

# Analysis of 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping from the Perspective of Positive Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract

Positive discourse analysis provides a new perspective for news discourse analysis by advocating to construct an equal and friendly society from positive aspects. As the main analysis method of positive discourse analysis, appraisal theory is widely accepted because of its theoretical and practical value. The 2023 New Year Address is a description of the struggle and great achievements of the past year, but also good hopes for the coming year. There is no doubt that it is a good corpus for positive discourse analysis. Thus, this research probes into the 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping from the perspective of the attitude subsystem of the positive discourse analysis, aiming to explore the distribution characteristics of their appraisal resources. This thesis also attempts to reveal positive meanings conveyed through these appraisal resources. This thesis selects 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping to form a corpus with a total of 1614 words. This research adopts appraisal theory as theoretical framework, and the software UAM Corpus Tool 3.3v is used to annotate and calculate distribution characteristics of attitude resources. On the basis of data statistics, positive meanings of the selected news reports are explored through qualitative analysis. Research findings show that there are abundant positive attitude resources in the 2023 New Year Address, including affect resources, judgement resources and appreciation resources. Affect resources are the most and they are mostly used to show President Xi's desires and satisfaction with achieved results and confidence and affection on China's future development. In judgement resources, social esteem resources convey conscientious spirit and people-centred idea, and strong ability of the CPC. Appreciation resources are the least frequently used words in attitude resources, and they express positive appreciation of achievements made by the CPC.

## Keywords

Positive Discourse Analysis; Appraisal Resources; 2023 New Year Address.

## 1. Introduction

Positive discourse analysis, proposed by Martin, supplements and improves the deficiencies of critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis has always attached importance to the study of social conflict discourses, and critical linguistics generally adopts an attitude of exposing and criticizing the social facts analyzed, so as to realize the deconstruction of the current social system and the purpose of exposing social problems. However, too much disclosure and criticism can not solve the actual problem, but will bring negative consequences. Therefore, Martin maintains that discourse analysis should adopt a positive and friendly attitude to analyze social facts. Through positive discourse analysis, people are guided to look at and deal with various affairs in life and society with a positive attitude, so as to make up for the deficiency that critical discourse analysis aims to expose and bring negative results to the inequality of critical discourse. Based on the praise and construction, positive discourse analysis advocates a positive attitude towards various social contradictions, hoping to advocate and create a harmonious society through discourse analysis, and form a relaxed, conciliatory

and co-existing human society. The study of discourse by positive discourse analysis is conducive to the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind and the harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

## 2. Appraisal theory

Appraisal theory originated in the 1990s and was proposed by Martin and his colleagues in their project Write It Right. It makes up for the lack of a complete system in systemic-functional linguistics. Appraisal theory consists of three subsystems: attitude system, engagement system and graduation system. Attitude refers to the judgment and appreciation of human behavior, text/process and phenomenon after psychological influence. Engagement system is the use of intermediary means of language users to regulate the spoken or written content of the responsibility and obligation. Graduation system is a hierarchical resource for the degree of attitude interlocutor.

Attitude system is the core of appraisal theory, which is composed of affect system, judgment system and appreciation system. Affect, judgment and appreciation can be divided into positive evaluation and negative evaluation, and there are direct expression and implicit expression. As the core of attitude system, affect system reflects the mental activities of language users on behaviors, texts/processes and phenomena. The judgment system evaluates the behavior of language users according to two subsystems: social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem evaluates language users by their behavior norms, ability to do things and perseverance, while social sanction evaluates language users by their real reliability and legitimacy. Appreciation system is the evaluation of text, process and phenomenon formation through reaction, composition and valuation. Reaction refers to the degree of attraction of text or process to readers and listeners, as well as the emotional impact on readers and listeners; Composition refers to whether the text/process is balanced and complex; Valuation refers to whether the text/process is important or valuable.

The application of positive discourse analysis is of great significance in the application of Xi Jinping's 2023 New Year Address, and the analysis of Xi Jinping's 2023 New Year Address from the attitude subsystem perspective is also reasonable and operable.

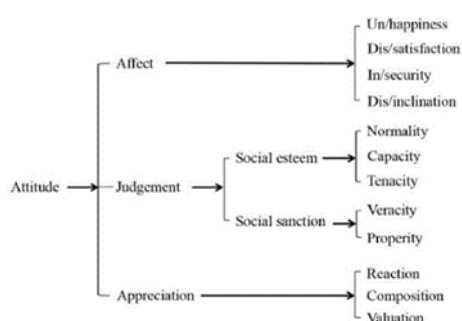


Figure 1 Framework of Attitude Resources

## 3. Attitude Resources in NYA

This section presents attitude resources in the 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping. First, the specific distribution of attitude resources will be analyzed. Second, the positive meanings conveyed through attitude resources will be explored with specific examples.

