A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Reuters' News Coverage of the 2025 Sino-U.S. Trade War

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Abstract

This study conducts a Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis (CBCDA) to analyze Reuters news coverage on the Sino-U.S. Trade War in 2025, using a mixed approach that combines Corpus Linguistics (CL) with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study mainly examines how Reuters constructs narratives surrounding the trade war. It focuses on linguistic patterns in the period from February 1 to May 1, 2025, a time marked by intensified conflict. By analyzing keywords, collocates, and concordances, the study uncovers ideology in Reuters' reporting, revealing asymmetries in the portrayal of the United States and China. The findings suggest that Reuters' coverage positions the U.S. as the active agent in the conflict, with China portrayed as reactive and defensive. The study also explores the broader implications of these discursive choices in shaping global perceptions of economic conflict, highlighting the role of media in constructing power dynamics and ideologies. This research contributes to the understanding of media neutrality, global power relations, and the discursive construction of economic narratives.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, Sino-U.S. Trade War, Reuters

1. Introduction

Since early 2025, the Trump administration has once again wielded the tariff stick, provoking renewed trade disputes. This round of the tariff war presents a triple-layered effect of "benchmark tariffs + equivalent tariffs + additional levies." Specifically, the comprehensive tariff rate on Chinese goods exported to the United States has been continuously raised—from 10% to 20%, then to 54%, and later soaring to 104%, 125%, and finally 145%. These actions triggered China's decisive countermeasures and exacerbated turmoil in the global financial market. The Sino-U.S. trade war, which began in 2018, has become one of the most significant economic and geopolitical confrontations of the 21st century. Initiated by the U.S. imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods and followed by retaliatory actions from China, the conflict has profoundly reshaped global trade strategies (Bown, 2021). On February 1, 2025, under Trump's second administration, the trade conflict entered a new and more intense phase. A new executive order imposed an additional 10% tariff on Chinese imports, sparking a fresh wave of countermeasures from Beijing. These developments reignited global attention and brought media coverage of the trade conflict to new heights. Such renewed tension calls for a closer examination of how international media outlets report and frame these events. Media discourse does more than reflect political and economic developments—it actively constructs public understanding and shapes international narratives (Van Dijk, 1998).

Among global news agencies, Reuters occupies a prominent position. Renowned for its wide reach and reputation for objectivity, Reuters' reports are widely syndicated and influential. It won the Pulitzer Prize for its international reporting in 2024, reinforcing its standing as a trusted source. However, as critical discourse theorists have pointed out, even language that appears neutral can carry implicit ideological meanings (Fairclough, 1995). News discourse not only describes but also constructs specific versions of reality. Thus, examining how Reuters frames the 2025 Sino-U.S. trade war is essential to understanding the linguistic construction of narratives surrounding trade, power, and international rivalry.

This study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework. This is an approach that explores the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology. CDA believes that language is a form of social practice, inherently shaped by and reflective of power relations and ideological processes (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model is a strong framework for studying how news articles are produced, disseminated and interpreted. It includes textual analysis, discursive practices and social practices in the wider

socio-political arena. To enhance the qualitative depth of CDA, the study integrates Corpus Linguistics (CL) methods, which use computational tools to reveal linguistic patterns in large datasets (Baker, 2006). Tools such as AntConc help identify keywords, collocations, and concordance patterns, offering empirical support when interpreting language expressions. CDA and CL are combined to form a mixed approach strategy that is both critically interpretive and data-driven, which is consistent with recent advances in media discourse research (Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013).

Although a growing body of research has examined how American media, such as The New York Times, represent the Sino-U.S. trade war, relatively little attention has been paid to Reuters. Moreover, few studies have systematically applied a corpus-based CDA approach to analyze its coverage. This research seeks to fill that gap in both empirical focus and methodological application.

Accordingly, this paper investigates how Reuters constructs narratives around the 2025 Sino-U.S. trade war, focusing on reports published between February 1 and May 1, 2025—a period marked by intensified conflict. Using AntConc, the study will extract keywords, collocates, and concordances, which will be interpreted through Fairclough's framework to uncover underlying ideological orientations. Key questions include: How does Reuters linguistically construct power relations in its 2025 trade war coverage? Does its reporting reflect specific ideological stances?

