

# Tracing the Evolution of China's Green Development Policy Discourse: A Corpus-Based Diachronic Study

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**Abstract:** Understanding the diachronic evolution of green development policy discourse is essential for interpreting the transformation of China's development philosophy and the evolution of its environmental governance practices. This study combines corpus linguistics with policy discourse analysis to examine the changing characteristics of green development discourse in China over the past four decades. A specialized corpus was constructed based on the outlines of the Sixth to the Fourteenth Five-Year Plans and the white paper China's Green Development in the New Era. Using keyword analysis, collocation analysis, and word co-occurrence network visualization, this research systematically investigates the evolution of China's green development policy discourse. The results show that China's green development discourse has demonstrated a continuous strengthening trend. The discourse has evolved from problem-oriented governance to institutionalized regulation, and further to value-oriented and systemic governance. Meanwhile, the relationship among development, environment, and ecology has gradually shifted from separation and conflict to integration and coordination. In this process, ecology has transformed from a natural object of governance into a core developmental value. The evolution of green development discourse is driven by both macro-level factors, including changes in national development stages, increasing governance demands, and global environmental agendas, and micro-level factors such as policy goal adjustments and institutional development. This study provides corpus-based empirical evidence for understanding the transformation of China's green development philosophy and offers a methodological perspective for policy discourse research.

**Keywords:** Corpus Analysis; Green Development; Policy Discourse; Diachronic Evolution; Five-Year Plan

## 1. Introduction

Over the past four decades, China has achieved rapid economic and social development through large-scale industrialization and urbanization. National comprehensive strength and living standards have improved significantly. However, the extensive development model characterized by high input, high consumption, and heavy pollution has also generated increasing tensions in terms of resource constraints, environmental pollution, and ecological degradation. These challenges have gradually become critical constraints on sustainable development. Against this background, green development has emerged as an important concept for coordinating economic growth and environmental protection [1]. Initially appearing as a supplementary policy objective, green development has gradually been elevated to a national development philosophy and has been continuously enriched with new connotations over time.

From the perspective of policy evolution, China's green development policies closely correspond to different stages of national development. In the early 1980s, policy measures mainly focused on industrial pollution control and resource exploitation management. With the gradual establishment of the market economy, policy priorities shifted toward the transformation of development patterns and the construction of institutional frameworks, emphasizing resource conservation, circular utilization, and standardized regulatory mechanisms. In the new era, green development has been systematically incorporated into the overall national development strategy and has become deeply integrated with ecological civilization construction and high-quality development goals, forming a comprehensive policy framework that encompasses

development philosophy, institutional arrangements, and practical governance pathways. This transformation is not only reflected in policy objectives and governance tools but is also embedded in the discourse of policy texts. Policy discourse serves as a concentrated representation of national development philosophy and governance logic. The selection of keywords, the organization of thematic structures, and the relationships among core concepts in policy texts all contain important analytical value.

Based on these considerations, this study introduces a corpus linguistics approach to investigate the diachronic evolution of China's green development policy discourse. The research corpus mainly consists of the outlines of China's national Five-Year Plans since the early 1980s and the white paper China's Green Development in the New Era. Through systematic corpus analysis, this study aims to identify the evolutionary trajectory and structural characteristics of China's green development policy discourse.

## 2. Literature Review

In the field of policy discourse studies, scholars have explored Chinese policy texts related to green development from various theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. For instance, Tan examined central and provincial government work reports and employed the philosophy of complex ecosystems together with corpus-based methods to analyze ecological harmony discourse, revealing the mechanisms through which ecological relationships and value orientations are constructed in policy discourse [2]. Gao Qun et al. conducted a diachronic analysis of China's agricultural green development policies over the past four decades from the perspective of policy attention and drawing on punctuated equilibrium theory, conducted a diachronic analysis of China's agricultural green development policies over the past four decades [3]. Their findings indicate that the focus of policy discourse has gradually shifted from "ecological attributes" to "technological innovation" and "industrial revitalization".

