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The Evolution of Metaphorical Language in Contemporary Chinese Political Discourse

Preliminary Evidence from the 12th and 18th CPC Congresses

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Abstract The tools provided by corpus linguistics and textometric analysis, applied to a number of official speeches delivered by the leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) during its Congress, provide useful insight into the evolution of the linguistic material and discursive strategies used in official communication, especially when focusing on the period between the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the present day. In the post-Mao era, the progressive construction of a new political, socio-economic, and cultural context, along with the renegotiation or obsolescence of certain concepts and models, inevitably yields its specific vocabulary and rhetorical patterns, which can be detected both quantitatively and qualitatively. One of the most interesting levels of analysis in contemporary Chinese political discourse is the use of figurative language: by resorting to a preliminary textometric analysis conducted on the reports delivered at the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congresses, the main figurative devices observable in Chinese political discourse will be located and commented upon, investigating their diachronic transformation and significance in a changing context.

Summary 1 Chinese Political Discourse and Figurative Language: the State of the Art. – 2 Corpus, Methodology, and Expected Results. – 3 The Characteristics of Ccpd and the Significance of Metaphorical Language. – 4 Some Preliminary Textometric Findings from The 1982 And 2012 Cpc Congress Reports. – 5 Some Observations on the Evolution of Metaphorical Language in Ccpd. – 6 Conclusions.

Keywords Chinese Political Discourse. Metaphorical Language. 12th CPC Congress. 18th CPC Congress.

1 Chinese Political Discourse and Figurative Language: the State of the Art

The analysis of political language and discourse is a well studied field of research in Euro-American scholarship (Fairclough 1989; Wilson 1990; Feldman, Landtsheer 1998; Chilton, Schäffner 2002; Chilton 2004 etc.).

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The focus on political communication also enters into several studies on figurative language, with special reference to metaphor (Kövecses 2002, Charteris-Black 2004 etc.). Moreover, a number of works have appeared that specifically investigate the use of metaphorical language in the public sphere (Musolff 2004; Beer, Landtsheer 2004; Carver, Pikalo 2008 etc.).

In scholarship focusing on China, whereas classical rhetoric has received extensive attention, the analysis of modern and contemporary political language and discourse is a comparatively recent field of research. Some of the most comprehensive article-length Chinese-language studies in this specific domain include Tian Hailong's 田海龙 pioneering work (2002) and Li Dekun's 李德昆 analysis (2010). A noteworthy contribution to this topic is Zhang Li's 张犁 (2008, 2009) research, whose merit lies in investigating some rhetorical devices – including metaphors – in contemporary Chinese political discourse (hereinafter CCPD), as well as the possibilities for their translation into English.

A number of English-language studies also contribute to research in this field. Schoenhals (1992) analyzes instances of pragmatic use of language in Chinese officialdom, whereas Hodge and Louie's (1998) work involves a section exploring CCPD from a semiotic perspective. Ji (2004) and Lu (2004) painstakingly enumerate and analyze, respectively, the characteristics and outcome of the 'linguistic engineering' that characterized the years of high Maoism, and the impact of such rhetoric on thought, culture, and communication. A special focus on the Mao era, and chiefly on the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), is also present in a number of previous studies centered on figurative and symbolic language, terminology, pragmatics, and semantics (Li 1958; Hsia 1961, 1963, 1964; Chuang 1967, 1968; Dittmer, Chen 1981 etc.).

Shifting the focus onto recent scholarship on the post-Mao period, Qian Gang's (2012) articles on the nature and evolution of the 'watchwords' typical of CCPD, published only weeks before the 18th CPC congress, provide interesting insights into a number of political concepts and the way they are communicated. Alvaro (2013) also investigates extensively the features of certain typical features of CCPD in English translation. In the French-speaking community, Salem and Wu (2007) have applied the tools provided by textometrics to the analysis of the reports to the Communist Party of China (hereinafter CPC) congresses. In Italian sinology, the studies by Lavagnino (2001), Stafutti and Ajani (2008), and Bulfoni (2010), which address the topic from a chiefly lexical perspective, must also be mentioned.

Perry Link's (2013) latest book devotes one chapter to metaphor and one to contemporary official discourse in the PRC. Link's in-depth analysis of rhythmic patterns and figurative devices applied to the manifold aspects of the 'language game' that can be observed in Chinese political life is highly relevant to whoever undertakes the task of investigating the

relationship between official language and metaphor, as is the case of the present study. However, with the exception of Link's monograph and a few Chinese-language studies (Liu 2007, Chen 2007), the rhetorical devices and the use of figurative language in today's Chinese public sphere remain almost unexplored both within and outside the Chinese-speaking academic community.

2 Corpus, Methodology, and Expected Results

The present study is part of a broader project focusing on the evolution of post-Mao Chinese political discourse and rhetoric, whose aim is to investigate the evolution of figurative language and the emergence of new political concepts and re-emergence of traditional stylemes, as well as to explore the possibilities for their translation into other languages (Magagnin 2014). To do so, it is crucial to identify metaphors in the texts analyzed, to outline their function and significance, and to suggest the possible reasons for their evolution.

The texts selected for this preliminary study are the full transcripts of the reports delivered at the 12th and the 18th National Congresses of the CPC respectively, as they appear on the *Xinhua News* website.¹ The first report, entitled *Quanmian kaichuang shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe de xin jumian* 全面开创社会主义现代化建设的新局面 (Creating a new situation in the building of a socialist modernization in all respects), was delivered by the then-General Secretary of the CPC Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 on 1 September 1982. The second speech, titled *Jian ding bu yi yanzhe Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi daolu qianjin, wei quanmian jiancheng xiaokang shehui er fendou* 坚定不移沿着中国特色社会主义道路前进为全面建成小康社会而奋斗 (Firmly march on the path of Socialism with Chinese characteristics and strive to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects), was pronounced by then-General Secretary and President of the PRC Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 on 8 November 2012.

