Media Representations of the Term "Elderly": A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis in Chinese and American Newspapers

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Abstract. The ageing of the population has been a topic in the media and has been very much covered by the media in the Western and Chinese context – but often the discursive strategies used to present the ageing population issue vary considerably. The present study aims to explore the representations of "elderly" in China Daily and the NYT during 2025 based on corpus-assisted discourse analysis. Results suggest that China Daily has used the term "elderly" much more, which suggests that the discourse of ageing people is located in a state-centred discourse of the silver economy and state-led projects, where the elderly are valuable members of society. By contrast, the New York Times paints a less rosy picture, and instead emphasizes the medical and social problems of old age in the United States. The contrasting representations show not only divergent semantic connotations, but also the general historical and socio-political ideologies in the frameworks of which each outlet acts.

Keywords: Elderly, collocations, discursive themes, corpus.

1. Introduction

The World Population Prospects 2022, published by the United Nations, forecasts that the world will peak in its population within this century while the world is fast becoming an aging society. By 2030, 1 in 6 people will be over the age of 60, and the number of people in this age group will grow from 1.0 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion. These changes are a major challenge to healthcare systems, pension structures, and labour markets, but ageing is not only a demographic and/or economic phenomenon; it is a discursive phenomenon shaped and legitimated by the public discourses and the media.

News media are perceived as more realistic and objective than other types of media, and thus perceptions of older people are more susceptible to the influence of news media [1]. Articles from the news media have been found to be relevant sources for the study of the societal construction of meanings and assumptions of words [2, 3]. In this context, the ageing process is often depicted in stereotypical, objectifying and even dehumanizing ways, which can be a cause for ageist attitudes [4].

"Elderly" is a convenient label, long used as a reference in the public and institutional discourse on older people. Past research indicates that it can evoke negative or ageist connotations, especially when combined with the negative semantic prosodies of disability, illness, care, and crime. The use of the term 'older persons' has been recommended by the United Nations since the adoption of the UN Principles for Older Persons in 1991 [5] and the subsequent studies have continued to question the appropriateness of the term 'elderly' [6]; however, it continues to be used in public discourse widely [7]. Importantly, it can be seen that the term "elderly" is not necessarily ageist but rather that the meanings and functions of the term can change from one discursive and institutional context to another.

This sort of variance is especially significant in cross-cultural media contexts. Ageing may be imagined and expressed in various ways as a result of different historical, institutional and cultural traditions. At the same time, both Western and non-Western societies are faced with a growing number of population ageing, policy demands and new expressions of ageism, which can affect media talk in converging and diverging ways. An analysis of the different uses of the term 'elderly' in various forms of media can shed more light on how ageing is discursively constructed.

Based on the research gap mentioned above, this study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of how China Daily and the New York Times use the term "elderly" in the ageing discourse, with the aim of identifying similarities and differences in their prevalent collocates and discursive themes. The four research questions were as follows.

RQ1: How often is the term "elderly" used in China Daily and the New York Times?

RQ2: What are the frequent collocates of the term "elderly" in China Daily and the New York Times?

RQ3: What are the prevailing discursive themes within the ageing discourse of China Daily and the New York Times?

RQ4: How is the term "elderly" discursively constructed in China Daily and the New York Times?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ageing and Media Representation

Societies are undergoing concurrent processes of population ageing and mediatization [8]. Media, as Hjarvard [9] contends, function as social tools for the production of attention with the capacity to control the representation of information, the construction of relationships, and the social purpose of communicative actions. Media has become deeply embedded within both the macro-structures of wider society and the micro-level lifeworld of individuals [10]. Within this mediatized environment, news reports emerge as the primary form of public discourse that provides the general outline of social, political, cultural, and economic models of societal events. [11]. News production thus constitutes an active discursive reconstruction through the strategic integration of diverse source discourses, rather than a passive reflection of reality [12].

