

## *Original Paper*

# Critical Discourse Analysis of Chinese Aerospace Reports in China Daily

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### **Abstract**

*With the continuous development of China's aerospace industry, China Daily, as an important window for international communication, plays a crucial role in shaping and disseminating China's aerospace image. This study takes the reports on Chinese aerospace in China Daily as the research object, adopting Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model and corpus-assisted research methods. From the perspectives of text, discourse practice and social cultural practice, this paper explores the linguistic characteristics, discourse strategies and image construction logic of the reports. The research finds that China Daily constructs a positive and comprehensive Chinese aerospace image featuring independent innovation, peaceful development, and international cooperation through specific lexical selection, syntactic structure arrangement, and diverse citation methods. This image construction is not only closely related to China's aerospace development achievements and national diplomatic concepts but also influenced by the media's international communication orientation and cultural value transmission needs. The study is expected to provide reference for optimizing the international communication of China's aerospace discourse and enhancing the international influence of China's aerospace image.*

### **Keywords**

*Chinese aerospace, critical discourse analysis, China Daily, space news*

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of globalization, the development of aerospace technology has become an important symbol of a country's comprehensive national strength, and the media's discourse construction of aerospace events is crucial to the shaping of a country's international image. China has made remarkable achievements in the aerospace field, from the "Shenzhou" series of manned spaceflights to the "Tianwen" Mars exploration program, which has attracted widespread attention from the international community.

As China's first national English-language newspaper, China Daily is committed to spreading Chinese voices to the world and has a significant influence on the international community's perception of China's aerospace development.

The image of China's aerospace constructed through media discourse is not only a reflection of objective development achievements but also a product of subjective discourse construction. Critical discourse analysis provides an effective theoretical perspective for exploring the deep relationship between discourse, power and ideology in news reports. By analyzing the linguistic characteristics and discourse strategies in China Daily's aerospace reports, we can reveal how the media constructs China's aerospace image and the underlying social and cultural factors.

This study is of both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it enriches the research on critical discourse analysis in the field of Chinese aerospace news, expanding the application scope of relevant theories in specific professional fields. Practically, it helps to understand the advantages and potential improvement spaces of China Daily in shaping China's aerospace image, providing practical reference for optimizing the international communication strategy of China's aerospace discourse, enhancing the persuasiveness and influence of the discourse, and enabling the international community to have a more comprehensive and objective understanding of China's aerospace development concept and achievements.

## **2. Literature Review**

Existing studies on the media image of Chinese aerospace mainly focus on two aspects: the image construction of foreign media and the self-construction of Chinese media. Foreign scholars' research on Chinese aerospace reports mostly adopts a critical perspective, believing that some Western media often construct a biased image of China's aerospace due to ideological differences and national interest games. For example, Zhang (2023) found that mainstream American media such as CNN and The New York Times tend to use war metaphors and negative vocabulary to portray China's aerospace development as a "threat" through discourse strategies such as lexical selection and citation manipulation, ignoring China's efforts and contributions to the peaceful use of outer space. Guan & Liu (2024) further pointed out that some foreign media often attach comparisons with the United States when reporting on China's space stations, attempting to construct a destructive image of China as a challenger to American status. Domestic studies on the media image of Chinese aerospace have gradually increased in recent years. Most scholars analyze the discourse characteristics and image construction of Chinese aerospace reports in Chinese media through content analysis and frame analysis. Wang & Zhang (2021) pointed out that Chinese media mostly construct a positive aerospace image featuring independent innovation, national strength enhancement and peaceful development, emphasizing the breakthroughs in aerospace technology and the positive significance for national development and international cooperation. However, there are relatively few studies that systematically analyze the image construction of Chinese aerospace in China Daily from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, and the depth of exploration

into the interaction between discourse strategies and social cultural factors needs to be further strengthened.

