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News reports about the Sino-US trade war: An ecolinguistic approach

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Abstract: This study adopts an ecolinguistic approach to analyze logical resources in the news reports about the Sino-US trade war collected from the two sources, *The Times* of Britain and *Sputnik News Agency* of Russia. By observing the logical system for ecological discourse analysis, the study throws light on the ecological properties and values of the mainstream media between the two stakeholders. The discursive research finds that overall, the Russian news reports appeal for a free trade system, while they talk down the trade truce, and the British news reports, although opposed to protectionism, call for unity with the UK's ally to avoid tariff risk and earn effortless profits. Hence, the ecological properties of the Russian and British media are complex and mixed. Regarding ecological variance, the two media more or less underwent an ecological shift with the dynamic process of the trade war.

Keywords: ecological discourse analysis; logical system; news reports; Sino-US trade war

1 Introduction

The seemingly long-standing harmony between the US and China since the normalization of diplomatic relations was disturbed and finally broken on March 8, 2018, when the US government, under President Trump's administration, began a trade war by imposing higher tariffs on the products imported from China. In the ensuing months, the trade conflict has been tortuously woven through the stages of confrontation, negotiation, reconciliation, and restarting (Kwan 2019). At the time of writing, there were few signs of an end to the conflict.

During the trade war between these two economic superpowers, the mass media worldwide have not only given extensive coverage to the taxation policies of

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the two governments, but also provided in-depth analyses of and opinions on the causes, ramifications, and future orientations of the trade war. They have played an essential role in informing readers about ongoing international issues, thus attracting tremendous scholarly attention to this topic.

It is important to consider how journalism practitioners strategically transfer their values through reports on the trade war. Previous discursive studies have concentrated on the themes of the construction of national identities (e.g. Li 2009; Ma 2015), metaphorical mechanisms (e.g. Liu 2015; Qiu 2020), and communication strategies (e.g. Chen et al. 2020) in the news coverage of the trade relations. However, these studies have mostly focused on either different official media within China or the Chinese and American mainstream media. Contrastive studies have rarely been concerned with other countries that are also exposed to the widespread effects of trade frictions, and research approaches have generally been limited to the fields of critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) (e.g. Wang and Ge 2019), corpus-assisted discourse analysis (e.g. Wang and Xin 2019), multimodal discourse analysis (e.g. Ma and Gao 2020), and cognitive linguistics (e.g. Yan and Zhang 2018).

Following this trend, the present study examines the news coverage of the trade war, yet applying a different paradigm, that is, the approach of ecological discourse analysis (hereafter EDA). Since the trade conflict is a consequence of human activities, as well as a long-lasting and dynamic process of the international ecosystem, analyzing discursive realization in news texts from an ecolinguistic perspective helps to clarify the “stories between the lines” that could influence people’s cognition and behaviors (Stibbe 2015). This study aims to explore the hidden values held by the media in the two close stakeholders regarding the conflict. Within the global village, it is noteworthy that the UK and Russia inevitably experience the enormous influence of this trade war through their common interests, bilateral ties, and historical associations with both China and the US. A contrastive study of news coverage can reveal the ecological properties of the relevant third parties, raise people’s ecological awareness in identifying discourses, and improve their ecological behaviors.

2 Literature review

Recent discourse studies have pursued critical inspections of news texts that directly concern the Sino-US trade war. Many studies in this field have contributed to our understanding of the formation of national identities whereby Chinese media usually construct the self-images of China as the victim of the trade war, defender of free trade, seeker for negotiations, and beneficiary of cooperation

(Wang and Ge 2019: 1), while foreign media are inclined to apply various war-related metaphorical expressions to describe Sino-US relations by highlighting the ideological differences and justifying the excuses of the American government for launching the trade war (Qiu 2020: 110). Additionally, research has acknowledged the importance of discursive strategies in the process of communication and reconstruction. One example is Chen et al. (2020: 1–21), which scrutinizes political communication across transcultural contexts through a specialized corpus approach and Proximization Theory. This kind of discursive study has helped us to better understand that Chinese news agencies seek to undermine the legitimacy of the US and the American press adopts more discursive tactics in an attempt to enhance its own validity and fabricate a Chinese aggressive history, whereas the stance of third parties, such as the British media, is not neutral but in some way closer to one side (Yan and Zhang 2018: 16). Considering that the stakeholders involved cannot evade the huge effect of the trade war, this study is designed to examine their exact attitude toward the international issue.

Admittedly, previous research has offered substantial insights into the studies of trade frictions in news coverage, but it should be pointed out that they have mainly emphasized two prominent topics, either the construction of metaphor and national identity or communicative strategies, thus leaving the underlying ecological values of the media relatively underexplored. Moreover, discourse analysts have largely adopted the approaches of CDA, cognitive linguistics, and corpus linguistics to investigate trade conflict. Therefore, this study is devoted to an EDA of news discourses concerning the trade war of two third parties, namely, Britain and Russia to shed light on the ecological orientation as well as the values of their mainstream media.

Emerged as part of a general “ecological turn” within humanities and social science (Stibbe 2010: 407), ecolinguistics investigates “how language is involved in forming, maintaining, influencing or destroying relationships among humans, other life forms and the environment” (Alexander and Stibbe 2014: 104). In this realm, language not only describes and reflects the world, but also constructs reality, addressing how language plays its role within the ecosystem (Halliday 1990; Stibbe 2015). Under the Hallidayan mode, EDA, one of the most frequently applied research methods, is essentially defined as an ecology-oriented analysis of discourse from the perspective of linguistics based on a certain ecosophy (He 2021: 24–25). According to Stibbe (2015: 24–33), discourses can be categorized into three types: beneficial, ambivalent, and destructive discourses, and the final objective of EDA is to promote beneficial discourse, improve ambivalent discourse, and resist destructive discourse in order to construct a healthy and harmonious ecological system (Stibbe 2015: 33). Unlike other paradigms of discourse studies (cf. CDA, positive discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis), EDA provides a novel

research perspective for discourse studies by broadening the research scopes from texts focused on the topics of “human and nature” to those involving the topics of “human and society”, and ultimately is intended to promote sound development of the ecosystem (He and Wei 2017, 2018).

Previous studies of EDA have generally been restricted to the analysis of discourse on environmental and ecological issues (Alexander 2018; Bednarek and Caple 2010; Poole 2016; Zhang and He 2020). However, what is worth noting is the difference between “the ecological analysis of discourse” and “the analysis of ecological discourse” (Alexander and Stibbe 2014: 110). According to Alexander and Stibbe (2014: 110), the scope of EDA should be broadened from ecological discourses (e.g. environmental discourse) to all kinds of discourses that have the potential to encourage people to show damaging or preservative behaviors toward ecological systems. Recently, sensitively recognizing the status of the social ecosystem in the greater ecological system, an increasing number of researchers have directed their interest toward discourses of this realm of EDA regarding the relations among individuals, societies, and countries (He and Wei 2018; Poole and Spangler 2020; Wei 2021; Xue and Xu 2021).

