

Framing How China is Taught:  
Analyzing Didactic Writing on China  
By Daniel Beyer

Special Thanks to: Dr. Joe Woelfel & Dr. Kristin Stapleton & Dr. Nona Carter & Meghan Beyer

## Introduction

In an economically, and technologically connected world, international relationships and perceptions of those relationships become very important. One of the most dynamic and important of these international relationships today is between the US and China, particularly as the two nations lead the world economically. Therefore, understanding how each nation perceives and portrays the other is of the utmost value in order to understand the present and to predict future conditions between the two superpowers. The purpose of this paper to analyze key terms drawn from articles written that introduce students to China in order to assess the attitude of two articles and how they are constructed.

The first article analyzed, *Top 10 Things To Know About China In The Twenty-First Century* (2003) by Tese Wintz Neighbor examines the realities of modern China and utilizes past historical examples to explain them. The information is presented to the reader in a list of ten important topics. This paper was published in the journal *Education About Asia*, Issue 8, vol 3 of Winter 2003.

The second article analyzed, *What I Wish My College Students Already Knew about PRC History* by Kristin Stapleton, Ph.D., discusses five major themes of the last sixty years in the history of the Peoples Republic of China. These themes are offered as a potential basis for K-12 teachers to construct their curriculum, so that future college students are well informed about PRC history.

These two articles will be combined into a single document and then analyzed in order to discover what are the most common terms employed by both authors in order to introduce readers to China. These most frequent terms are collected and counted, after excluding superfluous words such as “But”, “Not”, “Its” etc.; and, the Galileo™ engine also notes which words alongside those frequent words. The terms drawn from these articles are valuable because they represent important words and groupings of words that are being used in instruction about China. The first article, written by Neighbor, has a very general audience, and is not necessarily specific to college students; but the second, by Dr. Stapleton is intended as a preparatory tool for students entering college. These frequent terms will then be used in the creation of a survey that will examine whether American college students perceptions agree with the two authors.

## Data

The data presented will be shown in three separate forms: Frequency Lists, which show the most frequent words from highest to lowest, and parallel to this list is an alphabetical list of the same terms which can be used for reference; Dendrograms, where the most frequent words and those words that appear with them is shown by placing them at the top of the chart and a lines of varying symbols show the level of frequency how terms are related; and, three dimensional imaging, generated by a program known as TV32, mapping the words from the text into a three-dimensional grid in order to further examine their relationships. Coordinate grid data provides a different and sometimes more easily understandable view of the clusters described in the dendrogram. The program that computes this data is known as Catpac.

## (Sample 1. Frequency List)

The initial terms from sample one are fairly predictable and self-explanatory, being “China” and Chinese. People then comes as no surprise, and, after referencing the dendrogram from sample two, we see that “People” occurs close to “China” and Chinese. “Party” also becomes fairly self-explanatory as the party is another name for the Chinese government. In the same category, is unsurprising to find Mao, founder of the PRC appearing twenty times; also, of course the word “PRC” appears eighteen times. One word that has clear association with Mao and the history of China, and yet still draws ones attention is the word Communist. Given that the PRC is currently defined as, “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”, Communist has become a historical byword; yet, Communist is still mentioned in conjunction with China sixty years later.

Words from frequency list that standout are: “World”, “Economic”, “Today”, “Government”, and US. “World” gives the reader the suggestion that “China” has some relationship with the world, that it is not an isolated country necessarily. Consulting the dendrogram from sample two, we see that “World” is connected to “China” and “Chinese” “People”. “Economic” is another result that alters the appearance of the frequency list, as political and social terms were used in reference to China: words such as “China”, “Chinese”, and “PRC”; but, “Economic” represents a shift from the previously mentioned terms and also government-oriented ones such as “Party”, “Mao”, and “Officials”. It suggests that one other facet to China, in addition to the terms “China”, “Chinese”, and “People” having a relation to “World”, that China also has an economic relation also. The dendrogram seems to confirm this, as economic joins the previous relationship of “China”, “Chinese”, “People”, and “World”. “Today” is another unique term in that it places China in modern times. Reference to the dendrogram also shows that “Today” is connected to the growing cluster of “China”, “Chinese”, “People”, and “Economic”. “Government” is another term that, without context, is very open. The dendrogram does not define it much more: “Government” appears close to Leadership, and the two connect to “Officials” and “Power”. Lastly, “US” is another interesting term because it suggests a relationship or connection between China and the US – This is, of course, operating under the assumption that “US” is not “us”, since the results generated are all in capital letters. Given the context of the articles and their nature, it is assumed that most references are to the United States. The result “US” connects to the previous dendrogram of China and Chinese, appearing just after the two terms “Urban” and “Rural”. The US is thus connected to China and the “World”, along with “Chinese” and “People”.

