



TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT  
CHEMNITZ

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# **Metalanguage in Chinese Master Theses: Focus on Engagement Markers**

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# Introduction

## Appraisal Theroy:

- “ [...] semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgments and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations.” (Martin 2000: 145)
- offers the theorization of interpersonal meaning choices in discourse (see Martin & Rose, 2003; Hood, 2004; Martin & White, 2005)
- deals with the subjective presence of writers/ speakers in texts as they adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate (Martin, White 2005)

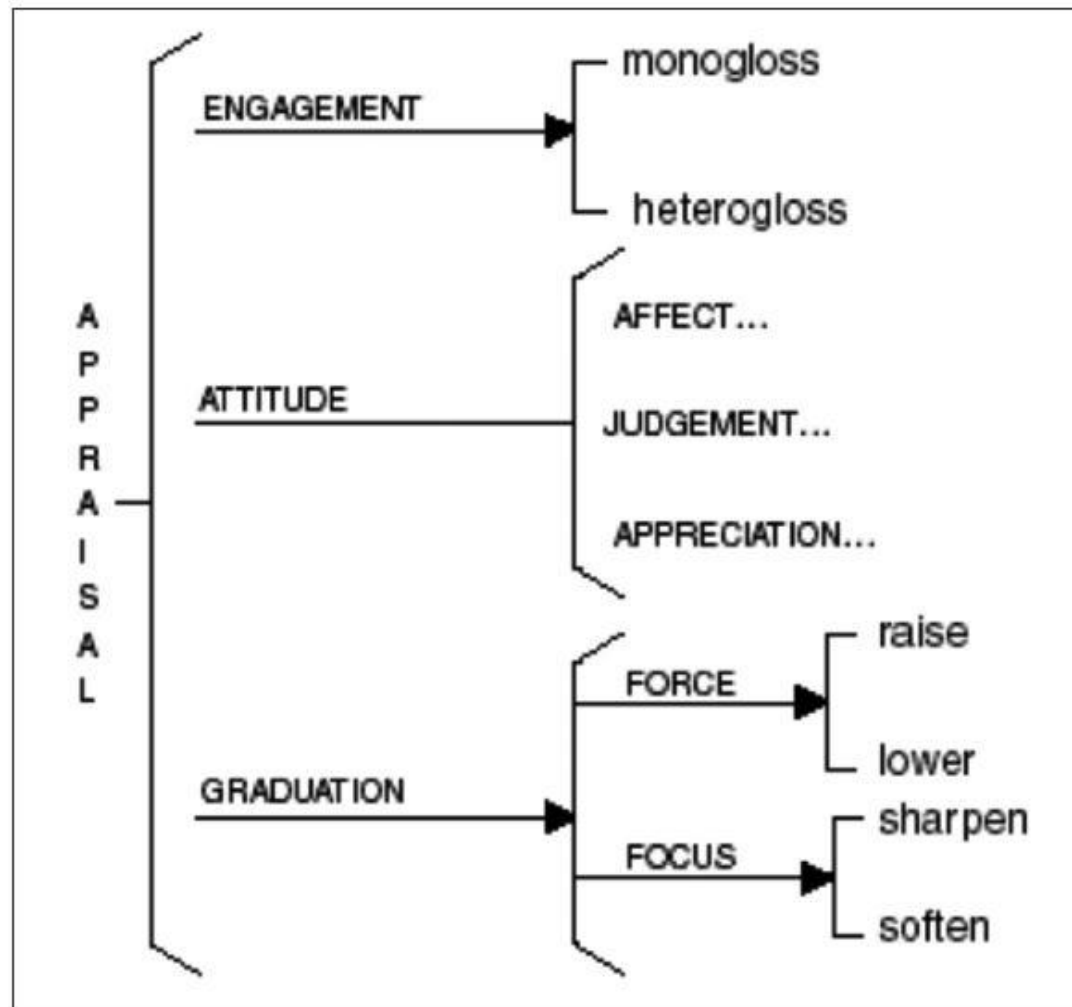


Figure 1. Appraisal System (Martin & White, 2005).

