

## Representation of ‘China’ in Trump’s Discourse on COVID-19

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### Abstract

Critical discourse analysis became influential and prominent over throughout recent years. The aim of critical discourse analysis is to observe the relation between language, ideology, and power. The study aims to investigate the representation of China in Donald Trump’s political speeches. This study is based on Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar, and van Dijk’s concept of the ideological square. Halliday’s model is utilized to analyze the lexico-grammatical structures that Trump uses to represent China throughout COVID-19’s speeches from the 26<sup>th</sup> of February until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. On the other hand, van Dijk’s ideological square approach is employed to examine the dichotomy of Us (represented by America) versus Them (represented by China). The study consisted of fourteen press conferences elected from the period 26-February-2020, to 22-September-2020 which is restricted to COVID-19’s spreading throughout America. The study’s findings revealed that material processes are prominent throughout Trump’s discourse. Moreover, the results showed that before the spreading of COVID-19 across America and Europe, Trump’s political speeches reflected a positive stance toward China. However, after the spreading of COVID-19 across America and the rest of the world, Trump’s speeches reflected more negative stances towards China, as he started to hold it responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, Transitivity structures, Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, COVID-19, Trump’s discourse, China.

### Introduction

Throughout the end of 2019, a new virus appeared in China, precisely in Wuhan. The infectious disease, which is universally named COVID-19, spread all over the world in general and in America in particular. The World Health Organization declared that COVID-19 is a global pandemic by the 11<sup>th</sup> of March in 2020. Great numbers of countries suffered from increasing cases and debilitating health systems. There were conflicting reports about COVID-19’s origin. Trump began to blame China for spreading COVID-19 and causing great damage to the world, as in “*The world is now suffering as a result of the malfeasance of the Chinese government*” (29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020). Furthermore, he claimed that COVID-19 was created in Chinese labs and maybe got out of control “*was it a mistake that got out of control or was it done deliberately?*” (18<sup>th</sup> April 2020). The variation in the views led to a war of words and exchange of blames with China, especially by President Trump. The political relations of America with China deteriorated severely throughout Donald Trump’s presidency.

Throughout this study, the researcher aims to analyze Trump’s COVID-19 daily conferences. Thus, 14 speeches will be selected from the period of COVID-19’s appearance (January 2020) until (September 2020). The study investigates the representation of China in Trump’s political speeches by employing analytical toolkits developed in Critical Discourse Analysis. The data will be carefully selected from the formal accounts of the White House conferences. Van Dijk’s ideological square approach will be employed to observe the polarization group of Us VS. Them. Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar will be used to reveal the strategies that Trump uses to represent America and China. This will ultimately elucidate how Trump’s stances toward China were discursively constructed, and reveal his ideological biases.

### Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is defined as a discourse analytic approach that examines how social influence, domination, and injustice are enacted, replicated, and resisted in text and speech in social and political contexts (van Dijk 2001, Fairclough 2010). Wodak & Meyer argue that Critical Discourse Analysis is “fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (2009: p.10). Young & Harrison (2004) give another goal for CDA which is to reveal the ideologies that are embedded in language and make unequal power distribution seem normal and inevitable. Mainly, CDA is primarily concerned with the relationships between language, power, and ideology, as well as the relation between discourse, social identity, and social change, and also the role of discourse in the production and maintenance of inequality (Weiss & Wodak, 2003)

Several studies were carried out in Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the hidden ideology in Trump discourse, but few studies were concerned with the representation of China with regards to COVID-19. Hangyan Yu, et al (2021) investigated the discourse characteristics concerning COVID-19 in China Daily Newspaper and The Guardian Newspaper. the study is based on Corpus analysis. The results showed that China Daily used more objective and impartial language, besides that it shared more active attitudes in the struggle against the epidemic. On other hand, The Guardian implied more negative terms to describe Tcovid-19, and expressions with weak limiting force to report about policies regarding the control on COVID-19 pandemic. Mohammad Awad AlAfnan (2020) investigated media bias, philosophies, and superiority By analyzing the American Washington Post newspaper and the Chinese People's Daily newspapers articles on COVID 19. The findings showed that the topics that the American newspaper foregrounded were backgrounded by the Chinese newspaper, and the topics that the American newspaper foregrounded were backgrounded by the Chinese newspaper. The study of Layegh N. et al (2020) based on CDA to examine Iranian and American newspapers about COVID-19. It is based on van Dijk's critical discourse analysis model. The researcher revealed significant variations in how these countries and newspapers report on COVID-19, as well as a connection between how it is discursively reflected and the number of people infected, died in these countries.