### (Sample 2. Dendrogram)

Examining sample 2, clusters of different words begin to appear. In understanding sample one, the most frequent cluster was already discussed, which is that of: “China”, “Chinese”, “People”, “Today”, “World”, “Economic”, this cluster later on adds on “Urban” and “Rural”, and then “Far”, “Life”, “Over,” and “Mao”.

The next most frequent grouping is “Cultural” and “Revolution”, which is six units later joined by “PRC” and “History”, and then “Foreign” and “Policy”. This cluster is then added onto by “Great”, and then “Growing” and “Among”.

The next most frequent cluster is “Communist” and “Party”, which is later joined by “Years”, afterwards connecting to “Economy” and “Population”.

As the clusters decrease in frequency and begin to all join together “Government” and “Officials” appears, soon connected to “Power” and “Corruption”. “Deng” and “Leadership” then join the cluster, followed by “Old” and “New”, and then “Population”.

The second last high frequency cluster is composed of “Young” and “However”; this is later added to by “Rich” and “State”, which is then added on by “Law”.

The final notable cluster is made up of “Continue” and “Students”, later joined by “War”; and, finally joined by the previous cluster’s term of “Law”.

Coordinate Grid 1 provides a view of the cluster described above that with “Urban” and “Rural” paired together. From this perspective we see that “Urban” is closer to the terms “Far” and “Life”, both of which are very close together. Even before the cluster approaches the term “Rural”, the term “Mao”, appears to be even closer. Distant, beyond “Rural”, is the the term “China”. Another pairing towards the center of this image is “Corruption” and “Power”. Over on the right side of the grid is “Law” and “Leadership” close together; then, separating between the pair “Law” and “Leadership” and “Cultural” and “Revolution” (“Cultural” being almost impossible to read behind the word “Revolution”) is the term “PRC”. Near and just in front the pair “Cultural” and “Revolution” is the term “State”.

(Coordinate Grid 1)

Coordinate Grid 2 displays the proximity of the terms “Cultural”, “Revolution” and “State” on the left side. “Law” and “Leadership” are two objects somewhat close in the center of the grid, with “PRC” distant from them towards the front of the grid. “Corruption” and “Power” loom close together towards the back of the grid. On the middle-right of the grid, one can see

Deng near the term “Growing”, with “Life” and “Mao” behind them towards the back. The term “Far” is in the back corner, the closest term to “Far”, though still at a distance to the left, is “Life”. Off to the middle right of the grid is “Economy” and “New”, slightly distant and behind the two terms is the term “Population”.

(Coordinate Grid 2)

Coordinate Grid 3 provides a different perspective on previously seen clusters in the other grids; and, it also reveals several new ones. One can see “Revolution” and “State” off to the left of the grid. “Corruption” and “Power” form a cluster at the center and back left of the grid, with “Law” off to the left and “Leadership” in the forefront. “Rich”, “Deng”, and “Growing” form a grouping in the center right; one sees “Life” and “Mao” towards the back of the grid, and “Far” is off to the right of this grouping of two. Visible in this image also is “New” and “Economy” close together, “Old” and “Great” are off to the right, and “Population” is above them.

(Coordinate Grid 3)

Coordinate Grid 4 continues to show previous clusters, but some appear more developed. One can see the term “Urban” very close to the previously mentioned pair of “Far” and “Life”, with “Mao” being just off to the right of “Life”. “Corruption” and “Power” are close together at the center left of the image. “Rural” is far from “Urban” in the back center of the image. In an almost indiscernible cluster towards the back right of the grid is “Deng”, “Growing”, “Rich”, “Population”, and “Old”. Not far from the cluster, more towards the center of the grid, is “Economy”, “New”, “Economic”. Off to the right, “Law” and “Leadership” are close together, with “PRC” to their right, and further right is the pair of “Cultural” and “Revolution”.

