

More Target-Oriented? The Rhetorical Effects of the English Translations of Chinese Political Discourse

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How to cite this paper: Sun, Y. F., Hu, S., Wei, L. F., Wu, J. H., & Wang, Q. N. (2025). More Target-Oriented? The Rhetorical Effects of the English Translations of Chinese Political Discourse. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 15, 339-357.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2025.152019>

Received: February 25, 2025

Accepted: April 21, 2025

Published: April 24, 2025

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Abstract

This study centers on, with the aid of Kenneth Burke's Rhetoric "Identification", a rhetorical analysis of the English works by Chinese leaders throughout three different periods (1960-2017), namely *Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung* (Volumes 1-5), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Volumes 1-3) and *The Governance of China* (Volumes 1-2) published by Foreign Languages Press via Docuscope3.40. The English translation of Chinese political discourse in these three periods (1961-1965; 1984-1994; 2012-2017) displays a high degree of commonalities, of which *Institutional Register*, *Academic Register*, and *Reporting* rank the most elevated, yet *Personal Relations*, *Interactivity*, *Narrative*, *Emotion*, and *Directives* the lowest. Therefore, it is suggested that the translator adopts rhetorical appeals of "Identification by sympathy" and "Identification by antithesis" to relate with the rhetorical audience. The rhetorical characteristic of *The Governance of China I and II* in the new era distinctively exhibit a higher percentage of *Institutional Register* and *Academic Register*. Still, the lower ratio in *Reasoning*, *Emotion*, and *Subjective Register* demands "Argumentation" and the rhetorical appeal of "Identification by inaccuracy" to achieve the communicative effects of the English translation of Chinese texts with a political agenda.

Keywords

Chinese Political Discourse Translation, Identification, Rhetorical Features, Argumentation, Rhetorical Appeals

1. Introduction

Over the last several decades, we have witnessed a growing wave of scholarly

works in political discourse analysis. Thanks to Van Dijk's works on political discourse analysis, research primarily focuses on speeches by symbolic elites in politics (Randour et al., 2020). Van Dijk defines political discourse through three dimensions: the actors involved, the political scope, and the context of communication (Van Dijk, 1997). Adhering to his definition, a discourse is deemed political and produced by the actors involved in the political activities in the institutional context (e.g., public or official speeches, political interviews, parliamentary debates) of communication. Political discourse, an arena of political, economic, and social concepts, is thus purposeful and intentional (Capone, 2010; Ochs, 1979).

Moreover, political activities, such as the social, conceptual, economic, and power struggles, are closely related to language use (Bayram, 2010: 24). Even though some scholars claim that political discourse should go beyond its boundary and expand its domain to any power negotiation at all levels (Fairclough, 2006; Okulska & Cap, 2010; Chilton & Schaffner, 2002), the elite speeches, according to bibliometrics statistics, continue to serve as the foreground of political discourse analysis (Randour et al., 2020).

The translation studies of political discourse against the backdrop of globalization have aroused growing attention among scholars over the past three decades who contribute to the reevaluation of the role of the translator in recontextualizing political discourse, the role of political discourse in the global communication (Bielsa, 2009; Pérez-González, 2012) and studies of translation strategies of political discourse (Schäffner, 2004; Trupej, 2017). Concurrently, corpus-driven translation studies of Chinese political discourse primarily focus on translation strategies initiated by translators or interpreters, political discourse translation influenced by ideology (Klimes & Marinelli, 2018), and reframing of China's image (Li & Pan, 2020; Yu & Wu, 2018). Critical discourse analysis manifests the interlink between discourse and power, ideology, social stance, and identity, among which some inform translation. Nevertheless, it fails to relate the translator to rhetorical audience. Likewise, translation scholars and rhetoricians share their goals and research methodology, yet they ignore one another (Connor, 1996), and systematic studies from rhetoric are needed (Qian & Kaufer, 2017; Kjeldsen, 2018).

The significance of Chinese leaders' works, China's rise in international politics, the implementation of the "go global" 走出去 strategy, and the calls for more acceptability in political translations (Pan & Wang, 2021) all contribute to making this study more meaningful. As few studies combine rhetorical and political discourse analysis, this constitutes an attempt to conduct a rhetorical diachronic comparison of the English translation of Chinese political discourse to investigate the international communicative effects of Chinese elite discourse and point to the contributing factors to the communicative effects of the English translation of Chinese political discourse.

Specifically, a diachronic corpus that covers Chinese leaders' English translations of Chinese political works is built to fulfill this purpose. The aim is to uncover what rhetoric features can be observed in three different periods (1961-1965;

1984-1994; 2012-2017) and whether there are shifts in translating outputs caused by the changing socio-cultural context that underpins Chinese political discourse's acceptability. By so doing, the study tries to provide a rhetorical perspective to improve the effectiveness of translation, especially Chinese to English translation of political discourse.

2. Kenneth Burke's "Identification" and Chinese Political Discourse for International Communication

The rhetorician Kenneth Burke's "Identification", a compliment of classical rhetoric "persuasion" (Beasley & Selzer, 2019), makes up a practical interpretive framework for symbolic action in interpersonal society. Rhetoric is consistently regarded as a type of instrumental discourse or a study of the means of persuasion available in given situation. The primary function of rhetoric is using words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents. In one way or another, it is a vehicle for responding to, reinforcing, or altering an audience's understanding of the community's social fabric (Gill & Whedbee, 1997). The concept of "Identification" nearly approximates the classical "persuasion" but has a more expansive theoretical range. The paradigm shifts from the rhetor's exclusive "persuasion" to "Identification" driven by the rhetorical audience's calls for the interchangeable role and interactivities between rhetors and the audience. In rhetorical studies, Burke's "Identification", convergence of consubstantiality, is commonly recognized as the solution or proactive device applied to achieve the consensus (Overall, 2017). As such, the titular term "Identification" confronts the implication of "division" as "Identification is compensatory to division" (Burke, 1969).

