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**A CORPUS-BASED REGISTER
ANALYSIS OF CHINESE PUBLIC
WRITTEN ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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Studies

A Corpus-based Register Analysis of
Chinese Public Written Announcements

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2018

Certificate of Originality

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Hue Sang Do

Abstract

Linguistic landscapes, which refer to any visible written texts found on shop or road signs, advertising billboards, street names, etc. (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), have been discussed in the context of multilingualism, literacy, multimodality, and language policy. From a register and genre perspective, however, public signs represent a written language variety as well as authentic and contextualized language use that is part of the social practice of a given public domain. This study examines the linguistic characteristics and discourse conventions of Chinese public written signs, announces, notices, warnings and reminders among others. For this purpose, a corpus of over 300 signs was compiled, containing signs from various public domains (traffic & transportation, tourism, education, shopping & commerce) in the People's Republic of China. The signs were analyzed using Biber & Conrad's (2009) theoretical framework for register analysis as well as speech act theory. First, a situational analysis was carried out to describe the situational characteristics of public written signs, followed by a quantitative and contrastive analysis to determine the distribution of grammatical and lexical features. One of the more salient features of public signs is the hierarchical relationship between the addressor and the recipient and the low level of interactivity between the two. In the majority of cases, an institutional anonymous author uses the written medium to impose some kind of restriction, realized as rules and regulations, on the public reader. The reader maybe requested to perform a certain action, or refrain from doing so, often accompanied by reasons and explanations that may emphasize the benefits of complying with the request. In a second step, a linguistic analysis revealed the lexical and grammatical characteristics of public signs. Findings indicate that the language used in Chinese public signs displays typical features of other informational written registers in Chinese, such as scarcity of function words.

Finally, a qualitative move analysis was conducted on one type of public signs - reminders, referring to speech act theory (Searle, 1976) and making use of the modified CCSARP framework and categories (Rue & Zhang, 2008) to explain the realization patterns of requesting. The findings suggest that the majority of the reminders exhibit similar discourse features in terms of their textual organization, indicating that conventions impose a need to follow a generic structure when addressing the audience of public signs. On the other hand, more variation is

apparent concerning the actual strategies used to persuade the reader to comply with a request. It was also observed that direct requests using imperatives were the most preferred strategy in the requestive head acts of reminders. They were mostly accompanied by several supportive moves to mitigate the impositive force of the request, in addition to lexical and syntactical means including politeness markers, honorific forms of addressing the reader and conditional clauses. Overall, external modification seem to play a slightly more important role than internal modification when expressing requests and prohibitions in public reminders.

The findings of this study contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of variation among Chinese written registers as well as language use in Chinese public signs as part of the linguistic landscape in the Mainland China.

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1 Introduction

Chinese characters are ubiquitous in public space in China, displayed on restaurant menus and street names. This “linguistic landscape” illustrates authentic and contextualized language use that is part of the social practice of a given public domain. The study of linguistic landscapes explores language use in its written form in public space, which refers to any visible written texts found on commercial shop or road signs, advertising billboards, timetables, house walls, etc. (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Applied linguists, sociolinguists and language policy developers have discussed linguistic landscapes in the context of multilingualism (Gorter, 2013), while others considered them as a source of input in second language acquisition (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). From a register and genre perspective, public signposts represent another written language variety that covers a wide range of domains (e.g., transportation, education, government, tourism). Over the past 30 years, linguists have investigated the relationship between spoken and written Chinese. Considerable interest was directed towards the differences and similarities between the two registers and, in particular, the linguistic characteristics of modern written Chinese (MWC¹) (Chen, 1993; Feng, 2010; C. N. Li & Thompson, 1982). It has been claimed that the latter exhibits greater lexical variability and more complex syntactical structures, scarcity of grammatical morphemes including sentence particles and aspect markers (Z. 孟子敏 Meng, 2013), and extensive use of classical Chinese grammar (Y. Wang, 2003). The observation that many elements of *Wenyan*, the literary and official written standard until the beginning of the previous century, are still widely preserved in formal writings of Chinese suggested the following explanations: 1. *Wenyan* elements are intentionally borrowed and used for stylistic reasons to serve as a kind of register marker (e.g. formal/literal Chinese), and 2. *Wenyan* elements have merged into and become an integral part of the grammatical system of MWC (Sun, 2012).

Other scholars, however, have criticized the undifferentiated perspective on written texts as one register, and the binary classification of speech and writing (e.g. Chang, 1996; Tao, 1999). They have postulated a finer discernment between registers,

¹ MWC refers to the written standard that was introduced in China after the May 4th Movement 1919 to replace the classical literary Chinese *Wenyan* (for an overview see Chen, 1993)

which would require more research based on empirical data rather than intuition to describe variation within and across registers. Zhang (2012), for example, pointed out that previous studies examined some of the characteristics mentioned above often in isolation. Categorizations of registers would rely mainly on impressionistic observations with little quantitative support, which often led to contradictory findings. More importantly, though, it is implicitly assumed that a dichotomous distinction existed between spoken and written registers. Such a generic description does not sufficiently account for register-internal differences.

The purpose of the present study is to contribute to a more comprehensive description of linguistic variation among written Chinese registers. Adopting the analytical framework for register analysis (Biber & Conrad, 2009) it describes the situational characteristics of written texts (announcement, notices and reminders) found on signposts and bulletins in Mainland China and determines the distribution of grammatical and lexical features. In a second step, a qualitative move analysis is conducted and speech act theory (Searle, 1976) is used to explain the realization patterns of requesting. The speech acts of requesting and prohibiting are most prevalent in public signs in which the authority or a proprietor addresses the public. By using directives, the writer attempts to make the reader perform some future action or to prevent him/her from doing so, with the propositional content condition specifying a future act on the part of the recipient (Rue & Zhang, 2008).

2 Literature Review

2.1 Register analysis

In the past two decades, the study of “text types” has attracted the attention of some research. Scholars broadened the scope of previous linguistic investigation when they started looking beyond the units of words, phrases, and clauses. The analysis of textual characteristics and organization did not only develop into a more comprehensive understanding and theory of text genres and registers. Moreover, it found its practical application in language pedagogy, mainly in the domain of teaching of English as a second language (ESL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Four schools, in particular, have been influential in using genre theory to analyze the form and function of non-literary discourse and adopting - to various degrees - a genre/register-based approach to the teaching of English (Flowerdew, 1999):

- a) English for specific purposes (ESP),
- b) North American New Rhetoric studies,
- c) Australian systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and
- d) Corpus-based analysis of register variation

The following paragraph will first provide a brief overview on genre definitions and approaches to text analysis central to these theoretical positions in order to discuss their relevance to the current study on the analysis of written public notices and announcements in China. It may prove useful to the teaching of reading in CFL to examine the contexts and objectives of genre-based pedagogy within these research areas. In a second step, a register perspective will be adopted to review some literature on lexical and grammatical variation in English and Chinese, as well as consequences and implications for classroom teaching. The final section will identify the knowledge gap and, hence, state the research objectives and questions of this proposal.

2.1.1 Genres and registers

Swales’ (1990) studies on English in academic and research settings have been seminal in developing genre theory in ESP. He describes genre as

“A class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. [...] In addition to purpose, examples of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience.” (p. 58)

ESP related studies showed particular interests in the analysis and the teaching of spoken and written texts to non-native speakers of English in academic and professional settings. Swales (1990) initially proposed a structured move analysis for describing the rhetorical organization of research article introductory sections. A move is considered a part of the text which achieves a particular purpose and contributes to fulfilling an overall purpose of the genre (Henry & Roseberry, 2001). Bhatia (1993) later extended Swales’ work to include promotional genres such as sales letters, while more genres were explored by other scholars, such as research grant proposals (Connor & Mauranen, 1999), letters of recommendation (Precht, 1998), application letters (Henry & Roseberry, 2001). ESP research is strongly motivated by pedagogical applications. This is because it aims at assisting second language speakers to master the functions and linguistic conventions of texts that they are required to read and write within their disciplines and professions (Hyon, 1996). However, as Hyon further points out, while ESP scholars focus mainly on detailing formal characteristics like sentence-level grammatical features (e.g. verb tense, hedges, and passive voice), less attention is paid to the specialized functions of texts and their surrounding social contexts.

By contrast, scholars of the New Rhetoric School directed their attention to situational contexts in which genres occur than to their forms, and especially emphasized the social purposes that these genres fulfill in certain situations (Hyon, 1996). Originating from a North American scholarship concerned with teaching rhetoric, composition studies and professional writing to native speakers of English, these scholars regard genre as “social action” (Miller, 1984). New Rhetoric’s ideological orientation becomes even more apparent in its use of ethnographic (i.e.

observation, interviews) rather than linguistic methods for analyzing texts. They offer descriptions of academic and professional contexts surrounding genres and the actions texts perform within these situations, e.g. ethnographic approaches to study scientific research communities in the U.S. (e.g. Bazerman, 1988) in order to reveal attitudes, values, and beliefs of the communities of text users that genres imply and construct (Hyland, 2002). However, only few findings have been translated into L2 classroom teaching, which is probably due to New Rhetoric's focus on social context rather than on linguistic features of texts (Flowerdew 1999).

The third perspective is based on Halliday's (Halliday, 1994) theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. SFL is a social theory of language as a meaning making resource in contexts of situation and culture and also reinforces the role of language and experience in the construction of social life (Christie, 1999; Coffin, Donohue, & North, 2009). Three key features of the surrounding social context, namely field (the activity going on), tenor (the relationships between participants) and mode (the channel of communication), are considered to shape the form of language and altogether determine the register of language (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Martin and other Australian students of Halliday later developed a theory of genre within SFL that examines how global text structures as well as lexico-grammatical patterns are affected by the context of culture and situation. Genre as a staged, goal-oriented social process is hereby linked to the level of overall discourse structure (e.g. a narrative) which is determined by the communicative purposes of the text and the sociocultural context (Martin, 1992). Register, on the other hand, refers to the specific lexico-grammatical choices that are made to realize communicative purposes (Flowerdew 1999).

As opposed to New Rhetoric studies, SFL genre-based applications are reported to having high impact on literacy education, particularly in schools and adult migrant English programs in Australia (Hyon, 1996). It is not surprising that SFL research findings have readily been converted into classroom practice, for one of the main concerns in genre-based instruction in Australia was to empower students with linguistic resources for social success. Christie (1991) considered the teaching of genre and language as an ideological matter of social justice, pointing out that "as long as we leave matters of language use available to some and not to others, then

we maintain a society which permits and perpetuates injustice of many kinds”. (p. 83)

A strongly quantitative and corpus-based approach to study register variation in English and several other languages is adopted by scholars surrounding Douglas Biber (e.g. Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007; Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Biber, 1995). A register is defined as “a variety associated with a particular situation of use (including particular communicative purposes)” (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 6). The register description comprises three major components: the situational context, the linguistic features, and the functional relationships between the first two components:



Figure 1 (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 6)

Biber & Conrad (2009) distinguish between registers and genres regarding their textual focus, their linguistic characteristics and distribution, and their interpretation as illustrated in the following table:

Defining characteristic	Register	Genre
Textual focus	Sample of text excerpts	Complete texts
Linguistic characteristics	Any lexico-grammatical feature	Specialized expressions, rhetorical organization, formatting
Distribution of linguistic characteristics	Frequent and pervasive in texts from the variety	Usually once-occurring, in a particular place in the text
Interpretation	Features serve important communicative functions in the register	Features are conventionally associated with the genre, not functionally

Table 1: Characteristics of registers and genres (adopted from Biber & Conrad, 2009, p.16)

Register analyses aim at identifying the pervasive linguistic features in the variety, i.e. those that could be found in any text but are notably frequent in the target register. In English, for instance, noun and pronouns occur in any kind of texts but pronouns are more common in spoken discourse than in written academic texts,

while nouns have the opposite distribution. Genre features, on the other hand, might only occur once in a complete text and are often related to conventional use, such as the rhetorical sections of research articles (abstract, introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and bibliography). They are neither pervasive nor functional but based on convention (Biber, 2012a). Biber (2012b) further challenges the common practice and understanding that the patterns of lexical-grammatical use can be accurately described in global terms. His studies repeatedly showed that patterns of use differ greatly between registers, and identify two major poles in the continuum between spoken conversations versus informational written prose. He stresses the importance of a register perspective on all linguistic levels: lexical, grammatical and lexico-grammatical (Biber, 2012b) .

2.1.2 A register perspective on vocabulary and grammar

Lexical patterns have been the focus of many corpus-based studies. Most notable among these are, for example, Sinclair’s (1991) description of phrasal verb and Hunston’s (2010) discussion on phraseological patterns. They provide in-depth analyses of collocations as well as preferred uses of certain target words, their semantic prosodies etc. Yet, in the majority of these studies, registers are rarely taken into account as a potential predictor for variation. The underlying assumption is that the lexical collocations of a word will remain the same, regardless of register (Biber, 2012b). There are a few exceptions that investigate n-grams/lexical bundles of various lengths in spoken or written registers. Warren (2013) compares the ten most frequent bigrams in spoken versus written texts and finds considerable differences. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan (1999) analyze the most frequent lexical bundles in four corpora, each representing a different register (conversation, fiction, news and academic prose), and classify them according to their structural patterns, functions and register specificity. Conrad & Biber (Conrad & Biber, 2009) reveal fundamental different collocates for the common English verbs “have”, “make”, and “take” when contrasting their usage in conversation versus informational writing:

Verb	Conversation	Informational writing
------	--------------	-----------------------

have	Dinner, fun, a hard time, kids	A range of, implications for
make	A joke, sure, (no) sense	Assumptions, choices, use of
take	A nap, time, notes, forever	Action, into account, part in

Table 2 Examples for English collocates (Conrad & Biber, 2009)

Similar to the lexical collocations of specific target words, grammatical variation may also be predicted by a register. Several studies document how the grammar of spoken discourse differs fundamentally from written informational discourse in terms of structural complexity. When comparing structural patterns of use in conversation versus academic research writing, Biber & Gray (2010) made two major findings: clauses and clausal constituents (adverbials and complement clauses) occur more often in speech whereas (non-verbal) phrases and noun phrase constituents (noun modifiers and complements) are preferred in academic prose. In a subsequent study, Biber & Gray (2011) illustrate from a diachronic perspective how new grammatical functions emerged in writing as a response to the communicative demands of writing discourse in the past centuries. Previous studies on grammatical change mainly focused on developments in conversation, implicitly assuming the driving factors of grammaticalization to be found in spoken interaction and thereby disregarding the possibility that grammatical change might emerge in written communication as well (e.g. Croft, 2000). Biber & Gray (2011), in contrast, argue that the communicative demands of both spoken and written registers have the potential to further the emergence of new grammatical constructions. Their study concentrates on academic research writing, a register that is almost diametrically opposed to spoken conversation in terms of being rather monologic, specialized, slowly generated and meticulously revised. The authors hypothesize that grammatical changes emerging from this register would differ fundamentally from those that occur in conversational interactions. Biber's earlier multidimensional analyses of register variation (1988) already demonstrated that written informational registers employ to a greater extent nouns, attributive adjectives and prepositional phrases. Spoken registers, on the other hand, rely more heavily on verbs, pronouns, stance features, reduced structures, and clausal embedding (Biber & Gray, 2011, p. 228). Academic writing has steadily evolved towards a 'compressed' discourse style in which information and even dynamic processes are primarily conveyed through

nouns and nominalizations (e.g. noun conversion in ‘the increase of x’ instead of ‘x increased’). Thus, their diachronic analysis of informational writing showed that there was a historical shift to phrasal grammatical styles, which can be characterized by a heavy reliance on nominalization/complex noun phrase structures and non-clausal phrases.

2.2 Variation in Chinese registers

The first section will review traditional approaches to the classification of Chinese registers and compare them to more recent quantitative approaches. The former often looked for broad distinction mainly in the mode of communication, distinguishing spoken and written mode.

The relationship between written and spoken Chinese, and the linguistic characteristics of MWC, especially the controversy on the prevalence of elements of classical Chinese in MWC. Grammatical difference that apparently resulted from spoken and written forms became the focus of those studies.

2.2.1 Register classification

Doing register analyses means to work on the assumption that language use varies fundamentally according to the situations in which it is used and the communicative purposes it aims to achieve. This is essentially a functional approach to texts: linguistic features are not treated as abstract symbols within a grammatical system that is arbitrary, self-contained and independent of functions as in a formalist approaches, but as forms derived from functions (Biq, Tai, & Thompson, 1996). Functional approaches are concerned with the specific use of structures, the interaction between meaning and use, and how grammatical patterns can be mapped onto discourse patterns. Consequently, explanations for linguistic phenomena are sought grammar-externally instead of grammar-internally. The increasing relevance of taking discourse into consideration when analyzing Chinese grammar is reflected in the publication of several discourse grammars of Chinese from the 1980s on (e.g. Li & Thompson, 1989; Zhang & Fang, 2014, Chu 1998). Chu (1998), for example, argues for the importance of discourse in the study of Chinese syntactic structure.

Zhang & Fang (1966) draw on authentic written and spoken data (TV dramas and naturally occurring narratives and conversations in Beijing Mandarin collected in the 1980s) and pay particular attention to the grammar of spoken Chinese. The genre approach, moreover, focuses on the conventions that dictate the organization of a text and the use of certain structures, grammatical and lexical forms (e.g. the sections of a research paper, the tense used in the literature review section). Most of the time, these conventions adhere more or less openly to the demands of the community that uses the register (e.g. the academic community).

In the wake of more functional oriented discourse approaches to Chinese grammar, scholars showed resurgent interest towards variations in Chinese text types and registers. Interest was mainly directed towards three areas: 1. a Chinese register typology and possible criteria to distinguish registers, 2. the distinction between written and spoken Chinese and the resulting differences in grammar and lexis, and 3. the linguistic characteristics of Modern Written Chinese (MWC) under the influence of Classical Chinese.

Since the 1980s register classifications have been made based on the text content (e.g. legal, political, scientific, literary and artistic discourse), relationship between writer/speaker and recipient, mode of communication (written or spoken), situational characteristics (e.g. used in daily life or in official settings), communicative purpose (e.g. narrative, descriptive, argumentative, procedural) or level of formality.

For Wang & Chen (2000), registers fulfil a social function and evolve from the requirements of different social settings and contexts. Their classification is mainly based on the situational characteristics and communicative purposes of a given register. Although a primary distinction is made between conversational style (日常谈话) and public writing (公众书卷), they emphasize that these styles do not refer to the mode of communication, i.e. whether the register is actually spoken or written because they can appear in both forms (p. 28). Conversational style can be both casual and formal. Public writing is further being subdivided into ‘artistic writings’ (including lyric poetry, prose and dialogues) and ‘practical’ writing which comprises four subregisters: news reporting, scientific discourse, argumentation and official or work-related documents (p. 47). These different styles can also be distinguished in terms of their word use. The vocabulary of more specialized discourse, such as the vocabulary used in scientific writing, differs from the vocabulary of more casual talk

which also explains the existence of lexical doublets. They further give examples of style markers, which are similar to Biber's concept of register features: words and phrases that occur commonly in a certain register. Their monograph "Register studies" (in Chinese) makes an attempt to provide a comprehensive description of the aforementioned registers and subregisters in terms of their function and purpose, topical domain, situational and linguistic characteristics, and what distinguishes them from each other. One subchapter characterizes the language use of official or work-related documents (行政事务话语), a subregister of practical writing, that are frequently generated in bureaucratic-administrative settings. These documents, notices, circulars, decrees etc. are typically concerned with the realization of constraints. The authors identify their main function as connecting humans, organizing their action and integrating institutional procedures. They maintain order and promote stability in the society by defining the boundaries of acceptable behavior. A decree imposes restrictions; rules and regulation issued in writing govern public conduct. For example, by stating what kind of conduct is lawful or unlawful and is subject to legal sanction, what ensures/receives legal protection. They coordinate, regulate, monitor procedures/actions between various units and human activity, harmonize the relationship between the people involved, and also assert the status, dominance and authority. Language serves as a mean to construct authority. Depending on the issuing authority or the status of the writer within an institutional hierarchy, the degree of constraint and force varies but usually there is little choice on the readers part not to abide by, not much room for dialogue and disagreement (Iedema, 1997). In addition, it fulfills the function of recording and keeping account of changes that take place in the course of history.

To Feng (2010), registers are formed in the context of human communication using language as a tool. Registers express the relationship between a speaker (or writer) and listener (or reader) when they communicate with each other. He argues that one of the fundamental characteristics of the communication is the need to ascertain the relationship and monitor the distance between people. His register theory proposes two distinct categories that account for this kind of monitoring: the level of formality and the degree of elegance. Both categories form a continuum with two opposite poles on each end: formal vs. informal and elegant vs. casual (Figure).

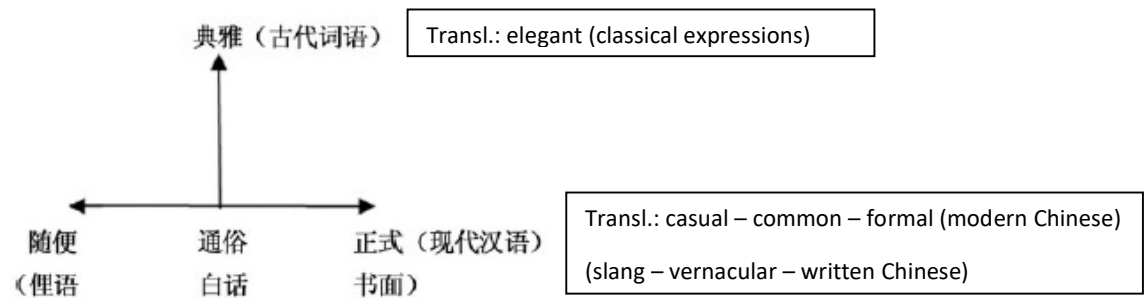


Figure 2 Two opposite poles in Chinese registers (Feng, 2010, p. 404)

By using more or less formal and elegant language the speaker can vary the distance between him/her and the listener. The use of formal language creates more distance while informal language reduces it. According to Feng (2009) the level of formality can be assessed by its distance to colloquial Chinese while the degree of elegance refers to the use of classical Chinese elements. He does not elaborate further on how to quantify what colloquial speech is and thus how to measure the said distance. The second very arguable criterion for setting the boundary between classical and modern Chinese is based on the comprehension of Chinese “native speakers of high school level” (p. 8): if the language is not comprehensible for such a listener it is considered classical.

It may have become apparent that a serious shortcoming in most classifications of Chinese registers lies in its methodology. Although many attempts have been made to provide somewhat comprehensive descriptions and to include both language internal as well as contextual factors, most analyses lack empirical validation and quantifiable variables. The discussion is based on introspection and is less than systematic, with little quantitative support. Many scholars solely draw on their intuition and subjective judgement when defining criteria for register classification. This is useful in the initial stage to form hypotheses from observations. In a subsequent step, however, it is vital to quantify and test these assumptions against actual language data in order to derive more valid and consistent criteria for classification. Statistical tests may reveal whether certain features occur more often in one register than in others, whether they co-occur with other features and what their dispersion across several text samples of the same registers are. It is interesting to note that despite advances in corpus techniques and the bulk of research on

various spoken and written registers in English (e.g. Biber, 1995; Friginal, 2009; Xiao & McEnery, 2005), only few studies have quantitatively explored Chinese registers from a text-linguistic perspective, which describes differences among texts and text varieties. Among the notable exceptions is Zhang's study (2012) in which he compares 15 written text categories of the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese (LCMC) in terms of their word classes and other linguistic features that are not included in the tagset, such as noun-noun and verbal reduplication. His analysis provides frequency profiles of the major grammatical classes and uncovers their co-occurrence and correlation patterns. Similar to Biber & Gray's (Biber & Gray, 2011) findings about the distribution of nouns and verbs in several English registers, Zhang's (2012, p. 215) study reveals that informational written registers like academic prose and official documents contain the most nouns and the least verbs. Humor and fiction, on the other hand, show quite the opposite distribution. In fact, across all LCMC subregisters, verbs are generally in almost diametric opposition to nouns in their distributional pattern.

