IJLLT

AL-KINDI CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

From Engagement to Stance Shifting: A Functional Linguistic Account of Power Deconstruction in Workplace-themed Stand-up Comedy

Zhixin Deng
School of English and International Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, China
Corresponding Author: Zhixin Deng, **E-mail**: 202420201002@bfsu.edu.cn

| ABSTRACT

This study explores how Chinese workplace-themed stand-up comedians employ linguistic resources to negotiate stance and subtly engage with institutional power through humor. Drawing on a revised Engagement framework within Appraisal Theory, the analysis focuses on dialogic positioning in routines that combine personal narrative, social commentary, and audience interaction. The corpus consists of 21 performance segments from *King of Comedy: Stand-up Season*, featuring comedians from diverse occupational backgrounds. A tentative contribution is the identification of Institutional Recontextualization as a potential genre-specific engagement resource, which involves the ironic redeployment of authoritative or bureaucratic discourse to create alternative evaluative frames. The findings suggest that performers combine Institutional Recontextualization with conventional engagement strategies to enact stance shifts in workplace-themed stand-up comedy. Four recurrent patterns were observed in the data: Identity Reconstruction, Value Inversion, Responsibility Displacement, and Collective Alignment, which help comedians negotiate speaker roles and engage audiences in implicit critiques of workplace hierarchies. Although based on a limited dataset, the findings suggest that comedians achieve subtle critiques of workplace power by deploying engagement resources to shift stance. It further suggests that moderated humor and reflective stance-taking may enhance student engagement and wellbeing in educational contexts.

| KEYWORDS

Stance Shifting; Power Deconstruction; Appraisal Theory; Workplace-themed Stand-up Comedy; Humor

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

1. Introduction

Workplace-themed stand-up comedy has become a focal point of public discourse on Chinese social media. Clips from nationally televised variety shows such as *Rock & Roast* and *King of Comedy* routinely circulate on *Weibo* and *RedNote*, where they elicit extensive user commentary and debate centered on labor conditions, managerial surveillance, and employee identity. As Chen and Gao (2023) note, stand-up comedy in China often relies on transgressive or semi-transgressive rhetorical strategies that enable performers to articulate otherwise sensitive critiques of organizational hierarchies and everyday workplace frustrations. In digital contexts, these humorous expressions are further amplified as users collectively construct counter-narratives, voice shared grievances, and utilize humor as a cultural resource to mitigate structural pressures. At the organizational level, empirical evidence from Yuan (2021) indicates that shared humor styles between leaders and employees can enhance stress relief and group cohesion, while simultaneously reinforcing power distance. Within this evolving media ecology, workplace humor thus serves as both a symbol of emotional alignment and a challenging practice through which ordinary employees reframe and contest the power dynamics embedded in contemporary Chinese work settings.

Humor, as a powerful discursive resource for negotiating social roles and critiquing authority, has long been a focus of interdisciplinary inquiry (Holmes & Marra, 2002; Mulkay, 1988). Humor research in applied linguistics has increasingly focused on how comedians use language to perform identity and negotiate power. Stand-up comedy, in particular, serves as a key site for

such inquiry due to its blend of scriptedness and spontaneity. Studies have examined humor through stancetaking (Du Bois, 2007), multimodal interaction (Vásquez & Aslan, 2021), and face-threatening acts (Daso-Akintunde et al., 2024). Nigerian comedians, for example, use hedges and referent power to mitigate offense while maintaining humor (Daso-Akintunde et al., 2024). Workplace humor has been shown to both reinforce and challenge authority (Holmes & Marra, 2002). However, few studies have explored how Chinese comedians use workplace-themed stand-up to deconstruct institutional power. This study addresses that gap by analyzing stance-shifting and power negotiation in Chinese workplace-themed comedy.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Stance Shifting

Stance in linguistics refers to the ways speakers or writers express attitudes, evaluations, commitments, and levels of certainty towards propositions, their interlocutors, or themselves within discourse (Du Bois, 2007; Englebretson, 2007). It is inherently social and interactive, not merely individual. Stance shifting refers to the dynamic process whereby communicators strategically recalibrate their expressed stance during interaction or across texts. Such recalibration serves to manage interpersonal alignment, negotiate identity, mitigate face threats, and respond to contextual demands (Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009). Du Bois's (2007) stance triangle provides the theoretical basis, highlighting that every stance act simultaneously evaluates an object, positions the speaker, and aligns or disaligns with others. Investigating stance and stance shifting is therefore essential for understanding how language constructs social meaning, negotiates power relations, and achieves pragmatic goals beyond literal content.

Over the past decade, research on stance-shifting has moved from treating stance as a relatively static attitudinal overlay to conceptualizing it as a continuously negotiated, sequentially emergent property of interaction (Kiesling, 2021). Drawing primarily on Du Bois' (2007) stance triangle and subsequent refinements, scholars have documented how speakers how speakers shift between different participation roles (Goffman, 1981), adjust their knowledge positioning (Kärkkäinen, 2006), and regulate emotional stance (Goodwin, 2007) in real time. Corpus-based studies reveal that such shifts are routinely cued by highly grammaticalized discourse markers, for example, "I mean" and "just sayin" in English (Kiesling, 2020), turn-initial na in Mandarin (Yang, 2023), and clause-final tteyuu in Japanese (Kaneyasu, 2024), each of which has followed a path from propositional to interactional meaning. Parallel work within conversation analysis demonstrates that divergence along epistemic, deontic, or affective axes is systematically managed through repair, formulation, and multimodal alignment to preserve progressivity and relational equilibrium (Logren et al., 2025). Institutional settings have provided fertile ground for extending these insights. In courtroom openings, attorneys oscillate between the footings of storyteller, interlocutor, and animator, covertly guiding jurors' moral evaluation while ostensibly adhering to evidentiary constraints (Chaemsaithong, 2014). Medical consultations reveal how clinicians and patients trade off epistemic authority and affective affiliation, often offsetting misalignment on one axis by strategic convergence on another (Logren et al., 2025). Meanwhile, translation studies have shown that translators routinely reentextualize source-language stance through modal recalibration, demodalization, or explicitation, thereby repositioning authorial voice to meet target-culture expectations of objectivity and politeness (Huang & Li, 2023; Espunya, 2024).

