Stancetaking in Hong Kong Political Discourse: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Study

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1

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Abstract:

This study gives a corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) of stancetaking in the public speeches of three former Chief Executives. Three large corpora have been built by collecting all the public speeches of the three former Chief Executives. It combines automatic semantic tagging with the tripartite analysis of stancetaking in terms of evaluation, positioning and (dis)alignment. The findings not only reveal their preferential ways of stancetaking but also the changing socio-political contexts behind their particular ways of stancetaking. It is argued that a combination of the methods and theories in critical discourse analysis, stancetaking, and corpus linguistics can generate more illuminating findings concerning stancetaking in political discourse.

Keywords: stancetaking, political discourse, Hong Kong, public speeches, Chief Executive, critical discourse analysis, corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS)

1. Introduction

Since Hong Kong's return to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 July 1997, Hong Kong has become a special administrative region of China. As promised by the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, Hong Kong can maintain its capitalist way of life and enjoy a high degree of autonomy for 50 years under the framework of "One Country Two Systems" (OCTS) (Liu & Zhong, 2020). However, the key question is how to maintain the delicate balance between the two systems under Chinese sovereignty. As the head of the government, the Chief Executive (CE) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has to address this question properly. During the twenty years after Hong Kong's handover, three CEs were elected in turn, including Chee-hwa Tung (1997-2005), Donald Tsang (2005-2012), and Chun-ying Leung (2012-2017). Unfortunately, it is no exaggeration to say that their performances were far from satisfactory and successful (S. H.-W. Wong, 2015). Therefore, it is of great interest to examine how they take stance towards the concerned parties during their tenure.

Political language use is "a preferred locus for the strategic use of language" and "particularly sensitive to distortion subject to the interests and power relations of participants" (Marín-Arrese, 2015, p. 194). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been known for its strong interest in examining language use in its socio-political contexts and explicating the dynamic relations between language use, power and ideology (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), and it has been applied extensively to the study of the strategic language use in political discourse (Chilton, 1996, 2004; Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 2005; Wodak, 1989). In view of the crucial role of stancetaking in political discourse (Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013), this study gives a critical examination of their public speeches to examine their particular ways of stancetaking and the underlying socio-political factors. The basic assumptions are that a proper understanding of their particular ways of stancetaking is closely related to public perceptions of their performances, and that a proper understanding of their particular ways of stancetaking cannot be separated from the evolving and dramatic socio-political contexts in post-colonial Hong Kong.

2. Research background

As the head of both the executive branch and the government, the CE serves as the most important political figure of HKSAR (M. Y. H. Wong, 2017). The position was created to replace the office of the Governor of Hong Kong under British rule in order to maintain political continuity. Under the Basic Law, the CE has great constitutional power, including nominating principal officials, policymaking, implementing the law, leading the government, issuing executive order, and giving policy addresses to the public. Nevertheless, governance problems emerged immediately after the establishment of HKSAR on 1 July 1997, because of the changing circumstances in post-colonial Hong Kong, including "a more politicized population, rising expectations among the people, a more active civil society, the introduction of electoral politics, and a less co-operative civil service" (M. Y. H. Wong, 2017, p. 40). Consequently, the CE has to face dual pressure from both the central government and the increasingly political Hong Kong society. No matter who gets elected as the CE, there is always a governance crisis in HKSAR (M. Y. H. Wong, 2017).

The challenges of this position can be witnessed in the three CEs during the first two decades of HKSAR, including Chee-hwa Tung (1997-2005), Donald Tsang (2005-2012), and Chun-ying Leung (2012-2017). As a business tycoon, Tung was known for his close ties to the Chinese government. When he took office in 1997, he was confronted with the task of rebuilding the confidence of Hong Kong people in the OCTS. Although his government pledged to solve the problems with housing, the elderly and education, it was plagued by a series of crises, especially the 1997 Asian financial crisis (Flowerdew, 2004). Although he was reelected to a second term, his efforts to push for the national security legislation in September 2002 and the outbreak of the SARS epidemic in early 2003 contributed to the mass protest on 1 July 2003. On 10 March 2005, he announced his early resignation for "health problems" and became Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

Tung's successor Donald Tsang was a career civil servant. He earned his fame for his stewardship of Hong Kong's economy, especially during the Asian financial crisis. Unlike his predecessor, he was known for his colonial associations, because he was the first Chinese to serve as the Financial Secretary in the colonial government and made a knight of the British empire just before the 1997 handover. However, he was accepted by the Chinese government for his popularity and experience, which could be a stabilizing force for Hong Kong. During his seven-year service (reelected in 2007), he made two proposals for constitutional reform. While the first one failed in 2005, he managed to make the second pass after a compromise with the pro-democracy legislators. Meanwhile, he was also concerned about protecting the local features of Hong Kong and launched a series of campaigns to protect the environment and cultural heritage in Hong Kong. However, he was embroiled in various corruption allegations at the end of his second term and became the first CE to be convicted and imprisoned. However, his conviction and sentence were finally quashed by the Court of Final Appeal in June 2019.

