Contesting Territory via Editorials in Different Varieties of English

Kathleen Ahrens

Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Kathleen Ahrens, Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, 11 Yuk Choi Road, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR. Email: kathleen.ahrens@polyu.edu.hk

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Abstract

This paper broadens Schneider's (2018) proposal relating to finding culture in corpora by examining keyness, conceptual frames, and metaphorical signals in newspaper editorials in two varieties of world Englishes: Chinese and American English. These editorials focus on opinion articles and commentaries about territorial issues in the South China Sea during 2013-2015. Our results demonstrate that keywords and metaphorical signals are used differently in the newspaper editorials published in these two countries, while the conceptual frames vary by degree but not by type. I discuss these findings in terms of how lexical-conceptual patterns allow for a greater understanding of the culture of argumentation. I argue that these types of focused, small corpora analyses are also useful for examining culture in corpora and suggest that Schneider's (2018) second layer of cultural dimensions should be expanded from indicator terms to include lexical-conceptual patterns found in keyword analysis, conceptual framing, and metaphorical signaling.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Corpus Linguistics, Keyword Analysis, Metaphor Signals, Conceptual Framing

1 | INTRODUCTION

One genre that is particularly useful in exploring metaphor use occurs in articles by opinion makers – the journalists, editorialists, and opinion writers – who express their viewpoint in news outlets, as they are often clamouring to argue their respective viewpoints on a particular issue at a particular point in time. Lee (2005), for example, compared the metaphors found in Chinese and Hong Kong newspapers during the 1997 handover period, when Hong Kong was returned to China. Flowerdew and Leong (2007) also found contrastive uses of political metaphor use in print journalism in Chinese. They ran a keyword-in-context search on 'Hong Kong', 'patriotism' and 'constitutional reform' in two Hong Kong newspapers: the pro-democracy tabloid *Apple Daily* and the pro-Beijing broadsheet *Tai Kung Pao*. They argued that the metaphors they found revealed the implicit tensions between Hong Kong and Mainland China under the 'one country, two systems' policy. For example, *Ta Kung Pao* created a novel metaphor, referring to the PRC government as a 'grandfather' and *Apple Daily* extended this metaphor by calling Tung Chee-Wah 'a frivolous son' who only wants 'free lunches' (namely, economic benefits for Hong Kong, but not universal suffrage). The above two studies were able to explain how particular conceptual metaphors developed over time when positioning the discussion in its

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historical context in Chinese. In a more recent study, the emphasis was on how the same viewpoint (the viewpoint of the government of the PRC) is shared with different audiences (Jing-Schmidt & Peng, 2017) in both English and Chinese. The authors ran a keyword-in-context search for 'corruption' in the People's Daily in both the English version and the Chinese version (using its translated expression) between April 2013 and March 2014. They found a systematic difference in the conceptual metaphors used in Chinese and English newspapers and argued that the knowledge base within an epistemic community invokes particular conceptual domains; in this case, corruption is compared to HARM (DISEASE, VERMIN, WEED, SLOVENRY) in Chinese and to WAR in English. These studies compared lexical usage and metaphors either within the same variety of Chinese or across Chinese and English. In this paper, I focus on examining related issues in the genre of newspaper editorials in two different varieties of English, Inner Circle (American English) and Expanding Circle (Chinese English) (Bolton, 2003; Kachru, 1985). Drawing on work by Schneider (2018), Ahrens (2011), and Ahrens and Zeng (In press), I present three different possibilities to expand on Schneider's (2018) proposal regarding how to search for evidence of culture in a corpus of written texts.

Schneider (2018) suggested examining (1) lexical terms for cultural objects, (2) lexical-conceptual dimensions, or (3) syntactic constructions to locate evidence of culture in corpora. The first method involves hunting for lexemes that reference cultural objects or terminology, which are often found in cultural keywords (Mukherjee & Bernaisch, 2015). The second method involves searching for 'indicator terms' which are "words or phrases assumed to indicate, reflect or be associated with the cultural domain or issue in question" (Schneider, 2018, p. 29), including honorifics or kinship terms. The third category focuses on differences in syntactic constructions that are 'motivated by culturally-based' principles, including the verb complementation patterns found in British English and Indian English (Olavarria de Errson & Shaw, 2003). This paper develops Schneider's (2018) proposal by expanding the second method beyond indicator terms to look at whether keyness, conceptual frames, and metaphorical signals found in newspaper editorials in two national varieties of world Englishes (Mikhalchenko (2006), cited in Proshina (2019)), Chinese English and American English, demonstrate different patterns. I suggest that broadening indicator terms to compare lexical preferences among two different corpora, as well as words associated with particular conceptual frames, or words associated with metaphor use, will allow us to gain additional insight into the culture

of a language, as I focus on two purpose-built corpora that present arguments surrounding a specific geo-political topic. I also seek to examine if the application of lexical-conceptual analyses on a small corpus with a narrow topic focus (Ahrens, 2006) will allow for cultural differences to be seen in terms of how speakers of each variety of English approach positioning and argumentation in editorials.

2 | HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

One particular political issue that provides interesting grounds for examination with regard to positioning and argumentation has to do with the geo-political jockeying related to the Spratly Islands. The Spratly Islands are more than a dozen small islands in the South China Sea, variously occupied by the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, and Vietnam. On January 22, 2013 the Philippines lodged a formal complaint in the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague. These events received media coverage, including the publishing of editorials and comments, at various points in the process, including December of 2014 when China failed to submit a counterargument to the claim, as it did not recognize the authority of the Hague to arbitrate this issue. There was additional press in the summer of 2015 when preliminary rules were provided, and in the summer of 2016 when the Tribunal ruled that China did not have a historical basis for claiming these

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islands or their surrounding waters, contrary to China's claims. A detailed timeline

may be found on the Council of Foreign Relations website (Council on Foreign

Relations, n.d.). What is interesting about this dispute is that it is also being argued in

the court of public opinion, with presentations in the English media by the two major

parties involved: China and the United States, which China views as an accomplice (or

initiator) to the Philippines claims. In this study, I focus on the three-year timeline

starting from when an arbitration case against China was filed by the Philippines at

the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague and

ending in 2015 after seven decisions were handed down and China refused to

participate further.

