

Research Article

# The Ideological Functions of the Disclaim Resources in Press Conferences

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## Abstract

In Critical Discourse Analysis, appraisal system has been of ideological interest because it concerns the language expression closely related to values. When answering questions in press conference, many appraisal resources are used by speakers to express their own stances on important issues and persuade the journalists and the public. This article focuses on the disclaim resources within the appraisal framework, and analyzes their ideological functions in press conferences. Specifically, using a corpus of 100 transcriptions of press conferences as data, this study investigates the discursive function of disclaim and stance-taking realized by disclaim in press conferences from an ideological dimension. It can be found that deny is always widely employed together with counter to reject and replace the point of view, and thus realize the discourse function of counter-expectancy and information modification. Through disclaim, such evaluative stances, including but not limited to reminding, warning, dissuading, prohibiting, questioning, opposing, refusing and criticizing are expressed. The stance-taking realized by disclaim could help the speaker to show his or her positions in a more covert way, so as to establish and maintain power relationships. Therefore, the employment of disclaim in press conferences really carries strong ideological implications and the thorough analysis of the disclaim resources could provide some implications for Critical Discourse Analysis. Besides, from the study we can see that spokesman could use a lot of language resources to emphasize his or her own stances, and thus to convince the audience. Therefore, this study could provide some implications for spokesman of press conferences, especially for government spokesman to effectively communicate with the audience and achieve a more harmonious communication.

## Keywords

Appraisal, Disclaim, Press Conference, Communication, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology

## 1. Introduction

Appraisal is one of the discourse semantic resources construing interpersonal meaning, which is regionalized as three interacting domains — attitude, engagement and graduation

[19]. In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), appraisal system has been of ideological interest because it concerns the language expression closely related to values [13, 37]. Scholars

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have already focused on the relationship of appraisal resources and their ideological functions. For instance, Jullian argued that in news reports attributions were indirect means of appraisal for the journalists, and quotations helped them imprint their personal views on the events and ultimately served an ideological function in the text [16]. Huan investigated the cultural variability of engagement patterns and indicated how text patterns point to distinctions in the ways the power relations are reproduced in news production processes [14]. Jiao pointed out that in news discourses, the attitude resources could encode the ideology of a press in specific news reports, and thereby invoking readers' affective and cognitive appreciation [15]. Li pointed out that by identifying the positive and negative connotations of evaluative factors, and revealing the discrimination and prejudice experienced by the evaluated subject, the discriminatory discourse can be quickly identified, and thus the cultural stereotypes contained in the discourse can be critically deconstructed [17]. Most previous studies exploring the ideological functions of appraisal resources involve news reports, but few to press conferences. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the ideological functions of appraisal in press conferences.

Official press conferences are one of the basic forms of active public relations practice, mainly by explaining the content of information, responding to public concerns, and thus shaping the positive image [6]. The press conference can be used as an important way for government to publicly disclose government affairs and respond to related issues. It is an organic whole with speakers, events, and media reporters. For example, during the COVID-19 epidemic, the United States government held several press conferences to report on its epidemic prevention and control situation. It is believed that analyzing the discourse of spokespersons at press conferences not only helps to understand the government positions represented by these discourses, but also helps to emphasize the interaction between ideology and discourse.

When answering questions in press conference, speakers inevitably establish relationship with the journalists, and thus this procedure could be seen as a kind of negotiation. Unavoidably, many appraisal resources are used by speakers to express their own stances on important issues all over the world and persuade the journalists and the public. This article focuses on the disclaim resources within the appraisal framework, and analyzes their ideological functions in press conferences. Specifically, using a corpus of 100 transcriptions of press conferences as data, this study investigates the discursive function of disclaim and stance-taking realized by disclaim in press conferences from an ideological dimension.

