

War and Conflicting Voices: Attitudinal Analysis of Chinese and British News Reports on the Israel-Gaza War

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ABSTRACT

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East stands out as one of the most enduring and complex disputes of the 21st century. Despite being the central focus of world political discussions, this conflict has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. Therefore, this study investigates attitudinal devices used in the coverage of the Israel-Gaza war in China and Britain, using the appraisal theory of Martin and White (2005). This study aims to reveal the potential bias in media reports by analysing the frequency and type of the three attitudinal devices, i.e., affect, judgment, and appreciation, in 80 news reports from China Daily and BBC. The study utilised a qualitative corpus-based approach using the UAM Corpus Tool 6. The findings show that the two media use all types of attitudinal devices, but there were notable differences in their application of affect, judgment, and appreciation. While China Daily mainly uses appreciation devices, focusing on evaluating events and objects, the BBC uses more judgment devices, emphasising ethical evaluation and social norms. This variation indicates that while the Chinese media tends to focus on the evaluation of events and objects to maintain objectivity, the BBC emphasises ethical and normative assessments, reflecting a cultural inclination towards moral and legal scrutiny. In addition, the BBC shows more negative attitudes and criticism than China Daily, indicating a stance of non-support in their coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict. These results underscore the important role of media in shaping public perception and highlight the need for critical news consumption when interpreting media coverage and cross-cultural narratives. The study's findings further suggest that news organisations should strive to achieve greater objectivity in their news coverage by developing greater awareness of evaluative language in news texts.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory; Attitude System; Political News Discourse; Israel-Gaza War

INTRODUCTION

Political discourse typically refers to multiple forms of talk or text, of which recipients are primarily politicians or institutions across different levels of governance (Fetzer & Weizman, 2006). News reports, as a source of political discourse, are gaining more attention in recent research on discourse analysis (Abid et al., 2025). They provide the public with access to political communication (Kazmi et al., 2024), and more importantly, they are taking on the role of spreading certain values and instilling beliefs in the public (Fowler, 2013). Especially during periods of war or conflict, news media are reckoned as a fundamental platform for dominant narratives to assert dominance over less influential ones narratives (Amer, 2022) and an important force in shaping public perception of war and conflict (Schudson, 2002).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East stands out as one of the most enduring and complex disputes of the 21st century. The roots of this conflict can be traced back to history, including Britain's mandate over Palestine and the United Nations partition plan for Palestine and Israel (Tantish, 2012). To put it differently, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict started because Britain made a promise to establish a national home for Jews in the Palestinian territories. Since the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948, Israel has occupied extensive Palestinian territories, resulting in long-term blockade and oppression for Gaza residents (Chomsky & Pappé, 2010). In recent years, the Gaza Strip has repeatedly become a hotspot of conflict, causing numerous civilian casualties and infrastructure damage (Greenberg, 2022).

Despite numerous news reports on the Israeli-Gaza conflict, the attitudes reported are often seen to be loaded with ideological positions and bias (Johnson & Milani, 2010). Existing research predominantly focuses on the coverage of this conflict by mainstream media in countries such as the UK and the USA, pointing out their tendency to support Israel (Amer, 2022; Graber, 2017; Hashish et al., 2023; Jackson, 2023; Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014; Qawariq, 2020; Sabido, 2022). In addition, comparative studies on media coverage of the Israel-Gaza War have focused on the contrasts between reporting in the UK and the USA (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014), as well as between reporting in Israel and Palestine (Baidoun, 2014; Ceylan, 2020). However, this suggests that insufficient research has been done on how media from other countries, opposing the Western media, such as Chinese outlets, respond to such a global conflict. Given China's different ideologies and prominent position on the international stage, this study, therefore, aims to answer these two questions:

- 1) What attitudinal devices are identified in Chinese and British political news reports on the Israel-Gaza War?
- 2) How do these attitudinal devices reflect both Chinese and British ideological attitudes towards the Israel-Gaza War?

Exploring the attitudinal differences between Chinese and British narratives in reporting on the Israel-Gaza war will be conducted within Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). The selection of these two media outlets for comparative study helps to analyse how ideologically different media outlets express their positions and attitudes through language when covering the same international event, such as the Israel-Gaza War. The current study is significant because its findings hope to enhance our understanding of how media narratives influence public perceptions of war and conflict through language, especially when covering a current world-controversial conflict like the Israel-Gaza war. Importantly, this war has been characterised by political, social, and physical instability, marked by recurring outbreaks of violence (Ayer et al., 2017), making it a topic worth investigating.

LITERATURE REVIEW

APPRAISAL THEORY

Within the general theoretical framework of Halliday’s (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Appraisal theory has been evolving as a discourse semantic system since the late 1990s (Martin & White, 2005, p. 8). Importantly, it was developed to extend the model of interpersonal meaning to encompass emotions, attitudes, and interpersonal evaluations. The appraisal framework is used in this research, which serves as a comprehensive analytical system for elucidating interpersonal meaning (Oteiza, 2017). This theory mainly includes three subsystems: attitude, graduation, and engagement, which respectively involve emotional reactions, moral evaluations, and value judgments about things, people, and behaviours. (Martin & White, 2005). According to Martin and White (2005, p. 35), “Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviour, and evaluation of things.”