With regard to green development, existing studies mainly focus on the conceptual connotations, policy evolution paths, and implementation mechanisms. Wang Feng et al. defined the core connotation of green

development from the perspective of green economic development and divided China's green development policies into different developmental stages, outlining a transition from an environmental protection orientation to a more systematic green transformation [4]. These studies provide important references for understanding China's green development policies; however, most of them focus on specific periods or particular fields, while relatively limited attention has been paid to the long-term diachronic evolution of policy discourse.

Meanwhile, corpus linguistics has provided effective analytical tools for policy discourse research, and its practicality has been demonstrated in numerous studies. For example, a corpus-based analysis of international organizational texts has revealed the underlying power structures embedded in language policy discourse [5]. From both diachronic and synchronic perspectives, existing research has explored the thematic distribution and linguistic strategies employed in Chinese diplomatic discourse [6,7]. Additionally, previous studies have indicated that major social events play an important role in shaping topic selection within policy and diplomatic discourse [8]. Further diachronic investigations have also been carried out on political concepts like "happiness" [9].

Collectively, these studies provide strong evidence for the effectiveness and reliability of corpus-based approaches in tracing conceptual changes over time. Nevertheless, current research remains largely concentrated on diplomatic discourse, international organizational texts, or individual political concepts. Research focusing on policy discourse associated with national development philosophies is still relatively scarce and warrants further in-depth exploration. Based on the above considerations, this study focuses on the following research questions:

- (1) What thematic structures characterize China's green development policy discourse in different historical periods?
- (2) How has the relationship among development, environment, and ecology been diachronically reconstructed within green development discourse?
- (3) What new characteristics in terms of value orientation and governance logic have emerged in green development discourse in the New Era?

### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1 Data Sources and Corpus Construction

The corpus used in this study consists of official policy documents released on the website of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. Specifically, the dataset includes the outlines of the national Five-Year Plans from the Sixth Five-Year Plan to the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan, as well as the white paper China's Green Development in the New Era. These texts possess high levels of authority, stability, and institutional representativeness, making them suitable for examining the dominant characteristics and historical trajectory of China's green development policy discourse. The Five-Year Plans were selected for three main reasons. First, they represent important historical milestones in China's national development strategy and provide a continuous record of policy priorities over the past four decades. Second, the texts are publicly accessible and well-documented, ensuring data reliability and replicability [9]. Third, focusing on a consistent type of policy document helps maintain analytical depth and methodological consistency across different historical periods [9].

To ensure corpus quality and analytical validity, the corpus construction process followed three key principles:

(1) Thematic relevance.

Because the Five-Year Plan outlines cover multiple policy domains such as economic development, social governance, and cultural development, only sections explicitly related to environmental protection, ecological construction, and green development were selected. Irrelevant sections were excluded to minimize semantic noise.

(2) Structural consistency.

Instead of including the entire policy documents, the corpus was constructed using chapters and sections as the basic analytical units. This approach ensures consistent functional positioning and thematic focus within each sub-corpus.

(3) Diachronic Comparability

Texts from different historical periods were selected according to similar functional attributes and policy genres. All selected texts represent formal policy planning statements with clear guiding functions.

Based on these criteria, a specialized corpus of

green development policy discourse was constructed. According to the key historical stages of China's green development and policy evolution, the corpus was divided into three sub-corpora corresponding to different development periods as shown in Table 1.

Sub-corpus 1 includes the Sixth to the Ninth Five-Year Plans. Sub-corpus 2 includes the Tenth to the Twelfth Five-Year Plans. Sub-corpus 3 corresponds to the new era of China's development and includes the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Five-Year Plans as well as the white paper China's Green Development in the New Era.

Although differences exist in the number of word types and tokens across the three sub-corpora, these variations mainly reflect objective changes in policy scope, governance complexity, and national development priorities over time. Rather than strictly balancing corpus size, this study prioritizes consistency in data sources and text genres within each stage to ensure diachronic comparability.