2.2 The Contested Term "Elderly" And Corpus Findings

The word 'elderly' is largely used to describe ageing persons as passive recipients of care or victims of a crime, and it is associated with negative semantic prosodies of disability, illness and vulnerability [13]. This trend is reflected on a large scale in corpus work. Jamet and Coupé [14] created collocational profiles of "elderly" (passivity, vulnerability - especially physical and health contexts). Ng (2021) found that the ratio of derogatory to positive descriptions is 6:1, and that "elderly" is a commonly used term but is a derogatory term. Amundsen [16] determined that the dominant negative stereotypes were "Vulnerable," "Declining," and "Silver Tsunami," with "elderly" being a Trojan horse that is seemingly respectful to the old, yet undermining. Expressions in media are referential in nature and they leave some ageist messages and they contribute to social exclusion and discrimination [17].

Despite prior studies focusing on negative collocational and thematic patterns for "elderly" in large corpora and media samples, fewer comparative analyses examine how these patterns operate across Western and non-Western news institutions and languages. The study addresses the gap by comparing and contrasting China Daily and the New York Times using a corpus and critical discourse analysis method to reveal the cross-cultural features in the discursive construction of age.

2.3 CDA As Interpretive Framework

CDA has a dialectical approach to the relationship between discourse and elements or events of social practices [18] and it assumes that there is the process of internalization of social elements to discourse and vice versa [19]. This study examines the discursive construction of age ideologies in the news discourse of the two newspapers, China Daily (CD) and the New York Times (NYT), and looks into the usages of the word "elderly". Fairclough's three-dimensional model [20] is chosen because it connects micro-linguistic aspects of texts with discursive practices (text production, distribution and consumption) and with the embedding social practices which are enabled and shaped by discourse. This dialectical perspective is especially relevant for the study of the fine-grained

workings of ideology in language in relation to institutional practices, power dynamics and social ideologies in various news genres.

3. Methodology

This study is a corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADA), which is based on a combination of corpus linguistic (CL) methods and qualitative interpretation based on critical discourse analysis (CDA). Utilizing CL techniques such as frequency lists, keyword analysis, collocation analysis and concordance lines provides valuable tools that lead to a more valid set of findings [21-23]. Such quantitative analyses, apart from the fact that they can greatly extend the empirical scope of critical discourse analysts, can also help to counteract the potential for biases arising from "cherry picking" [24]. In contrast, CDA provides the depth of context that purely quantitative methods may lack and a framework for understanding patterns of language use in their social context [25, 26]. This kind of methodological synergy makes it possible to perceive the subtle and ideologically significant discursive strategies in media representations of the term "elderly" in this study. AntConc 4.3.1 was used in this study to identify the linguistic features of the term "elderly" in the news texts to be further analyzed in a textual, discursive and social-political analysis.

3.1 Data Collection

To reveal how the term "elderly" is used in Chinese and U.S. news media, a specialized corpus concerning "elderly" was built. The cross-national focus is due to the fact that analysing the use of the term "elderly" in the different media could be useful in understanding how ageing is discursively constructed in the Eastern and Western countries. The news texts with the term "elderly" were retrieved from the official websites of China Daily and New York Times. This study was based on the latest full calendar year (1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025) to guarantee the timeliness of the media reports. Then, 1028 news reports from CD and 571 from NYT were retrieved after manual text cleaning. Because of differences in the sample size, and the amount of data, a random downsampling [27] was used, bringing both corpora to the same number of articles (n=100). The two sets are the final analytic corpus. As far as manual text cleaning is concerned, metadata (for example: images, author, word count, publication date, hyperlinks, ads, copyright information, e-mail contact, editor's notes, etc.) was removed. Given the study objective to look at the social depiction of ageing persons, articles with "elderly + [NON-HUMAN] nouns" (e.g. "elderly animals") are not analysed. All the articles were transferred to plain text (txt. format) after being set in two subsets (Table 1) for analysis by AntConc.

