

# Evaluation in research article introductions: A comparison of the strategies used by Chinese and British authors

**Xu, X. & Nesi, H.**

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**Cover sheet**

Authors: Xiaoyu Xu and Hilary Nesi

Corresponding Author: Xiaoyu Xu

Address:

Department of English

City University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong

Email: xiaoyuxu@cityu.edu.hk

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Declaration

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## **Bionote**

Xiaoyu Xu has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Coventry University and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at City University of Hong Kong. She is interested in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), contrastive rhetoric, genre analysis, corpus linguistics and Systemic Functional Linguistics. Address for correspondence: Department of English, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, City University Hong Kong. Email: xiaoyuxu@cityu.edu.hk

Hilary Nesi is Professor of English Language at Coventry University, UK. Her research activities largely concern corpus development and analysis, the discourse of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and the design and use of dictionaries and reference tools for academic contexts. She is editor of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, and was principal investigator for the projects to create the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus and the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus. Address for correspondence: School of Humanities, Coventry University CV1 5FB, UK. Email: h.nesi@coventry.ac.uk

## **Abstract**

This article investigates differences in evaluative style in introductions to research articles written by scholars from China and Britain. A corpus of 30 research article introductions in applied linguistics was analysed in terms of Appraisal Theory and genre analysis, using the UAM Corpus Tool. Findings from this analysis suggest that both the Chinese and the British authors were aware of the need to argue for their own opinions and maintain good relationships with their readers. However, the Chinese writers made more categorical assertions, supported by lists of references to prior studies, while the British writers were more likely to acknowledge the existence of alternative views within the research community, and were more explicit about their own attitudes towards the research topic, prior studies, and their own work. The findings, and the illustrative examples, can inform the design of programmes to help novice researchers publish internationally, and might also usefully raise the awareness of journal article reviewers and editors regarding cultural variation in approaches to stance-taking.

**Keywords:** evaluation, stance, research article, applied linguistics, genre, culture, Appraisal

Evaluation in research article introductions: a comparison of the strategies used by Chinese and British authors

Affiliations: City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong; Coventry University, UK

## **1 Introduction**

The Introduction sections of research articles (RAs) pose particular difficulties for L2 writers, because, along with Discussion sections, they require more argumentation both to convince readers of the need for the current research and to convince them that this need has been answered in the current research (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans 1988; Gosden 1992; Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995; Dudley-Evans 1995; Dubois 1997). This may be particularly true in disciplines such as applied linguistics, where arguments often involve engagement with the views of prior researchers and depend on the researcher's interpretation of existing evidence (Becher 1994; Becher & Trowler 2001; Hyland 2009).

This paper focuses on evaluation strategies used in the Introduction sections of applied linguistics RAs written in English. It examines RAs by 'home-grown' Anglophone scholars educated in Britain, and 'home-grown' Mandarin speaking scholars educated in mainland China or Taiwan. The distinction between these two sets of scholars was made in order to explore whether there are any differences in the stance-taking strategies of academics who have been equally successful in publishing their research, but who come from different backgrounds in terms of culture and first language. Of course, Anglophone scholars exist all over the world, but we decided to concentrate on this British subset of Anglophone authors because we were able to confirm their backgrounds with greater confidence, as we ourselves were based in Britain at the time of writing. We were also able to confirm the backgrounds of the Chinese authors, through websites and personal communications.

International research publications naturally expect some degree of conformity in the way authors engage with readers and evaluate their own and other's claims; it seems likely that many reviewers and editors allow for some cultural variation, but it is also possible that some articles are rejected or misinterpreted simply because they follow conventions that gatekeepers find unfamiliar. As Duszak (1997: 21) notes, "texts with traces of alien patterns are dispreferred – sometimes returned for repair, or edited with a possible loss of the author's intentions". One of the aims of this paper is therefore to increase our understanding of stance-taking behaviours that might seem 'alien', whether they be strategies chosen by British authors hoping to reach a wider non-British readership, or strategies chosen by Chinese authors hoping to reach a wider non-Chinese readership.

Our research questions are as follows:

1. What differences are there in the evaluative styles of Chinese and British applied linguistics researchers, as revealed in the moves in their article introductions?
2. What might these differences tell us about the academic conventions followed by Chinese and British scholars?

With an attempt to answer our research questions, we first highlight in the literature review section ways in which theory and research have explored the generic structure of Introduction sections and Chinese academics' structural choices and evaluation strategies. This is followed by a description of the research method of our choice and an analysis of the data. We then discuss the results with reference to the existing literature and conclude by considering a number of limitations and implications.

