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Discursive Construction of China's Rural Image: Appraisal Resources in English Reports on Rural Revitalization from *China Daily* and NOW Corpus

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Abstract

Since the 19th CPC National Congress put forward the rural vitalization strategy in 2017, China has realized the transition from poverty alleviation to comprehensive rural revitalization by 2021. Beautiful village construction has shaped a multi-dimensional rural image of China. Although rural revitalization attracts wide attention, few studies examine its English news coverage from the perspective of appraisal theory. Prior research mainly focuses on China Daily reports before 2023, and comparative studies between Chinese and foreign media are insufficient.This study selects 63 English reports from China Daily and the NOW Corpus, adopting Martin & White's appraisal theory and a mixed research method. With UAM Corpus Tool 6.2 for annotation, it compares appraisal resources in Chinese and foreign media reports and explores the constructed rural images.The results show that both media share similarities in the distribution of appraisal resources, while significant differences exist in attitude, engagement and graduation resources. China Daily builds a positive, authentic rural image with rich micro-level details, highlighting agricultural progress, sound ecology and governance outcomes. NOW Corpus also presents a generally positive rural image, yet foreign media employ more negative attitude resources which may weaken this image. This research helps improve cross-cultural communication of China's rural revitalization and deliver a vivid Chinese rural story.

I. INTRODUCTION

China has long been a traditional agrarian nation. Chinese civilization is agrarian in origin, with agriculture serving as the foundation of national strength (Sun, 2024). The Chinese government has launched a host of agricultural policies, among which All-Around Rural Revitalization is a core strategy of the CPC Central Committee to build a strong agricultural country and a modern socialist nation in the new era.

At the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the rural vitalization strategy for the first time, noting that issues relating to agriculture, rural areas and rural people are fundamental to China. In 2018, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the

National Rural Revitalization Strategy Plan (2018-2022), which stated that promoting international cooperation in rural revitalization, telling the Chinese story of rural revitalization, and contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to the world (Xinhua News Agency). In 2022, the Report of the 20th CPC National Congress introduced advancing rural revitalization across the board and promoting the revitalization of businesses, talent, culture, ecosystems and organizations in the countryside. Also in January 2025, the *All-Around Rural Revitalization Plan (2024-2027)* was unveiled, setting the main goal of securing substantive progress in each stage of rural revitalization and advancing agricultural and rural modernization to a new level by 2027 (Xinhua News Agency). All these documents show rural revitalization is a core part of China's agricultural policies, critical for addressing "agriculture, rural areas and rural people" issues and consolidating poverty alleviation gains.

Xi Jinping emphasized at the 30th group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that telling China's story, spreading China's voice, and showing a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China are important tasks to strengthen our country's international communication capacity (Xinhua Net, 2021). China's official news reports play multiple roles in spreading rural revitalization policies, sharing rural knowledge and telling rural stories (Shi, 2021: 62-63). These reports show China's capacity in rural development and its people-centered pursuit of rural residents' well-being. They also reflect the shift of rural perception from marginalization to vitality, ecological sustainability and better livelihoods. Foreign media have also paid growing attention to China's rural revitalization ₹strategy. Thus, analyzing English news coverage helps us understand global views on China's rural development.

This study aims to explore similarities and differences in appraisal resources within English news on China's rural revitalization from Chinese and foreign media, and examine the rural images constructed by these reports. Specifically, drawing on Appraisal Theory (AT), it compares attitude, engagement and graduation resources in news from *China Daily* and the NOW Corpus. These reports demonstrate China's achievements in rural revitalization and depict a modern countryside with strong agriculture, beautiful landscapes and prosperous farmers. By comparing the three categories and subcategories of appraisal resources, this study analyzes how media build rural images and explores ideological reasons behind resource choices. It hopes to offer insights for future comparative research on rural news.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it extends AT-based research on rural revitalization news and enriches the application of Appraisal Theory in news discourse. It analyzes attitude, engagement and graduation to uncover discursive strategies and ideological underpinnings. Most existing AT studies on rural news focus only on domestic official media, lacking cross-cultural comparison. This contrast between Chinese and foreign media helps us understand the use of appraisal resources across different cultural contexts.

Practically, rural revitalization is vital for China's modernization. Research on rural revitalization news discourse matches national agricultural strategies. It shows China's resolve to develop agriculture, modernize rural areas and improve public welfare. Mainstream news coverage is the main way global audiences learn about China's rural progress. It serves as an important channel to present authentic rural revitalization stories and spread China's voice internationally.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part first defines two key terms: rural image and rural revitalization reports. It then elaborates on the overview and subsystems of Appraisal Theory (AT). Next, it reviews previous studies on rural revitalization reports and the construction of China's rural image, followed by a review of discourse analysis research on English reports at home and abroad from the linguistic perspective. Finally, it summarizes the research gaps in previous studies.

2.1 Key Terms

2.1.1 Rural Image

According to Zhang (2002: 28), an image is information generated during the movement of matter, which is then projected by the human brain and subsequently output under specific conditions

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via a particular medium. In *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Rural Vitalization* (2021), rural areas refer to geographical complexes outside urban built-up areas, featuring natural, social, and economic attributes and serving multiple functions, including production, living, ecology and culture. They encompass townships, villages and similar settlements.

As a multidimensional, complex and highly symbolic concept, rural image covers people's overall perceptions and impressions of rural areas, including natural landscapes, architectural features, socioeconomic conditions, cultural traditions, and the lifestyles of residents (Yu & Bai, 2024: 178). It is an integral part of the national image and a vital component of China's stories. Therefore, the rural image plays a pivotal role in shaping China's national image in the new era (Ma & Yang, 2023: 152).

2.1.2 Rural Revitalization Reports

The rural vitalization strategy, proposed at the 19th National Congress of the CPC, is the key work concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers in the new era. It is comprehensive, covering the vitalization of industry, talent, culture, the environment, and organizational structures (Xi, 2019). It has long been a hot topic, with successive policy documents setting phased development goals. Mainstream media keep reporting and analyzing relevant policies and practices, thereby presenting a comprehensive picture of new landscape of rural development from multiple perspectives (Li, 2025: 30).

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1 Overview of Appraisal Theory

Developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Appraisal Theory (AT) is designed for the analysis of naturally occurring language. Apart from theoretical discussions, interdisciplinary studies, literature reviews and EFL teaching applications, relevant research on AT is mainly concentrated in discourse analysis (Xu, 2013: 12). At the semantic level of discourse, appraisal, together with negotiation and involvement, jointly construes interpersonal meaning. Negotiation focuses on discourse interactivity, speech functions and exchange structure, while involvement addresses non-gradable resources to negotiate tenor relations, especially solidarity (Martin & White, 2005: 33).

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 309) argue that all utterances realize three metafunctions: textual, ideational and interpersonal, throughout the grammatical system of language. SFL further holds that in nearly all communicative acts, language maps ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings onto one another (Martin & White, 2005: 7). Thompson (2014: 46) elaborates on interpersonal meaning, noting that interrogatives may function as directives, and writers can convey assessments of probability, personal attitudes and negotiate alignment with readers. Nevertheless, prior studies of interpersonal meaning largely centre on how mood and modality construct and negotiate interpersonal bonds. The grammatical resources for evaluative affect remain under-explored (Hunston & Thompson, 2000: 20). Lexico-grammatical resources encoding appraisal stances in discourse have not been systematically examined (Huang & Chen, 2021: 142).

To remedy this limitation in systemic functional grammar, Martin put forward Appraisal Theory. It extends SFL's account of interpersonal meaning, alongside modality and mood, by exploring how speakers take stances at the lexical level and negotiate with alternative voices in dialogue (Martin & White, 2005).

Originating in the 1990s, Appraisal Theory was formulated by linguists including Martin and White based on the interpersonal metafunction of SFL. It has proven effective for discourse analysis (Dong, 2019: 17). In 1992, Martin published his lecture notes from the Discourse Semantics course at the University of Sydney, entitled English Text: *System and Structure*. After its initial introduction by Martin and Rose in *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause*, the three core subsystems of AT — attitude, engagement and graduation — were elaborated in detail in Martin and White's *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (2005), which defines their analytical concerns and approaches. Appraisal resources refer to linguistic devices used to express evaluation (Bednarek, 2006: 27). Their function is to negotiate social relationships by voicing feelings about entities and audiences (Martin & Rose, 2007: 26). Fig. 2-1 sketches the framework of Appraisal Theory, comprising three interacting domains: Attitude, Engagement and

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Graduation. Attitude covers Affect, Judgement and Appreciation; Engagement includes monogloss and heterogloss; Graduation consists of Force and Focus.

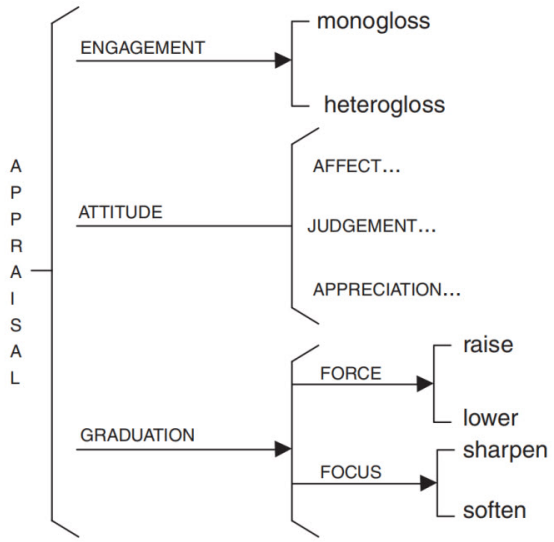


Fig. 2-1 An overview of appraisal resources (Martin & White, 2005)

2.2.2 Attitude System

The Attitude system lies at the heart of Appraisal Theory. Attitude is tied to emotions, through which writers or speakers encode positive or negative evaluations of entities, events and situations in discourse (Martin & White, 2005: 2). It contains three semantic domains: the expression of emotion, judgements of behaviour and valuations of things. Resources encoding feelings are labelled Affect; those assessing human conduct are Judgement; and those evaluating the worth of phenomena are Appreciation (Martin & Rose, 2007: 27-28).

Martin (2000: 148) treats Affect as semantic resources for building mood, culturally interpreted as positive or negative. Affect may surface as emotional surges, expressed through outward behaviour or internal psychological states. It can be further categorized by whether the emotion is directed at unrealized stimuli into four major types: irrealis Affect linked to dis/inclination, and realis Affect covering un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction. To be specific, dis/inclination refers to fear or desire for outcomes yet to happen; un/happiness covers joy and sorrow; in/security relates to peace or anxiety; dis/satisfaction emerges from a sense of achievement or disappointment in activities.

Judgement evaluates human behaviour against social norms (Martin & White, 2005: 35), falling into social esteem and social sanction. Judgement of esteem assesses normality, capacity and tenacity, while judgement of sanction concerns veracity and propriety.

Appreciation evaluates phenomena, natural objects and semiotic artefacts (Martin & White, 2005: 36). It is divided into reaction, composition and valuation, depending on whether the focus lies on the object's impact on viewers, its balance and complexity, or its ideational worth.