Similarly, considerable efforts have been made on the part of more computationally oriented researchers who adopt data-driven approaches to examine what discerns Chinese registers. Their research is based on the assumption that the characteristics of a register are reflected in the occurrence and distribution of linguistic features, which can be measured quantitatively. Using text clustering and principal component analysis, it is possible to establish word length, sentence length, POS and sentence-initial position as viable criteria to distinguish registers (Hou & Jiang, 2014). Hou, Yang, & Jiang (2014) compared three corpora containing TV news, daily conversation and talk show conversation and found that the three registers differed significantly in the above mentioned features. TV news language tends to use longer sentences and more disyllabic words than both conversational and Talk show speech. Longer sentences are accounted for by higher information load that is usually linked to longer modifiers and complex sentences. Feng (2010) has also pointed out to the conversion of verb-object constructions to prepositional object-verb constructions in more formal registers, which may also lead to longer sentences. Due to the large number of proper nouns including personal, place and organization names, there is also a higher percentage of multi-character words. Both conversational and talk show

speech display a clear preference for monosyllabic words over disyllabic words. With regards to the distribution of POS the three registers differ mainly in the use of nouns, adverbs, personal pronouns, interrogative pronouns, prepositions, nominal verbs, modal particles, place and personal names, which supports Hou & Jiang's (2014) findings that not all POS are useful for classification and registers may vary concerning the POS in which they differ. Another category that may constitute a register feature is the POS occurring in sentence initial position. While TV news frequently employ nouns, prepositions, new words and least frequently pronouns and verbs at the beginning of a sentence, the distribution for daily conversation is almost contrary. The latter prefers pronouns, verb, adjective, interjection, verb like “是” copula, verb like “有” ‘have’, modal particle, and intransitive verb to start a sentence. Based on their findings the authors conclude that Chinese news broadcasting and daily conversation represent opposite poles in a register continuum with talk show conversation lying in between. Comparisons of the language use in four types of informational TV broadcasts in China, namely TV news, news commentary, lecture and political talk show came to similar results. Liu & Hu's (2011) study supports previous findings regarding the ratio of word- and sentence length. The more conversational and interactive the setting is, the shorter are the sentences and the higher the proportion of monosyllabic words. Again, nouns and prepositions are proportionally more frequent in TV news than in the other subregisters, while for pronouns and auxiliaries the opposite is true. In addition, the authors looked into syntactical relations and revealed that TV news language contains an abundance of attributes that are frequently realized by nouns but rarely by adjectives, modifying phrases in front of the head noun in subject and object position, coordinating phrasal structures in modifiers, subject and object position, and prepositional objects. Moreover, nominalized verbs occur frequently as heads of clauses. It is also noteworthy that despite the general high frequency of the particle 的, there are relatively fewer attributive structures with 的 in TV news than in commentaries whereas they are more common in spoken registers. Another study by Meng & Hou (2009) investigated the potential of discourse markers as register features in four corpora containing news, conversation, academic writing. They found that the four registers indeed showed varying preferences in terms of the frequencies and dispersion of the discourse markers under investigation.

In summary, the studies discussed above make invaluable contributions to the research of Chinese registers in two respects: first, they reveal the linguistic variation found in different registers and provide empirical evidence regarding rates of occurrences and distributional patterns. These patterns give good indication about the extent to which registers differ from each other and whether systematic variation exists. Secondly, quantitative methods are employed and tested to build on previously made observations in order to define viable criteria for classification. However, they fall short on the attempt to interpret their findings in functional terms and thus fall short of making a step forward to discuss and link their findings to systematic variation.

2.2.2 Modern written Chinese

The nature and relationship between spoken and written Chinese has kindled great interest among linguists and language teachers. Most scholars agree that differences and similarities exist regarding vocabulary, syntactical structures, rhetorical style etc. As for written Chinese, the following characteristics have been observed (Zhang, 2012, p. 210):

- Greater lexical variability
- Lexical doublets, e.g. 买 - 购 ‘to buy’
- More complex syntactical structures
- More connectives between clauses
- A greater influence from foreign sources in the lexicon and grammar
- Prevalence of lexical and syntactic elements of classical Chinese
- Predominantly disyllabic rhythmic pattern
- Preferred use of ‘light’ verbs (as in ‘to combat’ 进行打击: light verb + nominalized verb instead of full verb 打击 ‘to combat’ alone).

Moreover, the situational context often dictates the level of formality and imposes certain restrictions on the register to use. Li & Thompson (1982) compared classical and modern Chinese and found a gap between spoken and written Chinese, which they attributed to the considerable influence of the 文言 *wenyan* style in modern written Chinese. Chen (1993) similarly identified classical Chinese as a major source of influence on modern written Chinese, stating that certain features of classical

Chinese on the syntactical, morphological and lexical level are still extensively preserved in writing. However, other scholars criticize the binary classification into spoken and written style as well as the listing of individual features in isolation (Chang, 1996; Tao, 1999). They postulate a finer differentiation of registers, which requires research based on empirical and quantitative support to describe variation across register. Zhang (2012), for instance, notes that previous studies examined the features mentioned above mainly in isolation and categorizations relied mainly on impressionistic observations, which often led to contradictory findings. More importantly, though, those scholars implicitly assumed a dichotomous distinction between spoken registers, on the one hand, and written registers, on the other. Such a generic description, in his view, is inadequate and insufficient because it fails to capture register-internal differences. He summarizes that, despite the effort that has been made to categorize these differences, systematic research on linguistic variation within written registers is still missing. In fact, across all LCMC subregisters, verbs are generally in almost diametric opposition to nouns in their distributional pattern. Following Biber's MD framework (1988), Zhang is also able to identify and interpret three dimensions. Among his more important findings are:

1. Biber's (1988) proposed dimensions and parameters still prove useful and applicable. Zhang's analysis reveals that written registers like academic prose and news are more integrated and elaborate while registers like humor and fiction tend to be more narrative and interactive (p. 231).
2. In contrast to previous studies that focused mainly on differences between speech and writing Zhang finds considerable variation within written registers and their subtypes. For instance, fiction differs substantially from journalistic writing (p. 230).
3. Some previous impressionistic observations regarding word and sentence length, lexical variability and certain stylistic connotations could be empirically supported.
4. The distribution of classical elements is more complex than previously assumed. Registers using more 文言 *wenyan* elements are not necessarily more formal (p. 232).

In a similar manner, Tao (1999) considers the binary distinction between speech and writing insufficient and inadequate to describe register variation. His study, based on a corpus of 49 news editorials from the newspaper “People’s Daily” published in 1997, comprising 100.000 characters, examines the distribution of 把- (auxiliary) and 将-(auxiliary) sentences. It is commonly assumed that 把-sentences are used more frequently and generally have a broader distribution than 将-sentences, while the second is more widely used in written formal contexts. Tao’s analysis, however, shows that 把 occurs by far more often than 将, 145x vs. 7x which is a ratio of 1:20. These findings are somewhat surprising, considering that news editorials are classified as a highly formal written text type. When these results are compared with a second corpus, comprising 206 cooking recipes and 50.000 characters, he finds that 将 occurred twice as often than 把. The difference of usage as reflected in the frequency of occurrence in both written registers could be explained when taking a closer look at these examples (1999, p. 22):

- a) 将 排骨打切成薄片，越薄越好。（‘Cut the ribs into thin slices, the thinner the better’）
- b) 将 鸡肉开条切成二分见方的丁。（‘Cut the chicken into cubes’）
- c) 将 逻辑字体装入系统。（‘Load logical fonts into the system’）

According to Tao (1999) the major difference between 将-sentence and 把-sentence lies in their succinctness (简练和文气). Recipes and manuals are instructional in nature, which means they describe procedures (指导操作性) while its modern counterpart 把 occurs more frequently in journalistic writings. Tao’s study suggests that various registers display different use of grammatical and lexical items, which contravenes to some extent the traditional notion of ‘the one correct grammar’. He therefore proposes a register perspective on grammar and a finer differentiation of register types.

Register variations did not only stir controversy among linguists but also raised concerns among language teachers. The difficulty to acquire classical elements in modern Chinese in the context of learning Chinese as a foreign language has been addressed by several scholars. In order to identify characteristics of the learning process as well as problematic areas, Li (2010) analyzes the vocabulary use in students’ writing and finds that students faced difficulties distinguishing oral versus

written vocabulary. The author sees the need for students to develop awareness about using vocabulary from the appropriate register or stylistic context, which requires explicit knowledge about registers or text types. She also considers vocabulary training as a bridge to progress from lower to more advanced proficiency levels as well as between oral and writing skills. In a first step, she examines differences of vocabulary use between spoken and written Chinese from various angles, such as communicative contexts, near synonyms and degree of formality. Based on the situational contexts, there is a functional distinction between formal versus informal for both written and spoken registers. With regard to spoken registers, greetings, casual chatting and daily conversation are considered informal while lectures, work-related conversations and radio- TV broadcast are considered formal. As for written registers, notes & memos, dialogues in literary works belong to informal text types while newspaper articles, business contracts, academic prose and government documents are considered formal. Li furthermore adds that any official context, no matter using speech or writing as a medium, requires the written register. The difference merely lies in the less refined style which is used in spoken contexts (Li, 2010, p. 5):

口语：非正式场合：寒暄、聊天儿、日常交流
正式场合：会谈、会议发言、工作交流、广播电视

书面语：非正式场合：便条、笔记、文学作品里的对白
正式场合：报刊文章、商业合同、公司协议、学术论文、政府文件

Transl.:

‘colloquial speech: informal setting: small talk, conversation, daily discourse

formal setting: talks, lecture, work-related discourse, radio-TV broadcast

written language: informal setting: note, dialogues in literary writings

formal setting: news articles, business contract, non-disparagement agreement, academic writing, official documents’

Lexical doublets can also be found for various parts of speech, such as pronouns, auxiliaries, adjectives, and conjunctions:

代词	口语	这	那	你	什么	他(它/她)
	书面	此	彼	贵	何	之
动词	口语	去	带	喝	到	
	书面	往	携	饮	抵	
形容词	口语	小	大	好	一样	
	书面	微	巨	佳	同	
连词	口语	跟	还有	如果	除了这个以外	
	书面	与	以及	若	此外	

Transl.

Pronouns	colloquial Chinese written Chinese	'This'	'That'	'you'	'what'	'he/she/it'
Aux.	colloquial Chinese written Chinese	'direction to'	'with'	'drink'	'to'	
Adj.	colloquial Chinese written Chinese	'small'	'big'	'good'	'same'	
Conj.	colloquial Chinese written Chinese	'with'	'in addition to'	'if'	'except'	

A speaker/writer can vary the degree of formality by changing the phrase and sentence structure (p. 8):

- A. 咱想的跟您一样，就甭去啦！
- B. 我们的想法跟你们一样，觉得不应该去。
- C. 我们国家政府的考虑跟你们一样，认为不应该去。
- D. 我国政府出于相同的考虑，认为不宜前往。

Transl.:

- A. 'We thought the same as you, we shouldn't go!'
- B. 'We thought the same as you, we think we should not go.'
- C. 'Our government had the same considerations and concluded, not to go.'
- D. 'Our government took the same considerations into account and came to the conclusion, not to proceed.'

Sentences A and D clearly display both ends of the continuum between colloquial and more formal registers, respectively. For sentence A, a rather colloquial tone is evoked by lexical items (咱 'Let's', 就 [gr.], 甭 'don't', 啦 [aux.]) while in sentence D, a higher degree of formality is achieved by using 出于...的考虑 'for the sake of...', 相同 'same', 不宜前往 'not to proceed'. Sentences B and C seem to be appropriate for both spoken and written mode.

Similar to Li (2010), Wang (2003) also recognizes the imbalanced treatment of Chinese written and spoken registers in the classroom. Comparing both registers regarding vocabulary, grammar, rhetoric, and style, she also points out their distinctive characteristics while acknowledging their indispensable usage in authentic communicative situations. She thus advocates the inclusion of a more balanced approach towards the teaching of written and spoken registers at all levels of Chinese language learning.

More research is needed to compare various types of discourse, not only between spoken and written language but also among different types of discourse within these two registers. The careful study of registers constitutes one important approach to a better understanding of the relationship between grammar, rhetorical organization and communicative goals (Biq et al., 1996).

2.3 The Linguistic Landscapes of Chinese daily life

The study of linguistic landscapes explores language use in its written form in public space, which refers to any visible written texts found on shop or road signs, advertising billboards, timetables, notice boards, etc. (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The ubiquity of public signs have been widely discussed in the context of multilingualism, language policy and second language acquisition (Gorter, 2013). Less frequently, researchers adopted a semiotic (R. Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and also sociolegal perspective (Mautner, 2012) on public signs, which is concerned with how the meaning of signs constructed by their placement and spatial contiguity with other objects in the world.

2.3.1 Directive signs and public discourse

A cursory glance at any randomly selected section of the linguistic landscape will reveal a multitude of signs. Written announcements, notices, and reminders represent an interesting specimen of the linguistic landscape in the Chinese mainland due to their ubiquity and abundance in the public sphere. They not only cover a wide range of domains (e.g. transportation, shopping, nature, etc.) but also convey multiple communicative purposes. Some are purely informational (such as those providing information about the opening hours of a public park to the visitor), but the majority are directive (such as warning signs reminding the swimmer to avoid the hazards of the rising tide or prohibiting smoking in a shopping mall). One text may include several functions, directive and informative. The aim of the text is not merely to present information but, in fact, to request or demand a specific action of the reader. A sign announcing “Road work ahead” seems to be informational at a first glance yet demands from the driver to detour. Official authorization, procedural and substantive, gives some signs full institutional backing, while others are unofficial, rather ad hoc and outside institutional frameworks, thus transgressive (R. Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 188), as a sign put up in the restaurant by the owner reminding the guests to take care of their personal belongings.

The legal contexts of public signs is explored in more detail by Mautner (2012) who sees the interplay of language, law, space and society reflected in directive signs,

warnings and prohibitions, found in British cities. She points out that the interaction works on several levels as in the case of a proprietor who exercises his duty of care by putting up a warning sign. The purpose thus is to prevent litigation. The performativity of these signs is constituted both by the location of their placement as well as their sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit reference to legal authorities. The desired effect in practical and legal terms can only be achieved if it, firstly, is placed correctly and secondly, has the right to be there at the same time. Drawing on speech act theory (Austin, 1962), Mautner further argues that signs are used to perform social action and that their “performative potential depends crucially on exophoric reference to their physical environment” (2012, p. 197).

It has been noted by Lock (2003) that notices issued by the Mass Transit railway (MTR) authority in Hong Kong to ensure safe and efficient journeys and to notify passengers of expected behavior also rely heavily on their immediate context for their interpretation. The signs contain a multitude of exophoric deixis to features of the train or the platform, which are either linguistic, e.g. ‘mind the gap’, ‘let’s keep the train clean’, or visual, e.g. arrows indicating the location of exits, pictures accompanying the imperative of the directives. Notices depend on their immediate context for their interpretation. For this reason, people and things represented linguistically and visually are features of the trains or the platforms (e.g. seats, doors, the gap between the platform and the train) or passengers. The request to ‘mind the gap’ clearly does not refer to the gap that exist between the platform and train in general, but only applies to the moment when the train stops and the passenger boards or leaves the train.

Directive signs play a major role in effectively regulating public life through orders and prohibitions; they guide the apparently vulnerable citizen through public space unharmed. Kind reminders, less kind prohibitions are the citizens’ constant companions to help him to keep out of harm’s way in seemingly unthreatening environments, stairs may be slipped and tripped on, waters to be drowned in. Mautner concludes “In contemporary industrialized societies, controllability is regarded as the default, it seems, and low risk as the preferred choice. Seen in this light, the warning sign, one could argue, is a perfect symbol of what has been termed the ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992; Giddens 1999).” (2012, p. 194).

2.3.2 Speech act theory and the performative nature of directive signs

Speech act theory tries to explain how language is used to accomplish intended actions and how recipients infer intended meaning from what is said. According to Austin's theory (1962) there are three kinds of meaning, namely propositional, illocutionary, and perlocutionary meaning (Cohen, 1996). Propositional meaning refers to the literal meaning of the utterance as in "It's hot in here" which is a statement about the warm temperature in a room. Secondly, illocutionary meaning describes the social function of what is said where the above statement could be interpreted as an indirect request to open the window. Finally, the perlocutionary force is the effect that is produced by a given utterance or written text (as in resulting the window being opened following the above statement). By performing a speech act, in particular when performing an illocutionary act, the language user has a certain communicative intention in mind. If the recipient recognizes the intention, the act is successful. Since the utterance does not necessarily encode the intention, the comprehension of an utterance is not merely a matter of decoding it. It has proved problematic to assign functions to sentences since the apparent sentence meaning does not necessarily reflect its pragmatic intention. Based on Austin's (1962), and Searle's (1976) theory, Cohen (1996, p. 385) identifies five categories of speech acts based on the functions assigned to them:

1. Directives (suggestions, requests, commands, warnings),
2. Expressives (apologies, complaint, thanks),
3. Representatives (assertions, claims, reports),
4. Declaratives (decrees, declarations), and
5. Commissives (promises, threats, offers).

Every verbal act comprises two components: the illocutionary part defines the function of the utterance while the propositional part contains the content of the act, for instance, the promise, the advice, etc. The verbal act is not only intentional but also highly conventionalized, that is, within a certain linguistic and social community the verbal act follows specific rules which language users have acquired while they became part of that community. The participants share common ground as to what conditions or rules prevail while they are communicating. Due to these conventionalized rules the recipient is able to interpret certain utterances correctly

and act accordingly (as in decoding a question as a request or an order). The conventionality of the verbal act, on the one hand, is a prerequisite for conveying certain meaning in a linguistic utterance, while on the other hand, it leaves room for deceit and manipulation if the rules and norms which a utterance refers to are violated (Brinker, 2005).

This chapter will take a closer look into the speech acts of directives focusing on requests, prohibitions and warnings, the latter being considered a kind of negative requests, in other words, asking someone to refrain from doing something. The speech acts of requesting, prohibiting are most prevalent in public signs in which an authority or proprietor addresses the public. By using directives, the addressor attempts to make the recipient to perform some future action or to prevent him from doing so, with the propositional content condition specifying a future act on the part of the recipient (Rue & Zhang, 2008).

2.3.3 Previous research on requests in different registers

Requests have previously been studied in different registers, such as letters, conversations and in more artificial settings by purposely eliciting requests by using the Discourse Completion Test (DTC). Cross-cultural comparisons in requests patterns have been extensively studied by researchers like Blum-Kulka, (1984), Blum-Kulka, House & Kaspers (1989a) among others. They initiated the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) to investigate cross-cultural variations in verbal behavior, focusing particularly on the speech acts of requesting and apologizing, and to find out about the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns. The CCSARP framework consists of a scale with nine levels as a coding scheme for the study of intra-lingual, situational, and cross-linguistic variations in directness and indirectness. The scale differentiates the level of directness into three main levels, namely direct, conventionally direct and non-conventionally indirect (such as hints). The original study by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) revealed that the situational variables of age, social status, intimacy, and gender were the determining factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies.

The CCSARP framework proposes nine types of strategies for requests, which are listed here in the order of indirectness, with type 1 being the most direct and type 9 the most indirect:

Strategy	Example
1. Mood derivable: The grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request (e.g. imperative)	“Clean up the mess!”
2. Explicit performatives: The illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named by the speakers	“I’m asking you to clean up the mess.”
3. Hedged performatives: Utterances embedding the naming of the illocutionary force	“I would like to ask you to clean up the mess.”
4. Locution derivable: The illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution.	“You’ll have to clean up the mess!”
5. Want statement: the addressor states the wish that the recipient carry out the act	“I really wish that you’d clean up your mess!”
6. Suggestory formula: utterance contains suggestion to do x	“How about cleaning up?”
7. Query preparatory Utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed) as conventionalized in any specific language	“Could you clean up the kitchen, please?” “Would you mind moving your car?”
8. Strong hints Utterance contains partial reference to object or to elements needed for the implementation of the act (directly pragmatically implying the act)	“You have left the kitchen in a mess.”

<p>9. Mild hints utterances that make no references to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable as requests by context (indirectly pragmatically implying the act)</p>	<p>“I’m a nun” in response to a persistent hassler.</p>
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Table 3 Request strategy types (modified from Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 202)

Similarly, Faerch and Kasper (1989) identify two kinds of modification that mark indirect requests. Whereas external modification alters the requestive force by inserting supportive moves before or after the head act (the actual request), internal modification is marked by the use of mitigating modality markers. These include the above-mentioned syntactic forms (e.g. interrogatives, negations, subjunctives) but also lexical devices such as politeness markers (“please”), hedges (“perhaps you could lend me some money”) and mitigating phrases (e.g. “if you don’t mind”, “I was wondering”, “do you think”). Naturally, the use of request strategies, external and internal modification varies across languages and cultures. Social and cultural factors, which are reflected in politeness values and power relations between addressor and recipient, play a major role in the linguistic choice when making requests. The relationship of form, meaning and pragmatic usage of requests appear to be complex while social factors are often involved for addressor and recipient in choice of linguistic options (Hong, 1998).

2.3.4 Realization patterns of requests

The speech act of requesting serves the purpose to ask people to do something or refrain from doing something. For this reason, requests need to be phrased appropriately in order to achieve their goal. They can be expressed either directly or indirectly, using different syntactic forms, e.g. imperative, interrogative and declarative, which show varied degrees of politeness and directness (Hong, 1998). In direct requests, the illocutionary force is expressed explicitly on the sentence level, as seen in the following examples:

- a) Please take care of your personal belongings! [Imperative]
- b) Smoking is not permitted on these premises. [Declarative]

Indirect requests, on the other hand, are phrased implicitly and therefore not necessarily recognizable on the sentence level:

c) Excuse me, could you tell me the way to the station? [Interrogative]
c) is generally understood as a request but not a question to test the hearer's sense of orientation. If the hearer is not familiar with the area, however, he will reply to the question and state his inability to give directions. In grammatical terms, the subjunctive form 'could' of the modal verb 'can' is conventionally used to express polite requests in English. Depending on linguistic, social and contextual factors, different syntactic forms may be selected in English to make a request, while various grammatical and lexical devices are employed to grade the level of indirectness (arranged from least indirect to most indirect):

- d) Ask him in. (Imperative)
- e) Be quiet, please. (lexical marker)
- f) The kitchen is really a mess. (pragmatic)
- g) It is hoped you will give us guidance.(impersonal passive)
- h) Won't you sit down? (negative question)
- i) Excuse me, could you tell me what time it is now? (lexical and interrogative in subjunctive)

(Examples modified from Hong, 1998, p. 21)

As can be seen from the above examples, requests using the interrogative appear to be more indirect and thus more polite in English than when using other syntactic forms. In addition, lexical and pragmatic devices may also modify the level of indirectness and politeness in a request. Pragmatical functions, however, require more contextual information in order to be understood as requests (such as the statement "The kitchen is really a mess" as a request to clean up the kitchen). The illocutionary meaning cannot be inferred linguistically but relies mainly on the context.

2.3.5 Requests in Chinese

Requests in Chinese and their realization patterns have been studied within the CCSARP framework as well as the theoretical framework of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Rue & Zhang (2008) examine the similarities and differences in request patterns found in certain types of Chinese and Korean spontaneous speech, and establish the relation between request strategies and social factors. The authors argue that requestive speech acts do not consist of single utterances alone but are rather the outcome of request sequences. These sequences can broadly be described as

1) Pre-request: sequences which aim to alert the recipients' attention and include openers and external modification (supportive moves);

2) Main Request sequence: the head act or main request act;

3) Post-request: these sequences generally serve the function of emphasizing, mitigating, justifying and concluding a request, and include external modification.

Their data analysis shows that for Chinese speakers interrogatives are overall the standard request form. In role plays the speakers have a preference for using query preparatories (e.g. questions containing 能不能 /néng bù néng/ 'could you..'), which refer to the feasibility of the request, including asking about the hearer's ability, willingness, permission, possibilities, or convenience. In natural conversation, both direct strategies and hints are used more frequently.

Gao's (1999) study focuses on identifying universal categories of conventionally indirect requests and finds that in comparison to English, Chinese requests rely on performative verbs more often, e.g. 让 /ràng/ 'let', 要求 /yāoqiú/ 'request', 指示 zhǐshì 'instruc', 命令 /mìnglìng/ 'order', which indicate explicit request intentions.