### 3.1. Distribution of attitude resources in NYA

Attitude resources are the core of appraisal resources and play an important role in expressing evaluation. Attitude system has two polarity, namely positive and negative polarity (Cambria, 2016). When annotating attitude resources, all attitude resources are classified into positive and negative aspects. Besides, attitude resources include three subcategories as mentioned above. So the specific distribution of attitude resources is provided as follows:

Table 3.1 Distribution of Attitude Resowurces in NYA

	Positive		Negative		Total	
	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.
Affect	88	46.56%	2	1.06%	90	47.62%
Judgement	81	42.86%	1	0.53%	81	43.39%
Appreciation	16	8.47%	1	0.53	16	8.99%
Total	185	97.89%	4	2.12%	189	100%

Note. Fre. = Frequency; Per. = Percentage

As shown in Table 3.1, there are 189 attitude resources in the 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping. Almost all of them are positive attitude resources occurring 185 times with the percentage of 97.89%. These positive attitude resources convey positive meanings which will be analyzed in next section with specific examples. Only 2.12% of attitude resources are negative, if combined with context, they are also used to reveal some implicit positive meanings. Among three subcategories, affect resources (46.56%) occupy the highest proportion. The proportion of judgement resources (42.86%) is next to affect resources. They are used to express attitudes towards the involved people and the achievements achieved under the leadership of the CPC. Appreciation resources (8.47%) take up the least.

### 3.2. PDA of attitude resources in PGC

As can be seen from Table 3.1 in the previous part, attitude resources are abundant in the 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping. And most of them are positive resources. This part will make PDA of attitude resources in 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping from three aspects: affect, judgement and appreciation.

#### 3.2.1. Analysis of affect resources

Affect resources express emotions about person, process and related phenomenon from two opposites: positive and negative expression. In the four subcategories of affect resources, dis/inclination resources are the most and they show desires to achieve some goals. Several representative examples in NYA are presented in the following.

Example 1: I sincerely hope that our compatriots on both sides of the Strait will work together with a unity of purpose to jointly foster lasting prosperity of the Chinese nation.

Example 2: Going forward, China will be a country that has great expectations of its younger generation. A nation will prosper only when its young people thrive. For China to develop further, our young people must step forward and take on their responsibilities.

In example 1, the word "hope" shows the President Xi's ardent hope for a better development of cross-Straits relations. The President Xi hopes that compatriots on both sides of the Straits will work together to build a better and better future for the Chinese nation. Harmonious relations among all ethnic groups is a necessary condition for the prosperity and development

of a country in any era. Combined with the context, this sentence shows the right direction of development and conveys the positive inclination of local authorities.

The verbal phrase “expectations” and “forward” in Example 2 clearly expresses the Xi’s expectation of Chinese younger generation. Combined with the context, the New Year is coming. Young people are the hope of the country, so the President Xi expected the broad masses of young people to aim high, keep the motherland in mind, and strive to make China's future better and better.

Dis/satisfaction resources express feelings towards the achievement or frustration of action. In the selected news, these resources mainly convey people's satisfaction with achievements and interest in something. Two instances are to be explored in the following.

Example 3: The Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games concluded with a resounding success. Chinese winter sports athletes gave their all and achieved extraordinary results.

Example 4: Today’s China is a country brimming with vigor and vitality. Various pilot free trade zones and the Hainan Free Trade Port are booming, innovations are gushing out in the coastal areas, development is picking up pace in the central and western regions, the momentum for revitalization is building in the northeast, and there is greater development and affluence in the border regions.

The verb “success” in Example 3 implies that the President Xi is satisfied with the success of the Winter Olympics, which shows the excellent ability of the Chinese government, and the excellent performance of the Chinese athletes adds glory to China. In addition, the success of the Beijing Winter Olympics has increased the enthusiasm of the Chinese people for ice and snow sports and promoted the national fitness campaign. In Example 4, the noun “vigor” and “vitality” show the sound momentum of China's economic development. China's coastal areas, central and western regions, northeastern regions and border areas are all developing in different ways, injecting new vitality into China’s economic development.

In/security and un/happiness resources are the least in affect resources, but they also reveal certain positive meanings. In/security resources involve feelings of peace or anxiety related to the surrounding environment. Security is related to confidence of oneself or trust in others, while insecurity correlates with disquiet or surprise.

Un/happiness resources are the core of affect resources, which refer to a kind of mental state. Happiness refers to cheerful mood or affection for other person or thing, while unhappiness is concerned with miserable mood or antipathy towards other person or thing. In the NYA, in/security resources are involved in confidence and disquiet, un/happiness resources convey cheerful mood and affection for things. Analysis of these two kinds of resources with representative examples is presented as follows:

Example 5: At every turn of the year, we always think of the great character of resilience that the Chinese nation has carried forward through millennia. It gives us still greater confidence as we continue our way forward.

