

# ○ A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF STANCE IN DISASTER NEWS REPORTS

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This study examines stance in cross-cultural media discourse by comparing disaster news reports on the Sichuan earthquake of May 2008 in a Chinese, an Australian Chinese, and an Australian newspaper. The stance taken in the news reports is examined using the Attitude sub-system of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework. The analysis revealed that stance patterns in the reports from the three newspapers varied systematically, and that the reports from the three newspapers could be placed on a continuum, with the Chinese-Australian news reports taking an intermediate stance, though leaning more towards the Chinese stance. For instance, whereas the Australian reports focused primarily on evaluating the actual earthquake situation, both the Chinese and the Australian Chinese reports focused more on assessing the participants and their behavior during the aftermath of the earthquake. Findings are linked to features of the Chinese and Australian socio-cultural contexts, and the implications of the study are discussed for understanding the discourse of migrant 'sub-cultures' in relation to the discourse of the cultures to which they are connected.

**KEY WORDS:** stance, Appraisal, cross-cultural media discourse, ethnic media

## INTRODUCTION

On May 12<sup>th</sup> 2008, a devastating earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale hit the southwestern Chinese province of Sichuan. According to official Chinese figures, this earthquake resulted in 69,197 deaths, 374,176 injured, 18,222 missing and 4.8 million homeless (<http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2008-07-21/170415971186.shtml>). It was the deadliest and strongest earthquake in China since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949.

Disasters are powerful events that can have far-reaching social and political ramifications and newspapers play a critical role in reporting disasters (Zhang, 2010). They catch the attention of the media both in the country in which the disaster occurs and around the world. Consequently, they provide a valuable platform for cross-cultural textual analysis. This study compares news reports on the Sichuan earthquake from a Chinese newspaper, an Australian Chinese newspaper and an Australian newspaper. Using the Attitude sub-system of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework, it analyses stance patterns in these disaster news reports. To date, little research has examined stance in cross-cultural media discourse.

Examining stance cross-culturally furthers our understanding of how interpersonal linguistic resources are used by writers in different cultural contexts to establish positions in relation to situations and events, and how these positions reflect social and cultural contexts.

Moreover, very little research has examined the media discourse of migrant communities compared to that of countries of origin and ‘host’ countries. The Chinese diaspora spreads across many countries, yet little is known about the differences between media discourse in mainland China and in diaspora communities. Australia has a large Chinese community with 669,890 Australians claiming a Chinese background (<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>). By including Chinese-Australian news reports, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of how the discourse of migrant ‘sub-cultures’ relates to the cultures to which they are connected.

## STANCE

Biber and Finegan (1988, p. 1) define stance as ‘the expression of an author’s or speaker’s attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the message’. Stance encompasses the ways in which a writer express attitudes and opinions towards specific propositions and also, more broadly, the overall discursive position that a writer takes in relation to a particular topic. Closely related terms found in the literature are ‘evaluation’ and ‘appraisal’. Stance has been most widely investigated in academic discourse (e.g., Barton, 1993; Charles, 2003, 2007; Hood, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Pho, 2008; Silver, 2003), but has also has been researched in spoken discourse (e.g., Chandrasegaran & Kong, 2006; Fitzmaurice, 2004; Karkkainen, 2006; Precht, 2003) and in large-scale corpus studies of different genres (e.g., Biber & Finnegan, 1988, 1989). In addition, there are a number of studies on stance in media discourse (e.g., Bednarek, 2006; Coffin & O’Halloran, 2005; Haddington, 2004).

A major focus of the existing body of stance research has been the linguistic features through which stance is expressed in discourse. For example, in a corpus study of published research articles, Hyland (2005) identified features such as hedges, boosters, affect markers and use of first person pronouns (i.e., self-mention) that writers use in order to stake out a position. However, in contrast to examining stance from a purely linguistic perspective, it is also possible to take a discourse semantic perspective. A number of “parameter-based” approaches exist (e.g., Bednarek, 2006, 2008; Francis, 1995; Martin & White, 2005) in which textual devices for expressing stance are classified in terms of semantic parameters (Bednarek, 2006).

Within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), researchers led by J.R. Martin at the University of Sydney have developed a framework for analysing stance known as Appraisal (White, 2004). Appraisal consists of three sub-systems (i.e., Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement) in which textual features are classified according to overarching semantic

categories that relate to commonly dealt with categories such as modality and evidentiality. White (2003, p. 259) contends that these diverse resources can be brought together because they 'all provide the means for speakers/writers to take a stance towards the various points-of-view or social positioning being referenced by the text and thereby to position themselves with respect to other social subjects who hold those positions.' As SFL holds the role of context to be central, studies carried out using this framework have also used the socio-cultural context to interpret and explain stance-related semantic features in texts. As Precht (2003) commented, stance is not just expressed through linguistic features, but is also shaped by culture and custom.

The Appraisal framework has been used, among other things, for the analysis of stance in media discourse. Martin (2004) used Appraisal to investigate the ways that writers influenced readers to take a certain position in an editorial from a Hong Kong magazine about actions taken against people of Middle Eastern appearance in Macau, Singapore and Hong Kong in the period directly after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Martin found that the editorial initially positioned readers to sympathize with Americans for their loss, but then through the use of expressions of affect shifted to a more negative, critical position of America. Martin was able to demonstrate that a close reading of evaluation in discourse can illuminate how writers and editors position readers to align themselves with those in society who take a particular ideological stance in relation to America and also how ideology, social relations, and social complexities are reflected in texts and the ways they are understood by readers. Similarly, Coffin and O'Halloran (2005) used Appraisal and critical discourse analysis to examine stance in a report on the signing of the EU constitution from a UK tabloid newspaper. They used their analysis to illustrate how semantic patterning positions readers to interpret seemingly neutral statements in negative ways.