Critical discourse analysis, proposed by Fowler et al. (1979), aims to reveal the hidden power relations and ideological tendencies in discourse through the analysis of language use. Fairclough's (1989, 1992) three-dimensional analysis model (text analysis, discourse practice analysis, social cultural practice analysis) has become a classic framework in the field of critical discourse analysis, providing a systematic analysis path for exploring the relationship between news discourse and social reality. This model has been widely used in subsequent studies to decode the ideological connotations behind news texts (Chou, 2014; Huang & Leung, 2005).

In recent years, critical discourse analysis has been widely used in the research of news discourse, including political news, economic news and international news. Scholars at home and abroad have analyzed the discourse construction and ideological transmission in news reports through lexical classification, transitivity analysis, intertextuality analysis and other methods. For example, in the analysis of international news reports, critical discourse analysis can effectively reveal how the media constructs the image of other countries through discourse strategies and the influence of social, political and cultural factors behind it (Fairclough, 1995; Halliday, 2000). However, in the research of aerospace news discourse, the application of critical discourse analysis is still relatively insufficient, especially the lack of in-depth analysis of the discourse construction mechanism and image shaping logic of Chinese aerospace reports in English media for international communication.

As an important platform for China's international communication, China Daily has attracted the attention of many scholars in terms of discourse characteristics and image construction. Existing studies mainly focus on the discourse strategies, translation methods and cultural transmission of China Daily in political, economic and cultural fields. Hu & Tian (2018) believed that China Daily has made positive efforts in spreading Chinese culture, explaining Chinese policies and shaping a good national image through accurate language expression and reasonable discourse construction. Cong (2023) compared the reports of China Daily and The New York Times on the Beijing Winter Olympics and found that China Daily constructs a positive national image through objective naming strategies, positive predication strategies and diverse perspectivization strategies.

However, there are few studies specifically focusing on the discourse of aerospace reports in China Daily. Most of the existing relevant studies are scattered in the research of national image construction, lacking systematic and in-depth exploration of the discourse characteristics, image construction strategies and their underlying mechanisms of aerospace reports. Therefore, it is necessary to fill this research gap by using critical discourse analysis to conduct in-depth research on the aerospace reports in China Daily, so as to provide more targeted reference for optimizing the international communication of China's aerospace discourse.

This study aims to explore the discourse characteristics and image construction logic of Chinese aerospace reports in China Daily from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, with the following

core research questions:

- (1) What linguistic features and discourse strategies are adopted in China Daily's reports on Chinese aerospace, including lexical selection, syntactic structure, and intertextual practices?
- (2) What social, cultural, and political factors influence the formation of such discourse strategies and image construction?

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### *3.1 Data Collection*

The research data consists of news reports on Chinese aerospace published in China Daily, with the following specific collection criteria and processes. In terms of the selection of media sources, China Daily was chosen as the core data source because it is China's first national English-language newspaper and an important window for international communication (Cong, 2023), whose reports on aerospace not only have authoritative information but also directly face international audiences, playing a key role in shaping China's aerospace image overseas. Regarding the time scope of data collection, reports published from January 2024 to November 2025 were selected to ensure that the corpus covers the latest progress and key events of China's aerospace industry during this period, including the Chang'e 6 lunar far-side sample return mission, the Shenzhou XX and Shenzhou XXI manned space missions, and the operation of the Tiangong space station, so as to reflect the timeliness and representativeness of the research. In terms of thematic screening, reports closely related to Chinese aerospace were selected, covering core fields such as lunar exploration, manned spaceflight, space station operations, deep-space exploration plans, and international aerospace cooperation, excluding short news snippets, irrelevant announcements, and non-narrative content. Finally, after sorting and screening, 25 valid reports were obtained, with a total word count of 13,573 words. These reports were compiled into a standardized corpus, with each text labeled with information such as publication date, author, and core theme to lay the foundation for subsequent analysis.

