



A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of News Discourses on China-Papua New Guinea and China-Solomon Islands Agricultural Cooperation

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Abstract— *Pacific Island nations are key participants in South-South cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, with agricultural cooperation serving as a vital area for China's practical collaboration with these states. Adopting Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model, this study constructs two small corpora consisting of 68 news reports (2018-2026) from Papua New Guinea's Post Courier and three major Solomon Islands English-language newspapers. With the AntConc tool, it compares media narratives of China-PNG and China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation across textual, discursive-practice and social-practice dimensions. The results reveal that while both media outlets adopt state-centred narratives focusing on rice production and food security, they differ noticeably in framing. PNG media emphasizes technology-driven industrial projects, aid and bilateral trade, whereas Solomon Islands media highlights livelihood support, sovereign equality and local public benefits. At the discursive-practice level, indirect quotation is widely used. PNG reporting is dominated by official and elite voices, while Solomon Islands coverage incorporates ordinary citizens' viewpoints. Such discursive variations stem from differences in agricultural conditions, bilateral-cooperation maturity and regional geopolitics. This paper argues that Pacific Island local media are heterogeneous. Differentiated communication strategies should be adopted by China to deliver grassroots perspectives and manage geopolitical risks. It further demonstrates the value of corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for studies on South-Pacific international cooperation.*



Keywords— *Critical Discourse Analysis; Fairclough's three-dimensional model; Pacific Island Nations; Agricultural Cooperation; Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis; Media Narrative*

I. INTRODUCTION

The friendship between China and Pacific Island countries has a long-standing history despite vast geographical distances. In 2014 and 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid state visits to Fiji and Papua New Guinea respectively, upgrading China-Pacific Island relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership built on mutual respect and shared development. Since then, bilateral and multilateral cooperative mechanisms have

been broadened, and agricultural cooperation has gradually become an important area of practical cooperation (Lü, 2022). High-level platforms such as the China-Pacific Island Countries Agricultural Cooperation Forum and the China-Pacific Island Countries Agricultural Ministers' Meeting have been established, providing institutionalised channels for regional agricultural exchanges.

Therefore, this study selects Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands as comparative cases, which have

strong comparability. In terms of the time of establishing diplomatic relations, Papua New Guinea established diplomatic relations with China in 1976, and the Solomon Islands established diplomatic relations with China in 2019. The two countries have different starting points for diplomacy with China, which can be used to observe how the difference in the length of diplomatic relations affects media discourse narratives. In terms of strategic cooperation, Papua New Guinea is the first Pacific island country to sign a memorandum of understanding on jointly building the Belt and Road with China; after establishing diplomatic relations, the Solomon Islands also signed a memorandum of understanding on jointly building the Belt and Road in 2021. Both countries regard the Belt and Road framework as an important institutional carrier for cooperation with China, but there are obvious differences in the time nodes of signing bilateral agreements and the subsequent implementation progress. In the field of agricultural cooperation, both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands are South Pacific developing countries where agriculture occupies a fundamental position in the national economy. Agriculture is not only a pillar industry to ensure food security and improve people's livelihood, but also a key cooperation direction for China to carry out foreign aid, technology export and capacity building with the two countries. From December 24 to 29, 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China signed a memorandum of understanding on agricultural cooperation with the Solomon Islands; Papua New Guinea has carried out hybrid rice, vegetable planting, agricultural technology training and other projects with China earlier, and agricultural cooperation started earlier and the projects are more abundant. The two countries have similar resource endowments and development demands, but there are differences in the pace and scale of cooperation with China. Therefore, comparing the domestic media coverage of China-Papua New Guinea and China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation can help examine how the duration of diplomatic relations and the maturity of cooperation influence the discursive construction of island country media, and provide case references and practical insights for China to further promote the Belt and Road cooperation with Pacific Island countries, optimise the layout of agricultural cooperation, and improve international communication.

From a linguistic perspective, exploring the representational content and methods of national media news coverage is an extremely important means of understanding the national government's attitude and perception toward the reported events (Shi & Jin, 2021). Linguistic scholars have conducted numerous studies on news coverage related to the Belt and Road Initiative from

a linguistic standpoint, yielding significant research findings. Existing studies mainly draw on Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal Theory, and Transitivity analysis as theoretical frameworks, and their research objects mostly focus on mainstream media in Europe, the United States, Australia and China. However, empirical discourse studies focusing on the local media of South Pacific Island countries are relatively scarce, and there is even less research on specific cooperation areas such as agriculture. This research gap motivates the present study.

Based on this, this study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis as the theoretical framework, selects news reports on China-Papua New Guinea and China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation from Papua New Guinea's mainstream media *The Post Courier* and Solomon Islands' mainstream media *Solomon Star*, *Solomon Times* and *The Island Sun* as the corpus, and uses the AntConc corpus tool to conduct a comparative discourse analysis.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions and Terminologies

Prior to reviewing existing academic studies, it is necessary to clarify the core terminologies adopted in this research. Accordingly, this section defines three fundamental concepts: discourse, news discourse, and agricultural cooperation discourse, with the aim of standardizing the analytical scope and theoretical boundaries of the present study.

2.1.1 Discourse and News Discourse

Discourse constitutes a core analytical category widely discussed in postmodern theories. Originating from linguistic research, contemporary discourse studies no longer confine their analysis to linguistic forms alone. Instead, they adopt interdisciplinary perspectives to explore how language interacts with social structures, historical backgrounds, cultural values, political mechanisms and institutional norms (Wang, 2004). In academic discussions, "text" and "discourse" often get mentioned in the same breath. But in many existing studies, the line between them is still pretty blurry. Some scholars have tried to separate the two, yet they haven't really managed to pin down what makes them fundamentally different (Huang & Xu, 2006).

A common way to distinguish text from discourse is to think in terms of product versus process. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 26), for example, put it quite plainly: textual materials are static records, whereas discourse is the dynamic communicative process in which writers or speakers use language to convey particular meanings and achieve communicative goals under given contextual

constraints. Van Dijk (1988, p. 29) takes this further, treating discourse not just as linguistic structure but as interactive social practice. Discourse, then, is not simply a set of isolated verbal expressions. It is embedded in broader cultural, historical, and political settings, and in that sense reflects dominant social perceptions and the workings of power (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 8). Widdowson (2007) makes a related point, stressing discourse's situated and practical character and treating it as context-bound social behavior. Overall, discourse can take many forms—disciplinary systems, positional stances within ideological fields, institutional language types, and the language practices of particular social groups (Angermüller, Maigneueau, & Wodak, 2014).

Within the wider field of discourse, news discourse stands out as a distinctive form of institutional discourse. In both function and structural features, it differs quite sharply from political, educational, and academic discourse. This definition is not meant to oversimplify how complex news production really is. Rather, it helps clarify the theoretical rationale for analyzing news texts from a discursive perspective. Seen this way, news is not just factual reporting; it is a complex social communicative activity, shaped by particular institutional cultures and ideological environments.

The theoretical claim behind “news as discourse” is that news texts are inevitably shaped by journalists' professional norms and by the institutional mechanisms within which they work. But the influence runs both ways: these standardized textual products also shape how news producers and audiences understand and interpret social events (Van Dijk, 1985, p. 70). Discourse analysis therefore sets out to examine text–context interactions, with the aim of uncovering the underlying connection between linguistic features and latent social ideologies.

