Kristina Holler

Biased Reporting on China in European Headlines?
A Corpus Analysis of Four Newspapers from Large and Small Countries[*]

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how the word *China* is associated with positive, negative, or neutral connotations in the headlines of four daily newspapers from 2010 and 2020 from countries characterized by pluricentric languages: UK, Ireland, Germany, Austria. For this purpose, a quantitative corpus analysis was carried out with *Lexis Nexis* and the search results were thereafter compared with each other based on diverse criteria. Mostly, simple quantitative analysis was used (not statistical procedures) to gain first insights. The analyses show that most headlines are unbiased, but it also became clear that among the surveyed newspapers the ones from larger countries tended to use more biased language than those from the smaller ones, English-language print media use judgmental language more frequently and that conservative dailies report on China negatively with greater frequency than those that belong to the center-left category. The expectation that negative connotations would be used more frequently in opinionated headlines than positive ones was met, although the rather small number of positive headlines was surprising. The size of countries of pluricentric languages did not play an outstanding role concerning this topic, but further comparisons of large and small standard varieties of pluricentric language may enhance Eurolinguistic research.

Sommaire

L'objectif de cette étude est d'examiner comment le mot *Chine* est associé à des connotations positives, négatives ou neutres dans les titres de quotidiens de 2010 et 2020 de quatre pays européens caractérisés par des langues pluricentriques: Angleterre, Irland, Allemagne, Autriche. À cette fin, une analyse quantitative du corpus a été effectuée avec *Lexis Nexis* et les résultats de la recherche ont ensuite été comparés les uns aux autres sur la base de divers critères. La plupart du temps, une simple analyse quantitative a été utilisée (pas de procédures statistiques) pour obtenir un premier aperçu. Les analyses ont montré que la plupart des reportages sont réalisés de manière impartiale, mais il est aussi apparu clairement que, parmi les journaux étudiés, ceux des grands pays ont tendance à utiliser un langage plus tendancieux que ceux des petits pays, que la presse écrite de langue anglaise utilise plus fréquemment un langage de jugement et que les quotidiens conservateurs parlent plus souvent de la Chine de manière négative que ceux qui appartiennent à la catégorie du centre-gauche. L'attente selon laquelle les connotations négatives seraient utilisées plus souvent dans les titres d'opinion que dans les titres positifs a été satisfaite, bien que le nombre plutôt faible de titres positifs ait été surprenant. La taille des pays de langues pluricentriques n'a pas joué un rôle important, mais d'autres contrastes de variétés nationales grandes et petites de langues pluricentriques pourraient avancer l'eurolinguistique.

Zusammenfassung

Ziel dieser Studie ist es, zu untersuchen, wie das Wort *China* in den Schlagzeilen von Tageszeitungen der Jahre 2010 und 2020 aus vier europäischen Ländern (geprägt von plurizentrischen Sprachen) mit positiven, negativen oder neutralen Konnotationen verknüpft ist: Großbritannien, Irland, Deutschland, Österreich. Zu diesem Zweck wurde eine quantitative Korpusanalyse mit *Lexis Nexis* durchgeführt und die Suchergebnisse anschließend anhand verschiedener Kriterien miteinander verglichen. Meistens wurden einfache quantitative Analysen (keine statistischen Verfahren) verwendet, um erste Erkenntnisse zu gewinnen. Die Analysen zeigten, dass die meisten Berichte unvoreingenommen sind, aber es wurde auch deutlich, dass von den untersuchten Tageszeitungen jene der großen Länder tendenziell häufiger eine wertende Sprache verwenden als die kleinen, englischsprachige Printmedien häufiger eine wertende Sprache verwenden und dass konservative Tageszeitungen häufiger negativ über China berichten als solche, die dem linken Spektrum angehören. Die Erwartung, dass negative Konnotationen in wertenden Schlagzeilen häufiger verwendet werden als positive, wurde erfüllt, wobei die eher geringe Anzahl positiver Schlagzeilen überraschte. Die Größe von Staaten plurizentrischer Sprachen spielte keine herausragende Rolle, doch weitere Untersuchungen großer und kleiner Standardvarietäten plurizentrischer Sprachen könnten die Eurolinguistik voranbringen.

