

The Politics of Fear in Hong Kong Protest Representations: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Study

Abstract

This study gives a corpus-assisted discourse study of the representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests in the *New York Times*. With the corpus-analytic tools Wmatrix and Wordsmith, it examines both the dominant patterns in its representations and the specific strategies used. The findings suggest that while NYT still draws on the traditional patterns in its representations of Hong Kong protests, it deviates from the protest paradigm in its representations of concerned parties. Meanwhile, emotion discourse has emerged as a distinct strategy in its representations. This is most revealing in the emotion of fear, and a close analysis of its use in its context has revealed its role in the construction of concerned parties and the distrust of Hong Kong people towards the Chinese government.

Keywords: protests, Hong Kong, corpus-assisted discourse study, emotion, fear

1. Introduction

Since Hong Kong's return from British colonial control to the People's Republic of China on 1 July 1997, there have been constant concerns about whether Hong Kong can still maintain its autonomy under Chinese Sovereignty for 50 years, as promised by the well-known principle of "One Country, Two Systems" (Cheng and Lam 2013). Protests have thus become a typical and effective means for Hong Kong people to express their concerns over Hong Kong's socio-political development and resistance against any unexpected social changes, such as the massive demonstrations against the legislation of the National Security Ordinance in 2003, and the protests against the delay of Universal Suffrage and the Umbrella Movement in 2014 (Purbrick 2019). Triggered by the proposed extradition bill which allowed Hong Kong residents to be extradited to Chinese mainland for trial, the 2019 Hong Kong protests turned out to be unprecedented for both their impact and the radical and confrontational tactics employed (Chan and Pun 2020, Purbrick 2019). These prolonged violent protests further thrust Hong Kong into the limelight of international news media.

The US news media have kept a strong interest in post-colonial Hong Kong due the substantial economic and political interests the US has maintained in Hong Kong (Martin 2007). The US volunteered to be the new "guardian" of Hong Kong after its handover in 1997 (Lee et al. 2002), and the representations of Hong Kong in US news media affect not only public understandings of post-colonial Hong Kong but also US government's policies on Hong Kong. In their coverage of Hong Kong's handover in 1997, the US media tended to align with their national interests to "bang the democracy drum" in their representations of the event (Lee et al. 2001). By emphasizing the threat of the erosion of the freedom and democracy in Hong Kong under Chinese rule, they constructed the US a new "guardian" of Hong Kong in an emerging war between the West and China.

Previous studies have also revealed that in their coverage of domestic protests, the US news media feature a "protest paradigm", i.e., the consistent patterns in their coverage of protests (McLeod 2007). For example, they prefer to focus on the conflicts between

protesters and police and criticize and marginalize protesters by focusing on their unusual appearances and confrontational demonstration strategies. Meanwhile, they tend to favor the authorities' voices over protesters' voices in order to maintain the status quo and disparage those who challenge it (Gitlin 1980, Shoemaker 1984). Therefore, they tend to give more unfavorable coverage to radical groups. Nevertheless, some other studies have demonstrated that protest representations in a foreign land tend to be shaped by the dominant ideologies of the countries and culture in which the media is situated (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). For example, Lee and Craig (1992) compared US newspapers representations of labor strikes in South Korea and (communist) Poland, and find "the 'us-them' dichotomy and anti-communist filter in operation" (p. 341).

Since Hong Kong serves as an battlefield in which different ideologies compete (Lee et al. 2002), it is of great interest to examine to what extent and in what way the representations of Hong Kong protests conform to and deviate from the traditional patterns of protest representations. Even though a few studies have examined the representations of different Hong Kong protests, such as the Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement (Bhatia 2015, Flowerdew and Jones 2016), and the right-of-abode issue (Pan 2002), there is still little information about how the new situation in Hong Kong protests is addressed in US news media. This study gives a corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) of the representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests in a prestigious US newspaper, the *New York Times* (NYT). It has three objectives: (1) to examine to what extent and in what way the representations conform to or deviate from the "protest paradigm"; (2) to examine the role of emotion discourses in NYT's protest representations; (3) to examine how they contribute to the constructions of concerned parties in the protests.

2. Emotion in news discourse and the politics of fear

The real power of news media lies in "the ability to define a situation for self and others" (Altheide 2006, 15). Nevertheless, news discourse features a tension between "hiding and displaying emotions" (Bondi 2007, 412). The last two decades, however, have witnessed the growing use of emotion terms due to the "affective turn" in dominant Western journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen 2016). While previous studies used to focus on the objectivity of news reporting (Schudson 1978, 2001), recent studies have turned their attention to emotion in journalism (Pantti 2010b, a, Richards and Rees 2011, Stenvall 2008, 2014, Wahl-Jorgensen 2013, 2016). The frequent reference to emotions in news discourse can "contribute to the *news values* of personalization and color" (Bednarek 2008, 35) and "play an interesting role in the argumentative dimension of many media texts" (Bondi 2007, 412). The expression of emotions in news media is not personal and accidental, but subject to the influence of historical and cultural values and moral norms (Pantti 2010a). The examination of emotions in news media should address not only what emotions are expressed but, more importantly, the functions they serve in the world (Pantti 2010a).