A small number of studies, all by Chinese scholars, have used an Appraisal framework to examine disaster news reports (i.e. Ma, 2007; Wang, 2004; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2010). In a study of Attitude in reports on an earthquake in south western China in 1998, Wang (2004) found that the reports used Judgement more than Appreciation and Affect. Wu (2009) focused specifically on affectual resources in an examination of feature stories on the Sichuan earthquake in China Daily. The study found that a major function of the affectual resources used in the earthquake news reports was to inspire sympathy for the victims with the purpose of encouraging readers to provide aid to the victims. Zhang (2010) examined both Attitude and Engagement in a comparison of news reports from the China Daily on the Yangtze River floods of 1998 and the Sichuan earthquake of 2008. Zhang found differences between the reporting of the two disasters, specifically that more Attitudinal resources, especially Affect resources, and more negative attitudes were used in the 2008 earthquake reports than in the 1998 flood news reports. These differences were attributed to the increasing openness in Chinese media brought about by political and social changes. Zhang

pointed out that China had long implemented a press policy of stifling negative news, and that if negative news was reported it was generally to encourage readers to believe that the people could overcome any disasters. Given this purported shift in the reporting of disasters in the Chinese press, it is timely to compare Chinese disaster news reports with those in Western newspapers.

### **CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSE**

Within the field of contrastive rhetoric, many cross-cultural studies have been carried out comparing how writers in different languages use certain textual structures to achieve coherence, particularly in academic texts, or comparing how the rhetorical patterns of writers' L1 influence their L2 writing. However, few cross-cultural studies have examined how writers take up a position or express attitudes in media discourse in different languages or cultures. Perhaps because of its rising prominence in the world, of the small number of studies nearly all focus on comparisons involving Chinese media discourse. Fang (2001) carried out case studies of how a Chinese newspaper (People's Daily) and a Taiwanese newspaper (The Central Daily News) reported civil unrest in South Africa and in Argentina in the nineteen eighties. Thus, this study focused on the same language in two cultures. Fang found that the Chinese newspaper displayed more sympathetic attitudes towards black South African protesters than did the Taiwanese newspaper, reflecting the stronger negative stance of the People's Republic of China towards the white South African government of the apartheid era. Wang (2006) compared newspaper commentaries on the September 11 terrorist attacks in Chinese and Australian newspapers. Wang found that Chinese writers often use explanatory expositions in their newspaper commentaries, while Australian writers often use argumentative expositions to present their points of view. He argued that these differences are closely related to the roles of the media and opinion discourse in contemporary China and Australia.

With regard to disaster news reporting, Yuan (2009) compared a single news report on a severe blizzard in China from the China Daily with a single report from The New York Times. It was found that the reporting in the American newspaper assessed the damage as being more serious than in the Chinese newspaper. In relation to the Sichuan earthquake, Zhu (2009) conducted a comparison of the lexis on the Sichuan earthquake in the China Daily and a number of American newspapers. The study found many similarities in the lexis used to describe the earthquake in both Chinese and American newspapers, and also found that both groups of newspapers expressed positive attitudes towards the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao. However, a difference was that the Chinese reports used more emotive language to describe the earthquake than did the American newspapers. In contrast, a critical discourse analytic study by Yin and Wang (2010) found that the English language version of the China Daily downplayed the suffering and chaos caused by the earthquake, and instead emphasized the positive role played by politicians and the army, the harmonious nature of the rescue

operation and the gratitude of those who were rescued towards their rescuers. Strongly critical of the Chinese reporting of the disaster, Yin and Wang (2010, p. 383) described the Chinese news reports as creating a ‘people-centered myth’. This study only looked at the English language version of the China Daily and did not examine how the earthquake had been reported in newspapers outside China. Although it used a critical discourse analytic approach, it did not conduct a systematic discourse-semantic analysis of the evaluative language used in the news reports.

The current study builds on the Yin and Wang study by using an Appraisal framework to carry out a systematic analysis of the discourse-semantic expression of stance in disaster news reports of the Sichuan earthquake in a Chinese, an Australian and a Chinese-Australian newspaper.

## **DIASPORA MEDIA DISCOURSE**

To date, the scholarly literature on what is frequently termed ‘ethnic media’ or ‘minority media’ (Deuze, 2006) has focused on the functions that these media fulfill in diaspora communities (e.g. Viswanath & Arora, 2000) or on the experiences of members of these communities in using or working within these media (e.g., Husband, 2006; Shi 2005). For example, Shi (2005) conducted ethnographic interviews with six first generation Chinese students in a mid-western University community in the United States in order to examine the influence that ethnic media had on their perceptions and on their cultural ties. However, little if any research has examined media discourse from a discourse-analytic perspective. The only study that we were able to locate that came close to doing this was Yu and Ahadi (2010), who explored the distinction between mainstream and ethnic media through a comparative content analysis on coverage of the 2008 Canadian federal election in English and Korean press in Canada.

Comparing diaspora media discourse with media discourse in home and host countries can provide us with insights into how ethnic media positions the members of their communities in terms of their world view and ultimately their cultural identities. Diaspora communities are likely to take a stance in reaction to the occurrence of a natural disaster in their home countries. The news coverage of the Sichuan earthquake in three different communities provides us with a platform for comparing stances towards the same event. Through the inclusion of a Chinese-Australian newspaper, the current study can contribute to our understanding of media discourse in diaspora communities.

