

## THE SOCIAL SEMIOTICS OF UNIVERSITY INTRODUCTIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND CHINA

*Canzhong WU*

*Jing FANG*

*(Linguistics Department, Macquarie University)*

**ABSTRACT:** *Drawing on systemic functional theory, this paper studies university introductions in Australia and China, and explores the ways in which universities in these two countries present themselves to the general public. In particular, we will examine the differences and similarities of the generic structure in these introductions, and investigate the socio-cultural features and how they are manifested in lexicogrammar in terms of systemic selections of thematic structures and process types.*

**KEY-WORDS:** *discourse analysis, university introduction, corpus linguistics*

### 1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the internet has increasingly impacted on every aspect of university life, ranging from enrolment to graduation, teaching to learning, research to supervision, and information sharing to public relations, and many universities have poured millions of dollars in upgrading their IT facilities. Macquarie University is one of such universities, particularly with the appointment of its new vice-chancellor, Steven Schwartz, who has made IT support one of his top priorities.

Better equipment and faster internet connections are essential in this fast-moving world, but what matters even more are the information and services a university provides to staff and students in research and teaching, and how these are presented. Just like a good company, a good university is very meticulous about its image, part of which is usually captured through its introduction or overview.

In this paper, we compare and contrast university introductions in Australia and China, and explore the ways in which universities in the two countries present themselves. We will examine the differences and

similarities of the generic structure in these introductions, and investigate the socio-cultural features and how they are manifested in lexicogrammar in terms of systemic selections of thematic structures, mood and process types.

## 2. The data: Australian and Chinese university introductions

Australia and China are both big countries, but China has a population (1.3 billion) more than six times larger than Australia. Australia has around 40 universities whereas China has more than 1,000 universities. This created a problem for our collection of data, particularly in respect to selection of Chinese universities, and the solution was to make random selections from the list of ranked universities published on the web site by NetBig (Chinese University Rankings at [http://rank2004.netbig.com/cn/rnk\\_1\\_0\\_0.htm](http://rank2004.netbig.com/cn/rnk_1_0_0.htm)).

### 2.1. English data

The English collection constitutes 35 university introductions, with 11,552 words in total. There are 456 clause complexes and 619 clauses in the text; the average number of clause complexes per introduction is 13.02, the average number of clauses per clause complex is 1.36, and the average number of words per clause is 16.33 (see Table 1 below).

### 2.2. Chinese data

The Chinese collection constitutes 48 Chinese university introductions, and has 114,598 characters including punctuation marks, or 89,956 characters excluding numbers and punctuation marks. There are 1,602 clause complexes and 3,979 clauses (see Table 1 below).

It is important to note that we used *characters* instead of *words* simply because there is no easily computer-identifiable word boundaries in Chinese as in English where words are typically separated by space, and automatic word segmentation programs are not always reliable.

### 2.3. Differences between the two sets of data

		Text	Clause complex	Clause	Word/Character
English	Count	35	456	619	11,552

(in words)	Average		13.02/text	1.36/cl. complex	16.33/clause
Chinese	Count	48	1,602	3,979	89,956
(in characters)	Average		33.38/text	2.48/cl. complex	22.52/clause

Table 1: Frequencies in English and Chinese data

As can be seen from the table above, the English data and the Chinese data are different in quite a number of ways, apart from the fact that there are more Chinese texts (48) than English ones (35):

- The average Chinese text is more than 1.5 times longer than the English one in terms of number of clause complexes.
- Chinese clause complexes tend to be complex, with 2.48 clauses on average while English clause complexes only has an average of 1.36 clauses.
- English clauses are a little longer than Chinese clauses in words on the assumption that Chinese words are mostly made up of 2 characters, followed by 4 characters, and then by 3 characters.

### 3. Analysing the data

For the analysis of the data, we will use SysConc for automatic analysis and SysFan for manual analysis, both of which are part of a suite of tools in SysAM, a computational environment for doing text analysis, as described in Wu (2000). This two-pronged approach was first proposed by Matthiessen (1993), and has been successfully applied to a number of commercial developments (see Herke-Couchman 2006).

#### 3.1. Tools for doing analysis

As shown in Figure 1 (Wu 2000; Matthiessen 1996), SysConc is located at the lexical end of delicacy within the graphological stratum (the bottom right corner of the diagram), and is one of tools that do simple pattern matching such as lexical or grammatical items as graphological strings. It is very useful for investigating word frequencies, word associations, and some morphological characteristics by producing concordances, frequency lists, collocational patterns. Since the tools located here do not involve any lexical grammatical information, they are very constrained in their functionalities. However, since the

information involved in the analysis is fairly simple, they can process large volumes of text, e.g., of twenty millions words or more in a fully automatic fashion though the texts may have to be chunked into smaller sections to be processed one by one.

