| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Comparing English Promotional Films of Chinese and International Universities: An Interpersonal Metafunction Perspective

Yi He[1] and Fei Guo[12]✉

[1]*College of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Ocean University, Shanghai, China*
[2]*Collaborative Research Center of The Memorial Hall of the First National Congress of the CPC and Shanghai University, Shanghai, China*
Corresponding Author: Fei Guo, **E-mail**: fguo@shou.edu.cnf.godoy@uam.es

| **ABSTRACT**

Universities' English promotional films may be considered as visual representations or "name cards," in that they play crucial roles in enlarging the universities influence overseas and accelerate their process of internationalization. Based on Halliday's interpersonal meaning theory, this study compares the Mood and Modality systems between Chinese and international university promotional films (UPFs). The research found that these similarities and differences in the construction of interpersonal meaning are related to the Tenor of social interaction in Chinese and international UPFs: (1) In terms of similarities, universities act as the providers of information, while the audience is the recipient. As a result, both have constructed the image of an educational communicator and guide. (2) In terms of differences, international UPFs focus on building the role of an inspirer and motivator. In contrast, Chinese UPFs take on the roles of leader and narrator in the process of constructing interpersonal meaning.

1. Introduction

As society rapidly evolves and information technology becomes ubiquitous, universities' promotional films (hereafter UPFs) have emerged as a popular medium for institutions to bolster their international image and foster academic exchanges on a global scale. These films offer audiences insights into various aspects of the university, including its history, mission, campus life, academic accomplishments, specialties, educational resources, student body, and notable alumni (Morad, 2017). In the context of an unprecedented educational surge in China, higher education institutions are increasingly acknowledging the critical role of English promotional films in advancing international academic collaboration and exchange.

As a window to display their image and connotation, universities' English promotional films are intended to construe and express the contents of discourse, attitude of the producers and purpose of communication mainly by dint of voice-overs, which consequently forges relationships with viewers and affects the attitude and behavior of the viewers (Feng, 2011). From a linguistic perspective, this information carriers contains rich interpersonal meanings. In view of their significance, most researchers have analyzed university English promotional films from cross-cultural perspective, semiotics or multimodal perspectives, but there is relatively little research on analyzing university promotional films from the perspective of systemic functional grammar (SFG) of interpersonal meaning. As a result, this study takes the Mood and Modality system in SFG as the theoretical framework to conduct a comparative study of interpersonal meaning in Chinese and International university promotional films, in order to identify the similarities and differences in the construction of interpersonal meaning in Chinese and international university promotional films.

This study can help promotional filmmakers organize the language of the promotional films scientifically and reasonably to achieve the best international communication effects and help viewers interpret the meanings conveyed in the promotional language scientifically and enhancing their appreciation of the promotional films.

2. Researches on Universities' English promotional films

As one of the pivotal representations of an educational institution, university promotional films not only signify the institution's positioning and image but also wield a considerable influence on prospective student enrollment choices. Employing techniques akin to those used in television and film production, these films are meticulously planned, shot, and produced with a targeted approach to effectively convey the desired message to the audience (Wang, 2016). With a strong visual impact, university promotional films comprehensively and clearly showcase the institution's strengths and characteristics, allowing audiences to form distinct impressions of the university within a short span of time. Thus, they stand as one of the most efficacious means to facilitate the dissemination of the university's brand and the shaping of its image (Fritz and Smith, 2024).

Researchers in linguistics both domestically and internationally have examined university promotional films from various fields and perspectives. From a cross-cultural viewpoint, Zaidman.N. and Holmes.P. delved into the intricate cultural interpretations of producers and audiences regarding specialized texts. Through a two-year interactive project, they discovered that the production of university promotional films necessitates expanding cultural approaches within contexts into a "context-centered communication approach." This approach accentuates contextual variables and diverse understandings of culture to accommodate the potential for misinterpretations of commercial and professional texts in multicultural settings. (Zaidman and Holmes, 2009). Similarly, Xu Han conducted a multimodal analysis from a cross-cultural perspective, focusing on language and visual symbols in international promotional films from six universities in China and the United States. This study explored how international promotional films are designed multimodally while incorporating cross-cultural factors to achieve better promotional outcomes. (Xu, 2020)

In the field of semiotics, Zhang Qingrong and Feng Dakang conducted an analysis of the creative elements in the promotional films of Peking University and Yale University from the perspectives of semiotics and artistic design. Peking University employs imagery, symbols, and music to showcase its history, academic activities, and campus life. On the other hand, Yale University portrays details of student life through the form of a musical, highlighting the distinctive styles between Eastern and Western cultures in the presentation of promotional materials. (Zhang and Feng, 2012)

