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**Extending beyond customary boundaries:
Using words to shape China's new image abroad¹
Tanina Zappone**

Abstract

The paper aims at analyzing the role of lexical choices in the formation of China's external representation during official journeys abroad or leaders' attendance of international events. The author proposes the methodology of software-assisted text analysis as a valuable tool for providing an empirical basis for the preliminary assumption of a more mature approach to foreign audiences by Chinese leadership, especially in terms of major focus on the psychology of the recipients of political speeches.

The linguistic data in the paper are partial outcomes of extensive linguistic research on China's political language in international contexts, conducted by the author during a three-year PhD program.

key-words

international communication, political language, corpora linguistics, public diplomacy

1. New communicative frontiers of Chinese political journeys

Travelling means to encounter unexplored spaces /places and to meet new interlocutors; it represents an opportunity to re-think self identity and a possibility to re-define the self differently from usual. Travellers are required to speak foreign languages and to approach different ways of communication. The ability to adapt the content and modes of their messages to *others'* cultural needs and communicative expectations determines their capacity to enjoy the travel experience and its relational implications. While extending self identity beyond customary boundaries, one challenges authenticity and the charm of the external image projected through communication.

Since the early Nineties institutional reforms and ideological innovations have demonstrated the Chinese realization that more effective communication and a more

¹ Some of the linguistic data in this paper are from the corpus Chinese Treebank 7.0, awarded in February 2012 thanks to the LCD (Linguistic Data Consortium) Data Scholarship program.

mature approach to foreign audiences could strengthen China's position in the international system. During the years and through symbolic events, such as the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, China has proved to have acquired a mature command of new and sophisticated tools which have successfully contributed to building a positive international image.² Recent investments on media expansion abroad, the employment of internet resources targeted at foreign audiences,³ the conscious use of foreign investment and development aid – especially in less developed regions⁴ – are just a few examples of the new Chinese strategy aimed at reaching public consensus and regaining a more influential status on the global scene, commensurate with the national economic success.⁵ Changes in Chinese leaders' rhetoric during official visits abroad is an essential factor of this new strategy.

Political communication – both domestically and internationally – has become a strategic priority of the leadership since the Eighties, when China's low influence on the international scene as well as hostility from the outside world – broadly known in China as the “China threat theory” – began to be considered as a direct consequence of the previous governments' little attention on international image.

At that time Chinese politicians renounced old Soviet-style rhetoric and its ideological connotations to gradually adopt a new political language, able to convey the image of a peaceful State as the ideal destination of foreign investments.⁶

The evolution process from old style propaganda to modern public diplomacy, launched so far back, is still ongoing.⁷ It has drawn the attention of a number of foreign

² Chen Haosu 陈昊苏, 2009, Wang Hongying, 2005 .

³ The already strong Chinese media apparatus, including traditional propaganda media such as *China's Daily*, *Radio Beijing*, *Beijing Review* and other publications aimed at foreign readers, has recently been consolidated through the expansion of Central China TV (new channels in Spanish and French will be launched shortly) and the construction of pro-government websites which attract and guide public opinion on given topics. Brady, 2006.

Additionally, the Xinhua Agency is working on transforming itself into a multimedia world news agency. It started to provide multimedia services in English in July 2009. News pieces in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian will also be broadcast in the future in the Asia-Pacific region and some European countries. Tang, 2009.

⁴ Between 2000 and 2007 China donated an estimated \$5.4 billion to Africa and cancelled more than a \$10 billion debt. In 2002, Beijing pledged \$5 million to Afghanistan, and donated \$2.6 million to the victims of the December 2004 tsunami. It also contributed \$2 million in cash as aid and despatched a 44-member team of experts following the earthquake in Java, May 2006. China even pledged \$5 million of aid and over almost \$620,000 in emergency supplies to those parts of the US hit by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

⁵ At the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPC, in late 2012, Hu Jintao said "The overall strength of Chinese culture and its international influence is not commensurate with the international status of China (我国文化整体实力和国际影响力与我国国际地位还不相称 *wo guo wenhua zhengti Shili he guoji yingxiangli yu woguo guoji Diwei you bu xiangcheng*)". Hu Jintao 胡锦涛, 2012.