The CPC National Congress had taken place on an irregular basis since the foundation of the Party, in 1921. However, only with the 11th Congress (1977) – the first to be held after Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 (1893-1976) death and the official end of the Cultural Revolution – did the Congress begin to be held on a regular five-year basis. Moreover, starting from the 11th Congress, the report delivered by the Secretary General has maintained an essentially fixed length of about 30,000 Chinese characters (Qian 2012). The introductory speech summarizes the work carried out by the Party in

1 With the exception of all paratextual features (title, dates, names of contributors, additional information etc.) that are not part of the original speeches as they were pronounced.

all domains in the last five years, setting its guidelines for the near future. Besides its crucial significance at the political level, this specific form of public speech also carries a number of important linguistic implications. In fact, the emergence, disappearance or reworking of conventional expressions linked to a specific political discourse may signal an evolution in the political line adopted by the Party, as well as a change in its internal dynamics.

This specific form of official discourse has been selected for the purpose of this research because, as the opening act of the paramount event in the political life of the PRC, it contains and sums up the most representative features of the language used in the sphere of officialdom. The choice of the two texts, which are separated by an exact thirty-year interval, has been made on the basis of a homogeneity principle: the reports are very similar in terms of length (31,660 and 29,146 characters respectively), and both of them belong to the post-Mao period. Here, a note must be made: although the first to be held after Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution was actually the 11th Congress (1977), scholars tend to consider its content a continuation of the Maoist radical agenda (Dittmer 1983, pp. 108-109), pointing out how it is still heavily influenced by the discursive features typical of the Cultural Revolution (Salem, Wu 2007, p. 8). The introductory speech at the 12th Congress has therefore been retained as the first representative congress report of the new era, allowing for the definition of a more homogeneous corpus.

By drawing inspiration from Musolff's (2004) inquiry into the use of metaphor in the public sphere of the European Union, and resorting to the notion of *conceptual domain* (hereinafter CD) elaborated by Lakoff and Johnson ([1980] 2003), a preliminary close reading of the two texts was carried out, in order to locate the keywords belonging to the different CDs and to record the number of their occurrences (*tokens*). A further verification was then conducted on such tokens, in order to identify the context in which they appear and select only those used in a metaphorical sense. Within the framework of critical metaphor analysis (Charteris-Black 2004), this first phase corresponds to that of *identification*. The second step is *interpretation*, i.e. the identification of the instances of *conceptual metaphor*, hereinafter CM (Lakoff, Johnson [1980] 2003), supplemented by an analysis of the most conspicuous diachronic variations observable in specific keywords. Interpretation is then followed by *explanation*, aimed at outlining the discursive functions of such CMs in the two texts analyzed. To do so, a number of metaphorical expressions of particular significance from the two reports will be selected and commented upon, in order to provide a tentative outline of the evolution of figurative language in post-Mao political communication.

3 The Characteristics of CCPD and the Significance of Metaphorical Language

Before examining the use and evolution of metaphor in the selected corpus, an outline of the peculiar features of CCPD must be provided. Chinese political language is marked by a strong emphasis on propaganda, conveyed through the use of standardized expressions (*tifa* 提法) and conventional allusions: such expressions reflect the essentially formulaic nature of such language, both at the lexical and segmental level (e.g. the repetition of specific syntactic patterns), but also act as political signals, since they trigger association with a specific political discourse (Qian 2012; Renwick, Cao 2003, p. 72). Furthermore, compared with the prescriptive language of Maoism, contemporary political communication shows a more careful use of slogans (*kouhao* 口号). The use of four-character expressions (*sizi jiegou* 四字结构) – typically *chengyu* 成语 and VOVO constructions – and pseudo-classical formations is extremely frequent. Semantic neologisms and loanwords from languages for special purposes can also be observed (Bulfoni 2010), although to a slightly lesser extent than the devices listed above. At the lexical level, a major role is played by polysyllabic Western-derived abstract nouns that, together with empty verbs (e.g. *jinxing* 进行 carry out) and recurring adverbs and modifiers (e.g. *yiding* 一定 a certain, *xiangdang* 相当 quite etc.), carry an air of scientific irrefutability (Link 2013, pp. 246-248). Lastly, what is especially significant to the present research is the massive use of metaphorical expressions, reflecting the general preference for evocative language (*yihui* 意会) over the pragmatic, as well as the use of other rhetorical devices, such as antithesis (*dui'ou* 对偶) and parallelism (*paibi* 排比) (Zhang 2009).

From the point of view of text typology, as stated above, the CPC Congress report is a particular form of political speech that is typical of the Chinese context: its main purpose is to outline the objectives already achieved (as well as the problems still unsolved) over the past five years, and to announce the political agenda to be adopted by the CPC in the near future. To use Jakobson's (1960) classification, then, the textual function of this type of political speech can be seen as chiefly *referential*, as it focuses on the extralinguistic reality; however, it also possesses a strong *conative function*, centered on the recipient of the message (in this case, CPC membership at all levels, and, more widely, the people of China). Therefore, the two texts analyzed reveal a clear proactive intent: they aim at favoring cohesion, building consensus and national unity, emphasizing the appropriateness of the results achieved and future goals. From this perspective, the reasons for the centrality and pervasiveness of figurative language, and particularly metaphor, can be easily understood: in fact, metaphorical language is mainly used to convey emotional experience, to cultivate intimacy, to establish or transform the conceptual perspective of the recipient, and

ultimately to call to action or to carry out problem-solving (Goatly 1997, p. 149). This explains why, particularly in political discourse, the function of metaphor is not so much to interpret the world as to *change* it, to echo the title of Carver and Pikalo's study (2008). The following sections will provide an account of the use of metaphorical language in the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, pointing out the main features of its diachronic transformations.