*Table 1: A model of metadiscourse in academic texts.*

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive resources		
Transitions	express semantic relation between main clauses	in addition/but/thus/and
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	finally/to conclude/my purpose here is to
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	noted above/see Fig/in section 2
Evidentials	refer to source of information from other texts	according to X/(Y, 1990)/Z states
Code glosses	help readers grasp functions of ideational material	namely/e.g./such as/in other words
Interactional resources		
Hedges	withhold writer's full commitment to proposition	might/perhaps/possible/about
Boosters	emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition	in fact/definitely/it is clear that
Attitude markers	express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately/I agree/surprisingly
Engagement markers	explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader	consider/note that/you can see that
Self-mentions	explicit reference to author(s)	I/we/my/our

(Hyland, Tse 2004: 169)

## Engagement Markers:

- are linguistic items that help writer or speaker to engage in a dialogue with the reader (address and/or involve reader explicitly)
- deal with sourcing **attitudes** and the play around opinions in discourse

examples: *you can see that, note that, consider, must, obviously*

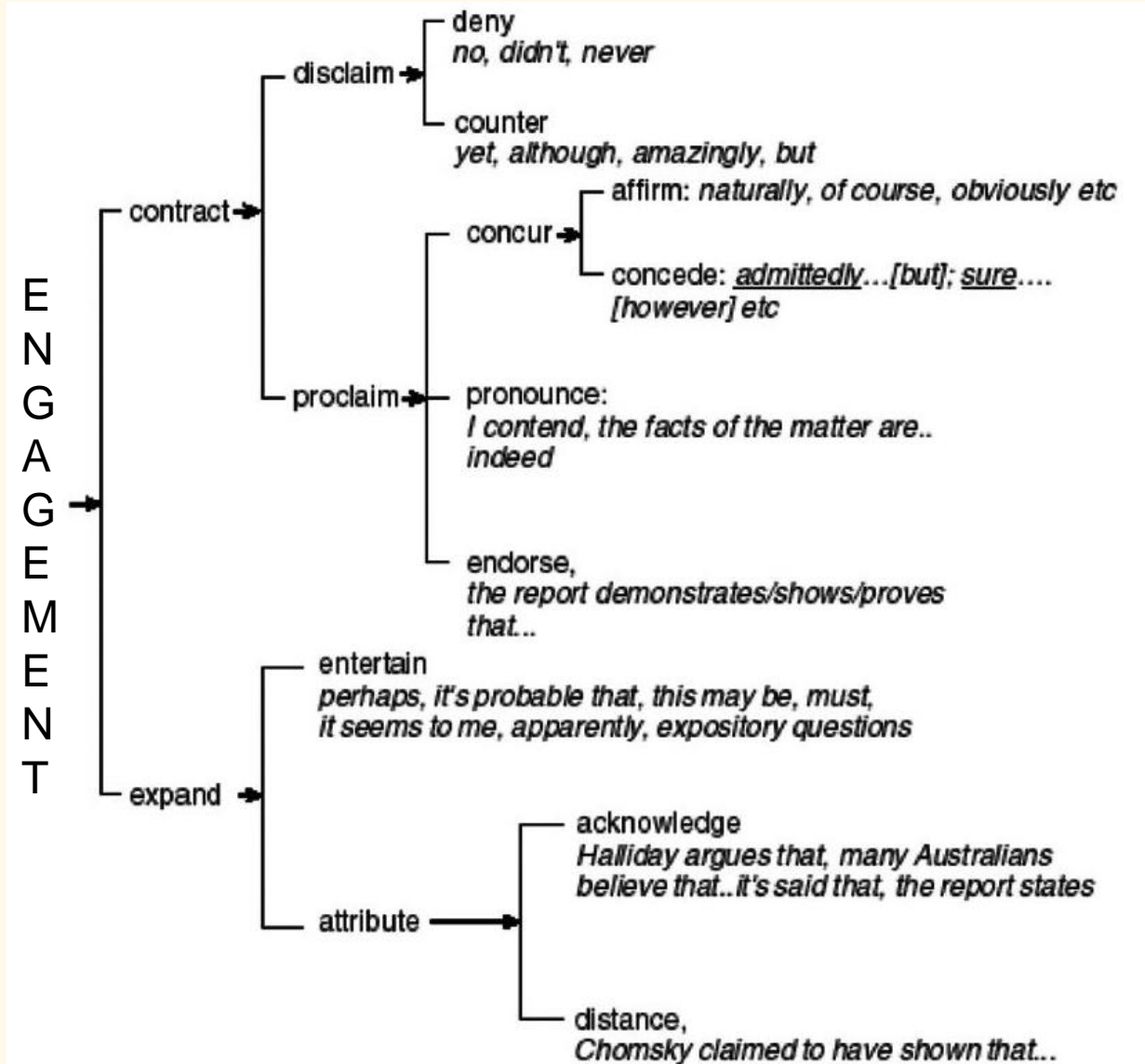
(Wang, An 2013: 1249, Martin & White 2005: 35)