(Coordinate Grid 4)

Sample seven shows some clusters not discussed in previous grids. In the back right corner of the grid is the cluster composed of History, “World”, Among, and Continue – “Economic” is off to the right. Another cluster, near the center, is formed of “Policy”, Students, and “Foreign”. Towards the back center of the grid is “Today” and “Years”. More towards the front at the center right of the grid are the terms Political, However, “Government”, and “Over”. Young stands off to the right of this grouping, and “Officials” is beyond it at the right side of the grid. Towards the back is the difficult to read grouping of “People” and “Party”, with “Communist” more towards the center.

(Coordinate Grid 5)

## Discussion

In some ways, the results of this text analysis do not display anything astonishing: words like “China” and Chinese dominate the charts. “Cultural” and “Revolution” also end up very close to each other in the results, very clearly spelling out the Cultural Revolution that helped shape China into the nation that it is today. “Law” and “Leadership” are also an anticipated cluster, as China is stated to be under the ‘Rule of Law’.

Some of the more interesting results seem to appear as one descends down the results and begins to see that the list very quickly turns political, rather than potentially cultural: The reader soon encounters “Party” after “People”, the following word “World” could be more neutral, but still suggests a certain relevance of China to the world at large. Right after “World” appears the word, “Mao”, denoting Mao Zedong. “Mao” cannot but have political implications, as he was so instrumental in the founding of the PRC, and what it represents in opposition to the nationalist KMT that he managed to overthrow. His name appears twenty times, his legacy and influence is still emphasized as one of the most essential facts to know about China.

Given than both “Economy” and “Economic” appear as frequent words, it is important to consider that the modern image of China that is being presented by educators is also one of relevance to the world of economics. As observed from the dendrogram results, the cluster that contains China, “Chinese”, “People”, “Today”, and “World” connects to “Economic”. Thus, the placement of this economic aspect is close to the term of China, the adjective “Chinese”, “People”, the “World”, and the modernity of “Today”. This economic image is added onto by the mention of “Deng” – referring to Deng Xiaoping, who instituted economic reforms in China. Not surprisingly, close to Deng’s name appears the term “Rich”, and not far from the two terms is the term “Growing”. Looking at sample six, one also finds that “Corruption”, “Power”, and “Leadership” are a relatively close cluster, informing the observer that some of the wealth of China may be misplaced.

The roots of the PRC are not missed, as one finds “Communist” to be one of the frequent terms. Though, now China defines its government as “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”, its government is still called the Communist Party of China. Therefore, it is necessary that these writers used Communism, or in this case “Communist”, as a frequent term. The inclusion of Mao reinforces this concept, along with the fact that “Party” is included.

Two curious pairings that arise out of the analysis are However and Political and “Foreign” and “Policy”. However and Political appearing together suggest that there is some juxtaposition against whatever political discussion is at hand in relation to China. A conjunction does not shed much light on the discussion, but it still provides for interesting speculation as to why However was in so much need in explaining the situation. “Foreign” and “Policy” being paired together show that there is important and defining interaction between China and foreign nations. Whether that foreign policy is one nation towards China or vice versa, there is

nevertheless a need for foreign policy to manage the interaction. In this same vein, it is worth considering, that while war only appeared seven times, it is still a frequent word. One clear explanation of this term's usage would be in reference to the civil war in China that led to the ultimate establishment of the PRC; nevertheless, it still draws ones attention that between the two writers there was a need to use the term seven times.

### Conclusion

Given that only two articles by experts in China were analyzed, study in this area would benefit from further research conducted with articles written by numerous experts. The two authors were also not from the same institutions, but two separate ones, Dr. Stapleton, teaching at the University of Buffalo – the school where this research is conducted. The other challenge being that Neighbor's article has a general audience in mind, and Dr. Stapleton is specifically addressing K-12 educators in hopes that they will revise their curriculum. Thus, if numerous didactic articles, used by current high school and college educators and written by experts in China from across America could be examined, then this analysis would be much more thorough.

### Resources

- “What I Wish My College Students Already Knew about PRC History”, *Social Education*, vol. 74, no. 1 (January/February 2010): 12-16.
- Neighbor, T. (2003). Top 10 Things To Know About China In The Twenty-First Century. *Education About Asia*, 8(3).

