The Practice of Reported Speech in Chinese News Reporting of China-U.S. Trade Disputes

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Abstract

The China-U.S. trade dispute over Chinese tires in 2009 is conceptualized as an activity in which journalistic discourses (from both China and the U.S.) are seen as mediations for both parties to engage in this dispute. This study focuses on the practice of reported speech in Chinese journalistic discourse. Informed by Grounded Practical Theory (GPT), the author aims to qualitatively investigate how reported speech is utilized by Chinese journalists to cope with the “discursive war” of this trade dispute and further to uncover the underlying assumptions about the nature of this dispute, the relationship between the two nations and, Chinese journalistic practice.

Through the lens of reported speech, we find that Chinese news reports are replete with indirect reported speech from government officials as a means to articulate China’s strong stance in this dispute. Chinese news reports also quote from the international community, U.S. media, experts and business leaders (when they voice a favorable stance toward China) rather than from the corresponding Chinese social actors in order to legitimate their arguments against the U.S. A positive image of China as mature and responsible is constructed through reported speech, in contrast to a negative image of the U.S. as immature, narrow-minded and hypocritical.

The technique of reported speech to some extent enables the presentation of one version of this trade dispute in favor of China, but it is problematic in that Chinese news reports are perceived as biased and skewed due to the selective reporting of positive and supportive voices that are in accordance with the “official tone” in this dispute. Finally, some implications of GPT informed study of Chinese journalistic practices are discussed.

Keywords: China-U.S. trade dispute, reported speech, Grounded Practical Theory, Chinese journalistic practice
Introduction

After the financial crisis in 2008, it is not unexpected to see a fierce increase in China-U.S. trade disputes along with the bilateral trade imbalance and rising rate of unemployment in the United States. According to the statistics provided by the Chinese Bureau of Fair for Imports and Exports, in a single year of 2008, trade disputes between the two countries came to 18\textsuperscript{1}. The figure dropped slightly to 16 in 2009 but again climbed up to 13 in the first half year of 2010.

With the acceleration of trade friction between the two major economies, economists are concerned with various possibilities of a “trade war” between the two which might spread around the world. However, this issue interests scholars from language and communication in a different way. China-U.S. trade disputes are not just perceived as a “trade war” but also at the same time a “discursive war”. Shi-xu (2010) argues that trade disputes are in nature more like a discursive phenomenon intertwined with economic, political, legal, and cultural factors, rather than simply an economic, political, or legal issue. Using his words, trade disputes are about “officials and businessmen from different countries quarrelling with each other” (p.98). In other words, trade disputes are discursive contestations informed and shaped by political, economic, social, cultural factors among different nations.

In this paper, the China-U.S. trade dispute over Chinese tires in 2009 is chosen as a case study to investigate this “discursive war” between the two nations. More specifically, we are interested in the question of how reported speech\textsuperscript{2} (as a discursive device) is practiced in Chinese

\textsuperscript{1} This information is obtained from the website: http://gpj.mofcom.gov.cn/article/subject/mymcyd/subjectdd/201008/20100807088256.html

\textsuperscript{2} “Reported speech” is a contested term. Buttny (1997) considers this term a “misnomer” because it implies a truthful representation of prior texts or utterances but overlooks the “recontextualization” of previous texts and utterances in a new context. Tannen (2007) claims that this term is misleading as reported speech is not just about “reporting” the content of previous utterances but more crucially “creating” a dialogue with them. Therefore she
news reports in order to cope with this “war”. Voloshinov (1973) pointed out the nature of language as signs mediating social intercourse:

A word is the purest mediator of social interaction. It is created in communication and its meaning develops within communication, and the meaning – the word’s ability to present another reality in the context of its use – is its constitutive property, its reason for coming into being. (quoted by Leiman, 1999, p.430)

Based on the idea of language as signs to mediate social interaction, the Chinese news reporting of this China-U.S. trade dispute over Chinese tires in 2009 becomes particularly interesting and insightful as we look into how Chinese journalists use language to mediate – represent, confirm, contest and construct – the social reality of “trade dispute”. In fact, numerous scholars from language and communication have followed this line of investigation, that is, how language use shapes and influences sociopolitical reality (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1998; Hodges, 2008, 2011; Scollon, 2001). With a focus on Chinese journalistic practice in this trade dispute, we will examine this pervasive language use (reported speech) in journalistic texts to investigate how this salient linguistic mediation operates within the larger activity of international trade disputes; what kind of sociopolitical reality is constructed or contested and if possible, what kind of problems there are for this mediation.

