

# Comparative Study on the Appraisal Resources of *China Daily's* Disaster News

Xiaolin Zhang

Chengdu College of University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, China

**Abstract**—This study compares the appraisal resources of the 1998 Shangyi earthquake reports and the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake reports collected from *China Daily*, examining whether there's improvement in disaster reporting. It finds that great changes have taken place over the 10 years. The most prominent changes are that the instances of Attitudinal and Engagement resources as well as the proportions of the Affect and the negative Attitudinal resources increased in the 2008 earthquake reports; moreover, the appraisers in the 2008 earthquake reports are far more diversified. The changes implicate a development in the disaster reports of *China Daily*, i.e., an ordinary people oriented reporting strategy was adopted in the 2008 earthquake reporting; more civilian were concerned in the disaster reports; the traditional sheer positive reporting method has been abandoned and more attention has been paid to people's true feelings.

**Index Terms**—disaster news reports, appraisal resources, diachronic changes

## I. INTRODUCTION

We live in a fragile world, fraught with the threat of disaster, looming like the sword of Damocles overhead (Ayan Sen, 2005). Each year, disasters like earthquake, landslides, volcanic eruptions, flood, cyclones and other catastrophic events kill thousands of people and destroy billions of dollars of property. Many countries that experienced disasters in the past attach great importance to the role of media. They say media can play a vital role in informing people of the latest news of disasters, facilitating governments' disaster-relief work and arousing people's sympathy towards victims. Some have gone as far as to call media a "vital arm of government" during disasters (Graber, 1984, p.286). This study, adopting Appraisal Theory, conducts a discourse comparison between two sets of English disaster news discourses taken from *China Daily*, the most dominant English newspapers in China, investigating whether there's any improvement in China's disaster reports in terms of appraisal resources. We hope to provide some insights into disaster reporting.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Disaster news, as one of the sub-varieties of news discourse, is now a hot research topic in Communication Science and has been studied mainly from the aspects like cross-cultural comparison (Quarantelli, E. L., Wenger, Dennis E., 1990, etc.), journalist ethics (Himmelstein H, Faithorn E P., 2002, etc.), journalist practice (Jason Roe, 2006, etc.) and political ideology in disaster news (Tian, 2008; Joye, S., 2009, etc.).

Unlike the prosperous situation in Communication Science, the disaster news discourses yet haven't drawn much attention from the linguistic field, let alone being studied from the perspective of the Appraisal Resources.

Appraisal theory is developed by Professor Martin and White. It is "concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned." (Martin & Rose, 2003, p.22). Up to now, only a few researchers have applied this theory in disaster news discourses. Wang Zhenhua (2004) applied the appraisal theory in the analysis of hard news. Since the news discourses he used in the study are disaster news reports on the earthquake which happened in China in 1998, it is actually a study on disaster news reports. He found that the linguistic device of Judgment is employed more than that of Affect and Appreciation in the earthquake news discourse. Although Wang's study adopts only one aspect (attitude) of the appraisal theory, it does introduce a new perspective for other researchers to study disaster news reports. Later, Ma Weilin (2007) analyzes a report about the earthquake in Pakistan in *New York Times* of October 9, 2005 from the material process and the three subsystems of the Appraisal Theory--Engagement System, Attitude System and Graduation System. Although the study is more elaborate and comprehensive than Wang's study, the limitations cannot be ignored, e.g. the small data size and the simplified analysis, etc. Most importantly, like Wang's study, Ma's study also merely dedicates to finding out the appraisal resources underlying the "objective" disaster news reports and has done no further exploration, let alone put forward any suggestions on disaster news writing. Wu Qianqian (2009), adopting quantitative and qualitative methods, studies the Affect resources (a sub-system within Attitude system of appraisal theory) of six feature stories taken from *China Daily's* 2008 Wenchuan earthquake reports. She finds that the Affect resources do not influence the objectivity of the feature story. She also discovers that the news writers prefer positive and non-authorial Affect in the feature story about the earthquake and some Affect resources are used more

frequently than others. In addition, she explores the functions of the Affect resources in the disaster news reports. Wu's study is far more intensive and profound than the previous studies, but it ignores the other aspects of the appraisal system and fails in explaining why these discourses have such appraisal features.

From the literature review, it can be clearly seen that the previous studies have done some work on the disaster news reports, but there're still lots of questions to be answered and many unknown areas to be explored. This paper is trying to answer such questions as whether there is any attitude in disaster news reports; if any, how the news writers convey their attitudes and how intense their attitudes are. In order to answer these questions, the Appraisal Theory will be adopted in this study.

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN

#### A. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Appraisal theory which deals with the linguistic resources that are used to express, negotiate and naturalize particular inter-subjective relationship and ideological positions. The Appraisal theory encompasses three sub-systems, namely, Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviors and evaluation of things. Engagement considers how writers/speakers convey their point of view and how they align themselves with respect to the position of others. Graduation attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (Martin & White, 2008, p.35). The Appraisal system with its sub-systems is outlined in Figure 3.1 below. Each of these sub-systems has its own sub-categories or options, and all these options are semantic ones that transcend diverse lexical-grammatical structures.

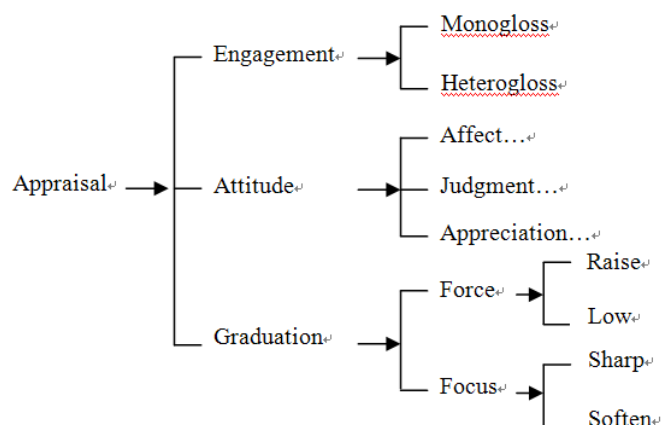


Figure 3.1 An overview of Appraisal resources (Martin & White, 2008, p.38)

The three sub-systems of the Appraisal theory adopted in the study can be perfectly used to answer the three research questions. The Attitude system is adopted to reveal the attitudinal meaning conveyed in *China Daily's* disaster news reports, the Engagement system to explore by what means the attitudinal meaning and the writers' or speakers' point of view are negotiated and the Graduation system to show how the attitudinal meaning and the writers' or speakers' point of view are graded.