**Table 1. Corpus Information Table**

| Name         | Time Period Description   | Word Types | Word Tokens |
|--------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Total Corpus | From 1980s to the New Era | 2824       | 17954       |
| Sub-corpus 1 | From 1981 to 2000         | 459        | 957         |
| Sub-corpus 2 | From 2001 to 2015         | 1239       | 5154        |
| Sub-corpus 3 | Since 2016                | 2303       | 11843       |

#### 3.2 Analytical Methods

This study employs several corpus-based analytical techniques to examine the evolution of green development policy discourse.

First, word frequency analysis is conducted to identify high-frequency lexical items and thematic patterns in policy discourse across different periods. Second, keyword analysis is applied to detect statistically significant lexical items that distinguish different sub-corpora. Third, collocation analysis is used to examine semantic associations between core policy terms. The T-score statistic is adopted to measure the strength of collocation relationships. Finally, co-occurrence network analysis is conducted to visualize the semantic relationships among key concepts. The software AntConc is used for corpus retrieval and statistical analysis, while Gephi is employed to construct word co-occurrence networks.

Through the integration of these methods, the study aims to reveal both the structural

characteristics and the semantic evolution of China's green development policy discourse.

#### 4. Results and Analysis

##### 4.1 Thematic Evolution of Green Development Policy Discourse

Based on word frequency statistics, the top 150 high-frequency words in each sub-corpus were extracted using AntConc as shown in Table 2. According to their semantic functions, the keywords in policy discourse were categorized into four major thematic dimensions:

- (1) Environmental problem identification and governance orientation.
- (2) Resource and energy utilization and development patterns.
- (3) Governance tools and institutional frameworks.

(4) Ecological values and development philosophy. Comparative analysis of keyword distribution across different sub-corpora reveals a clear diachronic evolution in China's green development policy discourse.

In Sub-corpus 1, discourse related to green development primarily revolves around terms such as environment, pollution, control, development, and planning. The primary focus lies in addressing environmental pollution and resource exploitation problems emerging during early industrialization. Ecological elements are typically represented as concrete natural objects or regional resources, and policy discourse mainly emphasizes administrative management and engineering-based governance.

In Sub-corpus 2, the scope and structure of green development discourse expand.

**Table 2. Top 150 Keywords in the Word List**

| Theme   | Sub-corpus 1  | Sub-corpus 2   | Sub-corpus 3  |
|---|---|--|---|
| Ecological Value and Development Concept Transformation         | ecology (6), environmental protection (17), nature reserve (6), landscape (3), environmental quality (2), improvement (4), environmental protection (2)   | ecology (62), environmental protection (12), forest (14), grassland (14), wetland (11), watershed (20), Yellow River (10), Yangtze River (10), restoration (11), restoration (10), climate (18)  | ecology (258), green (219), civilization (25), beauty (19), sustainability (39), high quality (hidden), concept (20), coordination (21), global (42), international (19)                            |
| Environmental Problem Identification and Governance Orientation | environment (31), pollution (26), environmental pollution (3), three wastes (5), emissions (5), discharge (2), prevention (6), control (13), remediation (7), governance (8), destruction (6), deterioration (3), water pollution (2), waste gas (2), waste water (2) | environment (40), pollution (28), prevention and control (27), emissions (17), sewage (14), garbage (13), waste (28), waste (8), danger (9), water pollution (8), remediation (8)  | environment (112), pollution (41), prevention and control (20), emissions (44), control (28), total (22), risk (18), remediation (16)   |
| Resource and Energy Utilization and Development Mode            | resources (11), utilization (7), development (9), comprehensive utilization (5), land (8), natural resources (4), forest (5), vegetation (2), water (2), water area (2), ocean (4), sea area (2), soil (3), soil and water loss (2), desertification (2)              | resources (85), utilization (63), conservation (33), energy conservation (39), recycling (35), energy (11), water resources (28), water conservation (11), mineral production (23), land (28), cultivated land (10), coal burning (8), regeneration (14), recycling (16) | resources (88), utilization (73), energy (75), energy conservation (53), conservation (33), low carbon (hidden), carbon (68), carbon peak (17), clean (31), recycling (36), transformation (17)     |
| Governance Tools and Institutional System Construction          | planning (10), planning (5), management (6), standards (5), measures (4), engineering (7), projects (3), departments (5), competent departments (3), regulations (3), environmental monitoring (4), monitoring (2), inspection (3), indicators (3)                    | systems (45), mechanisms (16), systems (31), standards (22), responsibilities (12), supervision (10), implementation (26), establishment (29), improvement (25), improvement (17), policies (9), planning (14), norms (24)   | systems (61), systems (74), mechanisms (47), responsibilities (25), policies (21), planning (25), implementation (83), implementation (19), coordination (21), coordination (18), construction (28) |