Given that humans are kept apart, the rhetorician would need to proclaim their unity. "Persuasion" is the process of identification relying on three rhetorical appeals. Through these three rhetorical appeals, namely "Identification by sympathy", "Identification by antithesis", and "Identification by inaccuracy" (Burke, 1973), the rhetor coordinates the motif, genre, or communicative motive to cater to the prototype audience and lastly identify with them as their interests are not joined. "Identification by sympathy", closest to downright persuasion, is a method of establishing rapport with an audience to whom the rhetor can relate (Burke, 1973). "Identification by antithesis", the most urgent form of the congregation by segregation, is union by some shared opposition. Seeking temporary secret alliances in wartime to fight the familiar foe is a case in point. A third kind remains, which Burke called "Identification by inaccuracy" (or "by unawareness"), the most succinct form of which must go to that tiny first-person plural form, "we." For instance, the private corporation in Los Angeles operates on a different identification. "We" as a nation advance funds to foreign countries from which "we" as private business enterprises receive money in payment for exports. Following this identification ambiguity, as a nation, "we" become "idealists" while some of our nationals are involved in transactions that are, at the very least, quite realistic.

Alternatively, whenever “we” fight a war, the range of identifications under one head extends from men in combat to Wall Street gamblers who make a killing in war stocks (Burke, 1973). Specific scholars (e.g. Danni, 2020) argue that rhetoric shares the same goal with Chinese political discourse for international communication, aiming for the audience’s identification through provoking political activity. Given the rhetoric of “Identification”, this study will reveal the rhetorical features of Chinese to English political discourse translation in three periods and consider their causes.

3. Research Questions and Methodology

China proactively participates in international economic and technological cooperation and maneuvers to establish a favorable international environment for its modernization drive. One crucial endeavor is the promotion of works by Chinese leaders globally through translation, as Huang (2015) stated, to “create a favorable international public opinion environment for China’s development”. Pan and Wang (2021) highlight that one direction that Chinese diplomatic interpreters strive towards is to interpret the best they can in a language that is intelligible to and can be easily understood by foreigners on account of the target audience of the speeches made by the leaders of the Chinese government, and they prove that the rendition produced is effective and has won widespread accreditation. Given that the shifts in Chinese political discourse interpretation have been more target-oriented, the primary goal of our research is to outline how DocuScope3.40 can be utilized to help the translator test whether the rhetorical features change diachronically and if the rhetorical experiences in Chinese are different from those in English, and lastly, whether the translated Chinese political discourse is more target-oriented. To this end, the study addresses the following research questions:

Question 1: What are the LATs-based (Language Action Types) rhetorical features of the Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung (Volumes 1-5), Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3), and The Governance of China (Volumes 1-2) during the three different historical periods (1961-1965; 1984-1994; 2012-2017)?

Question 2: What are the LATs-based rhetorical features of each volume of Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, and The Governance of China during the three different historical periods(1961-1965; 1984-1994; 2012-2017)?

Question 3: What rhetorical appeals can contribute to improving the acceptability of Chinese political discourse?

Political discourse addressers may identify with audience as their interests, positions, or tones are joined. In contrast, integrating rhetorical machine reading and manual reading supplies a theoretical assumption for researchers. Fundamentally, the DocuScope tool, a rhetorical analysis and visualization platform designed by Professor David Kaufer and his research team, is adopted to statistically identify patterns and rhetorical strategies in texts. DocuScope’s dictionary contains over 22,000 semantic categories and more than 58 million uniquely classified

words and phrases. Several organizations use it for various analytical purposes (Helberg et al., 2018). We ran the materials through DocuScope 3.40. Computers can scan surface texts for hundreds of variables and with lightning speed though they cannot “read” sociohistorically like human beings. Additionally, automated text analysis tracks patterns that are systematically utilized in some texts by comparing their frequency in other texts across an analyzed corpus. This makes it possible “to methodically track rhetorical strategy not only in terms of discrete language choices a rhetor happens to make but also in terms of choices a rhetor systematically refrains from making” (Kaufer & Parry-Giles, 2017).

DocuScope3.40 has two leading functions: MTV (Multiple Text Viewer) and STV (Single Text Viewer). Hereafter a screenshot of the single Text Viewer (Figure 1) is attached. Researchers may adopt this tool to explore a wealth of texts or a single text for rhetorical features and identify their most frequently used words or word strings. The strings are classified by rhetorical effect. Each category of effect falls into the category of LATs, placed into a “Dimension” further subsumed under a more extensive cluster (Qian & Kaufer, 2017). In this tool, every LAT is underlined and color-coded to analyze the rhetorical effect of a single text or a myriad of texts.