#### B. Data Collection

*China Daily* is regarded as one of China's most influential English media. It is the only national English Newspaper in China, the only one that has entered the western mainstream society and the only one that has been quoted by foreign news presses so far<sup>1</sup>. The current study selects 20 news discourses about natural disasters from it (10 are the news reports of the Shangyi earthquake in 1998; and the rest are the news reports of the Wenchuan-earthquake in 2008). The 20 texts are not random selection; they all meet the following criteria:

1. The news discourses are sequential front-page reports on the same disaster.
2. The contents of the discourses only appear on the front page without considering the rest on other pages.

#### C. Analysis Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are involved in this study. The quantitative approach is adopted to study the distribution and frequencies of Appraisal resources in the two data. In order to make the quantitative study more scientific and efficient, a computer-assisted discourse analyzing software---UAM Corpus Tool 2.36 will be adopted in data analysis. UAM Corpus Tool is a set of tools developed by Mick O'Donnell for the linguistic annotation of text and images. It can provide some basic statistics and some research tools for the statistical results.

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *China Daily*. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/static\\_c/gyzgrbwz.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/static_c/gyzgrbwz.html) (accessed 7/3/2015)

Inter-rater reliability was addressed by having a research assistant code 4 of the 20 reports, 2 from each data. The percentages of agreement between the two coders for the 4 reports were 89% and 88% respectively, which is an acceptable level of agreement.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS OF THE DISASTER NEWS DISCOURSE

This section reports on the results of the analysis. First, it gives a comprehensive comparison of the data in a systematic and statistical way. Then it presents some sample analysis of the data. Besides, some necessary discussions are also provided in this section.

##### A. Attitude Analysis

An Attitude analysis includes values of emotional response (Affect), values by which human behavior is socially assessed (Judgment), and values which address the aesthetic and socially valued qualities of objects, entities and natural phenomena (Appreciation). As the core system of Appraisal, Attitude plays a crucial role in negotiating solidarity by showing other people our attitudes towards things and people, and thus making people respond to the viewpoints and get involved in the ongoing interaction (Martin, 2004). Below is a detailed distribution of the attitudinal resources.

TABLE 4.1  
DISTRIBUTION AND RATE OF THE ATTITUDINAL RESOURCES

Feature	Wenchuan earthquake reports			Shangyi earthquake reports		
	number	percentage	rate	number	percentage	rate
Affect	24	20.51%	0.5	6	10.71%	0.1
Judgment	62	52.99%	1.3	36	64.29%	0.7
Appreciation	31	26.50%	0.7	14	25.00%	0.3

As shown in Table 4.1, there's a strong contrast between the two sets of discourses: the rate (appraisal items per 100 words) of the attitudinal resources in the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake reports is obviously higher than that in the 1998 Shangyi earthquake reports. This means attitudinal resources are more frequently employed in the 2008 earthquake news reports and a humanistic reporting strategy rather than a mere cold description was adopted.

Next, we will examine the Affect resources, Judgment resources and Appreciation resources in detail. Martin and White (2008) argue that it is useful to note the source of the Attitude (who is judging or appreciating, normally we interpret speakers and writers as the source of evaluations, unless Attitude is projected as the speech or thoughts of an additional appraiser) and what is appraised (who is judged and what is appreciated). Therefore, the appraisers and the appraised are also within the concern of the analysis.

##### 1. Analysis of Affect Resources

Affect itself involves different kinds of feeling, ways of realization, people who have emotions and the things or people that cause the emotions. Martin & White (2008) call the conscious participant experiencing the emotion an Emoter, and the phenomenon responsible for that emotion a Trigger. This paper follows Martin and White (2008), treating the emoter as the appraiser, and the trigger of the emotion as the appraised. A summary of the analysis is presented in Table 4.2 below.

TABLE 4.2  
SUMMARY OF THE AFFECT ANALYSIS

Feature	Wenchuan earthquake reports		Shangyi earthquake reports	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
Affect-TYPE				
happiness	13	54.17%	1	16.67%
security	4	16.67%	0	0.00%
satisfaction	6	25.00%	4	66.67%
inclination	1	4.17%	1	16.67%
POLARITY				
positive	14	58.33%	6	100.00%
negative	10	41.67%	0	0.00%
EXPLICITNESS				
inscribed	24	100.00%	6	100.00%
invoked	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
APPRAISER-TYPE I				
authorial	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
non-authorial	24	100.00%	6	100.00%
APPRAISER-TYPE II				
officials	10	41.67%	6	100.00%
non-officials	14	58.33%	0	0.00%

Table 4.2 reveals striking differences between the two sets of news reports. First, the Affect resources in the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake news reports are far more various and abundant than that of the 1998 Shangyi earthquake reports. All the four kinds of Affect can be found in the earthquake reports while only three kinds of Affect in the 1998

earthquake reports; the un/happiness type, in particular, shows a strong contrast; there are 13 un/happiness resources in earthquake reports while only one in the 1998 earthquake reports. In addition to the type of Affect, the polarity also displays a big difference; in the 1998 earthquake reports, all the Affect resources are positive, on the contrary, nearly half of the Affect resources are negative in the 2008 earthquake reports. This implicates that news writers pay more attention to people's true feelings rather than just reporting positive aspects. When it comes to the appraisers of these Affect resources, though all the Affect resources are non-authorial, the appraisers in the 2008 earthquake news reports are more diversified than that in the 1998 earthquake reports ---- all the appraisers are government leaders in the 1998 earthquake reports while the non-official appraisers account for 58.33% in the 2008 earthquake news reports. This indicates that common people are paid more attention by public media at present than before.

In order to better describe the Affect analysis, some sample analyses are given below, which demonstrate how the Affect resources are identified in the text.

[1] He told the villagers: "I know some of your family and friends have died. We are deeply **saddened** (*attitude; affect; -happiness*). Some people are still trapped. We will do our utmost to rescue them."