## **2 Literature review**

## 2.1 ESP genre theory and Introduction Move structure

The modern research article (RA) in English is a genre that has developed gradually over the centuries in terms of organization and linguistic features. The overall organization is described by Hill *et al* (1982) as an “hourglass” model, where the transition from the wider research context to the specific study is made by describing an inadequacy in the prior research, and a second transition moves back from the research findings to a final discussion of the wider implications of the study. West (1980) and Heslot (1982) gave a name to this RA structure: Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion, or IMRD.

The move structure of RA Introductions has been described by Swales in terms of his Create a Research Space (CARS) model. As Swales explains (1990: 142):

This model captures a number of characteristics of RA introductions: the need to re-establish in the eyes of the discourse community the significance of the research field itself; the need to situate the actual research in terms of its significance; and the need to show how this niche in the wider ecosystem will be occupied and defended.

Each move in the CARS model consists of a segment of text that realises a particular communicative purpose, further broken down into a series of optional or obligatory steps. Move 1 establishes the territory through demonstrating that a research area or topic is important, critical, interesting, problematic or relevant. Move 2 establishes a “niche” for the current research by indicating a gap in the previous research or adding new information, and Move 3 announces the current research, optionally presenting research questions or hypotheses, clarifying definitions and/or summarising methods.

The model described by Swales (1990, 2004) provides a useful framework for the current study within which to examine characteristic evaluation resources used by the L1 (“home-grown”

British) and L2 (“home-grown” Chinese) writers of English-medium RAs. Occasionally RA writers refer to real world contexts in order to create a research space in RA introductions (Samraj 2002:15, Xu & Nesi 2017). For reasons of space, however, in this paper we will focus solely on the evaluation of research contexts, in line with the CARS model.

## **2.2 Studies of the structural choices made by Chinese authors**

A number of studies have examined the move structure choices made by Chinese researchers, from both Western and Chinese perspectives. Taylor and Chen (1991) and Loi (2010), for example, compared RA introductions written by Anglophone and Chinese writers, finding that the Chinese writers in their studies were less likely to elaborate on the prior research and discuss its limitations. Loi (2010) argued that the Chinese RA introductions she examined did not make such strong cases for the existence of a research gap, and generally tended to avoid making strong research claims. She also found that, in contrast to the Anglophone RAs, the Chinese RAs did not introduce a research hypothesis in Move 3; she explained this absence in terms of Chinese culture, which she considered to be “high-context” (Hall 1976) and inclined to favour implicit over explicit expressions of meaning.

Such findings suggest that Chinese writers are less overtly critical than Anglophone writers, taking a more conciliatory approach which might seem to accord with certain other frequently-noted cultural attitudes, such as Confucian beliefs (Peng & Nisbett 1999; Hu and Wang 2014), collectivism (Hofstede et al. 2010), and an emphasis on saving face (Lustig & Koester 2010; Hu & Cao 2011). Prior studies of the structure of RAs written by Chinese scholars do not look much beyond the organisation and function of moves, however, whereas we believe it is necessary to examine not only move structure but also the use of evaluation resources within each move in order to understand the way argumentation develops.

## **2.3 Studies of the evaluation strategies used by Chinese authors**

In this study, we will proceed in accordance with the general perception that evaluation reveals the writer's attitude by rhetorical means (Hyland 2012), and can be expressed in a wide variety of ways. The evaluative nature of academic language has been analysed from various perspectives in the literature, with the focus varying from self-mention to all expressions of personal opinion (Sancho Guinda & Hyland 2012), and from self-attribution to unattributed expressions of writer's stance (Bondi 2012).

Prior analyses of the evaluation strategies used by Chinese scholars have mainly focused on hedging and reporting, but these two threads of research have often reached different conclusions. For example, research comparing hedging techniques (Bloch & Chi 1995; Yang 2003; Hu & Cao 2011; Xu & Nesi 2019) has found that Chinese-medium RAs, and English-medium RAs by Chinese authors, contain less hedging than RAs written by Anglophone authors. This suggests that Chinese scholars' academic writing style is more direct. Hu and Wang (2014) used some categories of the Appraisal framework (White & Martin 2005) to examine differences in the way sources were cited in applied linguistics RAs written by Chinese and Anglophone writers. Like Taylor and Chen (1991) and Loi (2010), they found that the Chinese writers referred to sources significantly less often than their Anglophone counterparts, and that they disagreed less often with prior claims.