Based on the considerations above, EDA could help researchers uncover the underlying ecological values entrenched in discourses and achieve ecological goals in ecosystems. Consequently, this research adopts an EDA approach to investigate news reports on the trade war to reveal the ecological properties of the British and Russian media from an ecolinguistic perspective.

3 Research design

3.1 Data collection

The data to be analyzed are drawn from the Factiva corpus, which contains approximately ten billion words of data from web-based newspapers and magazines from 2010 to the present; thus, it is an ideal tool for collecting news reports. The English news reports concerning the Sino-US trade war are limited to two sources: *The Times* (TT) of Britain and *Sputnik News Agency* (SNA) of Russia. TT, founded in 1785 and based in London, is one of the major daily newspapers in the UK and plays an important role in politics and international relations. SNA is a newly developed yet globally influential digital news portal in Russia, serving the significant functions of external publicity and presenting multifaceted images of the world. The two sources of newspapers were selected for investigation because they are both broadsheets instead of tabloids and are representatives of the press

industry in their own countries; as mainstream media, they could thus sufficiently reflect the ecological values of their countries.

Taking *trade war*, *trade conflict*, *trade dispute*, and *trade friction* as keywords, we searched and filtered news reports that were published in the four phases of the Sino-US trade war, including the starting stage, the escalation stage, the negotiation stage, and the restarting stage, spanning from March 2018 to May 2019 (Kwan 2019; Wang and Ge 2019). To be exact, the publishing dates of the news texts are supposed to be around the dates of four major events: the starting stage was around the date of the publication of “Section 301 of the Trade Act” on March 23, 2018, when US President Trump signed a memorandum on China’s intellectual property practices and extra tariffs on Chinese imports; the conflict stage was from September 24, 2018, the initial effective date for the US’s list of items with an additional duty rate of 10% ad valorem (later increased to 25%), with an approximate US\$200 billion annual trade value; the negotiation stage began on December 1, 2018, when a meeting between US President Trump and Chinese President Xi brought about a reconciliation that saw the US extend to China a 90-day reprieve from additional import tariffs; and the restarting stage commenced on May 5, 2019, when the US announced a plan to raise the additional tariff on US\$200 billion worth of Chinese goods from 10 to 25 percent. Accordingly, more than a thousand pieces of news are located in the four stages of each medium. The first two news reports of the highest relevance provided by the corpus were selected at each stage in the two news portals. Consequently, 16 news reports in total are obtained. A brief summary of the two datasets is provided in Table 1, which lists the word counts of the news texts in each stage.

Table 1: Summary of the two datasets.

Dataset	Stages	Number of news texts	Number of words	Total
SNA	Starting	2	2,005	6,636
	Escalation	2	1,082	
	Negotiation	2	2,059	
	Restarting	2	1,490	
TT	Starting	2	1,899	6,301
	Escalation	2	1,299	
	Negotiation	2	1,383	
	Restarting	2	1,720	

3.2 Ecosophy: “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”

To disclose the effect of language use on the ecosystem, the guidance of ecosophy is important in EDA. Ecosophy, short for ecological philosophy, has a critical value for ecolinguistics and is the criterion for the judgment of the ecological orientation of the world language system and discourse (He and Wei 2018).

The ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence” is constructed by drawing on insights from Chinese traditional cultures and philosophies, including Confucianism, Daoism, and Mohism, as well as modern Chinese diplomatic concepts (He and Wei 2018: 30). In general, this ecosophy is characterized by a good operative mechanism in the ecosystem (He and Liu 2020). When applied in discourses about natural and social ecology to guide EDA, it could mirror the ideal relations among humans, nature, and society.

Hence, this study takes the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence” as the guideline of the EDA of news reports about the Sino-US trade war. Under the circumstances of the conflict international ecosystem, “diversity” indicates that a piece of news should cover various aspects of an event and quote different sources to avoid the probability of overgeneralization and incompleteness. “Harmony” requires that the news texts play a positive role in maintaining sustainability and stability among different ecological elements in the international ecosystem. Therefore, the media are supposed to call for a truce between the US and China instead of supporting the trade war in the process of reporting. “Interaction” expects an ecosystem to be dynamic, whereby the ecological elements should actively work together for a balanced ecosystem, which means the press should convey more information about the advantages of negotiation and corporation and the disadvantages of the trade war. “Co-existence” implies that the ecological elements should all peacefully live together on the three bases above, so the media should highlight the importance of coordination for harmoniously co-living in the international ecosystem.

3.3 Analytical framework: The logical system for EDA

Situated within the broader discipline of systemic functional linguistics (hereafter SFL), the logical system provides two functional modes of logical meaning: logico-semantic system and taxis system, the former of which is categorized into the basic expanding and projecting logico-semantic relationships between clauses, and the latter referring to the degree of dependency (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 438).

This study applies the ecological modification of the original logical system, that is, the logical system for EDA (He and Cheng 2021), to explore how ecological properties and values are revealed through an analysis of the logical resources in journalistic discourses. The logical system from an ecolinguistic perspective comprises two subsystems, each with its own sub-categories and options.

The taxis system for EDA, apart from the original categorization of coordination and embedding, is expanded with the taxis order, representative ways, and logico-semantic relations. Taxis order distinguishes the “marked” from the “unmarked” ones. The dependency can be implicitly represented or logical markers, such as binders and linkers, can be explicitly adopted. Logico-semantic relations are coordinated with the taxis system, thus being a probable influencing element during the analysis (He and Cheng 2021: 54). An eco-beneficial taxis could be coordination or embedding, which is in accordance with the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”, and the eco-beneficial sense could be stronger if the taxis is in the “marked” order or explicit representation. An eco-destructive taxis could be one that is contrary to this ecosophy, and similarly, the eco-destructive sense could be stronger under the same conditions. Finally, an eco-ambivalent taxis could be one that neither resonates with nor works against the ecosophy of this article.

The logico-semantic system is further subdivided into two dimensions: expansion and projection. First, the expansion system for EDA should combine expansion relations with the ecological expansion orientation and origination of discourse (He and Cheng 2021: 55). As for the expansion orientation, it could be realized by the positive or negative stance of speakers on ecological issues, relying on specific linguistic contexts. Expansion origination mainly concerns the benchmark of researchers when analyzing logico-semantic relations, and given the fact that the Sino-US trade war presents the characteristics of the social ecosystem, the origination should be either interest-based or righteousness-based (He and Ma 2020: 50). This article conducts an ecological and statistical analysis of the logical resources in terms of the criteria below: when reporters and news sources employ righteousness-based and positive expansive relations to appeal for negotiation as well as mutual respect for the multilateral trade system, it is “eco-beneficial” in being advantageous for the development of international ecosystem; when they use interest-based and negative expansive relations to advocate the benefits of trade war and trade protectionism, it is “eco-destructive” by doing harm to the stability of the international ecosystem; and when they resort to neither righteousness-based nor interest-based expansion relations, it is “eco-ambivalent” due to few explicit influences being generated.

