

The Discursive Construction of National Identity in Speeches of Wen Jiabao in Response to the 2008–2011 Global Financial-Economic Recessions

Mustafa Ar

Correspondence: Mustafa Ar, Department of English Language Education, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Banda Aceh 23111, Indonesia.

Received: December 23, 2017

Accepted: March 28, 2018

Online Published: April 12, 2018

doi:10.11114/smc.v6i1.2875

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v6i1.2875>

Abstract

Although the relationship between discourse and identity has generally been explored in academic literature, critical research on the constitutive role of discourse in constructing national identity in the domain of the contemporary global economy has received scant attention. The main objective of this article is to identify and describe the linguistic resources used to construct national identity in the political economic speeches during the 2008–2011 global financial-economic recessions. The study is also an attempt to explain the opaque relationship between the discursive and economic elements in the formation of national identity. The sources of data are derived from three political economic speeches of the former Premier Wen Jiabao of China. Drawing upon critical discourse analysis and cultural political economy, the article reveals that at the micro level the first person plural ‘we’, nominal groups, and adverbs of place make up linguistic elements deployed to construct China’s national identity. At the macro level, constructive strategies are employed to inculcate national identity. With respect to political economy, the speeches entrench the neoliberal economic policy while obfuscating national interests of China as being a country with a form of state-led market economy.

Keywords: discourse, global financial-economic recessions, national identity, critical discourse analysis, cultural political economy

1. Introduction

This article starts with an excerpt from a speech of the former Premier Wen Jiabao in response to the world economy on the verge of a global meltdown that emerged in September 2008.

Will China's economy continue to grow fast and steadily? Some people may have doubts about it. Yet I can give you a definite answer: Yes, it will. We are full of confidence. Where does our confidence come from? It comes from the fact that the fundamentals of China's economy remain unchanged (...). We will pursue balance growth of domestic and external demand and establish a long-term mechanism to expand domestic demand, consumer demand in particular (...). We will spur economic development through innovation and promote scientific and technological advances and upgrading of the industrial structure. (*Speech addressed in Davos at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting on January 28, 2009*).

This quotation underpins my attempt to conduct a case study on the discursive construction of national identity in the speeches of Wen Jiabao during the 2008–2011 global financial recessions. The quotation entails that semiosis cannot be taken for granted without analysis. This is because semiosis as language in use is a potential resource of meaning-making and sometimes it does ideological work too.

The 2008–2011 global financial-economic recessions precipitated by the subprime crisis that led to the collapse of Lehman Brothers, a global investment bank and two mortgage giants—Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—in September 2008 almost ruined the world’s financial system. World leaders, business executives, and management gurus were shocked by this early twenty-first century meltdown as at the time the global economy represented by USA and China was expected to boost. State leaders, heads of international financial institutions, central bank governors, and leading economists see the crises from different perspectives. They put forward different arguments, set up new strategies, offer different solutions, but they are faced with the same situation of a financial storm of historic proportions. This must have happened because each country sees the crises in accordance with its national interests. In other words, each

country is required to find solutions to transform itself in the time of the crisis. However, it raises doubts how the countries could cooperate in the meltdown since they have different interests. Central bank chiefs and state leaders propose diverse solutions that are commensurable with the pursuit of their particular interests. For instance, the Bank for International Settlements collects 89 speeches of senior central bank officials on the 2008 global financial crisis. Similarly, as can be seen in the state websites, leaders of states also outline the arguments with respect to their national interests. From a discursive point of view, the speeches not only attempt to provide solutions to the global financial-economic recessions through new path-shaping moments, reforms and restructuring but they also play an important role in constructing national identity and new economic imaginaries and strategies. Nonetheless, this article seeks to address the constitutive role of discourse in enacting national identity. In this section I shall now take an opportunity to review previous studies on the topic in question.

The discursive construction of financial crisis and national identity has been explored by some researchers. Bickes, Otten & Weymann (2014) highlight the media role in the discursive construction of financial crisis that beset three European countries: Greece, Spain, and Italy. The study stresses on the differences in the evaluation and presentation of the crisis. Similarly, Lodge and Wegrich (2011) focus on the argumentation patterns of the discourse of the global financial crisis, revealing that cultural theory can be employed to analyze argumentation patterns of the financial crisis discourse on the financial regulation enacted in the media. They argue that contestation among different viewpoints emerged in response to the crisis. De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999) examine the discursive construction of Austrian national identity in a variety of genres including: speeches of politicians, newspaper articles, posters, slogans, and interviews. The data was analyzed through discourse-historical approach. Wodak et al. claim that while previously the approach was used to examine the discursive construction of differences, it is also applicable for the analysis of the sameness. The study is concerned more with testing a research paradigm rather than accomplishing the research program of dialectical social theory.

Ricento (2003) analyzes the discursive construction of the American national identity that emerged during the Americanization campaigns in 1914–1924. The analytical technique was drawn upon Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach. The analysis reveals that there are three representations of Americanism in the texts. Two representations are in agreement with the American identity. The third is considered narrow-minded and against attempts of promoting democracy. Ricento suggests that the arguments found in today's American public discourse are traceable to the model of competing discourses during those campaigns. The analysis was focused on historical texts. Similarly, Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeau and Garland (2004) focus on the discursive construction of Americanism, especially post September 11, 2001 attacks. They examine the media discourse in *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines, reporting "war on terrorism" for five weeks after the aftermath. Hutcheson et al. find that the U.S. government and military officials promote American national identity, the core values and the power of American people while they simultaneously condemn the enemy. Following the style of their politicians, the journalists also use similar nationalistic language in their news reporting.

