, Table 6.7 also shows the actions that The Economist foregrounds the Chinese government as ‘trying to’ do are often viewed as negative in the Western worldview, such as covering something up, warning some people, putting a false spin on something, reducing Islam's influence, sanitizing, and suppressing culture.

**Table 6.7:**

*15 concordance lines with try to (top 15) in the ECA*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	Kong was posed by "ill-intentioned forces"	trying	to turn Hong Kong "into a bridgehead to attack
2	to teach. Linxia's party chief, Guo Heli,	tried	to put a positive spin on the clampdown during a
3	disease keeps spreading. Local officials also	try	to cover up. They sometimes prefer not to alert
4	assistance". Local governments are also	trying	to help. One city in Guangxi province announced
5	" on the faithful. The authorities are also	trying	to reduce Islam's influence in society. In
6	that Chinese officials and state media are	trying	to downplay. Rural China is in the grip of a
7	fully, we understand that," he says. "But we are	trying	to protect what we have until the last day." When
8	". By stemming the flow of tourists, China may be	trying	to warn Taiwanese voters of what could happen if
9	the unrest (it would have allowed suspects to be	tried	by courts in mainland China). But democrats
10	of lawyers and legal activists who had been	trying	to help citizens use the courts to reverse
11	. China's national government has already been	trying	to bind the region together more closely. Last
12	to attend boarding school. Her family had been	trying	to secure this opportunity for her ever since
13	surprising. In recent years the party has been	trying	to sanitise or suppress any kind of culture that
14	Chinese opera, an art form which Mr Xi has been	trying	to promote. It used to be that female operatic
15	mainland authorities. The government has been	trying	harder to stop people using illegally

*Grow* and *involve* also are significantly high frequency verbs in the ECA. According to Table 6.8, the words that collocate more exclusively with *grow* in the ECA are related to economics, for example, *fast*, *economy* and *number*. This is perhaps not surprising given that The Economist has a business and economic focus and is understandably reporting on China's

recent rapid economic development. However, The Economist's use of the verb *involve*, is often used in conjunction with negative news when reporting on Chinese. This can be seen in the concordance lines in Table 6.9 where The Economist characteristically pairs the verb *involve* with negative news, such as demonstrations, political scandals, and medical malpractices.

**Table 6.8:**

*Top ten collections of grow (five words to the left and right)*

	Collocate	Freq	Log Dice
1	fast	7	10.85316
2	economy	6	10.29034
3	number	6	9.94834
4	rich	4	9.93391
5	pride	3	9.65423
6	recent	5	9.6495
7	slow	3	9.58496
8	tech	3	9.52968
9	its	14	9.52658
10	more	13	9.52302

**Table 6.9:**

*Ten concordances with involve in the ECA*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	of building the airport says construction has	involved	"unprecedented" difficulty. It was only just
2	who inspired the "Umbrella Movement" of 2014	involving	79 days of sit-ins and demonstrations in busy
3	. State media have also linked him with a scandal	involving	a string of luxury villa compounds in Shaanxi.
4	media scrambling to catch up. A good example	involves	a scandal involving childhood vaccines last
5	Keeping tabs China's "social credit" scheme	involves	cajolery and sanctions Some people shrug it off
6	headache. Challenging horrors in Xinjiang may	involve	confronting Chinese public opinion, as well as

7	Islam's influence in society. In Linxia this	involves	curbing the "proliferation" of the use of the
8	what proportion of his country's HIV cases	involved	homosexual transmission. His questioner, a
9	AFTER NEARLY six months of unrest in Hong Kong,	involving	increasingly violent protests, vandalism and
10	Buddhist monks are meant to avoid any food that	involves	killing, though they may eat meat received as

To conclude this section, three of the four most frequent verbs identified as having a significant occurrence in the ECA (*call*, *try*, and *involve*) are arguably used to reproduce discourses that construct China in a negative way for The Economist readers. The next section examines four of the most frequent verbs identified as having a significant occurrence in the EUSA (*go*, *come*, *seem*, and *pay*).

### 6.3 Four high frequently verbs occurring in the EUSA Corpus

Table 6.10 lists differences in the frequencies of four high frequency verbs in the EUSA (see Table 4.5, Chapter 4, Section 4.4), whose relative frequency in the ECA is considerably lower. In order to indicate the significance of the differences in frequency between these verbs, the table also provides a p-value statistic. As can be seen in the table the four verbs relatively higher frequency of the four verbs in the EUSA is statistically significant when compared to the ECA, and thus they exhibit a salience that warrants further examination.

**Table 6.10:**

*Comparative differences in the frequencies of go, come, seem and pay.*

verb	EUSA				
	Raw Freq.	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Relative Freq.	p-value
	EUSA	ECA	EUSA	ECA	
go	314	88	1080.296	597.94795	0.0000
come	270	94	928.9172	638.71713	0.0010
seem	250	59	860.1085	400.89692	0.0000
pay	208	50	715.6103	339.74315	0.0000

As indicated, the verb *seem* is one of four verbs that occurs in a list of the most frequent verbs in the EUSA, which do not occur in the list of those in the ECA. Of the 250 occurrences of *seem* in the EUSA, it occurs 89 times in the form of the phrase *seem to*. As a verb, *seem* is used to signal the subjectivity of an assertion that something is being done or has a particular quality. However, it could be argued that the producers of a news report should present their readers with credible and objective news, instead of simply speculating and inferring. In some instances, the less than objective nature of these assertions is compounded in The Economist reports on the USA though the co-occurrence of the items *unlikely* and *likely* with *seem* (29 occurrences). Table 6.11 lists ten concordance lines where the verb *seem* is followed by *likely* or *unlikely*. Bednarek & Caple (2012) show that in news reports, journalists often use words such as *will*, *probably* and *likely* to make assumptions, to predict the occurrence of an event, or speculate about future events. Using the verb *seem* in this way, The Economist often leads its readers to particular conclusions when reporting on the USA, before the information surrounding the related news item is necessarily confirmed or the truth revealed.