3 | CORPUS CREATION

A corpus of approximately 67 thousand words was built for the current study. It

contains two sub-corpora: the CD (*China Daily*) corpus and the NYT (*The New York

Times*) corpus. The CD corpus consists of opinions and editorials from the English

version of *China Daily*, which is the most predominant English-language newspaper in

China. *China Daily* is selected as the source of the corpus because it targets

international audiences, with the primary function of communicating the Chinese

government's stance to the world. The NYT corpus contains editorials and opinions from *The New York Times* and is one 'newspaper of record' in the United States.

In the first stage, full-text articles were retrieved from the official website of the two newspapers *China Daily*[1] and *The New York Times*[2] and saved as text files with headlines intact. The criterion for this stage was to include articles which contain the keywords 'South China Sea' and 'the Spratly Islands', and at least one of the following words 'dispute(s),' 'conflict(s),' 'the Philippines,' 'arbitration,' and 'Vietnam' from January 2013 to December 2015. The next step involved data screening. As the current research only focuses on the commentaries and editorials of the newspaper, articles such as news reports were removed manually. Only articles that were explicitly categorized as 'Opinions,' 'Commentaries,' or 'Editorials' by the newspaper agency were left for the current study. After the removal of non-opinions, non-commentaries, and duplicate articles, the articles were reviewed by two research assistants (RA1 and RA2) with postgraduate degrees in linguistics to identify the main topic of the article. Only those that directly related to the South China Sea disputes were kept in the corpus. The two assistants screened articles from *China Daily* and *The New York Times*, with RA1 identifying articles from *China Daily* and RA2 identifying articles from *The New York Times*. During the third stage of corpus creation,

to guarantee the reliability of the topic identification, inter-rater agreement was calculated on 10 per cent of each corpus following Wimmer and Dominick (2014). There was substantial agreement between the two raters on identifying topics for the CD corpus (κ = 0.703, *p* < 0.01) and for the NYT corpus (κ = 0.724, *p* < 0.01) (Landis & Koch, 1977). All disagreements were carefully discussed between the two raters to reach an agreement prior to the main analysis. After completion of the inter-rater agreement, 58 opinion articles from *China Daily* and 43 from *The New York Times* were kept for further analysis, with 35,536 words in the CD corpus and 31,961 words in the NYT corpus after the data was screened.
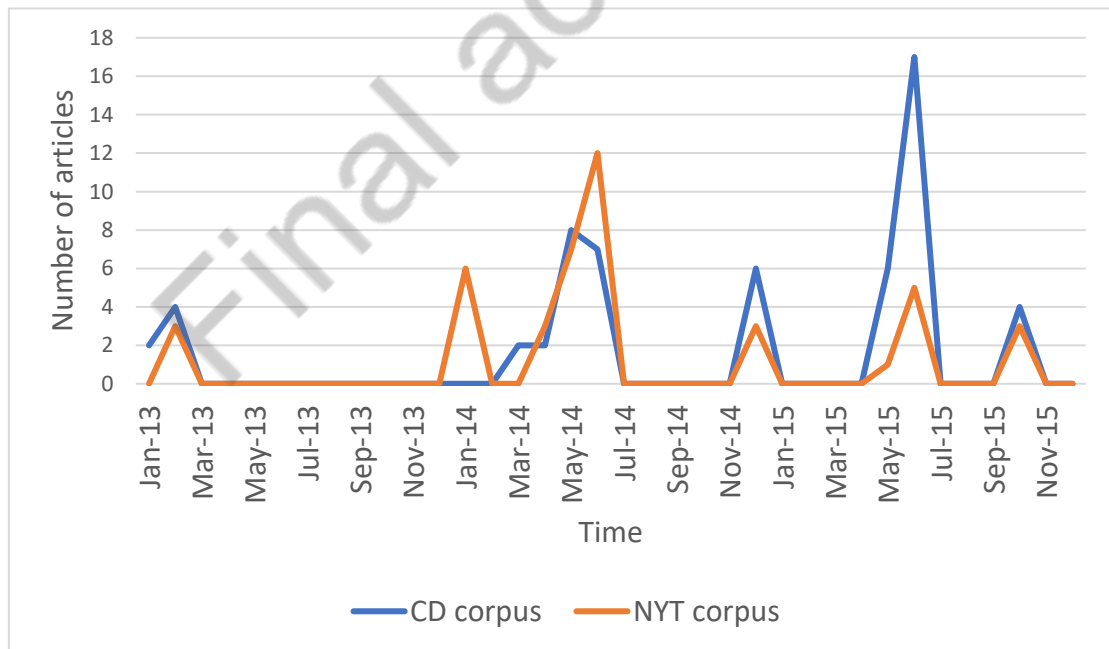

Figure 1. Coverage of South China Sea Conflict in *China Daily* and *The New York Times* in terms of number of articles