In recent years, research on promotional films has garnered significant attention in the field of multimodality. Liu Min conducted an in-depth analysis of multimodal metaphors in dynamic discourse, using Chinese university English promotional films as a case study (Liu, 2016). Zhou Xiaoqiang interpreted promotional films from renowned American universities, demonstrating the diversity of modal applications (Zhou, 2021). Ling Qin, Lu Xinmiao, and Shen Yaqin built upon Halliday's systemic functional grammar and Kress's visual grammar to establish new theoretical frameworks, conducting multimodal discourse analyses of promotional films from Chinese and American universities. Ling Qin's research revealed distinct characteristics in the construction of meaning between language Modality, sound Modality, and advertising discourse compared to other promotional discourses. Lu Xinmiao approached from a multimodal discourse analysis perspective, constructing a comprehensive framework based on "metalanguage function," "visual grammar," and Zhang Delu's "integrated theoretical framework." They conducted a comparative study of language modality, visual modality, and the relationships between various modalities in promotional films from the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences and Cornell University, further analyzing the similarities and differences in image construction between the two institutions. Meanwhile, Shen Yaqin discovered features of both similarity and dissimilarity in meaning construction between Chinese and American promotional films, providing linguistic insights for the production of university recruitment promotional films and opening up new perspectives for multimodal discourse research (Ling, 2019; Lu, 2021; Shen, 2022).

In the realm of examining interpersonal meanings in university promotional films, contributions have been made by scholars such as Li Aimin and Wang Xia. Li Aimin, drawing from Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar, conducted a comparative analysis of the visual interpersonal interactive meanings in English promotional films from Chinese and American universities (Kress and Van, 1996). This analysis revealed differences between China and the United States in terms of power differentials, contextual cultures, perspectives, and modalities. Building upon this foundation, Wang Xia utilized appraisal theory and visual grammar theory as analytical frameworks. They delved into the construction of interpersonal meanings in language and the interactive meanings of images in English promotional films from Chinese and British universities, highlighting both similarities and differences (Li, 2014; Wang, 2018).

As summarized above, research on interpersonal meanings primarily unfolds through the systemic functional grammar's systems of Mood, Modality, and appraisal (Martin, 2018). These systems, whether employed individually or in conjunction, serve as crucial resources for analyzing interpersonal meanings. Previous studies on interpersonal meanings in university promotional films have predominantly been multimodal inquiries, framed within theories such as appraisal theory or visual grammar theory.

Studies employing systemic functional grammar as a theoretical framework have been comparatively scarce. Furthermore, previous research has often focused on promotional films between China and the United States or China and the United Kingdom, thus limiting the scope of their conclusions to not encompass all university promotional films.

Therefore, this study opts to utilize English promotional films from 48 prestigious universities in China (designated as "Double First-Class" institutions) and 43 universities from the top 100 in the QS World University Rankings as its corpus. With the systems of Mood and Modality within systemic functional grammar as the theoretical framework, this research aims to identify, elucidate, and explicate the two pathways through which interpersonal meanings are realized in both sets of texts. By contrasting the distribution patterns and frequency of use in both datasets, this study quantitatively analyzes the commonalities and differences in their realization of interpersonal functions.

3. Theoretical Framework of Interpersonal Meaning

Represented by Halliday, the systemic functional linguistics posits three metafunctions within the language system for expressing functional meanings: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. (Halliday, 1994) Among these, the interpersonal function pertains to the interactive relationship between the speaker and the listener in the discourse context, as well as the speaker's attitude towards the content of their speech or writing (Li, 2001). In everyday life, individuals utilize the interpersonal function of language to convey interpersonal meanings, encompassing the functions of language in interpersonal interaction as well as the speaker's attitudes and judgments, thereby enabling the establishment and maintenance of various social role relationships, thus forming certain social structures.

Thompson regards interpersonal meaning as the interaction between language and its recipients, establishing relationships, shaping attitudes, and behaviors. The study of interpersonal meaning revolves around the exchange between conversational participants (Thompson, 1996). Speakers choose a role for themselves and assign one to the listener in the interaction, and dialogue progresses and evolves through continuous role selection and assignment. From a grammatical perspective, each clause achieves its illocutionary force through the selection of Mood (Li, 2002).

Therefore, interpersonal meaning refers to the expression of the speaker's identity, status, attitude, motivation, and inferences about things. It represents the "meaning potential" of the speaker as a participant and is a participatory function of language. This function enables the speaker to engage in a given situational context, express their attitudes and inferences, and attempt to influence the attitudes and behaviors of others. Additionally, this function also indicates the relationships between the roles played by the speaker or listener in the communicative process and it is realized mainly through Mood and Modality system.

3.1 Mood System

Halliday pointed out that Mood is one of the main ways to achieve interpersonal meaning and the core of information communication. It can reflect the relationship between the speaker and the listener and express what the speaker is trying to achieve by speaking. Mood indicates the speaker's choice of a role and assigns a speech role to the listener (Halliday, 2004).

