

Discursive Strategies Uncovered: Understanding Chinese New Year Speeches

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Abstract—This study examines the discursive strategies employed in Chinese New Year speeches delivered by the Chinese President from 2014 to 2024, investigating how these annual addresses function as significant platforms for national communication and revealing underlying power relations and ideological constructions. The research analyzes how nomination and predication strategies are deployed to construct and convey national messages within culturally significant contexts, while simultaneously exploring how these linguistic choices serve to legitimize and naturalize specific power structures and ideological positions. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and employing Wodak's Discourse-Historical approach, the analysis specifically examines two major discursive strategies: nomination strategies (encompassing personal reference, spatial reference, and metaphors) and predication strategies (focusing on explicit predicates and comparisons). This methodological framework enables a detailed investigation into how linguistic devices are strategically employed to construct national narratives and reproduce power relations through seemingly neutral cultural discourse. The findings reveal sophisticated patterns in discursive strategies: nomination strategies frequently employ spatial references to reinforce power hierarchies and metaphors that naturalize specific ideological positions, while personal references strategically shift between individual and collective voices to establish authority. The predication strategies demonstrate the systematic use of explicit predicates to legitimize national decisions and strategic comparisons that frame current developments within carefully constructed historical narratives. These results illuminate how Chinese New Year speeches effectively combine traditional cultural elements with contemporary national objectives, revealing the subtle ways in which power and ideology are embedded within ceremonial communication.

Index Terms—discursive strategies, New Year speeches, Discourse-Historical Approach, Critical Discourse Analysis, China

I. INTRODUCTION

National leaders have occupied a unique position in society throughout history. Notably, the speeches delivered by these leaders serve a crucial function. Through their words, direct communication with the public occurs, programs are presented, temporary solutions to specific issues are proposed, and support from the people is fostered (Nawaz et al., 2024). In a nation, national speeches have addressed a wide range of subjects, including the national economy, social policy, employment, youth development, education, national security, and health (Charteris-Black, 2018). In China, the New Year speeches delivered by the President have garnered significant attention from the public, the media, and researchers alike.

New Year speeches are delivered by national leaders on New Year's Eve to communicate with their constituents for a variety of purposes. New Year speeches show the social background, cultural ideas, ways of thinking, and behaviors of each represented community. In China, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers many speeches each year on different occasions, but his New Year speech is one of the most attractive speeches anticipated by all citizens and the media (Wu et al., 2021). During these New Year speeches, President Xi seizes the opportunity to highlight the achievements of the past year, outline the vision for the upcoming year, and simultaneously shape China's image as a friendly nation on the global stage (Sanakoyeva & Zakarliuka, 2020).

The Chinese New Year speech was first delivered in 1990 by former President Yang Shangkun, who formally addressed the nation through China Radio International. Since then, it has become a tradition for national leaders to deliver a New Year speech each year (Wu et al., 2021). Typically conveyed through media channels, these speeches serve to extend holiday blessings to the entire nation on the eve of New Year's Day. Simultaneously, they offer an opportunity for leaders to elucidate the present national situation and express the government's position and stance (Jia, 2023). Focusing on the

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New Year speech is a way to analyze how national leaders communicate the strategies, policies, and responses to contemporary issues, and thus to understand the broader social and cultural landscape of China.

President Xi Jinping first gave his New Year speech at the end of 2013 (the year of his inauguration). Presenting addresses on New Year's Eve via television and streaming, he made history as the first national leader of China, from his Zhongnanhai office, which houses the State Council of China and the Communist Party of China (CPC) (Cao & Gao, 2020). These speeches were delivered in Chinese and accompanied by English subtitles, broadcast across diverse media platforms, to reach audiences both within and beyond China.

The New Year speeches of the Chinese President hold immense significance for both the nation as a whole and the citizens of China. These speeches serve as a vital tool for conveying the President's national vision and priorities to the Chinese people and the global community (Bao & Cheng, 2018). Through careful analysis of these speeches, a deeper comprehension of the ideological positions of the Chinese government and its leader can be attained.

This study aims to examine the discursive strategies employed in President Xi Jinping's Chinese New Year speeches from 2014 to 2024, with a particular focus on nomination and prediction strategies. Through the application of Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, the research seeks to analyze how personal references, spatial references, and metaphors are utilized as nomination strategies while investigating the use of explicit predicates and comparisons as predication strategies in reinforcing power relations. Additionally, the study intends to explore how these linguistic choices interact with historical and sociopolitical contexts to reveal underlying ideological positions within ceremonial communication, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese national discourse.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) represents an analytical framework embraced by a cohort of researchers who adhere to shared methodological principles and are dedicated to exploring related sociolinguistic phenomena. CDA does not constitute a uniform model, school, or paradigm, but rather encompasses a collective approach to conducting linguistic, semiotic, and discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2003).