While linguistic research on stance shifting has explored its social and interactive nature across various contexts, from real-time interaction to institutional settings, stand-up comedy, a genre characterized by rapid role transitions, immediate audience engagement, and dense multimodal cues, remains comparatively underexplored in this research tradition. Existing work on humor and performance has noted that stand-up comedy constitutes a distinctive sociocultural arena in which performers articulate social critique, negotiate cultural meanings, and manage audience expectations in real time (Primbs & Dawson, 2024). Chu (2024) further highlights the inherently dynamic and risk-laden nature of live stand-up settings, where comedians navigate uncertainty and deploy surprise as part of their interactional strategy, shaping both their performed persona and emergent stance. These insights underscore the analytical value of stand-up comedy for examining how stance is continuously produced, adjusted, and evaluated in performance. Building on this foundation, this study therefore examines stance shifting in stand-up comedy, investigating how comedians achieve audience alignment through linguistic means.

2.2 Developments and Applications of Appraisal Theory with a Focus on Engagement

Appraisal Theory was developed in the 1990s by James R. Martin and his associates as a response to the observation that Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) lacked fine-grained resources for analyzing interpersonal stance in discourse (Martin & White, 2005, p. 7; Whittaker et al., 2009, p. 2). Martin and Rose (2007, p. 25) state its remit concisely: "Appraisal is concerned with evaluation–the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned." The system is located at the discourse-semantic stratum of SFL and is organized into three complementary subsystems: Attitude (feelings, ethical judgements, aesthetic valuations), Engagement (dialogic positioning and the sourcing of voices), and Graduation (scaling of intensity and categorization sharpness) (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 33−38). From its inception, Appraisal has been treated not as a separate theory but as a description of evaluative resources within the broader theoretical architecture of SFL (Martin, 2017, p. 22). Over the past two decades it has become a standard framework for the analysis of evaluative meaning across registers such as media discourse, education, and academic writing (Bednarek, 2006; Hood, 2004).

The Engagement subsystem, originating within Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework, offers a robust analytical lens for examining how writers and speakers manage the polyphony of voices that surround any act of evaluation. By distinguishing monoglossic assertions from heteroglossic resources, which strategically contract or expand dialogic space, Engagement illuminates the nuanced management of alternative viewpoints. This framework has proven adaptable across diverse contexts. In institutional translation, studies such as Munday's (2015) analysis of UN and EU texts reveal how shifts in reporting verbs recalibrate authorial commitment, subtly guiding target audiences toward preferred interpretations. Cross-linguistic research further underscores Engagement's ideological dimensions. Shokouhi and Akbarzadeh (2017) demonstrate that Persian op-ed writers frequently employ contractive strategies, such as endorsement and countering, to assert national narratives on Iran's nuclear program, whereas their U.S. counterparts favor expansive resources such as entertain to acknowledge competing perspectives, effectively functioning as discursive shifters that realign texts with target-culture values.

Studies of academic writing also reveal engagement patterns shaped by disciplinary norms. Geng and Wharton (2021) observe that discussion sections across L1 backgrounds rely on contractive disclaim to carve argumentative niches while hedging claims through expansive entertain. This pattern, showing minimal divergence between L1 Chinese and English writers, suggests disciplinary enculturation supersedes L1 rhetorical preferences. Moreover, Esmaili and Abdollahzadeh (2024) integrate Engagement with Hunston's (1993) conflict model, documenting how Iranian and Anglo-American doctoral students use contractive counter and distance to affirm original findings while expansively acknowledging rival positions.

Media and digital discourse studies further validate Engagement's explanatory power. Yao and Ngai (2022) identify how contractive judgment via pronouncing and disclaiming in Weibo COVID-19 posts drives user engagement more effectively than affective stance, highlighting its persuasive utility in crisis communication. Meanwhile, Mayr and Statham (2021) note that Facebook commenters leverage contractive social sanction to condemn offenders while using distance to disalign from media narratives, with multimodal analysis confirming how engagement resources amplify evaluative force through visual co-articulation. Beyond traditional text-reader dynamics, Armaselu's (2022) user-response research reveals distinct engagement profiles: skeptical users over-rely on deny and counter, while enthusiastic users prefer concur and endorse, with sentiment scores bridging linguistic analysis and UX metrics.

While existing research demonstrates Engagement's utility for analyzing stance and power negotiation in serious institutional, academic, and public discourses, its application to humorous genres remains underdeveloped, particularly concerning power dynamics. Workplace-themed stand-up comedy, with its ritualized subversion, offers a unique yet unexplored site for examining how engagement resources facilitate humorous stance-shifting and potentially subtler forms of power negotiation. Given humor's capacity to reframe hierarchies through strategic dialogic management, a functional linguistic analysis of Engagement in this context may illuminate how power relations are navigated, and possibly reconfigured, within comedic performance.

3. Methods
3.1 Modified Taxonomy of Engagement Resources for Workplace-themed Stand-up Comedy

This study draws on the Engagement subsystem within Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), with an emphasis on adapting it to the performative and highly dialogic context of workplace-themed stand-up comedy. In this genre, humor is not only a communicative tool but also a means of social critique, identity negotiation, and power deconstruction. Therefore, a genre-sensitive reconfiguration of the original engagement taxonomy is proposed.

The Engagement subsystem within Appraisal Theory conceptualizes evaluation as a fundamentally dialogic process through which speakers position themselves in relation to prior, potential, or alternative voices (Martin & White, 2005). It distinguishes between monoglossic and heteroglossic formulations. Monoglossic utterances present propositions as self-contained and voice-neutral, whereas heteroglossic utterances explicitly invoke, anticipate, or negotiate other voices (Martin & White, 2005). Within heteroglossia, two orientations structure dialogic positioning. Dialogic contraction works to exclude or suppress alternative voices, while dialogic expansion works to open space for alternative perspectives. In line with this model, Engagement can be operationalized at a second level of delicacy through four core categories: Proclaim and Disclaim under dialogic contraction, and Entertain and Attribute under dialogic expansion. This level of detail has been consistently adopted in empirical studies because it retains theoretical fidelity while ensuring analytic feasibility and coding reliability. For example, Breeze (2016) demonstrates how newspaper editorialists strategically deploy both proclaim and disclaim resources to negotiate alignment with readers, while Trnavac and Põldvere (2024) apply the same four-way taxonomy to examine evaluative positioning in fake news corpora. Together, such studies confirm the analytical robustness and cross-genre applicability of this mid-level engagement classification.