The functions of statement, question, and command within discourse are intricately tied to specific grammatical structures within the Mood system. Essentially, the declarative function is typically conveyed through declarative sentences, serving to assert facts or initiate a dialogue. On the other hand, the interrogative function finds expression through interrogative sentences, reflecting the speaker's quest for information. Lastly, the imperative function is conveyed through imperative sentences, allowing the speaker to assert their stance when issuing commands, requests, or advice. This classification is detailed in Figure 3-1.
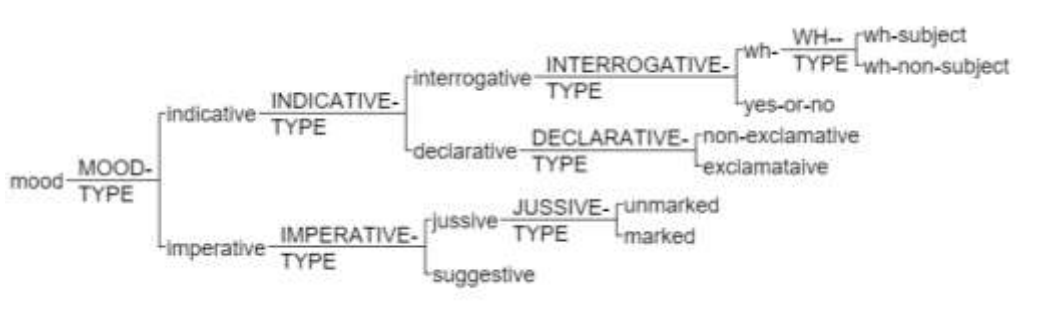

Figure 3-1 Mood System

3.2 Modality System

In *Introducing Functional Grammar*, Thompson identified Modality as a field of meaning that lies between "yes" and "no". Between the two poles, the speaker can choose different degrees of possibility to express his proposition or proposal. Meanwhile, Halliday divided Modality into two types: modalization and modulation (Thomson, 2008). The modalization or modulation of a clause hinges on the speech function of the main clauses. Specifically, when the main clause pertains to a "goods-services sentence," Modality assesses the speaker's confidence regarding the eventual success of the exchange in terms of obligation and willingness. Secondly, if the main sentence is an "information sentence", then Modality judges the reliability of information from the perspective of probability and frequency, which can also say possibility and usuality.

Halliday and Matthiessen point out, the basic distinction that determines how each type of Modality will be realized is Orientation: that is, the distinction between subjective and objective Modality, between the explicit and implicit variants (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

Modality also involves degrees and scales. "The speaker may, for example, signal a higher or lower degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition ('it will/may rain'); or higher or lower degree of pressure on the other person carryout a command ('you must/should leave')" (Thompson, 2000). Halliday establishes three basic values of Modality on the scale: high, median or low.

In summary, Modality type, orientation and value are three subsystems of Modality system. The ways to construct interpersonal meaning are shown in the following system network:
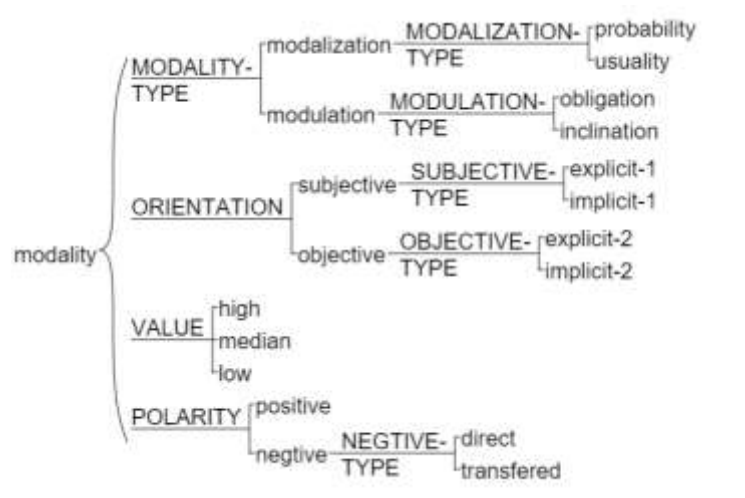

Figue3-2 Modality System

To sum up, the Mood and Modality system jointly construct the meta-function of interpersonal meaning.

4. Data and Annotation

The data in this study come from 48 prestigious universities in China (designated as "Double First-Class" institutions) and 43 international universities from the top 100 in the QS World University Rankings, employing quantitative methods for analysis. By using the UAM 6.2 version corpus tool, the research quantitatively examines the distribution of Mood and Modality resources in promotional films of universities from both domestic and international contexts.