Michalina Grzelka (2020) focused on the polish context about COVID-19. her research aims to see how the Polish public views vulnerable groups in the light of the global COVID-19 crisis. She focused on a limited number of online articles and comments about the COVID-19 virus on the influential Polish portal Gazeta. pl, by using critical discourse analysis. Lei Zhu and Wei Wang (2020) analyzed two political discourses conveyed by President Trump and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi. Drawing on Appraisal Theory, they found that both leaders prefer Judgment tools to the other two resources within the Affect System. Furthermore, the study showed that both leaders make extensive use of intertextuality tools. Furthermore, under the category of "Intertextuality," both leaders make extensive use of intertextuality tools in their remarks. Furthermore, under the heading of "Intertextuality," both leaders prefer the sub-category of "The Original Producer of Discourse being the Speaker's Compatriots." That is, Wang Yi prefers the lines of ancient Chinese sages, while Trump favors intertextuality services from a variety of realms, including laws and statutes, legal texts, and government records. Sameer Naser Olimat (2020) investigated the Dysphemistic expressions in Trump's speeches about COVID-19. The results revealed that Trump used war metaphors and harsh language to justify himself and his point of view, to influence Americans' thoughts and opinions, and to criticize other countries or institutions. Moreover, Trump uses several conceptual metaphors to refer to COVID-19. Bustan & Alakrash (2020) focused on Trump's political discourse on tweeter. They investigated impoliteness strategies in Donald Trump's tweets toward the countries of the Middle East. The study is based on a qualitative research approach. Furthermore, the study is based on analyzing 17 tweets which are selected from 2015 until 2019. The results showed that there are only four forms of impoliteness tactics used by Tramp toward the Middle East countries. The four impoliteness strategies are bald on-record impoliteness, negative impoliteness, positive impoliteness, and mock or sarcasm impoliteness. Otherwise, withhold politeness doesn't exist in the tweets.

Khan M. H. et al (2019) focused on Muslims' representation in Donald Trump's statements. The study aimed to examine the representation o others embodied in TARump's discourse toward Muslims throughout the American Presidential Election of 2016. According to the findings, Donald Trump portrayed Islam and Muslims as a negative phenomenon and has portrayed himself as an Islamophobe by criticizing Islamic elements such as Shariah and Jihad. Most Islamic views are portrayed as anti-women and anti-American in his prejudicial portrayal of Islam, posing a danger to America's stability and way of life. Chen W. (2018) looked at Donald Trump's inaugural address from the perspectives of "transitivity, modality, personal pronoun, and coherence". The findings revealed that Trump employs a variety of language types to subtly express, change, and sustain listeners' ideologies. As apart from the elements of the Socio-Cognitive Approach, Rohmah (2018) examined the organization of Critical Discourse Analysis that occurs in Donald Trump's speeches. Rosmah's study is based on van Dijk's Critical Analysis Theory. The results revealed that Donald Trump consequently uses irony and repetition to engage the addressee's emotional

attachment. Besides, Donald Trump tends to represent others by negation portray to save his positive representation. Moreover, he employs pronouns that aim to demonstrate unity in his plan to persuade and persuade the addressee to agree with his point and the administration's decision. Quinonez E. S. (2018) investigated the Anti-Immigrant rhetoric throughout Trump's speeches before and after the presidential election of the U.S. The results revealed that Trump uses demagogic and de-humanize language to represent immigration, along with constant discursive strategies. Such strategies are involved to show the positive representation of "us", while the negative representation of "other". besides, the use of metaphorical constructions to stoke fear and anti-immigrant feelings toward immigrations. Moreover to strip individuals of their humanity to make them undeserving the dignity and the rights which are deserved by America's groups.

