



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

**Jessica Dheskali**

1st Semester PhD Student

[jessica.kuechler@s2009.tu-chemnitz.de](mailto:jessica.kuechler@s2009.tu-chemnitz.de)

# Introduction

## Appraisal Theory:

- “ [...] 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)

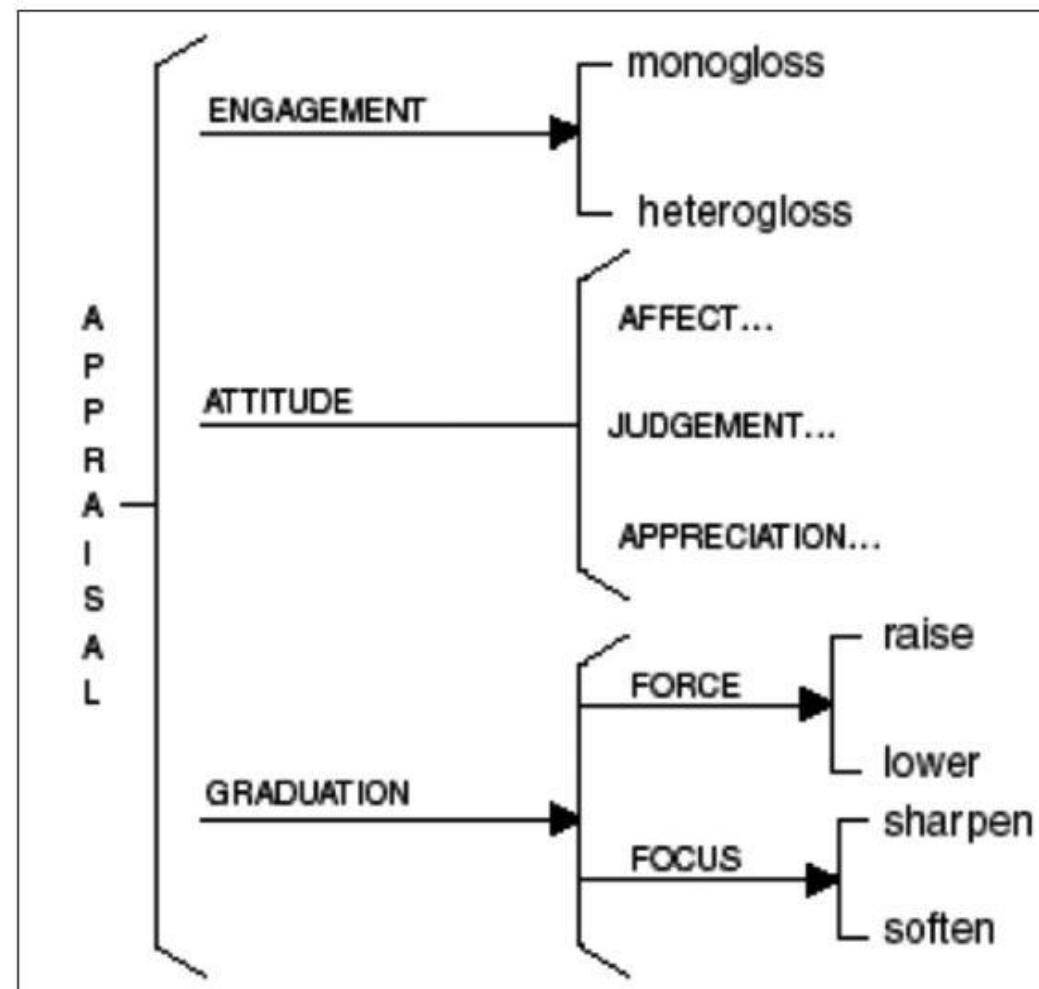


Figure 1. Appraisal System (Martin & White, 2005).

Table 1: A model of metadiscourse in academic texts.