#### *3.2 Theoretical Framework*

This study adopts Fairclough's (1989, 1992) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model as the core theoretical framework, which integrates micro-linguistic analysis and macro-social interpretation to systematically explore the discourse characteristics and image construction mechanisms of China Daily's aerospace reports. The first dimension is text analysis, which focuses on the linguistic features of the reports, including lexical selection (such as high-frequency words, positive/negative vocabulary, professional aerospace terms, and cultural metaphors), syntactic structure (such as transitivity processes, modal verb usage, and sentence patterns), and rhetorical devices (such as citations and parallelism), aiming to reveal the surface linguistic strategies of the discourse. The second dimension is discourse practice analysis, which examines the production and interpretation processes of the text, focusing on intertextuality and discourse dissemination logic. This includes analyzing how the reports quote official statements (e.g., announcements from the China National Space Administration), expert views (e.g.,

remarks from aerospace scientists), and international feedback to construct discourse meaning, as well as the selection and arrangement of information to explore the interaction between discourse and social practice. The third dimension is social cultural practice analysis, which links the discourse to the broader social context, analyzing the influence of national aerospace strategies (e.g., building a space power), international communication needs (e.g., enhancing the international influence of Chinese aerospace), and cultural values (e.g., peaceful cooperation and innovative spirit) on discourse production, so as to reveal the deep social and cultural mechanisms behind image construction. This three-dimensional framework provides a comprehensive analytical path for this study, enabling a multi-level exploration of the relationship between aerospace discourse, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1995; Guan & Liu, 2024).

### *3.3 Research Procedures*

The research follows a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, with the following specific implementation steps. Firstly, corpus preprocessing is carried out. The collected 25 reports are formatted and standardized, irrelevant information such as advertisements and source notes is removed, and a labeled corpus is established. Each report is marked with basic information such as publication date, thematic category, and core events to ensure the orderliness and accessibility of the data. Secondly, quantitative analysis of linguistic features was conducted. Using corpus analysis software (e.g., AntConc4.3.1), high-frequency words and keyword clusters in the corpus are extracted to identify core thematic vocabulary (such as "lunar samples," "space station," "cooperation," and "breakthrough") and their frequency; the usage of transitivity processes (material processes). Thirdly, qualitative analysis of discourse strategies is performed. Based on the quantitative results, typical texts and key discourses are selected for in-depth interpretation, including analyzing the persuasive effects of citation strategies (e.g., quoting official data and expert opinions to enhance credibility), and the ideological implications of syntactic structures, to explore how linguistic features serve as discourse strategies for image construction. Fourthly, social context analysis is conducted. Combining national aerospace policies, international communication backgrounds, and cultural value orientations, the influence of macro-social factors on discourse production is analyzed, such as how national strategies of building a space power guide the thematic orientation of reports, and how the concept of peaceful development is reflected in discourse expression. Finally, conclusion verification and induction are carried out. The analysis results are cross-validated through multiple cases and theoretical deductions, summarizing the discourse characteristics and image construction logic of China Daily's aerospace reports, and ensuring the credibility and validity of the research findings.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### *4.1 Text Analysis*

Drawing on the research paradigm of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, this section examines the linguistic characteristics of China Daily's aerospace reports from two core dimensions: lexical choice and transitivity. Quantitative statistics of lexical choice are presented in tables for objectivity, while

transitivity is analyzed through specific examples, revealing how linguistic choices serve the construction of China's aerospace image.

#### 4.1.1 Lexical Choice

Lexical choice is a core component of discourse construction, and the selection of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other lexical categories directly reflects the thematic focus and value orientation of the reports, thereby shaping the audience's cognitive impression of China's aerospace industry.

**Table 1. High-frequency Vocabulary in the Corpus (Top 20)**

Rank	Vocabulary	Frequency	Word Category
1	China	317	Noun
2	lunar samples	87	Noun
3	space station	63	Noun
4	mission	58	Noun
5	cooperation	56	Noun
6	astronauts	45	Noun
7	breakthrough	32	Noun
8	develop	27	Verb
9	Chang'e	37	Noun
10	Shenzhou	31	Noun
11	explore	22	Verb
12	share	24	Verb
13	successfully	23	Adverb
14	autonomous	12	Adjective
15	peaceful	19	Adjective
16	safe	17	Adjective
17	innovate	25	Verb
18	build	27	Verb
19	win-win	14	Adjective
20	Tianwen	18	Noun