The third CE Chun-ying Leung is a chartered surveyor. Unlike the two former CEs, he earned the position after a bitter contest with another candidate Henry Tang. He received only 689 votes from the 1,200-member election committee and took office on 1 July 2012 amid protests and controversies. Although he was praised for some "Hong Kong first" measures, he was criticized for his close ties to the Chinese government (Tsui, 2012). He was confronted with the increasing

demand for democracy and the growing conflicts between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland. His government was thus plagued by a series of mass protests, such as the anti-Moral and National Education protests in 2012, the "Umbrella Revolution" in 2014, and 2016 Lunar New Year Mong Kok civil unrest. In December 2016, Leung announced that he would not seek a second term, becoming the first CE not to do so. In March 2017, he was also elected Vice-Chairman of the CPPCC.

3. Stance in political discourse analysis

The study of stance as a linguistic phenomenon has attracted growing interest across different disciplines (Englebretson, 2007; Haddington, 2004; Jaffe, 2009). It has also been investigated in political discourse, as "the ability of language users, in this case politicians, to clearly articulate and manipulate their stance to achieve certain goals, express their attitudes and display solidarity with/opposition to certain values is obviously a key feature of political discourse" (Ho & Crosthwaite, 2018, p. 4). This gives rise to a growing number of studies on stance and positioning in political discourse (Cienki & Giansante, 2014; Fetzer, 2014; Furko, 2017; Haselow, 2020; Johnstone, 2009; Lempert, 2009; Marín-Arrese, 2013; Wang & Feng, 2018). The particular ways of stance construction can contribute to the construction of the identities of a certain politician (Chilton, 2004). For example, in a comparative study of the speech by the former President George W. Bush and that by Barack Obama in 2009, Hidalgo-Downing and Hanawi (2017) found they show different stances, as is evidenced in their choice of modality, negation and pronouns. However, to my knowledge no attempt has yet been made to investigate the particular ways of stancetaking of the three former CEs of Hong Kong during the two decades after Hong Kong's handover.

Although previous studies share a common interest in the stance of political discourse, their studies vary with different focuses, methodologies, and even terminologies they use. Stance is often used interchangeably with other terms such as "evaluation" (Thompson & Hunston, 2000a), "appraisal" (Martin & White, 2005), and "evidentiality" (Chafe & Nichols, 1986). Some studies start from the identification of stance markers and examine their distribution across different registers and genres (Biber, 2006a; Biber & Finegan, 1989). Others start from the clarification of different evaluative meanings and investigate their linguistic realizations in actual language use (e.g., Martin & White, 2005). However, neither approach is satisfactory given the multifarious overt and covert means of expressing evaluative meanings. Thompson and Hunston (2000b) thus propose a combined approach to the analysis of stance meanings and argue for the significance of using large corpora in the investigation of evaluation. Corpus linguistics (CL) can contribute to the investigation of evaluation in two complementary aspects. On the one hand, it allows for fast and accurate quantification of linguistic forms. On the other hand, it can contribute to the detailed qualitative analysis of multiple uses of a word or phrase in context. Nevertheless, whereas some scholars propose to annotate evaluative stance in discourse (Bednarek, 2006), it remains the most complicated and tricky issue to be addressed in discourse analysis.

4. Methodology

CADS underlines the "balanced" combination or "synergy" of CDA and CL in its analysis (Baker et al., 2008; Morley & Bayley, 2009; Partington, 2004). CDA is concerned with not only power relations in discourse but also "how power relations and power struggle shape and transform the

discourse practices of a society or institution" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 36). CL features the use of computer-assisted analytic tools for the automatic analysis of a large sample of electronic texts (Cheng, 2013). While the benefits of using CL methods in CDA have been widely discussed and acknowledged, CADS underscores the necessity to draw insights from both disciplines and contribute to their mutual development (Baker et al., 2008). CL can contribute to the automatic analysis of a large sample of texts and identify significant language patterns for further analysis. CDA draws insights from both linguistics and socio-political theories and contributes to the better interpretation and explanation of the findings generated by corpus-analytic tools and the detailed analysis of some linguistic features in their contexts of use (Baker, 2006).