**Table 6.11:**

*Ten concordance lines in the EUSA, where the verb seem is followed by likely and unlikely*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	like water", as Mr Trump tweeted last year. That	seems	likely, especially now that regular caravans
2	Other states planning to legalise cannabis	seem	likely to learn from this experience. In June
3	of lgbt Americans who want to foster and adopt	seems	likely to make up for any shortfall that arises
4	their competitors are charging? That, too,	seems	unlikely. Most states already require
5	risk of being wrong about Facebook again, that	seems	unlikely. This is partly because its impact has
6	lawyer at Davis Polk. A new federal privacy bill	seems	unlikely in the short term, but never before has
7	investigation. The president's suit	seems	unlikely to succeed. Courts tend to stay away
8	lawmakers want to challenge Roe v Wade That	seems	unlikely to happen until 2021 at the earliest

9	, for which Mr Trump is likely to be impeached,	seems	unlikely to help. Politically, he is already
10	, would have to find Mr Trump guilty. That	seems	unlikely. Only Mitt Romney of Utah has even

Although this language phenomenon occurs significantly less in the ECA corpus, it is of interest to examine how its usage differs when reporting on China (Table 6.12). Concordance line 1, for example, states that *Leaders in Macau seem anxious about contagion from Hong Kong*, which means that Macau politicians are worried about the negative influence of the Hong Kong protests on the citizens of Macau, and concordance line 6 states that *Her administration cannot negotiate with the protesters. It seems paralysed in the face of them*, which refers to the negative impact of the protests on the Hong Kong government. As indicated here and further viewed in the table, these are all negative descriptions of China, and The Economist uses *seem* to induce its readers to treat the magazine's hypotheses or opinions as facts. Therefore, The Economist uses *seem* to report news in China and the United States in different ways. One is to predict the occurrence or result of events, and the other is to guide its readers to regard conjectures as facts. However, when reporting on the United States, although a prediction was made, it does not tend to involve a negative report about the United States. In contrast, most reports on China involving the verb *seem* construct negative narratives.

**Table 6.12:**

*Concordance lines of seem in the ECA*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	. It will be hidden behind blue hoardings for a month. Leaders in Macau	seem	anxious about contagion from Hong Kong, which lies 65km to the east
2	, though mostly with older customers. But the hopes of private firms	seem	at variance with state aims. John Sun, the boss of AGTech, has grumbled
3	rulings is very rarely successful in China. The Xichu system does not	seem	fair, at least as it appears on paper: among rewards for the
4	. "We are racing to catch up with the	seems	lost. Magnetic attraction Rare

	coast," he says. The race already		earths give China leverage in the trade
5	the Communist Party in Beijing has risen sharply. The local government	seems	paralysed. Relations with the police have deteriorated. And worries
6	change. Her administration cannot negotiate with the protesters. It	seems	paralysed in the face of them. Meanwhile, the demonstrators
7	that can do just this (China is building these too, but its own gliders	seem	to lack the range to hit America). China fears that such weapons might
8	stimulus to revive it CHINA'S RUBBER-STAMP parliament can	seem	unchanging from one year to the next. Shortly past 9am on March 5th-the

Table 6.13 shows the concordances of *go*, *come* and *pay* in the EUSA, ranked according to the logDice statistic. Although statistically, the frequency of these three verbs is significantly higher than in the ECA, a collocation and concordance analysis indicate that there is nothing notable about their use; in other words, they are ideologically neutral words. This is mainly because they are used for simple verb collocations, such as *go to* and *come from*, or because refer to the discussion of certain phenomena, for example, *paid leave* and *paid parental leave*, which frequently occurs in the corpus.

**Table 6.13:**

*Collocates of go, come and pay (three words to the left and right)*

		Collocate	Freq	Log Dice
go	1	far	11	9.65208
	2	through	9	9.35935
	3	to	142	9.31094
	4	further	7	9.2956
	5	into	11	9.17172
come	1	when	22	9.93587
	2	from	45	9.93343
	3	out	14	9.40434
	4	down	7	8.99357
	5	to	94	8.72447
pay	1	leave	32	11.33112

	2	attention	10	10.35614
	3	teacher	7	9.78499
	4	rent	6	9.6661
	5	price	7	9.57374

#### 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter analyses and compares the use of certain verbs employed by The Economist in its news reports about China and the United States. In brief, the findings show that when reporting Chinese news, especially news related to the Chinese government, The Economist constructs an image of a Chinese government that faces many difficulties and lacks sufficient governance capabilities. Additionally, although perhaps appropriate given the nature of the two systems, The Economist tends to employ different sources of information from China and the United States. One comes from government organizations and the other comes from individuals. When reporting on China, The Economist constructs political and academic institutions as largely having a collective voice. In addition, The Economist uses the voices of the public, to construct an image of a China in which the government and the public are at odds.