As one of the basic types of emotions, fear has also drawn growing attention from researchers in different fields (Wodak 2015). Previous studies have demonstrated that the word "fear" has been increasingly used in American news discourse (Altheide 2006, Altheide and Michalowski 1999). It tends to be associated with certain themes, such as violence, drugs, and AIDS. The expanding use of fear has thus generated "a discourse of fear" (Altheide 2006). However, the pervasive use of fear in news discourse is not a

mere reflection of social reality but “part of the social construction of reality in the modern age” (Altheide 2006, ix). It can be constructed and promoted through the mass media by politicians and decision makers to exercise more control over the public (Altheide 2006). This is what Altheide (2006) calls “the politics of fear”, i.e., “decision makers’ promotion and use of audience beliefs and assumptions danger, risk and fear in order to achieve certain goals” (p. ix).

As Shi (2019) suggests, “political emotion has become one the most significant components of the ensuing crisis in Hong Kong since it was taken over by China in 1997” (p. 105). Shi (2019) examines the articulation and performance of the politics of fear by a political film “Ten Year” and its impact on Hong Kong. It is found that the film explicitly underlines China as “an omnipotent, powerful, violent, and fearful ‘other’”, which makes “the lives of Hong Kong people difficult and miserable” (Shi 2019, 108). Li (2019) also gives a historical analysis of the collective fear Hong Kong residents had in perceiving and imagining Communist China. However, few studies gave a close examination of the politics of fear generated by foreign media in their representations of post-colonial Hong Kong.

3. Corpus-assisted discourse studies

A corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) approach is adopted in the present study by combining the discourse-historical approach (DHA) in critical discourse studies (CDS) with corpus linguistics (CL). CDS are known for their shared interest in the relations between language, power and ideology and the analysis of “hidden, opaque, and visible structures of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 12). Based on their different understandings of the relations between language and society, CDS encompass a variety of approaches, such as the socio-dialectic approach (Fairclough 1995), the socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk 1998), and the DHA (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). DHA distinguishes itself from other approaches by its emphasis on the interpretation and explanation of discourse in its socio-historical contexts. It proposes to analyze texts at three levels: (1) topics; (2) the discursive strategies; (3) the linguistic means (types) and realizations (tokens). The primary purpose of text analysis is to expose “inconsistencies, (self-)contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in the text-internal or discourse-internal structures” (Wodak 2016, 65). Apart from the general discursive strategy of “positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation” (Van Dijk 2006), Wodak (2016) identifies five discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, and intensification/mitigation. Nomination concerns the specific ways of referring to a person or a group of people; predication refers to the positive or negative ways of labelling social actors; argumentation focuses on the justification of positive or negative attributes; perspectivation concerns expressing involvement and positioning speaker’s point of view; intensification/mitigation addresses the intensification or mitigation of the epistemic status of a proposition.

CL features the use of corpora as “primary data and starting point” (Cheng 2013, 1353) and aims at identifying “probabilities, trends, patterns, co-occurrences of elements, features or grouping of features” (Teubert and Krishnamurthy 2007, 6). The benefits of combining CDS and CL have been widely acknowledged in the last two decades, such as providing an empirical basis for the analysis, making the analysis more efficient and the findings replicable, thus reducing researcher bias (Hardt-Mautner 1995, Baker et al.

2008, Baker 2006, Mautner 2016). A CADS approach underscores a “balanced” combination of the methods and theories associated with CL and CDS (Morley and Bayley 2009, Haarman and Lombardo 2009). It requires the analyst to make frequent references to the methods and theories of two disciplines to give a more illuminating analysis of the data, thus contributing to the mutual development of both disciplines. While the basic CL methods include “the generation and study of word lists, key words, collocates, and concordances, backed up with measures of statistical significance” (Cheng 2013, 1353), recent studies have valued some more advanced corpus-analytic methods in the processing of data, such as key part-of-speech and key semantic categories (SMCs) (Rayson 2008, L'Hôte 2010). Following this trend, this study starts with the analysis of key SMCs to examine NYT’s preferential way of framing 2019 Hong Kong protests and the role of key emotion SMCs in its representations. It is followed by a close analysis of the typical tokens in these key SMCs in order to identify the specific strategies involved in the constructions of concerned parties.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data

This study is based on a corpus which collects all the news reports of NYT in 2019 with the keyword “‘*Hong Kong*’ AND ‘*protest*’” from the electronic database *Lexis-Nexis*. All the news articles downloaded have been further manually checked to make sure that they are hard news and closely related to the anti-extradition bill protests. The corpus consists of 281,838 tokens. However, in order to identify the distinct features that can characterize the new trends in Hong Kong protest representations, a highly comparable corpus (the NW corpus) has been used in this study. It collects all the news reports concerning Hong Kong in NYT from 2012 to 2017. The situation in Hong Kong has turned worse since 2012, and there were constant protests during this period (Author, 2019, 2020). The reference corpus consists of 1,080,989 tokens.