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how international news discourse shapes public perception of economic conflict. By revealing the ideology in Reuters' reporting, it offers insights into media neutrality, global power dynamics, and the discursive construction of economic narratives. Methodologically, it illustrates the benefits of combining corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), thus providing a framework that can be followed for subsequent studies of media discourse.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework of CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers substantial support to the deep analysis of how language, power, and ideology are intercorrelated. According to CDA, instead of being a neutral medium for communication, a language serves as a social practice that captures, builds and enhances social power relationships (Fairclough, 1995). CDA is related to the process by which social dynamics and structures influence discursive events. Therefore, it offers valuable implications for research on political and media discourses.

One of the most powerful methodologies for critical discourse analysis is the three-dimensional approach by Fairclough. Under this framework, discourse analysis is an interaction between three dimensions (Fairclough, 1992): (i) textual analysis (description), which refers to the linguistic features of discourse, including grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and rhetorical devices; (ii) discursive practices (interpretation), which focuses on the ways of texts' production, circulation, and consumption in specific contexts; and (iii) social practice (explanation), which links discourse to wider power dynamics, showing the process of reproducing and contesting ideologies.

CDA is also constructed from Foucault's perspective on discourse as a power field that creates ideology and ignites ideological debate (Foucault, 1972). Based on this viewpoint, media discourse is not merely a reflection of reality; it is also an influencing factor of it. Those media channels serve the purpose of ideology, with the construction of social identities and the legalization of political moves being facilitated by a deliberate selection of specific topics, news sources, and linguistic choices (Van Dijk, 1998). For instance, to achieve a subtle and clever presentation of major players like China and the United States, the media may choose a certain perspective, deliberately choose what subjects to report, how events are interpreted, and what characters to create.

However, CDA has limitations. For example, in the face of large datasets, CDA exhibits potential subjectivity and challenges. In response, various technical methods, such as corpus linguistics (CL), can be integrated to enhance the objectivity in analysis.

2.2 Combining CL with CDA

Discourse studies, especially in the field of media discourse analysis, have come to integrate CL with CDA. CDA is useful for research on language's ideological functions. However, it has limitations: subjectivity and lack of replicability. (Widdowson, 1998). To ensure objective analysis, it is feasible to use CL or other similar comprehensive techniques that are data-driven.

Under CL, researchers analyze a substantial volume of natural language through computer software to identify key aspects of language design, such as collocations and keywords (McEnery and Hardie, 2012). CL, as a quantitative method, increases the transparency and credibility of the entire process. Notably, it rectifies the limitations of CDA

in terms of large-scale manual data processing. It is certain that CL tools can facilitate the precise identification of hard-to-detect language patterns in the context of manual investigations.

When the two approaches are combined, they form a new method named corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis (CBCDA), specifically indicating that corpus tools can lend critical support to critical analysis (Baker et al., 2008). CBCDA makes it possible to analyze discourses on a large scale with a greater level of objectivity. Although CBCDA offers a more holistic perspective on language phenomena, it still allows CDA to keep its original depth. According to Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013) and Fairclough (2003), CBCDA can find from various media articles their lexical triggers, evaluative terms, and ideological frames.

When applied to media analysis, CL tools can effectively process substantial text data from news media. Researchers can utilize CL tools to discover from a great many articles the recurring themes and linguistic patterns. These identified insights can reveal the media's perspective on intricate incidents like the Sino-U.S. trade war. For this reason, researchers can combine the two approaches to identify invisible biases and ideological problems underlying media discourse, adding reliability to final research conclusions.

The sections above clarify the benefits of CBCDA. The next section is a literature review that involves the application of CDA to news coverage to demonstrate its practical utility.

2.3 Previous Studies on News Coverage Adopting CDA

CDA has been widely adopted in media discourse research. It offers insights into how power relations, ideologies, and social identities are constructed and maintained by language. A large amount of research has discovered that news discourse is more than event reporting; it has a direct influence on social and political realities. This impact is reflected in how it sidelines dissents and empowers prominent viewpoints.

