

# A Discourse Analysis Study of the Chairman of the CCP's Cultural Thought from a Corpus Perspective

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**Abstract:** The paper employs corpus technology and discourse analysis techniques to do a quantitative linguistic analysis of the keywords, semantic domains, and high-frequency collocations in the discourse of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thoughts. According to the research, the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought discourse is primarily focused on the domains of "people", "China", "culture", and "socialism", which together represent four key semantic features. These include a positive and resolute attitude towards cultural construction, a focus on upholding socialist political principles and stance, fostering socialist cultural self-confidence, and emphasizing the people-centered core idea. This paper offers reliable data support and a fresh research viewpoint to enhance further the comprehensive understanding and depth of comprehension of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought.

**Keywords:** Linguistics; The chairman of the CCP's cultural thought; Corpus; Discourse analysis

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## 1. Introduction

Culture, in its broad sense, refers to the totality of material and spiritual production capabilities acquired by humans through social practice, as well as the material and spiritual wealth created in the process. In a narrow sense, it refers to the capabilities of spiritual production and spiritual products, encompassing all forms of social consciousness, such as natural sciences, technological sciences, and social ideologies, and sometimes specifically denotes knowledge and facilities in the fields of education, science, and the arts<sup>[1]</sup>. Since entering the new era, the role of culture in invigorating the national spirit, sustaining national identity, promoting economic and social development, and facilitating comprehensive human development has become increasingly prominent.

In October 2023, the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought was introduced for the first time at the

National Conference on Ideological and Cultural Work. It is a key component of the chairman of the CCP's thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, and represents the creative expression and innovative development of Marxist cultural theory in contemporary China <sup>[2]</sup>. In the history of China's cultural development, the Party's theoretical innovation, and the history of propaganda, ideological, and cultural work, this marks a milestone, signifying that the Party's understanding of the laws governing the construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics has reached a new height <sup>[3]</sup>. A deep understanding and interpretation of the scientific connotations and essence of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought is of great significance for strengthening cultural confidence throughout the Party and society, advancing the strategy of building a culturally strong nation, and achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

## 2. Literature review

Research on the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought has predominantly concentrated on the political domain. For instance, using CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) as an example, a search conducted from October 2023 to January 2024 retrieved 115 relevant papers published in Peking University core and CSSCI journals. The results revealed that 70 papers were from the fields of Chinese politics and international politics, and 24 papers were from the domain of Party building, accounting for a total of 82%. These studies, grounded in Marxist philosophy, systematically elaborate on the theoretical system, logical framework, practical strategies, and contemporary value of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought. This suggests a lack of multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary research perspectives in the comprehensive understanding of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought.

Discourse, as a form of social practice, is shaped by social structures and, in turn, influences social reality. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as proposed by Fowler et al., focuses on authentic social discourse activities as its research object. By analyzing the linguistic features of texts, CDA traces their socio-historical context to reveal the relationships between language, power, and ideology <sup>[4]</sup>. CDA emphasizes interdisciplinary integration to better understand how language constructs and disseminates knowledge, builds social institutions, or exercises power across various societal domains. In terms of research content, CDA mainly addresses political discourse, gender discourse, and economic discourse. Among these, political discourse, with its intrinsic connection to power and ideology, naturally becomes the primary focus of CDA <sup>[5]</sup>.

In recent years, corpus techniques have been widely adopted in academia due to their support from large-scale, authentic data and their scientifically verifiable statistical methods. This approach emphasizes two main aspects: on the one hand, it focuses on the systematic analysis of corpus data, utilizing corpus tools to extract keywords, collocations, and clusters from large datasets to identify salient linguistic representations; on the other hand, it emphasizes the use of discourse, context, and relevant background knowledge to explain how socio-cultural factors influence the generation of meaning. Scholars like Baker proposed corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis, which integrates corpus linguistics with CDA. This method not only aids in quantifying discourse phenomena identified in CDA but also enables qualitative analysis within the CDA theoretical framework <sup>[6]</sup>. Baker proposed a nine-step analytical framework: (1) analyze the socio-cultural context of the research topic; (2) identify research questions and construct the corpus; (3) use corpus techniques to calculate word frequency, clusters, and distribution; (4) conduct a qualitative analysis of a small representative sample of corpus data; (5) propose new hypotheses or research questions; (6) conduct quantitative corpus analysis

based on the new hypotheses; (7) explore intertextuality or interdiscursivity based on quantitative analysis; (8) formulate new hypotheses; (9) conduct further corpus analysis<sup>[6]</sup>.