As shown in Table 1, high-frequency nouns in the corpus focus on three core categories: aerospace entities and achievements (e.g., "lunar samples", "space station", "mission"), cooperation and development (e.g., "cooperation", "win-win"), and cultural symbols (e.g., "Chang'e", "Shenzhou", "Tianwen"). "Lunar samples" (87 times) and "space station" (63 times) accurately depict key achievements such as the Chang'e 6 mission's lunar far-side sample retrieval and the Tiangong space station's long-term operation, demonstrating the professionalism and substantiality of China's aerospace

industry. Cultural connotative vocabulary derived from traditional myths not only distinguishes China's aerospace projects but also injects cultural charm, reflecting the inheritance of cultural confidence. High-frequency verbs are dominated by action-oriented terms such as "develop", "explore", "share", and "build", emphasizing practical efforts in technological innovation, cosmic exploration, achievement sharing, and infrastructure construction. These verbs convey a proactive and down-to-earth style, showing that China's aerospace achievements are rooted in concrete actions. Adverbs such as "successfully" and adjectives such as "autonomous", "peaceful", and "safe" further supplement the image: "successfully" highlights the high success rate of missions, "autonomous" underscores independent R&D capabilities, "peaceful" reflects the value orientation of peaceful use of outer space, and "safe" emphasizes the people-oriented principle of prioritizing astronaut safety.

#### 4.1.2 Transitivity

Transitivity processes reveal how discourse represents actions, relationships, and meanings. Based on system functional linguistics, the corpus mainly includes material, relational, verbal, mental, and existential processes. Among them, material processes account for 47% of the total, relational processes for 32%, verbal processes for 15%, mental processes for 6%, and existential processes for 2%. The choice of processes and the arrangement of participants subtly reflect the discourse's orientation, similar to how critical discourse analysis reveals hidden attitudes through transitivity analysis.

Example 1: "The Chang'e 6 probe collected nearly 2 kilograms of soil from the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the lunar far side and brought it back to Earth."

This sentence takes the Chang'e 6 probe as the actor, with "collected" and "brought back" as core action verbs, directly presenting the world's first lunar far-side sample retrieval achievement. The precise description of actions and quantities makes China's aerospace progress intuitive and credible, avoiding vague expressions and shaping a down-to-earth, results-oriented image.

Example 2: "Astronauts of the Shenzhou XX mission conducted four spacewalks and completed multiple scientific and technological assignments during their 204-day orbital stay."

Taking astronauts as the actor, the sentence details specific in-orbit operations such as spacewalks and scientific experiments through action verbs like "conducted" and "completed". It reflects the substantiality and rigor of the mission, showing that China's manned spaceflight achievements are rooted in solid practical operations.

Example 3: "After discovering cracks on the viewport window of the Shenzhou XX return capsule, mission planners and engineers conducted comprehensive simulation analyses, tests and safety assessments to ensure the crew's safe return."

The actors here are "mission planners and engineers", and the action verbs "conducted" and "ensure" highlight their rigorous and responsible handling of emergency situations. This reflects the aerospace team's professionalism and people-oriented philosophy, shaping an image of prioritizing safety and rigorous work.

Example 4: "Chinese scientists developed the world's first brain-like complementary visual chip, Tianmou, which can be applied in autonomous driving and intelligent robots."

With "Chinese scientists" as the actor, the verb "developed" emphasizes independent innovation efforts, highlighting that China's technological breakthroughs stem from active research and development practice. It strengthens the image of China's aerospace industry as technologically innovative.

Overall, the material processes in China Daily's aerospace reports construct a consistent image of China's aerospace industry: a pragmatic innovator with solid technological achievements, a collaborative pioneer with multi-subject joint efforts, and an open contributor adhering to peaceful development and shared benefits. These linguistic expressions directly and effectively convey the core strengths and value orientations of China's aerospace development to international audiences.