The Practice of reported speech

Reported speech (or quotation) has been considered as a universal and fundamental device for us to communicate and represent the world (Bakhtin, 1981; Sternberg, 1982), as Bakhtin advocates the term “constructive dialogue” instead of “reported speech”. There is another group of scholars preferring “quotation” or “quoting” to reported speech. (Buchstaller, 2011; Lopez Pan, 2010; Orr, 2003; Robles, 2009; Shukrun-Nagar, 2009). However, Holt (2009) and Momani et al. (2010) use the two terms interchangeably. In this paper, we acknowledge different interpretations of this linguistic phenomenon and choose to see “reported speech” as a practice in journalistic discourse in order to look at how this linguistic device is utilized as a mediation of sociopolitical reality – trade dispute in this case – between China-U.S.
observed:

The transmission and assessment of the speech of others, the discourse of another, is one of the most widespread and fundamental topics of human speech. In all areas of life and ideological activity, our speech is filled to overflowing with other people’s words, which are transmitted with highly varied degrees of accuracy and impartiality. (p.337)

Noticing the importance of reported speech in constructing our social reality, scholars in language and communication have made their effort understanding the practice of reported speech in conversational and institutional contexts, with special attention to its pragmatic functions in these contexts. Buttny (1997) discusses how college students are able to represent, evaluate and comment on other people through reported speech when they are talking about troublesome issues like racism. Holt (2000) notices that reported speech is an important linguistic device in social interaction to invoke social involvement and elicit agreements. Similar to Holt, Schely-Newman (2004) finds that reported speech is frequently practiced by people in Israel to engage with others in gossiping.

Antaki and Leudar (2001) find that parliament members directly quote their opponents’ original words as a strategy to argue against their opponents and promote their own projects. Kuo (2001, 2007) notes that in Chinese political discourse, direct quotation is used to establish interpersonal involvement and create reliability of claims by referring to shared knowledge but sometimes can also be used as a strategy of evasion. Buttny and Cohen (2007) identify the multi-functional nature of reported speech in public hearings: speakers use this discursive device strategically to respond to, evaluate and often challenge what others have said in the hearing.

All these investigations suggest that reported speech can be utilized by interctants in different contexts to achieve certain communicative goals (such as solving or mitigating certain
personal or social problems). Moreover, the ways that reported speech are intertextually mobilized relate to the communicative event per se (whether it is harmonious or contentious in nature), the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, the norms and values tied to reporting others’ speech in certain institutional setting (such as speaking in a court, parliament speeches and journalistic discourse). Therefore, in the case of China-U.S. trade dispute, the practice of reported speech becomes an illuminating theme leading us to understanding this communicative event of trade dispute, the relationship between the two parties and the norms and values of reporting others’ words in Chinese journalistic context.

**Reported speech in journalistic discourse**

The practice of reported speech in journalistic discourse deserves attention in its own right, as Waugh (1995) argues:

> The journalistic text – in particular the news articles – is a discourse genre in its own right and as such it sets a frame for everything which happens within, including what happens with reported speech. (p. 135)

Basically, journalistic discourse is oriented to informing the public (what happened, what is going on, etc.) and to re-representing a version of events that is desirable to the audience it serves. Journalistic discourse is inherently intertextual as journalists are constantly working with previous texts and reporting others’ speeches in their journalistic texts. In this sense, it can be said that journalistic discourse is fabricated with words from different speakers which journalists choose to present and construct a particular social event to the audience.

In addition to being used to construct social events in news reports, reported speech is seen as a device for accomplishing a “ritual” function in a particular context. Kovalyova (2006) reveals
that reported speech is used to align speakers with the ritual expectations of talking in the news coverage of Gorge W Bush’s presidential inauguration in 2005. Other scholars who have taken a critical view to the practice of reported speech in news reports argue that the practice of reported speech is usually loaded with ideologies, power relations and social conventions in a society for the purpose of portraying a particular version of “news” that is desirable for whoever is in control of the media system (Davis, 1985; Fang, 2001; Kovalyova, 2006; Kuo, 2001, 2007; Roberta, 2009; Robles, 2009; van Dijk, 1991). For instance, Kuo (2007) argues that the choice of quotation patterns is closely tied to the ideological bias of news reports. By contrasting two major newspapers in mainland and China, he finds differences on the news source (or actors) appeared and the content of quotations for reporting the same event, and more strikingly, the two newspapers present opposing reported speech from the same news source to serve their ideological bias. Jullian (2011) also notes the use of quotations as an engagement with ideological-evaluative activities in news reports. Through the examination of Chinese and Western news reports about the Chinese dissent Liu Xiaobo who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, she uncovers evaluative implicatures embedded in quotations from both Chinese and Western news reports.