## **SAMPLE**

Fifteen news reports were selected for inclusion in this study: five from a Mainland Chinese newspaper (People’s Daily), five from an Australian Chinese newspaper (Australian Chinese Daily) and five from an Australian newspaper (Sydney Morning Herald). The People’s Daily (PD) is state-owned and is the newspaper in China with the largest readership, with a circulation of 2.4

million (<http://www.globaltimes.cn/china/society/2010-02/505186.html>). The Australian Chinese Daily (ACD) is the most popular and influential Chinese language newspaper in Australia. According to the ACD website (<http://www.australianchinesedaily.com.au/eng/#/about-us/>), the main purpose of the paper is to strengthen ties between Australia and China. The main readership is Chinese immigrants, Chinese students in Australia and business people and investors. ACD obtains its news from a variety of Australian, Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong sources. The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) is a popular mainstream broadsheet newspaper owned by the Fairfax media company. In 2007, its circulation was an average of 212,700 copies per week day and an average 364,000 copies on Saturdays (Herman, 2007).

There were three criteria for selecting the reports from these newspapers. The first criterion was genre. News reports refer to 'information about current or recent events, happenings or changes taking place outside the immediate purview of the audience and which is considered to be of likely interest or concern to them' (Montgomery, 2007, p. 4). Only texts that reported directly on the earthquake were selected. Other media genres such as editorials and commentaries, which were mainly about people's responses to the earthquake, were excluded.

The second criterion was that the selected news reports had to focus on the earthquake disaster and the rescue efforts. According to Zhang (2010), disaster news reports cover both descriptions of the occurrence and evolution of the disaster and how people struggle against the disaster. Rescue efforts were defined as encompassing the organization and implementation of relief work, as well as the Chinese response to offers of international assistance. Thus, reports that were only about international donations, material aid or condolences from countries or companies were excluded.

The third criterion was time frame. Only reports from the 5-day period from 15 May to 19 May 2008 were selected. The earthquake occurred on May 12, but reports from the first three days were not included, as it was felt that these reports would largely focus on the disaster, with little attention to rescue efforts. From the 51 reports that met these three criteria, five from each newspaper were randomly selected.

## CODING TAXONOMY

As explained in the previous section, stance is examined in this study using the Appraisal framework. Bednarek (2006, 2008) has also developed an evaluative framework specifically for media discourse, in which evaluative language can be analyzed in terms of ten parameters (i.e., semantic dimensions). However, Appraisal has been chosen as the framework of the current study because it enables the attitudinal component of stance, which is the focus of this study, to be separated from other aspects of stance.

As also explained, there are three sub-systems in the Appraisal system: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Attitude refers to evaluations that are associated with speakers' or writers'

subjective or affective responses to people, objects or situations. Engagement refers to resources used by speakers or writers to express their degree of commitment to facts or points of view (e.g., reporting verbs, modals of probability and evidentiality). Graduation involves up-scaling or down-scaling meanings (e.g., softeners and intensifiers such as “a little” and “a lot”) and can be applied to both the Attitude and Engagement sub-systems. As the main focus of the present study is the evaluation of people and situations, the current study conducts its analysis in terms of the Attitude sub-system only.

As Figure 1 shows, the main categories in the Attitude sub-system are: Judgement, Appreciation and Affect. Judgement is concerned with language that evaluates human behaviour, such as “elite troops”, “swift action”, “weary rescuers” or “would-be rescuers”. Appreciation deals with the evaluation of phenomena, for example, “advanced technologies”, “blocked road” or “shocking sights”. Affect refers to the expression of emotional responses towards people, objects or situations, such as in “He was grateful for conversation”, and “expressing sympathy and condolences”. All three types of Attitude can be expressed either positively or negatively.

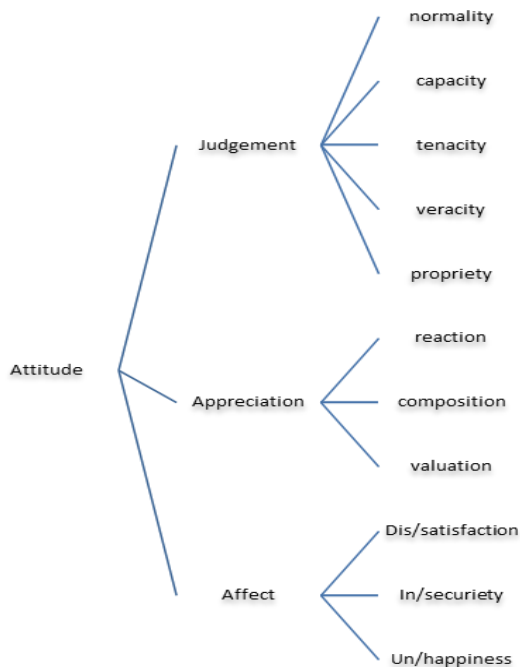


Figure 1. Categories in the Attitude sub-system

Attitude can be expressed through a wide range of grammatical structures, such as adjectives, nouns, verbs and modal adjuncts. For example, “burst into tears” can be coded as attitudinal lexis. Moreover, Attitude can be realised not only through direct attitudinal lexis (i.e., inscribed attitude) but also indirectly through the expression of ideational meanings (i.e., invoked attitude). For example, we can describe someone’s feeling directly by saying “He was sad” or less directly by saying “He hung his head”.

Judgement, Appreciation and Affect all have sub-categories also shown in Figure 1. For examples of these sub-categories, most of which have been taken from the data, the reader is referred to the Appendix. The Appendix provides a mixture of inscribed and invoked examples. Figure 1 shows that there are five Judgement sub-categories: Normality, Capacity, Tenacity, Veracity and Propriety. Normality refers to how typical someone is, capacity to how capable someone is, tenacity to how resolute someone is, veracity to how truthful someone is, and propriety to how ethical someone is. The figure also shows that Appreciation has three sub-categories: Reaction, Composition and Valuation. Reaction refers to the impact and quality of things, Composition to the balance and complexity of things and Valuation to the value of things. Lastly, the figure shows that there are three subcategories of affect: in/security, un/happiness and dis/satisfaction. According to Martin and White (2005), Un/happiness deals with feelings of happiness or sadness, In/security deals with feelings of anxiety fear, confidence and trust; and Dis/satisfaction covers feelings of achievement or frustration in relation to activities people are engaged in.

