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Study of Quotations From Western Media in Disaster Report: Focusing on Covid-19 Outbreak

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Abstract

The Covid 19 pandemic officially broke out in Jan 2020 and ended in Mar.2023, following the WHO, claiming 7 million lives. For the three years, while the world made concerted effort to fight against the deadly virus, South Korea was praised as a model country in that the country effectively contained the spread of the virus. Given this, the paper aims to figure out how South Korea's story was quoted by looking at six editorials in the New York Times and the Washington Post. For this aim, we have analyzed linguistic expressions within White (2003)'s appraisal theory and then conducted a key word frequency analysis. The analysis results as follows: first South Korea's story was quoted to criticize the U.S. government of its wrong management to the Covid-19, also giving some lessons to the world; second, both newspapers attribute the South Korea's success to its swift and rapid response to the pandemic; and third, the Washington Post showed more positive attitude to South Korea than the New York Times by quoting the country's success more frequently with more positive words in evaluating the country's responses to the pandemic while both newspapers showed negative attitudes to the U.S. government to the issue. Thus, it can be concluded that linguistic expressions in quotations are effectively used in showing the newspapers' attitude toward South Korea and the U.S.

Keywords: Covid-19, Quotation, New York Times, Washington Post, South Korea, Appraisal Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 outbreak is one of the biggest world issues since the coronavirus initially emerged in China and began to spread rapidly around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared that it was a serious international health issue as a disease on January 2020. Then it was officially ended on May, 2023 according to the guideline of WHO. For more than three years, almost 7 million (officially, 6,998,666) were confirmed dead. It was reported to be the fifth deadliest pandemic in history.

In the fight against the Covid-19, South Korea has been praised as a model country around the world. Since the pandemic was deeply related with international health, all news coverages which were newsworthy were disseminated to the world because implementing effective methods and responses to the pandemic could reduce death tools. Or some media outlets involved news framing by engaging political interpretations when citing other governments' response to the pandemic. In news framing, the issue, for example, the government's response to the pandemic can be used to criticize their government's poor policies or appraising their government's excellent responses.

Thus, in order to investigate how and why South Korea is cited in foreign quality newspapers, this paper

has evaluated the texts in editorials from *the New York Times*, and *the Washington Post* with regard to mainly South Korea's response to Covid-19 outbreak. In particular, we have paid attention to the nine months in 2020 when the Covid-19 began and spread rapidly at an alarming level in 2020. Two types of analyses are conducted: first, following White (2003)'s appraisal theory[1], linguistic expressions which involve positive and negative words, have been examined to examine whether the news reports are negative or positive attitude to the issue; second, a key word frequency analysis have been conducted by counting the key words from the editorials in both newspapers.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Martin's appraisal theory has a presupposition that newsworthy issues might be elaborated or framed. This is well explained by Gamson's framing theory. According to the framing theory, news is neither subjective or neutral, highlighting that a news frame explains what is an issue in news reporting(Gamson, 1989).[2] More particularly, Entman(1988)[3] mentioned that some parts of an issue are emphasized or elaborated, thus making them salient. In the framing theory, news frames can be conducted by various ways—namely, expansion, reduction, exaggeration, and others here. Quotations can be an effective way in framing news in that quotations contribute to the increases of authority and credibility(van Dijk, 1988).[4] It can allow journalists to reduce responsibility for his reporting, but increasing credibility(Ban & Noh, 2016).[5]

Given this, Martin's appraisal theory is concerned about the linguistic expressions with which writers come to express, negotiate inter-subjective and ideological positions. It claims that emotions are linguistically represented on the basis of a human's evaluation toward a situation, object, or event. More specifically, it focuses on the language of evaluation, attitude and emotion, and "with a set of resources which explicitly position a text's proposals and propositions interpersonally" (Martin, 2003).[6] In his theoretical framework, the types of evaluation engage three components: Attitude, Graduation and Effect. Attitude is about linguistic expressions which convey emotion about a certain event, denoting positivity, negativity or neutrality. Graduation is related with the linguistic expressions which emphasize or reduce feeling about a certain event. Effect is about the linguistic expressions focusing on the effect of a certain event on any relevant outcome. Now look at the following examples.

(1) The woman is <u>kind</u>, <u>good</u> and <u>passionate.</u>
(2) He <u>emphasizes</u> that the leader is honest.
(3) The economy is recovering at <u>a very rapid pace</u>.