In the above example, the Affect resource "*saddened*" is cited from the speech of Premier Wen Jiabao. The news writer puts the speech here in order to tell the victims that the government and other people are deeply concerned about them. "*Saddened*" is used to show that he (Premier Wen Jiabao) and other people are very sad to see the disaster and what the disaster has caused. The emotion embodied in the word "saddened" can be ascribed to that of unhappiness. Since the word "*saddened*" is quoted from Premier Wen Jiabao's speech rather than the writer's own comment/opinion. Therefore, "*saddened*" can be regarded as the non-authorial and negative Affect.

[2] "We are very **happy** (*attitude; affect; +happiness*). We have been standing here shouting for two days," said Pan Jianjun, a relative. "We are so **grateful** (*attitude; affect; +satisfaction*) to the rescuers and the government."

In example [2], Pan Jianjun is a relative of the rescued person Zhang Xiaoyan. The word "*happy*" reveals Pan Jianjun and other people's excitement and happiness when they see Zhang Xiaoyan and her mother being successfully rescued. It can be ascribed to the sub-category of happiness. The word "*grateful*" shows Pan and other people's feeling of appreciation to the rescuers and the government. It can be ascribed to the sub-category of satisfaction. Since "*happy*" and "*grateful*" are both quoted from Pan's words, not the writer's own comment/opinion, they can be regarded as the non-authorial and positive Affect.

## 2. Analysis of Judgment Resources

With Judgment we move into the region of meaning construing our attitudes to people and the way they behave—their character (how they measure up). Disaster news reports undoubtedly involve people like victims, rescuers, the government leaders and etc. therefore, it is impossible for the reporters to avoid making judgments on these people involved, either directly or indirectly. Table 4.3 below shows a summary of the analysis.

TABLE 4.3  
SUMMARY OF THE JUDGMENT ANALYSIS

Feature	Wengchuan earthquake reports		Shangyi earthquake reports	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
JUDGMENT-TYPE				
social-esteem	45	72.58%	24	66.67%
social-sanction	17	27.42%	12	33.33%
ESTEEM-TYPE				
normality	1	2.22%	1	4.17%
capacity	13	28.89%	7	29.17%
tenacity	31	68.89%	16	66.67%
SANCTION-TYPE				
veracity	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
propriety	17	100.00%	12	100.00%
POLARITY				
positive	48	77.42%	24	66.67%
negative	14	22.58%	12	33.33%
EXPLICITNESS				
inscribed	10	16.13%	2	5.56%
invoked	52	83.87%	34	94.44%
APPRAISER-TYPE				
authorial	35	56.45%	36	100.00%
non-authorial	27	43.55%	0	0.00%
APPRAISED-TYPE				
earthquake	12	19.35%	12	33.33%
government	18	29.03%	7	19.44%
others	32	51.62%	17	47.23%

As shown in Table 4.3, in the 1998 earthquake reports, all the appraisers are news writers. In contrast, the appraisers in the 2008 earthquake news reports are far more diversified, many people's Judgment other than the news writers' are attributed. As to the appraised items, there are much more judgments on the government's and other individuals' performances during the disaster time in the 2008 earthquake news reports than the 1998 earthquake reports. These

differences implicate that the coverage range of the 2008 earthquake news reports is bigger than that of the 1998 earthquake reports and the reporting perspective gradually turns to civilians.

In order to better describe the Judgment analysis, some sample analyses are given below, which demonstrate how the Judgment resources are identified in the text.

[3] Rescuers were last night racing against time (*attitude; judgment; +tenacity; invoked*) to find survivors a day after the strongest quake to hit China in 32 years jolted Sichuan province, demolishing buildings and burying tens of thousands beneath the rubble. (*attitude; judgment; -propriety; invoked*)

The underlined part “racing against time” is used to show that the rescuers were trying their best to save people; it invokes the readers’ positive evaluation towards the rescuers (how brave and hardworking they are), and therefore, it can be regarded as positive and invoked Judgment; within the underlined part “demolishing buildings and burying tens of thousands beneath the rubble”, though there’s no direct criticism towards the earthquake, it does invoke the readers’ negative attitude towards the earthquake (how bad and evil the earthquake is). Therefore, it can be regarded as negative and invoked Judgment.

[4] He described such siphoning of relief materials as “extremely despicable”. (*attitude; judgment; -propriety; inscribed*)

Not long after the earthquake, some Internet users posted pictures showing tents earmarked for disaster relief, including some donated by foreign countries, put up in luxurious residential communities in Chengdu. The underlined part “despicable” is quoted from the speech of Chen Kefu, Deputy Head of Sichuan’s civil affairs bureau. It is used to directly show Chen’s negative attitude towards those who siphon relief materials (how selfish they are). Since “despicable” is quoted from the speech of Chen Kefu rather than the news writer’s own comment/opinion, it can be regarded as negative, inscribed and non-authorial Judgment.

### 3. Analysis of Appreciation Resources

This section will be devoted to the analysis of Appreciation which looks at resources for construing the value of things, including natural phenomena and semiosis (either product or process). According to Martin and White (2008), Appreciation can be divided into our ‘reaction’ to things (do they catch our attention; do they please us?), their ‘composition’ (balance and complexity) and their ‘value’ (how innovative, authentic, timely, etc.). Like Affect and Judgment, the appraisers and the appraised of the Judgment resources are also noted in this section. The statistical results are summarized in Table 4.4 below.

TABLE 4.4  
SUMMARY OF THE APPRECIATION ANALYSIS

Feature	Wengchuan earthquake reports		Shangyi earthquake reports	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
APPRECIATION-TYPE				
reaction	4	12.90%	0	0.00%
composition	11	35.48%	3	21.43%
valuation	16	51.61%	11	78.57%
POLARITY				
positive	20	64.52%	10	71.43%
negative	11	35.48%	4	28.57%
EXPLICITNESS				
inscribed	31	100.00%	13	92.86%
invoked	0	0.00%	1	7.14%
APPRAISER-TYPE				
authorial	9	29.03%	6	42.86%
non-authorial	22	70.97%	8	57.14%

Table 4.4 reveals some differences between the two sets of disaster news. First, there’re 4 instances of reaction resources in the 2008 earthquake news reports while there’s no reaction resources at all in the 1998 earthquake reports. Second, the 2008 earthquake news reports possess more negative Appreciation resources than the 1998 earthquake reports. Third, the appraisers in the 2008 earthquake news reports are more diversified; the proportion of the non-authorial Appreciation resources is higher than the proportion in the 1998 earthquake news reports. These differences implicate that on the one hand, reporters were more skillful in dealing with the attitudinal resources in 2008 earthquake reports. On the other hand, the true opinions and feeling of people involved in the disaster were preferred in the 2008 reports, which was more likely to arouse sympathy within audience.