2.2.3 Engagement System

The Engagement system expands traditional accounts by examining not only speaker/writer commitment and epistemic certainty, but also how textual voices position themselves relative to alternative viewpoints. It covers linguistic devices that construct a heteroglossic backdrop of prior utterances, competing opinions and anticipated responses (Martin & White, 2005: 2, 97). From a dialogic perspective, these resources are sorted into monoglossic and heteroglossic discourse. Monogloss excludes alternative voices and perspectives, whereas heterogloss acknowledges and accommodates them (Martin & White, 2005: 2, 97).

Heterogloss is subdivided into dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion. Dialogic contraction narrows the dialogic space:

- Disclaim: directly rejects, replaces or negates an alternative viewpoint;

- Proclaim: authorially establishes and reinforces a proposition to rule out competing readings, including concur, pronounce and endorse.

Dialogic expansion opens up the dialogic space:

- Entertain: frames the proposition as one possible interpretation from the writer;

- Attribute: grounds the proposition in external sources.

Attribute is further split into:

- Acknowledge: statements in which there are no clear indications of the author's stance on the preposition.(Martin & White, 2005: 112).

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- Distance: explicitly disaffiliates the author from the attributed content via semantic framework employed.

2.2.4 Graduation System

Graduation deals with the scaling of semantic meaning, including the intensification of feelings and the blurring of category boundaries. It operates along two axes of gradability: intensity/quantity and prototypicality/precision of category boundaries (Martin & White, 2005: 35, 137).

Its two subcategories are Force and Focus. Force incorporates intensification and quantification. Intensification amplifies semantic volume to heighten impact in context, marked by up-scaling or down-scaling via lexis. "Quantification involves scaling with respect to amount (eg size, weight, strength, number), and with respect to extent, with extent covering scope in time and space (ie how widely distributed, how long lasting) and proximity in time and space (ie how near, how recent)" (Martin & White, 2005: 148-149). It is split into number, mass and extent, enabling loose measurement of entities by physical properties such as size, weight, distribution and proximity. Under Focus, specifications can be sharpened to highlight prototypicality, or softened to mark marginal membership of a category (Martin & White, 2005: 138).

2.3 Previous Studies

2.3.1 Analysis of Rural Revitalization Reports

At the Central Rural Work Conference in December 2020, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that after achieving victory in poverty alleviation, China would comprehensively promote rural revitalization, which marks a historic shift in the focus of work concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers (Xinhua News Agency). Rural revitalization has become a core priority in Chinese modernization discourse. Nevertheless, relatively few applied-linguistics studies, especially those adopting Appraisal Theory (AT), have examined English-language reports on rural revitalization.

A CNKI search using the keywords "rural revitalization" and "discourse analysis" retrieved 103 articles by October 11, 2025. Manual screening found merely 3 relevant AT-based studies. Bai (2023) carried out a PDA on ten China Daily rural revitalization news reports (April 2021–December 2022) within the Attitude framework. It found journalists heavily deployed Judgement resources and rarely used Affect resources, highlighting the government's capacity and resolve while maintaining news objectivity. Fu (2023) reached similar conclusions with an expanded corpus of 35 China Daily reports since 2017, proving Attitude resources build positive discourse for China and its rural residents. Zhao (2022) further integrated Attitude, Engagement and Graduation in analyzing China Daily reports from October 18 to December 31, 2021. It argued positive Judgement conveys governmental competence, Pronouncement broadens dialogic space and strengthens credibility, and concrete data vividly demonstrates rural revitalization outcomes.

Related studies on rural English news covers poverty alleviation, rural e-commerce and rural tourism, mainly drawing on *China Daily* and *People's Daily*. Zhou (2022) studied 43 poverty-alleviation reports from *China Daily* (October 18, 2017–April 7, 2021) and identified frequent Appreciation, Attribution and Quantification resources. Li & Yue (2023) analyzed 12 rural e-commerce news articles from the official *People's Daily* website (January 2022–January 2023). Attitude resources were evenly distributed, with Appreciation dominating to deliver objective public opinions. Yin (2024) explored 519 rural tourism posts on *China Daily*'s Twitter account (July 2022–January 2024). The coverage showed an upward trend, covering ecology, cultural events and policy interpretation, and uncovered discourse features and room for improvement.

Foreign media corpora are less frequently adopted for Chinese rural topics. Zhang et al. (2024) collected 91 international poverty-alleviation news reports (December 2011–January 2022) from the NOW Corpus across 15 countries. Under Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the research revealed national ideologies shape divergent media narratives in West, African, Southeast and South Asian countries.

Moreover, rural revitalization discourse analysis is not confined to AT. Luo (2024) adopted Teubert's paraphrase theory and Sinclair's extended unit of meaning model to explore dominant discourses and embedded ideologies in *China Daily* rural revitalization news. Wang et al. (2025) applied the discourse-historical approach to analyze *China*

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Daily's international discourse on poverty governance, identifying rural revitalization as a key theme closely linked to poverty reduction.

In summary, rural news research has covered diverse topics and analytical tools, yet AT-centered investigations remain scarce. Existing gaps include insufficient research on post-20th-Congress rural revitalization news, limited studies of foreign media coverage, and a tendency to only use the Attitude subsystem while neglecting Engagement and Graduation.

2.3.2 The Construction of Chinese Rural Image

Rural regions serve as a vital window for China to present its national image internationally, which helps enrich rural narratives, advance agricultural modernization and foster a positive global perception. A CNKI search for "Chinese rural image" over five years up to October 11, 2025 returned 114 papers. These studies fall into two strands.

The first strand examines discursive construction of holistic rural images. Yan (2025) selected seven episodes of CCTV's Rural Walk, Look at Revitalization. Drawing on visual grammar and multimodal synergy theory, it explored how visual, auditory and linguistic modalities jointly construct rural images of industry, talent, culture, ecology and organization. Zhu et al. (2024) built a corpus of *China Daily* rural revitalization reports and adopted harmonious discourse analysis to unpack construction strategies, revealing diversified rural values in economy, culture and ecology. Luo & Guo (2025) constructed a self-built corpus to study Chinese rural image communication on YouTube. Most commentary was positive, though doubts about agricultural technology and rural safety persisted.

The second strand focuses on specific rural groups such as rural women, teachers and college students. Luo (2024) divided female images in Chinese rural documentaries into four developmental phases and analyzed underlying social, political and economic drivers, noting progress in women's self-recognition and equality. Li (2024) adopted Zang's three-level framework to interpret media portrayals of rural college students in *China Youth Daily*. Jiang (2022) categorized rural teachers in modern novels and traced their living conditions, spiritual traits and life choices from the May Fourth Movement to the founding of New China.

Overall, existing rural-image research mostly relies on multimodal analysis or harmonious discourse, with few studies grounded in AT.

2.3.3 Discourse Analysis of News Reports

2.3.3.1 Discourse Analysis of News Reports at Home

Institutions and social groupings possess specific meanings and values, which are systematically articulated through language (Fowler, 1991: 42). "Media are dominating presenters of language in our society at large. Within the media, news is the primary language genre" (Bell, 1991: 1). Since the introduction of AT into China in the 21st century (Dong, 2019: 17), it has been widely adopted in news discourse analysis, frequently combined with CDA, PDA and EDA.

First, Fairclough's three-dimensional framework is fundamental for CDA, which explores power and ideology across text, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough, 1992). Scholars have deployed this framework to examine Western media's biased evaluations of China in economic and epidemic-related coverage. Li (2024) examined the distribution of attitude, engagement and graduation resources in American media on China's economic reports through a self-built corpus, pointing out that the prevalence of negative evaluations indicates that American media still harbors biases toward China. Tang & Li (2022) analyzed the distribution of attitude resources as well as the attitude trend of European and American media's reports on China-related epidemics, finding that attitude resources were mixed, with more negative resources being expressed. By investigating the frequency and distribution of attitude resources in Washington Post's reports on Sino-US trade war, Kang & Chen (2020) observed that the mainstream media of the United States adopted diverse negative attitudes to convey their negative views on China's economy, trade and politics, as well as their stance of isolating, suppressing and distorting China.

Secondly, PDA complements traditional CDA by adopting a positive and inclusive perspective to pursue harmonious social coexistence (Martin, 2006). Qian & Rob (2016) adopted the engagement system of Appraisal Theory (AT) to explore positive discursive features in *The New York Times* reports on

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Chinese tourists, affirming rational and positive elements in Western media narratives. Similarly, Dong (2019) investigated attitude resources in Italian news on the 19th CPC National Congress and found that Italian mainstream media predominantly adopted constructive and positive appraisal expressions.

Thirdly, Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA) develops under ecological philosophical guidance. Shao & Peng (2021) collected consumer reviews from Chinese and international e-commerce platforms through Python sampling and conducted a comparative ecological discourse analysis, aiming to provide implications for the sustainable development of cross-border e-commerce. From the attitude-system perspective, Li & Wu (2021) applied Halliday's model to analyze the white paper China's Arctic Policy and interpreted its embedded ecological ideologies.

Furthermore, cross-media comparative analysis has become a prevailing research paradigm to reveal Sino-foreign ideological and positional differences in reporting China-related issues. Qualitative and quantitative mixed methods are widely adopted in recent discourse studies. Specifically, UAM Corpus Tool is commonly used to quantify the distribution of appraisal resources, while AntConc is frequently applied for keyword extraction and lexical analysis. For instance, based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, Zhang & Shen (2024) compared high-frequency words and collocations in depression-related news from *China Daily* and *The New York Times*.

In terms of research objects, existing comparative studies mainly focus on Sino-US media discourse. Wei (2022) contrasted vaccine-related news from *China Daily* and *The New York Times* and identified distinct discursive characteristics between Chinese and American media. Xia (2023) further compared engagement resources in Chinese and American reports on the Beijing Winter Olympics, demonstrating that Chinese media constructs a trustworthy national image, whereas American media tends to express suspicion and negative judgment toward China. Some scholars have expanded foreign research objects beyond the US. Zhou & Ren (2023) compared domestic and Western media coverage of the BRI and attributed discursive divergence to different international relations concepts and governance philosophies between China and Western countries.

In summary, current domestic discourse studies primarily adopt CDA, PDA and EDA under the framework of AT, with increasing emphasis on comparative mixed-method research. Existing literature mainly selects *China Daily* and *The New York Times* as representative media sources, while multi-national foreign media corpus remains insufficiently explored.

2.3.3.2 Discourse Analysis of News Reports Abroad

Foreign scholars have made fruitful achievements in news discourse analysis. Literature searches in Web of Science show that CDA has attracted extensive scholarly attention. Foreign CDA studies mainly adopt Fairclough's (Hassan, 2018; Nartey & Ladegaard, 2021) and Van Dijk's frameworks (Munoriyarwa, 2020; Cooper, 2025). Besides, other theories including AT (White, 2025; Engelbrecht, 2020), EDA (Naureen & Janjua, 2024; Paramam, 2024), MCDA (Breazu & David, 2021; Tasseron, 2023) and PDA (Ernanda & Nartey, 2025) are also applied to news discourse research, often combined with CDA.

AT is widely used as a CDA analytical framework. For instance, Indriyani & Widyastuti (2023) combined AT's attitude system and CDA to analyze 25 Omicron-related news articles from *The Jakarta Post*. They found the newspaper maintained political neutrality while pursuing economic benefits by catering to diverse readers. Puspita & Pranoto (2021) adopted AT to examine disaster narratives in 100 news reports from *The Japan Times*, Japan Today and The Asahi Shimbun. Their study shows Japanese newspapers use optimistic lexical resources to highlight rehabilitation and relief instead of victim suffering, matching Japan's "Build Back Better" disaster governance principle.