Traditional journalistic research usually stresses describing events and summarizing content. The discursive analysis paradigm takes a different path: it brings together multidisciplinary insights from linguistics, social psychology, institutional communication, and critical social theory. It also offers methodological backing for Critical Discourse Analysis—the view that news reporting can never be entirely objective or neutral. As authoritative institutional practitioners, mainstream journalists help construct and interpret international relations, and in doing so, they subtly legitimize existing power structures. News discourse, then, inevitably carries implicit ideological leanings and helps reproduce hidden social power relations.

2.1.2 Agricultural Cooperation Discourse

Building on the definition of general news discourse, this study takes the discussion a step further by defining

agricultural cooperation discourse as a specialised subcategory of international news discourse. Different from conflict-oriented, politically confrontational and crisis-focused news discourse, agricultural cooperation discourse focuses on pragmatic, livelihood-oriented and developmental bilateral interactions between sovereign states.

Agricultural cooperation discourse in this study specifically covers news narratives concerning cross-national agricultural technology assistance, crop cultivation cooperation, agricultural personnel training, food security governance and rural development collaboration. Such discourse does not merely record objective cooperative events; instead, it carries implicit diplomatic attitudes, developmental expectations and regional geopolitical perceptions constructed by local media.

Essentially, agricultural cooperation news reports seem neutral and fact-based on the surface. However, through lexical selection, quotation arrangement, thematic emphasis and narrative framing, local media in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands construct distinctive versions of bilateral cooperation reality. Therefore, agricultural cooperation discourse provides a valuable analytical object for observing how South Pacific island nations linguistically interpret China-assisted development projects and shape bilateral diplomatic perceptions.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Previous Studies

2.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) originated from “Critical Linguistics”, which was put forward by Fowler et al. in 1979 in *Language and Control*. Critical Linguistics explores the intrinsic links among ideology, discourse, social structures and power. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Critical Linguistics evolved into Critical Discourse Analysis. The publication of Fairclough's *Language and Power* and Wodak's *Language, Power and Ideology*, the launch of the journal *Discourse and Society*, together with the Amsterdam conference on critical discourse analysis, marked the formal establishment of CDA.

Over decades of development, CDA has given rise to diverse schools, including Fairclough's socio-cultural analysis, Van Dijk's socio-cognitive analysis, Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, and Positive Discourse Analysis. The discipline has further advanced into Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), with its paradigm shifting from Critical Linguistics to CDA and then to CDS.

This study adopts Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model for its wide application and operability. Treating

discourse as a form of social practice, the model distinguishes three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. Text refers to spoken or written discourse; discursive practice covers the production, distribution and consumption of discourse; social practice includes social relations, culture, ideology and other social elements. Correspondingly, analytical procedures involve linguistic description of texts, interpretation of links between texts and discursive practice, and explanation of interactions between discourse and social processes.

Centered on Systemic Functional Linguistics, Fairclough's socio-cultural analytical approach integrates Bakhtin's dialogism, Kristeva's intertextuality and Foucault's ideas on discourse and power. It connects discourse analysis with social theory to examine both linguistic phenomena and socio-cultural changes (Ji, 2008). It represents a well-established theoretical paradigm within CDA (Ji & Xin, 2009).

Every discursive event can be seen as having three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. Text emerges from discursive practice, which is both constrained by and serves socio-cultural practice. The analysis then moves from describing textual features, to interpreting the relationship between text and discursive practice, and finally to explaining how discursive practice links up with socio-cultural practice (Xin & Gao, 2013).

2.2.2 Review of Empirical Studies on CDA

Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical framework is one of the most canonical paradigms in CDA. Traditional CDA often leans on qualitative interpretation of small-scale texts, which makes its findings especially vulnerable to the researcher's own subjective experience. Corpus linguistics, by contrast, makes it possible to produce reproducible quantitative data—high-frequency words, collocations, index entries, semantic rhymes—and this helps offset the heavy subjectivity of purely qualitative analysis. Out of this has grown an empirical approach known as corpus-supported critical discourse analysis.

In recent years, a growing number of empirical studies within the Chinese academic community have brought Fairclough's three-dimensional framework together with corpus-based tools such as AntConc, Wmatrix, and KH Coder, as well as natural language processing techniques including LDA topic modeling, STM structural topic modeling, and principal component analysis. These methods are now widely used in studies of international communication concerning China, media discourse, and political discourse, helping researchers uncover the discursive constructions, power dynamics, and ideological biases that underlie different types of texts.

2.2.2.1 Country-specific Media and Cross-media Comparative Studies

Broadly speaking, many studies focus on mainstream news media at home and abroad, using horizontal comparisons to tease out how the same issue or cultural symbol is discursively produced in different media frameworks. In research on overseas coverage of China, for example, Lyu and Zhu (2026) built a thematic corpus from coverage by Japan's five major national newspapers of the "community with a shared future for mankind," then analyzed it with AntConc and LDA topic modeling. They found that mainstream Japanese media generally framed the concept through a security-oriented lens on China, using terms such as "logon" to achieve discursive othering. The newspapers also differed markedly in their source selection and thematic focus, and these discursive features were rooted in Japan's local media system, its perceptions of China, and structural tensions in the international landscape (Lyu & Zhu, 2026).

Zhang et al. (2025) turned to China-related reporting by Germany's two major mainstream outlets, carrying out an empirical analysis with STM structural topic modeling and deep-learning-based sentiment classification. German coverage ranged across international relations, economy and technology, and culture and environment, with predominantly neutral emotional tones; negative narratives were mostly concentrated on economic and technological competition. The media cited experts and scholars extensively as sources, ultimately shaping a contradictory image of China—one that is economically and technologically formidable yet also carries competitive risks (Zhang et al., 2025).

Li (2026) collects reports from overseas English-language media on *The Three-Body Problem* and its derivative works. The analysis moves across three dimensions—high-frequency textual themes, the intertextuality of source references, and socio-practical motivations—and argues that foreign media frame *The Three-Body Problem* as a complex cultural-industrial-political symbol. The cognitive inertia of international communication, the logic of global cultural capital dynamics, and political competition among major powers together shape the narrative framework these overseas media adopt (Li, 2026).

Some studies go further and compare Chinese and foreign media directly, in order to see how outlets with different political stances approach the same issue. Guo and Wang (2021), for instance, compared *The New York Times* and *China Daily* coverage of China's ethnic affairs between 2013 and 2021. Drawing on collocational analysis, index-line analysis, and semantic-rhyme analysis, they

found that the two outlets diverged sharply under the influence of their respective ideological and geopolitical positions: *The New York Times* tended to amplify conflict narratives and construct a negative image of China, while *China Daily*, grounded in local practices of ethnic governance, highlighted the developmental achievements of ethnic minority regions. The contrast in issue selection and semantic tone is striking, and it reflects a broader tendency among Western media to instrumentalize ethnic issues (Guo & Wang, 2021).

Liu et al. (2022) built an in-house corpus of Western media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Their analysis of keywords and index lines showed that such coverage has become more diverse than in the past, with economic and cultural symbols receiving greater attention. Even so, ideological bias remains deeply entrenched. These outlets often link human rights and environmental issues to the Olympic Games, and “hegemonic anxiety” continues to dominate the construction of narratives concerning China (Liu et al., 2022).