⁶ Zhang Juyan, 2009.

scholars and analysts who basically acknowledge the success of the new communicative approach.⁸ Nevertheless a different degree of impact has been observed in various geopolitical areas, likely due to the diverse nature of foreign audiences. In particular, the public from modern Western countries seems to be less receptive to China's efforts to refer to itself as a liberal and cooperative international partner.⁹ On the contrary, developing countries increasingly look at China as a reliable partner – if not as a development model¹⁰ – in the fields of both trade and defense, as shown by the growing number of exchanges and new partnerships, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America.¹¹

While recent international events in China and their impact on public opinion have been extensively investigated by the scientific community,¹² the role of verbal communication in the formation of China's new image has been partially neglected, perhaps as a result of the long-lasting idea that language is just “a conduit for the communication of the essence of thought or reality”.¹³

Actually Chinese leaders have always considered language as an essential weapon in the political fight: back in the Sixties Mao Zedong maintained that “One sentence can rejuvenate a nation, one sentence can bring a nation to decline (一言可以兴邦, 一言可以丧邦 *yi yan keyi xing bang, yi yan keyi sang bang*)”.¹⁴

Nowadays Chinese politicians seem to be well-aware of the importance of appropriate communication. A telling example are the prolonged attempts to formalize an efficient, widespread government spokespersons system, able to successfully tackle foreign media.¹⁵ As Li Xiguang – professor at Qinghua University and key figure in

⁷ Zappone, forthcoming.

⁸ See, for instance, Brady, 2008.

⁹ BBC survey, quoted in Nye, 2012.

¹⁰ It refers to recent debates about the so-called “Beijing Consensus” and “China's Model”. See Zhang Jianjing 张剑荆, 2004; Cooper Ramo, 2004; Kennedy, 2010; Yu Keping 俞可平, 2006.

¹¹ Global BAV All Adults: China 1997-2005, quoted in Cooper Ramo, 2007.

¹² See, among many others, Zhang Guizhen 张桂珍, 2010 and Guo Jun 郭俊, 2009.

¹³ Hobart, Mark (1986). *Introduction: Context, Meaning, and Power*. In Hobart, Mark - Taylor, Robert H. (ed.). *Context, Meaning, and Power in Southeast Asia*, Cornell University SEAP, Ithaca, quoted in Schoenhals, 1992: 6

¹⁴ *Mao Zedong Wenji (1961-1968)* 毛泽东文集 (1961-1968), 1993: 55. The slogan comes from a *chengyu*, extracted from the XII book of *Lunyu*, “Zilu”. Shangwu yinshuguan yanjiu zhongxin, 2006: 883- 884

¹⁵ In February 1983 the communication *Guanyu shishi sheli fayanren Zhidu he jiaqiang duiwaiguo Jizhe gongzuo de Tongzhi* 关于 实施 设立 新闻 发言人 制度和 加强 对 外国 记者 工作的 意见 (Communication on the implementation of a spokesperson system and the strengthening of the work of foreign journalists), marks the creation of the system, which will be launched officially in 2003 under Hu

China's government spokesperson training program since 1999 – argues, “When I launched the program I told the Chinese government officials that their job was to handle the international media, not the Chinese media”.¹⁶

Travel abroad and attendance at international events, where cultural and linguistic gaps could affect the outcome of communicative processes, are the main “test benches” to prove this ability.

2. The Chinese political lexicon seen through the lens of corpora linguistics: sources and recipients

The following sections propose a computer-assisted text analysis methodology as a valuable tool to observe the main lexical characteristics of the Chinese leadership approach to foreign audiences.¹⁷

Data have been collected through a survey conducted on a corpus of 162,071 words (*token*), composed of 123 speeches, held between 2003 and 2010 by Chinese leaders attending big international events abroad. The primary sources are the texts of the speeches published in the section entitled “Important documents of Chinese diplomacy” (中国外交重要文献 *Zhongguo waijiao zhongyao wenxian*) of the white books on Chinese Foreign Affairs, edited annually by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC),¹⁸ as well as the page “Important speeches” (重要讲话 *zhongyao jianghua*) of the official website of the same Ministry.¹⁹ The employment of these written sources has been combined with the collection of related audio-visual materials available on Chinese news media. Multimedia sources have confirmed that all speeches were held in Chinese, with simultaneous interpretation. The choice to consider the time range from 2003 (the inaugural year of the theory of China's

Jintao. The document, approved by the Secretary of the Central Committee, requires that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other central departments with frequent contacts with foreigners create an internal mechanism of news broadcast. Xie Keling 谢柯凌, 2009.

¹⁶ Quoted from an interview made by the author in Chongqing (2011), during a six-month period of research funded by LISUM (Linking Sino-European Universities through Mobility) scholarship Program.

¹⁷ The software used in the survey are Wordsmith Tools version 5.0 and ICTclas (Institute of Computing Technology, Chinese Lexical Analysis System) version 1.0, developed by the Institute of Computing Technology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. For more details refer to <http://lexically.net/wordsmith/index.html> and <http://www.ictclas.org/>. Last accessed June 2013.

¹⁸ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu zhengce yanjiusi 中华人民共和国外交部政策研究司, 1998-2011.

¹⁹ http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/ziliao_611306/zyjh_611308/ 首页 *shouye* (homepage) > 资料 *ziliao* (materials) > 重要讲话 *zhongyao jianghua* (important speeches). Last accessed January 2013

“peaceful rise”, 和平崛起 *heping jueqi*)²⁰ to 2010 is justified by the aim of diachronically analyzing the evolution of political language as the central factor of an innovative approach to foreign affairs.

