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Reconstructing Solidarity Discourse through Conference Interpreting at the General Debates of the United Nations (2008–2021)

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Abstract

While reconstructing political discourses in various interpreter-mediated international conferences has attracted research attention, reconstructing solidarity discourse as a major theme for UN discourse in conference interpreting has not been studied. This study investigates the reconstruction of the solidarity discourse produced by Chinese heads of state and high-level government officials in Chinese-English conference interpreting at the UN's General Debates (2008–2021). The corpus-based critical discourse analysis reveals three patterns in the discursive reconstruction done by interpreters: (1) the (re)grouping discourse for the common-collective-Self and common-threat-Others is emphasised; (2) the commissive (promising) discourse for China's delivery of common goals is accentuated; and (3) the discourse of an inclusive 'global-we' with 'our obligations' is strengthened. The overall amplification of the solidarity discourse reproduces global consolidation as an upgraded form of international cohesion. Focusing on the prominent theme of solidarity discourse in the UN, this study highlights conference interpreters' 'editing' of linguistic realisations that *de facto* constitute ideological intervention at interpreter-mediated discursive events.

Keywords: Solidarity Discourse, Conference Interpreting, Ideology, UN's General Debates, corpus-based CDA

1 Introduction

Solidarity is concerned with group building, featuring reciprocal attitudes/relationships and mutual obligations of people within and between groups (Wilde 2013). Solidarity discourse constitutes a discursive practice that performs political functions, enabling political leaders to impel in-group

identities, appeal for reciprocal obligations and actions, and enhance transnational cohesion (Kampf 2016). Solidarity discourse is instrumental in the formation of communities founded on common values and understandings (Chilton 1990) and facilitates the establishment of cooperative relationships and social bonds among in-group members (Kampf 2016). The study of solidarity discourse is paramount for understanding the mechanisms through which social cohesion and collective action are negotiated and maintained; it also provides insight into how group identities are formed and how they operate within larger social and political contexts. In today's world where different countries share some common goals alongside certain common threats (Zhao 2019), solidarity discourse has become pervasive and cogent because joint efforts are often called for (Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov 2017), particularly in transnational communication.

In transnational communication, where solidarity discourse is often produced, translation/interpreting activities are ubiquitous and indispensable (Cronin 2013; Pérez-González 2012). Globalisation accelerates the demand for translation/interpreting (House 2015). Such demand is particularly strong in international conferences organised by international organisations (IOs). In international relations research, IOs define meanings and diffuse global norms (Barnett and Finnemore 1999), are involved in law-making and enforcement (Alter and Meunier 2009), and condition world politics (Binder and Heupel 2015). To perform these vital functions, IOs need conference interpreters, as language experts, to 'bridge' various discourses produced by speakers from different linguistic/cultural backgrounds. According to Schäffner (2004: 120), cross-border communication relies on translation/interpreting, which is 'part of the development of discourse' at the discursive sites of international conferences.

While participants in international conferences tacitly assume that the interpreted speech 'functions seamlessly as part of the discourse' of the source speech (Kang 2009: 144), the interpreted speech that the audience relies upon for understanding and communication does not always 'mirror' the source speech owing to the interpreter's *agency*. In this regard, interpreters may ideologically mediate or intervene and '[feed] their knowledge and beliefs into a text' (Hatim and Mason: 147). Therefore, interpreters' ideological beliefs play a role in 'editing' source texts (STs) that become a 'different version' discursively in the resultant target texts (TTs) (Gao and Munday 2023).

This article investigates ways interpreters' ideological beliefs contribute to reconstructing solidarity discourse. It raises research questions based on reviewing relevant literature and introducing

the background. Next, solidarity (as a theoretical concept) and solidarity discourse are introduced. Then, corpus data and research methods are reported, followed by an analysis of the discursive reconstruction of solidarity discourse. This article concludes with a summary and discussion of the findings and a proposal for future research.

2 Background and research questions

Existing studies in conference interpreting have established such interpreter ideological intervention at influential discursive events such as the European Parliament meeting (Bartłomiejczyk 2020, 2022; Beaton-Thome 2013), China's political press conferences with foreign media (Gu 2018; Gu and Tipton 2020; Wang and Feng 2017), and World Economic Forum's annual meetings among others (Gao 2021; Gao 2024). In conference-interpreting research, several discourses with different thematic *foci* are investigated considering interpreters' ideological intervention, such as refugee discourse (Beaton-Thome 2013), the discourse of racism (Bartłomiejczyk 2020), Eurosceptic discourse (Bartłomiejczyk 2022), the discourse of China and Beijing's image building (Gu 2018), and nationalist discourses (Gao 2021). These studies unequivocally point to the interpreters' ideological intervention that *de facto* reshapes and reconstructs these discourses at influential discursive events.

Despite the growing body of literature on interpreters' reconstruction of various discourses in international conferences, reconstructing solidarity discourse is little talked about, and the discursive events organised by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) are scantily examined. United Nations is meant to 'protect the maximisation of compatibility of different civilizations and their peaceful coexistence' in the time of 'worldness' (Zhao 2019: 49). UNGA is the main policy-making organ that provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues. Every September, heads of state and other high-level government leaders from around two hundred UN member countries address the Assembly in the General Debates. Hence, General Debates offers a multi-voiced platform for world political leaders to air their views on 'international conflict and cooperation, terrorism, development, climate change, and other key issues in international politics' (Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov 2017: 1). General Debates have become a discursive site for UNGA to call for joint actions to tackle shared global threats, ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic, racism, inequality, poverty, armed conflict, to other ills (Workings of the General Assembly 2022). Such

appeals for collective global actions to tackle these shared threats entail constructing solidarity discourse at this discursive event.