#### *4.2 Discursive Practice Analysis*

As the middle link of Fairclough's three-dimensional model, discursive practice analysis connects text analysis with social practice analysis. Focusing on the intertextuality of China Daily's aerospace reports, this section explores how the reports construct discourse through citation sources and presentation methods, with reference to the analytical framework of "specificity of citation sources" and "citation presentation methods".

##### *4.2.1 Citation Sources*

Citation sources are divided into specific clear sources, relatively specific sources, and unspecific sources. The more specific the source, the higher the credibility of the report.

Example 5: "CNSA Administrator Shan Zhongde said: 'Chang'e samples belong not only to China, but also to the world, representing a shared treasure for all humanity'."

Example 6: "Professor Li Qiuli from the Institute of Geology and Geophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences emphasized that unraveling the volcanic history of the lunar far side is crucial for understanding the moon's hemispheric dichotomy."

Example 7: "Yang Mengfei, chief designer of the Chang'e 5 mission, said: 'China should strive to become the first to achieve orbital exploration of an ice giant'."

Example 8: "The China Manned Space Agency said in a statement: 'Preparations for the Shenzhou XX astronauts' return are proceeding in an orderly manner'."

Example 9: "According to the Lunar Exploration and Space Engineering Center under the China National Space Administration, 30,881.8 milligrams of lunar samples will be lent to 32 research groups."

Example 10: "Scientists around the world are eager to have access to the Chang'e 6 samples, which researchers believe hold enormous scientific value."

Example 11: "It is widely recognized that the discovery of crystalline water in lunar samples has revised long-held academic assumptions."

##### *4.2.2 Citation Presentation Methods*

Citation presentation methods include direct citations and indirect citations. Direct citations retain the original discourse, while indirect citations are the reporter's secondary elaboration.

Example 12: "Astronaut Chen Dong said: 'Humanity's path of exploring the universe has never been smooth, and this is exactly why we chose to take this path'."

Example 13: "Professor Yu Hongyu said: 'We're now at the forefront, spearheading a full-system lunar project that could be the largest aerospace initiative Hong Kong has ever participated in'."

Example 14: "Wang Yanan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, noted that China's move to share lunar samples demonstrates its commitment to open scientific exchange."

Example 15: "Zhang Tianzhu explained that the scientific outreach payload for Chang'e 7 aims to use electromagnetic field interactions to make a flag wave on the moon."

The selection of citation sources and presentation methods in China Daily's aerospace reports reflects a clear purposeful design, jointly serving the goal of shaping a multi-dimensional image of China's aerospace industry.

In terms of citation sources, the discourse mainly relies on specific and relatively specific sources, with unspecific sources used sparingly. This structure ensures the authority and authenticity of the core information, avoiding the unreliability caused by vague sources. The coverage of sources—including official agencies, academic institutions, experts, and frontline practitioners—reflects the comprehensiveness of the information collection, showing that China's aerospace development is supported by a complete system, shaping an image of systematic advancement and professional rigor.

In terms of citation presentation methods, direct citations and indirect citations are used in combination. Direct citations retain the original speakers' voices, adding authenticity and emotional resonance, while indirect citations optimize the discourse's logic and conciseness. This combination not only ensures the information's authenticity but also enhances the discourse's readability, enabling international audiences to both obtain accurate information and perceive the emotional connotations behind China's aerospace development—such as the perseverance of practitioners and the sincerity of international cooperation.

Overall, the discursive practice of China Daily's aerospace reports constructs an authoritative, credible, and vivid discourse through the selection of specific and authoritative citation sources and the flexible application of citation presentation methods. This practice not only effectively conveys factual information about China's aerospace development but also successfully shapes and disseminates China's aerospace image characterized by technological innovation, open cooperation, and professional rigor, laying a solid foundation for effective international communication.