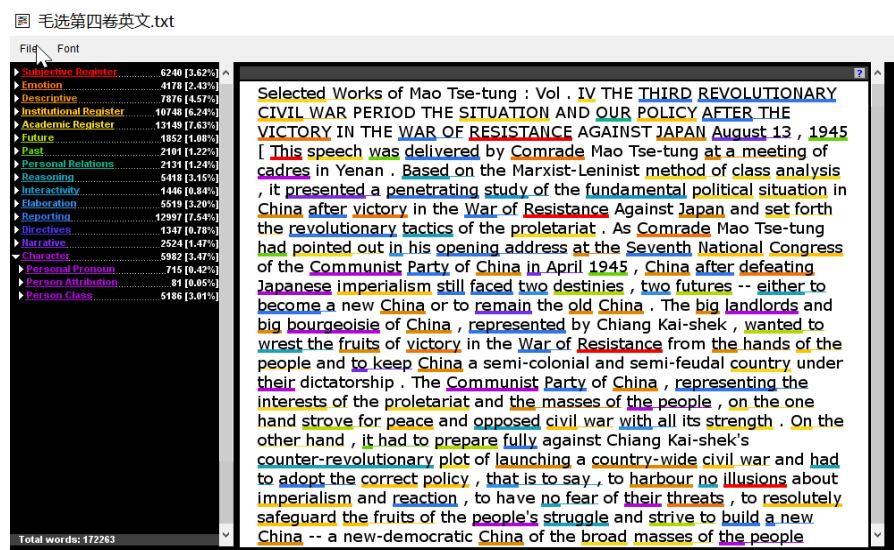


Figure 1. Screenshot of the Single-Text Viewer (STV). Texts can be read or accessed from the Multiple-Text Viewer (MTV). Hierarchical Rhetorical categories (Clusters/Dimensions/ LATs) are listed in the left panel and color-coded regarding their similarity.

The platform can capture phrase- and clause-level word sequences, thus enabling researchers to explain a rich repository of semantic content essential to maintain meaning across translation. It allows, for example, to classify “problems” or “swear at” as negative relationships and “approval” or “swear by” as positive relationships. Thanks to this, we learn that “by the way” signals the use of words to build cohesive markers that interact with the reader but “today” and “tomorrow” involve narrative description.

Hence, the platform's visualizations offer a microscope into these hard-to-detect transitions and allow researchers to observe, extract, classify, and archive them on a widespread scale. This system is supported by a dictionary consisting of 40 million linguistic patterns of English classified into over 150 categories of rhetorical features. DocuScope's language measures a range of English-based categories of rhetorical experience recognized by native English speakers. The main goal of this paper is to highlight how DocuScope technology can help translators test the communicative effects of English translations of Chinese political discourse. There are 15 significant clusters: Subjective Register, Emotion, Descriptive, Institutional Register, Academic Register, Future, Past, Personal Relations, Reasoning, Interactivity, Elaboration, Reporting, Directive, Narrative, and Character. Each "cluster", like Interactivity (Figure 2), is made up of several subcategories, including Inquiry, Curiosity Raising, Question, Future Question, Formal Query, Address Other, Attention, You Attention, You Reference, Request, Following Up, Feedback, Positive Feedback, Negative Feedback, Prior Knowledge.

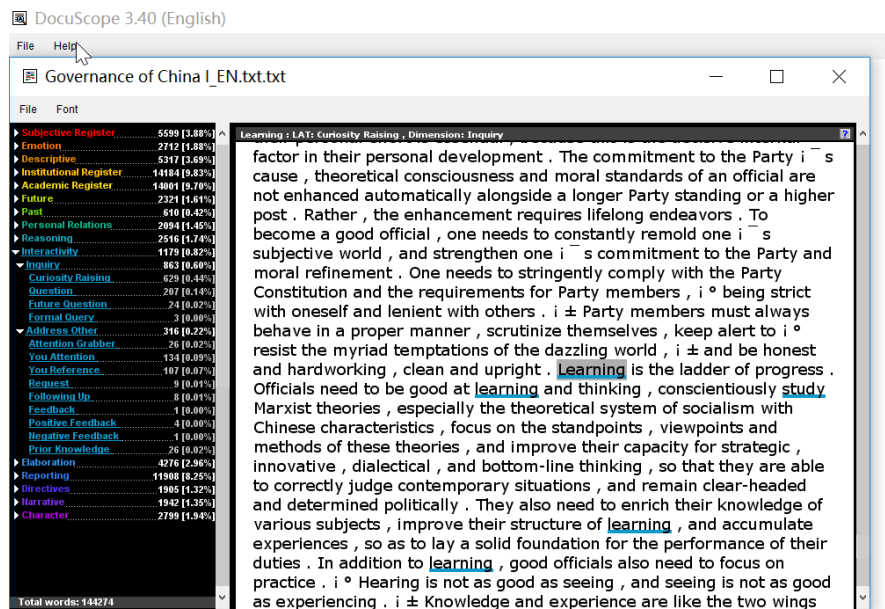


Figure 2. Screenshot of Interactivity of the Governance of China Volume 1.

4. Corpus Construction and Data Collection

The corpus is composed of the English translations of the works of Chinese leaders of state over three different periods (1961-1965; 1984-1994; 2012-2017), Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung (Volumes 1-5), Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3), and The Governance of China (Volumes 1-2) published by Foreign Languages Press. The selection of texts from Chinese political leaders for the corpus is guided by three representative historical periods, facilitating an in-depth analysis of political discourse. The corpus comprises seminal works such as the *selected Works of Mao Tse Tung* and *Deng Xiaoping* and *The Governance of*

China, all of which have been instrumental in shaping public discourse across three historically significant periods (1961-1965, 1984-1994, 2012-2017). Furthermore, the texts are translated by professional Chinese translators, reviewed by native English speakers, and trans-edited by senior professional Chinese translators, ensuring both accuracy and fidelity to the original content. This structured selection process not only underscores the significance of each leader's contributions to political rhetoric but also enables a comprehensive comparative analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed over time.

The Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung Volume 1 consisted of 128,558 words, Volume 2 of 162,565, Volume 3 of 100,205, Volume 4 of 151,867, and Volume 5 of 180,222 words. The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping Volume 1 consisted of 131,921 words, Volume 2 of 157,310, and Volume 3 of 129,337. Finally, The Governance of China Volume 1 consisted of 141,466 words, and Volume 2 of 179,919. The general background information concerning the corpus is listed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. The corpus of the English translations of works by three Chinese leaders of state.

Corpus	No. of word tokens	No. of word tokens (in total)
Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung (Vols.1-5)	128,558/162,565/100,205/151,867/180,222	723,417
Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping Vols.1-3)	131,921/157,310/129,337	418,568
The Governance of China (Vols.1-2)	141,466/179,919	321,385

5. Procedures for the Analysis

First, a rhetorical effect analysis is conducted of the five corpora with the analytic tool DocuScope3.40. With the help of DocuScope3.40, the above five corpora of the translated texts are tagged for salient rhetorical features based on the measures above and exported to a statistical package. Second, each volume of the 10 translated texts is respectively tagged and identified for rhetorical feature analysis. Third, after extracting these rhetorical features of the translated works, we interpreted the causes of rhetorical features of the English translation of Chinese political discourse over the three different periods based on a close reading of the translation and Burke's "Identification" and rhetorical appeals.

6. Results

The LATs-based Rhetorical Features of Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, and The Governance of China over Three Historical Periods (1960-2017).

With help of DocuScope 3.40, Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung (Volumes 1-5), Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3), and The Governance of China (Volumes 1-2) are tagged concerning their rhetorical features. The results are listed in **Table 2** and **Figure 3**. The selection of specific rhetorical features for analysis within the corpus is driven by criteria designed to facilitate a nuanced understanding of political discourse in three different periods. These salient fea-

tures serve as critical components in the translated discourse of three state leaders. Among them, the *Institutional Register*, *Academic Register*, and *Reporting* emerge as the most prominent, while features such as *Personal Relations*, *Interactivity*, *Narrative*, *Emotion*, and *Directives*, also play significant roles.

The specific scores assigned to different rhetorical features can significantly influence overall communicative effectiveness. Elevated scores in registers such as the *Institutional Register* indicate a strong authoritative voice that may resonate more effectively with the audience, thereby enhancing the text’s persuasive power. Conversely, lower scores in features like *Personal Relations* may indicate a lack of emotional engagement, potentially weakening the overall impact of the discourse.

Table 2. LATS distribution in selected works of Mao Tse Dung (Volumes 1-5), selected works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3), and The Governance of China (Volumes 1-2).

	Subjective Register	Emotion	Descriptive	Institutional Register	Academic Register	Future	Past	Personal Relation	Reasoning	Interactivity	Elaboration	Reporting	Directives	Narrative	Character
D	4.64%	2.37%	3.20%	6.50%	7.82%	1.26%	1.06%	1.66%	3.52%	1.17%	3.32%	8.69%	1.27%	1.36%	2.51%
M	4.24%	2.49%	4.20%	5.45%	7.75%	1.11%	1.04%	1.41%	3.88%	1.00%	3.44%	8.16%	0.80%	1.30%	3.13%
X	3.73%	1.90%	3.50%	10.00%	10.13%	1.58%	0.40%	1.47%	1.85%	0.72%	2.85%	8.47%	1.51%	1.26%	1.84%

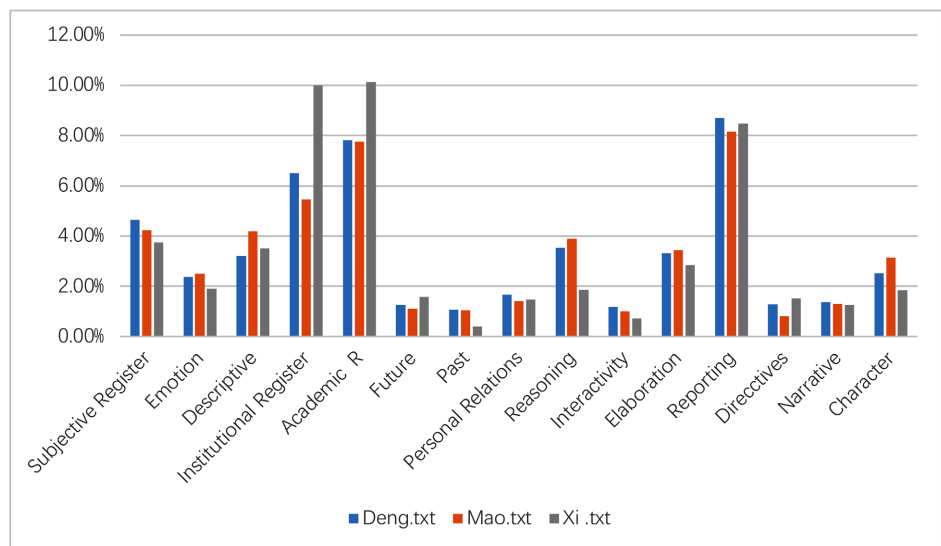


Figure 3. The bar chart of LATS distribution in selected works of Mao Tse Dung (Volumes 1-5), selected works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3), and The Governance of China (Volumes 1-2).

Table 2 and **Figure 3** show the Institutional Register, Academic Register, and Report score highest in the entire volume of Mao, Deng, and Xi, among which the Institutional Register and Academic Register in The Governance of China account for 10% and 10.13%. The entire volume of Mao of Deng shows that Xi ranks the second highest, up to 8.16%, 8.69%, and 8.47%, respectively. Past rates prove to be the lowest, accounting for 0.40%, 1.06%, and 1.04%. Comparatively, Future, Personal

Relations, Interactivity, Narrative, and Directive also score lower, nearly 1.20%.