## Attitude Markers:

- indicate writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositional information
- convey surprise, agreement, importance, frustration-rather than commitment

examples: *I agree, surprisingly, striking, disagree, preferred*

(Hyland 2005: 180)



- investigates rhetorical effects associated with various positionings
- explores what is at stake when one stance is chosen over another

(Martin & White 2005: 92)

Figure 2: Heteroglossia in discourse within the system of Engagemet (White 2002: 10)

# Aim of Research

## Research Questions:

- (1) What are the specific engagement and attitude markers employed by university EFL students in their theses to balance the reader-writer relationship?
- (2) What are the significant difference between German and Chinese university EFL students in the usage of engagement and attitude markers in their theses?
- (3) Do Chinese students use more positive attitude markers compared to German students (due to its influence of the philosophy of Confucius)?

# Methodology

## Sample and Analysis

- comparative corpus analysis with AntConc
- two Corpora containing student writings

China-Corpus	ChemCorpus-Theses
<p>306 Papers (2010-2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 306 MA Theses</li><li>- 116 different Universities</li><li>- Sections: Language and Linguistics, Cultural Studies, Literature</li><li>- Total No. of Words: 5.500.000</li></ul>	<p>60 Papers (2009-2015):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 43 BA Theses, 17 MA Theses</li><li>- Sections: Language and Linguistics, Cultural Studies</li><li>- Total No. of Words: 1.156.502</li></ul>



ENGAGEMENT (Heteroglossia)																			
contract disclaim					contract proclaim					expand entertain					expand attribute				
deny	# BUC	per 1M	# ChC	per 1M	concur	# BUC	per 1M	# ChC	per 1M		# BUC	per 1M	# ChC	per 1M	acknowledge	# BUC	per 1M	# ChC	per 1M
no	6954	1264,36	1229	1062,69	affirm					perhaps	312	56,73	60	51,88	argue	249	45,27	117	101,17
did not	470	85,45	537	464,33	naturally	327	59,45	55	47,56	it is probable that	5	0,91	3	2,59	(xxx) believe*	1877	341,27	149	128,84
didn't	181	32,91	16	13,83	of course	302	54,91	164	141,81	probable	40	7,27	42	36,32	it is said that	31	5,64	2	1,73
never	1357	246,73	237	204,93	obviously	578	105,09	107	92,52	this may be	34	6,18	29	25,08	stated	488	88,73	276	238,65
after all (follow	72	13,09	24	20,75	certainly	212	38,55	142	122,78	may be	1135	206,36	237	204,93	states	933	169,64	714	617,38
will not	340	61,82	82	70,90	in line with	88	16,00	65	56,20	must	2590	470,91	316	273,24	state	1138	206,91	349	301,77
won't	58	10,55	12	10,38	Total Affirm	1507	274	533	460,87	it seems to me	5	0,91	0	0,00	total state	2559	465,273	1339	1158
neglect	120	21,82	12	10,38						apparently	186	33,82	111	95,98	say	2964	538,91	327	282,75
fail	323	58,73	30	25,94	concede					may	6485	1179,09	1101	952,01	said	1918	348,73	411	355,38
Total Deny	9875	1795,5	2179	1884,1	admittedly...(bu	13	2,36	19	16,43	might	1304	237,09	1110	959,79	says	1003	182,36	141	121,92
					sure	652	118,55	59	51,02	probably	392	71,27	266	230,00	total say	5885	1070	879	760,1
					not sure	96	17,45	15	12,97	likely	828	150,55	404	349,33	report (v+n)	503	91,45	87	75,23
					Total Conced	761	138,36	93	80,415	it is likely	13	2,36	9	7,78	suggest*	3134	569,82	462	399,48
					Total Concur	2268	412,36	626	541,29	possible	1805	328,18	845	730,65	declare*	111	20,18		0,00
										it is possible that	21	3,82	19	16,43	Total ackn.	22793	4144,18	5253	4542
counter					pronounce					I think	373	67,82	56	48,42					
yet	730	132,73	277	239,52	(I) contend	11	2,00	0	0,00	one might think	3	0,55	4	3,46	distance				
although	1819	330,73	511	441,85	indeed	364	66,18	132	114,14	seem*	1923	349,64	804	695,20	claim	365	66,36	143	123,65
amazingly	11	2,00	0	0,00	really	1025	186,36	136	117,60	it seems	266	48,36	140	121,05	claim*	1212	220,36	457	395,16
undoubtedly	152	27,64	22	19,02	Total Pron.	1400	254,55	268	231,73	research suggests	6	1,09	1	0,86					
but	13743	2498,73	2379	2057,07						appear to	65	11,82	63	54,47					
however	4833	878,73	2126	1838,30	endorse					seem to	208	37,82	188	162,56					
Total Count	21288	3870,5	5315	4595,8	demonstrate*	856	155,64	183	158,24	prove to	19	3,45	11	9,51					
					show*	7275	1322,73	1961	1695,63	in all probability	19	3,45	4	3,46					
					prove*	1368	248,73	332	287,07	it is likely	13	2,36	9	7,78					
					reveal*	1253	227,82	427	369,22	it is not likely	2	0,36	1	0,86					
					neglect*	403	73,27	38	32,86	it is obvious	140	25,45	23	19,89					
					assume*	895	162,73	375	324,25	it is not obvious	1	0,18	0	0,00					
					have found	46	8,36	24	20,75	I believe	37	6,73	15	12,97					
					Total Endors	12096	2199,3	3340	2888	known	1160	210,91	240	207,52					
										it is/was (not) known	64	11,64	19	16,43					
										suggests	363	66,00	135	116,73					
										suggested	526	95,64	101	87,33					
										it has been suggested	1	0,18	7	6,05					
										total suggest	890	161,82	243	210,1					
Total Cont.D	31163	5666	7494	6479,9	Total Contr.F	15764	2866,2	4234	3661	Total entertain	20344	3698,9	6373	5511	Total attribut	24005	4364,55	5710	4937