#### *4.3 Social Practice Analysis*

As the core dimension of Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model, social practice analysis explores the intrinsic connection between discourse and social reality. Combining the social and cultural context of China's aerospace development and the global communication landscape of aerospace discourse, this section interprets the underlying social reasons and influencing factors that shape the discursive strategies of China Daily's aerospace reports, revealing how social-cultural contexts drive the selection of lexical, transitivity and citation strategies, and how the constructed aerospace discourse in turn reflects and responds to social reality.

#### 4.3.1 National Strategic Context: The Construction of Discourse under the Goal of Building a Aerospace Power

The strategic goal of China's construction of an aerospace power is the fundamental social driving force for the discursive strategies of China Daily's aerospace reports. In the context of national strategies that prioritize independent innovation, high-quality development and the integration of aerospace into national comprehensive strength, the reports' discursive design is highly aligned with national strategic demands.

The lexical choice of highlighting "autonomous", "innovation" and "breakthrough" echoes China's strategic emphasis on independent R&D of aerospace core technologies, responding to the social context of breaking technological monopoly and realizing high-level technological self-reliance. The high frequency of material processes describing concrete technological achievements and practical operations in transitivity analysis, such as the independent development of aerospace equipment and the completion of milestone missions, is a discursive reflection of the national strategic practice of "taking practical achievements as the core" in aerospace development. In terms of citation sources, the priority selection of authoritative sources such as CNSA officials, chief designers of national aerospace projects and scientists from key research institutions, is a discursive strategy to highlight the systematic and institutional advantages of China's aerospace development under the national strategic layout, and to demonstrate the solid implementation of the aerospace power strategy at the institutional and professional levels.

This discursive alignment with national strategy not only constructs the image of China's aerospace industry as a practitioner and achiever of national strategic goals, but also disseminates the national development concept through aerospace discourse, making the aerospace industry a discursive symbol of China's high-quality development and technological progress.

#### 4.3.2 Cultural Context: The Inheritance and Expression of Chinese Traditional Culture and Core Values

China's unique cultural traditions and socialist core values form the cultural context for the discursive construction of China Daily's aerospace reports, and are the deep cultural factors that shape the discourse's value orientation and expressive characteristics.

The lexical choice of cultural connotative words such as "Chang'e", "Shenzhou" and "Tianwen" is a typical discursive practice of integrating traditional Chinese culture into aerospace discourse. In the cultural context of attaching importance to cultural confidence and the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional culture, these words link modern aerospace undertakings with Chinese cosmic myths and cultural traditions, making aerospace discourse a carrier of cultural inheritance. The emphasis on "peaceful", "cooperation" and "win-win" in lexical selection and citation content reflects the core values of peace, development and mutual benefit in Chinese society, and the cultural concept of "the world is one family". In the presentation of discourse, the combination of direct and indirect citations to highlight the dedication, perseverance and team spirit of aerospace practitioners is a discursive expression of the core socialist values such as patriotism and professionalism, responding

to the social cultural demand for shaping and carrying forward the aerospace spirit.

This cultural integration in discourse not only endows China's aerospace discourse with unique cultural identity, distinguishing it from the Western aerospace discourse that focuses on competition and hegemony, but also makes the dissemination of China's aerospace image more rooted in cultural connotations, enhancing the emotional identity and cultural appeal of the discourse in international communication.

#### 4.3.3 Global Communication Context: Discourse Adaptation under the Background of International Aerospace Pattern and Cross-cultural Communication

The current global aerospace pattern characterized by both competition and cooperation, and the cross-cultural communication context of China's international image construction, are the key external influencing factors for the discursive strategies of China Daily's aerospace reports.

In the global aerospace pattern where major powers compete for technological dominance and international cooperation in deep-space exploration is becoming increasingly close, the reports' discursive strategy of balancing "highlighting independent achievements" and "emphasizing international cooperation" is a pragmatic adaptation to this context. The lexical emphasis on "cooperation", "share" and "international", and the citation of content about China's sharing of lunar samples and joint construction of the International Lunar Research Station with other countries, respond to the international social demand for multilateral cooperation in aerospace exploration, and construct the image of China as a cooperative participant in the global aerospace cause. In the cross-cultural communication context where the international community has an increasing demand for understanding China's development, the reports adopt the discursive strategies of specific and authoritative citation sources, and a combination of direct and indirect citations, which is a response to the need to enhance the credibility and acceptability of China's discourse in international communication. By reducing vague expressions and strengthening factual support, the reports effectively avoid the misinterpretation of China's aerospace development in cross-cultural communication, and strive to shape an objective and positive international image of China's aerospace industry.