This study uncovers how solidarity discourse is reconstructed from the ST in Chinese to the TT in English in the UN General Debates sessions for 2008–2021. The choice of this period bears its historic significance. The year 2008 was special because it witnessed a major earthquake and the Summer Olympic Games in China, both of which received substantial international attention and engagement. Then-Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao delivered a speech at the General Debates, highlighting global interdependence and togetherness. Subsequent years increasingly saw Chinese heads of state or high-level officials explicitly producing discourse of global solidarity. Chinese conference interpreters interpret and reconstruct their solidarity discourse into English versions. As the international *lingua franca*, the English language renders the political discourse reconstructed at IOs' discursive sites more accessible to world political leaders or decision-makers and more circulatable in the subsequent international media chain.

Two specific research questions are raised to deliver the research goal:

RQ (1) In what ways do the Chinese interpreters reconstruct solidarity discourse?

RQ (2) What are the linguistic patterns that realise the discourse structures of reconstructed solidarity discourse?

3 Solidarity and solidarity discourse

3.1 Solidarity as a concept

Solidarity finds its etymological provenance in the Roman law of obligations, 'obligatio in solidum', meaning the joint liability of a group of people on a contractual basis (Bayertz 1999: 3). As a theoretical, analytical concept, solidarity was first brought to social sciences by Emile Dürkheim (1893/1997), who made the seminal distinction of *organic solidarity* and *mechanical solidarity*. The former is created by sameness, while the latter is characterised by functional interdependence among different members based on shared fate. According to Dürkheim (ibid), organic solidarity is found in traditional societies in which group cohesion is based on the similarities among its members; mechanical solidarity is held by modern societies where social cohesion is built on the differences among the members, emphasising their interdependent relationships. Dürkheim was the trailblazer for an

important understanding of solidarity as a sociological concept based on experiences of common fate (Wydra and Pülzl 2014).

Dürkheim's (1893/1997) conceptualisation of mechanical solidarity offers a theoretical account for inter-country solidary in today's increasingly connected world. Chinese government leaders frequently posit at the General Debates that different countries can *求同存异 (achieve common development by seeking common ground while reserving differences*) and *取长补短 (draw on each other's strengths to compensate for one's weaknesses*). Informed by mechanical solidarity based on interdependence and common fate, this study approaches solidarity as a theoretical concept featured by *reciprocal efforts and mutual obligations of interdependent members—in an identifiable group—connected by their common interests, causes, or goals alongside common dangers, enemies, or threats*; this understanding of solidarity premises on three assumptions espoused by existing studies. First, common groundness binds people or groups in an identifiable group (Scholz 2008). Second, solidarity implies a relational Self-Other (re)grouping in terms of *inter alia*, mental models, and discursive practices (Alharbi 2018; De Fina 1995). Third, solidarity requires mutual and 'positive moral obligations' (Scholz 2008: 18–19) and mutual obligations to assist/support in-group members (Trifunovic 2012); such solidarity-associated obligations are not constrained by legal contract but by a spontaneous 'quasi-contract' that regulates ensuing mutual obligations and collective actions. In sum, solidarity is characterised by the bonds formed by an identifiable group based on common fate, Self-Other(s) (re)grouping, mutual obligations, and collective actions.

3.2 Solidarity as a discourse

Solidarity is not only a concept but can be a discourse. In discourse studies, scholars have established that discourse is socially constituted, constitutive (Fairclough 2010; Wodak and Meyer 2009), and can be performative (Meyer et al. 2013). In social studies, solidarity is viewed as descriptive and normative of social bonds/ties based on shared values (Dobrzanski 2005). Solidarity discourse, such as the discourse of Self-Other group identification, can be a 'descriptive' representation of actual or mental in/out-group relationships (van Dijk 1998). Additionally, the normative function of solidarity can be achieved by solidarity discourse as 'a form of consolidating social practice that is manufactured in text, speech, and communication' (Alharbi 2018: 2). Performing solidarity in text and talk helps form a community based on shared values and facts (Chilton 1990). It can help establish cooperation and

bonds with other in-group members (Kampf 2016). According to Wallaschek (2020), solidarity, as a social/political phenomenon, is discursively constructed by solidarity discourse.

While solidarity-as-a-discourse remains understudied in discourse studies, existing studies on solidarity have recognised its discursive nature and incipiently revealed a few linguistic patterns for discursive construction of solidarity (Alharbi 2018; De Fina 1995; Kampf 2016; Wallaschek 2020). Though linguistic formulas of solidarity vary immensely, the discursive forms can be found in four archetypical linguist realisations: (1) using pronouns (De Fina 1995; Kampf 2016), such as first/second person pronouns (for instance, *we* and *you*), used as strategic markers of inclusive Self and exclusive common-ground Other(s) for constructing solidarity discourse, (2) (reiterated) referential nouns for in/out-group identification (Alharbi 2018; Yu and Tay 2022), (3) metaphors (Kampf 2016; Meadows, 2007; Santa 1999), and (4) using modal verbs to construct a commissive discourse or a discourse of mutual obligation (Alharbi 2018; Yu and Tay 2022). These concrete linguistic patterns afford operational utility for analysing solidarity discourse for this study that interrogates linguistic data in a corpus.