Comparative analysis has also gained popularity for cross-national media research on global crises and social issues. Bashir et al. (2025) compared CNN and Al Jazeera's Gaza crisis coverage and explored how media bias shapes public perceptions. They called for more transparency in conflict reporting and encouraged critical reading of news sources. Ghasiya & Okamura (2021) analyzed over 100,000 COVID-19 news articles from the UK, India, Japan and South Korea with top2vec and RoBERTa. They discovered national-

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interest topics dominated coverage and pandemic news carried strategic implications. Billah & Biswas (2024) contrasted Reuters and TASS's reports on the Russia-Ukraine war, revealing that the two outlets deployed distinct linguistic strategies to guide public opinions.

Overall, CDA dominates foreign news discourse studies, largely drawing on Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Van Dijk's theories. Nevertheless, research perspectives are diverse, integrating AT, EDA, MCDA, PDA and other theories, with AT frequently paired with CDA. Recent studies also favor comparative analysis to explore cross-country media reporting strategies, mainly focusing on international crises and social affairs.

2.4 Research Gap

Prior scholarship has produced fruitful findings on rural news reports, Chinese rural image construction, and English news discourse analysis grounded in AT, CDA, PDA, EDA and comparative analysis, laying a solid foundation for this study. Still, three major research gaps remain.

First, linguistic studies of China's rural news mainly cover poverty alleviation, rural e-commerce and rural tourism. English news discourse concerning rural revitalization, especially reports after the 20th National Congress in 2022, remains understudied. Moreover, most AT-based research only adopts the attitude system, seldom incorporating engagement and graduation resources.

Second, existing studies of China's rural image focus on news discourse construction and individual rural figures. Most draw on multimodal or harmonious discourse frameworks; few explore how AT shapes authentic, multi-dimensional rural representations.

Third, domestic studies of rural revitalization English reports mostly use *China Daily* as the sole corpus source. Cross-media comparisons with foreign news outlets and contrastive analysis of appraisal resources are rare. A bilingual and cross-national comparison is therefore necessary for a holistic understanding of China's rural image.

Against such gaps, this thesis conducts an AT-based comparative analysis of Chinese and foreign English news on rural revitalization. It compares the distribution of appraisal resources to uncover media stances and reader alignment, and reveals diverse, multifaceted rural images of China constructed in relevant discourse.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part outlines the methodological framework of this study. It first presents the research questions, then elaborates research methods and data collection, and ends with the analytical procedures.

3.1 Research Questions

This thesis compares appraisal resources in rural revitalization news from *China Daily* and NOW Corpus, exploring how Chinese and foreign media construct Chinese rural images. It addresses three questions:

(1) What are the similarities and differences in the distribution of appraisal resources in English rural revitalization reports by Chinese and foreign media?

(2) What appraisal resources are adopted in English reports on rural revitalization by Chinese and foreign media?

(3) What Chinese rural images have been respectively constructed in English reports on rural revitalization by Chinese and foreign media?

3.2 Research Methods

This study adopts mixed quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyse attitude, engagement and graduation resources and unpack the rural images constructed in the news.

The quantitative method, supported by UAM Corpus Tool 6.2, annotates and counts appraisal resources. Chi-square tests run in SPSS Statistics 27.0.1 identify statistically significant distribution differences between the two corpora.

The qualitative method further compares the features of appraisal resources and illustrates how Chinese and foreign media deploy these resources to shape rural representations and reflect underlying ideological stances behind rural revitalization discourse.

3.3 Data Collection

To ensure representativeness, domestic data are collected from *China Daily* (https://www.chinadaily.com.cn), and foreign data

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from NOW Corpus (https://english-corpora.org/now/). As China's mainstream English newspaper widely reposted abroad, *China Daily* offers overseas audiences a major channel to learn about China (Yang & Qiu, 2021: 63). NOW Corpus contains 23.7 billion running words from online newspapers and magazines since 2010 (NOW).

We searched *China Daily* with "rural revitalization", covering 16 October 2022 to 31 July 2025. After screening for relevance, 30 reports form the self-built *China Daily* sub-corpus.

Given the lack of an official English translation for "乡村振兴" (Luo, 2024: 20), multiple keywords including "rural revitalization", "rural vitalization", "rural renaissance" and "rural development" were used to retrieve texts from NOW Corpus, from 18 October 2017 to 31 July 2025. We excluded verbatim reprints from Chinese official outlets and irrelevant articles, obtaining 33 eligible reports from 11 foreign countries.

After cleaning, the final corpus contains 63 texts (41,193 words): 30 from *China Daily* (20,562 words) and 33 from NOW Corpus (20,631 words), with nearly equal word counts.

3.4 Data Analysis

Guided by Appraisal Theory (AT), this comparative analysis investigates appraisal resources and rural image construction through mixed methods. The workflow is as follows:

First, prepare UAM Corpus Tool 6.2 and Java. Create two TXT sub-corpora named "*China Daily*" and "NOW".

Second, build a new UAM project, import the texts and create a manual annotation layer labelled "appraisal theory". Following Zhao (2022), only heterogloss is coded in the engagement system for objectivity, because monogloss carries single, subjective voices (Xia, 2023: 38).Fig. 3-1 shows the AT annotation layer.

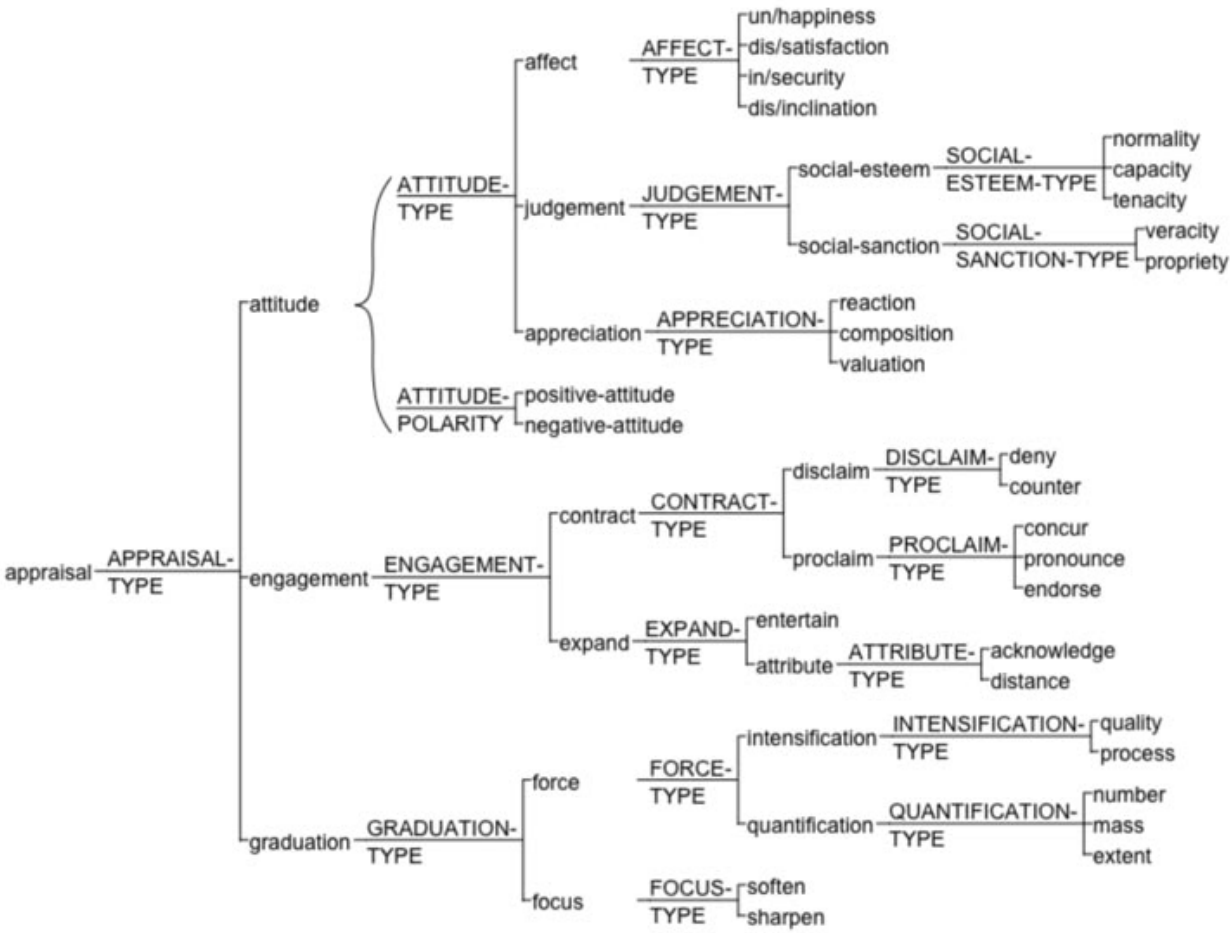


Fig. 3-1 Annotation layer of AT

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Third, annotate all appraisal semantic units. The tool generates distribution statistics. To guarantee coding reliability, delayed self-annotation is conducted after three months. All Kappa coefficients for attitude, engagement and graduation exceed 0.75 (0.917, 0.859, 0.904), proving reliable annotation. For ambiguous cases, the researcher revisits Handbook for Analysis of Chinese & English Appraisal Meanings and reaches agreement with other coders.

Finally, tabulate the overall distribution of appraisal resources and run SPSS chi-square tests to test whether cross-corpus differences are statistically significant.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the annotated data from *China Daily* and NOW Corpus via tables, qualitatively interprets how the two media deploy appraisal resources to construct their stances on China's rural image, and explores the underlying reasons for their diverging representations.

4.1 The Distribution of Appraisal Resources in English Reports on Rural Revitalization

The appraisal system contains three subsystems: attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude covers evaluative values and affective responses; engagement regulates speakers' discursive commitment; graduation scales intensity or adjusts semantic focus (Bednarek, 2006: 27-30). Table 4-1 shows the frequency of appraisal resources.

Table 4-1 Distribution of Appraisal Resources in China Daily and NOW

Appraisal Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Attitude	525	26.60%	503	26.52%		
Engagement	441	22.34%	407	21.45%	0.524	0.770
Graduation	1,008	51.06%	987	52.03%		
Total	1,974	100%	1,897	100%		

The chi-square test indicates no overall significant difference between the two corpora (X^2=0.524, P=0.770>0.05). Graduation resources account for the largest share in both datasets, as abundant figures and temporal expressions are used to detail rural achievements. Attitude ranks second and engagement is the least frequent. This pattern echoes Zhao (2022) and Zhou (2022).

4.1.1 The Distribution of Attitude Resources

Attitude, the core of Appraisal Theory, includes affect, judgement and appreciation. Affect signals emotional reactions; judgement morally assesses human conduct; appreciation evaluates aesthetic qualities of entities and processes (Bednarek, 2006: 27-28). Table 4-2 displays its distribution.

Table 4-2 Distribution of Attitude Resources in China Daily and NOW

Appraisal Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Affect	125	23.81%	110	21.87%		
Judgement	203	38.67%	223	44.33%	3.414	0.181
Appreciation	197	37.52%	170	33.80%		

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No significant difference emerges in the distribution of the three attitude subtypes (X^2=3.414, P=0.181>0.05). Judgement is the most common subtype in both corpora, followed by appreciation and then affect, consistent with Bai (2023), Fu (2023) and Zhao (2022).