Gao further states that imperatives are the most efficient and appropriate way to make a requests in Chinese and that hedged performatives serve different functions in English and Chinese. By adding 'I would like to....' to the performative in English, the impositive force of the request is mitigated and thus perceived more polite and less direct. This may not necessarily be the case in Chinese where it could indicate doubt. Two studies by Zhang (1995a, 1995b) utilize questionnaires comprising different kinds of contexts with differing power relations, social distances, and rankings of imposition, to investigate request strategies and indirectness in Chinese requests. Apparently, Chinese directness is realized more on discourse level and linked to information sequencing, which involves conversations

on topics related to the intended action and utterances inquiring about preparatory conditions. The degree of indirectness may be determined by the length of supportive moves which do not contain the explicitly intended proposition; the external modification of the request utterances is mandatory while utterance internal modification is not (1995b, p. 83). In sum, Zhang finds that Chinese indirectness contrasts with requests in English where internal and external modification operate separately. Indirectness may be achieved mainly externally through supportive moves rather than internal devices like modals, particles, pronouns, etc.). This means that in Chinese information of indirectness is less encoded in grammatical features but in the sequencing of information in continuous discourse. Her findings are in line with Scollon & Wong-Scollon (1991) who find that the introduction of topic is deferred until after some small talk has been exchanged and characterized this speech style "inductive" in contrast to "deductive" where the topic precedes an explanation. This feature of Chinese information sequencing has also been revealed in letters of request in which the Chinese writers employ an indirect way of making the request by following the sequence 'salutation-preamble (facework) - reasons for request - request' (Kirkpatrick, 1991).

Huang (1996) compares request strategies used by Taiwanese Mandarin natives and American English natives and finds that the former use more direct request strategies than the latter and that American English speakers use fewer supportive moves and alerters than the other group.

According to Hong (1998), requests in Chinese can be categorized into nine types, which are listed here based on their degree of politeness (increasing from type 1 to type 9):

1. 命令/mìnglìng/ 'to order'
2. 强求/qiǎngqiú/ 'to force'
3. 请求/qǐngqiú/ 'to ask, request'
4. 要求/yāoqiú/ 'to ask'
5. 期待/qídài/ 'to expect'
6. 希望/xīwàng/ 'to hope'
7. 想/xiǎng/ 'to want, wish'
8. 乞求/qǐqiú/ 'to beg'

9. 恳求/kěnrǒu/ ‘to implore’

Hong further notes that type 1 and 2 are requestive acts containing explicit performatives and express low degree of politeness which are most often used when a superior addresses an inferior. Type 3 to 7, however, are often realized as declaratives and may be used between socially equal conversational partners. Type 8 and 9, finally, again occur between socially unequal partners, the addressor making a request to someone of higher status.

In addition, she proposes a subcategorization of these nine types based on social cultural features, which influences the type of request that may be chosen by the requestor:

Social cultural feature	Explanation
Social position of the conversational participants, power relation	Conversational partners could be either equal in social position or the power relations are asymmetrical (superior – inferior; inferior – superior). Examples for asymmetrical power relations in the Chinese context are parents to children, teachers to students, employers to employees etc.
Degree of familiarity	<p>Hong suggests the following criteria which may influence the level of familiarity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The type of relationship between two people (family members, friends, colleagues, etc.) Time length of their acquaintance Social position Age difference <p>The higher the level of familiarity, the less politeness and indirectness may be expressed in the interaction</p>
Degree of necessity and urgency	If a request is urgent and necessary, the requestor tries to make the request as convincing as possible to make the requestee to comply. As the level of necessity and urgency increases, the level of politeness usually also increases. However,

	politeness may not be the determining factor for a request to be granted, if a higher degree of social power or familiarity exists.
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Table 4 Social-cultural features (modified from Hong, 1998, p. 25)

Request patterns may be influenced by social and cultural contexts, i.e. different cultures have different understandings of the above mentioned categories which in turn lead to specific requestive acts and patterns of realizations.

2.3.6 Linguistic realization patterns in Chinese

According to Hong (1998), three types of linguistic modifications are most notably used in Chinese request acts: syntactic representations of head acts, lexical/phrasal modifications, and syntactic modifications. Head acts in Chinese may be presented as

1. Declaratives, e.g.
 我希望你能帮我一个忙。 /Wǒ xīwàng nǐ néng bāng wǒ yī gè máng/
 I hope that you can do me favor.
2. Interrogatives, e.g.
 你能帮我一个忙吗? /Nǐ néng bāng wǒ yī gè máng ma? /
 Could you do me a favour, please?
3. Declarative + interrogative, e.g.
 我想问你一个问题, 可以吗? /Wǒ xiǎng wèn nǐ yī gè wèntí, kěyǐ ma?/
 I'd like to ask you a question, ok?
4. Conditional clause, e.g.
 如果方便的话, 我想跟你谈一谈。 /Rúguǒ fāngbiàn dehuà, wǒ xiǎng gēn nǐ tán yī tán/
 If it's convenient, I'd like to talk to you.

Lexical and phrasal downgraders are used to mitigate the impositive force of a request (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989b). Hereby, the head act is modified internally through language-specific vocabulary choices, e.g. 请/qǐng/ 'please', 能不

能/néngbùnéng/ ‘can/could you’, 麻烦你/máfan nǐ/ ‘may I bother you/excuse me’, 对不起/duìbùqǐ/ ‘sorry’, 很抱歉 /hěn bàoqiàn/ ‘very sorry’, etc.

In addition, in terms of syntactic modification, supportive moves serve to soften the impositive force and they can either precede or follow the head act. Hong (1998, p. 29) has identified the following types of external modification in Chinese requests:

- a) Preparatory: the addressor announces his or her intention to make a request, ask the recipient’s permission to make a request
- b) Condition: the addressor states the condition and circumstances to carry out the request
- c) Threat: the addressor states the potential consequences if the recipient refuses to comply with the request
- d) Imposition minimizer: the addressor offers something in return if the recipient complies with the request
- e) Grounder: the addressor provides reason, explanations and justification for the request
- f) Compliment: the addressor makes compliment in order to increase the likelihood of compliance
- g) Promise of reward: the addressor offers a reward or benefit as an incentive for compliance

2.3.7 Chinese announcements, notices, and reminders

The language use of Chinese public signs has primarily been studied from a translational perspective. Especially during the Olympic Games in Beijing, when China became the media focus of the entire world, many Chinese linguists were concerned about China’s image due to inaccurately translated signs that were seen everywhere (Niu, 2008; Wang, 2013). The language of public signs has been characterized as concise, direct, and intertextual and containing prompting, directive, referential and appellative functions.

In the Chinese literature, announcements, notices, and reminders (henceforth: ANR) are commonly classified as official letters (公文/gongwen/). However, these descriptions usually refer to writings that are produced and circulate within an

institution without direct reference to the language of ANR in public signs. This is not an irrelevant issue to raise because the fact that the recipients of the ANR in question are the general (or sometimes specific) public instead of the employees of a government agency or private company may have impact on the language. Due to the lack of studies on the language of Chinese public signs, however, this study will mostly make reference to observations and descriptions of practical writings, the register that comes closest to the ANR of public signs.

An array of Chinese textbooks exists that teach the conventions of writing such official letters, reports, contracts etc. to native speakers (e.g. Wang, 2007; Yu, 1996). The majority of these textbooks as well as other scholarly work demonstrate – mainly from a prescriptive perspective - the form and style of ANR that circulate within government agencies and state or private enterprises. To date, little scholarly attention has been directed towards the contextual and linguistic analysis of written ANR outside of institutional use.

One of the few studies of sales circulars and notices from government document archives and various enterprises was conducted by Zhu (2000) employing Swales' and Bhatia's genre approach and move analysis. She describes the text type 通知 /tōngzhī/ 'notice' as a 下行/xiàxíng/ 'downward' register because it is characterized by a top-down hierarchical feature where the superior writer gives instructions and makes arrangements for the subordinate reader. According to Liang, Huang, Chen, & Shu (1992) official letters can be subdivided into three broad categories based on the relationship between sender and receiver: 上行 /shàngxíng/ 'upwards' (subordinates addressing a superiors), 平行/píngxíng/ 'of equal rank' (equals addressing each other) and 下行/xiàxíng/ 'downward' (superiors addressing subordinates). When examining the structural moves of twenty sales circulars (e.g. heading, salutation, giving reasons and orders, etc.), Zhu furthermore identifies the employment of imperative modal verbs like 必须 /bìxū/ 'must', 不得/bùdé/ 'not allowed, phrases like 特此通知 /tècǐ tōngzhī/ 'we hereby issue this notice' as indicators for a xiàxíng register.

Contrary to ANR produced by and for institutional or company employees, written ANR that are directed at the public reader seem to display greater variety in several respect: level of formality, communicative purpose (e.g. inform, explain, request,

prohibit, warn, etc.), topics and domains, participants and the power relationship between them. Considering their ubiquity and prevalence as a register or text type in daily life, very little is known about ANR.

Research objectives & questions

The present research proposal aims at investigating Chinese written announcements, notices, and reminders found in public domains in the Chinese mainland.

The literature review showed that existing register descriptions most often assume a binary distinction between speech and writing instead of a continuum, which is not necessarily divided by these two modes. A dichotomous perspective does not sufficiently account for internal variation within written registers neither across registers. A second shortcoming that has come to light is the lack of functional interpretations of linguistic features, i.e. what features are associated with which communicative purpose as well as the attempt to explain why they are preferred over others. From a methodological point of view, combining a quantitative approach with a qualitative oriented approach may shed more light on the discourse functions of public notice. By conducting a corpus-based linguistic and functional analysis of public written ANR this study contributes to a more comprehensive description of contemporary language use in China. The research questions are:

1. What are the linguistic characteristics of Chinese public written announcements, notices and reminders? How can they be explained functionally?
2. How are requests and prohibitions realized in these texts? What are the characteristics of these speech acts?

3 Methodology

3.1 Corpus compilation

There are several publicly available Chinese corpora, for example, the Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese, the Peking University CCL online corpus and the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese (LCMC). They provide an online search interface and are balanced corpora. None of these corpora, however, contains text samples from public written signs (公示语). Both the CCL and the LCMC include a text category called ‘official documents’ (公文) which comes closest to the target register, yet does not necessarily represent it. Since the aim of the present study is to analyze the language used in public written signs specifically and not just that of official documents in general, it was crucial to build a specialized corpus containing public signs. A second practical issue that arose immediately concerned the collection of authentic text samples. Numerous genre and register studies focus on written academic discourse or other written communication whose texts are available in electronic formats or can be downloaded from the internet. Public written signs, in contrast, usually do not occur on the web nor are they exchanged between people in written form. Their “natural habitat” is – as the name suggests - the actual public space: subway stations, shopping malls, parking lots, university campuses² etc. For this reason, data collection took place in public sites of several cities in southern China, mainly Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian. The public signs were first photographed individually and then processed manually into machine-readable text files.

3.2 Public signs corpus description

The public signs corpus contains 315 text samples with 24787 tokens in total from six public domains. These domains include areas shown in Figure 3 and labelled as follows:

² There are Chinese websites that compile public written signs, both images and in text form, yet it was impossible for the writer to establish the authenticity of the source for most of those samples. For this reason, it was decided to use only a few of the web samples to supplement the corpus

- Education: includes kindergarten, schools, universities and other educational institutions
- Hospitals: includes hospitals and private practices
- House: includes residential buildings and estates
- Shops: includes shopping malls, restaurants, commercial areas
- Tourism: includes touristic sites, sightseeing points, parks, beaches
- Traffic & transportation: includes roads, public transportation, subway and train stations

Since most of the samples were found as signposts or written announcements on bulletins or walls, they were first photographed and then manually processed and saved as text files. The assignment of a sign to a domain was based on the location where it was found.

Apart from domains, different types of signs were collected that are common in public areas. The categorization of the seven different sign types is based on the title that precedes every sign, e.g. “Friendly reminder” (温馨提示), with the exception of one type of signs that does not contain any label (“noID”). These subcategories of public signs are:

- 提示 / tíshì / (reminder),
- 告示 / gàoshi / (notice, bulletin),
- 公告 / gōnggào / (announcement, notice),
- 通告 / tōnggào / (circular, public notice),
- 通知 / tōngzhī / (notice, circular),
- 须知 / xūzhī / (points for attention, notice)

The table below shows the number of signs from each subtype and domain.

Reminders are the most common type of signs encountered during the data collection which is clearly reflected by its share in the whole corpus (around 60% of the samples). Other signs were more difficult to find, especially in certain domains (e.g. 告示/gaoshi/ in residential and educational settings). It was not possible to find the same number of signs for each subcategory and domain. Therefore, the other six sign types are very much under- and not evenly represented in the current corpus (e.g. only eight 公告 but 38 通知). The domains, on the other hand, are more evenly

represented among the samples: most samples were collected from several hospitals in the province of Guangdong, followed by samples from touristic sites, roads and subways, shops and restaurants, and residential estates. The least samples could be collected from educational settings.

Types/ domains	Traffic & trans	Tourism	Housing	Hospitals	Shops	education	Total samples	Total tokens
Reminder 提示	32	46	19	45	39	11	192	9834
Bulletin 告示	6	5	4	6	2	1	24	2386
Announcement 公告	2	2	0	1	3	0	8	2211
Circular 通告	7	3	1	1	2	2	16	2529
Circular 通知	3	0	12	13	3	7	38	4649
Points for attention 须知	4	5	1	5	2	0	17	2510
No title	5	6	5	4	0	0	20	668
Total samples	59	67	42	75	51	21	315	
Total tokens	4451	3826	3708	7285	3806	1711		24787

Table 5 Number signs from each subtype and domain in the corpus

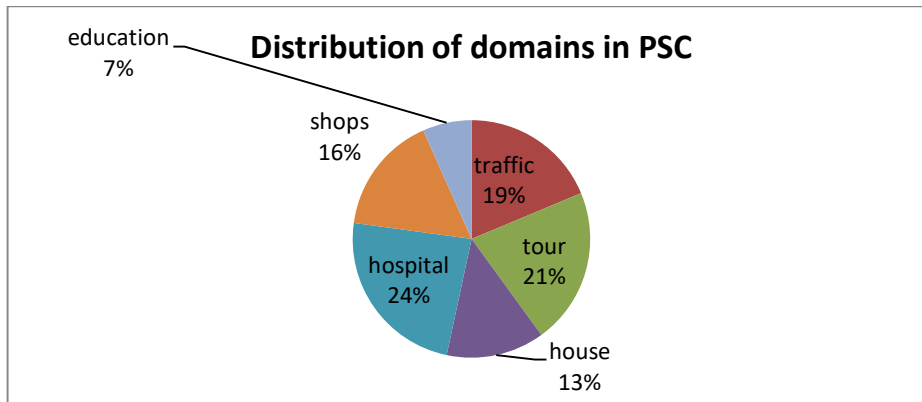


Figure 3 Distribution of domains in the corpus

3.3 Data processing

Chinese is written as running strings of characters without white spaces delimiting words. It is only possible to know the number of word tokens in a text when the text has been tokenized. Therefore, a first step in text processing is tokenization (also

known as word segmentation), which is breaking up the strings of characters into individual units. Even in alphabetical writing systems where word boundaries are more apparently marked by white space in between words this is not a trivial task. If one considers the role of apostrophes in contractions in English (he'll, I'd), the somewhat inconsistent use of hyphens (father-in-law, bed and breakfast, both with and without hyphen) or multiword expressions (New York, vice versa), the question arises whether the notion of the orthographic word, i.e. “words as defined by delimiters in written text” (Sproat & Shih, 2001) is sufficient. In Chinese, this problem is even more severe due to the lack of demarcation. In addition, a standard definition of what constitutes wordhood in Chinese does not exist to date. The annotation of the pilot corpus was conducted with the ICTLAS NLP software (Zhang, 2016) which is an online segmenter and POS-tagger for the Chinese language developed at the Beijing Institute of Technology and free for non-commercial uses. Its POS tagset is similar to the one used for the LCMC which will serve as the reference corpus for this study.

This tagset consists of 50 POS tags (Xiao, 2003):

a	adjective	ns	place name
ad	adjective as adverbial	nt	organization name
ag	adjective morpheme	nx	nominal character string
an	adjective with nominal function	nz	other proper noun
b	non-predicate adjective	o	onomatope
bg	non-predicate adjective morpheme	p	preposition
c	conjunction	pg	preposition morpheme
cg	conjunction morpheme	q	classifier
d	adverb	qg	classifier morpheme
dg	adverb morpheme	r	pronoun
e	interjection	rg	pronoun morpheme
ew	sentential punctuation	s	space word
f	directional locality	t	time word
fg	locality morpheme	tg	time word morpheme
g	morpheme	u	auxiliary
h	prefix	v	verb
i	idiom	vd	verb as adverbial
j	abbreviation	vg	verb morpheme
k	suffix	vn	verb with nominal function
l	fixed expressions	w	symbol and non-sentential punctuation
m	numeral	x	unclassified items
mg	numeric morpheme	y	modal particle
n	common noun	yg	modal particle morpheme
ng	noun morpheme	z	descriptive
nr	personal name	zg	descriptive morpheme

The advantage of the tag set is that it provides a very detailed differentiation of word classes e.g.:

- Nouns are further distinguished into different kind of common or proper

nouns, names (personal, place, organization)

- Verbs like 有 /yǒu/ ‘have’ and 是 / shì / ‘be’ have their own tags (_vyou and _vshi, respectively), transitive and intransitive verbs are distinguished as well as directional verbs
- The tagset accounts for the categorial fluidity in Chinese, which refers to the “relative flexibility of a word being used for different grammatical functions and possibly different POS” (Kwong & Tsou, 2003a, p. 194). There is a separate tag for adjectives occurring with nominal or adverbial function (e.g. in 注意安全 /Zhùyì ānquán/ ‘be careful’), verbs occurring with nominal function (服从工作人员的指挥 /Fúcóng gōngzuò rényuán de zhǐhuī/ ‘Obey the staff’s order’) etc.
- the morphosyllabic structure of Chinese is also considered, i.e. bound morphemes that are nominal, adjectival, or verbal are marked as such (_ng, _ag, _vg, respectively)

On the other hand, some shortcomings of the POS system are related to its under-specification, such as in the area of aspect marking. So, for instance, the system does not differentiate between the preposition 在 /zài/ ‘in, at’ and the aspect marker 在/zài/ ‘progressive marker’ (McEnery & Xiao, 2004, p. 1177). Similarly, while directional verb complements like 进来 /jìnlái/ ‘come in’ are tagged as such, no internal structure is indicated for resultative verb complements (RVC) like 做好 /zuò hǎo/ ‘finished something’ or 听到 /tīng dào/ ‘heard something’. In fact, more common RVC like 做好 are tagged as _v (verb) while others are not. For the sake of consistency, it was decided to tag all RVC as one verbal unit (e.g. 保管好 /bǎoguǎn hǎo/ ‘take good care of’, 锁好 /suǒ hǎo / ‘lock’).

After the automatic annotation was finished, the corpus was manually checked and corrected by the author to remove mistakes. Only textual data was included, pictures, graphs and tables were removed.

The concordance softwares Antconc (Anthony, 2014) and WordSmith (Scott, 2016b) were used. Antconc can be downloaded for free and installed on every Windows operating system while WordSmith requires the purchase of a license. Both are able to process Chinese script as long as the text files are saved in UTF-8 (for Antconc) or

Unicode (for WordSmith) encoding. Once the text files have been loaded, analyses on various levels like frequency counts, collocations and other lexical measures, such as type/token ratio and semantic density can be carried out. Their outputs was exported to Excel for further analysis.

An effective register analysis requires the comparison to another register(s), in order to determine what the distinctive features are (D. Biber & Conrad, 2009). For this purpose, the LCMC was chosen as the reference corpus. The LCMC is a balanced corpus of written Mandarin Chinese, containing five hundred random 2,000-word samples of written Chinese texts sampled from fifteen text categories published in Mainland China in the early 1990s, one million words in total (McEnery & Xiao, 2004). The corpus is segmented and POS tagged using the Chinese Lexical Analysis System developed by the Institute of Computing Technology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. The fifteen different text categories make certain that a wide range of registers are included, both informational writing (e.g. news reportage, academic prose, official documents) as well as non-informational texts types (e.g. various kinds of fiction) (see Table 2).

Code	Text category	Samples	Proportion
A	Press reportage	44	8.8%
B	Press editorials	27	5.4%
C	Press reviews	17	3.4%
D	Religion	17	3.4%
E	Skills/trades/hobbies	38	7.6%
F	Popular lore	44	8.8%
G	Biographies/essays	77	15.4%
H	Miscellaneous	30	6%
J	Science	80	16%
K	General fiction	29	5.8%
L	Mystery/detective fiction	24	4.8%
M	Science fiction	6	1.2%
N	Adventure and martial arts fiction	29	5.8%
P	Romantic fiction	29	5.8%
R	Humour	9	1.8%
Total		500	100%

Table 6 Informative and imaginative text categories in the LCMC (McEnery & Xiao, 2004)

The corpus is accessible via an online search interface (Hardie, 2012; Xu & Wu, 2014), and is also available for download as a whole. Apart from the usual search queries (e.g. frequencies, collocations) it also allows searches based on sub-text categories. For instance, the distribution of lexical and grammatical features of the

pilot corpus can be compared to those of “General Fiction” or “Press editorials” in the LCMC.

In order to compare several subcorpora of the LCMC with the present corpus, it was also necessary to normalize the counts due to varying text lengths. The public signs corpus is relatively small: it contains less than 16,000 running words while the other subcorpora are much greater in size (e.g. subcorpus ‘Science 162,825 tokens and ‘General prose’ 419,835 tokens). For this reason, a linguistic feature is likely to occur more frequently in the longer texts. To compensate for this problem, the counts were normed per 100 words of text (D. Biber & Conrad, 2009):

Normed rate = (raw count / total word count) * the fixed amount of text.

3.4 Feature selection

An effective register analysis aims to describe the characteristics of a target register, that is, to point out which linguistic features are typical for a register and to provide evidence to support these claims. It is thus a crucial question how to decide which linguistic features can be considered typical (p. 51). Biber & Conrad (2009) distinguish between two types of features that have defining characteristics for a text. First, register features are pervasive and frequent, meaning they are distributed throughout the text and occur more often in a given register than compared to other registers. Yet they are not restricted to the target register. Secondly, register markers, on the other hand, are distinctive in the sense that they are usually not found in other registers but what makes a given register recognizable. A third perspective includes genre features which refer to the conventional structures or moves that are used to create a text. Swale’s (1990) move analysis is an example for the identification of genre features, such as the moves used in different sections of research articles. These features are more motivated by convention rather than functionally because they are usually dictated by the members of a community or culture, e.g. the sequence of various moves in scientific abstracts (s. CARS model) or the preferred pattern of information sequencing using the 因所 yin-suo-structure in Chinese (Kirkpatrick, 1991).

It presents considerable difficulties to decide ahead of time which features to investigate. Almost any linguistic feature may have functional associations and

therefore be suitable for distinguishing the register of public signs from more general written registers in Chinese.

4 Register analysis of Chinese public signs

In this chapter the analytical framework for register analysis which was developed by Biber & Conrad (2009) will be applied to study the linguistic features of Chinese public written ANR. The framework consists of three major components: a situational description, a linguistic analysis, and a functional interpretation of the features that have been identified during the analysis. The situational analysis describes the situational characteristics of a certain register, that is, the circumstances in which the register is produced (e.g. time and place, the participants involved, the communicative purpose(s)). The linguistic analysis, on the other hand, aims at identifying the pervasive features, e.g. vocabulary, grammatical profiles etc., that are particularly common in the target register in comparison to other registers. The functional interpretation tries to form the functional associations between the linguistic forms and situational context.