Adopting a CADS approach, this study gives a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the preferential ways of stancetaking of the three former CEs in their public speeches. It adopts a holistic concept of stance, and views stance as:

> a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of value in the sociocultural field.
>
> (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163)

Viewing stance as a public act, this study adopts a tripartite analysis of stance in three interrelated aspects: evaluation, positioning, and (dis)alignment. Meanwhile, this study proposes to use automatic semantic tagging tools for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of stancetaking. It starts from automatic corpus analysis with a view to identifying these language patterns indicating their preferential ways of stancetaking. The basic assumption is that stancetaking can be revealed at different levels of discourse, including topics/themes, strategies, and linguistic means and realizations (Wodak, 2016). In other words, the act of stancetaking is not tied or limited to specific linguistic features (Elder, 2020).

Three corpora have been built by collecting all the public speeches of the three CEs, i.e., Chee-hwa Tung (Tung), Donald Tsang (Tsang), and Chun-ying Leung (Leung). All these public speeches are available on the portal of the Hong Kong government. The present study only addresses the English version of their public speeches. The English version is supposed to be more strategic in terms of stancetaking, because it is subject to the extensive scrutiny of international readers and audiences. The Tung corpus consists of 486,515 tokens, the Tsang corpus 270,910 tokens, and the Leung corpus 180,740 tokens. For comparison, three reference corpora have been built by combining two of them in turn, including Tung & Tsang (757,425 tokens), Tsang & Leung (451,650 tokens), and Tung & Leung (667,255 tokens).

The online corpus-analytic tool Wmatrix has been employed in this study for automatic corpus annotation and comparison. The UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS) it incorporates can classify English words into 21 semantic fields, which can be further classified into 232 semantic categories (SMCs) (Liu, 2017; Rayson, 2008). Besides, it can help to do key SMC analysis. By comparing one corpus with a general reference corpus or a comparable specialized corpus, Wmatrix can rank these statistically significant SMCs (i.e. key SMCs) in terms of their log-likelihood values. The higher their values are, the more statistically significant are their differences. For this study, each corpus was first compared with a specialized reference corpus which combines

the other two corpora. Then three key SMC lists were produced. This study focuses on the top 20 key SMCs of each corpus, and the typical tokens in each SMC are further examined in their specific contexts of use with a view to identifying their contributions to the specific ways of stancetaking of the three CEs. Their preferential ways of stancetaking are further discussed in terms of the changing socio-political contexts of Hong Kong. It is expected that a CADS approach to stancetaking can reveal not only their preferential ways of stancetaking but, more importantly, the intricate relations between stancetaking and the social, political and personal background.

5. Findings

This section gives a close analysis of the top 20 key SMCs in each corpus in order to identify their respective ways of evaluation, positioning and (dis)alignment (see Table 1).

5.1 Analysis of evaluation

An examination of the top 20 Key SMCs of the three corpora reveals that the three CEs have different evaluations of the situations in Hong Kong. Tung shows the most use of explicit evaluative key SMCs. On the one hand, Tung highlights the challenges and problems in Hong Kong, as can be seen from the two key SMCs "Difficult" (A12-) and "Violent/Angry" (E3-). A12- consists of such tokens as *challenges* (432), *problems* (186), *difficult* (178), *challenge* (161), *crisis* (159), and *difficulties* (155). The most frequent tokens in E3- include *turmoil* (257), *force* (48), *hit* (31), *attacks* (21), *attack* (20), and *threat* (18). They underline the financial turmoil in Hong Kong and the threat confronting Hong Kong. This can be attributed to the Asian financial crisis in 1998. On the other hand, Tung shows preference of using more key SMCs with explicit positive meanings, including "Confident" (E6+), "Success" (X9.2+), Healthy" (B2+), "Evaluation: Good" (A5.1++), and "Speed: Fast" (N3.8+). The most frequent tokens in each SMC are as follows:

> **"Confident"** (E6+): *confidence* (352), *confident* (210), *trust* (31), *faith* (14), *confidently* (13), *reassuring* (7)
> **"Success"** (X9.2+): *success* (432), *successful* (327), *successfully* (146), *achievements* (124), *effective* (121)
> **"Healthy"** (B2+): *recovery* (194), *healthy* (84), *well-being* (47), *recover* (28), *well* (26), *recovering* (25)
> **"Evaluation: Good"** (A5.1++): *better* (467), *greater* (241), *outstanding* (62), *superior* (6), *splendid* (5)
> **"Speed: Fast"** (N3.8+): *rapid* (187), *rapidly* (95), *quickly* (48), *immediate* (40), *fast* (35), *quick* (32)

They are used to highlight the confidence in Hong Kong's future, the rapid economic recovery in Hong Kong and the success Hong Kong has achieved. This can be attributed to Tung's efforts to build public confidence in Hong Kong's future, project a promising future for Hong Kong people and construct a positive image for the Hong Kong government. This can also be revealed in his preference for "Time period: Long" (T1.3+), which consists of such tokens as *long term* (297), *long* (51), *lifelong* (25), *long time* (21), and *lifelong* (20). They are used to highlight the value of long-term orientation in Tung's speech.