In contrast to those studying the use of hedging by Chinese scholars, Hu and Wang (2014) believed that the Chinese were more indirect than the Anglophone researchers, and attributed this to a Chinese cultural emphasis on harmonious interpersonal relationships and the avoidance of face-threatening acts such as public criticism. In the discussion of their findings they refer to the Chinese Confucian cultural belief that truth and knowledge are self-evident, and quote Peng and Nisbett (1999: 747), who claimed that, in Chinese culture, "verbal debate and argumentation are not meaningful tools for understanding truth and reality".

Perhaps one reason why researchers have arrived at different conclusions about the directness of Chinese scholarly writing is that they have looked at hedging and citation practices independently of RA moves. To create a broader picture of the strategies used by Chinese writers this paper will consider the use of a range of evaluative resources to build up arguments, step by step, within the generic structure of RA introductions.

### **3 Method**

#### **3.1 Data selection**

In order to examine the evaluative resources used by Chinese and Anglophone writers, it was necessary to select comparable research articles from the two cultures. Discipline, the writers' language proficiency, and the size and location of the audience can all have an effect on evaluative style in academic writing (Shaw 2003; Wu 2008; Sheldon 2013; Wu & Zhu 2014), so it was necessary to control for these variables as far as possible by selecting articles from the same disciplinary area (relating to language and communication) that had been accepted for publication in international journals which did not differ greatly in terms of prestige and readership (the average impact factor was 0.82 for the Chinese corpus and 1.20 for the British corpus). This allowed us to compare the effect of linguistic and cultural background without too much interference from other variables.

We used manual searches and personal recommendations to select RAs written by “home-grown” Anglophone scholars with British or European family names who had received their PhDs from British state universities, and by “home-grown” Chinese scholars with Chinese family names with PhDs from Chinese-medium state universities in mainland China or Taiwan. Very few RAs in international applied linguistics journals are in fact written by “home-grown” Chinese writers, but we collected 15 of these, published between 2010 and 2015, to correspond

to 15 RAs of similar length written by “home-grown” British academics. Although there was naturally variation in the topics, efforts were made to find articles which covered similar ground; for example cohesion, phonological awareness, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Full details of the articles we selected are provided in the Appendix.

### **3.2 Data annotation**

For the purposes of this study, all sections following on from the abstract and preceding an account of methods, materials and/or participants were counted as constituting the introduction to the article (may include literature review). These introductions were converted to plain text format and imported into the UAM CorpusTool (O’Donnell 2011), which offers multiple functions to facilitate manual annotation. The introductions were marked for generic structure in terms of the three moves in the CARS model developed by Swales (2004): establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and announcing the current research. All the introductions contained all three of these moves, although not necessarily in the same order.

The Appraisal framework (Martin & White 2005) was chosen for further annotation of the articles because, like the models developed by Swales (1990, 2004), its primary focus is on function rather than form, and the different types of evaluative resources are recognised on the basis of their meaning in context. The framework consists of three interacting domains: Engagement, Attitude and Graduation. The system acknowledges a wide array of resources, including conjunctions, modal verbs, reporting verbs, nouns with negative or positive connotations, and certain adjectival and adverbial relevance markers (“important”, “key”, “few” etc.). The framework categories are not mutually exclusive, so it is usually possible for language items to be analysed in terms of more than one domain.

Aspects of the Engagement domain were used to examine the way evaluative resources were used to present, review and evaluate claims within research article introductions, as in Hu and

Wang (2014). In Martin and White's (2005) category of Engagement, language resources for quoting and reporting voices external to those of the author are brought together. Text which does not acknowledge the possibility of other alternative views is categorised as monoglossic, while text which indicates that the writer is aware that his or her viewpoint is only one of many possible viewpoints on the topic is categorised as heteroglossic. The writer can create the impression of heteroglossia by a number of linguistic means, including hedging, taking a position in relation to another source, and rejecting assumptions that the author believes the reader to have made.

Examples of monoglossic and heteroglossic propositions are provided in Table 1, which also distinguishes between heteroglossic propositions which close down (contract) the dialogistic alternatives, and those which embrace (expand) dialogistic alternatives. Dialogistic alternatives can be contracted through direct rejection (e.g. *not*), countering what has been said (e.g. *however*), overtly agreeing to a claim (e.g. *obviously*), authorial emphasis (e.g., *I have no doubt that*), accepting an external source as valid (e.g., *shown*), or flagging a justification (e.g., *because*). Dialogistic alternatives can be expanded through making assessments of likelihood (e.g., *are likely to*), evidence/appearance-based postulations (e.g., *it seems that*), or withholding commitment to a claim made by an external source (e.g., *suggest, claim*).