Example 6: On my visit to Hong Kong earlier this year, I was deeply glad to see that Hong Kong has restored order and is set to thrive again. With determined implementation of One Country, Two Systems, Hong Kong and Macao will surely enjoy long-term prosperity and stability.

Example 7: In the course of 2022, we encountered various natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, droughts and wildfires, and experienced some workplace accidents. Amid those disconcerting and heartbreaking scenes, there have emerged numerous touching stories of people sticking together in face of adversity or even sacrificing their lives to help others in distress.

The noun “confidence” in Example 5 demonstrates positive meaning of security. Based on the context, whenever some natural disaster or security accident comes, there are always heroes who stand out and sacrifice themselves to help others. Consequently, the presence of these

heroic figures adds to the country's confidence to move forward despite difficulties and dangers, and this sentence reveals the potential positive meaning behind confidence.

The adjective "glad" in Example 6 expresses the cheerful mood of President Xi. Hong Kong has unique advantages for development. With the long-term interests of the Hong Kong people in mind, "One country, two systems" has protected Hong Kong's social structure based on private ownership and fundamentally safeguarded the lives and property of the Hong Kong people. This sentence implies that the President Xi is happy with the current development of Hong Kong and full of confidence in Hong Kong's future.

However, in Example 7, the words "disconcerting" and "heartbreaking" are all negative words, which convey the shock and suffering brought by these natural disasters and safety accidents. In fact, all these words imply positive meanings if they are combined with the context. Accidents are inevitable, but whenever these accidents happen, there are always some people willing to sacrifice themselves to protect strangers. This is the embodiment of the Chinese national spirit of helping each other and sticking together to tide over difficulties.

### 3.2.2. Analysis of judgement resources

Judgement resources make positive or negative judgments about human behavior based on certain social norms or values. Accordingly, judgement resources consist of two types: social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem resources take up the largest part of judgement resources and almost all of them are positive resources. Social esteem resources make judgments on behaviors of individuals from three aspects: normality, capacity and tenacity. Several examples containing these categories are provided in the following.

Example 8: We have consolidated our gains in poverty elimination and advanced rural revitalization across the board. We have introduced tax and fee cuts and other measures to ease the burden on businesses, and made active efforts to solve the most pressing difficulties of high concern to the people.

Example 9: We have now entered a new phase of COVID response where tough challenges remain. Everyone is holding on with great fortitude, and the light of hope is right in front of us. Let's make an extra effort to pull through, as perseverance and solidarity mean victory.

Capacity resources refer to the strength or weakness of one's ability. The words "consolidate" and "advance" in Example 8 show strong ability of the CPC. In Example 8, the president said the CPC has led the people and had made important achievements in poverty alleviation. These achievements reveal the strong capacity of the CPC, so this sentence is the positive judgement of capacity of the CPC.

Tenacity resources are about whether a person is reliable and responsible, which are mainly reflected in human quality characteristics and behavioral performance. The expression of "efforts" in Example 9 represents positive tenacity. Given the context, the President Xi delivered the 2023 New Year Address when China had just fully liberalized its domestic epidemic control policy. At that time, domestic medical resources were tight. The chairman encouraged everyone that the dawn was at hand and unity was victory. Consequently, this sentence also contains positive tenacity.

### 3.2.3. Analysis of Appreciation Resources

Appreciation resources are the evaluation of text, process and phenomenon, which belong to aesthetic category. Things can be appreciated through three aspects: reaction, composition and valuation. The most frequently used resources among appreciation resources are valuation.

Valuation resources concern the social value of things, involving importance, value, significance, function, influence and the like. They are not subjective judgments of individuals, but collective concepts of some people or society. The representative examples containing appreciation resources are illustrated as follows:

Example 10: The Chinese economy enjoys strong resilience, tremendous potential and great vitality. The fundamentals sustaining its long-term growth have remained strong.

In example 10, the words “strong” modify the positive importance and value of the Chinese economy. The development of the Chinese economy is not only benefits from its own geographical advantages and the support and guidance of the central government leadership, but also depends on the fact that different regions in China are actively exploring their own development paths, which has injected new vitality into the development of the Chinese economy. So the chairman made this statement. And the sentence conveys positive evaluation of Chinese economy.

#### 4. Conclusion

This thesis analyses the 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping from the path of positive discourse analysis, under the framework of attitude subsystem of appraisal theory. Through the analysis of attitude resources in the 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping, most of them convey positive meanings. Affect resources are the most and they are mostly used to show President Xi's desires and satisfaction with achieved results. In addition, there are a few affect resources expressing confidence in China's future development. In judgement resources, social esteem resources convey conscientious spirit and people-centred idea, and the strong ability of the CPC. Appreciation resources are the least frequently used words in attitude resources, and they express positive appreciation of achievements made by the Chinese people.

The 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping actively praises the great achievements made by the unity of the people of all ethnic groups in the past year, and encourages the people of all ethnic groups in the New Year to continue to work actively, which has positive social significance.

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