In studies of geopolitical conflict, Xu and Mo (2025) used corpus and semantic network analysis to compare how three mainstream outlets—from China, the United States, and the Philippines—covered the Ren’ai Reef incident. Their research reveals distinct narrative strategies: the Philippines focused on building a “victim” narrative; the United States used its image as a neutral third party to back its allies; and China grounded its reporting in legal and sovereignty-based perspectives. Through lenses such as news sources, high-frequency lexical collocations, and legal discourse, the study brings the power dynamics among the three into relief, showing how media can stake out positions through linguistic strategies in geopolitical conflict (Xu & Mo, 2025).

Another study turns the lens inward, examining the discursive subjectivity of domestic media. Xiong (2022) built a corpus from news coverage of oil price fluctuations by six Chinese media outlets and combined corpus-driven analysis with critical discourse analysis to trace how news subjectivity is generated across several dimensions—high-frequency keywords, lexical collocations, semantic patterns, news sources, and quotation strategies. The findings show that media positioning and market orientation directly shape fact selection, word choice, and source preferences. So even when covering the same objective event, different outlets use linguistic techniques to build different narrative positions (Xiong, 2022).

Beyond overseas media studies, some research also focuses on domestic external communication texts and on how third-party national media construct local images. Liu (2023), for example, draws on a corpus of *China Daily*’s

climate change coverage from 2001 to 2020, combining KH Coder and Wordsmith with the LDA model and lexical co-occurrence networks for a multidimensional analysis. The study finds that *China Daily*’s climate change reporting mainly foregrounded China’s policy actions and emission-reduction practices; the discourse also wove in traditional Chinese ecological ideas such as conscience, proximity, and restraint, opening a new angle for research on the construction of a domestic external ecological image (Liu, 2023).

Wang et al. (2025) examine *China Daily*’s external reporting on poverty governance. Using Wmatrix semantic annotation and principal component analysis in a diachronic design, they find that the thematic semantics of these reports lag behind actual policy developments by roughly one year. This suggests that journalistic discourse reflects social practice with a delay, and it sheds light on the interactive relationship between external news production and social reality (Wang et al., 2025).

Zeng et al. (2023) turn to reports about Hunan published by Sri Lankan mainstream media. Their analysis considers subject-predicate structure, voice, index lines, and semantic tone. They find that the Sri Lankan media collectively constructed a positive local image of Hunan. At the same time, because some content was reprinted from Western media sources, it was shaped by Western narrative frameworks and gave rise to cognitive biases—a pattern that shows how third-party regional media can be vulnerable to external discursive input (Zeng, 2023).

Zhang (2023) uses the NOW large-scale English online news corpus, with “Traditional Chinese Medicine” as the node word. The study integrates collocational strength (MI value), modal verbs, and index lines to dissect the media image of Traditional Chinese Medicine in English online media. By attending to the distribution of the modal system, it reveals the complex attitudes expressed in foreign media and offers micro-linguistic evidence for the international dissemination of Chinese traditional culture (Zhang, 2023).

2.2.2.2 Think Tanks, Policy-making, and Official Political Discourse Studies

A growing body of research is gradually moving beyond the traditional scope of news texts to include institutional texts such as think tank reports, legislative bills, and official government statements. By combining corpus-based tools with discourse-historical analysis, this approach looks at how positions are constructed, how power operates, and what ideologies lie beneath political discourse.

Tian (2026) offers a three-dimensional critical discourse analysis of 120 think tank texts dealing with the

“Rise of China.” Reading them through vocabulary and materiality, intertextual sources, funding sources, and power relations, Tian shows that these think tanks often rely on vague anonymous sources to construct a negative image of China’s “authoritarian expansion,” using active voice and material processes to do so. Their discourse is not free-floating: it is constrained by donors’ funding structures and serves the transatlantic narrative of competition with China (Tian, 2026).

Tan and Lu (2026) take the U.S. CHIPS Act as a case and place texts from three different power actors—think tank reports, news media, and legislative bills—within a single analytical framework. Using Wmatrix semantic annotation, they track how the semantic concept of “investment” travels and evolves. The three text types are semantically homogeneous in one respect: all reinforce semiconductor manufacturing and technological sovereignty. But they also diverge sharply. Think tanks treat investment as a tool for balancing security and efficiency in the U.S.-China competition over technological sovereignty; the media reduce investment to a symbol of addressing an economic crisis caused by supply chain shortages; and legislative bodies treat investment as compliance-driven behavior, prioritized for national security. This semantic divergence grows out of the different functional roles these actors play, and it reflects how a “security-first” logic pushes economic rationality aside in a technological competition environment (Tan & Lu, 2026).

Ding et al. (2021) gathered texts from U.S. and British think tanks on the “Belt and Road” initiative and compared them using Wmatrix semantic coding, collocation analysis, and extended semantic unit analysis. The contrast they found is striking. U.S. think tanks repeatedly drew on debt-related semantic categories to build a “debt trap” narrative, casting China as a source of risk. British think tanks, by contrast, adopted a more varied discourse—one that brought in multiple perspectives, leaned more heavily on neutral expressions, and stressed opportunities for Sino-British cooperation. These different discursive approaches stem not only from the think tanks’ own positioning but also from the wider diplomatic stances of the United States and the United Kingdom toward China (Ding et al., 2021).

Yang and Shi (2021) combined Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA) with corpus-based methods. They built a separate corpus of official U.S. government discourse on the China-U.S. trade war and analyzed it through high-frequency thematic terms, intertextual strategies, and legitimizing discourse strategies. The U.S. side repeatedly used attitudinal markers such as “unfair” and, through intertextual means—including citations of legal

provisions—portrayed China as an “unfair competitor” while positioning itself as a “just victim.” In doing so, it legitimized its trade war actions. The study also provides an empirical example of how corpus-based and discourse-historical approaches can be integrated (Yang & Shi, 2021).

If we look across existing empirical studies that use domestic corpora in critical discourse analysis, a fairly stable research paradigm comes into view. Researchers typically work with public databases or self-built thematic corpora, using tools such as AntConc, Wmatrix, and KH Coder to extract quantitative patterns—high-frequency words, collocations, index entries, and semantic domains. Some studies go a step further and bring in natural language processing techniques, including LDA, STM, principal component analysis, and semantic networks, to identify latent themes. The final step is usually qualitative interpretation through Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework, which allows quantitative linguistic findings and the broader socio-cultural context to validate each other.

That said, the field still has its share of gaps. One is a lingering imbalance between tools and reading. Some studies lean so heavily on output from NLP models and corpus tools that quantitative statistics and close reading of the text never really meet; the result is analysis that can feel more computational than interpretive. Another gap is coverage. The texts studied tend to cluster around mainstream Western and East Asian news media and think tanks in Europe and North America, while media texts, social media content, and grassroots discourse from the Global South remain comparatively under-examined. A third limitation is temporal. Most studies offer static, cross-sectional snapshots of discourse at a particular moment. Much less work follows how concepts travel across contexts, how texts echo one another, or how meanings shift over time. Finally, some studies stay at the level of phenomenological description, leaving the institutional, economic, and cultural mechanisms behind discourse formation relatively unexplored. Going forward, research would benefit from a better balance between quantitative tools and humanistic close reading, a wider range of regions and genres, a stronger diachronic and dynamic perspective, and continued theoretical and practical development of corpus-supported critical discourse analysis.

2.3 Previous Studies on the Cooperation between China and South Pacific Islands

As the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road continues to extend, Chinese scholars have taken a multidimensional approach to studying cooperation between China and

South Pacific Island Countries (SPICs). Liu & Kong (2026) conducted bibliometric analysis and found that domestic publications have risen rapidly after fluctuating growth. Research hotspots include regional institutions, ocean-climate governance, great-power games, bilateral relations and identity construction. Most existing works are policy-oriented applied studies, lacking profound theoretical frameworks, sufficient cross-country comparison and inter-institutional collaboration. It is necessary to build China-origin academic discourse for Pacific Island Countries studies.