[Insert Table 1 about here].

In the Appraisal Framework, Attitude is a system of meanings for mapping the expression of feelings. It reflects and emphasizes our "positive" or "negative" emotions (Affect), judgments on human behaviours (Judgment), and assessment of objects or artefacts (Appreciation) (Martin and White 2005: 42). Table 2 lists those types of Attitude which we will be referring to in the remainder of this paper, and gives examples of the language items which were used to express Affect, Judgement and Appreciation.

[Insert Table 2 about here].

Table 3 is a simplification of the system of Graduation developed by Hood (2004), showing those types of Graduation that we will be referring to in the remainder of this paper. All forms of Graduation can be “up-scaled” or “down-scaled” to indicate the strength of the evaluation.

[Insert Table 3 about here].

The distinction between Inscribed and Evoked Graduation is not well-differentiated in Martin and White (2005) but is made distinct in Hood (2004), who focusses particularly on academic discourse. Following Hood’s (2004) system, Table 3 shows that it is possible to grade both Inscribed items that express attitude explicitly, and Evoked items that only imply an attitudinal stance. One important way to grade Evoked items is through Force and its Quantification subcategory, for example by simultaneously referencing several sources (Multiple References), or indicating size, quantity or frequency, as in “the role of theory has *not always* been seen as a central issue”. Another way to grade Evoked items is through Focus, which takes into account the extent to which the item indicates that something is complete, satisfactorily fulfilled, or certain (for example “this study has *filled the gap*”).

Inscribed and Evoked items are also regarded as being “up-scaled” or “down-scaled” depending on the degree of Force or Focus. For example, in “*more* research is needed to confirm this point”, the item *more* is up-scaled, whereas in “it remains an area in which *little* research has been attempted”, the item *little* is down-scaled. Other Graduation categories described by Hood (2004) are not shown in Table 2 as they did not affect the results reported in this paper.

Efforts were made to ensure reliability when annotating Moves and Appraisal items in the texts. The introduction from one article was annotated by both authors, and we then discussed every evaluative item that had been assigned different Appraisal categories until we reached

consensus on the description of all the categories. During this process, particular issues were resolved. For example, “*mistaken*” in “we believed or perhaps wanted to believe that he was mistaken” was initially analysed by the first author as Capacity, but was eventually reclassified as Propriety, and definitions for the two categories were adjusted to make them more applicable to academic discourse. Items which focussed on the ability of the researcher were subsequently treated as Capacity, while items which focussed on how properly the research had been conducted were treated as Propriety.

After having finalised our coding system, the entire corpus was annotated twice by the first author with a gap of six months between the first and the second annotation cycle. Categorisation decisions were found to be almost identical in both cycles, varying only for some small subcategories which are not reported in this paper.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The frequencies of the Appraisal features were calculated for each move in the Introductions of each article in the corpus. These frequencies were normalized to counts per 1000 words, to enable quantitative comparisons. A one-tailed t-test was run on the data to evaluate the significance of the results, using the t-test facility provided in the UAM CorpusTool.

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Overview**

The statistical results are presented in Table 4. In this table, we have only reported findings for those Appraisal categories where there was a statistically significant difference between the Chinese and the British sub-corpora.

As can be seen from Table 4, there were significant differences between the Chinese and British subcorpora in every move, but the greatest differences were in Move 1 (Establishing the Territory).

[Insert Table 4 about here].

It is clear from the table that the British writers preferred Heteroglossia, and were more likely to use explicit Attitude and Evoked (implicit) Force, whereas the Chinese writers preferred Monoglossia, and were more likely to use Inscribed (explicit) Graduation, Evoked Focus on other sources, and Multiple References. British writers were also more inclined towards negative evaluation. These tendencies will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

#### **4.2 Differences in the realization of Introduction Move 1**

As explained in Section 2.1, Move 1 establishes the territory through demonstrating that a research area or topic is important, central, interesting, problematic, or relevant in some way. This usually entails reviewing previous research in the area. To realize this purpose, the British authors and the Chinese authors adopted significantly different ways of constructing arguments. As shown in Table 4, in Move 1 the British authors were more Heteroglossic, and used more Attitude and Evoked Force, whereas the Chinese authors were more Monoglossic, and used more Evoked Focus to up-scale their evaluations.

