Speech Act in Diplomacy: How China Makes Commitments in Diplomatic Press Conference

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Abstract— **Diplomatic commitments are often made in diplomatic settings to demonstrate a country's future actions. Based on the speech act theory, this study explores how Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons make diplomatic commitments in Chinese ministry of foreign affairs regular press conferences. This study adopted a corpus pragmatic approach and examined commissive speech acts in a self-established corpus consisting transcribed dialogs of 112 press conferences. The findings of this study include: 1) 98.64% of identified commissive speech acts were implicit performatives, among which future tense (59.45%) and modals (32.36%) were two most frequently used approaches to perform commissives; 2) Chinese spokespersons adjusted the use of commissive words in their speech acts for different diplomatic topics; 3) high-frequency words in commissive sentences revealed China's diplomatic ideologies of togetherness and continuity. The findings of this study present noticeable features of commissives performed by Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons and provide an innovative perspective to understand Chinese diplomatic discourse.**

Index Terms— **Diplomatic commitment, diplomatic discourse, press conference, speech act.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic spokespersons, as national representatives, make speech acts carefully in diplomatic settings, because their words carry certain intentions and purposes related to national interest and national image. According to the speech act theory, commissives are "those illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action" [1]. Failing to carry out diplomatic commitments might damage a country's credit in international society. Although it seems to be risky to perform commissive speech acts in diplomatic discourse, commissives are necessary to sustain legitimacy of a government [2]. Therefore, it is important that spokespersons pay special attention to their utterances when they perform commissive speech acts in public.

Nevertheless, little research has been done regarding the performance of commissive speech acts in diplomatic discourse, especially in Chinese contexts. Therefore, this study is trying to explore how Chinese spokespersons perform commissive acts when responding to domestic and international affairs in regular press conferences of Chinese ministry of foreign affairs (MFA), which is an important

channel for Chinese government to present its stance and provide timely responses. Moreover, this study intends to make a probe into the relationships among diplomatic commitments expressions, diplomatic topics, and ideologies behind these speech acts. The findings of this study are expected to help understand Chinese diplomatic commitments and extend academic explorations about commissive speech acts in Chinese context. Based on these two main purposes, the research questions of this study are as follows: 1) How the commitments are made by Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons in their regular press conference? 2) Are there any distinction in making commitments regarding different topics of international affairs? 3) Are there any words frequently appearing in commitment sentences? If so, what diplomatic ideologies do they reveal?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

"Diplomacy" is commonly understood as a range of practices to establish and maintain relationship between nations [3]. Diplomatic discourse studies have been conducted in the field of linguistics in the past few years [4], [5]. To be specific, diplomatic discourse includes official states documents, speeches of state leaders, treaties, agreements, communiques, statements, declarations between nations, and various diplomatic press conferences.

According to the speech act theory proposed by Austin [6], speakers perform actions via utterances. A speech act can be divided into three acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary [7]. The theory of speech act has provided a new perspective to explore human communication. Austin's speech act theory and its further refinements by later scholars are an essential part of pragmatic studies. Speech acts has been a popular research topic in recent pragmatic studies. For example, John *et al*. [8] analyzed speech acts by native and non-native speakers of English in professional maritime communication to examine possible risks of miscommunication. Besides, Licea-Haquet *et al*. [9] conducted an academic study on how Spanish speakers recognize speech acts.

Searle [1] extended the speech act theory and classified speech acts into five categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Among that, a commissive act is "to commit the speaker to some future course of action" [1]. When evaluating Austin's classification of illocutionary acts, Searle commented that "only in the case of commissives has Austin clearly and

unambiguously used illocutionary point as the basis of the definition of a category" [1]. It indicated that commissive speech acts were well-defined comparatively earlier than other speech act categories. Commissive speech acts have the typicality of "doing things via saying things" and are deemed a linguistic phenomenon that conspicuously shows the speaker's intention. A promise in a formal setting or an oath, which can be understood as a commissive speech act [1]-[10], impose certain external binding forces on the speaker. Blok [10] proposed that the introduction of a performative concept of ethical oaths can contribute to more ethical behaviors in the fields of economics and business. Blok's finding indicated that people have tendency to accomplish their commitments, because failure of doing so can cause loss of their reputations and credits.