The structure of the article is as follows. Section 2 briefly introduces the disclaim system, and reviews the previous studies on disclaim and ideology in news discourses. Section 3 introduces the data and methodology. Section 4 offers the analysis of ideological functions of disclaim in press conferences. Section 5 offers concluding remarks.

## 2. Disclaim and Ideology in News Discourses

### 2.1. Disclaim

The most important function of appraisal is to construct relations of alignment and rapport between the writer/speaker and the actual or potential respondents, which is most obviously embodied by engagement resources [18]. According to White, engagement is concerned with mapping the value relationships between the values and hence with understanding the way different choices of values from the system have different consequences for rhetorical potential, understanding the rhetorical consequences of the interaction of these positioning values with other meanings, and understanding the possible interaction between such values both within utterances and within the text [36]. Disclaim is the subcategory of engagement which involves meanings by which some dialogic alternative is directly rejected or supplanted, or is represented as not applying [19].

Engagement system characterizes the different possibilities for the stancetaking, investigates the rhetorical effects associated with these various positionings, and explores what is at stake when one stance is chosen over another [19]. As a subsystem, disclaim involves "those formulations by which some prior utterance or some alternative position is invoked so as to be directly rejected, replaced or held to be unsustainable" [19] (p. 118). Disclaim includes two subcategories: deny and counter.

Deny is "a resource for introducing the alternative positive position into the dialogue, and hence acknowledging it, so as to reject it" [19] (p. 118). In the dialogistic terms, "the negative is not the simple logical opposite of the positive, since the negative necessarily carries with it the positive, while the positive does not reciprocally carry the negative, or at least not typically" (ibid.). Deny is realized via the negation, which is mainly realized through the negative words *not*, *no*, *never*, *nothing*, *without*, etc., as well as the words with negative affixes such as *un-*, *in-*, *dis-*, *less-*, or the words which have the negative meaning such as *hardly*, *little*, etc. Consider the following examples.

(1) I'm not (deny) talking about what's happening here; I'm talking what they're doing.

(2) It had never (deny) been made a decision like that.

In Example (1) and (2), *not* and *never* are identified as deny value, which are used to express the negation for the opinions. That is to say, through deny the speaker establishes the dialogic space with the listeners and negates those voices that are contrary to his own voices.

Counter includes "formulations which represent the current proposition as replacing or supplanting, and thereby 'countering', a proposition which would have been expected in its place" [19] (p. 120). Counter owns dialogistic nature in the same pattern as deny because it also includes an opposite proposition that is said not to stand by [19]. Counter is typi-

cally realized via conjunctions and connectives, such as *however*, *though*, *but* and *yet*. Adjuncts such as *only*, *just*, *even* and *still* also have a counter-expectational aspect to their meaning. Besides, some adverbs like *surprisingly* and *amazingly* could also function as counter. Consider the following examples.

(3) I don't (deny) know if that's fair, but (counter) I guess it's politics when you get right down to it and what's fair.

(4) They haven't (deny) even (counter) spoken about it.

In the above examples, there are two counter values detected, which are realized via conjunction *but* and adjunct *even*. These formulations counter the expectation that would have appeared in this place by another proposition.

Deny is the challenge or rejection for an opinion or a phenomenon, while counter means that a kind of opinion or stance is used to replace the existed ones. Counter often manipulates deny, with the negative proposition in straightforward contradistinction with the expectation that is certain to arise from a straightway prior proposition [18]. As the above examples shown, deny and counter often appear together to complete the function of challenging, fending off or restricting the scope of the alternative voices.

## 2.2. Ideological Dimension of Disclaim in News Discourses

Ideology can be a key and complex term in several disciplines. In linguistics and the related fields, ideologies are "expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse" [32] (p. 115). Ideologies can be seen as the "means of legitimizing existing relations and differences of power" [9] (p. 2) and also as a "discursive or semiotic phenomenon" [8] (p. 194). Dominant ideologies are always ideologized through the universalization and naturalization of dominant ideas and beliefs, mystificatory operations, logic of appearances, dissimulation and manipulation, promotion of common senses and meanings embodied in discourses that contribute to the maintenance of power relations [26]. In Critical Discourse Studies, ideologies are systems of ideas that explain particular political and social orders, legitimate hierarchies and preserve group identities [5].