This study adopts the nine-step analytical framework proposed by Baker et al., combining corpus techniques with qualitative and quantitative methods. It aims to explore the linguistic characteristics and underlying meanings embedded in the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought, thereby providing new perspectives for discussing and interpreting the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought.

### 3. Research design

#### 3.1. Research objectives and questions

The objective of this study is to deeply explore the focal points, semantic features, discourse construction methods, and underlying ideologies within the discourse of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought from a corpus linguistic perspective. Based on this objective, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the key terms in the discourse of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought?
2. What are the thematic domains in the discourse of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought?
3. What are the strong collocations in the discourse of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought?

#### 3.2. Research corpus

The corpus used in this study is collected from the multilingual versions of "The Chairman of the CCP: The Governance of China", volumes one to four. This series, co-edited by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee (State Council Information Office), the Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee and Documentation Research Institute, and the Compilation and Translation Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, is published by Foreign Languages Press in both Chinese and English. The series includes a range of speeches, talks, addresses, lectures, instructions, congratulatory letters, and Q&A sessions delivered by the General Secretary between November 2012 and May 2022. The collection introduces new ideas, viewpoints, and conclusions, providing profound answers to major theoretical and practical issues faced by the Party and the country under new historical conditions. It comprehensively demonstrates the governance philosophy and strategies of the central leadership, with the chairman of the CCP at its core.

For the purposes of thematic research, this study centers on the exploration of cultural development themes across volumes one through four. These volumes include discussions on Building a Socialist Culturally Strong Country (volume one), Strengthening Cultural Confidence (volume two), Creating New Glories for Chinese Culture (volume three), and Advancing the Construction of a Socialist Cultural Power (volume four). To facilitate discourse analysis, a bilingual Chinese-English parallel corpus of the chairman of the CCP's Cultural Thought has been constructed. The essential data of this corpus are presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Basic information of the Chinese-English bilingual corpus on the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought

Language	Types	Token	TTR	Standardized TTR
Chinese	4202	27686	15.18	46.12
English	4430	33274	13.31	44.37





and the text's overarching themes by comparing them with a reference corpus. This method allows for a deeper investigation into the discourse characteristics and core themes. In this study, the AntConc (4.0.5) software was used, with the British National Corpus (BNC) as the reference corpus, to generate a list of the top 20 thematic words ranked by keyness. The thematic words are sorted in **Table 2** by their keyness values, from highest to lowest.

**Table 2.** Thematic word analysis of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought discourse

No.	Frequency	Keyness	Thematic word	No.	Frequency	Keyness	Thematic word
1	312	1860.16	China	11	62	325.11	Era
2	347	768.57	People	12	135	316.31	Social
3	144	677.21	Value	13	43	296.72	CPC
4	119	594.83	China	14	45	283.07	Marxism
5	94	593.21	Socialism	15	112	281.88	State
6	154	562.68	Party	16	78	248.25	Media
7	118	463.15	Culture	17	41	233.08	Propaganda
8	86	445.48	Philosophy	18	49	199.06	Science
9	91	440.08	Nationality	19	78	183.17	Development
10	81	386.20	Core	20	35	176.88	Theory

After analyzing the data in **Table 2**, the top 20 high-frequency content words can generally be categorized into four groups: group 1 Subjects of Cultural Development (e.g., China, People, Party, Nation, State, Communist Party of China), group 2 Principles of Cultural Development (e.g., Upholding Socialism, Marxism), group 3 Media and Means of Cultural Development (e.g., Media, Propaganda, Development), and group 4 Outcomes of Cultural Development (e.g., Science, Theory).

By comparing the high-frequency words and thematic words, a significant overlap can be observed, with recurring terms such as “China”, “People”, “Culture”, and “Socialism.” Among them, “China” reflects the subject of socialist cultural development in the new era, and “Culture” embodies the core content of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought, which emphasizes solidifying cultural foundations, strengthening cultural confidence, and promoting the international dissemination of Chinese culture. The focus on “Socialism” highlights the guiding ideology and political principles in cultural construction, while terms like “Era” and “Construction” indicate the forward-looking consideration of cultural development's future direction. By focusing on the overlapping elements between high-frequency words and thematic words, the internal coherence and key concepts of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought are revealed.