In empirical trade research, Chen et al. (2022) found bilateral trade keeps expanding. Restricted by SPICs' small economic size, weak industry, political risks and poor business environment, trade development faces bottlenecks. Potential can be released via assistance, industrial-chain upgrading, diplomatic adjustment and trade supervision. Relevant domestic trade studies remain fragmented and unsystematic. Taking Fujian as a case, Cai & Huang (2021) adopted the theory of industrial re-transfer and pointed out huge cooperation potential in mineral and distant-water fishery. Constrained by limited-scale investment and shallow industrial integration, Fujian should give full play to overseas-Chinese resources and industrial-park platforms as the Maritime Silk Road core zone.

Marine cooperation covers deep-sea mining and fishery. Zhao (2019) regarded deep-sea mining as a strategic choice for high-quality BRI development. Rich submarine mineral resources of SPICs can supplement China's critical raw materials and satisfy local blue-economy demands. However, challenges involve deep-sea technology, heavy capital investment, ecological liabilities and geopolitical rivalry from the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Risks can be mitigated through high-level diplomacy, multilateral partnerships, joint scientific research and legal instruments. Chu et al. (2026) divided China-SPICs fishery cooperation into four phases. Despite cooperative foundations, problems such as insufficient strategic alignment, shallow-level cooperation, limited mutual support within international organizations and external public-opinion interference still exist. It is essential to improve institutional arrangements, promote resource conservation and folk fishery cultural exchanges.

From the macro-diplomatic perspective, Zhang (2019) analyzed the developmental vulnerability of SPICs and regional great-power competition. She suggested leveraging summit and multilateral diplomacy, abandoning competitive aid, implementing targeted assistance with effect evaluation, and deepening people-to-people, ocean-climate cooperation to jointly build the Blue Economic Corridor. For people-centered capacity-building,

Liu & Liu (2024) argued that the comprehensive strategic partnership, talent demand from Chinese-funded enterprises and China's "vocational-education going global" experience underpin vocational-education cooperation, which bears political, economic and social value. Measures including policy improvement, demonstration projects and multi-stakeholder synergy can advance projects such as Luban Workshops.

To sum up, existing literature has covered trade, investment, marine industry, diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges. Nevertheless, most studies focus on several key island nations, dominated by macro policy proposals, while empirical research on micro-firm activities and grassroots interactions is scarce. Future research requires more cross-country comparison and field investigation for better theoretical construction.

2.4 Research Gaps

Based on the comprehensive review of both foreign and Chinese literature, the existing research exhibits the following four limitations, which represent potential areas for innovation in this study:

First, in the field of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, existing empirical studies largely concentrate on Western mainstream media, East-Asian news outlets and think-tank documents. Empirical discourse research targeting Global South small-island developing states remains under-represented. Few studies take local news media texts of South Pacific Island Countries as analytical corpus. Prior comparative discourse research mostly compares media narratives between Western countries and China, while cross-national comparative discourse analysis among South Pacific island states themselves is still insufficient. In particular, there is a lack of research on how Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands' local media construct narratives concerning China-supported agricultural-cooperation projects.

Second, existing CDA-related research mostly explores themes such as international geopolitics, cultural works, climate governance and high-level diplomatic events. Specialized discourse studies focusing on bilateral pragmatic agricultural-livelihood cooperation are quite limited. Most relevant works examine general foreign-aid discourse, rather than defining "agricultural-cooperation discourse" as an independent analytical concept. Few scholars unpack the lexical choices, quotation strategies, thematic framing and intertextual characteristics of news reports on Sino-Pacific-island agricultural cooperation from the three-dimensional CDA perspective.

Third, for domestic studies on China-South Pacific Island Countries cooperation, the overwhelming majority adopt macro-policy, economic or international-relations

perspectives. Existing literature focuses on trade statistics, marine-resource development, diplomatic strategies and vocational-education cooperation. These studies mostly rely on official statistical data, policy documents and secondary materials, rarely adopting media-discourse analytical perspectives to observe local perceptions in recipient countries. Current research tends to stand on China's standpoint to assess cooperation effects, yet insufficient attention has been paid to how local societies and local media in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands perceive and interpret China-funded agricultural cooperation. Micro-level empirical evidence from recipient-country media texts is relatively absent.

Fourth, the intersection of the two research strands is underexplored. Up to now, few studies combine Fairclough's three-dimensional critical-discourse-analysis framework with self-built news corpus to conduct comparative research on agricultural-cooperation news discourses of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Existing relevant research either focuses on CDA methodology without targeting South-Pacific-island contexts, or discusses China-Pacific island cooperation without adopting discourse-analysis tools. This study fills this dual gap by integrating corpus-driven quantitative statistics and qualitative three-dimensional interpretation, comparing the discursive construction of China-related agricultural cooperation in two typical South-Pacific island nations.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Questions

Based on the research gaps and the theoretical framework of Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the present study constructs two self-built corpora of agricultural cooperation news reports from mainstream media in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Through corpus-assisted quantitative statistics and qualitative critical discourse analysis, this paper comparatively explores the discursive construction characteristics and underlying social causes of China-South Pacific agricultural cooperation news discourse in the two Melanesian countries. This study mainly addresses the following three research questions:

First, at the textual level: what lexical features and collocation patterns appear in news discourse on China-PNG and China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation, and where do the two corpora converge or diverge?

Second, at the level of discursive practice: how do mainstream media in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands use quotation modes and source allocation

strategies to construct narratives about agricultural cooperation, and what discursive differences emerge between the two national media?

Third, at the level of social practice: what underlying social, historical, and geopolitical factors give rise to these discursive differences, and how do local media in the two island nations interpret China's agricultural cooperation projects ideologically in light of their own national development contexts?

3.2 Corpus Collection

For this study, the corpus was built from official newspapers in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands—namely *the Post Courier* and *the Solomon Star*, together with *the Solomon Times* and *the Island Sun*. Using the search terms “China agricultural cooperation” and “China agriculture cooperation,” the author identified and collected 68 valid news reports on agricultural cooperation. The Papua New Guinea material runs from June 2018 to June 2026 and includes 38 reports, totaling 16,432 characters. The Solomon Islands material runs from October 2019 to June 2026 and includes 30 reports, totaling 13,761 characters. These two sets of texts are referred to as Corpus P and Corpus S, respectively.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

CDA was put forward by the well-known linguist Roger Fowler and his colleagues. Its aim is to reveal the complex, dialectical relationship between language and ideology, as well as the subtler connections that run beneath language, power, and ideology. The theoretical framework centres on Fairclough's three-dimensional model and covers an entire analytical continuum—from language to society:

(1) Text analysis: this level focuses on linguistic form itself. It offers a linguistic description of lexical choice, syntactic structure, semantic relations, discourse logic, and other such features, and it lays the foundation for the analysis as a whole.

(2) Discourse practice analysis: this level works as a bridge between text and society. It examines how social cognition shapes the production and interpretation of texts.

(3) Social practice analysis: this level places discourse within an ideological context in order to explain the dialectical relationship between discursive practice and social structure—a relationship that is constrained by social factors but can also uphold, critique, or even reconstruct ideology and social reality.