Situating Chinese journalistic discourse in the activity of China-U.S. trade dispute, we aim to confront with two questions in this paper: first, how is reported speech practiced in Chinese news reports to mediate this trade dispute? What propositions (about this dispute, the relationship between the two parties and the Chinese journalistic practice) can we uncover through the analysis of reported speech in Chinese news reports?
Grounded Practical Theory (GPT)

Grounded Practical Theory, as an intellectual endeavor from communication scholars Robert Craig and Karen Tracy (Craig & Tracy, 1995), centers on the theoretical reconstruction of communication practices at three levels (problem level, technical level and philosophical level). Based on grounded descriptions, interpretations and critiques, GPT aims to identify the problems (or dilemmas) within a communication practice as well as specific strategies and technique that are utilized by participants in this practice to work through these problems (or dilemmas). This process of identification is essentially a process of reconstruction grounded in a particular practice, and informed by the reconstruction of the communicative problem, and more importantly it equips researchers with possible means to tease out situated ideals that are desirable for participants in this practice and thus allow them to reflect upon their own practice in pursuit of more effective communication.

GPT is particularly insightful in this study because of its focus on communicative problems and its reflexivity on communication per se. It offers a practical spin on the Chinese journalistic practice in this trade dispute at threefold: the practice of reported speech, possible dilemmas associated with this practice and the philosophical construction of a better practice. However, due to space limitations, this paper mainly looks at the technical level of how reported speech is utilized by Chinese journalists to cope with this “discursive war”. The adoption of GPT framework enables us to examine reported speech in a broader context –the Chinese journalistic practice that is assumed to have its own characteristics (Kuo, 2001).
Data and Method

Data for this research comes from the most influential newspaper in China – People’s Daily (Ren Min Ri Bao). In the case of journalistic reporting on this China-U.S. trade dispute over Chinese tires in 2009, all the newspapers followed and cited the reports from People’s Daily because of its authority in the current Chinese media and political system. This makes this newspaper a perfect target for our investigation of how reported speech is practiced in Chinese journalism to respond to and function within this trade dispute.

The China-U.S. trade dispute over Chinese tires in 2009 started on April, 24th 2009, with the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union (hereinafter USW) filing a petition with the U.S. International Trade Committee (ITC) contending that Chinese tire export industry has caused a disruption in the U.S. domestic tire market. On September 11th, President Obama announced that he had decided to impose additional three-year tariffs on certain Chinese tires (35% in the first year, 30% the second and 25% the third year). (See appendix 1 for a list of major events happened during this trade dispute)

After a qualitative search of all the news reports concerning this trade dispute from People’s Daily, 13 news reports (time range from June 20th 2009 to Sep. 16th 2009) were extracted from the online data base http://data.people.com.cn. In addition, 16 news reports were also extracted from the New York Times (time range from July 9th 2009 to Sep. 21st 2009) as a back-up contrasting corpus in order to give a critical and reflexive analysis of the practice of reported speech in the Chinese news reports.

A qualitative and interpretive method is adopted for this research. The author first read all
the Chinese and English news reports in the corpus, then marked and extracted all the (both direct and indirect) reported speech from these news reports. The reported social actors are identified and the speeches are classified into several main propositions that are frequently referred to throughout all the news reports.

Analysis

93 reported speeches are identified within the 13 news reports from People’s Daily. Among these reported speeches, 84 speeches (nearly 92%) are indirect and 8 (8%) is direct. This finding confirms previous studies that reported speech is pervasive in journalistic discourse (Waugh, 1995) and indirect reported speech is the salient reporting form preferred in Chinese journalistic practice (Kuo, 2001). In fact, most of the Chinese journalistic texts in this study consist of long paragraphs of reported speech from government officials and economists. In some cases, it is not clear where the reported speech ends, as the whole report sounds like a statement from the government officials. Some of the news reports are like assembly of a series of reported speech from the government officials and agencies. See example below:

Example 1

陈德铭说，近一段时间以来，中美双方就轮胎特保案进行了密集和多层次的磋商，但由于美方要价过高，双方最终未能达成一致，中方对此深表遗憾。陈德铭强调，中国政府坚决反对美方采取特保措施，这是严重的贸易保护主义行为，不但违反 WTO 规则，而且违背了美国政府在 G20 金融峰会上的承诺，是对特保条款的滥用，向世界发出了一个错误的信号。陈德铭指出，中国政府将坚定维护国内产业的正当利益，保留做出进一步反应和采取相应措施的权利。（People’s Daily, Sep 13）

(Translation) Chen Deming said, China has recently initiated intensive and multi-level negotiation with our US counterpart concerning this safeguard issue of Chinese tires. However, due to the high price that the US asked, the two sides ultimately failed to reach any agreement. China expresses its deep regret in this regard.

