A Study on the Theoretical Framework of Discourse Analysis of China’s Response to Sino-US Trade Frictions

Cao Linjing

Abstract
This paper selects the reports on Sino-US trade friction published by People’s Daily from August 2, 2019, when the United States announced that it would impose tariffs on Chinese goods exported to the United States, until the end of September 2019. Based on Zang Guoren’s news framework theory, this paper used the method of content analysis and framework analysis to analyze the four aspects of news source, reporting theme, schema structure, and reporting tendency. This paper analyzes the characteristics of the news framework constructed by People’s Daily under the publication strategy of Sino-US trade friction news reports. People’s Daily constructs the basic framework of news report with the main body showing the evaluation of China’s tariff increase policy of the United States. The theme of this paper is to focus on the ways in which China’s mainstream media People’s Daily reports Sino-US trade frictions, and find out the fundamental differences between China and the United States in the process of analyzing relevant news reports. People’s Daily attaches great importance to the expression of Chinese speech position in terms of news report selection strategy, focusing on dialogue, cooperation, and discourse communication, supplemented by criticism and refutation, focusing on the future prospects of Sino-US economic and trade relations, and emphasizing “speech communication” more than “counter action.” The related reports on Sino-US trade frictions in People’s Daily retrieved in this paper reflect China’s strong confidence in its own economic development strength in the face of the trade crisis brought about by the arbitrary imposition of tariffs by the United States. It also emphasizes the principle of “reasonable, advantageous, and prudent” adopted by China’s counter-measures, highlighting China’s desire to actively engage in equal and effective dialogue with the U.S., and expressing the Chinese government’s willingness to actively resolve Sino-US trade frictions under the premise of “mutual benefit and win-win results.”

Keywords
Sino-US trade friction, People’s Daily, theoretical framework, news sources, media

Research Purpose and Value
The economic and trade friction between China and the United States has a significant and far-reaching impact on the development of the world economy, which has aroused the wide attention of all countries in the world. The United States is the largest developed country and the largest economy in the world, while China is the largest developing country and the second largest economy in the world. The attitude of both sides toward the situation of trade friction determines the development trend. The risk management and control strategies of trade friction between the two sides have become the focus of the world. Adopting the research method of the news media framework of Zang Guoren, a scholar of Taiwan, starting from China’s relevant news reports on Sino-US trade friction, this paper searches and analyzes 43 news articles in People’s Daily of China from August 1 to September 30, 2019 about the Sino-US trade friction and conflict, and analyzes the choice of news sources and their attitude and position on shaping China’s mainstream media to relevant events.

Combined with the research on the news frame structure of China’s mainstream media reporting trade friction between China and the United States, from the aspects of news sources, report theme, schema structure, and reporting tendency, this paper discusses the basic attitude and position of the Chinese government toward Sino-US economic and trade frictions as well as the principles and methods of dealing with the contradictions between the two sides, finds
out the specific measures to improve Sino-US trade relations, and provides objective auxiliary analysis for improving Sino-US economic and trade relations, so as to better avoid the miscalculation and intensification of contradictions between the two sides. In order to realize the normalization of Sino-US economic and trade relations, safeguard the global free trade and multilateral system, promote the sustainable development of the world economy in the direction of mutual benefit and win-win results, and accelerate the pace of world economic recovery, the frictions, and conflicts between China and the United States in the field of economy and trade should be resolved. The globalization of the world economy should get promoted and economic prosperity and recovery be achieved.

**Background and Significance of the Research**

On July 31, 2019, after the 12th round of China and U.S. senior-level economic and trade consultation was concluded in Shanghai, the two sides not only had frank, efficient, and constructive in-depth exchanges on major issues of common concern in the economic and trade field, but also discussed China’s increase in agricultural products procurement from the United States according to Chinese domestic needs and the U.S. side’s efforts to create favorable conditions for procurement, and agreed to hold the next round of consultations in the United States in September. However, less than 2 days ago, in the early hours of August 2, 2019, U.S. President Trump tweeted that he would impose a 10% tariff on U.S. $300 billion Chinese exports to the United States from September 1, 2019. China’s CCTV news broadcast refuted the renegade behavior of U.S. for four consecutive days. The trade friction policy adopted by the United States has led to the continuous escalation of Sino-US economic and trade frictions, greatly harming the interests of China, the United States, and other countries, and seriously threatening the multilateral trade system and free trade principles. In response to the above-mentioned measures of the United States, China is forced to take countermeasures. A large number of news articles were published in *People’s Daily* from August 1st to September 30th, 2019, which provided in-depth reports on the continuously escalating trade friction between China and the United States.

In order to have in-depth analysis and research on the publication strategy of the Sino-U.S. trade friction news report and the characteristics of the construction of the news framework of *People’s Daily* from August 1st to September 30th 2019, this paper takes the Sino-US trade friction news published in *People’s Daily* at the same time as the research sample, according to Zang’s (1999) news framework theory, using the method of combining content analysis and frame analysis. From the following four aspects: news sources, report theme, schema structure, and reporting tendency, the article studies the basic attitude of the Chinese government in the process of the continuous escalation of Sino-US trade friction, so as to provide assistant decision-making basis for promoting the rational settlement of trade disputes between China and the United States.

**The Theoretical Basis of the Research**

In order to study the analysis framework of Sino-US economic and trade frictions in People’s Daily, the news sources of relevant news reports and the framework of media reports will be studied. News media rely on frame to establish the main axis and structure of the report, and the information scattered in the real society into meaningful news content will get combined and thoroughly researched. Meanwhile, news sources also need to rely on the framework to organize their internal views, and organize the information into events or statements that can be accepted by the news media. The following introduces the influence of news sources theory and news framework analysis theory on news reporting.