The LATs-based Rhetorical Features of Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung (Volumes 1-5), Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3), and The Governance of China (Volumes 1-2) over Three Historical Periods (1960-2017)

With the help of DocuScope 3.40, each volume of Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung (Volume 1-5), Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volume 1-3), and the Governance of China (Volume 1-2) is tagged for rhetorical features. **Table 3** and **Figure 4** list the result of the rhetorical analysis of each volume of Selected Works of Mao Tse Dung, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, and The Governance of China.

Table 3. Rhetorical feature of each volume of selected works of Mao Tse Dung, selected works of Deng Xiaoping, and The Governance of China.

Case	SR (%)	Em (%)	Des (%)	IR (%)	Aca (%)	Future (%)	Past (%)	PR (%)	Reason (%)	Inter (%)	Elabo (%)	Rep (%)	Dire (%)	Narra (%)	Char (%)
M1	4.12	2.44	4.75	5.15	8.13	0.88	1.26	1.24	4.04	0.78	3.56	8.20	0.52	1.38	2.96
M2	4.34	2.51	4.03	5.56	7.77	1.18	0.84	1.62	4.45	0.76	3.27	8.56	0.77	1.19	2.87
M3	4.53	2.63	4.01	5.61	7.90	1.12	0.87	1.57	3.79	1.17	3.19	8.05	0.86	1.19	3.41
M4	3.62	2.43	4.57	6.24	7.63	1.08	1.22	1.24	3.15	0.84	3.20	7.54	0.78	1.47	3.47
M5	4.60	2.47	3.77	5.21	7.51	1.24	0.99	1.39	3.91	1.38	3.82	8.34	1.02	1.28	3.03
D1	4.42	2.65	4.14	6.63	7.75	1.07	0.90	1.77	3.71	1.40	3.16	9.13	1.29	1.15	2.61
D2	4.88	2.38	2.94	6.73	7.73	1.17	0.95	1.52	3.29	1.29	3.46	8.63	1.43	1.24	2.75
D3	4.53	2.06	3.14	6.04	8.16	1.58	1.36	1.73	3.59	1.23	3.31	8.25	1.04	1.73	2.08
X1	3.88	1.88	3.69	9.83	9.70	1.61	0.42	1.45	1.74	0.82	2.96	8.25	1.32	1.35	1.94
X2	3.61	1.91	3.36	10.14	10.47	1.56	0.38	1.49	1.93	0.65	2.75	8.64	1.67	1.18	1.76

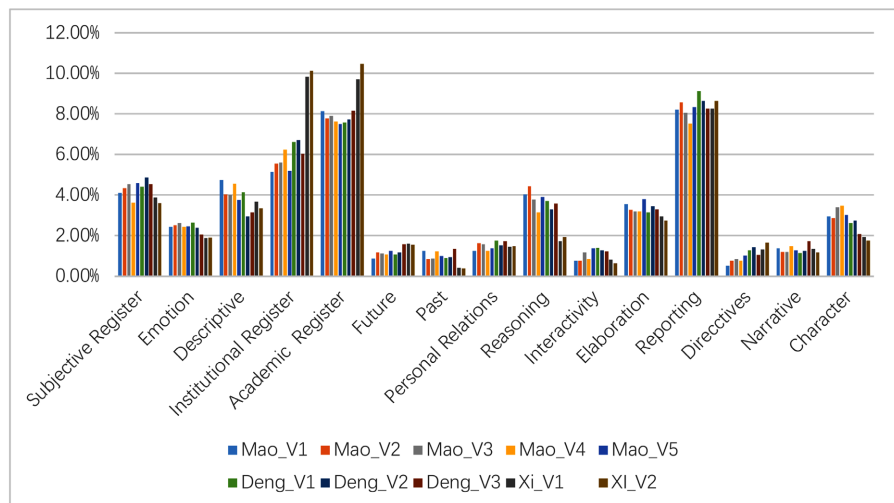


Figure 4. The bar chart of rhetorical features of each volume of selected works of Mao Tse Dung, selected works of Deng Xiaoping, and The Governance of China.

Figure 4 highlights that the Institutional Register, Academic Register, and Reporting in each volume of Mao, Deng, and Xi achieve the highest scores. Accord-

ing to **Table 3**, the Institutional Register and Academic Register in Governance of China II rate the highest among the ten texts and each volume of Deng the second. Except for Institutional Register in Mao IV, accounting for 6.24%, the rest of Mao stays at about 5%. Compared to the other translated works in the first and second periods, The Governance of China I and II show the highest ratio of Academic Register. Report in each volume of Deng has the highest proportion, up to 9.13%.

Regarding Reasoning, The Governance of China I accounts for 1.74%, and the second volume 1.93%. Emotion in The Governance of China I and II has the lowest ratio, up to 1.88% and 1.91%, and Subjective Register in the Governance of China I and II has the lowest ratio, up to 3.88% and 3.61%. Descriptive in Deng is 2.94%, the lowest of all volumes. In addition, Descriptive in China I and II Governance is also lower than in other volumes. Future in The Governance of China I has the highest proportion, Mao Vol.1 the lowest. Personal relations between each Mao, Deng, and Xi volume show the highest ratio. The Governance of China II reaches 2398 words in Inclusiveness, accounting for 1.34% of the total. Under Interactivity, The Governance of China I and II stay at a lower ratio, simply 0.82% and 0.65%, and the Governance of China II hits the lowest. Interpretation in The Governance of China I and II ranks the lowest, at around 2.96% and 2.75%, respectively, while elaboration in every volume of Mao maintains over 3%, and that in Mao Vol.1 to Mao Vol.4 is even higher than Mao Vol.5, indicating up to 3.82%. The Directive in The Governance of China II ranks the highest, accounting for 1.67%, as opposed to the lowest ratio of Mao Vol.1, Vol.2, Vol.3, and Vol.4. The ratio of Elaboration in each volume is similar, at an average of 1.30%. Unlike the other volumes, the Character in each volume of Mao shows the salient characteristics of multiple roles. In Mao IV, the total number of Person Class is 5186 words, accounting for 3.47%.