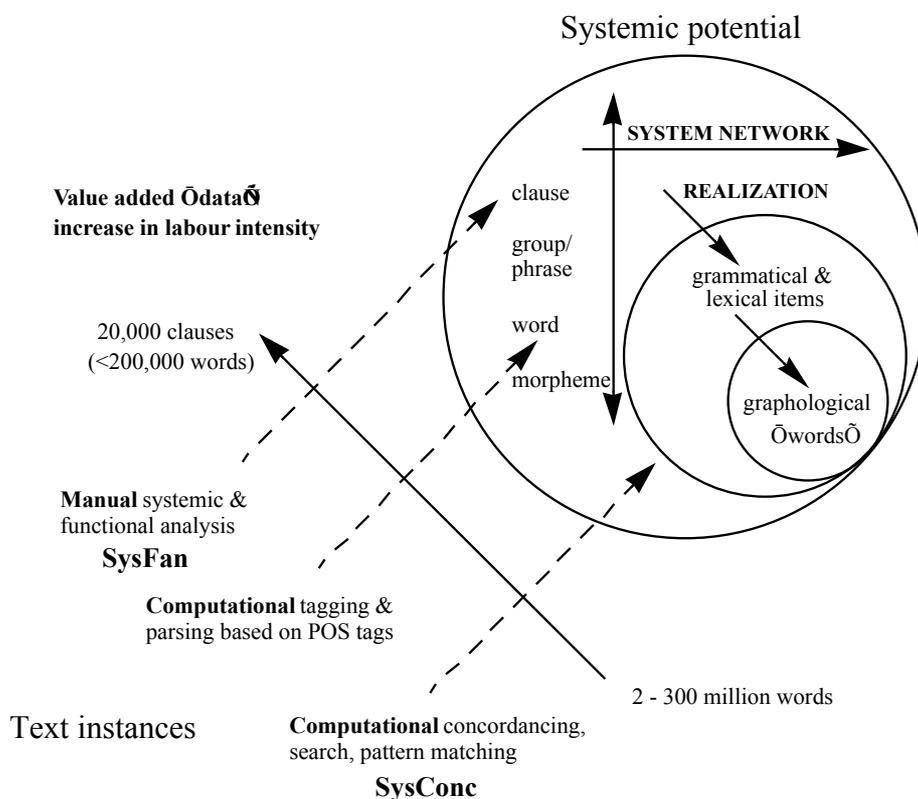


Figure 1: Stratification and division of labour in analysis

SysFan is located at the other end of the scale, and is one of the tools that operate at the highest rank within the lexicogrammatical stratum -- several steps away from the domain of SysConc and other similar tools. This is where tools may be located for doing systemic functional analysis of text. These tools are used to process large volumes of text to produce THEME, MOOD and TRANSITIVITY analyses of clauses and other systemic and functional analyses of other grammatical units. These analyses may be manual, semi-automatic or fully automatic depending on the amount of human intelligence involved, but the ultimate goal is to achieve fully automatic analysis of text at all levels.

### 3.2. Automatic analysis

In this section, we will use SysConc for our preliminary analysis of both English and Chinese university introductions by looking at frequency counts and word associations.

#### 3.2.1. Frequency lists

Figure 2 gives a list of first few most frequent words in the Australian university introductions, excluding numbers and some commonly used function words, such as pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, articles and so on. As indicated at the bottom of the frequency table, there are altogether 6,708 words (tokens), of which 2,027 words are different (types).

Word	Count	%
University	203	3.026
is	125	1.863
students	99	1.476
research	86	1.282
has	84	1.252
education	75	1.118
are	61	0.909
Australia	51	0.76
universities	47	0.701
international	44	0.656
one	41	0.611
also	40	0.596
campus	40	0.596
study	40	0.596
programs	38	0.566
their	37	0.552
courses	37	0.552
teaching	35	0.522
Australian	34	0.507
world	33	0.492
Community	28	0.417
than	28	0.417
Australia's	27	0.403
campuses	27	0.403

Word: 2,037 out of 6,708

Figure 2: Word frequency list of English data

As indicated in the frequency table, the most frequent items such as *University*, *student*, *research*, *education*, *universities*, *campus*, *study*,

*programs, courses, and teaching* clearly show what register these text belong to, and *Australia, Australian, and Australia's* shows that these texts are about what is in Australia.

Figure 3 shows the first few most frequency characters (monograms and bi-grams) in the Chinese university introductions, excluding punctuation marks and numbers. There are 89,956 characters with 1,954 different ones, as indicated in the frequency table on the left. By examining the frequency lists, we clearly see that the most frequent characters (*xué* ‘study’, *guó* ‘country’, *de* particle, *kē* ‘science’, *dà* ‘big’ (as in *dàxué* ‘university’), *xiào* ‘school’, *rén* ‘people’, *jiào* ‘teach’, etc.) in the monogram list and the top of the bi-gram list (*dàxué* ‘university’, *guójiā* ‘country’, *xuéxiào* ‘school’, *yánjiū* ‘research’, *xuéyuàn* ‘college’, *jiàoyù* ‘education’, *xuékē* ‘discipline’, *xuéshēng* ‘student’, *jiàoxué* ‘teaching’, *péiyǎng* ‘train’, *zhōngguó* ‘china’, *jiàoshòu* ‘professor’, etc.), like those in Australian university introductions, are a manifestation of university activities, but in China.

Find: 学

Char	Count	%
学	4732	5.26
国	1994	2.217
的	1872	2.081
科	1589	1.766
大	1532	1.703
校	1413	1.571
人	1216	1.352
教	1176	1.307
中	1101	1.224
院	1011	1.124
家	845	0.939
和	838	0.932
生	830	0.923
研	819	0.91
年	796	0.885
个	771	0.857
有	733	0.815
为	685	0.761
一	677	0.753
工	662	0.736
重	611	0.679
高	606	0.674
建	592	0.658
士	588	0.654

Char: 1,954 out of 89,956

Find: 教育

Char	Count	%
大学	1072	1.192
国家	648	0.72
学校	621	0.69
研究	572	0.636
学院	548	0.609
教育	529	0.588
科学	448	0.498
学科	444	0.494
重点	369	0.41
工程	347	0.386
全国	287	0.319
中国	282	0.313
培养	274	0.305
学生	266	0.296
人才	259	0.288
博士	258	0.287
建设	237	0.263
教学	234	0.26
科研	228	0.253
中心	216	0.24
发展	212	0.236
教授	212	0.236
技术	207	0.23
科技	203	0.226

Char (2-gram): 24,721 out of 89,955

Figure 3: Character frequency lists of Chinese data

By comparing the frequency lists for the English data and the Chinese data, we can also find out what are considered important in Australian and Chinese universities, at least from the point of view of respective universities.

While teaching and research are all considered essential in the universities of both countries, with *teaching*, *research* and *education* all on the top list, there are also some interesting differences which may reflect the socio-cultural contexts in Australia and China. With *study* and *campus* (both ranked 14 with 40 occurrences), Australian universities emphasize learning and learning environments, and in contrast, Chinese universities tend to be more self-centred by being important (*zhòngdiǎn* ‘key; important’, ranked 9), offering training *péiyǎng* ‘train’ (ranked 13 with 274 occurrences), producing *réncái* ‘talent, talented people’ (ranked 15 with 259 occurrences) and being in the process of building-up

(*jiànshè* ‘construction’) and development (*fāzhǎn* ‘development’).

### 3.2.2. Word associations

The frequency lists allow us to identify lexical items that are both frequent and potentially interesting, and examine them in more detail. By using the concordance lines and collocation patterns produced by SysConc, we will study five lexical items and their associations with others, and explore the differences in Australian and Chinese university introductions.

