
RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Corpus-based Analysis of Diplomatic Directive Speech Acts

Leilei ZOU¹ and Yiye ZHU²✉

¹Professor, College of Foreign Language, Shanghai Ocean University, China

²MA, College of Foreign Language, Shanghai Ocean University, China

Corresponding Author: Yiye ZHU, **E-mail:** zhuyiye0329@163.com

ABSTRACT

Diplomatic speech acts, to some extent, constitute and shape the national image, maintain international relations, and promote world harmony. Under the framework of Speech Act Theory, based on a corpus, this study analyzes the types and linguistic powerfulness of directive speech acts in statements made by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons in the past five years with a view to exploring the motivations behind their diplomatic directive speech acts and the relationship between discourse and power behind the speech. The findings indicate that Chinese diplomatic spokespersons tend to choose speech acts that blur the power and authority of both sides of the discourse and indicate weak directives. With the understanding that the wording of Chinese diplomatic speeches is indicative of the ideology and value orientation in the context of Chinese society, the findings of this study enrich the analysis of diplomatic discourse and the diplomatic framework and throw light on the motivations behind the wording of countries' diplomatic speeches.

KEYWORDS

Diplomatic discourse; directive speech acts; national image; diplomatic framework and system ; speech acts theory

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 21 June 2023

PUBLISHED: 02 July 2023

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2023.6.7.4

1. Introduction

Austin and Searle's Speech Act Theory is one of the core elements of modern pragmatics, and the objects that can be studied under this theory cover a wide range of areas, among which diplomatic discourse is one of the newest topics in recent years. Diplomatic discourse represents, to some extent, a country's soft power, an expression of its consciousness, will and values in its foreign interactions. Meanwhile, it bears the historical mission of stating its political aspirations and goals, as well as the historical task of shaping its own international image. As an expression of language, the diplomatic discourse naturally involves the study of theories of speech acts, indirect speech acts, principles of cooperation, principles of politeness and other theories of discourse. However, there is limited research on diplomatic discourse in China and even less research on diplomatic discourse under specific speech act theories. The study of Chinese diplomatic discourse from the perspective of Speech Act Theory is helpful for the theoretical construction and practical guidance of the diplomatic discourse system with national characteristics.

This study collected the statements made by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons in their regular press conferences and selected the written versions of spokespersons' statements distributed on the official website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry from 12 October 2018 to 12 May 2022 for a total of 1,000 texts as its corpus. However, there is no distinguishing between topics and spokespersons' identities and genders for these statements. It also attempts to discuss the classification criteria for the directive speech acts of diplomatic directive acts in different contexts and the motivations behind the wording of spokespersons' diplomatic speeches.

In the rest of this paper, Section 2 will review studies on diplomatic discourse under Speech Act Theory at home and abroad. Section 3 will address the research method, including text collection, corpus establishment and data analysis. In Section 4, the

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findings of this study are presented, and the results are discussed in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper with a summary of the findings and some suggestions for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 International Diplomatic Discourse under Speech Act Theory

The concept of Speech Act Theory was developed by the British philosopher Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*, a milestone book for Speech Act Theory released in 1962. In this book, Austin believed that not all statements that could be divided into true and false statements were "descriptive", so he divided the sentences into performatives and constatives. In his constant study, he found that speech acts could be divided into three steps: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts (Austin 1962). Searle, his student, on the other hand, argued that although Austin proposed the act of performative, he did not link the act of performative in one sentence to the content. Besides, in the classification of giving, Austin only classified it as performative verbs rather than acts. As a result, Searle distinguished individual acts into 12 aspects and classified speech acts into five categories: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration (Searle 1968). In the twenty-first century, research on Speech Act Theory has diversified, ranging from consideration of the theory itself to in-depth applied research, such as the application of Speech Act Theory to linguistics, literature, journalism and communication, and other fields. Speech Act Theory also provides theoretical support for this paper's study of diplomatic discourse.