4 Some Preliminary Textometric Findings from The 1982 And 2012 Cpc Congress Reports

After locating the keywords appearing in the two reports and subsequently grouping them into CDs, the following general classification could be outlined:²

- **journey and navigation:**³ *luxian* 路线 (route), *daolu* 道路 (road), *zou* 走 (to walk), *fangxiang* 方向 (direction), *fangzhen* 方针 (orientation), *zhidao* 指导 (guidance; to guide), *jinbu* 进步 (progress; to advance), *jiakuai* 加快 (to accelerate), *maishang* 迈上, *qianjin* 前进, *tuijin* 推进 (to advance) etc.;
- **human body:** *liliang* 力量 (strength), *shengming* 生命 (life), *shengmingli* 生命力 (vitality), *jiaqiang* 加强 (to strengthen), *jingli* 精力 (energy), *huoli* 活力 (vigor), *jiankang* 健康 (health; healthy) etc.;
- **war:** *qizhi* 旗帜 (flag, banner), *dailing* 带领 (to lead into battle), *qianlie* 前列 (front rank), *shengli* 胜利 (victory; to win), *fendou* 奋斗 (struggle; to struggle), *zhanlue* 战略 (strategy), *jiefang* 解放 (liberation), *wuqi* 武器 (weapon) etc.;
- **space and size:** *tigao* 提高 (to raise), *kuoda* 扩大 (to extend), *shenhua* 深化 (to deepen), *kaizhan* 开展 (to expand) etc.;
- **building:** *jianshe* 建设, *jiancheng* 建成 (to build), *jianli* 建立 (to establish), *jichu* 基础 (foundation), *jidi* 基地 (basis) etc.;
- **family:** *tongbao* 同胞 (compatriot), *jiayuan* 家园 (home, homeland), *ernü* 儿女 (children), *pengyou* 朋友 (friend) etc.;
- **botany:** *ben* 本, *genben* 根本 (root), *chengguo* 成果 (fruit, result) etc.;

2 Given the comparatively limited size of the selected texts, this data was gathered by resorting to the tools provided by the Pages text-processing software in the Apple iWork suite, instead of using one of the concordance softwares (e.g. ICTCLAS) usually employed in the textometric analysis of Chinese-language texts. The graphs appearing in the article have been prepared using the Apple Numbers spreadsheet software.

3 Although Chinese-language scholarship using the notion of CD tends to keep the 'journey' and 'navigation' CDs separated, in the present study the two have been unified for reasons of convenience.

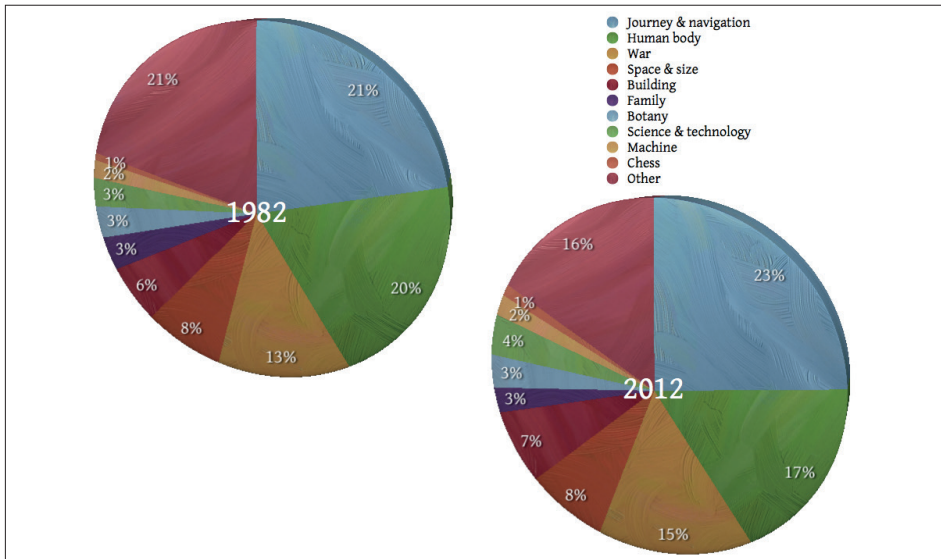
| CDs | | keywords | | tokens | | productivity | |
|-----|----------------------|----------|------|--------|-------|--------------|--------|
| | | 1982 | 2012 | 1982 | 2012 | 1982 | 2012 |
| 1 | journey & navigation | 122 | 130 | 594 | 690 | 72,468 | 89,700 |
| 2 | human body | 114 | 97 | 509 | 638 | 58,026 | 61,886 |
| 3 | war | 75 | 85 | 368 | 391 | 27,600 | 33,235 |
| 4 | space & size | 45 | 45 | 216 | 330 | 9,720 | 14,850 |
| 5 | building | 33 | 41 | 330 | 451 | 10,890 | 18,491 |
| 6 | family | 19 | 14 | 38 | 46 | 722 | 644 |
| 7 | botany | 18 | 18 | 88 | 174 | 1,584 | 3,132 |
| 8 | science & technology | 16 | 22 | 45 | 88 | 720 | 1,936 |
| 9 | machine | 10 | 11 | 33 | 85 | 330 | 935 |
| 10 | chess | 4 | 6 | 20 | 32 | 80 | 192 |
| 11 | other | 120 | 91 | 372 | 384 | 44,640 | 34,944 |
| | total | 576 | 560 | 2,613 | 3,309 | | |

Graph 1. Keywords, tokens, and productivity for each CD in the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports

- **science and technology:** *yali* 压力 (pressure), *zhongdian* 重点 (focal point), *pingheng* 平衡 (balance) etc.;
- **machine:** *dongli* 动力 (power), *jizhi* 机制 (mechanism), *yunxing* 运行 (to be in motion), *gongneng* 功能 (function) etc.;
- **chess:** *quanju* 全局 (overall situation), *jumian* 局面 (phase, situation), *buju* 布局 (position of pieces) etc.;
- **other:** *taijie* 台阶 (flights of steps), *shishi* 史诗 (epic), *huida* 回答 (answer), *guangming* 光明 (bright) etc.