In order to better describe the Appreciation analysis, some sample analyses are given below, which demonstrate how the Appreciation resources are identified in the text.

[5] Lifeline (*attitude; appreciation; +valuation; inscribed*) to epicenter opened.

The buckled roads and collapsed bridges caused by the quake hindered the rescue work since it prevented the delivery of disaster relief materials to the epicenter of Wenchuan. Therefore, a road which can ensure faster delivery of disaster relief materials to the epicenter of Wenchuan seems very important. In the above example, the underlined word “lifeline” is used to show how important, how valuable the road that connects the epicenter to the outside world is. It

belongs to the sub-category of valuation. The appraiser, though there is no clear source mentioned, is the news reporter him/herself. Therefore, “*lifeline*” can be regarded as positive, inscribed and authorial Appreciation.

[6] “Within 72 hours after the disaster is the *critical* (*attitude; appreciation; +valuation; inscribed*) period. Generally, the sooner the victims are rescued, the better,” Liang Guiping, the chief engineer of Shijiazhuang Bureau of Seismology, told CCTV.

After the 5.12 earthquake, many people, including police, firefighters, the PLA and many other rescuers were racing against time to save victims since the sooner they are rescued, the bigger chance they can survive. In the above quotation, the word “*critical*” is used by the speaker to stress the valuation (or importance) of the time period of within 72 hours after the earthquake. Since it is quoted from the speech of Liang Guiping, therefore, it can be regarded as positive, inscribed and non-authorial Appreciation.

### B. Engagement Analysis

In the previous section, attitudinal resources are dichotomized in terms of authorial and non-authorial. In fact, authorial/non-authorial belongs to the Engagement category. Engagement resources are used to adjust and negotiate the agreeability of the speaker's or the writer's utterances. The use of such resources can be considered as an interpersonal strategy to realize the alignment or disalignment with the ideal audiences or readers by the speaker or the writer. This section is concerned with the Engagement devices and the ways they contribute to the expansion and contraction of heteroglossic space, namely, the room for mediating the multiple voices in a text. Table 4.5 below is a summary of the distribution of the Engagement resources in the two sets of texts.

TABLE 4.5  
SUMMARY OF THE ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Feature	Wengchuan earthquake reports		Shangyi earthquake reports	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
ENGAGEMENT-TYPE				
mono-glossic <sup>2</sup>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
hetero-glossic	193	100.00%	122	100.00%
HETERO-GLOSSIC-TYPE				
contract	37	19.17%	20	16.39%
expand	156	80.83%	102	83.61%

Table 4.5 shows that there's no big difference between the distributions of Engagement resources of the two data. The proportion of dialogic expansive resources is higher than that of the dialogic contractive resources (contractions account for 19.17% and 16.39% while expansions account for 80.83% and 83.61%); the prevalent expand values are the salient feature of disaster news discourses of *China Daily*, which indicates that the news writers tend to attribute or entertain other voices or stances rather than to challenge, fend off or restrict other voices or stances.

In order to better demonstrate the analysis of the Dialogic Expansive resources, some sample analyses are presented below.

[7] Death toll hits 8,500, *likely* (*engagement; expand; entertain*) to rise. (2008 May 13<sup>th</sup>)

In example [7], the word “*likely*” is used by the news writer to express the negotiability of the proposition. The news writer gets prepared to recognize the contrary proposition that “the death toll will not rise”. Thus, the dialogic space is expanded. In this way the news writer allows dialogically alternative opinions and provides for the possibility of solidarity with those readers who hold this opposite proposition. Therefore, “*likely*” can be regarded as Entertain resource.

[8] Many people *were believed* (*engagement; expand; entertain*) to be under the debris. (2008 May 14<sup>th</sup>)

In example [8], the use of “*were believed*” places the proposition “Many people were under the debris” in one of the possible propositions. That is to say, by employing “*were believed*”, the news writer presents the proposition as individualized and admits that there may be other people who will not fully share his/her points of view on this matter. From this perspective it can be seen that this resource is dialogic; it makes allowance for a dialogic background for alternative propositions. Therefore, it can be regarded as Entertain resource.

[9] *Premier*: (*engagement; expand; attribute; acknowledge*) Quake adds uncertainties to economy (2008 May 22<sup>nd</sup>)

In the above example, by the use of: (*colon*), the news writers simply reports the words and viewpoints of Premier Wen Jiabao. Thus, the textual voice can refer to the opinion “*Quake adds uncertainties to economy*” neutrally without expressing the news writer's attitude. In this way, the news writer indicates that the opinion is individual and contingent and therefore but one of a range of possible dialogic options. The colon here can be regarded as Attribute resource.

### C. Graduation Analysis

In the previous sections, we analyzed the attitudes invested in the disaster news reports and how the news writers negotiate these attitudes. This section will be concerned with the ways in which the news writers up-scale or down-scale the attitudes---Graduation. Graduation covers two subcategories: Force and Focus. Force interacts with Attitude to either increase (turn up Attitudinal meanings) or decrease (turn down Attitudinal meanings) the ‘volume’ of that

<sup>2</sup> Mono-glossic is not discussed in this thesis; therefore the occurrence is not counted.