Domestic scholar Chen Xinren (2009) pointed out that pragmatics research needed to focus on the subjectivity and interpersonal meaning brought about by language speakers' use in a particular socio-cultural context. Even though both contexts and language users had an impact on linguistic communication, some researchers neglected the personal characteristics of language users as well as their values and ideologies in the process of their research (Mey 1993). At an objective level, some scholars argued that the gender of diplomatic speakers had some influence on their choice of speech acts, and by comparing the diplomatic speeches of Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, it was confirmed that Clinton and Kerry's political speeches behaved similarly in terms of linguistic style, but there were gender differences at the thematic and conceptual levels (Shih-chan Dai, Navida Chun-Han Wang 2021). Diplomatic speakers from different countries choose different styles of diplomatic discourse depending on the development status and identity of their countries. The sentences used by former US President Barack Obama in his speeches exhibited the characteristics of aphoristic speech acts, while other speech acts used assertive extra-verbal acts as persuasive factors (Sahar Altikriti 2016). The tendency of Turkish politicians to pause less in their debate speeches validated their clear, open-minded view of political communication, using silence to achieve certain hidden speech acts, thus making the conversation flow (Nuray Alagötlü, Sevgi Sahin 2011).

In addition to the objective factors mentioned above, which can, to some extent, influence the choice of diplomatic discourse behaviour, their personal subjective characteristics such as political orientation, values and ideology are also among the factors contributing to the choice of diplomatic discourse behaviour. By examining John Kerry's political speeches during his 2004 presidential campaign and George W. Bush's 2001 inaugural address, it was found that Kerry used more promising types of speech acts, and Bush used more sentences with assertive acts (Suhair Safwat Mohammed Hashim 2015), while the political orientations of these two politicians were significantly different. Because of differences in ideology and values, diplomatic spokespersons from different countries adopted different norms of verbal behaviour. Diplomatic spokespersons from the United States and Israel also paid different attention to moral issues and focused on them: The United States (USA) believed that uncivilization was the most pressing threat to society, while Israel emphasized national security and loyalty; on the ethical level, The USA spokespersons showed a greater tolerance for non-mainstream views, while Israel acted the opposite (Zohar Kampf 2021). Diplomatic spokesmen in Western countries mainly used rhetoric to invite listeners indirectly, while spokespersons in East Asian countries tended to use ostensiveness. The details of this form of dialogue needed to be understood in a specific cultural context (Peter Bull, Maurice Waddle 2021).

To sum up, in the same diplomatic and political context, we need to focus on both objective facts, such as the gender of the speaker, his or her identity and the development of the country to which he or she belongs, and subjective facts, such as his or her political orientation, values and ideology, in order to study his or her speech acts in a comprehensive manner.

2.2 Chinese Diplomatic Discourse under Speech Act Theory

In recent years, domestic attention to speech acts embodied in diplomatic discourse has continued to grow, such as analysis of the order of discourse from the perspective of diplomatic discourse act patterns, exploration of the conditions, rules, forms, procedures and values of diplomatic discourse (Wu Aihua 2013); speech acts such as warning, refusal (Han Dan 2021), offensive political metaphors (Wenyu Liu, Yingjie Wang 2020), metonymy (Meng Hong, Guo Huanping 2020), and extra-verbal power

(Yongmei He 2018), and other speech acts that are often found in diplomatic discourse have also been studied in depth by domestic scholars.

The comparative study of Chinese and foreign political discourse itself is also of great practical significance, such as the choice of speech acts such as apology (Liu Guangming, Deng Yaochen, Zhao Yingru 2016), rejection (Han Dan, Liu Guangming, Deng Yaochen 2020) and political advice (Liu Guangming, Shi Wenrui, Deng Yaochen 2019) in Chinese and American diplomatic speeches. By comparing and analyzing the similarities and differences of the same type of discourse choice in domestic and foreign diplomacy, we can explore the ideology and value orientation behind them. Although Chinese domestic research on Speech Act Theory and its application, as well as on diplomatic discourse, has achieved certain results, research from the perspective of diplomatic discourse in combination with Speech Act Theory is still in its infancy, and a literature search on the Internet reveals that the number of relevant literature is small, which means that the exploration of diplomatic discourse under Speech Act Theory is a promising and worthwhile research topic.

2.3 Discourse studies under specific Speech Act Theory

The fact is that there are few studies of diplomatic discourse under the Speech Act Theory in China, and so is the case of the research on diplomatic discourse under specific Speech Act Theory both in China and abroad. This paper focuses on directive speech acts in the context of Chinese diplomatic discourse, which is divided according to Searle's modified version of Austin's theory, namely: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration. Since there is little domestic or foreign literature on the specific Speech Act Theory of diplomatic discourse, this session focuses on the application of specific speech acts abroad in other fields in order to learn their research methods and data analysis.