CDA aims to interpret language use as a social phenomenon. Language users operate within complex cultural, social, and psychological contexts, rather than in isolation (Fairclough, 1995). CDA acknowledges the social context and examines the relationships between textual structures and their functional roles in societal interactions.

CDA stands out from other forms of discourse analysis due to its critical nature. Its prominence stems from its interdisciplinary methodology, integrating diverse theoretical and methodological frameworks from the humanities and social sciences, rather than adhering to a singular approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA examines how power relations and ideologies operate by revealing their connections to current social structures. It involves distancing oneself from the data, contextualizing it socially, clarifying one's political stance, and emphasizing self-reflection among researchers. Ultimately, CDA aims to bridge linguistic analysis with social analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000). CDA strives to elucidate and expose power mechanisms, a task of growing significance in today's world. It critically examines the interplay between language, discourse, speech, and social structures.

Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is the main methodological framework in the field of discourse analysis. Developed by Ruth Wodak, an Austrian linguist and leading figure in CDA, the DHA offers a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to analyzing historical and contemporary discourses in their socio-political contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Following Fairclough's critical framework, the discourse-historical approach views discourse as a manifestation of social practice. This perspective emphasizes the interplay between language, power, and societal structures, allowing for a deeper understanding of how discourse shapes and reflects broader social dynamics (Jessop et al., 2008). Wodak (2001) suggests a critical dialectical link between the practices of discourse and their contextual domains, which encompass various elements such as specific situations, institutional frameworks, and broader social structures.

Till now, a great number of scholars at home and abroad (Ciumacenco, 2018; Lin, 2023; Meng, 2021) have explored President Xi's New Year speeches. Some researchers focused on translation theories (Li, 2017; Lams, 2018) and some were from the perspective of a transitivity system (Yicheng & Wencheng, 2020); while others were interested in rhetoric analysis (Cao & Gao, 2020; Li & Wu, 2018). However, only a limited number of studies have explored the discursive strategies in President Xi's New Year speeches from the perspective of DHA. Researchers employing the DHA typically engage in in-depth textual analysis of various forms of discourse, such as national speeches, media texts, policy documents, and historical narratives. Through this comprehensive approach, the DHA aims to shed light on the intricate relationships between language, cognition, and socio-political processes, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities of contemporary society (Wodak, 2014). Wodak (2011) explains that five discursive strategies are concerned with the systematic ways of the use of language at different levels of linguistic organization and complexity: reference or nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation or discourse representation, and intensification and/or mitigation.

Drawing upon previous studies on national discourse analysis, this research extends the scholarly discussion by examining the discursive strategies employed in President Xi Jinping's Chinese New Year speeches from 2014 to 2024. Specifically, through the application of Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, this study investigates how nomination strategies (including personal references, spatial references, and metaphors) and predication strategies (comprising explicit predicates and comparisons) are deployed to reinforce power relations and ideologies. This approach not only

builds upon existing theoretical frameworks but also offers new insights into the intricate relationship between linguistic choices and power dynamics in Chinese national speeches.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

As explained before, this study is a critical discourse analysis of Chinese President Xi Jinping's New Year speeches. The data selection for this discourse study aligns with its specific objectives and scope. Consequently, the corpus comprises President Xi Jinping's New Year speeches delivered from 2014 to 2024. These 11 speeches are originally presented in Chinese, and the English-translated version is provided by the official website—China Global TV Network (CGTN) (cited from cgtv.com).

B. Research Methods

This paper adopted a qualitative descriptive research method combined with the corpus analysis tool. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach in this study was used as the theoretical framework, CL tool – Antconc is considered as CDA's useful technique for navigating data with quantitative analysis that can point to some discernible linguistic patterns, which are interpreted with qualitative analysis, and explained their socio-cultural contexts and ideological implications at a broader dimension.

This study employs Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach within the framework of CDA to examine eleven New Year speeches delivered by President Xi Jinping (2014-2024). The methodological framework encompasses three interconnected analytical phases.

The foundational phase comprises a comprehensive frequency analysis of lexical choices in the speeches to identify recurring linguistic patterns and significant discursive elements. This quantitative foundation provides empirical grounding for the subsequent qualitative analysis.

The core analytical phase applies two key strategies from DHA to examine how power relations and ideological positions are constructed and maintained through language:

(a). Nomination Strategies, Analyzing

- Personal references (how social actors are linguistically constructed)
- Spatial references (how space and place are represented)
- Metaphorical expressions (how abstract concepts are conceptualized)

(b). Predication Strategies, Examining

- Explicit predicates (how qualities and characteristics are attributed)
- Comparisons (how different elements are related and contrasted)

The contextual analysis phase situates the linguistic findings within broader socio-cultural frameworks, interpreting how historical and cultural factors influence and shape these discursive strategies. This interpretative phase examines how linguistic choices interact with broader social and cultural structures to reveal underlying power relations in contemporary Chinese national discourse.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis of data and the findings of the study. The analysis of Chinese New Year speeches proceeds through three interconnected analytical phases. The process begins with a quantitative frequency analysis of lexical patterns using AntConc 4.2.4, establishing the empirical groundwork for subsequent investigation. This foundation supports the core analysis of nomination and predication strategies within Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach framework. The final phase encompasses a broader contextual analysis, examining how these linguistic choices interact with historical and cultural factors to reveal underlying power relations in contemporary Chinese national discourse.