Attitude. It includes two sub-categories----intensification and quantification. By the employment of Force resources, the news writers can easily turn up or turn down the Attitudinal meaning embedded in the news discourses. Upscaling of Attitude frequently acts to construe the speaker/writer as maximally committed to the value position being advanced and hence as strongly aligning the reader into that value position. Downscaling, in the opposite, frequently has the obverse effect of construing the speaker/writer as having only a partial or an attenuated affiliation with the value position being referenced. Focus can either sharpen the specification of the graduated terms so that prototypicality is indicated or to soften the specification of the graduated terms so as to characterize an instance as having only marginal membership in the category. When the term being graduated under Focus is non-attitudinal, instances of sharpening often strongly flag a positive attitudinal assessment while instances of purported marginality a negative assessment. When the term being graduated is already explicitly attitudinal, instances of sharpening usually have the effect to indicate maximal investment by the authorial voice in the value position being advanced while instances of softening have the effect to indicate a lessening of the speaker/writer's investment in the value position. A summary of the analysis of Graduation resources in the two sets of disaster news reports is presented below in Table 4.6.

TABLE 4.6  
SUMMARY OF THE GRADUATION ANALYSIS

	Wengchuan earthquake reports		Shangyi earthquake reports	
Feature	number	percentage	number	percentage
GRADUATION-TYPE				
force	261	100.00%	292	100.00%
focus	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
FORCE-TYPE				
quantification	221	84.67%	239	81.85%
intensification	40	15.33%	53	18.15%
QUANTIFICATION-TYPE				
number	178	80.54%	210	87.87%
mass/presence	8	3.62%	5	2.09%
extent	35	15.84%	24	10.04%
INTENSIFICATION-TYPE				
quality	31	77.50%	46	86.79%
process	9	22.50%	7	13.21%
POLARITY				
up-scale	235	90.04%	269	92.12%
down-scale	26	9.96%	23	7.88%

Table 4.6 reveals that there's no big difference in Graduation resources between the two sets of disaster news reports. In both news texts, all the Graduation resources are Force resources, besides, the up-scale Graduation resources are preferred by the news writers rather than down-scale resources. Within the category of Force, quantification resources far outnumber intensification resources; and within the sub-category of Intensification, quality resources outnumber process resources. In addition, the massive use of figures or numerical expressions (178 and 210 instances respectively) is another distinct feature of the two sets of disaster news reports.

In order to better demonstrate the analysis of the Graduation resources, some sample analyses are presented below.

[10] He described such siphoning of relief materials as "*extremely* (graduation; force; intensification; up-scale) despicable". (2008 May 24<sup>th</sup>&25<sup>th</sup>)

In example [10], the up-scaling resource "*extremely*" construes the speaker as maximally committed to the community of shared value which regards siphoning of relief materials negative. This value position is going to guide the readers toward one interpretation (the behavior of siphoning relief materials is despicable), hence fending off other possible contraries since the interpersonal costs will be added when trying to make other contrary interpretations. The word "*extremely*" is a quotation that indicates the writer aligns the readers indirectly.

[11] Officials also said they have been cracking down on price-gouging in quake-affected areas after *some* (graduation; force; quantification; down-scale) businesses were caught overcharging for goods. (2008 May 24<sup>th</sup>&25<sup>th</sup>)

In the above example, "*were caught overcharging for goods*" can arouse readers' negative attitude towards businesses. This will perhaps cause tension between the news writer and some news readers (e.g. those good businessmen). When reporting this unfavorable and negative news, the linguistic means of "*some*" is chosen to tune down the interpersonal force, which reaches the effect of establishing a harmonious relationship between the news writer and news readers since it indicates that this phenomena is individual.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The data comparison reveals that the disaster news reports in *China Daily* experienced some changes over a period of 10 years from 1998 to 2008.

First, more Attitudinal resources are invested in the 2008 earthquake reports than the 1998 earthquake reports. Within these Attitudinal resources, the Affect resources in the 2008 earthquake news reports are far more various and abundant than that of the 1998 earthquake reports. All the four kinds of Affect can be found in the 2008 earthquake reports while

only three kinds of Affect in the 1998 earthquake reports. The un/happiness type, in particular, shows a strong contrast; there are 13 un/happiness resources in 2008 earthquake reports while only 1 in 1998 earthquake reports. In addition to the type of Affect, the polarity also displays a big difference; in the 1998 earthquake reports, all the Affect resources are positive, on the contrary, nearly half of the Affect resources are negative in the 2008 earthquake reports. When it comes to the appraisers of these Affect resources, though all the Affect resources are non-authorial, the appraisers in the 2008 earthquake news reports are more diversified than that in the 1998 earthquake reports ---- all the appraisers are government leaders in the 1998 earthquake reports while the non-official appraisers account for 58.33% in the 2008 earthquake news reports. As to the Judgment resources, all the appraisers in the 1998 earthquake reports are news writers, on the contrary, the appraisers in the 2008 earthquake news reports are far more diversified, many people's Judgment other than the news writers' are attributed; and the 2008 earthquake news reports make more judgments on the government's performances and other individuals during the disaster time than the 1998 earthquake reports. As to the Appreciation resources, there're 4 instances of reaction resources in the 2008 earthquake news reports while there's no reaction resources at all in the 1998 earthquake reports; the 2008 earthquake news reports possess more negative Appreciation resources than the 1998 earthquake reports; the appraisers of Appreciation resources in the 2008 earthquake news reports are more diversified than that of in the 1998 earthquake reports.

Second, more Engagement resources are adopted in the 2008 earthquake news reports than the 1998 earthquake reports. Within the Engagement resources, the Attribute resources, especially the acknowledge resources, in the 2008 earthquake news reports far outnumber those in the 1998 earthquake reports; the Disclaim resources, especially the sub-category of Counter resources in the 2008 earthquake news reports obviously outnumber those in the 1998 earthquake reports.

In fact, the disaster news reports are ever changing along with the development of the society. According to Wang (2008) who has systematically studied the disaster news reports in China over the past 60 years, the disaster news reports in China can be divided into three periods.

The first period is from 1949 to 1978. Since the founding of the Republic of China, Chinese government had required the news media to be prudent of reporting disaster news in consideration of social and political stability. If there's any report on disasters, they must be positive publication of the achievements attained in struggling against disasters. The purely objective coverage of disasters was prohibited at that time. During this period, China's principle for reporting disaster news was to highlight the revolutionary heroic spirit, praise the Party and Chairman Mao's care, pay a tribute to mankind's victory of overcoming disasters, stress moral enlightenment and always report disasters from the perspective of how people overcome disasters in order to fully praise the human spirit and strength.