A foreign scholar explored the framework of expressive speech acts from a pragmatic perspective by analyzing the signs displayed on the doors of closed businesses in Athens and London during the first outbreak of New Coronary Pneumonia in 2020; these end signs were characterized by the extensive use of relational features and included four expressive speech acts, namely greetings, apologies, thanks and well wishes, thus revealing the dual functions of expressive speech acts, i.e. authentic expressions of real emotion and conventional politeness (Eva Ogiermann, Spyridoula Bella 2021). The use of expressive speech acts in an online interactive corpus was studied abroad (Marta Carretero, Carmen Maíz-Arévalo, M. Ángeles Martínez 2015). In opinion discourses like newspaper editorials, the written arguments made clever use of linguistic features and communicative strategies in order to achieve the goal of persuading the audience, giving directive acts within the reader's acceptable range. The directive acts in 90 English-language electronic datasheets from two Asian newspapers (Dawn and New Straits Times) and one American newspaper (New York Times) was analyzed for their form of use, word frequency and common text. It was found that in the instruction strategy, facts might be provided only to support the editorial position. John Flowerdew (1991) delved into assertive speech acts and classified the modifiers used as "Nguyen Van Long, Nguyen Thi Thanh Thanh, M.A. (2022) et al. used the promise class speech act to analyze Hillary and Trump's discourse during the 2016 presidential election.

However, there is little domestic research on political speech acts under Speech Act Theory. At the same time, relevant study of diplomatic discourse under specific Speech Act Theory both in China and abroad is limited. The present study, therefore, investigates, from the perspective of diplomatic discourse under Speech Act Theory, the content of the regular press conference of the spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry as a corpus to analyze the tendency of choosing directive speech acts in Chinese diplomatic discourse. It is hoped that the analysis will further explain the relationship between power, ideology, value orientation and language expression behind the language and provides theoretical guidance for the establishment of diplomatic discourse systems for relevant countries from a pragmatic perspective.

The study attempts to answer the following two questions:

- (1) characteristics of the use of directive-like speech acts in Chinese diplomatic discourse acts;
- (2) reasons for the choice of different types of directive language in the statements of Chinese diplomatic spokespersons.

3. The Study

3.1 Statements

China's diplomacy covers a wide range of areas; in order to facilitate the collection and analysis of data for this paper, this paper will use the content of the regular press conference of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China as the corpus, and with the help of the analysis of the corpus, try to solve the questions mentioned above.

3.2 Data collection

In order to fully explore the types of directive speech acts selected in the spokespersons' statements of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this paper, using Python, selects a total of 1000 texts of spokespersons' statements from 12 October 2018 to 12 May 2022 on the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to build a corpus. The selected texts do not distinguish between topics and the identity and gender of spokespersons; instead, the texts select all the spokespersons' statements released on the official website within the above-mentioned time period. After comparing the videos with the texts, it is found that the written texts basically record in detail the questions asked by journalists and the answers given by the spokespersons of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the regular press conference, only omitting verbal phrases such as "so", "this" and mispronunciations, which have no impact on the precision of this study. Table 1 presents the statistical results of the corpus in this study.

Table 1: Statistical results of the corpus of statements made by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons

Time	Number of samples	Length of corpus (Chinese characters)
2018	61	162,236
2019	274	750,757
2020	296	1,061,609
2021	279	1,221,839
2022	90	351,788
Total	1000	3,548,229

3.2 Data Coding and Analysis

The corpus selected in this study spans a longer period of time and involves a richer number of texts. The data in this study are extracted automatically and read manually using a combination of the corpus retrieval tool AntConc 3.4.1. According to Searle's list of some of the directive imperative verbs, the purpose of this type of behaviour is that the speaker tries to get the addressee to do something, and the degree of expression can be strong or weak, specifically in the form of order, request, ask, suggestion, warn, beg, beseech, etc. In this paper, we compare and select the more common and frequently occurring verbs in the speeches of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, satisfying as far as possible the different emotional colours and powerfulness of expression of the selected command verbs, avoiding as far as possible the selection of words with subjective preferences, in order to ensure the credibility of the retrieval results in the corpus, and then complete the selection of the corpus by reading the retrieved lines and extracting the results manually according to the contextual background.