A. Frequency Analysis

The frequency analysis in this study serves as a systematic quantitative foundation for examining discursive strategies in Xi Jinping's New Year speeches (2014-2024). By identifying recurring lexical patterns and linguistic choices, this analysis provides empirical evidence for selecting representative examples for detailed discourse analysis. Utilizing the corpus analysis software AntConc 4.2.4, a high-frequency word list was generated from the collected data. The corpus comprises 12,773-word tokens, and the analysis focuses on the 50 most frequently occurring lexical items in the dataset, offering a visual representation of the predominant vocabulary within the analyzed texts, as Figure 1 illustrates.

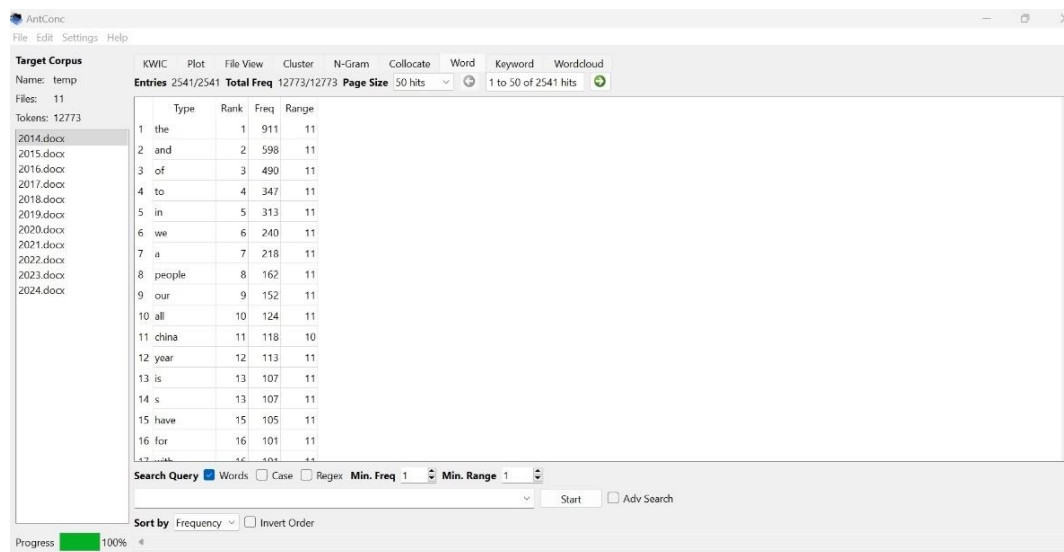


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Lexical Items in AntConc 4.2.4

After excluding functional words, the ten most frequently occurring lexical items in the corpus were identified, as shown in Table 1. These high-frequency words are “we,” “people,” “China,” “Chinese,” “new,” “world,” “development,” “reform,” “work,” and “effort”, which derived from an analysis of the total word tokens in the dataset. This analysis highlights the central themes and concepts that dominate the discourse, offering insights into the focal points and priorities embedded in the speeches. The identified lexical set serves as a basis for understanding the discursive strategies within the corpus.

TABLE 1
TOP TEN HIGH-FREQUENCY CONTENT WORDS IN THE CORPUS

Word	Rank	Freq	Range	NormFreq	NormRange
we	1	240	11	18789.634	1.000
people	2	162	11	12683.003	1.000
china	3	118	10	9238.237	0.909
chinese	4	86	11	6732.952	1.000
new	5	82	11	6419.792	1.000
world	6	58	11	4540.828	1.000
development	7	53	10	4149.378	0.909
reform	8	43	11	3366.476	1.000
work	9	34	11	2661.865	1.000
efforts	10	27	9	2113.834	0.818