# **Chapter 7:**

## **Adjective Analysis**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on comparing the use of adjectives in the ECA and the EUSA corpora. From a critical discourse perspective, adjectives have an intrinsic rhetorical function because their use as subjectivity markers can be explained as reflecting their users' world views and bias (Ajmi, 2014). Van Dijk (2000) also points out that adjectives are involved in the "ideological work" (Fairclough et al., 2011. p. 381) that is produced through discourse. As an example, he explains how the use of the adjective 'pinko' in the conservative Sunday Telegraph editorial headline to describe a Financial Times report about income inequality in the UK, not only references the characteristic pink colour of the Financial Times but casts the report as being influenced by left wing opinions which are in ideological opposition to those of the Telegraph. Jani (2017) also points out the role of the adjective in the (re)production of ideology. She states that ideological speech is always evaluative, and that that the adjective (either descriptive or taxonomic) plays a key role in processes of evaluation. According to Jani an analysis of adjectival use in a corpus of texts can provide evidence of ideology.

### **7.1 Forms of representation of the adjectives *Chinese* and *American***

Bednarek and Caple (2012) found that attributive adjectives which pre-modify nouns are common in news reports and that adjectives referring to countries (or cities) are the most frequent. Taking this into account, this chapter begins with the examination of the adjectives *Chinese* and *American*. As indicated in Table 4.6 (Chapter 4, Section 4.5), *Chinese* is the most frequent adjective in the ECA (raw freq. = 754, relative freq. = 5123.33 per million), while *American* is the 9<sup>th</sup> most frequent adjective in the ECA (raw freq. = 138, relative freq. = 937.69 per million), and the 7<sup>th</sup> most frequent in the EUSA (raw freq. = 318, relative freq. = 1094.06 per million). However, *Chinese* as an adjective rarely appears in the EUSA (raw freq.

= 20, relative freq. = 68.81).

As indicated, although *American* is a high-frequency adjective in The Economist's reports on China, the adjective *Chinese* appears relatively less frequently in The Economist's reports on the United States. As a result, it could be argued that The Economist tends to more frequently connect its discussions of China with the United States, than it connects its discussions of the United States with China. This suggests that, in The Economist's view, it is how China handles its relationship with the United States that matters.

In order to explore this further, Table 7.1 provides a list of the top ten collocates of the adjective *Chinese* in the ECA corpus (one word to the right) ordered by the logDice statistic which expresses the typicality of the collocation.

**Table 7.1:**

*The top ten collocates of Chinese in the ECA (one word to the right)*

Rank	Collocate	Freq	logDice
1	official	46	10.44942
2	student	31	10.11342
3	government	28	9.60523
4	leader	19	9.39306
5	firm	18	9.32443
6	diplomat	10	8.68349
7	characteristic	7	8.23371
8	counterpart	7	8.21677
9	state	8	8.1991
10	tech	7	8.19818

It can be seen in the table that *official*, *government*, *leader* and *diplomat* are ranked in the 1st, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> position respectively, indicating that the adjective *Chinese* is typically used in The Economist reports on China to reference the country's government and its officials. The collocate *student* in 2<sup>nd</sup> position is linked to the student protests in Hong Kong and again reflects a focus on the Chinese government. The occurrence of *firm* and *tech* in the list may

suggest a secondary focus on Chinese industry and technology. However, as seen in the Table 7.2, which provides examples of concordance lines containing the nodes *Chinese firm* and *Chinese tech* as nodes, these two items are also related to discussions about the Chinese government. For example, in these concordance lines, Huawei, a key Chinese technology company that was sanctioned by the US in the Sino-US trade war is repeatedly mentioned. Huawei is always discussed within the wider context of Chinese governmental concerns and Chinese international relations. The Economist clearly views Chinese business as being strongly influenced by government, although where the truth is on this matter, is difficult to say and clearly the Chinese perspective might be different.

**Table 7.2:**

*Concordance lines containing Chinese firm or Chinese tech*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	caused jitters. New Zealand cited "changes of schedule on the Chinese side", but speculation blamed China's pique with New Zealand for airing anxieties about the security of 5G technology made by Huawei, a	Chinese firm	. An article published by Global Times, a tabloid controlled by the People's Daily, fuelled concerns in New Zealand that China's enthusiasm for the year of tourism was waning. The newspaper said "tense
2	than many realise. For their part, Huawei's critics in America, led by Vice-President Mike Pence and the secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, stress the risks of entrusting any sensitive infrastructure to any	Chinese firm	. Put another way, they mean that China is an adversary like Russia. Team Trump has casually tossed about some momentous threats. Trump envoys told Poland's leaders that doing business with Huawei threatens
3	, the legislature is set to approve a foreign-investment law that will respond to some of America's main complaints-for example, by barring officials from requiring foreign investors to transfer technology to	Chinese firms	. Even if there is scepticism about how China will implement the law, it is an attempt to reduce trade tensions. America's president, Donald Trump, and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, could meet this
4	they are as likely to fret about BRI schemes leaving participating countries dangerously in debt, damaging the environment or	Chinese firms	. Ahead of the Belt and Road Forum, a multinational gathering that will be hosted by President Xi Jinping in late April, Chinese officials and scholars

	locking swathes of Africa, Asia or the Asia-Pacific into technical standards set by		suggest that it is time for other countries and
5	from the state, firms from China can, as it happens, be trusted not to help Chinese spies steal secrets.  Thus Huawei bosses note assurances from the Chinese foreign ministry that no law exists that could make	Chinese firms	install backdoors in digital devices, for spies to use. Asked about national-security laws requiring firms to assist Chinese intelligence services, they retort that such laws do not apply outside China's
6	, it is as if the Middle East not only sat on most of the world's oil but also, almost exclusively, refined it and then made products out of it. This is why rare earths now figure in the trade war. America can hobble	Chinese tech	giants by stopping American firms from selling them components such as semiconductors. But China could, in return, cut off their supplies of rare-earth products. The most important of these are specialised
7	chains and then compete in the West. But to become a world-shaping force like Silicon Valley, Zhongguancun will have to overcome Western concerns about the potential misuses of Chinese technology. So far, very few	Chinese tech	companies have managed to go global, Huawei and Bytedance being the most prominent. And Huawei, in particular, is under threat due to security fears raised by Western governments. In the meantime, even Mr Wang