**News Sources Analysis Method**

News sources mainly refer to the owner and provider of news sources. Through direct contact with news sources, media reporters can understand and grasp the truth of news. The audience can judge whether the news facts reported by journalists are authoritative and credible according to the sources of news. Therefore, news source is one of the important bases for the audience to decide whether they believe and accept news facts, and it is also the basis and source of the credibility of news reports (Zang, 1999). The source of news is the reliable basis for the truth of news. The choice of news sources for relevant reports by media determines the quality and efficiency of news communication to a great extent, and also reflects the influence and leading ability of news media on public opinion.

News sources have a strong influence on the credibility of news media reports. As Gandy (1982) believes, news does not necessarily represent the truth, but news reports represent the truth determined by the corresponding news sources. In fact, in the process of reporting facts, the news media always give priority to some authoritative news sources to reflect the media’s own world outlook and values. In the process of selecting news sources, there will be bias, which cannot achieve absolute fairness and justice (Chen,1993), and may prefer to choose powerful news sources. To a certain extent, news reporting is class biased. It usually becomes a tool for the dominant party to maintain its dominant position.

From the perspective of journalism, news sources have a significant impact on the organizational framework and objectivity of news reports. In providing descriptions and views of events, the news sources themselves also have subjective
understanding of the value and world outlook of the information providers themselves (Weng, 1994). Therefore, media news reports are often affected by external social factors. In the media news reports, it is inevitable to choose the sources of news and the obvious bias of news reports.

In news reporting, the news media have the initiative of whether to publish or how to report. They can decide when, where and by whom to interview, and how to present news from the perspective of organizational structure. The significance of news report is determined by journalists’ grasping the characteristics of readers’ interest and the news audience’s recognition of news report (Weng, 1997). When journalists report news events, on the one hand, they are influenced by social structure (such as communication policy, media organization, wiring structure, etc.), on the other hand, they internalize certain ideologies (such as objective reporting, news value, news type, news sources, etc.) into daily work rules through the process of specialization, and construct news subjectively through the above rules. It can be seen that culture and ideology can influence the process of news sources participating in the construction of media authenticity. Through the research and analysis of news sources in news reports, the relationship between news sources and symbolic authenticity will be explored, so as to reveal the news media’s understanding and attitude of news sources, and the views and action trends of social parties toward news event will be speculated. Thus, through investigation and research, the methods and strategies to deal with news events have been decided to better promote the development and progress of society.

**Approaches to News Frame Analysis**

The concept of frame originated from Bateson (1955), which was introduced into cultural sociology by Goffman (1981) in his book *Frame Analysis*, and then into mass communication research, which has become an important point in qualitative research (Zhang, 2005). According to Goffman, framework is an important evidence for people to transform social reality into subjective thoughts, that is, the subjective interpretation and thinking structure of people or organizations. Later, the concept of framework was applied to the analysis of mass media. Tuchman (1978) put forward the concept of “news framework,” which believes that “News framework helps journalists to write reports according to the current mainstream theory, and at the same time shape readers’ understanding of facts.” As far as the media is concerned, the media framework refers to a specific point of view used by the mass media when reporting something, the way of explanation, the definition of the problem and the benchmark of comments (Zhai, 2002).

The theory of “Media Framework” proposed by Zang (1999) and others of National Political University in Taiwan has a great influence among mainland researchers. It can be regarded as the “mainstream” method for mainland Chinese researchers to analyze news text frames.

In Zang’s (1999) works, he gave a variety of different definitions of the frame in different contexts. Among them, the news frame refers to “the subjective interpretation and thinking structure of news media or journalists on events, which is the core meaning of news reporting,” “the abstract meaning of the world of symbols, representing the high-level structure of speech, and presenting similar and consistent interpretation directions in different media content.” Zang Guoren also regarded “genre,” “formula,” “schema,” “paradigm,” “myth,” “metaphor,” “discourse,” etc. as similar to the concept of the framework, and the meanings they represent overlap with the framework to some extent. Based on the above viewpoints, Zang’s (1999) “three-level structure” is in a broad sense, and the definition of framework is based on “the subjective interpretation and thinking structure of events by people or organizations,” which refers to various truths (objective truths, symbolic reality, and subjective reality) having internal structures of high, medium, and low levels, as shown in the following Figure 1.

Taiwan scholar Zang Guoren proposed a framework of high-, medium-, and low-level theories. In fact, the theory of “Three-Level Structure of News Media Framework” of Zang Guoren draws lessons from Van Dijk’s five categories of news structure. However, it makes a further generalization and extends to social reality and subjective reality. “High-level structure” refers to all kinds of real macro-structure meanings, which are often used to define the theme of an event, that is, “what is it that’s going on here.” In the media reality, it is what Van Dijk called “thematic structure,” which discusses the core meaning and theme of news (Ball, 1996). “Middle-level structure” is derived from Van Dijk’s concept of “new model” (Chen, 1994), which is condensed into seven items: major events, previous events, history, results, influence, attribution, and evaluation (Malan, 2007). Previous events, history, results, and impacts are time variables before and after the occurrence of major events, while attribution and evaluation belong to the causes and judgments of major events. “Low-level structure” refers to the linguistic or symbolic expression of the framework, including the rhetorical style composed of characters and words, including Van Dijk’s micro structure (local semantics), “style” and “rhetoric.” In the three-level structure, the high-level represents the abstract intention; the middle level, as the empirical orientation, represents the actual occurrence and can be tested, and the low-level represents the operation or instruction orientation (Chen, 1998).