Given the rapid pace and high stance flexibility of stand-up comedy, this study adopts these four categories as the primary analytical framework. More fine-grained subcategorization (e.g., distinguishing concur, pronounce, or endorse within Proclaim) was intentionally avoided, as such micro-distinctions often yield low distinguishability in naturally occurring performance data and introduce unnecessary coding ambiguity. Methodological work on Appraisal annotation has cautioned that increasing sub-category delicacy tends to decrease annotator reliability due to heightened subjectivity (Fuoli, 2018). Research on humor performance likewise suggests that mid-level engagement distinctions offer adequate analytical resolution for capturing

systematic patterns of stance management in comedic discourse (see Cela et al., 2024). Limiting the taxonomy to these four categories therefore strikes an appropriate balance between theoretical adequacy and analytical consistency for stand-up comedy data.

At the same time, the genre-specific characteristics of stand-up comedy bring into focus a recurrent rhetorical pattern not adequately captured by the existing engagement categories. To address this, the present study introduces an additional subtype under dialogic expansion: institutional recontextualization. This resource involves the ironic redeployment of recognizable institutional, bureaucratic, or expert discourses within incongruent everyday contexts. Unlike original entertain, which signals epistemic tentativeness, or attribute, which foregrounds an external voice for alignment negotiation, institutional recontextualization expands the dialogic space by invoking authoritative scripts in order to expose, destabilize, or ridicule their ideological force. Its distinctiveness lies in how institutional authority is reproduced only to be immediately reframed, generating a multilayered evaluative stance unavailable through standard entertain or attribute. For instance, when the performer describes a supervisor's justification for extreme overtime, "you studied philosophy—'existence is reasonable'!", the comedic effect lies in recontextualizing a classic philosophical maxim as managerial discourse. The institutional voice (academic philosophy) is not cited to report a view but is ironically displaced to reveal its absurdity when weaponized to legitimize exploitative labor norms. This recontextualization widens the audience's interpretive space by inviting recognition of the original authoritative framework while simultaneously undermining it.

Research on the humorous redeployment of institutional and authoritative discourses provides empirical grounding for treating such recontextualizing practices as a recognizable rhetorical pattern. Studies of parody in institutional language (D'Errico & Poggi, 2016) and of intertextual stylization in humour (Tsakona & Chovanec, 2020) demonstrate that performers routinely exaggerate, recast, or distort authoritative voices to produce pragmatic effects such as distancing, critical reframing, and stance realignment. These findings suggest that institutional recontextualization captures recurrent expansion-based strategies that are not sufficiently accounted for by the existing categories of entertain or attribute. Incorporating this subtype thus extends the Engagement framework while remaining consistent with its theoretical orientation. The revised classification adopted in this study is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Modified Engagement System for Stand-up Comedy Analysis (adapted from Martin & White, 2005)

Level	Category	Subtype	Definition	Illustrative Example
Monogloss	–	–	Presents propositions as self-contained assertions with no acknowledgment of alternative positions.	"Safety comes first."
Heterogloss	Contract	Disclaim	Rejects, replaces, or challenges a projected alternative through negation or countering.	"If you can't work, then leave."
		Proclaim	Asserts strong speaker commitment, thereby suppressing dialogic alternatives.	"I'll be a fresh graduate even if I starve."
	Expand	Entertain	Opens dialogic space by presenting propositions as subjective, tentative, or one among alternatives.	"If your business trips are just 'business trips', mine should be called 'exile'."
		Attribute	Attributes a view to an external source, thereby inviting but not endorsing alternative positions.	"My counselor said, 'Not finding a job now has its perks'."
		Institutional Recontextualization (proposed)	Recycles or stylizes institutional, bureaucratic, or professional discourses to create an alternative interpretive frame, often for humorous critique.	"you studied philosophy – 'existence is reasonable'!"

3.2 Data Description and Research Questions

The corpus of this study consists of workplace-themed stand-up comedy performances selected from the first season of *King of Comedy: Stand-up Season*. In adherence to academic ethics, all personal identifiers of the performers have been anonymized to safeguard privacy. The corpus comprises 21 performance segments delivered by 14 comedians with diverse

occupational backgrounds, including environmental engineers, comedy screenwriters, forensic doctors, philosophy graduates, grassroots civil servants, human resources specialists, and food delivery riders, among others. With a total word count of approximately 15,000 words, the corpus serves as a foundational dataset for exploring stance shifting and power deconstruction in workplace humor.

Given workplace-themed stand-up comedy's complexity, the following three questions examine its linguistic mechanisms: stance-shifting devices and occupational variations, humorous-stance interactions in critiquing workplace power, and functional-linguistic mechanisms of power deconstruction as entertainment, with Chinese contextual specifics.

(1) What engagement resources and stance-shifting strategies are employed in workplace-themed stand-up comedy?

(2) How does the interaction of engagement resources and stance-shifting strategies linguistically transform workplace-power critique into socially acceptable entertainment?

(3) What implications does this mechanism hold for contemporary Chinese culture, especially in pedagogical contexts?

3.3 Data Processing and Categorization

The identification and classification of the data were conducted through a multi-stage qualitative procedure integrating both top-down and bottom-up reasoning. Following transcription and segmentation of the 21 performance excerpts into analytically meaningful units, all instances of evaluative or dialogically salient language were first annotated with reference to the modified Engagement system introduced in Section 3.1. This initial, theory-informed coding served primarily as a exploratory conceptual guide rather than a fixed typology.

Subsequent rounds of close reading focused on detecting recurrent patterns in how performers reconfigured speaker roles, evaluative authority, and audience alignment across narrative sequences. Through recursive comparison and grouping, several regularly co-occurring configurations of engagement resources and stance-shift strategies emerged from the data. These patterns, rather than being imposed in advance, represent bottom-up generalizations about how stance is dynamically managed in workplace-themed stand-up comedy.

To refine the classification, each emergent pattern was systematically cross-examined against the dialogic functions expressed in context, ensuring that the categories captured both formal engagement resources and their discourse-pragmatic effects. On this basis, four recurrent stance-shift types were identified: Identity Reconstruction, Value Inversion, Responsibility Displacement, and Collective Alignment. Table 2 summarizes these patterns and maps them to engagement resources.