Figures 1 and 2 show the coverage of South China Sea conflicts and related events in terms of number of articles (Figure 1) and word count (Figure 2) over time. Although both news agencies occasionally commented on the South China Sea dispute and related issues in 2013, the year 2014 has the most extensive coverage, reaching its peak in May and June when the arbitration tribunal ordered China to respond to the case filed by the Philippines. Although the number of articles plummets after December 2014 when there are no relevant news items, it increases dramatically again in June and July 2015, especially for *China Daily*, as it was during this period that the tribunal convened in The Hague.
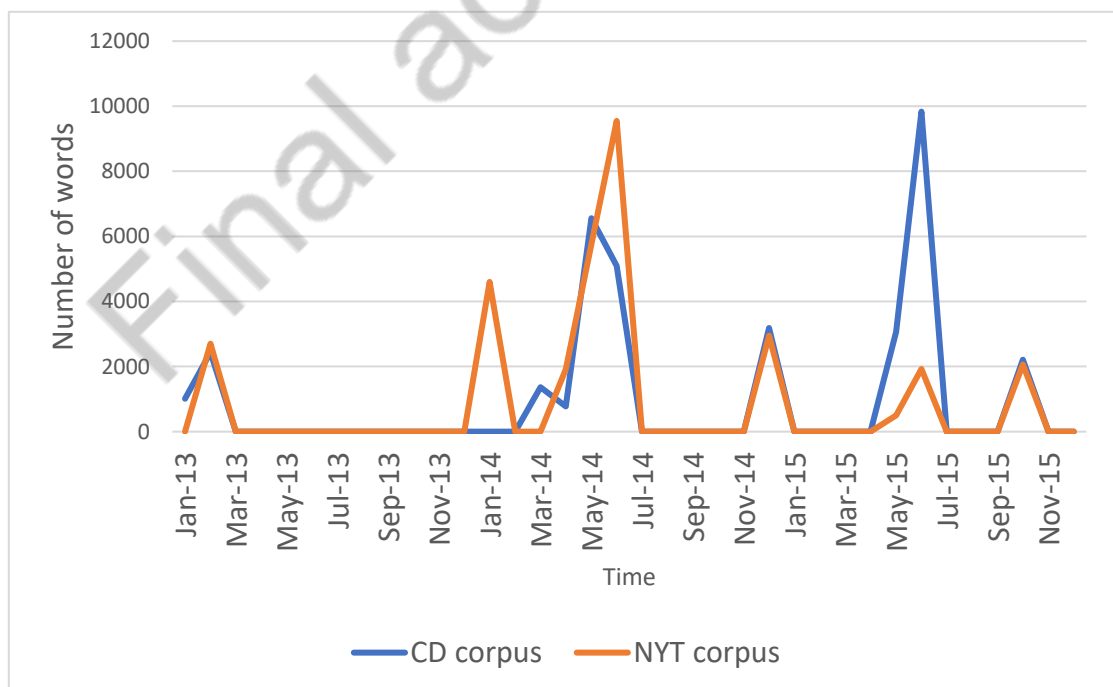

Figure 2. Coverage of South China Sea Conflict in *China Daily* and *The New York Times* in terms of number of words

In addition, as shown in Figure 2, there are two significant increases in word count in *China Daily*: in May 2014 when the Philippines charged 11 arrested Chinese fishermen and in June 2015 when the tribunal convened in The Hague, during which time *China Daily* contains five times as many words as *The New York Times* in our corpus. As for *The New York Times,* the number of words rose in January 2014 when The Philippines protested the Chinese coast guard's alleged firing of a water cannon. The event, however, did not attract much attention from *China Daily* because its word count is zero during this period in our corpus. Similar to what is seen in *China Daily*, the number of words in the NYT corpus increases dramatically in May 2014 and reaches its peak in June 2014 when China published a new map that expands Beijing's claim over the West Philippine Sea. *The New York Times* has more than twice as many words as *China Daily* during this period.

4 | ANALYSIS

4.1 | KEYNESS ANALYSIS

The first question is to ascertain to what extent there are lexical differences in the two corpora. Schneider (2018) uses keyword analysis to argue for uniqueness in culture, by contrasting corpora for various indicator terms (such as kinship terms) that

only occur rarely in other regional corpora. The claim here is not as broad, as the focus is on a smaller group of individuals arguing for or against a particular view of events. In this type of case, the keywords found can be thought of as positioning terms, with comparative frequency indicating how the group of commentators want to position themselves.

The corpus analysis software WordSmith Tools 6.0 (Scott, 2011) was used to run a keyness analysis (Scott, 1998, 2010; Gabrielatos, 2018). This was done by generating frequency lists taken from the CD corpus and the NYT corpus and comparing them against a list of keywords occurring in the reference corpus to ascertain which words were overused by either *China Daily* or *The Now York Times* in order to gain a better idea of the main topics and concerns in the two corpora (Koller & Semino, 2009).

The UM-Corpus, a parallel corpus between English and Chinese, was selected as the discourse reference corpus (Tian et al., 2014).[3] It consists of eight different text domains including News, Spoken, Laws, Thesis, Educational Materials, Science, Speech/Subtitles, and Microblog (Tian et al., 2014). For consistency, I only used the News domain (English) as it is representative of language use in news in general. The reference corpus used in the current research contains 8,646,174 tokens which is an 'appropriate sample' to study language (Scott & Tribble, 2006).

The keyness analysis between the CD corpus and the UM-Corpus, and the NYT corpus and the UM-Corpus generated 306 and 214 keywords respectively, at a significant level of $p < .01$. Table 1 presents keywords that are unique to the CD corpus and the NYT corpus respectively.