3.4 Research Procedure

This study uses the AntConc corpus tool and works through the analysis in sequential steps. It begins with the

Word and N-Gram functions to generate word-frequency statistics for the two self-built corpora. From these, it identifies high-frequency lexical items, screens core thematic vocabulary related to agricultural cooperation, extracts high-frequency multi-word collocations and industry-specific terminology, and compares how the two media outlets differ in their selection of thematic vocabulary, their terminological expression, and their use of common collocations. From there, the analysis turns to the KWIC indexing function, Collocate collocation analysis, and Cluster clustering. These are used to identify core keywords related to agricultural cooperation, retrieve the specific contexts in which they appear, count the collocational patterns surrounding them, and determine their semantic tendencies—again comparing the two outlets in how they present core vocabulary in context and in their semantic collocation patterns. Finally, drawing on the quantitative linguistic data gathered above, the study offers in-depth qualitative interpretation. It brings together the lexical selection preferences and semantic collocational characteristics of the core terms from both media outlets, and summarizes the distinct agricultural cooperation narrative patterns they construct. At the same time, by taking into account the local social development context, bilateral diplomatic relations, and the actual state of agricultural development in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the study probes the underlying media reporting attitudes, emotional biases, and internal value orientations concealed beneath the surface of journalistic language. It also examines the deeper influencing factors and real-world drivers behind the discourse construction that underlies different forms of discursive expression.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Lexical Features and Collocation Patterns of News Discourse on China-PNG and China-Solomon Islands Agricultural Cooperation

4.1.1 Vocabulary selection and word frequency

When we compare the top 20 high-frequency words in the agricultural cooperation discourses of the China-Papua New Guinea Corpus-P and the China-Solomon Islands Corpus-S, a stable shared core comes into view, along with some clear differences. Both corpora place the bilateral actors at the centre of the narrative. In Corpus-P, “png” and “China” appear with almost equal frequency, whereas in Corpus-S, “China” and “Solomon Islands” rank as the top two words. This suggests that both sets of texts are organized around interactions between China and the Pacific Island countries.

Administrative terms such as “government,” “minister,” and “province” are also relatively frequent in

both corpora, confirming that China-PNG and China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation are both built on a collaborative framework marked by government leadership and official-level coordination. Words tied to agriculture and cooperation, “agriculture,” “rice,” “development,” “cooperation,” and “support”—are likewise highly frequent across both corpora. Rice, as a fundamental food industry, serves as a shared focal point in the two cooperation frameworks, while the themes of support, development, and cooperation form a unified discursive value foundation.

Both corpora also incorporate place names specific to the host country’s core agricultural regions. In Corpus-P, “marape” refers to the core agricultural area of Papua New Guinea’s Highlands region; in Corpus-S, “mal” (Mala) and “malatia” (Malaita Province) denote the Solomon Islands’ primary recipient province for assistance. These local place names appear frequently in both corpora, which together shows that both sets of collaborative discourse are anchored in the precise implementation of initiatives targeting the host country’s most urgent regional needs. The difference lies mainly in the fact that, besides the single core term “marape,” Papua New Guinea also uses broader regional descriptors such as “highlands” and “eastern,” producing a more nuanced, layered geographical narrative. The Solomon Islands, by contrast, single out Malaita (malatia) as the sole prominent provincial-level focal unit.

At the level of difference, the two corpora tell quite distinct industrial stories. Corpus-P is anchored by “Juncao Mushroom Grass,” a flagship industrial symbol that appears with unusually high frequency, and it is paired with terms like coffee, mushrooms, and production capacity. Its overall discourse revolves around specific, industrializable technological projects. Corpus-S, by contrast, does not lean on any single iconic, high-frequency crop term. Instead, it relies on a cluster of agricultural vocabulary—“agricultural,” “farm,” “farmers,” “rural,” and “people”—to convey a narrative focused on inclusive, foundational agricultural support across regions.

The spatial narrative also differs in granularity. Corpus-P frequently uses specific regional terms such as “highlands” and “eastern,” which aligns with the targeted, region-specific implementation of its cooperation strategy in Papua New Guinea. Corpus-S, on the other hand, merely uses the broad term “islands” to refer to the entire territory, lacking detailed, localized geographical narratives. The focus of practical narratives differs as well: Corpus-P, with its project-based word frequency, emphasizes technological output and specialized infrastructure development, whereas Corpus-S leans more

toward a support-oriented narrative aimed at assisting farmers and improving rural livelihoods.

This surface-level disparity in lexical frequency essentially reflects differences in the actual cooperation models. China-PNG cooperation relies on mature Juncao technology to establish demonstration industrial projects and implement zoned, precision-operated management. China-Solomon agricultural cooperation, by contrast, is

still in the phase of providing comprehensive foundational agricultural support for rural livelihoods. Even so, both narratives are rooted in a unified cooperative foundation characterized by government coordination, food security assurance, and mutual benefit. Together, they form a differentiated foreign agricultural cooperation discourse paradigm tailored to the specific circumstances of various island nations in the South Pacific.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of agricultural cooperation discourse between China and PNG, as well as between China and the Solomon Islands

order number	Corpus P		Corpus S	
	vocabulary	frequency	vocabulary	frequency
1	png	187	China	150
2	China	186	Solomon	107
3	juncao	140	agriculture	100
4	rice	109	islands	96
5	agriculture	98	province	90
6	technology	97	development	72
7	project	88	support	63
8	new	77	government	57
9	coffee	74	minister	56
10	minister	72	cooperation	49
11	highlands	71	mal	48
12	mushroom	71	ministry	48
13	province	70	agricultural	47
14	eastern	66	rice	44
15	Chinese	63	Malaita	43
16	government	57	farm	42
17	agricultural	55	farmers	39
18	development	53	people	38
19	marape	51	farming	37
20	production	51	rural	36

4.1.2 Vocabulary collocations

Table 2: Collocation data for the term “China” in the P-Database

	Collocate	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Effect
1	aid	15	0	15	33.660	2.81
2	s	31	7	24	21.101	1.359
3	between	18	17	1	19.879	1.81
4	export	15	9	6	19.573	2.003
5	republic	7	7	0	19.399	3.225
6	construction	9	3	6	15.676	2.395

Table 3: Collocation data for the term “China” in the S-Database

	Collocate	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Effect
1	s	41	19	22	50.134	1.914
2	republic	16	16	0	43.057	3.157
3	islands	32	16	16	28.038	1.572
4	solomon	30	14	16	19.509	1.322
5	people	16	15	1	19.323	1.909
6	in	51	26	25	16.854	0.898
7	between	16	13	3	15.372	1.665

In Corpus P, the China-PNG agricultural cooperation corpus, “aid” is the collocate most strongly associated with “China.” It appears 15 times, always immediately after “China,” and there is no reverse collocation such as “aid China.” This matches the recurring fixed expression “China Aid” in the KWIC index lines. The term is then consistently paired with concrete agricultural technology projects—Juncao, upland rice, and the like—which, at the discursive level, solidifies China’s role as the proactive provider of agricultural aid. Through the high-frequency reuse of the standardized phrase “China Aid,” the media positions agricultural technical assistance as a core narrative symbol of bilateral cooperation. In doing so, it constructs an image of China as a responsible major power that actively exports agricultural technologies to support its partner countries’ food security.