After identifying the source domains and the specific keywords in which such domains are articulated, a count of the tokens was conducted in the two reports, excluding the instances of keywords used in a non-metaphorical sense (e.g. the occurrences of the word *wuqi* 武器 ‘weapon’, when used in the actual sense of a device designed for inflicting physical damage, as is the case in the sections covering the situation of China’s national defense system, were excluded from the computation). The quantitative information thus obtained for the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports is outlined in graph 1 (the additional index introduced in the third column, *productivity*, will be discussed below).

What can be observed at a first glance is the fact that, although the total number of keywords suffers a slight contraction in the 2012 report, the total number of tokens in the latter is remarkably higher. At a more micro-



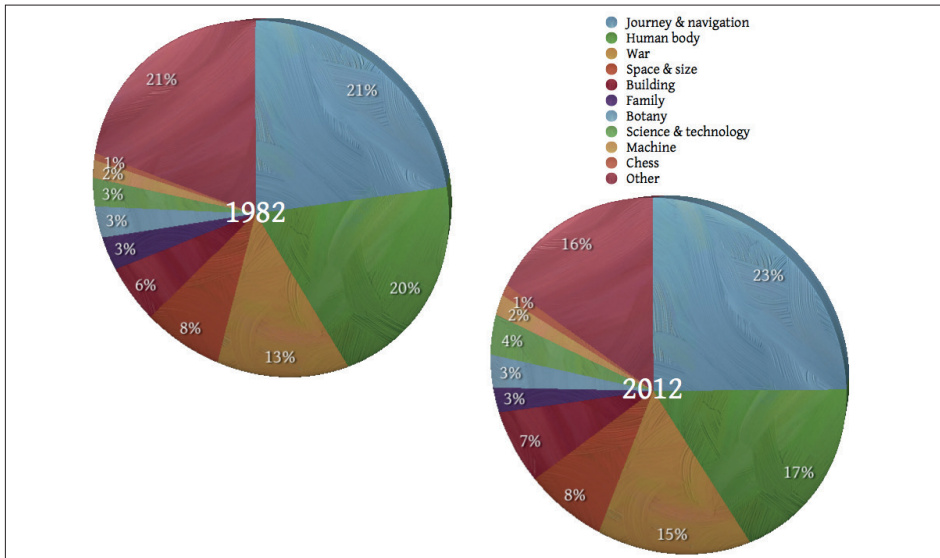
Graph 2. Keywords ratio on the total number of keywords for each CD in the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports

scopic level, in 2012, a decrease in terms of keywords is recorded in some CDs (i.e. ‘human body’, ‘family’, ‘other’), whereas others (‘space and size’ and ‘botany’) remain unchanged; the number of tokens, however, shows a systematic increase for each CD. Therefore, the 2012 text presents a considerably higher metaphorical density than its 1982 counterpart, and this is all the more significant if we consider that it is over 2,500 characters shorter.

For reasons of convenience, the order of the CDs in graph 1 reflects the frequency (higher to lower) of the keywords for each CD as they appear in the 1982 report. Here we will not take into account the ‘other’ category on account of its extreme heterogeneity, which makes it not particularly significant for the purpose of this study. In terms of number of keywords, graph 1 tells us that the order of the first five CDs remains unaltered from 1982 to 2012: ‘journey and navigation’ is predominating, followed by ‘human body’, ‘war’, ‘space and size’, and ‘building’. However, in 2012, ‘family’ is found in eighth place, whereas ‘science and technology’ occupies sixth place in the list. The position of ‘botany’, ‘machine’, and ‘chess’ also remains unaltered in the two reports.

These findings are confirmed by those obtained when quantifying the overall weight of each CD in terms of keywords in the two texts. Graph 2 displays the ratio of keywords belonging to each CD, calculated on the total number of keywords for all the CDs appearing in the 1982 and 2012 speeches.

As shown in graph 2, the order of CDs in terms of keyword ratio

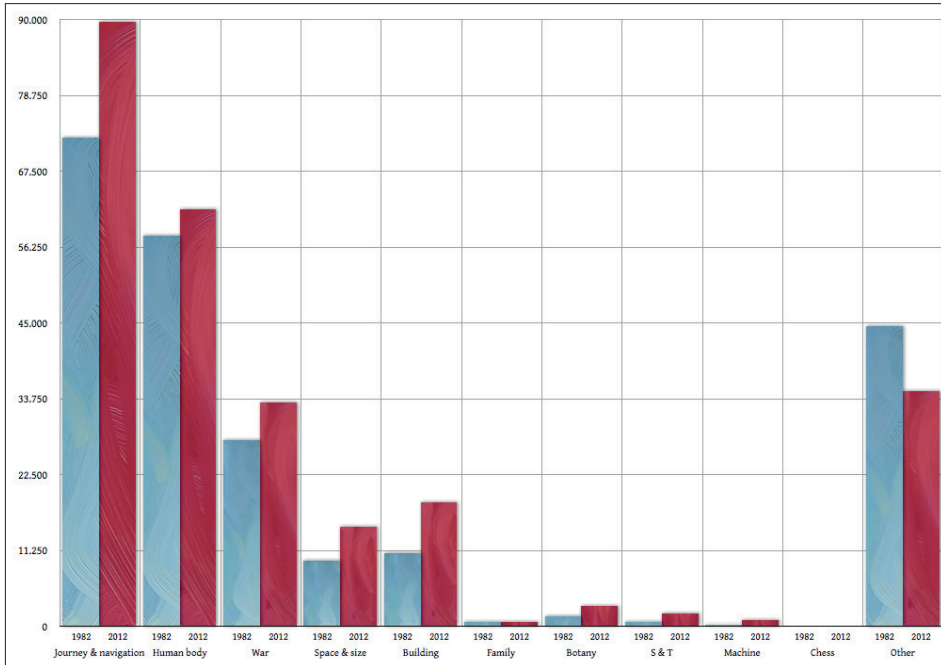


Graph 3. Token ratio on the total number of tokens for each CD in the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports

reflects their sequential position in terms of keyword frequency as outlined in graph 1, with the order of the first five CDs unvaried from 1982 to 2012, whereas sixth and eighth place are occupied by ‘family’ and ‘science and technology’ respectively in 1982, and by the same two CDs, but inverted, in 2012. Graph 2 also exemplifies, in a more apparent way than graph 1, the diachronic variation in the use of certain CDs. For instance, focusing our attention only on the five first CDs, the keywords belonging to the ‘journey and navigation’ CD confirm it to be the most pervasive in terms of metaphorical items employed in the texts analyzed (21% in 1982, increased to 23% in 2012); ‘human body’ undergoes a slight decrease over this 30-year span (from 20% to 17%), whereas ‘war’ rises from 13% to 15%. ‘Space and size’ remains unaltered (8%), whereas ‘building’ also increases (from 6% to 7%).

A similar analysis can be conducted on tokens, calculating the ratio of tokens for each CD, calculated on the total number of tokens for all CDs. The findings for the 1982 and 2012 speeches are shown in graph 3.

The figures in graph 3 seem to essentially mirror the ratio situation outlined in graph 2, suggesting a substantially regular correspondence between keyword ratio and token ratio: for instance, ‘journey and navigation’ has a keyword ratio of 21% in 1982 and 23% in 2012, while its token ratio is 23% and 21% respectively; ‘human body’ has a keyword ratio of 20% in 1982 and 17% in 2012, with a token ratio of 19% and 19% respectively, and so on. However, there is a conspicu-



Graph 4. Productivity of each CD in the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports

ous exception in the ‘building’ CD, whose keyword ratio is 6% in 1982 and 7% in 2012, but which shows a token ratio of 13% and 14% respectively: this means that although the number of keywords for that CD is comparatively small, the metaphorical items belonging to that same CD are extremely prolific.

The third column in graph 1 introduces an additional index – obtained by multiplying the number of keywords by the number of tokens for each CD – that accounts for the role played by a certain CD in the overall metaphorical discourse (Liu 2007) in a more accurate way, namely its *productivity*. This is exemplified by graph 4, which illustrates the productivity of each CD in the 1982 and 2012 speeches.

The productivity criterion allows us to look at the findings from a more comprehensive perspective. Besides corroborating the predominance of the ‘journey and navigation’, ‘human body’ and ‘war’ CDs in both texts, it confirms the relative growth of ‘building’ already mentioned above: in fact, ‘building’ ranks fourth in terms of productivity in both the 1982 and 2012 reports, followed by ‘space and size’. More generally, graph 4 also shows a systematic expansion (although to variable extents) in the productivity of each CD from 1982 to 2012, with the sole exception of ‘family’, which decreases slightly (‘other’ being ignored for the reasons stated above).

In the next section, a qualitative analysis will be carried out on the instances of metaphorical language that can be observed in the corpus, pointing out the significance of certain CDs, interpreting them in order to identify the underlying CMs, and providing a preliminary explanation of the discursive functions of a number of noteworthy metaphorical devices.

5 Some Observations on the Evolution of Metaphorical Language in Ccpd

The opening parts of the 1982 and 2012 CPC Congress reports, namely the lines presenting the main theme of the meetings, introduce most of (if not all) the dominating CDs identified through the textometric analysis illustrated above.

[1.1982] 这次代表大会的使命，就是要通过对过去六年历史性胜利的总结，为进一步肃清十年内乱所遗留的消极后果，全面开创社会主义现代化建设的新局面，确定继续前进的正确道路、战略步骤和方针政策。(my emphasis)

The mission of this congress is to summarize the historical victories obtained in the past sixty years, in order to further remove the negative consequences of the ‘ten years of internal turmoil’, create a new situation in the building of a socialist modernization in all respects, and define the correct path on which to advance, the strategic steps to be taken, and the orientation policies to be adopted.⁴

In this excerpt from 1982, the expressions *jinyibu* 进一步 (to go a step further), *yiliu* 遗留 (to leave behind), *qianjin* 前进 (to advance), *daolu* 道路 (road), *buzhou* 步骤 (step) and *fangzhen* 方针 (orientation) belong to the ‘journey and navigation’ CD; *shiming* 使命 (mission), *shengli* 胜利 (victory) and *zhanlüe* 战略 (strategy) to ‘war;’ *kaichuang* 开创 (to found) and *jianshe* 建设 (to build) to ‘building;’ *houguo* 后果 (fruit i.e. consequence) to ‘botany;’ *jumian* 局面 (situation) to ‘chess;’ and *suqing* 肃清 (to clean up) to ‘other’.

The opening lines of the 2012 report are equally dense in metaphorical expressions:

[2.2012] 大会的主题是：高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜，以邓小平理论、“三个代表”重要思想、科学发展观为指导，解放思想，改革开放，凝聚力量，攻坚克难

⁴ The translation of excerpts from the 1982 report (for which, to my knowledge, no official English translation is available), provided for reference, is my own. The official English translation available on the *Xinhua News* website was used for the passages from the 2012 report.

难，坚定不移沿着中国特色社会主义道路前进，为全面建成小康社会而奋斗。(my emphasis)

The underlying theme of the congress is to hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, follow the guidance of Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development, free up the mind, implement the policy of reform and opening up, pool our strength, overcome all difficulties, firmly march on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and strive to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

The expressions *zhidao* 指导 (guide), *jian ding bu yi* 坚定不移 (unyieldingly), *yanzhe* 沿着 (to follow a path), *daolu* 道路 (road), and *qianjin* 前进 (to advance) belong to the 'journey and navigation' CD; *gaoju... qizhi* 高举旗帜 (to hold high the banner), *jiefang* 解放 (to liberate), *gongjian* 攻坚 (to storm a fortification), and *fendou* 奋斗 (to struggle) are all articulations of the 'war' metaphor; the 'building' CD is represented by *jiancheng* 建成 (to build); 'human body' by *liliang* 力量 (strength); 'science and technology' by *ningju* 凝聚 (to condense).