4 Data and methods

The data were drawn from the UN General Debates Chinese-English Interpreting Corpus, which the authors built to study the interpretation of political discourse. The corpus consists of the ST (Chinese) and TT (English) versions of 14 speeches by Chinese heads of state and high-level government officials at the UN General Debates for 2008–2021. As shown in Table 1, all the speeches over 14 years are included in this study. The English and Chinese versions of the speeches included in the corpus were obtained from the UN official website (https://gadebate.un.org). The documents of these speeches are publicly available in separate PDF transcripts with corresponding audio clips. The transcripts were carefully checked against audio clips for inconsistency. The size of the bilingual corpus is 76,913 tokens in total (Chinese STs: 46,546 tokens by characters[1]; English TTs: 30,367 tokens by words).

Table 1 presents contextual data for the corpus. It lists the Chinese government leaders who

[1] This study did not use tokenised Chinese words for the calculation of Chinese data because different Chinese segmentation programmes segment Chinese words differently, particularly regarding terminologies and political set-phrases frequently used in this corpus. The segmented Chinese words do not match the words in English. Therefore, reporting data size by characters can offer a relatively more objective view for the size of the Chinese data.

delivered speeches at the UN General Debates from 2008 to 2021 and their corresponding speech topics. Considering the diachronic scope and the topics covered, it can be argued that the data in this corpus are representative in some way of the Chinese government leaders' construction of solidarity discourse on this discursive event. First, the data included the UN General Debates in 14 years, in which six top Chinese government leaders addressed the General Assembly, including two heads of state, two state council premiers, and two foreign affairs ministers. Second, most speech topics explicitly and cogently feature solidarity discourse through wordings like *unite as one, work together, pursue common development, for all, shared future for mankind* and so forth. These expressions highlight the themes of togetherness, commonness, and a need for collective actions. Hence, the Chinese-English bilingual data allows investigation of the conference interpreters' renditions of solidarity discourse.

Table 1 A breakdown of contextual data for the corpus from 2008 to 2021

No.	**Year**	**Chinese government leaders**	**Topics**
1	2008	Wen Jiabao, then Premier	*China Committed to Reform and Opening-Up and Peaceful Development*
2	2009	Hu Jintao, then President	*Unite as One and Work for a Bright Future*
3	2010	Wen Jiabao, then Premier	*Getting to Know the Real China*
4	2011	Yang Jiechi, then Foreign Minister	*Work Together to Meet Challenges and Pursue Common Development*
5	2012	Yang Jiechi, then Foreign Minister	*Work Together to Achieve Common Security and Development*
6	2013	Wang Yi, Foreign Minister	*China at a New Starting Point*
7	2014	Wang Yi, Foreign Minister	*Jointly Pursue Peace and Development and Uphold Rule of Law and Justice*
8	2015	Xi Jinping, President	*Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared*

			Future for Mankind
9	2016	Li Keqiang, then Premier	*Work for a World of Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development*
10	2017	Wang Yi, Foreign Minister	*Toward Peace and Development for All*
11	2018	Wang Yi, Foreign Minister	*Multilateralism, Shared Peace and Development*
12	2019	Wang Yi, Foreign Minister	*China Today: A Proud Member of the Global Community*
13	2020	Xi Jinping, President	*(Not given)*
14	2021	Xi Jinping, President	*Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties to Build a Better World*

The conference interpreters who rendered these speeches are the UN's Chinese interpreters working at the English and Chinese Sections of the UN's Language Services. According to the practice guidelines of UN's Language Services, these institutional interpreters are expected to interpret accurately the words and the 'spirit' of what is said.[2] They are experienced high-calibre professionals and have received professional training at the UN Training Programme for Interpreters and Translators at Beijing Foreign Studies University or other top institutions in conference interpreter training (UN's Translation/Interpreting Officials 2018). Their interpreted versions *in situ* in UN conferences, like the English interpretations in other international conferences, are often presumed and appear almost verbatim on government and media websites (cf. Gu and Tipton 2020). In other words, the Chinese interpreters' interpretations are often tacitly considered the 'official' versions of the ST speeches, feeding into a discursive chain that links the UN General Debates, world media circulation, and decision-makers from different countries.

To study solidarity discourse reconstructed by the interpreters in the English version, corpus-based critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used. CDA can be seen as a 'multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach' used to study social or political phenomena (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 2). Using corpus techniques, such as frequency, collocation, concordance, and keywords, can provide 'a much more detailed insight into the working language in use' to complement CDA analysis (McEnery and

[2] See https://www.ungeneva.org/en/conference-management/language-services.

Baker 2015:10). The integration of corpus linguistics (CL) and CDA has come of age in terms of investigating sociological and political issues in monolingual studies, thanks to its useful methodological '*synergy*' (Baker et al. 2008). In conference interpreting research, while such integration is relatively nascent, researchers have also benefited from the complementarities of connecting linguistic categories/items with the CDA-oriented approaches in investigating interpreter agency and ideological intervention/mediation (e.g., Beaton-Thome 2013; Gao 2024; Gu and Tipton 2020; Wang and Feng 2017).