Drawing upon Norman Fairclough's account of intertextuality, Li (2009) investigates how meanings of national identities and ideologies are constructed in *The New York Times* and *China Daily*'s reports of two particular events: the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in May 1999 and the air collision between a U.S. military airplane and a Chinese fighter jet in April 2001. While highlighting the meaning making processes of intertextuality and interdiscursivity as heterogeneous elements in text construction, Li argues that "the multidimensionality of text and the dynamic process for its production is especially important for a critical examination of the construction of meanings about national identities and positions" (p. 114). Her analysis show that meanings about national identities, positions, and images are related to the particular events and the interactions between discourses, styles, or genres reproduced in the news texts. In the bombing event, Li finds that *The New York Times* constructs an image of China trapped in wild nationalism with its unreasonable, fanatical, and incompetent protests to the bombing, whereas *China Daily* develops a discourse that represents China as a nation that promotes peace and justice through a condemnation of NATO's aggression and admiration of its citizens engaged in fights against the aggression. In the collision event, *The New York Times* constructs China as the U.S. military and political rival which is a potential threat to the U.S. foreign policy, whereas *China Daily* projects China as a nation which respects international regulations in its political and military activities. Li studies national identity in terms of broad social analysis, intertextuality, leaving out the linguistic trivialities such as the use of collective pronoun and adverbs of place that can signify the presence of nationalism.

This body of literature implies that both spoken and written discourse has become the major concern of the identity research on different selected topics and approaches. Nevertheless, although research on identity is a burgeoning topic, the issue concerning national identity in the political speech on global financial-economic recessions has received scant attention. This article seeks to incorporate semiosis with political economy. Accordingly, it aims to identify, describe, and explain the linguistic features used to construct national identity. At the macro level, it seeks to discuss the role of

semiosis as a mechanism in embodying the economic, political, and cultural practices of China's economy. The study has a single hypothesis, that is, the speeches are resources for constructing national identity as well as economic policy. The article is thus designed to answer the following research questions: How is national identity inculcated in the speeches? What are the linguistic features used to construct national identity? What is the economic policy enacted in the text?

To seek for answers to the aforementioned questions, this article refers to critical discourse analysis (CDA) and cultural political economy (CPE). CDA focuses on the analysis of the semiotic elements of social practice—the regulated ways of talking about things. In the present study it is the discursive role of political economic speeches in constructing national identity that becomes as part of social practice. CPE relates culture to social processes of economic imaginaries that have possibilities to be manifested in reality. Both CDA and CPE see semiosis as an intersubjective production of meaning—an irreducible element of all material social processes (Fairclough, 2006; Sum & Jessop, 2015). CDA highlights the social wrongs in the practice of social life. We can see social life as interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts (economic, political, and cultural). Social life is an open system configuring networks of practices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The study of semiosis allows for insights into examining the discursive role in human communication concerning these interconnected networks of practices including the construction of national identity. In the present study, CDA attempts to commit a dialogue particularly with CPE and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as a transdisciplinary approach in researching national identity. As the theoretical rationale, in the following section I shall explain the concept of nation, national identity, and critical analysis of discourse recognized as the dialectical-relational approach in language-based social research.

2. Theoretical Background

The discursive quest for the definition of nation and national identity is traceable to the works of classical philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Locke and Rousseau. These thinkers treated nation as a natural end of human community and national identity as a “collectively shared conception of the good life” (Parekh, 1994, p. 492); the good life that each individual shared, but differed from others in relation to polity. In the modern quest, a nation is often defined as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith, 1991, p. 42). National identity is described as the person's identity and sense of belonging to one state or one nation; it is “a constructed *and* public national self-image based on membership in a political community as well as history, myths, symbols, language, and cultural norms commonly held by members of a nation” (Hutcheson et al., 2004, p. 28). Similarly, Schlesinger (1991) describes national identity as a specific form of collective identity that polarizes into the inclusive ‘us’ and the exclusive ‘them’. This study adapts the modernist perspective of national identity that conceives the nation as a modern invention, created by political forces that include industrialization and technological innovation (Gellner, 1983), emerging capitalist economic systems (Hobsbawm, 1990), and the rise of mass media (Jackson, 2005) that produce myths constructed by national leaders (Hutcheson et al., 2004) and through political and financial institutions (Fairclough, 2006; Peet, 2009; Stiglitz, 2002).

CDA like the social constructivist sees the nation as “systems of cultural representations” (Hall, 1996, p. 612). It differs from the traditional understanding of national societies as being fixed and stable in history and society. Hall in the introduction asserts that “[a] national culture is a discourse—a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves” (p. 13). In a similar vein, Wiley (2004), who studies nationality in the context of globalization, emphasizes the need to study meanings within particular social spaces and to see the nation as a particular kind of an organizational logic by which society can be organized. This view regards the nation as a regulative system that brings together and reorganizes social, economic, and political practices into meanings that people attach to. The nation scale is “typically the product of social struggles for power and control” (Jessop, 2008, p. 105). This does not suggest that the national scale should be taken for granted without considering its relations with other territorial spaces (local, regional, and global) and non-territorial (economic, social, and cultural). Spaces are contested entities. They thereby have discursive characters.