Van Dijk (1991) pioneered the application of CDA to media texts. He explored how mainstream Western media repeatedly reproduces racial stereotypes and reinforces hegemonic ideologies. Through lexical choices and quotation patterns, he showed how elite media highlight the voices of politicians and organizational figures while downplaying other viewpoints. This research has been explored in depth by scholars like Teo (2000), who examined how asylum seekers are portrayed in the Australian media. He highlighted how negative portrayals were created by choosing words and focusing on certain topics.

Similarly, Machin and Mayr (2012) highlighted how linguistic and visual resources in the media can normalize ideologies. They argued that CDA requires a multimodal method that takes into account the visual aspects of current media. Fairclough (1995) earlier explored in depth how financial reporting is permeated with neoliberal ideas. Recent studies, such as (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008), used corpus-based CDA to explore how refugees are portrayed in the British media. They have identified recurring trends of negative representation in the large datasets.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), developed by Wodak and colleagues, integrates linguistic analysis with socio-historical context to examine how discourses evolve overtime (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). DHA is now used in government dialogues. For instance, media coverage of the Greek financial crisis applied DHA (Wodak and Boukala, 2015), showing how portrayals of "center" and "periphery" nations were used to support austerity policies.

CDA proves highly effective for in-depth analyses of global geopolitical events. For example, Altheide (2004) examined U.S. media depictions of the Iraq War, exposing how a fear-based perspective justified military intervention. Likewise, Philo and Berry (2011) studied BBC coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, revealing consistent biases in narrative imbalances and source choices.

These analyses show how corpus-based discourse analysis reveals the ideological basis of news coverage, including economic disputes. It serves as a reliable framework for examining how global media outlets report on major economic events.

2.4 Existing Studies on News Coverage of the Sino-U.S. Trade War

Much research has been conducted on how mainstream media in the world cover global economic conflicts. However, few studies have analyzed international news agencies that significantly sway global public opinion. U.S. outlets, such as The New York Times, often portray China as an economic and geopolitical adversary, disseminating coverage related to threats and rivalry (Zhou and Qin, 2020). These portrayals frequently align with American values, reflecting van Dijk's (2008) theory of elite discourse reproduction.

Differently, Chinese media, such as China Daily, often present the trade war as a fight for national pride and independence. Liyang, Jiayi and Qian (2020) noted that Chinese outlets adopt a defensive stance, depicting China

as a target of Western aggression, stressing that China's countermeasures are justified and essential. The aim is to challenge Western dominance and strengthen national unity.

On this basis, Wu and Rungrojsuwan (2022) conducted a comparative linguistic analysis of The Wall Street Journal and China Daily in terms of how they report the trade war, finding that both seek objectivity, but national biases remain evident. The Wall Street Journal often legitimizes U.S. policies, whereas China Daily stresses China's independence and development path, portraying U.S. actions as unjust. Their research findings show that the political atmosphere and cultural background of each country do impact the way the media reports on global controversial events.

Similarly, Li (2020) conducted a critical discourse analysis on China Daily, The New York Times, and The Guardian, using important discourse analysis and found that their discourse styles were very different. China Daily consistently echoes the Chinese government's stance, emphasizing the peaceful resolution of the issue by using bilateral discussions. Though The New York Times does not completely align with U.S. policy, it is generally supportive of the U.S. position, especially during the Trump administration. As for The Guardian, it represents the views of a third party and has given relatively objective, but sometimes sharp, evaluations of these two countries. Li's research shows that even media outlets that are considered neutral can subtly convey national ideologies through framing choices and language.

Though many researchers have studied media reports from various countries, there is a clear gap in research in this area for international news organizations like Reuters. For Reuters, an international news agency with a good reputation for fair reporting and a global audience, it is particularly critical to understand how it reports on the Sino-U.S. trade conflict. As Reuters' reporting influences global perceptions and policy debates, it is critical to examine its coverage for any implicit ideological patterns.

While studies like Xu et al. (2022) have discussed the importance of neutrality in global news organizations, they rarely analyze how Reuters describes economic conflicts in the discursive practice based on actual data. This gap is particularly critical because research shows that even the most intentional media outlets are still influenced by institutional, cultural and geopolitical factors (Boudana, 2015). Recent work by Wang, Coler and Redeker (2023) also demonstrates how geopolitical tensions inform trade war coverage.

