

A Study of the Discourse Form of the *People's Daily* during the COVID-19 Epidemic

Fang Jin

Network Communication College, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China

Email: 20042008@zyufl.edu.cn

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Abstract

As a journal with certain influence popularity and brand value, *People's Daily* not only performs the functions of the party and national mainstream media, but also gives full play to its media positioning and role advantages, it has a certain outstanding performance in the reporting of the COVID-19 which is worthy of attention. This paper takes the reports of *People's Daily* during the "COVID-19" epidemic in 2020 as the object of study, focusing on the characteristics of the reporting discourse of mainstream media represented by *People's Daily* and the role of discourse in guiding public opinion during major public health emergencies, as well as summarizing its characteristics based on the results of the analysis. This paper mainly focuses on qualitative research, collecting relevant literature through the Internet, making full use of China Knowledge Network, Google Scholar and other relevant websites to organize, summarize and conclude the currently available literature. Through the research and discussion in this paper, we expect to provide relevant reference opinions for the future reporting and public opinion guidance of similar public health emergencies.

Keywords

Discourse Analysis, *People's Daily*, COVID-19, News Report

1. Introduction

The COVID-19, which broke out at the end of 2019, has been invading all parts of China, the struggle of COVID-19 is not only a people's war on public health, but also an important test for the press. This paper selects the epidemic situation report from 2020 as the research example, summarizes the epidemic situation reporting framework and value role of *People's Daily*.

Discourse is an academic term derived from the discipline of language, and

the discursive concept of “discourse” comes from the “discourse theory” of critical scholars, who focus not only on linguistics, but also on the deeper meaning behind language (Li, 2020). Van Dijk, a leading figure in the field of discourse analysis, is the first to combine discourse analysis with journalism, arguing that news is not only one of the forms of public discourse, but also a discourse itself, and that by analyzing news texts and contexts, he explores the cultural perception, social environment and ideological structure behind the news (Du, 2017). *People’s Daily*, as the most authoritative mainstream media in China, has been playing an important role in promoting the main theme, national spirit and inspiring people, especially in the major disaster events in China (Zhang, 2019). During the COVID-19 epidemic, the media produced a large number of reports, which played a good role in guiding public opinion and demonstrating and driving the national people to work together to fight the epidemic (Hu, 2020). With its unique language expression and writing angle, *People’s Daily* made the news reports more mass, newsy and humane, which provided some thoughts and references for further enhancing the communication and guiding power of mainstream media.

2. Analysis of the Text Structure of *People’s Daily* Report on the COVID-19

The text is the most direct expression of discourse, and the difference of discourse expression is firstly reflected in vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric, etc., followed by highlighting conceptual issues such as content and perspective, and universal features carry specific discourse features (Chen, 2004). Analysis of the discourse features of the report of *People’s Daily* during the COVID-19 epidemic starts from the text firstly, and will be elaborated from the micro and macro levels of the text below.

2.1. Micro-Levels of Discourse in the Report on the New Coronavirus Outbreak in *People’s Daily*

Professor Chen Lidan has pointed out that “our media have conveyed too much subjective will through tendentious adverbs, adjectives and directional verbs when reporting the news (Chen, 2004). *The People’s Daily* strictly controls the use of adjectives, adverbs, and other modifiers when reporting the content of the COVID-19, so as to avoid malicious misinterpretation of the principle of journalistic objectivity by the subjective will of individual news editors (Yu, 2016).

The vocabulary in the news reports also showed a positive trend, as shown in **Figure 1**, in addition to the terms “epidemic”, “national”, “material” and “medical” in the news reports. “strengthen”, “safeguard”, “support”, “fight” and “carry out” in addition to nouns such as “epidemic” “national”, “materials”, and “medical”. In addition to verbs such as “strengthen”, “guarantee”, “support”, “fight”, “carry out”, etc., to focus on the action measures of the prevention and control of the epidemic, the report constantly mentions the terms related to the

Report	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
words	疫情	防控	中国	医院	工作	武汉	患者	人民	企业	肺炎
Frequency	770	417	320	257	239	220	212	209	177	172
Morpheme	Noun	Verb	Place name	Noun	Noun	Place name	Noun	Noun	Noun	Noun

Figure 1. High frequency words in reports.