The attitude subsystem is further subdivided into three domains: affect, judgment, and appreciation, which involve the evaluation of things, people, character, and their modes of experience, which can be implicitly or explicitly carried out through lexical or other language strategies (Martin & White, 2005). In addition, within the framework of appraisal theory, each type of attitudinal resource exhibits a polarity, either positive or negative. Based on the Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), the theoretical framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

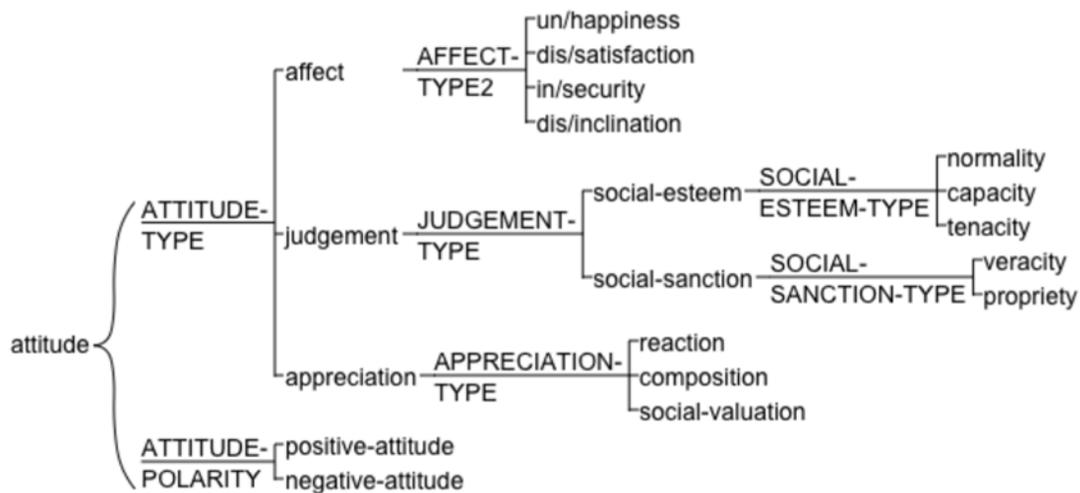


FIGURE 1. An overview of the attitudinal domains in the appraisal theoretical framework (Martin & White, 2005)

In recent years, the appraisal framework has been increasingly utilised in language research across a range of different contexts, for example, business discourse (N. K. Ho, 2019; Q. Wang et al., 2021), language teaching discourse (McKinley, 2018; Mori, 2017; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015; Pasaribu, 2020), as well as political discourse (Al-Gamde & Tenbrink, 2020; Alkahtani, 2020; Jakaza, 2019; Pankov et al., 2011; Pratama, 2021). Despite numerous studies employing the appraisal framework to study attitudes in news reports about wars and conflicts, it is still noticeable that there is still a limited research on attitudes in news reports regarding the Israel-Gaza war.

PREVIOUS STUDIES ON CONFLICT DISCOURSE

Over the years, there has been a growing body of research on war and conflict in news discourse, particularly in comparing media coverage of the same event across different countries and regions. In terms of target media selection, some studies have examined media from both countries (Atawneh, 2009; Li, 2009), while others have chosen media from one side of the conflict (Hong & Ge, 2019; Jakaza, 2019; Muwafi et al., 2024; Yazgan & Utku, 2017) or countries with divergent political stances (Al-Gamde & Tenbrink, 2020; Amer, 2022; Chen, 2013; Eldin, 2019; Wang, 2017). For instance, Amer (2022) analysed the coverage by The New York Times and BBC of the Israeli military offensive in Gaza in May 2021, claiming that two mainstream Western media outlets defended and rationalised Israel's interests, damaging the Palestinian narrative and rights. Eldin (2019) analysed headlines from Western and Arab online media reports on the Gaza conflict and found Western media may lean toward Israel's stance. In a similar study, Muwafi et al. (2024) examined Transitivity patterns in the headlines of Al-Jazeera Arabic (AJA) and Al-Jazeera English (AJE) in the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The study showed that while both outlets avoided negative labelling of the Russian government, they highlighted civilians suffering and protesting. Additionally, Chen (2013) compared the reports of the New York Times and China Daily on the Libyan Civil War in 2011 and found significant differences in the reporting positions and wording of the two media. Wang (2017) also researched five newspapers and concluded that the dominant ideology of powerful Western countries, such as the United States, was likely to be adopted by other countries in international communication. Furthermore, some studies have focused on how language in news reporting constructs national identity during conflicts. For instance, Li (2009) sampled the New York Times of America and China Daily of China, exploring how they employ particular discursive strategies to construct their national identities while reporting the conflict of US-China relations. Atawneh (2009), on the other hand, examined the multiple categories of speech acts in the headlines in the discourse of war in the Middle East and concluded that the Israelis used more 'Threats', indicating a more dominant position. In addition, Rababah and Hamdan (2019) conducted a comparative critical discourse analysis of speeches given by the Israeli Prime Minister and Palestinian President regarding the Gaza War (2014), probing the representations of self and others in the context of warfare.