**Research Process**

In order to study the attitude and position of the Chinese government on Sino-US trade friction, and analyze the characteristics and strategies of the Chinese government in dealing
SAGE Open

with Sino-US trade friction, the paper will analyze the sources of the sample, study the way that the Chinese government dominates the news public opinion to shape the facts through the choice of the news, and analyzes the relevant reports, the effect of source control is studied. Secondly, the paper studies the main purpose, event framework, and reporting tendency of the Chinese government on Sino-US trade friction in an overall way by using the framework analysis theory to analyze the basic attitude and position of the Chinese government toward Sino-US trade friction, and analyzes the strategies of the Chinese government and the intention and characteristics of resolving trade conflicts, so as to win support internationally and safeguard the world trade order. The prosperity and development of the international economy and society, world trade cooperation and benign interaction will get promoted; the comparative advantages of all countries will be given full play to, the efficiency, development, and fairness of the world economy improved.

**Sample Extraction**

This paper selects the news reports from August 1st to September 30th 2019 as the sampling time range. The reason is that on August 1, the United States claimed that it would impose a 10% tariff on U.S. $300 billion goods exported from China to the United States on September 1, thus provoking a new trade dispute between China and the United States. Within 2 months, China actively negotiated with the United States while having to carry out anti-terrorism activities. During this period, both China and the United States fully expressed their own views and attitudes, and directly evaluated and responded to the corresponding behavior.

The samples of *People’s Daily* are obtained from the search platform of the website of *People’s Daily* (www.people.com.cn), where the advanced search method is adopted to retrieve the news reports with the words “Sino-US trade friction” in the full text, where the date range is set from August 1st to September 30th, 2019, and the search scope is *People’s Daily*. After browsing the full text of the samples, only the contents related to trade friction between China and the United States are retained, and finally 43 valid samples are obtained. According to the purpose of the paper, the author sorted the 43 papers in chronological order, and classified them according to the main event categories and sources of news reports. The classification of 43 retrieval samples according to the main event categories and news sources are shown in Appendix.

**Analysis Process**

The news source analysis and the frame analysis method are employed in the paper. The news sources analysis is “one of the important bases for the audience to decide whether they believe and accept news facts.” (Zang, 1999) and belongs to the research methods commonly used in the field of news communication. This article employs the news sources analysis method to quantitatively analyze the news sources of
People’s Daily report on Sino-U.S. trade frictions from August 1 to September 30, 2019 in terms of news sources, report theme, schema structure, and reporting tendency, and probes into the analytical framework and news sources characteristics of Sino-US trade friction news reports.

News sources analysis. The media selects and sorts sources of news to form a news frame, construct the opinions to be expressed, and reflect the basic attitudes and tendencies (Ma, 2012). News sources are an important part of the news media’s framework. This article attempts to divide the news sources into the following categories: (a) U.S. official: U.S. government agencies and officials; (b) Chinese official: Chinese government agencies and officials; (c) American media; (d) American experts and scholars; (e) Chinese experts and scholars; (f) American folk: American economic and trade circles, business people, and businesses; (g) Chinese folk; (h) The international community.

According to the above Figure 2, relevant news reports in China accounted for 58.2% of all searched samples, of which 37.2% were official reports from the Chinese government; 16.3% were relevant reports from Chinese economic experts; and 4.7% were reports from Chinese folk. People’s Daily’s citing news reports from the United States accounted for 34.9%, of which relevant reports from American civil organizations accounted for 20.9%(18.6% + 2.3%), relevant reports from U.S. economic experts accounted for 7.0%, and relevant news reports from U.S. media accounted for 2.3%; relevant reports from the international community account for about 7.0%. On the whole, the relevant news reports from the Chinese government accounted for the highest proportion, accounting for 37.2% of the total reports, with a total of 16 articles, followed by reports from the United States, accounting for 20.9% of the total, with a total of 9 articles; and the reports from Chinese experts and scholars accounted for 16.3% of the total, with a total of 7 articles. The number of reports from American media and Chinese people is the least.

From the news sources of People’s Daily, the news reports mainly focus on the views of the Chinese government, experts, and scholars, take into account the voice of the U.S. government and the American people, and reflect the international community’s position on the Sino-US trade friction. It can be considered that People’s Daily shows the truth of Sino-US trade friction to the world from various angles, and effectively promotes the profound development of China and the United States. It has effectively stimulated China and the United States to deeply reflect on the far-reaching impact of trade frictions on the world economy, which can promote the strengthening of dialogue and communication between the two parties and the settlement of trade disputes through negotiations.

People’s Daily’s news sources framework shows the following characteristics:

1. Chinese officials are the main source of information. Chinese government agencies and officials are the most prominent of People’s Daily news sources, accounting for 34.9% of the total. Although the
economic and trade frictions between China and the United States are economic issues, the major issues related to China’s national economy and people’s livelihood are major issues related to the stability of world economic development. The official source of the government department is the main source of information. From different news sources and in different ways, these news reveal the impact of Sino-US economic and trade friction on the two countries’ economy, and the far-reaching impact of trade friction on Sino-US diplomatic relations. The Chinese government timely released its official position and publicly expressed its views on Sino-US economic and trade frictions, which has a distinct guiding role in solving the economic and trade friction between China and the United States. So that the Chinese and American governments and non-governmental organizations can better understand the trade friction, adjust their psychological expectations, and reach new consensus, so as to deal with trade friction in a better way. People’s Daily, as a large newspaper at the central level in China, needs to spread the voice of the Chinese official, so the Chinese official occupies a large proportion of the source.