The speeches have been selected from a database of more than 800 texts, collected and catalogued during a one-year period of source-monitoring between 2010-2011. The choice of 123 specific pieces – made necessary by the tricky work of segmentation, tokenization and markup of the original plain texts²¹ – is essentially based on criteria of “iteration” and prominence. All speeches have been brought to attention by the Ministry as “important” and are thus regularly and promptly reported in official publications. Table 1 illustrates international conferences and forums whose speeches are almost annually reported in ministerial indices. Their different nature has led to the identification of the main interlocutors in China’s international dialogue: Africa, Latin America, Asia (Pacific, Central and South-east Asia), Europe, Middle Eastern countries, as well as main global meetings such as the UN Assembly. Refer to table 1 for more details.

As to authoriality, the speaker in 24% of the cases is China’s former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao; 26% Former President Hu Jintao; and the remaining 51% lower level government representatives. The average length of the speeches is approximately 1,000 words.

Table 1 : Main recipients of China political discourse abroad

China- Africa
FOCAC - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 中非合作论坛 <i>Zhong-Fei hehuo luntan</i>
China –Latin America
FEALAC - Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation 东亚—拉美合作论坛 <i>Dongya-La-Mei hezuo luntan</i>

²⁰ The concept, which has its intellectual origins in the foreign policy of openness launched at the end of the Seventies, was formally conceived by Zheng Bijia - a close advisor to Hu Jintao - as emblem of the new way of communication and officially inaugurated at the Bo’ao Forum in November 2003. Glaser, 2007.

²¹ Once sources had been selected and the comparability of the texts of the corpus verified in terms of structure and size, the texts were prepared to allow correct scanning operations. Preparation consisted of the definition of the character set (UCS-2 Little Endian) and the dispossession of managing text formats (TXT), then in the 'normalization', namely the a priori elimination of particular elements (dates, titles, presentations of the speech), given in the text, but unconnected with the act of speech. The texts were segmented using the software ICTclas. The software is also able to apply a specific tagset, consisting of 50 parts of speech, to categorize morphologically and syntactically each minimum unit of analysis in the corpus.

China – Asia
CICA - The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia 亚信论坛 <i>Ya xin luntan</i>
Bo'ao Forum for Asia 博鳌亚洲论坛 <i>Bo ' ao Yazhou luntan</i>
China- Southeast Asia
ARF - Regional ASEAN Forum 东盟地区论坛 <i>Dongmeng diqu luntan</i>
ASEAN+1 (China) 中国-东盟 <i>Zhongguo-Dongmeng</i>
ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, South Korea) 东盟与中日韩 <i>Dongmeng yu Zhong-Ri-Han</i>
ASEAN 东盟地区论坛 <i>Dongmeng diqu luntan</i>
China- Central Asia
Cooperation Shanghai Organisation 上海合作组织 <i>Shanghai hezuo zuzhi</i>
China- Pacific Asia
APEC- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 亚太经合组织 <i>Ya-Tai jinghe zuzhe</i>
China- Arab countries
Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum 中阿合作论坛 <i>Zhong-A hezuo luntan</i>
China – Europe
ASEM - Asia-Europe Meeting 亚欧会议 <i>Yazhou huiyi</i>
China – World
World Economic Forum 世界经济论坛 <i>shijie jingji luntan</i>
G5
G20+5
G8+5
UN General Assembly 联合国大会 <i>lianheguo dahui</i>

3. Inside the language: lexical characteristics of the corpus

First, let's observe the lexical characteristics of the corpus as a whole. Table 2 shows high frequency words, excluding “empty” grammatical words (so-called “stop words”).²²

Table 2 – high frequency words in the corpus

Word	Freq.	%	Texts	%
发展 <i>fazhan</i> to develop/development	2,909	1.88	111	90.24
合作 <i>hezuo</i> to cooperate/cooperation	2,459	1.59	111	90.24
中国 <i>Zhongguo</i> China	2,012	1.30	109	88.62
经济 <i>jingji</i> economy	1,729	1.12	103	83.74
国际 <i>guoji</i> international	1,278	0.83	104	84.55
我们 <i>women</i> we/us	1,138	0.74	109	88.62
世界 <i>shijie</i> world	1,033	0.67	104	84.55
共同 <i>gongtong</i> common	846	0.55	110	89.43
国家 <i>guojia</i> State/country	806	0.52	108	87.80

²² Grammatical words were not included in the statistical results below.

发展 *Fazhan* – which occurs 2, 909 times, equivalent to 1,88% – is the word that recurs most frequently. It appears in 90.24% of the texts (111 out of 123). The topic of development, in all its possible combinations (social, economic, pacific, common development), is definitely at the core of Chinese political discourse abroad.