progress of the incident, involving the people's most concerned about the development of the epidemic and the safety of people's lives, which makes the readers psychologically form dependence and trust with the media side when they are frequently exposed to the report (Huo, 2013). This makes the readers form psychological dependence and trust with the media when they are frequently exposed to the reports, and with the media reports, they have a more fixed attitude and tendency to take the lead in guiding public opinion, which is conducive to the guidance of news and public opinion. However, in the news reports, in addition to the high-frequency words about the epidemic itself, terms such as "people", "patients" and "medical staff" appear much more frequently. In addition to the high frequency of the term "people" in the news reports, the term "patients" and "health care workers" appeared much more frequently, as shown in **Figure 1**. The mainstream media made the best use of collective terms in their reports, enhancing the publicity effect with powerful hints and creating a certain sense of community and collective identity.

In the commentary, many macro terms have been added on top of the first two terms, such as "community", "world", "humanity", and "cohesion", "big picture" and other unifying words that stand at the national level, based on the big picture view, reflecting the concept of the community of human destiny. This also reflects the position and responsibility of *People's Daily*, as the mainstream media of the Party, to reflect the attitude and position of China, not only to report the epidemic itself, but also to discuss the way of development in the global epidemic development situation, and to actively and effectively guide international public opinion (Sun, 2015).

Diversified presentation of sentence patterns. The focus of *People's Daily's* report on COVID-19 is "the progress of the epidemic in China" and "the international epidemic", which is mostly presented in the style of news with concise sentences to ensure the rapid transmission of the epidemic information and the legibility of the report. The detailed progress of the work on the "frontline" and the stories of the "frontline personnel" are mostly presented in the form of communications, which are expressed in some descriptive sentences. For example, in the "Guardian of Civilian Heroes against the Epidemic", the description of the treatment of female doctors on the frontline "fog on their goggles, blurring the vision of all of us...".

Secondly, there are many reports quoting the instructions and speeches of the

General Secretary, which are basically positive reports about the meeting, such as General Secretary's latest instructions: fight the battle of Wuhan, if Wuhan wins, Hubei wins, if Hubei wins, the whole country wins. The commentary accounts for the least amount of coverage, but it has the most power to guide public opinion, which conforms to the nature and style of Party newspapers. This is consistent with the theme of *People's Daily's* COVID-19 epidemic report on a macro level. In addition, according to different report contents, *People's Daily* used corresponding sentence patterns to make the epidemic report better spread.

News reports, especially those on major public security events, rarely use sentence patterns that obviously convey subjective attitudes and emotions, such as questions and exclamations (Zhou, 2010). Especially in news report, they adhere to the principle of objectivity and impartiality, and most of them are declarative. Communication, commentary and other genres appear more other sentence patterns. Generally speaking, the same is true of *People's Daily's* news reports on COVID-19. The newspaper does not rely on subjective sentence patterns to guide public opinion, and the text is mostly serious and formal (Li, 2018).

Since February 21, 2021, when the epidemic in China has entered a calm period, imperative sentences often appear in the communication texts, which remind people of the role of warning and advice in a tone of command and emphasize the seriousness of epidemic prevention and control.

In the deployment of the epidemic prevention and control strategy, mainstream media should play a role of transmission (Hou, 2017), so that the content of their reports is close to the people.

People's Daily used a lot of exclamatory sentence patterns in its editorial on the epidemic, such as "History will prove once again that the Chinese nation has experienced many hardships in its history, but it has never been overwhelmed. Instead, it has grown stronger and stronger, constantly growing up in spite of hardships and rising from them!" "Wuhan will win! Hubei will win! China will win!"

The subjective sentence patterns do not mean that the media ignore the objective value. The flexible use of these sentence patterns can arouse readers' emotions and improve the communication effect.

Rhetorical reinforcement effect. In Van Dijk's news discourse analysis, the rhetorical form is mainly used to analyze the expression and context of the text, which is often referred to as the rhetorical device (Van Dijk, 1990). News rhetoric is also a strategic means often used to increase the authenticity, rationality, correctness and accuracy of news reports (Van Dijk, 1990). In the analysis of the content of *People's Daily's* epidemic report, it is found that there are a lot of rhetorical devices, and it is concluded that the most common rhetorical devices are quotation and metaphor. *People's Daily* first used a large number of quotes in its coverage of the COVID-19 epidemic. According to a sample of 235 articles, 168 articles were quoted. On the one hand, the direct narrative and eyewitness reports interviewed by journalists and the real indirect narrative quotes, such rhetorical strategies to enhance readers' identification to a large extent, while