4.1 Situational characteristics

There are various sources of information that can be of use in identifying the situational characteristics of a register: previous research, expert informants and the researcher's own experience and observation. Depending on the researcher's familiarity with the cultural context of the target register, expert informants can provide a valuable source of knowledge. While some characteristics can be quickly pointed out, such as the mode (speech or writing) and place of communication (public or private, specific setting), it can be more challenging to reveal others. For instance, it takes a deeper insight into the cultural context to uncover the relations among the participants in terms of social roles (power relation) or to correctly interpret the expression of stance (epistemic, attitudinal, etc.). The latter, in particular, is closely related to the occurrence of certain linguistic means, that is to say, the addressor supposedly makes a conscious choice of lexical and grammatical features to convey certain meaning. In the case of public announcements, it may be interesting to explore how the communicative purposes of informing, requesting and giving orders are realized linguistically and how they differ. These distinctions may be very subtle and thus more difficult to detect, especially for a non-native observer

who is unlikely to fully comprehend the implied meaning. Due to the lack of research on public announcements in addition to the researcher's non-native status, it proved particularly useful to interview several native Chinese informants about the different types of announcements and include their observations in the situational description.

Biber & Conrad (2009, p. 40) list seven major situational characteristics of registers which are shown in the left column. The right column shows a summarized situational description of Chinese ANR.

Situational characteristics	Chinese ANR
I. Participants A. Addressor 1. Single/plural/institutional/unidentified 2. Social characteristics B. Addressee 1. Single / plural / un-enumerated 2. Self / other C. On-lookers	Institutional, rarely single, sometimes unidentified Public sphere Large group, e.g. residents of a housing estate, anonymous Other N/A
II. Relationship among participants A. Interactiveness B. Social roles: relative status or power C. Personal relationship: e.g., friends, colleagues, strangers D. Shared knowledge: personal and specialist	No direct interaction but sometimes request for or prohibition of certain actions Often hierachic: authoritarian tone; sometimes equal Mostly no; sometimes business to customer/client no
III. Channel A. Mode: speech / writing / signing B. Specific Medium: Permanent: taped / transcribed / printed / handwritten etc.	Writing Printed on paper or sign post
IV. Production and Comprehension circumstances real time / planned / scripted / revised and edited A. Production B. Comprehension	time for planning, revising, editing varies depending on setting and reader, careful reading (if certain action is required) or may be

	skimmed quickly (if kind of common knowledge)
V. Setting A. Time and place of communication shared by the participants? B. Place of communication 1. Private / public 2. Specific setting C. Time: contemporary, historical time period	physical shared time or place are sometimes shared public for everyone to view usually referring to a specific location (construction site, hotel room), sometimes within a certain time period contemporary (in this study)
VI. Communicative purposes A. General purpose: narrate / report, describe, exposit / inform / explain, persuade, how-to / procedural, entertain, edify, reveal self B. Specific purpose: e.g. describe methods, teach moral through personal story C. Factuality: factual, opinion, speculative, imaginative D. Expression of stance: epistemic, attitudinal, no overt stance	Announcing and notifying, informational, <u>regulatory</u> and sometimes warning inform and explain about regulations, request/order for actions to be taken; call attention to or warn against dangers and threats factual
VII. Topic A. General topical 'domain': e.g., domestic, daily activities, business / workplace, science, education / academic, government / legal / politics, religion, sports, art / entertainment, etc. B. Specific topic	Broad domains of public daily life such as transportation, housing, shopping, sites and institutions varies

Table 7 Situational characteristics (modified from Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 40)

I. Participants: addressor (producer) and addressee (recipient)

Most public ANR are produced by an institutional addressor that rarely reveals the identity of the actual writer of the text. These institutions include government agencies ranging from higher to lower level (e.g. municipality, police department), the management of a housing estate, private or state enterprises, various kinds of organisations but also shops, hotels, restaurants and schools. Most often the addressor is not even stated, and the texts appear to be anonymously written, such as

on signboards at a touristic site or a parking lot. Yet depending on the local setting, the authorship can be implicitly assumed as the local authorities, the owner of a premise etc.

The addressee is the intended reader of ANR. They are most likely a large group readers, like the residents of a housing estate, passengers of a ferry or the visitors of a park.

II. Relationship among participants

The relations among participants can be described in terms of the degree of interactiveness as well as their social roles. Interactiveness refers to the extent of how directly the participants interact with each other as expressed in time and space. Spoken conversation, for instance, is highly interactive, the speakers engage in a dialogue in real-time, mostly at the same location but sometimes also far apart (e.g. on the phone). Spoken registers like conference lectures, on the other hand, are less interactive. Usually, there is one main speaker who produces most of the text while the audience is listening and has the opportunity to raise questions and initiate a discussion at the end. With the exception of webchats, text and mobile messaging, which seem to be a hybrid form, written registers usually show less interaction even if they are aimed as written conversation such as in email and letter correspondences. Producers and recipients can choose the time and place to respond. Public ANR in most cases require very little interaction. Not only is the author often unknown or maybe represented by an institution but also the audience being addressed is somewhat anonymous or at least not a specific person, e.g. all visitors of a scenery park, the customers of a shop etc. Sometimes the producer provides contact information like a telephone number or it is assumed that the reader knows how to get in touch, as in the case of the property management or the local police station. It is thus possible for the reader to respond to a notification, to ask questions or give feedback, yet not very common, unless it is specifically requested by the addressor.

Biber & Conrad (2009) furthermore draw attention to the social roles and relationship among participants. Social differences among participants, such as in status, gender etc., may affect language use. One of the major concerns in Critical Discourse Analysis, for instance, is to reveal power relations manifested in language use, which is based on the assumption that power differences influence language

choices, but also social practice (van Dijk, 1993). This is also evident in the divergent use of polite forms in the text samples of the current corpus. The corpus comprises four different types of announcements and notices that reflect various degrees of formality and hierarchic relationship between the addressor and addressee. As section 4 will show, type IV /tishi/ ‘reminder’, the least formal and official type as well as the flattest hierarchy, is in the majority of cases preceded by a 温馨 /wenxin/ ‘gentle’ to form a ‘kind reminder’. Furthermore, polite forms like 请 /qing/ ‘please’, 您 /nin/ ‘you’ are more likely to be used in /tishi/ than in the other categories. These examples on the lexical level indicate that the power relations between the participants can be a determiner for linguistic variation.

III. Channel

Registers can be distinguished between their physical channel, speech or writing. It is not surprising that whether a text is produced in the spoken or written mode will directly influence other situational characteristics, like the level of interactiveness, production circumstances and also communicative purpose. Public announcements are produced both in spoken and written mode: spoken announcements can be heard in places like train stations, supermarkets, etc. while written announcements are usually printed on sign posts or on paper and posted on bulletin boards. But the current study will focus on written ANR only.

IV. Production and Comprehension circumstances

Speech is language produced in realtime and usually allows little room for extended planning and editing. Writing, on the other hand, is typically characterised by carefully revised language. In a normal conversation the speakers interact more spontaneously, the turn-takings are not choreographed and there are many instances of repair, repetition and new starts. The writer, however, usually has much more time at his or her dispose to plan and draft the text, add and delete language. The same applies to the recipient: whereas a listener has only limited control over how to comprehend the text that is directed towards him or her in terms of speed, pronunciation and sequence of information, a reader usually can choose freely how

and when to process the text, choosing his/her own pace or spending deliberate time on one sentence, paragraph or just rereading it. These circumstances will have immediate impact on what language is used and how information is presented in spoken and written registers. Biber et al. (1999) for instance, showed that in American English conversation certain word classes like pronouns, verbs, adverbs, auxiliaries and particles are more common, while other classes like nouns, determiners and prepositions are less common. Even more revealing, the distribution of these classes in newspaper and academic writing is diametrically opposed to spoken conversation.

The majority of public announcements and notices belong to the text category of official or semi-official documents that are typically produced with great care and a lot of time for planning, revising and editing before they are posted on a bulletin or printed on a signpost. Depending on the status of the issuing agency, certain guidelines of writing may have to be adhered to. Due to their printed nature in addition to the relatively permanent place of publication the addressees are allowed ample time to read and process them.

V. Setting: time and place of communication

During face-to-face conversation a speaker can comment on something that is happening at that moment or by looking at it. In addition, deitic expressions like ‘now’ and ‘right there’ are used to refer to the physical context where a text is produced (Biber & Conrad, 2009). In contrast to many spoken registers, the participants in most written registers rarely share the physical context, the time and space, of the communication. This means, if they want to make direct reference to the physical environment, further explanation is required. In the case of written announcements, interestingly, the physical context of the text production is less relevant than the place (and often time) where the text is being published. An announcement or notice refers directly to a specific place, usually the area where the signpost has been put up. It should be therefore obvious to the reader what the texts is referring to. A “No smoking” sign prohibits the act of smoking in its immediate surrounding, most likely a building or closed compartment. Other notices are more specific and add place names (“Yulong River”), spatial adverbs and other deictic

expressions (“here”, “this train”, “from March 18-28”) to indicate the area or a period of time as to the duration of validity.

VI. Communicative purposes

This situational characteristic can be described along several parameters. A register may have a general purpose, a specific purpose or it combines several communicative purposes. ANR may have combined purposes but they can be distinguished which purpose is the specific one, even if they all intent to inform the recipient about something or explain the procedure. 通知 ‘circular’ may inform about a specific concern and often requests the response/ or action of the reader. 通告 ‘circular’, on the other hand, may inform about a general issue or a decision that has been made by a higher authority and does not necessarily require action. For instance, 提示 is a reminder and does not so much inform about something but rather draws the reader’s attention to something that should generally be known. Furthermore, the reminder serves the indirect function of a request, containing the communicative purpose of a directive. It reminds but also ask the reader to close the windows and lock the door when they leave the house. There should not be severe consequences if one does not follow the instruction, at least not from any authority. Biber & Conrad (2009) made the observation that many written registers rather focus on conveying information than developing a personal relationship.

VII. Topic

It seems obvious that the words which are used in a text largely depend on the topic or domain they are encompassing. For this reason, topic has been identified as the most important situational factor that determines vocabulary choice (Biber & Conrad, 2009). A distinction could be drawn between broad domains like scientific writing, fiction or press and more specific topics within a domain such as news reports on sports versus politics.

Grammatical features, on the other hand, seem to be less affected by topic but rather by the physical situational context and communicative purpose, at least in English. ANR encompass a wide range of topical domains that are part of daily life, such as transportation, food and drink, shopping, health, education, etc. The very uneven text

sampling suggests that the topical domain of tourism and housing makes more use of the text category ‘reminder’ than other domains.

4.2 Linguistic analysis

This chapter describes the frequency profiles of selected features and provides lexical measures data about type-token ratio, lexical density, and average sentence length. Lexical measures are calculated for the entire PSC. Previous research has shown that sentence and word length as well as POS are viable parameters to distinguish Chinese texts of different writing styles (Hou et al., 2014). The findings are compared to Zhang’s (2012, p. 239) calculations of the 15 LCMC subregisters.

4.2.1 Lexical measures

The type-token ratio ($TTR = \text{type}/\text{token} * 100$) is a measure of lexical variability. This is the ratio between the number of types (i.e. unique words) and the number of tokens (i.e. running words). A higher TTR and lower repetition rate (RR) means that more different lexical items are being used and are associated with vocabulary richness. A lower TTR, on the other hand, indicates that fewer specific words are used while more generic ones are frequent (Westin, 2002). However, the type-token ratio varies widely depending on the length of the text that is being studied. A large corpus tends toward a lower TTR while a small corpus may have a very high ratio. Unless one compares corpora of a similar size (such as texts from the Brown corpus family) the conventional TTR is rather misleading. Therefore, to compare TTR across texts of differing lengths and to make the ratio of the PSC comparable to other Chinese registers, a standardized type-token ratio (STTR) is calculated. Following Scott’s (2016a) suggestion the STTR for the current corpus is truncated to the same token counts of 10,000 word tokens. This means, the ratio is calculated for the first 10,000 running words and then calculated afresh for the next 10,000. The final STTR is an average type-token ratio based on two consecutive 10,000-word chunks of texts. The PSC has a STTR of 26.77, which is in comparison to the 15 subregisters of the LCMC close to the categories “Humor” (26.34), “Skill, trades and hobbies” (26.16) and “Religion” (26.9). According to Zhang’s analysis the highest STTR are

found in “News reportages” (35.47) and “Popular Lore” (32.64) while the two other news categories “Editorials” (22.23) and “Reviews” (23.54) and also “Reports and official documents” (24.05) have the lowest STTR. Zhang’s (2012) findings complement previous observations that written Chinese has higher lexical variability than spoken Chinese (Y. Wang, 2003). Moreover, the coefficient of variance (12.6 with a threshold of 15), which describes the amount of internal variability of these text categories regarding their TTR, indicates there is still substantial variation within written registers. The STTR for the PSC subcategories are not included because of their small token size.

Another common lexical measure is lexical density (lexical words/ total words * 100) which measures the information load of a text. Semantic density refers to the percentage of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) in all word classes (Stubbs, 1996). Content words are an open class of words comprising nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs while function words are a closed class containing a limited number of grammatical words such as articles, auxiliaries, prepositions etc. A higher percentage of content words indicate higher information load. From a readability perspective, higher information load means higher text difficulty. Previous studies investigating lexical density in spoken and written language in English found that writing as a whole had a higher lexical density than speech (Ure, 1971). Moreover, it was noted that message-oriented and relations-oriented discourse may be distinguished in terms of their lexical density, the former tending towards higher density, i.e. message-oriented discourse contains more lexical than grammatical items (McCarthy, 1998). In teaching contexts, lexical density is also often used to measure the level of difficulty of texts, assuming that a higher amount of content words corresponds with greater difficulty (Camiciottoli, 2013). The amount of content words in the PSC was calculated by calculating the sum of all words that are tagged as nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

The PSC contains 81.43% content words which is lower than the amount in all other text categories in the LCMC. The most content words can be found in “Reports and official documents” (82.36%), “Science” (80.12%) and the least in “Romantic fiction” (72.78%) and “Science fiction” (73.42%). Internal variation between the text categories is less pronounced (coefficient of variance 3.8).

4.2.2 Sentence length

For the analysis of the PSC data, a sentence is defined as a string of words marked by a full stop, a question or an exclamation mark at the end. Line and paragraph breaks are also included as sentence markers because it was observed that many public signs do not make use of punctuation markers to separate sentences. Instead, a new line or a paragraph marks the beginning of a new train of thought. The average sentence length in the PSC is 11.29 which is only half of what the average sentence length of most of the LCMC subregisters is. Zhang (p. 214) reports a high degree of variability among the LCMC text categories regarding their sentence length (coefficient of variance 14.7). Sentence length refers to the average number of words per sentence. On the longer spectrum with average sentence lengths between 24 to 27 words per sentence are “Religion”, “News reviews”, “Official documents” “Science”. The shortest sentences on average are written in “Humor” (15.14) and “General Fiction” (17.65). These data do not tell anything about the variation in sentence length within each category. A closer look into the distribution of sentence lengths between 1 word (V1) and > 50 words reveals that in the PSC very short sentences containing between one to six words account for almost half of all sentences (46 %). Moreover, very short word strings up to three words account for ¼ of all sentences alone while in the LCMC, in contrast, these sentences make up less than 10% of all sentences.

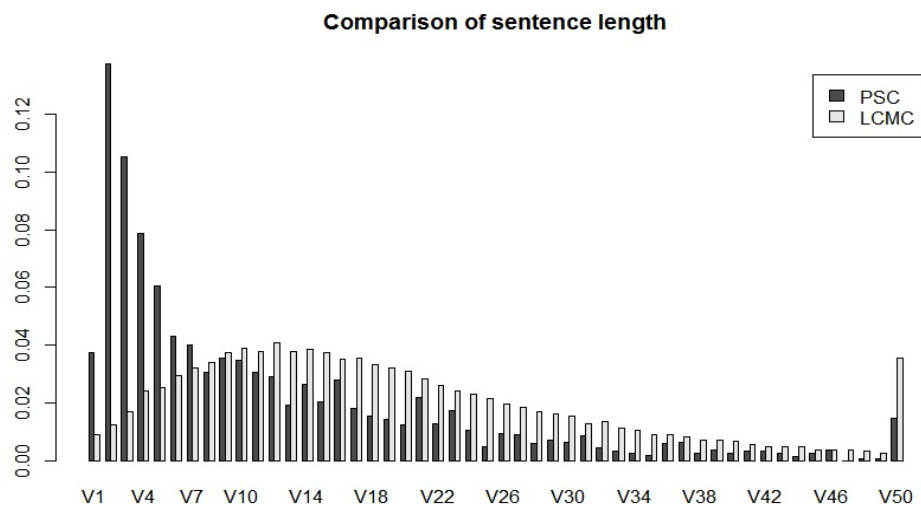


Figure 4 Comparison of sentence length

This somewhat distorted distribution may be explained by a compositional convention of this register. The majority of the collected signs typically begins with a heading that

- a) states the type of the sign (e.g. ‘Notice’, ‘Announcement’) which is often further modified by another noun, verb or adjective about the nature of the category (e.g. 游泳须知 /yóuyǒng xūzhī/ ‘Notice about swimming’, 温馨提示 /wēnxīn tíshì/ ‘Soft reminder’, 危险告示/wéixiǎn gàoshì/ ‘Notice about danger’),
- b) includes a term of address (e.g. 游客朋友们 /yóukè péngyǒumen/ ‘Visitors and friends’) and/ or a form of greeting to the readership (e.g. 尊敬的顾客 /zūnjìng de gùkè/ ‘Dear customers’).

In addition, most signs conclude with the name of the institutional addressor (e.g. 大沥奇槎幼儿园 /dà lì qí chá yòu'éryuán/ ‘Daliqi Kindergarten’), the date 2011 年 10 月 12 日, and sometimes an expression of gratitude (e.g. 谢谢合作 /xièxiè hézuò/ ‘Thank you for your cooperation’). These conventions may account for the bulk of short sentences between one and six words.

4.2.3 Frequency profiles of grammatical classes

Part-of-speech (POS) denotes the grammatical category of a word. By classifying words into POS it is possible to study their different usages and the grammatical structure of sentences. Chinese, as an isolating language, generally lacks inflectional morphology which can distinguish word classes in other languages. The correspondence between word class and grammatical roles is less fixed, but is rather a one-to-several correspondence between the two for major word classes like nouns, verbs, and adjectives (Wu, 2004). This categorial ambiguity has been widely discussed in the literature and it poses a not small dilemma to the tagging of Chinese corpora. The majority of Chinese grammarians hold the view that Chinese words have predefined lexical categories that are determined by their syntactic properties and should not depend on the grammatical function they perform in individual sentences (Kwong & Tsou, 2003b). The word 安全 /ānquán/ ‘safe’, for example, occurs frequently in the PSC (4.6 per 1000 words) and both as adjective as well as in a nominalized form:

- a) 为了您和他人的安全 /wèile nín hé tārén de ānquán/ ‘For your and other

people's safety' – noun

- b) 优美、安全的游园环境需要你我共同创造 – adjectival, modifier /yōuměi, ānquán de yóuyuán huánjìng xūyào nǐ wǒ gòngtóng chuàngzào/ 'A beautiful and safe park environment requires our joint creation'

A verb can take up the grammatical role of the subject, predicate, object, or attribute of a sentence while the written character itself remains unchanged:

- c) 配合/v 管理/vn 人员/n 的/ude1 工作/vn

Therefore, grammatical relations are more often determined by word order and the use of grammatical particles but less so by means of morphological changes. Wu (2004) notes that this has presumably led to the broad traditional division of words into *shici* 'full words' and *xuci* 'function words', the latter being void of concrete meaning but able to signal grammatical relationships (P. Li & Lu, 1980). In addition, a function word may serve more than one grammatical function (e.g. auxiliary and preposition). Other scholars have also observed that the dividing line between full words and function words has never been very clear on the edges. Some members of the function word category show relatively different degree of affinity with the full or the function nature of the categories, some lean more towards the full word end while others more towards function words (Wu, 2004). For this reason, it should be borne in mind that the very clear-cut notion of word classes suggested by the POS tagger is a bit misleading. The notion of word classes is necessary here for the grammatical analysis and the comparison of linguistic features across different registers. However, there should be an understanding that these categories are fuzzier in Chinese, that is, nouns can be, under certain circumstances used as verbs, adjectives or even adverbs and vice versa.

This analysis adopts the Chinese POS tag set from ICTLAS and further subdivides words into content and function words. Content words include nouns, verbs, adjectives, attributive words, numerals, adverbs, special notional words, onomatopoeias and interjections whereas function words can be divided into auxiliary words, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and modal particles (B. Huang & Liao, 2002).

4.2.4 Frequency ranks

The 100 most frequent word types cover about 1/3 of all words in the PSC (28.87%) and LCMC (31.31%). However, in the PSC the ratio of content words to function words is about 3 to 2, whereas in the LCMC the ratio is the other way around. The distribution of POS in the Top100 word types also differs greatly: in terms of tokens, verbs followed by nouns and auxiliaries.

Top100 of all tokens	PSC	Top100 of all tokens	LCMC
v (verb)	23.40%	u	27.59%
n (noun)	18.12%	v	16.34%
u (auxiliary)	10.93%	r	12.75%
p (preposition)	8.64%	p	10.33%
m (numeral)	6.63%	d	8.82%
c (conjunction)	6.17%	m	5.62%
r (pronoun)	5.09%	c	4.87%
a (adjective)	5.04%	f	4.39%
f (directional locality)	4.86%	n	4.14%
d (adverb)	4.66%	q	2.41%
q (classifier)	2.37%	a	1.87%
t time word	1.66%	y	0.87%
b non-predicate adjective	1.38%		
x unclassified items	1.03%		

Table 8 Relative distribution of top100 tokens in PSC and LCMC

Top100 of all types	PSC	Top100 of all types	LCMC
v	25.00%	v	21.00%
n	23.00%	r	15.00%
p	9.00%	p	13.00%
f	7.00%	d	10.00%
m	7.00%	u	8.00%
d	5.00%	n	7.00%
r	5.00%	f	6.00%
c	4.00%	c	5.00%
t	3.00%	q	5.00%
a	3.00%	m	5.00%
q	3.00%	a	4.00%
u	2.00%	y	1.00%
x	2.00%		
b	2.00%		

Table 9 Relative distribution of top100 types in PSC and LCMC

A comparison of the top ten POS shows that the proportional difference between all these POS in the LCMC and PSC is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) except for

adjectives. There are relatively more occurrences of nouns, verbs, numerals and time words in the PSC but fewer of adverbs, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions.

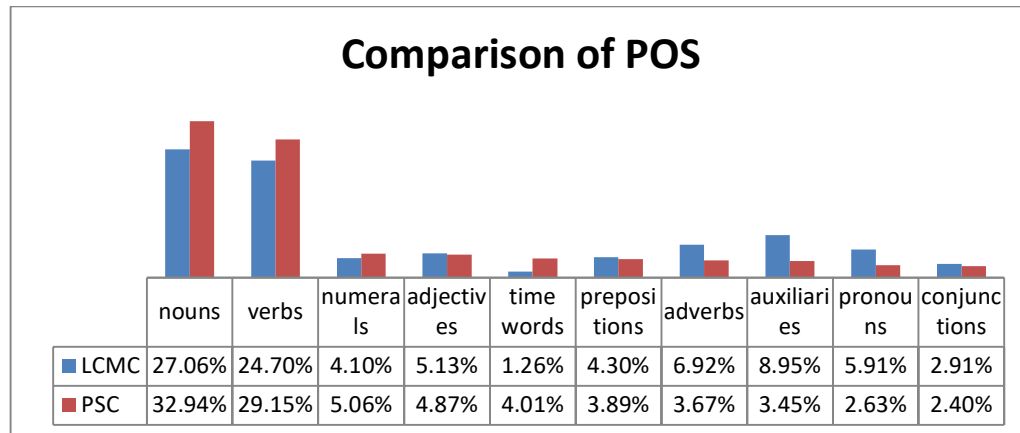


Figure 5 Comparison of relative distribution of POS in LCMC and PSC

4.2.5 Grammatical and lexical profiles of individual POS

The ICTCLAS tag set includes sub-tags for each major POS which allows a more detailed look into what kind of subcategories a POS is made of.