Even in such short excerpts, the predominance of certain CDs can be observed, namely 'journey and navigation' (6 keywords and 6 tokens in [1.1982], 5 keywords and 5 tokens in [2.2012]) and 'war' (3 keywords and 3 tokens in [1.1982], 5 keywords and 5 tokens in [2.2012]), which hold the first and third position in terms of number of keywords, number of tokens, and productivity in both the 1982 and 2012 reports.

Therefore, relatively limited portions of the two texts show an extremely high conceptual density. In particular, [1.1982] contains such CMs as THE REALIZATION OF SOCIALISM IS A ROAD and HISTORY IS A ROAD, THE PARTY IS AN ARMY and HISTORY IS A BATTLEFIELD, SOCIALISM IS A BUILDING, HISTORY IS A PLANT, THE REALIZATION OF SOCIALISM IS A CHESS GAME, and PROGRESS IS CLEANING. Most of these CMs are also found in [2.2012], which further introduces THE REALIZATION OF SOCIALISM IS A STRUGGLE, SOCIETY IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT, THE PARTY IS A LIVING BEING, and SOCIETY IS A BUILDING.⁵ All these CMs overlap and contribute to the weaving of a solid metaphorical network, which systematically informs the two reports at a deep level.

Further evidence of the relevance of such dominating metaphors is provided by the fact that the strongly metaphorical expressions forming the

5 Following Lakoff and Johnson ([1980] 2003), capital letters are used to distinguish CMs from other clauses.

titles of the 1982 and 2012 speeches are included unaltered into [1.1982] and [2.2012] respectively. Moreover, these CDs and the corresponding CMs deeply structure a number of crucial points in the two speeches, notably the strongly emphatic closing passages:

[3.1982] 让我们全党在马克思列宁主义、毛泽东思想的伟大旗帜下更加紧密地团结起来，让我们党同全国各族人民更加紧密地团结起来，同各民主党派和国内外全体爱国同胞更加紧密地团结起来，同世界上一切支持我们事业的各国进步力量和友好人士更加紧密地团结起来，同心同德，不屈不挠地奋勇前进！任何力量都不能阻挡我们。胜利一定是属于我们的！（my emphasis）

Let the whole Party rally more closely under the great banner of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, let us rally more closely and forge ahead valiantly and unyieldingly, with one heart and one mind, together with the people of all the ethnic groups of the country, with all the democratic parties and all the country-loving compatriots both in China and overseas, with all the progressive forces and friends supporting our cause all over the world! No force can ever resist us. Victory undoubtedly belongs to us!

Here, ‘journey and navigation’ is represented by *jinbu* 进步 (to progress), *qianjin* 前进 (to advance), *bu qu bu nao* 不屈不挠 (unyieldingly), and *zudang* 阻挡 (obstacle); ‘human body’ by *liliang* 力量 (strength), *tongbao* 同胞 (compatriot), *zhichi* 支持 (to support), and *tongxin* 同心 (with one heart); ‘war’ by *qizhi* 旗帜 (flag, banner), *tuanjie* 团结 (to rally, esp. troops), and *shengli* 胜利 (victory); finally, *jinmi* 紧密 (close) belongs to ‘space and size’.

Let us now consider the closing passage of the 2012 report:

[4.2012] 让我们高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜，更加紧密地团结在党中央周围，为全面建成小康社会而奋斗，不断夺取中国特色社会主义新胜利，共同创造中国人民和中华民族更加幸福美好的未来！（my emphasis）

Let us hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, rally more closely around the Party Central Committee, strive to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, continue to win new victories for socialism with Chinese characteristics, and make joint efforts to create an even brighter future for the Chinese people and nation.

Here, the ‘war’ CD prevails and is expressed, again, by *gaoju... qizhi* 高举旗帜 (to hold high the banner), *tuanjie* 团结 (to rally), *fendou* 奋斗 (to struggle), *duoqu* 夺取 (to capture), and *shengli* 胜利 (victory); ‘building’ by *jiancheng* 建成 (to build) and *chuangzao* 创造 (to create); ‘space and size’ by *jinmi* 紧密 (close) and *zhouwei* 周围 (surroundings).

Besides the omnipresence of the CMs already identified above, it can be observed that the main CDs employed in excerpts [3.1982] and [4.2012] and their relative ratio essentially reflect the situation in [1.1982] and [2.2012], with some remarkable exceptions. For instance, [4.2012] stresses the 'war' CD (6 keywords and 6 tokens), whereas 'journey and navigation' disappears altogether: in fact, the increase in the use of military metaphors in the 2012 speech is confirmed by the textometric findings illustrated above, although this CD is also central in [3.1982]. Moreover, at the syntactic level, the presence of the same pattern *rang women... gengjia jinmi de tuanjie* 让我们更加紧密地团结 (let us rally more closely) in both [3.1982] and [4.2012] seems to corroborate the persisting predilection for formulaic expressions.

At a microscopic level, some noteworthy changes in the specific metaphorical items used should be pointed out. For instance, in the 'journey and navigation' CD, the 2012 speech shows a general increase in the use of keywords referring to 'speed' and 'progress' metaphors, e.g. *jiakuai* 加快 'to accelerate' (0 tokens in 1982 and 50 in 2012), *tuijin* 推进 (3 tokens in 1982 and 76 in 2012), *cujin* 促进 (15 tokens in 1982 and 49 in 2012), *tuidong* 推动 'to push forward' (2 tokens in 1982 and 53 in 2012), with some notable exceptions (e.g. *jinxing* 进行 'to carry out', 64 tokens in 1982 and only 5 in 2012). The most basic keyword in this CD, *daolu* 道路 'road' also increases in terms of number of tokens (6 in 1982 and 26 in 2012). On the other hand, the 'guide' metaphor seems to lose ground by 2012, as the decrease in the use of *fangzhen* 方针 'orientation' (29 tokens in 1982, 16 in 2012) and *lingdao* 领导 'guide' (71 tokens in 1982 and 36 in 2012) suggests.