To fill this gap, this study applies a corpus-based CDA approach to analyze Reuters' news articles published between February 1 and May 1, 2025. By examining keywords, collocations, and global power dynamics during the trade war.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The data for this study come from 35 news reports by Reuters from February 1 to May 1, 2025. It was at that time that the Trump administration announced a new tariff policy, causing the Sino-U.S. trade war to become increasingly fierce. The main reason for choosing this time point is to capture the discursive construction of economic confrontation during its peak phase in international media coverage.

These articles were collected from the official website of Reuters. The keywords used for the search were "Sino-U.S. trade war" and "U.S.-China trade war". The criteria for selecting these narratives were that they had to be published by Reuters during that time period, directly discuss issues related to the bilateral trade conflict, and range between 800 and 1,200 words. This ensures that the reports in this collection are comprehensive and detailed enough, without overwhelming the analysis with excessive data.

To prepare the articles for analysis, all non-textual elements, such as images, hyperlinks, advertisements, and excessive formatting, were removed. The cleaned texts were converted to plain text format and compiled into a single corpus so that they can be processed uniformly in the corpus analysis software. This initial processing step is particularly important for the subsequent word frequency statistics, keyword weight calculations, and accuracy in understanding the context.

3.2 Analytical Approach

The corpus was examined using AntConc, a well-known corpus analysis software, which helps to discover the lexical patterns and discourse structures (Froehlich, 2015). Three main techniques are used to study how Reuters represented the trade war: keyword analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance analysis.

3.2.1 Keyword Analysis

To identify words that appear prominently in the trade war corpus compared to general news discourse, keyword analysis was conducted using a reference corpus: the American English 2006: Press Reportage corpus (containing 89,281 tokens). This allows the identification of statistically outstanding

3.2.2 Collocation Analysis

Collocation analysis can be used for studying the patterns and relationships of the co-occurrence of words in the corpus. It helps reveal the collocation relationship between words, that is, which words often appear together in a certain context. This technique was applied to key entities like "Trump," "China," and "tariff" within a defined window of context. This approach can help to clarify the relationship between these statements and reveal the subtle details that participants use when describing ideology. For example, they may portray China as reactive or aggressive.

3.2.3 Concordance Analysis

Concordance analysis is a technique for analyzing the usage patterns of words or phrases in a corpus. It helps researchers understand the actual usage of a specific word in its context and provides an in-depth analysis of the lexical context for language studies. Examining the use of specific words, such as "tariff," across different contexts to understand the framing and evaluation of the conflict. This method provides a deeper understanding of the tone, modality, and evaluative language employed by Reuters in its portrayal of the trade war.

These practices can all provide us with important insights into how the language used by Reuters in its reports contributes to the construction and continuation of the specific narrative regarding the Sino-U.S. trade war.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted by Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which views discourse as both a linguistic product and a social practice. This framework consists of three interrelated parts: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice.

3.3.1 Textual Analysis

This dimension focuses on language features, like how to choose words, how to organize grammatical structures, and what rhetorical techniques to use. It studies how actors and actions are represented. For example, a passive voice statement such as "tariffs were imposed" makes it unclear who did it, but evaluative adjectives like "radical" clearly reveal the ideological tendencies behind it.

3.3.2 Discursive Practice

This level examines how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. In the context of Reuters, consideration is given to how to write the article and what the editor will choose, like what topic to choose, what framework to use, and what content to quote. While Reuters strives to maintain objectivity, the language used in its reports may indicate the agency's stance and the impact of regional politics.

3.3.3 Social Practice

The final dimension situates the discourse within broader social, political, and economic contexts. It explores how the media discourse on the Sino-U.S. trade war is linked to larger power structures and ideological formations. This analysis focuses on how Reuters' portrayal of the conflict aligns with global power dynamics, particularly the ideological underpinnings of neoliberalism and the exercise of power through economic policies.