Table 1. Words occurring in the top 100 content keywords in the two corpora

	Words only occurring in the CD corpus (within the top 100 content keywords)	Words only occurring in the NYT corpus (within the top 100 content keywords)
Noun	countries, stability, declaration, activities, issue, parties, interests, UNCLOS, shelf, delimitation, cooperation, negotiations, people's, drilling, Hanoi, demarcation, sides, stance, relations, freedom, joint, baselines, Washington's, country, consultations, peace, statement, remarks	ship(s), fishing, vessels, oil, Taiwan, boat(s), coast, Myanmar, Malaysia, map, miles, Xi Jinping, navy, Xinhua, Philipino, affairs, claimants, ministry, archipelago, neighbors, admiral, province, code, Brunei, rocks, Japanese, Wednesday, waterway
Adjective	bilateral, regional, continental, unilateral, adjacent, relevant, indisputable, strategic	naval
Verb	conduct, resolve	guard, assert, rammed, presence, asserted

Keyness analysis demonstrates an emphasis on seeking solutions to the South China Sea issues in the CD corpus, with about half of the words relating to China's

position and the benefits of settling the issue. In order to support this argument, I examined the sentences which continued these keywords. I found that a recurring theme in the CD corpus relates to the ultimate aim of resolving the maritime boundary dispute—to maintain stability and peace (Example 1). Discussion of how this could be achieved is seen through the keyword use of *bilateral*, *cooperation,* and *negotiations* as in Example 2.

(1) The ASEAN statement also reaffirmed "the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security and freedom of navigation in and overflights over the South China Sea." (*China Daily*, April 30, 2015)

(2) In this spirit, China has resolved questions regarding territories and borders with some neighbouring countries through bilateral consultations and negotiations in an equitable, reasonable and amicable manner. (*China Daily*, January 24, 2013)

However, the frequency of the keyword 'indisputable' as well as 'delimitation,' 'demarcation,' and 'unilateral' refers China's fixed stance regarding its sovereignty claim over the South China Sea area, even as they strive to be viewed as working toward a solution.

(3) China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and their adjacent waters in the South China Sea. (*China Daily*, May 13, 2014)

The NYT corpus does not highlight negotiations and instead contains many more keywords related to maritime transport and the effects of the dispute on transport,

such as *rammed*, *ships*, *fishing*, *vessels*, *boat*, *fishermen,* and *naval*. I again extract the

sentences in which these keywords occur and find that they are used in reference to

the marine actions conducted by the claimants of South China Sea, as in examples (4)

to (6). This word choice serves to highlight the economic effects of the territorial

dispute.

(4) Chinese ships escorting the rig rammed and fired water cannons at Vietnamese vessels attempting to stop the move in potentially oil- and gas-rich waters claimed by Hanoi. (*The New York Times*, May 8, 2014)

(5) On Thursday, Vietnam said that China had damaged 12 Vietnamese fishing boats, 19 fisheries enforcement vessels and five coast guard vessels since the dispute began. (*The New York Times*, June 9, 2014)

(6) Vietnamese officials have asserted that China has sent naval ships to guard the rig, but China has denied that accusation. (*The New York Times*, June 25, 2014)

Another stance taken by *The New York Times* that can be seen in terms of its

lexical choice has to do with China's sovereignty rights in the South China Sea. The

writers argue that China has failed to distinguish between geographic features

considered as 'islands' or 'rocks' under the United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea (UNCLOS). Example (7) shows the justification with figures and legal

definitions provided in the UNCLOS which claims the disputed water as territorial

waters rather than an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

(7) The Philippines wants the court to rule that four of these features are actually underwater reefs that generate no territorial sea whatsoever and that another four (including Scarborough Shoal) are just <u>rocks</u> unable to sustain human habitation and so generate only a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea and not a 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. (*The New York Times*, December 15, 2014)

The argument being made by the writer is that China is carrying out construction works on these rocks, which are obscure, to then to turn them into larger islands to strengthen control of these areas. However, whether the rocks can be defined as territory is still up for debate as can be seen from both example (7) above as well as example (8) below.

(8) But in recent years, China <u>has asserted</u> greater control by turning seven obscure reefs and <u>rocks</u> into more substantial islets, some big enough to hold military bases, and claiming jurisdiction of the waters around them. (*The New York Times*, November 20, 2015)

Thus, the keyness analysis for the two corpora show evidence of a difference in cultural dimensions of approaching a dispute, with Chinese editorials emphasizing a preference for negotiation while at the same time highlighting what aspects are non-negotiable. U.S. commentators' frequent keywords, on the other hand, invoke dates, details, and arguments for economic harm as well as legal arguments regarding definitions of terms as if presenting their cases in a court of law. The lexical choices that are unique to the CD corpus reflect the underlying approach of the Chinese

government: the simultaneous striving for a harmonious society for Chinese speakers, while at the same time taking a hard line against any perceived threats to sovereignty. Given that *China Daily* is an established and recognized mouthpiece for the Chinese government, this alignment is not surprising, but it is useful to see that this could be extrapolated from a keyness analysis using a small corpus. Of course, further sentential analysis was needed on these lexical choices, but it was knowing what lexical items to look at that allowed sentences to be extracted and analyzed. In the same way, the keyness analysis for *The New York Times* plus the additional sentential analysis demonstrated that NYT writers are concerned about what is legally right under the conditions of a particular case.

This finding sheds light on the authors' positions about how such problems should be dealt with, and as such, highlights the litigious aspects of U.S. society. In short, this keyness analysis extends Schneider's (2018) proposal to explore culture through a lexical-conceptual analysis and demonstrates that keyness may be a distinguishing factor among varieties of English even in small corpora by demonstrating that it can be used not only to identify differences in indicator terms, but that with the addition of sentential analysis, it can also assist in identifying cultural assumptions underlying a particular political stance.

4.2 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

I now move beyond keyword analysis to the lexical-conceptual level of contrast (Schneider, 2018). Ahrens, Jiang and Zeng (In press) and Ahrens and Zeng (In press) have argued that analysis of metaphorical source domains as well as metaphorical target domains may be used to distinguish between varieties of English. In this section I examine the possibility that conceptual framing may also show different patterns in the two editorial corpora. I find that both sets of editorials use the rhetorical frame that best aligns with their goal to protect their respective geo-political interests, and furthermore, that the predominance of its use in the NYT editorial corpus demonstrates the propensity of the U.S. society to rely on legal solutions.