At the same time, against the background of some Western media's intentional misrepresentation and labeling of China's aerospace development, the discursive construction of highlighting China's technological achievements and peaceful development concept is also a discursive response to the distortion of China's international image, which is of great significance for breaking the Western discourse monopoly and building a positive discourse of China's aerospace development in the international community.

#### 4.3.4 Social Public Context: Discourse Response to the Public's Cognitive Demand and Emotional Identity with Aerospace Undertakings

The social public's growing attention to aerospace development, cognitive demand for aerospace knowledge and emotional identity with national aerospace achievements form the mass context for the discursive strategies of China Daily's aerospace reports.

With the continuous progress of China's aerospace undertakings, aerospace has become a key field that triggers the public's national pride and attention. The reports' discursive strategy of multi-dimensional coverage of aerospace achievements, from major national missions to the participation of private enterprises and Hong Kong research teams, responds to the public's comprehensive cognitive demand for China's aerospace development. The use of direct citations from astronauts and frontline scientists in discourse presentation adds a humanistic touch to aerospace reports, making the distant aerospace industry more close to the public, and satisfying the public's emotional demand for understanding the spiritual connotation of aerospace practitioners. The lexical choice of "successfully", "safe" and other positive evaluative words, and the material processes that describe the smooth completion of missions, are consistent with the public's emotional expectation of China's aerospace achievements, and further enhance the public's emotional identity with national aerospace undertakings.

This discursive response to the public's demand not only makes China Daily's aerospace reports an important channel for the public to understand aerospace development, but also strengthens the emotional connection between the aerospace industry and the social public through discourse, and condenses the social consensus of supporting the development of the aerospace industry.

#### 4.3.5 Integrated Interpretation: The Interactive Relationship between Discourse and Social Practice

The discursive strategies of China Daily's aerospace reports are not a passive reflection of social reality, but a dynamic interaction between discourse and social practice under the joint action of national strategy, cultural tradition, global communication and social public context. On the one hand, various social-cultural contexts determine the selection of discursive strategies, making the aerospace discourse highly aligned with the current social development demands and value orientation; on the other hand, the constructed aerospace discourse in turn exerts a positive feedback effect on social practice: it disseminates and consolidates the national aerospace development strategy, inherits and promotes Chinese excellent traditional culture and the aerospace spirit, shapes a positive international image of China's aerospace industry in global communication, and enhances the social public's national pride and identity with aerospace undertakings.

In essence, the aerospace discourse constructed by China Daily is a microcosm of China's social and cultural values in the field of high technology. It takes aerospace achievements as the carrier, takes social-cultural contexts as the basis, and through deliberate and targeted discursive strategies, realizes the dual goal of disseminating aerospace information and shaping China's national image, and becomes an important part of China's national discourse system construction in the new era.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Major Findings

This thesis conducts a critical discourse analysis of China's aerospace reports in China Daily from the three-dimensional framework of text, discursive practice and social practice, exploring the linguistic characteristics of the reports, the discursive strategies adopted in their production and dissemination, and

the deep social-cultural contexts shaping these strategies. It aims to reveal how China Daily constructs the image of China's aerospace industry through discourse and the intrinsic connection between such discursive construction and social reality.