4.2.5.1 Nouns

Nouns are further subdivided into common nouns, proper nouns (e.g., names of specific people, places, organizations etc.), nouns morphemes and letter strings. Most nouns are common nouns and noun morphemes in both corpora (86.59% in the PSC and 83.64% in the LCMC). The remaining nouns are mainly proper nouns yet with different distributions in both corpora. While most proper nouns in the PSC are place names such as 深圳市 ‘Shenzhen’, the LCMC contains much more names of people. In addition, public signs contain a higher amount of letter strings, usually English translations of Chinese names of places or other entities as in ‘POLICE’ or Guifeng Mountain National Forest Park.

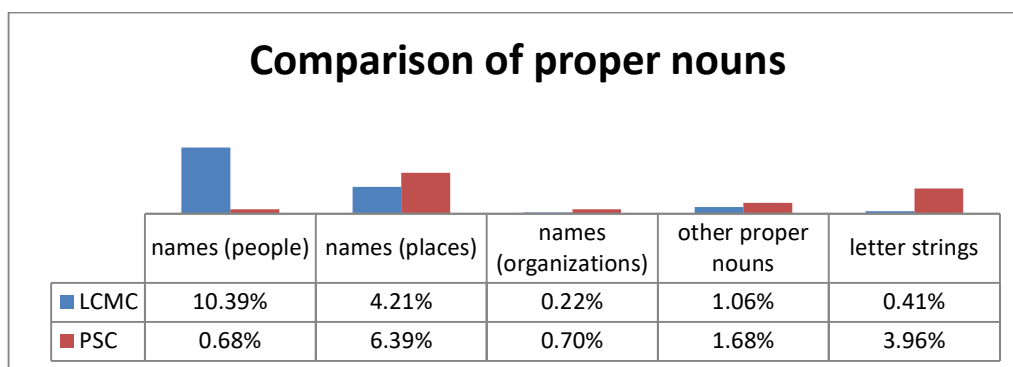


Figure 6 Comparison of relative distribution of nouns in LCMC and PSC

A frequency list of the 50 most frequent nouns in the PSC reveals that one part of the nouns directly encompass the semantic field where the signs are taken from, such as 医院 /yīyuàn/ ‘hospital’, 孕产妇 /yùn chǎnfù/ ‘pregnant women’, 医疗 /yīliáo/ ‘medical treatment’ from the health domain, or 交通 /jiāotōng/ ‘traffic’ and 车辆 /chēliàng/ ‘vehicles’ from traffic & transportation and 物业 /wù yè/ ‘property’ and 业主 /yèzhǔ/ ‘landlord’ from housing. In addition, some nouns refer to time and more general places as 时间 /shíjiān/ ‘time’, 场所 /chǎngsuǒ/ ‘site, place’, 楼 /lóu/ ‘building’, 区 /qū/ ‘district’, but also reflect the specific nature of public notices and reminders in terms of what and whom they are concerned with 规定 /guīdìng/ ‘regulation’, 标准 /biāozhǔn/ ‘standards’, 人员 /rényuán/ ‘personnel’ and 物品 /wùpǐn/ ‘articles, goods’.

In contrast, the most frequent nouns in the LCMC are much more generic, e.g. 人(们) /rén (men)/ ‘people’, 问题 /wèntí/ ‘issue, question’, 系统 /xìtǒng/ ‘system’, 关系 /guānxì/ ‘relationship’, 情况 /qíngkuàng/ ‘situation’, but also refer mainly to politics, economy and society: 经济 /jīngjì/ ‘economy’, 中国 /zhōngguó/ ‘China’, 我国 /wǒguó/ ‘China’, 国家 /guójiā/ ‘country’, 世界 /shìjiè/ ‘world’, 社会 /shèhuì/ ‘society’.

4.2.5.2 Verbs

The tag for verbs includes the subcategories of nominalized verbs, verb morphemes, adverbial uses of verbs and also separate tags for the copular verb 是 /shì/ and

stative verb 有 /you/ ‘have’. Although there are no uniform morphological indicators whether a lexical item in Chinese a verb is or not, several morphological and syntactical features are typically associated with verbs (Li Audrey, 2016). Among their defining properties is the ability to take aspect markers as suffixes, such as the durative marker 着 /zhe/, the perfective marker 了 /le/ and the experiential marker 过 /guò/; to take objects or complements; to form compounds in combination with other words based on certain morphological and syntactical rules and to allow reduplication (either Aa, A-infix, or ABab with disyllabic verbs). Modal auxiliaries like 能 /néng/ ‘can’ or 要 /yào/ ‘must’ are usually considered a subcategory of verbs although they typically take verb phrases as a complement and are never suffixed with aspect markers). The ICTLAS tagger does not have a separate tag for modal verbs but they will be discussed as a separate group, nonetheless.

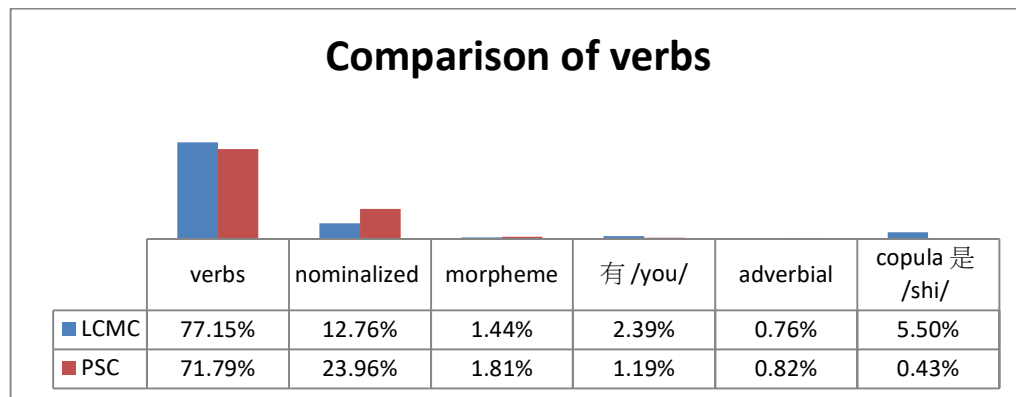


Figure 7 Comparison of relative distribution of verbs in LCMC and PSC

Public signs apparently make much more use of nominalized verbs. As noted, nominalized forms in Chinese do not undergo morphological changes as compared to English where nominalization may occur via affixation (e.g. ‘depart’ vs. ‘departure’), a new word form (e.g. ‘to sell’ vs. ‘the sale’), change of word stress (‘increase’ vs. ‘increase’) and adding an article word (‘to murder him’ vs. ‘the murder of x’, or ‘his murder’) (look for reference). In Chinese, nominalizations of word forms are primarily determined by change of word order and syntactical structure (He & Wang 2007), and the use of the particle 的 /de/:

- d) 发展理论 /fāzhǎn lǐlùn/ develop theories
- e) 理论的发展 / lǐlùn de fāzhǎn / ‘the development of ideas’

Different from verbs, nominalized verbs can be modified by an attribute and they do not take objects and complements (Shi, 2011):

- f) 我们需要注意环境(的)保护。 /wǒmen xūyào zhùyì huánjìng bǎohù/
 ‘We need to pay attention to environmental protection.’
- g) 我们需要注意保护环境。 /wǒmen xūyào zhùyì bǎohù huánjìng/
 ‘We need to pay attention to protect the environment.’

The ten most frequent nominalized verbs differ somewhat in the two corpora, both in rank and frequency. 管理 /guanli/ ‘manage’, 工作 /gongzuo/ ‘work’ and 活动 /huodong/ ‘activity’ occur in the T10 list of both corpora and are more generic, 提示 occurs only with 温馨 in the title line of reminders, 管理 as attribute to a noun or other vn in a multi-compound word, such as in

管理: 物业/n 管理/vn 处/n, 治安/n 管理/vn 处罚/vn 法/n

服务: 卫生/an 服务/vn 中心/n

nfreq1000	T10_LCMC	nfreq1000	T10_PSC
1.47	工作	7.54	提示
1.19	发展	3.19	管理
0.82	活动	2.28	服务
0.72	生活	2.11	工作
0.62	教育	1.86	举报
0.62	管理	1.12	活动
0.56	建设	1.04	谅解
0.54	生产	0.99	相关
0.50	研究	0.95	咨询
0.49	有关	0.95	检查

Table 10 Comparison of Top10 most frequent nominalized verbs in LCMC and PSC

Vshi

	nfreq1000 LCMC	nfreq1000 PSC
有	5.89	3.48
是	13.59	1.24

Table 11 Comparison of normalized frequency of 有 and 是 in LCMC and PSC

The copula 是 /shi/ ‘be’ can be treated as a subcategory of verbs because it shares properties like certain verbs. Unlike other verbs, however, it does not take aspect markers nor can it be - in the unmarked canonical form - combined with most

auxiliary verbs like 能 /néng/ ‘can’ or 会 /huì/ ‘be able, will’. According to Li & Thompson (1989, p. 151) there are three types of construction that employ 是 /shì/ as their verb:

1. Simple/bar copular sentences: the referential subject noun phrase is linked to a nonreferential noun phrase by the copula verb. The nonreferential NP serves to characterize or identify the referent of the subject NP, and the copula verb serves as a link between the two. The copula and the nonreferential NP are the VP of the sentence which is also intransitive. The nonreferential NP following the copula is not an object of the copula verb.
 - h) 医院卫生间是各种传染病排泄的场所 /Yīyuàn wèishēngjiān shì gè zhǒng chuánrǎn bìng páixiè de chǎngsuǒ/ ‘The hospital bathroom is a place of all kinds of infectious diseases to be excreted’ [272_ts_heal]
 - i) 社区是我家 /shèqū shì wǒjiā/ ‘The community is my home’ [60_ts_house]
2. Special affirmative sentences 是... (的): The emphatic construction is comparable to the English emphatic ‘do’ as in ‘I did promise to help you’. The copula is used to affirm a statement in the preceding or following discourse. The copula verb does not link the subject NP and a nonreferential NP as in the simple copula sentence but the full VP, that may include a negative particle, an auxiliary verb, and a manner adverb and has the meaning ‘It is true that...’. The sentence typically contains another main verb or predicate and the 是...的 construction performs an emphatic function as well as a topic-comment information structure. The element preceding 是 is the topic while the phrase framed by 是... 的 serves as the comment.
 - j) 您如果是进行两次或两次以上输液的请核对您的药物数量是否正确 /Nín rúguǒ shì jìn háng liǎng cì huò liǎng cì yǐshàng shūyè de qǐng héduì nín dì yàowù shùliàng shìfǒu zhèng/ ‘If you receive twice or more infusions, please check if the quantity of your medicine is correct’ [178_ts_heal] (predicate focus)
 - k) 水资源是非常宝贵的 /Shuǐ zīyuán shì fēicháng bǎoguì de/ ‘Water is an invaluable resource’ [194_ts_shop]
3. It is also used to explicate a fact or proposition by way of asserting the manner, purpose, reason, or means; to express one’s subjective stance toward the asserted

proposition, convey mental perceptions, make inferences, or evaluate the state of affairs (e.g., 他是知道的 /Tā shì zhīdào de/ ‘He knows about it’). The latter is compatible with modals of possibility 会 /huì/ ‘able to’, necessity 应该 /yīnggāi/ ‘should’ or ability 可以 /kěyǐ/ ‘can’ (Shyu 2016).

Verb types frequently used in PSC (word lists and keywords)

A comparison between the most frequent 30 verb types shows that while the LCMC verbs are more generic in nature, i.e. verbs like be, (not) have, come, go, speak, arrive, see, work modal verbs (want, can, would), the most frequent PSC verbs stem from the semantic field that directs, regulates, manages, instructs and administers people and situations, such as 使用 /shǐyòng/ ‘use’, 管理 /guǎnlǐ/ ‘manage’, 严禁 /yánjìn/ ‘it is strictly forbidden’, 办理 /bànlǐ/ ‘handle’, and 注意 /zhùyì/ ‘pay attention’. A keyword analysis³ of all verbs further confirms that the following verbs are unusually frequent (table 11) and infrequent (table 12) in the PSC:

Rank	Keyness	Verb	Rank	Keyness	Verb
1	1338	请/v	11	191	如下/vi
2	1232	提示/vn	12	177	就诊/vi
3	374	严禁/v	13	176	谢谢/v
4	285	举报/vn	14	134	谅解/vn
5	263	携带/v	15	132	服务/vn
6	232	预约/v	16	129	不得/vi
7	223	敬请/v	17	129	使用/v
8	220	尊敬/v	18	128	停放/v
9	206	办理/v	19	123	吸烟/vi
10	198	禁止/v	20	119	生育/vn

Table 12 Top 20 Unusually frequent verbs in PSC

Rank	Keyness	Verb	Rank	Keyness	Verb
1	549	是/vshi	11	25	认为/v
2	72	要/v	12	22	生产/vn
3	58	使/v	13	21	会/v
4	49	有/vyou	14	20	走/v

³ Keyword analysis refers to the notion in which words are unusually frequent (or infrequent) in the corpus when compared with the words in a reference corpus. The keyness score is a statistical measure indicating words which are significantly higher in the target corpus than in the reference corpus.

5	38	看/v	15	20	发展/v
6	36	没有/v	16	17	提出/v
7	32	成/v	17	15	能/v
8	31	道/v	18	14	占/v
9	31	发展/vn	19	14	得到/v
10	26	听/v	20	13	解决/v

Table 13 Top20 Unusually infrequent verbs in PSC

4.2.5.3 Adjectives

The category of adjectives usually comprises lexical items that represent properties of entities, e.g., dimension, age, color etc. Their predominant function is to serve as a prenominal modifier or as the head of a predicate in a clause (S.-Z. Huang, Jin, & Shi, 2016).

The ICLTAS tagger has different tags for the total class of adjectives and non-gradable attributive adjectives (区别词 /qūbiécí/ ‘distinguishing words’), but no separate tag for predicative adjectives. Non-gradable attributive adjectives cannot be modified by degree adverbs like 很 /hěn/ ‘very’ or 非常 /fēicháng/ ‘extremely’.

Attributive adjectives (both gradable and non-gradable perform a modifying function when they appear in front of nouns (e.g., in 公共交通 /gōnggòng jiāotōng/ ‘public transportation’). As the predicate in a clause, adjectives typically occur with a degree adverb 很 /hěn/ ‘very’ or negator 不 /bù/ ‘not’.

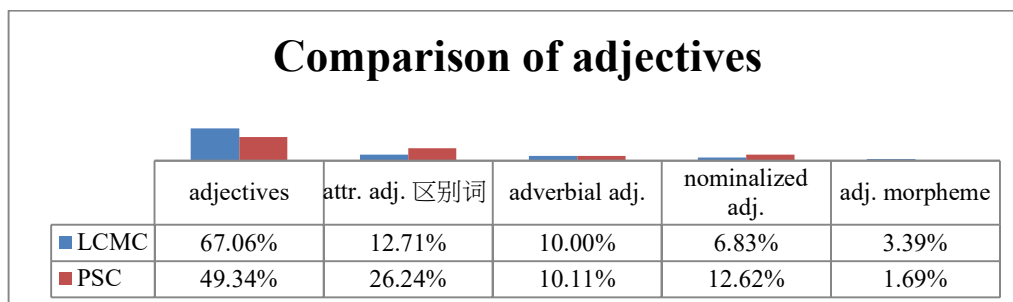


Figure 8 Comparison of relative distribution of adjectives in LCMC and PSC

Whereas there are relatively fewer occurrences of adjectives and adjectival morphemes in the PSC than in the LCMC, the amount of non-gradable attributive and nominalized adjectives is greater in the PSC than in the LCMC. According to S.-Z. Huang et al. (2016), adjectives consists of lexical items that typically represent properties of entities, e.g. dimension, age, color, speed, quantity and quality, etc. A

comparison of the Top20 most frequent adjectives in the LCMC and PSC reveals that adjectives in the latter are less generic but characteristic of the topics and domains the public ANR encompass. The most frequent items in the LCMC are all related to the above-mentioned properties of entities ('big', 'small', 'good', 'new', 'important', 'red' etc.), and they are much more evenly distributed. The topmost frequent lexical items in the PSC, on the other hand, are 温馨 /wēnxīn/ 'soft', which occurs in almost every title of reminders, followed by 'safe', 'good', 'big', 'poor', 'complete', 'easily flammable'. Like the most frequent verbs and nouns occurring in the PSC, the lexical choice of adjectives is also a strongly linked to the domains where public ANR can be found (transportation, housing, etc.).

nfreq1000	T20_LCMC	nfreq1000	T20_PSC
2.12	大	7.13	温馨
1.62	好	4.68	安全
1.07	新	2.74	好
1.03	小	1.08	大
0.94	多	0.95	贫困
0.67	重要	0.91	全
0.67	不同	0.87	易燃
0.65	高	0.83	卫生
0.37	长	0.83	有效
0.37	基本	0.79	危险
0.31	老	0.70	不便
0.30	完全	0.62	及时
0.29	红	0.62	新
0.26	低	0.62	易爆
0.25	一般	0.62	贵重
0.24	少	0.54	不便
0.23	具体	0.54	满
0.23	一般	0.50	特殊
0.23	黑	0.41	多
0.22	多	0.41	妥善

Table 14 Comparison of Top 20 adjective types in LCMC and PSC

4.2.5.4 Time words and numerals

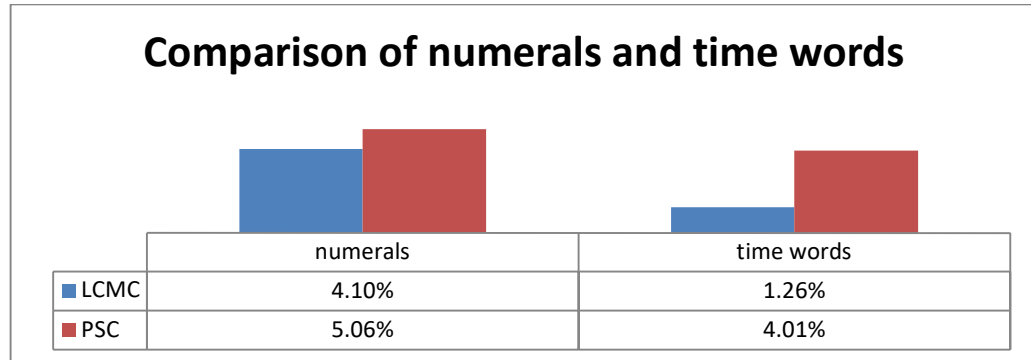


Figure 9 Comparison of relative distribution of numerals and time words in LCMC and PSC

Both numerals and time words (tagged with ‘m’ and ‘t’, respectively) occur significantly more frequently in the PSC than in the four other LCMC subcategories. In fact, numerals are the third and time words the fourth most frequent type in the PSC corpus, only preceded by nouns and verbs. In all other subcategories in the LCMC grammatical classes like auxiliaries, prepositions, adverbs, or pronouns are more frequent. The POS tag for numerals comprises all numbers occurring in the corpus, such as ordinal and cardinal numbers denoting quantities, duration, phone numbers etc., excluding times and dates that are marked with a separate tag for time words.

A look at two of the text samples makes it apparent why numbers and dates occur so frequently in the PSC. The first example below shows the usage of numerals in a reminder displayed on a ferry. Here, the numerals are used for listing regulations (first, second, third etc.), indicating age (children below the age of 14 and the elderly above the age of 70), price (one yuan per ticket) but also locality (second floor).

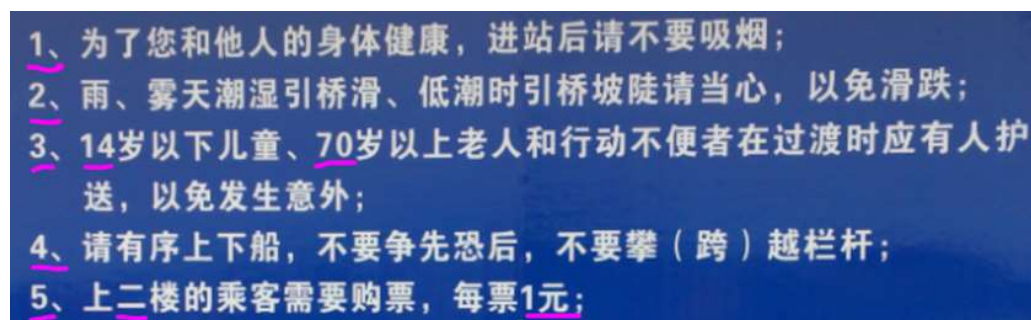


Figure 10 Example of an announcement at a ferry pier from PSC

The second example shows a circular informing parents about changes of tuition fee in a language education center. The notice clearly specifies the details of the change: the actual increase, the new rate per hour as well as the total fee per month, possible discounts, and time period of validity.

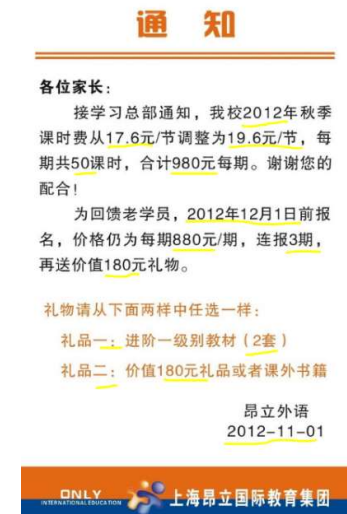


Figure 10 Example of a circular from PSC

Both text samples inform the recipients about regulations, conditions, and restrictions when taking part in a certain event. The first one refers to the event of a ferry ride where the reminder lays out all restrictions that any passenger who wishes to partake is subject to. The second notice states the changed conditions for enrolling in the respective school’s language classes, which includes paying a certain amount of tuition fee. These conditions and restrictions are expressed most often in numbers (price, time period, eligibility etc.).

4.2.5.5 Auxiliaries

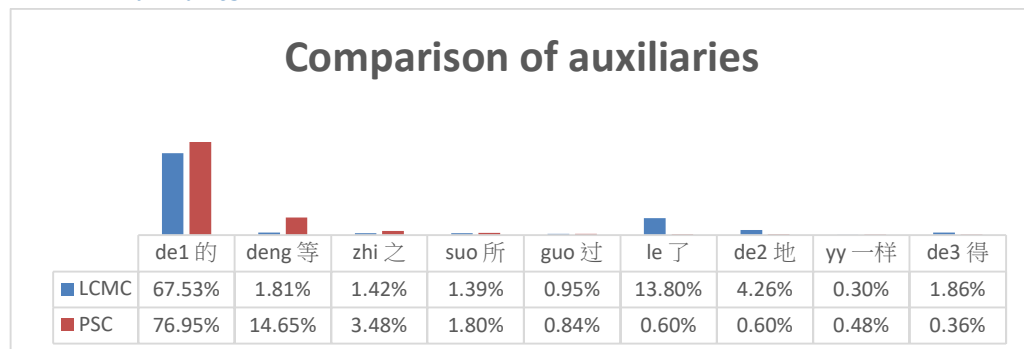


Figure 11 Comparison of relative distribution of auxiliaries in LCMC and PSC

Overall, there is a statistically significant higher amount of auxiliaries in the LCMC (8.95%) compared to the PSC (3.45%).

The bar chart compares the occurrences of the nine most frequent auxiliary types in the LCMC and PSC. Not surprisingly, the structural particle 的 /de/ is the by far most frequent auxiliary in both PSC and LCMC as it is overall also the most frequent type of all word types in both corpora. It is more noteworthy, however, that the second and third most frequent auxiliary types in the PSC are 等 /deng/ ‘and other similar things’ and 之 /zhī/. 等 is frequently used for listing items, conditions etc. in order to inform to public about the number of restrictions:

- l) 严禁携带婚庆礼炮等易燃 /Yánjìn xiédài hūnqìng lǐpào děng yì rán/ ‘It is strictly forbidden to carry wedding fire crackers and similar readily flammable materials [6_gs_trans]
- m) 从即日起, 卖菜、卖水果、收废品、收旧家电等等严禁进入本小区。
/Cóng jīrì qǐ, mài cài, mài shuǐguǒ, shōu fèipǐn, shōu jiù jiādiàn děng děng yánjìn jìnrù běn xiǎoqū/ From this day on, it is strictly forbidden to enter the community to sell vegetables and fruits, collect waste products and old appliances etc. [55_tz_house].