Press conference is of great importance in breaking down Internet rumors, stabilizing public emotions, and guiding public opinion [27]. In press conference, people need to use a lot of strategies to express their own stances and let the listeners accept their opinions, thus convincing them. From the perspective of engagement, it is a process of dialogicality. According to Bakhtin's [2] and Voloshinov's [33] notions of dialogism and heteroglossia, "all verbal communication, whether written or spoken, is 'dialogic' in that to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or

imagined readers/listeners" [19] (p. 92). In the dialogic process, language isn't a neutral medium but full of evaluation, which carries the speakers' attitudes and positionings. In this regard, the disclaim resources employed in news discourses aren't arbitrary; instead, they could help to express speakers' stances and hide the ideology. Specifically, deny is such a strategy which involves a different point of view by quoting and denying one point of view, and counter is a kind of strategy that speakers quote words that are different from or related to their own points of view, and then substitute or counterattack to frustrate the expectation [35]. Language has never been a neutral medium of communication. It is not simply a reflection of reality, but a construction tool, which helps to construct the views and beliefs that the power class need to spread [10]. Therefore, such choices are strategies of rhetoric and carry strong ideological implications.

To analyze the ideology in modern society, we must pay attention to the nature and influence of mass media and its core role in the production and dissemination of ideology [30]. Analyzing state leaders' utterances would contribute to revealing their stances and attitudes towards important issues around the world. Specifically, this study investigates the relationship between the disclaim strategy and ideology, and thus reveals how speakers employ the disclaim strategy to express their own stances and control the public's comments on important issues by giving privileges to a particular ideology. Thus, this study reveals the ideological functions of disclaim in press conferences.

## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1. Data

Taking state leader's utterances in press conferences as the example, this study aims to investigate the ideological functions of the disclaim resources from the perspective of interpersonal and textual meanings. The materials in this study were collected from the official website of *White House* ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)) between 2020 and 2023. First, I searched in "Briefing Room" section of *White House* and downloaded all transcriptions about state leaders' remarks. Then, I randomly selected 100 from those downloaded transcriptions with "Question-Answering" section. In this stage, I totally collected materials of 980,039 words and established the corpus of "State Leader's Utterances in Press Conferences". The reason why I only chose those with the "Question-Answering" section is that both quantitative and qualitative analyses of this study focus on state leader's answers of questions concerning important issues all over the world. Generally, a complete press conference consists of the speech at the beginning and then the questions-answering part. However, this study only analyzes state leaders' utterances in question-answering part. Therefore, I further counted the total words of question-answering parts. The total word count of their answers is 303,091 words. That is to say,

when coding and counting the disclaim resources, this study only focuses on those appearing in state leader's answers.

Political discourses by state leaders are one of the most common and important ways for a country to convey its message to the rest of the world. This kind of discourse plays an important role in international communication. Therefore, this study chose discourse of state leaders of America as the material to deeply explore the relationship between ideology and the disclaim resources.

### 3.2. Methods

This study investigates the main discursive function of disclaim and the stance-taking realized by disclaim in state leader's utterances of press conference. First, I measured all disclaim resources employed by state leaders according to Martin and White's taxonomy [19] as well as considering the context with the hard copy manually. Second, the corpus annotation software UAM Corpus Tool version 3.3 was used to establish the annotation framework and carry out the manual annotation based on the annotation under the hard copy. The appraisal resources are in the discourse semantic level and the software can hardly handle them exactly, so as to ensure the study's validity, I first annotated them in hard copy and then with the software to reduce mistakes and avoid omissions as far as possible. All annotations were carried out with clause as the unit.