It has been widely argued that identity is the intersubjective production of discourse. CDA scholars usually link identity to the different discursive moments. For instance, Benwell and Stokoe (2006) relate identity to discursive settings in which people do ‘identity work’. Identity is thereby defined in its broadest sense—how people display who they are to each other. Benwell and Stokoe also identify the discursive construction of identity in institutional settings, spatial locations, and commodified contexts. Although their account of identity is in general, Benwell and Stokoe provide an engaging and accessible framework of a broad and varied field which will be of use to discourse analysts. Their concept of spatial and virtual identities is relevant to research on national identity. This is because they propose the use of textual data as well as visual data to explore the role of space and place in identity construction.

This article also makes use of Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart's (2009) account of national identity. They relate national identity to discourse in terms of a "mental construct" and "imagined community" (p. 22). They argue that national identities are the intersubjective product of discourse. Wodak et al. also put forward that "the institutional and material social conditions and practices interrelate dialectically with discursive practices" (p. 4). Referring to CDA, they regard discourse as a form of social practice. Discourse has a dialectical relationship with other social practices that are inherently related to particular institutions and social structures which can be embedded in the discursive practice. In other words, discourse is constitutive and constituted (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Wodak et al. claim that national identity can be constructed through macro-strategies and micro-strategies. At the macro level, the most comprehensive strategies employed in the discursive formation of national identity are constructive strategies. These strategies are used by promulgating unification, identification, and solidarity. With respect to the micro-strategies in the discursive construction of national identity, they can be manifested in linguistic devices which include: personal reference (personal pronouns as 'we', 'they'); spatial reference (adverbs of place as 'in China'), (prepositional phrases as 'from our government'); and temporal reference (temporal conjunction as 'whenever'), (adverbs of time 'next year'), (temporal preposition as 'in advance of', 'in the course of').

The theoretical justification for this article is also drawn upon Billig's (1995) concept of nationalism as a form of ideology that makes nations appear natural. He refers to this kind of representation as banal nationalism. The term refers to the methods by which the concept of a particular nation is constructed and perpetuated, both in society as a whole and in the minds of individual citizens. State leaders can construct this subtle nationhood by a number of ways: unprecedented access to media with large audiences, political speeches at the World Economic Forum (WEF), Annual Meeting of the New Champions, and other economic summits. For Billig, the term nationalism encompasses the "collection of ideological habits (including habits of practice and belief) which reproduce existing nations as nations" in everyday life (p. 6). Billig sees national identity as an everyday phenomenon embedded in and influences our lifeworld or civil society (Habermas, 1984; see also Gramsci, 1971, pp. 210–276) through socialization—education, politic, media, and everyday practices (Wodak et al., 2009). The notion does not apply only to the developed western states but also to any state in the world. Billig points out that although the claims and actions of political elites should never be taken for granted—they can be suspicious, state leaders tend to see their nation in the international arena as among members of imagined nation-states, acknowledging that competitions exist among nations. This nationalism can be produced and reproduced in political speeches. These genres can 'enlighten' the audience on the issues of their homeland as well as social and political stance.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Data: An Overview of the Corpus

To cope with the 2008–2011 global financial-economic recessions, influential figures of a big economy country such as China put forward their views on the solution to the crisis. During this meltdown, political economic speeches were usually addressed by state leaders in tackling with issues of a nation's foreign economic policies, a nation's interests in such issues as the restructuring of global economy and free market. In other words, the presentation of the issues is worth disseminating because it affects policy-making, governmental reactions and the like. The current study concentrates on China.

China is chosen because it is an emerging economy which plays a very important role globally and has its distinct strategies in the global economy; its economic policy and political roles are decisive and affect 1.3 billion of people at home and hundreds of millions abroad. This populous country has led the global economy in the last four decades. The sources of data emanate from three speeches of the former Premier Wen Jiabao. The general historical context of the speeches was the emergence of the 2008 financial crisis. Wen Jiabao delivered the speeches in Chinese; this article examines the translated versions made available by the government of China. The speeches are entitled: *Strengthen Confidence and Work Together for a New Round of World Economic Growth* (Davos, January 28, 2009); *Consolidate the Upward Momentum and Promote Sustained Growth* (Tianjin, September 13, 2010); and *Promote Sound, Sustainable and Quality Development* (Dalian, September 14, 2011). As the English version of the speeches was authoritatively prepared by the government of China, it is still reflective of the institutional discourse. These speeches were addressed to members of the World Economic Forum and the world. Altogether the speeches, treated as a small corpus, consist of 9,016 words.

There are three main reasons why these political economic speeches are chosen for analysis. Firstly, the speeches are potential resources of embodying national identity. They are concerned with the global discourse that instils the attitude, values, and the viewpoints of the state leaders of China in response to the crises; they embed in nationalism and globalism. Secondly, the speeches are conceived as social practice of both structure and social events that emerged during the 2008–2011 global financial-economic recessions. They figure in aspects of social life of talking and happenings during

this chaotic period. They construct past failures and future possibilities—economic imaginaries—at the national and global level. In other words, the speeches are used not only for exchange of meaning but they also address pivotal issues, such as economic strategies/policies, possible solutions, accountability, and good governance. Thirdly, these texts are part of communicative and strategic action in the public sphere that provides a semiotic resource for the analyst to identify and analyze typical examples.