4. Findings

4.1 Types of directive speech acts

Directive speech is an important category of speech act, an act of soliciting from the addressee, essentially asking for something. Speech acts have a sender, a receiver, and subjects of the speech act. In diplomatic discourse, in order to safeguard the interests of the country and promote diplomatic harmony, the two parties to the conversation pay particular attention to the relationship between discourses. In fact, each speech act has a discourse power relationship, but in comparison to other speech acts, discourse power in directive-type speech acts is particularly important. Since Searle did not give the criteria for the classification of directive speech acts, he believed that according to the purpose and strength of expression, it was a way of classification, and gave a non-exhaustive list of some representative giving verbs, such as order, request, inquiry, suggestion, warn, beg, beseech, etc. In his view, the question was also a kind of directive behavior, but the diversity of question words and punctuation question marks could also express questions, which was difficult to operate. This paper will not consider the question words and punctuation question marks in the scope of corpus screening temporarily. Different scholars have different classification criteria, and this paper selects Fan Xiaoling's (2011) classification criteria because there is little literature on the classification of directive speech acts in China and abroad, and Fan's classification criteria are more suitable for discussing diplomatic speech acts in the context concerned in this study. Her classification criteria are based on the degree of emphasis on discourse power, which can be divided into three types: directive acts that emphasize one's own discourse power and authority, directive acts that emphasize the discourse power and authority of the other party; and directive acts that blur the discourse power and authority of both parties.

Based on the directive discourses of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs extracted from the corpus, the frequency and proportion of the occurrence of directive discourses emphasizing discourse power have been counted in this study, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Categories and distribution of discourse in the directive category of Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons' statements emphasizing discourse

Category	Command speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Emphasis on the power and authority of one's own discourse	warn, inform, request	1673	18.33%
Emphasis on the right and power of the other discourse	hope, appeal	3574	39.16%
Blurring directive speech acts power and authority on both sides	suggest, can, should, urge	3880	42.51%
Total		9127	100%

As can be seen from Table 2, there are 9,127 directive speech acts in the statements of foreign ministry spokespersons, among which directive speech acts that blur the directive speech acts power and authority of both sides are the most common, appearing 3,880 times, accounting for 42.51% of all directive speech acts; speech acts that emphasize their own directive speech acts power and authority appear the least, appearing 1,673 times, accounting for 18.33% of the total.

In emphasizing one's own directive speech acts of power and authority, three words chosen in this paper, "warn", "inform," and "request", are in the category of the directive, and usually, those giving the command will have more directive speech acts power and authority. A command is a mode of instruction chosen to emphasize one's directive speech acts of power. It is used when people want to get others to do something by emphasizing their own directive speech acts of power. The fact that the Chinese side uses this type of command less frequently indicates that it follows the principle of politeness to a certain extent in its diplomatic statements, preserving the negative face of the other side and avoiding over-emphasizing its own directive speech acts of power and authority.

When emphasizing the power and authority of the other party's discourse, the "hope" and "appeal" category selected by the Chinese side appear more frequently, but the "hope" and "appeal" in the original text and context are essentially emotional and attitudinal expressions, and less contain the meaning of emphasizing the other party's discourse and power. This part will be compared and analyzed in combination with the parallel corpus CCL.

The most frequent speech act that blurs the discourse power and power of both parties is actually to close the distance between them in the form of suggestions, which illustrates the five principles of peaceful coexistence that China still adheres to in the development of Chinese diplomacy to date, and upholds China's image as a diplomatic power that is not subservient.

4.2 Powerfulness of directive speech

The speech acts of the directive type can be further classified into strong, general and weak directives according to the powerfulness of the discourse. A strong command is an instruction expressed by the speaker in the form of a promise which is harmful to the interests of the audience under certain conditions, such as a threat; a general command is an order or request which can be either beneficial or harmful to the interests of the audience; a weak command is an indirect command expressed by a statement or an act of doubt, the realization of which depends on the context and the effectiveness of the expression depends on the willingness of the audience to follow the command. The effect of the expression depends on the audience's willingness to follow the instruction. The results of this study are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Powerfulness and distribution of discourse in the category of directives of the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson

Command strength	Command speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Strong directive acts	warn, inform	371	4.06%
General directive acts	request, urge	2446	26.80%
Weak directive acts	suggest, hope, can, should, appeal	6310	69.14%
Total		9127	100%

As can be seen from the data in Table 3, the strong directives of "warn" and "inform" appear the least frequently, 371 times; the general directives of "request" and "urge" are also not used very often in diplomatic statements, accounting for 26.80%; while the weak directives of "suggest", "hope", "can", "should" and "appeal" appear the most frequently, 6310 times, accounting for 69.14% of the total. It is almost consistent with the results above, but again, the use of weak directives needs to be judged according to

the context, and it does not follow that Chinese diplomacy is cautious and prudent just because the Chinese side uses more weak directives rather than contemporary Chinese diplomacy is focused on safeguarding national interests and adopts a diplomatic strategy that places equal emphasis on courtesy and efficiency.