## 4.2. Thematic domain investigation

This study used Wmatrix software to extract the thematic domains in the chairman of the CCP's discourse, aiming to uncover key semantic concepts. Wmatrix, developed by Lancaster University, incorporates the USAS semantic tagging tool, which categorizes semantically similar words into 21 major categories. By tagging the BNC Sampler and using log-likelihood ratio analysis (critical value 6.63,  $P < 0.01$ ), the accuracy of the semantic domain tagging can reach up to 92% <sup>[10]</sup>. Since most of the corpus used in this study comes

from speeches and talks, the British National Corpus Sampler-Spoken (BNC Sampler) was selected as the reference corpus for comparative analysis. Given that Wmatrix currently does not support Chinese retrieval, only the English corpus from the self-built corpus was uploaded and analyzed in this section. After excluding geographical names, grammatical words, and numerals, the key semantic domains generated are shown in **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Selected thematic semantic domains in the chairman of the CCP’s cultural thought discourse

No.	Code	O1	1%	O2	2%	Log-likelihood	Log Ratio	Semantic domain
1	G1.2	349	1.09	554	0.06+	1244.33	4.28	Politics
2	C1	388	1.21	896	0.09+	1167.41	3.74	Humanities
3	A11.1+	346	1.08	955	0.1+	947.08	3.48	Importance
4	X4.1	359	1.12	1066	0.11+	942.47	3.37	Psychological Objects: Conceptual Objects
5	S6+	752	2.35	5698	0.58+	920.67	2.02	Strong Obligation or Necessity
6	S2	481	1.51	2728	0.28+	789.54	2.44	People
7	G1.1	323	1.01	1084	0.11+	787.26	3.2	Government
8	S1.1.1	273	0.85	746	0.08+	751.44	3.49	Social Action, State, and Process
9	S8+	402	1.26	2020	0.21+	732.44	2.61	Help
10	P1	391	1.22	1928	0.2+	723.49	2.64	Education

#### 4.2.1. Analysis of Table 3: Thematic semantic domains in the chairman of the CCP’s cultural thought discourse

Through analyzing the thematic semantic domains and their corresponding indices in **Table 3**, four key semantic characteristics of the chairman of the CCP’s cultural thought discourse emerge.

The first key semantic domain, “Politics”, reveals the chairman of the CCP’s strong emphasis on upholding a socialist political stance and promoting socialist values. Notably, this domain has the highest log-likelihood ratio (1244.33), signifying its exceptional prominence in the corpus. Within this domain, sub-domains associated with “socialism” are particularly prevalent, including terms such as “socialist”, “socialism”, “communism”, and “democracy.” The term “socialist” is the most frequent, appearing 94 times. A closer analysis of collocations with “socialism” reveals expressions such as “core socialist values”, “socialist culture”, “socialist democracy”, and “harmonious socialism.” Among these, “core socialist values” is the most frequent, appearing 50 times and accounting for 53.2% of the total occurrences. These frequent expressions underscore the central role that socialist political stances and values play in the chairman of the CCP’s cultural thought, particularly in highlighting the importance of socialist values in the development of art and culture.

#### 4.2.2. Confidence in socialist culture and promoting civilizational exchange

The second key semantic domain, “Humanities”, reflects the chairman of the CCP’s commitment to cultural confidence and fostering mutual learning among civilizations. This domain emphasizes the sub-domains of “culture” and “cultural”, with frequencies of 117 and 108 occurrences, accounting for 52% and 48% respectively. In particular, the most frequent collocation in the “culture” sub-domain is “Chinese culture”, which appears 46 times, comprising 39.3% of occurrences. These expressions underscore the importance of

cultural development in the chairman of the CCP's thought, emphasizing cultural confidence, maintaining the subjectivity of Chinese culture, and the desire to build a strong socialist cultural nation. In the "cultural" sub-domain, high-frequency collocations include "cultural process", "cultural reform", "cultural innovation", "cultural soft power", "cultural resources", and "cultural exchange." These expressions highlight the practical focus of cultural development, the emphasis on cultural innovation, and the call for mutual exchange between Chinese and foreign civilizations, rooted in cultural confidence.

#### **4.2.3. Strong commitment to cultural development**

The chairman of the CCP's firm commitment to cultural development is evident in the fifth key semantic domain, "Strong Obligation and Necessity." The two most frequent sub-domains within this category are "should" and "must", with frequencies of 382 and 191, accounting for 34.4% and 17.2%, respectively. Examples of collocations with "should" include "We should make plans", "This central task should not change", "We should master Marxist theory", and "Our priority should be serving the people." Similarly, collocations with "must" include "We must believe in Marxism", "We must take initiative", "We must base ourselves on traditional Chinese culture", and "We must advocate socialist morality." These modal expressions reflect a strong sense of obligation and urgency regarding cultural development, as well as a resolute attitude and determination.