之, on the other hand, is used in an idiomatic phrase which often concluded the public notice:

- n) 不便之处, 敬请原谅! /bùbiàn zhī chù, jìng qǐng yuánliàng/ Sorry for any inconveniences caused! [66_ts_tour]

There is a paucity of other auxiliary types like aspect markers 着 /zhe/, 了 /le/, 过 /guò/, which could be attributed to the fact that Chinese aspect markers are used to describe the internal temporal constituency of a situation, to be more precise, to express perfectivity and imperfectivity. According to Tang (2016) a situation is viewed “as a process consisting of a series of stages and phases, including the beginning, the continuation, and the completion. Each of these stages is an aspect that can be viewed” (p. 216). The texts found in the PSC, however, typically lack internal temporal structure as they do not focus on the relation between the time of an action and the time of reference. They are more often concerned with issuing directives and giving instructions which, from a syntactic perspective, are often realized as imperatives:

- o) 下车时勿忘手机、钱包等随身物品; /Xià chē shí wù wàng shǒujī, qiánbāo děng suíshēn wùpǐn/ ‘Don't forget your mobile phone, wallet, etc. when you get off the bus’ [200_ts_trans]

4.2.5.6 Prepositions

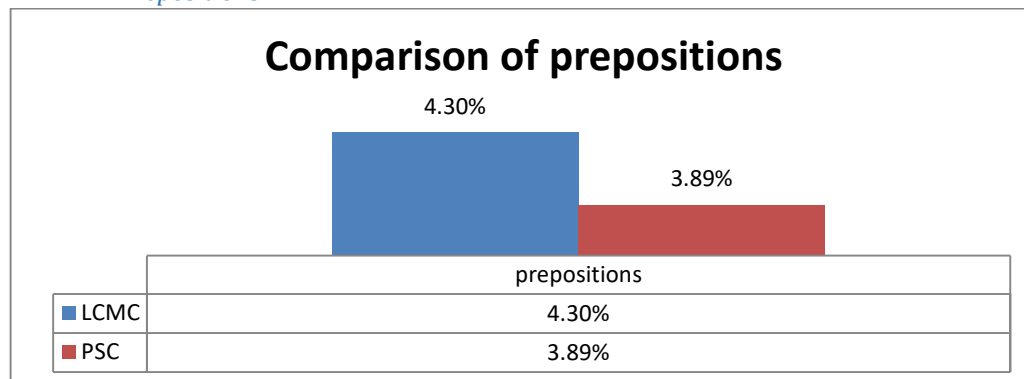


Figure 12 Comparison of relative distribution of prepositions in LCMC and PSC

There are significant fewer occurrences of prepositions in the PSC than in the LCMC. A comparison of the top15 prepositions shows a very different distribution of prepositional types: while the locative 在 /zai/ ‘at’ is the most frequently used preposition in both corpora, the PSC contains significant more occurrences of the prepositions 根据 / ‘according to’ /gēnjù/, 按 /àn/ ‘on the basis of’ and 关于 /guānyú/ ‘with regard to’ which all denote the meaning ‘depending on’ or ‘in agreement with’ and are typically used in more formal contexts to refer to official evidence, set of rules or regulations in statistics and reports:

- p) 根据国家治安管理条例 /Gēnjù guójiā zhì'ān guǎnlǐ tiáoli/ ‘According to the National Security Administration Regulations’ [72_ts_tour]
- q) 为了游客安全, 请按景区指定山路上山游玩 /wèile yóukè ānquán, qǐng àn jǐngqū zhǐdìng shānlù shàngshān yóuwán/ ‘For the safety of tourists, please follow the scenic spot on the mountain road’ [67_ts_tour]
- r) 关于开展古城用电专项整治工作的公告 /guānyú kāizhǎn gǔchéng yòng diàn zhuānxiàng zhěngzhì gōngzuò de gōnggào/ ‘Announcement on the special rectification work of the ancient city’ [166_gg_shop].

The preposition 至 /zhì/ ‘to’ is also more frequently used in the PSC, both in its temporal and local directional function to indicate a time period and spatial distance, respectively:

s) 江门至中山小榄班车从 5 月 5 日起不再进入旧车站 /Jiāngmén zhì zhōngshān xiǎo lǎn bānchē cóng 5 yuè 5 rì qǐ bù zài jìn rù jiù chēzhàn/ ‘The Jiangmen-Zhongshan Xiaolan shuttle bus will no longer enter the old station from May 5th’ [63_tz_trans].

即日起至 7 月 15 日 /Jì rì qǐ zhì 7 yuè 15 rì/ ‘From now until July 15’ [69_tz_shop].

The two prepositions 把 /bǎ/ and 被 /bèi/ which are used in two non-canonical clause types in Chinese, namely the 把 - disposal construction and passive constructions, respectively, occur rather infrequently in the PSC. When the disposal construction is used, however, it is almost rather formed with the alternative preposition 将 /jiāng/:

t) 不得将未登记人员带入客房。 /Bù dé jiāng wèi dēngjì rényuán dài rù kèfáng/ ‘No unregistered persons may be brought into the room.’ [19_ts_house].

u) 乘船时请勿将头、手、脚伸出护栏外。 /Chéng chuán shí qǐng wù jiāng tóu, shǒu, jiǎo shēn chū hùlán wài/ ‘Please do not extend your head, hands or feet beyond the guardrail when you are on a boat.’ [45_ts_trans].

It was noted by Tao (1999) that the distributional difference between 把- and 将- clauses could be attributed to register preferences. These findings in the PSC are in line with his conclusion that in instructional and procedural texts 将 is more frequently used for disposal constructions compared to 把.

nfreq1000T15_LCMC	nfreq1000T15_PSC
11.77 在	7.96 在
3.75 对	3.61 为
2.37 把	2.78 至
2.12 从	2.49 对
2.02 为	1.82 为了
1.70 与	1.70 根据
1.61 以	1.70 用
1.48 被	1.49 按
1.17 用	1.41 关于
1.17 给	1.24 将
1.15 向	1.12 由
1.05 由	1.08 于
0.96 于	0.95 向
0.80 将	0.91 从
0.68 比	0.91 自

Table 15 Comparison of Top 15 preposition types in LCMC and PSC

4.2.5.7 Pronouns

Pronouns are typically used anaphorically or deictically. As anaphoras they usually refer to something that has been mentioned in the discourse before, either within the same clause or beyond. As deictic elements, on the other hand, their understanding and interpretation depends on the “physical properties in the situation of the utterance, from the perspective of the speaker or the addressee who are engaged in the act of communication.” (Jiang, 2016, p. 484). The concept of deixis refers to the use of words and phrases whose interpretation depends on the physical properties of the context in which the utterance is made, i.e. they are not fully comprehensible without contextual information. They represent the indicating function of referential expressions and can be classified according to their lexical categories, such as pronouns (我 /wǒ / ‘I’, 你/nǐ / ‘you’), nouns (左边/zuǒ biān / ‘left’), verbs (来/lái / ‘come’, 去/qù / ‘go’) and adverbs (这么/zhème / ‘so’), or their semantic types, e.g. person (大家/dàjiā / ‘all’), place (这儿/zhèr / ‘here’), time (现在/xiànzài / ‘now’), manner (这样/zhèyàng / ‘such’), social (阁下/géxià / ‘your honor’) and discourse deictic (这/zhè / ‘this’) (Jiang, 2016).

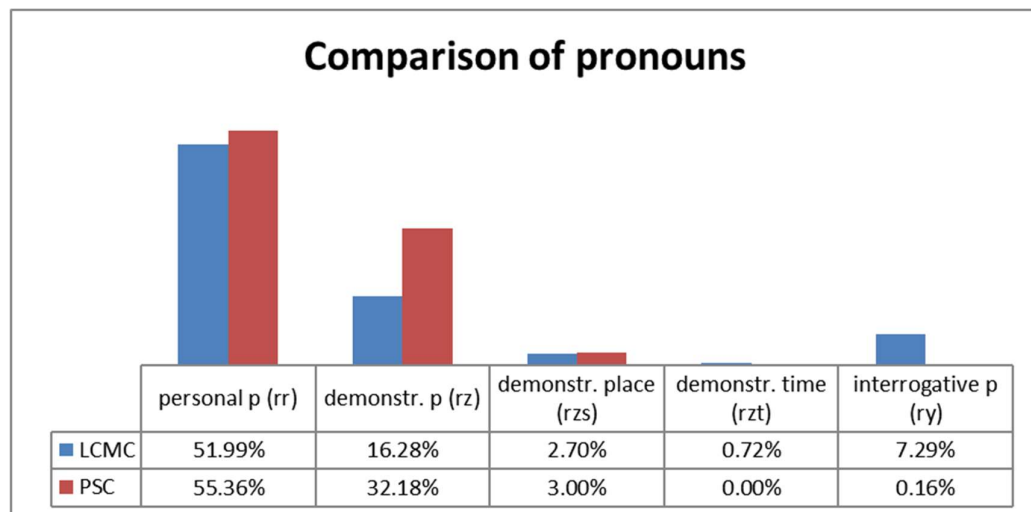


Figure 13 Comparison of relative distribution of pronouns in LCMC and PSC

Overall, there is a significantly lower amount of pronouns in the PSC (2.63%) compared to the LCMC (5.91%).

The bar chart shows the five most frequent categories and subcategories of pronouns. Personal pronouns are the most frequent pronoun category in both corpora, followed by demonstrative pronouns (without pronouns indicating time and place). The latter category includes pronouns like 本 /běn/ ‘this’, 各/gè/ ‘each’, 任何 /rèn hé/ ‘any’, 每 /měi/ ‘every’. Whereas the number of demonstrative time pronouns, such as 那时 /nà shí/ ‘at that time’, 这天 /zhè tiān/ ‘this day’, occurring in the PSC is zero and in the LCMC very small, the category of demonstrative place pronouns comprises a wider range of pronouns like 此 /cǐ/ ‘this here’, 本地 /běn dì/ ‘local, here in this region’ /, 各地 /gè dì/ ‘everywhere’, 这里 /zhè lǐ/ ‘here’. Interrogative pronouns like 什么 /shén me/ ‘what, which’ and 谁 /shéi/ ‘who’ are common in the LCMC but very rare in the PSC.

The relatively high frequency of demonstrative pronouns found in Chinese ANR compared to the LCMC is most likely related to their use as deictic expressions. In sign, these pronouns often fulfill the function of definitive referring expressions, which means, they are used to refer to objects outside the text yet in the immediate environment, as in 购物车到此 /Gòuwù chē dào cǐ/ ‘shopping cart not allowed beyond this point [here]’ [222_ts_shop]. The Chinese demonstrative pronoun 此 /cǐ/ ‘here’ is used to mark the physically absent boundary line. Despite being grammatically definite, exophoric deixis may cause ambiguity if the physical boundary markers, as gates and fences, are missing. Interestingly, exophoric deixis may refer to both physically existing objects, as in the sign inscribed with 游泳池 /Yóuyǒngchí/ ‘the swimming pool’ [221_ts_house] which points to the swimming pool directly behind the sign, as well as imaginary boundaries (‘here’), to temporal concepts (today, until the end of the week) and also conditions (no swimming when drunk).

Personal pronoun				Demonstrative pronoun			
nfreq_1000	T10_LCMC	nfreq_1000	T10_PSC	nfreq_1000	T10_LCMC	nfreq_1000	T10_PSC
7.05	他	7.54	您	1.17	这个	2.61	本
6.67	我	1.57	我	1.08	其	1.66	各
3.46	你	1.33	各位	0.80	这些	0.99	任何
3.37	她	0.91	他人	0.70	各	0.66	每
2.34	我们	0.66	我们	0.49	各种	0.62	其
1.88	他们	0.58	大家	0.43	每	0.41	其它
1.88	自己	0.54	本人	0.38	其中	0.33	该
1.28	它	0.46	自己	0.32	一切	0.29	另
0.42	你们	0.29	自	0.32	有些	0.25	各种
0.33	大家	0.21	你	0.30	有的	0.12	其中

Table 16 Comparison of T10 personal and demonstrative pronoun types in LCMC and PSC

Although personal pronouns are the most frequent pronouns in both corpora, a comparison of the Top20 most frequent pronoun types shows that the distribution of the core personal pronouns differs a lot between the two corpora. According to Shi (2016), core personal pronouns such as 我 /wǒ/ ‘I’, 你 /nǐ/ ‘you’ and 他 /tā/ ‘he’ or 她 /tā/ ‘she’ are classified based on the deictic category of persons, i.e. the first person singular pronoun singular refers to the speaker and the second-person singular pronoun to the listener, while the third-person singular pronoun can be both deictic and anaphoric. 他 and 她 can represent some person(s) other than the speaker or listener and as an anaphora they can also refer to a nominal phrase which has been mentioned in the previous discourse. There is an alternative second-person singular pronoun 您 /nín/ which is used to address persons with higher social status or to show respect and deference. In public ANR, 您 is the most frequently used core personal pronoun and the preferred form to address the public readership. It is interesting to note, however, that the addition of 您 in many requests, if realized as an imperative clauses, is somewhat redundant. The Chinese imperative clause does require the insertion of a personal pronoun to be grammatical:

- v) 请您主动刷卡进出 /Qǐng nín zhǔdòng shuākǎ jìnchū/ Please take the initiative to swipe the card when entering’ [231_ts_tour].

Hence, the additional use of 您 could be interpreted as a politeness marker to express a higher level of respect towards the reader.

The only two other core personal pronouns that occur are 我们 /wǒmen/ ‘we’ and 我 + noun. 我们 is used to refer to the institution that issued the sign, as in:

w) 为了病友的安全以及我们工作的顺利开展 /Wèile bìngyǒu de ānquán yǐjí wǒmen gōngzuò de shùnlì kāizhǎn/ ‘For the safety of patients and the smooth development of our work’ [141_ts_heal]

Secondly, it is used as an including ‘we’, comparable to the inclusive pronoun 咱们 /Zánmen/ which occurs typically in colloquial speech:

x) 让我们一起携手 /Ràng yīqǐ xiéshǒu/ ‘Let us work together’ [21_ts_house]

The occurrences of the first personal singular pronoun 我 are almost all in combination with an institutional noun, such as 我公司 /Wǒ gōngsī/ ‘our company’ or 我单位 /wǒ dānwèi/ ‘our work unit’ (both 182_tz_house). This is very characteristic of language use in official written documents in which the pronoun 我 replaces the plural 我们 (Shi, 2016).

The relatively frequent occurrence of 他人 / tārén/ ‘others’ is due to its conventionalized use to substitute 你们 (的) /Nǐmen (de)/ ‘you, your (plural)’ in a more formal way:

y) 为了您和他人的安全 /Wèile nín hé tārén de ānquán/ ‘For the safety of you and others’ [21_ts_house]

nfreq_1000	T20_LCMC	POS	nfreq_1000	T20_PSC	POS
7.05	他	rr	7.54	您	rr
6.67	我	rr	2.61	本	rz
5.18	这	rzv	1.66	各	rz
3.46	你	rr	1.57	我	rr
3.37	她	rr	1.33	各位	rr
2.34	我们	rr	0.99	任何	rz
1.92	那	rzv	0.95	其他	rzv
1.88	他们	rr	0.91	他人	rr
1.88	自己	rr	0.66	我们	rr
1.32	什么	ry	0.66	每	rz
1.28	它	rr	0.66	此	rzs
1.17	这个	rz	0.62	其	rz
1.08	其	rz	0.58	大家	rr
1.02	这样	rzv	0.54	本人	rr
0.93	这种	r	0.46	自己	rr
0.80	这些	rz	0.41	其它	rz
0.70	各	rz	0.33	该	rz
0.49	各种	rz	0.29	自	rr
0.49	此	rzs	0.29	另	rz
0.48	谁	ry	0.25	各种	rz

Table 17 Comparison of T20 pronoun types in LCMC and PSC

4.3 Discussion

In this chapter, exploratory analyses of the situational and the linguistic characteristics of Chinese public ANR was conducted, based on the previously collected and processed samples. The results of the linguistic analyses were all compared to the features of the LCMC.

The lexical measures indicated that the PSC is neither especially high nor low regarding vocabulary richness. Compared to the LCMC subregisters, its STTR is close to the categories “Humour”, “Skill, trades and hobbies” and “Religion”. In terms of lexical density, the PSC contains a lower percentage of content words than all other text categories in the LCMC which indicates lower information load. This finding is surprising since the texts found in ANR should be categorized as rather message-oriented than relations-oriented discourse from a functional perspective and should, thus, tend towards higher density.

The average sentence length in the PSC is only half of the average length of sentences in most of the LCMC subregisters. ANR contain many extremely short sentences which is related to the compositional conventions and textual organization of this text type. Many ANR are extremely short and concise in their language, consisting of a warning or a request only, optionally preceded by an opener stating the type of sign, such as reminder, and a closer indicating the addressor, date, and contact information. Compared to more argumentative and narrative texts, ANR tend to contain fewer complete sentences. Hence, the distribution of sentence length could thus be characteristic of this register.

The analysis of POS showed that compared to the LCMC there are relatively more occurrences of nouns, verbs, numerals, and time words in the PSC but fewer of adverbs, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions. A basic assumption is that if linguistic features occur more often than compared to another corpus, they can be explained functionally, referring to their communicative purpose or situational characteristics.

The choice of vocabulary in a text is largely dependent on the topic or domain. For this reason, topic has previously been identified as the most important situational factor that determines vocabulary choice (Biber & Conrad, 2009). This holds true for

the types of nouns, verbs and adjectives being used in PSC. They encompass the semantic fields from where the ANR stem from, such as traffic & transport, healthcare, tourism & nature, compared to higher occurrences of generic nouns, verbs, and adjectives in the LCMC. Numerals and time words occur significantly more frequently in the PSC than in the four other LCMC subcategories. In fact, numerals are the third and time words the fourth most frequent type in the PSC corpus, only preceded by nouns and verbs. ANR commonly convey information regarding regulations, conditions, and restrictions, which linguistically involve the use of numbers.

The overall relatively low number of pronouns used in the PSC is noteworthy, as well as the more limited use of core personal pronouns (except for 您 ‘honourable you’), on the one hand, and the overuse of demonstrative pronouns, on the other hand. The relatively high frequency of demonstrative pronouns found in Chinese ANR compared to the LCMC is most likely related to their use as deictic expressions. In ANR, these pronouns often fulfil the function of definitive referring expressions, which means, they are used to refer to objects outside the text yet in the immediate environment, as in 购物车到此 ‘Shopping not beyond this point’. ANR differ from other displays such as advertisements regarding their deictic relationship to the location. The context of utterance and participatory roles, i.e., the roles and attributes of the writer and reader, are more clearly defined and are directed at the here and now (“Please pay attention to the tidal changes”, “Please stop here”, “Watch your step”). This is to say, they primarily refer to people and places in the immediate surrounding, relying heavily on the context for interpretation. They do not make much sense once taken out of their context which could be an explanation for the underuse of place deixis commonly expressed by demonstrative pronouns, and an overuse of exophoric deixis (“mind the gap”).

The paucity of core personal and interrogative pronouns could also be explained functionally. Both types of pronouns are most often used in personal, non-informational discourse. In ANR, however, there is a low level of interactivity and asynchronous communication between the writer and reader. Only the 您 ‘honourable you’ occurs more frequently as a politeness marker yet linguistically redundant when addressing the reader.

5 Speech acts in public signs

5.1 Discourse functions of public reminders

After having analyzed the lexical and grammatical properties of public announcements and notices, this chapter will now turn to the discourse functions of one of its sub-types, that is, 提示 ‘reminders’. As argued in the previous chapter, the linguistic landscape of a language community provides opportunity to study actual language use, discourse between various interactants while reflecting the sociocultural norms and practices of said community.

For this analysis 132 samples of reminders were initially chosen from the entire ANR corpus to conduct a more qualitative-oriented analysis to reveal the rhetorical organization (‘moves’) and communicative functions of this type of public notices. Three reminders that belonged to the domain of education were removed due to their small sample size; the rest of the 129 reminders came from the following five domains: tourism (39), shops & restaurants (28), traffic & transportation (26), healthcare (25) and housing (11).

Each sequence in every reminder was classified and coded using the CCSARP framework which has been employed widely in request studies. Rue & Zhang (2008) reported on difficulties in applying the original CCSARP coding scheme - which was created for western languages - to their study on Chinese and Korean requests. For this reason, they adapted the original framework for their analysis in which some inapplicable categories were deleted while new ones were created. The current analysis makes use of the modified CCSARP framework and categories by Rue & Zhang (2008). All classifications and coding were done by the researcher herself which shall be explained in more detail in the following section. The segmentations in head acts and adjuncts are based on sequential, as well as contextual and functional criteria.

5.2 Request strategies in public reminders

Based on the modified framework, the reminders in the ANR corpus were subdivided and classified into the following request sequences:

1. Openers,

2. head acts (the main request acts),
3. supportive moves (external modification, either preceding or following the head act), and
4. closers.

5.2.1 Openers

Apart from drawing the readers' attention to the notice, openers indicate the kind of notice that has been put up, in most cases stating solely (温馨/重要) 提示 /Wēnxīn /zhòngyào tíshì / '(Kind/Important) reminder' but sometimes also more specified 公共卫生安全提示 / Gōnggòng wèishēng ānquán tíshì / 'A reminder to your health and safety' [100_ts_shop]. Openers may also include additional sequences such as headings, a form of address to the public and greetings. The heading provides information about the author of the reminder or even a slogan, as in 7天酒店年轻的选择/ Tiān jiǔdiàn niánqīng de xuǎnzé / '7 Days Inn, a relaxed choice' [058_ts_tour]. It may be followed by a polite terms of address that specifies the intended readership as in 尊敬的乘客/ Zūnjìng de chéngkè / 'Dear passengers' [112_ts_tour] or 各位业主 /Gèwèi yèzhǔ/ 'To all proprietors' [022_ts_house], the passengers of the subway or the proprietors of a housing estate, respectively. The terms of address may in turn be concluded by a greeting 您好 /Nín hǎo/ 'Hello' [021_ts_house] using an honorable 'you' in Chinese.

5.2.2 Head acts

Head acts contain the main request act, and the analysis showed that they could be divided into four subcategories based on their functional strategy as to how they convey the request. These categories were labelled as follows: (1) Information only; (2) Request; (3) Warning or prohibition; (4) Order.

In order to examine the level of directness in head acts, Rue & Zhang (2008) adapted the original CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, (1984). They determined three main levels regarding their degree of directness, with each level comprising further subcategories. The table below illustrates and exemplifies their taxonomy: level 1 direct head act, mood derivable (imperative) being the most direct strategy, with decreasing degree of directness to level 3, non-conventionally indirect HA, mild

hint, considered the most indirect request act. The current analysis will also discuss the proposed strategies regarding the strategies used in requestive head acts occurring in reminders.

Directness Level	Strategy	Chinese example
Level 1: direct HA (Impositives)	Mood derivable (<i>imperative</i>)	不要告诉他! ‘Don’t tell him!’
	Performatives (use of <i>illocutionary verb</i>)	我命令你们马上出发。 ‘I ordered you to leave right away.’
	Obligation statements (stating <i>moral obligation</i>)	你应该早点回来。 ‘You should come back sooner.’
	Want statements (asserting a particular <i>want/desire/wish</i>)	我想跟你们借钱。 ‘I would like to borrow money from you.’
Level 2: conventionally indirect HA	Suggestory formula (illocutionary intent expressed as <i>suggestion</i>)	今天不去怎么样? ‘How about not going today?’
	Query preparatory (refers to request’s <i>feasibility</i> , incl. asking <i>hearer’s ability, willingness, permission, possibility or convenience</i> to perform act)	能不能快点做? ‘Could you do this faster?’ 可以给我看一下吗? ‘Can I take a look?’
Level 3: non-conventionally indirect HA	Strong hint (no overt expression of intent but strong clue provided)	这个房间很热。 ‘It is hot in this room.’ (intent: request for the window being opened)
	Mild hint (illocutionary intent is interpretable as a request yet greater inferencing required)	你忙吗? ‘Are you busy?’ (same intent as above)

Table 18 Directness levels of head acts in Chinese requests as (adapted version from Rue & Zhang (2008, p. 40)

(1) Information only

Head acts assigned to this category do not exploit any apparent means on a lexical or syntactical level to state a request or impose a prohibition. On the contrary, the writer seems to impart neutral information only, notifying the readers about a broken door

that is not in use anymore or the changed opening hours of a public park etc. as in the following examples:

- 1) 此门故障，停止使用 / Cǐ mén gùzhàng, tíngzhǐ shǐyòng/ ‘This door is broken, not in use’ [185_ts_shop]
- 2) 游客参观时间：星期一至星期五 12:00 - 14:00 及 17:00 后 / Yóukè cānguān shíjiān: Xīngqī yī zhì xīngqīwǔ 12:00 - 14:00 Jí 17:00 Hòu/ ‘Visiting hours: Monday to Friday 12:00 - 14:00 and after 17:00’v [036_ts_tour]
- 3) 行李舱只供存放，不作保管 / Xínglǐ cāng zhǐ gōng cúnfàng, bùzuò bǎoguǎn/ ‘The luggage compartment is for storage only and not for safekeeping’ [078_ts_tour].