1. Introduction

While Bucher writes that the relevance of daily newspapers has been declining since the turn of the millennium when it comes to how the general population informs itself about political events, he also points out that trust in daily newspapers remains high, with 80 percent of respondents in a study saying that daily newspapers are far more suitable for gathering information about political issues than television and non-news-specific online sources (Bucher 2017: 299). This is to say that newspapers, as reliable and trustworthy sources of information, have the potential to play a huge role in shaping public opinion. Bucher goes on to say that print media themselves actively participate in a country's political events by making an issue a central theme, then framing it in a certain way, and finally presenting it in an evaluative manner (Bucher 2017: 299). With respect to the concept of framing, Wengeler argues that public discourse actors deliberately frame topics and issues according to their worldview by using words or phrases that carry meaning so as to manipulate their audience (Wengeler 2017: 40).

As accusations of fake news grow increasingly louder and political camps are drifting farther and farther apart, it is worth examining how certain terms are presented in daily newspapers and whether they are used differently in different camps. The term to be explored in this paper is *China*, as throughout the first halves of 2010 and 2020, China was frequently a topic in the headlines of many European dailies. This was due to several reasons. For one, in 2010 Google withdrew from China as it did not want to comply with government-ordered censorship. Additionally, a massive earthquake in the northwestern province of Qinghai resulted in the deaths of nearly 2,700 people. A decade later, headlines centered on the U.S.-China trade war, and on an initially mysterious lung disease that quickly grew into a pandemic with vast implications around the world. Thus, it is worthwhile to take a deeper look at the term *China*. One must also keep in mind that the reason why the People's Republic of China is not regarded as a pariah state by the West is solely due to its status as a major world power (Geldenhuys 1997: 17). This potential to be considered a pariah state may possibly lead to the country being presented in a rather negative light in the press. Whether this is the case is analyzed in this paper.

Through a quantitative corpus analysis, this paper will examine to what extent the word *China* is used with positive, negative, or neutral connotations in the headlines of daily newspapers from four different countries and with different political orientations, and whether correlations between connotation on one side and country size, language and political orientation on the other side can be identified. The countries selected are Germany, Austria, Britain, and Ireland. This approach is not Eurolinguistic *stricto sensu* with regard to the selection of coutries. However, the selection of coutries and sources can be a basis for a new methodological aspect of Eurolinguistics, namely the analysis of large and small countries characterized by the same official (pluricentric) language. By pluricentric languages, linguists mean "languages with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms" (Clyne 2004: 296). Europe, more than other languages, displays pluricentric languages with one relatively large country and at least one relatively small (geographically adjacent) country. Do newspaper headlines of smaller countries show the same change of discourse strategies as the larger countries? This is something not dealt with in a recent volume on the media of pluricentric languages (De Ridder 2023). There are different kinds of pluricentricity. English and German are the two languages in Europe where a smaller country has newspapers with an important international coverage and uses the language in question all over the country (while, for instance, Belgium uses French or Dutch and Finland Swedish only regionally). Further Eurolinguistic studies on media language could include other types of pluricentricity as well.

After introductory remarks on existing literature, the corpus, and the selected newspapers, as well as some examples for the classification into positive, negative, and neutral reporting are provided. Thereafter, the results of the corpus study are presented and analyzed.

2. Literature Review

Much is written about China in newspapers, and occasionally the framing of China in newspapers is also the subject of academic research, as in this paper. A brief overview of the existing academic literature regarding the framing of China in newspapers will be given here. First, in her book *Framing China*, Ariane Knüsel looks at how American, British, and Swiss media portrayed China between 1900 and 1950. She concludes that China was portrayed differently in each of these countries due to a number of different motivations, such as national interests, anxieties and issues (Knüsel 2016). Second, in a 2011 article, Wilke and Achatzi analyze how China was portrayed in the German press in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre until the 2000s. They conclude that the type of framing differs according to the political orientation of the daily newspaper and that some coverage is positive if it concerns political cooperation and some negative if it concerns politics and political actors (Wilke/Achatzi 2011). Another article, written by Ospina Estupinan in 2017, that focuses on the press in Latin America, comes to similar conclusions in its choice of topics for positive coverage. Negative coverage in this region is increasingly related to democracy, military development, as well as other topics. This article further concludes that the framing of China in Latin American news coverage is largely influenced by foreign stereotypes (Ospina Estupinan 2017). Furthermore, Ooi and D'Arcangelis look at how China is framed as *Other* in the U.S. American press and political rhetoric. They note that China is often presented as a critical threat to Americans on various levels, including, for example, as a naval power or through cyber battles, with the conclusion that the U.S. government may one day have no choice but to use hard power against China (Ooi/D'Arcangelis 2017: 280). Another 2015 article focusing on the American press comes from Golan and Lukito. They examine how the rising economic power of China is framed in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, noting that the former portrays China as a global power with structural limitations, while the latter clearly sees the country as a threat to the political interests of the U.S. government (Golan/Lukito 2015: 760-762). Finally, in 2016, Lams looks at how China is presented in Belgian and Dutch media to explore whether their frames are similar to those of U.S. newspapers. She concludes that China is often only reported on if it is relevant to the region of the respective newspaper. Also, it is again found here that the coverage of China is oftentimes negative (Lams 2016: 152). The present paper intends to add to this body of research by comparing German- and English-language newspapers from four European countries in regards to how they portray China in recent years.