ensuring the authenticity of events, making the presentation of events more concrete. On the other hand, quoting classic poems and colloquial sayings often appears at the end of comments and newsletters. For example, in the article “Drawing spiritual Strength from Classic Poems to Overcome Difficulties” published by *People’s Daily* on April 5, 2020, the quotation of the classic poems can be reflected, “The green mountains are the same as the clouds and rain, the bright moon was once the two villages”, “the mountains and rivers are different, the wind and the moon are the same as the sky” and “There are many different roads. There will be times when the wind breaks and the waves break. Thousands of grinding thousands of strikes are still strong, Ren Erdong southwest north wind”.

According to the analysis of sample articles on the epidemic reported by *People’s Daily*, as shown in **Figure 2**, metaphors are often used. In the second paragraph of such reports, words such as “battlefield”, “struggle” and “decisive victory” are warlike words, comparing the fight against the epidemic to a “containment war” and a “protracted war”, vividly illustrating that the fight against the epidemic is a long and difficult process, reflecting the difficulty of the fight against the epidemic. Increase the closeness of the expression, arouse the attention of the audience. Meanwhile, the report compared China to a big family, “one party in trouble, from all over the country to support the hard-hit areas, rendering a warm family atmosphere.”

Warlike vocabulary	Frequency of occurrence
抗击	55
抗战	45
斗争	44
战胜	36
打赢	28
阻击战	25
英雄	23
奋战	22
决胜	19
胜利	18
攻坚	14
战斗	14
英勇	12
决战	10

Figure 2. Text sample warlike vocabulary.

2.2. Macro Level of the Discourse of the COVID-19 Epidemic Report in *People's Daily*

Macrocosm of background events. From the perspective of news discourse research, context is like theory, although it takes up more text, the more specific the description of the event is, the more people will understand it. Context includes the historical causes and contexts of real events (Wang & Guan, 2020). Some news reports contain multiple events, but they all revolve around a theme, based on the results produced by a certain context.

The structure of “Lead + Facts + Causes + Impact + Evaluation” is in depth, which is the regular text structure and mode of the *People's Daily* newsletter, with the subjective intention of putting the news in the framework by introducing the news background.

In response to the emergence of the “COVID-19 epidemic”, some of the reports focus on the retrospective of public health and safety emergencies and sort out a large number of historical and informative backgrounds. When the *People's Daily's* coverage of the COVID-19 epidemic rises to the ideological field of hypertext and is placed in the severe environment of the domestic epidemic, it has to rise from the micro level of the discourse system to the macro social background, and at this time the coverage has to face a more severe environment, and the reporting discourse will be consistent with the social background and reflect the tone of authoritative media coverage.

Diversified review focus. During the period of epidemic prevention and control, the topics and focus of news commentary are particularly prominent, relevant and extensive compared to other public issues. First, many of the incidents that occurred during the epidemic prevention and control period were directly related to the personal interests of everyone's life and safety. Secondly, the focus of public opinion triggered by the multiple incidents that occurred during the epidemic prevention and control period was special in that most of the incidents were not topics of concern to specific groups, but were universal in nature. During this period, news commentaries focused on a wide range of radiation, not for a few fields or a specific social event, but for the whole society or even the whole field.

Live picture scene-setting. Sceneization refers to the way news constructs contexts and situations through discourse expressions. Expert Peng Lan clearly indicates that scene includes context. She believes that the scene in a broad sense can include the context, and the context can include both spatial context and behavioral context and psychological context.

The anti-epidemic report of *People's Daily* is completed in a specific communication situation through a large number of narrative pictures, as shown in **Figure 3**, where the picture content occupies a large number of pages to tell readers the anti-epidemic story in the most intuitive real situation.

To fully understand the meaning of communication, context is certainly an important factor that cannot be ignored, and different contexts and situations



Figure 3. *People's Daily*, February 28, 2020, page 10.

will influence and limit the effect and style of communication, not only in different styles, but also in different results and can lead to different results (Facchinetti, 2021). Therefore, contextualization is quite important for the communication effect, but pictures alone are not enough to construct a complete scene to express, and the use of linguistic symbols in the text also affects the communication effect.