The polarity of attitude resources includes positive and negative dimension. Table 4-3 shows the overall distribution of positive and negative attitude resources in China Daily and NOW Corpus. However, the polarity of attitude shows a statistically significant gap (X^2=19.279, P<0.001, Table 4-3). China Daily uses far more positive attitude resources and fewer negative ones. News discourse carries ideological weight (Fairclough, 1995: 65). As China takes the lead in rural revitalization, domestic coverage naturally adopts a supportive stance, while some Western outlets treat China's agricultural progress with scepticism. Still, both sources remain predominantly positive, in line with Bai (2023) and Zhao (2022).

Table 4-3 Positive and Negative Attitude Resources in China Daily and NOW

Attitude Polarity	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Positive	491	93.52%	428	85.09%	19.279	<.001
Negative	34	6.48%	75	14.91%		

4.1.2 The Distribution of Engagement Resources

Heterogloss falls into dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion. Dialogic expansion welcomes alternative voices; dialogic contraction restricts competing viewpoints (Martin and White, 2005: 102). Table 4-4 presents the results.

Table 4-4 Distribution of Engagement Resources in China Daily and NOW

Engagement Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Dialogic contraction	165	37.41%	189	46.44%	7.085	0.008
Dialogic expansion	276	62.59%	218	53.56%		

Engagement distributions differ significantly (X^2=7.085, P=0.008<0.05). Both media prefer dialogic expansion to incorporate outside voices and strengthen news credibility, replicating Zhao's (2022) findings. *China Daily* uses more dialogic expansion, while NOW Corpus employs more dialogic contraction. This reflects Chinese civilisation's emphasis on openness, harmony and dialogue (Xi, 2020: 213; Zhao & Ren, 2026: 33), whereas Western discourse tends to prioritise conflict and exclusive nationalism (Zhao & Ren, 2026: 32-33).

4.1.3 The Distribution of Graduation Resources

Graduation is split into force and focus. Force amplifies or weakens evaluations; focus modifies category boundaries (Bednarek, 2006: 30). Table 4-5 summarises the statistics.

Force dominates graduation resources in both corpora, a finding comparable to Zhao (2022). The chi-square test detects a significant difference (X^2=4.436, P=0.035<0.05). *China Daily* relies more on force to highlight macro achievements rooted in collectivism and holistic thinking. NOW Corpus uses focus more often, reflecting Western individualism and pragmatism that stresses specific distinguishing features.

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Table 4-5 Distribution of Graduation Resources in China Daily and NOW

Graduation Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Force	931	92.36%	885	89.67%	4.436	0.035
Focus	77	7.64%	102	10.33%		

4.2 Comparative Analysis of Appraisal Resources in English Reports on Rural Revitalization

4.2.1 Comparative Analysis of Attitude Resources

4.2.1.1 Affect Resources

The affect system includes un/happiness, dis/satisfaction, in/security and dis/inclination. *China Daily* has 125 affect tokens while NOW Corpus has 110 (Table 4-6, X^2=10.433, P=0.015<0.05).

Table 4-6 Distribution of Affect Resources in China Daily and NOW

Affect Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Un/happiness	35	28.00%	19	17.27%	10.433	0.015
Dis/satisfaction	28	22.40%	44	40.00%		
In/security	17	13.60%	9	8.18%		
Dis/inclination	45	36.00%	38	34.55%		

- In *China Daily*, dis/inclination (36.00%) ranks first, followed by un/happiness (28.00%) and dis/satisfaction (22.40%); in/security is least frequent (13.60%).

- In NOW Corpus, dis/satisfaction (40.00%) is dominant, then dis/inclination (34.55%). In/security is also the least used (8.18%).

Chi-square test shows significant inter-corpus difference in affect subtypes. Except dis/satisfaction, *China Daily* uses more un/happiness, in/security and dis/inclination resources.

Table 4-7 shows polarity distribution of affect resources: China Daily: positive=114 (91.20%), negative=11 (8.80%); NOW: positive=103 (93.64%), negative=7 (6.36%). X^2=0.491, P=0.483>0.05, with no significant difference in polarity. Positive affect overwhelmingly outnumbers negative affect in both corpora, consistent with Zhao (2022).

Table 4-7 Positive and Negative Affect Resources in China Daily and NOW

Affect Polarity	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Positive	114	91.20%	103	93.64%	0.491	0.483
Negative	11	8.80%	7	6.36%		

A. Un/happiness: It refers to emotional responses to circumstances, covering joy and sorrow (Martin & White, 2005: 49).

(1) Xi, who visited the village 23 years ago, said he was ***delighted*** [affect: un/happiness] to see that the village has undergone tremendous changes, adding that China's countryside will surely enjoy brighter prospects on the new journey in the new era. (*China Daily*)

(2) Gemechu's relief and ***happiness*** [affect: un/happiness] were echoed by his wife, Ake Adugna, who also emphasized the importance of the

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project in providing a better future for their family and ensuring food security in the area. (NOW)

These examples illustrate positive emotions triggered by rural transformation and China's overseas poverty-reduction cooperation.

B. Dis/satisfaction: It encodes feelings of satisfaction, interest or boredom towards activities and outcomes.

(3) Despite persistent droughts in key grain-producing regions earlier this year, these regions have provided encouraging news with predictions for a bumper summer harvest, ***thanks to*** [affect: dis/satisfaction] advances in seed breeding, smart farming, and a new generation of tech-savvy farmers. (*China Daily*)

(4) Doing so helps downplay urban-rural chasms and stoke national ***pride*** [affect: dis/satisfaction]. It also fits nicely with Beijing's rural revitalization strategy. (NOW)

They show satisfaction brought by agricultural modernization and national pride from rural progress.

C. In/security: It covers emotional perceptions of safety, trust, anxiety and worry.

(5) After driving all day, the car battery is low. I originally thought that this was a remote area and there were no charging piles so I was quite ***anxious*** [affect: In/security]. (*China Daily*)

(6) During her field research, Bamo Qubumo observed a ***worrying*** [affect: In/security] trend: the over-commercialization of ICH in some regions, with certain entities even exploiting the ICH label for unethical financial gain. (NOW)

Example (5) depicts temporary anxiety later relieved by rural infrastructure; (6) voices concerns over heritage commercialization risks.

D. Dis/inclination: It signals willingness, intention and desire.

(7) "My wife could be closer to her family, which was important to both of us, and I would finally have the chance to build the kind of life I had long been ***yearning for*** [affect: dis/inclination] — one that's more in tune with nature, community, and personal well-being," he said. (*China Daily*)

(8) President Rajapaksa said that the Hambantota Port Project and development of infrastructure facilities are continuing in a satisfactory manner and ***urged*** [affect: dis/inclination] the government of China to complete the project. (NOW)

The two cases reflect individual longing for rural lifestyles and international expectation for China's cooperation projects.

4.2.1.2 Judgement Resources

Judgement is divided into social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and social sanction (veracity, propriety). *China Daily* has 203 judgement tokens and NOW Corpus has 223 (Table 4-8). Social esteem dominates judgement resources in both corpora (X^2=1.168, P=0.558>0.05, no significant difference). Capacity is the most frequent subtype, followed by tenacity, while normality is least frequent. This aligns with Fu (2023). Social sanction shows no statistical difference (P=1.000>0.05); propriety appears far more often than veracity in both corpora (Fu, 2023; Zhao, 2022).

Table 4-8 Distribution of Judgement Resources in China Daily and NOW

Judgement Resources		*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Social Esteem	Normality	15	7.39%	10	4.48%	1.168	0.558
	Capacity	117	57.64%	120	53.81%		
	Tenacity	55	27.09%	59	26.46%		
Social Sanction	Veracity	0	0.00%	2	0.90%		1.000 (Fisher's Exact Test)
	Propriety	16	7.88%	32	14.35%		

Table 4-9 shows judgement polarity: China *Daily*: positive=197 (97.04%), negative=6 (2.96%); NOW: positive=176 (78.92%), negative=47 (21.08%). X^2=32.031, P<0.001, significant difference. *China Daily* adopts a more affirmative stance, while NOW contains more negative judgement.

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Table 4-9 Positive and Negative Judgement Resources in China Daily and NOW

Judgement Polarity	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Positive	197	97.04%	176	78.92%	32.031	<.001
Negative	6	2.96%	47	21.08%		

A. Normality: It links to social esteem, evaluating whether behaviour is ordinary or exceptional.

(9) To help consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty alleviation, the level of credit support will be ***maintained*** [judgement: normality] for previously impoverished regions. (*China Daily*)

(10) A delegation of ***world-renowned*** [judgement: normality] Islamic experts and scholars recently paid a visit to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region at the invitation of the local government, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Friday. (NOW)

Maintained delivers positive judgement on consistent poverty-alleviation support; world-renowned recognizes the authoritative status of visiting scholars.

B. Capacity: It evaluates people's ability to finish tasks.

(11) Mounchili came to see Nujiang's development not just as a Chinese ***success*** [judgement: capacity] story, but as a model for global poverty reduction. (*China Daily*)

(12) Second, China's ***abject*** [judgement: capacity] state of poverty was, of course, created by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party in the first place. (NOW)

Success positively affirms China's poverty governance capacity; abject conveys negative capacity judgement in foreign media narratives.

C. Tenacity: It assesses resolution and reliability amid difficulties.

(13) Fueled by surging demand, the application of AI in agriculture has expanded rapidly in China, highlighting the government's ***continued efforts to*** [judgement: tenacity] modernize its agricultural sector to accelerate rural revitalization. (*China Daily*)

(14) At the symposium, Li Qiang called for efforts to ***faithfully*** [judgement: tenacity] study and implement the guiding principles of Xi's important speech, and turn the region's geographical and resource advantages into development advantages. (NOW)

These two items underline consistent governmental devotion to rural advancement.

D. Veracity: It judges whether someone or something is truthful. No veracity resources are found in *China Daily*.

(15) Digital-savvy farmers and countryside dwellers have used nostalgia and ***authenticity*** [judgement: veracity] to win over Chinese social media. (NOW)

(16) The West has cowardly chosen the option of slander to blemish China's giant strides in its all-round development and advancement, and to tarnish its example which is the real reason why the West spreads ***falsehood*** [judgement: veracity] against China. (NOW)

Authenticity approves genuine rural representation online; falsehood refers to Western disinformation about China.

E. Propriety: It judges if conduct conforms to social morality or legal norms.

(17) China's Belt and Road Initiative has supported many underdeveloped countries and regions. China's poverty alleviation efforts are significant not only economically but also in terms of ***social equity*** [judgement: propriety] and the fate of humanity. (*China Daily*)

(18) The essence of ICH preservation lies in prioritizing its inheritance. We must guard against its ***distortion*** [judgement: propriety] and ***misuse*** [judgement: propriety]. (NOW)

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Social equity morally validates China's anti-poverty actions; distortion and misuse mark improper heritage practices.

4.2.1.3 Appreciation Resources

Appreciation includes reaction, composition and valuation. *China Daily* has 197 appreciation tokens and NOW Corpus has 170 (Table 4-10, X^2=5.110, P=0.078>0.05, no significant difference). In both corpora, valuation resources rank first, followed by reaction, and composition is least frequent, consistent with Fu (2023) and Zhao (2022).