3. Corpus and Method

As a basis for the corpus analysis, the digital research database *Lexis Nexis* ("Nexis Uni® Home" n.d.) was used in April and August 2022 to conduct queries with the keyword *China* in the headlines of a total of eight German- and English-language daily newspapers for the periods from January 1, 2010, to June 30, 2010, and from January 1, 2020, to June 30, 2020, yielding a total of 2,966 hits. The search results were then analyzed to determine whether the word *China* was used with a positive, negative, or neutral connotation. A small number of search results were considered irrelevant for the analysis in case the word *China* did not refer to the People's Republic and instead, for example, to the first name of the British author China Miéville or to fine porcelain. Thus, out of 2,966 results, 2,958 remained that were of relevance to the analysis.

3.1. Newspapers

In order to offer a broad and representative selection of media and countries for this analysis, sources were selected from two English-speaking and two German-speaking countries respectively: England, the Republic of Ireland, Germany, and Austria. The selection of newspapers also attempts to cover as broad a political spectrum as possible to be able to examine whether and to what extent certain tendencies in reporting can be derived from the political orientation of the newspapers. A brief overview of the different newspapers follows.

The two German daily newspapers used for this analysis are *Die Welt* and *taz, die Tageszeitung*. *Die Welt* is a conservative daily newspaper with a circulation of 107,777 (2019) ("Die Welt" n.d.). For the first half of 2010, a total of 282 search results could be found and for the same period in 2020, there were 181 search results. The left-wing *taz, die Tageszeitung* has a circulation of 49,056 (2019) ("Taz, Die Tageszeitung" n.d.) and used the word *China* 135 times in its headlines in the first two quarters of 2010 and 127 times in 2020. It would have been desirable to analyze the higher-circulation German newspapers *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, but since it was not possible to research these newspapers via *Lexis Nexis*, the other two newspapers were selected.

From Austria, *Der Standard* and *Die Presse* were selected, with *Der Standard* delivering 53 (2010) and 55 (2020) results respectively and *Die Presse* 123 (2010) and 124 (2020). The first of these two newspapers has a circulation of about 70,000 (2019) ("Der Standard" n.d.) and is considered center-left. The liberal-conservative *Die Presse* has a circulation of 76,000 (2019) in its Monday-Saturday editions and around 90,000 (2019) in its Sunday edition ("Die Presse" n.d.).

The conservative *The Daily Telegraph* and the center-left *The Guardian* were selected as newspapers from England. The former has a circulation of 318,000 (as of 2019) ("The Daily Telegraph" n.d.) compared to 127,000 (as of 2019) of the latter ("The Guardian" n.d.). In terms of search results, for the selected period of 2010, *The Daily Telegraph* had 224 search results and *The Guardian* had 313 search results, and for 2020, 305 and 692 respectively. The 1,534 headlines from these two newspapers account for nearly 42 percent of all search results in this analysis.

When it comes to the analysis of newspapers from the Irish Republic, there are a total of 352 search results for the selected time periods, of which 21 (2010) and 116 (2020) each are found for the conservative *Irish Independent* and 99 (2010) and 116 (2020) for the left-of-center *The Irish Times*. The circulation strength of the *Irish Independent* is 83,900 (2018) ("Irish Independent" n.d.) compared to 54,147 (2019) of *The Irish Times* ("The Irish Times" n.d.).