The word “we” has the highest frequency, reaching 240 times. Some of them are used to refer to China, and quite a few are used to refer to the Party, the government, and the Chinese people. The nation and its people stand together in the same position to overcome the sufferings of the past and embrace the new future with confidence. The second high-frequency word is “people” (162 times). Chinese New Year speeches took the interests of the people as the home of all government actions, highlighting the Chinese government’s ruling philosophy of “taking the people as the foundation and governing for the people”. Focusing on the “people”, the President promotes China as a people-oriented nation. This concept brings more benefits for its citizens and the global community and emphasizes the essential role of the people in supporting state-to-state relations. “Development” is another high-frequency word (53 times), which indicates that China is not only actively promoting development, but also developing peacefully, and developing in a healthy, green, and sustainable way. Through “development”, the President projects China as a responsible and rising power, which seeks common peaceful development and strives to accelerate economic growth in China and other countries. Ranked in the list of high-frequency, “reform” comes up 43 times in Chinese New Year speeches, which shows that reform is one of the most important parts of China’s social development and a powerful driving force for development. China’s accomplishments throughout its reform and opening-up period have yielded advantages not only for its citizens but for populations worldwide. Reform is the continuous improvement and development of the socialist system. The Chinese New Year speeches frequently mentioned reform, signaling China’s unwavering commitment to reform initiatives. This determination aims to guide the Chinese people toward the early realization of the “Chinese Dream”.

The frequency analysis reveals significant patterns in lexical choices throughout Chinese New Year speeches,

providing empirical evidence for the systematic examination of discursive strategies. The identification of recurring linguistic patterns establishes key areas for detailed discourse analysis, thereby illuminating how language functions within these national speeches.

B. Discursive Strategies

Drawing upon Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, this analysis examines two key discursive strategies with examples employed in Chinese New Year speeches: the nomination strategy (encompassing personal references, spatial references, and metaphors) and the predication strategy (including explicit predicates and comparisons).

(a). Nomination Strategy

Nomination strategies serve as linguistic devices through which discourse producers systematically categorize and reference social actors. This analysis examines three key linguistic realizations of nomination strategy in Chinese New Year speeches: personal reference, spatial reference, and metaphors. These linguistic tools reveal how social actors and concepts are constructed and positioned within the ceremonial discourse.

1. Personal Reference

The personal pronoun "we/our/us" appears 415 times in the collected data, and is used to refer to "China", "Chinese", and "Party and government", as shown in Figure 2.

The screenshot shows the AntConc 4.2.4 interface with a concordance display for the word "we/our/us". The search query is "we/our/us" and the results set is "All hits". The context size is set to 10 token(s). The table below represents the data shown in the concordance display.

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 2017.docx	city, we held the 11th G20 Leaders' Summit, we shared	our	thoughts with world leaders and proposed our ideas, and
2 2022.docx	can we fulfill our responsibility to history, prove worthy of	our	times and live up to people's expectations. The
3 2020.docx	increasing the number of countries that have official ties with	us	to 180. We have friends in every corner of 2020 will
4 2020.docx	New Year wishes to you all! In 2019, we sweated and	we	toiled as we pressed ahead with concrete efforts for
5 2019.docx	racing against time with unwavering determination, we will carry forward	our	unprecedented great cause one resolute step after another, and
6 2019.docx	the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up.	We	unveiled a comprehensive and systematic overhaul of both Party
7 2019.docx	stops for no one, and the seasons keep changing." As	we	usher in 2019, I'd like to extend my New
8 2019.docx	We put China's proposals on the table and made	our	voice heard at these and other diplomatic events. I
9 2020.docx	heart. The greater the difficulties, the further we advance, strengthening	our	weak links even more and laying a more solid
10 2023.docx	We are about to ring in the New Year. Let	us	welcome the first ray of sunshine of 2023 with the
11 2023.docx	CPC National Congress, my colleagues and I visited Yan'an.	We	were there to relive the inspiring episode in which
12 2020.docx	inspires us to work harder in the new era, filling	us	with boundless energy. Over the past year, I have
13 2015.docx	are closely associated with the interests of the general public.	We	worked to adapt to the new normal of economic
14 2015.docx	were held on these days. Despite the change of times,	we	would always remember the sacrifice and contribution of these

Figure 2. Concordance Display of the Word "We/Our/Us" in AntConc 4.2.4

The strategic deployment of personal reference manifests notably in the integration of China and international partners through collective pronouns, particularly in constructing a "community of shared future" narrative. President deliberates use of the first-person plural pronoun "we" serves as a discursive bridge, conveying Chinese values and perspectives to global audiences while simultaneously fostering a sense of shared identity. Corpus analysis reveals that the dominant collocation pattern "we + modal verb" (see Figure 3) appears consistently throughout the speeches, demonstrating a calculated rhetorical approach. This syntactic structure functions as a discursive mechanism for expressing collective capability, responsibility, and shared aspirations, effectively blending national interests with international cooperation through ceremonial discourse.