Unlike Tung, Tsang features the use of less evaluative key SMCs, but they tend to be more positive. Tsang also addresses the potential risks of Hong Kong, as can be seen from "Danger" (A15-). It consists of such tokens as *risks* (44), *risk* (39), *exposure* (6), *danger* (4), *dangers* (3), *peril* (3), *hazard* (2), *dangerous* (2), *at stake* (2), *jeopardize* (1), *precarious* (1), and *at risk* (1). Nevertheless,

Table 1 Top preferential key SMCs of the three Chief Executives

	Tung			Tsang			Leung		
Rank	Tagset	LL	SMCs	Tagset	LL	SMCs	Tagset	LL	SMCs
1	A13.3	300.4	Degree: Boosters	I2.2	217.3	Business: Selling	Z99	583.43	Unmatched
2	S6+	260.04	Strong obligation and necessity	W3	174.9	Geographical terms	Z2	546.25	Geographical names
3	A12-	238.74	Difficult	M7	122.21	Places	W3	413.38	Geographical terms
4	T1.1.3	224.88	Time: Future	I1.1	110.17	Money and pay	Z1	282.87	Personal names
5	P1	170.84	Education in general	G1.2	75.68	Politics	B5	261.88	Clothes and personal belongings
6	A1.1.1	158.73	General actions/making	O4.3	70.83	Colour and colour patterns	Y1	211.2	Science and technology in general
7	Z8	158.41	Pronouns	A1.8+	66.68	Inclusion	M3	200.53	Vehicles and transport on land
8	E6+	139.29	Confident	K5.1	65.65	Sports	I2.1	132.66	Business: Generally
9	E3-	130.79	Violent/Angry	I1	48.54	Money generally	I2.2	117.04	Business: Selling
10	Z5	119.04	Grammatical bin	F2	47.7	Drinks and alcohol	M5	100.14	Flying and aircraft
11	X9.2+	118.43	Success	N5++	46.54	Quantities: many/much	W1	86.91	The universe
12	S7.1	93.06	Power, organizing	N5---	46.34	Quantities: little	S1.2.4+	85.73	Polite
13	T2++	90.63	Time: Beginning	L2	42.56	Living creatures: animals, birds, etc.	N1	77	Numbers
14	B2+	74.8	Healthy	M4	40.2	Sailing, swimming, etc.	Z3	73.1	Other proper names
15	X8+	74.39	Trying hard	K1	33.44	Entertainment generally	M4	60.57	Sailing, swimming etc.
16	G2.1-	68.34	Crime	O4.2+	32.69	Judgement of appearance: Positive	N3.6	51.19	Measurement: Area
17	T1.3+	59.17	Time period: long	A1.7-	31.54	No constraint	M7	50.64	Places
18	N3.8+	58.35	Speed: Fast	N3.3--	31.2	Distance: Near	N5++	45.42	Quantities: many/much
19	A7+	56.15	Likely	A15-	30.85	Danger	Z4	44.36	Discourse bin
20	A5.1++	54.21	Evaluation: Good	S9	30.07	Religion and the supernatural	N5.1-	38.71	Part

Tsang prefers to highlight the uniqueness of Hong Kong and build a more attractive Hong Kong, as can be seen from the SMCs "Color and color patterns" (O4.3), "Judgement of appearance: Positive" (O4.2+), "Quantities: Little" (N5---), and "Religion and the supernatural" (S9). Their typical tokens are as the following:

> **"Color and color patterns"** (O4.3): *green* (91), *transparent* (30), *bright* (19), *golden* (16), *brighter* (14)
> **"Judgement of appearance: Positive"** (O4.2+): *clean* (65), *attract* (65), *attractive* (32), *attracted* (24)
> **"Quantities: Little"** (N5---): *unique* (136), *minimum* (42), *single* (31), *uniqueness* (3), *uniquely* (3)
> **"Religion and the supernatural"** (S9): *spirit* (76), *Islamic* (54), *dragon* (40), *blessed* (10), *miracle* (9)