Table 2 Stance-shift Patterns Identified from Corpus and Their Engagement Mappings

Stance-shift Type	Dominant Engagement Strategy	Function
Identity Reconstruction	Entertain + Institutional Recontextualization + Proclaim	Rejecting imposed identities and constructing ironic, self-negating, or hyperbolic self-positions
Value Inversion	Disclaim + Entertain	Undermining dominant ideologies by inverting their moral logic, often through parody
Responsibility Displacement	Attribute + Disclaim	Projecting an institutional voice (corporate, bureaucratic, managerial) before contesting or undermining its authority
Collective Alignment	Entertain + Institutional Recontextualization	Amplifying shared experience to build audience solidarity and co-membership

4. Analysis

4.1 Distributional Overview of Engagement Resources and Stance-shifting Strategies

This study draws on the Engagement subsystem within Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), with an emphasis on how comedians discursively position themselves and their audiences in workplace-themed stand-up comedy. To assess this, a manual annotation was conducted across 21 performance segments from *King of Comedy: Stand-up Season*, identifying a total of 485 instances of engagement resources and 130 instances of stance-shifting strategies, based on the revised taxonomy developed in Section 3. The quantitative results presented in Table 3 reveal distinct rhetorical patterns that underpin the genre's critical and humorous functions.

Table 3 Frequency of Engagement Resources and Stance Shifts across 21 Performances

Category	Subtype	Definition	Frequency
Engagement Resources	Monogloss	Presents propositions as self-contained assertions with no acknowledgment of alternative positions.	65
	Disclaim	Rejects, replaces, or challenges a projected alternative through negation or countering.	88
	Proclaim	Asserts strong speaker commitment, thereby suppressing dialogic alternatives.	61
	Entertain	Opens dialogic space by presenting propositions as subjective, tentative, or one among alternatives.	86
	Attribute	Attributes a view to an external source, thereby inviting but not endorsing alternative positions.	155
	Institutional Recontextualization	Recycles or stylizes popular cultural discourses to create an alternative interpretive frame, often for humorous critique.	30
	Total Engagement Resources	—	485
Stance Shifts	Identity Reconfiguration	Rejecting imposed identities and constructing ironic, self-negating, or hyperbolic self-positions	43
	Value Inversion	Undermining dominant ideologies by inverting their moral logic, often through parody	46
	Responsibility Shift	Projecting an institutional voice (corporate, bureaucratic, managerial) before contesting or undermining its authority	16
	Collective Alignment	Amplifying shared experience to build audience solidarity and co-membership	25
	Total Stance Shifts	—	130

Most notably, the Attribute category emerges as the predominant engagement resource, accounting for 155 instances, surpassing the frequency of any other single subtype. It can be observed that comedians consistently attribute statements, beliefs, or absurd behaviors to external sources such as managerial figures, human resources policies, or corporate discourse. Through this discursive practice, comedians construct a dialogic space wherein critique is mediated via quotation rather than direct assertion, enabling the ridicule of institutional illogic while preserving plausible deniability. This rhetorical technique not only distances performers from the content of critique but also facilitates audience recognition of, and emotional resonance with, shared experiences of workplace irrationality.

Following Attribute, Disclaim (88 instances) and Entertain (86 instances) represent the next most prevalent engagement resources. Their elevated frequencies indicate that comedians actively negotiate interpretive meaning by rejecting anticipated counterarguments or societal expectations via Disclaim while concurrently opening interpretive possibilities for the audience via Entertain. This underscores the interactive essence of stand-up comedy. Performers maintain narrative control while inviting the co-construction of meaning with the audience. In contrast, Monogloss (65 instances) and Proclaim (61 instances) appear with relatively low frequency, reflecting the restrained use of direct, unqualified assertions, typically deployed to establish identity markers or set up punchlines rather than to dominate the discursive space.

With respect to stance-shifting strategies, Value Inversion (46 instances) and Identity Reconfiguration (43 instances) stand out as the primary tactics. These findings underscore a coherent model of ideological critique. Specifically, comedians reverse the conventional moral and logical norms of occupational life. For example, by embracing laziness traditionally discouraged in

professional settings, challenging mainstream productivity culture, or reframing failure as a positive outcome, comedians expose the inherent absurdities in workplace expectations. Meanwhile, comedians also restructure their self-identities by rejecting assigned roles (e.g., "the loyal employee") and adopting ironic, self-deprecating identities (e.g., "the exhausted intern", "the unwilling team player"). Such personae align with the audience's lived experiences of workplace insecurity and disconnection, fostering relatable critiques of occupational norms.

The relatively lower frequencies of Collective Alignment (25 instances) and Responsibility Shift (16 instances) do not indicate insignificance but rather strategic deployment. Collective Alignment is utilized selectively to cultivate collective solidarity around shared workplace dissatisfactions, often functioning as emotional highlights within comedic routines. Responsibility Shift, though infrequent, exhibits high rhetorical efficacy when employed. It involves the momentary adoption of institutional authority's voice, followed by immediate undermining of that authority, creating distinct discursive contrasts that amplify critical impact.

Collectively, the data demonstrate that workplace-themed stand-up comedy is predicated on dialogic positioning and ideological undermining. Comedians employ attribution to externalize critique, use Disclaim and Entertain to regulate audience reception, and adopt Value Inversion and Identity Reconfiguration to challenge dominant labor ideologies. These tactics are further complemented by the strategic use of Collective Alignment and institutional voice mimicry to enhance rhetorical impact. These patterns collectively illustrate how humor operates as a nuanced discursive instrument for negotiating power dynamics, identity formation, and resistant practices in the contemporary workplace.

4.2 Illustrative Analysis of Engagement and Stance-shifting Strategies

This section presents two full-text stand-up routines to illustrate how comedians use engagement resources and stance-shifting strategies to critique workplace power while maintaining humor. The analysis focuses on how the interaction of these resources transforms potentially confrontational workplace critique into socially acceptable entertainment, showing how performers deploy engagement resources alongside stance-shifting patterns to negotiate authority, identity, and audience alignment.