#### 3.2.2.1. *University/universities* and *dàxué/xuéxiào* ‘university/school’

In the English data, *university* and *universities* are immediately pre-modified by *The* (122), *Australian* (12), *Good* (6), *research* (5), *new* (4), *largest* (4), *finest* (3) and some proper names like *Catholic* (5), *Queensland* (5), *Griffith* (4), and *Bond* (4), and post-modified by ‘of-structure’ (42) and *Guide* (5). It can also be seen that *university* or *universities* is very likely to serve as part of the Subject, followed by *has*, *is*, *was*, *are* or *also has*, a good indicator of relational clauses (see Figure 4). Here are some examples:

- *Today it is Western Australia's second largest university with almost 23,000 students.*
- *Twice named Australia's University of the Year\* - in 1999-2000 for its outstanding research and development partnerships and in 2000-2001 for preparing its students for the e-world*
- *In 1998-99 it was named Australia's University of the Year and it continues to enjoy the highest overall rating for Queensland universities in the annual Good Universities Guide.*
- *Deakin has won the Good Universities Guide University of the Year award twice - in 1995/1996 for its clever use of technology in education and in 1999/2000 for its partnerships with industry.*

Left---		Left--		Left-	
Word	#	Word	#	Word	#
of	16	of	31	The	122
The	14	the	11	Australian	12
is	6	Australia's	8	a	7
In	5	and	8	Good	6
A	5	a	8	Catholic	6
s	4	as	6	Queensland	5
Australia's	4	at	6	research	5
only	3	by	5	Griffith	4
to	3	most	5	Bond	4
and	3	for	5	new	4
Welcome	3	to	5	largest	4
programs	3	Australian	5	other	4
any	2	top	3	finest	3

Right+		Right++		Right+++	
Word	#	Word	#	Word	#
of	42	the	18	the	14
s	20	a	14	is	9
in	16	to	8	of	8
has	16	has	6	in	7
is	13	Technolo...	5	and	5
with	12	Tasmania	5	world	5
was	6	Melbourne	5	on	4
Guide	5	Australia	4	Year	4
also	4	in	4	to	4
are	3	over	3	a	4
for	3	Wollong...	3	internati...	3
established	3	internati...	3	for	3
that	2	students	3	has	3

Query: university|universities

Figure 4: Collocation of *university* in English data

In contrast, the Chinese equivalents *dàxué/xuéxiào* ‘university’ are dominantly pre-modified by *zhòngdiǎn* ‘key; important’ (53) and classifiers indicating the nature of a university: teachers’ university, medical university or Chinese university. Interestingly, these two terms are also followed by a verbal group such as *be, has, own*, indicating the status of relational clauses (see Figure 5).

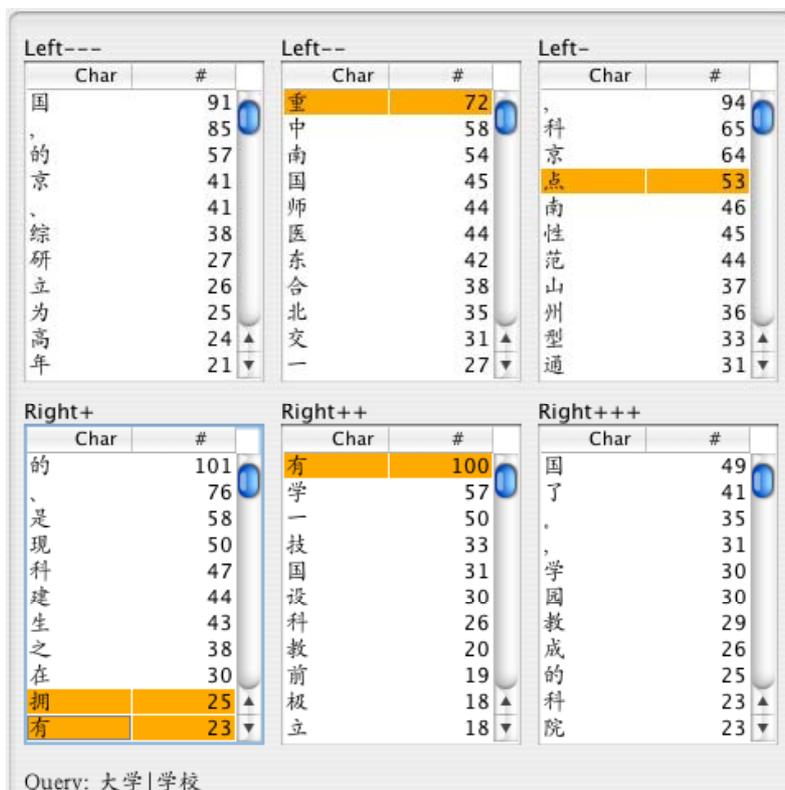


Figure 5: Collocation of *dàxué/xuéxiào* 'university' in Chinese data

### 3.2.2.2. Staff and *jiàozhīyuán* 'staff'

Since staff is an integral part of a university, it is both important and necessary to have a look at the frequency counts of its related terms in English and Chinese (as shown in Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8 below).

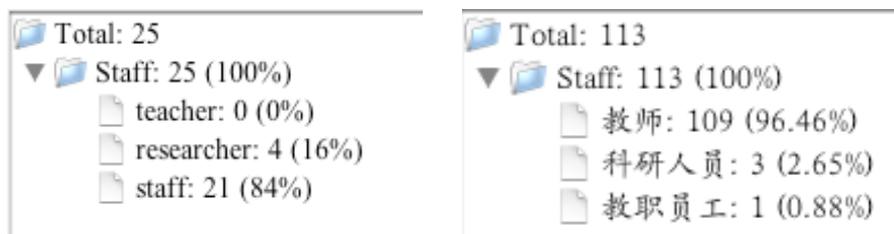


Figure 6 Frequency counts of 'staff' items in English and Chinese

Left---			Left--			Left-		
Word	#		Word	#		Word	#	
of	3		and	2		academic	3	
a	2		students	2		and	2	
class	1		world-class	1		students	2	
to	1		amongst	1		with	2	
than	1		academy	1		resources	1	
ratio	1		research-ac...	1		its	1	
work	1		million	1		student-to	1	
also	1		first-rate	1		UTas	1	
has	1		ranking	1		for	1	
partnership	1		is	1		year	1	
partnerships	1		work	1		between	1	
Right+			Right++			Right+++		
Word	#		Word	#		Word	#	
and	9		students	7		and	2	
to	2		Getting	1		makes	1	
maintain	1		many	1		it	1	
provide	1		pathways	1		vibrant	1	
among	1		achieve	1		made	1	
ratio	1		close	1		diverse	1	
than	1		a	1		who	1	
who	1		have	1		for	1	
prospective	1		all	1		beliefs	1	
come	1		technology	1		countries	1	
of	1		partners	1		a	1	

