

Abstract

This paper provides a quantitative analysis of modality in the Reports on the Work of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (*Zhōngguó Gòngchǎndǎng Zhōngyāng Wěiyuánhùi De Gōngzuò Bàogào*) from 1945 to 2017 presented at the Party's national congresses. I operationalize modality as modal verbs and, following F. R. Palmer and Péng Lìzhén, chiefly focus on its three main functions (epistemic, deontic and dynamic). I interpret the predominance of deontic modality and the increase in its share over time in the context of Wú Guóguáng's argument about the Congress being a theatre through which power is legitimized, arguing that this reflects a gradual abandoning of charismatic ideology and a deepening institutionalization and identifying changes in editorial teams and the way texts are processed, which tend to accompany power shifts within the party, as the mechanism through which politics affects language.