The speech act theory is an important approach to study speaker's intentions [9]. In diplomatic press conferences, spokespersons consider various aspects regarding national interests when they speak. A commitment in a diplomatic setting is not merely a matter of words but is underlain by intentions and purposes. The aim of this study, then, is to understand Chinese diplomatic commitments in regular press conferences of MFA.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

This study was carried out based on a self-established corpus consisting of conversations (Questions & Answers) between Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons and journalists in MFA regular press conferences. The data were downloaded from the official website of MFA and included all 112 regular press conferences from January 2 to June 28 of the year 2019. Table I provides detailed information of the data set in terms of text number, size, word tokes, and word types.

TABLE I: DATA INFORMATION

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	TOTAL
text number	21	14	19	19	20	19	112
size	57,698	41,235	57,332	49,200	59,343	55680	320,488
tokens	37,955	26,607	37,599	32,066	39,117	36,812	210,156
types	1,094	1,019	1,080	1,027	1,095	1,115	1,550

B. Data Analysis

This study applied a corpus pragmatics methodology [11] for data analysis with two steps: 1) extract possible commissive sentences with predetermined classifiers and 2) determine whether extracted sentences have commissive illocutionary forces with a pragmatic analysis.

First, in order to design the list of commissive classifiers as comprehensive and reliable as possible, we referred to the speech act features proposed by Qadir and Riloff [12]. Qadir and Riloff [12] designed a variety of linguistic features associated with speech acts, aiming to create speech acts classifiers. They divided the feature set into three groups, namely, "lexical and syntactic features, speech act clue features, and semantic features" [12]. Although Qadir and Riloff's [12] design of speech act features was based on the text corpus of message board posts, the features were comprehensive enough to cover speech act properties in other text areas. For instance, the applicability of this data analysis approach has been verified in previous research for extracting commissives and directives in verbal maritime communication [8]. Following the approach proposed by Qadir and Riloff [12], the list of commissive classifiers was developed and presented in Table II.

TABLE II: THE DESIGNED LIST OF COMMISSIVE CLASSIFIERS

Category	Classifiers
"promise"	保证, 承诺, 答应, 诺言, 许诺
"pledge"	保证, 承诺, 发誓
"commit"	承诺, 致力于
"guarantee"	保障, 保证
"plan"	计划, 规划, 安排, 打算, 方案
"First person pronoun"	我, 我们
"future tense"	将, 会, 将会
"modals"	愿, 愿意, 一定
"future"	将来, 未来, 明天
"later"	以后, 之后, 后期, 晚些

Second, the pragmatic analysis was conducted to examine the commissive illocutionary forces of the extracted sentences in the following two types of scenarios. One scenario was about sentences that contained classifiers but were not commissives. For instance,

Example 1
美国已经承诺它与台湾只是保持非官方的往来。
(The United States has made a commitment that they only maintain unofficial ties with Taiwan.)
Example 2
中欧双方承诺支持多边主义。
(China and Europe pledge to support multilateralism.)

Both example 1 and example 2 included the classifier "承诺" (cheng nuo), which means "pledge". However, example 1 was not a commissive while example 2 was. The determining factor was whether the sentence showed the commitment of the speaker or the large entity represented by the speaker to a future course of action. This study removed the extracted sentences that were judged as non-commissives, like example 1. The other scenario was about sentences that contained more than one commissive classifiers. In these cases, we measured the degree of commissive illocutionary forces of each commissive word to the sentence and determined which word had the primary illocutionary force. Then, the sentence was considered to be performed by the commissive word with highest illocutionary force.