The Heteroglossic propositions used by the British authors served as a means of entering into dialogue with their readers. Within these propositions, Contract was sometimes used to reduce the appearance of confrontation. This can be seen in (1), where “although” is used to signal a concession to readers who might support the approach under discussion, before the author goes on to question its validity.

- (1) *Although the RTI approach for school-age children is supported by a growing body of evidence, RTI in early childhood is an emerging practice, with many aspects (e.g., assessment approaches and benchmarks) still under debate.*

The Chinese authors often preferred to use Monoglossic propositions in the opening sentences of their research articles, to define terms and concepts (see (2)). Where references were made to sources, the authors used them to add authority to their claims rather than to allow for alternative views (see (3)). In this way, the authors strongly aligned with the prior researchers they cited; they repeated their views unquestioningly, without allowing for the possibility that readers might disagree.

- (2) *Phonological awareness (PA) refers to the ability to perceive and manipulate the sounds of spoken words (Mattingly, 1972).*
- (3) *Language learning situations are especially prone to anxiety arousal (e.g., Bailey, Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2000; Price, 1991).*

The British authors also used more Attitude and Evoked Force. The use of Attitude is illustrated in (4), where the RTI approach is positively evaluated as *supported by evidence* in a concession. Evoked Force was used for a number of purposes, for example to implicitly evaluate a claim through the use of quantifiers such as *many*, as in (4) where the writer evaluates the practice of RTI as problematic.

- (4) *Although the RTI approach for school-age children is **supported** by a growing body of **evidence**, RTI in early childhood is an emerging practice, with **many** aspects (e.g., assessment approaches and benchmarks) still under debate.*

In the articles written by British authors, Evoked Force could also evoke the importance of the topic, as in (5) through the use of *constantly*, or implicitly tone down disagreement with the

prior research, as in (6), where the authors down-scale the extent of their concern about prior findings by referring to *the latter two points* which are *particularly* concerning.

(5) *Research has **constantly** shown that children who enter school behind their peers in emergent literacy skills are unlikely to catch up...*

(6) ***The latter two points are particularly concerning ...***

In the Chinese corpus, writers used more Evoked Focus (e.g., *demonstrated, shown, found*) to emphasise that work by other researchers had reached a conclusion, thus adding credit to the author's own position (see (7)). The authors also often strengthened their position through Multiple References to the prior research, as in (7) and (8), taking an assertive stance and creating an impression of extensive scholarship.

(7) *Significant correlation between early PA and subsequent reading and spelling skills has been **demonstrated** in many studies (e.g., Bryant et al., 1990; Caravolas et al., 2001; Silva & Alves-Martins, 2002; Gillon, 2004).*

(8) *Additional studies on the subject were later successful in concretizing their discovery (Carreiras, Vergara, & Barber, 2005; Dambacher, Kliegl, Hofmann, & Jacobs, 2006; Martin, Kaine, & Kirby, 2006; Meng, Jian, Shu, Tian, & Zhou, 2008; Meyler & Brezitz, 2005).*

From the above analyses of examples from Move 1, we can see that the British authors generally attempted to justify the importance of their topics by engaging their readers and balancing both explicit and evoked evaluations. The Chinese authors, on the other hand, generally attempted to highlight the importance of their topics by accepting the assertions made in numerous prior studies.

### 4.3 Differences in the realization of Introduction Move 2

After the necessary background to the topic had been established, the writers went on to argue that there is a space that needs to be filled by additional research. Swales (1990: 141) suggests that this is normally accomplished through counter-claiming, indicating a gap, question-raising, and/or continuing a tradition.

In this particularly argumentative Move, the Chinese authors used a significantly greater number of Multiple References to sources which in some way expressed the view that the current state of knowledge was inadequate or inconclusive. Example (9) illustrates the use of Multiple References by the Chinese writers.

- (9) *Language anxiety always poses problems to SL/FL learners by interfering with ongoing cognitive performance (e.g., Eysenck, 1979; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a; 1994b)....*

The British authors used significantly more Inclination, Evoked Force and Evoked Focus (particularly down-scaled Focus); this gave the impression that they were more personally motivated to undertake the research, but less certain about the current state of knowledge.

In (10), for example, Inclination, a type of Attitude, is apparent in the way the British authors project themselves as *experienced* teachers, *wanting* to believe other teachers *mistaken*, and *feeling compelled* to investigate. In this example, the references to *we* emphasise that it is the authors' own feelings that are being expressed. In this way, they reveal their own stance towards the research, and create an impression of commitment and curiosity. This "human touch" might increase the article's appeal to readers who share similar qualities to those of the authors.