## CODING AND ANALYSIS

Each of the 15 news reports in the sample was coded according to the taxonomy in Figure 1. The news reports were transcribed in Microsoft Word, so that they could be coded with the assistance of the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. This program helps users to identify, code and calculate the frequency of relevant items in textual, graphical, audio or video data (Muhr, 2004). The main researcher examined each text sentence by sentence using the Atlas ti program to mark potentially relevant items. Any lexical word, phrase or sentence was considered to be a potentially relevant item. This enabled both inscribed and invoked Attitude items to be included as potentially relevant.

Each marked item was coded in terms of its main category, subcategory and whether it expressed a positive or negative attitude. Whether particular items in each category or sub-category were inscribed or invoked was not explicitly coded. In order to determine whether an item contained a positive or negative evaluation, the connotations of each item were considered. An issue was that items sometimes had different connotations in Chinese and English. For example, the phrase “qiangxingjun (force army to march)” carries a positive value in Chinese. However, in English forcing an army to march would probably be viewed negatively. Items such as this have been coded according to the connotations that the item



has in the language concerned. Each text was coded in the language in which it was originally written. However, translations of the Chinese texts were made to make the texts accessible to non-Chinese speaking readers.

Inter-rater reliability was addressed by having a research assistant code three of the fifteen reports, one from each newspaper. The percentages of agreement between the two coders for the three reports were 81%, 89% and 88% respectively, which is an acceptable level of agreement.

To give an overall picture of the stance items in the reports of each newspaper, descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, percentages and ranges) were reported. Due to the small sample size, no statistical analysis was carried out. Reporting both frequencies and percentages allowed us to consider both rate of occurrence and proportion of total number of occurrences. Range was used as a backup, as it allowed us to see whether a particular pattern occurred consistently across the news reports, or whether the pattern was attributable to outlying frequencies in one or more texts. In addition, qualitative description was used to provide and explain examples that illustrated common stance patterns identified in the quantified data.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the frequencies of stance items for the three main categories in the Attitude sub-system. It shows that in PD and ACD the Judgement category, which relates to evaluations of people, had the highest percentage of items, whereas in SMH, Appreciation, which relates to the evaluation of non-human entities, was categorized as having the highest percentage. This suggests that in PD and ACD, writers focused on the assessment of participants and their behaviours, while in SMH the focus was more on evaluation of the earthquake situation.

Opening sentences from reports in each of the three newspapers illustrate this difference. The SMH report below begins by describing the scene of the earthquake in Beichan City with an extremely graphic negative Appreciation item “graveyard of the living”. The sentence continues with strong negative Appreciation items for both the scale of the disaster and China’s ability to cope with the disaster. In contrast, PD begins an invoked positive collective Judgement of the ability of the Chinese government’s ability to deal with the disaster that appears to be the journalist’s own assessment. ACD also begins with a positive Judgement of Wen Jiabao, here titled not as Premier but as “General Director of the State Council’s Earthquake Rescue and Relief Headquarters”, and described as “one of the busiest men in the earth-quake hit areas”.

### Example 1

Beichan City is a **graveyard for the living**, with China’s **war-scale relief effort** so far **unable to cope** with the country’s **worst natural disaster in three decades**. (SMH2)

Example 2

党和政府一定会帮助灾区人民渡过难关。

The Party and the government **will help people in the quake-hit area to get through the disaster.** (PD1)

Example 3

“我是溫家寶爺爺，孩子們一定要挺住！”在地震災區，身為抗震總指揮的總理溫家寶可說是最忙的人之一。

“I’m grandpa Wen Jiabao. You must hold on, child!” Premier Wen Jiabao, General Director of the State Council’s Earthquake Rescue & Relief Headquarters, is **one of the busiest men in the earthquake-hit areas.** (ACD2)

For Affect, the differences between the three newspapers are not as great. However, the percentage of items in PD (30.9%) is somewhat higher than in either ACD (21.5%) or SMH (17%). Thus, there appears to be a little more description of people’s feelings in PD than in ACD or SMH. In the next sections, results for the sub-categories of Judgement, Appreciation and Affect will be reported.

Table 1. Frequencies, percentages and ranges for the main categories of Attitude items

	PD	ACD	SMH
Judgement	43 (39.1%) [4-14]	33 (41.8%) [2-9]	17 (18.1%) [0-6]
Appreciation	34 (31.0%) [1-11]	29 (36.7%) [12-1]	61 (64.9%) [6-17]
Affect	33 (30.9%) [0-18]	17 (21.5%) [0-7]	16 (17.0%) [1-6]
Total	110 (100%) [10- 39]	79 (100%) [9- 28]	94 (100%) [12- 25]

JUDGEMENT

Table 2 presents the items for the Judgement subcategories. The table shows that in the PD and ACD news reports Tenacity, which relates to how resolute someone is, is the category with the highest percentages, whereas in SMH Capacity, which relates to how capable someone is, has the highest percentage. The raw frequencies for Capacity in the three

newspapers are quite similar, and the main difference is that PD, and to a lesser extent ACD, have more Tenacity items than SMH. In the PD news reports, most judgements emphasized the spirit of bravery, reliability, and endurance of rescue workers and of the Chinese leadership. In SMH, the majority of judgements assessed participants' ability to carry out the rescue work effectively. ACD was more balanced with judgements focussing not only participants' bravery, but also on their capabilities.