Table 4-10 Distribution of Appreciation Resources in China Daily and NOW

Appreciation Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Reaction	79	40.10%	49	28.82%		
Composition	36	18.27%	37	21.76%	5.110	0.078
Valuation	82	41.62%	84	49.41%		

Note: due to rounding decimals during the calculation process, the sum of all percentages will be very close but not exactly equal to 100%, which is normal (henceforth).

Table 4-11 presents appreciation polarity: China Daily: positive=180 (91.37%), negative=17 (8.63%); NOW: positive=149 (87.65%), negative=21 (12.35%). X^2=1.363, P=0.243>0.05. Positive appreciation dominates in both datasets, showing both domestic and foreign media mostly construct positive narratives of China's rural governance.

Table 4-11 Positive and Negative Appreciation Resources in China Daily and NOW

Appreciation Polarity	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Positive	180	91.37%	149	87.65%	1.363	0.243
Negative	17	8.63%	21	12.35%		

A. Reaction: It concerns how much an item attracts audience attention.

(19) The village has encouraged diversified entities and ***attracted*** [appreciation: reaction] leading agricultural groups like the Beidahuang Group and the Anhui Agricultural Reclamation Group. (*China Daily*)

(20) In Huawu, once a village mired in poverty, now it embraces clean and tidy roads and ***charming*** [appreciation: reaction] antique houses. (NOW)

Attracted and charming capture the appealing features of revitalized villages.

B. Composition: It evaluates whether things are balanced or intricate.

(21) I still remember the first time he brought me to Xiamen in 2019. It was love at first sight… the ***balance*** [appreciation: composition] of nature and modernity — that just spoke to me," she said. (*China Daily*)

(22) To develop a comprehensive and sound rural revitalization system which can deal with the ***complexity*** [appreciation: composition] of the rural situation in each developing country is not an easy job. (NOW)

Balance describes harmonious rural layout; complexity reflects the tangled nature of rural challenges globally.

C. Valuation: It judges the value and significance of entities.

(23) "Leveraging these natural advantages, the county has committed to the principle that lucid waters and lush mountains are ***invaluable*** [appreciation: valuation] assets, positioning TCM as

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a key pillar for development," says Pan Huakai, deputy head of the county. (*China Daily*)

(24) "At IFAD we know that our partnership with China ***is crucial to*** [appreciation: valuation] addressing the global challenges facing rural people, including climate change, conflicts, and food insecurity," said Brown. (NOW)

Invaluable and crucial to highlight the intrinsic value of ecological resources and China's international cooperation value.

In summary, judgement resources occupy the core position in both corpora. Capacity and tenacity are most frequently used, highlighting China's governance competence and continuous commitment to rural well-being.Appreciation resources rank second, mainly positive valuation items, showcasing the value and attractiveness of new countryside.Affect resources are less used, for objective news narration.

Speaking of the differences, *China Daily* prefers dis/inclination to express expectation for bright rural future; NOW uses more dis/satisfaction to show gratitude for China's overseas support. Judgement polarity differs significantly: *China Daily* carries stronger positive tendency, while NOW contains more negative judgement on rural development.

4.2.2 Comparative Analysis of Engagement Resources

This section compares engagement resources in rural revitalization news reports from *China Daily* and the NOW Corpus. It firstly compares the distribution of subcategories of engagement resources in the two corpora, and then explores how Chinese and foreign media deploy these resources through illustrative examples.

4.2.2.1 Dialogic Contraction Resources

Dialogic contraction includes two subcategories: disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim consists of deny and counter, while proclaim covers concur, pronounce and endorse. As shown in Table 4-12, dialogic contraction resources are less frequent in the *China Daily* corpus than in the NOW Corpus.

Table 4-12 Distribution of Dialogic Contraction Resources in China Daily and NOW

Dialogic Resources	Contraction	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Disclaim	Deny	58	35.15%	64	33.86%	0.092	0.761
	Counter	69	41.82%	82	43.39%		
Proclaim	Concur	10	6.06%	8	4.23%	0.745	0.689
	Pronounce	12	7.27%	16	8.47%		
	Endorse	16	9.70%	19	10.05%		

Both corpora favour disclaim resources over proclaim resources, accounting for 76.97% and 77.25% respectively. No significant inter-corpus difference is found in disclaim distribution (X^2=0.092, P=0.761>0.05). Counter resources outnumber deny resources in both corpora, showing a preference for implicit rather than direct negation, which aligns with Zhou's (2022) findings on *China Daily* poverty alleviation news. In proclaim resources, no significant difference exists between the two corpora (X^2=0.745, P=0.689>0.05). Endorse takes the largest proportion, followed by pronounce, and concur is the least frequent. This result is generally consistent with Zhao (2022). The use of deny, counter, concur, pronounce and endorse reflects divergent constructions of China's rural image.

A. Deny

Deny rejects alternative viewpoints and narrows dialogic space, marked by words such as not.

(25) Yang's livestreaming success is ***not*** [disclaim: deny] an isolated case, but part of a broader movement across Yunnan to harness local strengths for rural revitalization. (*China Daily*)

(26) Low-skilled jobs are already leaving China for Vietnam, India, and other countries, yet the workforce is ***not*** [disclaim: deny] equipped to shift into higher-skilled jobs. (NOW)

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In Example (25), not rejects the reading that Yang's success is isolated. Example (26) uses not to negate the claim that low-skilled job outflow brings automatic labour upgrading.

B. Counter

Counter is a subtype of disclaim. It sets up an expectation and then overturns it, guiding readers to align with the reporter's stance; but and though are typical markers.

(27) It's not a big city, ***but*** [disclaim: counter] it has good infrastructure and a lifestyle that's closer to nature. (*China Daily*)

(28) ***Though*** [disclaim: counter], still at the fringes of global coffee production, China has deliberately taken big steps to boost production and quality. (NOW)

But in (27) highlights the appeal of rural areas for foreign residents. Though in (28) shows that China actively develops coffee industries despite its weak initial position.

C. Concur

Concur frames a claim as common, undisputed truth to suppress alternative voices, with markers naturally and clearly.

(29) Yu Hai, a sociology professor at Fudan University said China's opening-up began with major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, which ***naturally*** [proclaim: concur] attracted the largest number of foreigners. Back then, foreigners visiting small towns across China were mostly travelers passing through. (*China Daily*)

(30) In China's megacities, where the air is thick with pollution and opportunity, there's ***clearly*** [proclaim: concur] a hunger for something real – something that doesn't come shrink-wrapped or with a QR code. (NOW)

Naturally in (29) narrows dialogue and presents the statement as objective reality. Clearly in (30) implies shared public feeling among outsiders toward big cities in China.

D. Pronounce

Pronounce refers to explicit evaluative language that reinforces the author's stance, such as really and indeed.

(31) I thought rural China would be more isolated, but the development and vitality here ***really*** [proclaim: pronounce] opened my eyes. (*China Daily*)

(32) Dr. Smith complemented China's approach, observing that "cultural preservation and economic opportunity can ***indeed*** [proclaim: pronounce] be woven together." (NOW)

Really highlights the striking transformation of rural China in (31). Indeed in (32) seeks readers' agreement and marginalizes opposing opinions.

E. Endorse

Endorse validates an external proposition and rules out opposing views, with typical markers show and prove.

(33) "Cameroon also struggles with transportation and energy issues, and Nujiang's development ***proves*** [proclaim: endorse] that infrastructure improvement can stimulate the economy." he said. (*China Daily*)

(34) "Seeing is believing. People can tell right from wrong. The experience of the world-renowned Islamic religious figures in Xinjiang once again ***shows*** [proclaim: endorse] that truth will not be hidden by lies, and those who seek to smear China by manipulating Xinjiang-related issues will not have their way," they commented. (NOW)

Proves uses Nujiang's achievement as solid evidence for replicable rural development. Shows in (34) argues that accusations against Xinjiang are false.

4.2.2.2 Dialogic Expansion Resources

Dialogic expansion consists of entertain and attribute. Attribute is further divided into acknowledge and distance. Table 4-13 shows the distribution of dialogic expansion resources.

Acknowledge resources dominate attribute resources in both corpora. No significant inter-corpus difference is found for entertain (X^2=0.231, P=0.631>0.05) or acknowledge resources (P=0.066>0.05). Notably, the *China Daily* corpus contains zero distance resources, while three distance cases appear in NOW. This finding echoes Zhao (2022): reporters widely adopt acknowledge resources to integrate external voices and boost news authenticity.

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Table 4-13 Distribution of Dialogic Expansion Resources in China Daily and NOW

Dialogic Expansion Resources		*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Entertain		75	27.17%	81	37.16%	0.231	0.631
Attribute	Acknowledge	201	72.83%	134	61.47%		0.066
	Distance	0	0.00%	3	1.38%		(Fisher's Exact Test)

Note: due to low expected frequencies, the statistical significance was revealed using Fisher's Exact Test in the distribution of attribute resources.

A. Entertain

Entertain treats a claim as only one possible interpretation and reserves space for alternative readings; modal verbs may and should are typical markers.

(35) "Choosing to settle down and build a life in a small town, however, ***may*** [entertain] be the newest chapter in the story of foreigners in China," Yu said. (*China Daily*)

(36) The campaign to energize the central region ***should*** [entertain] be better linked with the nation's other major development strategies to help the region better integrate into and support the country's new development pattern, he said. (NOW)

May presents foreigners settling in rural China as one possible trend. Should proposes one forward-looking policy option while leaving other approaches open.

B. Acknowledge

Acknowledge introduces external voices neutrally and admits alternative standpoints, marked by phrases like it is reported that, said, and believed (Van Dijk, 1983: 28).

(37) ***It is reported that*** [attribute: acknowledge] Liukangzhuang village has well-developed special industries, including greenhouse fruit picking, flower cultivation and clay figurine pottery. (*China Daily*)

(38) While some countries are still focusing on urban construction, China has already shifted to the vast countryside and has achieved remarkable results," Li ***said*** he ***believed*** [attribute: acknowledge] that the development potential of China's rural areas was what attracted Lang back to his hometown to start a business. (NOW)

Example (37) uses outside reporting to show Liukangzhuang's successful rural revitalization model. Example (38) quotes an overseas student to strengthen the credibility of China's rural achievement.

C. Distance

Distance quotes external voices while dissociating the reporter from the cited viewpoint. No distance resources are found in *China Daily*, while the NOW Corpus contains cases marked by claim.

(39) China has never ***claimed*** [attribute: distance] to have attained an Eldorado but always restates its strivings at improving the quality of lives of its people and making contributions to the cause of improving the lots of mankind. (NOW)

(40) Late last month, the European Union, United States, Britain and Canada each announced sanctions against China over alleged human right abuses in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, ***claiming*** [attribute: distance] an unproven repression of the Uyghur ethnic group. (NOW)

Claimed signals that the reporter separates themselves from the quoted proposition. This resource allows NOW to introduce hostile Western accusations while creating dialogic space for counter-arguments.

The distribution of entertain, acknowledge and distance resources in the two corpora embodies different ways of constructing China's rural image.

Western civilization emphasizes the concepts of struggle and conflict, and advocates exclusive nationalism (Zhao & Ren, 2026: 32-33). Therefore, the Chinese media tend to maintain an open and tolerant

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attitude towards external views, embracing different voices to broaden the scope and acknowledging the validity of external opinions, thereby establishing a closer, more interactive rapport with their respective readers. However, foreign media are more inclined to stick to their own view to win the support of potential readers.