This study unlike the previous studies carries more details about China's representation in Trump's speeches concerning COVID-19. Besides, it investigates China's representation in Trump's speeches before and after COVID-19 spreading. In other words, none of the studies listed above looked at the Coronavirus outbreak from the perspective of a politician like Donald Trump. Furthermore, none of the previous studies are focused on the struggle between America and China. Thus, due to the significance of "Donald Trump" as President of the United States, as well as the significance of the case itself, the researcher will address this issue and fill in the gaps throughout this study. The researcher focused on analyzing Trump's spoken discourse. Thus, 14 conferences are elected from February 2020, until September 2020, which the period of appearance and the spreading of COVID-19. It is aimed to examine the portray of China in Trump's discourse concerning COVID-19.

### **Transitivity**

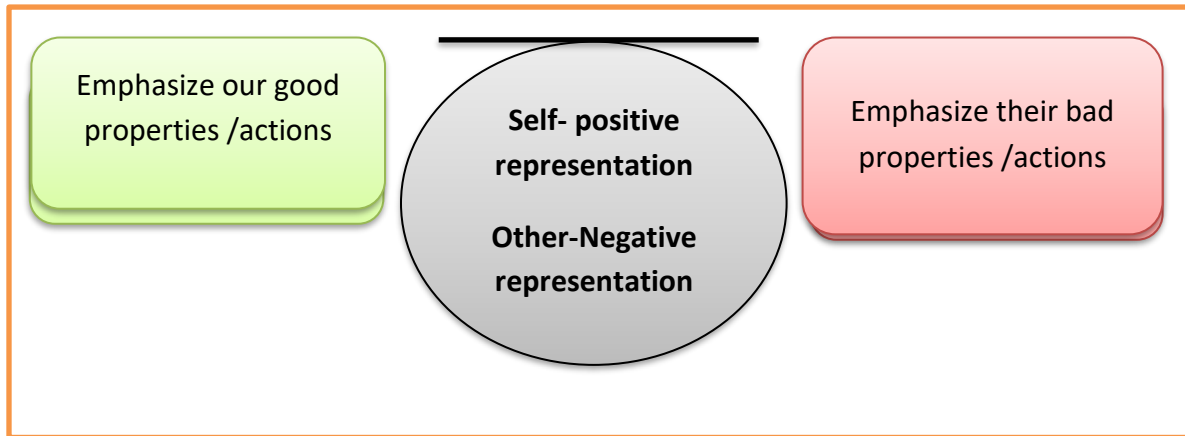
One of the tools used in Critical Discourse Analysis is transitivity analysis. This form of analysis is provided by Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics, which analyzes a text to reveal its ideology. Mathiessen and Halliday (1997), refer to the resource for producing meanings through wordings. Simpson defines Transitivity as

"a popular part of the analytic toolkit of work within the critical linguistics tradition. It has been employed to uncover how certain meanings are foregrounded while others are suppressed or obfuscated. In this way, the transitivity model provides one means of investigating how a reader's or listener's perception of the meaning of a text is pushed in a particular direction and how the linguistic structure of a text effectively encodes a particular "world-view". This world-view will, of course, be that of the producer(s) of the text" (2003:p. 104)

Halliday (1985) argues that transitivity is concerned with a writer's mental image of the world, that it entails the transmission of ideas, and that it belongs to the ideational function. For Halliday "transitivity is the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the process of the external world, and the internal world of his consciousness, together with the participants in these processes and their attendant circumstances .." (Halliday, 1973: p.134). thus, transitivity emphasizes the writer's representation of who is the doer of the action and who is affected by the action. Simpson (1993) mentions Halliday's classification of Transitivity's processes, which are Material processes known as processes of doing, mental processes known as processes of mind and feelings, verbal processes known as processes of saying, and relational processes which are known of processes of being. This research is based on three processes which are material, mental, and relational.

### **Van Dijk's ideological square**

Van Dijk (1998) argues that ideologies are often expressed and built on the ideological square. Van Dijk explains that "members engage in intergroup discourse for reasons of self-presentation, self-defense, legitimation, persuasion, recruiting, and so on." (1998:p. 125). Carter (1998) states that "the choice of words or one syntactic construction instead of another will function not just in a vacuum but to articulate ideology" (p. 109). Since this study focuses on political discourse, it is important to highlight the ideological strategies employed in Trump's discourse. For this purpose, we will rely on Van Dijk's ideological Square. Van Dijk's ideological square is based on four concepts that emphasize in-group's good actions and out-groups bad actions, as well as de-emphasize in-group's bad actions, and out-groups good actions (Van Dijk: 2006).