Example 1 Zhai as an Environmental Engineer

大家好，我刚步入社会第一份工作是一个环保工程师，主要负责就把咱们人类在城市里产生这个垃圾、粪便、剩饭剩菜送到咱们人类永远看不见的地方，所以一般咱们管打工人叫社畜牛马，我不是，我属于那个社大肠杆菌，我属于分解者。我那种出差的地址，朋友们，就特别偏僻，偏僻到什么程度，就是连人类都看不见。如果你们平时出差叫出差，在这我平时出差应该叫流放，我永远忘不了我第一次出差那个地址是我领导用 word 文档给我发过来的。地图上标记不到那个地方。他说翟你第一次出差，咱先去江苏省徐州市沛县安国镇朱王庄村口向西走 3.5 公里，找到一个加油站，再向苞米地方向走 2.5 公里，遇见联络人徐工。使劲询问。

20 年夏天我巡视现场，看到一个工地大哥，他一边动电焊，一边抽烟，我就过去批评他。我说能不能干，不让抽烟，不能干就走。我离他就大约三米，我耳后就传来了特别不和谐的声音。我小时候如果跟别人打仗没打过人家，让我爸听见了，我爸绝对揍我第二遍。我们老翟家的家训就是 Don't argue, just fight. 我当时没有任何犹豫，一拳就打在大哥脸上了，整场战斗就此拉开了序幕，特别的激烈，朋友们激烈到什么程度，就整个工地现场都充满着我的哀嚎。真的衷心给各位一个建议，遇见工地大哥生气，跑。我打大哥那一下就是我碰到大哥的最后一下。我躺在地上安全帽从来没那么有用过，大哥甚至一边抽烟一边揍的我，我一边躺地下一边求饶我说咱错了，再也不敢了，再也不敢了。我们老翟的家训今天就改了 Love and Peace, forever. 最后衷心给各位一个建议就是工地动电焊确实不能抽烟，安全第一。

Hello everyone. My first job after graduating was as an environmental engineer. What do I mainly do? I'm in charge of taking all the garbage, sewage, and leftover food produced by humans in the city and transporting it to places we'll never see. So usually, we call office workers "corporate livestock" or "cattle and horses", but I'm not that—I'm like a "social Escherichia coli", a decomposer. The places I go on business trips, friends, are extremely remote. How remote? So remote that not even humans can be seen. If your business trips are just "business trips", mine should be called "exile". I'll never forget my first business trip address, which my boss sent me via a Word document. It wasn't marked on any map. He said, "Zhai, for your first trip, let's go to Xuzhou, Jiangsu—3.5 kilometers west of Zhuwangzhuang Village, Anguo Town, Pei County. Find a gas station, then walk 2.5 kilometers toward the cornfield, and you'll meet contact person Master Xu. Ask around hard."

One summer in 2020, I was inspecting the site and saw a worker welding while smoking. I went over to scold him: "Can you do your job properly? No smoking here. If you can't, leave." I was about three meters away when I heard an unfriendly voice behind me. When I was a kid, if I lost a fight and my dad found out, he'd beat me again. Our Zhai family motto was: "Don't argue, just fight." I didn't hesitate—I punched the guy in the face, and the whole battle began. How intense was it? The entire construction site was filled with my wailing. Sincerely, here's advice: If a construction worker gets angry, run. That punch was the last time I touched him. Lying on the ground, my safety helmet never felt more useful. He even kept smoking while hitting me. I begged: "Brother, I'm wrong! Never again, never again!" Our Zhai family motto now? "Love and Peace. Forever." Finally, sincere advice: You really shouldn't smoke while welding—safety first.

As Example 1 shows, Zhai's routine exemplifies the strategic deployment of engagement resources and stance-shifting strategies to render workplace critique humorous and socially acceptable. Monogloss establishes a factual baseline ("I'm in

charge of taking all the garbage, sewage, and leftover food…"), anchoring the narrative in a credible labor context that allows subsequent exaggeration to be perceived as comedic rather than purely fictional. Over this foundation, Entertain and Identity Reconstruction exaggerate and reframe Zhai's occupational role ("I'm like a social Escherichia coli"), transforming the marginal status of manual labor into a source of comic identification, fostering audience alignment, and setting up a critical yet playful lens through which institutional absurdities are interpreted.

Exaggerated descriptions of the remoteness of work assignments and bureaucratic procedures ("3.5 km west of Zhuwangzhuang Village…mine should be called exile") function through Entertain and Institutional Recontextualization, while Disclaim enables Value Inversion, indirectly subverting hierarchical expectations without direct confrontation. By presenting authoritative voices and institutional procedures only to invert or mock them, Zhai creates a safe space for critique that the audience can perceive as ironic commentary rather than personal attack. Attribution of external voices ("He said…") further allows Responsibility Displacement, projecting institutional authority before undermining it, reinforcing the comic effect while preserving relational alignment with the audience.

The routine's climactic transformation, rephrasing the confrontational family motto ("Don't argue, just fight") into a humorous peace slogan ("Love and Peace. Forever"), illustrates the combined operation of Institutional Recontextualization, Value Inversion, and Identity Reconstruction. This contrast of violent escalation and comic de-escalation not only generates humor but also signals a re-evaluation of workplace hierarchies, masculinity, and personal agency. Overall, Zhai's performance demonstrates that engagement resources and stance-shifting strategies operate interactively: exaggeration, mediated institutional voices, and ironic self-positioning are coordinated to linguistically transform critical commentary on labor conditions into socially acceptable, entertaining discourse.

Example 2 Yu as a Philosophy Graduate

我是去年大学毕业的，我大学专业学的是哲学。我毕业的时候，我辅导员还劝我乐观一点，说祥宇，你暂时找不到工作这个事呢，它也有好处。你就可以刚好保留应届生干净的身份。我光有这个身份有啥用呀？同学聚会人家说我现在大厂上班。五险一金，顶格。我说那怎么了，我可是应届生，你已经跟资本同流合污了，我还是清清白白。有些人活着他已经"死"了，而我就算饿死，我也是应届生。我墓志铭上就写于祥宇，他的一生，是应届的一生，没给资本出过一分力。