3.2 Analytic methods

The corpus-analytic tools Wmatrix and Wordsmith 7.0 have been used in this study for the automatic processing of the data. Wmatrix is an online tool for corpus analysis and comparison. The corpus annotation tool (USAS) it incorporates can classify the tokens in a corpus into 21 semantic fields, which can be further divided into 232 SMCs (see Table 1)

Table 1. Major semantic fields in USAS (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/>)

A General and abstract terms	B The body and the individual	C Arts and crafts	E Emotion
F Food and farming	G Government and public	H Architecture, housing and the home	I Money and commerce in industry
K Entertainment, sports and games	L Life and living things	M Movement, location, travel and transport	N Numbers and measurement
O Substances, materials, objects and equipment	P Education	Q Language and communication	S Social actions, states and processes
T	W	X	Y

Time	World and environment	Psychological actions, states and processes	Science and technology
Z Names and grammar			

It is suitable for this study because one of the major semantic fields is “Emotion” (E), which consists of six semantic categories, which are further divided into 14 sub-semantic categories.

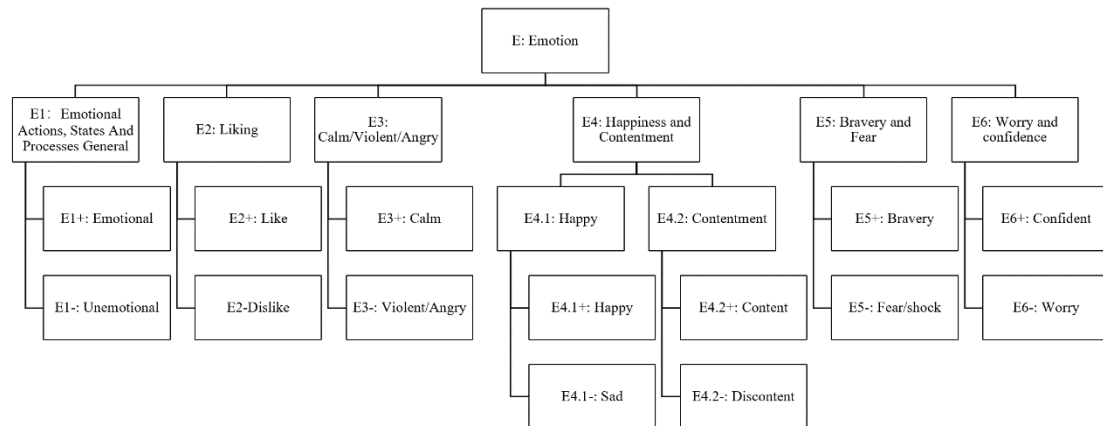


Figure 1. Emotion semantic categories

This study starts with uploading the two corpora into Wmatrix in turn for automatic semantic tagging and Key part-of-speech tagging. Then NYT is further compared with NW with a view to identifying the key SMCs. Wmatrix ranks these key SMCs in terms of their log-likelihood (LL) values. The higher their LL values, the more key these SMCs. This study first focuses on the top 20 key SMCs in order to identify the preferential ways of framing the protests in NYT. The typical tokens in each key SMC has been examined to identify the presence of protest paradigm in NYT’s representations of Hong Kong protests. Then this study focuses on these SMCs with a LL value above 6.63 (i.e., $p < 0.01$) (Rayson 2008), and there are all together 73 key SMCs identified. These key SMCs are further classified based on the semantic fields they belong to with a view to identifying the role of the semantic field of “E: Emotion” in the corpus. Then the LL value of each semantic field is further computed based on the “log-likelihood and effect size calculator” (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>), and the significance of the semantic field of “E: Emotion” can be identified. This study further examines the significance of fear in these key emotion SMCs and the use of the lemma *fear** in its specific context of use. Particular attention has been paid to the role of *fear** in the constructions of concerned parties, and the discursive strategies employed. It is expected that a combination of the theories and methods associated with CDS and CL can yield significant insights NYT’s preferential ways of representing 2019 Hong Kong protests.

4. Findings

4.1 General analysis of key SMCs

Table 2 shows the top 20 key SMCs in NYT. These key SMCs can suggest NYT’s preferential ways of framing 2019 Hong Kong protests. NYT prefers to focus on the

violence and conflict in the protests, as can be seen from E3- (“Violent/angry”), G3 (“Warfare, defense and the army; weapons”). E3- consists of these tokens which foreground violence and conflicts in the protests, such as *violence*, *clashes*, *force*, and *riot*. G3 consists of these tokens which highlight the use of military forces and weapons, such as *tear-gas*, *officers*, *military*, *bullets*, and *forces*. Besides, it also highlights the demonstration strategies of these protesters, such as blocking the airport, subway, and streets. This can be seen from the typical tokens in M3 (“Vehicles and transport on land”), M5 (“Flying and aircraft”) and M1 (“Moving, coming and going”), such as *streets*, *street*, *station*, *subway*, *airport*, *flights*, *airline*, and *flight*. Meanwhile, NYT also focuses on the unusual appearance of protesters, as can be seen from the SMC B5 (“Clothes and personal belongings”). It consists of these tokens which highlight the protesters’ use of umbrellas, wearing face masks and black T-shirts, such as *umbrella*, *masks*, *wearing*, *umbrella*, and *dressed*. It seems that NYT still conforms to the protest paradigm in Hong Kong protest presentations, focusing on violence and deviant behaviors of the protesters (Hertog and McLeod 1995).