Table 2: Distribution of heteroglossic instances in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per one million words

Attitude Markers according to Hyland						
	# BUC	per 1M	use	# ChC	per 1M	use
positive						
1 agree	668	121,45	o	193	166,88	o
2 agrees	52	9,45	u	21	18,16	u
3 agreed	199	36,18	u	81	70,04	u
4 amazed	8	1,45	u	1	0,86	u
5 amazing	56	10,18	u	3	2,59	u
6 amazingly	11	2,00	u	0	0,00	u
7 fortunate	20	3,64	u	0	0,00	u
8 fortunately	37	6,73	u	4	3,46	u
9 hopeful	21	3,82	u	1	0,86	u
10 hopefully	45	8,18	u	9	7,78	u
11 important	5046	917,45	o	938	811,07	o
12 importantly	127	23,09	u	35	30,26	u
13 curious	52	9,45	u	13	11,24	u
14 essential	774	140,73	o	144	124,51	o
15 essentially	169	30,73	u	31	26,80	u
16 interesting	513	93,27	u	412	356,25	o
17 interestingly	26	4,73	u	137	118,46	o
18 prefer	449	81,64	u	110	95,11	u
19 preferable	39	7,09	u	9	7,78	u
20 preferably	10	1,82	u	23	19,89	u
21 preferred	214	38,91	u	221	191,09	o
22 remarkable	152	27,64	u	64	55,34	u
23 remarkably	29	5,27	u	26	22,48	u
24 surprised	63	11,45	u	4	3,46	u
25 surprising	86	15,64	u	97	83,87	u
26 surprisingly	39	7,09	u	55	47,56	u

Table 3: Instances of attitude markers in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per one million words

## First Results – Engagment Markers

				China-Corpus	ChemCorpus	Total ChiC	Total CheC
heterogloss	contract	disclaim	deny	1795,5	1884,1	8532,3	10140,9
			counter	3870,5	4595,8		
		proclaim	concur	412,4	541,3		
			pronounce	254,6	231,7		
			endorse	2199,3	2888		
	expand	entertain		3698,9	5511	8063,5	10448,2
		attribute	acknowledge	4144,2	4542		
			distance	220,4	395,2		