However, as indicated in Table 7.3, which shows the top ten collocates of the adjective *American* in the EUSA corpus (one word to the right), The Economist's use of the adjective *American* to refer specifically to the US government is less pronounced, and instead it is used to refer more broadly to US politics, the economy, the American dream and the American public. Indeed, while *official* is ranked at number 5, the items *history* and *life* are the 6th and 7<sup>th</sup> most typical collocations of *American*, again supporting the view that The Economist reports on the US tend to have a much broader socio-historical focus than Economist reports on China, which as seen in the previous chapter, tend to focus mainly on a range of political events.

**Table 7.3:**

*The top ten collocates of American in the EUSA (one word to the right)*

	Collocate	Freq	logDice
1	politics	22	10.64565
2	economy	10	9.62844
3	dream	5	8.95124
4	public	7	8.71724
5	official	5	8.52751
6	history	4	8.42257
7	life	4	8.28232
8	politician	4	8.25853
9	commander	3	8.21428
10	adult	3	8.17982

In general, therefore, it could be argued that compared with the United States, when The Economist reports on China, The Economist pays more attention to the political actions and events associated with the Chinese government, than it necessarily does when reporting on America, where there is either a narrow focus on the president and politicking between the two main political parties (see Chapter 6), or a broader focus on the social and historical elements of American society.

The Economist's primary focus on the actions and events associated with the Chinese government in its reports on China, and its relative lack of reporting on Chinese culture and history means that Economist readers, who are primarily those from English-speaking cultures, may lack the opportunity to understand more about the reasons behind China's political and social behaviours. As Van Dijk (2000) points out, the readers of the news are not able to understand the actions reported about unfamiliar cultures and countries, without knowing a great deal of everyday knowledge about those countries and cultures (Van Dijk, 2000). The Economist's failure to include such information in any depth, may have the effect of misleading readers to draw upon their own cultural experiences when evaluating China, effectively resulting in bias.

## 7.2 Adjectives frequently occurring in the ECA Corpus

This section now moves to a specific focus on two adjectives, *foreign* (raw freq. = 154, relative freq. = 1046.41 per million) and *western* (raw freq. = 112, relative freq. = 761.0247 per million), that Table 4.6 (Chapter 4, Section 4.5) identified as frequently occurring in the ECA. These adjectives are of interest because they exhibit a relatively high frequency in the ECA corpus, but also because they unexpectedly do not appear with such a high relative frequency in the EUSA corpus (*foreign*, raw freq. = 95, relative freq. = 326.84 per million; *western* raw freq. = 20, relative freq. = 68.81 per million). In order to explore these two adjectives in more detail Table 7.4 and Table 7.5 show their top 10 collocates using the logDice statistic and compares their frequency and relative frequency to the same collocates in the EUSA.

**Table 7.4:**

*The top ten collocates with foreign in the ECA compared to the same collocates in the EUSA (three words to the right)*

foreign (ECA)					foreign (EUSA)	
Rank	Collocate	logDice	Freq.	Rel. Freq.	Freq.	Rel. Freq.
1	journalist	9.84	5	33.97	0	00
2	policy	9.78	6	40.77	38	120.42
3	ministry	9.72	5	33.97	0	0
4	power	9.62496	6	40.77	5	17.20
5	student	9.49902	7	47.56	1	3.44
6	firm	9.48543	7	40.56	1	3.44
7	investment	9.41504	4	27.18	3	10.32
8	reporter	9.19265	3	20.38	0	0
9	market	9.17982	4	27.18	1	3.44
10	black	9.07717	3	20.38	0	0

**Table 7.5:**

*The top ten collocates with western in the ECA compared to the same collocates in the EUSA  
(three words to the right)*

western (ECA)					western (EUSA)	
Rank	Collocate	logDice	Freq.	Rel. Freq.	Freq.	Rel. Freq.
1	region	10.94472	8	54.36	0	0
2	xinjiang	10.76296	7	47.56	0	0
3	ally	10.26303	3	20.38	1	3.44
4	country	9.42635	8	54.36	1	3.44
5	province	9.26303	3	20.38	0	0
6	government	8.90951	7	47.56	1	3.44
7	leader	8.77118	3	20.38	0	0
8	and	7.33725	11	74.75	2	6.88
9	of	6.30342	9	61.16	1	3.44
10	be	6.29264	11	74.75	0	0

Table 7.4 shows that, with the exception of *policy*, the top 10 *foreign* collocates in the ECA, all of which are characteristic collocates of *foreign*, appear considerably less in the EUSA in terms of relative frequency. Hence it could be argued that The Economist pays more attention to certain outstanding issues in foreign and international contexts, such as *foreign policy*, *foreign government*, and *foreign power*, in its reports on China than when reporting on the United States. The Economist tries to show readers an image of China that is frequently involved in international events. If Table 7.4 does not fully reflect the attitude of The Economist towards Chinese news narratives, then Table 7.5 can provide further proof. The table shows that the top 10 *western* collocates in the ECA, all of which are characteristic collocates of *western*, rarely in the EUSA in terms of relative frequency. Again, arguably, the table shows that when reporting on China The Economist positions it strongly against the west (i.e., *western ally*, *western country*, *western government*, and *western leader*). In contrast, the word *Asian* has only appeared four times in the EUSA (relative freq. = 13.76 per million).