Query: Staff

Figure 7: Collocation of 'staff' in English data

Left---		Left--		Left-	
Char	#	Char	#	Char	#
有	13	专	29	任	25
中	12	青	12	年	12
教	8	家	4	的	10
名	5	师	4	、	5
校	5	指	4	职	4
专	4	派	3	占	4
生	4	选	3	导	4
学	4	位	3	校	4
后	3	骨	3	和	3
年	3	育	3	出	3
国	2	高	3	有	3
“	2	兴	2	名	2

Right+		Right++		Right+++	
Char	#	Char	#	Char	#
1	15	育	7	0	13
2	9	5	7	2	6
中	8	0	6	的	5
教	8	2	6	3	5
队	5	伍	5	学	5
5	5	1	5	中	4
总	4	数	4	、	4
和	4	3	4	人	3
3	4	教	4	1	3
在	4	9	3	5	3
奖	3	,	3	4	3
,	2	,	2	er	2

Query: Staff

Figure 8: Collocation of *jiaòshī/ jiàozhīyuángōng* ‘staff

As shown in the frequency lists above, *staff* is mostly frequently used in Australian university introductions with a frequency of (84%), which includes both teachers and non-teaching staff, and in Chinese university introductions, *jiàoshī* ‘teacher’ or teaching staff is favored with a frequency of 97.32%.

According to the English data, the word *staff* is more commonly associated with *students* to form a nominal group complex, such as *students and staff*, or with *academic* as a pre-modifier to refer to the teaching staff and researchers. In contrast, the Chinese equivalent of ‘teacher’, *jiàoshī*, is more linked to pre-modifiers such as *young*, *middle-aged*, *full-time*, and *well-known*. This indicates that the reputation and quality of the teaching staff is an important factor in judging a university in China.

The close association of *students* and *staff* in Australia is probably due to the view of Australian universities that the two are both integral parts of university life, and that students should be treated equally well as, if not more important than, the staff. After all, it is the number of students that

determines how much a university receive federal funding in Australia.

### 3.3. High-level manual analysis

The manual analysis of the texts in English and Chinese is done in the adapted version of SysFan, an analysis tool which provides user-friendly interface for doing systemic and structural analysis at the lexicogrammar and other linguistic strata. To carry out the analysis, each text has been segmented into clause complexes, which are in turn segmented into clauses. Since we are only interested in the analysis of clauses in the text, we will briefly illustrate the procedures for doing clausal analysis in SysFan here (see Wu 2004 for further details).

Generally speaking, the clausal analysis is fairly straightforward, requiring just a few mouse clicks. Figure 9 presents a template for doing analysis of the thematic structure for Clause 1\_3\_1. The user can fill up the Theme and Rheme fields either by dragging part of the clause and dropping into relevant fields, or by putting the cursor right after the word *Technology*, and then click the Button Analyse so that the Theme and Rheme fields are automatically filled up. As for the textual, interpersonal and topical themes, just select part of the Theme, and click the labels next to respective fields.

1\_3\_1

Curtin University of Technology is a world-class, internationally focused institution.

Textual Interpersonal Experiential

Analyse

Theme Curtin University of Technology

Theme [textual]

Theme [interpers.]

Theme [topical] Curtin University of Technology

Rheme is a world-class, internationally focused institution.

Figure 9: Template for doing structural analysis of clause

Figure 10 is a system network for doing systemic analysis. All the features in the system network are clickable, and once the choices are made, selection paths will be highlighted. The user can either move from left to right and select features along the way, or select right-most features and let the system select features automatically. For example, when the user click 'declarative', all the features to its left ('indicative', 'free' and 'clause') will be selected.

In addition, the user can also set up the default choices for a particular template so that the features will be pre-selected, and the user makes changes when necessary. This could potentially double or even redouble the analysis efficiency. It turns out that our predefined choices account for more than 85% of all the clauses in the English text.