The projection system for EDA combines the engagement system from an ecolinguistic perspective (He and Ma 2020) with three dimensions: projector role,

projecting marker, and projecting orientation (He and Cheng 2021: 57). In the projecting clause, projector roles should be classified into life or lifeless, human or non-human, individual or group, and physical or social participants, which are similar to the refined definition of participant roles in He and Wei (2017). Generally, social ecological discourse is encouraged to project from human groups and social participants. As for projecting markers, the different categories could mirror the individual stances of discourse producers and further expose their hidden ecological values. According to the engagement system (Martin and White 2005), there are five types of projecting markers, including three ways of “expanding”: to “entertain”, “acknowledge”, or “distance” a position opens up the dialogical space for alternative voices being advanced, and two ways of “contracting”: to “pronounce” or “endorse” a position narrows the dialogical space or external voice. In the projected clause, the projection orientation should be interest-based or righteousness-based, given the social attributes of the news reports concerning the trade war. This article conducts an ecological and statistical analysis of logical resources according to the following criteria: when reporters and news sources employ righteousness-based projecting relations, it is beneficial for the development of the international ecosystem, thus being “eco-beneficial” projections; when they use interest-based projecting relations, it is detrimental to the stability of the international ecosystem, thus being “eco-destructive” projections; and when they resort to neither righteousness-based nor interest-based projecting relations, it is “eco-ambivalent” with ecologically ignorable effects.

This study aims to uncover the ecological values of the two different media and, ultimately, to promote the sound development of the international ecosystem. To achieve this purpose, this study, drawing on the ecological logical system as an analytical framework, conducts an EDA of the logical resources in news coverage about the trade war by the two national media. This research quantitatively analyzes the distribution of the frequencies and percentages of logical resources in news reports. Based on the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”, the study also qualitatively analyzes the ecological attributes of the two media, in which ecological property tagging is completed manually and exhaustively with the symbols of logical resources in terms of the logical system for EDA.¹ It also longitudinally investigates their

¹ Within the theory of SFL, in the taxis system, a coordinate clause is represented by the symbol “|||...|||”; a simple clause, by the symbol “||...||”, and the relationship between the clauses is coordination; and an embedded clause by the symbol “[|...|]”, whereby the embedded clause is embedded into the dominant clause. Binders are tagged in italics, and linkers in bold. In projection relations, projection markers are underlined.

ecological variance in terms of the various stages of the trade war. Several instances are exemplified to clarify the EDA of logical resources in the discourse.

4 Analysis and results

This study carefully analyzes news discourses concerning the trade war in TT and SNA under the framework of the logical system for EDA. The four categories of logico-semantic relations are presented in the two datasets. The analytical results are specifically concluded in the following section, including the similarities and differences in the logical resources and ecological properties.

4.1 Analysis of expansion relations

After a careful examination of the ecological properties of the TT and SNA, the distributions of the three types of expansion relations are shown in Table 2.

As Table 2 shows, the two media have divergent preferences for the three types of ecological properties in the expansion relations. In both datasets, elaboration relations make up the largest share among the three relations, slightly larger in the British news (47%) than the Russian (41%). The percentage of extension relations in the Russian dataset (29%) is also noticeably almost the same as in the British dataset (28%). There are numerous cases where enhancement relations are employed by Russian journalists (30%), whereas those in SNA (25%) are minimally distributed. Overall, the eco-ambivalent logical resources account for the largest proportion in both datasets, to some extent, corroborating the objectivity of the press industry. However, it is also noteworthy that the eco-destructive attribute in the British dataset (31%) is almost three times that in the Russian dataset (13%), whereas the eco-beneficial attribute in SNA (24%) is much greater than that in TT (18%). The analytical results give a rough picture that the eco-beneficial feature in SNA is prominent in employing clarification relation to elaborate the detrimental effects of the trade war launched by the US government, and addition relation to express China's will of mutual talks and negotiation, but it also tends to employ condition relation to suppose a negative future orientation in the trade war. However, the eco-destructive attribute in TT is salient in employing clarification relation to demonstrate that the UK could be exempt from punitive tariffs as an American ally. TT also often applies causal relation to justify the US government starting the trade war in order to protect its national security, undermined by China's violations of the trading order of the global market.

Table 2: Ecological property distribution of expansion relations in TT and SNA.

Expansion relations	TT			SNA				
	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total
Elaboration	28/8%	99/27%	42/12%	169/47%	25/8%	95/30%	11/3%	131/41%
Extension	17/5%	53/15%	24/8%	97/28%	34/11%	51/16%	6/2%	91/29%
Enhancement	20/5%	34/9%	32/11%	95/25%	17/5%	56/17%	24/8%	97/30%
Total	65/18%	186/51%	98/31%	361/100%	76/24%	202/63%	41/13%	319/100%

As for the expansion origination, there are 281 (88%) and 245 (68%) instances of righteousness-based origination, respectively, in the Russian and British datasets. In contrast, interest-based origination in SNA is marginally distributed at 12%, which is much less than that in TT (32%). As for the expansion orientation, the expansion relations are largely positive-oriented (76%, 242 times), and only negative-oriented in 24% (31 times) in the Russian dataset, where the distributions are similar to those in the British dataset (70% for positive and 30% for negative). This finding suggests that Russian journalists are more inclined to report the trade war positively than their British peers.

On this basis, from the angle of the taxis system for EDA, the clauses are mostly in embedding, and only a small part of them are in coordination in both Russian (85 and 15%) and British (88 and 12%, respectively) datasets. The two types of representative manners are approximately equally applied in SNA and TT. The taxis orders are also overwhelmingly “unmarked” in the two datasets, and the few times of “marked” taxis order are worked to level up the potential of the original ecological property.

The following section more specifically analyzes the ecological properties of the three types of expansion relations in TT and SNA. Table 3 illustrates the frequencies of the ecological properties of the elaboration relations in the two datasets.

In the sub-types of elaboration relations, clarification accounts for a large majority in both British and Russian media (98.2 and 99%, respectively), whereas exposition occurs rarely distributed in TT (1.8%), and exemplification rarely in SNA (1%). Similarly, the eco-ambivalent attribute makes up about two-thirds of the British dataset (59.6%) and the Russian (73%), being employed to clarify the meanings in a relatively neutral manner. The percentage of the eco-beneficial attribute in the British dataset (16.6%) is approximately equal to that in the Russian dataset (19%), while that of the eco-destructive attribute in the former (24.8%) is triple that in the latter (8%). Specifically, the clarification relation accounts for the absolute majority of elaboration relations in the two datasets. In other words, few journalistic practitioners tend to resort to exposition and exemplification relations. This indicates that they are more inclined to clarify the primary clause by backing it up with illustrations rather than restating it from another point of view or citing some examples. The exposition is frequently realized by the linkers “in other words” and “that is to say” in TT, and the clarification by relative clauses with the binders like “which”, “that”, and “who” in both datasets.