The second period is from 1978 to 2002. After the Third Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC which was held in December 1978, China began to reform and open up to the outside world and build democracy and legal system. The introduction of the concept of "Information" reconfirmed the function of news paper as to disseminate information. The coverage of disasters, once regarded as a "forbidden zone" and "minefield", acquired a certain degree of liberation. A reporting series which includes brief message at the beginning of the disaster and depth follow-up reports had formed at that time, which enabled news reporters to present the reality in a complete and comprehensive way. China's principle for reporting disaster news was to pursue the time effectiveness of news and focus on the audience's right to know. Disaster news coverage at that time no longer remained in the stage of stressing the moral significance of news, but rather into the level of pursuing the value of information.

The third period is from 2002 up to now. The 16th NCCPC was held in November 2002, after which the CPC Central Committee put forward and upheld the "people-oriented" concept of governance. 2003 is an extraordinary year for news dissemination, the rampant SARS pushed Chinese journalists to the huge catastrophic events. The spread of SARS crisis became a historical turning point for reporting disaster news. During this period the principle for reporting disaster news is to get constant breakthroughs in restricted areas and strive to make information transparent.

The three periods actually reflect the three development stages of China's disaster news reports. The 1998 earthquake reports are at the second stage while the 2008 earthquake news reports at the third stage. Under different principles for reporting disaster news, there would surely be some changes in reporting disaster news. For example, the reporting objects and approaches. Attitude, as an ideological element within news reports, is impossible to stay intact from the influence. Now, it's clear what cause the changes. Next, this paper will try to explain the implications of the changes.

Yang (2003) argues that the realization of news value includes perception of events, experience of emotion and communication of information. He explains that the emotion of news text is often twofold: First, the news itself contains emotion. News, especially the social news is itself a product of human activity, which surely contains a variety of people's emotions like happiness, sorrow, anger, etc. so that the news itself has different emotional colors. Second, the reporter itself shows emotion in the dissemination of events. When facing and disseminating certain events, the reporter is by no means just a heartless informer, but a human with feeling and emotion. Wang and Zhang (2008) point out that news reporters at the scene is not only the communicator of the reported people's sense and emotion, but also a specific symbol involved in the scene and an important person to inform events as well as emotions. They should report the true feeling accurately.



An increase in Affect resources is in accordance with what Yang, Wang & Zhang said. It implicates that news writers pay more attention to people's feeling during disaster time, this can make the news reports more vivid and more easily to arouse readers' sympathy.

In China, "disasters are not news, only fighting disasters and disaster-relief work are news." (Wang, 1987, P.51). In fact, China has long implemented the press policy of advocating positive news reports while prohibiting or avoiding negative news reports. If there're any negative news reports like disasters, they usually focus on the performances of the Party leaders or the governments and propagate the belief that people can overcome any disasters.

In the 2008 earthquake news reports, an increase in negative Attitudes implicates that the news media has given up the coverage method of sheer positive publicity. More negative Affect resources indicate that the news reports pay more attention to people's true feeling (in fact, a disaster usually causes more negative emotions like sadness than positive emotions). More negative Judgment resources indicates that the news media no longer just praise the positive performance of the people, but also increase criticism to those immoral and illegal behaviors. More negative Appreciation resources indicates that the news media disclose more negative consequences caused by disasters, which makes coverage more objective and comprehensive.

The people-oriented guideline has been established since the 17th NCCPC. News media play an important role in embodying and promoting the people-oriented idea. Therefore, news media should focus on the people, especially those common people when report disasters so as to show humane care in the news reports.

The diversification of appraisers in the 2008 earthquake news reports indicates that a common people-oriented reporting strategy was adopted; more civilian are concerned in the reports, which reflect the humane care of the news reports.

It is believed that news should be objective. But with more Attitudinal resources invested in the news texts, more Engagement resources will have to be adopted in order to properly deal with these Attitudinal resources, thus to prevent these Attitudinal resources from influencing the objectivity of news reports. More Engagement resources, particularly the acknowledge resources in the 2008 earthquake news reports indicates that the reporters are more skilled in manipulating the Attitudinal resources. By employing these Engagement resources, they can well handle these Attitudinal resources without damaging the objectivity of news reports.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Adopting the appraisal theory, this study compares the appraisal resources of two sets of disaster news reports taken from *China Daily*. It finds that great changes in disaster news reports have taken place over the 10 years from 1998 to 2008. It also reveals that the changes in the two sets of news discourses implicate a development in the *China Daily*'s disaster news reports----a common people-oriented reporting strategy was adopted in the 2008 earthquake news reports; more civilian are concerned in the reports; the traditional sheer positive reporting method has been abandoned and more attention has been paid to people's true feelings.

This study is significant in that it has demonstrated the applicability and explanatory power of the theory, which has contributed due effort to the development of the theory; this study also casts some light on how to report disaster news, especially on how to deal with Attitudes in the disaster news so as to embody humane care to the victims and yet keep the news reports objective.

The work undertaken in this paper is one of the first efforts to probe into the appraisal nature of English disaster news reports in China from a systemic functional perspective. However, there is much ground needs to be improved. Further study shall select more news texts concerning various disasters since there are many kinds of disasters. Besides, news discourses should be taken from more newspapers rather than just from one kind of newspaper.

## APPENDIX

Below is a sample of the detailed analysis of the Affect, Judgment and Appreciation resources in the disaster news reports collected in this study. According to Martin & White [2008, p.71-76], the ideational tokens/invocations are marked with the notation 't' to indicate invoked Affect, Judgment and Appreciation. In addition, the abbreviations below are adopted in the analyses.