(2) People’s Daily pays more attention to subjects from the American private sector such as the U.S. economic and trade community, business people, and companies. These entities account for 21% of the total sources of information in People’s Daily. At the same time, People’s Daily pays less attention to the content of American experts, officials, and the media, indicating that in such reports, the Chinese ideology still the main manifestation. The news reporting strategy of People’s Daily shows that under the conditions at that time, China was unwilling to have direct conflicts with the U.S. government. China still wanted to solve the trade friction problem through dialogue and communication, rather than forcing the other party to stop trade friction by blaming the other party’s shortcomings. The Chinese language adopts an indirect and soft dialogue strategy (Cao, 2013), which gives the U.S. government time for self-reflection. In relevant news reports, People’s Daily selects the words and facts of the American people, and shows the world the adverse effects of Sino-US trade friction on the two countries’ economy and ordinary people’s lives with indisputable facts, so as to win the support and understanding of the international community, and urge the U.S. government to change its trade friction policy and realize the reasonable settlement of trade disputes.

(3) The proportion of Chinese experts and scholars as news sources in People’s Daily is relatively large, but it basically does not reflect the voices of Chinese folk. Concerned about Chinese experts and scholars, it shows that People’s Daily not only pays attention to the expression of official positions, but also attaches importance to scholars’ analysis of events. At the same time, economic and trade frictions belong to economic issues, so essentially, the opinions of experts and scholars who understand and respect the objective laws of the market economy are required to provide fundamental support. The analysis and demonstration of experts and scholars makes the report more scientific and credible and persuasive. However, People’s Daily paid less attention to the public response, which failed to be prompted by many people, making the report not very specific and timely. At the same time, unlike the opposition and criticism of the American people who have been negatively affected, the lack of Chinese folk voices reflects China’s economic stability, and has little impact on the daily life of ordinary Chinese people, who have not paid attention to the Sino-US trade friction. The trade friction between China and the United States has a greater impact on American society. In comparison, the life of ordinary Chinese people has not been greatly impacted. This also reflects that in the Sino-US trade friction, the U.S. side has suffered from more obvious losses, which has a far-reaching impact on the economic development of the United States.

Report Theme Framework Analysis

According to the purpose of this paper, the following will analyze the retrieved news samples from the news sources, report theme, schema structure, reporting tendency, and other aspects, so as to explain the way and characteristics of People’s Daily in building the news framework of Sino-US trade friction.

The subject of a news report is a summary of its content. The report theme is the news facts and the ideological connotation of the media reports, which also builds a high-level framework for news. According to the above chart (Table 1), after studying the relevant news reports of People’s Daily, it is found that the focus of news reports in People’s Daily is more on the words of both sides, with a total of 32 reports, accounting for 74.4% of the total reports. In addition, although there are three different subjects in the speech debate news reports, including American folk, experts, and scholars, Chinese officials and the international community, there are 21 articles that criticize and reflect the negative impact of the U.S. government’s arbitrary tariff increase, accounting for 48.8% of the total report. The reporting theme framework of People’s Daily has the following characteristics:
(1) Words speak louder than actions. There are 11 articles reflecting action, accounting for 25.6% of the total report. It focuses on China’s response to the U.S. tariff increase and the dialogue between the two sides. It does not directly report the U.S. tariff increase. The purpose is to avoid confrontation with the U.S. government and intensify the spear shield, so as to put the Sino-US trade friction in a controllable state and increase the communication and cooperation between China and the United States. This kind of indirect strategy adopted by People’s Daily can express China’s disapproval of the American insistence on carrying out trade friction policy, and also show Chinese attitude of continuing to expand mutually beneficial cooperation with the United States. In the reports of reaction language, People’s Daily pays more attention to the expression of Chinese officials and American people. Although there are three main bodies, they all criticize the arbitrary imposition of tariffs by American officials and reflect on their negative effects. The main purpose of these news reports is to expose the negative effects brought about by Sino-US trade friction, with the intention of gaining support and sympathy of the international community, and the trade friction with the United States can be solved on the basis of equal consultation, which directly reflects the attitude of Chinese official.

(2) People’s Daily focuses on the criticism and warning of the U.S. official tariff increase. There are 21 reports in this regard, accounting for 48.8% of the total reports, accounting for almost half of the total reports. From this, it can be clearly seen that the Chinese government toward the U.S. tariff increase holds an opposing attitude; the other half of the news reports suggest that China and the United States should strengthen communication and cooperation with dialogue, so as to end trade frictions on the premise of win-win cooperation and realize the normalization of economic and trade relations.

(3) Among the 25 articles in People’s Daily, words and actions from Chinese side were the most concerned, accounting for 58.1%. Among them, the forecast and analysis of China’s actions are more than those of Chinese action reports. The forecast of China’s actions shows China’s resolute attitude toward the U.S. side’s wrong behavior, and influences the specific strategies of the U.S. government through specific news reports, so as to make the U.S. government understand the consequences and harm of continuing to stir up trade frictions, so as to carefully consider the feasible ways to solve the trade friction, return to the way of settling trade disputes through negotiation, and realize the balance of interests of both sides of trade through negotiation, so as to solve the problem of trade friction. The analysis of China’s actions reflects China’s image as a responsible big country taking full account of domestic and foreign influences and taking countermeasures. The forenotice and analysis of China’s actions are closely followed by the contents of China’s action reports. It shows that People’s Daily has comments attached to the reports from Chinese officials to explain the official voice, show the position and attitude of the media, and play a correct role in guiding public opinion and analyzing the report theme framework of People’s Daily.