The most frequent token in S9 (i.e., *spirit*) is used to highlight the "can-do" spirit of Hong Kong. *Blessed* is used to refer to the advantages of Hong Kong. The token *green* in O4.3 is used to refer to green living and the environment. The tokens *bright* and *brighter* are used mainly to refer to the bright future of Hong Kong. Tsang prefers to highlight the uniqueness of Hong Kong, as can be seen from the most frequent token *unique* (136) in N5---. The most frequent collocates at the first position to the right (R1) of *unique* are *free* (19), *advantages* (18), *strengths* (10), *experience* (6), *role* (5), *character* (4), and *advantage* (3). Typical examples are as follows:

(1) These *unique* **advantages** are the foundations of our development, our stability and our prosperity.
(2) This is a pivotal moment in our history, and underscores the importance of Hong Kong's *unique* **strengths** and role in the Mainland's development.
(3) Our strength as a global financial centre rests with our *unique* **experience** in implementing the Mainland's financial reform initiatives offshore…

Compared with Tung and Tsang, Leung shows the least use of explicit evaluative key SMCs. However, he is noted for his preference for "Polite" (S1.2.4+) and "Part" (N5.1-). Their typical tokens are as follows:

> **"Polite"** (S1.2.4+): *thanks* (84), *thank* (38), *grateful* (16), *gratitude* (13)
> **"Part"** (N5.1-): *part* (119), *parts* (39), *shares* (17), *piece* (9), *section* (7), *proportion* (3)

An examination of the concordance lines of the tokens in S1.2.4+ finds that Leung prefers to use polite expressions to express his gratitude to some other factors, especially the "One Country, Two Systems" arrangement. It tends to give a positive evaluation of the benefits of OCTS to Hong Kong. Examples are as follows:

(4) *Thanks to* our deepening economic integration with the Mainland.
(5) Hong Kong can connect you to the vast markets of the Chinese Mainland, *thanks to* our "one country, two systems" arrangement.

This positive evaluation of Chinese mainland's role in Hong Kong can also be witnessed in the tokens in N5.1-. The concordance lines of the most frequent tokens in N5.1- underline that the majority of them are used to emphasize that Hong Kong is a part of China, as in the following:

(6) Hong Kong has been an integral *part* of the China-watcher story.
(7) We also offer the unique feature of being *part* of China and yet outside the Mainland.
(8) Under "one country, two systems", we are *part* of China and enjoy the "China advantage".

5.2.2 Analysis of (dis)alignment

Their preferential ways of alignment can also be revealed in their preferences for different themes and topics. This can be revealed in their preferential key SMCs. Tung prefers to highlight "Trying hard" (X8+), "Crime" (G2.1-), "Power, organizing" (S7.1), and "Education in general" (P1). Their typical tokens are as follows:

> "**Crime**" (G2.1-): *crime* (56), *illegal* (32), *terrorist* (14), *terrorism* (12), *infringement* (8), *offenders* (7)
> "**Power, organizing**" (S7.1): *restructuring* (304), *status* (66), *restructure* (22), *standing* (18), *colonialism* (7)
> "**Education in general**" (P1): *education* (699), *students* (162), *schools* (135), *teachers* (133), *training* (126)
> "**Trying hard**" (X8+): *efforts* (349), *effort* (128), *strive* (71), *concerted* (48), *try* (42), *trying* (41)

The tokens in G2.1- highlight the efforts to fight crimes. These tokens in S7.1 underline the emphasis on economic restructuring. This can be seen from the most frequent token *restructuring* in S7.1. It is overwhelmingly pre-modified by the token *economic* (203). The tokens in P1 also suggest that Tung prefers to highlight the development of education. The most frequent token *education* (699) collocates at the L1 position with *tertiary* (38), *quality* (25), *secondary* (23), *higher* (21), and *continuing* (16). The typical tokens in X8+ underline the government's efforts and commitment to economic restructuring and education development in Hong Kong. The strong collocates of *efforts* (349) in X8+ include *concerted* (41), *joint* (21), *our* (132), *made* (32), *redouble* (5), *thanks* (8), *step* (10), and *improve* (17). In other words, Tung prefers to align with the government in building a better Hong Kong.