The text analysis from lexical choice and material processes shows that China Daily adopts purposeful lexical selection and transitivity application in its aerospace reports. In terms of lexical choice, the high frequency of aerospace achievement terms, cooperation-oriented words and culture-loaded vocabulary, as well as the prominent key words representing technological innovation and peaceful development, lays a lexical foundation for constructing a multi-dimensional image of China's aerospace industry as technologically advanced, open and cooperative, and culturally rooted. The dominant material processes, with concrete actors, result-oriented action verbs and detailed descriptions of tangible achievements, intuitively presents the pragmatic and innovative development of China's aerospace industry, shaping a down-to-earth and achievement-driven industrial image. From the perspective of discursive practice, the analysis of citation sources and presentation methods reveals the deliberate discursive design in the production and dissemination of the reports. The priority use of specific and clear authoritative sources, supplemented by relatively specific sources and a small number of unspecific sources, maximizes the credibility and authority of the reports, providing solid factual support for the discursive construction of China's aerospace image. The flexible combination of direct and indirect citations not only retains the authenticity and emotional resonance of the original discourse through direct citations, but also optimizes the logical conciseness of the reports and aligns the cited content with the thematic orientation through indirect citations, making the discursive expression more targeted and effective for international communication. The social practice analysis further interprets the underlying driving forces of the above discursive strategies, which are jointly shaped by multiple social-cultural contexts including national strategic layout, traditional cultural inheritance, global communication pattern and social public demand. The strategic goal of building an aerospace power is the fundamental driving force, making the discursive construction highly aligned with national technological and development strategies; the inheritance of Chinese excellent traditional culture and the advocacy of core values endow the aerospace discourse with unique cultural connotations and value orientation; the global aerospace pattern of competition and cooperation and the demand for cross-cultural communication prompt the reports to adopt a balanced discursive strategy of highlighting independent achievements and emphasizing international cooperation; the social public's attention to aerospace and emotional identity with national achievements drive the reports to balance professionalism and popularization, enhancing the close connection between discourse and the public.

In summary, China Daily constructs a consistent and positive image of China's aerospace industry through systematic and targeted discursive strategies: a technological innovator with independent R&D capabilities and remarkable achievements, an open collaborator adhering to the concept of win-win cooperation and contributing to human aerospace exploration, a cultural inheritor integrating traditional Chinese culture with modern aerospace undertakings, and a responsible practitioner prioritizing safety

and professionalism under national strategic guidance. This image construction is not only a discursive reflection of China's real development achievements in the aerospace field, but also a positive response of Chinese media to the current social-cultural and international communication contexts.

As an important international English media in China, China Daily's discursive construction of China's aerospace industry in its reports has important practical significance. On the one hand, it effectively disseminates China's aerospace development achievements to the international community, breaks the discourse monopoly of Western media on aerospace narrative, and builds a positive and objective international image of China's aerospace industry; on the other hand, it inherits and promotes the aerospace spirit and Chinese traditional culture, enhances the national pride and cultural confidence of Chinese people, and condenses social consensus for the further development of China's aerospace industry.

### 5.2 Suggestions for Future Studies

This research also has certain limitations. The research corpus is limited to the aerospace reports of China Daily, and the comparative analysis with aerospace reports of Western mainstream media is lacking, which makes it impossible to further explore the differences in aerospace discourse construction between Chinese and Western media and their deep cultural and social reasons. In the follow-up research, the research scope can be expanded to include more Chinese and foreign media's aerospace reports, and the comparative analysis method can be adopted to conduct a more in-depth exploration of the discursive characteristics and cultural connotations of aerospace discourse in different contexts. In addition, the research mainly focuses on the qualitative analysis of discourse, and the combination of quantitative corpus analysis can be strengthened in the follow-up to make the research conclusions more objective and persuasive.

Looking forward to the future, with the continuous advancement of China's aerospace undertakings, the discourse construction of China's aerospace industry will face new opportunities and challenges in the changing global communication context. Chinese media should continue to adhere to the combination of factual presentation and value transmission, keep pace with the times to optimize discursive strategies, enhance the international communication power and influence of China's aerospace discourse, and make the world better understand China's aerospace development concept and achievements, so that China's aerospace discourse can become an important part of the international aerospace discourse system and contribute Chinese wisdom and strength to the common development of human aerospace exploration.

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