Recently, studies have shown more interest in adopting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine ideological positioning and power relations in media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. For example, drawing on Van Dijk's (1997) theory, Ahmed et al. (2022) analysed six articles in the *Independent* from the UK and the *Washington Post* from the US. The study revealed that Palestinians are described negatively in both newspapers, whereas Israelis are frequently presented in more favourable terms. Similarly, in a current study, Degaf et al. (2025) conducted a qualitative CDA of news articles from *The Guardian* (UK) and *The Jakarta Post* (Indonesia) during the May 2021 escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study concluded that while *The Guardian* placed greater focus on the humanitarian impacts of the conflict, often using euphemistic language to describe events, *The Jakarta Post* highlighted reactive actions and used a more direct and forceful tone. Similarly, Abid et al. (2025) combined CDA with corpus linguistics methods to compare how English-language newspapers from Middle Eastern countries with diplomatic ties to Israel (*The Khaleej Times* and *The Gulf Daily News*) and without diplomatic ties to Israel (*Daily Sabah* and *The Tehran Times*) represented Israeli and Palestinian actors in their coverage of the May 2021 Gaza War. The study concludes that media representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Middle Eastern countries are shaped by diplomatic relations with Israel. Likewise, El Damanhoury et al. (2025) employed mixed methods to compare transitivity,

intertextuality, and lexicalisation in 136 online articles from Al Jazeera English (AJE) and the BBC. The findings revealed that while AJE's headlines and texts presented Palestinians as a diversity of human actors, the BBC's reports tended to frame Palestinians through the lens of militancy, citing Israeli sources more frequently than AJE.

Studies within the Appraisal Theory in news discourse have primarily focused on the stance and attitude of news media towards particular events. Among the limited body of research, Warshagha et al. (2024) conducted a corpus-based study within Fairclough's socio-dialectical framework and Martin and White's (2005) affect subsystem. The corpus contained articles from *Al Jazeera English* (AJE) (117 articles) and *The Washington Post* (WP) (115 articles). The findings revealed that both *Al Jazeera English* and *The Washington Post* use affect resources strategically to shape their narratives about the conflict, with an aim to steer public sentiment and construct persuasive frames. Jakaza (2019) adopted the Appraisal Theory to investigate the media's evaluations of the Zimbabwean government's constitutional provisions and their implementation, claiming that the media plays a positive and encouraging role in monitoring the government. Similarly, Al-Gamde and Tenbrink (2020) employed corpus analysis to study Iranian news agency coverage of the Syrian civil war, showing the great influence of Iran's political viewpoint on reporting the Syrian conflict. Likewise, Wang et al. (2023) looked into how political words are employed by press media and concluded that a negative attitude is conveyed in coverage related to political and territorial issues. On a similar topic, Li and Pan (2021) investigated the image of China depicted in the English translation of a Chinese political news report, claiming that China is belittled in the translated text. In another study, Jin (2019) examined American attitudes towards China through the lens of the appraisal theory and concluded that mainstream media in powerful countries may distort other countries' political and economic development to discredit their national image on the international stage. Additionally, Pratama (2021) studied *The New York Times*' coverage of the 2021 US election, finding increased use of attitudinal devices on national issues.

Based on a review of relevant studies, the study is needed to bridge the gap in the existing literature. First, fewer studies systematically examine attitudinal meaning at the interpersonal level to explore the Israel-Gaza conflict. In other words, although Appraisal Theory is widely used in language studies and political discourse (Jin, 2019; Li & Pan, 2021; Wang et al., 2023), there are few applied studies in journalistic discourse, especially in the context of war and conflict. Because of its long duration and important geopolitical implications (Buheji, 2024; Shreim, 2015), this conflict, therefore, deserves further scholarly attention. Second, comparative analysis is probably insufficient. Existing studies often focus on analysing media reports from a single country or Arab versus Western media, lacking comparisons between media with different political positions, with limited attention to non-Western, non-Arab contexts (Chen, 2013; Eldin, 2019; G. Wang, 2017; Warshagha et al., 2024). Finally, although some research has explored the lexical and syntactic features used in news reports (El Damanhoury et al., 2025; Muwafi et al., 2024; Puspita & Pranoto, 2021), there has been less research on how these features are used to convey attitudes and political positions in conflict-related news.

To address the aforementioned research gaps, this study aims to analyse the reports of the Israel-Gaza War by *China Daily* and the BBC using corpus tools from the perspective of appraisal theory and explore the attitudinal devices used in the reports and the ideologies and positions behind them. Through this research, it is hoped to gain a deeper understanding of how media shapes public perceptions of war and conflict through language, providing new perspectives and theoretical support for future research on news discourse analysis and political communication.