### Table 1. Analysis of the Report Theme Framework of People’s Daily.

| Category        | Main body                                | Type subdivision                                      | Number of articles |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Action          | China and the United States              | Common dialogue                                       | 5                  |
|                 | China                                    | Measures to be taken against U.S. actions             | 6                  |
| Speech          | American folk, local, and expert scholars| U.S. official behavioral criticism                     | 4                  |
|                 | Chinese official                         | Reflect the negative impact of tariff increases on domestic | 9                  |
|                 |                                          | Prediction and analysis of Chinese behavior            | 9                  |
|                 |                                          | U.S. official behavioral criticism                     | 5                  |
|                 |                                          | China’s further response                               | 2                  |
|                 |                                          | U.S. official behavioral criticism                     | 3                  |

**Report Schema Framework Analysis**

The middle structure of the report frame is the schema of the report. In the text discourse of news, the order of the text is determined by the news theme. The schematic structure of the news reflects the order of the various elements of the news, and the news text formed from it can achieve the purpose of emphasizing and highlighting the theme of the news. Van Dijk (1995) believes that the general meaning of discourse (macro-structure) usually has its own organizational principles, and also needs some general syntax to limit the possible forms in which topics are inserted or arranged in
actual text. Van Dijk (1995) divides the schema structure into the following categories: title, introduction, main event, consequence, environment, previous event, history, oral response, prediction, and evaluation.

The analysis of news schema structure is consistent with the connotation of news framework theory. In Zang Guoren’s frame structure hierarchy theory, the schematic structure of news is also used as the middle structure of the frame, which is divided into major events, previous events, history, results, impact, attribution, and evaluation. This section combines the analysis of Van Dijk’s (1998) schema structure with Zang Guoren’s theory of the middle structure of the news frame, and divides the schema structure of this paper into seven categories according to the specific situation of the study. The specific schema structure categories are as follows:

1. Major events: Reports on the actions taken by the Chinese side in handling the issue of trade frictions, and core events in dealing with Sino-US trade frictions.
2. Previous events: Previous events with direct causal relationship with major events in the Sino-US trade friction are reported.
3. History: Reports on the historical background and historical events in the Sino-US trade friction.
4. Consequences: Speeches, actions, and consequences of the conflicts between the parties in the Sino-US trade friction, including direct results and indirect effects.
5. Oral response: Opinions expressed by relevant personnel on the Sino-US trade friction, including political figures, experts, scholars, and folk figures.
6. Evaluation: News media’s assessment of relevant issues arising from the Sino-US trade friction, and expresses their views and attitudes. It mainly includes two aspects of evaluation and forecasting. Evaluation is to judge and summarize the meaning of news events; forecasting is to explain the possible impact of news events and future development trends.
7. Attribution: Analysis of the causes of related events of the Sino-US trade friction in news reports.

As can be seen from the above chart (Table 2), the spoken response part accounts for the largest proportion in the schematic structure of People’s Daily, accounting for as much as 54.50% of the total text, reflecting a way of reporting that emphasizes speech; the history part accounted for 0.17%, and the previous events and consequences also accounted for 6.14% (2.35% + 3.79%). It can be seen that the schematic structure of People’s Daily’s report on Sino-US economic and trade frictions is incomplete. The schematic structure of People’s Daily presents the following characteristics:

1. The spoken response occupies the most important position, and the subject of the spoken response is mainly Chinese officials. A large number of spoken responses are added to guide the audience to understand China’s position and attitude on the Sino-US economic and trade frictions, and promote the role of public opinion guidance. In addition, the spoken language response in People’s Daily is diversified, not only reflecting the opinions of Chinese officials, focusing on expressing Chinese officials’ viewpoints, but also encompasses a large number of Chinese and international experts and scholars’ analysis of the cause and history of the event, the evaluation and prediction of the impact of the event, and the expression of the opinions of various subjects. Economic issues in news reports are mainly analyzed by quoting the views of economic experts and scholars. It is reasonable to comment on China’s trade behavior in news reports on the basis of respecting the laws of market economy. At the same time, it is proved that the American groundless international economic and trade rules violate the economic laws when provoking Sino-US economic and trade frictions.

2. In the main events part of the news report, the words and deeds of the U.S. government in promoting the escalation of Sino-US economic and trade frictions and conflicts are insufficient, and the reports on China’s defensive actions to safeguard China’s economic and trade interests are emphasized. People’s Daily basically does not describe the way the U.S. provokes trade conflicts in the main events, but reports on the U.S. unilaterally provoking and escalating economic and trade frictions, which are often put in the previous events and oral reactions, and analyzed and exposed by relevant experts and scholars, but not as a special report of the main events. The reports on the wrong words and deeds of the U.S. side are mainly interspersed in the reports on China’s behavior, stance, and attitude, so as to better explain China’s stance and policy.

| Schema         | Percentage of total text |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Main event     | 6.58                     |
| Previous events| 2.35                     |
| History        | 0.17                     |
| Consequence    | 3.79                     |
| Spoken response| 54.50                    |
| Evaluation     | 6.95                     |
| Attribution    | 5.85                     |