C. Analytical Tool

PowerConc, an R-gram based corpus analysis tool, was used in this study for data analysis. PowerConc was able to directly process Chinese texts without the process of Chinese word segmentation, making the analysis more efficient. Besides, it served optimized core functions of corpus tools, preferable in terms of convenient operations.

IV. RESULTS

A. Explicit/Implicit Commissive Speech Acts

Based on the definitions of explicit and implicit performatives by Austin [6], this study identified 7 explicit commissives and 506 implicit commissives in the corpus (see Table III). According to Austin, explicit performatives are sentences with the typical structure of "first-person pronoun + performative verb (present tense, indicative, active voice) + other component", while implicit performatives are sentences with non-typical structures.

TABLE III: THE NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED COMMISSIVES

Commissives	Amount	Percentage
Explicit	7	1.36%
Implicit	506	98.64%
Total	513	100.00%

1) Explicit performatives of commitment

The performative verb in all the seven explicit commissive sentences was "承诺" (cheng nuo), which means "promise", "pledge", or "commit oneself to". There were two characteristics regarding Chinese spokespersons' explicit commissive sentences: 1) related to crucial international affairs, like nuclear issues and 2) related to cooperative partner countries. Six explicit commissives were concerned with nuclear issues and use the same subject "the five nuclear states" (e.g. example 3). Since China is the member of the five nuclear-weapon states, these sentences were counted as Chinese commitments. The other explicit commissive sentence used "China and Europe" as the subject (example 2).

Example 3

五核国承诺共担国际和平与安全责任。

(The five nuclear states pledge to share responsibility for international peace and security.)

2) Implicit performatives of commitment

Among all 513 identified commissives, 506 were implicit performatives (98.64%). Five means of performing implicit commissives were categorized (see Table IV).

TABLE IV: MEANS OF PERFORMING IMPLICIT COMMISSIVES

Category	Specific Words	Amount	Percentage
"Future tense"	将，会，将会	305	59.45%
"Modals"	愿，愿意，一定	166	32.36%
"Commit"	致力于	20	3.90%
"Guarantee"	保证，保障	13	2.53%
"Future"	未来	2	0.39%
Total		506	98.64%

First, among all identified implicit commissives, 305 speech acts were expressed in future tense, accounting for 59.45% of all implicit commissives. The Chinese characters "将" (jiang), "会" (hui), and their combination "将会" (jiang hui), which mean "will" or "be going to", were used to form commissive sentences in future tense. There were two groups of future tense commissives, one with self-referring subjects (282 commissives) and one without them (23 commissives). The self-referring subject was defined here as first-person pronouns and subjects that referred to China or certain

Chinese department. This study found three types of self-referring subjects in 282 future tense commissives, which respectively referred to: 1) spokespersons and the MFA, e.g. "we" in example 4; 2) China, e.g. "China" in example 5; 3) both China and other countries, e.g. "both sides" in example 6. It was found that the most used subjects in future tense commissives were those that referred to China. It implied that Chinese spokespersons made commitments mostly on behalf of the country, sometimes made their own promises regarding the media work, and occasionally stated joint commitment of China and other countries.

Example 4

如果有这方面的消息，我们会及时发布。

(If there is any information on this, we will release it in a timely manner.)

Example 5

中方将坚决捍卫中国企业的合法、正当权益。

(China will resolutely defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises.)

Example 6

双方将进一步加强口岸开放与管理合作。

(Both sides will further strengthen cooperation on port opening and management.)

There were 23 commissives without self-referring subjects, such as example 7 and 8. We can infer from example 7: (a) the determination is of Chinese government; (b) Chinese government will not change the determination; (c) the determination is to implement the principle of "one country, two systems"; and (d) Chinese government will persist with the principle. Consequently, the sentence of example 7 can be viewed as a commissive speech act. Similarly, we can interpret example 8 as "we promise that China will become more and more open to the world".