### Appendix

#### Frequency List

DESCENDING FREQUENCY LIST

ALPHABETICALY SORTED LIST

WORD	CASE CASE		CASE CASE		WORD	CASE CASE		CASE CASE	
	FREQ	PCNT	FREQ	PCNT		FREQ	PCNT	FREQ	PCNT
CHINA	101	16.4	657	20.8	AMONG	7	1.1	49	1.6
CHINESE	53	8.6	358	11.3	CHINA	101	16.4	657	20.8
PEOPLE	37	6.0	249	7.9	CHINESE	53	8.6	358	11.3
PARTY	31	5.0	209	6.6	COMMUNIST	12	2.0	84	2.7
WORLD	23	3.7	153	4.8	CONTINUE	9	1.5	63	2.0
MAO	20	3.3	137	4.3	CORRUPTION	7	1.1	49	1.6
ECONOMIC	18	2.9	126	4.0	CULTURAL	10	1.6	69	2.2
TODAY	16	2.6	111	3.5	DENG	8	1.3	56	1.8

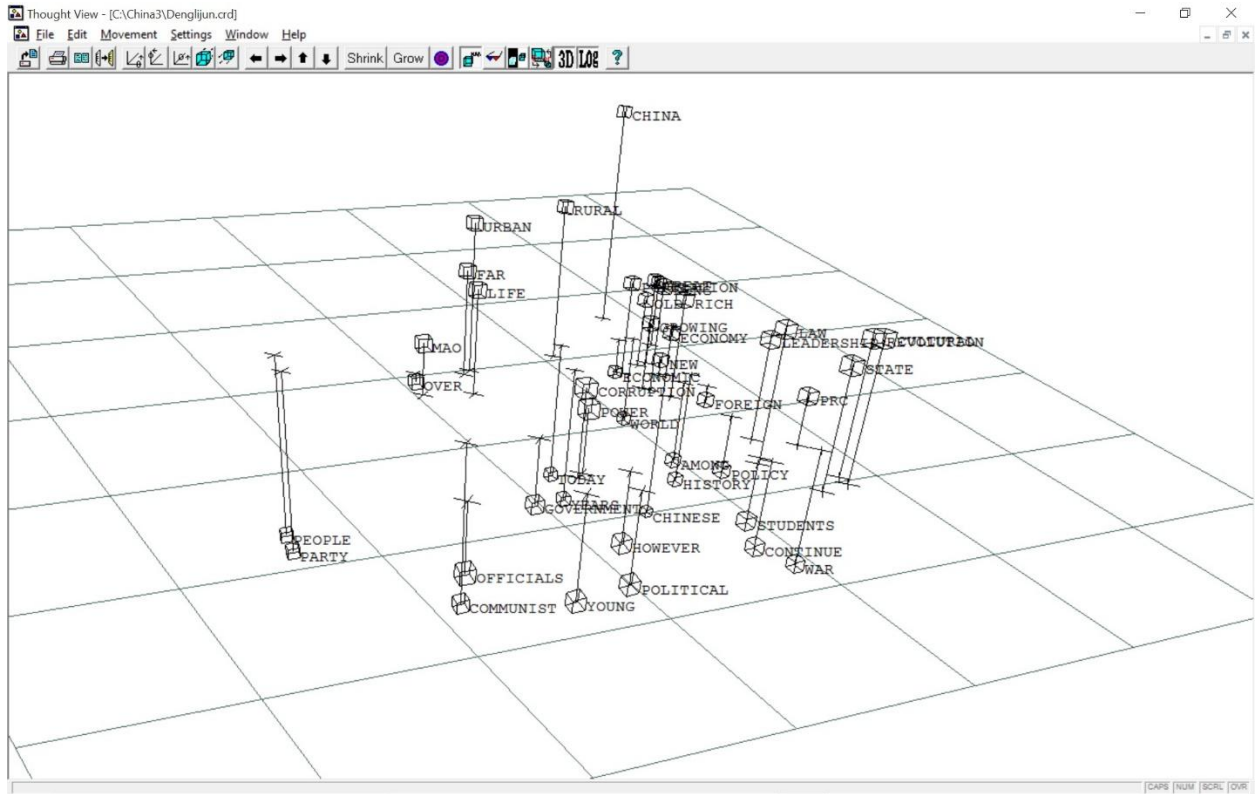
PRC	13	2.1	91	2.9	ECONOMIC	18	2.9	126	4.0
GOVERNMENT	12	2.0	84	2.7	ECONOMY	8	1.3	56	1.8
US	12	2.0	84	2.7	FAR	7	1.1	49	1.6
YEARS	12	2.0	84	2.7	FOREIGN	11	1.8	77	2.4
OFFICIALS	12	2.0	84	2.7	GOVERNMENT	12	2.0	84	2.7
COMMUNIST	12	2.0	84	2.7	GREAT	10	1.6	70	2.2
FOREIGN	11	1.8	77	2.4	GROWING	7	1.1	49	1.6
OVER	11	1.8	75	2.4	HISTORY	8	1.3	56	1.8
GREAT	10	1.6	70	2.2	HOWEVER	7	1.1	49	1.6
CULTURAL	10	1.6	69	2.2	LAW	7	1.1	49	1.6
POLICY	9	1.5	62	2.0	LEADERSHIP	7	1.1	49	1.6