This use of hardline versus softened language in politics has been compared to a conceptual model of a FAMILY (Lakoff, 2002[1996]), whereby the government is understood as a parent. The parent type is furthermore one of two kinds: a STRICT FATHER (SF) or a NURTURANT PARENT (NP). In these two models, morality is understood as either 'strength' and 'authority' (SF) or 'nurturance' and 'empathy' (NP).

Ahrens and Lee (2009) and Ahrens (2011) searched for four related keywords—strength, authority, nurturance, and empathy—as well as their hypernyms, in WordNet 3.0 (Princeton Univerity, 2010; see Ahrens and Lee (2009) and Ahrens

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(2011) for details on this procedure). By selecting all of the content words in the

WordNet definitions, lexemes related to the STRICT FATHER/NURTURANT PARENT models

were obtained and the frequencies of different groups of lexemes were compared, as

shown in the underlined words below in Table 2.

Table 2. List of the STRICT FATHER and the NURTURANT PARENT lexemes (Ahrens, 2011; based on WordNet 3.0)

	STRICT FATHER model
Strength (N.)	
Definition	<u>force</u>, forcefulness, <u>strength</u> (physical energy or intensity)
Examples	He hit with all the force he could muster.
	It was destroyed by the strength of the gale.
	A government has not the vitality and
Direct hypernym	<u>intensity</u>, intensiveness (high level or degree; the property of being intense)
Authority (N.)	
Definition	<u>authority</u>, <u>authorization</u>, <u>authorisation</u>, potency, <u>dominance</u>, say-so (the power or right to give orders or make decisions)
Examples	He has the authority to issue warrants.
	Deputies are given authorization to make arrests.
	A place of potency in the state
Direct hypernym	<u>control</u> (<u>power</u> to direct or determine) "under control"
	NURTURANT PARENT model
Nurturance (N./V.)	
Definition	(n) nurturance (physical and emotional <u>care</u> and <u>nourishment</u>)
	(v) nourish, nurture, <u>sustain</u> (provide with nourishment)
Examples	N/A
Direct hypernym	<u>care</u>, <u>attention</u>, <u>aid</u>, tending (the work of providing treatment for or attending to someone or something) "no medical care was required"; "the old car needs constant attention"

Empathy (N.)

Definition	<u>understanding</u> and entering into another's <u>feelings</u>
Examples	N/A
Direct hypernym	<u>sympathy</u>, fellow feeling (sharing the feelings of others (especially feelings of <u>sorrow</u> or anguish)

In order to investigate the usage frequency of SF lexemes and NP lexemes in the two corpora, I searched for each lexeme individually by using WordSmith 6.0 and then manually checked to ascertain if the meaning as used in context could be associated with the relevant conceptual model. Two items were removed from the NYT corpus (specifically, 'power plant' and 'power station') and one item was removed from the CD corpus (specifically, 'wind power'). Table 3 and Table 4 show the frequency of each lexeme in the British National Corpus (BNC) and its tokens in our corpus after we manually checked the association with the conceptual model.

Table 3. The frequency of SF lexemes in BNC corpus and their tokens in the corpora

Lemma	Frequency in BNC (per million)	Amount in the CD corpus	Amount in the NYT corpus
dominance	9.79	0	0
authority	277.36	4	8
power	346.68	23	41
intensity	15.17	0	0
force	318.86	30	31
control	340.08	13	33
dominate	38.41	6	7
strength	71.92	2	0
authorize/authorise	4.85/8.94	1	0
Total	1432.06	79	120

Table 4. The frequency of NP lexemes in BNC corpus and their tokens in the corpora

Lemma	Frequency in BNC (per million)	Amount in the CD corpus	Amount in the NYT Corpus
sympathy	20.59	2	0
sustain	25.55	0	3
attention	212.08	2	4
feeling	156.72	2	0
care	242.97	4	3
aid	114.34	1	2
understanding	85.01	4	2
sorrow	5.9	0	0
nourish	2.28	0	0
Total	865.44	15	14

The frequency of the use of SF and NP lexemes for the two corpora was then compared with the overall frequency of the use in the BNC using z-statistics, following Ahrens and Lee (2009) and Ahrens (2011).[4] Table 5 presents the comparison of NP versus SF lexemes between the two corpora. As the ratio of frequencies of SF lexemes and NP lexemes in the BNC corpus is 1.6547 (1432.06/865.44 per million) rather than 1, the study tests whether the ratio in a group's speech differs statistically from 1.6547.

Table 5. Comparisons of SF versus NP lexemes between the two corpora

Corpus	Numbers of SF lexemes	Numbers of NP lexemes	Corpus size	Z-score	P-value
CD	79	15	35536	5.299	.001
NYT	120	14	31961	8.1206	.001

Ahrens, K. (2021). Contesting territory via editorials in different varieties of English. *World Englishes*. 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12529.

As can be seen from Table 5, both the CD corpus and the NYT corpus utilize significantly more SF lexemes than NP lexemes (z = 5.299, p < .001; z = 8.1206, p < .001). Thus, both CD and the NYT commentators adopt STRICT FATHER language compared to Nurturing Parent language. In addition, I have found that the NYT corpus employs significantly more SF lexemes than the CD corpus when controlling for corpus size (z = - 3.6641, p < .001).

These two conceptual frames, therefore, do not distinguish between these two varieties of English as the rhetorical demands of positioning oneself in a dominant role in the argument takes precedence. This is in contrast to the previous work on political language which found that United States Democrat and Republican presidents (Ahrens, 2011; Degani, 2015) and U.S. Senators (Ahrens & Lee, 2009) often invoke these frames for particular audiences. Given that both groups of writers are trying to convince each other's political leaders that their view of the world is correct and given that they are discussing a geo-political dispute, having both argue from a STRICT FATHER perspective may lend itself well to their argumentative goals.