Table 4 : Frequencies of heteroglossic instances in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per one million words

## First Results – Engagement Markers

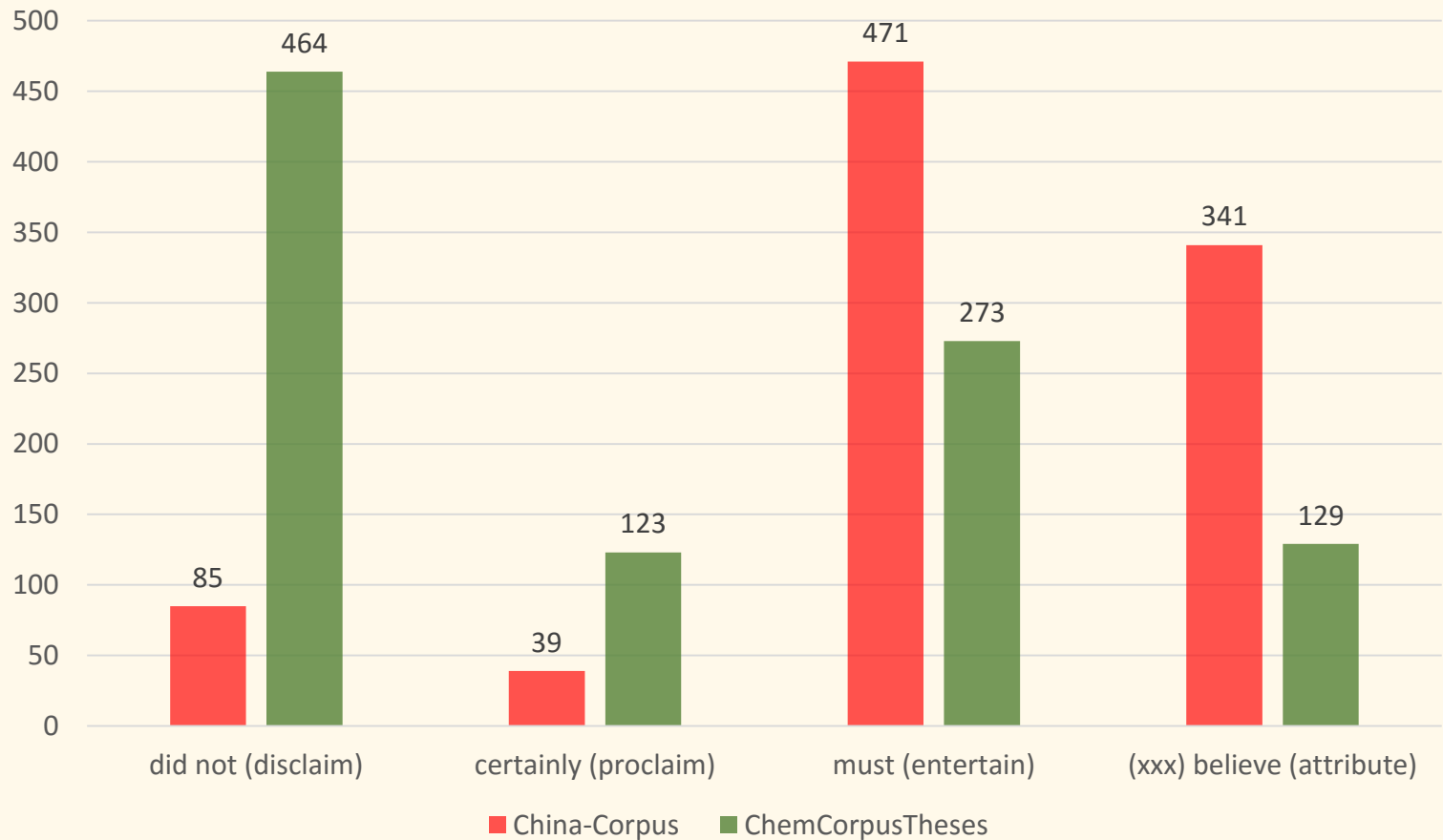


Figure 3: Frequency of selected engagement markers in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per 1 million words