In order to examine further whether The Economist tends to focus on China's international relationships, more than it focuses on the United States' international relationships, the next

analysis will examine the occurrence of country nouns and country adjectives across the two corpora. Table 7.6 and 7.7 shows the frequency of ten countries and country adjectives (include *Europe* and *European*) in the ECA and EUSA.

**Table 7.6:**

*The frequency list of country nouns in the ECA and the EUSA*

	ECA			EUSA		
	country	Freq.	Relative frequency	country	Freq.	Relative frequency
1	america	193	1311.409	russia	88	302.758
2	britain	33	224.23	china	61	209.8665
3	japan	28	190.256	britain	20	68.8087
4	europe	27	183.461	korea	20	68.8087
5	canada	26	176.666	europe	15	51.6065
6	korea	19	129.102	canada	11	37.8448
7	australia	14	95.1281	japan	7	24.083
8	russia	13	88.3332	france	6	20.6426
9	france	11	74.7435	germany	5	17.2022
10	germany	8	54.3589	australia	5	17.2022

**Table 7.7:**

*The frequency list of main country adjectives in the ECA and the EUSA*

	ECA			EUSA		
	country adjective	Freq.	Relative frequency	country adjective	Freq.	Relative frequency
1	american	147	998.8449	russian	59	202.986
2	europorean	30	203.846	chinese	21	72.24911
3	british	20	135.897	europorean	18	61.9278
4	russian	15	101.923	british	15	51.6065
5	korean	11	74.7435	german	10	34.4043
6	german	8	54.3589	french	9	30.9639
7	japanese	8	54.3589	japanese	5	17.2022
8	canadian	8	54.3589	korean	5	17.2022
9	french	6	40.7692	canadian	4	13.7617
10	australian	3	20.3846	australian	1	3.44043

It can be seen in the two tables that *America* and *American* have the highest frequency in the ECA, while *Russia* and *Russian* are the most frequent in the EUSA followed by *China* and *Chinese*. This suggests that Economist news reports which focus on China include reference to the United States considerably more than they do for any other country, while Economist news reports on the United States refer first to Russia and then China considerably more than they do for any other country. *Russia* and *Russian* are high-frequency words in the EUSA because The Economist frequently reported on the impeachment of Trump, with one of the reasons for Trump's impeachment being the suspicion that Russia interfered in his presidential campaign.

However, what is of most interest in these tables is the relative frequency, given as indicated earlier, that The Economist published more reports on the United States than it did on China. Firstly, in the ECA, the relative frequency of *America* (1311.409 per million) and *American* (998.8449 per million) is significantly higher than the relative frequencies of any other country noun or country adjective listed across the two tables. Indeed, the next highest is *Russia* (302.758 per million) in the EUSA. This supports the assertion made previously, that the United States is discussed more in Economist reports on China, than China is discussed in Economist reports on the United States.

Secondly, the relative frequency of all countries and country adjectives in the ECA is significantly higher than those in the EUSA. This shows that although The Economist is most concerned about the relationship between China and the United States, they also give considerable attention to the relationship between China and other major countries when reporting on China. However, in contrast, when reporting on the United States, significantly less attention is given to other countries. Again, we can see that in The Economist reports China is frequently positioned from a non-Chinese perspective.

### 7.3 Adjectives frequently occurring in the EUSA corpus

Two adjectives of interest in the EUSA are *democratic* (raw freq. = 321, relative freq. = 1104.38 per million), and *republican* (raw freq. = 196, relative freq. = 674.33 per million). These appear as high frequency adjectives in Table 4.6 (Chapter 4, Section 4.5) and represent the two major political parties in the United States. In order to examine these adjectives in more detail, Table 7.8 provides a list of their top ten collocations, according to the logDice statistic.

**Table 7.8:**

*The top ten words that match democratic and republican in EUSA (one-word range on the right)*

	democratic			republican		
	Collocate	Freq	logDice	Collocate	Freq	logDice
1	primary	33	11.19577	senator	14	10.4675
2	presidential	26	10.85809	congressman	6	9.73947
3	candidate	22	10.39874	candidate	10	9.64597
4	leader	11	9.82281	governor	8	9.6163
5	party	15	9.75714	voter	10	9.45156
6	nomination	9	9.68208	politician	5	9.06454
7	voter	14	9.59547	presidential	5	8.93822
8	governor	9	9.32757	primary	5	8.92961
9	senator	7	8.99678	leader	4	8.90724
10	rival	5	8.81018	colleague	3	8.83007

The typical collocates of *democratic* tend to be associated with Democratic Party elections, for example, *democratic primary*, *democratic candidate*, *democratic nomination* and *democratic voter* and Democratic politicians, such as *democratic presidential*, *democratic governor*, and *democratic senator*. Similarly, the collocates of *republican* also focus on these two areas, for example, *republican senator*, *republican congressman*, *republican candidate* and *republican governor*. Interestingly, the relative frequency of *democratic* (1104.38 per million) is nearly twice that of *republican* (674.33 per million). Although the Republican

Party was the elected party in the United States in 2019, and one might expect The Economist would refer to it considerably more often than the Democrat party in its reports on the United States, it appears that The Economist refers to the Democratic Party twice as often as it refers to the Republicans.