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
19 2019.docx	rock-solid confidence, and racing against time with unwavering determination,	we	will carry forward our unprecedented great cause one resolute
20 2019.docx	mutual trust, and we enlarged our circle of friends. In 2019,	we	will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of
21 2021.docx	the waves and sail out for our journey ahead, and	we	will certainly realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese
22 2016.docx	will prevail, peace will prevail, and the people will prevail.	We	will comprehensively implement the reform strategy to strengthen China'
23 2024.docx	through progress, and establishing the new before abolishing the old.	We	will consolidate and strengthen the momentum of economic recovery,
24 2024.docx	and work to achieve steady and long-term economic development.	We	will deepen reform and opening up across the board,
25 2017.docx	and offer help to those fellow citizens living in poverty.	We	will enable more people to enjoy the fruit of
26 2014.docx	those who keep forging ahead unswervingly. On our way forward,	we	will encounter various risks and challenges. We still need
27 2020.docx	every corner of 2020 will be a year of milestone significance.	We	will finish building a moderately prosperous society in all
28 2023.docx	if we stay the course; difficult as the task is,	we	will get the job done if we keep working
29 2017.docx	lunch, and only hard work will make dreams come true.	We	will make sure that no one is left behind
30 2017.docx	the territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests of China.	We	will never tolerate any act that undermines our territorial
31 2015.docx	efforts focusing on poverty-alleviation and guaranteeing basic living conditions.	We	will provide assistance to all those in need of

Figure 3. Concordance Display of the Word “We” in AntConc 4.2.4

To illuminate the practical manifestation of this discursive pattern, consider the following representative examples.

Example 1: Despite the change of times, we would always remember the sacrifice and contribution of those who gave their lives for the Chinese nation and for peace. (2014)

Example 2: At the significant juncture of the 40th anniversary, we should surmount all obstacles to carry the reform further to its ultimate triumph. (2018)

Example 3: We will steadfastly advance Chinese modernization, fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, and both pursue development and safeguard security. (2022)

In these examples, the pronoun “we” flexibly encompasses the Party, government, people, and China, functioning as a strategic device to unite these entities as cohesive “in-groups” sharing collective responsibility. The combination with modal verbs is particularly significant, as these linguistic markers convey speaker attitudes and commitment levels (Thompson, 2013). The strategic pairing of “we” with modal verbs like “would”, “will”, and “should” articulates China’s resolute stance on maintaining world peace, protecting people’s rights, ensuring social equity, and advancing national development. This consistent collocation of first-person plural pronouns with modal verbs effectively communicates China’s unwavering commitment to international cooperation and global development, while simultaneously reinforcing domestic unity and shared purpose.

2. Spatial Reference

Spatial reference in national discourse serves as a powerful discursive strategy that extends beyond mere physical locations to encompass psychological and ideological dimensions (Kakisina et al., 2022). In Chinese presidential speeches, spatial references function as sophisticated rhetorical devices that bridge physical, cognitive, and linguistic spaces to construct national narratives and power relations. While physical space addresses tangible geographical references, cognitive space reflects how these spatial elements are conceptualized and interpreted within the cultural-political context of Chinese New Year speeches. The linguistic manifestation of these spatial references in presidential discourse reveals strategic choices in constructing national identity, establishing authority, and positioning China within both domestic and international contexts. This analysis examines how spatial references in these ceremonial speeches serve to reinforce ideological frameworks and legitimate power structures.

Spatial reference in discourse typically centers on the speaker’s position as a primary reference point for conceptualizing distance and spatial relationships. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), spatial references serve as essential linguistic tools in shaping national identity and image. These references manifest primarily through geographical names, place adverbs, and prepositional phrases. In analyzing Chinese presidential speeches, spatial positioning operates on two distinct levels: a micro-geographical perspective situating China within Asia, and a macro perspective positioning it within the global community. To examine these spatial constructions systematically, this study analyzes the concordance patterns of keywords such as “earth”, “world”, and “country”, as illustrated in the following examples.

Example 4: More than 7 billion people inhabit the planet Earth. We in the same boat should keep watch and help each other to achieve common development. We Chinese people seek to realize the Chinese dream, and also wish that the dreams of people of all countries will come true. I sincerely hope that people of various countries in the world will understand and help each other in the course of realizing their dreams and building the Earth that we rely on for survival into a common beautiful homeland. (2013)

Example 5: The Chinese people have always believed that the world is a commonwealth. We Chinese not only aspire to good living for ourselves, but also hope people in other parts of the world lead a decent life. At present, people in certain countries and regions are still troubled in wars and turbulence; many are suffering from diseases and disasters.

(2016)

Example 6: While pursuing its development, China has also embraced the world and fulfilled its responsibility as a major country. We held the China-Central Asia Summit and the Third Belt, and hosted leaders from across the world at many diplomatic events held in China. (2024)

In the above example 4 and 5, according to spatial reference, China as well as other countries is a “commonwealth”, which has the same “homeland” - earth and is classified as a group with common aspirations and development goals. Therefore, as a member of the global village, China is willing to help other members with their economic development. China has also taken practical actions to assist them. These examples depict China as a nation committed to solidarity and mutual assistance. By emphasizing these values, President Xi reinforces internal cohesion while projecting China as a responsible global actor. This discourse positions China as a country valuing interconnectedness and shared prosperity, shaping its distinctive identity in the international community.