On closer examination, however, one could argue that although no overt expression of intentionality is apparent, the illocutionary intent is still at play and could be interpreted as a request yet requiring greater inferencing on the readers’ part. The mere information about the malfunction of a door is a hidden request to refrain from using that said door. Informing the visitors about the opening hours implies an indirect request to the readers or return during a certain time period if they wished to enter the park. Similarly, the scope of the luggage compartment’s function is clearly defined in the third reminder, and a warning is thus given to the travelers to take care of their personal belongings and not to leave valuables unattended. At the same time, the author denies any responsibility in case of loss or theft. In these head acts, the directive speech act cannot be inferred from the propositional content, i.e., the literal meaning alone, because the utterance does not encode the intention itself. It is the perlocutionary force, indirectly pragmatically implying the act that, hopefully, will produce the desired effect. The requestive acts in this category are thus all identified using level 3, non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints).

(2) Request

Direct requests, which have the strongest impositive force according to the original CCSARP framework, make up the majority of requestive head acts in the current corpus of reminders. All of the above-mentioned direct strategies of level 1 are employed except for “Want statement”.

Mood derivable (imperative)

The strategy “Mood derivable”, which describes the grammatical mood of an imperative, is the most frequently used among the strategies in this category. Each direct head act is lexically modified by at least one or more of these items and phrases:

Lexical modification	Examples
请 /qǐng/ ‘please’ + verb (imperative)	请保管好您的随身物品 /Qǐng bǎoguǎn hǎo nín de suíshēn wùpǐn/ ‘Please keep your belongings safe’ [040_ts_tour].
Verb (imperative)	外出前注意关好门窗，做好防盗措施 /Wàichū qián zhùyì guān hǎo ménchuāng, zuò hǎo fángdào cuòshī / ‘Before going out, pay attention to closing doors and windows, and do anti-theft measures’ [024_ts_house].
请勿 /qǐng wù/ ‘please don’t’	请勿乱扔垃圾 /Qǐng wù luàn rēng lèsè/ ‘Please do not litter’ [028_ts_shop].
(切) 勿 /qiè wù/ ‘don’t’	切勿被骗 /Qiè wù bèi piàn/ ‘Don’t be fooled’ [135_ts_heal]. 下车时勿忘手机、钱包等随身物品 /Xià chē shí wù wàng shǒujī, qiánbāo děng suíshēn wùpǐn/ ‘Don’t forget your mobile phone, wallet, etc., when you get off the bus’ [200_ts_house].
不要 /Bùyào/ ‘don’t’	不要向窗外抛洒任何物品 /Bùyào xiàng chuāngwài pāosǎ rènhe wùpǐn/ ‘Don’t throw anything outside the window’ [021_ts_house].

Table 19 Lexical modification in mood derivables

In most cases, the imperative contains the politeness marker 请 to soften the impositive force.

Explicit performative

Explicit performatives utilize relevant illocutionary verbs to convey the illocutionary intent, making the utterance an order, suggestion, or a plea. Only one instance of this strategy could be found here:

- 4) 晚上 11 点过后，请为了不 影响他人的休息，酒店建议您到大堂会客
/Wǎnshàng 11 diǎn guòhòu, qǐng wèi liǎo bù yǐngxiǎng tārén de xiūxi, jiǔdiàn
jiànyì nín dào dàtáng huì kè/ ‘After 11 o'clock in the evening, please do not affect
the rest of the rest of the hotel. The hotel suggests that you go to the lobby to
meet guests/ [059_ts_tour].

Obligation statement

In obligation statements the writer conveys the illocutionary intent by stating moral obligation directly, mainly using modal verbs such as 应 (当) /Yīng (dāng)/ ‘should’, (需) 要 / (xū) yào/ ‘need, want’, 尽量 /jǐnliàng/ ‘as much as possible’, 得 dé/ ‘must’:

- 5) 14 岁以下儿童、70 岁以上老人和行动不便者在过渡时应有人护送 /14 Sui
yǐxià értóng, 70 suì yǐshàng lǎorén hé xíngdòng bùbiàn zhě zài guòdù shí yīng
yǒurén hùsòng/ ‘Children under the age of 14, seniors over the age of 70 and
those with reduced mobility should be escorted during the transition’
[045_ts_trans].
- 6) 上二楼的乘客需要购 票，每票 1 元 /Shàng èr lóu de chéngkè xūyào gòu
piào, měi piào 1 yuán/ ‘Passengers on the second floor need to purchase tickets
for 1 yuan per ticket’ [045_ts_trans].
- 7) 住宿期间应当遵守旅馆的治安管理制度。 [080_ts_tour]
- 8) 请贵宾严格遵守以上注意事项，在使用的同时也要掌握自己身体的 实际情
况 / Qǐng guìbīn yángé zūnshǒu yǐshàng zhùyì shìxiàng, zài shǐyòng de tóngshí
yě yào zhǎngwò zìjǐ shēntǐ de shíjì qíngkuàng/ ‘ The honored guests are strictly
obliged to observe the above precautions, and they must also have an
understanding of their own health conditions while using it [101_ts_shop].
- 9) 机动车尽量停放有人看管的场所内 The motor vehicles should be parked as
much as possible in a place where people are in charge /Jī dòngchē jǐnliàng
tíngfàng yǒurén kānguǎn de chǎngsuǒ nèi/ [060_ts_house].

Obligation statements are rarely used in this category.

Suggestory formula

A suggestory formula is a conventionally indirect strategy (level 2) in which the writer conveys the illocutionary force by making a suggestion. There is only one instance of this strategy found:

- 10) 乞讨人员可到求助管理站救助 /Qǐtǎo rényuán kě dào qiúzhù guǎnlǐ zhàn jiùzhù./ ‘Beggars can go to the help station for help’ [038_ts_tour].

(3) Warning or prohibition

The second most prevalent requestive head act category is to give out a warning or to impose a prohibition. All prohibitions are lexically modified with one of the alternative words and phrases denoting ‘x is strictly forbidden’ (strong impositive force) and ‘x is not allowed’ (less strong impositive force):

Lexical modification	Example
严禁 / Yánjìn/ ‘strictly forbidden or prohibited’	严禁下海戏水、游泳 / Yánjìn xiàhǎi xì shuǐ, yóuyǒng/ ‘It is strictly forbidden to play in the sea and swim’ [027_ts_tour].
禁止 /Jìnzhǐ/ ‘prohibited’	禁止在景区道路上停车 /Jìnzhǐ zài jǐngqū dàolù shàng tíngchē/ ‘Parking on the scenic roads is prohibited’ [041_ts_tour].
不准 /Bù zhǔn/ ‘forbidden’	不准捕捉野生动物、挖树仔头、折枝，乱砍林木 /Bù zhǔn bǔzhuō yěshēng dòngwù, wā shù zǐ tóu, zhézhī, luàn kǎn lín mù/ ‘It is not allowed to catch wild animals, dig trees, fold branches, and slash trees’ [067_ts_tour].
不得 bùdé ‘not allowed’	非本商场经营户不得在此打开水 /Fēi běn shāngchǎng jīngyíng hù bùdé zài cǐ dǎkāi shuǐ/ ‘Non-store customers are not allowed to use the hot water here’ [195_ts_shop].

Table 20 Lexical modification in prohibitive head acts

The strategy employed in prohibitive head acts is a combination of imperative clauses and explicit performative verbs.

Warnings can be expressed directly using an imperative or, on the other hand, more subtly using a non-conventionally indirect hint:

11) 违者罚款 200 元！ /Wéi zhě fákuǎn 200 yuán/ ‘The offender is fined 200 yuan’ [034_ts_tour].

12) 公园内所有区域均有视频监控，一切违法、不雅、不文明行为将被拍录 /Gōngyuán nèi suǒyǒu qūyù jūn yǒu shìpín jiānkòng, yīqiè wéifǎ, bù yǎ, bù wénmíng xíngwéi jiāng bèi pāi lù/ ‘Video surveillance is available in all areas of the park, and all illegal, indecent, and uncivilized behaviors will be recorded’ [062_ts_tour].

The illocutionary intent of 12) cannot be inferred from the propositional meaning alone. The prohibitive request implied is interpretable as such only because the reader knows that the recording of illegal and indecent behavior will most likely lead to some form of punishment.

(4) Order

Orders were identified based on the strong obligatory element of (必) 须 /bìxū/ ‘must’ that they all contain:

13) 凡入住人员须持有效证件一人一证如实登记 /Fán rùzhù rényuán xū chí yǒuxiào zhèngjiàn yīrén yī zhèng rúshí dēngjì/ ‘All guests are required/must hold a valid certificate, the truthful registration must be based on one person, one card’ [173_ts_tour].

14) 此通道门运营期间要求保持锁闭，进出必须刷卡 / Cǐ tōngdào mén yùnyíng qíjiān yāoqiú bǎochí suǒ bì, jìnchū bìxū shuākǎ/ ‘This access door is required to remain locked during operational hours. For entering and exiting one must swipe a card’ [186_ts_trans].

5.2.3 Internal modification

Unlike external modifications, internal modifications do not constitute a request sequence but a kind of lexical or syntactical means to modify the head act. They play a role in intensifying or minimizing the illocutionary force of a request act, either as an upgrader or as a downgrader. Rue & Zhang (2008) identify two overall kinds of

internal modifications: (1) lexical modification and (2) syntactic downgraders. Lexical modifications increase or decrease the impositive force of a request by modifying the head act internally using various lexical items. They include politeness markers, lexical downgraders and lexical upgraders.

Lexical modification	Strategies identified in Rue & Zhang's (2008) framework	Strategies in request head acts of reminders
	<p>Politeness marker Respectful and polite expressions, including terms of address, are employed to the request to seek cooperation from the reader. 请/qǐng/ 'please', 先生 / xiānshēng/ 'Mr.'</p>	<p>Politeness marker 请 'please' is used in almost all requestive head acts, e.g., 请保管好您的随身物品. 'Please keep your belongings.' Terms of address are mostly used in openers, on rare occasions in head acts as well, e.g. 游客 /Yóukè/ 'Tourist', 贵宾 /guībīn/ 'VIP', etc. as in 请游客注意避让, 勿靠近树木/Qǐng yóukè zhùyì bìràng, wù kàojìn shùmù/ 'We are asking the tourists to avoid [...], to stay away from the trees.'</p>
	<p>Downtoner sentence end particles, e.g., 呢 /ne/, 了 /le/, 吧 /ba/</p>	n/a
	<p>Subjectivizer the speaker makes it clear that what he/she says is their subjective opinion which reduces the assertive tone of the request. 觉得/juéde/ 'feel', 认为 /rènwéi/ 'think', 想 /xiǎng/ 'think'</p>	n/a
Downgraders	<p>Understater under-represent the issue of a request using adverbial modifiers 一点儿 /Yīdiǎnr/ 'a little', 一些 /yī xiē/ 'a little'</p>	n/a
	Appealer	n/a

	intended to elicit a response from the hearer and used at sentence final positions, often in form of a tag question. ...行吗? /Xíng ma/ 'alright?', ...可以吗? /Kěyǐ ma/ 'would it be possible ...?'	
	Honorific Deference and politeness are expressed using respectful terms such as the most representative honorific pronoun 您 /nín/ 'honourable you' and 贵 /guì/ 'honourable/respectful'	请注意您的言行举止! /Qǐng zhùyì nín de yánxíng jǔzhǐ/ 'Please pay attention to your words and deeds.' 贵 is not used
	Hesitation marker Insertions reduce the compelling tone by delaying voicing a request. 这个... /Zhège/ 'this', 那个... /nàgè/ 'that'	n/a
	Delimiter Used to downplay the state of affairs conveyed in the request, e.g., 只有 /Zhǐyǒu/ 'only'	行李舱只供存放, 不作保管 /Xínglǐ cāng zhǐ gōng cúnfàng, bùzuò bǎoguǎn/ 'The luggage compartment is for storage only and not for safekeeping'
	Hedge Vague expressions tone down and avoid provocation of the request 大概 /Dàgài/ 'about', 似乎 /sìhū/ 'almost', 可能 /kěnéng/ 'maybe'	n/a
Lexical upgraders	commitment indicator heighten the degree of the writer's commitment to the issue conveyed in the request. 一定 /Yīdìng/ 'certainly', 肯定 /kěndìng/ 'sure'	n/a
	Repetition of request	n/a

	is repeated to emphasize the importance of carrying out the request	
	Time intensifiers Time phrases stress the urgency of the request. 马上 /Mǎshàng/ 'immediately', 赶紧 /gǎnjǐn/ 'immediately'	及时:及时检查空调屋外机支架 /Jíshí: Jíshí jiǎnchá kòngtiáo wūwài jī zhījià/ 'Check the outside rack for the air conditioner in time' 马上:有杂物时请勿饮用, 并马上与我们联系 /Mǎshàng: Yǒu zá wù shí qǐng wù yǐnyòng, bìng mǎshàng yǔ wǒmen liánxì/ 'Please do not drink [the water] if there is litter, and contact us immediately'

Table 21 Lexical modifications in Chinese request head acts in reminder (the table includes the proposed categories in Rue & Zhang (2008, p. 42)

Lexical modification is found not be used extensively in head acts. Most strategies mentioned by Rue & Zhang (2008) are not applicable in the main request acts of public reminders.

Syntactic downgraders

Syntactic downgraders are means to modify request sequences internally by diminishing the impositive force of a request using various syntactic forms.

Conditional clauses starting with 如果 /Rúguǒ/ 'in case, if' or, alternatively, 当 /Dāng/ 'Every time when' are frequently used before presenting the main request act:

- 15) 如您对以上的治安管理条例有疑问, 请咨询本地派出所 075-3184318 /Rú nín duì yǐshàng de zhì'ān guǎnlǐ tiáoli yǒu yíwèn, qǐng zīxún běndì pàichūsuǒ/ 'If you have any questions about the above public security regulations, please consult your local police station' [058_ts_tour].
- 16) 当您遇到困难和危险需要帮助时, 请您记住拨打 / Dāng nín yù dào kùnnán hé wéixiǎn xūyào bāngzhù shí, qǐng nín jì zhù bōdǎ/ 'When you encounter difficulties and dangers and need help, please remember to call' [022_ts_house].
- 17) 如有违反以上规定, 按《森林法》《森林防火条例》处罚 /Rú yǒu wéifǎn

yǐshàng guīdìng, àn “sēnlín fǎ” “sēnlín fánghuǒ tiáoli” chūfǎ/ ‘If there is any violation of the above regulations, it shall be punished according to the “Forest Law” and the “Forest Fire Prevention Regulations” [067_ts_tour].

Rue & Zhang (2008) mention two more forms, namely reduplication of verbs and interrogatives, which are not applicable for this analysis.

5.2.4 Supporting moves

External modification, realized as supportive moves, are not considered part of the head act. Instead, supportive moves often precede or follow the head act and have mitigating function. They may prepare the reader by explaining or justifying certain actions before the main request is made or try to positively attune the reader to comply with a request by expressing apologies and gratitude or appeal to common sense. Among the present public reminders, eight types of supportive moves were identified that serve different communicative functions. Three of them, namely (1) introduction or provide background information, (2) refer to regulations (3) give reasons or explanation, generally precede the main request act while (3) may also occur as a supportive move following the main head act, sometimes with the additional function of stating the consequences of an action. The remaining five types, (4) make a promise, (5) express apologies, (6) make a disclaimer, (7) express gratitude, and (8) give encouragement, only appear in positions following the main request act.

(1) Introduction or provide background information

The introduction sequence typically speaks in very general terms about the context in which the request act will be embedded in. It may announce new developments, describe the current state of an issue or recount recent events. This strategy provides background information and functions as a preparator. It mostly consists of declarative sentences, for example:

18) 龙头农贸市场现已提升改造完毕 /Lóngtóu nóngmào shìchǎng xiànyǐ tígāng gǎizào wánbì/ ‘Longtou farmer's market has now been upgraded and completed (the reconstructions)’ [030_ts_shop].

19) 4 到 7 月为毛毛虫多发季节 /4 dào 7 yuè wèi máomáo chóng duōfā jìjié/ ‘From

April to July, it is the season for caterpillars' [066_ts_tour].

- 20) 鉴于 警务室发现有患者被骗，特别 提醒 /Jiànyú jǐng wù shì fāxiàn yǒu huànzhě bèi piàn, tèbié tíxǐng/ 'The Police noted that patients have been deceived, here is special reminder' [135_ts_heal].
- 21) 本科正在与北京安贞医院 一起，进行心脏手术”中空纤维膜式氧合器临床试验“研究， /Běnkē zhèngzài yǔ běijīng ān zhēn yīyuàn yīqǐ, jìnxíng xīnzàng shǒushù “zhōngkōng xiānwéi mó shì yǎng hé qì língchuáng shìyàn” yánjiū/ This department is working with the Beijing Anzhen Hospital to conduct a clinical trial on heart surgeries "Hollow Fiber Membrane Oxygenator" [139_ts_heal].

(2) Refer to regulations

The writer backs up the importance and necessity of the request by referring to existing national laws and regulations. For example:

- 22) 根据 国家治安管理条例 / Gēnjù guójiā zhì'ān guǎnlǐ tiáoli/ 'According to the National Security Administration Regulations' [072_ts_tour].
- 23) 根据 《中华人民共和国治安管理处罚法》、《中华人民共和国居民身份证法》等法律法规，旅客入住旅馆应当遵守下列规定/ Gēnjù “zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó zhì'ān guǎnlǐ chǔfá fǎ”, “zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó jūmín shēnfèn zhèng fǎ” děng fǎlǜ fǎguī, lǚkè rùzhù lǚguǎn yīngdāng zūnshǒu xiàliè guīdìng/ 'According to the Laws and Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Public Security Administration Punishment Law and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Identity Cards, guests entering the hotel shall abide by the following provisions' [080_ts_tour].

This persuasive strategy tries to achieve compliance by citing authorities which may lend the request stronger support. The sentences typically start with 根据 /gēnjù / 'according to' and contain words denoting regulations and laws (e.g. 条例 / tiáoli/, 规定 /guiding/ 'provision', 处罚法 /chǔfá fǎ/ 'Law on Administrative Penalty')

(3) Give reasons or explanation

This strategy is the by far most widely used supportive move among the reminders at hand. The writer tries to give plausible reasons, explanations, and justifications for why it is necessary to put in the request or give out the warning. For example:

- 24) 为了您和他人的身体健康 /Wèile nín hé tāren de shēntǐ jiànkāng/ ‘For your health and the health of others’ [045_ts_trans].
- 25) 因圭峰山风景名胜区的茶花园名卉谷及其他景区基础配套工程建设需要，景区道路有 施工管理车辆、运送建筑材料的车辆来往 /Yīn guī fēngshān fēngjǐng míngshèngqū de chá huāyuán míng huì gǔ jí qítā jǐngqū jīchǔ pèitào gōngchéng jiànshè xūyào, jǐngqū dào lù yǒu shīgōng guǎnlǐ chēliàng, yùnsòng jiànzhú cáiliào de chēliàng lái wǎng/ Due to the construction needs of the Tea Garden “Míng huì gǔ” and other scenic spots in the Guifeng Mountain Scenic Area, there are construction management vehicles and vehicles carrying construction materials [068_ts_tour].
- 26) 此部电话为应急求救电话，电梯内有监控 /Cǐ bù diànhuà wèi yìngjí qiújiù diànhuà, diàntī nèi yǒu jiānkòng/ ‘This phone is for emergency calls, and there is a surveillance camera inside the elevator’ [024_ts_house].

This strategy typically makes use of 为 (了) /wèile/ ‘in order to’ and 因 /yīn/ ‘because, since’ to state the reasons. However, if it is used as a postgrounder following the main request act the move is more frequently linked with the connectors 以免 /yǐmiǎn/ ‘so as not to’ and 以防 /yǐfáng/ ‘to avoid’ to illustrate what the pitfalls are, for example:

- 27) 以免损害物品柜及公共安全 /Yǐmiǎn sǔnhài wùpǐn guì jí gōnggòng ānquán/ ‘So as not to damage the lockbox and public safety’ [207_ts_shop].
- 28) 以防夹伤或被浪花溅湿您的衣物 /Yǐ fáng jiā shāng huò bèi lànghuā jiàn shī nín de yīwù/ ‘to avoid injury or splashing your clothes by the waves’ [045_ts_trans].

Moreover, in some cases the writer names consequences instead of reasons which are presented as conditional clause using 如果 /rúguǒ/ ‘if’:

- 29) 如果由于您的疏忽，引起公安的传询，会给您造成许多不便 /Rúguǒ yóuyú nín de shūhū, yǐnqǐ gōng'ān de chuán xún, huì gěi nín zàochéng xǔduō bùbiàn/ ‘If it is due to your negligence that the police has to start an inquiry, it will cause you a lot of inconvenience’ [179_ts_tour].
- 30) 如欠费下次不能预约挂号 /Rú qiàn fèi xià cì bùnéng yùyuē guàhào/ ‘If you owe the fee you won’t be allowed to make an appointment next time’ [047_ts_health].

As mentioned above, reasons, explanations and background information are more often presented as pregrounders before making the actual request than as postgrounders. This is consistent with previous findings on information sequencing in written Chinese which suggest a deductive pattern of discourse (Scollon & Scollon 2001, p.75). Reasons, justifications, or explanations are put forward before presenting the main topic and the introduction of the main issue is delayed. The ‘because...therefore’ - sequence (因果 /yīnguǒ/) is the preferred unmarked order in Chinese (Kirkpatrick, 1991). This order stands in contrast to a more frequently employed inductive pattern in English where the topic is stated first before reasons are presented to build up a stronger argument.

(4) Make a promise

This strategy is rarely used and occurs only a few times. In the framework of Rue & Zhang (2008) promises of reward are made by the speaker to obtain the hearer’s compliance with the request. Here the writer declares his/her intention to perform a certain act (of service) in the future which is marked by the modal verb 会 /huì/ ‘will’:

31) 我们会竭诚为您服务 /Wǒmen huì jiéchéng wèi nín fúwù/ ‘We will be happy to be at your service’ [136_ts_heal].

(5) Express apologies

The writer apologizes for the trouble that the potential request may cause and asks for understanding, for example:

32) 由此给您带来的不便，敬请谅解 / Yóu cǐ gěi nín dài lái de bùbiàn, jìng qǐng liàngjiě / ‘If this causes you any inconvenience, we appreciate your understanding [020_ts_house].

33) 不便之处，敬请原谅 / Bùbiàn zhī chù, jìng qǐng yuánliàng/ ‘Apologies for any inconveniences caused’ [153_ts_heal].

There is a high conformity and little variation concerning the phrases used.

(6) Make a disclaimer

A disclaimer is usually a statement intended to specify or delimit the scope of rights and obligations that may be enforced by parties in a somewhat legally recognized relationship and implies circumstances that involve some level of uncertainty. This strategy has been identified as a disclaimer because it very strongly shifts the focus to the readers' responsibilities for his actions in case of non-compliance. It bears some resemblance to the above illustrated strategy of stating the consequences, yet the language used to describe the reader and his/her actions is much stronger. The non-compliance becomes an offence and violation, consequences and responsibilities are emphasized by using phrases like 自负 /zìfù/ 自行负责 /zìxíng fùzé/ and 自行承担 /zì háng chéngdān zérèn/ 'your own responsibility':

- 34) 如停放在其它地方, 发生损坏或被盜, 由业主自行承担責任 / Rú tíngfàng zài qítā dìfāng, fāshēng sǔnhuài huò bèi dào, yóu yèzhǔ zì háng chéngdān zérèn/ 'If it is parked in another place and there is damage or loss, the owner has to bear the sole responsibility' [022_ts_house].
- 35) 违者后果自负 /Wéi zhě hòuguǒ zìfù/ 'Violators have to bear the consequences of their actions' [208_ts_shop].