The anti-epidemic report of *People's Daily* is done through a large number of narrative pictures in a specific communication scenario, as shown in Figure 3, where the picture content occupies a large number of pages to tell readers the anti-epidemic story in the most intuitive and realistic scenario. To fully understand the meaning of communication, context is certainly an important factor

that cannot be ignored, and different contexts and situations will influence and limit the effect and style of communication, not only in different styles, but also lead to different results. Therefore, contextualization is quite important for communication effectiveness, but pictures alone are not enough to construct a complete scene in order to express it, and the use of linguistic symbols in the text also affects communication effectiveness.

3. Discourse Style Characteristics of News Reporting on the COVID-19 Epidemic

Discourse expressions show specific stylistic features in specific situations and contexts. The style of journalistic discourse in news reporting is limited by the context of communication and is based on various elements such as subject, status, position, etc (Yan, 2019). The style of discourse is generally divided into “everyday discourse of the public”, “intellectual elite discourse” and “political power discourse”, and the *People's Daily's* coverage of the COVID-19 epidemic has multiple discourse resources. In its news coverage, the *People's Daily* crosses over between daily discourse, professional discourse and political discourse, keeping the tone of politics and maintaining rationality and objectivity, while at the same time using everyday public discourse in its coverage of people, showing its style characteristics in expressing different connotations.

3.1. Everyday Words Make Heroes

People's Daily adopted the method of “group portrait” to integrate a group of groups with common behaviors during the epidemic prevention campaign, and reflected the contributions of a group of groups during the fight against the epidemic through aggregated reports. It is a common practice for *People's Daily* to report on multiple characters in a limited space, as opposed to individual stories, and on February 2, 2020, the feature stories *Report from the front line of epidemic prevention and control* and *Tribute! Retrograde*, focused on the people on the front line of epidemic prevention and control. Each article used simple and clear language to tell the main deeds of front-line personnel, which not only increased the tone and thickness of the article, but also expanded the scope of public attention from individuals to groups.

People's Daily “has a clear mass perspective in the selection of characters, such as the article “Heroic role in ordinary positions”, with these shots to capture the work of ordinary position and ordinary positions of the “special period” of sanitation workers, in the article “The most people you can see on the streets of Wuhan are the sanitation workers in uniform”. The portrayal maximizes the coverage in a limited space, from age and other lifelike expressions close to the characteristics of the subject of the report, to reflect more fully the most real and complete situation of the group of sanitation workers on the front line of epidemic prevention in plain words. In addition, the *People's Daily's* report covers all walks of life: front-line medical and nursing staff, field workers who risk their

lives to deliver take-out. There are party members and cadres working at the grassroots level, as well as construction workers working at Huoshenshan Hospital. There are delivery drivers and volunteer young people. Such group reports marginalize and expand the breadth of features and extend the dimension of the characters, creating a cohesive, united atmosphere at a special time, and setting up microscopic images of all the workers fighting on the front line of epidemic prevention and control.

3.2. Professional Discourse Adheres to a Rigorous Attitude

Since January 21, 2020, *People's Daily* has published at least two pieces of news on the progress of the epidemic every day in its coverage of the anti-epidemic period, and all of them are in the main news pages, using scientific data to convey information. The daily reports on the number of new confirmed cases and new deaths are true and transparent, adhering to authenticity and accuracy, focusing on flexibility, and the intellectual discourse in the reports is reflected in the rigorous scientific terms used in the news, which shows that reporting for health communication is often straightforward and transparent text input.

Any media coverage has to conform to the general social context of the main theme, subject to the media environment in which it operates and the media management system (Xiang, 2020). *People's Daily*, as a party newspaper, must perform its news media duties on the basis of ensuring correct and safe ideology. With the development of information diversification under new communication technologies, the audience's demand for authoritative information has multiplied, especially under the epidemic, and the advantages of *People's Daily* as an authoritative mainstream media have been brought into play, with rigorous professional reporting and strict professional management ensured in the general media environment. In this battle against the epidemic, it accurately delivered the voice of the Party and the government, conveyed the true principles, actively guided public opinion and exerted great influence.

3.3. Political Discourse Hides Value Judgment

People's Daily, as the mouthpiece of China's official court of public opinion, has always been the wind vane of mainstream media. The editorials and direct commentary discourse are less indirect, and efforts are made to create an atmosphere of figure reporting discourse with a pure narrative of values. Since this official discourse has strong political implications, when the mainstream media, as a sounding board, wants to convey its value judgment, it often uses the rhetorical technique of quotation, either directly or indirectly, to maintain a solemn and authoritative position as the subject of discourse expression.