Example 7

贯彻"一国两制"方针的决心坚定不移，不会改变。

(The determination to implement the principle of "one country, two systems" is firm and will not change.)

Example 8

我们对外开放的大门只会越开越大。

(Our door to the outside world will only open wider.)

Second, we found that 166 implicit commissive speech acts used modals. Among them, 5 commissives used the word "一定" (yi ding), which means "must" or "definitely" (example 9) and the rest 161 commissives used the word "愿" (yuan) or "愿意" (yuan yi), which means "would like to" or "be willing to" (example 10). The subjects in "愿" (yuan) or "愿意" (yuan yi) commissive sentences all referred to China. Another feature of these 161 commissives was the involvement of other countries for emphasizing China's willingness of cooperation with them. For achieving that, "同" (tong) and "与" (yu), which both mean "with", were used after "愿" in these sentences. In addition, out of 161 modal commissive sentences, 58 commissives used the fixed collocation "同/与…一道", which literally means "standing on the same path with…" and can be translated as "working with…(for a common goal)" (also see example 10).

Example 9

我们一定会采取必要的反制。

(We will definitely take necessary countermeasures.)

Example 10

中方愿同孟加拉国新政府一道努力，推动中孟战略合作关系。

(China would like to work with the new Bangladeshi government to move forward China-Bangladesh strategic partnership of cooperation.)

Third, beside future tense and modals, the study identified 35 commissive speech acts that were performed by commissive words of "commit", "guarantee", and "future". As shown in Table IV, there were 20 commissives of "commit" word, 13 commissives of "guarantee" word, and 2 commissives of "future" word. "致力于" (zhi li yu) was a commissive word in "commit" category, which means "be committed to" (example 11). Classifiers in "Guarantee" category included "保障" (bao zhang) and "保证" (bao zheng), which mean "guarantee" (example 12). The word "未来" (wei lai), which means "future", was also used in commissives (example 13).

Example 11

我们致力于为外国企业来华投资兴业提供更加有吸引力的投资环境。

(We are committed to providing a more attractive investment environment for foreign enterprises to invest in China.)

Example 12

中国政府依法保障在华外国公民的安全与合法权益。

(The Chinese government guarantees the safety and lawful rights and interests of foreign citizens in China in accordance with the law.)

Example 13

我们对未来加强彼此间的合作充满信心。

(We are full of confidence in strengthening our cooperation in the future.)

B. Topics of Commissive Sentences

This study analyzed every identified commissive speech act with its context to determine what diplomatic topic it was about. A total of 54 specific diplomatic topics were found, with which identified commissives were concerned. Specific topics were further summarized into 23 topics. Fig. 1 shows the number of commissive speech acts within each topic.
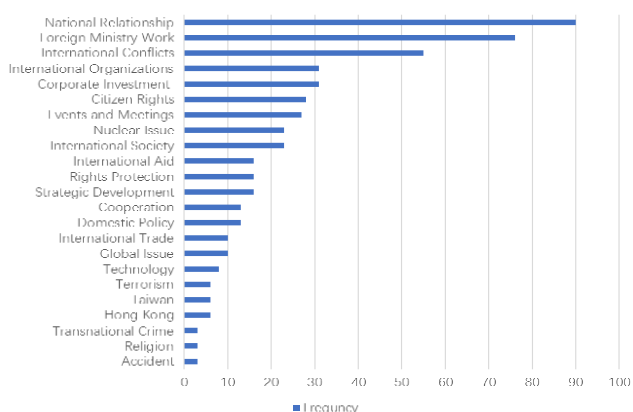

Fig. 1. Diplomatic topics concerned and the number of commissives.