The criteria that guide the selection of the speeches are the dates of publication 2009–2011 and the issue of global financial-economic recessions. I have analyzed parts of these texts for different research objectives of my previous research (Ar, 2015a, 2015b & 2016). This period is chosen because it was also the reemerging epoch of economic globalization debates. Although the pervasive debate of global economy was unleashed since 1980s, the discourse of economic globalization reached the peak again after the late 1990s Asia's financial crisis and was once more at the beginning of the 21st century when the global financial crisis emerged, which was a blow for the capitalist system of economy. In other words, each of the texts is chosen because it concerns with the global economy in crisis which also beset China. For the analytical purpose, the corpus is represented by excerpts. The data is verified by the fact that they all appear in the context of contemporary economy of China in the face of the global financial-economic recessions. The computer search helps locate part of the text in which the intended word or phrase occurs. Nevertheless, in order to avoid contextual distortion, be able identify the typical excerpts in the corpus, and provide a larger co-text for interpretation, I have used manual techniques rather than machine. This allows the implementation of qualitative analytical technique that is attuned to the quantitative textual evidence.

3.2 Analytical Tool

As was alluded to in the Introduction section, this article applies CDA and CPE to better understand national identity embedded in political economic speeches during the 2008–2011 global financial-economic recessions. Scholars recognize that CDA is an “analysis of dialectical *relations between* discourse and other objects, elements or moments,” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 4, italics in original), which “involves the use of discourse analytic techniques, combined with a critical perspective, to interrogate social phenomena” (Ainsworth & Hardy, p. 236). Simply put, CDA is an interdisciplinary analysis. The current study employs CDA for linguistic analysis which is underpinned by CPE for the macro-reflexive social analysis (Sum & Jessop, 2015), seeing discourse and economy in dialectical relations. CPE is concerned with the intersubjective production of meaning and thereby recognizes “both the constitutive role of semiosis and the emergent extra-semiotic features of social relation and their conjoint impact on capacities for action and transformation” (Jessop, 2004, p. 161). Accordingly, for the analysis of linguistic resources, this article refers to SFL, focusing on a number of analytical categories including nominal groups, the first person plural pronoun, transitivity system (process types), modality, and prepositional phrases. These analytical categories are set out with the following methodological arguments:

- Nominal group or noun phrase as it is called in formal linguistics can structurally occupy the subject slot or the complement of a clause. The referential meaning of the nominal group depends on the word *per se*. It can denote an entity, spatial reference or location (the name of a country, for example, *China*, *China's economy*). Political economic discourse tends to be commensurable with space and scales (local, national, regional, global), depending on the understanding of the current conjuncture of world capitalist development (Sum & Jessop, 2015). In effect, analyzing national-oriented space and scale can contribute to the understanding of national identity.
- Pronouns in English can serve relational values. A relational value refers to the extent to which one feels valued by others. Politically speaking, the pronoun *we*, for instance, can be used inclusive or exclusive signification. The use of the first person plural pronoun *we* in a political speech by the leader of a nation may include the leader and its people. Although the uses of generic *we* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985) are difficult to interpret, the contextual clue provides sufficient background information.
- Transitivity construes the world of experience into a manageable set through a grammatical system known as process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014). SFL typically recognizes three main types of processes in English transitivity system: Material (doing and happening), Mental (experiencing or sensing), and Relational (being or becoming). In addition to these three main process types, SFL also recognizes three other process types: Verbal (saying), Behavioral (behaving), and Existential (existing).
- Modality can be said as the interconnection in discourse between making meaning of reality and enactment of social relations or to use the terms from SFL, between the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Fairclough, 2003). In other words, modality is significant in texturing identities. Undertaking modality as an analytical tool underpins the researcher in examining the constitutive role of discourse in constructing national identity.

- Prepositional phrases or adverbs of place refer to a group of words that functions as circumstances, including places or locations, for example, *in China*. From the viewpoint of CDA, adverbs of place can enact national identity. Adverbs of place do not merely indicate grammatical relations, but they can refer to geopolitical spaces. This requires a dialectical approach where CDA and CPE need to be incorporated.

As the analysis is contingent on the text-driven procedure, these analytical tools are referred to at the point they are relevant to the analysis of excerpts.

4. Data and Analysis

The discourse of the global economy during the 2008–2011 financial-economic recessions tends to be a political economic arena to construct national identity. As was illustrated in the Introduction section, the potentiality of embodying national identity in the discourse of global economy occurs in the excerpts from speeches of Premier Wen Jiabao. National identity in the speeches is identifiable at least in three ways: Uses of the first person plural ‘we’, nominal groups and adverbs of place. I shall discuss these linguistic devices directly below in relation to the objectives of research. The frequency of ‘we’ as used in the three speeches can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. The occurrence of ‘we’ and its derivatives in the speeches

	we	us	our
Number of occurrences	148 (76%)	6 (3%)	41 (21%)

The table indicates that the first person plural in the form of subject ‘we’ predominates the object form ‘us’ or the possessive form ‘our’. Generally, this entails that the speeches highlight political economy of China since the subject acts the agent of structuring the economic and political strategies during the recession.

Noun phrases or nominal groups in SFL terms and adverbs of place also provide resources for the analysis of national identity. The table below sets out the occurrences of nominal group ‘China’ and possessive adjective ‘China’s’ in the 9,016-word speeches.

Table 2. The occurrence of nominal group ‘China’ and possessive adjective ‘China’s’ in the speeches

	China	China’s
Number of occurrences	47 (44%)	60 (56%)

Notice that the possessive form ‘China’s’ occurs more frequently than the nominal one ‘China’ in the speeches. These linguistic items can form adverbs of place indicating scale at the level of national or owning of resources. As the article will show below, it seems to suggest that politic and economy in China is a collective enterprise in which both the nation and state control the economy at least at the level of imaginaries not in material reality. In the following subsections, I shall provide a detailed account of the topic in question.