In the 'human body' CD, the most notable diachronic variation is the general increase of keywords linked to the 'strength' metaphor, e.g. *qiangjing* 强劲 'powerful' (0 tokens in 1982 and 20 in 2012), *zengqiang* 增强 (4 tokens in 1982 and 50 in 2012), *jianquan* 健全 (5 tokens in 1982 and 41 in 2012), and *jiaqiang* 加强 'to strengthen' (46 tokens in 1982 and 77 in 2012). An interesting case is *fxing* 复兴 'rejuvenation', which is absent from the 1982 speech but appears 9 times in 2012: this is a case of 'new' metaphorical expression becoming associated with Hu Jintao's leadership, where the idea of national 'rejuvenation' is a central concept.

With reference to the 'war' CD, the 2012 speech shows a growing emphasis on the 'banner' theme, another distinctive trait of Hu Jintao's rhetoric: in fact, *gaoju* 高举 and *qizhi* 旗帜 make 0 and 1 occurrences in 1982, but 5 and 8 in 2012 respectively. A number of other keywords referring to 'defense' and 'strategy' also show a dramatic increase, e.g. *baozhang* 保障 'to safeguard' (9 tokens in 1982 and 50 in 2012), *weihu* 维护 'to defend' (12 tokens in 1982 and 33 in 2012), *zhanlüe* 战略 'strategy' (17 tokens in 1982 and 33 in 2012) etc. Conversely, the use of certain 'harsher' military terms suffers a significant contraction, e.g. *douzhen* 斗争 'struggle',

with 45 tokens in 1982 and only 3 in 2012. The change in the treatment of this specific keyword may be another indicator of the disappearance or modulation of expressions linked to a political agenda that has become obsolete: therefore, from this perspective, it is interesting to observe how the string *jieji douzheng* 阶级斗争 'class struggle', a basic concept in the rhetoric of high Maoism, appears 13 times in the 1982 speech but is absent altogether from the 2012 report.

In the 'space and size' category, the most striking transformation is the quantitative growth of the verbs *tigao* 提高 'to raise' (32 tokens in 1982 and 73 in 2012) and *shenhua* 深化 'to deepen' (0 tokens in 1982 and 38 in 2012). What can be remarked in the 'building' CD is the further proliferation of the strikingly predominant keyword in the CD, *jianshe* 建设 'to build' (140 tokens in 1982 and 192 in 2012); its quasi-synonyms *jiancheng* 建成 'to build' (1 token in 1982 and 17 in 2012), *jianli* 建立 'to establish' (15 tokens in 1982 and 27 in 2012) and so on, also show a substantial increase. Diachronic variations in other CDs are generally less conspicuous, although – again – a certain number of period-specific metaphorical expressions can be identified, and these will be discussed below.

From a broader perspective, in order to provide an explanation of the discursive functions of these instances of figurative language, the dichotomy between 'P-ideology' and 'S-ideology', proposed by Hodge e Louie (1998, p. 51), can be fruitfully adopted as an interpretative tool.

P-ideology, based on a power relationship, works according to the principle of binary opposition: therefore, it proves particularly effective in a discourse whose purpose is to solve problems, remove obstacles and eradicate or overcome events or circumstances that are presented as negative and undesirable.

The most intuitive example of figurative language based on this form of ideology is represented by military metaphors: this principle is effectively exemplified by the closing formulas of the two speeches examined above, and especially by excerpt [4.2012], where the predominance of the 'war' CD suggests a shift towards a conceptual perspective carrying the tones of a strong call to action. However, P-ideology can also structure CMs that are associated with other CDs: in 'journey and navigation', for instance, the CM THE REALIZATION OF SOCIALISM IS A ROAD entails such metaphorical expressions as *zhang'ai* 障碍 'obstacle', referring to a negative situation whose removal is presented as the target of the action of the Party or society as a whole. The 'human body' CD can also reveal instances of P-ideology, e.g. in the opposition between 'strength' (e.g. *li-liang* 力量) and 'weakness' (e.g. *ruanruo* 软弱), and so on.

The mechanism at work in the latter form of ideology analyzed by Hodge and Louie is that of solidarity, which aims at blurring or dissimulating disparities and differences. In fact, S-ideology is at play in metaphorical expressions whose purpose is to create a sense of familiarity or intimacy,

to reduce hierarchical gaps, to present certain targets as shared between those who govern and those who are governed (i.e. the producers and the final recipients of the message delivered), and so on. It is precisely this form of ideology that reveals the most noteworthy phenomena in terms of evolution of figurative language use in CCPD.

The 'human body' CD proves typically useful when cultivating intimacy and evoking unity: for instance, such expressions as *xuerou lianxi* 血肉联系 'blood and flesh ties', where *xuerou* 血肉 (2 tokens in 2012) is used to suggest the intimate connection between the Party and the Chinese people, belong to the CM THE PARTY AND THE PEOPLE ARE ONE HUMAN BEING. With reference to 'family', a typical example of a keyword serving the purpose of S-ideology is *tongbao* 同胞 'compatriot' (10 tokens in 1982 and 16 in 2012), which aims at creating unity among all the people of Chinese ethnicity by virtue of the CM THE CHINESE NATION IS A FAMILY. Again, when the status of the Chinese people is described through the expression *dang jia zuo zhu* 当家作主 'to be master of the house' (1 token in 1982 and 4 in 2012) or the like, the CM at play is THE NATION IS A FAMILY, where the people play a central role.