Table 1. Basic information of the corpora.

Sub-corpora	Starting time	Ending time	News articles	Types	Tokens
China Daily	1 Jan 2025	31 Dec 2025	100	7435	59,187
New York Times	1 Jan 2025	31 Dec 2025	100	16,004	169,935

3.2 Research Design

This study employed Fairclough's [20] three-dimensional discourse analysis framework to analyze the term "elderly" used in CD and NYT at textual, discourse and social-political levels, aiming to uncover the representation of ageing people in China and US and their ideological assumptions and power relations.

Firstly, textual analysis concerns the linguistic properties of texts, examining discursive themes and frequent collocations associated with the term "elderly" in both newspapers through the toolkit of AntConc (4.3.1). Normalized frequency analysis and dispersion analysis are utilized to address the first research question regarding the frequency of the term "elderly".

Collocate analysis identifies words that frequently co-occur with a target term within a specified window span. It offers insight into the lexical patterns and semantic association of the given term by generating a list of collates ranked by statistical measures [28]. Sinclair [29] defines collocation as

the occurrence of two or more words within a short span of each other in a text, with a typical measure of proximity allowing a maximum of four intervening words. Thus the window span was determined to be 4L/4R, and the second research question was answered through analysis.

A method of keyword analysis is a method to find the words that are used in a certain text collection (corpus) in a special manner [30]. For this study, we selected CD as the target corpus and NYT as the reference corpus and vice versa, which resulted in two keyword lists. These lists can serve as a beginning in uncovering the discursive themes and ideological assumptions that are part of texts [31]. The overlapping of the two approaches of a keyword analysis and a thematic analysis enables the identification of common and different issues of two national news. This integrated approach to analysis was then used to answer the third research question.

Secondly, the discourse practice analysis mainly focuses on the discourse production and consumption of these news reports. This dimension emphasizes the media-specific editorial frameworks and conventions and examines the impact of different media systems on the use of "elderly."

Thirdly, social practice analysis contextualizes the linguistic findings within broader socio-political environments, interpreting the power relations embedded in the reporting of ageing people. Discourse and social practice analysis were performed to answer the last question.

4. Results and Discussion

The textual analysis showed that the term "elderly" has subtle differences in frequency, collocational patterns and discursive themes between CD and NYT, which are consistent with these discourse practices and social contexts concerning ageing people in China and the US.

4.1 Textual Analysis

4.1.1 Frequency and Distribution

The frequency and distribution of "elderly" in the sampled corpora are summarized in Table 2. In the sampled articles (n=100 / per corpus), "elderly" occurs 807 times in CD and 117 times in NYT. Owing to the different sizes of two corpora, the normalized frequency offers a more objective standard for comparison. As NormFreq showed, the term "elderly" in CD appears nearly 20 times (13634.751/688.499) its frequency in NYT, indicating that CD uses the term "elderly" considerably more frequently relative to its corpus size. The high prominence of the term cannot be directly equated to increased attention to ageing in general. NYT can use other more general terms (such as "older adults", "seniors" or "the aged"). Therefore, the frequency differences also reflect a discursive preference and do not necessarily give a complete measure of topical salience. The dispersion values for CD and NYT are relatively high at 0.886 and 0.899, respectively, (close to 1), suggesting that the term "elderly" is distributed in a fairly even manner across articles in each newspaper. Despite the substantial disparity of NormFreq in CD and NYT, compared with the frequency rate of 22.2 per million in British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English [15], both CD and NYT exhibit considerably higher frequency rate for the term in news reports on ageing issues. One reason is the focus of the specialized corpus in this study, and the term "elderly" remains widely used in both China and the US, with a notably more prevalent application in the Chinese context.