• *Figure 1: Van Dijk's Ideological Squares.*

Van Dijk's ideological Square embodied in trump's discourse by declaring that Chine is responsible for spreading COVID-19 around the world, besides he accuses China of hiding the real numbers of COVID-19 cases. On the other hand, Trump stresses and cites the positive steps taken by America to protect its people from COVID-19, and he claims that the number of COVID-19 victims is much lower than China's. Thus, he emphasizes the good actions of America (Self) and the bad actions of China (Other).

### **Analytical framework**

Halliday's Structural-Functional Grammar was utilized to investigate the role of China in Trump's political discourse. Halliday's model develops the concept of transitivity as one of the most important aspects of discourse. As a result, this research aims to reveal China's position in Trump's political speeches. Transitivity involves six various processes that are: mental, relational, material, verbal, behavioral, and existential. This study only focused on three processes: material, mental, and relational. Since these are the most common types of processes in the English language's transitivity scheme (Halliday and Matthiessen: 2004).

Material processes take place in the external world. The sentence structure of this process consists of a subject (actor), a transitive/intransitive (process), and an object (goal). A sentence with a transitive verb comprises a pattern (SVO) that indicates an action that involves the actor and the goal. On the other hand, the sentence which consists of only one participant comprises the pattern (SV) that can represent either a non-direct action or an event.

Mental processes are based on sensing verbs such as cognition verbs, affection verbs, and perception verbs (Emilia: 2014). There are two participants in such processes which are sensor and phenomenon. A sensor is often human, while a phenomenon is a nominal clause dependent on what is believed, desired, interpreted, or liked/disliked.

Relational processes are distinguished by the fact that they link a participant's identity and definition "the main characteristic of relational processes is that they relate a participant to its identity or description" (Butt et. al: 1995:49). These processes are subdivided into two types which are attributive and identifying (Attributive 'a is an attributive of x' / Identifying 'a is the identifying of X) (Halliday, 1994:119).

### **Method**

#### **Design**

The primary concern of this study is political discourse. Firstly, the researcher provided a theoretical background about critical discourse analysis, and the information about the novel virus such as its appearance, and exchange blaming between the United States and China. The researcher focused on a qualitative approach to analyze the data because it is necessary to investigate how and why the problem appeared, not only where and when. Furthermore, as Waiker (2018) explains discourse analysts should not primarily address the sample size of their defined corpus in discourse analysis studies since a large sample would yield an uncontrollable volume of data that will not contribute to the study's analytical finding. As a result, a limited sample size of the corpus will yield qualitative and useful interpretations in discourse studies.