After annotation, applying the statistical function of UAM corpus tool, the frequency of disclaim and its sub-categories were counted and calculated, and then the distribution data of the disclaim resources were obtained. Based on that, the realizations of the deny resources and counter resources were extracted by UAM corpus tool. Finally, based on the obtained data, this study carried out the critical discourse analysis to reveal ideology behind state leader's utterances.

Therefore, the study resorts to the balanced application of quantitative corpus-linguistic methods together with CDA to make richer observations than are normally possible using basic qualitative or quantitative methods of text analysis [1, 3, 24, 34].

## 4. The Ideological Functions of Disclaim in Press Conferences

This paper proposes that the disclaim resources play important ideological functions in press conferences. Specifically, this study explores the textual and interpersonal ideological meanings of disclaim. For illustrating it, this paper analyzes the utterances of state leaders in press conferences, focusing on the discursive function and stance-taking function of disclaim in press conferences.

### 4.1. The Discursive Function of Disclaim in Press Conferences

According to Martin and White's definition and classification of the disclaim system [19], there were total 11,823 disclaim resources in state leaders' answers to questions in press conferences, about 39 per thousand words. The distribution of disclaim was shown in Table 1.

*Table 1. Distribution of disclaim in the state leader's utterances.*

Disclaim	Frequency	Frequency/1000	Percentage
Deny	7486	24.69	63.31%
Counter	4337	14.31	36.69%
Total	11823	39.00	100%

As shown in Table 1, deny was employed more than counter by state leaders in press conferences. Specifically, the results show that deny was employed 7,486, taking up 63.31% of all disclaim resources, and counter was employed 4,337, taking up 36.69%.

#### 4.1.1. Deny in Press Conferences

The main realizations of deny with frequency more than 50 in state leaders' answers were shown in Table 2.

*Table 2. Main realizations of deny in state leaders' utterances.*

deny	frequency
not/n't	4196
no	1023
different	425
never	404
nobody	398
hard	97
nothing	89

As shown in Table 2, in state leaders' answers, the most widely employed deny resources were negative clauses formed by negative particle *not* and its contracted form *n't*, with a total of 4,196, followed by *no*, with a total of 1023. The next most employed deny resource was implied negative word *different*, with a total of 425. Then, negative adverb *never* and noun *nobody* were employed with the similar frequency, with a total of 404 and 398, respectively. Finally, implied negative word *hard* and noun *nothing* were also employed with the



similar frequency, with a total of 97 and 89, respectively.

That is to say, the deny resources in state leaders' answers were mainly realized by syntactic negation, such as *not/n't* and *no*. Among these syntactic negations, negative raising took up a large proportion, which was mainly realized by *I don't think....* It is a special engagement feature of question-answering discourses. In this genre, speakers must answer questions from journalists and express their personal opinions and attitudes. In this process, speakers should try their best to avoid being called in question by others and try their best to convince them. By questioning and negating other's views through negative raising, speakers could clearly express their views and positionings, reduce the negotiation and communication with listeners, and thus narrow the space for interpersonal communication. For example,

(5) Question: Are you considering any tax breaks to help ease the pain?

Trump: I don't (deny) think the Democrats are going to be approving any tax cuts because they like to raise taxes instead of lowering taxes. But (counter) we'll be, in the not-too-distant future, announcing a very major middle-income tax cut. (N1, February 29, 2020)

In the example, the speaker didn't answer the question directly at the beginning, instead, he pointed out that the Democrats were not going to be approving any tax cuts. Then, he gave the journalist and the audience an affirmative answer. Compared with directly answering the question, establishing the opposite side could emphasize the speaker's attitude and then make the public more believe and support the American government.