5. Discussion

5.1 The classification criteria for the directive speech acts of diplomatic directive acts in different contexts

The study of theories related to pragmatics helps to explore the ideology and values behind language use in social contexts, and institutional discourse is one of the objects of study (Chen Xinren 2009). Diplomatic discourse falls under institutional discourse (Chilton 2004:217-231), and diplomatic discourse under Speech Act Theory is complex and diverse. Directive-type speech acts, which are part of a face-threatening behaviour and during communication influenced by factors such as socio-cultural background, identity and status of the communicator. This study examines the choice of directive speech acts in diplomatic spokespersons' statements by combining the theories of directive speech acts in depth with a pragmatic perspective and integrating aspects of language form, power and speech powerfulness. Maintaining, consolidating and establishing good relations in diplomatic discourse has far-reaching significance for seeking cooperation and gaining power in political communication (Zohar 2016).

From the two tables above, it can be found that Chinese spokespersons' statements use more directive speech acts that blur the power and authority of the discourse between the two sides and that the act of weak instruction appears more frequently among the three kinds of directive acts, which does not exclude the reason why five of the nine directive verbs chosen in this paper are categorized under the weak instruction range. In general, Table 2 and Table 3 both reflect the choice strategy of Chinese diplomatic spokesmen in terms of vocabulary, preferring equal dialogue between the two sides. Moderate wording by spokespersons is to show mercy to the other side, indicate the demeanor of big country diplomacy, and leave more room for manoeuvre in the follow-up of international affairs. The expressions of these inclusive and cooperative diplomatic words highlight the country's mainstream ideology in the context of globalization.

In the process of dealing with the corpus, words such as "suggest" and "hope" are randomly selected and searched in the parallel corpus CCL, and it is found that the meaning of their high-frequency collocation in the parallel corpus CCL is different from the deeper connotation of the diplomatic statements selected in this paper. Because of the different contexts, this paper considers that words such as "suggest" and "hope", when placed in a diplomatic context, encompass, to a certain extent, the attitude of the diplomatic spokespersons. The following are random samplings of the CCL corpus and a corpus of statements by diplomatic spokespersons in which the pairing of the words "advice" and "hope" is discussed.

①. ..童的教育, 主张父母应把6-7岁的儿童都送到学校接受教育, 还极力建议在城乡设立公办学校, 以打破天主教会教育的垄断等等, 使欧洲...

...tóng de jiàoyù, zhǔzhāng yīng bǎ 6-7 suì de értóng dōu sòngdào xuéxiào jiēshòu jiàoyù, hái jīlì jiànyì zài chéngxiāng shèlì gōngbàn xuéxiào, yǐ dǎpò tiānzhǔ jiàohuì duì jiàoyù de lǒngduàn dēngdēng, shǐ ōuzhōu...

'... The education of children, advocating that parents should send all children from the age of 6-7 to school to receive education, also strongly suggested the establishment of public schools in urban and rural areas to break the monopoly of the Catholic Church on education, etc., so that the European...'

②. ..养“才智之士”, “才智之民多则国强, 才智之士少则国弱。”因此建议废科举兴学堂, 乡乡办小学, 儿童7岁入小学, 学习八年毕业。儿童...

...yǎng 'cáizhì zhīshì', "cáizhì zhīmín duō zé guóqiáng, cáizhì zhīshì shǎo zé guórùo." Yīncǐ jiànyì fēi kējǔ xīng xuétáng, xiāngxiāng bàn xiǎoxué, értóng 7 suì rù xiǎoxué, xuéxí bānián biyè. Értóng...

'... The "talented and wise people" were raised, "If there are many talented and wise people, the country will be strong, but if there are few talented and wise people, the country will be weak." Therefore, it was suggested to abolish the imperial examinations and to set up primary schools in the countryside, where children would enter at the age of seven and graduate after eight years of study. Children...'