4.1 First Person Plural ‘We’

The interpretation of the pronoun ‘we’ and its derivatives in the speeches can be very complex. In effect, the pronoun ‘we’ in English is complicated even when it is dealt in the theory of grammar. The interpretation of ‘we’ in this study is built upon the knowledge of grammar and discourse, that is, as it occurs in the texts on the background of global economic discourse. There is a collective ‘we’ occurring in the speeches; consequently, the national we-group emerges in the texts. This can be said so, because from a semiotic perspective the globe is economically and politically divided during the crisis as at the time leaders of states were bewildered. The following are excerpts for illustrations of the first person plural ‘we’ indicating nationalism. As a simple convention, bracketed dots indicate omissions.

Excerpt 1

We encourage our enterprises to upgrade technologies and make technological renovation. We support them in making extensive use of new technologies, techniques, equipment and materials to restructure their product mix, develop marketable products and improve their competitiveness. Our financial support policies are being improved, a sound credit guarantee system installed and market access eased for the benefit of SME development. (. . .). We are developing high-tech industrial clusters and creating new social demand and new economic growth areas. Fifth, substantially raise the level of social security. We have accelerated the improvement of social safety net. We will continue to increase basic pension for enterprise retirees and upgrade the standard of unemployment insurance and workers' compensation. We will raise the level of basic cost of living allowances in both urban and rural areas, welfare allowances for those rural residents without family support and the special allowances and assistance to entitled groups. (. . .). We give priority to education and are now working on the Guidelines of the National Program for Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development. This year, we will increase public funds for free compulsory education in rural areas, offer more financial support to students from poor families and improve the

well-being of middle and primary school teachers so as to promote equity in education and optimize the educational structure. We are using every possible means to lessen the impact of the financial crisis on employment. We are following a more active employment policy [para. 5]. (. . .) (Wen Jiabao, January 28, 2009)

Excerpt 2

We will pursue balance growth of domestic and external demand and establish a long-term mechanism to expand domestic demand, consumer demand in particular [para. 8]. (. . .)

We will spur economic development through innovation and promote scientific and technological advances and upgrading of the industrial structure [para. 9]. (. . .)

We will continue to conserve resources and protect the environment, and raise the efficiency in resources utilization and capacity in tackling climate change [para. 10]. (. . .)

We will strike a balance between economic and social development and strive to ensure and improve people's livelihood and promote social equity and justice [para. 11]. (. . .)

We will deepen reform and increase the dynamism and vitality for sustainable development [para. 12]. (. . .) (Wen Jiabao, September 13, 2010)

The uses of pronoun 'we' are pervasive in Excerpts 1 & 2 above. The first person plural 'we' in the two excerpts is used exclusively and totally China-oriented. That is, 'we' obviously refers to the leaders of China and its people, hence, national identity, even though the speech was addressed to the WEF members and the world. The use of 'we' in this sense is authorial and/or rhetorical: it is used in the collective sense of 'the nation', 'the party'. It may be viewed as a special type of generic 'we'. The pronoun refers to the collection of people, the national community of China, functioning as banal nationalistic representation. It (re)produces the discourse of solidarity in the face of recessions and portrays the ideological retention of the state power as an ensemble of social relations, which enhances the spirit of togetherness from the people of China in practicing a form of state-led market economy. Wen Jiabao employs 'we' to symbolize nationalist consciousness of sharing the state as an imagined community.

Whether it is used as inclusive authorial or rhetorical, the pronoun 'we' in the excerpts polarizes in terms of the nationality 'we' the people of China because the speeches were addressed to the members of the WEF and the world community. It is used to ideologically share the interests in promoting the global economy with national interests. The first person plural 'we' represents national responses to the global economy with respect to the global financial crisis. Syntactically the two excerpts indicate that 'we' is in the grammatical colligations with a number of material process verbs: 'raise', 'increase', 'support', 'pursue', 'spur', 'continue', 'strike', and 'deepen'. The use of such verbs indicates the presence of political legitimacy that signifies the delivering of growth and managing the crises.

The modal operator 'will' rather than 'shall' is used. The use of modal 'will' suggests that there is a blunder that has been sparked by the wrongly led global economy, which is in need of a set of self-evaluations and that the global governments are to take responsibility and measures to deepen reform and to spur economic growth by using innovations and advances of technology. But this reform needs to be adjusted to the 'moment' that does not destroy the environment which worsens the climate change; it is thus regarded as 'sustainable development'. The use of 'will' also implicates the social identity of Wen Jiabao as the state leader committed to what he articulates with respect to certainty of future strategic actions; therefore, 'will' collocates with the process verbs 'raise', 'establish', 'discuss', 'direct', 'deepen', which needs human agency. Replacing 'will' with 'shall' brings about less certainty, which is not appropriate when the statements are made by a state leader. In other words, saying 'we will' rather than 'we shall' is an indication of a particular style, the very optimistic attitude of the political stance of Wen Jiabao. Taken together, the use of first person plural 'we' in the excerpts characterizes the construction of national identity, because it constitutes as experiential themes in the clauses. Here is another excerpt that entails a similar picture:

Excerpt 3

But we in China remain level-headed. We are clear about the situation and we are fully confident about our future [para. 2]. (. . .)