National relationship was the hottest topic, relating to 90 commissives. Spokespersons made commitments when they intended to emphasize the good relationship and prospect between China and other countries. The second most related topic was foreign ministry work (76 commissives). It was mainly about specific work promises of the foreign ministry, for example, a promise of releasing new information as soon as possible. The third-ranking topic was international conflicts (55 commissives), including Korean Peninsula issue, India and Pakistan issue, Syria issue, etc. Commitments in this topic was mostly the promise of China's "positive and constructive role" regarding these international conflicts. Then followed topics of international organizations (31 commissives), corporate investment (31 commissives), and citizen rights (28 commissives). The next topic was events and meetings (27 commissives), relating to specific future activities. The topic ranking eighth was nuclear issue (23 commissives), which had the same amount of commissives as the topic of international society. The rest of topics had less than 20 commissives respectively.

This study further analyzed how commissives were performed in the top ten topics (see Fig. 2).
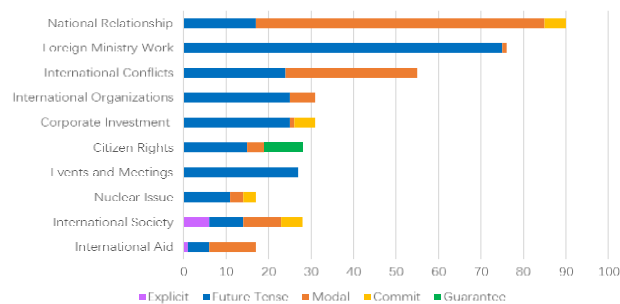

Fig. 2. Commissive speech acts in different topics.

It is clear to see from Fig. 2 that commissives were mostly performed by means of modals when related to national relationship and international aid. On the contrary, commissives were mainly performed in future tense when related to foreign ministry work, international organizations, corporate investment, citizen rights, events and meetings, and nuclear issue. Promises of specific work and activities (see Foreign Ministry Work and Events and Meetings in Fig. 2.) were all made in future tense except only one speech act related to foreign ministry work. The numbers of future tense commissives and modal commissives were similar in the topics of international conflicts and international society. Commissives performed by the "commit" words occurred in topics of national relationship, corporate investment, nuclear issue, and international society with similar amount. Commissives using the "guarantee" words were detected in the topic of citizen rights. Finally, the study found that all explicit commissives occurred in the topic of nuclear issue except one in the topic of international society.

C. High-Frequent Words within Commissive Sentences

This study used the function of "N-gram List" in the software program PowerConc and got a word list of all the

513 speech act sentences and the frequency of each word. We searched one-, two-, three-, and four-character word lists respectively and removed non-lexical items in the lists. High-frequency here was defined as the value ≧ 40. Table V presents high-frequency words that appeared in the word lists.

As seen in Table V, the words "together" and "continue" showed outstanding amounts, appearing 211 and 162 times respectively in commissive sentences. The statistics suggested that there were two main ideologies expressed along with commissive speech acts: togetherness and continuity.

TABLE V: HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS IN COMMISSIVE SENTENCES

Character	Word	Amount
One	共 (together)	138
	互 (mutual)	57
Two	继续 (continue)	162
	一道 (together)	73
	发展 (develop)	67
	国际 (international)	53
	关系 (relation)	51
	国家 (nation)	43
Three	致力于 (be committed to)	41

1) Togetherness

The ideology of togetherness was strongly expressed in commissive sentences. The word "共" (together) appeared 138 times, with collocation that emphasized mutual responsibility (共建, 共商, 共担, 共同致力于, 共同促进, 共同努力, 共同应对, 共同维护), mutual sense (共同关心, 共同愿望, 共识), and mutual benefit (共享, 共赢, 共同利益, 共同发展). When commissive speech acts were performed by modals, Chinese spokespersons tended to emphasize togetherness with other countries in certain future course of action. "一道" (together or the same path) appeared 73 times. By using the metaphor to say "we (China) and you (other countries) are on the same path", spokespersons intended to emphasize mutuality and commonality shared by China and other countries concerning a particular future cause.