我一开始也干过补习老师，教小升初一对一。所以来上课的都是些什么家里开公司的，或者拆二代的有钱小孩。搞得我就没有任何立场劝他们好好学习。我说你现在不好好学习，那长大以后可就只能出国留学了。你难道希望以后跟你同学一样，就当一辈子普普通通的房东吗？我求求你了，你就当是为了我学，你让老师挣两个钱吧！后来补习老师这条赛道就没了嘛，然后又去了一个互联网大厂实习，那种大厂嘛，就是经常干到一两点，也没有加班费。我说领导这么干，我实在受不了了，领导说这怎么了，这很正常啊！祥宇你学哲学的呀，存在即合理啊！当时给我哲学世界干崩溃了，我学了这么多年，从来没有想到过一件事的存在，它都不合法，但就合理啊！这些公司不要脸的地方就是裁员撕 offer。只要给了点赔偿金，就都合法，但你还是会本能的觉得不合理，大家想要的就是个确定感。你上学上班，人生慢慢走向正轨，现在就是会有人突然把你正轨毁了，然后跟你说那你现在自由了，你的人生不是轨道，是旷野。那才是你牛马该去的地方。我就看着那帮同学，蹲在那找工作呀，我都想说要实在不行就都来干脱口秀吧！我们这边今年两家大厂都在扩招，既然在哪都被当作笑话，那咱至少可以 Stand up。

I graduated from college last year, and my major was philosophy. When I graduated, my counselor tried to cheer me up: "Yu, not finding a job for now has its perks—you can keep your clean identity as a fresh graduate." What is the usage of this identity? At a class reunion, someone said, "I work at a big tech company with full social security and housing fund." I said, "So what? I'm still a fresh graduate. You've already colluded with capital, but I'm still pure and clean." Some people are alive but already "dead", while I'll be a fresh graduate even if I starve. My epitaph will read: "Yu—his life was a fresh graduate's life, never contributing a single effort to capital."

I once worked as a tutor, teaching sixth-grade pupils one-on-one. The kids all came from rich families—their parents either owned companies or were demolition millionaires. It left me with no moral ground to urge them to study. "If you don't study hard, you'll only be able to study abroad. Do you want to end up like your classmates—just ordinary landlords for life? I'm begging you, study for my sake. Let me earn some money!" Later, the tutoring track collapsed, so I interned at a big Internet company. Those places often make you work until 1 or 2 a.m. with no overtime pay. I said to my boss, "I can't take this anymore." He said,"What's the big deal? It's normal! Yu, you studied philosophy—'existence is reasonable'!" It shattered my philosophical world. After years of study, I never thought something could be illegal yet "reasonable"! The shameless thing is: Companies revoke offers and call it "legal" as long as they pay compensation. But you still feel it's wrong. What people want is certainty. You go to school, work, build a life—and suddenly someone smashes it, saying, "Now you're free! Life isn't a track, it's a wilderness." That's where "cattle and horses" belong. Watching my classmates squatting, job-hunting, I want to say: "If all else fails, come do stand-up! Two big companies in our field are expanding this year. If we're jokes everywhere, at least we can 'stand up' here."

As Example 2 shows, Yu's routine similarly illustrates the nuanced interplay of engagement resources and stance-shifting strategies in mediating workplace and institutional critique through humor. Attribute is first used to project the counselor's voice ("not finding a job…has its perks"), providing a mediated institutional perspective and creating a platform for subtle Responsibility Displacement. Yu asserts a resistant self-position with Proclaim, Entertain, and Identity Reconstruction ("I'll be a

fresh graduate even if I starve"), converting occupational marginalization into a comedic exaggeration that aligns the audience with his ironic stance.

The routine highlights systemic absurdities through exaggerated commentary on social and professional hierarchies, including wealthy students' moral privilege and exploitative corporate practices. These are presented via Entertain and Value Inversion, allowing Yu to critique labor exploitation and bureaucratic inequities indirectly, maintaining humor while exposing power asymmetries. Institutional Recontextualization is evident in the boss's statement ("existence is reasonable"), which reframes organizational rationality ironically, highlighting the discrepancy between legal legitimacy and moral credibility. The audience perceives the critique as mediated, ironic, and therefore socially acceptable, which enables laughter without overtly challenging authority.

Yu's conclusion, inviting classmates to pursue stand-up comedy if conventional work fails, demonstrates how engagement resources (e.g. Entertain) and stance-shifting strategies (e.g. Institutional Recontextualization, Identity Reconstruction, Collective Alignment) coordinate to structure affective connection, facilitate audience identification, and transform critique into entertainment. By integrating exaggeration, mediated voices, ironic positioning, and collective alignment, Yu linguistically reframes personal and systemic challenges, rendering workplace-power critique humorous, socially acceptable, and ideologically impactful.

5. Discussion
5.1 The Linguistic Mechanism and Social Function of Stance Shifting through Humorous Engagement

This study examined how Chinese workplace-themed stand-up comedians deploy linguistic resources to shift evaluative stance while managing complex power dynamics in professional contexts. Drawing on a revised Engagement framework adapted for comedic discourse, the analysis identified patterns in which performers move from institutionally-shaped subjectivity toward ironic or resistant reframing. Across the data, stance shift typically takes place through three discursive phases: an initial alignment with institutional norms or official voices, a transitional stage marked by irony, exaggeration, or self-mockery, and a final stance that reconfigures the speaker's subjectivity, aligning with the audience in critique rather than with formal authority. This pattern is realized through a dynamic interplay of engagement resources, including Monogloss, Proclaim, Disclaim, Attribution, Entertain, and genre-specific Institutional Recontextualization, which simultaneously disalign from institutional authority and invite audience alignment through shared laughter.

The two cases analyzed illustrate how occupational and educational background shapes both discursive features and stance-shifting strategy. Zhai, whose experience lies in technical labor, emphasizes impersonal institutional registers and gradually intensifies absurdity through spatial exaggeration ("exile" instead of "business trip") and physical self-mockery, employing Identity Reconstruction and Institutional Recontextualization to critique workplace hierarchies. Yu, a philosophy graduate, relies on metalinguistic reflexivity and ironic redeployment of recognizable institutional discourse, integrating Proclaim, Entertain, and Value Inversion to contrast stereotypical workplace reasoning with ironic ethical commentary ("existence is reasonable"), thereby generating humor while undermining institutional legitimacy. Both performers achieve a final stance through performative self-reinvention, Zhai as a reformed peaceful persona, Yu as a marginalized but lucid graduate, transforming individual vulnerability into narrative agency and fostering collective audience identification.

Unlike hedging, quoting, or countering in conventional discourse, the same strategies in stand-up function performatively to dramatize disruption, exaggerate contradiction, and elicit recognition of absurdity. Attribution of absurd workplace reasoning, followed by ironic recontextualization, delivers critique that would be socially or professionally unacceptable in formal contexts, yet becomes acceptable and therapeutic through humor. This pragmatic ambiguity allows comedians to challenge dominant ideologies while minimizing interpersonal or cultural risk, highlighting how humor functions as both a social mediator and a discursive strategy for ideological engagement.