In promoting the main theme and spreading positive energy, value guidance is also often carried out through character reports. After decades of development, the *People's Daily* has largely abandoned the high profile image, but still focuses on positive images, avoiding and retaining negative character elements

in order to maintain the credibility and high social status of character images. In the article “In the same boat, overcome the difficulties together, women strugglers tell the story of war epidemic” published in *People’s Daily* (March 9, 2020), the words “fear” and “exhaustion” appear in the article. Although there are only a few descriptions, they soon make the characters flesh and blood and come to life. It also conveys the idea that heroes are not fearless, but ordinary people who challenge their fears and limits are another great force to be commended and encouraged. By allowing the negative emotion of fear of exhaustion to exist, *People’s Daily* further expands the humanistic value orientation of the characters, making full use of political discourse to bring out the humanistic concern of the news.

4. The Successful Construction of the Discourse of Reporting on the COVID-19 in *People’s Daily*

The previous article analyzed the textual content of the reporting discourse, while discourse is not only conveying content, but discourse is a social practice capable of influencing, constructing and producing reality. From a constructivist perspective, the media selectively encodes facts and meaningfully conveys its facts through textual discourse, a process that is also the process of discourse construction. In its coverage of the fight against the epidemic, *People’s Daily* accomplished certain constructions of the facts, characters and aspects of community consciousness of the COVID-19 epidemic through news and commentaries, and its successes will be elaborated below.

4.1. The Construction of the Image of the Typical Character

Reinforcing the subjectivity of the people. The people are the most important group to be concerned about in the coverage of the “COVID-19 epidemic”. The textual statistics of the *People’s Daily’s* coverage of the epidemic show that the people dominate the discourse compared to the official epidemic situation. While the official discourse is firmly established and most reports crowd out the space for the general public to express their discourse, the people have the ability to seize their own discourse during the COVID-19 epidemic, and the multi-channel and multi-platform diversified reports of *People’s Daily* provide the channels for the people to express their voices and therefore pay more attention to the media reports. As a result, when presenting ordinary people under the COVID-19 epidemic, *People’s Daily* enhances people’s sense of participation and strengthens the group image of ordinary people to a certain extent, and also reinforces people’s subjectivity through a large number of first-perspective and directly quoted discourse expressions.

Shaping the heroic image of typical characters. Most of the typical characters reported in *People’s Daily* are based on ordinary cadres, party members and ordinary characters, for example, the article *I am a party member, I go first!* on the fourth page of *People’s Daily* on February 27, 2020. tells the story of a Commu-

ist Party member rushing to the front wherever it is most needed and dangerous, shaping the typical image of a Communist Party member represented by Peng Zhiyong, and constructing the heroic image of typical characters through the reporting discourse, such as the aforementioned rhetoric of quotation, forming a more complete discourse system of character reporting.

The People's Daily successfully portrayed many typical heroic figures, such as Zhao Jianping, a doctor at Tongji Hospital of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, who is a “retrograde warrior” of scientific protection, and Wu Peiyong, the chief of Wuhan Jiufeng Police Station, who wants to get well quickly and go back to fight. The typical people, are guided by the correct public opinion to actively and positively fight against the COVID-19 epidemic. The media coverage, especially the mainstream media such as *People's Daily*, is influenced by a combination of political, economic, and media environment factors. The shaping of typical characters is also mapped to the specific background of the times, so the role of different discourses in constructing the heroic image of typical characters is constantly changing and cannot be ignored.

4.2. Constructing Facts about the COVID-19 Epidemic

Transferring knowledge about the COVID-19 epidemic. The construct is most basic to the reflection of reality, and the media is selectively coding and transmitting facts when reporting news. *People's Daily* follows the concept of positive and effective guidance in reporting the COVID-19 epidemic and uses discourse expression to construct social reality. The COVID-19 epidemic strain first discovered in humans in 2019, after the virus has confirmed the existence of human-to-human transmission phenomenon, *People's Daily* outside a series of reports around the content, taking the responsibility of reflecting social reality and gathering social consensus. Most of the media reports in the *People's Daily* presented the social situation under the epidemic, and in the construction of the facts, they conveyed the safety knowledge about the “COVID-19” from the first level, including the popularization of science, as well as the specific requirements of prevention and control, and the development of the situation.