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive resources	Help to guide reader through the text	
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	Involve the reader in the argument	
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)

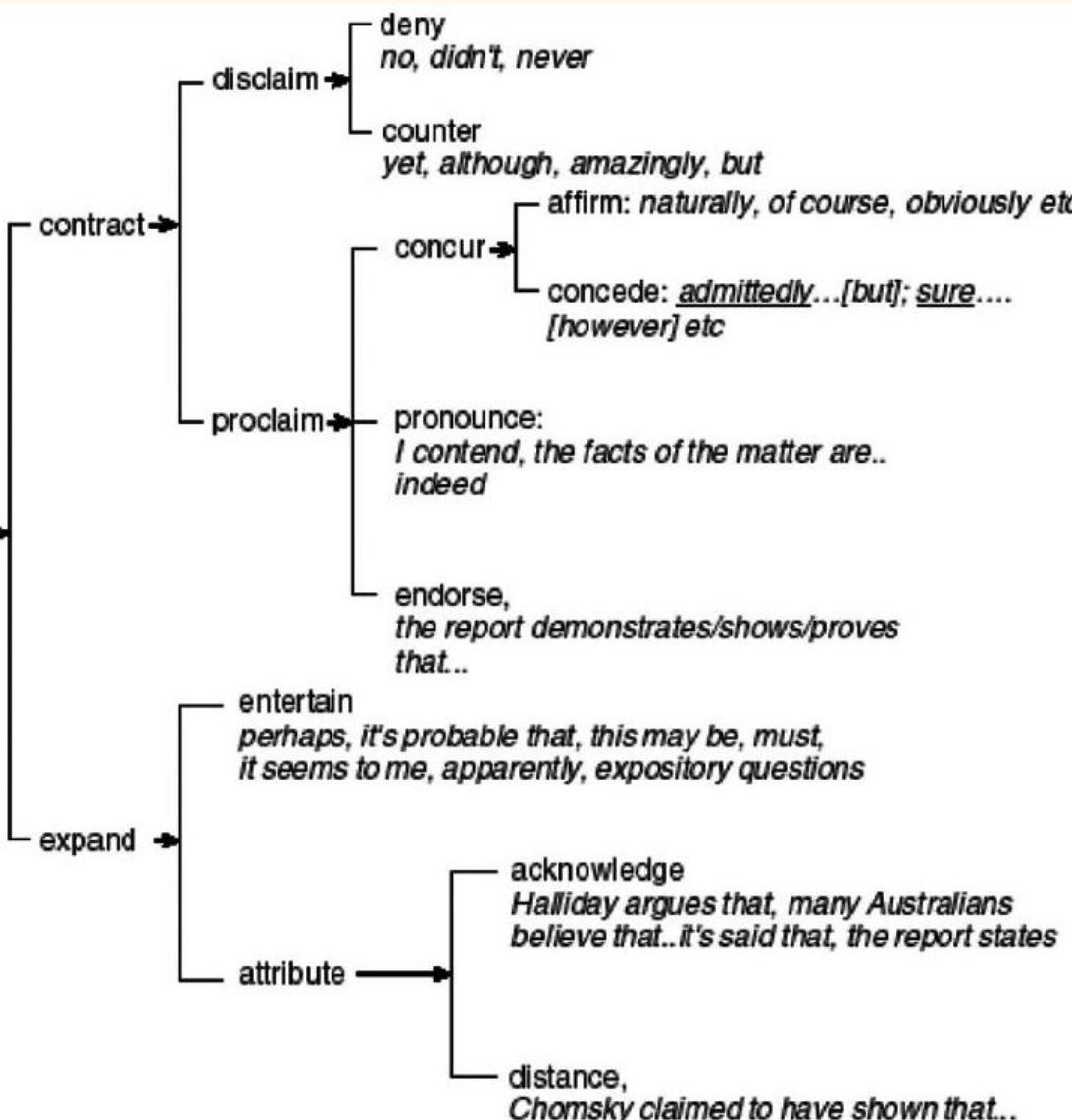
## Attitude Markers:

- 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)

ENGAGEMENT



- 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 Engagement (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>

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 – Engagement Markers

				China-Corpus	ChemCorpus	<b>Total ChiC</b>	<b>Total CheC</b>
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