We have continued to resolve challenging issues in development by carrying out reform and steadily improved the socialist market economy. (. . .) We have made full progress in expanding social services. (. . .) Through reform, we are removing bottlenecks hampering development and have released the initiative, enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese people [para. 5].

We are pursuing a win-win strategy of opening-up to increase the openness of China's economy. Since joining the WTO in 2001, we have speeded up efforts to change the way of conducting foreign trade, (. . .). We have pursued the dual strategy of introducing foreign capital and encouraging Chinese companies to invest overseas (. . .). We have

taken an active part in the reform of the global economic governance structure and the building of regional cooperation mechanisms, and worked to deepen bilateral and multilateral economic and trade relations [para. 6] (Wen Jiabao, September 14, 2011)

National identity of China is also inculcated in Excerpt 3 above. The economic progress and processes are discursively constructed and are concerned to a great extent with the global economy in accordance with China's orientation. Even though the vocabulary 'foreign trade', 'the global economic governance structure', 'foreign capital', and 'multilateral economic and trade relations' is intermingled in the discourse, the presence of China's national identity is obvious. The first person plural 'we' refers to the leaders of China in particular and Chinese people in general. Therefore, the 'we' in this excerpt does not include any other nation.

It is unsurprising that national collectivity is discursively constructed in a very positive manner. For example, Wen Jiabao uses optimistic expressions 'remain level-headed', 'fully confident', 'full progress', 'removing bottlenecks', 'an active part' and 'encouraging Chinese companies' with human agent 'we' as the main social actor. The deployment of this linguistic strategy in the global economic texts opens room for Wen Jiabao to construct Chinese national identity while pretending to provide serious contribution to the global economic development. Taken together, all the excerpts above exemplify that national identity of China is inculcated in terms of national collectivity. The speaker applies constructive strategies to maintain national identity in tackling global financial recessions. The strategies promote togetherness by self-justification of what have been done in the past and what would be done in the future.

4.2 Nominal Group and Prepositional Phrase

Table 2 above indicates the number of occurrences of the items 'China' and 'China's' in the three speeches. In the excerpts below it is noticeable that the nominal group 'China' can occupy the participant slot of a verbal process. Meanwhile, the item 'China's' can function as a modifying adjective which together with the nominal group fills in the participant slot. It can also function as a nominal group in a prepositional phrase. In essence, the uses of these linguistic resources inculcate national identity.

Excerpt 4

China's economy is in good shape on the whole. We managed to maintain steady and relatively fast economic growth in 2008 despite two unexpected massive natural disasters. (. . .) When China, a large developing country, runs its affairs well, it can help restore confidence in global economic growth and curb the spread of the international financial crisis. (. . .) Steady and fast growth of China's economy is in itself an important contribution to global financial stability and world economic growth [para. 6]. (. . .)

Will China's economy continue to grow fast and steadily? Some people may have doubts about it. Yet I can give you a definite answer: Yes, it will. We are full of confidence. Where does our confidence come from? It comes from the fact that the fundamentals of China's economy remain unchanged [para. 7]. (Wen Jiabao, January 28, 2009)

Excerpt 5

Three years have passed since the outbreak of the international financial crisis. International organizations, governments, the business communities and the academia are all taking a hard look at the root causes of the crisis and exploring ways to sustain the growth of both the global economy and national economies. With regard to China's economic development, some people have hailed its achievements, while some others have expressed doubt. Some are optimistic about China's economic future, while some others say that China is in trouble. But we in China remain level-headed. We are clear about the situation and we are fully confident about our future [para. 2]. (. . .)

With its development entering a new historical stage in the second decade of the 21st century, China is in an important period of strategic opportunities. Peace, development and cooperation remain the trend of our times. The international environment is generally conducive to China's pursuit of peaceful development [para. 7]. (. . .)

The current 12th Five-year Plan period is a critical stage in China's efforts to build a society of initial prosperity in all respects [para. 8]. (. . .)

China will continue to follow the strategy of expanding domestic demand, with focus on improving the structure of demand and increasing consumer demand to drive economic growth. Domestic demand is crucial and a necessary choice for a big country to achieve sustainable economic growth. China has 20% of the world's population. (. . .) With its per capita GDP exceeding US\$4,000, China has entered a key stage for upgrading consumption structure [para. 9]. (. . .)

China will continue to develop education as a priority, bring about all-round human development, and promote economic development on the basis of improving the quality of human capital. For a major developing country like China, boosting education and improving quality of human resources will drive economic development and make it

more competitive. We will act quickly to achieve economic growth by increasing the quality of human capital rather than by just using more workers. (. . .) And we will move faster to make China not only a big country but also a strong country in both education and human resources. This will provide strong intellectual impetus for sustaining China's economic development [para. 10].

China will continue to build an innovation-driven society, speed up the development of an innovation system, and enhance the role of science and technology in driving economic and social development [para. 11]. (. . .)

China will continue to save resources and protect the environment, follow the path of green, low-carbon and sustainable development, use resources in a more efficient way, and develop stronger capacity for tackling climate change. To conserve resources and protect the environment is crucial to achieving sustainable development, and this is one of China's basic state policies. We will speed up the building of an industrial structure, a mode of production and a model of consumption that are conducive to resource conservation and environmental protection, and promote harmony between man and nature [para. 12]. (. . .)

China will continue to put people's interests first, pay more attention to ensuring and improving people's well-being and pursue common prosperity [para. 13]. (. . .)