POLITICAL	9	1.5	63	2.0	LIFE	8	1.3	56	1.8
URBAN	9	1.5	62	2.0	MAO	20	3.3	137	4.3
CONTINUE	9	1.5	63	2.0	NEW	7	1.1	46	1.5
STUDENTS	9	1.5	55	1.7	OFFICIALS	12	2.0	84	2.7
REVOLUTION	9	1.5	63	2.0	OLD	7	1.1	49	1.6
POWER	8	1.3	52	1.6	OVER	11	1.8	75	2.4
RURAL	8	1.3	56	1.8	PARTY	31	5.0	209	6.6
HISTORY	8	1.3	56	1.8	PEOPLE	37	6.0	249	7.9
DENG	8	1.3	56	1.8	POLICY	9	1.5	62	2.0
ECONOMY	8	1.3	56	1.8	POLITICAL	9	1.5	63	2.0
LIFE	8	1.3	56	1.8	POPULATION	7	1.1	49	1.6
YOUNG	8	1.3	53	1.7	POWER	8	1.3	52	1.6
FAR	7	1.1	49	1.6	PRC	13	2.1	91	2.9
STATE	7	1.1	49	1.6	REVOLUTION	9	1.5	63	2.0
OLD	7	1.1	49	1.6	RICH	7	1.1	49	1.6
LAW	7	1.1	49	1.6	RURAL	8	1.3	56	1.8
WAR	7	1.1	46	1.5	STATE	7	1.1	49	1.6
POPULATION	7	1.1	49	1.6	STUDENTS	9	1.5	55	1.7
RICH	7	1.1	49	1.6	TODAY	16	2.6	111	3.5
NEW	7	1.1	46	1.5	URBAN	9	1.5	62	2.0
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LEADERSHIP	7	1.1	49	1.6	WAR	7	1.1	46	1.5
AMONG	7	1.1	49	1.6	WORLD	23	3.7	153	4.8
GROWING	7	1.1	49	1.6	YEARS	12	2.0	84	2.7
HOWEVER	7	1.1	49	1.6	YOUNG	8	1.3	53	1