Chen Deming emphasized, Chinese government strongly opposes to the safeguard measures that are adopted by the US government. This is a serious action of trade protectionism, not

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3 As you may notice, there is one more reported speech left. It is a “mixed reported speech” with indirect quoting followed by direct incorporation of the (exact) words said by an Professor Thomas Pulusa.
only in violation of WTO rules, but also of the commitment that the US government made in the G20 summit. This is the abuse of the special safeguard provision, which sends a wrong signal to the world.

Chen Deming pointed out, Chinese government will try every means to protect the interests of domestic industries and reserve its rights to further respond and take actions. (People’s Daily, Sep 13)

As we can see from Example 1, reported speech is the building blocks for the construction of Chinese news reports in this trade dispute. Chinese news reports are full of paragraph-after paragraph reported speech and it is hard to see the journalists’ point of view and comments on this issue. Compared with the practice of reported speech in the U.S. newspapers, Chinese news reports are heavily packed with the voice of others rather than that of the journalists, mostly in the form of indirect reported speech. See Example 2.

Example 2

His early public battering largely behind him, Mr. Geithner sounded sanguine last week. "As long as I feel confident we're making the best decisions among a set of options," he concluded, "I feel good." (New York Times, Sep 28)

In view of reported speech as a form of intertextuality that is heavily influenced by ideology, power relations and social conventions in a society, the analysis below proceeds with its examination of “social actors” 4 (see Van Leeuwen, 1996) that is animated and voiced in the reporting, the content of what is reported and the forms of reporting (direct or indirect) in order to shed light on the ideological package, power relations and social conventions embedded in this trade dispute.

Who is speaking/animated?

Critical discourse analysts have found reported speech (quotation) as a frequently practiced linguistic strategy to include or exclude certain social actors in news reports so as to present a

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4 Van Leeuwen (1996) built a systematic network to the linguistic representation of social actors when social practices are transformed into discourses.
particular version of social reality. Based on the analysis of news reports from People’s Daily, Fang (2001, p.587) argues that “the choice of social actors and participants are indexing the ideological positions in the news coverage in a sense of giving voice to certain actors instead of others”. In this study, the identification of social actors that are reported in this trade dispute can shed light on the ideology behind the media representation of this trade dispute but more importantly on epistemic stance toward the trade dispute itself. As we can see from Table 1, over 40 percent of the reported social actors are from the Chinese Government and Commerce Department, including the spokesman (Yao Jian) and leaders of this Department. U.S. government and international community are also referred to for 7 times in total. With Commerce Dept. in charge of Chinese as well as international trade, it is well expected that this Dept. gave most of the information concerning this dispute. In addition (since this dispute is defined as an international trade conflict), it is necessary to report on the reactions from both governments as well as the international community.

Table 1 The classification of social actors reported in Chinese news reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>classification of reported speaker</th>
<th>freq. (per.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce Dept.</td>
<td>38 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yao Jian (spokesman in Commerce Dept.)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce Dept (and its involved officials)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Deming (Director of the Commerce Dept.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhong Shan (Vice-director of the Commerce Dept.)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese government</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiang Yu (Spokeswoman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International community</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International public opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders in G20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Media</td>
<td>8 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall Street Journal</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American public opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American media</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Business Associations</td>
<td>16 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequent reporting on Chinese Commerce Dept. as well as Chinese government, along with one-paragraph-after-another reported speech, People’s Daily confirms to its widely acknowledged “official” status of being the “mouthpiece” of the Communist Party. In the case of trade dispute, this newspaper is dedicated to disclose the stances and responses from the central government. In this sense, it is expected that the central government is frequently heard.