Tsang prefers to align with the public in Hong Kong. He is concerned about not only business and trade but also the political development in Hong Kong. This can be seen from "Business: Selling" (I2.2), "Money and pay" (I1.1), "Money generally" (I1), "Politics" (G1.2), and "No constraint" (A1.7-). Their typical tokens are as the following:

> "**Business: Selling**" (I2.2): *trade* (572), *market* (333), *markets* (216), *trading* (100), *free trade* (76)
> "**Money and pay**" (I1.1): *investment* (267), *capital* (220), *tax* (124), *investors* (95), *funds* (91), *banking* (86)
> "**Money generally**" (I1): *financial* (822), *banks* (118), *currency* (99), *finance* (93), *liquidity* (47), *money* (41)
> "**Politics**" (G1.2): *political* (182), *suffrage* (67), *democratic* (48), *election* (39), *democracy* (30)
> "**No constraint**" (A1.7-): *regulatory* (71), *freedom* (71), *liberalization* (57), *freedoms* (23), *unfettered* (17)

The emphasis on the economic development and trade in Hong Kong is not surprising in view of Hong Kong's status as an international financial market. However, the emphasis on political development is exclusive to Tsang. The token *suffrage* (67) here refers to the universal suffrage in Hong Kong. It collocates strongly with *universal* (69), *timetable* (9), *2017* (5), *ultimate* (5), *Chief* (7), *executive* (7), *road* (5), *secured* (3), *achieving* (4), *goal* (5), and *2020* (4). They emphasize that the ultimate aim or goal of the Hong Kong people is universal suffrage for both the elections of the CE and the Legislative Council. It also underlines his efforts and promises to set a timetable for the election of CE and the Legislative Council by universal suffrage in 2017 and 2020 respectively. Examples are as follows:

(9) On constitutional development, I pledged to set a timetable for attaining *universal suffrage*.
(10) The ultimate aim is *universal suffrage* – for both the elections of the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council.
(11) I have already secured a timetable for *universal suffrage*: The Chief Executive and the Legislative Council may be elected by universal suffrage in 2017 and 2020 respectively.

Besides, Tsang is also more concerned about the development of the entertainment industry, as can be seen from "Sports" (K5.1), "Drinks and alcohol" (F2), and "Entertainment generally" (K1). Their typical tokens are as follows:

"**Sports**" (K5.1): *games* (76), *goal* (56), *equestrian* (51), *playing field* (45), *sports* (29), *Olympics* (28)
"**Drinks and alcohol**" (F2): *wine* (80), *distillation* (3), *bar* (3), *wines* (1), *beer* (1), *distil* (1), *beverages* (1)
"**Entertainment generally**" (K1): *play* (109), *competition* (66), *festival* (32), *entertainment* (25), *playing* (21)

Like Tsang, Leung is also concerned about the development of trade and business in Hong Kong, as can be seen from "Business: Generally" (I2.1), and "Business: Selling" (I2.2). I2.1 consists of such tokens as *business* (546), *economy* (288), *companies* (258), and *infrastructure* (154), and I2.2 consists of such tokens as *trade* (412), *market* (169), *markets* (123), *trading* (92), *free trade* (91), and *sell* (19). Nevertheless, he is also concerned about the development of science and technology and the construction of new infrastructures in Hong Kong, as can be seen from "Science and technology in general" (Y1), "Vehicles and transport on land" (M3), "Flying and aircraft" (M5) and "Measurement: Area" (N3.6). Their typical tokens are as follows:

"**Science and technology in general**" (Y1): *technology* (298), *science* (125), *engineering* (25), *scientists* (18)
"**Vehicles and transport on land**" (M3): *road* (195), *platform* (65), *transport* (44), *railway* (36), *drive* (33)
"**Flying and aircraft**" (M5): *airport* (67), *aviation* (46), *pilot* (27), *fights* (22), *flight* (18), *runway* (14)
"**Measurement: Area**" (N3.6): *space* (45), *hectares* (5), *mou* (4), *spaces* (4), *spatial* (2), *stretch* (2)
"**Clothes and personal belongings**" (B5): *belt* (177), *ties* (70), *fashion* (13), *hat* (6), *wearing* (5)

On the one hand, these tokens in Y1, M5, and N3.6 suggest that Leung is concerned about the development of science and technology and the construction of the third runway for Hong Kong airport. Besides, the tokens like *belt* in B5 and *road* in M3 suggest that Leung prefers to underline the "Belt and Road" initiative and Hong Kong's important role in it. This can also be revealed in another frequently used token *ties* in B5. It is used primarily to refer to the close ties between Hong Kong and Chinse mainland, as in the following:

(12) The *ties* between Hong Kong and the Mainland are getting closer.
(13) Hong Kong has the most extensive and the longest history of economic *ties* with the Mainland of China.

5.2.3 Analysis of positioning

Positioning addresses how each CE positions himself and their audience in their speeches based on the view that "a negotiation between speaker's and addressee's worldviews is inherent in every act of communication" (Connor-Linton, 2014). Positioning can be revealed in several discursive features, such as the use of stance adverbs, modals, pronouns, and other linguistic patterns (Conrad & Biber, 2000; Halliday, 1994; Hunston, 2006).