What's more, previous studies have proposed that negative raising is generally associated with a speaker's choice to weaken his assertion, to mitigate his commitment with respect to the content expressed, by showing less certainty and weakening the power of the negation [28]. Therefore, negative raising is clearly associated to the pragmatic concept of politeness [4, 29]. When using negative raising, speakers are not only softening their attitudes to the proposition contained in the utterance, but also establishing a good relationship with the addressees [28], in the sense that "preferring transferred negation helps to leave the addressees' range of options to respond intact, thus avoiding any impression of other-determination" [4] (p. 560).

Therefore, wide employment of negative raising reveals that when answering questions, speakers establish good relationship with the journalists and the audience through the strategy of understatement<sup>1</sup>, since negative raising has the function of avoiding imposition upon his interlocutor [28].

#### 4.1.2. Counter in Press Conferences

The main realizations of counter with frequency more than 50 were shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Main realizations of counter in Trump's utterances.

counter	frequency
but	3052
just	747
even	401
only	116

As shown in Table 3, in state leaders' answers, the most widely employed counter resources were *but*, with a total of 3,052, followed by *just*, with a total of 747. The next was *even*, with a total of 401, followed by *only*, with a total of 116.

That is to say, the counter resources employed by the state leaders were mainly realized through connectives and conjunctions as *but*, and adjuncts as *just* and *even*. In the corpus, *but* was widely employed by the state leaders to counter the propositions which would have been expected in its place. Actually, *but* and negation usually appear together to realize the discourse function of counter-expectation, thus enhancing the coherence of the discourse information and avoiding the misunderstanding of the listeners or modifying the information and then preventing the wrong message. For example,

(6) Question: Mr. President, Vice President Biden's spokesperson said that he had made some suggestions to you about actions that you can be taking to deal with the pandemic?

Trump: We had a very good talk. We agreed that we weren't (deny) going to talk about what we said, but (counter) we had a very, very good talk.

Question: Did he have good suggestions? Anything that you're going to do?

Trump: Well, he had suggestions. It doesn't (deny) mean that I agree with those suggestions, but (counter) certainly he had suggestions. And I also told him some of the things we're doing. But (counter) the conversation was a friendly — very friendly conversation. (N21, April 7, 2020)

In the example, the speaker resorts to formulations of syntactic negation *weren't*, *doesn't* and *but*, which have the counter-expectational meaning to fend off and restrict the scope of the alternative voices. The speaker first admitted that he had a good talk with the Vice President. At that time, the listeners may have the expectation that the speaker would talk about some information about their talk. However, the speaker closed the dialogic space by *weren't* since he didn't want to disclose any information of their talk. Then, the speaker employed *but* to dispel the listeners' doubts and then convince them. For the journalist's next question, the speaker also used this kind of strategy and fully expressed his own stance.

As the subcategories of disclaim, deny and counter really

<sup>1</sup> Bublitz (1992) believes that negative raising is an instance of rhetorical understatement.

have something in common. Deny is a variable mechanism with respect to alignment. Counter, similar to deny, frequently is aligning rather than disaligning [19]. Therefore, proper employment of the disclaim resources could help state leaders to establish good relationship with the journalists and the audience. Indeed, when state leaders answer questions from the journalists, they do not only consider the journalists but also the audience, even the potential listeners such as the public. Thus, this process is closely related to solidarity. State leaders have to put themselves among people with different opinions and attitudes, and strive to maintain solidarity with those who disagree them, in which the disclaim resources play a very important role.

Martin and White believe that deny has two kinds of functions: (1) speaker/writer uses negation to provide opposite views and make the listener/reader accept them; (2) speaker/writer uses negation to correct some misunderstandings or misconceptions of the listener/reader [19]. Similarly, Tottie proposes that negative expressions are usually used in two situations, that is, to reject suggestions and to deny assertions [31]. Denying assertions then can be used in four situations: (1) denials of background information; (2) denials of text-processed information; (3) unfulfilled expectation; (4) contrasts [22]. In the corpus, the deny resources were frequently employed together with the counter resources by state leaders for denials of background information or text-processed information, and for contrasts.