British journalists largely use a non-defining relative clause to specify the primary clause or a particular subset of it that bears further characterization and explanatory remarks. The clarification relation is usually employed in a neutral

Table 3: Ecological property distribution of elaboration relations in TT and SNA.

Elaboration relations	TT				SNA			
	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total
Exposition	1/0.6%	1/0.6%	1/0.6%	3/1.8%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%
Exemplification	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	1/1%	0/0%	1/1%
Clarification	27/16%	98/58%	41/24.2%	166/98.2%	25/19%	94/72%	11/8%	130/99%
Total	28/16.6%	99/59.6%	42/24.8%	169/100%	25/19%	95/73%	11/8%	131/100%

way that introduces the specific tariff moves in an eco-destructive manner to highlight the antagonistic relationships of the two sides, as shown in Example 1:

- (1) || The danger is [*that* Mr Trump’s brinkmanship will instead strengthen the hand of China’s own economic nationalists]], [*who* want to maintain the present state-led economy]].|| (“Trump’s brinkmanship is either a masterstroke or a reckless bluff”, TT, May 9, 2019)

From the perspective of the logical system, this example is an elaborating embedded simple clause. The two embedded clauses explicitly represent the relation of clarification, respectively, identifying what the discourse producer believes is the real peril and specifying the identity of “China’s own economic nationalists”. The employment of the replative adverb “instead” implies the contradiction to the expectation of the journalist, so the relational process regards as “danger” one of the undesirable consequences of this trade war, namely, “strengthen the hand of China’s own economic nationalists”, though acknowledging the irrational political strategies of Trump administration as “brinkmanship”. The following relative clause may help to expound the expansion origination of the reporter that the advocates of China’s “present state-led economy” run counter to the original scheme of launching the trade war and the essential benefits to the US and Britain. It is tacit that the journalist subconsciously puts the UK in line with the US, and expresses the economic development of the opposite side against their will, which could also be seen in the next sentence in the news that “it is overwhelmingly in Britain’s interest that Mr. Trump wins his trade war”. Seen through an ecological lens, the keywords in this instance indicate the negative orientation of the reporter due to invisibly reinforcing the antagonistic relations between the two countries, and the clarification relations originate from the interest-based value, thus being incompatible with the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”. Hence, it can be judged as an eco-destructive expansion.

In the Russian dataset, the only instance of exemplification is realized by “such as” to cite the concrete measures that Beijing adopted to make the diplomatic relation with Washington back on track. There almost exclusively exists the embedded clarification elaboration, since the Russian journalists adopt this discursive strategy to tactfully background evaluative comment on or interpretation of some respect of the primary clause concerning the trade war:

- (2) || “It’s unacceptable [*that* these products subsequently enter the US market]] [**and** disadvantage scrupulous American companies and their workers [*who* play by the rules]]].”|| (“RPT: REVIEW – Trump Anti-China Tariffs Spark Fears of Trade War, Invite Countermeasures”, SNA, March 23, 2018)

Example 2 is a quotation by DiMicco, chairman of Coalition for a Prosperous America, who expresses dissatisfaction that “Chinese companies have hacked and stolen proprietary US technologies”. From the view of the logical system, the dominant clause points out that there is something “unacceptable”, and the embedding clause explicitly elaborates his discontent, which is realized by a co-ordinated clause with additional extension relation. In the embedded clause, the initiating clause is a non-embedded simple clause that depicts a phenomenon in which Chinese technological products are exported into the US, and the continuing clause is an embedded simple clause with clarification relation. From an ecolinguistic perspective, the speaker asserts that Chinese technological goods, which are claimed to be the illegitimate outcome of China’s intellectual property theft from the US, dim American products by blunting their competitive advantages and impairing the interests of their conscientious workers. With the negative expansion orientation of identifying keywords like “unacceptable”, “disadvantage scrupulous American [...] play by the rules”, it could be seen that there appears a hidden contrast and contradiction between the Chinese companies, as well as its employees and products, and their American counterparts, which constructs an adversarial relationship between the two parties. Arbitrary and reckless assertions could easily stimulate social conflicts not only among countries and corporations but also at the civic level. Hence, it is difficult to find that the logical relation of the discourse producer originates from interest-based value, thus being opposed to the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”, so this instance presents an eco-destructive elaboration.

Extension is another common type of expansion relation for journalists to construct the trade war. Table 4 indicates that in extension, with only a few cases of “variation” and “alternation”, “addition” is primarily employed in 69% in TT and 71% in SNA, and “continuation” is the next frequently used, respectively accounting for 26 and 21% in the two datasets. As for the ecological properties in the extension relations, eco-ambivalent attribute accounts for the largest share in the British and Russian datasets (55 and 56%, respectively). The main distinction is that the eco-beneficial attribute in the former (17%) is less than half that in the latter (37%), and the eco-destructive attribute in the British media (28%) is four times greater than that in the Russian media (7%). This suggests that in trade war communication, extension relations in TT are less likely to express eco-beneficial values, whereas SNA adds less eco-destructive but more eco-beneficial information concerning the trade frictions. The principal markers of extending relations are the linkers “and”, “not only [...] but also [...]”, the negative addition “neither [...] nor”, and the binders “before”, “after”, “as well as”, etc.

The British journalists tend to use addition relation to depict the current situation of the trade war and its influence on the British economy, and continuation

Table 4: Ecological property distribution of extension relations in TT and SNA.

Extension relations	TT				SNA			
	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total
Addition	12/12%	36/37%	19/20%	67/69%	33/36%	26/28%	6/7%	65/71%
Variation	1/1%	2/2%	2/2%	5/5%	0/0%	6/7%	0/0%	6/7%
Alternation	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%	1/1%	0/0%	1/1%
Continuation	4/4%	15/16%	6/6%	25/26%	1/1%	18/20%	0/0%	19/21%
Total	17/17%	53/55%	27/28%	97/100%	34/37%	51/56%	6/7%	91/100%

relation to introduce big moments and events. Compared with their Russian peers, British journalists more frequently analyze the effects of this conflict on their own country, and less frequently the inappropriateness of either side in the process. Thus, this type of relationship could directly relay to the common people a negative message in opposition to easing international tensions, as Example 3 demonstrates:

- (3) ||| In less than two years, President Trump has unleashed a trade war with China, || launched economic attacks on some of America's closest allies, || pushed the international rules-based system to the brink || **and** pulled his country towards the exit.||| ("Trump at trade crossroads in Buenos Aires", TT, December 1, 2018)

This example is in the coordinated relation of the addition extension, composed of three independent dominant clauses. The first two clauses are implicitly extended with no logical markers, while the last one adopts the linker "and" to explicitly add new information. Every clause is expanded in chronological order. That is to say, the three events in the clauses are presented in the progressive process of this trade war, and the subsequent behavior even exerted a more detrimental influence within a wider range than the previous one. From an ecolinguistic angle, the content of extension, either waging "a trade war with China", undermining the international trade system, or implementing the policies of brinkmanship and protectionism, is opposed to the present mainstream opinions on the global economy, namely the common call for cooperation and mutual benefits. Hence, the three aspects above implicate the journalist's critical attitude toward the measures of the US government, presenting a positive expansion orientation. However, the criticism originates from the US having "launched economic attacks on some of America's closest allies", which obviously includes Britain itself. As a whole, therefore, the extension relation shows no clear attitude toward the ecosophy of "Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence". Such kind of eco-ambivalent discourse should be consciously improved.