Nevertheless, a close examination of the typical tokens in these key SMCs finds that unlike the protest paradigm which highlights the use of violence by the protesters, NYT foregrounds the use of violence by police officers rather than protesters. This can be seen from the most frequently used token *violence* in E3- (“Violent/angry”) and *peaceful* in E3+ (“Calm”). An examination of the use of *violence* in NYT finds that several distinct strategies can be identified in NYT. As a typical form of nominalization, *violence* (293 out of 321) is frequently used in NYT without specifying the actors of violence. Violence is primarily metaphorically conceptualized as a natural force which occurs unexpectedly (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), as in the following:

- (1) *Violence broke out* again at the most recent protests.
- (2) Tensions have eased and street *violence* has *subsided* considerably since the vote.
- (3) ...leader and police force after two months of rolling protests that have *flared into violence* and inflamed opposition to Chinese rule.
- (4) Analysts say that if demonstrations *descend into violence*, the authorities would have an easy excuse to prosecute young protesters...

By contrast, predication strategies have been used to emphasize police as the actors of violence in a few cases. There are 19 instances of *violence* which are pre-modified by *police*, but none by *protester*, as in the following:

- (5) Those demands include an independent inquiry into *police violence* against protesters and the complete withdrawal of

The attempt to foreground police violence but background protesters’ violence can be further perceived through the prominence of the lemma *peaceful** in E3+ (“Calm”). Its strongest collocates include *largely/peaceful* (15), *rational/peaceful* (8), *march/peaceful* (19), *mostly/peaceful* (12), *marched/peacefully* (9), *marches/peaceful* (12), *demonstrators/peaceful* (18), *demonstration/peaceful* (9), *manner/peaceful* (4), *gassed/peaceful* (3). It can be seen that both mitigating and predication strategies have been used to emphasize these protests are peaceful or largely peaceful. Consequently, the violence has been attributed to a small group of people and some unexpected occasions, as in the following:

Table 2. Top 20 key SMCs in NYT

Rank	Tagset	NYT		NW		LL	Semantic category	Tokens
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%			
1	E3-	2635	1.01	3104	0.29	2056.22	Violent/Angry	<i>violence</i> (321), <i>clashes</i> (192), <i>force</i> (186), <i>violent</i> (178), <i>riot</i> (156)
2	G3	1782	0.68	1962	0.18	1504.16	Warfare, defense and the army; weapons	<i>tear-gas</i> (326), <i>officers</i> (302), <i>military</i> (100), <i>bullets</i> (88), <i>forces</i> (67)
3	G2.1	4588	1.76	9355	0.87	1407.85	Law and order	<i>police</i> (1527), <i>law</i> (321), <i>police-officers</i> (241), <i>legislation</i> (209), <i>arrested</i> (181)
4	G1.2	5326	2.04	12697	1.17	1055.73	Politics	<i>protesters</i> (1968), <i>political</i> (430), <i>demonstrators</i> (390), <i>demonstrations</i> (264)
5	Q2.2	5580	2.14	16407	1.52	462.59	Speech acts	<i>protests</i> (1096), <i>protest</i> (511), <i>demands</i> (229), <i>called</i> (168), <i>call</i> (91)
6	I3.1-	391	0.15	373	0.03	383.41	Unemployed	<i>fired</i> (161), <i>strike</i> (82), <i>firing</i> (39), <i>retired</i> (17), <i>strikes</i> (17), <i>fire</i> (17)
7	M3	1264	0.48	3024	0.28	247.7	Vehicles and transport on land	<i>streets</i> (197), <i>subway</i> (124), <i>street</i> (107), <i>station</i> (105), <i>roads</i> (57)
8	T1.3	4029	1.54	13269	1.23	156.63	Time: period	<i>Sunday</i> (283), <i>Wednesday</i> (2000), <i>Monday</i> (197), <i>day</i> (179), <i>days</i> (177)
9	S8-	721	0.28	1719	0.16	142.88	Hindering	<i>opposition</i> (134), <i>fight</i> (61), <i>prevent</i> (34), <i>oppose</i> (29), <i>undermine</i> (28)
10	G1.1	3569	1.37	11766	1.09	137.57	Government	<i>government</i> (997), <i>officials</i> (289), <i>authorities</i> (238), <i>legislature</i> (178)
11	M5	362	0.14	744	0.07	108.95	Flying and aircraft	<i>airport</i> (166), <i>flights</i> (41), <i>airline</i> (21), <i>aviation</i> (17), <i>flight</i> (15), <i>airlines</i> (10)
12	E3+	337	0.13	687	0.06	103.46	Calm	<i>peaceful</i> (181), <i>rest</i> (38), <i>peacefully</i> (37), <i>peace</i> (21), <i>calm</i> (17), <i>patience</i> (5)
13	Q2.1	4511	1.73	15749	1.46	99.92	Speech: Communicative	<i>said</i> (204), <i>say</i> (204), <i>statement</i> (154), <i>saying</i> (135), <i>told</i> (114), <i>response</i> (80)
14	M1	3215	1.23	10871	1.01	98.99	Moving, coming and going	<i>movement</i> (496), <i>march</i> (190), <i>returned</i> (90), <i>marched</i> (85), <i>left</i> (79), <i>go</i> (61)
15	M2	1975	0.76	6512	0.6	76.04	Putting, pulling, pushing, transporting	<i>held</i> (95), <i>set</i> (71), <i>withdraw</i> (70), <i>push</i> (67), <i>suspended</i> (62), <i>put</i> (62)
16	E5-	341	0.13	785	0.07	75.38	Fear/shock	<i>fear</i> (105), <i>fears</i> (56), <i>feared</i> (20), <i>afraid</i> (15), <i>scared</i> (14), <i>shocked</i> (13)
17	S1.1.3+	478	0.18	1235	0.11	71.4	Participating	<i>conference</i> (76), <i>meeting</i> (49), <i>attended</i> (41), <i>turnout</i> (39), <i>meetings</i> (25)
18	B5	664	0.25	1857	0.17	70.88	Clothes and personal belongings	<i>umbrella</i> (128), <i>masks</i> (66), <i>wearing</i> (66), <i>umbrellas</i> (35), <i>dressed</i> (26)
19	A1.5.1	521	0.2	1408	0.13	64.85	Using	<i>use</i> (213), <i>used</i> (169), <i>using</i> (97), <i>mobilized</i> (9), <i>users</i> (9), <i>mobilization</i> (4)
20	S7.4-	260	0.1	576	0.05	64.25	Not allowed	<i>ban</i> (137), <i>banned</i> (23), <i>barred</i> (16), <i>unauthorized</i> (15), <i>suppress</i> (12)