For spatial reference “Asia” is not only a geographical position but also a cognitive space. China, as an integral part of Asia, actively seeks to enhance connectivity and forge cooperative partnerships with fellow Asian nations. By implementing the “Belt and Road Initiative”, China aims to stimulate collective economic growth among participating countries. This approach reinforces China’s identity as a driving force for regional prosperity and collaboration, emphasizing its commitment to fostering a shared, mutually beneficial future across Asia. As China continues to develop, it is committed to collaborating with other nations. China is shaping its national identity as an open, inclusive, and globally engaged nation with a multifaceted identity: economically open, culturally sophisticated, and proactive in diplomacy.

In this context, China is an integral member of the “Fate Community”, actively contributing to shared progress. Through various initiatives, China constructs its identity as a nation committed to mutual growth and collaborative partnerships, emphasizing its role in fostering global development and promoting win-win outcomes in international relations.

(b). *Metaphor*

Metaphors serve as sophisticated discursive mechanisms that bridge complex concepts with accessible understanding (Wodak, 2009). In presidential speeches, metaphorical expressions are deliberately deployed to communicate administrative objectives and institutional progress. These linguistic choices effectively translate abstract policy initiatives into comprehensible frameworks, particularly when addressing systemic reforms and institutional development.

Example 7: We vigorously pushed forward the exercise of our Party’s strict governance in every respect, unswervingly cracked down on both “tigers” and “flies”, in a bid to purify our political ecosystem, and continue to improve our Party and our government’s working style. (2016)

Example 8: For an eventual accomplishment of building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way in due time, both deepening the reforms and strengthening the rule of law should function as the two wings of a bird, or as wheels on both sides of a vehicle. (2014)

In Example 7, the metaphorical representation of corrupt officials as “tigers” and “flies” illustrates how metaphors effectively communicate anti-corruption initiatives across hierarchical levels. This dual metaphor emphasizes comprehensive oversight, suggesting institutional reforms target corruption at all levels regardless of position or influence. In Example 8, the metaphorical portrayal of reform and legal frameworks as “wings” and “wheels” demonstrates how abstract governance concepts are made tangible through familiar imagery. By comparing China to a bird and car, these metaphors conceptualize institutional development as a synchronized system where reforms and legal structures function as essential, complementary components. This metaphorical framing helps articulate complex administrative processes and regulatory frameworks in accessible terms while emphasizing their interdependent nature.

C. *Predication Strategy*

Predication strategy plays a crucial role in discursive construction by attributing specific qualities and characteristics to social actors through linguistic devices. As Wodak (2011) explains, these strategies manifest through both implicit and explicit attributions that shape actor perceptions and relationships within discourse. In Chinese presidential New Year speeches, predication strategies operate through two key mechanisms: explicit predicates and strategic comparisons. This analysis examines how these complementary approaches construct specific representations through direct attribute assignment and contextual positioning, revealing sophisticated patterns in how linguistic choices serve broader discursive objectives and meaning-making processes.

(a). *Explicit Predicate*

As mentioned before, in New Year speeches, the highly frequent words are “China”, “Chinese” and “we”, which usually refer to the Party, the government, and the Chinese people. Choosing “China/Chinese/we” as the query word and checking its collocation and concordance with the help of AntConc, it could discover that the structure “China/Chinese/we will + (adverb) + verb” in the material process of transitivity is the most prominent, as shown in Figure 4.

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
13 2023.docx	to make tomorrow's China a better place. Going forward,	China	will be a country that performs miracles through hard
14 2023.docx	we will turn our grand goals into reality. Going forward,	China	will be a country that draws its strength from
15 2023.docx	jointly foster lasting prosperity of the Chinese nation. Going forward,	China	will be a country that has great expectations of
16 2024.docx	world. We Chinese are keenly aware of what peace means.	We	will work closely with the international community for the
17 2019.docx	development of a community of shared future for mankind. And	we	will work tirelessly for a more prosperous and beautiful
18 2015.docx	but we will always remember those still living in hardships.	We	will work with passion to improve their well-being,
19 2023.docx	noble demeanor, and cherish the great legacy he left behind.	We	will honor his last wishes and advance the cause
20 2018.docx	poverty by current standards. That is our solemn commitment and	we	will honor it. With three years left until 2020, the
21 2017.docx	great contributions to the Chinese people and the Chinese nation.	We	will remain committed to our mission, and continue to
22 2019.docx	seen in a century. No matter what these changes bring,	China	will remain resolute and confident in its defense of
23 2016.docx	were brutally killed by terrorists. All these are deeply heartbreaking.	We	will remember them. We wish all the deceased to
24 2024.docx	unfolding on the way, and have made plenty real achievements.	We	will remember this year as one of hard work
25 2024.docx	s overall development, and securing long-term prosperity and stability.	China	will surely be reunified, and all Chinese on both

Figure 4. Concordance Display of the Word “China/Chinese/We” in AntConc 4.2.4

Evidently, “will + verb” is the explicit predicate in this structure. In respect of transitivity, material processes are those involving physical actions, in which the “doer” of an action is called the actor, and another participant being affected or “being done to” is named the goal (Thompson, 2013). Therefore, in the structure “China/Chinese/we will + (adverb) + verb”, China is the actor of an action being done through the explicit predicate “will + verb”. The examples are extracted from the concordance list to provide a nuanced understanding.