In some Russian news coverage, the continuation relation is frequently seen in the description of the reaction of one side to the other's tariff move. The reporters tend to employ more addition relations to extend the justification of China's ensuing countermeasures and add some potential economic losses as well as threats to the world posed by US declaration of the trade war. In most cases, this kind of portrayal of China's victimization is realized by additive relations, including both implicit representations with no conjunctions and explicit adoption of logical markers, as Example 4 shows.

- (4) || China argued [[*that* the US trade policy was self-defeating]] [[**and** would harm the interests of US consumers, companies, and financial markets, [[*as well as* jeopardize international trade order and world economic stability]]]].||
 (“RPT: REVIEW – Trump Anti-China Tariffs Spark Fears of Trade War, Invite Countermeasures”, SNA, March 23, 2018)

This instance is an embedded simple clause that reports the locution of a Chinese embassy. In the projected part, the three clauses are in the relation of additional extension, with the first two in coordination by adopting the linker “and”, and the last two in embedding by using the binder “as well as”. The starting clause states the view of China as to the trade policy newly implemented by the US government; namely, it would not solve any problems among the two economies or derive a mutually satisfactory result, but rather have an opposite effect of leading to more unpredicted difficulties. Then, the continuing dominant clause adds that in the long run, the hasty tariff punishment would not only damage the interests of China, but more importantly, adversely affect the US from bottom to top. From the global perspective, the last embedding clause extends that trade protectionism and unilateralism would cause severe damage to the order of the world economy. It is apparent that the whole proposition of the Chinese mission is to transfer the message of peaceful communication with regard to trade negotiation details by analyzing the drawbacks of this unreasonable move, as well as denouncing the Trump administration for violating WTO rules, thus constructing a responsible national image of a defender of the free trade system. From the angle of ecolinguistics, the positive expansion orientation is invoked by the negative appreciation of the wrongful trade practices, including the words like “self-defeating”, “harm”, and “jeopardize international trade order [...]”. The discourse producer warns of three probable disastrous consequences, ranging from individuals and companies to the state, and finally to the world, undermining the legitimacy of waging the trade war and justifying China’s following reactions. This implies that the additional extension reiterates the identity of the US as a rule-breaker and partner-betrayer, coupled with the threat to the global economic equilibrium and, thus, originates from the righteousness-based value. Consequently, it is in concordance with the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence” and is categorized as eco-beneficial expansion. On this basis, as seen from the taxis system for EDA, the explicit employment of logical markers strengthens the original eco-beneficial property of the additional extension, which is advantageous for international communication.

The enhancement relation is also frequently employed in the two datasets. As Table 5 shows, the six types of enhancement relations are more or less applied in the selected news discourses. The fair reliance on purpose (15 and 29% in TT and

Table 5: Ecological property distribution of enhancement relations in TT and SNA.

Enhancement relations	TT				SNA			
	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total
Temporal	2/2%	4/4%	5/5%	11/11%	2/2%	5/5%	0/0%	7/7%
Adversative	4/4%	11/12%	6/6%	21/22%	4/4%	10/11%	4/4%	18/19%
Manner	4/4%	3/3%	0/0%	7/7%	2/2%	7/7%	1/1%	10/10%
Causal	4/4%	9/10%	10/11%	23/25%	4/5%	11/11%	5/5%	20/21%
Conditional	2/2%	3/3%	14/15%	19/20%	1/1%	5/5%	8/8%	14/14%
Purpose	4/4%	4/4%	6/6%	14/15%	4/4%	18/19%	6/6%	28/29%
Total	20/20%	34/34%	41/44%	95/100%	17/18%	56/58%	24/24%	97/100%

SNA), adversative (22 and 19%), causal (25 and 21%), and conditional (20 and 14%) relations stands in contrast to that on manner (7 and 10%) and temporal (11 and 7%, respectively) relations. In the British dataset, the proportion of eco-destructive attributes is 44%, which is slightly higher than its elaboration and extension relations. In the Russian dataset, the eco-ambivalent property accounts for the majority (58%) of enhancement relations, whereas the eco-beneficial attributes account for the least (18%), which is almost equal to that of the British one (20%). It can be seen that among the three types of expansion relations, both British and Russian journalists tend to transmit eco-destructive values by enhancing the information. That is to say, eco-destructive logical resources, especially in TT, are most easily located in enhancement relations. The most common logical markers are the linkers “but”, “so”, and the binders “while”, “because”, “for”, “since”, “as”, “if”, “unless”, etc.

British journalists usually give assertive statements to explicitly evaluate the possible benefits and risks of the American tariff increase for the US, coupled with the UK itself. They tend to employ more causal relation to expound the reasons for waging the trade war and consequences of aggravating the tariff punishment, and adversative relation to put forward concessive circumstances where the trade dispute fails to work out as expected, through which a negative image of China and its officials is constructed. In addition, conditional relation is applied to posit a different situation and the potential orientation of the trade conflict. Most text sentences are realized by a combination of various enhancing logical markers, as demonstrated by the following example:

- (5) ||| Democrats may originally have attacked Mr. Trump [*for* launching his trade war with China]], || **but** the president is sure to be attacked [*if* he agrees any deal [*that* allows Beijing off the hook]].||| (“Trump’s brinkmanship is either a masterstroke or a reckless bluff”, TT, May 9, 2019)

From the angle of the logical system, this coordinated clause is enhanced by the adoption of the adversative linker “but”, in which the initiating clause is an embedded simple clause with causal enhancement relation, and the continuing clause is also an embedded simple clause with conditional enhancement relation. While the primary clause indicates that it is possible that at the beginning of the trade war, Democrats had already criticized the Republican leader, President Trump, for bold trade practices, the secondary clause further underlines that the chance is high that he would be attacked by the opposition party if he lost power in this big game with China. Through an ecological lens, the preceding clause (i.e. “attacked”, “launching his trade war”) seems to be equipped with positive expanding orientation condemning the illegality of starting the trade war, yet with the two clauses in adversative relation, the following clause (i.e. “sure to be

attacked”, “allows Beijing off the hook”) determines the orientation of this instance as a whole as negative. The conditional embedding clause presupposes a situation where Trump lets China easily get out of its difficult position; that is to say, the trade war does not end, as the news claims, with China’s subsidy reduction, termination of forced technology transfers and cybertheft, and the removal of protectionist tariffs and regulations. This kind of trade bullying pursues the maximization of their own benefits at the expense of disregarding the principles of free trade and jeopardizing the multilateral trading system. Apparently, the logico-semantic relations originate from interest-based value and go against the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”. Since the final position generally reflects greater functional importance in coordinate relations (Thompson 2014), the secondary clause semantically has greater weight with the eco-destructive expansion being salient. Meanwhile, the employment of three strong logical markers explicitly enhances the original ecological property and transfers negative ecological value, which is detrimental to the development of the international ecosystem.