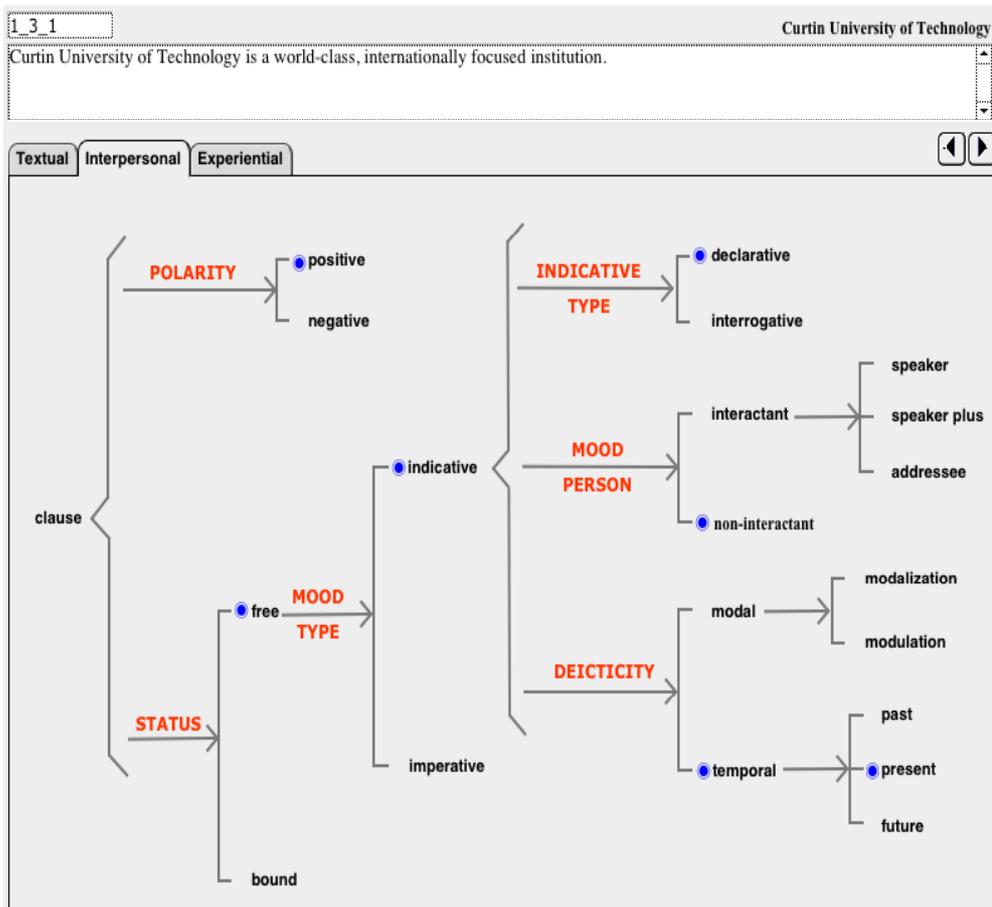


Figure 10: Template for doing systemic analysis of clause

### 3.3.1. The system of THEME

In terms of thematic analysis, we notice that Chinese university introductions use more marked themes than the English texts. Among these marked themes, most of them contain temporal information, which are mainly found in the account of university history and development (see Figure 11 and Figure 12). In the system network, systemic features are represented in terms of relative frequencies as well as percentages; this is significant since probability is manifested in actual texts as relative frequency (see Nesbitt & Plum 1988; Halliday 1991; Matthiessen 1995 & 1999; Halliday & James 1993).