What is also interesting is how the NYT uses the keywords related to the STRICT FATHER frame more frequently than CD, especially for the lexemes 'control' and

'power', which are almost double in their frequency in the NYT corpus as compared with the CD corpus. The two corpora differ in their use of 'power' with CD emphasizing China's role as a 'regional power' and the NYT emphasizing China's role as a 'growing power,' one that is trying to 'use,' 'position,' or 'exert' its power, such collocations are not found in CD, setting up the idea that this 'power' must be constrained by international law. The two corpora also differ in their use of 'control' with CD talking about 'controlling disputes' or disputes being 'out of control,' again alluding to the concept that it is better to live in a harmonious world. The NYT, in contrast, talks about 'controlling waterways' and 'controlling fishing'. Framed in this way, the issues become one of legal significance and not simply disputes that can be resolved through arbitration. These patterns align with our first finding regarding keyword preferences, which highlighted the litigious nature of American society and the priority given to winning legal cases, in contrast to Chinese society, which prioritizes harmony (again, as long as certain lines are not crossed).

4.3 | METAPHORICAL SIGNALS

In this section I examine to what extent the use of metaphorical signals differs in these two corpora. Scholars have argued that metaphors (both conventional and novel) in

discourse can be observed via metaphor signaling in the language, such as particles, words and phrases such as like, symbol, and kind of (Goatly 2011[1997]; Steen, 2016). The current study searches for potential metaphors in the two corpora by adopting a pre-selected list of metaphor signals based on Skorczynska and Ahrens (2015) and Goatly (2011[1997]). The seventeen metaphor signals are classified into nine categories, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Metaphor signals analyzed (based on Goatly (2011[1997]); Skorczynska & Ahrens (2015))

Metaphor signal category	Metaphor signals
Explicit signals	metaphor
Intensifiers	just, really, literally
Symbolism forms	symbol
Superordinate terms	sort of, kind of
Copular similes	like, as
Clausal similes	as if
Perceptual processes	look
Verbal processes	say, call
Modals and conditionals	may, could, would
Orthography	scare quotes " "

WordSmith 6.0 was used to automatically query the two corpora for the use of metaphor signals (as shown in Table 6). First, all signals are uploaded to WordSmith to build concordance lines in the search box. Twenty-five words to the left and right

of a search term are kept so researchers are able to examine the signals and metaphors in context.

After the concordance lines are generated and saved as Excel files, each entry is manually examined to see if the searched signal leads to a metaphorical expression. Two analysts with linguistic backgrounds (RA1 and RA 2) independently conducted the manual analysis of the concordances following the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen et al. 2010).

There was a high degree of agreement between the two raters on signaled metaphors identification ($\kappa = 0.938$, $p < 0.01$) (Landis & Koch, 1977). All disagreements were resolved by a third rater or consensus-based discussion. It should be noted that a metaphor may be signaled by two different types of signals, in which case it would be counted twice. Table 7 summarizes the frequencies data of the metaphor signals in the CD corpus and the NYT corpus and their normalized frequencies.

Table 7. Number of signaled metaphors in two corpora

	Occurrences (CD)	Normalised ratio (Per 1,000 words)	Occurrences (NYT)	Normalised ratio (Per 1,000 words)
Intensifiers				
just	1	0.0281	2	0.0626
really	2	0.0563	2	0.0626
literally	0	0	1	0.0313
Symbolism forms				
symbol	0	0	0	0
Superordinate terms				
sort of	0	0	1	0.0313
kind of	1	0.0281	0	0
Copular similes				
like	4	0.1126	1	0.0313
as	35	0.9849	22	0.6883
Clausal similes				
as if	0	0	0	0
Perceptual process				
look/looks	0	0	1	0.0313
Verbal processes				
say	45	1.2663	47	1.4705
call	3	0.0844	2	0.0626
Modals and conditionals				
may/might	2	0.0563	6	0.1877
can/could	17	0.4784	17	0.5319
would	7	0.1970	4	0.1252
Orthography				
scare quotes (" ")	62	1.7447	14	0.4380
Total	**179**	**5.0371**	**120**	**3.3754**

To explore whether there is any overall difference between the patterns of

signaling in the two corpora, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was run to compare the