(10) *Being **experienced** writing teachers, we believed or perhaps **wanted** to believe that he was **mistaken**. Nonetheless, we **felt compelled** to investigate whether students wanted feedback, what types were preferred, and what was done with it.*

The Down-scaling of Focus by British authors seemed to allow for the possibility of different viewpoints. In (11), *suggest* is used to introduce the possibility of a positive outcome for research on the topic, while evoking some space for alternative voices that might disagree with the prediction. In (12), *sought to* signals that the prior research may not yet have reached a satisfactory conclusion, but also leaves this open to debate. In (13), *belief* signals that the claim is just an opinion that needs to be proved, and therefore evokes a space for alternative views.

(11) *This **suggests** that research which investigates how to best teach forms which could help learners to become SUEs is worthwhile...*

(12) *It is clear that there has been only a small amount of classroom research which has **sought** to investigate the most productive ways to teach aspects of spoken grammar, including DMs.*

(13) *... this **belief** seems to be founded on the idea that learning a language is akin to developing a skill ...*

The number of techniques applied by the British authors in this move to create the research space shows that they had more complex and balanced strategies than the Chinese authors, including explicit and implicit attitude and self-positioning.

#### **4.4 Differences in the realization of Introduction Move 3**

In Move 3, authors demonstrate how they will fill the research space identified in Move 2 by announcing the present study, outlining its purposes or indicating the structure of the research

article (Swales 1990: 141). The British authors used significantly more negative Attitude, as in Move 2, but the Chinese authors used a wider range of strategies than in Move 2, with more Inscribed Graduation and Down-scaled Focus alongside the use of Multiple References.

In (14), the British writers negatively evaluate (using the word *issue*) an unsolved topic that will not be considered, and hence lead readers towards their own investigation.

(14) *However, in this study we will content ourselves with the notion that feedback has a positive influence on revision and leave the **issues** of causality and learning outcomes to future research.*

In (15), the British writer explicitly and negatively evaluates the space that needs to be occupied as a *gap*, and then announces the objective of the present study, expressing positive Attitude by describing as *empirical* the evidence they intend to obtain. Through this contrast in (15) between the negative situation prior to the present study and the positive study outcome, the writers explicitly justify their own research.

(15) *Given this clear **gap** in knowledge, the primary objective of this study was to obtain **empirical** evidence ....*

However, the Chinese authors tended to down-scale the Focus when announcing the present study, indicating that their research is only an attempt, rather than confidently predicting that they will fulfil the aim of their research (see (16)).

(16) *In our study we shall **attempt** to prove these metafunctions of Chinese punctuation by utilizing the ERP method.*

This understated way of occupying the niche is balanced by Multiple references to the prior literature (see (17)) which evoke the idea that the methods they have adopted are valid, and by Inscribed Graduation (see (18)) which positively evaluates their methods in an explicit way.

(17) *Corpus linguistics has been increasingly used in critical discourse studies to examine the discursive events of politics (Johnson et al., 2003; Prentice, 2010)...*

(18) *...in fact, deeper analysis of learner performances would provide valuable resources for researchers or teachers to understand the aspects ....*

In general, in this move, the British authors used more explicit strategies to occupy the niche, while the Chinese created more balance between explicit and implicit evaluative resources.

## **5 Discussion**

These results indicate considerable differences between the Chinese and British authors in their argumentative style. Overall, they indicate that both the Chinese and the British authors were aware of the need to prove to the international research community that their research was needed, while also keeping their readers on side. They also indicate that the two groups of authors realised these purposes in different ways. Generally, the Chinese authors established their own positions by presenting claims as not being open to question, and supporting these claims with multiple references to the prior literature. They maintained writer-reader relationships without explicitly revealing their own attitudes. The British authors, on the other hand, argued for their own positions by explicitly evaluating people and phenomena. They maintained writer-reader relationships by explicitly adjusting or evoking the dialogic space, in order to acknowledge the possibility of alternative views.

Some features of the Chinese articles seem to reflect Confucian beliefs, collectivism and saving face, as mentioned in the prior research (Hofstede et al. 2010; Lustig & Koester 2010; Hu & Wang 2014). The time-honoured Confucian view that language is a tool for conveying knowledge, rather than a medium for partaking in knowledge construction, means that truth and knowledge are seen as self-evident rather than as being constructed through discussion and

argument (Hu & Wang 2014). The use of Monoglossia and Multiple references by the Chinese authors accord with such beliefs by creating an assertive effect, not open to discussion.