In addition to the government officials and Chinese business leaders, U.S. media, business associations and experts are also frequently quoted in the Chinese news reports, taking up 37 percent of the overall social actors appeared. It is interesting to note that social actors from the U.S. part are more frequently reported than that in the Chinese side – U.S. media 8 times, U.S. business associations 16 time, US experts 8 times, while on the contrary, Chinese business associations only 8 times, Chinese experts 3 times and no Chinese media mentioned. The
inclusion of U.S. social actors could be attributed to the nature of journalistic discourse – informative texts – that is fabricated through various voices in order to present a clear picture of what is going on. In this case of trade dispute, it is necessary to quote the US media, government and business associations etc. in order to reconstruct the dispute as well as present their reactions and responses. However, the difference on quoting from two sides is striking, especially when Chinese experts are only mentioned 3 times (compared with 8 times from the US side) and none of the Chinese media is reported.

The discussion of the social actors that is voiced and animated indicates an uneven distribution between the reporting of Chinese social actors and the U.S. ones. In order to make a meaningful interpretation of this difference, we need to look at the specific words that are “attributed” to these actors in this case. The words (or content) that are reported are supposed to take us to see the ideological stances and assessments implied in the Chinese news reports. Below we present our analysis of the content of reported speech in terms of what is said (or paraphrased)?

What is said (or paraphrased), in what forms?

After the examinations of the content of reported speech in Chinese news reports, nine major propositions stand out as they are frequently and explicitly referred to and emphasized throughout all the news reports. As following, these propositions are presented along with the reporting verbs and the social actors to which these propositions are attributed. Scholars have observed that the choice of a “neutral” or “argumentative” reporting verb indicates the stance that reporters hold toward what is reported (Roberta, 2009; Suomela-Salmi & Dervin, 2009).

Therefore, in order to find out the possible stances embedded in the reported speech, only
argumentative reporting verbs are marked in this paper. (See Table 2)

Table 2 Reporting verbs and propositions identified from Chinese news reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social actors related</th>
<th>Reporting verbs</th>
<th>Propositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yao Jian, Chen, Davis (American lawyer)</td>
<td>point out/reveal, emphasize,</td>
<td>The tariff imposed on Chinese tires is a mistake, a severe trade protectionist action taken by the U.S. government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International leaders, Yao, Chen,</td>
<td>emphasize (repeatedly), appeal, criticize</td>
<td>U.S. betrayed international consensus against protectionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese government, Commerce Dept., (firmly) believe, hope,</td>
<td>point out/reveal, express</td>
<td>International cooperation (with free trade flow) is the only effective way to deal with economic recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese government, Spokeswoman from Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>point out/reveal</td>
<td>Chinese government tried every means to engage with this trade dispute and has won overwhelming understandings and supports from U.S. industries and associations; but U.S. government asked too much for any negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American public, Commerce Dept., Yao, Thomas</td>
<td>notice, indicate, emphasize, point out/reveal</td>
<td>This trade tariff will damage the U.S. self-interest (causing more laid-offs) and China does not want to see this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American business associations and media</td>
<td>point out/reveal, indicate, suspect, object (explicitly, firmly)</td>
<td>This trade tariff is disappointing, insensible, a trade-off between U.S. domestic political pressure and foreign trade policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu, Thomas</td>
<td>point out/reveal,</td>
<td>This trade tariff is unfair and it does not do any good for both sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, Song, Xu</td>
<td>point out/reveal/refute</td>
<td>Blaming Chinese tire industry for trade deficit in U.S. tire industry does not make sense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from Table 2 that Obama’s imposition of trade tariff on Chinese tires is considered a form of trade protectionism, a mistake and a non-sense action. This proposition is not only articulated by the Chinese side, but more crucially it is widely recognized by the international community as well as the media, economists and business associations within the U.S. Through the reporting technique of including the opposing voice of “the other (such as the international
leaders, U.S. public and media, etc.) against the U.S., a strong accusation is formulated against the U.S. in this trade war. It not only presents an image of the U.S. ignoring Chinese government’s objection to trade tariffs on Chinese tires but also of the U.S. betraying the international community. See example 3.