#### **Data Collection Tools**

## Representation of 'China' in Trump's Discourse on COVID-19

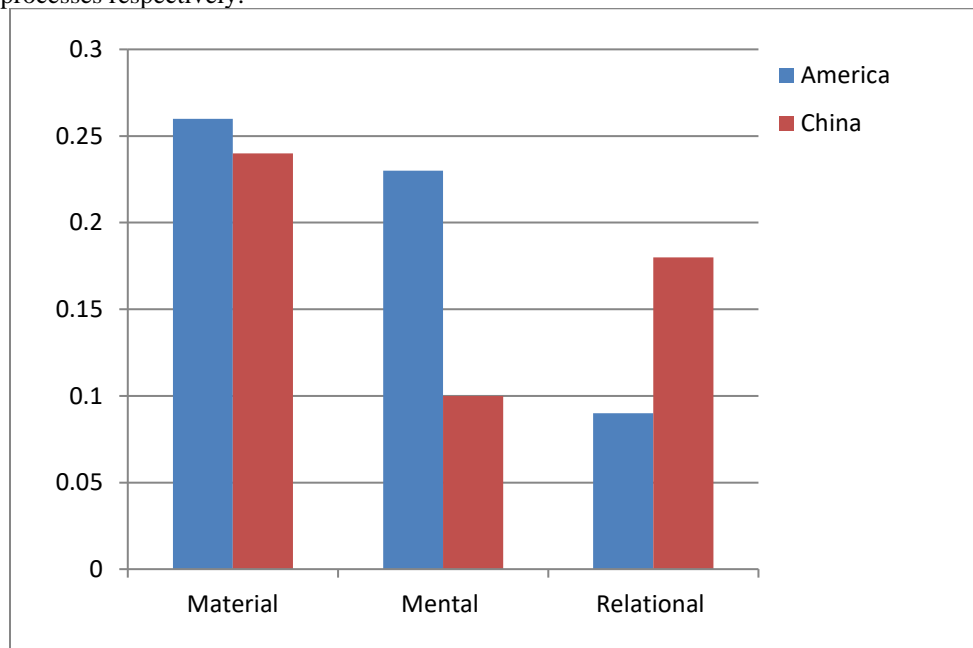
The data of this research consist of 14 press conferences, about China concerning COVID-19. These press speeches are gained from two official sources <https://www.whitehouse.gov> and <https://www.rev.com>. The researcher matched the conferences with the transcript of the official channels. The conferences were selected from the period from (26 February / 2020) to (September 22/2020), throughout the breakout and the spreading of COVID-19. The data were not chosen at random, but rather under investigation. Moreover, the data correspond to events that occurred within the chosen period. The data selected according to the content and the date of publishing. In addition, the researcher compared the transcript and the official channel speech from which the data was taken.

### Data analysis

The researcher analyzed the data depending on Halliday's transitivity and van Dijk's ideological square. By Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, the researcher examined the material, mental, and relational processes to observe the function of the agent position and the role of the affected in the clausal level of Trump's political discourse. The findings were interpreted according to van Dijk's (1998) ideological square to examine the discursive expressions used to represent China in Trump's political debate, as well as to observe the representation of Us VS. Them.

### Findings

Figure (2) below represents the frequency of the material, mental, relational processes of America and China. It shows that Material processes are the most frequently used processes in trump speeches, then relational process, and mental processes respectively.



• *Figure 2. Transitivity Structure in Trump's Discourse of America and China*

Thus, throughout America's material processes, the most prominent theme is the ban on China.

- “... we closed so early to China and most people..” on March 21/ 2020
- “.... and I'm very lucky that I banned China, as you know, very early on.” On April 30 -2020
- “In January, we put the ban on in China and that was a very early day, that wasn't a late day...” April 30 - 2020
- “ We acted extremely early in keeping China out of our country and banning people from China coming in ....” On May 11-2020
- “... we could close our country, save millions of lives, stop people very early on from China ...” on June 5, 2020
- “But we made that decision..” on June 5- 2020
- “... We saved tens of thousands of lives with that decision.” On June 5, 2020

Material processes revealed that Trump represented himself as a noble president, and America as a virtuous nation, by associating them with good actions. He used to declare that America is standing beside China which is the main competitor for America, to offer help concerning COVID-19. Through his discourse, Trump emphasized the positive Self-representation by showing America's efforts in fighting COVID-19, while he emphasized the negative Other-representation by holding them the responsibility of COVID-19's spreading. As a result, Trump and America associated with positive actions, such as: putting an early ban on China, acting early to overcome COVID-19, and saving the lives of tens of people. Trump portrayed America as a good entity that was attempting to save millions of people in the United States as well as the rest of the world from COVID-19. Expressions such as: *"We're giving them certain advice"* on 26/ February 2020, *"we ban on in China"* on 30 April 2020, *"We acted extremely early"* 11 May 2020, *"save millions of lives"* 5 June 2020, *"we saved tens of thousands of lives"* 5 June 2020 are associated by Trump to reflect 'positive- self-representation. On the other hand, negative 'Other' features are linked to China. Such characteristics are exemplified by China's secrecy regarding COVID-19 news. Furthermore, Trump was accusing China of spreading COVID-19 deliberately around the world. We notice that Trump accused China of hiding the real numbers of COVID-19 cases from the rest of the world and the press. Trump was accusing China of preventing the press from reporting COVID-19's news. Thus, he stated that *"China kicked the Washington Post out of China and they kicked the New York Times out of China and I guess the Wall Street Journal"* on 21 May 2020, *"it got out of control"* on 30 April 2020, they made a mistake" 30 April 2020, such expressions reflect Trump's claim that China was secretive concerning COVID-19 information and the state "China was very secretive. Okay? Very, very secretive", "China was very secretive" on 21 March 2020.