Table 2. Frequencies, percentages and ranges for sub-categories of Judgement

	PD	ACD	SMH
Normality	1 (2.3%) [0-1]	1 (3.0 %) [0-1]	0 (0)%
Capacity	8 (18.6%) [0-4]	10 (30.3%) [0-3]	12 (70.6%) [0-5]
Tenacity	26(60.5%) [3-8]	14(42.5%) [0-5]	2 (11.8%) [0-1]
Propriety	8(18.6%) [0-6]	8(24.2%) [0-4]	3(17.6%) [0-1]
Veracity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	43 (100%) [4- 14]	33 (100%) [2- 9]	17 (100%) [0- 6]

The example below from PD appears to be employed to increase esteem for those involved in the rescue effort in the eyes of readers. In the example “working around the clock” suggests that the writer wished to create the impression that the rescuers are working tirelessly.

#### Example 4

空降兵某部官兵和河南公安消防队员正在使用各种救援设备紧张搜救幸存者。

The officers and soldiers of an air force unit and firefighters from Henan Province are **working around the clock** to find and rescue people. (PD1)

The examples below illustrate the kinds of Capacity items that were identified in the ACD and SMH reports. In example 5 from ACD, “the most elite” indicates the high status—and hence implied competence—of the Chinese forces being sent on the rescue mission. It should be noted that this evaluation is identified as having been made by the Chinese news agency,

Xinhua, and not by an Australian source. In contrast, in example 6 from SMH, “fairly sizeable” is applied as a positive evaluation that portrays Australia as being capable of providing rescuers to China. The use of inverted commas in this example seems to indicate that writer is indicating that this evaluation is not his own, but comes from an uncited external source.

Example 5

新華社報導，解放軍最精銳的特種部隊空降兵部隊共投入兩個師約9000名兵力參加抗震救災。

Xinhua news said that **the most elite** PLA Special Air Forces had dispatched two divisions of about 9,000 soldiers to assist disaster relief. (ACD3)

Example 6

Australia also had a “**fairly sizeable**” team of search and rescue experts on standby to fly to the disaster area, but was also told Sichuan's shattered transport system made it impossible. (SMH5)

APPRECIATION

Table 3 shows that, although SMH has higher frequencies for the Appreciation sub-categories, the percentages in these sub-categories are actually quite similar across the three newspapers. Reaction, which involves evaluations of the impact and quality of things, accounts for the largest percentages of Appreciation items in each newspaper, closely followed by Composition, which involves evaluations of the balance and complexity of things.

Table 3. Frequencies, percentages and ranges for sub-categories of Appreciation

	PD	ACD	SMH
Reaction	18 (52.9%) [0-7]	14 (48.3%) [0-5]	27 (44.3%) [3-8]
Composition	14 (41.2%) [1-4]	12 (41.4%) [0-6]	24 (39.3%) [0-11]
Valuation	2 (5.9%) [0-1]	3 (10.3%) [0-1]	10 (16.4%) [0-7]
Total	34 (100%) [1- 11]	29 (100%) [1- 12]	51 (100%) [6-17]

The Composition items in the three newspapers related to circumstances and conditions in the earthquake-hit areas. Describing these is a typical feature of disaster news reports. However, it is noteworthy that the evaluative lexis used in the SMH example paints a powerful picture of total destruction, whereas the lexis in the examples from the other two newspapers, while negative, is less vivid and shocking.

#### Example 7

这个镇一些居民楼和企业车间、宿舍在地震中**严重损毁**, 有的**完全倒塌**, 有的**扭曲变形**。

Some residential buildings, factories, and dormitories in the town had been **badly damaged** in the earthquake. Some of them had **totally collapsed** and some were **twisted out of shape**. (PD1)

#### Example 8

映秀镇星期四早晨再度发生强烈余震, 据报道, 当地部分原本**尚未坍塌**的房屋在余震后也被**夷为平地**。

A strong aftershock jolted Yingxiu Town again on Thursday morning. It is reported that some **dilapidated** houses, inflicted by the aftershock, **collapsed completely**. (ACD4)

#### Example 9

The destruction around the epicenter in remote Wenchuan county is widespread: **whole mountainsides have been sheared off, highways ripped apart and buildings razed**. (SMH1)

Moreover, some of the negative items used in PD news reports contain descriptions of the situation that appear to have the purpose of portraying Chinese leaders in a positive light. In example 10, “badly affected” and “bumpy” appear to appraise Shifang city and the road in the disaster area. However, the preceding co-text, with the positive judgement “made a special trip” seems to have the effect of foregrounding a positive evaluation of Hu Jintao. Thus, the two Appreciation items are not only used to reinforce the devastating and dreadful impact of the earthquake, but to highlight the dedication of Hu Jintao in making a special trip to the badly-hit area on bumpy roads.

#### Example 10

当总书记听说在这次特大地震灾害中什邡市遭受**严重损失**, **特地前往**这里察看灾情。沿着**坎坷不平**的道路, 胡锦涛驱车向什邡市灾情严重的荃华镇赶去。

Upon finding out Shifang was **badly affected** by the earthquake, he made a special trip here to inspect the disaster situation. Travelling on **bumpy** roads, Hu Jintao drove to the badly-hit Yinghua town in Shifang city. (PD1)

AFFECT

Table 4 shows that the patterning of Affect items has similarities across the three newspapers. In each newspaper, Un/happiness is the category with the highest percentages and frequencies, followed by In/security. However, the proportion of In/security items is somewhat higher in PD than in ACD and SMH, and the proportion of Un/happiness items is somewhat higher in PD and ACD than in SMH. Closer examination of the range (0-8) indicates that the higher frequency in the PD news reports is largely due to the fact that Insecurity appeared frequently in one article (PD1).