number of signaled metaphors identified in the CD corpus with the number of signaled metaphors identified in the NYT corpus. Although the CD corpus uses signaled metaphors more frequently, there is no significant difference in the overall scores for the CD corpus (mean rank = 8.50) and the NYT corpus (mean rank = 6.75): z = -.094, p = 0.925. However, Figure 3 shows that the use of scare quotes patterns differently from the other signals, with a large difference between the means of the normalized ratio of the two corpora, in contrast to the mean differences of the other metaphor signals.
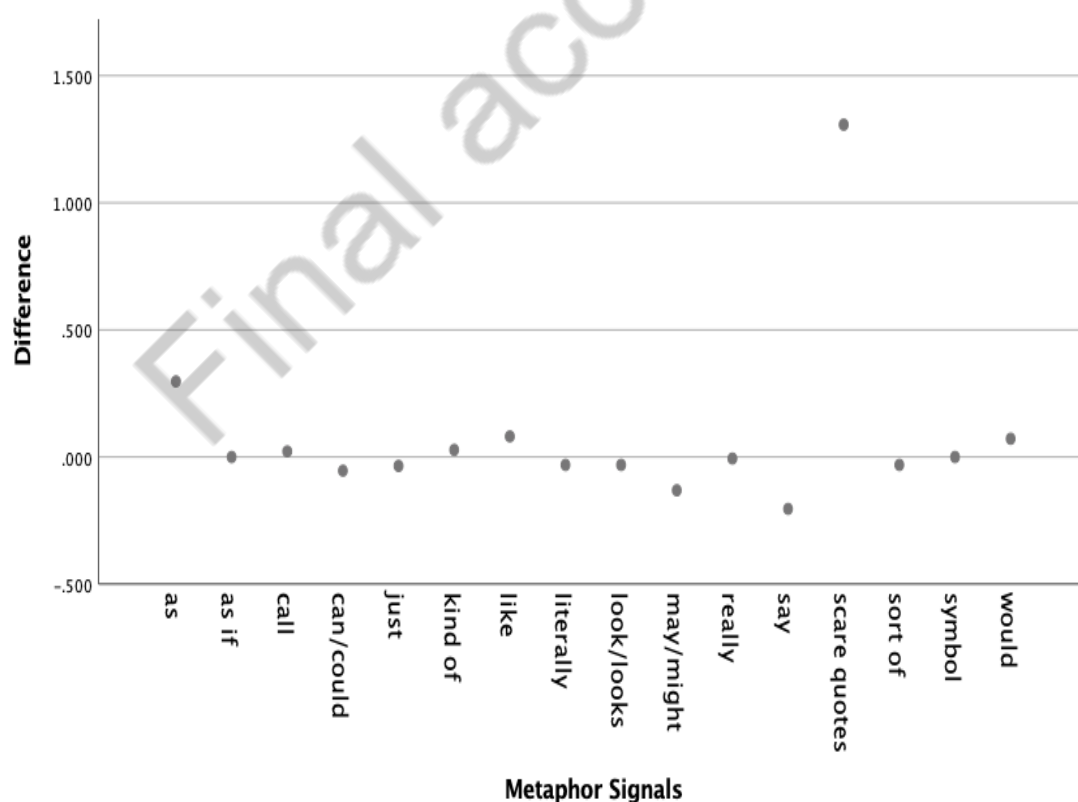

Figure 3. The mean difference of the normalized ratio of the metaphor signals between the two corpora

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Referring back to Table 7, it can be seen that this difference comes from an overuse of scare quotes in the CD corpus compared to the NYT corpus.

I then search the concordance for scare quotes and examine two possible functions: emphasis and objection. I find that the CD corpus and the NYT corpus pattern very differently in terms of how they use this metaphorical signal.

In the CD corpus, scare quotes are used primarily to sow doubt, as shown in example (9).

(9) There is little doubt that the maritime disputes broke out as a result of Washington's "rebalancing" in Asia policy, which is aimed at strengthening the US' strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific region. (*China Daily*, June 26, 2014)

The usage here follows that Geis (1987) and Bell (1991), who note that the functionality of scare quotes in the media or politics is often to indicate doubt or objection with the quoted claim. Thus, in this case, the idea of 'rebalancing' is being called into question, as the writers think it is not so much a 'rebalancing' as a 'strengthening'.

In addition, scare quotes are also used to refute allegations of negative behavior on China's part. In example (10), the writer uses quotes to indicate disagreement with

viewing China as an outlaw, and in (11), the writer also is using quotes to disagree

with the notion that China is a threat.

(10) By doing so, and joined by Hanoi, Manila intends to create an impression that "the big is bullying the small", and their thinly veiled motive is to demonize China and portray China as an "outlaw" in international disputes to encroach upon its long-held interests. Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Evan Garcia mentioned "goodwill" and "patience" were the keys to resolving the boundary issue. The irony is: where is the Philippine patience when it comes to disputes with China. (*China Daily*, July 16, 2014)

(11) Vietnam has been using China-Vietnam clashes in the South China Sea, and distorting facts, fanning passions and playing up the "China threat" theory, to vilify China. Ignoring the overall development of Beijing-Hanoi relationship, Vietnam is pretending to be a "victim" in the South China Sea dispute, saying it is prepared to seek international arbitration on the issue.   (*China Daily*, June 14, 2014)

These negative portrayals of China are then refuted in the text that follows,

indicating a disbelief and an unjustness in the accusation. Thus, these types of scare

quotes used by CD represent expressions which come from the other sources,

enhancing the authenticity of the content, but at the same time insinuating a negative

interpretation.

While it seems at odds rhetorically for the writer to bring up a negative viewpoint

about China's actions, it may have to do with the social construct of harmony,

mentioned earlier, which is so important in not only daily interactions, but also in how

the Chinese government views their own actions. The use of scare quotes in the greater geo-political context not only allows the writer to disagree with the quoted expressions and argue for that it is an incorrect assessment of the situation, but it also portrays those geo-political actors as non-harmonious, and is thus in violation of an important social norm, one that has been extended to geo-politics.

The use of scare quotes found in CD differs from what is found in the NYT. Not only are scare quotes used much less frequently, they are used only once to indicated doubt, as in (12) below, and they are never used to doubt negative portrayals, as was found in (10) and (11).

(12) A decade ago, American officials were hoping China would be a constructive "stakeholder" in upholding the post-Cold War system that guaranteed the free flow of navigation and trade in oceans…. (*The New York Times*, April 11, 2015)

In (12), the use of scare quotes serves to indicate doubt that China is acting in the interests of all parties in the South China Sea region.

Furthermore, in contrast to the CD pattern of usages, most instances of scare quotes in the NYT are to emphasize a particular concept, as in (13) below.

(13) The dispute with Vietnam was largely ignored, suggesting Beijing is keen to control the message regarding the dispute with what state media call an "old friend." (*The New York Times*, May 8, 2014)

Based on the context of the article, the NYT writer is emphasizing the friendship between China and Beijing, and not doubting its veracity.