- + 'positive'
- 'negative'
- des 'Affect: desire'
- hap 'Affect: un/happiness'
- sec 'Affect: in/security'
- sat 'Affect: dis/satisfaction'
- norm 'Judgment: normality'
- cap 'Judgment: capacity'
- ten 'Judgment: tenacity'
- ver 'Judgment: veracity'
- prop 'Judgment: propriety'

reac 'Appreciation: reaction'  
 comp 'Appreciation: composition'  
 val 'Appreciation: valuation'

Inscribed and Invoked Affect			
ITEMS	APPRAISER	AFFECT	APPRAISED
crying	a child	- hap	various
saddened	Wen Jiabao"	- hap	some of your family and friends have died
appreciation	Wang Zhenyao	+ sat	all domestic and foreign donations
welcomed	A Foreign Ministry spokesman	+ hap	the international community's aid
mourn	various	- hap	the victims of the quake
despair	people in Dujiangyan and Beichuan	- hap	being ravaged by the earthquake
celebrate	people in Dujiangyan and Beichuan	+ hap	more people have been rescued
cheered	exhausted rescuers and residents	+ hap	pulling an eight-month-pregnant woman .....they were buried
Stricken	relatives	- sec	various
happy	Pan Jianjun	+ hap	Zhang, 34, and her mother being saved
grateful	Pan Jianjun	+ sat	the rescuers and the government
shaken	Zhang and her mother	- sec	being buried under the clapsed building by the earthquake
thank	"the Party and the country"	+ sat	disaster relief personnel
sorrow	"residents"	- hap	various
confident	an unnamed woman	+ sec	that you were coming to rescue me
happy	an unnamed woman	+ hap	being rescued and still alive
pain	President Hu Jintao	- hap	lost family and property
hugged	President Hu Jintao	+ hap	an eight-year-old boy
PLEA	various	+ des	more tents
hurts	Chen Kefu	- hap	to learn of such news
thanks	Wen Jiabao	+ sat	international donors
panicked	a CCTV reporter	- sec	the earth quake
gratitude	Wen Jiabao	+ sat	UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
appreciates	Wen Jiabao	+ sat	the efforts of the international community
Inscribed and Invoked Judgment			
ITEMS	APPRAISER	JUDGMENT	APPRAISED
3,000 killed in one county	author	t, - prop	earthquake
Wen arrived in Dujiangyan last night to direct the rescue work.	author	t, + ten	Wen Jiabao
the number of deaths is estimated at more than 3,000. More than 80 percent of the buildings there were destroyed and about 10,000 were injured.	author	t, - prop	earthquake
RESCUERS RACE AGAINST TIME	author	t, + ten	rescuers
Tens of thousands under rubble	author	t, - prop	earthquake
Rescuers were last night racing against time to find survivors	author	t, + ten	rescuers
demolishing buildings and burying tens of thousands beneath the rubble	author	t, - prop	earthquake
pulled more than 1,000 people from debris	author	t, +cap	People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers
national death toll reached more than 12,000 by 2 a.m. today	author	t, - prop	earthquake
will try our best	Wen Jiabao	t, + ten	government
ensure children do not go hungry	Wen Jiabao	t, + ten	government
Wen was visiting cities worst hit by the quake, including Dujiangyan, Deyang and Mianzhu	author	t, + ten	Wen Jiabao
will do our utmost	Wen Jiabao	t, + ten	government
more than 70 percent of the roads in the town were damaged, and almost all bridges had collapsed. Many people were believed to be under the debris	author	t, - prop	earthquake
At least 149 cargo trains and 31 passenger trains were affected	author	t, - prop	earthquake
the quake has resulted in the damage of "a considerable number of water projects".	E Jingping	t, - prop	earthquake
exhausted	author	t, + ten	rescuers& residents
with the bodies of her parents shielding her	author	t, + prop	her parents
miraculously	author	+ norm	a 3-year-old girl who was buried under the debris for 40 hours being rescued
50-hour rescue operation	author	t, +ten	rescuers
the building was very dangerous and highly unstable so the rescue operation was very risky.	Sun Guoli	t, +ten	rescuers

more than 1,000 students and teachers from Juyuan Middle School were buried when the building collapsed on Monday. So far more than 60 have been confirmed dead.	author	t, - prop	earthquake
Rescuers have been struggling to reach all quake-hit areas, battling landslides, buckled roads, collapsed bridges and wet weather.	author	t, + ten	rescuers
more than 130,000 troops were engaged in rescue operations	author	t, +prop	government
they had reached all 58 counties and towns stricken by the massive quake.	author	t, +cap	the rescue troops
government will make the utmost efforts to help the victims	Wen Jiabao	t, + ten	government
thorough	Ma jian	+ ten	the military
complete	Ma jian	+ ten	armed police and the PLA
“There is no problem at all.”	Ma jian	t, + cap	government
“every available means”	Hu Jintao	t, + ten	government
We must try every method to send rescuers to every quake-hit village	Hu Jintao	t, + ten	government
We must send rescue teams carrying food and drinking water to the worst-hit villages, even on foot, as soon as possible	Hu Jintao	t, + ten	government
visit one quake-hit village after another	author	t, + ten	Hu Jintao
make every effort	Hu Jiantao	t, + ten	government
brave	Hu Jintao	+ ten	a boy
not to surrender to difficulties	Hu Jintao	t, + ten	a boy
We shall have confidence, courage and strength	Hu Jintao	t, + ten	various
orderly	Ma jian	+ cap	Chinese military
efficient	Ma jian	+ cap	Chinese military
A total of 113,080 soldiers and armed policemen	Ma jian	t, + ten	government
working at full capacity	Jiang Li	t, + cap	military
the government has purchased enough materials	Jiang Li	t, + cap	the government
We will do our utmost to ensure that homeless people find a place to live.	Jiang Li	t, + ten	government
pledged	Wen Jiabao	+ ten	government
generous	Jiang Li	+ ten	donators
the disaster is so great	Jiang Li	t, - prop	earthquake
783,984 cotton-padded quilts, 1,783,600 items of cotton-padded clothes and food and drinking water worth 218 million yuan have been sent to the disaster areas	author	t, + cap	the government
pledged	the NAO	+ ten	government
The quake destroyed thousands of buildings, knocked out power and phone services and damaged factories, mines and other facilities.	author	t, - prop	earthquake
About 45,000 medical workers are working in all quake-hit counties and townships in Sichuan	author	t, + cap	Ministry of Health
About 1,196 tons of disinfectants and bactericides were distributed	author	t, + cap	Ministry of Health
In seven out of the 11 worst-hit counties, sanitation work has been completed and in the other four, one-third of the town ships have been covered	author	t, + cap	health workers
fighting time to find survivors	author	t, + ten	rescuers
saved and evacuated 396,811 people	author	t, +cap	rescuers
A total of 6,452 have been dug out alive	author	t, +cap	rescuers
in every village, to ensure that no one was left behind, and try to treat all injured people, in order to “save as many lives as possible	author	t, + ten	government
the second time in less than two weeks.	author	t, + ten	Wen Jiabao
doctors and nurses are stationed round the clock in refugee camps to try to prevent survivors from falling sick.	author	t, + ten	doctors and nurses
despicable	Cheng Kefu	- prop	the people siphoning the relief materials
overcharging for goods	author	t, - prop	some businesses
is determined to	author	t, + ten	the government
Two people were killed, hundreds injured and 70,000 houses collapsed	author	t, - prop	earthquake
<b>Inscribed and Invoked Appreciation</b>			
<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>APPRAISER</b>	<b>APPRECIATION</b>	<b>APPRAISED</b>
leading	author	+ val	Wolong Nature Reserve
crucial	Weng Jiabao	+ val	rescue work
urgently needed	an official with the Ministry of Civil Affairs	+ val	search and rescue workers
MAGICAL	author	+ comp	moments