Example 3

各国领导人G20峰会在G20峰会等场合多次重申共同反对贸易保护主义，美方违背国际社会的广泛共识，不顾中国政府和中国轮胎产业的强烈反对，无视美国内有关行业和组织的大量反对呼声，在缺乏事实依据的情况下，违背世贸组织规则，滥用特保措施，是向美国国内贸易保护主义的政治压力妥协。(People’s Daily, Sep, 13)

(Translation) International leaders at the G20 Summit have on many occasions reiterated their opposition to trade protectionism. The United States betrayed this widely accepted international consensus, disregarded Chinese government’s strong objection as well as a huge amount of opposing voices from its domestic industries and associations, abused the safeguard measures in this case even without providing solid evidence and following WTO regulations and procedures. It is a comprise within the domestic political pressure in the U.S. (People’s Daily, Sep, 13)

Following the equation of imposing trade tariffs as a mistake, the Chinese news reports further quote from Chinese and U.S. economists, business leaders, etc. to argue that this measure will not do any good for the U.S. economy and China has been trying every means to prevent this happening. However, due to the “unreasonable” negotiation conditions put forward by the U.S. government, the two nations failed to reach any agreement. China’s good effort in this regard is well recognized by the international community as well as American industries and associations (“overwhelmingly understanding and support”). China’s performance in this trade dispute is widely praised as following the international laws. Once again, this consensus-like statement is acknowledged by the international community, the opposite (American) side and China. The news report further points out that the only solution for this economic dispute at this critical period lies in the international cooperation and free trade flow, not in the blaming of Chinese tire exports.
By depicting contrastive images of the two countries, Chinese news reports aim to establish their “good image” in the international arena. See example 4. In this example, a positive Chinese image is constructed by being mature, reasonable and responsible; while contrast to China’s image of a “good international citizen”, the American is a “rebel” against international norms and rules. This portray of two contrastive national images to some extent helps China to establish a responsible image and gain sympathy internationally, and at the same time voices its strong opposition to what the U.S. has done.

Example 4

国际舆论对美贸易保护主义多有批评, 对中国的举措却罕有异议, 称这一事例展现出中国在与贸易伙伴的众多争端中, 正采用日趋老练的法律策略。姚坚说, 在世贸组织规则的框架内寻求问题的妥善解决，体现了中国尊重多边规则、维护多边贸易体制的一贯立场，也显出中国作为世界贸易大国应有的负责任与成熟风范。 (People’s Daily, Sep. 16) (Translation) Most of the international communities are criticizing America’s practice of trade protectionism, but seldom hold any dissent against China’s reactions. They are saying China is gradually learning sophisticated and mature legal strategies to handle trade conflicts with its trade partners. Yao Jian said, seeking for appropriate solutions to trade dispute within the WTO regulations and procedures confirms to China’s consistent respect to multilateral rules and trading systems, and also reflects China’s maturity and responsibility of being one of the world largest trading power. (People’s Daily, Sep. 16)

These propositions are introduced and constructed by reported speech (mostly indirect) in strategic ways. As Guo (2007) noticed, indirect reported speech appears to indicate journalists’ agreement on what is reported. The pervasive indirect reported speeches to some extent confirms to this point by including whoever voices that are in favor to the Chinese government, which to some extent also indicates the stance the newspaper (People’s Daily) advocates. In fact, the content of reported speech in this case can be generally divided into two sets: the first one is relatively informative – telling the audience about various aspects of this trade dispute, and the second one contains all kinds of voices that are in favor of the Chinese government explicitly and
implicitly. Drawing upon our contrast corpus (U.S. news reports on this trade dispute), we are able to see the difference in this regard. In the U.S. news reports, there is also a strong stance against what China has been doing regarding this trade dispute. However, this strong stance is constructed by reporting multiple voices with much more vivid direct reported speech to present a critical view on the tire tariffs imposed on Chinese tire companies. See example 5 and example 6. While in the Chinese news reports, it is always hard to hear any dissenting voice. The strategy of including social actors who acknowledge and support China’s stance while at the same time excluding any “heresy” to some extent helps international community to recognize China’s situation in this context, while it also risks the credibility of Chinese journalistic reports on this issue.

Example 5

The Chinese are not the only ones who are unhappy. European officials are quietly grumbling that the United States has yet to become engaged in an effort to revive work on a new global agreement to knock down barriers in areas like agriculture and business services. "With Obama's move on the tire tariffs, the hypocrisy on trade pledges is really quite apparent," said C. Fred Bergsten, director of the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "I would expect the other countries to beat up on the U.S., and they deserve it." (The New York Times, Sep 25)

Example 6

"They cheat in every area,” Mr. Gerard said, pointing to repeated findings of illegal subsidies, as well as one American tire maker’s saying that Beijing had illegally required one of its factories in China to export all its output. "If the bully keeps beating you up, is it so bad to stand up to him?" (The New York Times, Sep 23)