## First Results – Engagement Markers

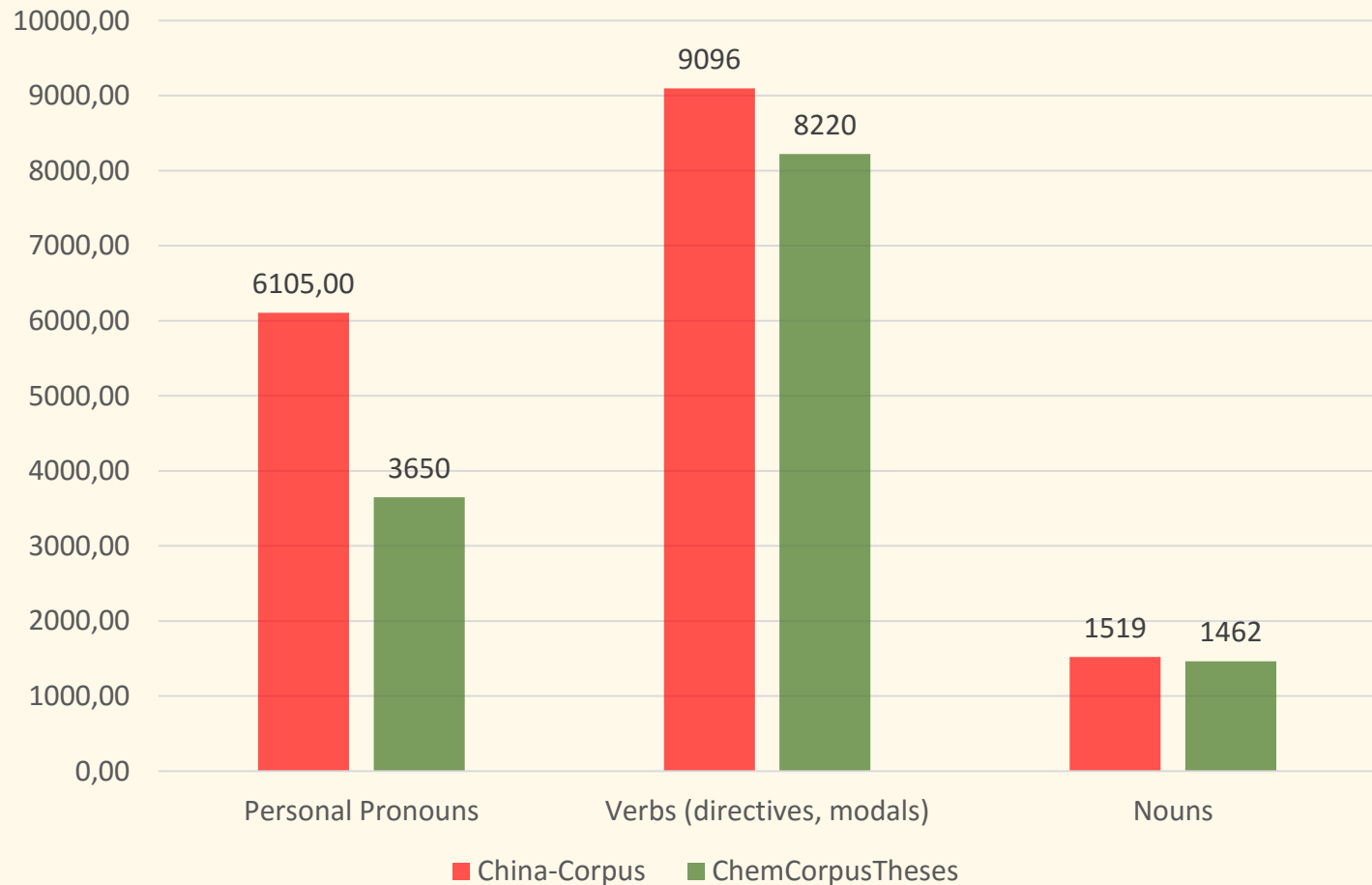


Figure 4: Frequency of engagement markers (according to Hyland) in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per 1 million words