The examples (1)-(2) refer to the first component, attitude. The example (1) involves the affect. In (1) the modifiers*, kind*, *good*, and *passionate*, show that the writer has positive attitude to the reference (here, *the woman*) in that the corresponding antonyms, *unkind, bad*, and *indifferent* denote negative attitude. In (2), the verb *emphasize* indicates that the writer strongly believes the statement is right by giving a clearer recognition to his statement that the leader is honest. The example (3) is related with gradation: it clearly illustrates that the writer thinks that economic recovery is so fast by using a degree adverb, *very.* Affect refers to emotional evaluation of entities (processes, states, or things), for example, as in the statement *he loves or hates candies*. Judgement is related with ethical evaluation of human acts, for example, as in the statement *his action is wrong*. Appreciation involves aesthetic assessment of entities, for example, as in the statement, *she is beautiful* or *the policy is effective*.

Given this, it is noteworthy to mention that this paper mainly looks at the attitude in the editorials because the primary aim of this paper is to evaluate that the media out's stance is positive or negative only. That is, graduation is of little importance. The degree about how much the statement is positive or negative does little matter in this study. In line with the perspective, judgment is not taken into consideration in that the rightness or the wrongness already clearly shows one's attitude to an issue without examing the usage of positive or negative words.

3. SCOPE AND METHOD

This paper has the purpose to figure out how the western quality newspapers describe mainly South Korea's response to the Covid-19 when the Covid-19 broke out. For the aim, each three editorials from *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* were selected by the search engine in each newspaper. Here editorials included columns. The ones from *the New York Times* are '*How South Korea Flattened the Curve*,' (Ed1, Apr. 20, 2020)[7], '*3 Rules for the Trump Pandemic: One Don't trust the Presiden*t', (Ed2, March 19, 2020)[8] and '*The Best outcome for the Coronavirus and the Worst*,' (Ed3, March, 20, 2020)[9]; and the ones from *the Washington Post* are '*South Korea is winning the fight against covid-19. The U.S. is failing*,' (Ed4, Apr. 10, 2020)[10]; '*Instead of learning from South Korea's coronavirus example, Trump is lying about it*,'(Ed5, Oct.,27, 2020)[11]; '*The difference in how the pandemic has affected the U.S. and South Korea remains staggering*' (Ed6, Dec.4, 2020)[12]. They were sought with key words-*South Korea* and *coronavirus* and they are included in the top ten list by relevance.

In particular, for objective comparison, the pair of editorials which share a similar or the same theme were chosen from each newspaper: Here, the Ed1 and the Ed4 share the theme of a successful South Korea's story; both the Ed2 and the Ed5 accuse the U.S president Trump of his bad handling of the Covid-19; and the Ed3 and the Ed6 share a similar theme in that both talk about the better or the worse outcome, given that South Korea is reported to be successful, while the US is less successful. In this situation, we have conducted both quantitative and qualitative analyses. We have analyzed qualitatively linguistic expressions which might denote positive or negative stance to the issue in the six editorials, following Martin's appraisal theory. Then, for the quantitative purpose, we have counted key words (linguistic expressions) related with South Korea's cases and with the U.S. governmental management in order to mainly examine the functions and roles of South Korea's case in the editorials of the western newspapers.

4. FINDING AND ANALYSIS

This analysis comes from White's appraisal theory(2003) which addresses journalists' viewpoints toward Covid-19. So, for this aim, six editorials are analyzed based on relevant linguistic expressions to investigate how South Korea's response to the pandemic is depicted. The editorials were published in 2020 where the news of the pandemic was plastered with news articles in the newspaper around the world. The followings are the headlines of the editorials.