Table 2. Percentage of Related News Report Schema Structure in the Total Text of People’s Daily.
(3) The structure is stylized and unitary. People’s Daily’s reports on Sino-US economic and trade frictions often appear in fixed forms and pages. The basic schema structure of People’s Daily is “prior events + major events + oral reactions” (some of which are transformed into “prior events + oral reactions”) for the actions of the United States unilaterally imposing tariffs in violation of the consensus reached at the meeting between China and the United States. The structure model generally takes the U.S. action of imposing tariffs as the prior event, and the Chinese side responds, which shows that the oral response part overlaps with the main event part. The relevant news reports were interspersed with consequences and assessments, and the reports focused on the response of Chinese officials to the Sino-US economic and trade frictions. This kind of structure accounted for about 10.74% (3.79% + 6.95%), and its specific form was mainly to deliver news. In addition, the relevant news reports in People’s Daily pay more attention to the interview reports on the impact of the U.S. tariff increase and the reports on the Chinese expert seminar. In the opening part of the introduction, the structure of “previous events + major events + oral reaction” will be adopted to briefly introduce the events of the meeting, the main problems in the news and the attitude of the Chinese side. The following content is mainly based on expert opinions, in order to avoid the escalation of direct conflict with the U.S. government in news reports. The structure of “previous event + main event + oral response” and its simple deformation account for about 63.43% (54.50% + 2.35% + 6.58%) of the total text. The schema structure of news reports is single, with few changes, and slightly stiff writing style.

**Report Tendency Analysis**

Based on the three evaluation indicators of positive report, negative report, and neutral report, this article classifies and sorts out the sample information of the website of People’s Daily (www.people.com.cn). According to the attitude of People’s Daily in selecting news reports, with nearly half of the non-emotional reports, People’s Daily objectively and fairly reflects the truth of Sino-US economic and trade frictions, shows the world the causes, process and development of Sino-US trade frictions, and demonstrates China’s concept of peaceful development and shared development to the world through fair and objective facts, which also fully demonstrates China’s hope for cooperation, consultation, and equal dialogue to promote the resolution of Sino-US trade frictions and stimulate the wish of social and economic prosperity and development.

As can be seen from the above chart (Figure 3), there are 18 reports about the U.S. side’s negative words and actions, accounting for 41.9% of the total number, followed by neutral reports on China’s words and actions, with 11 reports, accounting for 25.6% of the total.

At the same time, the keywords expressed under different themes in People’s Daily were extracted for word frequency analysis.
Table 3. Topic Summary and Keyword Frequency Statistics for Different Trends.

| Category                                | Topic                                                                 | Vocabulary                                                                 | Frequency |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Neutral reporting involving both parties (accounting for 3.6%) | The expectations and efforts of China and the United States in the common dialogue | Negotiation (磋商), hope (希望), dialogue (通话)                             | 40        |
| Positive reports involving China (40%)  | The status Quo and prospects of good cooperation between China and the U.S. civil and world economy | Cooperation (合作), future (未来), win-win result (共赢)                      | 58        |
|                                         | China actively responds to the impact of economic and trade frictions | Exclusion (排除), response (应对), solve (解决), defend (捍卫), full consideration (充分考虑), resolute (坚决), persist (坚持) | 131       |
|                                         | China’s stable and progressive economic strength                      | Positive (积极), compelling (不得不), reasonable, advantageous and prudent (有理有利有节), unwilling (不愿), confident (信心) | 236       |
| Negative reports involving the U.S. (56.4%) | The negative impact of tariff increases on the U.S. and the world economy | Strong (强), ability (能力), toughness (韧性), maintenance (保持), continuity (持续), stability (稳定), potential (潜力) | 367       |
|                                         | The U.S. proactively stirs up and escalates trade frictions that violate morals and rules | Caution (注意), damage (损害), loss (损失), serious (严重), error (错误), cost (代价), difficult (困难), inconvenience (不便), decline (下降), drawback (不利), consequence (后果), burden (负担), risk (风险), harm (伤害), imbalance (失衡), shock (冲击), drag (拖累) | 211       |
|                                         | Criticisms and oppositions to U.S. Government raising tariffs by local U.S. and other countries | Objection (反对), criticism (批评), worry (担忧), dissatisfaction (不满), disappointment (失望), pain (痛苦), worry (担心) | 52        |
the expense of others, and China’s image of a responsible big country firmly defending its own rights and international rules. In sharp contrast, the words used in the report are precise and accurate, with distinct emotional color and firm stand. The subject and vocabulary retrieval frequency of 43 articles retrieved from People’s Daily are shown in Table 3.

(1) When referring to China’s economic strength, “strong” (强) and “development” (发展) are the most frequently used words, reflecting China’s strong confidence in its own economic foundation in the face of the crisis brought about by the U.S. side’s arbitrary tariff increase. In addition, “exclusion” (排除) and “response” (应对) are the most frequently used words in reflecting China’s positive measures to impose tariffs, and emphasizing China’s countermeasures. The measures are “reasonable, advantageous, and prudent” (合理有利有节). Taking countermeasures against the U.S. side is a forced, inevitable, and confident move. People’s Daily has also said that China is looking forward to the future, starting from the overall situation of maintaining the stability of China and the United States and the world economy, emphasizing “cooperation” (合作) and “hope” (希望) that China and the United States will actively engage in equal and effective dialogue and create necessary conditions for the restoration of friendly cooperation. This is the sincerity and goodwill of the Chinese government in solving the Sino-US trade friction issues, and also shows China’s trade cooperation. The principled position and the bottom line of solving the problem will play an important role in promoting the settlement of Sino-US trade friction.