- (6) What started out as a *peaceful* rally descended into brief clashes and chaos at the train station where last week’s attack had taken place.
- (7) Her with the world watching, they tear-gassed and beat *largely peaceful* demonstrators and fired rubber bullets at them.
- (8) The protest on Sunday was *mostly peaceful*, but after midnight, dozens of remaining demonstrators tried to occupy areas around the legislature
- (9) *For most of the day*, Sunday’s demonstration was *peaceful*.

4.2 Analysis of key emotion SMCs

Table 3 shows the 13 semantic fields of the 73 semantic categories with a LL value above 6.63. Among them, the most statistically significant semantic field is “Government and public” (G). It consists of 6 key SMCs, including G3 (“Warfare, defense and the army; weapons”), G2.1 (“Law and order”), G1.2 (“Politics”), G1.1 (“Government”), G3- (“Anti-war”), and G2.1- (“Crime”). The typical tokens in each SMC are as follows:

- G3 (LL=1504.16): *tear gas, officers, military, bullets, forces, shot, officer, embattled*
- G2.1 (L=1407.85): *police, law, police officers, legislation, arrested, extradition, rule*
- G1.2 (LL=1055.73): *protesters, political, demonstrators, demonstrations, democracy*
- G1.1 (LL=137.57): *government, officials, authorities, legislature, president, country*
- G3- (LL=28.68): *civilians, unarmed, civilian.*
- G2.1- (LL=20.87): *criminal, suspects, vandalism, crimes, civil disobedience, illegal*

The prominence of this semantic field can be attributed to the topics or themes of this corpus. Since the corpus is concerned with 2019 Hong Kong protests. They were triggered by the legislation of the proposed extradition bill in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is concerned with “Politics” (G2), “Government” (G1.1), and “Law and order” (G2.1). However, the prominence of G3 (“Warfare, defense and the army; weapons”), G3- (“Anti-war”), and G2.1- (“Crime”) suggests NYT’s preference to foreground the conflicts between Hong Kong police and civilians.

Table 3. Top key semantic fields

Rank	Tagset	Semantic categories	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	LL
1	G	Government and public	15801	6.06	37451	3.46	3190.98
2	E	Emotion	4401	1.69	7573	0.70	1941.81
3	Q	Language and communication	10091	3.87	32156	2.97	506.21
4	I	Money and commerce in industry	391	0.15	373	0.03	383.41
5	M	Movement, location, travel and transport	9853	3.78	32494	3.01	378.69
6	S	Social actions, states and processes	8640	3.31	28187	2.61	362.71
7	A	General and abstract terms	3613	1.38	10834	1.00	268.31
8	T	Time	5555	2.13	18149	1.68	230.51
9	B	The body and the individual	664	0.25	1857	0.17	70.88
10	O	Substances, materials, objects and equipment	186	0.07	365	0.03	62.47
11	N	Numbers and measurement	2086	0.8	7219	0.67	50.88
12	X	Psychological actions, states and processes	2079	0.8	7269	0.67	45.29
13	P	Education	1487	0.57	5105	0.47	39.44
14	Z	Names and grammar	99622	38.2	405794	37.54	23.99