4.2.3 Comparative Analysis of Graduation Resources

This section compares graduation resources in rural revitalization news reports from the *China Daily* and NOW Corpus, and explores their application with examples.

4.2.3.1 Force Resources

Force contains intensification and quantification. Intensification includes quality and process; quantification covers number, mass and extent. Force resources appear more frequently in the *China Daily* corpus (931) than in the NOW Corpus (885).

As shown in Table 4-14, intensification resources are less common than quantification resources in both corpora. The chi-square test shows no significant difference in intensification distribution (X^2=1.034, P=0.309>0.05). Quality resources outnumber process resources in both corpora, which matches Zhao (2022): reporters prefer quality resources to highlight rural achievements.

Table 4-14 Distribution of Force Resources in China Daily and NOW

Force Resources		*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Intensification	Quality	248	26.64%	258	29.15%	1.034	0.309
	Process	137	14.72%	122	13.79%		
Quantification	Number	335	35.98%	314	35.48%		
	Mass	59	6.34%	32	3.62%	7.260	0.027
	Extent	152	16.33%	159	17.97%		

For quantification, number ranks first, followed by extent and mass, consistent with Zhao (2022). Reporters adopt precise figures to reinforce news objectivity (White, 2000). A significant difference exists in quantification distribution (X^2=7.260, P=0.027<0.05). *China Daily* uses more number and mass resources to present detailed data for global readers, while foreign media employ fewer such details.

The different uses of quality, process, number, mass and extent shape varied rural images.

A. Quality

Intensification of quality evaluates quality intensity (Martin & White, 2005: 141). Comparative and superlative adjectives are typical quality resources to express attitudes.

(41) "Agricultural machinery has become ***more and more advanced*** [Intensification: quality], with air-conditioned cabins and more user-friendly controls. They have made the working environment much ***better*** [Intensification: quality]," Ding said. (*China Daily*)

(42) The Hunan Specialized Forestry Industry Development Project will integrate smallholder farmers into these agricultural value chains, empowering them to become part of ***the larger*** [Intensification: quality] agricultural economy while also improving the overall resilience of the region. (NOW)

In Example (41), "more and more advanced" and "better" highlight upgraded farm equipment and modern rural production. In Example (42), "larger" stresses climate-smart agricultural policies that stabilize rural livelihoods.

B. Process

Process adjusts action intensity via verbs and adverbs (Martin & White, 2005: 145).

(43) A group of young people — diverse in languages and cultural backgrounds — traverse this landscape, not only captivated by its beauty but also ***deeply*** [Intensification: process] engaging with the local community. (*China Daily*)

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(44) The slow pace, soothing music, and impeccable cinematography of her videos quickly turned her into a social media star around the world. Fans loved the idealized version of rural life that Li presented, although some viewers have criticized it as ***overly*** [Intensification: process] sanitized. (NOW)

"Deeply" in (43) shows visitors' immersive engagement with local rural revitalization. "Overly" in (44) reflects foreign viewers' doubts about the idealized rural scene.

C. Number

Number quantifies entities (Peng, 2015: 255). Precise numbers enhance the truthfulness of news discourse (Van Dijk, 1988: 87).

(45) Today, the county boasts ***193*** [quantification: number] such reserves, spanning 43,600 hectares and safeguarding rare species like the critically endangered blue-crowned Laughingthrush. This dedication to conservation has further fueled economic growth, with birdwatching tourism alone generating over ***100 million*** [quantification: number] yuan in 2023. (*China Daily*)

(46) The event hosted over ***300*** [quantification: number] representatives from more than ***40*** [quantification: number] countries, fostering an environment ripe for discussions on rural revitalization, the exchange of innovative practices, and the formation of strategic alliances. (NOW)

The numbers in (45) prove the economic gains brought by ecological protection. Example (46) uses figures to demonstrate global recognition of China's rural revitalization.

D. Mass

Mass describes the physical form of entities, including size, weight and thickness (Peng, 2015: 263).

(47) Tea buds and leaves do not ripen at the same time, even on the same branch. In early spring, they are typically about ***2 centimeters long*** [quantification: mass], with petioles just ***a few millimeters in length*** [quantification: mass]. (*China Daily*)

(48) The Yunnan Coffee Association reports that over 95% of the country's coffee production is from the province. In 2024, Yunnan province exported ***32,500 tonnes*** [quantification: mass] of coffee which represented a year-in-year increase of 358%. (NOW)

The measurements in (47) illustrate the difficulty and value of high-quality tea picking. The export volume in (48) shows the progress of China's agricultural modernization.

E. Extent

Extent marks the spatial or temporal scope of events (Peng, 2015: 268).

(49) Currently, more than 80 percent of its villagers have returned to work in their hometown, with the average annual income of villagers increasing sixfold ***over the past decade*** [quantification: extent]. (*China Daily*)

(50) Yet, for all the conceivable pitfalls, the new farmer trend is an opportunity to challenge the urban-centric narrative that has dominated China's development story ***for decades*** [quantification: extent] and rethink whether progress always means high-rises and highways, or if there's value in preserving ways of life that have sustained communities ***for centuries*** [quantification: extent]. (NOW)

"Over the past decade" in (49) reflects the steady income growth of local villagers. "For decades" and "for centuries" in (50) reveal how the new farmer trend reshapes dominant views of development.

4.2.3.2 Focus Resources

Focus resources are divided into soften and sharpen. They appear less often in *China Daily* (77) than in NOW Corpus (102). Table 4-15 shows their distribution.

Table 4-15 Distribution of Focus Resources in China Daily and NOW

Focus Resources	*China Daily*		NOW		X^2	P
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Soften	26	33.77%	37	36.27%	0.121	0.728
Sharpen	51	66.23%	65	63.73%		

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China Daily has 26 soften and 51 sharpen resources; NOW Corpus contains 37 soften and 65 sharpen resources. No significant difference is found (X^2=0.121, P=0.728>0.05). Both corpora use more sharpen resources to reduce ambiguity and build trust, consistent with Zhao (2022).

The two corpora' different use of soften and sharpen constructs distinct rural images.

A. Soften

Soften adds ambiguity to non-gradable meanings.

(51) Noting that the company has reduced the cost of robotic arms from ***around*** [focus: soften] 100,000 yuan (about $13,873) to under 10,000 yuan and cut the weight of the robotic arms from 85 kilograms to 22 kilograms, Zhou also expressed hope that these robots will eventually adapt to different types of terrain and speed up operations. (*China Daily*)

(52) Spanning more than 1,333 hectares and expected to yield ***around*** [focus: soften] 13,000 tons, the crop has become a major source of rural income, transforming the bright, fragrant fruit into what locals call a "golden fruit of prosperity". (NOW)

"Around" in both examples delivers approximate figures and improves news objectivity.

B. Sharpen

Sharpen clarifies non-gradable semantic meanings.

(53) "I want to be an integral part of my hometown's development and bring about ***real*** [focus: sharpen] changes that improve the livelihoods of our villagers while realizing my own personal value," Li said. (*China Daily*)

(54) "This support is a living testimony to our two countries' ***true*** [focus: sharpen] friendship as it grows from strength to strength and continues to bear fruit and benefit a lot of our rural communities throughout the country," he said. (NOW)

"Real" highlights young people's practical contributions to rural development. "True" emphasizes reliable cooperative ties that benefit local rural communities.

In summary, for graduation resources:First, Chinese and foreign media show high consistency: force resources outnumber focus resources. Within force resources, quality resources highlight rural achievements; number resources supply concrete data to reflect welfare growth.

Second, sharpen resources are preferred over soften resources in both outlets, which strengthens the factual credibility of reports and forms a positive impression of China's rural transformation.

Finally, significant differences exist between the two corpora. Rooted in collectivism, *China Daily* uses force resources more frequently, especially number and mass data to show detailed rural progress. Influenced by individualism and pragmatism, foreign media use more focus resources and fewer quantified details.

4.3 Main Features of Chinese Rural Image in *China Daily* and NOW Corpus

Based on the comparative analysis of appraisal resources in rural revitalization coverage and specific examples of appraisal use, this section summarizes the two media outlets' attitudes toward rural revitalization achievements. It further explores how appraisal resources construct distinct Chinese rural images in their respective discursive contexts and discusses underlying factors behind these divergent representations.

4.3.1 The Construction of Chinese Rural Image in *China Daily*

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of appraisal resources in *China Daily* shows that domestic media deploy abundant appraisal resources to build a dynamic, promising rural image of China. This image presents an actively modernizing countryside, where the rural revitalization strategy improves residents' living standards and builds confidence in strong agricultural development in the new era.

To conclude, *China Daily* constructs a positive, authentic rural image featuring modern agriculture, livable eco-friendly environments, sound infrastructure, updated social civility, effective governance and improved farmers' well-being.

Firstly, its reports highlight advanced technology and mechanization in agricultural modernization. Descriptions of AI platforms, drones and robotic arms build the image of a digital village. Integrating farming with AI, big data and intelligent machinery upgrades rural infrastructure and shifts traditional agriculture toward smart farming. Tech-savvy young farmers returning home drive

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agricultural transformation and industrial upgrading.

Secondly, *China Daily* adopts an overall positive stance, dominated by positive attitude resources. Terms like "attract", "beautiful" and "harmony" show the countryside is no longer a remote area, but a space for harmonious human-nature coexistence. Resources such as "success" and "continued efforts to" credit government support for rural development. Improved infrastructure including high-speed rail makes rural areas accessible and habitable, attracting tourists. Affective resources reflect villagers' satisfaction with local changes and their hopes for agricultural and rural modernization.

Thirdly, the coverage stresses the inheritance of fine rural cultural traditions and the modernization of governance capacity, matching the goals of cultural preservation and organizational revitalization. Local enterprises and cooperatives protect intangible cultural heritage and fuel rural revitalization, while legislative measures safeguard rural homeowners' rights. Villagers participate in community co-governance and advance village self-governance.

Fourthly, raising farmers' income is the core of rural work (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). Booming rural industries create local jobs, and growth-driven policies lift grain output and residents' income. Quantifying rising disposable income, better public services and improved life quality helps construct the image of villagers moving toward common prosperity.

4.3.1.1 Thriving Businesses

A sound business environment underpins rural revitalization, relying on modern agriculture and integrated rural industries. Modern agriculture is central to thriving local businesses (Xi, 2019; Fuyang Municipal Government Website, 2023).

(55) Meanwhile, as of 2024, more than 2.2 million agricultural machines across the country had been equipped with the BeiDou navigation system, which helps them achieve internationally advanced levels of ***efficiency*** [appreciation: valuation] and precision. (*China Daily*)

(56) Xi has emphasized on various occasions that to advance rural revitalization, local industries ***must*** [entertain] be developed. (*China Daily*)

(57) Furthermore, enhanced financial services will be provided for promoting the in-depth integration of agriculture, culture and tourism and empowering the development of digital villages, ***according to*** [attribute: acknowledge] the guideline. (*China Daily*)

(58) In Jiayu county, Central China's Hubei province, ***vast expanses*** [quantification: extent] of vegetable fields stretch as far as the eye can see, infusing the air with a sense of freshness and vitality. (*China Daily*)

Examples (55) - (58) illustrate digital villages, local industries and agri-culture-tourism integration. In (55), "efficiency" proves smart farming lifts economic output; BeiDou navigation boosts planting accuracy and agricultural modernization. In (56), the modal "must" highlights the necessity of developing local industries with unique strengths. (57) reflects official plans to offer financial support for digital villages, with "according to" grounding the report in official guidelines. (58) shows Jiayu County leverages vegetable farming and technology to raise production, residents' income and living standards.