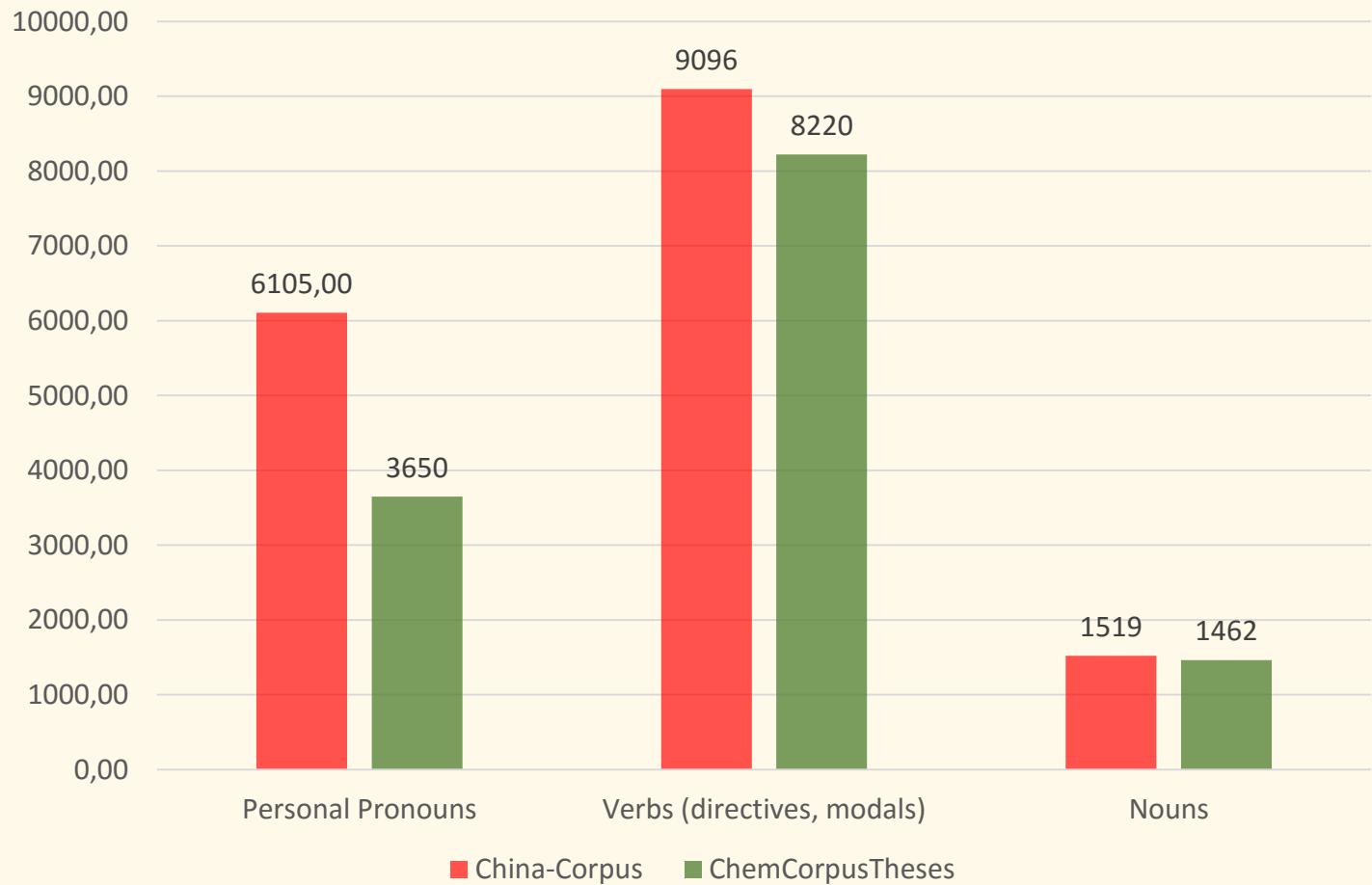


Figure 4: Frequency of engagement markers (according to Hyland) in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per 1 million words