In contrast to their British peers, Russian journalistic practitioners choose to highlight the profile of the US as a protagonist of trade bullying, protectionism, and unilateralism. By expanding the dominant clause, they usually employ purpose relation to demonstrate the real aims of the US as being to raise tariffs and those of China to counterattack. Russian journalists mainly set up an assumption and then deduce the correspondent consequence, explicitly involve a shift in concession to express the real semantic importance, or implicitly reveal the purposes of the US practices with no overt indication of enhancement, as exemplified by Example 6.

- (6) ||| Moreover, the US presidential election is about to enter a new cycle, || **so** he is seeking [[to achieve his goals in negotiations with China]].||| (“Economic Spat Between US, China Could Move Into Political Sphere – Analysts”, SNA, May 7, 2019)

In Example 6, the coordinate clauses are in the causal enhancement relation that attempts to explain why President Trump is determined to break down trade cooperation and apply the “maximum pressure” tactics. The initiating clause is a non-embedded simple clause, introducing the temporal backdrop as well as the political motivation of Trump’s decision to restart the war, and the continuing clause is an embedded simple clause with an infinitive structure to implicitly express the purpose enhancement relation. Therefore, the reasons why Trump adjusted his trade strategies on China, the discourse producer believes, are that the negotiation meetings failed to meet his expectations on the agreement and that he hopes to gain the most from the talks, which could also be used as an advantage in

the new round of his presidential election. In essence, this kind of capricious practice implies that Trump retains his nature as a shrewd businessman in the political sphere, given the fact that the reconciliation between Washington and Beijing became a bargaining chip for his game. The discourse indicates a negative expansion orientation of caring only for oneself while turning one's back on others, so the expansion origination is unquestionably interest-based. Selfish nationalism and individualism neglect the order and rules of the international system, thus being contrary to the ecosophy of "Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence". Hence, this example provides an eco-destructive enhancement relation.

4.2 Analysis of projection relations

Projection relations are tremendously abundant in journalistic discourses, being used to represent non-direct experience, namely, to attribute statements to sources in news reporting. As for the projecting mode, "report" (79%) is more frequently used in the Russian dataset than "quote" (21%), which is also the case in the British dataset (83 and 17%, respectively). It could be seen that reporting is a more regular approach to writing news reports in mainstream broadsheets. As for the speech function of projection, the two media prioritize the type of "proposition", with "statement" accounting for the majority; in contrast, there are only a few occurrences of "proposal" in both datasets. As for the projection level, the majority of the two datasets are composed of "locution" instead of "idea". Compared with TT, to be specific, SNA adopts a higher proportion of "idea", suggesting that it not only attaches importance to the actualized words of speakers, like its British counterparts, but also pays attention to the content of non-actualized thinking of news sources. Also, it is noteworthy that there is no instance of "fact" projection at all in the Russian dataset, which is a hidden reporting technique for journalists to express authorial voice. This finding indicates that SNA is less likely to show its personal opinions about the trade war, which supports the point that it is inclined to play the role of observer in the whole process.

By attributing the information to the external voices in news reports of the trade war, the British journalists tend to marginalize the knowledge about the trade conflicts from the projector of "human group", yet to prioritize that from the projector of "human individual", especially from the international voices. SNA is open to global voices and opinions regarding the trade frictions rather than limiting itself to the sources of the two major players. It not only introduces the authoritative voices of the government, but also considers the reportage of their counterparts. This finding indicates that projector roles are represented differently according to the various social cultural contexts.

The choice of projecting marker is not simply concerned with the indication of projecting level or function, but more importantly, it signals the reporter's dialogic positioning with regard to the news sources being advanced in journalistic discourses (Huan 2015: 16). The following table presents an overview of the ecological property distribution of the projection markers in the two datasets.

As shown in Table 6, the percentage of “expand” projection markers in both TT (87%) and SNA (86%) far outstrips that of “contract” markers (respectively, 13 and 14%), implying that the reported voices are more open to possible dialogic alternatives in the two media. Under the sub-category of “expand”, chances are a little bit higher than Russian journalists “entertain” other dialogic alternatives (17%) in reporting the trade war than their British peers in this respect (9%), in order to construe a heteroglossic backdrop for the texts via explicitly grounding the projection in the contingent subjectivity of the speaker (Martin and White 2005: 105). In the two datasets, the predominant “acknowledge” markers both amount to 66%. British journalists are more inclined to adopt “distance” (13%) projection markers than are Russian journalists (3%). In contrast, neither British nor Russian reporters prefer to close down the communicative space, because frequent employment of “contract” markers could simply cause an overt authorial intrusion into a discourse, thus undermining their professional norms. Specifically, in the case of “pronouncing” other voices, the cited voices in the Russian dataset (7%) are slightly more negotiable than those in the British one (6%), while the two seldom favor direct intervention of construing external voices as undeniable or correct by using “endorse” markers (7%). Hence, TT is more likely to expand the dialogic space for alternative positions than SNA; that is to say, the Russian media may even more often contract the interactive space than the British media by virtue of providing a preferable voice over others.

The “expand” projection relation accounts for the overwhelming majority in the two media. TT generally adopts “acknowledge” projection markers, sometimes “distance”, and “entertain” the least. In the British dataset, “acknowledge” projection is usually found in the speeches of news sources with few authorial sentiments, and “distance” projection is often seen in the US's threatening proposals and claims. Similarly, the Russian press predominantly adopts “acknowledge” projection markers, though it occasionally resorts to “entertain” and “distance” as well. The “expand” projection markers are usually “said”, “told”, “claimed”, “warned”, “threatened”, “believe”, and “pledged”. The following illustrates how external voices are mediated by channel information concerning the trade war, as shown in Example 7.

- (7) ||| Mr Trump told reporters on Air Force One [*that it was “an incredible deal”*] || **and** claimed [*it would see China [*“opening up”*] [**and** “getting rid of tariffs”*]] ||. ||| (“Trump agrees ceasefire in trade war with China”, TT, December 3, 2018)

Table 6: Ecological property distribution of projecting markers in TT and SNA.