synonymous with death and destruction	author	- reac	Dujiangyan and Beichuan
moving	Sun Guoli	+ reac	rescue of Zhang and her mother
miracle	Sun Guoli	+ reac	rescue of Zhang and her mother
miracle	Sun Guoli	+ reac	rescue of Zhang and her mother
dangerous	Sun Guoli	- comp	the building
unstable	Sun Guoli	- comp	the building
risky	Sun Guoli	- comp	the rescue operation
Lifeline	author	+ val	roads
critical	Liang Guijing	+ val	Within 72 hours after the disaster
encouraging	author	+ reac	news
inadequate	Minister of Water Resources Chen Lei	- comp	management systems
poor	Minister of Water Resources Chen Lei	- comp	data collection
crucial	Minister of Water Resources Chen Lei	+ val	to prevent secondary disasters, and control floods at damaged reservoirs, hydropower plants and dikes
necessary	Minister of Water Resources Chen Lei	+ val	to study and judge potential dangers
fabricated	Ma Jian	- val	rumors
groundless	Ma Jian	- val	rumors
helpful	Ma Jian	+ val	the experience Chinese troops had in rescue and relief work in other countries
LIFE PEG	author	+ val	tents
desperate need	Jiang Li	+ val	tents
the most wanted	author	+ val	tents and awnings
fast-growing	author	+ comp	China' economy
major	author	+ val	Sichuan
stable	Weng Jiabao	+ comp	the economy
grave	party leadership	- comp	the current situation
tough	party leadership	- comp	the relief work
a hard and long-term task	Weng Jiabao	- comp	Reconstruction
urgently needed	internet users	+ val	tents

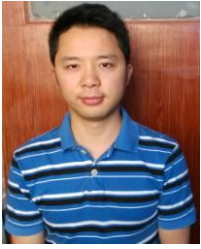
## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported in part by a grant from the Scientific Research Foundation of the Education Department of Sichuan Province, China (13SB0305).

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ayan, S. (2005). World Congress of Disaster and Emergency Medicine. *Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care*. Volume 3, Issue 3, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/37708/20061028-0000/www.jephc.com/uploads/990140.pdf> (accessed 29/2/2015).
- [2] Graber, D. A. (1984). *Mass media and American politics*. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- [3] Himmelstein, H. & Faithorn, E. P. (2002). Eyewitness to disaster: How journalists cope with the psychological stress inherent in reporting traumatic events. *Journalism Studies*, 4, 537-555.
- [4] Jason, R. (2006). Framing Katrina: a Study of Frames Used in Newspaper Coverage of Hurricane Katrina. Communication Honors Theses. Paper 2. [http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/comm\\_honors/2](http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/comm_honors/2) (accessed 21/3/2015).
- [5] Joye, S. (2009). The hierarchy of global suffering: A critical discourse analysis of television news reporting on foreign natural disasters. *Journal of International Communication*, 2, 45-61.
- [6] Ma, W. (2007). The Study of Appraisal in Disaster Reporting. *Journal of Jiangxi Normal University*, 2, 124-129.
- [7] Martin, J. R. & White, P. R. (2008). *The Language of Evaluation-Appraisal in English*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [8] Martin, J. R. (2004). Sense and Sensibility: Texturing Evaluation. In J. Foley (Ed.) *Language, Education and Discourse*. London: Continuum. 270-304.
- [9] Martin, J. R. & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause*. London & New York: Continuum.
- [10] Quarantelli, E. L., Wenger, Dennis E. (1990). A Cross-Societal Comparison of Disaster News Reporting in Japan and the United States. <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/518> (accessed 2/3/2015).
- [11] Tian, H. (2008). SARS discourse as anti-SARS ideology: the case in Beijing. In John H. Powers and Xiaosui Xiao (Eds.), *The Social Construction of SARS: Studies of a Health Communication Crisis*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 125-145.
- [12] Wang, Y. (1987). *Comments on Excellent News Reports in Modern China*. Wuhan: Wuhan University Press.
- [13] Wang, J. & Zhang, J. (2008). Study on the Emotion and Media Narration in Disaster Reporting. *Journalists*, 7, 34-37.
- [14] Wang, L. (2008). Changes in China's Disaster Reporting. *News University*, 4, 29-34.
- [15] Wang, Z. (2004). Study on the Attitudinal Resources of Hard News. *Foreign Language Education*, 5, 31-36.
- [16] Wu, Q. (2009). *An Analysis of Affectual Resources in the News Report of China Daily about Wenchuan Earthquake*, Master Dissertation, Henan University.
- [17] Yang, B. (2003). *News Value*. Beijing: China Renmin University Press.

[18] Zhang, W. (2003). *Comparative Journalism: Methodology and Case Studies*. Guangzhou: Nanfang Daily Press.



**Xiaolin Zhang** was born in Sichuan, China on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982. He received his Masters' degree in foreign linguistics and applied linguistics from University of Electronic Science and Technology of China in 2010. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of Arts and Science, Chengdu College of University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. His research interests are in corpus linguistics and discourse analysis.