Examination of ranges also revealed that there is one article in PD (PD4) and one article in ACD (ACD5) without any Affect items. These two reports reported on the arrival of international rescue teams in China. The lack of Affect items in these reports suggests that less emotional value may be attached to international rescue teams than to the efforts made by local rescuers.

Table 4. Frequencies, percentages and ranges for subcategories of Affect

	PD	ACD	SMH
In/security	11 (33.3%) [0-8]	2 (11.8%) [0-2]	3 (18.6%) [0-2]
Un/happiness	20 (60.6%) [0-10]	15 (88.2%) [0-5]	8 (50.0%) [0-4]
Dis/satisfaction	2 (6.1%) [0-1]	0	5 (31.2%) [0-2]
Total	33 (100%) [0- 18]	17 (100%) [0- 7]	16 (100%) [0- 6]

Qualitative examination of the Un/happiness items revealed that there were quite large differences between the three kinds of news reports. In SMH, these items mainly describe the feelings of earthquake victims. In example 11, a journalist from SMH is said to have spoken with a man who had been trapped between boulders for two days. An inscribed positive item “grateful” is used to describe the man’s reaction to speaking to the Herald journalist, in strange contrast to the almost gruesomely detailed description of the extremity of the man’s situation and his reported pronouncement in the invoked negative item “I feel like I am already dead”.

## Example 11

On the approach to the city the Herald found a man whose legs were squashed between two car-sized boulders. He had survived in that position for two days. He said he was **grateful** for conversation and added: “**I feel like I am already dead.**” From the other side of the boulder an arm protruded, wearing a red bracelet. (SMH2)

In sharp contrast, most Un/happiness items in PD and ACD were employed to appraise political leaders’ feelings. In PD, 9 of the 20 Un/happiness items are used to describe the feelings of Chinese President Hu Jintao and the Premier Wen Jiabao, and of the 15 Un/happiness items in ACD, 14 are used to describe the feelings of Chinese Premier Wen, accounting for 82.4% of the total number of Affect items in this newspaper. Examples 12 and 13 illustrate that in the PD and ACD news reports the writers described the feelings of Chinese political leaders.

## Example 12

总书记**动情地**说：“知道你们遭了灾，有的还失去了亲人，我们和你们**一样痛心！天灾无情人有情。**”

The general secretary said **sentimentally**: “Knowing you were suffering from the earthquake and some of you lost family, **we share the pain** with you. **Disasters have no mercy, but we do.**” (PD1)

## Example 13

而有目擊者透露，由於災情嚴重，剛剛挖開的地方又塌方，溫總見狀**不禁老淚縱橫**，親自送水給被困的孩子喝，並一直彎腰察看救援情況。

A witness said that the disaster was so serious that some places that had just been excavated caved in again. Seeing this, Wen’s **tears were rolling down from his aged eyes**. He himself brought water to the children in the debris and bent down to inspect the relief work frequently. (ACD2)

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EVALUATIONS

Each Attitude item has a positive or a negative value. Table 5 shows the overall results for positive and negative Attitude items in each newspaper. As can be seen from the table, positive attitudes are more common than negative attitudes in the PD news reports, whereas in the SMH negative attitudes are more common than positive ones. In ACD, the percentages of positive and negative attitudes are very similar.

Table 5. Frequencies, percentages and ranges for positive and negative attitude

	PD	ACD	SMH
Positive attitude	65 (59.1%) [6-21]	39 (49.4%) [3-10]	15 (16.0%) [0-8]
Negative attitude	45 (40.9%) [3-18]	40 (50.6%) [2-17]	79 (84.0%) [14-19]
Total	110 (100%) [10- 39]	79 (100%) [9- 28]	94 (100%) [12- 25]

The following examples show that the writers of these SMH and PD news reports took a different stance towards the Chinese rescue workers. In example 15, the positive Judgement item “professional” strongly shows the confidence and the ability of the Chinese rescue team in triumphing over the disaster. In contrast, in example 14, the use of the negative Judgement item “would be” does not seem to rest so much on judging the quality of the rescue workers or their rescue work as on emphasizing the enormity of the disaster and the impossibility of a rescue effort being able to cope with a situation of this magnitude.

Example 14

The road into the city is blocked by boulders the size of houses and it takes **would-be** rescuers one hour to walk three kilometres. (SMH2)

Example 15

来自解放军、武警、公安、消防和各省的**专业**救援队伍，都按照指挥部的部署正在向各个救援点展开救援。  
  
The **professional** rescue teams from PLA soldiers, armed police, public security workers, fire fighters and provincial **expert** groups carried out standing orders to save people in every rescue spot. (PD3)

Not only were the attitudes towards the Chinese rescue efforts different, but so were the attitudes to the manner in which China dealt with the issue of deployment of foreign rescue teams. In example 16 from SMH, the initial Chinese refusal of international assistance with the rescue effort on May 15 is portrayed negatively through the use of the negative Affect item “frustrated” to describe the Japanese rescue team, and also through the juxtaposition of this refusal with the negative Appreciation items “flattened” and “burying thousands” that are used to describe the enormity of the disaster. In contrast, examples from PD and ACD report



positively on May 17 on the historic acceptance by China of foreign assistance in a national disaster. In examples 17 and 18, positive Judgement items are used to emphasize both the speed and the professionalism of the foreign rescuers.