2) Continuity

The study found that the word "继续" (ji xu), which means "continue to…", constantly appeared next to commissive classifiers in speech act sentences. Statistics showed that 138 speech acts out of all (513 speech acts), accounting for 26.9%, contained "继续" to express the continuity of a certain action. "继续" was mostly added after "将" (will) in commissives performed in future tense (94 out of 138, 68.1%) and second mostly after "愿" (would like to) in modal commissives (42 out of 138, 30.4%). Manifesting the state of continuing in a commissive speech act had the function of combining past achievements and future promises, as seen in example 14.

Example 14

中方将继续推进同委各领域交流与合作。

(China will continue to promote exchanges and cooperation with Venezuela in various fields.)

In example 14, the spokesperson made an implicit commissive speech act by using future tense, giving China's promise to cooperate with Venezuela. Besides, "continue to" indicated that China had cooperated with Venezuela in the past time. In other words, the spokesperson made future promises and showed past accomplishments at the same time.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the corpus pragmatic analysis, this study found how commissive speech acts were performed by the Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons in regular press conferences of MFA. A list of classifiers for commissives identification was designed for the corpus search based on the methodology proposed by Qadir and Riloff [12]. The study found that (1) 98.64% of commissives were implicit performatives, while explicit performatives only accounted for 1.36%. (2) In different diplomatic topics, commissives were performed with different commissive words. (3) High-frequency words in commissive sentences revealed the diplomatic ideologies of togetherness and continuity.

First, explicit commitments were rarely uttered (accounting for 1.36%). When spokespersons made explicit commitments by using performative verbs in present tense and indicative active voice, they involved other countries in commitments as the agency along with China in order to excuse China from full responsibility of failing to carry on commitments. Nuclear issue was where explicit performatives were mostly performed. It could be explained by the fact that nuclear issue is one of the most sensitive issues in international relations. China might prefer to give a direct and explicit commitment rather than maintain implicitness on nuclear issue in order to avoid suspicion and doubts from international society. As Cooper and Fues [13] proposed, "the cautious approach is well entrenched as part of China's diplomatic repertoire". Chinese spokespersons' tendency to make implicit commitments indicated their cautiousness in diplomacy. Commissive speech acts performed by diplomatic spokespersons in press conferences can contribute to the country's legitimacy both domestically and internationally. In Gu's [2] words, "the sustained rule of the central government rests on the utilitarian socioeconomic benefits it delivers or at least on what it promises to achieve". Nevertheless, commissives must be performed carefully, because inappropriate performance can be a risk to national interest and even state relations. What's more, the failure to carry out promises might damage national image and international position of the country. Accordingly, diplomats or other diplomatic personnel like foreign ministry spokespersons may "prefer to use imprecise language to avoid damaging the national interest" [14]. One of imprecise forms in diplomatic discourse is implicitness [15]. Apart from factors of diplomacy, cultural factors might probably have influence on Chinese spokespersons' tendency to implicit commitments, since Chinese society is characterized as implicitness and euphemism in language expression [16].

Second, commitments in different diplomatic topics showed discrepancies in the use of commissive words (see Fig. 2.). Six means of performing commissives (the last five

are implicit performatives) were identified in the corpus: (1) explicit performatives (1.36%), (2) future tense (59.45%), (3) modals (32.36%), (4) "commit" words (3.90%), (5) "guarantee" words (2.53%), and (6) "future" words (0.39%). Future tense tended to be used for performing commissives related to the topics of international organizations and corporate investment, where professionalism was more required than emotions and ties. Besides, when the topic involved more concrete work and plans, future tense was used dominantly to perform speech acts. The most obvious examples were topics of Foreign Ministry Work and Events and Meetings. A promise can be expressed by modal words [17]. When talking about relationship with other countries, Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons used more modals to perform commissive speech acts. Performance of hospitality not only can be seen in the arrangement during diplomatic visits, but also in diplomatic discourse. Positive modals used in commissive sentences, especially those related to national relationship, added a sense of hospitality to weaken the stiff and indifferent image and efficiently expressed China's will and intention of corporation. Performance of hospitality is important as it contributes to building and maintaining national relationship [18]. When the leaders of the corresponding country receive the message of cooperation along with more hospitality, they are more likely to keep this message as a positive option for future corporation.