Significantly, words such as ecosystem, restoration, conservation, and recycling appear more frequently, indicating that ecological issues are increasingly viewed within a broader systemic framework. Institutional terms such as system, mechanism, and policy framework also appear more frequently, suggesting that green development is gradually integrated with

development model transformation and institutional construction.

In Sub-corpus 3, green development discourse becomes more strongly value-oriented. Keywords such as green, high-quality development, low-carbon, and global appear frequently. Ecological values are deeply integrated into development philosophy.

Meanwhile, policy discourse increasingly emphasizes implementation and governance effectiveness, while also incorporating references to social participation and international cooperation. Overall, the thematic evolution of green development policy discourse reflects a transition from problem-oriented governance, to institutional governance, and finally to value-driven systemic governance.

As shown in Figure 1, the evolution of attention paid to the four high-frequency thematic terms across different sub-corpora reveals a distinct divide. In Sub-corpus 1, environmental governance and resource and energy utilization were the most prominent themes, followed by institutional governance, while ecological value remained relatively marginal. Subsequently, the attention to ecological value increased significantly, while the attention to environmental governance and resource and energy utilization declined relatively, and the gap in attention among the themes tended to narrow. In the later period, although the attention to ecological value slightly retreated, it still remained far higher than its initial level.

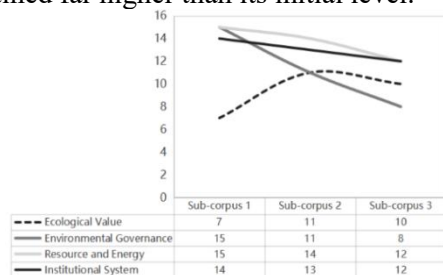


Figure 1. Variations in the Count of High-Frequency Thematic Terms

#### 4.2 Discursive Reconstruction of Core Concepts

Building on the statistics of high-frequency words, this study further narrows the analytical focus by selecting three core lexical groups—development, environment, and ecology—for in-depth analysis. These terms occur with relatively high frequency across all sub-corpora and exhibit strong cross-temporal stability, thereby effectively representing the core themes of China’s green development policy discourse. More importantly, these three lexical groups correspond respectively to development objectives, environmental governance targets, and ecological value orientations. Changes in the relationships among these elements reflect the evolution of development concepts and governance logic within the framework of green

development discourse. Accordingly, this section analyzes the collocational characteristics of these three core terms in order to explore the diachronic reconstruction of China’s green development policy discourse.

During the corpus analysis process, this study employed AntConc as the primary retrieval tool. Focusing on the key terms development, environment, and ecology, collocate analyses were conducted for each term. The T-score was adopted as the main indicator of collocational strength to identify word combinations with stable co-occurrence relationships. In addition, Gephi was used to construct word co-occurrence networks in order to reveal the semantic structure of the development–environment relationship in policy texts across different periods and to examine its evolution over time (as shown in Figure 2).