By integrating Corpus Linguistics (CL) methods with Fairclough's CDA model, this study not only provides a qualitative interpretation of the discourse but also offers empirical support through the identification of recurring linguistic patterns (Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013). The use of CL techniques ensures a more objective, data-driven analysis, which complements the critical, interpretive approach of CDA.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Keyword Analysis

Using AntConc, a Keyword List (Table 1) was generated. The frequent appearance of terms such as "China" and "US" indicates that the reports are focused primarily on these two nations, highlighting the binary opposition in terms of national identity and the trade conflict. The third most frequent keyword, "Trump", suggests that the former U.S. president is a central figure in these reports, with his personal decisions playing a significant role in the trade war. This reflects an "individualized" narrative rather than a purely structural economic analysis. "Tariffs" and "trade" indicate that the core of the reports centers on economic policies, particularly tariff-related measures

and trade activities. These keywords partially reflect the main theme of the reports, but a deeper analysis is needed through collocation and concordance lines to understand the full narrative.

Table 1. Top 15 Keywords from Keyword List

Type	Rank	Freq_Tar	Freq_Ref	Keyness (Likelihood)	Keyness (Effect)
China	1	323	18	775.903	0.022
US	2	370	48	767.991	0.025
Trump	3	191	0	535.522	0.013
tariffs	4	193	2	519.968	0.013
trade	5	201	24	424.363	0.014
tariff	6	111	0	310.99	0.008
Chinese	7	93	7	213.744	0.006
markets	8	79	1	211.084	0.005
on	9	503	651	198.171	0.033
market	10	108	32	170.142	0.007
investors	11	74	11	147.981	0.005
Beijing	12	53	1	139.018	0.004
Donald	13	44	0	123.199	0.003
goods	14	62	11	117.961	0.004
Wednesday	15	59	11	110.558	0.004

4.2 Collocates Analysis

Using AntConc, collocates of the keyword "Trump" were analyzed (Table 2). The frequent collocation of personal (e.g., "Donald") and institutional (e.g., "president", "administration") terms underscores Trump's central role as both an individual and as part of the U.S. government. Temporal markers such as "after" suggest that Trump's actions are pivotal moments in the unfolding of the trade conflict.

Table 2. Collocates with Five-Word Span Surrounding "Trump"

Collocate	Rank	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
Donald	1	440	43	43	0	33	157.345	3.908
president	2	710	47	43	4	31	136.809	3.346
tariff	3	1110	42	6	36	19	80.038	2.539
tariffs	4	1930	45	7	38	26	51.061	1.84
after	5	690	21	20	1	15	32.301	2.225
administration	6	280	12	1	11	10	25.305	2.719
US	7	3700	49	41	8	30	20.268	1.024
agenda	8	50	5	1	4	3	18.434	3.941

For the keyword "tariff", collocates (Table 3) emphasize tariffs as deliberate policy tools central to Trump's agenda. Words like "threats", "hikes", and "increases" suggest a negative or aggressive framing of tariffs, reflecting the contentious nature of the trade conflict. The prominence of Trump's name reinforces his role as the key enforcer of these policies.

Table 3. Collocates with Five-Word Span Surrounding "Tariff"

Collocate	Rank	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
Trump	1	1910	42	36	6	19	79.815	2.534
threats	2	60	6	1	5	4	28.318	4.72
increases	3	100	7	0	7	5	28.054	4.205
announcement	4	140	7	0	7	3	23.5	3.72
hikes	5	60	5	0	5	4	21.758	4.457
Donald	6	440	10	8	2	9	19.357	2.582
reveal	7	40	4	0	4	2	18.872	4.72
raise	8	110	5	4	1	5	15.877	3.582
imported	9	110	5	0	5	4	15.877	3.582

These collocational patterns construct a discourse where the U.S. (specifically Trump and his administration) is portrayed as the central and active force in the trade war, while China is framed as reacting to U.S. actions. This dynamic aligns with the broader ideological tendencies in Western media to center Western actors, presenting the geopolitical conflict from a U.S.-centric viewpoint.