Tung prefers to position himself as an authoritative and credible CE. This can be revealed in his prominent preference for "Degree: Boosters" (A13.3) and "Strong obligation and necessity" (S6+). S6+ consists of such tokens as *need* (642), *must* (601), *should* (451), *needs* (302), *have to* (219), *commitment* (179), *necessary* (162), *responsibility* (141), *essential* (105), *needed* (70), and *had to* (52). Most of them are modals which are concerned with the degree to which a speaker or writer is committed to the claim he or she is making (Halliday, 1994). Biber (2006b) makes a distinction between three groups of modals: (1) modals of "**volition/prediction**", such as *will*, *should*, *shall*,

and *be going to*; (2) modals of "**obligation/necessity**", such as *must*, *should*, *(had) better*, *have to*, *got to*, and *ought to*; (3) modals of "**permission/possibility/ability**", such as *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might*. Tung shows a preference for modals of "obligation/necessity", as can be seen from the choice of modals *must*, *should*, *have to*, and *had to*. Different groups of modals tend to communicate different degrees of authority (Baker, 2006). The preference for modals of "obligation and necessity" can be associated with a more "authoritarian" style, because it tends to establish a high power distance between addressers and addressees (Hidalgo-Downing, 2008). The reference for deontic modals such as *must* and *should* represents a typical legitimization strategy, which underlines that the statement is "right" not only in a "cognitive" sense but also in a "moral" sense (Chilton, 2004; Marín-Arrese, 2015).

The "authoritarian" style can also be revealed in Tung's preference for A13.3, which consists of such tokens as *very* (1118), *more* (902), *indeed* (438), *really* (220), *particularly* (219), *much* (182), *so* (147), *highly* (92), *increasingly* (91), *such as* (73), *greatly* (71), and *very much* (68). These tokens can be used to amplify and intensify the power and authority of his speech. A few instructive examples are as follows:

(14) And we are *very* fortunate to be in the heart of Asia, an economy in the Mainland of China, which is really doing very, very well.
(15) *More* importantly, we need to address the financial implications brought about by the increase in elderly population and the additional service provisions.
(16) *Indeed*, they are an interim arrangement, designed to maintain balance and continuity while our democratic process evolves over the next 10 years.
(17) This is *particularly* so in the knowledge-based global economy in which we now live.
(18) I believe that there is *much* synergy between China and the US.
(19) First, economy has become *increasingly* global.
(20) We *really* need to look at this seriously.
(21) We are a *highly* liberal and open society.

Meanwhile, Tung also shows a preference for the stance adverbials of certainty, such as *indeed* (438) and *really* (220) in A13.3. These "modal-like expressions" can "construct a more complex interaction between speaker and hearer, expressing other kinds of evaluative meanings and creating potential conflicts between points of view" (Hunston, 2006, p. 86). The emphasis on *really* and *indeed* suggests Tung's efforts to underline the factual status of his speech. This can be attributed to the widespread distrust of the Hong Kong government in times of crisis after Hong Kong's return to China. The claim to "real" facts also represents another typical legitimizing strategy (Chilton, 2004; Marín-Arrese, 2015).

However, Tsang does not show distinct features in his positioning. By contrast, Leung tends to show his own way of positioning, which can be seen from his preference for the two key SMCs "**Polite**" (S1.2.4+), and "**Discourse bin**" (Z4). S1.2.4+ consists of such tokens as *thanks* (84), *thank* (38), *grateful* (16), *gratitude* (13), *thanking* (2), *thankful* (1), *courtesy* (1), and *indebted* (1). An examination of the concordance lines of these tokens finds that Leung shows gratitude to not only the concerned parties but also the OCTS arrangement and the special role of Hong Kong in China. For instance:

(22) I wish to extend my heartfelt *thanks* for their efforts.
(23) My *thanks*, as well, to our panel of judges.

(24) That's *thanks* largely to our combined advantages of "one country and two systems", our longstanding business connections and our professional expertise.
(25) In turn, Hong Kong, *thanks* to its "super-connector" role, will enable global business to take advantage of southern China's rising business tide.
(26) For that, I am *grateful* to the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and the Guangzhou Institutes of Biomedicine and Health for organising it.
(27) I offer my sincere *gratitude* to all those who have put in so much effort within so short a space of time to finalise the preparation of this launch.