To some extent, this data could be read as a sign of continuity with the principles of Chinese foreign policy in the last thirty years. Since the launch of the policy of reform and opening up in the late Seventies, domestic and international affairs have always been deeply linked and interdependent: to create an international environment conducive to national development has always been an explicit task of foreign policy officials.

The high frequency of the term 经济 *jingji* suggests the centrality of economic issues in the Chinese discourse. This datum also seems to confirm the impression that China, now as thirty years ago, is receptive to globalization processes just as a means to achieve internal goals of growth and modernization. However, from another perspective, as Anne-Marie Brady argues,²³ the use of rhetoric in promoting the image of a socially and politically stable country, steadily devoted to carrying out the policy of reform and opening up towards relentless economic growth, constitutes a response to the widespread concerns among the international community about China's “*charm offensive*” and the future impact of its rise on global equilibrium.²⁴

The token 中国 *Zhongguo* appears in the top 20 most frequent words with more than 6,000 occurrences. The recurrence of this lexical form could be interpreted as an indication of a particular assertiveness of political discourse abroad. The tendency towards a self-confident attitude, as well as the firm way in which the leadership recently seem to have been promoting China's model abroad, hasn't gone unnoticed by scholars and analysts, who have pointed it out as one of the most characteristic elements of China's recent international political communication.²⁵ It is consistent with the impression, also derived from the analysis of Chinese intellectual debate,²⁶ that the country would now stand and act as a protagonist of successful policies and as a potential guide for a renewal of the international order. The distance of this “new

²³ Brady, 2008.

²⁴ Kurlantzick points out in particular the damage to U.S. initiatives towards democratization, environmental protection and good governance, potentially deriving from a major political influence of China on the international stage . Kurlantzick, 2007.

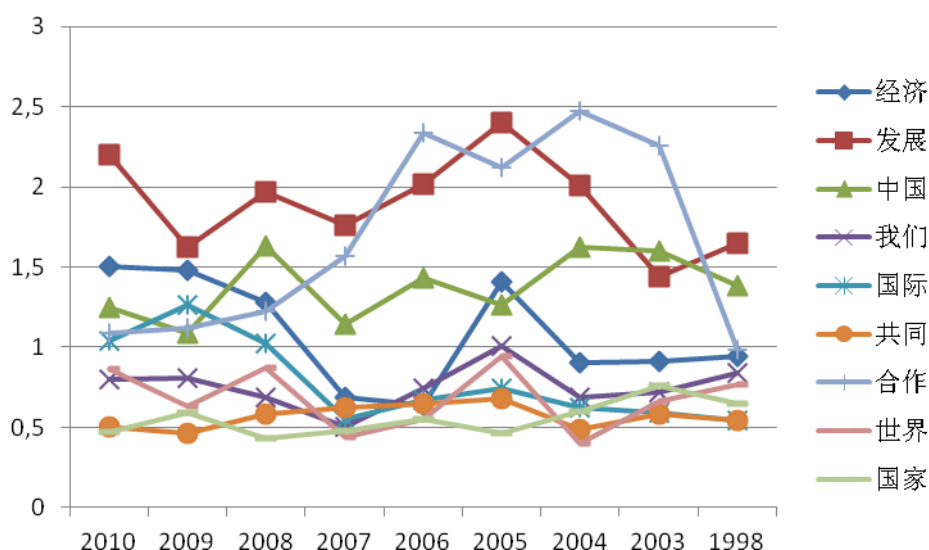
²⁵ Pascucci, 2011.

²⁶ Refer to Li Mingjiang, 2008 and 2008a; Glaser, 2009; Zappone, 2012.

assertiveness” from the defensive, reactive attitude typical of the Eighties and the Nineties – aimed solely at preserving the political *status quo* –, is well-evident.

Figure 1 below illustrates how the frequency of the words changes through the time range considered by the survey.²⁷