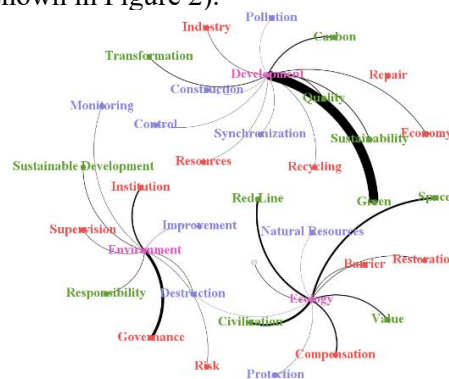


Figure 2. Collocation Network of

#### Development, Environment and Ecology

4.2.1 The evolution of the “development” discourse: From economic growth to green transformation

In Sub-corpus 1, the term development mainly co-occurs with lexical items such as economy and industry, demonstrating a clear orientation toward economic growth. Its discursive function is primarily centered on promoting industrial expansion. During this stage, environment-related terms show relatively weak direct connections with development, indicating that a stable discursive integration between development goals and environmental protection had not yet been established.

In Sub-corpus 2, development begins to form collocations with terms such as energy conservation, circular economy, and resource utilization, suggesting the initial adjustment of development approaches. At this stage, development is no longer solely equated with expansion in scale; instead, it gradually becomes associated with resource efficiency and

environmental constraints.

Since the advent of the New Era, development has increasingly co-occurred with terms such as green, low-carbon, and coordination. The discursive connotation of development has undergone a significant transformation: development is now explicitly situated within the framework of ecological civilization and sustainable development, reflecting a shift from a singular focus on economic growth toward high-quality development.

4.2.2 The transformation of the “environment” discourse: From problem identification to institutional governance

From a diachronic perspective, in Sub-corpus 1, the term environment mainly appears alongside problem-oriented words such as pollution and damage. In this stage, the environment is largely framed as a negative consequence generated in the process of economic development, and the primary discursive function is to identify problems and implement post hoc governance measures.

In Sub-corpus 2, environment gradually forms stable collocations with terms such as institution, regulation, and mechanism. This indicates that environmental issues are increasingly incorporated into the policy and institutional framework, and environmental governance is gradually shifting from reactive measures to more standardized and institutionalized forms of management.

Entering the New Era, this trend becomes even more pronounced. The term environment frequently co-occurs with words such as responsibility and rule of law, suggesting that environmental protection has become an important component of the national governance system. In this context, the environment is no longer merely an object of governance but has become a key domain in which institutional operation and responsibility implementation are realized.

4.2.3 The reconstruction of the “ecology” discourse: From natural object to developmental philosophy

Compared with development and environment, the term ecology exhibits the most pronounced semantic evolution. We statistically analyzed the high-frequency collocates of “ecological” as shown in Table 3. In Sub-corpus 1, ecology mainly refers to the natural environment and its degraded conditions. It frequently co-occurs with terms such as protection, governance, and

ecological agriculture, reflecting the basic understanding of ecology as a component of natural resources and the environment.

In Sub-corpus 2, ecology forms stable collocations with institutional terms such as restoration, compensation, and functional zones. This indicates that ecological issues have been incorporated into the framework of spatial governance and policy regulation, and ecology increasingly displays attributes associated with an object of governance.

In the third stage, ecology further co-occurs with value-oriented terms such as civilization, institution, security, and products. In this context, ecology is explicitly endowed with the connotation of a developmental philosophy and becomes closely aligned with the modernization of national governance and the improvement of public well-being. This shift signifies a discursive reconfiguration of the relationship between economic development and the ecological environment.

**Table 3. Keyword Collocation and Frequency Table**

| Keyword Collocation and Frequency Table |                           |           |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|
| Keyword                                 | Collocation               | Frequency |
| Ecology                                 | ecological protection     | 68        |
|   | ecological environment    | 59        |
|   | ecological governance     | 12        |
|   | ecological agriculture    | 5         |
|   | ecological restoration    | 26        |
|   | ecological compensation   | 38        |
|   | ecological function zones | 34        |
|   | ecological civilization   | 23        |
|   | ecological system         | 3         |
|   | ecological security       | 24        |
|   | ecological products       | 20        |

### 4.3 New Characteristics of Green Development Discourse in the New Era

#### 4.3.1 Reconstruction of value orientation

In the co-occurrence context of development–environment–ecology in Sub-corpus 3, the ecological environment is no longer framed merely as an external constraint on economic development or as an object of governance. Instead, it is endowed with normative and value-oriented connotations. From Table 4, it can be seen that evaluative expressions such as the most equitable public good, livelihood, well-being, and a beautiful environment frequently appear together, indicating that within the discourse of green development in the New Era, the

ecological environment is regarded as a fundamental component of people's quality of life. This discursive shift not only weakens the development narrative that prioritizes economic

growth at the expense of environmental protection, but also enhances the legitimacy and priority of ecological considerations within the overall framework of development objectives.