The centrality assigned to the people in order to conjure a sense of solidarity is by no means new in Chinese political language, but it seems to be even more emphasized in the 2012 report. The most interesting example, this time within the 'botany' CD, is the 'root' metaphor in the set expression *yi ren wei ben* 以人为本, literally 'to consider the people as the root' or 'putting people first', which is absent in 1982 but appears 5 times in 2012. This expression, grounded in the CM THE NATION IS A PLANT (but also THE PARTY IS A PLANT), represents one of the most pervasive 'trademarks' of the political rhetoric of the Hu Jintao era, but is still very influential today. The Confucian idea of 'people as root' (*min ben* 民本) often had negative undertones throughout history: however, in contemporary public rhetoric, it possesses an unequivocally positive connotation, and is broadly used on account of its extraordinary emotive content (Sabatini 2012, p. 188).

Finally, the 'building' metaphor, especially in the form of such CMs as THE REALIZATION OF SOCIALISM IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BUILDING and SOCIETY IS A BUILDING (incidentally, two metaphors that inform the very titles of the 1982 and 2012 speeches respectively) also offers a prolific set of images working according to the principle of S-ideology. The action of 'building' is systematically presented as a collective achievement: it is hardly surprising, then, that 'building' metaphors are often accompanied by an exhortation to an 'us' (*women* 我们) that puts on the same plane the producer and the recipient of the message, as is clearly the case in excerpts [3.1982] and [4.2012] examined above. In the conceptual perspective thus defined, the objective is presented as being achievable only through the joint effort of both the leadership and the people.

Again, excerpts [3.1982] and [4.2012] also demonstrate that the use of metaphors in which P-ideology prevails and the use of metaphors based on S-ideology are not mutually exclusive: on the contrary, although they may serve different specific functions, the two systems coexist and perform the same discursive macro-function. An even more frequent combination of such basic ideological functions seems to characterize the 2012 speech, as the following passage suggests:

[5.2012] 全党必须牢记，只有植根人民、造福人民，党才能始终立于不败之地。(my emphasis)

The whole Party must bear in mind that only by taking root among the people and delivering benefits to them can the Party remain invincible.

In excerpt [5.2012] the CM THE PARTY IS A PLANT, expressed by the metaphorical expression *zhi gen* 植根 ‘take root’, is found together with the conventional THE PARTY IS AN ARMY and POLITICS IS A BATTLEFIELD, embodied by the pseudo-classical verbal phrase *li yu bu bai zhi di* 立于不败之地 ‘to stand on a ground where one cannot be defeated’. In this passage the reference to the unity of Party and people is closely associated with the idea of resistance and struggle: the two functions described above, then, mingle together and cooperate in the shaping of a common conceptual perspective, thus maximizing the emotive impact of the message.

6 Conclusions

From a strictly numerical point of view, an initial close reading of the 1982 and 2012 reports shows that the main CDs used in both speeches appear to be ‘journey and navigation’, ‘human body’, ‘war’, ‘space and size’, ‘building’, ‘family’, ‘botany’, ‘science and technology’, ‘machine’, and ‘chess’ (the ‘other’ category is not taken into account because of its heterogeneity). Moreover, although the number of keywords for each CD shows variable growth from 1982 to 2012 (showing an increase in such CDs as ‘journey and navigation’, ‘war’, and ‘building’, a decrease in ‘human body’ and ‘space and size’ etc.), a systematic increase in the number of tokens is recorded in all the CDs, accounting for a much greater metaphorical density in the 2012 report. In terms of *productivity* of each CD, the predominant CDs in both speeches are (by descending order of productivity) ‘journey and navigation’, ‘human body’, ‘war’, ‘building’, and ‘space and size’. Moreover, as in the case of the number of tokens, productivity displays a systematic growth in all CDs but ‘family’ (although its contraction is very limited) and ‘other’, providing further evidence for the substantial increase in the use of metaphorical devices in CCPD.

The analysis of a number of significant excerpts (titles, opening and closing sections) from the speeches shows an extremely high conceptual density both in 1982 and 2012, reflecting essentially the main CDs already identified in terms of keywords, tokens, and relative productivity. A number of CMs (e.g. THE REALIZATION OF SOCIALISM IS A ROAD, THE PARTY IS AN ARMY, SOCIETY IS A BUILDING etc.) that inform both reports at a deep level can also be easily identified. The closing passage of the 2012 speech also exemplifies a general tendency, namely the proliferation of 'war' metaphors, which typically embody a form of ideology based on power relationships and binary opposition (P-ideology). Moreover, substantial continuity can be observed in terms of rhetorical devices, lexical items, and syntactic patterns.

Notable transformations can be observed also at the level of keywords used in the two texts. For instance, the 2012 speech reveals an expansion of lexical items related to 'speed' and 'progress', as well as of keywords related to 'strength', 'defense' etc., whereas the 'guide' and 'struggle' metaphors decrease. The emergence or disappearance of metaphorical items associated with specific policies is linked to the specific political context in which the two speeches were produced: for example, the expression 'class struggle', which appears extensively in the 1982 report and is typical of high Maoism, is absent in 2012. The 2012 report, on the other hand, makes frequent use of the 'people as root' image, one of Hu Jintao's favorite rhetorical 'banners'.

Finally, an analysis of specific passages from the two reports demonstrates that the use of metaphors based on P-ideology and S-ideology (focusing on a principle of solidarity) is not an exclusive one. On the contrary, the two forms of ideology perform the same discursive macro-function, and especially so in the 2012 speech, where such basic ideological functions seem to be combined at a deeper level, in order to guarantee the definition of a common conceptual perspective and intensify the emotive potential of the message delivered.

In order to gather more comprehensive data, a larger corpus should be used (including intermediate CPC congress reports and possibly further official materials), further indicators should be taken into account, the use of textometric analysis software should be involved, and an in-depth analysis of the connection between linguistic transformations and changes in the political agenda of the PRC should be conducted. However partial and limited in scope, this research allows for a preliminary investigation of how metaphorical language in CCPD transformed over a thirty-year time span. The findings of the present study could lay the foundations for further research on the evolution of the language used in the official sphere, in order to look beyond the texts examined here and to make broader comments on the political discourse in contemporary China.

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