The unevenness of coverage is not accidental. To examine this further, Table 7.9 provides a random list of 10 concordance lines containing the node word *democratic*. The table shows that The Economist has given a certain degree of coverage to the Democratic Party on the issue of environmental protection (*green deal*, 9th line) and racial discrimination (4th line) showing a positive attitude in both reports. The Economist also used positive descriptions of the Democratic party in its business reports, such as *The Democrats' directness about race* (4th line) and *Only a unified Democratic government* (9th line), which demonstrated The Economist's affirmation of the Democratic Party's policies and its ability to take action. This stance hints to readers that The Economist's underlying support is for the Democratic Party. However, quality news media is supposed to be as neutral and impartial as possible when reporting.

**Table 7.9:**

*A random list of 10 concordance lines containing the word democratic*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	diverse and younger than the country at large. Non-whites lean heavily	Democratic	and young Americans are the most Democratic generation of all. Both
2	and policymaking to local authorities. But as cities have turned into	Democratic	bastions and forged their own liberal visions for the future,
3	senators, Cory Booker and Kamala Harris, among the top tier of	Democratic	candidates. Both they and their rivals have discussed racism and
4	discussed racism and racial inequities openly, in ways that previous	Democratic	candidates have shied away from. The Democrats' directness about race

5	are only tangentially related to climate policy. Many top-tier	Democratic	candidates, who would no doubt balk at such sweeping changes, signed on
6	by activists into the mainstream. The colour of money In their defence,	Democratic	candidates have mostly made far more measured commitments to all three
7	today. As whites without a college degree have left the party, the	Democratic	coalition of well-educated whites with members of ethnic minorities
8	Medicare for All allows her to attract progressive voters within the	Democratic	electorate-especially the college-educated whites who have fuelled
9	. And the green deal appears to have no chance of success. Only a unified	Democratic	government-with a filibuster-proof majority or no filibuster to
10	, and expanding high-performing charter networks-are anathema to the	Democratic	primary voting base. Outside Newark, the public perception of the

In order to compare The Economist's attitude towards the Democratic Party, with its attitude to the Republican party, Table 7.10 provides a random list of 10 concordance lines containing the node word *republican*. It can be seen from the table that The Economist gives a negative description of the Republican Party's passive response to climate change and gun management. In addition, the table also mentions some negative comments made by Republicans on immigrants and non-white ethnicities, such as *both Republican congressmen, have compared immigrants to invaders* (5th line). These reports contrast with The Economist's positive description of the Democratic Party's racial issues in The Economist in Table 7.9 above. Although The Economist does not openly support a particular party, ideologically it would appear that The Economist is more supportive of the Democratic Party.

**Table 7.10:**

*A random list of 10 concordance lines containing the word republican*

	Left	KWIC	Right
1	if they had more serious alternatives to offer.	Republican	denial of climate change has led to Democratic
2	, has to his credit doubled down: he is a rare	Republican	fan of paid family leave. Yet the senator's

3	the proposal appears to confirm one of the main	Republican	arguments for inaction on global warming: a
4	. Since June 20th Mr Boquist and the rest of his	Republican	colleagues in the state Senate have fled from
5	the House floor Ted Yoho and Louie Gohmert, both	Republican	congressmen, have compared immigrants to invaders
6	will stuff the ballot boxes. Daddy lessons	Republican	states loosen their gun laws following mass
7	in year immediately following a mass shooting,	Republican	legislatures passed twice as many laws
8	against Mr Trump suggested to some that his	Republican	firewall may not be as solid as is generally
9	voters. But it is not grounds to imagine many	Republican	senators deserting him in the impeachment
10	Democrats' record on gerrymandering is dire;	Republican	attempts to suppress non-white voter turnout

#### 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter analyses high-frequency adjectives used by The Economist in Chinese and American news reports. The chapter found that The Economist constructs an image of a China that is in opposition to, but inherently linked with, western countries. It also suggests that when reporting on the United States, The Economist tends to provide a broader social and historical background, yet when reporting on China, it mainly focuses on a series of political events and lacks any focus on Chinese culture and history. Moreover, The Economist's reports on China discuss the United States more than The Economist's reports on the United States discuss China. Finally, in The Economist's reports on the United States, The Economist pays more attention to domestic political events. At the same time, the news magazine tends to report more on the party in opposition at the time, the Democratic Party, although when it does report on the Republican Party, The Economist tends to negatively describe the remarks and actions of its representatives and members. Arguably, in its news narrative, The Economist demonstrates an affirmation and underlying support for the political behaviour of the Democrats. Although it is possible that this might differ if the study was carried out over a different time period.

# **Chapter 8:**

## **Discussion**

### **8.0 Introduction**

One of the main objectives of this study was to observe and study how The Economist uses language in different ways to report on the news about China and the United States.

Following the critical approach to the investigation of language of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2013) in CDA, and Baker (2006, 2008, 2012, 2014) in Corpus Linguistics, an examination of the language choices found in The Economist can be seen as providing insights into the underlying ideologies and attitudes of The Economist towards China and the United States, and how these differ. As such, the two questions that the study set out to answer were:

1. How does The Economist use language differently to report on China and the United States?
2. What does this different language use reveal about the underlying ideologies and attitudes of The Economist towards these two nations?