## First Results – Attitude Markers

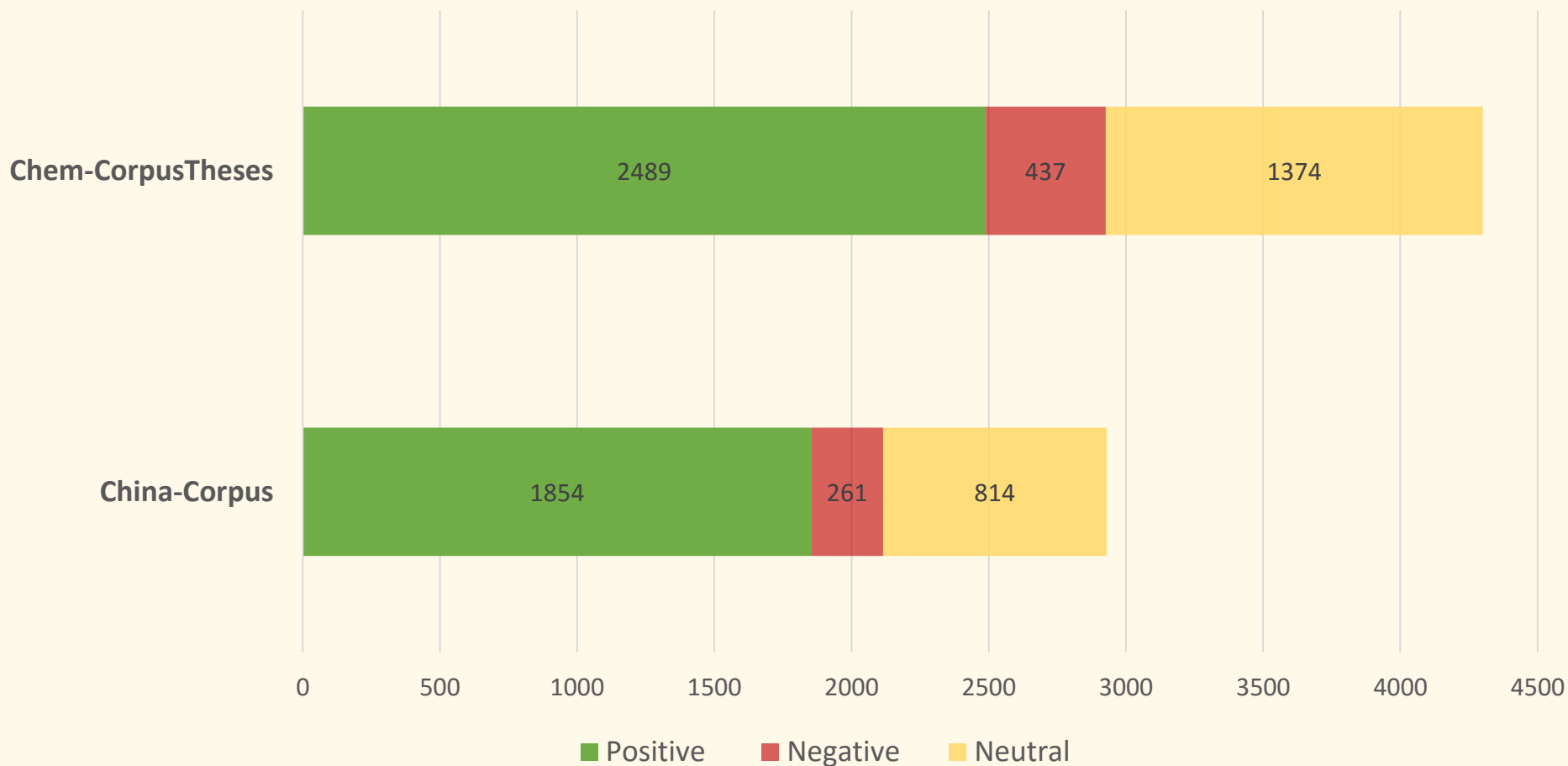


Figure 5: Frequency of attitude markers (according to Hyland) in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per 1 million words

## **Discussion - Examples from my corpora**

***of course* = 'appeal to shared knowledge' or 'heteroglossic proclaim/affirm'? One category or two?**

- 1) Of course, the abandonment of Irish as compulsory subject can be attributed to defunct societal interest in learning Irish. (BA11Mt\_PB)
- 2) His description explains that the first immigrants found themselves cut off from the native-born Americans, who, of course, did not live in the slums of the cities. (BA09Ff\_CW)
- 3) The second issue, of course, is whether or not they will help the Lebanese democracy succeed. (CCMAP30)
- 4) Of course, the degree of semantic weakness is different for different individual quasi-affixes. (CCMAS2)



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