4.1 Research data

In this study, UAM Corpus Tool 6.2 is used. It is a popular software for annotation in the field of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The process involves creating a project, importing the corpus for annotation, and defining the annotation system along with the systemic networks. Manual or automated annotation of the imported data can then be executed. This research focuses on the Mood and Modality system for the manual annotation. Following this, the annotated results can be counted, retrieved, and compared within UAM. Additionally, the findings can be exported from the tool. Figure 4-1 illustrates the texts of promotional films from Chinese and international universities as seen in UAM.

4.2 Research Annotation

The author conducts three rounds of annotation on the corpus, which is subsequently reviewed and revised by graduate students specializing in this research area. Finally, any ambiguous annotations are discussed with the author's supervisor. As a

result, the annotation outcomes are considered to be relatively objective. The annotation process in UAM is illustrated in figure 4-2.
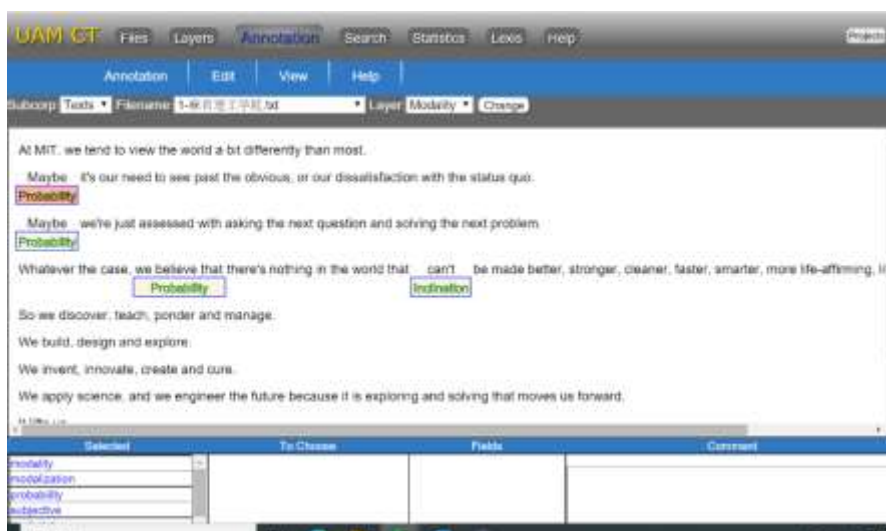

Figure 4-2 UAM Annotation

5. Results and Discussion

In this section, a comparative study of China and International UPFs separately will be conducted in the Mood and Modality systems separately. The distribution of Mood system in the two corpora will be firstly analyzed.

5.1 Comparative Analysis of Mood System in the Two Corpora

After a careful searching, the distribution of Mood types in Domestic and International universities' English promotional films are shown in Table 5-1. We take China English universities' promotional films as corpus A and International universities' films as corpus B.

Table 5-1 Distribution of Mood System in Corpus A and Corpus B

	Corpus A		Corpus B	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Declarative	1605	96.2%	821	91.4%
Interrogative	13	0.8%	26	3.0%
imperative	50	3.0%	49	5.6%
Total	1668	100.0%	896	100.0%

It can be seen from the table that among the 1668 clauses in domestic universities' English promotional films, declaratives occupy the largest proportion with its percentage reaching 96.2%. Imperative rank the second place with the percentage of 3.0% and interrogative account for the smallest proportion. Like in domestic universities promotional films, in international universities' English promotional films, declaratives constitute the largest proportion which is 91.4%, while interrogative and imperative account for 3.0% and 5.6% respectively. The following part will analyze how these Mood structures help to realize interpersonal meaning in the two kinds of English promotional films.

(a) Declarative

In English promotional films for both domestic and international universities, declarative statements are extensively employed to convey a wide array of information, encompassing details about the universities' history, faculty, cultural ethos, achievements, as well as their overarching vision and mission. For example:

(1) *Supported by the government under Project 211, Anhui University is now a comprehensive and key province university with many kinds of disciplines. (Corpus A, Anhui University)*
(2) *Edinburgh University is highly ranked worldwide. It got such strong academic reputation which is why I was so eager to come here. (Corpus B, Edinburgh University)*

The above four examples are all declaratives, by using 33 this kind of Mood structure, the writer conveys enough and necessary information to readers. As most of the declaratives are simple sentences, they can present information in a direct and brief way, which is more acceptable and can help readers gain the main points clearly and easily. What's more, declaratives serve to present information, which are like describing facts, therefore, they are more objective.

(b) Interrogative

Interrogatives are usually used to ask questions or demand something. Table 5-1 shows that there are only 0.8% interrogatives in domestic universities' English promotional films, while in international universities' English promotional films, interrogatives account for 3.0% and are adopted to provide information. For example:

(3) What is the origin of the universe?

How does the Universe evolve?

Where do we come from?

What are we?

What is the structure of matter?

Where are we going? (Corpus A, University of Science and Technology of China)

(4) How will we live in the future?

Where will we live?

How will we work?

And how will we navigate our cars in cities of the future?

How will we ensure that we don't run out of fuel?