#### Example 16

Despite whole towns being **flattened** in Sichuan province, **burying thousands**, Australian expertise was **politely declined** and **frustrated** Japanese teams were forced to turn around at the airport. (SMH5)

#### Example 17

来自日本、俄罗斯、韩国、新加坡等国的国际救援人员陆续抵达成都并**迅即赶赴**多个受灾县市救灾现场，新中国历史上第一次国际救援人员参与救灾的行动在震灾最前线展开。

International rescuers from Japan, South Korea and Singapore **quickly headed** for disaster counties after their arrival in Chengdu. It's the first time that international rescuers have been involved in disaster relief efforts in dangerous quake-hit areas in the history of the People's Republic of China. (PD4)

#### Example 18

經過近7個小時的**星夜兼程**，首批31名日本**專業救援人員**於16日上午9點45分抵達距成都近400公裏的青川縣關莊鎮，並已於中午轉赴青川縣城繼續開展救援工作。

The first group of 31 **professional** Japanese rescuers arrived at Guanzhuang Town of Qingchuan County about 400 km away from Chengdu to assist local disaster relief efforts after a seven-hour **urgent trip in great haste** at 9:45 a.m. on May 19. (ACD5)

## DISCUSSION

This study has shown that there are differences in the patterns of Attitude resources used in Chinese, Australian Chinese and Australian disaster news reports on the Sichuan earthquake of May 12th, 2008, and that these differences can be linked to the stances taken towards the disaster in the three newspapers. Firstly, both the Chinese and the Australian Chinese reports focused on positive appraisals of the participants in the earthquake and their actions – in particular on Judgements of the Chinese leaders and the rescuers, while the Australian reports' focus was on negative Appreciation of the overwhelming nature of the disaster, its effects on the victims and to some degree the Chinese response to the disaster. Secondly, the Chinese reports focussed a little more on Affect, that is, on feelings and emotions than did the Australian and Australian Chinese reports. The Chinese news reports and to a lesser extent the Australian Chinese reports focussed on the feelings and emotions of the Chinese leadership.

Differences between the stances taken in the three newspapers are likely to be partially attributable to the difference between an insider and an outsider perspective. For the Chinese people, the earthquake was a national disaster. In the midst of a national disaster, patriotism and national pride were likely to be involved when reporting the news about the earthquake relief work. The rise of nationalism in recent years is one of the features of the Chinese media (e.g., He, 2003; Lee, 2003). One of the main purposes of the Chinese news reports was likely to have been to encourage and inspire readers by providing a positive assessment of China's ability to cope with the disaster. In contrast, for the readers and writers of the reports in the Australian newspaper, the earthquake was a disaster in a faraway place that did not greatly touch their own lives. Therefore, the main purpose of the reports was to inform and interest readers. In the Australian Chinese news reports, the writers appeared to take more of an insiders' position. As in the Chinese newspaper, national pride and patriotism were embodied in the reports, suggesting that the Australian Chinese readership are likely to still identify themselves as being Chinese, at least in their response to the Sichuan disaster.

Another factor that can help in explaining the differences in the stances of the three newspapers is differences in journalistic reporting in China and Australia. Australian journalistic reporting is highly derivative of ideas and work generated in the western world, and particularly the English-speaking world (Sinclair, 2006). The western newspaper industry is commercially oriented and relies on sales (Chen, 2004). Chen (2004, p. 675) also argued that 'British and British influenced newspapers appear to thrive on conflict and on negative news stories'. Consequently, disasters gain attention in news reports in English-speaking countries. In order to increase circulation and make profits, the focus of disaster reports is likely to be the unprecedented, dreadful situation and sensational recounts that hold a fascination for readers.

The role of the media is known to be very different in China. The book 'Reading of the Communists', written by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (2005, p. 226), points out that newspapers...and other news media are the mouthpieces of the Party, government and the people. News publications...should be beneficial to stability and unity...' Previous studies have also pointed out that the mainstream Chinese press, unlike the western press, is a government controlled, non-commercial industry which is concerned to present positive news (Conley & Tripoli, 1992; Lee, 1990; Wei, 1997; Zhao, 1998). Chan (2003) noted that all media in China are regarded as political units (*shiye danwei*) not as enterprises (*qiye danwei*) and the Party-state typically plays an important role in directing the development of media. However, as already pointed out, the Chinese media is engaged in a process of change. As reported, Zhang (2010) found that there were more negative evaluations in the reporting of the Sichuan earthquake than there had been in the reporting of the Yangtze river floods in 1998. Nonetheless, according to W. Wang (2006), although the Chinese media have undergone significant changes over the past twenty years, they are still

bound by the Chinese political system. Reporting the horror of the situation or the victims' terrible hardships is likely to be seen as threatening social stability. Therefore, the PD reports endeavoured to reinforce a strong sense of unity amongst the Chinese people.

The findings of the current study mirror Yin and Wang's (2010, p. 387) finding that Chinese news reports on the Sichuan earthquake focussed on 'the relationships between the rescuers, the rescue operation and the politicians'. It did not support Zhu's (2009) finding that Chinese news reports used more emotive language to describe the actual earthquake than did western reports. In the current study, the Chinese news reports did indeed use more emotive language, but this language was largely used to describe the emotions of the Chinese leadership and not to describe the disaster itself.

The current study has built on Yin and Wang's study: firstly, by examining Chinese language news reports rather than reports from the Chinese English press, by systemically analysing the evaluative lexis in the reports, and by comparing Chinese media discourse to discourse in a western newspaper. Including this cross-cultural comparison has allowed us to illustrate that it is not only Chinese newspapers that present a subjective view of reality. As claimed by Yin and Wang (2010, p. 396), Chinese newspapers may in a sense have created a 'people-centred myth' in which the rescue operation surrounding the Sichuan earthquake was portrayed as 'a miracle of working in harmony' the outcomes of which are 'overwhelming gratitude and happiness'. Yet, in focussing so much on the gruesome details of the Chinese tragedy and the immense suffering of individual victims, without balancing this with a focus on progress being made in the rescue effort, the Australian newspaper could be said to have used the tragedy to create a 'horror-centred-myth' that sensationalized the events surrounding the disaster.