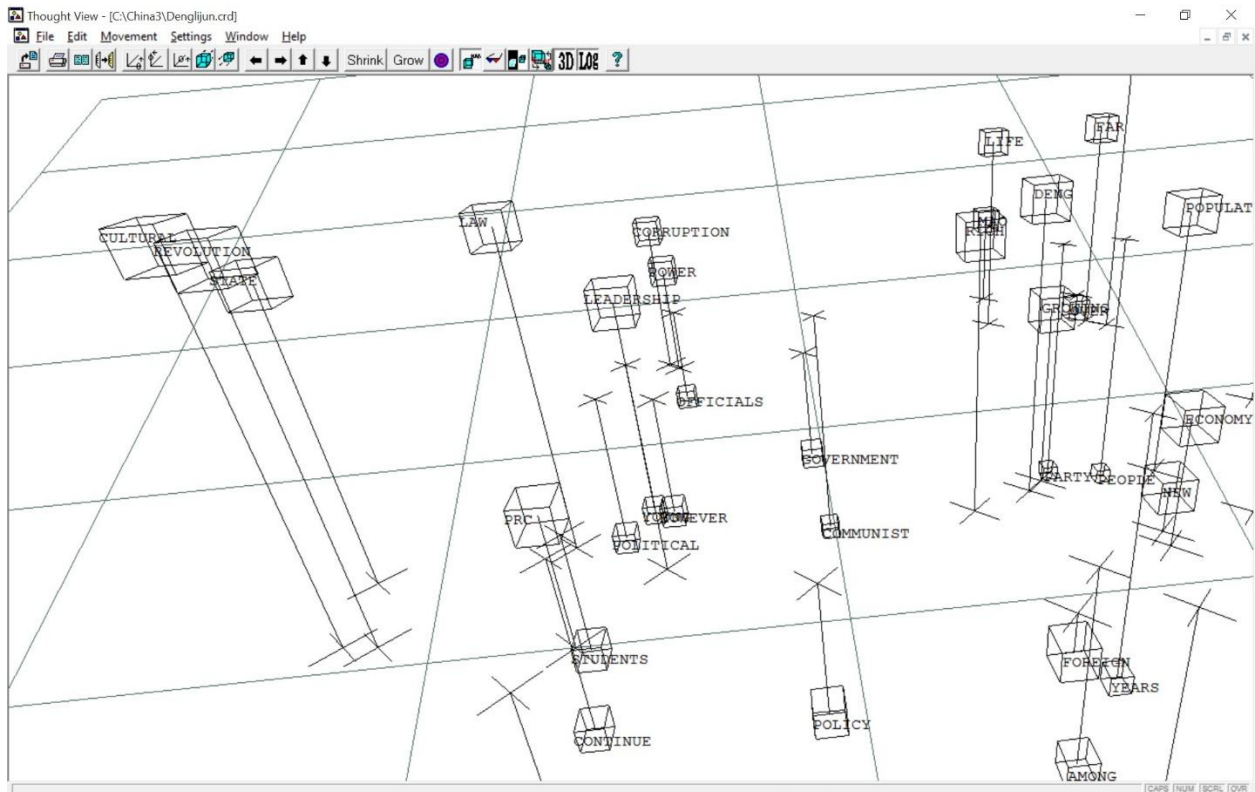




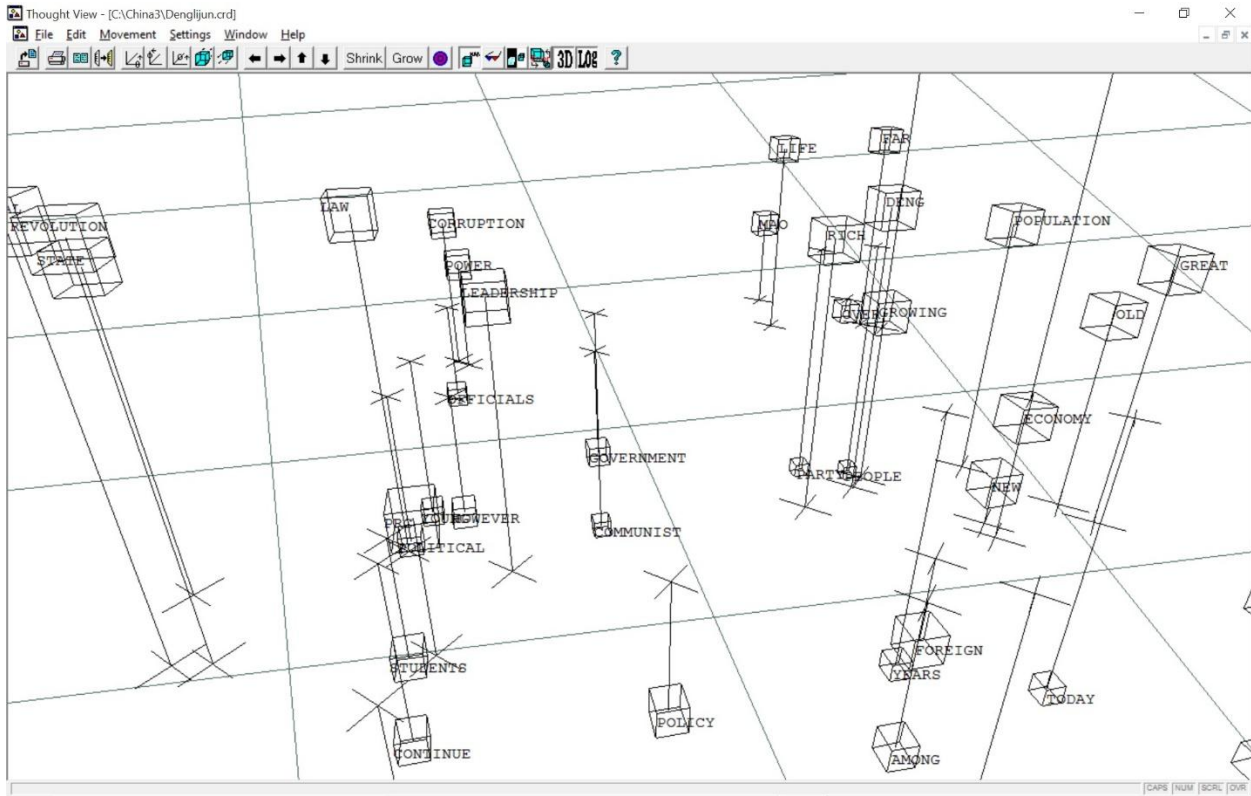
### Coordinate Grid 1