4.3 Concordance Analysis of "Tariff"

Concordance analysis can provide more details. Since "tariff" is the core of the report, it has been further analyzed. Examples of the concordance lines of "tariff" as follows:

1)"The move comes after Trump made good on his threat to impose an additional 50% tariff on China unless it withdrew its retaliatory levies on the United States, taking total new U.S. duties on Chinese goods this year to 104%." (Reuters, 09/04/2025)

2)"He also heaped pressure on China, saying he would raise the tariff on Chinese imports to 125% from the 104% level that came into effect on Wednesday." (Reuters, 10/04/2025)

Examples 1 and 2 reflect how the United States imposes pressure through tariffs and uses them as a diplomatic tool to sanction and coerce countries like China. Tariffs become a means of political control for the U.S., demonstrating how powerful nations utilize economic policies to achieve political objectives in international trade.

3)"U.S. President Donald Trump's fast-changing tariff decisions have super-charged market volatility and investor uncertainty, with little respite in prospect in the days ahead." (Reuters, 10/02/2025)

4) "'We told our U.S. clients as soon as Trump got elected that the payment terms were 100% upfront with purchase order because we anticipated this tariff nightmare,' said Dominic Desmarais, chief solutions officer at Liya Solutions." (Reuters, 31/03/2025)

5) "'There is a focus on the tariff news getting less worse but there's also a focus on hard data and whether the market is right to worry about a recession,' said State Street Global Markets' head of macro strategy Michael Metcalfe." (Reuters, 29/03/2025)

6)"Our view is that the tariff shock is caused by the unpredictability rather than the tariff itself." (Reuters, 16/04/2025)

Examples 3–6 highlight the market turmoil and investor anxiety due to the unpredictability of tariff policies. Political leaders, such as Trump, continuously alter policies, leading to global economic instability. This indicates that tariff policies are not merely economic tools between nations, but also sources of risk in the global market.

7)"China hits back at Trump tariff hike, raises duties on U.S. goods." (Reuters, 09/04/2025)

8)"China raises duties on U.S. goods to 125%, calls Trump tariff hikes a 'joke'." (Reuters, 11/04/2025)

9)"On Thursday, governments from Ottawa to Paris threatened retaliation after Trump unveiled a 25% tariff on imported vehicles, hammering auto stocks and testing already strained ties with allies." (Reuters, 28/03/2025)

10)"On Thursday, Beijing said it would immediately restrict imports of Hollywood films in response to Trump's tariff increases." (Reuters, 11/04/2025).

Examples 7–10 demonstrate how tariffs are used as tools for retaliation and counteraction between countries. When the U.S. raises tariffs, other nations adopt corresponding tariff measures, reflecting how countries use tariffs in the global trade system to create economic confrontation and mutual checks and balances.

Through these examples, tariffs are shown not just as instruments of economic policy execution but also as symbols of power struggles, illustrating how tariffs influence nations' foreign diplomacy, economic standing, and the stability of international markets.

4.4 Summary

The keyword, collocation, and concordance analyses together reveal a clear narrative structure within Reuters' coverage of the 2025 Sino-U.S. trade war. The frequent references to "Trump," "tariffs," and the co-occurrence of words like "threats" highlight the aggressive, U.S.-centric nature of the conflict. This linguistic framing portrays the United States as an active instigator, while China is portrayed as responding to these external pressures. These linguistic features lay the foundation for the subsequent critical interpretation in the next part, and then how these language choices align with broader ideological and power dynamics will be analyzed using Fairclough's framework.

5. Interpretation Based on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

This chapter provides a critical interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 4, which relies on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. By examining the Reuters coverage of the Sino-U.S. trade war through the dimensions of textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The main purpose is to find out what kind of ideology is hidden behind the media's discussion of this matter, and what power relations are reflected.

5.1 Textual Level Analysis

At the textual level, the analysis focuses on surface linguistic features such as lexical choices, grammatical structures, semantic patterns, and rhetorical strategies (Fairclough, 2003). The corpus findings, derived through AntConc, reveal that Reuters' linguistic representation in describing the United States and China is different. For instance, the keyword "Trump" appears very frequently, more often than "China" or "Xi." When "tariff" is mentioned, it is often paired with action words such as impose, threaten, and increase, which further reinforces the portrayal of the United States as the initiating and controlling actor in the conflict. On the contrary, China's role is often described using passive terms (like "was hit by tariffs"), which are a deliberate attempt to portray China as a passive participant or impacted party. Evaluative language also contributes to this framing. Statements like escalating tensions and unpredictable policy shifts make the conflict between the two countries sound like a play, making it even more ridiculous. These linguistic features are not ideologically neutral. Actually, they shape a special narrative in a way that makes certain actors and interpretations more palatable than others.