The mental processes throughout Trump's discourse represented his awareness, thoughts, and inner perception of China. Throughout the early appearance of COVID-19, Trump started his conferences as standing beside China by asserting that President Xi wishes to eliminate COVID-19 and return to the normal life of trade and commercial "... *He wants it to go away from China and go away fast, and he wants to get back to business as usual"* on (26 February 2020). Trump's optimistic view toward China is altered after the spreading of COVID-19. Trump began to attack China, Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, by claiming that China didn't permit America to come into its country to investigate COVID-19. Thus, he claimed that China was hiding the information of the real cases of people with COVID-19. Furthermore, he argued that the world is suffering from COVID-19 as a result of China's violations, stating that *"the world is now suffering as a result of the Chinese government's malfeasance"* (29 May 2020) and that *"China's cover-up of the Wuhan virus caused the disease to spread all over the world"* (29 May 2020). At the same time, he claimed that China was aware of COVID-19's existence. We can notice the positive stance of Trump toward China throughout the first period of COVID-19 since COVID-19 didn't attack America yet *"We hope we can open it up to China as soon as possible"* (26 February 2020). After that, and precisely when COVID-19 spread across the rest of the world, especially in America, Trump began blaming China for the spreading of COVID-19 and hiding the real number of the cases *"We hope the numbers that we've been getting are true on China, where it has leveled off and started to go down"* (26 February 2020). Most of the mental processes, which represent China, reflect the responsibility of China for the spreading of COVID-19. It reflected the suffering of America and the World, the wondering about the origin of COVID-19, and the wondering if China allowed COVID-19 to spread across the world *"The world is now suffering as a result of the malfeasance of the Chinese government"* on 29 May 2020, *"China's cover-up of the Wuhan virus allowed the disease to spread all over the world"* on 29 May 2020, *"The world needs answers from China on the virus"* on 29 May 2020, *"They knew it was a problem ..."* on 5 June 2020, *"it's the China virus. They don't want to say it..."* on 22 September 2020.

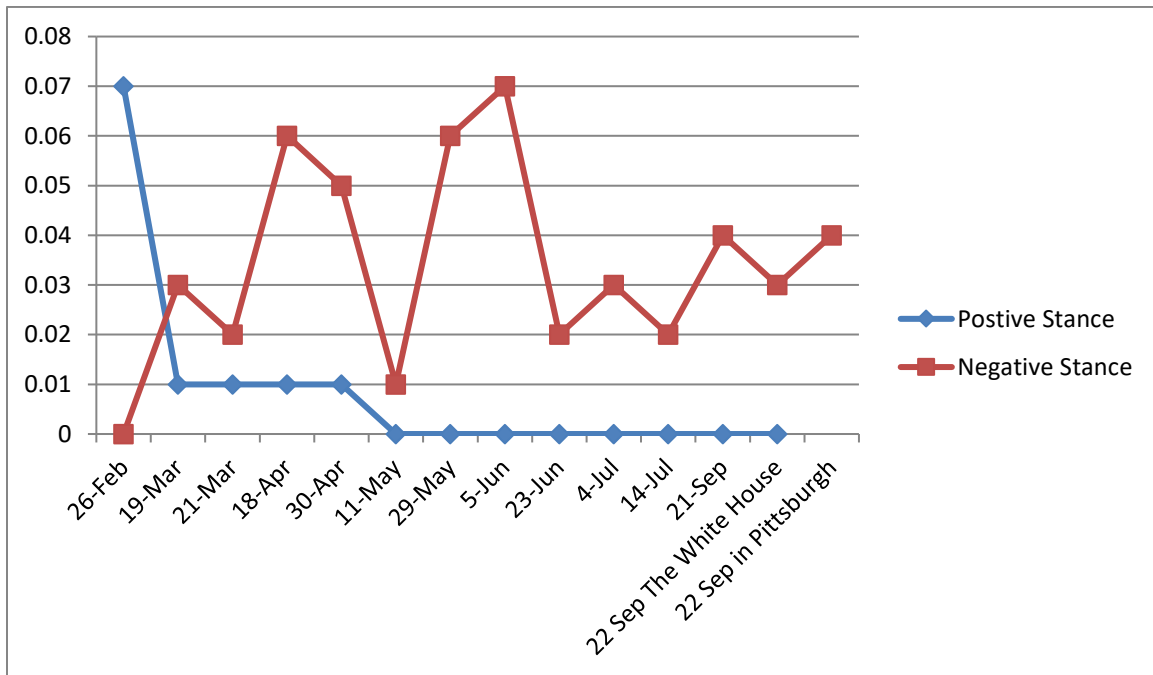
Throughout America's mental processes, Trump emphasized the positive characteristics of his nation. We've noticed that Trump sometimes talks in polarizing terms (We for America, and They for China). Using pluralization pronounces (we), mean that Trump resembled himself with other members of his administration who are responsible for transmission COVID-19's news, such as Dr. Anthony Fauci, Admiral Giroir who is an American physician, and a retired four-star admiral, Mike Pence the vice president, and other members of the Republican Party. Most of the mental processes of America's representation emphasized that China was hiding the numbers of real cases of COVID-19 from the rest of the World *"it would've been much better if we had known about this a number of months earlier .."* on 19 March 2020, *"Unfortunately, China, I wish China would have told us more about what was going on in China long prior to us reading about it..."* On 21 March 2020, *"I wish they could've told us earlier about what was going on inside ..."* on 21 March 2020, *"I think they were embarrassed. I think they knew it was something bad and I think they were embarrassed"* On 18 April 2020.