③我知道你们一直很关心中美经贸磋商, 但是关于磋商的具体安排, 我还是建议你去向主管部门去询问。

Wǒ zhīdào nǐmen yìzhí hěn guānxīn zhōngměi jīngmào cuōshāng, dànshì guānyú cuōshāng de jùtǐ ānpái, wǒ háishì jiànyì nǐ qù xiàng zhǔguǎn bùmén qù xúnwèn.

'I know you have been very concerned about the US-China economic and trade consultations, but regarding the specific arrangements for the consultations, I would still suggest that you go and ask the competent authorities.'

④我们建议有关国家与其对别人指手画脚, 还不如自己言行一致, 真正做到对待大小国家一律平等...

Wǒmen jiànyì yǒuguān guójiā yǔqí duì biérén zhǐshǒuhuàjiǎo, hái bùrú zìjǐ yánxíngyìzhì, zhēnzhèng zuòdào duìdài dàxiǎo guójiā yìlǚ píngděng

'We suggest that instead of telling others what to do, the countries concerned should match their words with their deeds and truly treat all countries, large and small, equally...'

The word "suggest" in non-diplomatic contexts conforms to the dictionary interpretation. It usually refers to the objective existence of a person or a matter and puts forward its own reasonable opinions or opinions so that it has certain conditions for reform and improvement so that it can be improved and developed in a better and positive way. ③ ④ comes from the corpus of diplomatic spokespersons' statements. ③ is a frequent collocation in the corpus, and spokespersons usually adopt a vague approach to questions that are detrimental to the country's interests or image or are uncertain and do not answer the question directly; ④ according to the context, combined with Austin's extra-verbal behaviour, it is easy to find that it implies that the spokesperson is impatient with, disapproves of or even condemns the questioner.

⑤而每一位家长都希望自己的子女能有一颗纯洁、善良的同情心，能理解别人的需要和愿望...

Er měiyīwèi jiāzhǎng dōu xīwàng zìjǐ de zǐn nēng yǒu yīkē chúnjié、shànliáng de tóngqíngxīn, néng lǐjiě biérén de xūyào hé yuànwàng...

'And every parent *hopes* their children to have a pure, kind and compassionate heart that understands the needs and desires of others...'

⑥我们不可否认科举制也希望能达到选贤任能的目的，但他的更大目的，却在于把人的思想拘囚于一...

Wǒmen bù fǒurèn kējǔzhì yě xīwàng néng dádào xuǎnxiánrènnéng de mùdì, dàn tā de gèngdà mùdì, què zàiyú bǎ rén de sīxiǎng jūqiú yú yī...

'We do not deny that the imperial examination system also *hoped* to achieve the purpose of selecting the best and the brightest, but its greater purpose was to imprison people's minds in a...'

⑦我还没有看到你提到的报道，但是我注意到现在有媒体对新疆职业技能教育培训中心发表不实报道。我希望媒体能够客观，全面报道和看待有关问题，不要根据臆想或道听途说的谣言就妄加指责。

Wǒ hái méi kàndào nǐ tídào de bàodào, dànshì wǒ zhùyìdào xiànzài yǒu méitǐ duì xīnjiāng zhíyè jìnéng jiàoyù péixùn zhōngxīn fābiào bùshí bàodào. Wǒ xīwàng méitǐ nénggòu kèguān, quánmiàn bàodào hé kàndài yǒuguān wèntí, búyào gēnjù yìxiǎng huò dàotīngtúshuō de yáoyán jiù wàngjiā zhìzé.

'I have not yet seen the reports you mentioned, but I have noticed that some media are now publishing false reports about the Xinjiang Vocational Skills Education and Training Centre. I *hope* that the media will report and view the mentions objectively and comprehensively and not make accusations based on conjecture or hearsay rumours.'

⑧我注意到布兰斯塔德大使也承认中国取得了巨大进步，我们希望有关人士，也能够认真、客观看待中国人民自己选择的发展道路和促进人权事业的途径...

Wǒ zhùyìdào bùlǎnsītǎdé dàshǐ yě chéngren zhōngguó qǔdé le jùdà jìnbù, wǒmen xīwàng yǒuguān rénshì, yě nénggòu rènzhēn、kèguān kàndài zhōngguó rénmin zìjǐ xuǎnzé de fāzhǎndàolù hé cùjìn rénquán shìyè de tújīng

'I note that Ambassador Branstad has also acknowledged that China has made great progress, and we *hope* that those on the other side can also take a serious and objective view of the path of development chosen by the Chinese people themselves and the ways to promote the cause of human rights...'