Table 2. Frequency of using "elderly"

Corpora	Tokens	"elderly" frequency	Normalized frequency	Dispersion
China Daily	59,187	807	13634.751	0.886
New York Times	169,935	117	688.499	0.899

4.1.2 Collocates

The frequent collocations of "elderly" in CD and NYT are statistically significant (Table 3). Given that both CD and NYT are small corpora, priority is given to log-likelihood (LL)values in the

collocation analysis conducting with AntConc. LL is a well-established statistical technique that adequately reflects the frequency of the lemma pairs and performs well on even very much smaller volumes of text [32]. Unlike other measures, LL is well-suited for make comparisons between rare and common phenomenon, where Mutual Information (MI) may become unstable [33]. A likelihood value of 10.83 or higher, which corresponds to a significance level of $p < 0.001$, is generally considered robust enough to indicate a statistically significant association [33]. Such a metric helps reduce the risks of random associations emerging as significant in a limited dataset.

Table 3. Top 10 collocations of "elderly" in CD and NYT

	CD				NYT			
Rank	Collocate	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Collocate	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood
1	care	23	268	556.103	disabled	4	7	71.315
2	services	27	69	106.789	care	14	4	63.268
3	people	4	84	77.273	vulnerable	2	5	44.697
4	disabled	4	15	45.543	people	4	17	41.513
5	residents	0	38	45.238	the	75	25	40.170
6	the	333	117	37.495	poor	2	4	32.864
7	service	4	32	30.545	children	8	2	28.150
8	needs	17	9	22.748	and	20	30	22.977
9	facilities	4	13	20.862	women	4	2	21.639
10	friendly	1	16	19.639	population	0	6	20.726

Among the top 10 collocates of "elderly", four are shared between CD and NYT, and these four collocations all refer to the senior group. On most occasions, "the" collocates with "elderly" on the left side, that is, "the elderly", which means the old-age group (Table 3). But when "the" occurs on the right side of "elderly", they are divided by comma or period, which are not meaningful collocates.

While CD and NYT share some baseline terminology, such as "the elderly", "elderly people", they have their own collocations. In CD, "elderly" is frequently used as a modifier in institutional or service-oriented contexts (e.g., "elderly residents", "elderly services", "elderly needs", "elderly-friendly facilities"), placing ageing people in tasks related to consumer protection, urban statistics, and care provision. Grammatically, "elderly" frequently serves as a head noun in nominal groupings that highlight collective categories ("the elderly") or attributively (pre-nominal adjective), emphasizing service links or demographic accounting above individual traits. By contrast, NYT instances place "elderly" in coordinated lists with other social groups (e.g., "elderly and vulnerable", "elderly, women, children", "elderly and poor"), which links ageing people to broader social categories and policy concerns. Similarly, "elderly" emphasizes a relational/comparative context such as allocation of resources, threats, or political disputes as both a head noun and in coordination.

In addition, the adjective collocational patterns of "disabled" in CD vs NYT are quite distinctive: "friendly" in CD and "vulnerable" and "poor" in NYT. The CD descriptor "friendly" takes a pragmatic, service-oriented approach by framing ageing people in terms of accessibility, design, and positive accommodation. The NYT adjectives "vulnerable" and "poor" frame ageing people in terms of risk and protection, invoking health, economic, or policy vulnerability. Rather than maintaining a neutral valence, these two modifiers construct a semantic prosody of frailty and deprivation. Ultimately, they emphasize different semantic roles: CD favors infrastructural and supportive descriptors, while NYT leans toward risk and needs descriptors.