Trump's representation of America reflected van Disk's ideological square theory. He was stressing the positive qualities that he and his followers possess. He portrayed himself as the savior of America and the rest of the world from the evil Virus that originated in China. Almost every portrayal of Trump and America is positive; stressing positive aspects of the US, while every wicked attribute associated with China emphasized negative

## Representation of ‘China’ in Trump’s Discourse on COVID-19

aspects of THEM. As an example of the negative aspects which are associated with China, we notice when a reporter asked him about the true number of COVID-19 cases that have died in America, he became angry and responded, *“that’s a question you should ask China, don’t ask me, ask China that question, okay”* 11 May 2020. Associating China with negative representation has the discursive goal of isolating it from those who care about the world and the welfare of its people.

Relational processes reveal the act of being (Halliday, 1994). It creates a link between two items (Simpson, 2004). According to the results, Trump a China has a good representation in Trump’s speeches in the first months of 2020. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, Trump announced that he is in continual contact with President Xi, to inform him about COVID-19’s progress. Most of the speeches throughout February reflected the hardworking of China’s government, especially president Xi *“He’s working very hard”* on 26 February 2020. He confirmed that the Chinese are powerful, clever and that they can overcome COVID-19, as in *“And it’s significant - it’s a significant group”* on 26 February 2020, besides the cooperation between America and China is very good, as in *“The relationship with China is a very good one”* on 26 February. When COVID-19 spread across Europe, we notice that Trump’s stance altered against China. He began to blame China for hiding the information about the real cases of COVID-19, besides spreading COVID-19 intentionally into the rest of the world *“China was very secretive ...”* on 21 March 2020, *“The world is now suffering as a result of the malfeasance of the Chinese government”* on 29 May 2020, *“it’s a gift from China and a very bad gift”* 5 June 2020, *“..., it’s the China virus, not the coronavirus ...”* on 22 September 2020, *“Corona. No, it’s a China virus”* 22 September 2020. Besides accusing China of creating COVID-19 in its labs intentionally *“Was it a mistake that got out of control or was it done deliberately?”* on 18 April 2020.



• **Figure 3. The Change in Trump’s Attitude Toward China Concerning COVID-19**

Figure 3 shows that there is a clear change in Trump’s stance against China after the spread of COVID-19 across America. Throughout the first appearance of COVID-19 (precisely throughout 26-February), Trump has a positive stance toward China, which even included offering help to the Chinese government. Trump’s declarations throughout the first period of COVID-19 appearance, indicate the effort of President Xi to overcome COVID-19, as in *“he is working so hard on this problem. He is working so hard”* (26 February -2020). However, this stance changed after COVID-19 spreading across America and Europe in general. Therefore, the most prominent theme throughout China’s material processes refers to the responsibility of China for the spreading of COVID-19 which reflects Trump’s continual blaming on China.