China will continue to deepen reform and opening-up and resolutely remove institutional hurdles to increase the momentum of pursuing sustainable development. China owes its rapid development in the past 30 years and more to reform and opening-up, and this will be equally true for its future development and progress [para. 14].

China cannot develop itself in isolation from the world and the world also needs China for its development. Here, I wish to reiterate that China's opening-up to the outside world is a long-term commitment which covers all fields and is mutually beneficial. China's basic state policy of opening-up will never change. We will continue to get actively involved in economic globalization and work to build a fair and equitable international trading regime and financial system [para. 15]. (. . .)

I am confident that China's economy will grow over a longer period of time, at a higher level and with better quality and make new contribution to robust, sustainable and balanced growth of the global economy [para. 18]. (Wen Jiabao, September 14, 2011)

These excerpts are also part of the governance discourse of the Chinese government on the contemporary economic strategies in which the social manifestation is generally still waiting. The repeated use of the verbal group 'continue' in the excerpts entails selectivity of the economic paradigm that advocates retention of the prevailing economic strategies and policies in the face of crises. National identity is embedded in specific nominal groups. The presence of the nominal group 'China' and the possessive form 'China's' constitutes conspicuous textual evidence. The item 'China' indicates a particular space functioning as the social actor. Meanwhile, the item 'China's' used for formulating nominal groups ('China's economy', 'China's economic future', 'China's economic development', 'China's basic state policies', and 'China's opening-up') represents national properties. As was identified in Excerpts 1–3, the first person plural 'we' is also pervasive in Excerpt 5. This clearly demonstrates that national identity is at work in the discourse since the pronoun refers merely to Chinese society. Excerpts 4–5 provide evidence that the nominal groups and adverbs of place entrench the discursive construction of national identity and neoliberal economic policy. The spatio-temporal fixes emerge in the discourse as Wen Jiabao stresses on the national economy in the context of global crisis. The crisis is also seen as the path-shaping moment since he attempts to portray that the crisis would resolve itself by boosting national economic growth, for instance, by 'expanding domestic demand' and 'increasing the quality of human capital'.

The excerpts show that the nationalistic nominal group 'China' is in grammatical colligation with other nominal groups 'development', 'economy', 'any other nation', 'steady and fast growth', 'a national strategy', 'a large developing country', 'huge potential', 'opportunities', 'national savings rate' and other positive nominal constituents. This indicates that the government of China is willing to be conceived as "being proactive" with respect to the discursive practices of the global economy. Wen Jiabao highlighted China's involvement in promoting growth of the global economy even though China's economic growth was boosted by the domestic demand. As the crisis spread globally, China was able to produce but unable to sell. As a result, the domestic market was the current strategic solution. The Chinese government resorts to the economic strategy of adaptability in the face of shocks.

The discourse thereby constructs the policies and strategies of China's economy. At the lower linguistic level, the noun phrase 'China' or 'China's' generally occupies the subject slot. This demonstrates that national identity is being inculcated in the speeches, because it is the proper name 'China' that constitutes as Theme of the clauses. The presentation of the discourse is very much national-oriented. China is portrayed in the positive sense. Wen Jiabao related the item 'China' to the development of human capital, innovation-driven society, 'reform' and 'opening-up' strategy. The constitution, selection, and retention of reform and opening-up as a testimony of getting involved in

‘economic globalization’ in the course of economic crises are part of maintaining neoliberal economic strategies. However, this free market economic policy does not always contribute to the well-being of the people of China in general; instead, it creates the more widening gap between a few ruling elites and the subaltern groups as the state power enforces social democracy, but in the form of extractive political and economic institutions. Wen Jiabao highlighted the issues of ‘economic growth’, ‘education as a priority’, ‘innovation-driven society’, ‘low-carbon and sustainable development’, and ‘common prosperity’, but the embodiment of such economic and political imaginaries functions merely as a discursive selectivity that frames future possibilities. This constructive strategy is thereby commensurable with the objective of reconstructing China’s national identity on the global scale during the systemic financial-economic turbulences.

The excerpts also demonstrate that Wen Jiabao provides as a set of constructive evaluations for the national economy. The positive self-evaluation is manifested by the quality adjective ‘well-established’, ‘good’, ‘fast and steadily’, ‘environment-friendly’, ‘comprehensive and mutually beneficial’, ‘remain unchanged’, ‘a higher level’, and ‘better quality’. Syntactically the proper name China as well as the human agent in the form of the first person plural occupies the subject of the finite clauses as in ‘China's economy is in good shape on the whole’, ‘China will continue ...’, ‘China cannot develop itself in isolation from the world’, and ‘We will speed up the building of an industrial structure’. Prepositional phrases also promulgate national identity as in ‘But we in China’, ‘of China's economy’, and ‘like China’. The national interests are discursively more dominant in the speeches on the construction of the global economic crisis than the international interests even though mentions are made at least at the beginning and at the end of the texts as in Excerpt 5 that the speaker is talking about the global economy. In short, the uses of proper name ‘China’ and prepositional phrases in colligation with positive evaluative adjectives and positive material process verbs indicate that national identity is being instilled in the global economic texts. Wen Jiabao constructs the social reality, the socio-economic strategies and policies as well as what have been achieved; the ultimate objective of the discursive process is the manifestation of Chinese national identity in the trajectory of contemporary global economy. Although China’s involvement in economic globalization (‘opening-up to the outside world’) was emphasized, it was not clear whether its participation was in import activities or in the dumping of China’s goods into other countries. Taken together, the speeches construe a form of discourse that attempts to orient the spatio-temporal fixes of global capitalism to state policies and strategic conjuncture—a particular temporary economic strategy required during the global crisis.