METHODOLOGY

To conduct the current study, a qualitative corpus approach was employed to explore the attitudes and positions underlying the attitudinal devices used in Chinese and British news reports on the Israel-Gaza War. Therefore, 40 news reports from the BBC and 40 news reports from China Daily published in April 2024 were collected (Britannica Online, 2024). The selection of 40 news reports from each outlet (BBC and China Daily) is considered representative because it is a sufficiently large dataset published in one month only, April, that can capture the attitudinal devices across both Western and Chinese media outlets. The UAM Corpus Tool 6 was utilised to identify attitudinal devices within the texts in terms of the three aspects: affect, judgment, and appreciation, providing descriptive quantitative analysis of their frequencies and distribution across the news reports selected from the BBC and China Daily. The reason for choosing the UAM Corpus Tool is that it fundamentally enables users to apply tags to segments of text as appraisal requires. Through an interface displaying the text, users can select a segment and are then prompted to choose tags to associate with that segment, following a tag hierarchy provided by the user (O'Donnell, 2008).

DATA COLLECTION

The news reports about the Israel-Gaza War were retrieved from the China Daily (<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn>) and BBC News website (<https://www.bbc.com>), two publicly accessible online news outlets, see Appendix (A). As both websites are freely available to the public for browsing and do not require any subscription or access fee, the selection of these data did not necessitate further research consent. However, there was a difference in the search process between the two media outlets. On the China Daily website, after entering the key term, the 'Advanced Search' option was selected, and the date range was set to 30 days from 1 April 2024 to 30 April 2024. Then, 'Duplication Removal' was applied before clicking the "Search" button. In contrast, on the BBC website, the researcher had to manually identify all news coverage published in April 2024, as no advanced filtering system was available.

China Daily and BBC were chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, both media outlets are very authoritative. China Daily is the sole national English daily news media issued and operated by the Chinese government (Chen, 2013). Likewise, the BBC, as a leading public news media in Britain (Amer, 2022), showcases a valuable case to study. Secondly, the two media outlets have different political and cultural backgrounds. China Daily is China's official English-language newspaper and represents the positions and views of the Chinese government, while the BBC, although independent, to some extent, reflects the social and political views of Britain. Choosing these two outlets allows for a comparison of how media outlets from different political and cultural backgrounds cover the same event, revealing attitudes and biases in their reporting. Thirdly, both media outlets provide a large number of political news reports, covering international events.

DATA ANALYSIS

By using "Israel-Gaza War" as a search term on the official websites of China Daily and BBC, relevant English news texts from April 2024 were manually collected, resulting in 40 news articles from each news platform.

Next, two projects were created in the UAM Corpus Tool 6 to represent each corpus, namely China Daily (CDNC) and BBC (BBCNC). The attitude analytical layer was constructed based on the Appraisal Theory framework proposed by Martin and White (2005). Then, the attitudinal devices were manually identified and categorised according to the three subsystems of attitude: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. That is, the UAM Corpus Tool was used to annotate and analyse these features, providing descriptive statistical data on their frequency and distribution. Finally, each attitudinal device was interpreted qualitatively, using textual examples to explain how evaluative meanings were constructed in the reporting of the Israel-Gaza War.

To ensure the reliability of the coding, a double-coding procedure of 10% of the analysis was employed. After the attitudinal resources were identified, the first researcher randomly selected 10% of the total analysed clauses. The second researcher then independently coded the same sample to allow for comparison between the two analyses. When there were any differences in both analyses, they were resolved through discussion and by revisiting the contextual meanings of the clauses until full agreement was reached.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ATTITUDINAL DEVICES

Regarding the types of attitudinal devices, the analysis of the selected 80 news reports shows that both media outlets include all the attitudinal devices, but to varying degrees. There are significant differences in the number of three emotional devices in CDNC, while the three attitudinal devices of BBCNC are relatively similar in number. The attitude system construes text meanings from emotive, ethical, and aesthetic aspects (Martin & White, 2005). Table 1 presents the frequencies of affection, judgment, and appreciation elements used by CDNC and BBCNC news media outlets.

TABLE 1. Frequency of attitudinal devices in CDNC and BBCNC

Attitude	China Daily News Corpus (CDNC)		BBC News Corpus (BBCNC)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Affect	15	5.3	18	5.4
Judgment	107	38.1	181	54.4
Appreciation	159	56.6	134	40.2
TOTAL:	281	100	333	100.0

Based on the results shown in Table 1, both corpora utilised all attitudinal devices in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian war, with BBCNC having slightly more attitude elements (n=333). In CDNC, appreciation devices are dominant (n=159), whereas in BBCNC, there are more judgment devices (n=181) than the other two. However, due to the difference in the size of the two corpora, it is currently inconclusive as to which media outlet utilised attitudinal devices more in reporting on the Israel-Gaza conflict. Such a difference in attitudinal devices used by BBCNC and CDNC suggests that while both media aim to convey a multifaceted view of the conflict, the BBC may lean towards a more nuanced portrayal, potentially to cater to a diverse audience with varying perspectives. That is, the difference in attitude element usage between the two media outlets lies in the usage of institutionalised feelings. While CDNC used more appreciation, BBCNC tends to use more judgment, approximately at the same frequency as CDNC's appreciation usage. The dominance of appreciation devices in CDNC supports previous research by Puspita and Pranoto

(2021), who highlighted the Chinese media’s focus on the evaluation of events and objects to maintain objectivity.

In terms of attitudinal polarity, both outlets use more negative expressions to convey the Israel-Gaza conflict, see Table 2 below.