However, the semantic field of “Emotion” ranks the second in the corpus, suggesting the important role emotion plays in NYT’s representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests. There are all together 11 emotion sub-SMCs identified (see Table 4). Although both negative and positive emotion SMCs can be identified, NYT tends to foreground negative rather than positive emotions, because more tokens can be identified in negative SMCs (3792) than those in positive SMCs (512). This can be attributed to the conflicts in the protests and the news value of negativity (Bednarek 2016, Galtung and Ruge 1965). Besides, some key SMCs in this semantic field form contradictory pairs, including E3- & E3-- (“Violent/Angry”) vs. E3+ (“Calm”), E5- (“Fear/Shock”) vs. E5+ (“Bravery”), E2- (“Dislike”) vs. E2 (“liking”), and E6- (“Worry”) vs. E6+ (“Confident”). This might be attributed to the news value of balance (Galtung and Ruge 1965), and they may serve different functions in the representations of Hong Kong protests and the concerned parties involved. Nevertheless, in each pair, the negative SMC ranks higher than the positive SMC. In other words, NYT prefers to highlight the violence occurring in Hong Kong, the fear and worry Hong Kong people have, and their dislike of the extradition bill.

As regards the frequencies of each emotion SMC, E3- (“Violent/Angry”) ranks the first in both NYT and the reference corpus, which is followed by E6- (“Worry”) in both corpora. It suggests that the two emotion SMCs characterize NYT’s representations of Hong Kong. In other words, NYT prefers to focus on the conflict in Hong Kong and the worries of the public, which is consistent with US news media’s interest in Hong Kong (Lee et al. 2002). However, while E3- still ranks the first in terms of the LL value, the significance of E6- has decreased. Instead, the negative emotion SMC E5- (“Fear/shock”) has emerged as a distinct negative emotion in the corpus. It consists of the tokens which underscore the emotion of fear, as can be seen from the most frequently used tokens, including *fear* (105), *fears* (56), *feared* (20), *afraid* (15), *scared* (14), and *shocked* (13). It suggests that fear has risen to be a distinct emotion in NYT’s representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests. The difference between fear and worry lies in the fact that the former has a higher degree of negativity than the latter, and is more newsworthy (Stenvall 2007). Besides, as previous studies have demonstrated, American news representations of protests tend to associate fear with violence (Altheide 2003), so the following sections give a close analysis of the lemma *fear** in its specific context of use.

Table 4. Key emotion SMCs in NYT

Rank	Tagset	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	LL	Semantic categories	Tokens
1	E3-	2635	1.01	3104	0.29	2056.22	Violent/Angry	<i>violence, clashes, force, violent, riot, anger, unrest, attacked, attack</i>
2	E3+	337	0.13	687	0.06	103.46	Calm	<i>peaceful, rest, peacefully, peace, calm, patience, calm-down, resting</i>
3	E5-	341	0.13	785	0.07	75.38	Fear/shock	<i>fear, fears, feared, afraid, scared, shocked, intimidate, chilling, terror</i>
4	E2-	145	0.06	317	0.03	37.17	Dislike	<i>unpopular, grievances, objections, hate, resentment, are against, loathed</i>
5	E6-	502	0.19	1535	0.14	33.17	Worry	<i>concerns, tensions, worried, concern, worries, concerned, worry</i>
6	E6+	105	0.04	261	0.02	18.08	Confident	<i>confidence, trust, forceful, confident, forcefully, hawkish, faith, mind</i>
7	E4.1-	163	0.06	469	0.04	15.14	Sad	<i>cry, trauma, regret, upset, saddened, sad, suffered, desperate, suffer</i>
8	E2	28	0.01	44	0	14.52	Liking	<i>tolerate, tolerated, tolerating</i>
9	E5+	42	0.02	82	0.01	14.27	Bravery	<i>brave, courage, dare, fearlessly, dares, undaunted, fearless, audacity</i>
10	E3--	6	0	3	0	9.49	Violent/Angry	<i>seething, seethed</i>
11	E1	97	0.04	286	0.03	7.92	Emotional Actions, States and Processes General	<i>sentiment, mood, tone, sentiments, tempers, emotions, compassion, emotionally</i>

4.3 Analysis of the lemma *fear**

All together there are 192 occurrences of *fear**, including *fear* (105), *fears* (56), *feared* (20), *fearful* (6), and *fearing* (5). Table 5 shows the top 40 collocates of *fear**.