Figure 1 – High frequency words per year



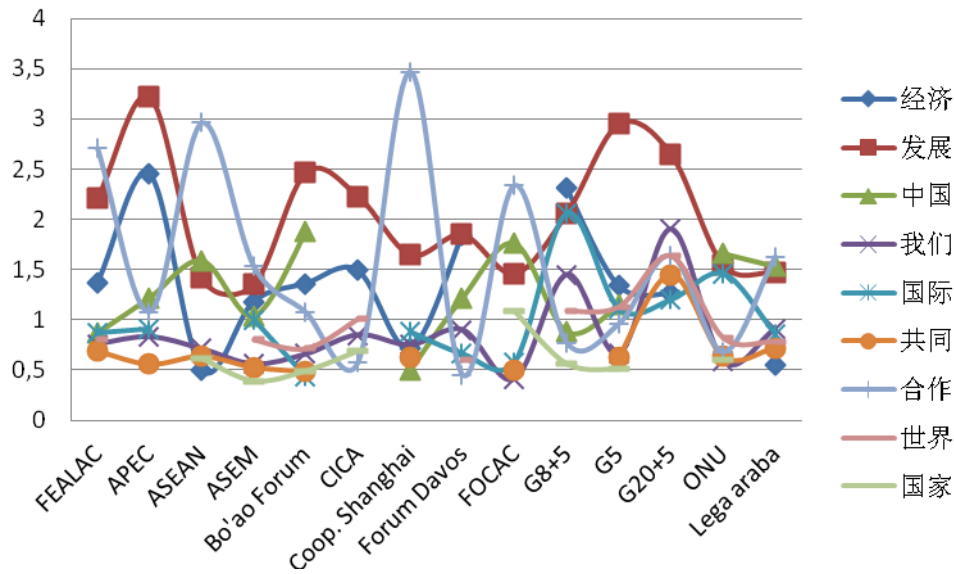
Diachronic analysis basically confirms the prominence of the above mentioned lexical units. Nevertheless it is interesting to notice that, at specific times, one can find terms which are totally absent elsewhere.

The current international financial crisis, triggered in 2008 by the U.S. subprime mortgage case, certainly explains the sudden appearance in the wordlists of the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 of the word 金融 *jinrong* “finance” among the top twenty occurrences.

Less obvious – but perhaps more significant – is the reason why the lemma 社会 *shehui* “society” appears in the lists for the same period. This novelty, on the one hand, can be due to the new phase of special attention, by the Chinese leadership, to themes of social injustice in the country; on the other hand, it could denote the adoption of a less “bureaucratic” language, which looks more constructive and reassuring, as well as more aware of the media dimension of the political discourse.

²⁷ In the figure statistical results regarding the speeches of Jiang Zemin published in the *White Paper* of 1998 are also considered, as comparative references to the years prior to the change of leadership in 2002. The *White Papers* published in 1999-2002 reported no “important speech”.

Figure 2 – High frequency words per venue



The synchronic analysis reveals the precise interaction of the “theme words” with the various international venues. For instance, figure 2 immediately shows that the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are the locations where China deals most frequently with the subject of cooperation (合作 *hezuo*).²⁸

In addition to drawing a more exact map of the high frequency words, the analysis per venue reveals the dynamics through which the content of Chinese discourse is adjusted to meet the expectations and interests of different audiences.

The terms 金融 *jinrong* “finance” (0.61%), 危机 *weiji* “crisis” (0.43%), 政策 *zhengce* “politics/political measure” (0.37%) and 投资 *touzi* “investment” (0.33%) reveal the obvious economic nature of the speeches at the Forum in Davos, while the items 地区 *diqu* “region/area” (1.04%), 和平 *heping* “peace” (0.68%), 安全 *anquan* “security” (0.59%) and 稳定 *wending* “stability” (0.50%) outline the peculiar dimension and the central targets of Chinese policy in the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In the frequency list regarding speeches held at G5, the lexemes 能源 *nengyuan* “energy resources” (1.08%), 发展中国家 *fazhan zhong guojia* “developing country” (0.77%), 变化 *bianhua* “change/to change” (0.73%), 气候 *qihou* “climate” (0.72%), 技

²⁸ The high occurrence of the term 合作 *Hezuo* “cooperation”, evident in the figure for the Association for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, is actually biased by the presence of the lemma in the name of the organization.

术 *jishu* “technique/technology” (0.56%) – which are almost absent elsewhere – indicates the ability of the Chinese politicians to take on the role of regional leaders and wear the uniform of representatives of an emerging country addressing the concerns and challenges peculiar to an economy yet to be defined.

With equal dexterity, in the presence of the twenty largest global economies (G20+5), PRC diverts attention from issues such as global finance and technological advancement to act as a developing country (the item “发展中国家 *fazhan zhong guojia*” shot to 2.40%), focused on “safeguarding” (维护 *weihu*, 0.63%) “interests” (利益 *liyi*, 0.57%), “peoples” (人民 *renmin*, 0.70%), and attentive to global-shared issues, such as world hunger (粮食 *liangshi* “cereals/ food”, 0.57%).

The UN General Assembly is the frame where the discourse of the PRC addresses key international “questions” (问题 *wenti*, 0.75%): 安全 *anquan* “security” (0.68%), 和平 *heping* “peace” (1.12%), 非扩散 *feikuosan* “non-proliferation” (0.74%), 社会 *shehui* “society” (0.47%), 维护 *weihu* “safeguard/assert (rights)” (0.46%). The term 权利 *quanli* “right” does not appear among the top twenty occurrences, a sign that the rights issue is not among the priorities of Chinese politics; nonetheless, in the frequency list of the UN it is at 0.11%, much higher than the 0.03% calculated for the same lemma in the whole corpus.