This study attempted to answer these two research questions by collecting and analysing the 2019 news reports of The Economist on China and the United States in 2019, the results of which can be found in Chapters 4 through 7. While not all the results are necessarily of related interest, their general direction contributes to our understanding of how The Economist, according to certain underlying beliefs and values, discursively constructs China and America. This chapter will discuss and summarise the main observations from Chapters 4 through 7, and provide an overall discussion of the significance of the study. Following that, the limitations of the study and its impact on future research are also discussed.

## **8.1 Key observations**

Focusing on the two research questions, the study finds that The Economist employs a different use of language, including the construction of different types of narratives, with different discursive foci, when reporting on news about China, than it does when reporting on news about the United States. It also finds that this divergent use of language is often informed by the underlying ideologies and attitudes of The Economist towards these two nations. The key observations of this study are discussed below.

### *8.1.1 Political personalities and events*

As analysed in Chapter 5, The Economist reports on the politicians and political events in different ways. In terms of their reports on politicians, while both Chinese and American politicians appeared in the keyword lists of the two corpora, The Economist made reference to, and quoted, many American political figures, while limiting its focus to only two Chinese politicians. Among the two Chinese political figures discussed, the Chinese Chairman Xi is particularly prominent.

In general, because political leaders, as well as the wider representatives of states, cities or large organizations (official and unofficial) tend to be regarded as the important sources of credible and informed information, their statements are routinely reported in the news (Van Dijk, 1988). This, however, cannot be said of The Economist's journalistic practices when reporting on China, which lacks coverage of the wider Chinese political elite. Of the only two political leaders that are regularly reported, the Chinese leader Xi (1447 freq. per million), appeared more than three times the frequency of Lam (584 freq. per million), the chief executive of the Hong Kong. Lam was frequently reported for the 2019 Hong Kong protests. However, even though The Economist paid much attention to the Hong Kong protests, it largely only reported the voice of one person, Lam, and rarely mentioned other Hong Kong government officials, including the police commissioner. In most reports on social conflicts, authority figures such as officials and police are required to tell and comment on facts

(Maddux & Rogers, 1980). The Economist, however, generally did not appear to employ a range of official sources in their reports and evaluations, perhaps suggesting that the news magazine did not have, or seek, access to these figures, or alternatively that it has a hidden mistrust of Chinese political leaders.

Furthermore, although The Economist has produced many reports on the Chinese government leader Xi, an analysis of the choice of verbs used to refer to Xi and his actions show that these reports tend to produce negative news narratives. The Economist, for example, tends to construct a centralised China in which the president represents the sole will of the country. However, China practices ‘Xieshang Minzhu’ (Deliberative Democracy), a different approach from electoral democracy, but which is viewed in China as a system that provides the Chinese people with the right to participate in politics (Li & Zhou, 2020).

The Economist also routinely reported on the leader of the United States, Donald Trump. Interestingly, although the verbs used to report on Trump and his actions were different from Xi, these also tended to produce negative narratives. The difference is that The Economist’s negative reports on Trump are fundamentally personal criticisms of the president, while the reports on Xi can be construed as negative reports about the country. Of course it should be considered here that Trump, as a president with no previous political experience at any level of office was somewhat unique, and facilitated a personal type of politics. In its news reports on Xi, The Economist emphasised China as an undemocratic, one-party dictatorship. In the report on Trump, The Economist showed readers a political individual lacking the ability and falling into a political crisis.

When reporting on events, The Economist’s reports on China focused on a range of politically related domestic and international events. For example, as well as focusing on the 2019 Hong Kong protests, it actively paid attention to China’s Muslim policy, the Belt and Road initiative, and a number of other economic policies. However, for the United States, The Economist tended to focus mainly on two domestic events, the impeachment of Trump and

the presidential campaign. The focus on these two latter events is perhaps why so many US political figures appear in the EUSA corpus. The US political figures referred to are also presented as individuals, with The Economist reporting on their independent views and positions. This is in stark contrast to The Economist's focus on Chinese political events, where the voices of the political leaders involved are largely absent. It might be argued that in the reports of Chinese political events, the voices of Chinese political figures are deliberately omitted from The Economist. As Goatly and Hiradhar (2016) have pointed out the news press is able to slant the readers interpretation of a news story by choosing who to report. A possible impact of this reduction in the reporting of Chinese official voices is that the readers are not offered the ability to develop an understanding of the behaviours and motivations of these individuals within the wider context of the news being reported.

#### *8.1.2 Use of verbs*

According to Biber and Conrad (2009), a newspaper's stance to current affairs and news is often revealed through their choice and use of verbs. In this sense, Chapter 4 and 6 demonstrated that The Economist uses verbs in different ways when it reports on China, compared to when it reports on the United States. An example is the verb *say*, a high-frequency verb which appears in both corpora, and is typically regarded as a neutral reporting word. However, on closer inspection, when The Economist reports on the United States, *say* is largely used to quote individual American politicians or institutions without evaluation or discussion, yet when *say* is used in reports on China, The Economist either refers to the collective voice of the Chinese government, or seemingly ordinary public voices specifically selected by The Economist, to discuss the difficulties faced by the Chinese government. The Economist seems to use this method to present its readers with an image of China that exhibits contradictions between the government and the public, although it might be added that the press will often highlight contradictions between the government and the public in any country.

Furthermore, The Economist also uses different high frequency verbs for reports in China and

the United States. For China, The Economist has constructed a foreign and differentiated China for English-speaking readers. As an example, the use of *try* constitutes a Chinese government that is laden with crises and challenges and lacks the ability to govern (Chapter 6, Section 6.2).