#### Summary: English

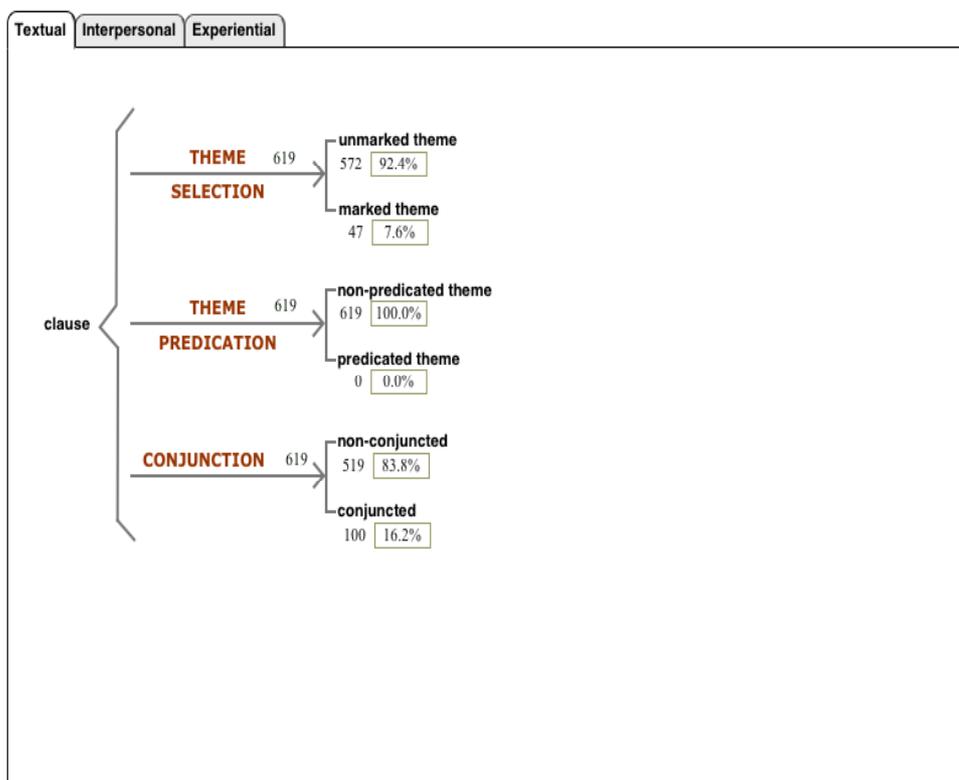


Figure 11: Thematic choices in English data

## Summary: Chinese

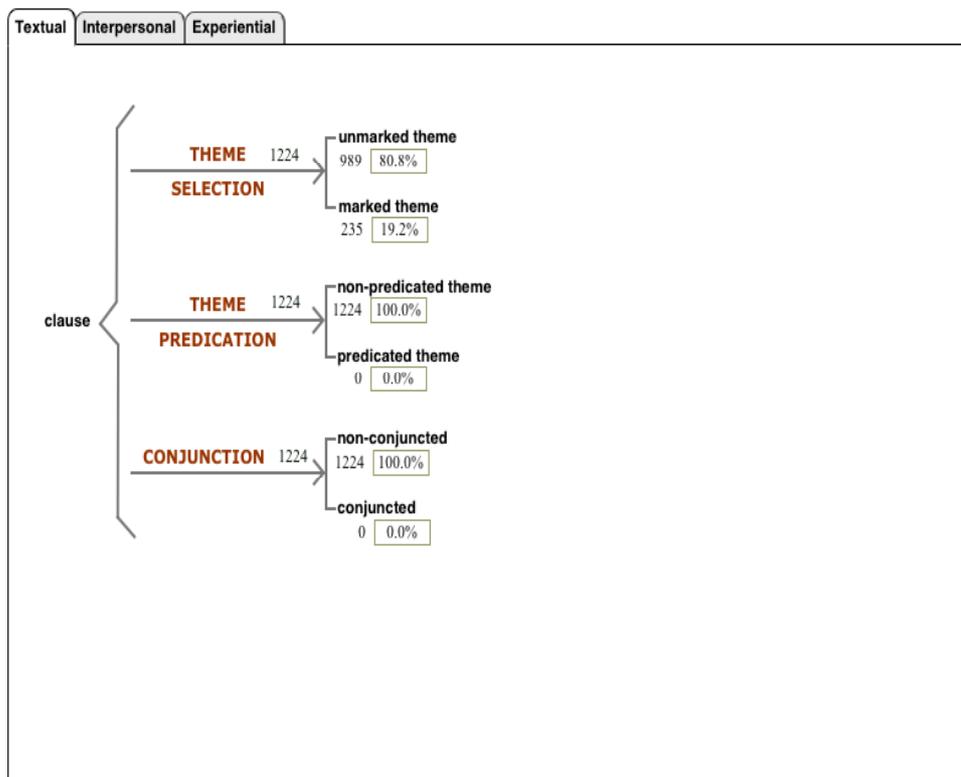


Figure 12: Thematic choices in Chinese data

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>
1931年“九.一八”事变后, <i>After the September 18<sup>th</sup></i> <i>Incident in 1931</i>	被迫先后迁徙北平、西安、开封、四川三台等地。 <i>(the university) was forced to move to Peking, Xi'an, Kaifeng, and Santai of</i> <i>Sichuan.</i>
我国改革开放以后, <i>Since China's economic</i> <i>reform and opening up,</i>	原中山大学和原中山医科大学在广东省经济飞跃发展的驱动下,进行了一系列教育改革, <i>the original Zhongshan University and the Zhongshan Medical University</i> <i>have implemented series of reform</i>
1995年, <i>In 1995,</i>	东北大学软件中心被确定为当时唯一的计算机软件国家工程研究中心; <i>the software centre of the North-east University was designated as the only</i> <i>software research center in the country.</i>

Table 2: Chinese examples of thematic analysis

By examining thematic choices in the texts, we can see that the Chinese

universities place much importance to their histories, developments and achievements and all of them are evidenced by time. Comparing with the Chinese universities, the Australian universities lay more emphasis on the university itself as Actor and the Identified entity. Of 619 English clauses, 92.4% use unmarked themes and among them the most common choices are *the university*, *it* (=the university) and something concerned with the university such as *its campus*, *its ethos* and *its graduates*. This indicates that Australian universities are more concerned about what they do and who they are.

### 3.3.2. The system of MOOD

In terms of interpersonal analysis, we analyse the data in the system network of MOOD, as summarized in Figure 13 and Figure 14. Our findings show that all the clauses used in the Chinese university profiles are declarative, while 1.5% of the English clauses in the Australian university introductions are imperative. These imperative clauses are used to realize the generic stage of *welcome* and to construe the meaning of persuasion and encouragement (see Section 4 for more detail). For example,

- *Please take a look at the International Centre.*
- *Experience the best of city living along with the benefits of a regional lifestyle in a wide choice of study locations.*
- *Welcome to Notre Dame, one of Australia's most exciting and innovative universities.*

In terms of SUBJECT PERSON, no Chinese clauses contain interactant pronouns such as *you*, *we*, and *I*. In contrast, in the English introductions, there are altogether 34 clauses containing interactant pronouns with a majority using speaker plus pronoun *we* in referring to the university. There are also instances of *I*, which refers to the speaker (normally from the perspective of the vice chancellor), and *you*, which refers to the readers. For example,

- *I'd like to invite you*
- *I also encourage you to take time to enjoy the 'Virtual Tour' of the University*
- *If you have any questions regarding this service,*
- *We invite you*

Different choices of personal pronouns express different relationship between speaker and addressee, and give us certain clues about the interpersonal distance (cf. Matthiessen 1995). The use of interactant personal pronouns by the Australian universities indicates that they try to shorten the distance between the prospective students and themselves to achieve promotional purposes. On the other hand, with a 100% use of non-interactants, the Chinese university introductions seem to be more formal and distant from the readers.