Projecting marker	TT				SNA			
	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total	Eco-beneficial	Eco-ambivalent	Eco-destructive	Total
Entertain	4/3%	5/3%	4/3%	13/9%	7/4%	20/12%	2/1%	29/17%
Acknowledge	22/15%	53/36%	22/15%	97/66%	27/17%	80/48%	2/1%	109/66%
Distance	9/6%	7/5%	2/1%	18/13%	3/2%	1/1%	0/0%	4/3%
Pronounce	5/3%	1/1%	3/2%	9/6%	10/6%	1/1%	0/0%	11/7%
Endorse	2/1%	4/3%	5/3%	11/7%	3/2%	7/4%	2/1%	12/7%
Expand	35/24%	65/44%	28/19%	128/87%	37/23%	101/61%	4/2%	142/86%
Contract	7/4%	5/4%	8/5%	20/13%	13/8%	8/5%	2/1%	23/14%
Total	42/28%	70/48%	36/24%	148/100%	50/31%	109/66%	6/3%	165/100%

Example 7 is coordinated by two embedded simple clauses with projection relations, which is backgrounded in the meeting between US President Trump and Chinese President Xi at the G20 summit. The first projection clause partially quotes the locution of the former, and the second one also reports his proposition of trade talks between Washington and Beijing. From an ecolinguistic perspective, in the projecting clause, the projector is always the top leader of the US, President Trump. Though its supreme identity enhances the authority of the statement, it is an individual human participant, which is not ecological enough in a social ecosystem discourse. The projecting verbs, “told” and “claimed”, are both seen as “expanding” attributions to open up dialogic space for alternative positions, which are respectively categorized as “acknowledge” and “distance” markers. The reason is that the former indicates no overt stance of the journalist on what is being reported, thus leaving it open to context, while the latter detaches the authorial voice from the responsibility for the citation, thus widening the space for dialogic alternatives (Martin and White 2005). This suggests that although the “acknowledge” projection marker seems to express a disinterested attitude toward Trump’s high praise of the trade negotiation, the discourse producer obviously declines to approach the external proposition that China would expand import and lower tariff barriers just after their talks. That is because the “distance” marker betrays a certain cynicism of the reporter about the possibility of the truce in the trade war, indicating the judgment of unpromising future orientation. Hence, this instance does not conform to the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”. It displays an eco-destructive projection relation that should be guided correctly. Analyzed from the taxis system, the projection includes the mixture of both reporting and quoting (i.e. “an incredible deal”, “opening up”, and “getting rid of tariffs”), thus being free indirect speech. This sort of marked taxis order increases the degree of the original eco-destructive property.

The “contract” projection relation only accounts for a small fraction of the total in the two media. Among the equally rare cases of “pronounce” and “endorse”, the British journalists make their own role salient and subjective to imply some possible opposed viewpoints. In the Russian dataset, the reporters seem to show less reluctance to embrace “contract” formulations. They are inclined to employ “endorse” projection when interpreting the two sides’ tariff moves, and apply “pronounce” projection when the officials insistently state a demand. The common “contract” projection markers are “agreed”, “insisted”, “knew”, “concluded”, “pointed out”, “stressed”, and “noted”. Journalists tend to raise their persuasive power in reporting the details from the authorities and corporate representatives, as well as exposing their opinions and stances on the trade war, as observed in Example 8.

- (8) || He noted [[*that* the Chinese side hopes for joint efforts with the American side [[to move towards each other on the basis of mutual respect]], [[to seek]] [[**and** reach an agreement [[*that* meets the interests of mutual benefit and the common good]]]]].|| (“Economic Spat Between US, China Could Move Into Political Sphere – Analysts”, SNA, May 7, 2019)

From the perspective of the logical system, this embedded simple clause contains projection relations. In the dominant clause, the projector “He” refers to the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng, a high-level official. The projection marker “noted” is categorized into dialogistically contractive endorsement, because it excludes any alternatives and construes the proposition of the external source as warrantable and valid. The projected clause is also an embedded simple clause with projection relation, in which the reporting verb “hopes” is within the subcategory of acknowledging expansion, revealing the mental proposal of the desiderator. The proposal comprises three coordinated infinitive clauses: the first suggests that the US should step forward together with China to promote the negotiation for truce with respect; the second is with regard to the pursuit of peaceful communication; and the last is an embedded simple clause that expresses China’s good vision of agreeing with a deal that satisfies the benefits of the two parties. Ecologically speaking, the projected content is positively oriented which could be told from the keywords including “mutual respect”, and “reach as agreement [...] mutual benefit and the common good”. Distinct from the administrative principles of the US, China spares no effort to break the predicament of a zero-sum game and counter the “Thucydides’ trap” all the time, which corresponds to the general trend of global development. The discourse is a hint of China’s appeal for establishing the path to a “community of a shared future for mankind”, thus reflecting righteousness-based value. The projection relation also discloses that the author is in line with the official’s idea that China actively advocates win-win cooperation. Therefore, this instance is consistent with the ecosophy of “Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence”. On this premise, the projector is the group human participant, “the Chinese side”, increasing the degree of the original eco-beneficial characteristics, so this kind of text should be encouraged to transmit harmonious information.

4.3 Ecological variances of the two media

Based on the qualitative findings stated above, at the micro-level, every type of logico-semantic relations is employed in the two datasets. Through the EDA of various instances, it was found that their ecological values were hidden between

the lines. At the macro level, the ecological attributes of both British and Russian media are not constant over time, but vary during the dynamic process of the trade war. Table 7 summarizes the distribution of the total frequencies and normalized percentages of the three types of ecological properties, and Figures 1 and 2 show

Table 7: Distribution of ecological properties in the four stages in TT and SNA.

Stages	Eco-beneficial		Eco-ambivalent		Eco-destructive	
	TT	SNA	TT	SNA	TT	SNA
Starting stage	0.9%	2.04%	3.6%	4.99%	2.3%	1.25%
Escalation stage	2.7%	1.57%	4.7%	6.84%	1.1%	0.92%
Negotiation stage	2.0%	2.91%	3.5%	4.71%	2.9%	0.10%
Restarting stage	1.6%	2.68%	4.5%	4.77%	2.8%	0.67%

Figure 1: Ecological variance of TT.

Figure 2: Ecological variance of SNA.

the trend of those percentages in line charts to show their variance in the four different stages of the trade war.

As the table and figures above show, in the news reports regarding the trade war, the British media experienced a remarkable ecological shift; however, the Russian media underwent a relatively flat ecological variance. It is evident from the line charts that the rates of the eco-ambivalent property of both datasets remain the highest in the four stages, but this does not mean that they are ecologically neutral in the trade war. In this study, the other two sorts of properties are in the limelight. In the initial period, TT presents a fair reliance on the eco-destructive attribute (2.3%), but the eco-beneficial attribute is minimally distributed at around 1%. SNA is more likely to present the eco-beneficial attribute (2%) than the eco-destructive attribute (1.25%). As the situation of the trade war deteriorated on the international stage, the ecological property of the British press fluctuates significantly: it tends to employ more eco-beneficial properties (2.7%) and fewer eco-destructive attributes (1.1%). In the Russian dataset, the proportions of eco-beneficial and eco-destructive properties were 1.6 and 0.9%, respectively. When the two major parties came to an agreement on a short-term truce, the British dataset showed a second apparent fluctuation in the distribution of ecological features: the rate of eco-destructive attributes surpassed that of eco-beneficial ones, with the former rising to 2.9% and the latter decreasing to 2%. In the Russian dataset, the amount of eco-beneficial property increased to 2.9%, while that of the eco-destructive property continued to decrease to 0.1%. At the restarting stage, in TT the percentage of eco-beneficial properties also declined to 1.6%, as did eco-destructive properties (1.6%). Meanwhile, Russian reporters tended to adopt more eco-destructive properties (0.7%) and much less eco-beneficial ones (2.7%).