(2) In the negative reports concerning the U.S. side, “cause” (导致) and “damage” (损害) are the most frequently used words. The U.S. tariff increase is contrary to the actual consequences, which is wrong and ineffective. At the same time, People’s Daily used rigorous terms such as “trade protectionism” (贸易保护主义), “hegemonism” (霸权主义) and “unilateralism” (单边主义) to qualitatively define the U.S. words and actions in an objective and detailed analysis, exposing concisely the motives behind the U.S. escalating economic and trade friction. In terms of criticism of the U.S. side, there are strong negative emotional words such as “worry” (担忧), “dissatisfaction” (不满), “disappointment” (失望), and “pain” (痛苦). To sum up, People’s Daily has sternly criticized and warned the United States in various ways.

(3) People’s Daily’s position on Sino-US trade friction is consistent with that of the Chinese government. Chinese media serve the Party, the state, and the people. As a major central newspaper, People’s Daily must have its reports from the perspective of China’s national interests. The content of the report reflects the direction of national policies and the Chinese government’s specific strategies and objective responses to Sino-US trade friction at that time.

**Brief Description of Research Results**

From the above analysis, it can be seen that People’s Daily in the report on Sino-U.S. economic and trade frictions presents a China-led protection framework for rights and interests. It attaches importance to conveying the Chinese government’s position and policies on handling the U.S. tariff increase issue, and explaining China’s rationality of systemic activities. It has given the United States a firm and powerful boost to unilateral escalation of trade frictions and unprovoked accusations. The counterattack showed China’s firm determination to maintain the healthy development of the country’s economy.

In terms of news structure (Ye, 2014), People’s Daily attaches great importance to spoken responses. The choice of news content is biased toward China, and reports on the United States do not pay attention to the voices of the U.S. official and U.S. media, but specifically go deep into some states and the folk. The choice of source of news is centered on sources from China’s official background. At the same time, it attaches great importance to the analysis of problems by experts and scholars. Social groups, the public, and foreign news sources outside the United States account for a small proportion of the reports.

As a mainstream newspaper of the Party Central Committee (Liao, 2012), People’s Daily does not only give priority to positive propaganda, but also should have a certain amount of constructive and critical reports. Therefore, when carrying out positive publicity, People’s Daily is supposed to criticize the relevant people and things, so as to make news develop in a better direction to serve the people and contribute to social construction. The development direction of Sino-US trade frictions should get guidance to promote the proper settlement of Sino-US trade frictions with more favorable measures, provide basic models and examples for all countries in the world to fairly and truly solve trade conflicts, better promote the benign development and prosperity of the world economy, achieve mutual benefit and win-win results, share the fruits of world economic development, and benefit human society.
**Appendix.** The Classification of 43 Retrieval Samples According to the Main Event Categories and News Sources.

| News headlines | Main event categories of news reports | Analysis of news news sources | Newspaper layout |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| The 12th Round of Sino-US High-Level Economic and Trade Consultation Held in Shanghai | Positive Report on China’s Words and Deeds | Chinese Official | August 1, 3rd Page |
| All Walks of Life in the United States Strongly Oppose the Government’s New Round of Measures to Tax China: “Expanding the Scope of Taxation will only Make the Problem Worse.” | Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American Folk | August 3, 3rd Page |
| If the U.S. side Imposes Tariffs, China Will Have to Take Necessary Countermeasures, and All the Consequences Will be Borne by the U.S. Side | Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | Chinese Official | August 3, 3rd Page |
| The U.S. Side Plans to Impose a 10% Tariff on US $300 Billion of Chinese Goods Exported to the U.S. China strongly Opposes it and will Take Necessary Measures to Firmly Defend its own Interests | Positive Report on China’s Words and Deeds | U.S. Official | August 3, 3rd Page |
| The Federation of German Industries Criticizes the New U.S. Threat of Imposing Tariffs on China Relevant Chinese Enterprises Suspend New U.S. Agricultural Products Procurement | Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | International Society | August 5, 3rd Page |
| The United States Accuses Me of not Buying Agricultural Products and Lacks Factual Basis | China’s Neutral Report | Chinese Official | August 6, 3rd Page |
| Seminar Held by National Institute of Development and Strategy, Renmin University of China | Positive Report on China’s Words and Deeds | Chinese Official | August 6, 3rd Page |
| People in the U.S. Economic and Trade Circles Criticized the Government’s Trade Policy Toward China: “Imposing Tariffs Will Only Reduce the U.S. Competitiveness.” | Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American Experts and Scholars | August 7, 3rd Page |
| A Foreign Ministry Spokesman Answered a Reporter’s Question on the Suspension of New U.S. Agricultural Products Procurement by Chinese Enterprises | China’s Neutral Report | Chinese Official | August 7, 3rd Page |
| Foreign Media and Experts Criticized the U.S. Extreme Pressure Tactics: “It is Unreasonable and Rude to Impose Tariffs Arbitrarily.” | Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | International Society | August 9, 3rd Page |
| American Media Warn that Wrong Trade Policy will Lead to American Economic Recession Seminar on Evaluating the Development Trend of Sino-US Relations Held by China Institute of Modern International Relations | Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American Media | August 10, 3rd Page |
| American Experts and Scholars Criticized the Government for Upgrading the Economic and Trade Friction with China “The Interests of American Enterprises and Consumers are Being Damaged” | A Comparative Report on the Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese and American Words and Deeds | Chinese experts and scholars | August 10, 3rd Page |
| Call between Leaders of Sino-US High-Level Economic and Trade Consultation “Local Cooperation Between the United States and China Is Hard to Stop” | Sino-US Common Neutral Report | Chinese Official | August 14, 3rd Page |
| The Person in Charge of the Tariff Commission of the State Council Delivered a Speech | A Comparative Report on the Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese and American Words and Deeds | Chinese Official | August 16, 3rd Page |
| At the Seminar on Sino-US Economic and Trade Issues Held by the China Academy of International Studies, Experts Agreed that the Irresponsible Approach of the U.S. Side is Bound to Fail | Negative reports on American Words and Deeds | Chinese folk | August 17, 3rd Page |