TABLE 2. The polarity of attitudinal devices in CDNC and BBCNC

Polarity	China Daily News Corpus (CDNC)		BBC News Corpus (BBCNC)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	118	42.0	119	35.7
Negative	163	58.0	214	64.3
TOTAL:	281	100.0	333	100.0

As Table 2 demonstrates, it is noticeable that negative devices outnumbered positive devices in both corpora (CDNC=163 and BBCNC=214), with BBCNC showing a greater disparity between negative and positive devices. Such statistics show that the BBC exhibits a greater number of negative attitudes, or more criticism, in its coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict. This suggests that both China Daily and BBC adopt a stance of non-support in their coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict, with the latter exhibiting more negativity or criticism. Moreover, the disparity between negative and positive resources in BBCNC is notably greater than that in CDNC. While the number of positive attitude resources in CDNC was nearly equal to that in BBCNC, the number of negative resources in BBCNC was significantly higher than in CDNC. The findings align with Chen’s (2013) findings that underline how Western media often use explicitly positive or negative evaluative language to express ideological alignments in conflict reporting, whereas non-Western media may frame the same events with less explicit judgment and different priorities. According to Chen (2013), Western media often employ more negative terminology, possibly to evoke a stronger emotional response and to highlight the gravity of the situation. However, according to Puspita and Pranoto (2021), negative attitudinal features are slightly more frequent than positive ones, but they are mainly directed at the phenomena and response strategies rather than at the victims themselves.

Affect, as the first attitudinal subsystem, primarily revolves around emotions and feelings, and Martin and White (2005) categorise affect devices into four main types: un/happiness, dis/satisfaction, in/security, and dis/inclination. Un/happiness explores whether the emoter feels happy or sad in a given context, dis/satisfaction focuses on the actor’s level of satisfaction, in/security examines the actor’s sense of security, and dis/inclination concerns whether the actor has a subjective willingness, see Table 3 below.

TABLE 3. Affect devices in CDNC and BBCNC

Affect	China Daily News Corpus (CDNC)		BBC News Corpus (BBCNC)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
un/happiness	3	20.0	5	27.8
dis/satisfaction	0	0.0	6	33.3
in/security	8	53.3	5	27.8
dis/inclination	4	26.7	2	11.1
TOTAL:	15	100	18	100

As demonstrated in Table 3, there is a significant difference in the number of the four types of affect resources in CDNC. In/security has taken the highest proportion, accounting for over half of the instances, while dis/satisfaction never appears. The numbers of the four types of affect

resources in BBCNC were relatively close. Dis/satisfaction resources involve the actor’s sense of satisfaction in each context. Hence, China Daily rarely expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction in reporting the Israel-Gaza War, whereas the BBC comparatively expresses it more frequently. This indicates that English discourse places more emphasis on affect resources than Chinese discourse, a finding that also supports what was reported by Zheng (2025). Similarly, Warshagha et al. (2024) also concluded that Western news organisations consciously or subconsciously shape emotions to impact public sentiment and evoke particular stances.

Judgment typically focuses on whether a given situation conforms to societal norms or legal standards. Social esteem encompasses evaluations of individuals based on various criteria, including their conformity to societal norms (normality), their skills and abilities (capacity), and their determination and resilience (tenacity). These assessments are often communicated through informal channels such as gossip, jokes, and storytelling, with humour often playing a pivotal role in shaping perceptions (Eggins & Slade, 1996). The obtained data shows a dominance of Social-Esteem Judgments in both corpora, see Table 4 below.

TABLE 4. Judgment Devices in CDNC and BBCNC

Judgment	China Daily News Corpus (CDNC)		BBC News Corpus (BBCNC)		
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
social- esteem	normality	62	57.9	80	44.2
	capacity	12	11.2	14	7.7
	tenacity	1	0.9	2	1.1
social- sanction	veracity	0	0.0	0	0.0
	propriety	32	29.9	85	46.9
TOTAL:		107	100	181	100

Table 4 presents that the most frequently occurring judgment device in CDNC is normality resources (n=62). That is, CDNC relies more on normality resources, indicating China Daily’s emphasis on viewing the Israel-Gaza war from the perspective of societal norms. On the other hand, in BBCNC, propriety resources and normality resources are the most frequently occurring (n=80 and 85), respectively. In other words, in the CDNC, the most common resource of judgment is normality, indicating that China Daily is more inclined to view the Israel-Gaza War from the perspective of social norms. In BBCNC, propriety devices and normality devices are the most common, indicating that the BBC is equally concerned about ethics and social norms. This suggests that the BBC equally focuses on the moral and ethical aspects of the Israel-Gaza war and whether its conduct aligns with societal norms. This is partly in line with Amer (2022), who shows that explicit evaluative language and ideological framing were more prominent in Western outlets, aiming to protect and rationalise Israeli interests and marginalise the Palestinian narrative.

What is more, both CDNC and BBCNC rarely used tenacity and veracity devices, indicating a general lack of emphasis on evaluating individual or societal determination and honesty, and relatively less judgment on individual or societal capabilities or competence in news reporting. Interestingly, tenacity appears infrequently in the data, with only one instance in CDNC (n=1) and two instances in BBCNC (n=2), while veracity is entirely absent from both corpora. This lack of veracity judgments might reflect that both media sets avoid explicit assessments of truthfulness in the selected articles, perhaps due to the mutual scepticism about the truthfulness of both sides in the conflict. However, such findings support Ahmed et al. (2022) argument that judgment, especially moral judgment, is strategically suppressed in conflict reporting.