Drawing on the methodological 'synergy' of CDA and CL, this study integrates the discourse analysis at the macro level and the analysis of linguistic realisations of solidarity discourse at the micro level. At the macro-level, solidarity discourse—manufactured in text and talk—was interrogated concerning social/political aspects, not least to speaker backgrounds, the particularities of certain years, and the speech topics at the discursive events of the UN General Debates. At the micro-level, linguistic realisations of solidarity discourse were examined with a focus on three linguist means: (1) referential nouns/pronouns to Self/Others, (2) modal verbs of obligation, and (3) metaphors (see 2.2). These linguistic means are also accounted for in van Dijk's (2018) socio-cognitive approach, in which the in/out-group discourse realised by these linguistic means is linked to the speakers' mental models—ideology. This study examined the relevant linguistic items aided by frequency, collocation, and concordance corpus techniques. The operationalisation of the corpus-based CDA approach has revealed three patterns where conference interpreters ideologically intervened in the ST solidarity discourse.

5 Analysis

This section examines three ways in which Chinese interpreters reconfigure the discourse on solidarity: firstly, they highlight the discourse of (re)grouping, emphasising the collective identity and identifying common external threats; secondly, they underscore China's commitment to fulfilling mutual obligations towards shared objectives through commissive discourse; and thirdly, they reinforce the discourse of inclusivity, promoting a sense of global unity and emphasising collective responsibilities that necessitate joint actions.

5.1 Emphasised (re)grouping discourse for common-collective-Self and common-threat-Others

Regrouping discourse helps language users identify and consolidate their in-group Self with common interests/causes and create the common Other(s) discursively (Alharbi 2018), constituting an essence for the discursive construction of solidarity. The examination of solidarity discourse is assisted by 'frequency', the 'bedrock' of corpus-based research (Baker 2010: 19). The frequency analysis of referential nouns to Self/Others—as a typical linguistic retaliation of in/out-group discourse (van Dijk 1998, 2018)—discloses a slightly up-toned (re)grouping discourse for the common-collective-Self and common-threat-Others in the TTs.

The STs in the corpus show that rather than producing a grouping discourse of China-as-Self and other countries-as-Others, the Chinese speakers intend to construct a discourse of *international solidarity* that transcends national boundaries. As shown in Table 2, the Chinese government leaders use collective nouns (*人类 (humanity), 国际社会 (international community),* and *人类命运共同体 (a community with a shared future for humankind)*), with which China and many other countries are discursively identified as one united group as Self. The Chinese speakers use the FAMILY metaphor to refer to the UN member countries. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), using the FAMILY metaphor—as a relatively fixed conceptual metaphor—structures a positive mental frame. It strengthens the inter/intra-group bonds through its influence on people's actions. Using the FAMILY metaphors is rendered accurately. Then, the discourse of common-threat-Others is constructed through speakers' explicit reference to, among others, *新冠 (COVID), 疫情 (pandemic), 核问题 (nuclear issue), 战争 (war),* and *气候变化 (climate change).* These global issues are discursively constructed as the common-threat-Others that call for collective efforts to tackle (Example 1). These 'Others' are not countries or social groups but common threats facing many countries. Table 2 illustrates a relatively close interpretation, with a moderate increase in the TTs, of the corresponding referentials for the common-collective-Self (ST = 140 vs. TT = 161) and common-threat-Others (ST = 183 vs. TT = 200); such increases discursively emphasise the (re)grouping discourse for the Self/Others.

Table 2 Referential nouns for common-collective-Self and common-threat-Others in STs and TTs

Common-collective-Self	common-threat-Others

	STs[3]	TTs	STs	TTs
	人类 (*n*= 79)	*human(s), mankind, humanity* (*n*= 99)	*新冠, 疫情, 病毒,* (*n* = 37)	*COVID, pandemic/epidemic virus,* (*n* = 44)
	国际社会 (*n* = 47)	*international/global community* (*n* = 47)	*无核化, 核问题/扩散/武器* (*n* = 34)	*denuclearization, nuclear issue/weapons* (*n* = 37)
	人类命运共同体 (*n* = 9)	*a community with a shared future for mankind* (*n* = 10)	*战争, 世界大战, 一/二/冷战* (*n* = 30)	*war(s), world war(s), world war one/two, cold war* (*n* = 34)
	家庭 (*n* = 5)	*family* (a reference to the UN member countries) (*n* = 5)	*气候变化/变暖* (*n* = 28)	*climate change/warming* (*n* = 28)
			贫困/穷 (*n* = 24)	*poverty* (*n* = 26)
			金融危机 (*n* = 13)	*financial crisis* (*n* = 14)
			保护主义 (*n* = 9)	*protectionism* (*n* = 9)
			难民危机/问题 (*n* = 8)	*refugee crisis/issue* (*n* = 8)
Total	*n* = 140	*n* = 161	*n* = 183	*n* = 200

The example below illustrates emphasised (re)grouping discourse for the common-collective-Self and common-threat-Others. Example 1 is taken from the 2020 General Debates when the COVID-19 pandemic was a global health threat. Chinese President Xi uses the WAR metaphor to fortify the (re)grouping discourse—humanity as the Self-group and the pandemic as the common-threat-Other. Synonymous with the FAMILY metaphor, the WAR metaphor, as a conceptual metaphor, also

[3] Back translation of the Chinese words in Table 2 is not provided because the TT English words are the lexical correspondences of the ST Chinese.

influences how people think and act (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), thus, contributing to producing the discourse of humanity (as the Self-group) vis-à-vis COVID-19 (as the common Other). The metaphorical use of war-related expressions (such as *战胜 (beat), 赢得 (win), 斗争 (fight)*) is interpreted accurately. The referential nouns to the common collective Self (*人类 (humanity))* and the common-threat-Other (*疫情* (*pandemic*)) are rendered with close lexical correspondence in English. Notably, *疫情 (pandemic)* is rendered as *COVID-19*, which serves to explicitate the common-threat-Other. Another interesting point is the addition of an in-group referential noun, *humanity*, juxtaposed with the first-person plural pronoun *we*. These two referentials mutually reinforce each other, thus, emphasising the (re)grouping discourse in the TT English version.