6. The Causes of Rhetorical Features of English Translation of Chinese Political Discourse

6.1. Common Rhetorical Features and Causes

First, the commonalities of the rhetorical features of the English translation of Chinese political discourse can be summarized based on the following two aspects. Institutional Register, Academic Register, and Reporting of the English translation of Chinese political discourse in the three periods rank the highest, proving that abstract terms, specialized expressions, and citations are broadly seen throughout the translation of Chinese political discourse. The translation of Chinese political discourse shares common characteristics and no observable changes are discovered in the three historical periods. Descriptive, Subjective Register, Interpretation, and Reasoning in the translations of Chinese political discourse in three historical periods remain at the lower ratio, proving that fewer expressions of Descriptive, Interpretative, Constructive Reasoning, Contingent Reasoning, and Oppositional Reasoning emerge in the translated Chinese political discourse. As highlighted by [Chen \(2014\)](#), a senior translator, the traditional ST-first trans-

lations of China's political discourse are often rigid and thus difficult to be accepted by foreigners and more accurate and idiomatic English expressions are needed to enhance the acceptability of translated political texts and speeches to foreigners. This shift in institutional orientation on the translator's performance is echoed in [Li and Li's \(2015\)](#) study.

Aristotle put forward three kinds of rhetorical arguments, of which Logos originates from the problem itself, with its meaning evolving from "voice" to "reasoning" or "logic" ([Crowley & Hawhee, 2008](#)), now referred to as "argumentation" ([Baumtrog, 2018](#)). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca state that the rhetorical argument refers to the ability to interact, study, understand and perform practical activities to solve problems. The expressions of society's nature ([Tindale, 2015](#)) and the goal of argumentation are to strengthen the audience's beliefs or views suggested by the speaker until they can be identified ([Wang, 2019](#)). Moreover, the translation of Chinese political discourse reframes the Chinese rhetorical discourse. The rationality of the texts endows the translators' rhetorical crafts adopted in rendering the Chinese political discourse. Unfortunately, the low ratio of Reasoning in the ten translated political discourses over the three periods reveals flawed arguments in translated texts. The following example can exemplify this.

1) Only by upholding socialism with Chinese characteristics can we bring together and lead the whole Party, the whole nation, and the people of all ethnic groups in realizing a moderately prosperous society by the centenary of the CPC in 2021 and in turning China into a prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious modern socialist country by the centenary of the People's Republic of China in 2049, to ensure the people greater happiness and the nation a brighter future."

The statement above is not persuasive enough to claim that if Chinese people do not uphold socialism with Chinese characteristics, they cannot bring together and lead the entire Party, nation, and the people of all ethnic groups in realizing a moderately prosperous society, violating the Western rhetorical argument which requires facts and evidence. Thus, the unreliable premise leads to an unconvincing conclusion. To make a compelling argument, rhetoricians who craft rhetorical appeals must offer a credible premise; frothy discourse may bring forth unclear communication and arouse negative comments.

Second, "A rhetorical 'appeal' as the magic pull and as the grounding for argument, an appeal to something or someone" must be appealing ([Fulkerson, 2007](#)). "Rhetorical appeals" utilized by politicians aim to induce emotions like sympathy, recognition, fear, anger, etc. The proper rhetorical appeal may make the audience loyal to a country, authorities, or organization. Modern rhetoric enriches the meaning of classical rhetorical appeals and expands the "rhetorical appeals" to transformation, for example, "appeals always involve such acts of transformation and substitution" ([Killingsworth, 2005](#)). The politicians transform conflicting attitudes into common forms by establishing new and strengthening old unity, or revealing distance and similarity to resolve antagonism. "The identification de-

depends upon the power of the appeal to close the distance” (Killingsworth, 2005). The ideology and speech norms of the original language manifest themselves in the writings of political elites, and they bear the original language’s cultural representations when translated into the target language. In Burke’s words, these peculiar elements and values are “the rhetoric of attitude”; thus, the resistance of target readers proves natural. Carlos (2009) stated that Western audience had turned values and attitudes toward the other culture into stereotypes, and this instinctive resistance can make them resistant to the cultural Other. In a similar context, the translator is like the addresser facing a hostile audience, and must find a way to attract these potentially resistant addressees who cannot take the original language (ibid.).