The current study has also shown that, in comparison to the Chinese newspaper and the Australian newspaper, the Australian Chinese newspaper took an intermediate stance towards the disaster, being closer to the Chinese newspaper in terms of focussing more heavily on evaluating participants and their behaviour during the aftermath of the earthquake, but closer to the Australian newspaper in terms of focussing less heavily on overt expressions of affect towards these participants. However, as the Australian Chinese newspaper was also similar to the Chinese newspaper in terms of having more expression of positive attitudes than the Australian newspaper, it can be said that overall the stance of the Chinese-Australian newspaper was somewhat closer to the stance of the Chinese newspaper. Sun (2006, p. 9) argued that the 'Chinese-language media provide an essential discursive space for the Chinese communities in various national and social contexts to defend their economic interests, promote commercial activities and argue for their rights to conduct trade in the Chinese way'. The stance taken in the Australian Chinese news reports may be indicative that 'the Chinese way' also extends to a more general cultural orientation. Sinclair et al. (2000) emphasized the symbolic cultural values that the ethnic media hold for the Chinese

diaspora community in Australia. Nonetheless, as the stance of the Australian Chinese newspaper was different in some respects from the stance in the Chinese newspaper, the study also indicates that cultural values espoused in the Chinese media were not fully embodied in the discourse of the Australian Chinese newspaper.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Examining cross-cultural discourse has the potential to increase not only our understanding of other cultures, but also of our own. The western reader may assume that the media in a country such as China is heavily biased, but be less aware of the bias that is present in the reporting of western media. The current study illustrates how, regardless of the context, media position audiences to view the world from a particular perspective.

In the current study, the stance taken in the Chinese-Australian news reports was found to be somewhat closer to the stance taken in the Chinese news reports than to the Australian news reports. Future research could examine whether aligning more closely to the stance taken in the media of the country of origin than the host country is a common tendency of ethnic media, or whether there are specific factors that are involved in the manner in which ethnic media position themselves. The arena has been opened for future studies to further explore the features of media discourse in migrant communities and the intricate relationships between them and media discourse in the country of origin.

We would like to conclude by discussing three methodological issues that need to be taken account of in future research. Firstly, the current study used a mixed methods approach that combined the use of descriptive statistics with qualitative description. Future studies in the area of cross-cultural discourse could use a mixed methods approach with larger samples, which would also enable statistical testing of the findings.

Secondly, text length is a factor that influences the frequency of attitudinal items. The longer the news report, the more opportunities to use attitudinal items. Future studies could take text length into account by expressing frequencies of attitudinal items as rates rather than as raw frequencies.

Thirdly, the Appraisal framework enabled us to identify patterns of word and phrase level evaluative meanings that contributed to the stance taken in the disaster reports. However, stance is likely not only manifested in the patterning of linguistic elements, but also at discourse level through the rhetorical structure of the text, and through tools such as framing, presupposition, foregrounding or backgrounding (see Huckin, 1997). Moreover, as Pennycook (2007) argues in his notion of transtextuality, meaning also goes beyond the text itself to include the pretext (history), context, subtext (ideologies and discourses), intertext (relationships between texts) and posttext (engagement with a text by audience). Hence, there is a need for future studies to consider stance, not only from a linguistic discourse-semantic perspective, both also from

discourse and transtextual perspectives. Pennycook reiterates the point made by Widdowson (1995, 1996) that textual analysis rarely takes interpretations of meanings by audiences into account. Future stance research needs to conduct audience studies to find out if news reports indeed position readers in the ways that text analysts claim they are being positioned.

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APPENDIX: SUB-CATEGORIES IN THE ATTITUDE TAXONOMY

Main category	Sub-category	Definition	Example
Judgement	Normality	how typical someone is	<b>special teams</b> (positive, inscribed) Premier Wen who is <b>over 60 years old</b> (positive, invoked)
	Capacity	how capable they are	<b>Professional</b> rescuers (positive, inscribed) the officials whose rescue efforts were <b>inadequate</b> (negative, inscribed)
	Tenacity	how resolute they are	Premier Wen <b>gets injured when rescuing people</b> (positive, invoked) <b>weary</b> rescuers (negative, inscribed)
	Veracity	how truthful someone is	His response was <b>genuine</b> (positive, inscribed) This seems <b>dubious</b> (negative, inscribed)
	Propriety	how ethical someone is	<b>He (Premier Wen Jiabao) himself sent water to the primary school students</b> (positive, invoked) it takes <b>would-be rescuers</b> one hour to walk three kilometres (negative, invoked)
Appreciation	Reaction	the impact and quality of things	<b>powerful slogans</b> such as “Keep on fighting against the disaster and carry on the task bravely” and “Be determined to complete the task” rang out continuously. (positive, inscribed) <b>shocking</b> sights (negative, inscribed)
	Composition	balance and complexity of things	kinds of rescue vehicles <b>parked orderly</b> (positive, inscribed) the building <b>totally collapsed</b> (negative, inscribed)
	Valuation	the value of things	the <b>advanced</b> technologies (positive, inscribed) the <b>crucial</b> time (positive, inscribed)
Affect	Dis/satisfaction	feelings of achievement and frustration	Knowing the injured and most villagers had been shifted out to a safe area, Hu felt <b>relieved</b> . (positive, inscribed) <b>furious</b> parents (negative, inscribed)
	In/security	feelings of peace and anxiety	The president’s speech <b>inspired</b> all the people there (positive, inscribed) She is <b>very anxious</b> because her child has not been found. (negative, inscribed)
	Un/happiness	the moods of feeling happy or sad	The people in the disaster areas <b>felt the warmth and concern</b> of the Central Government. (positive, inscribed) <b>swallowed her grief</b> (negative, inscribed)