What will robots look like?

And how will we communicate with them?

Will we travel using new modes of transportation with environmentally friendly technologies and at greater speeds than ever before?

How will we make medical diagnosis?

Which surgical techniques will we employ?

And how will we treat serious diseases like cancer? (Corpus B, Technical University of Munich)

The first set of questions from Corpus A, University of Science and Technology of China, delves into fundamental existential inquiries, reflecting a quest for understanding the origin of the universe, the evolution of the cosmos, and the nature of humanity. In contrast, the second set from Corpus B, Technical University of Munich, leans towards a pragmatic exploration of the future, considering advancements in lifestyle, urban living, technology, transportation, and healthcare. The questions evoke a sense of anticipation, reflecting a forward-looking perspective, aiming to uncover the potential trajectory of human existence and societal progress.

In this context, interrogatives serve as an initial engagement strategy to captivate readers, followed by the dissemination of valuable information. Due to the nature of non-face-to-face communication, the use of interrogative forms piques readers' interest and curiosity, fostering a sense of dialogue and immediacy. This technique not only draws readers closer to the content but also fosters a feeling of intimacy, achieving the purpose of university promotion.

(c) Imperative

The imperative Mood is the typical structure to realize the function of command.

(5) Come wo NNU and reach for your own one. (Corpus A, Nanjing Normal University)

(6) Be the person moving forward with courage and responsibility. (Corpus A, Harbin Engineering University)

(7) *Have the courage to imagine a better way and the freedom to turn what could be into what will. (Corpus B, University of California)*

(8) *To draw on the kind of deep thinking and analysis that's going on here at UCLA. (Corpus B, University of California)*

Example 5 and 6 are typical imperative Mood structures. In example 5, the writer is inviting students to come to this university while in example 6, the writer indicates that in this university people will move forward with courage and responsibility. While declaratives demand action in a euphemistic way, imperatives demand action in a more direct way with more clear purpose, in this way, they easily draw readers attention. In promotional texts for universities, the imperative sentence plays a significant role, serving the purpose of urging the audience to come to the campus and collectively strive for both individual and communal progress.

Overall, in the promotional films of both domestic and international universities, declarative sentences dominate the distribution in the Mood system, indicating that such films typically adopt a formal and authoritative tone to convey clear and direct information. However, it is worth noting that international university promotional films exhibit greater diversity in the use of Mood structures. In addition to declarative sentences, these films also contain a higher proportion of interrogative and imperative Mood structures compared to domestic promotional films.

5.2 Comparative Analysis of Modality System in Two Corpora

In addition to the Mood system, it is important to acknowledge that university promotional films also leverage the Modality system to establish and define the relationship between the universities and their viewers. Interpersonal meaning within these films is realized through three subsystems, namely Modality type, Modality orientation, and modal value. These subsystems collectively contribute to establishing the perspective, attitude, and evaluative stance of the universities towards the conveyed information, thereby shaping the nature of communication and influencing how viewers perceive, interpret, and engage with the content presented.

(1) Modality Type

As we mentioned before, Modality refers to the dimension between positive and negative polarity. Modality can be expressed by two meaning, modalization and modulation. The former refers to the judgment made by the speaker towards what (s) he says and shows the scales of probability and usuality of a proposition, while the latter expresses the scales of obligation and inclination of a proposal. The distribution of Modality types is illustrated in Table 5-2:

Table 5-2 Distribution of Modality Type in Corpus A and Corpus B

		Corpus A		Corpus B	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
modalization	probability	10	7.0%	44	20.8%
	usuality	29	20.3%	33	16.6%
modalization total		39	27.3%	73	36.7%
modulation	obligation	37	25.9%	43	20.3%
	inclination	60	46.9%	92	43.4%
modulation total		104	72.7%	135	63.7%

Based on the provided data from Table 5-2, it's apparent that Corpus B relies more on the expression of probability within the modalization category, with 20.8% of instances falling under this type, while Corpus A exhibits a relatively lower emphasis on probability at 7.0%. Meanwhile, Corpus A demonstrates a higher prevalence of usuality at 20.3% compared to Corpus B, which stands at 16.6%.

In terms of Modulation, both corpora primarily utilize instances depicting obligation, accounting for 25.9% in Corpus A and 20.3% in Corpus B. This suggests that Corpus A utilized more language that conveys a sense of necessity or duty within their promotional films.

Additionally, it is evident that both universities' promotional films predominantly express inclination within the Modulation category. In both Corpus A and Corpus B, a significant portion of clauses falls under the category of inclination, with 46.9% and

43.4% respectively. This emphasis on expression of inclination signifies a strong persuasion or encouragement aspect within the promotional content of both universities, potentially aimed at motivating the viewers to consider and engage with the content presented.