Nevertheless, Personal Relations and Interaction rank lower in the English translations of political elites’ works, indicating that Chinese political discourse lacks interactivity with potential Western audience. The low scores of narratives in the translated works showcase that the translations of political discourse rely on a high degree of formality and institutionalization. The lower emotional ratio implies that the translated works cannot arouse the Western audience’s emotions and fail to relate with the audience. Close to six illogical expressions and grammatical errors are found in the publisher’s notes of *The Governance of China II*. For instance, “Together they have created Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era...in all respects, in striving for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, in achieving the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation, and in reaching the people’s aspirations for a better life”. A grammatical error is identified in the underlined part of the sentence, and the translation consists of 7 lines and 66 words. According to the grammarian Wylie (2020), whenever the sentence exceeds 43 words, the reader can only understand 10% of the content. The sentence above counts far more than 43 words. Inevitably, the lengthy sentence will weaken the translation efficacy behind the message. Additionally, the identification process implies that translators must conquer the obstacles and remove the barriers between Chinese political discourse and Western audience. The translator representing the original author and the audience, must fight against inertial resistance, establish common ground with the audience, and utilize the rhetorical appeal of “Identification by antithesis” to break down the barriers between the translation and the audience, achieving the ultimate “Identification”.

Translation studies of political discourse consider translation as an act of mediation to advance an ideological agenda. Regardless of the translator’s ideology, specific language choices must be made in response to Western audience in each rhetorical situation. Exporting political discourse to the outside world is necessary to soften and weaken the audience’s hostility, avoid offending the audience’s values, and identify common problems or enemies. As such, the translator must resort to the rhetorical appeal of “Identification by antithesis”.

The LATs-based Rhetorical Features of Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, and *The Governance of China over Three His-*

torical Periods (1960-2017)

6.2. The Individual Rhetorical Features of Translation of Political Discourse

The rhetorical feature analyzed by DocuScope3.40 can be summarized into the following three aspects.

First, the rhetorical features of *The Governance of China I and II* in the new era prove more prominent than those during the other two periods. Among the ten texts, Volumes 1 and 2 of *The Governance of China* have the highest ratio of Institutional Register, Academic Register, and Reporting, highlighting that language and message in the translation of political discourse in the new era primarily involve rights and obligations, media resources, public responsibility, deliberations, and court language. Regarding rhetorical effectiveness, the more specialized the discourse, the more cognitively restrained the audience, and the more undesirable the communicative effect. Furthermore, the low Reasoning in *The Governance of China I and II* indicates that the translator uses fewer logical connectives. Hence, the Chinese-to-English translation of political discourse requires more logic and persuasive force.

Second, rhetorical appeals relate to emotions, beliefs, and instincts, but argument is directly related to reasoning. According to Burke (1950), if you want to promote or inspire people to oppose a policy, you must analyze the audience's perception of justice and their standards of injustice and the desirable and undesirable characters, and stimulate its attitude, similar values, and emotions, to narrow the distance between the audience. Rhetorical appeals are inseparable from rhetorical motivation. Linguistic variables represent the manifestation of rhetorical appeals. The rhetorical strategy of "Identification by sympathy" is linked to the audience's reception of the translation of Chinese political discourse.

The think tank of former US President George W. Bush advocated populist tenets. Thanks to "Identification by sympathy", the emotional appeal of grief in the speeches, the connection with the audience is strengthened, and a favorable rhetorical effect is achieved. Following the analytical data, the lowest emotional power is exposed in *The Governance of China I and II*. Thus, the translated version cannot stimulate the audience's empathy and cognitive experience (like success, fear, anger, etc.), and the Subjective Register, similar to Emotion, remains the same. Conversely, a failure might be observed in the translation of Mao's use of historical references, where the cultural context was lost, leading to a diminished impact on readers unfamiliar with Chinese history. The lowest degree of "Identification by Sympathy" in the translation testifies that, as for Chinese leaders, it is challenging to achieve the expected communicative effect. For example, novel expressions in the publisher's note like "Five-point Strategy" 五位一体, "Two Centenary Goals" 两个百年奋斗目标, "Four-pronged Strategy" 四个全面战略布局 and "the Chinese Dream" 中国梦 pose challenges for the Western audience to grasp their meaning. Aside from the "Chinese Dream," the outputs have not been explained. The abstract and technical terms will inevitably weaken the

audience's enthusiasm, much less achieve identification with the audience. In *The Governance of China II*, there are 34 “群众路线” *qunzhong luxian* in total, all translated as “The Mass Line.” *The Economist* (Oct 5th, 2013) published an article titled *Critical masses: Getting closer to the people*, which primarily discusses “the Mass Line” of the Chinese Communist Party. “Getting closer to the people” should equal the Chinese “Mass line” 走群众路线 (Tang, 2018: 351). In fact, “the masses” can be substituted for “the public,” “non-governmental,” or “the people,” reducing the defamiliarization due to the translation.

Lempert and Silverstein (2012) argue that “Identification” is required for political communication to establish joint membership. Using plain and straightforward language can create light-hearted, non-contradictory air, increasing intimacy (*ibid.*). Political speakers resort to various methods to align with the audience so that they can comprehend the information conveyed by the addresser, projecting it onto themselves, establishing different relationships with various social roles in the political discourse, and finally aligning with the translators. This is the ultimate goal of Chinese political discourse since Burke (1950) said that finding apolitical aesthetics must resort to politics and vice versa. The cross-cultural communication and translation of political discourse rely on maintaining closeness to the audience. Thus, a sufficient “Identification by Sympathy” mode may help stir an audience's emotions.

Third, “Identification by inaccuracy” requires the rhetorical speaker to utilize specific words, pictures, and symbolic means to push the audience to involuntarily imagine themselves as belonging to the same category as the rhetorician or as described by the rhetorician. For instance, the transcendent We belong to the persuaded party, and the speaker uses “we” to subtly classify the audience as the same group. The rhetorical speaker may drive or navigate the audience in innovative ways. In Western political discourse, politicians can use appellatives and personal pronouns when interacting with the audience. For example, Obama took advantage of “we” 98 times in his 4636-word speech and established a harmonious relationship with the audience by utilizing the pronoun “We” (Reyes, 2015). “We” indicates that political elites actively position their relationship with audience, empowering them to frame the future political agenda.