CD	Statistics show that Chongqing faces a pressing demand for elderly care services, with 8.01 million	elderly	residents accounting for a quarter of the city's permanent population.
CD	He also noted that seniors have growing and diversifying needs for	elderly	services and products, and added that the ministry will focus on safeguarding elderly consumers' rights to allow them to shop in a safer environment.
CD	China's largest hotel operators, rooms that are equipped with	elderly-friendly	facilities proved popular last year - with an occupancy rate of more than 90 percent in 2024.
NYT	It argued for "focused protection" - a strategy to protect the	elderly	and vulnerable while letting the virus spread among younger, healthier people.
NYT	They soon encountered a military checkpoint where soldiers were separating men of fighting age from the	elderly	women, children.
NYT	Republicans have long sought to scale back Medicare and Medicaid, the government programs for the	elderly	and poor, and the budget panel's list outlined a slew of options for doing so, including reducing federal Medicaid payment rates and establishing work requirements for the program's recipients.

4.1.3 Discursive Themes

In the previous section, we described the reference corpora and the keyword analysis process. Then, we generated two keyword lists from the two sub-corpora. There were 338 keywords in CD and 147 keywords in NYT, covering different themes. In this section, only those related to ageing issues are listed for analysis, and Table 4 presents a more detailed categorization.

Table 4. Keywords of ageing issues in CD and NYT.

Ageing issues	Related types (rank, log-likelihood) in CD	Related types (rank, log-likelihood) in NYT
social welfare	care (3, 549.034), services (4, 406.197), silver (13, 199.094), nursing (16, 167.856), consumption (38, 99.196), guideline (44, 90.928), needs (45, 89.342), digital (47, 84.868), industry (58, 75.353), economy (60, 74.197), demand (65, 69.639), eldercare (66, 69.031), innovation (72, 61.736), training (79, 58.720), tailored (88, 52.970), beds (120, 41.519), disabilities (120, 41.519), facilities (129, 39.922), offering (137, 38.023), modernization (147, 35.817), pension (163, 33.420), investment (173, 32.997), education (198, 29.411), renovations (206, 27.678), resources (240, 26.030), canteen (245, 24.796), accessibility (270, 22.741), guardianship (280, 22.041), livelihood (327, 19.793), application (334, 19.687), specialized (334, 19.687)	medicaid (36, 62.175), cuts (41, 57.391), tax (44, 55.851), law (75, 34.612), money (83, 33.597), budget (84, 32.902), homelessness (128, 22.714)
lifestyle and culture	friendly (57, 75.800), travel (73, 61.164), festival (130, 39.695), activities (131, 39.379), companionship (108, 44.990), dancing (108, 44.990), dance (277, 22.118), entertainment (245, 24.796)	genocide (26, 75.930), immigration (76, 34.610)
healthcare	medical (31, 111.923), rehabilitation (32, 111.290), healthcare (37, 101.203), health (82, 55.385), hospice (83, 55.105), influenza (83, 55.105), diseases (259, 24.282), chronic (315, 20.806)	opioid (79, 34.073)
elderly assistance	ai (8, 243.092), robots (9, 230.603), robot (10, 218.482), products (21, 150.926), smart (25, 138.192), intelligent (36, 101.952), mobility (112, 44.240), emotional (114, 43.531), interaction (209, 27.551), consultations (209, 27.551), exoskeletons (191, 30.306), humanoid (93, 49.594), robotics (52, 78.061), exoskeleton (61, 71.638), technologies (71, 63.353), technology (76, 60.848), assistance (96, 49.544), helping (104, 45.754), GDP (134, 38.572), assist (151, 35.802), artificial (158, 34.786), cognitive (264, 23.936), devices (105, 45.457), collaboration (176, 32.687), appliance (280, 22.041), aids (228, 26.592), assistive (245, 24.796), escort (280, 22.041)	Humanitarian (132, 21.518)

CD's key words, such as "care", "services" and "guideline", indicate a focus on the organisation and delivery of services, within an institutional framework, as far as social welfare is concerned. Each implies a policy and services system to address social welfare. In contrast, NYT's language emphasizes "cuts", "budget", and "tax", emphasizing financial limitations and political issues. This distinction indicates that for CD, social welfare is a structured system of care while for NYT, it is a fiscal management and political challenge. The other major disparity is in the area of older adults' help. CD puts a focus on technology – "AI", "robots", "smart systems" and "exoskeletons" come up regularly. The use of these key words indicates that technology is a focal point of the discussion; it is a key part of the eldercare strategies. This is a government-led, proactive approach towards technology in eldercare. By contrast, the NYT has none of the related technology terms in its discussion of eldercare shown in Table 4.