In approaching the distant and complex cultural dimensions, such as the Arab world, China does not hesitate to put the topic of dialogue among civilizations at the heart of the discourse: the lexeme 文明 *wenming* “civilization” (0.62%) appears among the high frequency words in the Chinese speeches addressed to the Arab League. The same lemma even turns up at 0.48% in speeches at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), an intergovernmental forum founded on the model of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), where the goal of building a dialogue of peace and stability is pursued by promoting cultural wealth and variety and proposing more lively cultural exchanges.

5. Key words and correspondence analysis: the semantic dimension

So far the statistical analysis has shown how high frequency words may provide insight into discursive strategies in terms of choice of words. However, the analysis of frequency lists is not sufficient to explain the content of the speeches. More useful in

this regard is the identification of key words, i.e. the items that, regardless of frequency, are over-represented in the corpus, compared to their frequency in a linguistic pattern, used as a reference standard of a given language community. It is therefore necessary to build lists of key words to have a specific lexicon of reference, generally much larger (in our case, The Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese – LCMC),²⁹ and to compare the two to obtain a measure of specificity: the greater the difference, the more a lemma can be considered as characterizing the speech.³⁰ Keywords provide a synthetic representation of semantic references in the corpus.

Table 3 shows the top twenty keywords in the corpus. Next to each item, the software reports the frequency of each word in speeches where it is a keyword, the relevant percentage, the frequency of the word in the reference corpus (RC, reference corpus) and the “keyness” rate.³¹

Table 3 – Keywords in the corpus

Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness
合作 <i>hezuo</i> cooperation/to cooperate	2,459	1.59	148	0.02	8,114.79
发展 <i>fazhan</i> development/ to develop	2,909	1.88	1,434	0.17	5,858.90
中国 <i>Zhongguo</i> China	2,012	1.30	1,118	0.13	3,816.59
国际 <i>guoji</i> international	1,278	0.83	308	0.04	3,315.82
经济 <i>jingji</i> economy	1,729	1.12	1,126	0.13	3,009.44
共同 <i>gongtong</i> common	846	0.55	170	0.02	2,297.72
世界 <i>shijie</i> world	1,033	0.67	530	0.06	2,033.11
和平 <i>heping</i> peace	666	0.43	118	0.01	1,861.16

The results essentially confirm the centrality of the words examined above. Only two lemmas (我们 *women* “us” and 国家 *guojia* “State/Country”) disappear from the top positions; however, the software detects their tendency towards overexposure in the corpus (respectively 0.74% and 0.52%), compared to the standard language (0.23%, 0.10%).

A further valuable contribution to the description of the contents of Chinese political discourse abroad may come from the analysis of correspondence and repeated

²⁹ The LCMC Corpus is a publicly available balanced corpus of Mandarin Chinese, constructed as part of a research project undertaken by the Linguistics Department, Lancaster University. For more information: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/corpus/LCMC/>.

³⁰ Wordsmith tools calculates the keywords of a text, applying the chi-square test of significance. For more information see the website of the University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language (UCREL) of Lancaster University at: <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>. Last accessed march 2013.

³¹ Chi-square or log likelihood statistic. See note 30.

segments.³² Correspondence analysis is a technique of statistical analysis, developed by the French school (*l'analyse des données*).³³ It permits the identification of the semantic dimensions along which a discourse is structured. In particular, the selection of the most significantly repeated segments is able to show the use of a lemma in context and helps to analytically identify topics and themes associated with it in the corpus.

The clusters – namely two or more words found repeatedly in combination with the term – detected in the corpus for 经济发展 *jingji fazhan* “economic development”³⁴ highlight that the issue of economic development is mostly focused on the need to “transform the ways of economic development” (转变经济发展方式 *zhuanbian jingji fazhan fangshi*) and correct an unbalanced economic development (经济发展不平衡 *jingji fazhan bu pingheng*) (Table 4).

Table 4 – Clusters for 经济发展 *jingji fazhan*

Cluster	Freq.
转变 经济 <VN>发展 方式 <i>Zhuanbian jingji <VN>fazhan fangshi</i> Transformate economic development ways	21
中国 经济 <VN>发展 <i>Zhongguo jingji<VN>fazhan</i> China's economic development	14
世界 经济 <VN>发展 <i>Shijie jingji <VN>fazhan</i> World economic development	10
加快 转变 经济 <VN>发展 <i>Jiakuai zhuanbian jingji <VN>fazhan</i> Speed up the transformation of economic development	8
经济 <VN>发展 方式 转变 <i>Jingji <VN>fazhan fangshi zhuanbian</i> Transformation of economic development ways	8
经济 <VN>发展 不 平衡	6

³² Concordance analysis has been conducted exploiting the function *Concord* of the software WordSmith Tools. The function allows observation of the way in which the graphic forms are associated with each other and identification not only of the most frequent combinations, but also the most relevant ones. The software is able to calculate the Mutual Information (MI). It does not simply take into account the words most frequently associated with the lemma, but also considers the degree of autonomy in that word by itself. If this proves to be high (i.e., if the word appears alone and disconnected from the lemma), the MI will be low, and vice versa. To calculate the MI, WordSmith uses a formula derived from Gaussier, Lange and Meunier. The formula is described in Oakes, 1998: 174. Moreover, the function “Relationship”, assuming a reference corpus as representative of standard language, operates a comparison between the results of two corpora, further refining the accuracy of the final data.