Overall, the data indicates that the two corpora demonstrate a clear similarity in their use of Modality types, both emphasizing language that expresses inclination and obligation in their promotional materials. However, Corpus A contains more clauses expressing obligation, while Corpus B contains more clauses expressing possibility.

(2) Modality orientation

Modality orientation can express speakers' attitudes and aims from the four types mentioned above. The distribution of Modality Orientation is illustrated in Table 5-3:

Table 5-3 Distribution of Modality Orientation in Corpus A and Corpus B

		Corpus A		Corpus B	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
subjective	explicit-1	2	1.4%	23	10.8%
	implicit-1	93	65.0%	150	70.8%
subjective total		95	66.4%	173	81.6%
objective	explicit-2	2	1.4%	2	0.9%
	implicit-2	46	32.2%	37	17.5%
objective total		48	33.6%	39	18.4%

Based on the provided data in Table 5-3, it is clear that there are notable distinctions in the use of Modality orientation between domestic and international universities' English promotional films.

Subjective Modality is considerably more prevalent in international UPF, accounting for 81.6% of instances, compared to 66.4% in domestic UPF. Within the subjective category, there is a significant presence of implicit orientation in both domestic and international films at 65.0% and 70.8% respectively. This suggests that both types of universities tend to rely heavily on implicit cues to convey subjective attitudes, potentially appealing to the emotions and perspectives of their audiences. However, it is evident that the international universities' films employ a much higher proportion of both explicit and implicit subjective orientations, signifying a stronger inclination to overtly express attitudes and opinions, as well as a more context-dependent or inferred approach to conveying such nuances.

In contrast, objective Modality, concerning factual statements and reality, is notably less represented in both domestic and international universities' English promotional films. The use of implicit objective orientation appears to be more prevalent in the films of domestic universities, comprising 32.2% of instances, compared to 17.5% in the films of international universities. This indicates that domestic universities are more inclined to subtly hint at factual information or present factual statements in a less overt manner within their promotional content.

In summary, the analysis of the Modality orientation in English promotional films from both domestic and international UPF indicates that both tend to use implicit Modality verbs, with explicit orientation appearing less frequently. However, international universities seem to exhibit a stronger inclination towards subjective orientation, whether explicit or implicit, while domestic universities tend to lean more towards objective implicit.

(3) Modality value

Table 5-4 Distribution of Modality Value in Corpus A and Corpus B

	Corpus A		Corpus B	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
high	39	31.2%	45	22.6%
median	56	44.8%	92	46.2%
low	29	23.2%	61	30.7%
Total	124	100.0%	198	100.0%

Based on the data in Table 5-4, In domestic UPF, the instances of median values account for the highest proportion at 44.8%, while high-value instances make up 31.2%, and low-value instances constitute 23.2% of the total.

On the other hand, in the English promotional films of international universities, the distribution is slightly different, with a greater emphasis on both median and low modal values. Specifically, there were 46.2% of clauses attributed to median values and 30.7% to low modal values, while 22.6% of clauses were associated with high values.

These findings indicate that, compared to domestic UPF, international UPF tend to use a higher proportion of median and low modal values, while domestic UPF emphasize high and median values across all three modal categories. This difference in distribution may reflect varying degrees of belief, certainty, and emphasis in the promotional discourse of domestic and international universities. The domestic UPF displays high levels of belief and certainty, skillfully utilizing emphatic language, whereas the international UPF presents lower levels of belief and uncertainty, with less frequent use of emphatic language.

5.3 Similarities and Differences in Mood and Modality System

In this section, we aim to explore the similarities and differences in the realization of interpersonal meaning in domestic and international UPFs. We will analyze the social interaction dynamics and power structures underlying the Mood and Modality systems from the perspective of Tenor. The comparison of the Mood system in Corpus A and Corpus B will be the primary focus.

(1) Similarities and Differences in Mood

In terms of similarities, the analysis above indicates that in both Chinese and International university promotional films, there is a prevalent use of declarative sentences to convey information to the audience. In terms of Mood distribution, declaratives play a dominate role in this process, indicating that this type of video usually adopts a formal and authoritative tone, aimed at delivering clear and direct information. This Mood is suitable for the medium of a promotional video because it emphasizes showcasing the university's academic achievements, facilities, curriculum, and other specific details, which enhances its persuasive power.

Tenor refers to the participants in a conversation, specifically the relationships between the speaker and the listener, or the speaker, listener, and the subject being discussed (Halliday, 1978). Tenor primarily concerns the relationships between participants in discourse, including social roles, power relations, and the nature of interaction. These relationships are dynamic and can change during the course of interaction, especially in social interactions, where the social distance, power relations, and knowledge roles between participants can all shift as the interaction progresses. From the perspective of Tenor, the declarative mood clauses typically reflect the university's authority and its guiding role towards the audience: the university conveys information to the audience in a "top-down" manner, thereby shaping an image that is both authoritative and credible. In both cases, the university acts as the information provider, while the audience is the recipient, thereby constructing the image of an educational communicator.