(continued)
### News headlines

| Main event categories of news reports | Analysis of news news sources | Newspaper layout |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| A Comparative Report on the Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese and American Words and Deeds | U.S. official | August 24, 3rd Page |
| China’s Neutral Report                | Chinese official | August 24, 3rd Page |
| China’s Neutral Report                | Chinese experts and scholars | August 24, 3rd Page |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American folk | August 25, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American experts and scholars | August 26, Page 3 |
| Negative reports on American Words and Deeds | International society | August 27, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American Folk | August 27, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American experts and scholars | August 28, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American folk | August 28, Page 3 |
| China’s Neutral Report                | Chinese experts and scholars | August 29, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American folk | August 29, Page 3 |
| Sino-US Common Neutral Report         | Chinese official | August 30, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American Folk | August 30, Page 3 |
| A Comparative Report on the Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese and American Words and Deeds | Chinese experts and scholars | August 31, Page 3 |
| Negative Reports on American Words and Deeds | American folk | August 31, Page 3 |

(continued)
Appendix. (continued)

| News headlines | Main event categories of news reports | Analysis of news news sources | Newspaper layout |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Call Between Leaders of China US High -Level Economic and Trade Consultation | Sino-US Common Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 6, Page 3 |
| The Tariff Commission of the State Council Announced the First Exclusion List of the First Batch of Goods Subject to Additional Tariffs on the United States | China’s Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 12, Page 3 |
| "Exclusion List" Reduces Pressure for Enterprises | China’s Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 12, Page 3 |
| Sino-US Entrepreneur Dialogue Held in Beijing | China’s Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 12, Page 3 |
| China Imposes Tariff Exclusion on New U.S. Agricultural Products Procurement | China’s Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 14, Page 3 |
| China’s Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 22, Page 3 |
| China has Made a Positive Response to the U.S. Side's Release of the List of Tariff Exclusion | China's Neutral Report | Chinese official | September 25, Page 3 |

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my paper advisor Xin Bin of School of Foreign Languages and Cultures in Nanjing Normal University. The door to Prof. Xin Bin office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. He allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right direction whenever he thought I needed it. I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in Jiangsu Open University and I am gratefully indebted to their very valuable comments on this thesis. Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my mum and to my spouse for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this paper. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

Declaraton of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the General projects of Jiangsu Social Science Foundation in 2019, “A Corpus-based Study of the Cognitive Mechanism of Predicative Metaphor in Chinese and English”[grant number 19YYB007], and Major projects of philosophy and social science research at Jiangsu University in 2019, “A Cognitive Study of Event Structure of Inchoative Verbs from the Perspective of Typology” [grant number 2019SJZDA101].

ORCID iD

Cao Linjing https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4294-5243

References

Ball, M. A. (1996). The role of language, media, and spectacle in constituting a presidency. *Journal of Communication*, 46(3), 176–182.

Bateson, G. A. (1955). Theory of play and fantasy. *Psychiatric Research Reports*, 2, 39–51.

Cao, Y. (2013). *Research on the South China sea issue and China’s marine strategy* (pp. 12–24). Nanjing University.

Chen, B. (1994). *Journalists, graphic design and news sources. A dialogue between journalism and technology*. Institute of Journalism of National Political University.

Chen, R. (1993). *A study of the relationship between the meaning construction of news events and cognition: The influence of news framework from the perspective of audience inference* [Master Thesis]. Institute of Journalism of National Political University.

Chen, S. (1998). News construction in media organizations. Symposium on Media and Environment Sponsored by the Institute of Mass Communication of Fu Ren University, 14–15 November.

Gandy, O. H., Jr. (1982). *Beyond agenda setting: Information subsidies and public policy*. Ablex.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. *Contemporary Sociology*, 4(6), 1093–1094.

Liao, L. (2012). *On the role of Chinese mainstream media in the South China sea dispute: An analysis based on the visual angle of signal transmission*. Foreign Affairs University.

Ma, H. (2012). Research on Sino-Japanese territory disputes from the perspective of American mainstream media: Taking the New York Times 1980-2010 as an example. *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, 3, 44–51.

Malan. (2007). On the tendency of news reporting. *Young Journalists*, 16, 63–65.

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality* (pp. 244–246). Free Press.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Discourse semantics and ideology. *Discourse & Society*, 6(2), 243–289.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: An interdisciplinary approach*. SAGE.
Weng, X. (1994). *On the autonomy of news sources and journalists—on the function of Journalists’ Association*. Dialogue between journalism and art. Institute of Journalism of Political University.

Weng, X. (1997). *News and the construction of social reality: The triangular relationship among mass media, official information sources and social movements*. Sanmin Publishing House.

Ye, Q. (2014). *Construction of China’s image by mainstream media in the Philippines from frame theory* (pp. 28–36). Guangxi University.

Zang, G. (1999). *News media and sources: A discussion on media framework and real construction* (pp. 113–125). Sanmin Publishing House.

Zhai, Z. (2002). The portrayal of China and the United States in each other’s major media: A comparative analysis of the people’s Daily and the New York Times reported in 1998. *American Studies*, 3, 38–43.

Zhang, K. (2005). *National image dissemination* (pp. 51–56). Fudan University Press.