5. Conclusion

The three speeches of Wen Jiabao during the global financial-economic recessions discursively construct national identity as well as entrench the neoliberal economic policy. The analysis demonstrates that the constructive strategies are deployed to inculcate national identity and that national identity is inculcated in terms of national collectivity. National identity is identifiable at least in three ways: pronoun ‘we’, noun phrases, and adverbs of place or prepositional phrases. Process types and modality analysis provide additional textual evidence for the constitutive role of discourse in the articulation of economic strategies and policies.

The first person plural ‘we’ in the speeches tends to occupy the experiential themes in the clauses. It brings about relational values between the speaker and the entities being described, including places, scales, and properties. The analysis entails that Wen Jiabao deploys the inclusive ‘we’ while he could have used collective references—the government, the people of China, the bankers, and any other social actor. The use of pronoun ‘we’ in that circumstance implies that nationalism is at work in the discourse of global economy in the recession. The first person plural ‘we’ is politically used to indicate adherence to the speaker’s nationality. In addition to the nationalistic ‘we’, nominal groups in the form of proper names signifying possession and location and prepositional phrases indicating spatial references also contribute to the discursive construction of national identity.

Although China advocates a free-market economy, it does so in accordance with its own economic policies and strategies. Its leader constructs national interests with respect to the actualization of global economy. In the face of shocks the presentation of national interests predominate the global interests. China cannot avoid nationalism. The discursive practice of global economy in the meltdown thus goes hand in hand with economic strategies of the country. This conclusion is confined to the texts and the linguistic features on which the analysis has focused. For future research it is suggested to include not only large corpora but also other analytical categories for being able to provide an overarching analysis of socio-historical aspects and ethical dimensions of discourse production and interpret the tension between neoliberal newspeak and the justification of nationalistic economic policies.

References

- Ainsworth, S., & Hardy, C. (2004). Critical discourse analysis and identity: Why bother? *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1(2), 225–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1740590042000302085>
- Ar, M. (2015a). Language and ideology in texts on globalization: A critical discourse analysis. *International Journal of*

- English Linguistics*, 5(2), 63–78. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v5n2p63>
- Ar, M. (2015b). Language and globalization: A critical analysis of global economy in strategic texts during the financial crisis. *English Linguistics Research*, 4(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.5430/elr.v4n2p1>
- Ar, M. (2016). The discursive construction of global economic strategies in turbulent times. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 4(10), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v4i10.1701>
- Benwell, B., & Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bickes, H, Otten, T., & Weymann, L. C. (2014). The *financial crisis* in the German and English press: Metaphorical structures in the media coverage on Greece, Spain and Italy. *Discourse & Society*, 25(4), 424–445. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514536956>
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity: Rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (1999). The discursive construction of national identities. *Discourse & Society*, 10(2), 149–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926599010002002>
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809068.ch1>
- Fairclough, N. (2006). *Language and globalization*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In van Dijk, T. (Ed.). *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 258–284). London: Sage.
- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and nationalism*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from prison notebooks*. New York, NY: International Publishers.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *Theory of communicative action*, Vol. 1, Trans. T. McCarthy. London: Heinemann.
- Hall, S. (1996). The question of cultural identity. In S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert and K. Thompson (Eds.) *Modernity: An introduction to modern Societies* (pp. 595–634). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1990). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Program, myth, reality*. London: Clarendon.
- Hutcheson, J., Domke, D., Billeaudeau, A., & Garland, P. (2004). U.S. national identity, political elites, and a patriotic press following September 11. *Political Communication*, 21, 27–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600490273254>
- Jackson, R. (2005). *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jessop, B. (2004). Critical semiotic analysis and cultural political economy. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1(2), 154–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900410001674506>
- Jessop, B. (2008). *State power: A strategic-relational approach*. London: Polity Press.
- Li, J. (2009). Intertextuality and national identity: Discourse of national conflicts in daily newspapers in the United States and China. *Discourse & Society*, 20(1), 85–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926508097096>
- Lodge, M., & Wegrich, K. (2011). Arguing about financial regulation: Comparing national discourses on the global financial crisis. *Political Science and Politics*, 44(4), 726–730. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001351>
- Parekh, B. (1994). Discourses on national identity. *Political Studies*, XLII, 492–504. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1994.tb01692.x>
- Peet, R. (2009). *Unholy trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO* (2nd ed.). London: Zed Books.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. N., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.
- Ricento, T. (2003). The discursive construction of Americanism. *Discourse & Society*, 14(5), 611–637. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265030145004>
- Schlesinger, P. (1991). Media, the political order and national identity. *Media, Culture and Society*, 13, 297–308.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/016344391013003002>

Smith, A. D. (1991). *National identity*. Nevada, NV: University of Nevada Press.

Stiglitz, J. (2002). *Globalization and its discontents*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Sum, N. L., & Jessop, B. (2015). *Towards a cultural political economy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Wiley, S. B. C. (2004). Rethinking nationality in the context of globalization. *Communication Theory*, 14(1), 78–96.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2004.tb00304.x>

Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Liebhart, K. (2009). *The Discursive construction of national identity*. Trans. A. Hirsch and R. Mitten. (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution license](#) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.