CD	The reason why such low income levels could coexist with such high life expectancies during those three decades was mainly due to efforts in three aspects, namely, the three-level medical preventive healthcare system in counties, townships and villages; barefoot doctor	services,	and a medical system cooperative.
CD	China will enrich services for the elderly, boosting the	silver	economy and cultivating more talent for the sector in the next 10 years, as part of a move to better cope with the aging population and improve the quality of life for seniors.
NYT	Complicating their task is a political challenge: Many of the cuts Republicans are contemplating target programs aimed at helping low-income Americans, all in the service of paying for the extension of	tax cuts	that disproportionately benefit the wealthy.
NYT	House Republicans hunting for ways to pay for President Trump's	tax cuts	have called for cutting the federal government's share of Medicaid spending, including a proposal that would effectively gut the Affordable Care Act's 2014 expansion of the program.
CD	Notably, enterprises are leveraging emerging technology such as	AI and robotics	to pioneer a new consumption scenario tailored to the elderly.
CD	the nation will channel resources and investment into technological programs for elderly care services, such as humanoid	robots	and artificial intelligence.

4.2 Discourse Practice

Fairclough [34] conceptualizes discourse practice as the link between texts and social practice, involving the processes of production, circulation and interpretation.

The source of discourse significantly determines its credibility as well as readers' reception and attitude change. In this study, the production of discourse surrounding "elderly" is fundamentally shaped by China Daily and the New York Times, two influential English-language newspaper with distinct socio-political and media systems. Established in 1981 under the supervision of the State Council, China Daily functions as China's official English-language outlet. Its discourse is produced to mirror the state's governance objectives, effectively acting as an institutional interface between central directives and a global readership. CD's production is characterized by a "top-down" modality, where ageing people are situated with a structured framework of state-led modernization. The descriptions of eldercare guidelines in CD, such as "Beijing launches campaign to improve elderly quality of life" and "China will enrich services for the elderly." The agents collocated with these descriptions are mostly government departments and authoritative official sources. The ageing

population's discourse production is synced with the overall development discourse of the state. These are circulated to give a "proactive state" impression. With technological elements like "digital", "robots", "exoskeletons", "artificial" in the discourse of ageing, CD crafts a future-oriented interpretation experience for global audiences, putting China's age transition into a technologised and manageable successful light.

In contrast, New York Times, as a legacy newspaper following the American liberal tradition and the principles of the First Amendment, and with a global readership, is an editorially independent critical newspaper. Its production logic is investigative, rather than prescriptive, circulating narratives of ageing by placing them in relation to the effects of certain political decisions, such as poor Medicare reimbursement, or brutalising populations in war zones, like Gaza and Ukraine. The NYT moves from the parochial to the systemic by moving from within the boundaries of America's domestic concerns of retirement savings, and caregiver burnout, to the geopolitical vulnerability of the elderly in war zones. In this context, the "elderly" discourse is built by the NYT as both being left in a state of fiscal deprivation and of systemic neglect, caught at the volatile intersection of congressional budget warfare and a care system in collapse. The consistent co-occurrence of "elderly" and "medicaid" and "cuts" and "geriatrician shortage" and other terms suggests a narrative pattern, in which ageing becomes a battleground over policy.

4.3 Social Practice

According to Fairclough's [35] three-dimensional framework, the social practice aims to reveal the relationship between abstract social structures and concrete social events by examining how discourse contributes to the reproduction or transformation of social relations. Both China and the

US face distinct but equally urgent challenges within the context of global population ageing.