³³ Amatur, 1989.

³⁴ Software-assisted analysis has shown that *jingji* is the word that appears most frequently associated with *fazhan* in the corpus.

<i>Jingji <VN>fazhan bu pingheng</i> Economic development is not balanced	
为 世界 经济 <V>发展 <i>Wei shijie jingji <VN>fazhan</i> For world economic development	6

In table 5 the results within the *corpus* are compared with those for LCMC Corpus (representative of standard mandarin) and Chinese Treebank 7.0 (representative of media language).³⁵

Table 5 - Comparison among clusters of 发展 *fazhan* in the corpora

Corpus		LCMC		Chinese Treebank 7.0	
Cluster	Freq	Cluster	Freq	Cluster	Freq
可 持续 发展 <i>Ke chixu fazhan</i> Sustainable development	121	社会 发展 <i>Shehui fazhan</i> Social development	32	经济 发展 <i>Jingji fazhan</i> Economic development	51
经济 社会 发展 <i>Jingji shehui fazhan</i> Socio-economic development	77	经济 发展 <i>Jingji fazhan</i> Economic development	23	关系 的 发展 <i>Guanxi de fazhan</i> Development of relations	23
和平 与 发展 <i>Heping yu fazhan</i> Peace and development	71	国民经济 和 社会 发展 <i>Guomin jingji he shehui fazhan</i> Development of national economy and society	23	健康 发展 <i>Jiankang fazhan</i> Healthy development	16
中国 的 发展 <i>Zhongguo de fazhan</i> China's development	68	中国 青少年 发展 基金 会 <i>Zhongguo qingsjaonian fazhan jijinhui</i> China Youth Development Foundation	18	新 的 发展 <i>Xin de fazhan</i> New development	11
千年 发展 目标 <i>Qian nian fazhan mubiao</i> Millennium development goals	52	技术 的 发展 <i>Jishu de fazhan</i> Tecnological development	15	社会 发展 <i>Shehui fazhan</i> Social development	11

³⁵ Chinese Treebank 7.0, Linguistic Data Consortium (LDC) catalog number LDC2010T07 and isbn 1-58563-542-1, consists of over one million words of annotated and parsed text from Chinese newswire, magazines, various news broadcasts and broadcast debate programs, web newsgroups and weblogs. For more information: <http://www ldc upenn edu/Catalog/catalogEntry.jsp?catalogId=LDC2010T07>. Last accessed June 2013

世界 经济 发展 <i>Shijie jingji fazhan</i> World economic development	51	十 年 规 划 <i>Shi nian guihua</i> Ten-year plan	14	中 国 经 济 发 展 <i>Zhongguo jingji fazhan</i> China's economic development	11
经济 发展 <i>Jingji fazhan</i> Economic development	48	发 展 的 需 要 <i>Fazhan de xuyao</i> Need of development	13	快 速 发 展 <i>Kuaisu fazhan</i> High speed development	9
较 快 发 展 <i>Jiaokuai fazhan</i> Rapid development	45	事 业 的 发 展 <i>Shiye de fazhan</i> sector development	11	发 展 中 国 家 <i>Fazhang zhong guojia</i> Developing country	9
促 进 共 同 发 展 <i>Cujin gontong fazhan</i> Promote common development	44	科 学 技 术 的 发 展 <i>Kexue jishu de fazhan</i> Scientific and technological development	10	稳 定 发 展 <i>Wending fazhan</i> Steady development	9

From the comparison one can infer that the words associations most characteristic of political discourse are the expressions 可持续发展 *ke chixu fazhan* “sustainable development”; 和平与发展 *heping yu fazhan* “peace and development”, two concepts deeply interrelated in Chinese political discourse in recent years; 千年发展目标 *qian nian fazhan mubiao* “millennium development goals”, a specific terminology of the United Nations;³⁶ 促进共同发展 *cujin gongtong fazhan* “to promote common development”.

The locution “sustainable development” is by far the most frequently repeated segment, with an occurrence rate equal to 121. It appears in 110 lines of the corpus. Looking at the location of the expression within different speeches, it can be seen that, although there is generally a fair distribution of the expression in all the international contexts taken into account by the corpus, it seems to be reiterated with greater effectiveness in venues where the other party is a group of developing countries (FOCAC or FEALAC), or international organizations which deal mainly with economic issues (World Economic Forum, APEC or G20).