(59) From AI-powered data platforms to drones flying across the skies, Generation Z farmers in China are ***embracing*** [affect: un/happiness] a modern approach to agriculture and redefining what it means to be a farmer. (*China Daily*)

(60) Local farmers here are incredibly ***knowledgeable*** [judgement: capacity]. Even if they haven't studied organic methods, their connection to the land runs deep. (*China Daily*)

(61) A growing number of ***more*** [intensification: quality] highly ***educated*** [judgement: capacity] "new farmers" are returning to the countryside, helping to reshape Chinese agriculture by applying technology and business expertise to fields once dominated by manual labor. (*China Daily*)

Examples (59) - (61) focus on young farmers as the driving force of modern agriculture. They break the stereotype of old, uneducated farmers. Young villagers actively adopt digital technology to transform traditional farming. (60) recognizes local farmers' practical farming wisdom from lived experience. "New farmers" in (61) lead rural entrepreneurship, transforming agriculture with technology and business knowledge.

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4.3.1.2 Pleasant Living Environment

Building pleasant living environments guarantees high-quality rural development, embodying ecological civilization construction and villagers' willingness to build beautiful communities (Xi, 2019).

(62) Now many of the tourists coming to Taizhou city are driving new energy vehicles. Our city has ***beautiful*** [appreciation: reaction] natural scenery and rich tourism resources. (*China Daily*)

(63) "I ***really*** [proclaim: pronounce] didn't expect that charging piles would be installed here. It's so convenient!" On Oct 22, coinciding with the golden autumn tourist season, Li, who traveled to Tongbaixingu Palace in Taizhou city, Zhejiang province for a visit, said after injecting new power into his beloved car. (*China Daily*)

(64) He ***particularly*** [focus: sharpen] remembered his visit to Yangpo village in Lushui, where newly built government homes stand atop the mountains. While residents live in these modern buildings, they continue to practice traditional activities such as weaving and brewing, "seamlessly blending the ancient with the modern", he said. (*China Daily*)

Examples (62) - (64) show upgraded rural infrastructure and natural surroundings. "Beautiful" in (62) depicts attractive rural landscapes and tourism resources. (63) reflects stable, improved rural power supply that solves past voltage fluctuation risks. "Particularly" in (64) contrasts foreign visitors' prior stereotypes with the reality of modern, culturally rich villages.

(65) "This ***harmony*** [appreciation: composition] between humans and nature is something I'd only seen online but never in real life," she said. "This coexistence of convenience and pristine nature gave me a new understanding of rural China." (*China Daily*)

(66) "I think it's now called ecological tourism, ecological culture, and green industries," she said. We will ***constantly*** [judgement: tenacity] seek ways to improve the livelihoods of the villagers and promote ecological civilization and sustainable development in rural areas. (*China Daily*)

Examples (65) - (66) highlight ecosystem protection and human-nature harmony. (65) presents remote mountain villages balancing urban-style convenience and untouched nature. "Constantly" in (66) demonstrates local residents' persistent efforts to develop eco-tourism, raise incomes and realize sustainable rural-urban integration.

4.3.1.3 Social Etiquette and Civility

Cultivating rural civility protects and inherits local cultural traditions, carries forward fine customs and promotes core socialist values (Xi, 2019).

(67) When he visited Huawu village during an inspection tour of Guizhou in 2021, Xi ***gave the thumbs-up*** [affect: dis/satisfaction] to using Miao embroidery to pass down ethnic traditional culture, aid in the battle against poverty, and promote rural vitalization. (*China Daily*)

(68) As of June 2024, a total of ***9,100*** [quantification: number] such workshops had been established across the country. Most of these are built around leading local enterprises or cooperatives engaged in intangible cultural heritage practices. They have become vital platforms for the living preservation of traditional culture and serve as powerful engines driving rural vitalization. (*China Daily*)

Examples (67) - (68) show how villages integrate heritage into modern life. Huawu Village preserves Miao embroidery heritage and alleviates poverty. Nationwide ICH workshops run by enterprises and cooperatives keep traditions alive and fuel economic and social progress.

(69) People here are ***kind*** [judgement: propriety]. I've made friends who feel like family. My in-laws include me in Lunar New Year celebrations, and shopkeepers remember my favorite fruits. These small gestures make me feel truly part of the community. (*China Daily*)

Example (69) illustrates rural residents' friendliness as a spiritual civilization achievement, showing warm, inclusive rural interpersonal culture.

4.3.1.4 Effective Governance

Effective governance supports rural revitalization and advances the modernization of rural governance systems and capacity (Xi, 2019).

(70) To promote the effective management and utilization of rural resources and assets, the document calls for the exploration of feasible ways to

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make good use of ***legally*** [judgement: propriety] owned rural housing through methods such as leasing, equity participation and cooperation. (*China Daily*)

(71) "The traditional governance model made it difficult to mobilize the community's enthusiasm." To bridge these gaps, the village introduced a point-based rewards system that encourages residents to keep streets and public spaces clean. Weekly town hall meetings and volunteer patrols also provided new opportunities for dialogue, gradually turning skeptics into active participants. ...The village's efforts have ***paid off*** [judgement: capacity]. It has achieved zero direct sewage discharge and received national recognition as a model for "community co-governance, resource symbiosis, and shared benefits". (*China Daily*)

Examples (70) - (71) demonstrate participatory, legally-backed modern rural governance. "Legally" in (70) defines lawful channels to use rural housing assets and protect homeowners' rights. (71) shows villages reforming old governance models with incentive rules and public dialogue to realize self-governance, environmental improvement and shared benefits.

4.3.1.5 Prosperity

Prosperity is the core goal of rural revitalization, aiming for steady farmer income growth, narrowed urban-rural wealth gaps and common prosperity (Fuyang Municipal Government Website, 2023).

(72) Eligible cities are encouraged to include their agricultural migrant populations with ***stable*** [judgement: normality] employment into the scope of local urban housing security policies gradually, the document notes. (*China Daily*)

(73) Since leasing his farmland to a company to develop a peony-themed tourist attraction, he ***no longer*** [disclaim: deny] relies on labor-intensive farming. He opened a farmhouse restaurant with his family, offering local dishes to visitors. (*China Daily*)

(74) We must gain a full understanding of and apply the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress, advance rural revitalization across the board, implement one policy after another for the prosperity of the people, speed up the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, so that all the country folks could live a ***more prosperous*** [Intensification: quality] life. (*China Daily*)

Examples (72) - (74) show measures to narrow urban-rural gaps and improve rural living standards. (72) guarantees housing security for migrant workers. "No longer" in (73) marks the shift away from low-yield intensive farming toward tourism income. "More prosperous" in (74) conveys the expectation of shared affluence for rural residents.

(75) Data from the National Bureau of Statistics ***showed*** [proclaim: endorse] that, in 2021, the per capita disposable income of rural residents nationwide grew by 9.7 percent year-on-year to 18,931 yuan, up 125.7 percent from 2012. (*China Daily*)

(76) In March, Dianjiang received ***3.6 million*** [quantification: number] tourists, generating ***2.56 billion*** [quantification: number] yuan in revenue. During the recent three-day Qingming Festival holiday, in early April, alone, the county welcomed ***821,000*** [quantification: number] tourists, up ***17.96 percent*** [quantification: number] year-on-year, with tourism revenue reaching ***535 million*** [quantification: number] yuan, a ***21.07 percent*** [quantification: number] increase, according to the county's culture and tourism department. (*China Daily*)

(77) In Jiayu, vegetable cultivation began as early as in the 1980s. With favorable climate and soil conditions, Jiayu has become a leading vegetable producer in the province, generating an impressive annual output of ***1.27 million tonnes*** [quantification: mass] that is sold across the country and overseas. (*China Daily*)

Examples (75) - (77) prove rapid farmer income growth toward common prosperity. National statistical data in (75) verifies income gains. Tourism and vegetable industry data in (76) and (77) show local industries bring tangible revenue growth.

4.3.2 The Construction of Chinese Rural Image in NOW Corpus

NOW Corpus uses fewer appraisal resources than *China Daily*. Most foreign media build an image of idyllic, prosperous rural China, highlighting green agriculture investment, international agricultural cooperation, aid for developing nations and sustainable rural development. Still, some outlets hold negative, stereotypical views.

4.3.2.1 Bucolic Landscape and Inclusiveness

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Bucolic landscapes carry tranquility and natural advantages; inclusiveness shapes warm, open rural communities.

(78) In the quiet backwaters of Yunnan, Dong Meihua — though her followers know her by the public alias Dianxi Xiaoge — has done something remarkable: She's made the pastoral ***simplicity*** [appreciation: composition] of rural China irresistible to millions. (NOW)

(79) Her videos glorifying the ideals of a ***slower*** [Intensification: quality], pastoral lifestyle also fit ***well*** [Intensification: process] with the government's rural revitalization agenda. (NOW)

Examples (78) - (79) show idyllic rural life shared by rural online creators. Their videos rebrand rural China as a simple, healing pastoral haven and reshape international perceptions of the countryside.

(80) The happy smiles on the faces of the villagers once again confirmed Li's thoughts. Li said everyone he met in Shiping village would greet him ***hospitably*** [judgement: propriety]. (NOW)

Example (80) tells of foreign visitors experiencing villagers' hospitality and the traditional Chinese virtue of treating guests as family.

4.3.2.2 Prosperity and Success

Prosperity is reflected in diversified income streams, revenue growth and poverty alleviation.

(81) The inclusion of bamboo, tea seed oil, and medicinal herbs ***is expected to*** [affect: dis/inclination] diversify income sources for farmers, thereby reducing their vulnerability to environmental risks and market fluctuations. (NOW)

(82) This year, the company's pomelo cultivation covers 400 hectares with production expected to reach ***2.5 million kilograms*** [quantification: mass], nearly double last year's output, and generate revenue of about 15 million yuan. (NOW)

Examples (81) - (82) reflect expectations of diversified income and rising yields. New crops help smallholder farmers resist risks and build sustainable rural economies. Pomelo planting becomes a major local income source.

(83) All the participants ***spoke highly of*** [affect: dis/satisfaction] its transformation and ***marveled at*** [affect: dis/satisfaction] its successful organic connection between poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, as well as the integration of rural ecological revitalization, industrial revitalization, and cultural revitalization. (NOW)

(84) To relieve more than 700 million people of the scourge of poverty in a generation is no mean feat and so far, ***no*** [disclaim: deny] country has accomplished that, therefore China is clearly a pacesetter whose example is worthy of serious interrogation. (NOW)

Examples (83) - (84) show international recognition of China's anti-poverty and revitalization achievements. Overseas observers praise integrated ecological, industrial and cultural progress. "No" emphasizes the uniqueness of China's poverty reduction contribution globally.

4.3.2.3 Substantial Expenditure and Investment

Large-scale fiscal investment safeguards food security, improves farming practices and builds climate resilience.