Thus, in terms of metaphor signals, the two corpora differ significantly only in their frequency of use of scare quotes, which suggests that this particular metaphor signal is important to the Chinese variety of English, as it has a pronounced over-usage. Furthermore, the use of scare quotes in the Chinese corpus is predominantly used to sow doubt about a situation. A variation of this pattern is when they use scare quotes to indicate that others have portrayed them negatively and they view this opinion or argument as spurious, and use scare quotes to refute its veracity. In contrast, the NYT uses scare quotes much less often than CD, and when it does it uses them for emphasis. Only once is it used to sow doubt, but the doubt that is sowed has to do with China's good intentions, and not with the refutation of negative intentions on the part of the United States. Therefore, the use of scare quotes in these two corpora can be viewed as a unique part of the Chinese variety of English.

It remains to be seen, however, whether this use is found in additional genres of this variety of English, or whether it is specific to argumentative writing, such as found in editorials. Xin and Shi (2018), for example, looked at news reports on the topic of

the South China Sea arbitration in Chinese (in *the People's Daily*) and in English in the *New York Times* during a four-month period in 2014. They focused on the use of reporting verbs in their paper and did not examine the function of scare quotes, but they did note that the frequency of use of scare quotes was far greater in Chinese in *the People's Daily* than in English in the *New York Times*, indicating that this signaling device is prevalent in news reports in Chinese.

Another question has to do with the effectiveness of this particular type of rhetoric on U.S. readers. That is, since using scare quotes in this genre often signals a negative portrayal of the recipient, does signaling one's country negatively (as CD writers do) and then refuting the negative portrayal have the intended effect or does it serve to reinforce the negativity? This type of research question may be answered by fluent readers of the statements and editorials from both China and the United States in a future psycholinguistic study, with the hypothesis being that readers who agree with the Chinese viewpoint that harmonious geopolitical relationships are important may find this use of scare quotes convincing, but those readers who do not see harmony as a cultural priority, would not.

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5 | CONCLUSION

This paper has taken Schneider's (2018) proposal and expanded it in the following ways. First, while his research focused on large corpora, I focus on a small corpus of opinion articles having to do with territorial issues in the South China Sea during 2013-2015 published by *The New York Times* and *China Daily*. I have argued that focused analyses of carefully curated small corpora are also useful for finding evidence of culture. I looked at keyness, conceptual frames, and metaphorical signals and found that keyness was particularly useful when used in combination with sentential analysis of the keywords unique to each corpus compared to a reference corpus. This type of detailed analysis would be difficult in a large corpus, but in a focused corpus, it allows for qualitative analysis to ascertain what is underpinning these differences in lexical use.

In particular, the keywords found indicate a difference between the two corpora on the orientation of how a solution is to be achieved, with the CD corpus emphasizing negotiations between relevant parties (but always within a certain set of fixed expectations) and the NYT corpus emphasizing international litigation as a way to solve the ongoing dispute. While this type of qualitative approach that involves analyzing the context in which the keyword is found is not discussed in

Schneider (2018), it is in line with the spirit of Heller's (2008) work in which she argues that the role of language is moving away from 'autonomous structure' and moving toward 'process and practice.' What is also notable is that this finding may be attributed to the contrastive political rationale underlying each nation's views rather than with differences in the English varieties, as the keywords found are not unique to either variety of English.

Conceptual framing, on the other hand, did not show a pattern unique to Chinese English or American English. Instead, I found that the STRICT FATHER frame was the preferred frame for both varieties as compared with the NURTURANT PARENT frame. However, there was a difference in frequency of usage. The NYT corpus uses the STRICT FATHER frame more frequently than the CD corpus, and I argue that this is reflective of the argumentative and litigious rhetoric used in the NYT editorials, as the STRICT FATHER frame highlights the concepts of power and control.

The third finding, that of the large difference in frequency with respect to the use of scare quotes, as a type of metaphorical signaling, seems to be a feature of the Chinese English found in editorials in the *China Daily*. The feature is often used to highlight the illegitimacy of what is being quoted. At the same time, it may also serve to remind the reader that the speaker of the original language is violating the cultural

value of harmony in Chinese culture. Further research is needed to evaluate the efficacy of this rhetorical device for the intended audiences of speakers of Chinese English and American English.

In short, these three lexical-conceptual analyses within two small corpora of newspaper editorials have provided us with a greater understanding of how China and the United States position themselves when arguing over the geopolitical situation in the South China Sea and also with a greater understanding of how Chinese English and American English vary in terms of how the speakers of these English varieties choose to present their arguments.

NOTES

[1] http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/

[3] http://nlp2ct.cis.umac.mo/um-corpus/

[4] Since I am comparing proportions, I calculate the relevant z-statistic and set the alpha-level for significance at .05 for comparison between the CD corpus and the NYT corpus. The z-statistic is used to compare proportions. For example, in this study, two kinds of lexemes (A1 and A2) are being compared in a particular corpus. The

proportion of A1 lexemes ($p1$) and the proportion of A2 lexemes ($p2$) cannot be compared directly because frequencies of lexemes differ overall in a large-scale corpus (BNC corpus in the current research). However, this can be dealt with by testing the ratios of frequencies based on the result of Scott and Seber (1983). For example, for the ratio of frequencies of two kinds of lexemes in a large-scale corpus, the null hypothesis can be set as $p1 = a*p2$, or equivalently, as $p1-a*p2 = 0$. Thus, what is being compared is the difference between $p1$ and $a*p2$ rather than the difference between $p1$ and $p2$. If the null hypothesis is rejected, and $p1-a*p2 < 0$, then it means that this corpus uses more A2 lexemes than A1 lexemes relative to the large-scale corpus. If the null hypothesis is rejected, and $p1-a*p2 > 0$, then this corpus uses more A1 lexemes than A2 lexemes relative to the large-scale corpus. (Professor Cheng Chung-Ping, personal communication, 12 January 2009, cited in Ahrens (2011)).

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