In the first case, Africa and Latin America are privileged recipients as main inheritors of the discourse of sustainable development for the future of the globe; in the latter case, China presents itself as a responsible country, caring about the sustainability of its

³⁶ “The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions.”. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>. Last accessed May 2013

development plans, but also keen to share with other states the objective to “achieve harmony in the world and the sustainable development” (实现世界的和谐与可持续发展 *shixian shijie de hexie yu ke chixu fazhan*).³⁷

Moreover, it is interesting to note how the word *Zhongguo* combines with other lexical forms in the corpus. As shown in table 6, the word with the highest relation with “China” is 东盟 *Dongmeng* (literally “eastern league”) namely the Association of South-East Asian Nations (东南亚国家联盟 *dongnanya guojia lianmeng*). This data suggests the priority given by China's policy to the regional dimension of international relations. This assumption is confirmed by the presence at point 6 of the table of the word 亚洲 *Yazhou* “Asia”.

Similarly, at point 3 the lemma 非洲 *Feizhou* “Africa” turns up; Africa is another strategic partner in China’s international strategy. Eventually the presence of the words 合作 *hezuo* “cooperation”, 贸易区 *maoyiqu* “trade area” and 发展 *fazhan* “development” seem to suggest that Chinese diplomacy has not renewed its agenda, since, now as in the past, it is shown to be primarily interested in cooperation as a tool to achieve national interests, first and foremost in terms of economic development.

Table 61 – Co-occurrences of 中国 *Zhongguo*

Word	With	Relation	Texts	Total
东盟 <i>dongmeng</i> ASEAN	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	1,526.297	20	249
非洲 <i>Feizhou</i> Africa	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	292.938	13	122
论坛 <i>luntan</i> forum	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	181.947	14	21
合作 <i>hezuo</i> cooperation	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	170.358	74	241
亚洲 <i>Yazhou</i> Asia	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	124.416	19	79
贸易区 <i>maoyiqu</i> trade scambio	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	121.260	8	14
发展 <i>fazhan</i> development	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	120.279	96	544
各位 <i>gewei</i> everybody, each one	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	116.847	41	59
和平 <i>heping</i> peace	中国 <i>Zhongguo</i>	103.306	58	131

7. Conclusions

In the previous sections we have attempted to outline an analytical framework, based mainly on the use of statistical methods, to detect keywords and critical features of the lexicon of the Chinese government’s representatives in international contexts.

The preliminary outcomes of the present analysis, although limited, have provided a useful empirical basis to the assumption that the recent acquisition of

³⁷ Quoted from Wen Jiabao's speech at the General Debate of the LXIII Session of the United Nations, New York (USA), 24 September 2008.

modern techniques and theories of communication by Chinese leadership has led to a particular focus on the psychology of the recipients of political speech, and, as a consequence, to the adoption of different lexical registers in diverse contexts, in order to project a variety of images of the country.

In any case, the data are not sufficient to support the hypothesis of a full renewal of Chinese political language abroad. Actually, a careful reading of the texts constituting the corpus “tells a story” about China which is still cumbersome and not really attractive. The formality of the language, the tendency to adopt an impersonal approach, the redundancy of the style, the ambiguity of the content, unsupported by objective information, and the apparent priority given to issues of national interest (economics and development) compared to subjects of common interest (international security), are all factors in continuity with the language of Chinese politics of the past, marking the boundaries of the communicative capacity of the current leadership.³⁸

Anthropological studies on traditional societies which use a formalized rhetoric in order to maintain unity and social cohesion, have shown that the confrontation with modernity often puts a strain on old systems. The new generations consider the ambiguous codes of the past anachronistic and attack the system. China's politics have created a variant of this dynamic: the new leadership challenges the formulations that it has inherited, without questioning the system. Chinese politicians identify with the existing power structure and its representation in political language and, therefore, are reluctant to radically change the rhetoric of the past.³⁹ However the problems connected to the aims of modernization, in a globalized and interdependent world, are now well-known by the Chinese *intelligentsia*, who consider them the most important challenges that the country will have to face in the near future. To achieve this goal, in the next few years China will have to acquire more and more modern and effective tools, especially in communicative terms.

³⁸ These characteristics of China's political discourse emerge from a series of analysis conducted through the years by Chinese and foreign scholars. See, among others, Schoenhals, 1992, Pye 1994, Li Qin李琴, 2006, Renwick, 1999, Bhatia, 2006, Jiang Xiangying, 2009, Yuan Chunming 苑春鸣 and Tian Hailong 田海龙 2001, Sun Jisheng 孙吉胜, 2007, You Zeshun 尤泽顺 2010. For studies focused on Chinese rhetoric refer to Heisey, 2000, Kirkpatrick, 1995, Xing Lu and Simons, 1998, Garrett 1991, Xiao Xiaosui 1995 and 1996, Kluver 1996.

³⁹ Schoenhals, 1992.

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