For the denials of information, it means that disclaim is used when speakers think that listeners may hold wrong opinions based on the background knowledge. For example,

(7) Question: And then my — the follow-up to that would be: Now that you're President and you're saying, "There is nothing we can do to change the trajectory of the pandemic in the next several months," what happened to two months ago when you were talking declaratively about "I'm going to shut down the virus"?

Biden: Well, I'm going to shut down the virus, but not (deny) — I never (deny) said I'd do it in two months. I said it took a long time to get here; it's going take a long time to beat it. And so we have millions of people out there who are — who have the virus. (N64, January 25, 2021)

In the example, when the journalist pointed out that the President Biden talked declaratively about "I'm going to shut down the virus", Biden employed two deny resources to deny this "wrong" information and let them know the real situation.

Actually, in the press conferences, there are much information known or opinions held by the journalists and the audience, which are or should be proven to be wrong or incorrect by state leaders. Facing the information not beneficial to their images, state leaders have to well prepare and handle the questions quiet skillfully. Frequently, they do not directly answer these tough questions, instead, they first deny the information held by the journalists and the audience that they treat to be false, and by that they answer these questions in

an indirect way. Such strategies really could help state leaders not only well answer questions and make clear what they want to clarify, but also establish good relationship with the journalists as well as the public.

For the denials of text-processed information, it means that disclaim is used when speakers believe that the listeners may get the wrong information from the text, either co-text or context. For example,

(8) Question: Mr. President, what did you learn from Americans last night about what they want in this plan?

Biden: I learned, based on the polling data, they want everything that's in the plan. Not (deny) a joke. Everything that's in the plan. I — the fact is that I'd like to — I asked a rhetorical question: Those who oppose the plan, what don't (deny) they like? What particular program don't (deny) they like? Don't (deny) they want to help people with nutrition? Don't (deny) they want to help people be able to pay their mortgages? Don't (deny) they want to help people get their unemployment insurance? Don't (deny) they want to make sure that people are able to stay in their homes without being thrown out of their homes in the middle of this god-awful pandemic? What don't (deny) they like? (N67, February 17, 2021)

In the example, when answering the journalist's question, the speaker directly pointed out the real situation at first. And then, maybe he thought that his answer would have the other explanation by the listener, that is, treating it as a joke, so he emphasized the answer with the deny resource "not". Following it, the speaker used "don't" seven times to refute those who oppose the plan.

For the above two situations, deny plays the important role of counter-expectancy and information modification. With deny, the speakers could modify the previous information and then control the information flow [12, 20]. Thus, they could convince and influence people's cognition potentially and have the strong ideological implications.

For the contrasts, it means that negation is used when comparing two or more items. For example,

(9) Question: Yesterday, there was a letter that was sent out publicly by the Federal Reserve Chairman, talking about steps that the Fed may do to prevent economic impacts from happening here in the United States. What's your reaction? Is that enough — that kind of a letter?

Trump: Our Fed should start being a leader, not (deny) a follower. Our Fed has been a follower. We need a Fed that's going to be a leader. (N1, February 29, 2020)

In the example, the speaker used *not* to emphasize that Fed should be a leader. Through negation, "follower" and "leader" are compared and opposed. Such comparison finally highlights what the speaker wants to emphasize. Consider another example.

(10) Question: And Secretary Mnuchin said that this shut-down, this lockdown could last 10 to 12 weeks, perhaps early into June. Given that, would you consider another fiscal stimulus, another check to these families?

Trump: I think it's going to go very rapidly because this wasn't (deny) a financial crisis — just (counter) the opposite. This was a medical crisis. (N10, March 11, 2020)

In the example, the speaker pointed out that coronavirus was a medical crisis rather than a financial crisis. In the above case, financial crisis was opposed to medical crisis through negation. This comparison would make coronavirus be further understood by the listeners from the cognitive perspective of the similarities and differences between the two.