In the above four sentences, ⑤⑥ are from the CCL corpus, where "hope" refers to a good wish or an object on which an ideal is pinned; ⑦⑧ in the corpus of diplomatic speeches deliver the official interpretations of hope for some achievement, while they rather express the extra-linguistic meaning of dissatisfaction with the foreign media or the foreign side than look forward to the achievement; thus the use of the moderating words here tend to give serious instructions.

5.2 Motivations for choosing different types of directive-type speech in the statements of Chinese diplomatic spokespersons

Diplomatic discourse is an important part of the country's soft power and the expression of national consciousness, will and value in diplomatic intercourse. It not only undertakes the historical mission of stating its own political aspirations and goals to the world but also bears the historical responsibility of shaping its own international image. In recent years, China's renaissance has become an indisputable fact. The terms "peaceful development", "harmonious world", and "community of human destiny" have become the mainstream diplomatic discourse in China's foreign relations. Along with this, international public opinion has also been inflamed, such as the "China collapse theory" and the "China threat theory". In addition to a series of subjective statements propagated by other countries' politics and media, the world is now overwhelmed by "turbulence". In this context, it is particularly important to study the mode of construction of China's foreign diplomatic discourse, the interaction between discourse and society, and the impact of discourse on the implementation of foreign policies. As Liu Yongtao (2007) argued, the fluid, multilayered and controversial nature of the meaning of linguistic symbols not only exposed the hegemony of discourse in the 'knowledge' of international relations but also helped to understand the different 'realities' of international relations. However, Xingwu (2004), in 'Hegemony in Chinese and Western Political Culture and Discourse Systems', suggested that the different hegemonic views of China and the West provided a way of thinking about the national interests, history and cultural orientation of Chinese diplomatic discourse in response to hegemonic discourse, and also helped us to better understand some of the characteristics of the foreign relations discourse of different countries in international relations.

In the face of the complicated international situation and the biased public opinion trend, diplomatic speech is one of our means to communicate with the world. Currently, the country needs to give an active voice and shape a good and positive image to pave the way for China's international development. However, there are still a series of problems and contradictions in China's diplomatic discourse: firstly, the serious imbalance between the Western discourse and China's international discourse; secondly, the contradiction between the rapid growth of China's economic power and the lack of diplomatic discourse influence; and thirdly, the contradiction between the massive introduction of western discourse and the lack of creation of a "Chinese featured discourse". Taking the findings of this paper as an example, the frequency of directive speech acts in the statement of the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China is relatively high. Compared with the expressive and declaration, directive speech itself has a certain degree of strength, violates the principle of politeness, and has a negative impact on the international image or national dignity of the other party to a certain extent, aiming at confronting injustice in international diplomacy. However, according to the powerfulness of its expression, the diplomatic spokesmen tend to choose vague discourse power of both sides and weak directive language, which is one of the manifestations of China's active construction of diplomatic discourse with Chinese characteristics, thus reflecting China's primary diplomatic position of respecting each other's sovereignty, non-aggression, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence, aiming at achieving independence, anti-injustice, anti-power politics, thus to safeguard China's national interests and attain the goal of promoting international peace and development.

6. Conclusion

Diplomatic discourse is indicative of the soft power of a country. This paper uses the written version of spokespersons' statements collated from the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the past five years as a corpus and classifies the speech acts of directives according to discourse power and speech powerfulness. This study indicates that Chinese diplomatic spokespersons' statements tend to choose speech acts that blur the directive speech acts power and authority of both sides and weak directives among the directive categories. The findings both enrich the analysis of the diplomatic framework of political discourse and provide insights into the establishment of diplomatic discourse systems in China or any other country from a pragmatic perspective.

However, there are still shortcomings in the breadth of the study and the diversity of the corpus. Here are some suggestions for future further study. Firstly, the representativeness and coverage of the directive categories of speech selected in this paper need to be further enhanced. Secondly, the texts selected are Chinese diplomatic discourse which lacks comparability, and the future study could be conducted in a comparative manner between China and foreign countries. Finally, diplomatic discourse acts should not be confined to a single pragmatic field, and in the future, the study could be conducted interdisciplinarily and combined with multiple aspects for dynamic research.

Funding: This research was funded by Shanghai High-Level Local University (Shanghai Ocean University) Construction Project.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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