## First Results – Attitude Markers

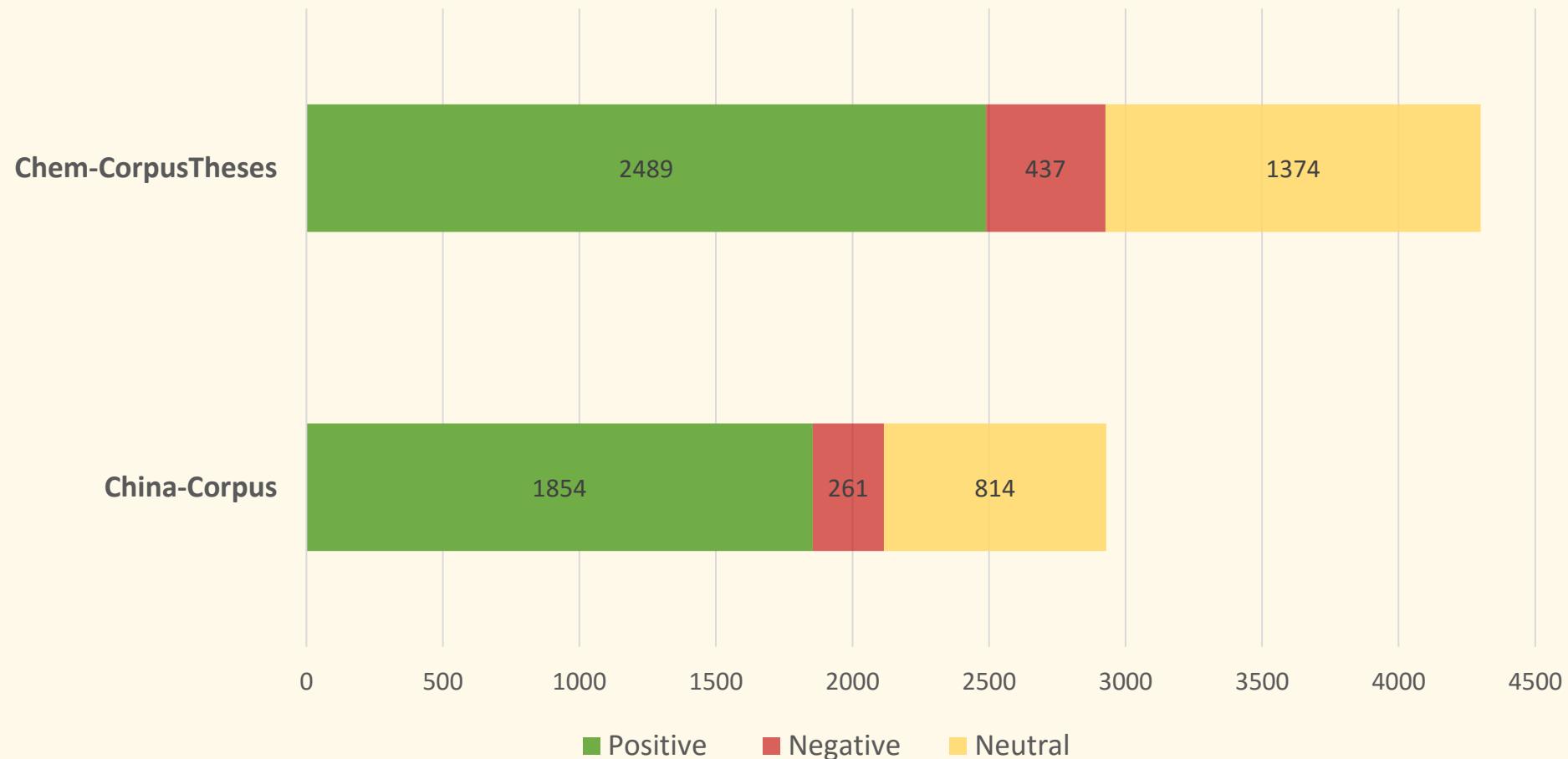


Figure 5: Frequency of attitude markers (according to Hyland) in the China-Corpus and ChemCorpusTheses per 1 million words



## 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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