(4) Headlines of Editorials in *the New York Times*
a. How South Korea Flattened the Curve (Ed1, Apr. 20, 2020)
b. 3 Rules for The Trump Pandemic: One Don't Trust the President (Ed2, Mar, 19, 2020)
c. The Best Outcome for the Coronavirus, and the Worst (Ed3, Mar. 20, 2020)

(5) Headlines of Editorials in *the Washington Post*
a. South Korea is winning the fight against covid-19. The U.S. is failing (Ed4, Apr. 10, 2020)
b. Instead of learning from South Korea's coronavirus example, Trump is lying about it (Ed5, Oct. 27, 2020)
c. The difference in how the pandemic has affected the U.S. and South Korea remains staggering (Ed6, Dec, 4, 2020)

As seen above in the headlines, we can assume that the underlined phrases- *the best outcome, don't trust, the best outcome, wining the fight, learning from South Korea,* and *flatten the curve* show that South Korea might be depicted as an exemplary country. However, as shown in (4b) and 5(b), we can assume that this can be used to criticize the then-president's policies to the pandemic. For example, the phrase *don't trust* in (4b) clearly shows that the then-president Trump was at least wrong in his reaction to the pandemic. For example, in (5a) the phrase *winning the fight* in (5a) and *learning from South Korea* in (5b) denote that South Korea has clear concepts to successfully reduce the infections and the deaths caused by the pandemic. By analogy, South Korea

and the U.S. are assumed to be applied to the phrase *best outcome* and *the worst*, respectively in (4c).

From the headlines, we can also assume that South Korea is highly likely to be cited with two purposes: One is that South Korea itself is cited to be a successful one to fight against the Covid-19 as shown below. The main themes in (6) and (7) is that South Korea successfully contains the Covid-19 by effectively responding to the pandemic as illustrated in the lexicons such as *hail* and *efficiency,* owing to the public's willing

(6) The head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has hailed South Korea as demonstrating that containing the virus (Ed3)

(7) The <u>efficient</u> South Korean response also hinged on two historically rooted factors: the <u>close cooperation</u> between the state and the private sector, and the South Korean public's <u>willing</u> and almost <u>enthusiastic</u> embrace of a large-scale medical intervention (Ed4)

The second South Korea is highly likely to be quoted for the comparison with America. The below examples show that South Korea is quoted to underscore the US government's poor response to the Covid 19.

(8) Compare, for example, America's handling of the coronavirus with that of <u>South Korea</u>. Both countries reported their first case on Jan. 20. But South Korea <u>moved quickly</u> to implement widespread testing; it has used the data from that testing <u>to guide social distancing</u>; and <u>the disease appears to be on the wane there</u>. (Ed2)

(9) But according to Health Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, there's <u>nothing to learn from</u> Seoul —to his total <u>inaccurate and stereotype-laden misrepresentation of South Korea's response</u> (Ed5)

In particular, in (8), the text clearly states that South Korea effectively responds to the pandemic, even though the infected cases were reported on the same day in South Korea and America. It implies that America was not as good as South Korea, for instance presupposing that America didn't move as quickly as South Korea. To make it worse, the text in (9) shows that US was wrong with using words such as *inaccurate*, and *misrepresentation.* That is, the editorials strongly accuse the US government of its unwise and bad strategies, in a comparison with South Korea. However, *the New York Times* differs from *the Washington Post* in that the latter quotes South Korea much more frequently than the former, as shown in Table 1. In Table 1, the asterisk mark * denotes a paragraph. For example, the Ed 1 tells South Korea's case in 7 out of 9 paragraphs at 78%, while the U.S 's case is mentioned just in one paragraph at 11%. Even in the Ed 2 and the Ed 5, South Korea's story is much less quoted in *the New York Times* at 13%, while the percentage is much higher in *the Washington Post* at 86%. To sum, South Korea and its story are cited 11 times in the three editorials in *the New York Times* at 30%, while the numbers increase to 35 times in the counterpart in *the Washington Post*, at 78% . Thus, we can easily figure out that *the Washington Post* tells South Korea much more frequently than New York Times. Note that the words, *Trump, Azar*, the then-secretary of Health and Human Service, are counted to refer to the US. Similarly, the then-president *Moon Jae-In* is counted to the reference of South Korea.

Table 1. Frequency of quotation of South Korea and the US in editorials

Editorial	New York Times		Washington post	
	S. Korea	the U.S	S. Korea	the U.S
1/4	7/9* (78%)	1/9* (11%)	15/15* (100%)	5/15* (30%)
2/5	2/15* (13%)	9/15* (60%)	12/14* (86%)	10/14* (71%)
3/6	2/14* (14%)	2/14* (14%)	8/16 (50%)	12/16 (75%)
Total	11/40* (30%)	12/40* (30%)	35/45* (78%)	27/45* (60%)
A/B= NYT editorial/WP editorial / *a paragraph				

The next question is about how South Korea and America are quoted in both newspapers in terms of attitude. As shown below, there is no doubt that the texts in editorials use much more positive words toward South Korea, while both newspapers use much more negative words toward America.