The US entered the ageing society stage nearly six decades earlier than China. It has formed a comprehensive and multilevel eldercare system but has still been confronted with serious problems such as inadequate long-term care insurance, high eldercare costs and unstable medical budget [36]. The sub-corpora indicates that the administration has formulated plans to reduce healthcare expenditures, as evidenced by information disclosed in sentences "Republicans have long sought to scale back Medicare and Medicaid, the government programs for the elderly and poor, and the budget panel's list outlined a slew of options for doing so" and "health secretary under President Joseph R. Biden Jr., issued a statement saying the cuts would most likely downgrade services to elderly and disabled people, and those with mental health challenges". The NYT has increasingly exhibited a tendency toward politicization while catering to the preference of its readership. Concurrently, the intense political polarization surrounding social issues has framed ageing within partisan narratives.

By contrast, although China is also facing ageing challenges, such as rapid speed, sheer scale, the unique pattern "Getting old before getting rich" [37] or inadequate long-term care infrastructure for the elderly, the news reports center on some positive achievements, contributing to shaping China's international image as a proactive state in addressing ageing population through English-language media. CD's discourse is consistent with governmental policies, including the silver economy development and smart eldercare modernization. As regards the terms relating to lifestyle and culture, the use of "activities", "dance" and "festivals" reflects a 'cultural participation' and contributes to a discourse that is designed to encourage the national silver economy's older people to be active participants. The descriptions such as "hack-resistant computer networks and smart living environments for the elderly" or "a high-tech smart suit that could support failing muscles" show that the technology is largely related to supporting the needs of the ageing population, in terms of physical support, security and autonomy. These portrayals show technology as infrastructure and assistive technology to improve the quality of life for the ageing population. This discursive positioning is useful in explaining how ageing people are more positively and diversely represented in a neutral or positive context, showing that the ageing group is involved and active in social and cultural life.

5. Conclusion

This study applied Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to analyse the way the term "elderly" is presented in China Daily and New York Times, and found that there are different media representations reflecting the general socio-political ideology on ageing in the two countries. Collocational patterns indicate that the two outlets adopt different discursive strategies of framing the ageing population. More particularly, the results show that the term "elderly" is more likely to be located in texts related to policy making, service provision and technological modernisation. This lexical choice seems to fit in with a governance discourse which focuses on the inclusion of the ageing population in the national development and the "silver economy". In contrast, the "elderly" are more likely to be linked to a welfare controversy, health risks, and public vulnerability in the NYT. The framing seems to be a reflection of the editorial agenda to place ageing in the public policy debate, in the context of social equity and as an individual health issue.

The distinct emphases of discursive themes in each text - CD and NYT - can be understood through the different institutional orientations in which each outlet highlights the elderly as active contributors to collective social care and development, whereas NYT's discourse has a greater emphasis on the societal and financial strain that comes with an ageing population. CD as a state-controlled national newspaper, and NYT as an independent newspaper with a critical point of view. Lexical choices and discursive strategies of these two newspapers are also influenced by the context of the silver economy in China, as well as the ageing issues that the US is currently facing. The present results suggest that the different images of the elderly are closely related to the institutional logics of the newspapers – CD's as a state-owned publication and NYT's as a legacy newspaper with a critical and investigative focus – and with the socio-political issues that each country experiences in regard to its demographic changes.

To conclude, the comparison of CD and NYT with the term "elderly" illustrates some interesting discursive themes and linguistic properties of "elderly" and some media priorities that are created by their respective institutional contexts and their socio-political worlds. But there are some drawbacks of this study. On the one hand, the corpus is fairly limited in that it includes a time span of 1 year and less than 180,000 tokens per corpus. On the other hand, only the term "elderly" is analyzed and not other referential expressions of ageing persons, such as "old", "older" and "middle-aged". Future research could expand the database in terms of time span and size, as well as explore a wider range of ageing-related terms to gain a more comprehensive insight of media representations of ageing people.

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