In the commentary “wind and rain to move forward”, “the heroic people are strong and unyielding, the heroic city is as solid as a rock, the heroic China is indestructible, history will once again prove: the Chinese nation has experienced many trials and tribulations in history, but has never been crushed, but the more frustrated the more courageous, and constantly in the trials and tribulations of growth, from the trials and tribulations of the rise!” (Ren, 2020). The reports of the new crown epidemic mostly end with the use of appealing and predictive discourse expressions, as reflected in the previous sentence analysis, whose discourse expressions construct the prospect of fighting the epidemic and call for upholding confidence. “On the shores of East Lake, a thousand trees are quietly blooming, an unstoppable spring! A moment like this contains the secret of Jingchu’s land to forge ahead through the wind and snow, and nurtures the

strength of the Chinese nation's self-improvement through trials and tribulations." In this way, the facts constructed are in line with social development and people's expectations, thus enhancing social identity and gathering more strength and confidence to help fight the epidemic.

4.3. The Construction of a Sense of Community

Multiple presentations stimulate the resonance of opinions. In the era of media convergence, news commentaries also join the wave of multi-method communication, strengthening the audience's sense of "being in the place". During the epidemic prevention and control period, many events and issues touched the hearts of the public, and the news media, as the main carrier of information dissemination, brought into play the advantages of news commentary by integrating multiple means of communication, from a single text commentary to the audio guide, graphic combination, and video communication, etc., building different scenarios and creating various situations through various means, and combining the expression of words, pictures, and videos. The expression of words combines text, pictures, videos and other forms of expression, focusing on creating the audience's sense of presence, creating a communication context closer to reality. The audience's sense of empathy is triggered.

The perspective of all the people helps the emotional resonance. The *People's Daily* focuses on the expression of the perspective of all people in its reports, and the content focuses on where the audience covered by the information is. Many events and issues concern the people. For example, when reporting on specific issues such as the resumption of work and schooling in the epidemic, *People's Daily* uses plain, friendly and popular words and phrases to reflect the psychological state and inner demands of the people in a monologue-style communication based on the perspective of all people. In the posters released by *People's Daily* at the beginning of the epidemic, there were many ritualistic expressions such as *The Most Beautiful Retrograde*, which actively intervened in the narrative bias of public events, observing the development of facts from the perspective of the public, focusing on the impact and causes of the events, and giving audiences a new perspective on the epidemic. The "dialogue" approach enhances the sense of intimacy, and the "Go Wuhan" type of appealing expressions also evokes emotions.

Immersion narratives enhance emotional interactions. As Merovitz said, as the media penetrate people's daily life, the situation changes, and the scenario that could have occurred changes because of the media. We do not need to be physically involved in what is happening in distant places. Through the role of media, a new type of space is created where people participate not only in the "present space and the distant space" but also in distant events. The news commentary during the epidemic prevention and control period is based on details and personal stories, and the viewers' experience of "scenery" is enhanced by grounded and warm words.

In addition, due to this expression and style, viewers bring themselves into the spatio-temporal structure created by the commentary, increasing the audience's sense of presence, forming an immersive discourse to express specific comments, achieving a high level of emotional resonance, and emotional interchange, and the effect of this empathetic narrative guidance in the application of mainstream media, boosting the effect of public opinion guidance, expanding the scope of positive emotions, and reflecting the humanistic spirit of the media. It also expands the scope of positive emotions and reflects the humanistic spirit of the media.

5. Reflections on the Report of People's Daily on the Topic of COVID-19 Epidemic

5.1. Discourse Text Breaks the Solidified Presentation Style

As seen in the above analysis of the textual features and reporting style, the discourse features of the *People's Daily* report are very different for different topics and different genres of content. The text is presented from the perspective of the entire population, making its content easily understood by the audience. The illustrative news presentation effectively combines news with pictures to mobilize reading interest. A review of a sample of coverage during the COVID-19 epidemic showed that the text was much less lengthy and more readable than previous coverage of the news or interpretation of the conference. In the past, the mainstream media had a top-down perspective in reporting, and it was difficult to give readers the focus of the content, especially when there was too much space. This text-based presentation has formed a more solid form of reporting.