Table 5. Strong collocates of *fear**

Rank1	Collocate	With	LL	Freq.	Rank	Collocate2	With	LL	Freq.
1	<i>widespread</i>	fears	38.47	6	21	<i>opponents</i>	fear	21.49	4
2	<i>could</i>	fear	35.84	14	22	<i>raised</i>	fears	21.20	4
3	<i>out</i>	fear	35.47	15	23	<i>would</i>	feared	20.93	7
4	<i>that</i>	fear	34.01	42	24	<i>eroding</i>	fear	19.23	3
5	<i>expose</i>	feared	34.00	3	25	<i>raising</i>	fears	18.85	3
6	<i>growing</i>	fear	30.94	7	26	<i>emergency</i>	feared	18.71	3
7	<i>anger</i>	fear	27.73	8	27	<i>April</i>	fear	18.28	3
8	<i>longstanding</i>	fears	26.79	3	28	<i>amid</i>	fears	17.96	3
9	<i>of</i>	fears	26.73	39	29	<i>they</i>	fear	16.98	17
10	<i>freedoms</i>	fear	26.31	6	30	<i>bill</i>	feared	15.37	5
11	<i>that</i>	fears	26.21	25	31	<i>many</i>	fear	14.69	10
12	<i>growing</i>	fears	25.42	5	32	<i>about</i>	fears	14.64	7
13	<i>erosion</i>	fear	25.22	5	33	<i>such</i>	fears	13.60	4
14	<i>erosion</i>	fears	23.74	4	34	<i>could</i>	feared	13.58	4
15	<i>retribution</i>	fear	23.67	3	35	<i>will</i>	fear	13.16	8
16	<i>would</i>	fear	23.25	16	36	<i>to</i>	fear	11.94	13
17	<i>because</i>	feared	23.10	5	37	<i>is</i>	fear	11.01	17
18	<i>rising</i>	fear	22.45	4	38	<i>be</i>	fearful	10.93	3
19	<i>law</i>	fear	22.23	10	39	<i>target</i>	fear	10.87	3
20	<i>many</i>	feared	21.57	6	40	<i>sent</i>	fear	10.54	3

These collocates highlight different aspects of fear. Some collocates underline the subjects of fear, including *many/feared* (6), *opponents/fear* (4), *they/fear* (17), *many/fear* (10). They indicate NYT's preference to underline that it is opponents and many people in Hong Kong who have the fear. This is consistent with the view that news media prefer to highlight collective rather than individual fears (Stenvall 2007), as in the following:

- (10) **Many** *fear* it is eroding freedoms.
- (11) **Many** in Hong Kong *feared* the bill would further increase Beijing's influence over Hong Kong, a semiautonomous Chinese territory that has its own courts and local government and greater protection for civil liberties than the rest of the country.
- (12) **Opponents** of the bill *fear* that if it becomes law, it would open a door for Beijing to take anyone from Hong Kong including dissidents into the mainland's opaque, politicized judicial system.
- (13) ...law is necessary to prevent the city from becoming a haven for criminals, **opponents** *fear* that Beijing could use it to target political dissidents.
- (14) **They** *fear* the new law would not just target criminals but political activists as well.

This is further supported in the predication strategies used for *fear**, as can be witnessed from such collocates as *widespread/fears* (6), *growing/fear* (7), *longstanding/fears* (3), *growing/fears* (5), and *rising/fear* (4). They underline that fear is not only growing but also longstanding and widespread, as in the following:

- (15) And ahead of Sunday's unrest, there were *widespread fears* that groups of Fujianese gangsters might again assault protesters in North Point.
- (16) Underlying opposition to the extradition bill is a *growing fear* that the freedoms that people in Hong Kong enjoy under the one country, two systems...
- (17) The movement, which has been driven by *longstanding fears* of deteriorating freedoms under Beijing's rule, has expanded to include a variety of

Some nominal and verb collocates also underline what is feared in NYT. The nominal collocates include *freedoms/fear* (6), *erosion/fear* (5), *erosion/fears* (4), *retribution/fear* (3), *law/fear* (10), and *bill/feared* (5). They stress what is feared is not only the extradition bill itself but also the retribution from the government and the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong. In other words, NYT is still “banging the democracy drum” for Hong Kong (Lee et al. 2002). Examples are as follows:

- (18) They said that *fear of retribution* prevented them from voicing their opinions, and that universities need...
- (19) On Hong Kong Handover Anniversary, Many *Fear* Loss of *Freedoms*;
- (20) Many *fear* it is eroding *freedoms*.
- (21) Hong Kong March: Vast Protest of Extradition *Bill* Shows *Fear* of Eroding Freedoms
- (22) ...and foreshadowing more upheaval in the semiautonomous territory, where many still *fear* the *bill* could extend China's reach.
- (23) Dai Haijing, an associate professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong from Shanghai, said she *feared* that the *bill* could curtail sensitive academic research and nonprofit activities.
- (24) Underlying opposition to the extradition bill is a growing *fear* that the *freedoms* that people in Hong Kong enjoy under the one country, two systems...
- (25) That excludes political ones, but critics *fear* the *legislation* would essentially legalize the sort of abductions to the mainland that have taken place in Hong Kong in recent years.

They fear the extradition bill because it will extend China's influences in Hong Kong, legalize the illegal behaviors of those in Hong Kong, and expose Hong Kong people to China's authoritarian control. This can also be seen from the verb collocates of *fear**, including *expose/feared* (3), *eroding/fear* (3), *target/fear* (3), and *sent/fear* (3), as in the following:

- (26) They *feared* the extradition bill would *expose* them to the authoritarian arm of Beijing.
- (27) Many people *feared* that it would *expose* Hong Kong residents to a judicial system controlled by the Communist Party...
- (28) They *fear* the new law would *target* not just criminal suspects but political activists as well.
- (29) He fled to Taiwan in April out of *fear* that he would be *sent* back to the mainland after the extradition bill passes.