Example 1 (President Xi/2020)

ST: 我们必须战胜疫情，赢得这场事关人类前途命运的重大斗争。[…] 这次疫情虽然来势凶猛，我们终将战而胜之。

Gloss: We must beat the pandemic and win this major fight crucial to the future of humanity. […] Although the current pandemic comes forcefully, we will eventually overcome it and win.

TT: We must beat COVID-19 and win this decisive fight crucial to the future of humanity. […] The current pandemic may appear overwhelming, but we humanity will surely overcome it and prevail.

5.2 Accentuated commissive (promising) discourse for shared benefits/goals

Commissive discourse is constructed by speakers' committing to future actions leading to collective benefits, establishing solidarity through speakers' promise(s) or offer(s) willingly made, so it discursively promises performances for mutual obligations (Alharbi 2018). The Chinese speakers use the construction (*中国将/会* (*China will*)[4] + action verbs) (n = 54) in the STs to express their promises/offers to make contributions to shared benefits/goals of the international community. The referential noun that refers to the actor (*China*), together with the modal verb (*will*) that shows the actor's commitment to future action, constitutes an explicit act to construct the commissive discourse (ibid). Figure 1 shows a noticeable increase in this construction (*China will*) in the TTs (n = 93),

[4] Using the Chinese character *将/会* (*will*) is analogous to the English word *will. Will* can fundamentally be regarded as a modal verb in the above construction when it is used to show willingness to do things (Salkie 2010).

discursively accentuating the overall commissive discourse in the interpretations for 2008–2021. Apart from the three years (2008, 2013, 2014) in which this commissive construction in the STs and TTs mirror each other in number, higher frequencies in the TTs can be observed in all the other eleven years. Interestingly, there was a spike in the TTs (n = 13) in 2018, in which the foreign minister delivered a speech on the topic *Multilateralism, Shared Peace and Development,* signalling Beijing's call for collective actions from UN member countries. The interpreter adds 13 cases of '*China will*' before the action-verb-led promises/offers that discursively commit China to shared actions to contribute to the common cause of global peace and development.

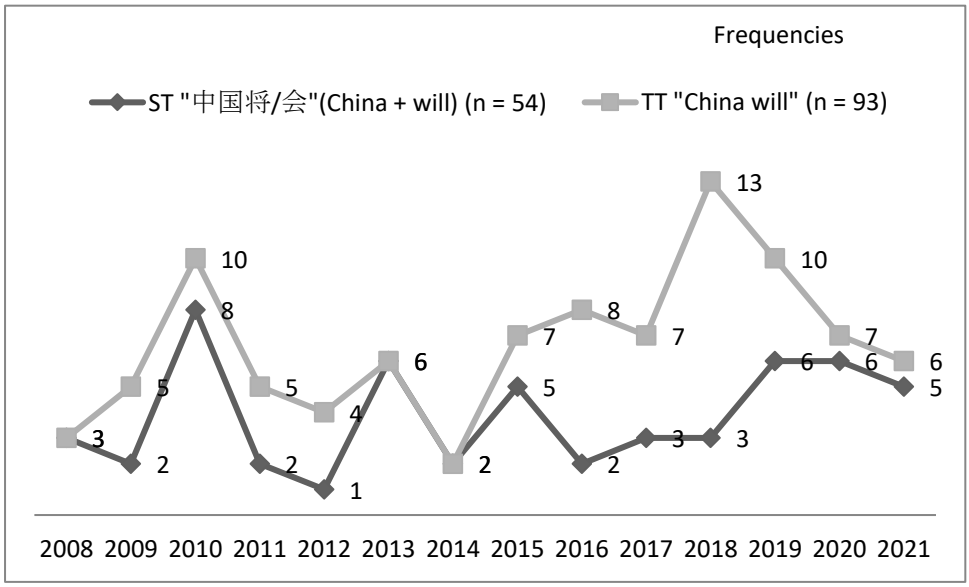

Figure 1 Frequencies of *中国将/会*（*China will*）in the STs and *China will* in the TTs

The concordance corpus technique closely examines the sentences with the construction (*China will* + action verbs). Table 3 presents examples of the commissive discourse with '*China will*' added by the interpreters. The middle column shows that the interpreters literally render the verb + object sections. Coupled with the added '*China will*' in the left column, the reshaped sentences demonstrate the accentuated commissive discourse. The interpreters reshape these sentences regarding China's promised future contributions to the global economy, environment, health, and transnational relations. For example, the TT discourse (*China will import about US$10 trillion of goods* […] *boost world economic growth*) explicitly expresses China's economic commitment; the TT discourse (*China will donate 100 million doses of vaccines*) explicitly expresses China's commitment to the global health issue; the TT discourse (*China will keep to its commitment and remain a champion of multilateralism*)

explicitly expresses China's commitment to a multilateral transnational relationship. Such explicit reconstruction of China's commissive discourse is more forceful than implicit means (cf. Alharbi 2018). Hence, adding '*China will*' discursively accentuates China's commissive discourse in the TT English version.