Appreciation, the third attitudinal subsystem, involves our evaluation of various entities based on people’s perceived value. It can be divided into three areas: reaction, composition, and social valuation. Reactions involve our emotional responses and desires to these entities, determining whether or not they attract our attention. Composition concerns structural aspects such as balance and complexity. Social valuation, on the other hand, focuses on the evaluation of qualities such as innovation, authenticity, and timeliness (Martin & White, 2005).

TABLE 5. Appreciation Devices in CDNC and BBCNC

Appreciation	China Daily News Corpus (CDNC)		BBC News Corpus (BBCNC)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
reaction	15	9.4	4	3.0
composition	7	4.4	0	0.0
social-valuation	137	86.2	130	97.0
TOTAL:	159	100	134	100

As Table 5 illustrates, comparatively, CDNC employs more appreciation devices (n=159), with both media outlets significantly utilising social valuation more than the other two subcategories of appreciation (n=86.2 and 130). This indicates a greater emphasis on the potential impact of the war on people’s lives in their reporting. Unfortunately, previous studies did not mention too much whether the media’s focus is on the people; thus, the use of appreciation devices in hard news needs further research. Regarding reaction, CDNC employs more reaction judgments (n=15) compared to BBCNC (n=4), which suggests that CDNC articles may place more emphasis on emotional or sensory responses to events than BBCNC does. More importantly, while composition judgments (evaluations of balance, complexity, or structure) occur least frequently in CDNC (n=7), making up 4.4%, they are entirely absent in BBCNC (0%). This may reflect a difference in reporting style, with CDNC paying more attention to structural or organisational elements of what is being evaluated.

IDEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES

The analysis of attitudinal devices in both media corpora reveals clear ideological distinctions in how Chinese and British media represent the Israel-Gaza War. These differences are shown in the varying use of affect, judgment, and appreciation devices, which convey each outlet’s communicative priorities and ideological attitudes. Overall, China Daily employs a higher proportion of appreciation resources (56.6%) compared to judgment (38.1%) and affect (5.3%), indicating an ideological inclination toward evaluating events and situations rather than individuals. This, in fact, aligns with the Chinese media’s preference for maintaining objectivity and social harmony. Puspita and Pranoto (2021) made similar findings, indicating that the Chinese media do not prioritise emotions in their reporting to preserve objectivity and credibility. By focusing on the evaluation of consequences and humanitarian aspects, China Daily presents an ideology of balanced reporting and diplomatic neutrality, consistent with China’s foreign policy position advocating for restraint and peace in international conflicts.

In contrast, the BBC shows a predominance of judgment devices (54.4%), which emphasise ethical and moral evaluations of actions and participants in the conflict. The prevalence of judgment devices in BBCNC suggests a stronger emphasis on ethical and normative assessments, which emphasises that news media construct ideological positions and moral evaluations (Liu, 2021). In other words, this suggests an ideological orientation toward moral

accountability and human rights discourse, reflecting the Western media's tendency to foreground ethics and responsibility. The BBC's frequent use of negative judgment and affective language also highlights a positioning toward the violence and humanitarian crisis, thus reinforcing its liberal-democratic ideology that values transparency and moral scrutiny.

Moreover, polarity analysis further reinforces this ideological divergence. Both corpora display more negative than positive attitudinal resources (CDNC = 58%; BBCNC = 64.3%), but in reporting the Israel-Gaza conflict, BBC demonstrates a greater amount of negative attitudes or more criticism. Examples (1), (2), (3), and (4) below further demonstrate the effect of the subsystem used by both media outlets.

- (1) (CDN5): *US President Joe Biden said in a statement he was “**outraged and heartbroken**” by the deaths of the World Central Kitchen humanitarian workers.*
- (2) (CDN34) *I **want** everyone to live in security, so they do not have to **fear** for their lives.*
- (3) (BBCN9): *Facing danger to feed millions, Charity founder '**heartbroken**' over 'workers' deaths.*
- (4) (BBCN28) *The people of Gaza are very **grateful** for the efforts that we are making.*

In examples (1), (2), (3), and (4) provided above, affective devices are shown in bold to denote the textual sentiment towards the Israel-Gaza conflict. Among these, “outraged” and “heartbroken” represent unhappiness devices, “want” demonstrates inclination, “fear” portrays insecurity, and “grateful” conveys satisfaction. From a polarity perspective, although affective devices appear infrequently, these selected devices predominantly convey negative emotions. Despite “want” and “grateful” conveying positive emotions, neither expresses a positive sentiment towards the Israel-Gaza conflict. In example (2), “want” conveys the author's hopeful anticipation for the end of the war, while “grateful” in example (4) expresses the gratitude of the people in Gaza for humanitarian assistance. This shows their aim to expose suffering and moral violations. In addition, China Daily's relatively moderated negativity suggests a cautious ideological stance, prioritising stability, social order, and collective well-being over overt emotional or moral judgment.