Third, high-frequency words in commissive sentences revealed ideologies of togetherness and continuity in Chinese diplomatic discourse. This study identifies that ideologies of togetherness and continuity in Chinese diplomatic commitments exert positive influence on Chinese national image. Positive image and reputation enable countries "to attain foreign goals, attract overseas investment, tourists and education" [19]. However, Giffard and Rivenburgh [20] analyzed western news reporting on major international conferences and found that there were three times more negative reports against developing countries than positive reports, which indicated that western media had more tendency to spotlight conflicts and problems in developing countries instead of other positive sides. Although China have achieved great economic leap, it was proposed that "there is no obvious correlation of economic performance with overall national image index" [21]. Besides, China seems to have difficulty in refreshing its image inherited from the past [22]. Based on the international relations image theory [23], this study observed that ideologies expressed within commissive sentences might have contributed to building a cooperative image of China. A country's image that another perceives is decided by three structural features: (1) goal compatibility, (2) relative power/capability, and (3) relative cultural status, or sophistication [24]. When a country shows mutual goals, similar capability, and similar cultural status in international relations, it will influence another country to perceive the image of that country as the ally image [24]. More detailed description of an ally-image country's motivation provided by Herrmann *et al.* [23] is "ready to pursue mutually beneficial economic relations and to cooperate in peaceful joint efforts to protect and improve

the global environment" and "motivated by altruism as much as by self-interest". As the results showcased, words that expressed the ideology of togetherness had high frequency of appearance in commissive sentences. The ideology of mutual benefit and mutual responsibility displayed in Chinese spokespersons' commitments suggested the goal compatibility of China with other countries and might have influenced how other countries perceived of Chinese image.

The ideology of continuity was realized by frequently-used word "继续 (continue to)". 26.9% of all commissive sentences included the word "继续 (continue to)", which enabled spokespersons to make future promises and unfold past and present actions of China at the same time. The present perfect (continuous) structure suggests relationship between the past, the present and possibly the future [25]. This study considers that combining continuity and future promise of an action has the same effect as the present perfect (continuous) structure in our corpus. Gu [2] analyzed the effect of present perfect tense in Chinese premier's press conference and proposed that use of present perfect tense contributed to "the discursive legitimisation and the further consolidation of the dominant position of the Chinese government". Likewise, expressing continuity of certain diplomatic stance and action arguably contributes to stabilizing Chinese position in diplomatic stage and building a consistent national image.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study took a corpus pragmatic approach and the speech act perspective to find out how diplomatic commitments were made by Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons in regular press conference. We found that (1) Chinese diplomatic commitments tended to be made implicitly in regular press conferences of MFA. (2) Means of performing commissives showed discrepancies in different topics of diplomatic issues. (3) Ideologies of togetherness and continuity were revealed by high-frequency words in commissive sentences.

The limitations of this study need to be presented. The data of this study was collected from transcribed texts on the official website of MFA. Language discrepancies between transcribed texts and actual utterances might have had certain influence on the result of this study. Future studies can consider fixing this issue with other methods. Also, this study only focuses on data from MFA press conferences. Future research can investigate Chinese diplomatic commitments in other types of diplomatic discourse to capture more comprehensive characteristics of Chinese government's commitments. In addition, more attention could be paid to the effect of commissive speech acts in diplomatic discourse.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Hua Yin conducted the research; Dr. Yang Chen supervised and guided the research; both authors had approved the final version.

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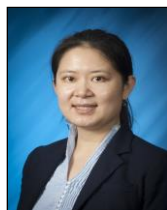
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