3.2. Examples of Classification

Prior to presenting the analysis of the results, it is worth considering several examples of headlines that were classified as positive, negative, or neutral, and those that were considered irrelevant for the analysis. To this end, one headline from a German-language and one from an English-language newspaper will be presented for each category. According to Bucher, adjectives in particular help to mark a subjective perspective to make clear the connection between linguistic form and communicative function (Bucher 2017, 310). It is clear from the examples given that semantically loaded adjectives, but also verbs, are used above all in the positive and negative headlines.

(1) *Alte Pracht mit neuen Fassaden. Einst spiegelte der Luxus die Herrschaft der verhassten Kolonialisten wider. Heute ist er Symbol für den **Erfolg** eines neuen **starken** Chinas.* (*taz, Die Tageszeitung* May 19, 2010)
'Old grandeur with new facades. Once, luxury reflected the rule of the hated colonialists. Today it is a symbol of the success of a new strong China.'

In this first example from the *taz*, China is described with the adjective *stark* ('strong') and the country's economic success is emphasized. Commonly, success and strength are considered positive qualities, so it is justified to classify this newspaper headline as positive.

(2) *China **praised** for response to corona as hotel collapse kills 10.* (*The Daily Telegraph*, March 9, 2020)

In this second example of coverage of China with positive connotations, the country's behavior in the face of rapidly rising numbers of infections from the corona pandemic is praised, i.e., the behavior of the People's Republic is seen as something worthy of commendation. The second part of the headline, which refers to a hotel collapse, is not relevant for the classification, since China is neither the actor nor the recipient of the action here, but merely the location of the event that is taking place at the same time.

(3) *Was China **verheimlicht** haben dürfte.* (*Die Presse*, March 25, 2020)
'What China may have been concealing.'

The word *verheimlicht* ('concealed') in this headline of the Austrian *Die Presse* is the crucial word, which has a negative connotation. If someone is hiding something, they are not being honest. In other words, if a country hides something, in this case the truth about when the government knew about the first cases of infection and the severity of the disease, then that country is accused of dishonesty. It should also be noted that instead of the more accurate reference to the Chinese government that withheld the information, the entire country is accused of dishonesty, i.e., a totum pro parte is used here and in the second example. The choice of this kind of wording therefore leads to the whole of China and not just one active part of it being portrayed in a negative light.

(4) *China **in a mood to punish** Britain.* (*The Guardian*, January 11, 2010)

Likewise, in this English-language example from *The Guardian*, China is presented as a negative actor in world affairs when, once again, the entire country, rather than the government, is accused of intending to cause harm to another nation.

(5) *Menschenrechte: Koalition will Dialog mit China vertiefen.* (*Die Welt*, January 21, 2010)
'Human rights: Coalition wants to deepen dialogue with China.'

This is an example from *Die Welt* of a headline with neutral connotations. Here, China is not described with either positive or negative adjectives or verbs. It would have been easy to formulate a judgmental headline by calling China a "violator of human rights," for example. Instead, the editors opted for the value-free variant.

(6) *China defends control of web while praising freedom of speech.* (*The Irish Times*, June 10, 2010)

In this neutral example from *The Irish Times*, the country defends a certain action, i.e., censorship of the Internet, which is seen as negative from a Western perspective, but at the same time praises freedom of expression, which is seen as positive. Also, the verbs *defend* and *praise*, in this case with China as the actant, are to be considered value-free, as they do not describe the country.

(7) **Edd China** *and the joys of simple mechanics.* (*The Irish Times*, April 8, 2020)
(8) *Mend broken* **china** *and glass.* (*The Guardian*, January 18, 2010)

Examples 7 and 8, along with other similar headings, were deemed irrelevant to the analysis and sorted out because they do not refer to the People's Republic of China but are homographs of the word *China*. Example 7 is about a man with the surname China and in the article belonging to example 8 one can learn to repair fine china, i.e., porcelain, and broken glass, oneself.

4. Analysis

The following tables provide a clear breakdown of the results, showing first the number of total headlines in tables 1 and 3 and then their distribution in percentages in tables 2 and 4. In 2010, 600 headlines (48%) came from more left-leaning newspapers while 650 headlines (52%) originated from conservative or liberal-conservative dailies. In 2020, the results are divided between newspapers on the left with 1,059 (62%) and 726 (38%) on the right of the political spectrum. Finally, in the year 2010 there is an almost equal distribution of results between German-language newspapers (593 headlines; 47%) and English-language ones (657; 53%). A decade later, as can be seen, there are fewer results from newspapers in German with 487 headlines representing only 28% as opposed to the much bigger number of 1,229 headlines (72%) from newspapers in English.