It can be seen from the above examples that, through negation, the similarities and differences between two or more items can be revealed, so as to highlight a certain phenomenon or thing that speakers want to emphasize. In news discourse, the opposition between affirmation and negation has a strong rhetorical effect, enhancing the rationality of persuasion and thus make listeners are more convinced.

It should be noted that in above situations, the counter resources are always employed together with the deny resources to reject and replace the point of view, and thus realize the discourse function of counter-expectancy and information modification. It can be seen from the above examples that, through both deny and counter the speakers appropriately answer the journalists' questions, skillfully avoid conflict, and thus establish good relationship with not only the journalists but also the audience whether are present or potential.

## 4.2. Stance-Taking Realized by Disclaim in Press Conferences

Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field [7]. The expression of stance is an important tool for conveying a message against alternative positions that are always in play in political discourse, reflecting the speaker's attitudes or knowledge state concerning the state of affairs talked about [11]. Stance-taking is closely related to interpersonal meaning. Evaluation could be the most salient and widely recognized form of stance-taking [11] (p. 142). Based on the above analysis, it can be found that the disclaim resources, which are the subsystem of appraisal system, could linguistically realize the function of stance-taking, since the engagement system of the appraisal system can organically link one opinion with other related opinions, used to measure the relationship between the speaker's voice and various voices in the discourse [21]. The stance expressed through the evaluation can be regarded as evaluative stances.

Through the disclaim resources, the speaker constructs evaluative and interactive aspects. Evaluation refers to the speaker's viewpoint and attitude towards propositions and things. Interaction refers to the speaker engaging the audi-

ence in the press conference, assuming that they hold specific viewpoints and using them to "interact and negotiate", in order to express their position and establish alliances. According to Du Bois [7], in press conferences, as the speaker of stance-taking, the speaker could make negative or positive evaluations of propositions, things, etc. by the disclaim resources, in order to position themselves; the audience will make their own judgment (agree or disagree) on this evaluation, in order to position themselves. During this process, the speaker gradually formed an alliance with the audience.

In this study, the disclaim resources could help state leaders to express at least the following eight evaluative stances when answering journalists' questions in press conferences:

- a) the stance of reminding: it means that the speaker points out the information that the listeners (including the journalist and the audience) do not know or the information which has been ignored, and then emphasizes the importance of them;
- b) the stance of warning: it means that the speaker reminds or warns the listeners not to do something or make them realize the serious consequences they should bear if they don't;
- c) the stance of dissuading: it means that the speaker persuades the listeners about some inappropriate behaviors or behaviors that do not meet the expectations of the speaker;
- d) the stance of prohibiting: it means that the speaker absolutely negates the previous behavior or state of the listeners. And the speaker asks the listeners to give up and end this kind of behavior or state. It is with a strong sense of deterrence (Peng, 2012);
- e) the stance of questioning: it means that the speaker doubts the authenticity of some information that existed before;
- f) the stance of opposing: it means that the speaker refutes some information or voices that existed before, or disagrees with some behaviors of the listeners;
- g) the stance of refusing: it means that the speaker rejects unreasonable demands or respond negatively to some invitation of the listeners;
- h) the stance of criticizing: it means that the speaker accuses against the listeners or the organizations/countries for their inappropriate behaviors or discourses.

Actually, these evaluative stances are not always expressed separately, instead, some of them could be expressed at the same time. For example, the stance of questioning and criticizing could often be finished together. The speaker could doubt the authenticity of some information and then criticize the people or organization that spread them.

Specifically, with the help of the disclaim resources, speaker could doubt and deny the information or the voices from the journalists or existed before, which are negative or even harmful to themselves or their governments. For example,

- (11) Question: But I just wanted to get a clarification be-

cause you just said that you haven't had to require companies to up their production of medical supplies, but you've said last night you invoked the DPA.