From a broader sociocultural perspective, these mechanisms have particular significance in contemporary Chinese contexts. Direct confrontation of authority is culturally constrained and institutional censorship constrains overt critique, yet humor provides a socially recognized means for voicing dissent. Metaphorical indirectness, exaggerated narrative, and exaggerated character performance collectively make systemic critique relationally inclusive, fostering affective resonance while maintaining social comprehensibility. Audiences are able to decode double meanings, recognize ironic recontextualization of bureaucratic and professional genres, and empathize with precarious labor identities, enhancing the semiotic efficiency of humor: the more exaggerated or absurd the scenario, the more credible the critique. In this way, humorous engagement functions not only as comic relief, but as a structured linguistic mechanism for negotiating power, reframing personal experience, and fostering performative solidarity.

These findings carry certain implications for contemporary Chinese culture, particularly in pedagogical contexts. Humor-mediated stance-shifting demonstrates how critical engagement can be socially acceptable and emotionally safe, suggesting that educators could utilize similar strategies to foster reflective thinking, critical analytical skills, and dialogic participation. By demonstrating irony, exaggeration, and mediated critique, teachers may help students explore complex social and institutional dynamics without inciting defensiveness, while encouraging active audience alignment and considering multiple perspectives.

This mechanism thus bridges personal experience, social critique, and collective learning, providing a culturally appropriate framework for fostering critical engagement in educational practice.

5.2 The Cultural Significance of Humor in Contemporary Language Teaching

In contemporary China, humor has gained increasing cultural and communicative significance, particularly among younger generations with increasing academic pressure, precarious employment, and shifting social expectations. In this context, humor functions not only as entertainment but also as a socially recognized mechanism for emotional regulation, identity negotiation, and subtle critique. The findings of this study indicate that stance shifting through humorous engagement provides Chinese youth with a communicative space to voice labor insecurity, challenge institutional authority, and regain agency in socially acceptable ways.

Educational research emphasizes the pedagogical and relational functions of humor. Bakar and Kumar (2019) highlight that lecturers perceive humor as a tool to enhance student engagement, facilitate participation, and strengthen classroom rapport. Abu Bakar (2020) further demonstrates that humor that is contextually appropriate and relevant—linked to shared experiences or disciplinary content—reduces affective distance between teachers and students and fosters a supportive learning environment. Complementing these findings, Xiao et al. (2025) show that laughter in Chinese classrooms functions multimodally to signal alignment, negotiate authority, and create opportunities for subtle resistance. Together, these studies suggest that humor operates as a culturally valued resource for managing hierarchical relationships, promoting relational equality, and facilitating expression. Humor here functions closely aligned with the stance-shifting mechanisms identified in workplace stand-up comedy.

The alignment between educational and comedic contexts highlights why workplace-themed humor generates strong resonance with Chinese youth. As individuals increasingly value discursive equality, personal expression, and reflexive critique, humor provides a socially comprehensible means for addressing systemic frustration without violating norms of respect or harmony. The usage of Institutional Recontextualization illustrates how institutional discourse can be re-framed for critical yet entertaining purposes, allowing speakers to critique while maintaining audience identification.

From a practical perspective, these insights offer guidance for contemporary education. Teachers can strategically incorporate humor through moderated self-mockery, playful reframing, and dialogical position-taking to create psychologically safe learning spaces, reduce perceived power asymmetries, and encourage active participation. Humor is therefore not a marginal skill but a culturally important pedagogical tool capable of enhancing engagement, fostering relational trust, and supporting students' sense of voice and agency.

6. Conclusion

This study extends the Engagement system in Appraisal Theory by proposing Institutional Recontextualization as a genre-sensitive engagement resource for analyzing stance in Chinese workplace-themed stand-up comedy. Through close examination of performances from *King of Comedy: Stand-up Season*, the analysis shows how comedians draw on institutional language, workplace routines, and bureaucratic discourse to create humorous contrasts and negotiate power relations. By shifting stance across narrative layers, moving between personal stories, imagined dialogues, and institutional voices, comedians turn everyday work pressures into shared experiences and build alignment with their audiences.

The findings demonstrate that humor is not only a tool for entertainment but also a meaningful way for younger Chinese speakers to express concerns about work, identity, and social expectations. As discussed earlier, humor helps create a more equal interactional space and supports emotional release in contexts where direct criticism may be discouraged. These insights have practical value for educational settings as well. Teachers who make thoughtful use of humor and flexible stance-taking may improve classroom rapport, encourage student participation, and support students' growing need for voice, recognition, and psychological comfort.

This study has two principal limitations. First, the dataset is relatively small and drawn from a single program, which restricts the generalizability of the findings and may not reflect the broader stylistic or regional variation of Chinese stand-up comedy. Second, the analysis focuses exclusively on verbal data and therefore omits multimodal resources such as gesture, prosody, and facial expression as well as audience uptake, all of which are integral to performance-based discourse. Future research could address these limitations by enlarging the corpus across multiple shows and platforms and by incorporating multimodal analysis to provide a more comprehensive account of how stance and power are co-constructed in comedic interaction. Overall, the study highlights humor as an important cultural resource in contemporary China, enabling speakers to soften social tension, negotiate power, and build collective understanding through shared laughter.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

[1] Abu Bakar, F. (2020). Appropriate and relevant humour in the university classroom: insights from teachers and students. *The European Journal of Humour Research, 7*(4), 137-152. https://doi.org/10.7592/EJHR2019.7.4.bakar

[2] Armaselu, F. (2022). Towards a computer-assisted aesthetics of user response. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, 37*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqab069

[3] Bakar, F. A., & Kumar, V. (2019). The use of humour in teaching and learning in higher education classrooms: Lecturers' perspectives. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 40*, 15–25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2019.04.006

[4] Bednarek, M. (2006). *Evaluation in media discourse: Analysis of a newspaper corpus.* London: Continuum.