Country	Newspaper	Political alignment	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Other	Total
Germany	*taz, die Tageszeitung*	Left-wing	3	34	98	0	135
	Die Welt	Conservative	26	59	197	0	282
Austria	*Der Standard*	Center-left	3	5	45	0	53
	Die Presse	Liberal-conservative	3	8	112	0	123
England	*The Guardian*	Center-left	1	40	266	6	313
	The Daily Telegraph	Conservative	2	56	166	0	224
Republic of Ireland	*The Irish Times*	Center-left	1	7	91	0	99
	Irish Independent	Conservative	2	3	16	0	21
		Total	**41**	**212**	**991**	**6**	**1250**

Tab. 1 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 in total numbers.*

Country	Newspaper	Political alignment	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Germany	*taz, die Tageszeitung*	Left-wing	2.2%	25.2%	72.6%
	Die Welt	Conservative	9.2%	20.9%	69.9%
Austria	*Der Standard*	Center-left	5.7%	9.4%	84.9%
	Die Presse	Liberal-conservative	2.4%	6.5%	91.9%
England	*The Guardian*	Center-left	0.3%	13.0%	86.6%
	The Daily Telegraph	Conservative	0.9%	25.0%	74.1%
Republic of Ireland	*The Irish Times*	Center-left	1.0%	7.1%	91.9%
	Irish Independent	Conservative	9.5%	14.3%	76.2%
		Total	**3.3%**	**17.0%**	**79.3%**

Tab. 2 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 in percent.*

Country	Newspaper	Political alignment	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Other	Total
Germany	*taz, die Tageszeitung*	Left-wing	7	31	89	0	127
	Die Welt	Conservative	6	48	127	0	181
Austria	*Der Standard*	Center-left	1	9	45	0	55
	Die Presse	Liberal-conservative	2	23	99	0	124
England	*The Guardian*	Center-left	0	95	597	0	692
	The Daily Telegraph	Conservative	9	123	173	0	305
Republic of Ireland	*The Irish Times*	Center-left	0	12	102	2	116
	Irish Independent	Conservative	1	20	95	0	116
		Total	**26**	**361**	**1327**	**2**	**1716**

Tab. 3 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2020 in total numbers.*

Country	Newspaper	Political alignment	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Germany	*taz, die Tageszeitung*	Left-wing	5.5%	24.4%	70.1%
	Die Welt	Conservative	3.3%	26.5%	70.2%
Austria	*Der Standard*	Center-left	1.8%	16.4%	81.1%
	Die Presse	Liberal-conservative	1.6%	18.5%	79.8%
England	*The Guardian*	Center-left	0.0%	13.7%	86.3%
	The Daily Telegraph	Conservative	3.0%	40.3%	56.7%
Republic of Ireland	*The Irish Times*	Center-left	0.0%	10.5%	89.5%
	Irish Independent	Conservative	0.9%	17.2%	81.9%
		Total	**1.5%**	**21.0%**	**77.3%**

Tab. 4 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2020 in percent.*

A comparison of all the results from 2010 with those from 2020 reveals that in both periods, neutral reporting on China predominates with 79.3% and 77.3%, respectively. At first glance, this may be interpreted as a sign of bias-free reporting. It also emerges, however, that the positive coverage, with only 3.3% (2010) and 1.5% (2020), is almost non-existent compared to the negative coverage (17% in 2010 and 21% in 2020), thus revealing a certain bias towards negative coverage. Given China's near-classification as a pariah state, this is hardly surprising. It can further be noted that, in the surveyed newspapers, negative reporting has increased by 4% points in the space of just one decade. Whether this increase is a sustained trend would have to be investigated in further studies of additional time periods. Overall, these findings confirm the results from previous studies that have been presented in the literature review, that China, when judged, is presented in a negative light.

The next tables group the figures into large countries and small countries.