This suggests that both China Daily and BBC adopt a stance of non-support in their coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict, with the latter exhibiting more negativity or criticism. This is consistent with Chen's (2013) conclusion that Western media tend to use more negative terminology, potentially to elicit stronger emotional reactions and to highlight the seriousness of the issue. In the subsystem of affect, China Daily primarily uses in/security devices, emphasising fear and instability (e.g., fear for their lives) in example (2), which portrays the war as a humanitarian concern rather than a political blame game. The BBC, however, distributes affect more evenly and includes dis/satisfaction resources, indicating a more explicit emotional involvement and evaluative stance. This finding has some similarities with the research results of Chen (2013) and Wang (2017), who found that Western media express more explicit attitudes. However, Amer (2022), through an analysis of BBC and The New York Times coverage of the Gaza war, concluded that mainstream Western media tend to use language to rationalise Israel's actions. One of its key conclusions is that both outlets tended to present the conflict as “Israel vs Hamas”, rather than “Israel vs Palestinian”, which results in limiting the scope of Israel's moral and political responsibility. This finding is not entirely consistent with the present study, as the BBC's reporting did not prominently feature many biased attitude elements.

For judgment, China Daily's emphasis on normality suggests an ideological tendency to assess the conflict through societal norms and collective order, while the BBC's dominance of propriety and normality reflects social expectations. This combination points to the BBC's effort to hold actors morally accountable. Let us consider examples (5), (6), (7), and (8) below.

- (5) (CDN9): *The resolution marked the first time the UN top rights body has taken a position on the **bloodiest-ever** war to beset the besieged Palestinian territory.*
- (6) (CDN13): *Amidst this **tragedy**, the actions of the United States, Israel's key ally, have sparked **serious concerns and criticism** among the international community.*
- (7) (BBCN1) *In the **bloodiest** incident, more than 100 people were killed on 29 February when a convoy arrived at al-Rashid Street in Gaza City.*
- (8) (BBCN25) *The **devastated** landscape of their city feels unreal to the thousands of Palestinians who have been returning to Khan Younis in Gaza.*

Examples (5) and (7) illustrate propriety elements while examples (6) and (8) present normality devices. It can be observed from these examples that the judgment elements used by both media outlets are mostly negative. It is also noted that both media outlets used similar adjectives to describe this war as "bloodiest-ever" and "bloodiest", indicating that both sides of the media consider the Israel-Gaza conflict to be a cruel and bloody war, reflecting the moral condemnation of the war by both media outlets. Additionally, in example (6), China Daily describes this war as "a tragedy" and reports that it has aroused strong concerns in the international community, while BBC, in example (8), describes the post-war cities as "devastated", which is also a reflection of the strong opposition and condemnation of this war by the Chinese and British media. Such a finding resonates with Amer (2022) and El Damanhoury et al. (2025), who argue that international news media strategically minimise explicit moral judgments in conflict reporting to express moral condemnation of war itself, rather than to evaluate the truthfulness or integrity of specific actors. Moreover, Rababah and Hamdan (2019) found that in the context of the Gaza war, Israel and Palestine respectively used judgment resources to portray each other as threats, which is not reflected in the findings of this paper. This result may be due to the difference in political stance because the media concerned in this study are not the national media of the two sides of the war.

In appreciation, both outlets heavily rely on social valuation resources, focusing on the consequences and significance of the war. However, China Daily's use of reaction and composition devices indicates more attention to human response and structural harmony, whereas the BBC's reliance on social valuation reflects a focus on moral gravity and societal critique. Eggins and Slade (1996) argue that appreciation can be understood through mental processes: reaction corresponds to emotions, indicating emotional attachment or desire; composition is related to perception and reflects our perception of order; social valuation, on the other hand, is associated with perception and represents our well-thought-out opinion. According to statistics, both media outlets made great use of social values in their reporting, indicating that they placed more emphasis on the potential impact of the war on people's lives. China Daily made more use of reaction and composition devices, while the BBC made less use of these devices. This suggests that the BBC pays less attention to people's reactions to the war and does not focus on the harmony of order in its reporting. In contrast, China Daily shows some concern for both attitudes, but not extensively, yet it demonstrates a comparatively greater interest in people's reactions to the war than the BBC. Below are some examples, with appreciation devices highlighted in bold.

- (9) (CDN11) *The conflict began after Hamas launched an **unprecedented** attack on southern Israel, which claimed the lives of around 1,200 Israelis, according to the Israeli authorities.*
- (10) (CDN13): *For American politicians, the political obligation to shield their ally from accountability outweighs the **urgent** need to end the mounting humanitarian crisis in Gaza.*
- (11) (BBCN13): *All except the shortest wars have times when killing is an **unchanging, grim** routine.*
- (12) (BBCN12) *On the call, he described the situation in Gaza as “**increasingly intolerable**” and demanded a thorough and transparent independent investigation into the killing of the aid workers.*