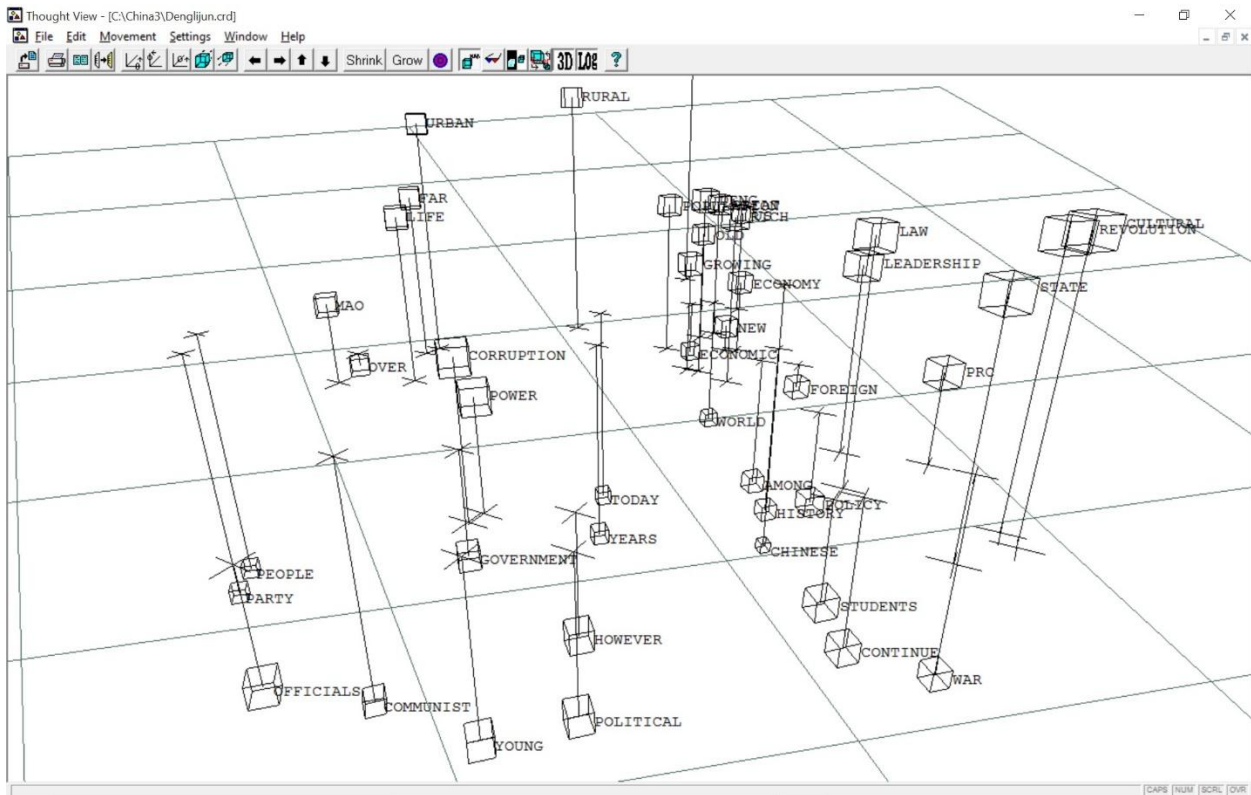
### Coordinate Grid 2



### Coordinate Grid 3



### Coordinate Grid 4



### Coordinate Grid 5