Results	Year	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
large country newspapers	2010	32	189	727	948
	2020	22	297	983	1302
small country newspapers	2010	9	23	264	296
	2020	3	64	341	408

Tab. 5 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 and 2020 in large country and small country newspapers in total numbers.*

Results	Year	Positive	Negative	Neutral
large country newspapers	2010	3.4%	19.9%	76.7%
	2020	1.7%	22.8%	75.5%
small country newspapers	2010	3.0%	7.8%	89.2%
	2020	0.7%	15.7%	83.6%
Difference	2010	-0.4%points	-11.1% points	+12.5% points
	2020	-1.0% points	-7.1% points	+8.1% points

Tab. 6 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 and 2020 comparing the results of large country and small country newspapers in percent.*

Taking into account the percentage points, biased language was more prominent in the media of the smaller countries 2010, but there it had dropped considerably in 2020 more in the media of the large countries. In 2020, the differences between larger and smaller countries of the two pluricentric languages have become smaller. If a Mann-Whitney U test is proceeded (with the percentage points of neutral portions for each paper and year, grouped into large and small countries), it can be seen though that there is no statistical significance, though; there is also no statistical significance when comparing just the percentage points for each paper for 2010 (grouped according to country size); there is also no statistical significance if the changes of percentage points with respect to neutral portions for each paper (grouped according to coutry size) are compared. Statistical significances can nevertheless change if more papers are included. This is just a first paper to get an idea whether headline creation may differ in the country of pluricentric languages.

This next part of the study compares the results of the English-language media with those of the German-language media. For this purpose, tables 5 and 6 show the results of both languages, as well as their respective differences.

Results	Year	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
English-language newspapers	2010	6	106	539	651
	2020	10	250	967	1227
German-language newspapers	2010	35	106	452	593
	2020	16	111	360	487

Tab. 7 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 and 2020 in English- and German-language newspapers in total numbers.*

Results	Year	Positive	Negative	Neutral
English-language newspapers	2010	0.9%	16.3%	82.8%
	2020	0.8%	20.4%	78.8%
German-language newspapers	2010	5.9%	17.9%	76.2%
	2020	3.3%	22.8%	73.9%
Difference	**2010**	**+5.0%points**	**+1.6% points**	**-6.8% points**
	2020	**+2.5% points**	**+2.4% points**	**-4.9% points**

Tab. 8 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 and 2020 comparing the results of English- and German-language newspapers in percent.*

It is noticeable that in the headlines of the chosen German-language media, judgmental language is used to a higher degree than in the English-language media. Thus, in both periods, German-language dailies report up to 5.0% points more biased language. However, it should not be overlooked that the results of the individual countries differ, in some cases drastically. Table 4 shows that in 2020, the English-language *The Daily Telegraph* published an above-average number of negative headlines at 40.3%, which contrasts with the maximum value of 26.5% in the German-language *Die Welt*.

Finally, attention is paid to the extent to which the political alignment of the daily newspapers plays a role in their coverage. To this end, tables 7 and 8 juxtapose the results of the left-leaning newspapers with those of the right-leaning ones.

Results	Year	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Center-left and left-wing	2010	8	86	500	594
	2020	8	147	833	988
Conservative and liberal-conservative	2010	33	126	491	650
	2020	18	214	494	726

Tab. 9 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 and 2020 in newspapers with an alignment on the left and right of the political spectrum in total numbers.*

Results	Year	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Center-left and left-wing	2010	1.3%	14.5%	84.2%
	2020	0.8%	14.9%	84.3%
Conservative and liberal-conservative	2010	5.1%	19.4%	75.5%
	2020	2.5%	29.5%	68.0%
Difference	2010	+3.8% points	+4.9% points	-8.7% points
	2020	+3.3% points	+14.6% points	-16.3% points

Tab. 10 – Distribution of positive, negative, and neutral connotations of the term China *in 2010 and 2020 comparing the results of newspapers with an alignment on the left and right of the political spectrum in percent.*

These figures clearly show that the chosen conservative dailies are more likely to report in a biased manner than the left-leaning newspapers. This becomes particularly clear when comparing the results for 2020, where a difference of 14.6% points can be observed in the negative headlines. When considering individual newspapers, the right-wing *The Daily Telegraph* shows the highest rate of negative headlines in 2020 with 40.3%, compared to a high of 25.2% (2010) of negative headlines from the left-wing *taz*.

5. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to investigate how the word *China* is associated with positive, negative, or neutral connotations in the headlines of various German- and English-language daily newspapers from four European countries. For this purpose, a quantitative corpus analysis was carried out with *Lexis Nexis* and the search results were thereafter compared with each other on the basis of diverse criteria. The analysis showed that most of the reporting is done in an unbiased manner, but that newspapers from differently sized countries, of different language and with different political alignments write about the People's Republic of China in a biased manner with varying frequency. The results concluded that among the surveyed newspapers, small-country papers use less biased language than large-country papers (of the same language), English-language print media use judgmental language more frequently than German-language ones and that conservative dailies report on China negatively with greater frequency than those that belong to the center-left category. The expectation that negative connotations would be used more frequently in opinionated headlines than positive ones was met, although the rather small number of positive headlines was surprising. With respect to the Eurolinguistic aspect of pluricentricity, it must be said, as regards this topic, that there are no numbers that stand out that much that it would be reasonable to say that pluricentric characteristics make a big difference.

To further support the conclusions, future research considerations could include investigations of additional daily newspapers from the same countries and of other political orientations, on the one hand, or newspapers from other countries and of other (pluricentric) languages, on the other hand. Such studies may also include more rigid statistical analyses. Finally, it would be worthwhile to examine how the media report on other countries in comparison to China, be they other pariah states or those that are considered to be among the good countries from a Western perspective.

Kristina Holler
DE-85072 Eichstätt
Kristina.Holler@stud.ku.de

References

Bucher, Hans-Jürgen (2017), "Massenmedien als Handlungsfeld I: Printmedien", in: Roth, Kersten Sven / Wengeler, Martin / Ziem, Alexander (eds.), *Handbuch Sprache in Politik und Gesellschaft*, [Handbücher Sprachwissen 19], 298-333, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

Clyne, Michael G. (2004), "Pluricentric Language / Plurizentrische Sprache", in: Ammon, Ulrich et al. (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: An international Handbook of the Science of Language and Society / Soziolinguistik: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Wissenschaft von Sprache und Gesellschaft*, 1. Teilband, 296-300, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

De Ridder, Reglindis (ed.) (2023), *"One size fits all"?: Linguistic Standards in the Media of Pluricentric Language Areas*, Graz/Berlin: PCL-PRESS.

"Der Standard" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148488/der-standard> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

"Die Presse" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148502/die-presse> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

"Die Welt" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148503/die-welt> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

Geldenhuys, Deon (1997), "Pariah States in the Post-Cold War World: A Conceptual Exploration", in Mills, Greg / Callahan, Thomas J. / Fabricius, Peter (eds.), *US-South Africa Relations and the "Pariah" States: Papers from a Workshop*, [SAIIA Reports 2], 15-24, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs.

Golan, Guy J. / Lukito, Josephine (2015), "The Rise of the Dragon? Framing China's Global Leadership in Elite American Newspapers", *International Communication Gazette* 77 (8): 754-772. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515601576.>

"Irish Independent." n.d. Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148637/irish-independent> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

Knüsel, Ariane (2016), *Framing China*, London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315582917>.

Lams, Lutgard (2016), "China: Economic Magnet or Rival? Framing of China in the Dutch- and French-Language Elite Press in Belgium and the Netherlands", *International Communication Gazette* 78 (1-2): 137-156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515618117>

"Nexis Uni® Home" (n.d.). <https://advance.lexis.com/bisacademicresearchhome?crid=7fc60a0a-567c-4bcf-8782-e0be34de6701&pdmfid=1516831&pdisurlapi=true> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

Ooi, Su-Mei / D'Arcangelis, Gwen (2017), "Framing China: Discourses of Othering in US News and Political Rhetoric", *Global Media and China* 2 (3-4): 269-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436418756096>.

Ospina Estupinan, Jhon Deyby (2017), "The Coverage of China in the Latin American Press: Media Framing Study", *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 4 (1): 1287319. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2017.1287319.

"Taz, Die Tageszeitung" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148812/taz-die-tageszeitung> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

"The Daily Telegraph" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148815/the-daily-telegraph> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

"The Guardian" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148819/the-guardian> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

"The Irish Times" (n.d.), Eurotopics.Net. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148823/the-irish-times> (Accessed 20 August 2022).

Wengeler, Martin (2017), "Wortschatz I: Schlagwörter, Politische Leitvokabeln Und Der Streit Um Worte." In *Handbuch Sprache in Politik Und Gesellschaft*, edited by Kersten Sven Roth, Martin Wengeler, and Alexander Ziem, 22–46. Handbücher Sprachwissen, Band 19. Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter.

Wilke, Jürgen, and Julia Achatzi (2011), "From Tian'anmen Square to the Global World Stage: Framing China in the German Press, 1986–2006", *Chinese Journal of Communication* 4 (3): 348-364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2011.594563>.