In above examples, some typical nomination strategies have been used to give a negative presentation of China and China's judicial system, such as *China's opaque judicial system*, *a judicial system controlled by the Communist Party*, *the authoritarian arm of Beijing*, and the country's *Communist Party-controlled* courts. They underline China's judicial system as “opaque” and “controlled by the Communist Party”. What is feared is not the bill itself but the Communist Party behind it. This suggests the “anti-Communist” filter still at work in NYT's representations of Hong Kong protests (Herman and Chomsky 1988).

In the meantime, *fear** has also been used to justify and legitimize the abnormal and illegal behaviors of the protesters and some Hong Kong people, as can be seen from the collocates *out/fear* (15) and *because/feared* (5).

- (30) That is at least in part *because* of *fear*.
- (31) In August, protesters pulled down a smart lamppost *out of fear* it was equipped with TOOLONG surveillance software.
- (32) One of them explained it in an interview: Perhaps were staying anonymous *out of fear*.
- (33) He fled to Taiwan in April *out of fear* that he would be sent back to the mainland after the extradition bill passes.
- (34) Her son had remained on campus *because* he *feared* a rioting charge that can carry a 10-year prison sentence.

In above examples, some protesters' illegal behaviors are legalized and justified by the fear they have, such as pulling down a lamppost, fleeing to Taiwan, and remaining on campus. Besides, the use of some unknown sources in news reporting has also been justified by highlighting the fear these sources have for refusing to have their names published. It can be regarded as "pro-active" fear, i.e., "one does something in order to avoid being a victim or to avoid engaging in an activity or issue already tainted by fear", and it can increase "the salience of news reports for individuals' perceptions and behavior" (Altheide and Michalowski 1999, 496).

Another function of fear is to underline the government's actions as the cause of fear in Hong Kong, as can be seen from the collocates *raised/fears* (4), and *raising/fears* (3).

- (35) The opening of the West Kowloon station last year has *raised fears* about growing mainland influence in Hong Kong.
- (36) China has never confirmed the total number of mainland soldiers in the territory, *raising fears* that it has quietly bolstered the force.
- (37) ...in Hong Kong after he crossed the border into the mainland, his family and his girlfriend said, *raising fears* that the Chinese authorities might be targeting travelers they suspect...
- (38) ...did not have the distinct orange color of those the police have been using to fire rubber bullets, *raising fears* they were deploying more lethal weapons.

As above examples show, it can put the blame on the government by constructing it as the cause of fear in Hong Kong and some people. On the contrary, *violence* has not occurred as a strong collocate of *fear**, suggesting that NYT fails to associate violence with fear in its representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, while NYT still prefers to emphasize violence, conflicts between police and protesters, and the demonstration strategies of protesters, it deviates from the protest paradigm by backgrounding the violence conducted by protesters and foregrounding police violence (Hertog and McLeod 1995). The analysis has further demonstrated that emotion has emerged as a distinct strategy in its representations, which can be attributed to the violent conflicts in the protests. Through highlighting the negative emotions of fear, worry, dislike, and sadness, NYT tends to underline and dramatize the bad feelings some Hong Kong people and protesters have towards the proposed extradition bill. This is most revealing in its strong emphasis on the construction of the fear of Hong Kong people and protesters. It contributes to the justification and legitimation of some abnormal and illegal actions of some protesters and the negative construction of the Hong Kong and Chinese government. As always, NYT still aligns with Hong Kong protesters in its representation of Hong Kong protests and frames the protests as a group

of terrified protesters to resist the authoritarian control of Communist China. The Communist Party has been constructed as a threat to Hong Kong, and what is feared is not the bill itself but the Communist Party behind it. Hereby NYT further constructs and consolidates the distrust of Hong Kong people towards the Chinese government. NYT's representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests are still consistent with the dominant ideologies of the US towards China and its policies in Hong Kong (Lee et al. 2002, Herman and Chomsky 1988, Martin 2007).

This study thus not only introduces the new trend of Hong Kong protests but also reveals the new strategies of NYT in coping with the increasingly violent techniques adopted by some protesters. It finds that fear has emerged as a distinct strategy in NYT's representations of 2019 Hong Kong protests. Through playing up the sense of insecurity, fear can contribute to the production and reproduction of the Chinese government as an imminent and potential threat to Hong Kong and the justification and legitimation of the radical and illegal measures taken by the protesters in Hong Kong (Shi 2019). Meanwhile, it can draw the international attention to Hong Kong and arouse the sympathy of the international society to the protesters in Hong Kong, thus legitimizing the potential measures taken by the US government towards Hong Kong. Therefore, the role of fear in NYT's representations of Hong Kong protests should not be taken for granted and merit our further attention. A combination of the theories and methods in CDS and CL can reveal not only the distinct patterns in language use but also the specific use of some linguistic features in their contexts, so it can contribute to our better understanding of language use by news media in a certain socio-political context (Baker et al. 2008).

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