Trump: But (counter) I didn't (deny) say that. No (deny). (N13, March 20, 2020)

In the example, the speaker denied the utterance of the journalist through the disclaim resources. Actually, he does not only deny the utterance but also the whole event. Through this kind of negation and counter-expectancy, the speaker clarified the matters happened before and saves his face before the public.

Or, speakers reject answering these questions that they don't want to answer or they aren't able to answer. For example,

(12) Question: The Chinese Vice President is going to be there. Are any U.S. officials going to meet with him?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't have an announcement for you today. But (counter) stay tuned in case, you know, there is a — a U.S. official who ends up seeing the Chinese Vice President. (N92, September 15, 2023)

In the example, the speaker didn't directly answer the journalist's question. Instead, he said that he didn't have an announcement. By this, the speaker not only showed his unwillingness to answer the question but also told the audience the current situation.

To sum up, through both deny and counter, speakers could appropriately answer the journalists' questions, effectively expresses their stances and skillfully avoids conflict, and thus try their best to establish positive image before the listeners. Besides, the stance-taking realized by the disclaim resources is implicit enough to help speakers hide their ideological intention and convince the listeners gradually. Since evaluation in discourse is particularly difficult to challenge, it is particularly effective to manipulate readers/listeners with evaluation (Pang 2013). Therefore, the disclaim resources are strategy of rhetoric and carry strong ideological implications.

## 5. Conclusions

In news discourses, each language expression not only reflects the social reality, but also construct the ideology that speaker/writer wants to spread. This article utilizes Martin and White's appraisal framework to demonstrate how state leaders ideologically answers questions in press conferences. This article explored the main discursive function of disclaim, and investigated the stance-taking realized by disclaim in press conferences from an ideological perspective. The results revealed that deny and counter are always employed together to play the role of denials of background information, denials of text-processed information, and comparing two or more items. Thus, the counter resources and the deny resources are employed together to reject and replace the point of view, and then realize the discourse function of counter-expectancy and information modification. At the same time, disclaim could realize the following stance-taking:

(a) the stance of reminding; (b) the stance of warning; (c) the stance of dissuading; (d) the stance of prohibiting; (e) the stance of questioning; (f) the stance of opposing; (g) the stance of refusing; (h) the stance of criticizing.

The discursive function and the stance-taking function of disclaim really play a very important role in press conferences. When answering questions, state leaders not only direct to the journalists but also the audience at present or not, and thus establish good interpersonal relationship with them. State leader's attitudes and positionings on important issues can be revealed through the analysis of the disclaim resources they employ when answering questions.

In political discourse, the speaker could employ the disclaim resources to not only reclarify the existed voices which are not beneficial to himself, to modify the information when interacting with the listeners which he thinks is not appropriate or clear enough for the listeners to understand, to timely stop the listeners' wrong expect, to emphasize what he wants to emphasize and so on. On the other hand, the disclaim resources could help the speaker to effectively express his own stances. Such evaluative stances, including but not limited to reminding, warning, dissuading, prohibiting, questioning, opposing, refusing and criticizing, could be expressed through the disclaim resources. Evaluation can increase the acceptability of ideology. Therefore, the evaluative stances expressed by disclaim could help the speaker to show his position in a more covert way, so as to establish and maintain the power relationship and realize the political intention. Since this kind of stance-taking is always covert, the listeners are often unable to detect, or even manipulated by the speaker, and are willing to accept the ideology hidden in discourse. It then can be concluded that the employment of the disclaim resources in news discourses really carry the strong ideological implications and the thorough analysis of the disclaim resources can provide some implications for Critical Discourse Analysis.

In addition, press conference, which is originally established in the United States, has been viewed as a global communication tool by nations worldwide. From this study, we can see that spokesman could use a lot of language resources to emphasize his or her own stances, and thus to convince the audience. Therefore, this study could provide some implications for spokesman, especially for government spokesman to effectively communicate with the audience and achieve a more harmonious communication situation.

## Abbreviations

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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