The outcomes of the studies by Taylor and Chen (1991) and Loi (2010) seem to be supported by the findings from our study. Taylor and Chen (1991) and Loi (2010) found that Chinese writers are less likely to discuss the limitations of prior research. We found that Chinese authors avoided explicit Attitude towards people and phenomena, and their multiple references were to sources that they treated as entirely dependable. These Chinese strategies can perhaps be explained in terms of Confucian values which prevent face-threatening discursive practices and negative evaluation. Lustig and Koester (2010: 67) suggest that in China, “saving face and maintaining interpersonal harmony are so highly valued that it would be catastrophic to confront another person directly”.

The explicit evaluations made by the British authors sometimes challenge the views they assume at least some of their readers hold, and may thus pose something of a threat to these readers’ face. On the other hand, it is possible that the tone sometimes taken by the Chinese authors, drawing on the authority they have bestowed on prior researchers, runs the risk of being face-threatening in a different way, by ignoring readers’ possible alternative views and downplaying their role in knowledge construction.

## **6 Conclusion**

This study has provided new insights into the argumentative style of Chinese academics by investigating the RAs written by Chinese authors with reference to those by British authors. However, a few limitations are also identified. This paper only examined a small number of article introductions, not enough to be sure whether British and Chinese researchers typically adopt the stance strategies we describe. Moreover the study did not consider non-cultural factors which might have affected the results, for example a greater level of writing expertise

amongst authors from one of the cultural backgrounds than authors from the other. However, although we can only guess at the reasons for the findings from the two datasets, they do reveal fairly consistent differences between the stance-taking behaviours of the British and the Chinese authors, and we believe they can usefully inform the development of materials to help novice researchers manage the stance and voice demands of research article introductions. Such materials could raise awareness of the dialogic nature of the writer-reader relationship, and different techniques for engaging with their audience. Novice researchers might be introduced to implicit evaluative techniques to evoke problems in the prior research or in their own studies, and explicit evaluative techniques to present themselves as inquisitive researchers, adding a more “human” touch to their writing, and perhaps increasing its appeal to readers.

All the articles investigated for this study were successful and had been accepted for publication. However, in an expanding international community where journal editors and reviewers are situated around the world, awareness raising may be needed in order to promote greater cultural understanding and equity. It is hoped that our findings will be of general benefit not only to writers but also to reviewers and editors, by drawing attention to alternative stance and voice strategies, possible reasons for their selection, and their possible effect on readers.

More research is needed to explore variation in the way different groups of authors handle evaluative resources, leading towards a more complete description of the discourse of introductions in international research articles.

## Tables

Table 1. Types of Engagement, after Martin and White (2005)

Types of Engagement		Examples
Monoglossic (bare assertions)		This information is correct
Heteroglossic (with recognition of dialogistic alternatives)		
Contract	This information is <i>not</i> correct. <i>However</i> , this information is correct. This information is <i>obviously</i> correct. I have <i>no doubt that</i> this information is correct. Research has <i>shown</i> that this information is correct. <i>Because</i> this information is correct, ...	
Expand	This information is <i>likely</i> to be correct. Research <i>suggests</i> that this information is correct. Research <i>claims</i> that this information is correct.	

Table 2: Types of Attitude discussed in this paper

Types of Attitude		Examples
Affect	Dis/inclination	<i>want, feel compelled, support</i>
Judgement	Capacity (competence and ability)	<i>fail, experienced, successful</i>
	Propriety (appropriate behaviour)	<i>mistaken, risky, wrong</i>
Appreciation	Reaction (attractiveness)	<i>challenge, interesting, remarkable</i>
	Composition (order)	<i>balanced, systematic, contradictory</i>
	Social valuation (social value)	<i>issue, evidence, empirical, deep</i>

Table 3: Types of Graduation, adapted from Hood (2004)

Types of Graduation		Examples of Evaluative Resources
Inscribed (explicit Attitude)		<i>more successful; some success; best, important</i>
Evoked (implicit attitude)		
Force		
	Quantification	<i>many studies; a small number of; little attention; a lack of training; larger sample; adequate evidence; general finding; different kinds; at least; over time; growing; increasing</i>
	Multiple references	<i>(Treiman &amp; Baron, 1983; Cunningham, 1990)</i>
Focus		<i>suggest; seems to be; fill the gap</i>