Conversely, reports on the United States are much more moderate. For instance, The Economist uses *seem* in the EUSA when predicting the results and development of US news to readers, but when reporting on China it uses *seem* to regard certain conjectures (largely negative) as facts (Chapter 6, Section 6.3). According to Van Dijk (1988), the severity of the consequences of social and political events determines their news value. When reporting on China, The Economist may appear to increase the severity of the incident reported to increase the newsworthiness of their reports and attract readers with gimmicks.

### 8.1.3 The use of adjectives

Finally, when The Economist covers news about the two countries, there is a difference in the adjectives used. While the relative frequency of many of the adjectives across the two corpora were similar, in particular high-frequency adjectives, such as *many*, *more*, and *big*, words representing non-Chinese phenomena, such as *foreign* and *western* appeared as high-frequency words in the ECA and adjectives with American political characteristics such as *Democratic* and *Republican* appeared as high-frequency words in the EUSA.

Furthermore, the analysis of adjectives in the two corpora, showed that when reporting on the United States, The Economist extensively reported on the social and historical elements of the country, often providing a broad socio-historical background context for news events. However, when reporting on China, attention was largely paid to the announcements and actions of the Chinese government, with little focus on introducing readers to Chinese history and culture. This lack of knowledge of the country's history and society provides an obstacle to understanding this country's news. According to Van Dijk (1988) in news discourse, reporters presuppose a large amount of social and political knowledge (Van Dijk, 1988). As a

result, he states that background knowledge often goes unreported, causing readers to misunderstand the news. The approach of The Economist has failed to fill a gap between China and readers, which has meant readers are less likely able to objectively view the political behaviour of the Chinese government, potentially causing misunderstanding and misappraisal.

Moreover, by analysing the use of adjectives in The Economist's news reports, this study finds that The Economist tends to focus attention on China's international relations, while, in contrast, focuses attention on the United States' domestic politics. In terms of China's foreign relations, The Economist is most concerned about the relationship between China and the United States, but they also provide a certain degree of coverage to China's relations with other major countries. In its reports on domestic news in the United States, The Economist's focus is more or less limited to the impeachment of Trump and the US presidential campaign. Interestingly, however, on this matter the magazine seems more concerned about reporting the views of the opposition Democratic Party. This reveals an affirmation of the Democratic Party's policies and ability to act, and implies likely ideological support for the Democratic Party.

## **8.2 Significance of the study**

With the development of Internet technology, the reporting methods of the news media continue to change. New and social media have not only become the main source of information for news reports, but also make news reports no longer dependent on traditional professional journalists (Lin, 2013). Non-western countries, for example, have more channels to present their news to the western world without necessarily relying on major news organisations and publications. Compared with traditional media, new and social media in Malaysia, for example, such as websites and blogs provide a wider range of news coverage at home and abroad (Weiss, 2013). Furthermore, those in western countries no longer only use the mainstream news media to obtain news about the non-western world. Both provide

opportunities for the existing values and beliefs, often produced through the mainstream news, about non-Western countries to be contested or reconsidered. Issues regarding the trustworthiness of the mainstream news media, especially when reporting on countries with different underlying social and political ideologies will become an important discussion.

### **8.3 Limitations of the research**

There are some limitations to this study, and these will be addressed in this section. Firstly, due to the word and time constraints, the collection of data focused on a single year; 2019. The Economist, however, is an English language newspaper with a long history, and if the data was able to be collected over a much longer duration, for example, the past five or ten years, considerably clearer and more powerful findings might be drawn. Despite having made some important observations and conclusions, these still lack long-term and time-sensitive outcomes.

Again, due to constraints of time, this research also lacks a focus on the analysis of images (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006.; Xu, 2018). The Economist routinely accompanies its written texts with visual images and a critical analysis of these images in relation to the accompanying written news would have enriched the results of this study. Importantly, The Economist uses visual images for political satire, often on its cover, and many of these covers focus on themes involving China and the United States. The inclusion of The Economist's covers in a critical analysis, could also lead to more interesting conclusions on the subject of The Economist and the underlying beliefs and values that shape its news production.

Thirdly, qualitative research is a kind of interpretive inquiry (Creswell, 2009), and as indicated in Section 3.6 researchers are not necessarily able to escape the constraints of their own background, history, and prior knowledge when presenting what is involved in their research. Some of the views of this study could be argued as being driven by the researcher's personal background and knowledge. Likewise, readers, participants, and researchers may all

interpret research reports and results differently dependent on their particular beliefs and values. Hence in the eyes of certain individuals, including a certain number of Chinese citizens, *The Economist* could be found as having a critical attitude towards China.

#### **8.4 Implications for future research**

This study suggests a number of implications for future research. Firstly, while it examines the difference in language use between *The Economist's* reports on China and the United States, future research could use a similar method to compare the way *The Economist* reports on other countries. Secondly, as indicated above, this study focuses only on the written text of *The Economist*. Future research could carry out a critical social semiotic analysis that focuses on the visual images of *The Economist's* reports in order to establish whether it is possible to draw conclusions similar to this research. Thirdly, this research only collected reports from *The Economist* throughout 2019. Future research could expand the scope of the data, for example, the collection of reports from *The Economist* throughout the past decade. Alternatively, future research might use a corpus-based critical discourse study to investigate other influential western media, such as the *New York Times* and the *Times*.

#### **8.5 Conclusion**

This study uses a corpus-based critical discourse analysis to examine *The Economist's* news reports on China and the United States in 2019. By observing how *The Economist* uses language in different ways to report on China and the United States, the underlying ideologies and attitudes of the news magazine towards the two countries were revealed.

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