(7) Express gratitude

The writer shows gratitude to the reader for the expected compliance with the request, for example:

- 36) 谢谢您的合作 /Xièxiè nín de hézuò/ 'Thank you for your cooperation' [158_ts_trans].
- 37) 谢谢您的理解和配合 /Xièxiè nín de lǐjiě hé pèihé/ 'Thank you for your understanding and cooperation' [059_ts_tour].

Similar to the strategy of expressing apologies, there is high conformity and little variation concerning the phrases used.

(8) Encouragement

The writer uses idioms and colloquial phrases to induce the readers to cooperate. It could also be interpreted as a strategy of encouragement and an appeal to the readers' common sense.

38) 病人的康复，需要你我的共同参与 /Bìngrén de kāngfù, xūyào nǐ wǒ de gòngtóng cānyù/ 'The patient 's recovery requires our joint participation' [144_ts_heal].

39) 幸福生活要以安全为基础，美好环境要靠我们共同创造和维护 / Xìngfú shēnghuó yào yǐ ānquán wéi jīchǔ, měihǎo huánjìng yào kào wǒmen gòngtóng chuàngzào hé wéihù/ 'A happy life is based on safety , and a beautiful environment depends on joint effort and protection' [021_ts_house].

5.2.5 Closers

The request sequence 'closer' does not appear in the original CCSARP framework nor in the modified version by Rue & Zhang (2008). However, it was added to this study because it was observed that most reminders do not conclude after having made the intended request or given a warning. Apart from inserting supporting moves following the head act that may soften the impositive force of a request, the reminders often close by stating the name of the issuing authority, institution or company and even providing additional contact information such as a telephone number, a website, and an address. In some cases, the issuing date is added. By including information on the authorship, either in the opener or closer sequence of a reminder, there is a certain liability assumed, both on the side of the reader and the issuing authority. The reader may become more aware of the institutional context and is intentionally reminded of the presence of the authority, including the possible consequences if his or her actions do not comply with the request or warning being made. On the other hand, the issuing authority assumes responsibility for the content of the notice and opens a channel for interaction with the reader if he or she wishes to get in touch. Another interesting point to note is that in three reminders (two found in the domain of housing, one in health) the authors added a line of good wishes, like the conventionalized closing of a personal letter, e.g.

40) 祝 您生活愉快 /Zhù nín shēnghuó yúkuài/ '(We) wish (honorific) you a happy life' [021_ts_house].

41) 各位业主身体健康、万事如意 /Gèwèi yèzhǔ shēntǐ jiànkāng, wànshì rúyì/

‘Good health and good luck to all proprietors’ [022_ts_house].

Request sequence	Functional strategy	Example from the corpus
1. Opener	Title	温馨提示 / Wēnxīn tíshì/ ‘Kind reminder’
	Heading & title	如家 / Rújiā / Home Inn 温馨提示/Wēnxīn tíshì/ ‘Kind reminder’
	Address term	尊敬的客人 / Zūnjìng de kèrén/ ‘Dear respected guests’
	Address & greeting	尊敬的顾客朋友：您好！/ Zūnjìng de gùkè péngyǒu: Nín hǎo! / ‘Dear respected guests and friends: how are you?’
2. Supporting moves (preceding the HA)	Introduction or provide background information	现我分局正在开展‘您举报， 我奖励’旅业监督管理活动。/ Xiàn wǒ fēnjú zhèngzài kāizhǎn ‘nín jǔbào, wǒ jiǎnglì’ lǚ yè jiāndū guǎnlǐ huódòng./ ‘Our department is carrying out a travel supervision and management program called ‘You report, we reward’ at the moment.’
	Refer to regulations	根据国家治安管理条例，[...]。 / Gēnjù guójiā zhì‘ān guǎnlǐ tiáolì/ ‘According to the National Security Administration Regulations, [...].’
	Give reasons or explanation	为了您和他人的安全。/ Wèile nín hé tārén de ānquán/ ‘For the safety of you and others.’
3. Head act (HA)	Information only	游客参观时间：星期一至星期 五 12:00 - 14:00 及 17:00 后。/ Yóukè cānguān shíjiān: Xīngqī yī zhì xīngqīwǔ 12:00 - 14:00 Jí 17:00 Hòu. / ‘Visiting time: Monday to Friday 12:00 - 14:00 and after 17:00.’
	Make a request	请勿采摘瓜果及观赏植物！/ Qǐng wù cǎizhāi guā guǒ jí

		guānshǎng zhíwù! / ‘Please do not pick melons and ornamental plants!’
	Impose a prohibition or give a warning	严禁下海戏水、游泳！违者罚款 200 元！ / Yánjìn xiàhǎi xì shuǐ, yóuyǒng! Wéi zhě fákuǎn 200 yuán! / It is strictly forbidden to play in the sea and swim! The offender is fined 200 yuan!
	Give an order	必须配备足够的灭火器材。 / Bìxū pèibèi zúgòu de mièhuǒ qìcái / ‘You must be equipped with adequate fire extinguishing equipment.’
4. Supporting moves (following the HA)	Name consequences Give reasons or explanation	以免造成电梯故障。 / Yǐmiǎn zàochéng diàntī gùzhàng! / ‘So as not to cause elevator failure.’
	Make a promise	竭诚为您服务！ / Jiéchéng wèi nín fúwù! / ‘Sincerely at your service!’
	Express an apology	不便之处，敬请原谅！ / Bùbiàn zhī chù, jìng qǐng yuánliàng! / Sorry for any inconveniences caused!
	Make a disclaimer	违者后果自负。 / Wéi zhě hòuguǒ zìfù! / Offenders are at their own risk.
	Express gratitude	谢谢合作。 / Xièxiè hézuò / Thank you for cooperating.
	Give encouragement	病人的康复，需要你我的共同参与。 / Bìng rén de kāngfù, xūyào nǐ wǒ de gòngtóng cānyù / The patient 's recovery requires you and me to work together.
5. Closer	wishes	祝您就诊愉快！ / Zhù nín jiùzhěn yúkuài / We wish you a happy visit!
	producer	东川门诊收费处 / Dōng chuān ménzhěn shōufèi chù / ‘Dongchuan Clinic’
	contact info	电话 / Diànhuà / 84198060 Telephone no.

	date	2015 年 6 月 29 日 /2015 Nián 6 yuè 29 rì/ ‘29 th of July, 2015’
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Table 22 Overview on request sequences and communicative strategies with examples from the PSC corpus

5.2.6 Distribution of request sequences

A reminder may make use of several functional strategies from one category to support and to communicate its request or warning more effectively. For instance, a reminder may contain a heading, form of address and a greeting as an opener, introduce the context in which the request will be put in, set out more plausible reasons to prepare the ground before making the main request. The head act itself may consist of several sequences, several single requests, followed by warnings and/or orders. The text may then conclude by expressing thanks for the readers’ understanding and stating the name and contact information of the issuing institution.

The bar chart below shows the absolute number of each request sequence in all 129 public reminders across all domains. All sequences are listed sequentially as they may occur in a reminder. Every reminder in this samples consists of a head act that includes in most cases a request or a prohibition (a negative request). Around 10% (head act: information only) do not make references to the request proper or employ linguistic means to make a direct request. It is only interpretable as a request by its context which produces the perlocutionary force to make it effective as a request. Another 10% (head act: order) uses modal verbs in obligation statements (e.g., 必须 /Bìxū / ‘must’) to impose the need.

A quite similar number of supportive moves both precede and follow the main request act. However, they differ in their distribution which can partly be attributed to their communicative functions. The by far most frequently employed strategy to mitigate the impositive force of a request is to give reasons and explanations. This strategy is used much more often as a pregrounder than as a postgrounder which is probably related to the preferred causative clause in Chinese as in 因为... 所以 /Yīnwèi... suǒyǐ/ ‘because..., therefore’ and 为了 /Wèile/ ‘in order to’. Other pregrounders, although not very frequently used, include an introductory section as well as referring to regulations. Only 13% of the reminders try to introduce the

subject or context. Very few reminders (8%) refer to official or government regulations to add more weight and authority to their cause. It was a bit surprising that the strategy “Referring to regulations” was used in the somewhat non-formal register of reminders at all, as opposed to other more official public notices.

There is a greater variety of supportive moves that occur as postgrounders compared to pregrounders: showing gratitude being the most frequent (18%), followed by giving reasons and adding a disclaimer (both 10%), making apologies (9%), giving encouragement (6%) and, finally, making promises (2%).

All reminders contain the title ‘reminder’ - that was how they were selected for this analysis from the entire ANR corpus - but less than 1/3 choose a form of address and greeting to communicate with the public. Only 10% indicate the name of the producer at the beginning of a reminder while in the majority of cases information about the producer of the text is found at the end in a closer sequence (55%). About 2/3 of the reminders inform the readers about the authorship of the text but only 14% of those provide additional contact information such as telephone number, a website, or an address.

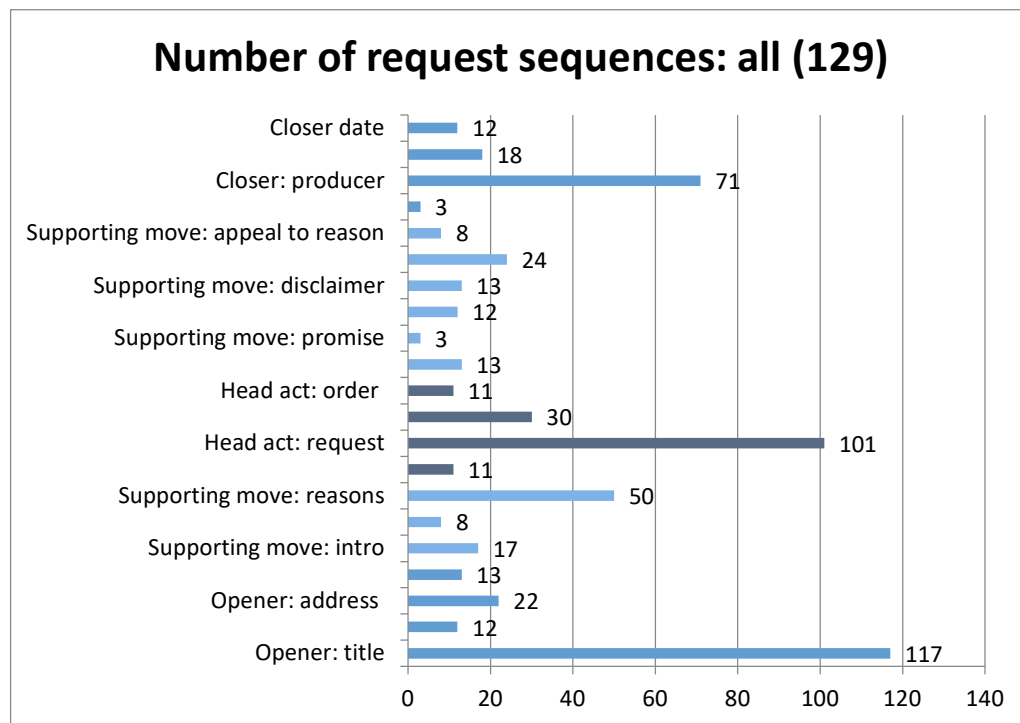


Figure 14 Distribution and absolute number of all request sequences in public reminders

5.3 Discussion

In this chapter, a qualitative analysis was conducted on 129 reminders (提示) using the modified CCSARP framework and categories by Rue & Zhang (2008). The analysis aimed to reveal the rhetorical organization and communicative functions found in Chinese public reminders. The findings showed that most of the reminders exhibit similar discourse features in terms of their textual organization, indicating that conventions impose a need to follow a generic structure when addressing the audience of public signs. On the other hand, more variation was apparent concerning the actual strategies used to persuade the reader to comply with a request.

The modified framework proved useful to identify four request sequences. The sequence types “openers” and “closers” are generally placed, as their names suggest, at the beginning and end of a reminder, respectively, and they showed relatively little variation concerning their functional strategies and additional sequences.

Head acts (the main request acts), on the other hand, contained functionally very different strategies as to how they convey the request to the reader, namely by either stating information, making a request, impose a prohibition or give an order. These functional strategies showed different degrees of directness (impositives, conventionally indirect, non-conventionally indirect). Direct requests, which have the strongest impositive force according to the original CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, (1984), made up the majority of requestive head acts in the current corpus of reminders. The strategy “mood derivable”, which describes the grammatical mood of an imperative, was the most frequently used among the strategies in this category. The second most prevalent requestive head act category was to give out a warning, while it was a combination of imperative clauses and explicit performative verbs that made up the strategy employed in prohibitive head acts. The observation that direct requests using imperatives are the most preferred strategy in requestive head acts of reminders was previously made by Gaos study (1999). Her findings showed that Chinese requests relied on performative verbs more often, (e.g., 让 /ràng/ ‘let’, 要求 /yāoqiú/ ‘request’, 指示 zhǐshì ‘instruct’, 命令 /mìnglìng/ ‘order/), which indicate explicit request intentions, since imperatives are the most efficient to make a request.

In addition, head acts sometimes were internally modified by lexical or syntactical means, i.e., lexical modification or syntactic downgraders including politeness markers, honorific forms of addressing the reader and conditional clauses. The analyses revealed, however, that internal modification was not used extensively in the main request acts of public reminders unlike external modifications.

Finally, eight types of supportive moves (external modification) were identified which may both precede and/or follow the main request act to mitigate the impositive force of the request in many cases. However, they differed in their distribution which could partly be attributed to their communicative functions. These findings are in line with Rue & Zhang (2008) who concluded that requestive speech acts in Chinese do not consist of single utterances alone but are rather the outcome of request sequences.

The by far most frequently employed strategy to mitigate the impositive force of a request was to give reasons and explanations. This strategy was used much more often as a pregrounder than as a postgrounder which is probably related to the preferred causative structure in Chinese as in 因为... 所以 /Yīnwèi... suǒyǐ/ ‘because..., therefore’ and 为了 /Wèile/ ‘in order to’. Other pregrounders, although not very frequently used, include an introductory section as well as referring to regulations. Scollon & Wong-Scollon (1991) had previously pointed out the inductive speech style in Chinese. The introduction of a topic is deferred until after some small talk has been exchanged which contrasts with a more deductive style where the topic precedes an explanation. This feature of Chinese information sequencing has also been revealed in letters of request in which the Chinese writers employ an indirect way of making the request by following the sequence 'salutation-preamble (facework) - reasons for request – request (Kirkpatrick, 1991).

Very few reminders referred to official or government regulations to add more weight and authority to their cause. It was a bit surprising that the strategy “referring to regulations” was used in the somewhat non-formal register of reminders at all, as opposed to other more official public notices. There was a greater variety of supportive moves that occurred as postgrounders compared to pregrounders: showing gratitude being the most frequent, followed by giving reasons and adding a disclaimer, making apologies, giving encouragement and, finally, making promises.

Overall, external modification (supportive moves) seemed to play a slightly more important role than internal modification when expressing requests and prohibitions in public reminders. These findings confirm Zhang's two studies on indirectness and requesting in Chinese (1995a, 1995b) (questionnaires). She states that Chinese directness is realized more on discourse level and linked to information sequencing. The degree of indirectness may be determined by the length of supportive moves which do not contain the explicitly intended proposition. The external modification of the request utterances is mandatory while utterance internal modification is not (1995b, p. 83). Indirectness, thus, may be achieved mainly externally through supportive moves rather than internal devices like modals, particles, pronouns, etc. This means that in Chinese, information of indirectness is less encoded in grammatical features but in the sequencing of information in continuous discourse. A sign's performative potential may only be realized if the reader understands which action is expected of him. Some directives are more explicit by using imperatives and prohibitions (涨潮、落潮、酒后、夜间（下午 18 时后）严禁下海游泳！ /Zhǎngcháo, luòcháo, jiǔ hòu, yèjiān (xiàwǔ 18 shí hòu) yánjìn xiàhǎi yóuyǒng/ 'Swimming is prohibited when the tide is rising/falling, after the consumption of alcohol and at night (after 6pm)' (003_gs_tour)), whereas others are warnings disguised as indirect requests as in: 电梯内有监控，请注意您的言行举止！ /Diàntī nèi yǒu jiānkòng, qǐng zhùyì nín de yánxíng jǔzhǐ/ 'There is a camera installed inside the lift, please mind your behavior' (024_ts_house). The reader, in fact, is warned against displaying any kind of inappropriate behavior when using the lift because surveillance is in action and may lead to consequences.

5.3.1 Potential applications of research findings

The findings of this study may contribute to several areas of research. From the point of view of Chinese register studies and pragmatics, the analysis has generated sets of linguistic features that clearly outline the characteristics of Chinese public written announcements, notices, and reminders. By combining the linguistic analysis with a situational analysis, which describes the situational characteristics of these ANR, the functional associations between the linguistic forms and situational context were formed. The more qualitative-oriented analysis shed some light on the discourse functions and conventions of public signs. The description of requestive strategies in

public signs could be compared to requestive strategies in letters, natural conversation, etc. and cross-culturally, as to speech acts found across registers and languages. This may lead to more insight into the pragmatic usage of requests in general and constraints imposed by social factors such as hierarchical relations and social distance between addressor and recipient. The results of the study hence provide the public with better understanding of language use and variation in modern written Chinese.

Finally, the findings could be applied to the teaching and learning of Chinese as a second/foreign language. L2 learners of Chinese may be presented a greater variety of text types from different domains to study variation of grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics, Chinese language use in general. The concept of „one correct grammar“ (Tao, 2005) may be challenged when taking register as a determiner of vocabulary and grammatical choice into account.

5.3.2 Research limitation and future research direction

The focus of this research was to explore the situational, linguistic and discourse features of a public signs found in the Chinese Mainland. For a preliminary exploratory study, a small corpus with a very limited set of announcements, notices and reminders was compiled with a lack of balance and representativeness which is major shortcoming of this study. If the data collection had been expanded to include ANR samples from the internet from various ministries such as the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, State Administration of Foreign Exchange, National Development and Reform Commission, The People’s Court, etc., the linguistic features of these sub-category of texts could have been more representative and convincing. Although it was not possible to identify register markers for these texts due to the small sample size, the analysis was able to reveal and suggest some noticeable and common features in these signs. These linguistic and discursive features could serve as a starting point for larger scale studies on Chinese public signs.

The current investigation was also limited to signs written in Mandarin Chinese found in the Chinese mainland. Future research could be extended to make comparative research on the linguistic characteristics of different languages and communities to reveal cross-linguistic similarities and differences. For example,

signs from different regions where Mandarin Chinese is used as Lingua Franca could be compared or different Chinese dialects within a region. A higher level of theoretical significance could be achieved by generalizations of these cross-linguistic comparisons.

6 Conclusions

This study set out to examine the linguistic characteristics and discourse conventions of Chinese written announcements, notices, and reminders found in public domains in the Chinese mainland. It aims to reveal the linguistic features that are pervasive and typical for this register and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of variation among Chinese written registers, contemporary language use in China and discourse in the public sphere. The following two research questions were raised:

1. What are the linguistic characteristics of Chinese public written announcements, notices, and reminders and to what extent are they functionally motivated?
2. How are requests and prohibitions realized in these texts? What are the characteristics of these speech acts?

Over 300 samples of public written signs including various types (announcements, notices, warnings, and reminders) and covering different public domains (transportation, education, shopping, tourism, and housing) were photographed and digitalized. For the data analysis, several theoretical frameworks were considered and applied to gain a more profound understanding of the language use and underlying functional intentions of these specimens of the Chinese linguistic landscape. First, a situational analysis based on Biber & Conrad's (2009) theoretical framework for register analysis was carried out to describe the situational characteristics of public written signs, followed by a quantitative and contrastive analysis to determine the distribution of grammatical and lexical features.

In a second step, a qualitative move analysis was conducted on one type of public signs - reminders, adopting to speech act theory (Searle, 1976) and making use of the CCSARP framework and categories to explain the realization patterns of requesting. By using speech act theory, the discourse functions, and strategies of requestive acts in public reminders were analysed.

One of the more salient features of public signs is the hierarchical relationship between the addressor and the recipient and the low level of interactiveness between the two. In most cases, an institutional anonymous author uses the written medium to impose some form of restriction, realized as rules and regulations, on the public

reader. The reader maybe requested to perform a certain action, or refrain from doing so, often accompanied by reasons and explanations that may emphasize the benefits of complying with the request. Although there is little room for dialogue, the reader is not bound to the constraints imposed on him or her and often has the choice to ignore the announcement or request made, with no direct consequences.

The linguistic comparison between the Public Signs Corpus and the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese revealed that Chinese public ANR contain a lower percentage of content words than all other text categories in the LCMC which indicates lower information load. The average sentence length in the PSC is only half of the average length of sentences in most of the LCMC subregisters which means that ANR contain many extremely short sentences which is related to the compositional conventions and textual organization of register. The analysis of POS showed that there were more occurrences of nouns, verbs, numerals, and time words in the PSC but fewer of adverbs, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions. The types of nouns, verbs and adjectives in the PSC encompass mostly the semantic fields from where the ANR stem from, such as traffic & transport, healthcare, tourism & nature. Numerals and time words occur significantly more frequently in the PSC than in the LCMC, probably because ANR commonly convey information regarding regulations, conditions, and restrictions, which linguistically involve the use of numbers. The overall relatively low number of pronouns used in the PSC is noteworthy, as well as the more limited use of core personal pronouns (except for 您 ‘honourable you’), on the one hand, and the overuse of demonstrative pronouns, on the other hand. The relatively high frequency of demonstrative pronouns is most likely related to their use as deitic expressions. The paucity of core personal and interrogative pronouns could functionally explained by the low level of interactivity and asynchronous communication between the writer and reader. Only the 您 ‘honourable you’ occurs more frequently as a politeness marker yet linguistically redundant when addressing the reader.

The speech acts of requesting and prohibiting are most prevalent in public signs in which the authority or a proprietor addresses the public. By using directives, the writer attempts to make the reader to perform some future action or to prevent him/her from doing so, with the propositional content specifying a future act on the part of the recipient. The findings revealed that many of the reminders exhibit similar

discourse features in terms of their textual organization, indicating that conventions impose a need to follow a generic structure when addressing the audience of public signs. On the other hand, more variation is apparent concerning the actual strategies used to persuade the reader to comply with a request. It was also observed that direct requests using imperatives were the most preferred strategy in the requestive head acts of reminders. They were mostly accompanied by several supportive moves to mitigate the impositive force of the request, in addition to lexical and syntactical means including politeness markers, honorific forms of addressing the reader and conditional clauses. Overall, external modification seems to play a slightly more important role than internal modification when expressing requests and prohibitions in public reminders. Finally, there is a preferred deductive discourse pattern which is in line with previous findings on information sequencing in Chinese writing across different registers.

The findings of this study may contribute to the research areas of Chinese register studies and pragmatics. The analysis has generated sets of linguistic features that outline the characteristics of Chinese public written announcements, notices, and reminders. By combining the linguistic analysis with a situational analysis, which describes the situational characteristics of these ANR, the functional associations between the linguistic forms and situational context were formed. The more qualitative-oriented analysis shed light on the discourse functions and conventions of public signs. The description of requestive strategies in public signs could be compared to requestive strategies found in other registers, both written and spoken, and contribute to speech act theory. The results of the study hence provide the public with better understanding of language use and variation in modern written Chinese. Finally, the findings could be applied to the teaching and learning of Chinese as a second/foreign language. L2 learners of Chinese may be presented a greater variety of text types from different domains to study variation of grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics, Chinese language use in general. The concept of “one correct grammar” (Tao, 2005) may be challenged when taking register as a determiner of vocabulary and grammatical choice into account.

7 References

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