Table 4: Evaluation across moves (Each number is a t-score; grey = higher density in the Chinese sub-corpus; white = higher density in the British sub-corpus; - = No significance; + = weak significance; ++ = medium significance; +++ = high significance; N/A = no occurrence or equal density in the two sub-corpora)

Research world	Introduction		
	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3
<b>Engagement</b>			
Monoglossic	2.51 +++	1.07 -	1.13 -
Heteroglossic	2.51 +++	1.07 -	1.13 -
Contract	2.34 ++	0.71 -	0.35 -
Expand	0.05 -	0.19 -	1.63 -
<b>Attitude</b>			
Dis/inclination	1.65 -	1.91 +	1.58 -
Social valuation	2.28 ++	1.11 -	0.51 -
Positive attitude	1.92 +	1.08 -	0.60 -
Negative attitude	2.61 +++	1.36 -	2.71 +++
<b>Graduation</b>			
Inscribed Graduation	0.86 -	0.68 -	1.90 +
Evoked Graduation	0.88 -	0.02 -	0.08 -
Evoked Force	2.62 +++	2.30 ++	1.50 -
Quantification	2.08 ++	1.98 ++	0.91 -
Multiple references	2.77 +++	2.97 +++	1.69 +
Focus	2.62 +++	2.30 ++	1.50 -
Down-scale	0.97 -	2.49 +++	1.75 +
Up-scale	2.33 ++	0.21 -	0.17 -

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## Appendix

Chinese RAs (17887 words)	British RAs (16437 words)
Gao, Y. (2011). Cognitive linguistics–Inspired empirical study of Chinese EFL teaching. <i>Creative Education</i> , 02(04), 354–362.	Elwood, J. A., & Bode, J. (2014). Student preferences vis-à-vis teacher feedback in university EFL writing classes in Japan. <i>System</i> , 42, 333–343.
Yang, X. (2010). Intentional forgetting, anxiety, and EFL listening comprehension among Chinese college students. <i>Learning and Individual Differences</i> , 20(3), 177–187.	Lamb, T. (2011). Fragile Identities: Exploring Learner Identity, Learner Autonomy and Motivation through Young Learners’ Voices. <i>The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Special Issue 14(2)</i> , 68–85.
Wen, W. (2014). Assessing the roles of breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge in Chinese EFL learners’ listening comprehension. <i>Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics</i> , 37(3), 29–56.	Vandergrift, L., & Baker, S. (2015). Learner variables in Second language listening comprehension: An exploratory path analysis. <i>Language Learning</i> , 65(2), 390–416.
Liu, H. (2010). Dependency direction as a means of word-order typology: A method based on dependency treebanks. <i>Lingua</i> , 120(6), 1567–1578.	MacDonald, M. C. (2013). How language production shapes language form and comprehension. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> , 4, 226.
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Chen, Y. (2015). Developing Chinese EFL learners’ email literacy through requests to faculty. <i>Journal of Pragmatics</i> , 75, 131–149.	Murray, N. (2012). English as a lingua franca and the development of pragmatic competence. <i>ELT Journal</i> , 66(3), 318–326.
Hou, Z. (2015). A critical analysis of media reports on China’s air defense identification zone. <i>Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences</i> , 198, 194–201.	Mills, T. A., Lavender, R., & Lavender, T. (2015). “Forty is the new twenty”: An analysis of British media portrayals of older mothers. <i>Sexual &amp; Reproductive Healthcare</i> , 6(2), 88–94.
Wei, L. (2012). Construction of seamless English language learning Cyberspace via interactive text messaging tool. <i>Theory and Practice in Language Studies</i> , 2(8), 1590–1596.	Coffin, C., Hewings, A., & North, S. (2012). Arguing as an academic purpose: The role of asynchronous conferencing in supporting argumentative dialogue in school and university. <i>Journal of English for Academic Purposes</i> , 11(1), 38–51.
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Liu, B. (2013). Effect of first language on the use of English discourse markers by L1	Jones, C., & Carter, R. (2014). Teaching spoken discourse markers explicitly: A

Chinese speakers of English. <i>Journal of Pragmatics</i> , 45(1), 149–172.	comparison of III and PPP. <i>International Journal of English Studies</i> , 14(1), 37–54.
Xin, T. (2010). Mainstream discourse and the construction of public understanding of women’s employment. <i>Social Sciences in China</i> , 31(2), 135–149.	Cameron, D. (2010). Sex/gender, language and the new Biologism. <i>Applied Linguistics</i> , 31(2), 173–192.
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