In general, British journalists showed an ecological shift that changed with the major events in the trade tensions: from eco-destructive in the initial stage to eco-beneficial in the escalation stage, and back to eco-destructive in the negotiation stage. In the beginning, they held an eco-destructive value on the trade war that was in line with the US government, one of the closest allies of the UK. By discreetly weighing the pros and cons by their selection of external sources cited in the news, this unprecedented yet perilous expedition was depicted as a challenging but profitable attempt to improve their unfair and disadvantaged position in international trade in the past. Their ecological values passed through a transition to an eco-beneficial value in the days of conflict escalation. The shift conforms to the fact that the British media reiterated the importance of the order of the international trading system and principles of the WTO in spite of the up-scaled trade war, managing to show the image of the UK as a rules-keeper. Additionally, the British economy becomes a winner by replacing some plans of the US to trade with China, so its government may not be expected to seek reconciliation between the two

opponents. At the truce stage, the ecological values of British journalists remain eco-destructive, setting the two major economies against each other, which reveal that TT is generally consistent with the American side in the process.

However, the ecological values of the Russian media do not show a significant change in the four stages, but vary with its stance on international friction. In the starting period, Russian journalistic practitioners held a somewhat conservative attitude toward the path of the unknown trade war terrain, since few of them were certain about the results of the newly decided economic practices. During the negotiation period, they also had grave reservations about whether the two countries would be able to reach an agreement over contentious issues. Instead of being presented as their views, cynicism about negotiatory achievements is generally attributed to experts or the authorities involved. Russian reporters display many eco-beneficial properties when showing concern about the trend of this trade tension and analyzing the possible consequences in the period of renouncing the truce and continuing the tariff war.

5 Discussion and conclusion

Drawing on the analytical framework of the ecological logical system, this discursive study is devoted to disclosing ecological properties by exploring the logical resources in news reports on the trade war. The quantitative analysis of the data shows that the four categories of logico-semantic relations are all adopted by both British and Russian reporters. The two media discursively represent mixed and intertwined ecological values in their news coverage of the four stages. Overall, TT mainly transferred an eco-destructive value accompanied by occasional eco-beneficial properties. Although opposed to protectionism, it calls for unity with the UK's ally to avoid tariff risks and earn effortless profits. However, SNA largely presents an eco-beneficial value that is combined with an occasional eco-destructive property, which appeals for a free trade system while talking down the trade truce.

The most prominent similarity between the two media is that they choose similar logical resources to report the trade war. As for the expansion relations, they both tend to depend on the usage of elaboration relations, and the proportions of extension and enhancement are almost equally distributed. Among the three kinds of elaboration relations, the clarification relation makes up the largest share of the two datasets, and the exposition and exemplification relations are seldom deployed. In the four sub-classes of extension relations, the addition relation overtakes the total of the remaining three types of extension relations; the continuation relation is the next most frequently used in the two media, and there

are only a few cases of alternation and variation relations. As for the projection relations, the reporters of the two media prefer to open up the dialogic space for alternative positions more than they close it down. The differences are salient in the usage of the enhancement relations: the six categories are scattered throughout the two datasets, but overall, they are more inclined to employ causal, adversative, purpose, and conditional relations than manner and temporal relations.

The two media adopt logical relations to talk about distinct aspects of the trade war, from which their ecological values can be inferred. TT adopts the causal relation to justify the US as the initiator of the trade war and to show concern over the negative effects on the UK. However, SNA mainly employs the clarification relation to elaborate on the harms of the American trade barriers and shows a friendly stance in favor of China. It applies the condition relation to portray a negative orientation toward the trade war to imply little likelihood of rapprochement between the two sides. Meanwhile, their ecological orientations vary during the dynamic process: British journalists generally shifted, with the key turning points from eco-destructive in the initial stage to eco-beneficial in the escalation stage, and back to eco-destructive in the truce stage, while the Russian reporters were generally eco-beneficial in line with their stance on the trade frictions.

These different ecological properties in news reports concerning the trade war can be explained in terms of the overall international situation, the national stance of each press, and the particular sociopolitical context. The two media tend to play the role of observer with no attempt to stoke conflict with either side in the process, so that their countries might gain maximal economic benefits from the two major players of the game. In the British dataset, the basic root that lies behind the eco-destructive property is the national interest of the UK, which is often seen in logico-semantic relations as justifying the US starting the trade war as protecting its national security, which is undermined by China's violations of the global trading order. This could be partially explained by its close relationship with the US, which shares a special Anglo-American relationship with a long history (Xu 2019: 118). The importance of the US in Britain is more salient and influential, especially after Brexit, and the White House would play a more prominent role in shaping the UK's China policy and the UK-China relationship. The Trump administration then aggressively appealed to countries, including Britain, to stand on the same side in an imposing manner. With few signs of courting Washington, London could hardly enjoy the "special exemption" from punitive tariffs under the "America First" policy (Zhang 2020: 56). Nevertheless, there have been conflicting interests between the May government and the Trump administration in the areas of global governance (Zhang 2018). It is worth mentioning that the findings do not deviate much from those of previous research on the values and positions of Britain in

economic discourse studies, which argue that British media showed mental proximity to China in the trade war (Yan and Zhang 2018: 16). The results of this study are unsurprising. It is presumed that pragmatic cooperation between the UK and China will still be the main course in the future. Indeed, Britain claims to support the organized international trade system and is still eager to maximize its economic benefits, because the trade market in China is left unsaturated due to the trade war (Goldstein 2020). In the Russian dataset, the main eco-beneficial value is about the closer and more harmonious diplomatic relations between China and Russia. Against the backdrop of the trade war, the two countries consolidated strategic cooperation and deepened pragmatic cooperation in different areas. Nevertheless, there is little possibility of an alliance between China and Russia (Zhao 2018: 1). Meanwhile, Moscow refused to unite with the US to fight China, although the Trump administration offered a friendly proposition to President Putin (Yu 2020: 70). The claimed and factual position of the Russian government continued to remain neutral in the trade war, while searching for more advantages for its national interests, including the growth of international influence (Li 2018: 57).

Overall, this research helps us to understand how the third parties, namely, the British and Russian media, display different ecological properties regarding the conflicting relations between China and the US in the dynamic process of the trade frictions. Finally, to promote the development of the international ecosystem, this study posits that the Chinese external communication media should become familiar with and be cautious about the logical resources frequently used by foreign media to embed their values in order to expose their contradictory and variable stances. The official media should not only tell Chinese stories, break the predicament of the zero-sum game, and transfer eco-beneficial values, but also clarify foreign media accusations and provide targeted responses.

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