Example 9: China will staunchly safeguard the authority and status of the United Nations and actively fulfill its due responsibility and duty in international affairs; China will honor its promises in countering global climate change and actively push forward the common construction of the “Belt and Road”. (2017)

Example 10: Going forward, China will be a country that performs miracles through hard work. (2023)

The analysis of explicit predicates reveals a consistent pattern of “will + verb” constructions in material processes, with the modal “will” functioning as a marker of institutional commitment and planned action. In Example 9, this linguistic structure articulates specific policy objectives regarding rural poverty alleviation and social welfare enhancement, demonstrating how explicit predicates frame concrete institutional initiatives. Example 10 employs similar predicative structures to position institutional responsibilities in international contexts, particularly regarding the Belt and Road Initiative. These explicit predicates systematically construct agency and commitment through carefully chosen verb phrases that link institutional capabilities with specific development objectives, both domestic and international.

(b). Comparison

Comparative strategies emerge as a significant discursive mechanism throughout the New Year speeches, functioning to articulate institutional positioning across multiple domains. These comparisons systematically construct relationships between temporal states and developmental trajectories through two distinct linguistic patterns: comparative degree markers (“more”, “better”, “greater”) and superlative constructions (“biggest”, “highest”). This dual approach enables nuanced expression of progressive development while simultaneously establishing definitive positioning. The following analysis examines how these comparative structures operate in the discourse to construct specific relationships between institutional initiatives, international engagement, and development objectives, as evidenced in these representative examples.

Example 11: We have advanced reforms with the fundamental purpose of making our nation stronger and more prosperous. We also aim to achieve a higher degree of impartiality and justice in society so that people can live a better life. (2013)

Example 12: China's reforms will never stop, and its doors will only open ever wider. (2018)

The comparative structures deployed in these examples reveal a sophisticated discursive pattern that constructs temporal and developmental trajectories. Through the strategic use of comparative forms, the speeches establish progressive relationships between current and future states, particularly in articulating reform initiatives and socioeconomic development. The systematic employment of comparative markers frames institutional progress as an ongoing process, while simultaneously constructing specific benchmarks for evaluation. This linguistic patterning demonstrates how comparative structures function as key discursive mechanisms for articulating developmental objectives and institutional capabilities within broader contexts of social and economic transformation.

Example 13: We will enable more people to enjoy the fruit of our reforms, and ultimately let all the people in this country live in happiness. (2016)

Example 14: China's reforms will never stop, and its doors will only open ever wider. (2019)

Example 15: Cheaper and faster internet connection has enabled a faster flow of information. (2020)

Example 16: I am aware of the people's biggest concerns, such as education, employment, income, social security, and the environment. (2017)

Example 17: The Party committees and officials must constantly hold in their hearts the interests of the people, and regard the benefit of the people as their highest career accomplishment. (2023)

The deployment of comparative markers in Examples 13-15 (“more”, “wider”, “cheaper”, and “faster”) reveals a sophisticated discursive pattern that constructs developmental trajectories beyond current achievements. These comparative forms function as linguistic mechanisms to articulate expanding spheres of influence and accelerating progress, particularly with reform outcomes and their distribution. The discourse transitions from domestic to international contexts, systematically broadening the scope of beneficiaries through careful comparative structuring. Examples 16-17 employ superlative constructions (“biggest”, “largest”) to establish hierarchical priorities and institutional commitments. The superlative marker “biggest” about social concerns functions as a discursive device for prioritizing specific policy domains: education, employment, income, healthcare, housing and environmental protection. This linguistic choice positions these issues within an institutional framework that systematically links administrative priorities with concrete social objectives. The strategic use of superlatives thus constructs a hierarchy of institutional attention and resource allocation, while simultaneously establishing evaluative criteria for policy implementation.