- *“It could have been stopped where it came from, China ...”* on March 19- 2020.
- *“Could have been stopped in China before it started.”* On April 18 – 2020.
- *“It came out of China and it could have been stopped .....”* On April 30 -2020.

- “*They either didn’t do it and they couldn’t do it from a competitive standpoint or they let it spread.” April 30 -2020.*
- “*They should have stopped this at the source*” on May 11- 2020
- “*... They should’ve stopped it at the source..*” on June 5, 2020
- “*.. they didn’t stop it cold from coming to the United States, Europe and the rest of the world...*” on June 5, 2020
- “*They let the plague out, they shouldn’t have done it...*” on September 22- 2020 In Pittsburgh

On the other hand, Trump associated America with good characteristics which reflect the self-positive representation. Throughout 18 April 2020, Trump declared that the cases in America are much less than in China “*we’re not number one, China’s number one*” On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. Furthermore, he emphasized the good strategies that America followed to overcome China, specifically the early ban on China “*And it’s very lucky. This country is very lucky and I’m very lucky that I put the ban on China, as you know, very early on*” (30 April 2020), “*And if we didn’t do that, as Alex knows, we would have had a problem like you wouldn’t have believed*” (30 April 2020), “*That was a very hard decision to make*” on 5 June. Besides the continual references to the great American economy which is affected greatly by COVID-19. In other words, Trump was reminding the press and the American people that China was well ahead of America in the economy a few months earlier, but that due to the pandemic, America’s economy was harmed “*I want to tell you if you go back a few months before this pandemic, we were gaining, gaining, gaining*” on 21 September 2020. Ideologically Trump used to accuse China of COVID-19 spreading, claiming that it intentionally spread COVID-19 to attack the American economy.

The data analysis showed that Trump was insisting that America is working hard to save people's lives. On the other hand, he was associating China with wicked characteristics such as: creating COVID-19 intentionally, hiding the real cases of COVID-19 from the press, destroying America’s economy by spreading COVID-19 which caused great damage, also hiding the real number of people who are infected with the virus. But in fact, we know that America has a large number of people with COVID-19 in addition to the deaths, but such a declaration asserts van Dijk’s ideological square, which is to emphasize Our good actions and Their bad actions while de-emphasizing Our bad actions and Their good actions.

### Results, Discussion, and Recommendations

This study examined the representation of China and America in Trump’s discourse between the periods (26 February to 22 September/ 2020). The research focused on Halliday’s transitivity to examine the representation of America (Self) and China (Other) in Trump’s press conferences. The results revealed that before the spreading of COVID-19 across the world, Trump represented China as a virtuous entity. However, when COVID-19 attacked Europe especially America, Trump’s positive stance toward China was changed into a negative one. The “other” is represented as a wicked entity, which tries to spread the damage across the world, besides hitting the economy of its competitors. On the other hand, the “self” is represented as a noble and helpful entity that tries to save the world from COVID-19, and offering help to its competitors “*We’re dealing with them. We’re giving them certain advice*” on 26 February 2020, “*We hope we can open it up to China as soon as possible*” On 26 February. This fits the polarization between the “self” and the “other”, as van Dijk states “usual forms and formats of ideological discourse... emphasizing Our good things and emphasizing Their bad things” (2006, p. 359). The dichotomy of “self” and “Other” is prominent in Trump’s discourse, thus, America is represented as a good entity and China as a wicked one.

According to the findings of this research, political discourse analysts must be aware of the different strategies used by politicians to legitimize their acts as well as delegitimize the actions of the “other”. This reflects Trump’s discourse in which he associated China with evil actions that holding it the whole responsibility of the damage caused by COVID-19, even regarding it responsible for creating COVID-19 in its labs. On other hand, he associated America with good actions that involved making strategies that decreased COVID-19 cases in America and the rest of the world.

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## Representation of 'China' in Trump's Discourse on COVID-19

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