In the same corpus, “export” ranks fourth among the collocates of “China,” and the KWIC index clearly shows a large number of “export to China” patterns. The texts mainly discuss the policy advantages and cooperation agreements surrounding the export of local agricultural products—coffee, fresh vegetables, aquatic products—to China. In the corresponding collocation statistics, “export” displays a bidirectional distribution: 9 occurrences to the left of “China” and 6 to the right. Unlike the unidirectional postpositioned “aid,” which only reflects China’s provision of assistance, “export” introduces the narrative dimension of “importing products from other countries into China.” This complements the reciprocal character of

bilateral agricultural and trade relations, building a fuller discursive logic that emphasizes mutual connectivity and win-win outcomes in agricultural cooperation.

A collocational analysis of Corpus S reveals that terms like “republic,” “Solomon,” and “islands” collocate very strongly with “China.” The discourse repeatedly puts the two sovereign states on equal footing as partners in agricultural cooperation. “Between” and “people” also show up frequently, building a narrative of mutual benefit—one that emphasizes tangible gains for ordinary people. The preposition “in” is the most frequent word overall, but its collocational effect value is under 1. It acts merely as a general grammatical particle, carries no exclusive semantic meaning, and takes no part in constructing the core cooperative discourse.

A comparison of the collocation data for the node word “China” across Corpus P and Corpus S shows that the two share some basic identity- and relationship-related items, such as “republic,” “between,” and “s.” Their core narrative orientations, however, pull in quite different directions. Corpus P is marked by strong collocations built around “aid,” together with “export” and “construction,” foregrounding China’s unilateral assistance, infrastructure development, and agricultural exports. Corpus S, by contrast, has no core lexical items tied to aid. Instead, it anchors its narrative in “Solomon” and “islands,” framing cooperation with island nations as equitable and mutually beneficial for the people.

Table 4: Collocation data for the word “agriculture” in the P-Database

	Collocate	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Effect
1	forestry	8	1	7	31.754	4.153
2	university	7	1	6	25.927	3.96
3	sector	11	0	11	22.387	2.658
4	boost	5	3	2	18.032	3.89
5	focus	6	4	2	15.843	3.153
6	department	6	6	0	15.843	3.153
7	farming	8	7	1	15.408	2.568

Table 5: Collocation data for the word “agriculture” in the S-Database

	Collocate	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Effect
1	livestock	21	0	21	68.598	3.61
2	ministry	22	19	3	44.028	2.616
3	sector	9	3	6	20.196	2.824
4	and	73	20	53	18.850	0.774
5	annual	6	4	2	18.792	3.519
6	fisheries	5	1	4	15.387	3.479
7	mal	13	0	13	14.922	1.857

Corpus P centers on forestry and university-based scientific research, with its discourse focusing on the development of modern agricultural technologies and the upgrading of the agricultural and forestry sectors; Corpus S focuses on livestock farming and fisheries, aligning with the marine agricultural resources of island nations, and its narrative centers on the development of basic crop cultivation and aquaculture; these two corpora construct distinct agricultural industry profiles based on the local resources of their respective partner entities; China and PNG employ terms such as “department” and “university” to highlight the diverse stakeholders involved in the collaborative relationship between research institutions and industry regulatory authorities; in China, the term “ministry” appears frequently, reflecting a discourse that emphasizes bilateral governmental coordination at the central ministry level; Corpus P includes proactive action verbs such as “boost” and “focus,” underscoring China’s proactive role in facilitating industrial advancement; Corpus S lacks strong development-related action verbs and instead frequently uses the term “annual” to quantify output, emphasizing an objective description of the current state of local agricultural production. Corpus P centers on forestry and university-based scientific research, with its discourse focusing on the development of modern agricultural technologies and the upgrading of the agricultural and forestry sectors; Corpus S focuses on livestock farming and fisheries, aligning with the marine agricultural resources of island nations, and its narrative centers on the development of basic crop cultivation and aquaculture; these two corpora construct distinct agricultural industry profiles based on the local resources of their respective partner entities; China and PNG employ terms such as “department” and “university” to highlight the diverse stakeholders involved in the collaborative relationship between research institutions and industry regulatory authorities; in China, the term “ministry”

appears frequently, reflecting a discourse that emphasizes bilateral governmental coordination at the central ministry level; Corpus P includes proactive action verbs such as “boost” and “focus,” underscoring China’s proactive role in facilitating industrial advancement; Corpus S lacks strong development-related action verbs and instead frequently uses the term “annual” to quantify output, emphasizing an objective description of the current state of local agricultural production.

The term “sector”, used as a general designation for the agricultural industry, represents a set of macro-industrial vocabulary common to both corpora; the function word “and,” which has a probability value <1 in only Corpus S, serves solely as a coordinating conjunction and does not possess any exclusive discursive construction function.

4.2 Quotation Modes, News Source Allocation and Narrative Construction in the news reporting

Discourse practice analysis is mainly a matter of intertextuality. In general, intertextuality refers to the interactive relationship between different texts, often called “textual indeterminacy.” In discourse analysis, it means that a given discourse incorporates utterances from other speakers or excerpts from other texts. It reflects the value system of the speaking subject and is regarded as one of the basic features of discourse. Common intertextual strategies include allusion, presupposition, parody, and quotation, with quotation further divided into direct and indirect quotation. This study examines all texts in Corpus P and Corpus S. Using Antconc3.2.1, it identifies the most frequent transitive verbs (e.g., said, say, says) as well as contextual cues such as “saying.” Manual screening and supplementation then determine the frequency of direct and indirect quotations and the sources of those quotations. The data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency distribution of paraphrase forms and paraphrase sources in the P-Collection and S-Collection

Corpus	Rhetorical form		Cite source
	direct speech	indirect speech	
Corpus P	32	113	Prime Minister (41); Ambassadors (22); Governors (18); Ministers & Officials (24); Experts & Scholars (12); Industry representatives (8); Others (20)
Corpus S	24	87	Public officials (52); Diplomatic representatives (23); Normal people (14); Company spokespersons (7); Others (15)

Table 6 tells an interesting story about quotation practices. In the Papua New Guinea corpus, indirect quotations (113) far outnumber direct ones (32), which suggests the reporting leans on indirect quotation to weave together perspectives from different stakeholders. When it comes to who gets cited, the PNG Prime Minister tops the list, followed by the Chinese Ambassador, provincial governors, and officials from various ministries. Experts, scholars, and industry representatives also show up with some regularity, while ordinary citizens are heard from less often. On the whole, the paraphrased quotations come mostly from high-level official figures on both the Chinese and PNG sides—a pattern that points to a reporting style focused on official positions and policy narratives.

The Solomon Islands corpus shows a similar preference. Indirect quotations (87) are much more common than direct ones (24), again indicating a tendency to integrate diverse voices through paraphrase. Here, Solomon Islands public officials are cited most frequently, followed by diplomatic representatives. Ordinary citizens make up a significant share of the citations, whereas corporate spokespersons appear relatively rarely. Overall, the paraphrased quotations draw mainly on official public officials and diplomatic personnel, but they also bring in some ordinary citizen voices. This reflects a reporting approach that values official policy positions while still making room for a degree of public perspective.

4.3 Social, Historical and Geopolitical Causes of Discursive Differences and Their Ideological Interpretation

The terms “rice” appear with high frequency in both the Corpus-P and Corpus-S corpora; this discourse feature can be traced back to its social-practical roots in the agricultural realities of both countries. According to statistical data, both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands engage in rice cultivation; however, the rice planting and processing stages are relatively labor-intensive, and local practices generally do not include fertilization or pest and disease control measures. As a result, the local rice yield is low, and rice consumption relies heavily on imports (Zou, Peng, and Kang, 2024).