Table 3 Examples of China's commissive discourse with *China will* added in the TTs (the Chinese STs and the English gloss presented in brackets)

e.g.	**Added "*China will*" in TTs**	**Action-verb-led promises**	**Topic areas**	**Year/ speaker**
1	*China will*	*increase support for other developing countries hit hard by the financial crisis (加强对受国际金融危机影响严重的发展中国家的支持 [enhance the support to the developing countries hit hard by the financial crisis])*	Global economy	2009/ Hu
2	*China will*	*import about US$10 trillion of goods in the next five years, and this will further boost world economic growth. (进口近10 万亿美元的商品，将对世界经济增长起到更大的促进作用 [import nearly US$10 trillion of goods, will play a greater role to boost world economic growth])*	Global economy	2011/ Yang
3	*China will*	*enhance friendly relations and cooperation with all other countries. (同所有国家发展友好合作 [develop friendship and cooperation with all countries.])*	Transnational relations	2012/ Yang
4	*China will*	*shoulder its share of responsibility and continue to play its part in this common endeavour. (*"common endeavour" refers to "to build a sound global eco-environment"*) (在这方面，继续做出自己的贡献 [In this area, continue to make own contributions])*	Global environment	2015/ Xi
6	*China will*	*open its door even wider to the outside world. (对外开放的大门会越开越大 [the door of opening-up is getting increasingly bigger])*	Global economy	2016/ Li
7	*China will*	*keep to its commitment and remain a champion of multilateralism (始终是多边主义的践行者 [remain the practitioner of multilateralism])*	Transnational relations	2018/ Wang

8	*China will*	*donate 100 million doses of vaccines to other developing countries in the course of this year. (年内再向发展中国家无偿捐赠 1 亿剂疫苗 [within next year, donate again to developing countries 100 million doses of vaccine])*	Global health	2021/ Xi

5.3 Strengthened discourse of an inclusive *'global we'* with *'our obligations'*

Using pronouns serves to negotiate the overall relationship of solidarity and distance between interlocutors (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). In particular, using first-person plurals reveals how speakers view others in unity. The selection of pronouns is fundamental to the speaker's mental representation of the audience and *grouping* (van Dijk 2008: 226). Shifts in the pronouns 'edit' the speaker's stance regarding the audience and serve to 're-group' them.

In the discursive event of UN General Debates, the first-person plurals often refer to the inclusive 'global-we' (China + other countries), with which Chinese speakers intend to construct a solidary discourse of the global community. Using 'global-we' is a re-grouping discourse that, despite country-specific differences, consolidates different countries into one Self-group based on common fate, goals, and interests. As Figure 2 illustrates, a drastic increase of first-person plurals (*we/our*/us*) from the STs (n = 143) to the TTs (n = 292) refers to the inclusive 'global-we'. Such inclusive usage serves to re-group and unite members into one Self-group (Alharbi 2018; Kampf 2016). Hence, the strong increase of the inclusive 'global-we' in the TTs discursively strengthens solidarity discourse for the global community as a Self-group.

Interestingly, Figure 2 also portrays a chronological upward trend in the STs and the TTs, albeit with fluctuations. This trend suggests that Chinese speakers and interpreters tend to (re)produce a stronger inclusive 'global-we' discourse over the years. Two spikes can be observed in 2015 (n = 40) and 2020 (n = 44); in 2015, Chinese President Xi delivered a speech on *Creating a Community of Shared Future for Humankind*, and in 2020, he called for collective actions from the international community to combat the COVID-19 pandemic as the common threat of humanity. These two speeches intrinsically construct a discourse of a common-ground-Self vis-à-vis a common-threat-Other. The increase in the inclusive 'global-we' in the TTs indicates the interpreters' in-group positioning for the global community (cf. van Dijk 1998) and discursively fortifies the global solidarity discourse.