(85) In 2022, ***40 billion*** [quantification: number] yuan (about 5.63 billion U.S. dollars) has been allocated from the central government budget to ease the impact of agricultural material price rises, along with agricultural specialists being sent to fields across the country to assist farms. (NOW)

(86) The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of China have officially signed an agreement to invest ***US$235.2 million*** [quantification: number] into the Human Specialized Forestry Industry Development Project (HuSFID). This ambitious initiative, aimed at enhancing the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in China, will directly benefit ***128,000*** [quantification: number] individuals over the next six years in the Hunan province. (NOW)

Examples (85) - (86) confirm government-backed rural revitalization. The 40-billion-yuan fund stabilizes agricultural production and food security. The IFAD cooperation project injects capital into green agriculture, reduces poverty and unlocks agricultural chain potential.

4.3.2.4 Commitment to International Cooperation and Sustainable Development

China shares rural development experience and solutions with other developing countries to advance global sustainability and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

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(87) In July this year Dr Yuan Jiajun, top official of the Chinese Communist Party in Chongqing, who is also a CPC Politbureau member, said that China ***would*** [entertain] extend ***fullest*** [Intensification: quality] cooperation by encouraging large-scale investments in industrial and agricultural spheres. (NOW)

(88) International collaboration has also played a role in the industry's success, with Peruvian agricultural expert Marcelo Vergaray working alongside Chinese colleagues for seven years. Vergaray's efforts, along with those of his team, have not only propelled the blueberry industry forward but have also ***significantly*** [Intensification: process] contributed to the social and economic well-being of the Mengzi community. (NOW)

(89) China would like to share its experiences and solutions with other developing countries through ***innovative*** [appreciation: valuation] international cooperation. (NOW)

Examples (87) - (89) illustrate China's active international agricultural cooperation and assistance. "Would" and "fullest" in (87) signal willingness to expand industrial and agricultural investment. (88) shows joint Sino-foreign teams lift local industries and farmers' income. "Innovative" in (89) highlights China's exploration of new cooperative models for developing nations.

(90) This long-term strategy envisions a ***greener*** [Intensification: quality] economy and a more equitable society by 2050, with a focus on sustainable development and climate resilience. (NOW)

(91) The 2024 Lucun Forum ***demonstrated*** [proclaim: endorse] that true revitalization transcends policy, rooted instead in shared commitment to the people and narratives that define rural communities. (NOW)

(92) As China works toward its goal of reaching peak carbon emissions ***by 2030*** [quantification: extent] and achieving carbon neutrality ***by 2060***, [quantification: extent] projects like the HuSFID will be instrumental in shaping a greener and more sustainable future for rural communities across the country. (NOW)

Examples (90) - (92) show rural revitalization aligns with global sustainable development goals. "Greener" anticipates low-carbon development. "Demonstrated" lends objectivity to forum conclusions. Carbon peaking and neutrality targets show rural development carries ecological priorities.

4.3.2.5 Negative Image

Some Western media cast doubt on China's rural development capacity and highlight challenges to build negative rural images. Other countries refute these stereotypes.

(93) Imagine nearly two-thirds of China's population ***unable*** [judgement: capacity] to find employment other than as trash pickers, street vendors, or the guys who stop you at intersections to clean your windshield. (NOW)

(94) ***Notwithstanding*** [disclaim: counter] these efforts, China's urban-rural income gap remains substantial, with the average annual per capita disposable income of rural households standing at 21,691 yuan (about US$3,100), approximately 40% of the amount for urban households. (NOW)

Examples (93) - (94) are excerpts from U.S. and UK reports. They claim rural residents are trapped in low-skilled work and that revitalization has yielded limited results, exaggerating the urban-rural gap to downplay China's progress.

(95) Wang said that members of the delegation said that what they saw in Xinjiang is ***entirely*** [focus: sharpen] different from what has been painted by some media, and the accusations against Xinjiang's human rights situation and so-called Uyghur cultural genocide are nothing but distortion of facts. (NOW)

(96) ***It is a well-known fact that*** [proclaim: pronounce] modern China was founded against the will of the West for whom the old China was a lucrative colonial outpost for expropriation, exportation and domination. (NOW)

Examples (95) - (96) come from Pakistan and Nigeria, BRI and Global South partners. "Entirely" in (95) counters fabricated Xinjiang narratives. "It is a well-known fact that" in (96) pushes back against Western hegemonic discourse, challenging one-sided misrepresentations of China's countryside.

In summary, NOW Corpus reports carry some skepticism but present a largely positive view of China's rural development. This positive impression stems from China's international cooperation, food security actions, green agriculture, poverty relief investment and shared-future vision.

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First, foreign reports frame rural communities as pastoral, welcoming and successful. Rural creators spread images of slow, harmonious rural life online. Villagers' hospitality embodies traditional Chinese virtues, and rising agricultural yields and diverse income sources show poverty reduction success.

Second, rural revitalization in complex developing contexts is difficult, and China's rural progress offers a global poverty-reduction model. Quantified data shows large government investment, and China shares its practical experience with other countries.

Third, China is ready to share rural development solutions with nations facing similar challenges, offering grants and training programs. Affective resources express recipient countries' gratitude for China's aid. Joint research produces competitive farm products, and China's green agricultural initiatives advance global ecological balance.

Fourth, though most foreign coverage is positive, NOW Corpus contains a noticeably higher share of negative attitude resources than *China Daily*, harming China's overseas image. Western outlets tend to emphasize difficulties and skepticism, using negative judgement resources to question government governance capacity. "News is not simply an description of the facts, but a specific kind of (re)construction of reality according to the norms and values of some society" (Van Dijk, 1983: 28). This skepticism comes from geopolitical hesitation to fully recognize China's poverty alleviation gains and its global rise.

4.3.3 Comparisons of Chinese Rural Image in Chinese and Foreign Media

The above section analyses the main features of Chinese rural image constructed in English reports on rural revitalization by Chinese and foreign media through appraisal resources, showing both similarities and differences.

Chinese and most foreign media tend to construct a positive Chinese rural image. China's rural living environment has undergone huge changes, not only fulfilling domestic aspirations but also attracting overseas people who long to be close to nature. Rural natural surroundings are depicted as picturesque, the lifestyle as peaceful and convenient, villagers as prosperous and friendly, and a harmonious coexistence between people and nature is achieved. Both also emphasize China's ability and commitment to transforming rural life, improving villagers' livelihoods, and playing a significant role in sustainable development.

In terms of differences, first, domestic media focus on the micro-narrative of rural revitalization practices by presenting typical successful cases backed by detailed data, thereby constructing a three-dimensional image of comprehensive rural revitalization. By contrast, most foreign media focus on international agricultural cooperation narratives and the success of the strategy. They express profound gratitude to China for its continuous support and generous assistance, as China is willing to share its rural and agricultural development experience and solutions with other nations facing similar difficulties. Second, Chinese media consistently maintain a positive stance toward the rural revitalization strategy and the prospects of becoming an agricultural powerful country. However, foreign media attitudes diverge: BRI-participating countries hold positive attitudes, while Western countries still harbor doubts about China's capabilities and attempt to undermine China's efforts.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on an appraisal-resource analysis of rural revitalization news from China Daily and the NOW Corpus, and an exploration of how journalists construct China's rural image, this chapter summarizes major findings, presents research implications, notes limitations and offers suggestions for future studies.

5.1 Major Findings

This thesis analyzes rural revitalization news with UAM Corpus Tool 6.2 and SPSS Statistics 27.0. It examines the distribution of appraisal resources, compares resource use between the two media corpora, explores underlying reasons, and investigates how journalists shape China's rural image. The main findings are as follows:

First, both corpora deploy a wide range of appraisal resources.

(1) For attitude resources: judgement resources are most frequent, followed by appreciation and affect. Positive attitude resources outnumber

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negative ones significantly in both corpora. In judgement, social esteem resources are preferred over social sanction resources, with capacity and tenacity as the top two subtypes. In appreciation, valuation ranks first, followed by reaction and composition.

(2) For engagement resources: dialogic expansion is more common than contraction. Acknowledge resources dominate expansion, while disclaim resources outnumber proclaim resources within contraction.

(3) For graduation resources: force resources appear far more often than focus resources. Quantification is more frequent than intensification under force; number resources lead quantification, and quality resources are favoured in intensification. Under focus, sharpen resources are more frequent than soften ones.

Beyond similarities, clear differences exist:

(1) Attitude polarity differs greatly. China Daily carries more positive and fewer negative attitude resources, highlighting the positive outcomes of rural revitalization.

(2) Affect subtypes differ. China Daily prioritizes dis/inclination, while the NOW Corpus centres on dis/satisfaction.

(3) Judgement polarity differs. China Daily uses more positive judgement to affirm government work, whereas NOW contains more negative judgement, emphasizing rural development challenges and criticism of Chinese policy.

(4) Engagement patterns differ. China Daily favours dialogic expansion to open dialogue space; foreign media in NOW rely more on dialogic contraction to exclude alternative voices.

(5) Graduation use differs. China Daily uses more force resources (especially number and extent quantification) with concrete investment and infrastructure data to prove achievements. NOW uses more focus resources, highlighting event timelines for stronger rhetorical impact.

Second, attitude, engagement and graduation resources all appear in both datasets. Overall, China Daily uses slightly more appraisal resources than the NOW Corpus; graduation resources account for the largest share, followed by attitude and engagement.

Third, the two media construct distinct rural images. China Daily builds a positive, authentic rural image: modern agriculture, pleasant ecology, improved infrastructure, civilized villagers and effective governance, matching the official rural revitalization strategy. It highlights China's commitment to lifting rural livelihoods.

The NOW Corpus generally presents a positive countryside of pastoral life, inclusion and poverty reduction success, acknowledging China's global contribution to sustainable agriculture and willingness to share experience with developing nations. Still, some Western outlets remain sceptical, emphasizing unresolved rural challenges and weakening the positive overseas image of China's countryside.

5.2 Implications

This comparative study of appraisal resources offers the following implications:

First, strengthen cross-cultural communication of agricultural civilization and Chinese discourse values. Domestic media can explain China's pursuit of peace and harmony to ease overseas doubts, reduce misinterpretations, help global audiences understand contemporary China, and boost international communication influence (Xinhua Net, 2021).

Second, highlight global development and cooperation in rural revitalization reporting. Domestic media should not only showcase domestic achievements but also report poverty-alleviation processes, adopt third-party foreign observers' perspectives, and expand coverage to cross-border agricultural cooperation. Linking rural revitalization with the BRI, South-South Cooperation and FAO projects helps tell China's rural stories internationally.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions

This research has limitations, and corresponding suggestions are put forward:

First, the corpus size and sources are limited, with only 63 reports in total (30 from China Daily, 33 from NOW), excluding outlets such as Xinhua News, People's Daily and Global Times. Future research can expand the corpus to cover more Chinese and Western media for more robust, objective conclusions.

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Second, the thesis only analyses typical appraisal examples due to length constraints. Veracity and distance resources were absent from the collected post-2022 news, which may result from limited sample size. Larger corpora in future work can test whether these subtypes are genuinely rare.

Third, foreign reports are unevenly distributed. Most available foreign samples come from BRI partner states with cooperative attitudes, while Western media carry more critical viewpoints. Later studies may build a balanced corpus and make direct comparisons between BRI countries and Western nations.

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