Since the goal of translation of Chinese political discourse is to move away from the author to the Western audience with whom the translators share mutual values, the effectiveness of rhetorical appeals decides to what extent the audience can move from disintegration to convergence. Burke's rhetorical appeal, “Identification by inaccuracy,” associates variables with various levels of intimacy, shedding light on the inclusive relationship between political speakers and audience in communicative activities. During the translation of Chinese political discourse, translators should point to the essential importance of “We” in the transmission of political discourse values since “We” may navigate the way and establish “homogeneity” with the audience. *The Governance of China I and II* falling under the category of Personal Relationships indicate that translators of Chinese political works in the new era have begun to realize the critical importance of interpersonal

relationships. Adding personal pronouns during translations can improve communication (Zhou, 2020). Inclusiveness in *The Governance of China* reached 2398 words which powerfully highlights that the translators of political works in this period paid more attention to the rhetorical strategy of “Identification by inaccuracy”.

7. Conclusion

This study builds up the corpus of the translation works of Chinese political leaders to analyze the language action types through Docuscope 3.40 platform and discusses the rhetorical characteristics of the English translation of Chinese political discourse. According to the results, the translated texts of Chinese political discourse in the three periods displayed a high degree of similarity. The extensive abstract language and the common citations culminate in the highest proportion of Institutional Register, Academic Register, and Reporting in the translated texts during three different periods. In contrast, the ratios of Description, Subjective Register, Interpretation, Reasoning, and Character maintain lower levels, manifesting increasingly complex syntax and textual concepts, weaker logic, fewer characters, and poorer storytelling.

Moreover, Personal Relationship, Interaction, Narrative, Imperatives, and Emotion in the translations of political elites’ works throughout the three periods are at the bottom, proving that the translated works lack interactivity with potential audience. Based on suggestions, the rhetorical appeal of “Identification by sympathy” and “Identification by inaccuracy” may help identify with the audience. The rhetorical analysis of the translated texts in the coming era found that the ratio of Institutional Register and Academic Register in *The Governance of China I and II* is at the highest point, indicating that Chinese politicians’ writings in the new era are intensely specialized. Thus, the more specialized the texts, the higher the cognitive level the readership must meet, and the less valid the cross-cultural communication. Still, the lowest ratio of Reasoning in *The Governance of China I and II* suggest that logical connectives are seldom used. Likewise, the lowest ratio of Emotion and Subjective Register in *The Governance of China I and II* indicates that the translated text is inadequate for the arousal of emotional concerns of the audience.

Given the diachronically comparative results of rhetorical features of Chinese to English translation of political discourse, it is revealed that the norm-governed institutional translators in three different historical periods perform similarly. Moreover, the faithful rendition strategy of Chinese political discourse remains intact. However, the insufficient use of Rhetorical means of “Identification by sympathy,” “Identification by inaccuracy,” and “Identification by antithesis” contribute to the unfavorable acceptability of Chinese political discourse.

Future research is encouraged to verify the impact of social cultural contexts on shifts in translation strategies through a comparative analysis of the political and social climate during each other’s tenure. For example, during Deng’s era, there was a greater emphasis on economic reform language, which required translations to

adapt to a more pragmatic tone. This contextual awareness was crucial in guiding the translation approach to align with contemporary audience expectations. Future translations may also be better equipped to incorporate rhetorical appeals like “identification by antithesis” by adopting a more dynamic approach to cultural adaptation. This could involve training translators to recognize and utilize culturally relevant contrasts that resonate with target audiences, thereby enhancing cross-cultural communication. A focus on audience analysis could further refine how these rhetorical devices are employed in translation.

Human Ethics and Consent to Participate

No applicable.

Authors' Contributions

YS was in charge of data coding and analysis and writing the draft of the manuscript. SH helped check the coding of the data analysis and proofreading of the manuscript. LW was in charge of commenting on the draft of the manuscript and helped clarify aspects of the analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Funding

This work is supported by funds from Zhejiang Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences, China, “The study of the English Translation and Dissemination of the Travel Accounts Related to the Maritime Silk Road during the Yuan Dynasty” [grant number 2025N144], The Horizontal Research Fund, “Error Classification in Chinese-English Machine Translation and Post-Editing Studies” [grant number H20240041], The Social Science Fund of Hunan Province, “A Study of Mary Zimmerman’s Theatre Adaptation from Traditional Chinese Novels” [grant number 21WLH08], The National Social Science Fund of China, “The Study of English Translation and Database Construction for Chinese Online Novels” [grant number 21BYY199] and The Ministry of Education of Humanities and Social Science Project, China, “A Study of China-Related Political Discourse in the U.S. Mainstream Media” [grant number 19YJA740053].

Data Availability

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The study did not require any ethical review and approval as it complied with China’s legislation and university requirements.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Abbreviations

LAT	Language Action Types
STV	Single-Text Viewer
MTV	Multiple-Text Viewer
Deng.txt	Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volumes 1-3)
Mao.txt	Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung (Volumes 1-5)
Xi.txt	the Governance of China (Volumes 1-2)
Mao_V1	Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung Volume 1
Mao_V2.	Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung Volume 2
Mao_V3	Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung Volume 3
Mao_V4	Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung Volume 4
Mao_V5	Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung Volume 5
Deng_V1	Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping Volume 1
Deng_V2.	Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping Volume 2
Deng_V3.	Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping Volume 3
Xi_V1	The Governance of China I
Xi_V2	The Governance of China II