Given these actual constraints in grain supply, rice has become a tangible focus of bilateral agricultural cooperation and thus appears as a high-frequency term in both news texts.

The discourse differences between the two corpora primarily stem from the distinct agricultural development foundations and the varying stages of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The Pacific Island nations generally possess limited agricultural infrastructure and low levels of agricultural investment; the development of agricultural science and technology equipment lags behind, and the degree of agricultural mechanization is relatively low. Agricultural production in these regions largely relies on simple labor and animal-based farming methods; furthermore, underdeveloped public infrastructure—such as transportation networks and scientific research and technical services—hinders the widespread adoption and application of agricultural technologies (Zou, Peng, and Kang, 2024). The shortage of local agricultural technology supply in Papua New Guinea has given rise to a tangible demand for cooperation; consequently, the word frequencies of “technology” and “project” are significantly higher in the Corpus-P, reflecting a narrative focus on the export of agricultural technologies and the implementation of projects. In contrast, although the Solomon Islands also face a weak agricultural technology base, China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation is largely confined to the realm of inclusive basic agricultural assistance and has not yet progressed to the stage of implementing large-scale specialized technology projects; therefore, the corpus does not exhibit high-frequency discourse related to technological projects.

In the Papua New Guinea corpus, high-frequency occurrences of specialized economic crop terms such as “coffee” and “mushrooms” are inextricably linked to the practical imperative of expanding bilateral trade chains. As China’s domestic consumption structure undergoes upgrading, there is growing market demand for diversified, high-quality imported agricultural products; the South Pacific island nations possess favorable natural conditions, making tropical crop cultivation a key area for bilateral

cooperation. These nations encourage enterprises to participate in the development of island plantations and establish supply chains for exporting island-specific products to China (Chen, Lin and Zhuang, 2022). Papua New Guinea's coffee and mushroom crops align well with this trade orientation; consequently, relevant planting and production-marketing cooperation projects have been implemented and are reflected in the news texts. In contrast, no such specialized planting and trade linkage projects have been initiated between China and Papua New Guinea, leaving a lack of practical cooperation platforms, and thus no corresponding keyword exists in the Corpus-S.

The geopolitical environment and diplomatic strategic positioning have further amplified the narrative divergence between the two types of corpora. Influenced by the legacy of colonial history, the South Pacific island nations face a relatively complex landscape of competition among both domestic and external powers, and many of these nations receive official development assistance from multiple sources. Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands are both among the countries within the region that receive substantial aid; however, they face distinct external geopolitical dynamics and varying structures of assistance. Multiple external forces constrain the scope for collaborative implementation, influence the pace and form of agricultural project rollout, and thereby shape their news narrative choices. Meanwhile, Papua New Guinea is the largest land-based economy in the South Pacific, strategically positioned at the regional center, and exerts a radiating and exemplary influence over its surrounding island nations. It serves as a strategic pivot for China's regional cooperation efforts, featuring a higher level of bilateral engagement and a permanent commercial and trade office, which facilitates the implementation of numerous agricultural technology and specialty cash crop industry projects (Chen, Lin and Zhuang, 2022). In contrast, the Solomon Islands do not hold such a strategic pivot role; its bilateral agricultural cooperation primarily focuses on basic livelihood assistance, lacking large-scale specialized industrial projects as narrative material. As a result, the corpora rarely contain expressions related to technology or specialty cash crops.

V. CONCLUSION

5.1 Major Findings

Utilising Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis framework, this study constructed two self-built corpora consisting of 68 news reports collected from mainstream English-language newspapers in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, covering the time span from 2018 to 2026. Supported by the AntConc corpus

analytical tool, the paper carried out a systematic comparative discourse analysis of news narratives regarding China-Papua New Guinea and China-Solomon Islands agricultural cooperation along three interconnected analytical layers: textual description, discursive-practice interpretation and social-practice explanation. By comparing high-frequency vocabulary, collocation patterns, quotation modes, news source allocation and underlying socio-historical driving forces, this research has unpacked the similarities and divergences in how local Melanesian media construct representations of Chinese-led agricultural cooperation, together with the root causes behind such discursive variations. Several core empirical findings have been yielded.

At the textual dimension, news discourses from both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands are anchored in state-centred official narratives. Government-coordinated bilateral cooperation, rice production and food security constitute shared thematic pillars in the two corpora, reflecting the practical reality that food insufficiency has long been a pressing developmental challenge for both South-Pacific island nations. Nevertheless, substantial textual divergences emerge in thematic emphasis, lexical preference, collocation relationships and geographical framing. In the Papua New Guinea corpus, high-frequency lexical items such as *juncao*, *technology*, *project*, *coffee* and *mushroom* dominate the discourse landscape. Collocation analysis demonstrates that "China" is strongly associated with *aid* and *export*, which jointly construct a narrative that stresses China's provision of agricultural technical assistance, the roll-out of large-scale demonstrative industrial projects, as well as reciprocal bilateral agricultural trade that enables PNG local commodities to access Chinese consumer markets. Correspondingly, geographical descriptions in PNG news reports are multi-layered, covering the Highlands, Eastern regions and other spatially-specific zones where cooperative projects are physically implemented. By contrast, news texts from the Solomon Islands revolve around a cluster of livelihood-oriented lexis including *farm*, *farmers*, *rural*, *people* and *Malaita*. Rather than highlighting technological industrial outputs, media narratives prioritise grassroots livelihood improvement and community-level gains. Collocation patterns place heavy emphasis on sovereign state-to-state partnership between the two countries. Geographically, Malaita Province stands out as the overwhelmingly dominant regional reference point, while the rest of the archipelago is only vaguely referenced by the umbrella term "islands". In short, PNG media tends to frame agricultural cooperation as technology-driven industrial development plus bilateral commodity trade, whereas

Solomon Islands media favours a livelihood-centred narrative that highlights equal bilateral partnership and public welfare for ordinary local residents.

From the discursive-practice dimension represented primarily by intertextuality and quotation strategies, indirect quotation is widely adopted as the prevailing reporting technique across both corpora. Journalists in both countries frequently integrate statements from multiple stakeholders through paraphrasing instead of relying heavily on verbatim direct speech. The most salient gap lies in the composition and hierarchical distribution of cited news sources. In Papua New Guinea's news coverage, elite and official voices occupy a dominant position: prime ministers, provincial governors, cabinet ministers, Chinese diplomatic representatives, industry specialists and enterprise representatives are repeatedly quoted. Ordinary local citizens' perspectives are rarely incorporated into news texts, resulting in an official-elite-oriented discursive landscape. For the Solomon Islands, while government officials and diplomatic spokespersons still constitute major citation sources, local ordinary residents' viewpoints gain visible space within news stories. This mixing of official statements and grassroots feedback indicates that Solomon Islands mainstream media attempt to balance state-level diplomatic rhetoric with community-centred public perceptions of agricultural cooperation projects. Such differences in source allocation shape whose experiences and interpretations become publicly visible within national media discourse.