**Table 4. Example Concordance Lines Illustrating Value Orientation in Green Development Discourse**

| No. | Value-oriented Quotations on Green Development in Sub-corpus 3  |                      |  |
|-----|---|----------------------|--|
| 1   | A sound ecological environment is the most equitable            | public product       | and the foundation of a good life.   |
| 2   | The environment is people's livelihood;                         | people's livelihood; | green mountains are beauty, and blue skies are happiness.                                |
| 3   | Coordinate efforts to promote                                   | high-quality         | economic and social development and high-level protection of the ecological environment. |
| 4   | Let the people gain a stronger sense of gain and happiness from | the beautiful        | ecological environment.  |
| 5   | Develop a   | low-carbon           | economy and form a pattern of resource conservation and environmental protection...      |

#### 4.3.2 Transformation of governance logic

In Sub-corpus 3, institutional terms such as system, institution, and mechanism frequently co-occur with governance-related expressions including precision, scientific management, and rule of law. We extracted relevant index rows to form Table 5. This pattern suggests that the governance logic of ecological and environmental management in the New Era has gradually shifted from campaign-style and engineering-oriented approaches toward

institutionalized, normalized, and refined forms of governance.

Meanwhile, the emergence of expressions such as risk monitoring, early warning, and emergency response indicates that ecological and environmental issues have been incorporated into the national risk governance framework. Consequently, governance objectives have expanded from a singular focus on pollution control to the proactive management of systemic and potential environmental risks.

**Table 5. Example Concordance Lines Illustrating the Governance Logic of Ecological and Environmental Management**

| No. | Quotations on the Logic of Ecological and Environmental Governance in Sub-corpus 3 |  |   |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 1   | Establish and improve the entire ecological and environmental governance           | system   | to promote precise, scientific, and law-based governance. |
| 2   | Implement the strictest environmental protection                                   | system.  |   |
| 3   | Establish and improve for ecological and environmental risk monitoring.            | the early warning and emergency response mechanism | for ecological and environmental risk monitoring.         |
| 4   | Increase the intensity of environmental  | information disclosure                             | and smooth the channels for public participation.         |

#### 4.3.3 Expansion of governance actors and governance scales

In Table 6, from the perspective of governance actors, discourse in the New Era no longer limits ecological and environmental governance to the sole responsibility of the government. Instead, expressions such as co-governance and public participation construct a collaborative governance framework involving government, enterprises, and the public.

frequently introduces expressions such as global, all humanity, and shared responsibility, thereby connecting China's domestic ecological governance practices with broader global environmental issues. This discursive construction not only enhances the international significance of China's ecological governance experience but also situates green development within the broader narrative framework of a community with a shared future for humankind.

In terms of governance scale, related discourse

**Table 6. Example Concordance Lines Illustrating Governance Actors and Governance Scales**

| No. | Quotations of Governance Actors and Governance Scales in Sub-corpus 3 |                      |   |
|-----|---|----------------------|---|
| 1   | Forming an environmental governance system of                         | co-governance        | involving the government, enterprises, and the public.                |
| 2   | Facilitating channels for   | public participation | and improving environmental information disclosure.                   |
| 3   | ...becoming   | China's model        | for global environmental governance.                                  |
| 4   | Promoting the establishment of  | a global             | environmental governance system based on fairness and reasonableness. |

|   |   |                |  |
|---|---|----------------|--|
| 5 | Protecting the ecological environment and addressing climate change is the shared responsibility of | all humankind. |  |
|---|---|----------------|--|

To further examine the significant differences between green development discourse in the New Era and the previous two stages, this study conducts a keyness analysis comparing Sub-corpus 3 with Sub-corpus 1 and Sub-corpus 2. As shown in Table 7, the word green (keyness = +122.77) exhibits an exceptionally prominent keyword status in Sub-corpus 3, far exceeding other lexical items. This finding suggests that green has evolved from an earlier descriptive modifier into a core value marker of development discourse in the New Era.