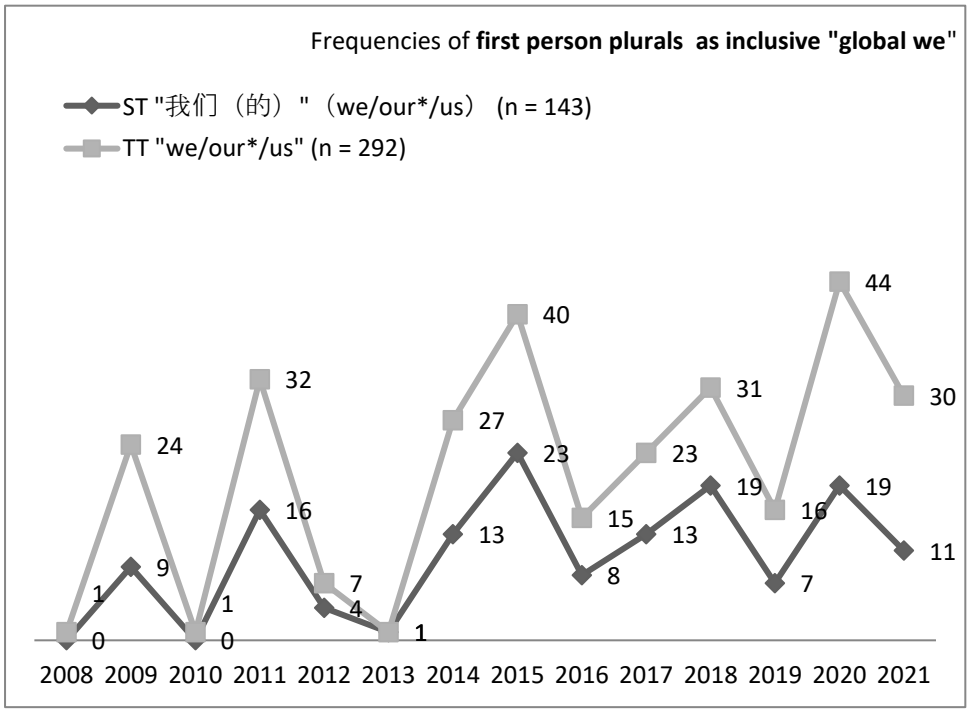

Figure 2 Frequencies of first-person plurals for the inclusive 'global-we' of "*我们(的)"* (we/our/us) in the STs and "*we*/*our**/*us*" in the TTs.

Regarding collocation[5], using inclusive 'global-we' in the TTs is closely associated with using the three modal verbs of obligation—*need* (MI = 5.31), *must* (MI = 5.10), and *should* (MI = 5.07). According to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) system of 'modulation' (roughly obligation and inclination), the three modal verbs of obligation are scaled as high-intensity modal verbs, using which signal a strong sense of obligation and urgency to fulfil obligations (ibid). Their usage in the collocation of the pronouns refers to the inclusive 'global-we', suggesting an intensified sense of mutual obligations and a call for joint efforts to achieve common goals.

The following examples demonstrate how the collocated use of the inclusive 'global-we' and modal verbs in the TTs help strengthen the discourse of *our* mutual obligations that entail collective actions.

Example 2 (then-President Hu/2009)

[5] The three modal verbs, as collocates of the inclusive *we*, were identified through the Collocates function of Lancsbox, with the settings of Statistic: MI| Span: 0-4| Collocation freq. threshold: 5.0| Statistic value threshold: 3.0| L0-R4|. The Mutual information (MI) score was used to measure the strength of association because it stresses semantic exclusivity and de-emphasises grammatical frequency.

ST: 面对前所未有的机遇和挑战，国际社会应该继续携手并进，秉持和平、发展、合作、共赢、包容理念，推动建设持久和平、共同繁荣的和谐世界，为人类和平与发展的崇高事业不懈努力。第一，用更广阔的视野审视安全，维护世界和平稳定。

Gloss: Faced with unprecedented opportunities and challenges, the international community should continuously uphold principles of peace, development, cooperation, common progress, and tolerance, promote the endeavour to build a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity, and contribute to the noble cause of peace and development of mankind. First, a broader perspective is to be taken for safeguarding world peace and stability.

TT: In the face of unprecedented opportunities and challenges, we, members of the community, should commit ourselves to peace, development, cooperation, common progress and tolerance and continue our joint endeavour to build a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity and contribute to the noble cause of peace and development of mankind. First, we should view security in a broader perspective and safeguard world peace and stability.

In Example 2, the Chinese head of state attended the 2009 UN General Debates for the first time. When the then-President Hu calls for collective efforts from the *international community* (as the Self group) in the face of shared *opportunities and challenges*, in the two sentences of the example, five instances of additions of the first-person plural pronouns refer to the inclusive 'global-we'. Such additions in the juxtaposition of *we* with *members of the community* and collocations of *commit ourselves* and *our joint endeavour* reveal the discursive strengthening of the in-group discourse by the interpreters. They reconstruct a strengthened global solidarity discourse by signalling an up-graded inclusive message that China is solidified with other countries. Moreover, modal verbs are slightly reshaped. Though one modal verb (*应该* (*should*)) in the ST might also apply to the following sentence, the interpreter's additions of *should* (a high-intensity modal verb of obligation) in the collocation *we* + *should* reproduce, at least rhetorically, a stronger sense of mutual responsibilities and urgency to fulfil such obligations (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Therefore, the interpreted sentences may more emphatically call for solidary actions from the UN member countries considering common causes, such as *peace, security*, and *progress*. Such additions of 'global-we' referential pronouns (*we, our**) alongside the high-intensity modal verb of obligation (*should*) in the TTs reveal the interpreters' ideological mediation and strengthen solidarity discourse.

Example 3 (Wang/Foreign Minister /2018)

第一，坚持以合作共赢为目标。世界正处于百年未有之大变局，[…]。只有以合作代替对抗，以协商取代胁迫，建设大家庭而不是拼凑小圈子，坚持共商共建而不是搞赢者通吃，这个世界才有光明的未来。

Gloss: First, win-win cooperation is to be kept as a goal. The world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. […] This world will only have a bright future only when cooperation replaces confrontation, consultation replaces coercion, building a one big family rather than patching together small circles (*a fixed Chinese metaphor which is similar to the word 'cliques'*), and a common-development approach replaces a winner-takes-all approach.

TT: First, we must pursue win-win cooperation. Our world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. […]. What we need to do is to replace confrontation with cooperation and coercion with consultation. We must stick together as one big family instead of forming closed circles. We must promote common development through consultation instead of taking a winner-takes-all approach.