Discussion

The analysis of 93 reported speeches identified from our corpus gives insights into the practice of reported speech in Chinese journalistic discourse. As scholars found elsewhere (Fang,
indirect reported speech is preferred in Chinese news reporting and for People’s Daily – the official newspaper in the nation – journalistic discourse is mainly constructed by animating the voices of government officials to deliver an official and authoritative message to the audience. The paragraph-after-paragraph reported speeches can be seen as the “ritual” practice of reporting in People’s Daily as shown by Kovalyova (2006) that reported speech is needed in particular context in order to align the speaker (journalists in this case) with the rituals and expectations of reporting. As the “mouthpiece” of the Party, People’s Daily is supposed to animate the “official voice” on behalf of the nation in various situations and reported speech seems to be an indispensable device to accomplish this “mission”. In addition, this “ritual” function is particularly insightful for looking at the practice of reported speech beyond political influences, especially in Chinese news reports. The cultural norms and values attached to the “appropriate” way of reporting others’ words in a journalistic context may differ in both sides, and also the social functions assumed in journalistic practice may vary – the U.S. journalistic discourse is expected to be more dramatic and entertaining in order to appeal to its audiences, while the Chinese journalistic discourse (especially as shown in People’s Daily) functions mainly as an “official” message sender.

Quoting words from the other party (the international community, U.S. media, U.S. business associations and U.S. experts) is necessary for sketching a clear picture of this trade dispute but it can also be strategically practiced in order to present a Chinese version of this trade dispute that is in favor of China. In this case, these social actors are animated in Chinese news reports because they hold favorable opinions toward China in this trade conflict, that is, trade tariffs imposed on Chinese tire industry is a mistake and an action of trade protectionism that has
been taken by the U.S.

The practice of reported speech in Chinese news reports indicates some propositions about the nature of this trade dispute, the relationship of the two sides and the Chinese journalistic practice at large. The construction of a mature, responsible and civilized national image of China contrasting with an immature, hypocritical and narrow-minded image of the U.S. suggests that the tire tariffs imposed on Chinese tire industry as a violation of WTO rules and of promises that U.S. has made constantly. In other words, this trade dispute is essentially an unwise and wrong move taken by the U.S., and there are harmful consequences to both the U.S. and China. Portraying contrastive (a positive Chinese and a negative American) images in the Chinese news reporting reflects a critical relationship between the two nations. The selective quotations of whoever in favor of China are obvious. As Jullian (2011) notes, the Chinese media presents a one-sided version of the contentious issue of Liu Xiaobo by heavily including Chinese officials’ voices while discrediting the other opposing ones in news reports. This strategic practice of reported speech contributes to legitimating accusations of U.S.’s wrong doing of imposing tire tariffs on Chinese tire industry, but it could also pose potential problems for the practice of Chinese journalism. In order to build a strong argument (as shown in this case), Chinese news reports incorporate different voices that are in accordance with the “official tone” but exclude dissenting ones. Informed by GPT, we see a potential dilemma in Chinese journalistic practice, that is, the unanimous voice animated in the news reports (in order to create a positive national image) could potentially risk the credibility of Chinese journalistic practice for its failure in presenting a “true” picture about what is going on in this dispute. Looking into our reference corpus of the U.S. news reports, we see multi-vocal reported speech both favored and contested the tariffs imposed on
Chinese tires. It seems this practice of quoting multiple sides in news reports concerning a controversy is more likely to be accepted as “objective,” although this also needs empirical investigation, as Jullian (2011) argues in the case of Liu Xiaobo that Chinese media and its Western counterpart have different quoting patterns but both parties essentially work toward a one-sided construction of the event.

A GPT framework could potentially be illuminating for further investigation into Chinese journalistic practice in cases like this trade dispute. This paper mainly looks at the technique level of reconstructing this communicative event of trade dispute by looking into the practice of reported speech (as a language mediation) to deal with this “discursive war”. Our findings suggest potential dilemmas (or problems) that are inherently embedded in Chinese journalistic practice, such as how does Chinese journalistic practice discursively manage to voice its strong stance in dispute like this one without potentially portraying a “bullying and threatening” image (as it is quite a concern for China’s slogan on “non-threatening rising”) in the international community? Certainly, we need further studies on a full-scale examination of this practice before coming up with any dilemma (or problem) that is grounded in Chinese journalists’ practice of reporting contentious international issues. For future studies on the Chinese journalistic practice, GPT framework can be applied by asking questions that are situated in this practice, such as what dilemmas are faced by Chinese journalists when they are reporting on contentious international issues, how reported speech is practiced to deal with those dilemmas and what situated ideals that are implied in the practice. By reflecting upon the journalistic practice itself in terms of uncovering dilemmas and problems, we would be able to unveil the situated ideals that are practiced by Chinese journalists when faced with dilemmas or problems, and these ideals would
be the resources for the transformation of this practice.