5.2 Discursive Practice Analysis

The discursive practice dimension concerns how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. It covers editorial decisions, sourcing patterns, and the intertextual strategies that shape media output.

Reuters is a well-known Western news organization that operates in a multi-faceted organizational and cultural context. Its reporting style is influenced by the rules of journalism, editorial processes, and the thoughts of its main Western readers. The results show that both in terms of frequency and narrative framing, there is a clear tendency to prioritize the U.S. perspective. For example, the statements of American officials are often placed at the beginning of news reports, framing them as primary information, while Chinese responses are typically introduced later or presented in a subordinate narrative position.

Notably, direct quotations from U.S. sources (e.g., "Trump said...", "The White House announced...") appear prominently, thereby conferring legitimacy and authority. In contrast, Chinese perspectives are more frequently reported through indirect speech (e.g., "China reportedly responded..."). In this way, the effect is reduced, and the discursive weight is also weakened. This asymmetry reflects the reproduction of Western-centric news values and reveals an implicit hierarchy in how voices are selected and represented.

5.3 Social Practice Analysis

At the level of social practice, discourse is situated within broader social structures, power relations, and ideological frameworks. Media discourse does not merely reflect reality—it actively constructs it (Fairclough, 1995). Reuters' representation of the Sino-U.S. trade war is thus part of a broader ideological project tied to global power asymmetries.

The discursive positioning of the U.S. as a rational enforcer of economic norms and China as a disruptive or opaque actor resonates with the ideological assumptions of the neoliberal global order. Through its lexical and syntactic

choices, Reuters constructs China as a "challenger" to the status quo and reaffirms the legitimacy of U.S.-led economic governance.

Furthermore, key issues such as "Made in China 2025", state subsidies, and intellectual property theft are presented with minimal contextualization or engagement with Chinese narratives. This unique perspective further highlights that China is highly enterprising in its economy, but its strategies are rather unclear. Reuters' news reports make people feel that China is both an "acceptable Other" and a hidden global threat. This statement is similar to the way many Western media outlets describe this climbing superpower.

6. Conclusion

This research seeks to analyze Reuters' language and ideological framing of the 2025 Sino-U.S. trade war. By integrating Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis (CBCDA) with Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model, it reveals how Reuters shapes the narrative of this intricate geopolitical issue.

The results highlight the United States and China have a representational difference. At the textual level, the U.S. is the primary conflict driver, as seen in frequent word choices such as "Trump" and terms such as "tariffs". Differently, China tends to be depicted as a party that only makes passive responses to the moves. moves. As such, the trade war is depicted as a U.S.-initiated campaign, with China being portrayed as secondary or defensive.

At the level of discursive practice, Reuters' editorial choices strengthened this U.S.-centered narrative. With priority given to American sources, especially by means of directly quoting U.S. officials, the United States seems proactive and resolute. Conversely, indirect conveyance of Chinese perspectives weakens its narrative-shaping power.

At the social practice level, these narratives are a subtle reflection of the global power struggle. Notably, they capture the dominant role of neoliberal economic laws. In addition, an ideology comes to the surface, with the United States being depicted as the protector of free trade, while China is depicted as an opponent and an economic adversary. This perspective gives justification for U.S. policies that actually violate global trade standards.

Despite Reuters' impartiality and fairness, this study reveals that even respected news outlets have subtle ideological discrimination, although not deliberate. Therefore, media coverage should be analyzed in a critical way. With a clear insight into the influence of language on perceptions and power relationships, this research reveals how media narratives operate in global conflicts from a new angle. It also emphasizes the need to analyze how major news organizations portray international events.

In summary, this research clarifies the 2025 Sino-U.S. trade war and demonstrates the need to combine corpus linguistics with critical discourse analysis in media studies. Future research could apply this method to examine other global disputes and investigate how power dynamics are depicted in international news coverage.

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