At the social-practice dimension, the observed discursive similarities and discrepancies cannot be reduced to mere media stylistic choices; they are conditioned by a complex assemblage of material agricultural conditions, bilateral cooperative maturity, national strategic positioning and regional geopolitical contexts. The shared focus on rice-related themes in both corpora originates from common domestic developmental predicaments: limited local rice productivity and heavy dependence on imported rice supplies in both island states, which render rice-related agricultural collaboration a pragmatic priority. The divergent narrative orientations, however, stem from uneven cooperative progress. China-Papua New Guinea diplomatic ties date back to 1976, and agricultural cooperation has evolved over a long period from preliminary technical exchanges toward systematic industrial demonstration projects and cross-border agricultural commodity trade linkages. By comparison, China-Solomon Islands diplomatic relations were established in 2019, and agricultural cooperation remains largely confined to basic livelihood-support-oriented interventions without mature large-scale industrialised flagship projects. Beyond bilateral practical conditions,

regional geopolitics and national strategic status also shape how media frame these stories. Papua New Guinea, as the largest economy in Melanesia, sits at a geostrategic pivot in the South Pacific. It attracts development assistance from multiple parties, which in turn makes China-PNG agricultural cooperation more diversified—and gives local journalists plenty to report on. The Solomon Islands, by contrast, has yet to produce comparable large-scale industrial cooperation outcomes, so its local media narratives tend to focus on community-level livelihood results. This empirical evidence backs up the study's core argument: South Pacific Island nations should not be treated as a single, homogeneous group. Local mainstream media generate heterogeneous, context-specific readings of China-related cooperative initiatives rather than falling into one unified discursive stance. On top of that, this study shows the practical value of corpus-assisted Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis for examining development-oriented international cooperation discourse in Global South small-island settings.

5.2 Implications

This study delivers multi-layered theoretical, methodological and practical implications for critical discourse studies, China-South Pacific academic research and international communication practice.

On the theoretical side, this paper pushes at the empirical boundaries of corpus-supported critical discourse analysis. So far, corpus-driven CDA scholarship has clustered heavily around news outputs and think-tank documents from Western and East Asian media institutions, while discourse evidence from small-island developing countries in the Global South remains comparatively thin. By taking mainstream English-language news from Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands as its analytical objects, this study adds non-Western empirical cases to CDA research on international cooperation. It also conceptualises and operationalises agricultural cooperation discourse as a specialised sub-category within international news discourse. Unlike conflict-centred diplomatic or crisis news discourse, agricultural cooperation discourse centres on pragmatic, livelihood-focused bilateral development interactions. This conceptual refinement offers a usable analytical lens for future discourse research on aid-relevant, development-driven bilateral exchanges between China and other Global South partners.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates a feasible and replicable analytical workflow for small-scale self-built thematic corpus research in less-studied regional contexts. The workflow includes corpus construction from

local mainstream newspaper sources, quantitative processing via AntConc for word frequency, collocation and KWIC concordance analysis, manual coding of intertextual quotation patterns and news source typologies, and multi-layered qualitative interpretation anchored in Fairclough's three-dimensional model. This mixed quantitative-qualitative analytical path can be adapted for follow-up research on fishery cooperation, climate governance or infrastructure-related media discourse in Pacific Island countries and other comparable developing regions. It also reinforces the strengths of corpus-assisted CDA: quantitative linguistic statistics help mitigate pure qualitative researchers' subjective bias, while three-dimensional social-practice interpretation prevents corpus-derived numerical findings from being isolated from real-world socio-historical contexts.

In practical terms, the heterogeneous media representations identified in this research carry tangible implications for China's international communication and public diplomacy targeting South Pacific Island nations. First, differentiated, country-tailored communication strategies should be designed according to local media characteristics and the developmental stage of bilateral agricultural cooperation. When engaging with Papua New Guinea's public sphere, communication outputs can appropriately highlight the technological demonstration value of flagship projects such as juncos cultivation, industrial upgrading effects and the mutual benefits of agricultural trade. For the Solomon Islands, external communication ought to place greater weight on authentic grassroots stories, presenting tangible community-level livelihood improvements experienced by local farmers and rural residents, rather than only emphasising technological outputs. Second, external communicators should proactively amplify ordinary local citizens' voices. The empirical findings show that grassroots perspectives already occupy partial discursive space in Solomon Islands' mainstream media but remain marginalised in PNG's newspaper coverage. Incorporating more local farmers' testimonials and community feedback into communication products helps Pacific audiences perceive cooperative achievements from lived-experience standpoints instead of merely receiving elite-dominated official narratives. Third, policy-makers and communication practitioners need to maintain continuous awareness of complicated regional geopolitical dynamics. External geopolitical forces continue to shape local media agendas in Melanesian countries. It is necessary to conduct sustained monitoring of local news framing, foresee potential geopolitically induced public-opinion risks, and maintain constructive dialogue and information sharing with local mainstream newspaper outlets, so as to facilitate

more balanced, context-rooted media reporting of China-supported agricultural-development initiatives.

5.3 Limitations

Despite its empirical discoveries and contributions, this study comes with several noticeable limitations, which open avenues for subsequent scholarly inquiry.

First, the composition and scale of the self-built corpora impose certain constraints. The dataset draws exclusively upon four major printed English-language newspapers: Post Courier, Solomon Star, Solomon Times and The Island Sun. Digital news portals, social-media posts, radio transcripts and media materials published in indigenous local languages are excluded from corpus construction. Accordingly, the discursive patterns summarised in this paper mainly reflect perspectives from English-language elite mainstream print media, and cannot fully represent the broad public opinions held by non-English-speaking grassroots communities across the two island nations. In addition, the overall token volume of both corpora is relatively small. Although the 68 news reports cover multiple cooperative events spanning nearly eight years, limited corpus size may reduce the robustness of some lexical and collocation observations, and findings should not be over-generalised to all media and public discourse within Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Second, this research adopts cross-sectional comparative analysis, lacking fine-grained diachronic tracking. While the corpus collection window extends from 2018 to 2026, the core analytical focus rests on comparing aggregated discursive features between the two national corpora. The study does not systematically trace how lexical choices, collocation tendencies, quotation strategies and thematic framing shift over time alongside the advancement of concrete agricultural projects, important bilateral diplomatic events, or external geopolitical shocks. Therefore, dynamic evolutions of agricultural-cooperation news discourse remain insufficiently captured in the current analysis.

Third, the integration level between corpus-generated quantitative outputs and qualitative textual close-reading can be further enhanced. This study relies on frequency, collocation and concordance results exported from AntConc, complemented by manual annotation for direct-indirect quotation classification and news-source coding. More advanced natural-language-processing techniques such as LDA topic modelling, structural topic modelling or fine-grained sentiment classification are not incorporated to cross-validate interpretative conclusions. Subjective researcher judgement inevitably exists during manual text coding and qualitative interpretation processes.

Fourth, explanations for social-practice-level driving factors are built on secondary academic literature and publicly available background documents, without primary field-work evidence. This paper infers media discourse-shaping mechanisms from discourse texts and existing secondary materials, yet it has not conducted original interviews with local journalists, newspaper editors, agricultural project practitioners or community stakeholders in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. As a result, interpretations of media production logics and local actors' real-world perceptions remain indirect rather than grounded in first-hand field data.

Against such limitations, future research can expand data sources by including digital news platforms, social-media content and indigenous-language materials to construct larger-scale multi-modal corpora. Longitudinal diachronic research designs can be adopted to observe how news discourse evolves alongside project implementation cycles. Moreover, combining corpus computational analysis with qualitative field-work methods including interviews and field observations will help scholars further unpack the institutional, economic and cultural mechanisms that shape local media representations of China-supported development projects across the broader South-Pacific Island region.

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