#### **4.2.4. People-centered approach**

The fourth key semantic domain, "People", highlights the central tenet of people-centeredness in the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought. The most prominent sub-domains are "people" and "humanity", with 20 occurrences, accounting for 66.7%. Collocations related to "people" include expressions such as "ladder for the people", "people's feelings", "people's future", "people's achievements", and "people's problems." These expressions reflect the chairman of the CCP's concern for the welfare of the people and emphasize the core mission of serving the people in cultural development. In the "humanity" sub-domain, collocations include "human civilization", "human development", "human society", and "human history." These expressions illustrate that the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought not only focuses on the Chinese people but also considers the development of humanity as a whole, showcasing his global perspective and responsibility in building a community with a shared future for mankind and promoting the common prosperity of human civilizations.

In conclusion, these four semantic characteristics highlight the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought, underscoring the importance of socialist values, cultural confidence, a firm commitment to cultural development, and a people-centered approach, all within a broader global vision.

### **4.3. Collocation analysis**

Firth believed that collocation is a habitual combination of words that frequently appear together in texts or corpora, reflecting the close relationships between words <sup>[11]</sup>. The higher the frequency of co-occurrence between two words, the clearer the contextual meaning provided by their collocation becomes <sup>[12]</sup>.

Collocation frequency statistics provide a comprehensive understanding of high-frequency topics co-occurring with a node word, helping to avoid bias that may result from focusing solely on frequent collocates. In this study, Mutual Information (MI) analysis was used for collocation retrieval. Using "culture" as the node

word, collocations within a span of  $\pm 2$  were observed. The typical 30 collocations were sorted in descending order of MI values, as shown in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2.** Typical collocations related to culture

Key observations from collocation analysis are as follows.

Higher MI values indicate stronger associations between “culture” and its collocates, suggesting these word pairs co-occur frequently and convey specific contextual meanings.

Collocates may reveal underlying themes or discourses that are central to the chairman of the CCP’s cultural thought, such as “cultural confidence”, “cultural development”, and “Chinese culture.”

The identification of these high-MI-value collocations allows a more nuanced exploration of the cultural discourse, emphasizing the interconnectedness of concepts like “socialism”, “heritage”, and “innovation” with “culture.”

By focusing on these collocations, researchers can delve deeper into the specific ways in which “culture” is framed in the chairman of the CCP’s discourse, further clarifying the core messages of cultural confidence, national identity, and development goals.

## 5. Conclusion and outlook

The chairman of the CCP’s discourse on cultural construction has become an important medium for the public to understand his cultural thought. Through a statistical analysis of the keywords, semantic domains, and high-frequency collocations in his cultural discourse, the study reveals that his rhetoric centers on key concepts such as “China”, “the people”, “culture”, and “socialism.” This reflects the chairman of the CCP’s proactive and resolute attitude toward cultural construction. His discourse not only emphasizes adherence to socialist political principles and values but also highlights a firm commitment to cultural confidence and the people-centered approach. These key concepts form the basic framework of the chairman of the CCP’s cultural thought,

indicating that his vision for cultural development aims to achieve the prosperity of China's traditional culture and the construction of a socialist cultural power through a series of policy paths and concrete measures.

From a linguistic perspective, examining the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought further reveals the deep-seated logic and philosophical implications embedded in his discourse. His cultural rhetoric demonstrates not only theoretical coherence and logical rigor but also a strong practical orientation, reflecting the Chinese Communist Party's strategic thinking on promoting cultural confidence and building a strong cultural nation in the new era. Through the frequent use and collocation of key terms such as "culture", "the people", and "socialism", the consistency and systematic nature of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought become evident—namely, that cultural confidence, innovation, and international exchange are the foundations for the prosperity and development of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics.

This paper, from a linguistic perspective, provides a new angle for studying the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought, offering readers a deeper understanding of its core concepts while further verifying its theoretical foundation, practical pathways, and philosophical significance. In the future, interdisciplinary research drawing from linguistics, political science, communication studies, and other fields will undoubtedly offer more comprehensive and in-depth academic insights and theoretical support for the study of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought. Such an approach will help systematically uncover the uniqueness and innovation of the chairman of the CCP's cultural thought while further enriching research in this field, providing important theoretical and practical references for understanding and promoting the cultural construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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