Except for “increasingly intolerable”, which belongs to reaction elements, the appreciation elements demonstrated in these examples all belong to social valuation. Examples (9), (11), and (12) all describe the brutality of the war, while example (10) calls for societal action to stop the war, emphasising the urgent need for intervention. It can be found that most of these examples criticise the war from the perspective of social values. However, comparatively, the appreciation terms used by the BBC convey a stronger attitude. Additionally, while China Daily tends to call for international action, the BBC focuses more on the brutal reality of the war. These findings confirm the divergence in their ideologies reflected in the previous attitudinal devices. That is to say, China Daily reflects an ideology of collectivism, neutrality, and stability, consistent with China’s broader diplomatic discourse that values peace and harmony in international affairs. This supports similar findings reported by Li and Pan (2025). The BBC, on the other hand, reflects an ideology grounded in liberalism, moral accountability, and humanitarian concern. This aligns with those findings reported by Kanaker et al. (2020), who reported that China Daily usually adopts a collectivist and stability-oriented approach to prioritise neutrality and diplomatic caution. In contrast, the BBC foregrounds liberal-humanitarian values through an emphasis on moral accountability and ethical responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The study offered a qualitative corpus analysis of the attitudinal devices utilised in political news reports by China Daily and BBC during the Israel-Gaza War, employing Martin and White’s (2005) appraisal theory. The findings revealed that while both media outlets engaged all types of attitudinal devices, there were notable differences in their application of affect, judgment, and appreciation. The BBC demonstrated a slightly higher frequency of attitudinal elements, with a marked preference for judgment devices, indicating a focus on ethical evaluations and societal norms. Conversely, China Daily predominantly utilised appreciation devices, suggesting an emphasis on evaluating events and objects to maintain a neutral and objective stance, which aligns with the general trend in Chinese media to provide balanced coverage. Overall, news reporting serves as a medium for expressing ideologies and political positioning.

The implications of this study are manifold. Academically, it enriches the growing body of research on appraisal theory and political discourse analysis concerning war conflict discourse. The reason is that the findings help demonstrate its effectiveness in uncovering implicit ideological

positions. It also contributes to the understanding of how different cultural and ideological backgrounds influence media reporting on international conflicts. Practically, the insights gained can enhance readers' critical thinking skills, enabling them to evaluate news reports more discerningly and form more independent opinions. This awareness is considered essential in an era of media polarisation, where understanding attitudinal and evaluative language helps audiences differentiate between fact-based and ideologically motivated narratives. For editors and journalists, the study's findings highlight the importance of recognising and balancing potential biases in coverage to maintain objectivity and adhere to professional ethical standards. The study's findings could also inform journalism training and institutions to promote more transparent and responsible reporting of different controversial conflicts.

Despite the findings' significance, the study is not without limitations. Therefore, the scope could be expanded to include other subcategories of appraisal theory, such as engagement and graduation, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the textual representation of national positions. Additionally, broadening the corpus to encompass news reports from a wider range of sources or over a longer period could provide a more accurate exploration of the ideas contained within the text. Including more media outlets from both the UK and China could offer a more thorough exploration of the attitudes of both countries towards the Israeli war in Gaza. Lastly, exploring the multimodal nature of online news media, which combines video, pictures, and text, could provide a richer understanding of media ideologies. Expanding the study to other countries or regions could also offer a more global perspective on how media from diverse cultural backgrounds report on international conflicts.

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APPENDIX A

CHINESE AND BRITISH NEWS REPORTS ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN WAR

No	CDNC	BBCNC
1-	CDN1: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/01/WS6609bb57a31082fc043bfa28.html	BBCN1: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68551965
2-	CDN2: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/02/WS660b60d8a31082fc043bfed9.html	BBCN2: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68687749
3-	CDN3: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/03/WS660d04c3a31082fc043c045e.html	BBCN3: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68704280
4-	CDN4: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/04/WS660e9116a31082fc043c05e4.html	BBCN4: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68705643
5-	CDN5: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/04/WS660defe3a31082fc043c051c.html	BBCN5: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68705765
6-	CDN6: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/05/WS660f316ca31082fc043c062b.html	BBCN6: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68708923
7-	CDN7: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/05/WS660ef51ca31082fc043c0615.html	BBCN7: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68708984
8-	CDN8: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/06/WS661063a1a31082fc043c06ff.html	BBCN8: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68711282
9-	CDN9: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/06/WS661089fea31082fc043c0718.html	BBCN9: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68713015
10-	CDN10: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/06/WS661134baa31082fc043c079e.html	BBCN10: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68713373
11-	CDN11: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/08/WS66130da2a31082fc043c098b.html	BBCN11: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68714128
12-	CDN12: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/08/WS661327b8a31082fc043c09a4.html	BBCN12: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68716499
13-	CDN13: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/08/WS6613aceba31082fc043c0cb4.html	BBCN13: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68722308
14-	CDN14: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/08/WS6613e66fa31082fc043c0cfd.html	BBCN14: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68724691
15-	CDN15: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/09/WS66149898a31082fc043c0e4f.html	BBCN15: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68727828
16-	CDN16: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/11/WS6617366ea31082fc043c1524.html	BBCN16: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68728378

17-	CDN17: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/12/WS661837d3a31082fc043c17c4.html	BBCN17: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68729064
18-	CDN18: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202404/14/WS661bf787a31082fc043c1de3.html	BBCN18: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68737846
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