In addition, words such as ecology, nature, sustainability, and innovation also demonstrate relatively high keyness values, indicating that green development discourse in the New Era places greater emphasis on the intrinsic value of ecological systems, sustainability, and innovation in development approaches. Verbal expressions such as development, enhancement, and promotion are also highly salient in Sub-corpus 3. This suggests that the discourse of the New Era does not weaken the emphasis on development goals; rather, it reconstructs traditional growth logic by highlighting development quality and optimizing development pathways.

Furthermore, keywords such as carbon and energy appear with notable prominence, reflecting that green development in the New Era has been explicitly incorporated into governance frameworks concerning low-carbon transition and energy structure transformation.

**Table 7. Keyness Comparison between Sub-corpus 3 and Sub-corpus 1 & 2**

| Keyness |      |            |        |                |
|---------|------|------------|--------|----------------|
| Rank    | Freq | Keyness(+) | Effect | Keyword        |
| 1       | 219  | 122.77     | 0.0363 | green          |
| 2       | 83   | 54.61      | 0.0139 | China          |
| 3       | 182  | 37.06      | 0.0302 | development    |
| 4       | 52   | 35.58      | 0.0087 | improvement    |
| 5       | 79   | 32.42      | 0.0132 | promotion      |
| 6       | 52   | 30.54      | 0.0087 | space          |
| 7       | 30   | 24.99      | 0.0051 | park           |
| 8       | 258  | 24.98      | 0.0424 | ecology        |
| 9       | 58   | 24.18      | 0.0097 | nature         |
| 10      | 68   | 22.76      | 0.0114 | carbon         |
| 11      | 22   | 22.49      | 0.0045 | innovation     |
| 12      | 39   | 20.82      | 0.0066 | sustainability |
| 13      | 75   | 18.55      | 0.0126 | energy         |

Notably, terms related to concrete governance contexts, such as parks and space, also emerge as keywords. This indicates that green development discourse is shifting from macro-level policy objectives toward concrete spatial practices and domains of public life, reflecting a governance orientation aimed at improving the living environment of the population. At the same time, the significant keyness of the word China suggests that green development discourse in the New Era is increasingly consolidated within the national narrative, positioning green development as a central component of China's path toward modernization.

### 5. Conclusion

This study adopts a corpus linguistics approach and selects a series of Five-Year Plan outlines over the past four decades, together with the white paper Green Development in China in the New Era, as the research corpus. On this basis, a diachronic examination of China's green development policy discourse is conducted. Through analyses of high-frequency words, keywords, and collocational patterns of core terms, the study focuses on the semantic associations and discursive reconstruction of three key conceptual groups—development, environment, and ecology—in policy texts across different historical periods.

The value of this research lies in revealing, from a linguistic perspective, the discursive transformation of China's green development policy from problem-oriented governance toward an approach that combines value-oriented guidance with systematic governance. This analysis provides corpus-based evidence for understanding the evolutionary logic of the green development concept across different stages. At the same time, by introducing corpus-based methods into policy discourse analysis, this study offers a new perspective for research on green development discourse. Meanwhile, this also reflects that China plays an important role as a leader, advocate and supporter in the cause of green development.

Nevertheless, this study also has certain limitations. The corpus is mainly composed of policy documents, which limits coverage of discourse at the local level or within public communication contexts. Future research could

further expand the range of corpus sources and incorporate cross-linguistic or cross-national comparative perspectives, in order to examine more comprehensively the multi-level construction of China's green development discourse and its international dissemination.

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