Conclusion

Drawing up the framework of GPT, this study looks into the practice of reported speech in Chinese journalistic discourse as a mediation to the China-U.S. trade dispute in 2009, and also propositions (about this dispute, the relationship between the two sides and the Chinese journalistic practice) that are embedded in this practice. By analyzing the social actors that are quoted and the speeches that are reported (mostly indirectly), we find People’s Daily heavily packed with “official” stance against U.S’s initiation of this trade safeguard against Chinese tire industry. The strategic inclusion of whoever voice in favor of the Chinese government (especially the international community and U.S. media and experts), as well as the depiction of a “good citizen” image of China and a “rebel” image of the U.S., helps to construct strong and legitimate arguments against the U.S.

The practice of reported speech opens a window for us to examine the practice of news reporting in a larger scope. As discussed above, selectively reporting voices that are consistent with the official discourse for the purpose of making a strong and valid argument could potentially risk the credibility of Chinese journalistic practice itself. In fact, some Chinese citizens voiced their dissatisfactions with Chinese journalistic reports concerning this tirade dispute. Some argued that Chinese government’s stance was not strong enough and the voices from Chinese factories and business associations are not sufficiently heard.

Bown and McCulloch (2009: 684) point out that it is since 2007 that China has begun to independently challenge the U.S. anti-dumping measures and although China has been using the
WTO dispute settlement to contend with the U.S., its efficacy has been limited. There is no doubt that China needs to find an effective way to cope with international trade disputes legally, economically, politically and also discursively. Chinese journalism, as a key actor in the system of Chinese discourse production and proliferation in society, needs to reflect upon and transform its practice. This is the place where we see the value of Grounded Practical Theory.
References


*Poetics today*, 3(2), 107–156.


*Text, 15 (1)*, 129-173.

# Appendix 1 Key events during the China-U.S. trade dispute over Chinese tires in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event (initiated by the U.S.)</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Response from China</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 24th, 2009</td>
<td>USW filed a petition with the U.S. ITC against tires imported from China under the Section 421;</td>
<td>April 30th, 2009</td>
<td>Yao Jian, spokesman of Ministry of Commerce, voiced strong opposition and dissatisfaction on behalf of the Chinese government;</td>
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<td>April 29th, 2009</td>
<td>ITC launched its investigation to Chinese tires;</td>
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<td>June 18th, 2009</td>
<td>ITC made an affirmative injury decision that the surge of Chinese tire exports to U.S. has rocked the domestic U.S. tire industry;</td>
<td>June 19th, 2009</td>
<td>Chinese government was deeply disappointed by the decision. This ruling violated both the WTO laws and U.S. domestic laws.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 29th, 2009</td>
<td>ITC recommended the imposition of additional tariffs on certain passenger vehicle and light truck tires over three years (55%, 45% and 35%);</td>
<td>July, 3rd, 2009</td>
<td>Chinese government was highly concerned about this case and would strongly oppose to U.S. government’s imposition of additional tariffs on Chinese tires;</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 7th, 2009</td>
<td>A hearing was held by the United State Trade Representative’s (U.S.TR) Office in Washington concerning this “Chinese tire case”;</td>
<td>August 12th, 2009</td>
<td>Vice Minister of Commerce rendered this “Chinese tire case” as protectionism initiated by U.S.</td>
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<td>August 17th, 2009</td>
<td>Vice Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan went to U.S to negotiate with the government;</td>
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<td>September 2nd, 2009</td>
<td>The U.S. TRO submitted its recommendation to President Obama after consulting with Treasury, Department of Labor and Department of Commerce;</td>
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<td>September 11th, 2009</td>
<td>President Obama announced that he would impose additional three-year tariffs on certain Chinese tires (35% in the first year, 30% the second and 25% the third year);</td>
<td>September 12th, 2009</td>
<td>Chinese government expressed its strong opposition and dissatisfaction and would reserve the right to make further response;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>September 13th, 2009</td>
<td>China initiated anti-dumping and anti-subsidy cases against imports of U.S. auto parts and poultry products.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table is drawn by the author based on the information obtained from the official website of Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China [http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/](http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/)