The report of the new crown epidemic is not only dominated by text reports, but also combines picture news, graphic data, etc. to increase the depth thickness of the news and dig out more representative pictures to effectively mobilize the vision and ensure the maximum dissemination effect. Accurate use of the advantages of data news, objective and real data to support the news, three-dimensional, all-round enhance the visualization of news reading. In addition to this, the *People's Daily* reports are more diversified in form, multiple perspectives and rich in content. Due to the dramatic increase in the number of Internet users, the continuous popularity of terminal devices, and the massive amount of information faced during the epidemic, the traditional mainstream media release information with slow content updates and boring presentation, and diversified forms of reporting becomes necessary. The public has transformed from passively receiving information to actively requesting information, and in such public health events, the media using a convenient and effective platform can serve as a communication hub to meet information needs.

5.2. Discourse-Oriented Balanced Biased Topics

Through the analysis of the *People's Daily's* reports about the new crown epidemic, it is found that the wording is strict when reporting the content, and

more attention is paid to the depth of discourse in order to avoid exaggerated or sensationalistic writing style. Truthfulness and objectivity are the most basic requirements for news reporting. As a party newspaper with the principle of party nature, it coordinates news and propaganda work on the basis of standing firm on political stance, and achieves unity of objectivity and tendency. The fight against the epidemic is a difficult and long-lasting task, a comprehensive “protracted war” that involves a lot of content and a very complex environment. The two major contents of the COVID-19 epidemic report, epidemic tracking and common anti-epidemic vision, should be balanced in terms of the number of reports and synchronized in both positive and negative aspects, as these contents do not exist in a single report, but interact with each other. In its coverage of the epidemic, *People’s Daily* showed the achievements of the epidemic, and also fully reported on typical figures and deeds, always adhering to the main tone of positive propaganda and upholding the correct guidance of public opinion.

People’s Daily did a good job in guiding public opinion in all aspects of the discourse. For example, at the beginning of the epidemic, rumors were widespread and inaccurate information spread. Some inaccurate information affected public perceptions and caused misleading ideas, and even disturbed social order and endangered social life. The most typical example is the rumor of *Double Yellow Lotus against New Coronavirus*, which had a wide impact.

5.3. The Overall Situation Awareness Is Highlighted in the Construction of the Discourse

As the Party’s newspaper, the *People’s Daily* assumed the important responsibility of conveying information and guiding public opinion during the epidemic, and this responsibility was deeply expressed in the construction of the reporting discourse. During the epidemic, *People’s Daily* reported on a large number of pioneers in the fight against the epidemic, from ordinary people to leading cadres at all levels, from soldiers and doctors to state organs, shaping the exemplary spirit of the Party and the government who cared about the people and the people who were brave and dedicated, and establishing a positive image of the country and society. When reporting on the measures and actions taken by the Party and the government in the fight against the epidemic, *People’s Daily* shares the same frequency with the national policy, takes the initiative to convey the official voice, interprets and conveys the policy documents and strategic deployment, quickly conveys the mainstream position and stabilizes the hearts of the people. As a domestic mainstream media, it has a global vision in the communication of the new crown epidemic, and guides public opinion in a positive and rational direction in a planned and organized manner under a macro perspective. In its coverage of the tracing, prevention and control of the virus, it conveyed its determination to “win against the epidemic” through different presentations of the discourse, showing the effectiveness of China’s anti-epidemic work and highlighting the superiority of China’s socialist system.

The *People's Daily*, with more international coverage of the new epidemic, actively reported on the situation of China's epidemic prevention and control, kept information open and transparent, and provided the world with a transparent and powerful reference for China's decision making and China's speed in fighting the epidemic, establishing the image of China as a responsible great power and reflecting China's role as a great power. It also refuted the unwarranted accusations and offensive remarks from the international community, actively and truly demonstrating China's determination to fight the epidemic hand in hand with the world. When the *People's Daily* discourse builds a good vision, it is not only the good expectation of our healthy society, but also the expectation of the whole world and all mankind, and through the report, it solidifies the right of discourse in the international public opinion pattern.

6. Summary

General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the relationship between media development and public opinion guidance, clearly stating, "Let the mainstream media firmly occupy the high ground of public opinion guidance thought leading culture inheritance service people moving communication." Looking at the reports of *People's Daily* at the early stage of the new crown epidemic, it chose a more positive expression in terms of vocabulary, sentences, rhetoric, style and other micro-levels of the text, and sang the main theme while ensuring the professionalism of the news, and also fought the "active battle", now that China and the world are in a period of normalization of epidemic prevention and control, the language style and writing angle of *People's Daily's* reports during this period provide references and lessons for future epidemic reports and mainstream media reports on public health and safety events.

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Conflicts of Interest

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