### Summary: English

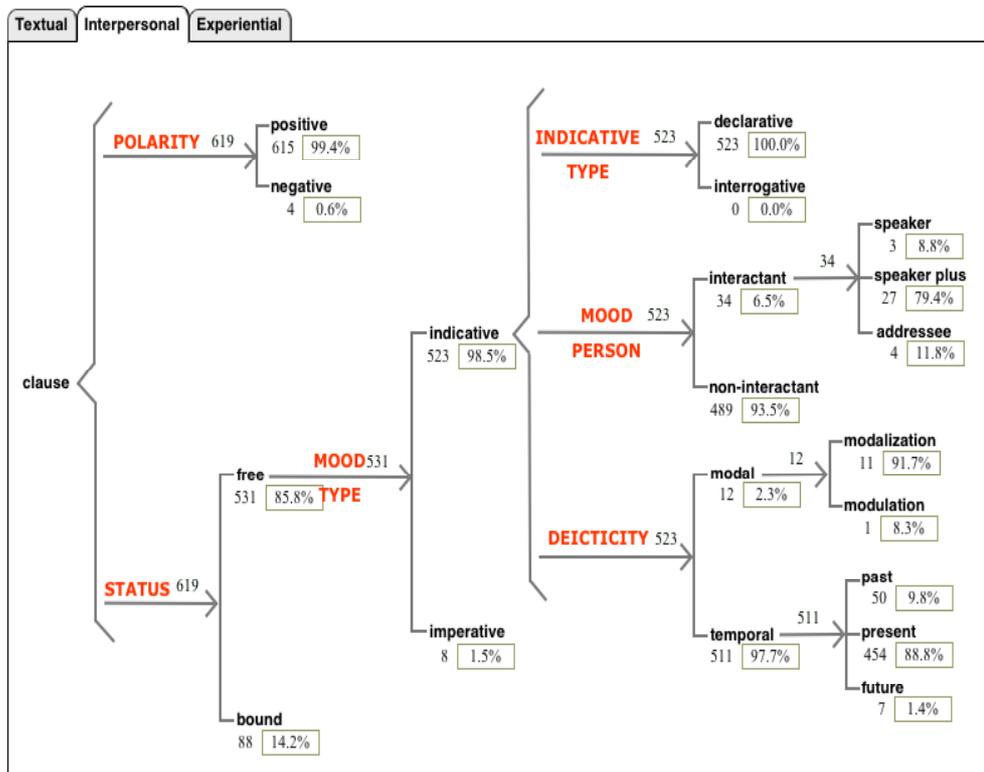


Figure 13: Mood choices in English data

## Summary: Chinese

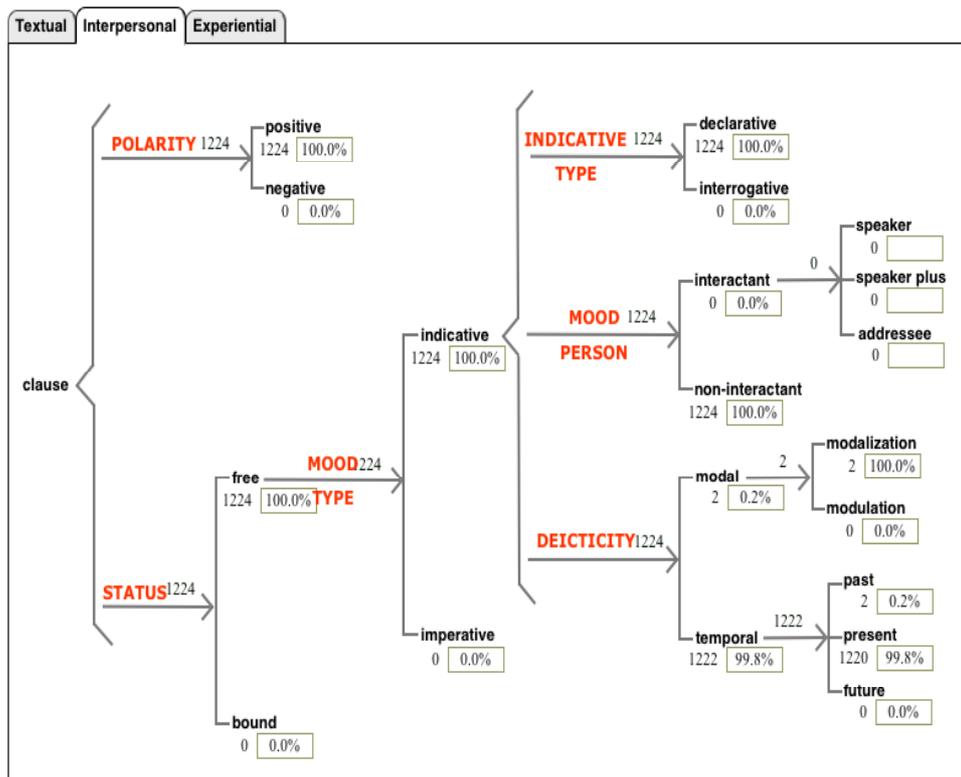


Figure 14: Mood choices in Chinese data

### 3.3.3. The system of PROCESS TYPE

To explore the experiential meaning, we analyse the data in terms of process types in both English and Chinese texts, as summarized in Figure 15 and Figure 16. Generally speaking, Australian and Chinese university introductions are rather similar in terms of process types. In the texts of both languages, material and relational clauses are the predominant process types. It is reasonable to assume that, by using material and relational clauses, the universities in both countries try to construe the semantic meaning of what they have achieved and who they are. If we relate the process types to generic stages, we find that in the stages of *history* and *achievements*, university introductions in both countries use material clauses as the predominant process type. Also, to realize the stage of *university standing* and *campus and facilities*, relational clauses are widely used in texts of both groups.

However, if we take a closer look at the subcategories (see Figure 15 and

Figure 16), we also find a slightly different picture. In the system network of TRANSITIVITY, relational process has two distinct modes of being: ascriptive (also called attributive) and identifying (Matthiessen, 1995). Among all the relational clauses of the English texts, most of them (81.9%) are ascriptive, while in the Chinese texts, the percentage is much lower (53.4%) and nearly half of the relational clauses are identifying. This indicates that Australian universities are more likely to consider themselves as an entity with some class or general characteristics ascribed or attributed to it. On the other hand, Chinese universities pay more attention to identity, role or meaning, which are more often than not assigned by others (normally the government or the country). This means Chinese universities attach great importance to the recognition from the authorities.