Considered in terms of disparity, as represented in Table 5-1, it becomes evident that promotional films originating from international universities exhibit a more diversified employment of Mood structures. In addition to declarative statements, these films incorporate a notably higher proportion of interrogative and imperative Mood structures in comparison to domestic counterparts. Notably, international UPF manifest an 8.6% adoption of diverse Mood structures, contrasting with the conservative 3.8% inclusion of imperatives and interrogatives within Chinese UPF. The increased use of interrogatives and imperatives reflects greater social interactivity and guidance in international university promotional films, emphasizing the audience's sense of involvement. Through interrogatives, international universities invite and challenge the audience's thinking;

through imperatives, they express an intention to motivate the audience to take action. Therefore, international UPFs place greater emphasis on constructing the role of a facilitator.

(2) Similarities and Differences in Modality

In terms of Modality types, international and domestic UPFs reflects their different expectations of the audience and social interaction structures. International UPF typically emphasize possibility, which is closely related to the openness, inclusivity, and exploratory spirit they convey. From a Tenor analysis, the use of Modality demonstrates international universities' invitation to the audience's thinking and encouragement to explore possibilities. By emphasizing probability, they often give the audience more freedom to choose and think, encouraging students to explore, choose, and engage. For example, phrases like "you could...", "it is possible...", and "students may..." reflect the values of self-exploration and potential development that international universities advocate. This tone also conveys a more egalitarian teacher-student relationship and a sense of participation, encouraging students to freely express themselves and achieve personal goals. Therefore, in this context, international UPFs construct the image of an inspirer.

In contrast, domestic UPF tend to focus more on obligation, emphasizing duties and responsibilities. This tone conveys a more formal and regulated guidance, reflecting a more traditional and centralized educational culture. Domestic university films often use more imperative or directive language, such as "you must...", "students should...", emphasizing the norms or obligations that students are expected to follow, conveying a sense of guidance or constraint over behavior and thought. This usage reflects the domestic universities' greater focus on discipline and collectivism, where the authority of teachers and the school is more prominent, and students are more inclined to follow the school's guidance and arrangements. Here, domestic universities mostly position themselves as leaders in talent cultivation, emphasizing the guidance of students' behaviors and thoughts, and focusing on fostering their sense of discipline and collectivism.

Despite differences in the use of Modality types between domestic and international universities, similarities exist in expressing propensity. Both employ language to guide students' behaviors and thoughts, conveying the institutions' core values and expectations. This reflects the role of educational institutions in shaping student behavior and social interaction, as both construct the image of a guide.

In terms of Modality orientation, both Domestic and International UPFs predominantly utilize subjective implicit orientations, but international universities demonstrate a higher prevalence of explicit subjective orientation. Additionally, both groups exhibit a preference for implicit objectivity, with no explicit objective orientation in their English promotional films. These findings may suggest domestic universities tend to convey the school's culture, atmosphere, and values indirectly through elements like images, backgrounds, and scenes, rather than through overly direct or explicit language. In contrast, international universities often adopt an explicit orientation, using clear language to express the school's invitation, commitment, and expectations to potential students, showcasing a more direct and confident promotional style. Here, in terms of modality orientation, domestic universities are the narrators of campus culture and international universities are the guides of their intended audience.

In terms of Modality value, while both groups share a common preference for 'median' Modality values, domestic universities have a higher prevalence of 'high' Modality values, while international universities exhibit a relatively higher proportion of 'low' Modality values. From the perspective of Tenor, domestic universities tend to use higher Modality values, emphasizing the institution's authority and confidence in its own characteristics. In contrast, international universities use relatively more lower Modality values, adopting a more open and gentle language style to establish a more equal and interactive relationship with potential students. This difference reflects the cultural and communicative variations between the two: domestic universities generally favor authoritative and assertive expressions, while international universities focus more on invitations and encouragement, using a more flexible communication approach.

To sum up, based on the above analyses, universities function as providers of information, while the audience acts as the recipients. Both domestic and international UPFs employ language to guide student behavior and thought, conveying the institutions' core values and expectations. This reflects the role of educational institutions in shaping student behavior and social interaction. As a result, both have constructed the image of an educational communicator and guide. International university promotional films exhibit stronger interactivity and motivation, emphasizing the audience's sense of participation. Therefore, international UPFs focus on building the role of an inspirer and motivator. In contrast, Chinese UPFs are more authoritative and instructive. Thus, in the process of constructing interpersonal meaning, Chinese UPFs take on the roles of leader and narrator.

6. Conclusion

This study compares the Mood and Modality systems of Chinese and international UPFs and demonstrate the similarities and differences in language usage characteristics of Chinese and international university promotional texts from the perspective of interpersonal meaning.