Table 2. Positive and negative words in the editorials

Country	Linguistic Expressions
South Korea	success, closely manage, super, wise, move quickly better, willing, enthusiasm, success, excellent, good close cooperation, impressive, handle quickly, swift
US	impatience, nothing, bad practice, inaccurate, discouraging, deny, unfortunately, misrepresentation, bad bet, unwilling, slow, stereotype delay, failure/fail

Based on this assumption, the issue about how frequently the linguistic expressions- positive or negative words are used is also analyzed. Two pars of editorials-Ed 1 and Ed4, and Ed2 and Ed5 are compared on the ground that the editorials in a pair share a similar or the same theme in editorials. In the below table, the asterisk mark, * denotes a theme in each editorial. For example, the Ed 1 and the Ed 4 share the same theme of South Korea's successful story in response to the Covid-19. Through an analysis, it is shown that the frequency of positive words to South Korea are almost similar in both newspapers: It is 39 in *the New York Times* and 31 in *the Washington Post*. The similar trend holds true in the case of US: The number is 4 in the former and 2 in the latter newspaper. However, they show a sharp contrast in the Ed 2 and the Ed 5 when they quote South Korea's story as a successful story : the number of positive words to South Korea is 3 in *the New York Time*, while it is 13 in *the Washington Post*, even though the number of negative words toward the U.S. government is almost similar in both newspapers at 18 times and 15 times respectively, thus clearly showing that the Washington Post is more favorable to South Korea's story than the New York Times.

Table 3. Frequency of positive and negative words in editorials

Newspaper	S.Korea (positive words)	U.S.(negative words)
NYT(Ed1*)	39/1581 words (2.5%)	4/1581 words (0.25%)
WP (Ed4*)	31/1351 words (2.3%)	2/1351 works (0.14%)
NYT (Ed2**)	3/ 901 words (0.3%)	18/901 words (1.99%)
WP (Ed5**)	13/921 words (1.4%)	15/921 words (1.62%)
*S. Korea's successful story /** the U.S.'s unsuccessful story		

We have found that certain words are repeatedly used in the editorials. They are *swift* (4 times), *success* (4 times), *support* (4 times), *quickly* (3 times), *efficiency(efficient)* (4 times), *rapid* (3 times), partnership (cooperation) (3 times). Thus, it shows that South Korea's swift response and cooperation between the government and the citizens are the main factors for the success of the country in response to the Covid-19.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has an aim to examine how South Korea is quoted in the western quality newspapers in regard to Covid-19 pandemic in that South Korea has been praised as a model from the world. For this aim, we have selected six editorials in a total - three editorials each from *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* in 2020 and analyzed them both quantitatively and qualitatively. For a qualitative analysis, we have analyzed linguistic expressions which are positive or negative based on the framework of White's appraisal theory. For

a quantitative purpose, the quotation frequency of South Korea and America, and the frequency of key words-positive and negative expressions have been calculated in order to examine the newspapers' stance or attitude toward the issue of South Korea and America's response to the Covid pandemic.

As a result, three important findings are found. First, South Korea is quoted with two functions. One it to introduce a successful story as an exemplary case, and the other is to highlight the U.S. government's failure to respond to the Covid 19 pandemic. That is, South Korea's story is also quoted when the U.S. government is criticized of its mismanagement in response to the Covid 19. Second, when comparing *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* editorials, positive words about South Korea as a success story are used much more often in *the Washington Post* than in *the New York Times*. However, the frequency of negative words about the United States were not significantly different in the two newspapers. Third, both newspapers attributed South Korea's success to its speed, immediacy, and efficiency in that such linguistic expressions such as swift, rapid, effective are relatively quoted more often in editorials in both newspapers, thus suggesting that South Korea's rapid and efficient response is seen as an exemplary case in stopping the spread of the coronavirus. Third, positive words about South Korea as a success story are used much more often in *the Washington Post* than in *the New York Times*, while the frequency of negative words about the United States is not significantly different in the two editorials. It implies that *the Washington Post* is more favorable to South Korea than *the New York Times*, but both share negative attitude to the U.S. government in response to the Covid pandemic.

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