### Summary: English

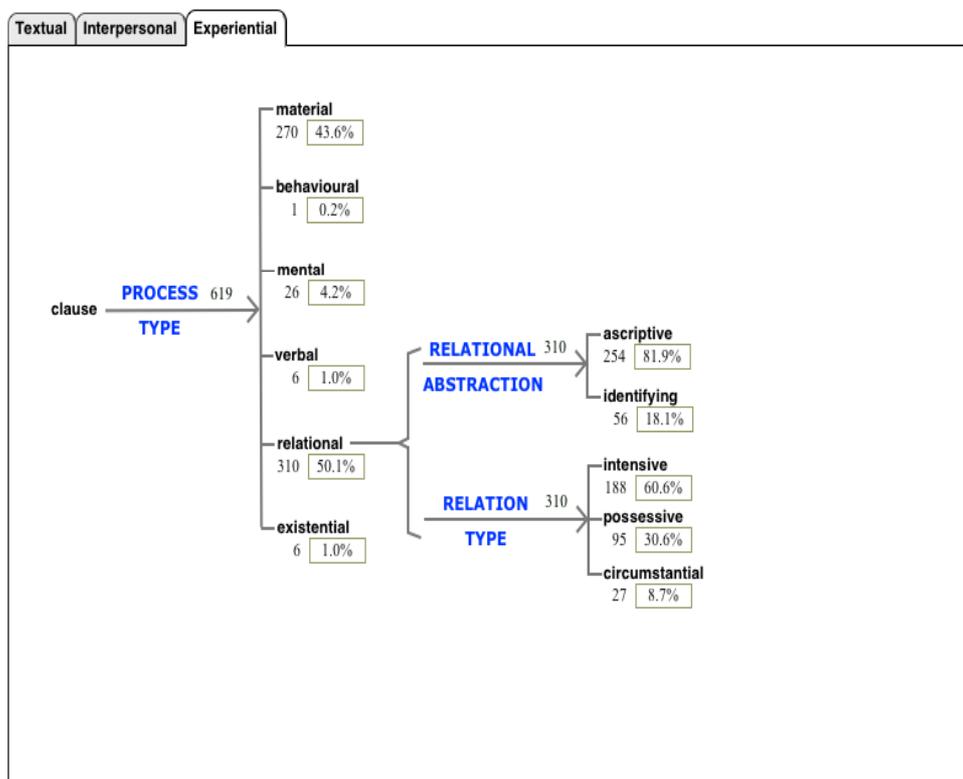


Figure 15: Choices of PROCESS TYPE in English data

## Summary: Chinese

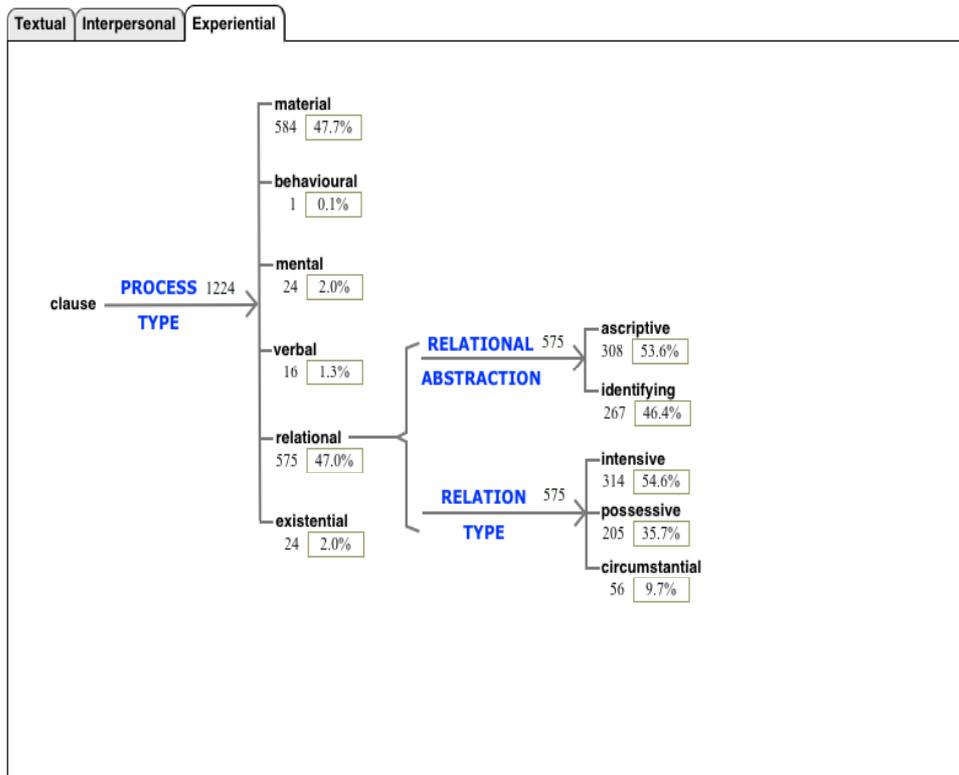


Figure 16: Choices of PROCESS TYPE in Chinese data

### 4. Generic structure

In terms of generic stages, the Chinese university introductions are more detailed and elaborate, while the Australian universities use more simple and concise introductions with further links to more detailed information.

In the Chinese universities, the following generic stages can be identified: *The university standing*, *The history or origin of the university*, *Campus and environment*, *Teaching staff*, *Courses or programs*, *Future goal*, *Achievement*, *International exchange*, *Library and facilities*, *The relation with celebrities*, and *Research*. Compared with the Chinese university profiles, the Australian profiles are more concise. There are only four common stages: *The university standing*, *Campus and environment*, *Welcome*, and *Courses and programs*.

However, this does not mean that Australian universities attach little

importance to their profiles. In most of the Australian university websites, there are links to subcategories of information, e.g., at the website of University of Queensland, under the category of “profile”, there are eight subcategories covering much more detailed information about teaching, research, staff, students, alumni and history. The Chinese university websites, on the other hand, usually put all the relevant information in the university introductions.

Within the stage of *Teaching staff*, universities of the two countries have different focuses. In the Chinese university introductions, the focus is on teachers’ academic achievements and identities. From the experiential analysis of this stage, we can also see that many identifying relational clauses and transformative material clauses are used in construe the meaning. In the Australian university introductions, on the other hand, the focus is on the teaching quality and staff development. Therefore, we find some material clauses with students and teachers as recipients.

Many Chinese universities show their relation with celebrities, while few Australian universities include this stage in their introductions. The celebrities that the Chinese universities mention in the introductions normally include three groups of people: the political leaders who are concerned about the development of the university, the famous alumni and teaching staff, and the well-known academics and politicians who are offered an honorary professorship by the university. The emphasis on the connections with celebrities indicates that in China people judge the standing and prestige of an institution by looking at their relationship with people with power. That’s why 30 out of 48 universities include this stage in their university profiles.

One third of the Australian universities have the stage of *Welcome* in their profiles, while none of the Chinese universities have this stage. Interpersonal analysis shows that this stage is realized by using imperative clauses and the interactant personal pronouns such as *you* and *I*. The use of this stage shows that the relationships between the writer (i.e. the university as an entity) and the readers (i.e. the prospective students and people who are interested in the university) are different among the universities of the two countries. The Australian universities seem to be closer to the readers than the Chinese universities.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to make a comparative analysis of both

English and Chinese university profiles. Our analysis is unfolded in terms of lexical and grammatical choices and generic stages, and we find that Australian and Chinese universities tend to present their profiles from different perspectives.

In terms of lexical choices, Chinese universities are more meticulous in the use of epithets and classifiers to showcase their reputation and teaching quality. Findings in the interpersonal analysis indicate that the Australian universities are closer to the readers, while the tone of the Chinese universities generally sounds more formal. This can be interpreted by looking at the current education markets in the two countries: in Australia it is the buyers' (i.e., the students') market, and in China it is the suppliers' (i.e., the universities') market. The experiential analysis shows that Chinese universities tend to give more prominence to the recognition from higher authorities, which is indicated by the extensive use of identifying relational clauses.

In terms of generic stages, our analysis shows that Chinese universities focus more on their connections with celebrities and political leaders, whereas there is no such an emphasis in Australian university introductions. This divergence reflects the deep-rooted differences of cultural values in the two countries.

As Matthiessen and Halliday maintain, language does not passively "reflect" or "correspond to" some pre-existing reality. Language constructs reality; or rather we as human beings construct reality in language (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). We do hope that our analysis and findings can make some contributions in helping people better understand the world around us, the world that is established and maintained by the meaning potential of language.

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