Research has found that in the two corpora of university promotional films (UPFs) from domestic and international universities, declarative sentences dominate the Mood distribution. However, international UPFs demonstrate a more diverse use of Mood, with a higher proportion of interrogative and imperative clauses.

In terms of the Modality type, both corpora tend to express inclination. International UPFs emphasize possibility, while domestic UPFs focus more on obligation. Regarding modality orientation, international universities display a stronger subjective tendency, whereas domestic universities exhibit a more objective inclination. In terms of modality value, both corpora lean towards mid-range modality values. However, domestic UPFs have more instances of "high" modality values than "low" ones, while international UPFs have more "low" modality values than "high" ones.

The findings suggest that these differences are related to the social interaction dynamics of Tenor in domestic and international UPFs. Universities act as the providers of information, while the audience is the recipient. Both use language to guide students' behaviors and thoughts, conveying the institutions' core values and expectations. This reflects the role of educational institutions in shaping student behavior and social interaction. As a result, both construct the image of educational communicators and guides. However, international UPFs are more interactive and guiding, emphasizing the audience's participation, thus focusing on building the role of an inspirer and motivator. In contrast, domestic UPFs place greater emphasis on authority and directive interaction, tending to position themselves as leaders and narrators.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. Primarily, the research is confined to a textual analysis, focusing exclusively on subtitles from university promotional films. This approach overlooks the multimodal nature of promotional films, where visual elements (e.g., imagery, gestures), auditory features (e.g., background music, voice modulation), and contextual factors (e.g., cultural nuances, institutional branding strategies) may significantly influence interpersonal meaning construction. Furthermore, the scope of the corpora—limited to Chinese and international UPFs—may not fully capture regional or institutional diversity, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could extend this work by adopting a multimodal framework to investigate how linguistic features interact with visual and auditory resources to shape interpersonal meaning in UPFs.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. ·

References:

[1]   Fritz, A. M., & Smith, A. M. (2024). Marketing higher education on YouTube: a content analysis of college promotional films. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 1-22.
[2]   Feng, D., & Wignell, P. (2011). Intertextual voices and engagement in TV advertisements. *Visual Communication*, *10*(4), 565-588.
[3]   Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar.* Beijing: International Language Teaching and Research Press.
[4]   Halliday, M.A.K., Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Oxford University Press,
[5]   Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Edward Arnold.
[6]   Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design.* London: Routledge.
[7]   Martin, J.R. (1992). *English Text: system and structure*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
[8]   Martin, J. R. (2018). Interpersonal meaning: Systemic functional linguistics perspectives. *Functions of Language*, *25*(1), 2-19.
[9]   Morad Abadi, O. (2017). The role of rankings in the marketing undertaken by universities 9through their institutional websites.
[10]   Thompson, G. (1996). *Introducing Functional Grammar*. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc.
[11]   Thompson, G. (2008). *Introducing Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold.
[12]   Li, Z. (2001). The expansion of the interpersonal meaning framework in functional grammar. *Foreign Language Research*, (1), 48–54.
[13]   Li, Z. (2002). Several issues on mood as the "syntax" of interpersonal meaning. *Foreign Language Research*, (4), 33–39.
[14]   Ling, Q. (2019). *Multimodal discourse analysis of university promotional videos based on systemic functional grammar* (Master's thesis). Shanghai International Studies University.
[15]   Li, A. (2014). *A comparative analysis of the construction of visual interpersonal interaction meaning in Chinese and American university English promotional videos* (Master's thesis). University of International Business and Economics.
[16]   Lu, X. (2021). *A comparative study on the construction of university images in Chinese and American university promotional videos from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis: Taking the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences and Cornell University as examples* (Master's thesis). Tianjin Polytechnic University.
[17]   Liu, M. (2016). *A cognitive study of multimodal metaphors in dynamic discourse: A case study of Chinese university English promotional videos* (Master's thesis). China University of Petroleum (East China).
[18]   Shen, Y. (2022). A *comparative study of Chinese and American university enrollment promotional videos based on a comprehensive multimodal discourse analysis framework* (Master's thesis). Wuhan University of Technology.

[19]   Wang, L., & Feng, X. (2016). Research on the content of university image promotional videos. *Journal of News Knowledge*, (9), 82–84.

[20]   Wang, X. (2018). *A comparative study of interpersonal interaction meaning in Chinese and British university English promotional videos from a multimodal perspective* (Master's thesis). Southwest Petroleum University.

[21]   Xu, H. (2020). *A multimodal analysis of international promotional videos of Chinese and American universities from a cross-cultural perspective* (Master's thesis). Dalian University of Technology.

[22]   Zhou, X. (2021). *A multimodal discourse analysis of American university promotional videos*. Beijing University of Technology.

[23]   Zhang, Q., & Feng, D. (2012). Exploring the creativity of promotional videos of Peking University and Yale University from a semiotic perspective. *Decoration*, (10), 64–65.