[5] Breeze, R. (2016). Negotiating alignment in newspaper editorials: The role of concur-counter patterns. *Pragmatics, 26*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.26.1.01bre

[6] Cela, H., Veit, S. V., & Wood, G. (2024). Breaking down the laughter: An exploration into the linguistic dimensions in stand-up comedy ratings. *BMC Psychology, 12*(1), 679. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-02187-6

[7] Chaemsaithong, K. (2014). Dramatic monologues: The grammaticalization of speaking roles in courtroom opening statements. *Pragmatics, 24*(2), 213–239.

[8] Chen, D., & Gao, G. (2023). The transgressive rhetoric of standup comedy in China. *Critical Discourse Studies, 20*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2021.1968450

[9] Chu, Y. (2024). Risk and surprise: Stand-up comedy in a relaxed venue. *Comedy Studies, 15*(2), 154–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/2040610X.2024.2352219

[10] Daso-Akintunde, O., et al. (2024). Meaning negotiation and strategies in Nigerian stand-up comedy performances. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies, 3*(2), 45–67.

[11] D'Errico, F., & Poggi, I. (2016). "The bitter laughter": When parody is a moral and affective priming in political persuasion. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 1144. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01144

[12] Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The stance triangle. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (pp. 139–182). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.164.07du

[13] Englebretson, R. (Ed.). (2007). *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction.* John Benjamins.

[14] Esmaili, F., & Abdollahzadeh, E. (2024). Negotiating academic conflict in discussion. *Pragmatics and Society, 15*(6), 905–928. https://doi.org/10.1075/ps.22060.esm

[15] Espunya, A. (2024). Narrative report of speech acts as characterization resource in Mansfield Park and its Spanish and German translations. *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies, 36*(1), 1–25.

[16] Fuoli, M. (2018). A step-wise method for annotating Appraisal. *Functions of Language, 25*(2), 229–258. https://doi.org/10.1075/fol.15016.fuo

[17] Geng, Y., & Wharton, S. (2021). Evaluative language in discussion sections of doctoral theses: Similarities and differences between L1 Chinese and L1 English writers. *University of Warwick Working Papers.* (Accepted manuscript)

[18] Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk.* University of Pennsylvania Press.

[19] Goodwin, C. (2007). Participation, stance and affect in the organization of activities. *Discourse & Society, 18*(1), 53–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926507069457

[20] Holmes, J., & Marra, M. (2002). Having a laugh at work: How humor contributes to workplace culture. *Journal of Pragmatics, 34*(12), 1683–1710.

[21] Holmes, J., & Marra, M. (2002). Over the edge? Subversive humor between colleagues and friends. *Humor, 15*(1), 65–87.

[22] Hood, S. (2004). *Appraising research: Taking a stance in academic writing* (Unpublished PhD thesis). University of Technology Sydney.

[23] Huang, Y., & Li, D. (2023). Translatorial voice through modal stance: A corpus-driven study of Chinese–English research article abstracts. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice, 31*(4), 573–589.

[24] Jaffe, A. (Ed.). (2009). *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives.* Oxford University Press.

[25] Kaneyasu, M. (2024). Final tteyuu as a mockery stance marker: Multifunctionality and ongoing semantic change in Japanese social media. *Journal of Pragmatics, 221*, 13–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.12.013

[26] Kärkkäinen, E. (2006). Stance taking in conversation: From subjectivity to intersubjectivity. *Text & Talk, 26*(6), 699–731. https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2006.029

[27] Kiesling, S. F. (2020). Investment in a model of stancetaking: I mean and just sayin'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 24*(4), 431–455.

[28] Logren, A., Ilomäki, S., & Ruusuvuori, J. (2025). Management of divergent stances as a resource to maintain progressivity and social relationships. *Discourse Studies, 27*(1), 3–32.

[29] Martin, J. R. (2017). The discourse semantics of attitudinal relations: Continuing the study of lexis. *Russian Journal of Linguistics, 21*(1), 22–47. https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-1-22-47

[30] Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause* (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.

[31] Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[32] Mayr, A., & Statham, S. (2021). "Free Mo Robinson": Citizen engagement in response to a crime event on social media. *Journal of Social Semiotics, 31*(3), 365–382. https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2021.1930854

[33] Munday, J. (2015). Engagement and graduation resources as markers of translator/interpreter positioning. *Target, 27*(3), 406–412. https://doi.org/10.1075/target.27.3.05mun

[34] Mulkay, M. (1988). *On humor: Its nature and its place in modern society*. Blackwell.

[35] Primbs, O., & Dawson, M. C. (2024). Taking stand-up seriously: Comedy as a site for imagining decolonial futures. *Sociological Inquiry, 94*(4), 873–889. https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12585

[36] Shokouhi, H., & Akbarzadeh, F. (2017). Analysing intersubjective resources in Persian and English newspaper opinion/editorials. *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics, 53*(2), 281–303. https://doi.org/10.1515/psicl-2017-0011

[37] Trnavac, R., & Põldvere, N. (2024). Investigating appraisal and the language of evaluation in fake news corpora. *Corpus Pragmatics, 8*, 107–130. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41701-023-00162-x

[38] Tsakona, V., & Chovanec, J. (2020). Revisiting intertextuality and humour: Fresh perspectives on a classic topic. *The European Journal of Humour Research, 8*(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.7592/EJHR2020.8.3.Tsakona

[39] Vásquez, C., & Aslan, E. (2021). "Cats be outside, how about meow": Multimodal humor and creativity in an internet meme. *Journal of Pragmatics, 171*, 101–117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.10.006

[40] Whittaker, R., Llinares, A., & McCabe, A. (2009). The appraisal framework and discourse analysis: An introduction. In A. McCabe, M. O'Donnell, & R. Whittaker (Eds.), *Advances in language and education* (pp. 1–14). London: Continuum.

[41] Xiao, S., Bao, S., & Sun, M. (2025). Classroom laughter: Interactional meanings and research agenda. *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences), 43*(10), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.16382/j.cnki.1000-5560.2025.10.003

[42] Yang, Y. (2023). Turn-initial na in Mandarin conversation: Stance-taking and sequence organization. *Chinese Language and Discourse, 14*(1), 1–29.

[43] Yao, L., & Ngai, C. S. B. (2022). Engaging social media users with attitudinal messages during health crisis communication. *Lingua, 268*, Article 103199. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2021.103199

[44] Yuan, Y. (2021). Leader-employee congruence in humor and innovative behavior: The moderating role of dynamic tenure. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, Article 579551. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.579551