Example 18: With more peacefulness and more cooperation, let's turn confrontation into cooperation, and turn swords into plowshares. (2015)

Example 19: And we will work tirelessly for a more prosperous and beautiful world. (2021)

The recurring comparative marker “more” demonstrates systematic collocation with concepts of “peace/peaceful” and “prosperity/prosperous”, revealing a distinctive discursive pattern in constructing international relationships. This linguistic structure strategically frames global engagement through the lens of progressive development, where comparative forms position cooperation as an evolving process rather than a fixed state. The discourse employs these comparative constructions to articulate a shift from confrontational to collaborative frameworks, particularly evident in references to international community building. Through careful deployment of comparative markers alongside concepts of harmony and development, the speeches construct specific institutional positions on global cooperation. This discursive mechanism systematically links comparative structures with broader objectives of international collaboration, demonstrating how linguistic choices function to articulate complex diplomatic and developmental relationships through carefully structured comparative frameworks.

D. Socio-Cultural Analysis

Drawing on Wodak's Discourse-Historical approach, this section examines how sociopolitical, historical, and cultural contexts interact with the nomination and predication strategies identified in Chinese New Year speeches. The analysis reveals how these contextual dimensions influence the deployment of specific linguistic devices, particularly in how spatial references reinforce power hierarchies and how metaphors naturalize ideological positions. By examining the interplay between traditional cultural elements and contemporary national objectives, this section illuminates how ceremonial communication serves as a platform for legitimizing power structures. Special attention is paid to how personal references strategically shift between individual and collective voices to establish authority, while prediction strategies systematically frame current developments within carefully constructed historical narratives. This contextual analysis demonstrates how Chinese New Year speeches effectively combine cultural resonance with institutional objectives, revealing the subtle mechanisms through which power and ideology are embedded within ceremonial discourse.

The systematic deployment of personal reference, particularly through collective pronouns and strategic shifts between individual and collective voices, reflects China's deeply rooted cultural emphasis on collective identity and social harmony. This linguistic pattern aligns with traditional Confucian values that prioritize collective welfare over individual interests, while simultaneously adapting these cultural frameworks to contemporary institutional objectives. The frequent use of “we” in combination with modal verbs demonstrates how traditional concepts of collective responsibility are strategically merged with modern governance priorities, creating a discursive bridge between cultural heritage and current institutional aims.

The employment of spatial references and metaphorical constructions reveals a sophisticated interplay between historical consciousness and contemporary development goals. Spatial references systematically construct relationships between domestic and international spheres, reflecting China's historical experience of transformation from a traditional agricultural society to a modern global actor. These spatial constructions are further reinforced through metaphorical frameworks that draw on familiar cultural concepts to explain complex institutional initiatives. For instance, metaphors comparing governance structures to natural phenomena or traditional objects demonstrate how the discourse strategically utilizes cultural knowledge to make abstract political concepts more accessible while simultaneously legitimizing specific power relationships.

The predication strategies, particularly through comparative and superlative constructions, operate within a broader historical context of rapid social and economic transformation. The systematic use of comparative structures to articulate progressive development reflects the institutional response to China's unprecedented pace of change over recent decades. These linguistic choices construct temporal relationships between past achievements and future objectives while carefully balancing traditional values with modernization goals. The emphasis on superlative forms with social welfare and development priorities demonstrates how the discourse navigates between cultural expectations of governmental responsibility and contemporary challenges of globalization. This careful calibration of predication strategies reveals how

ceremonial discourse serves as a sophisticated mechanism for managing the complex relationships between traditional cultural values, historical experiences, and modern institutional objectives.

V. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how Chinese New Year speeches employ nomination and predication strategies to construct and maintain power relations through ceremonial communication. The analysis reveals systematic patterns in nomination strategies, particularly in three key areas: personal references that strategically shift between individual and collective voices, spatial references that reinforce power hierarchies, and metaphorical constructions that naturalize ideological positions. Additionally, the examination of predication strategies, manifested through explicit predicates and comparative structures, illuminates how current developments are systematically framed within carefully constructed historical narratives.

These findings contribute to our understanding of how ceremonial discourse functions as a sophisticated platform for institutional communication, revealing the subtle interplay between traditional cultural elements and contemporary objectives. The systematic deployment of nomination and predication strategies demonstrates how power relations and ideological positions are carefully embedded within seemingly neutral cultural discourse. This research extends the application of Wodak's Discourse-Historical approach by illuminating how these specific linguistic devices operate within distinct cultural-political contexts, offering insights into the complex relationship between language, power, and institutional communication in ceremonial settings.

While this research illuminates significant patterns in discursive strategies within Chinese New Year speeches, several limitations warrant consideration. The current analysis would benefit from a longitudinal approach examining how these strategies evolve across different historical periods, providing deeper insights into institutional discourse adaptation. Methodological constraints suggest opportunities for integrating complementary analytical frameworks beyond the Discourse-Historical approach, potentially enriching our understanding of nomination and predication strategies in ceremonial communication.

Future research could expand the analytical scope through comparative studies examining similar discursive patterns across different cultural and institutional contexts. Such comparative analysis would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how these linguistic devices operate within varying political frameworks, further illuminating the relationship between discourse, power, and institutional communication in ceremonial settings.

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