These polite expressions can also be found in Z4, which consists of such tokens as *thank you* (151), *thank you very much* (57), *good morning* (51), and *good afternoon* (31). These polite expressions suggest that Leung tends to construct a high power distance between himself and the concerned parties, but unlike Tung, he positions himself at a low rather than higher power status. They also underline Leung's efforts to construct solidarity with the concerned parties. This can also be witnessed in some frequently used expressions in Z4, including *of course* (117), *after all* (26), and *yes* (24). They are typical common ground markers that can be used by the speaker to establish common ground with his present and putative addressees. They presume that the speaker and the addressees share the same knowledge and background about what is said. By using them, "addresser and addressee are thus presented as so thoroughly in alignment and the proposition at issue so 'commonsensical', that agreement can be taken for granted" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 123). Examples are as follows:

(28) These, *of course*, are more vulnerable to swings in fund flows and substantial adjustments in asset prices.
(29) *After all*, Hong Kong is second to none in the world in terms of business proximity to the Mainland of China.
(30) *Yes*, in Hong Kong - and nowhere else - China advantages and global advantages come together, thanks to our "one country, two systems" arrangement.

By using these expressions, Leung takes what he says as common knowledge between himself and the addressees and thus constructs solidarity between them. However, the use of these expressions is manipulative and ideological because they rule out alternative viewpoints. The preference for these expressions can be attributed to the growing conflicts in Hong Kong and his intention to construct solidarity between him and the Hong Kong people.

6. Conclusion

A CADS study of their public speeches has revealed distinct patterns in their particular ways of stancetaking. Tung prefers to align with the government and position himself and the Hong Kong government as authoritative and credible in order to build the confidence of Hong Kong people in Hong Kong. Therefore, he prefers to use evaluation strategies to build a positive image of Hong Kong. Tsang tends to align with Hong Kong people in promoting the political development of Hong Kong and protecting the local advantages and features of Hong Kong. He does not show distinct features in positioning compared with the other two CEs. He also uses some evaluation strategies but they focus on the unique advantages of Hong Kong. Leung tends to align with the central government in highlighting the China advantage and the crucial role of Hong Kong in a rising China, including its "Belt and Road" initiative. He positions himself at a low status and uses more polite expressions. Compared with the two former CEs, Leung was more eager to establish common ground with the public.

A proper understanding of their preferential ways of stancetaking cannot be separated from the evolving socio-political background in Hong Kong. As the first CE in HKSAR, Tung was confronted with popular scepticism and a widely shared lack of confidence in OCTS and Hong Kong's future, especially during the time of the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Tung had to resort to explicit evaluative language to boost the confidence of Hong Kong people and build a reliable and credible image for his government (Flowerdew, 2004). However, when Tsang was the CE, Hong Kong's economy had recovered from the previous slump (Liu & Zhong, 2020). The key problem that confronted him was the constitutional reform and the schedule for universal suffrage. Meanwhile, Hong Kong is increasingly concerned about asserting itself as "a civic and cultural community" (Veg, 2017, p. 325), as can be seen from "the campaigns for cultural heritage protection (2004-2010)" (Liu & Zhong, 2020, p. 2). That explains why Tsang is concerned about political development in Hong Kong and highlighting the unique advantage of Hong Kong. However, when Leung took office on 1 July 2012, there was growing tension between Hong Kong people and the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong society has become increasingly conflictual. Meanwhile, the Chinese government took a more proactive stance towards Hong Kong's political development. As a CE with a lack of popular mandate, Leung had to show concerns towards local development on the one hand and underline the China advantage on the other hand. Instead of using more evaluative language, he prefers to position himself at a lower status and seek common ground between himself and the public.

To conclude, this study has demonstrated the benefits of not only a tripartite analysis of stancetaking in terms of evaluation, positioning and (dis)alignment but also using automatic semantic tagging to conduct fine-grained analysis of stancetaking. A tripartite analysis of stancetaking can reveal the subtle differences in their preferential ways of stancetaking in three interrelated aspects, thus presenting a more comprehensive picture of the particular ways of stancetaking. The use of automatic semantic tagging not only makes the efficient and accurate analysis of large corpora possible, but it also presents a more holistic picture of the detailed strategies involved in the particular ways of stancetaking. It can also help to identify the entry points for further detailed analysis of specific linguistic patterns (Baker et al., 2008). A combination of the methods and theories in CDA, stancetaking, and CL can thus generate more illuminating findings concerning the particular ways of stancetaking and the socio-political factors behind them (Wu, Huang, & Liu, 2015). Nevertheless, an ethnographic approach would be more conducive in further research, with a view to yielding a more comprehensive analysis of the socio-political factors behind their preferential ways of stancetaking.

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