Example 3 presents the Chinese foreign minister's argument for win-win cooperation with a FAMILY metaphor. The interpreter accurately uses a lexical correspondence for *大家庭* (*big family*) with additional action verbs (*stick together as a big family*), heightening the metaphorical force for the togetherness discourse of the UN member countries as family members. Similar to Example 2, there are five instances of additional first-person plural pronouns (*we, our*) referring to the inclusive 'global-we'. In addition to one instance of *our world* that discursively (re)groups the world countries as one Self-group, four instances of additional *we* are accompanied by additional high-intensity modal verbs of obligation (*must, need*). The added constructions (we + must/need + action verbs) render the TT solidarity discourse more forceful, with a stronger sense of mutual obligations and an urgent need for collective actions the UN member countries. Such frequent additions in the interpreter's reconstruction cumulatively amplify the discourse of an inclusive '*global-we'* with '*our obligations'* that entail collective actions.

6 Conclusion

Benefiting from the 'synergy' of corpus techniques and CDA, this study investigated how conference

interpreters from Chinese STs reconstruct solidarity discourse into English TTs at the UN General Debates (2008–2021). The analysis showed an overall TT amplification of the ST solidarity discourse produced by Chinese heads of state and high-level government officials over 14 years. The Chinese interpreters reconstruct solidarity discourse in three ways: (1) the (re)grouping discourse—for the common-collective-Self and common-threat-Others—is emphasised; (2) China's commissive (promising) discourse—for delivery of mutual obligations towards common goals—is accentuated; and (3) the discourse of an inclusive 'global-we' with 'our obligations'—that entail collective actions—is strengthened. According to van Dijk's (1998, 2018) socio-cognitive approach in which ideology is manifested in the production of discourse, the strengthened reproduction of solidarity discourse in English points to interpreters' ideological strengthening of the speaker discourse.

The overall ideological amplification in the TT discourse is realised through interpreters 'editing' linguistic realisations (cf. Gao and Munday 2023). Such 'editing' is achieved in three ways. First, the discursive emphasis of (re)grouping is realised through interpreters adding referential nouns/pronouns to the common-Self/Others. The increased use of referential nouns to the common collective Self (*humanity*, *global community*) in parallel with those to the common-threat Others (*COVID, pandemic, nuclear issue*) emphasises the (re)grouping discourse. Second, the marked increase of '*China will* + action verbs' (ST = 54, TT = 93) discursively accentuates the commissive discourse for China's delivery of mutual obligations for collective benefits/goals. Third, the notable increase of first-person plural pronouns (*we, our*, us*) referring to the inclusive 'global-we' (ST = 143, TT = 292) alongside high-intensity modal verbs of obligations (*need*, *must*, and *should*) functions to strengthen the mutual obligations discourse and appeal for collective actions. These additions are accompanied by the accurate renditions of the FAMILY metaphor (used for the common-collective-Self) and the WAR metaphor (used for the common-threat-Others). These two conceptual metaphors that influence people's minds and actions (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) can reinforce the upgraded solidarity discourse reconstructed with the TT English version.

Such linguistic 're-engineering' that amplifies solidarity discourse in TTs may have profound implications. First, the amplified solidarity discourse in English at the UN General Debates will likely be taken verbatim or as the 'official' version of the Chinese leaders' speeches by other world leaders and media agencies. Beyond the UN's meetings, global media may further pass on and circulate the reshaped discourse to global audiences, exerting a far-reaching impact on the geographic and temporal

scope. Second, the TT discourse reshapes China's important voices in such a way that Beijing's commitment to global solidarity is discursively upgraded, potentially leading to a more active, willing, and determined image of China as a major world contributor, and, in return, higher expectations upon Beijing/China by other countries. Although its further political implications are beyond the remit of this study, the paramount importance of interpreters' discursive presence can be commensurately recognised. Third, this empirical case exemplifies conference interpreting as a vital discursive 'node'. This node creates a pleiotropic discursive chain, linking a cascade of audiences, not least to the media onsite/offsite and the world leaders and decision-makers, separated temporarily and geographically (Gao 2024). Considering the permeating influence of conference interpreting as the discursive node, the scholarly investigation in the field can go outward (Zwischenberger 2019), drawing from other disciplines while contributing empirically and theoretically to the neighbouring fields of study.

Methodologically, the integrated approach used in this study helped capture the nuanced granularity of linguistic patterns without overlooking the bigger picture of discursive configurations. Drawing on CDA, this study demonstrated the value of integrating the sociological concept of solidarity with the linguistic categories recognised/used by discourse scholars in excavating the underlying discursive reconstruction of solidarity discourse. This can be seen as integrating an upper-level concept with linguistic realisations at a lower level. The 'synergy' of such integration enabled the analysis to connect the social/political/historic embedding of the UN General Debates as a discursive event with the language used *in situ* of the event meaningfully. Future studies on the social and political aspects of conference interpreting can benefit from such interdisciplinary integration.

One limitation of this study is that the chronological pattern (2008–2021) remains vague owing to the relatively small corpus size. Although some interesting connections were tentatively made between spikes of certain linguistic items in the corpus with likely causes (the outbreak of COVID in 2020), questions like how these spikes are systematically triggered and how solidarity discourse is reconstructed through interpretation, from a temporal perspective, are yet to be investigated with a larger data-set, preferably with more language pairs in the influential discursive events of the UN General Debates.

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