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## ***The 45 Years' Evolution of a Genre: Commodification of the University Textbook Prefaces in China***

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper investigates diachronic changes of the university textbook prefaces in China over the past 45 years (from 1966 to 2010). Applying genre analysis, a discussion of generic structure potential, appraisal theory, as well as multimodal discourse analysis, this paper examines the changes in generic structure, the lexical-grammatical and paralinguistic features of the genre with a detailed analysis of 60 sample texts over three time periods namely 1966-1980, 1981-1995, and 1996-2010. The analysis reveals that the university textbook prefaces feature distinctive changes with the development of the times, pointing to the intertextual mix of academic discourse and promotional discourse, thus undergoing a process of commodification. It argues that the ideological influence of promotional culture, the powerful position of advertising discourse and fierce professional competition are the most conceivable contextual factors contributing to the commodification of the genre in question.*

**Key words:** commodification, textbook preface, diachronic change, genre, China

### ***1. Introduction***

During the last five decades, university textbooks in China have undergone great changes with the development of Chinese society and economy. In China, textbooks have traditionally played an exceptional role as sole sources of information and bases of subject contents in teaching practice. Especially prior to the 21st century, teachers have relied heavily on textbooks in delivering the subject matter to the students. University textbooks in China constitute a unique pedagogic genre in academic and professional settings, making a great impact on scholars, university faculties and students. Along with the drastic social change in the new century, university textbooks have experienced great transformation in many aspects while remaining a predominant resource for teachers and students in the education process. As an influential academic genre in social life, university textbooks remain much

neglected with insufficient studies addressing its linguistic and discursal features as well as concerning how these changes have been influenced by the social developments.

In the recent 20 years or so, as a result of the rapid increase in university enrolments, higher education in China turns from elite education to mass education. The corresponding increase in demand for university textbooks has made textbook-selling a great profitable market. The fierce competition in the textbook publishing industry has forced the publishing houses to raise the demands for editing staff and authors, and also the quality of textbooks in order to attract more potential customers. Prior to the 1980s, China was dominated by a planned economy with publishing houses funded and controlled by the government. The production of textbooks was made in accordance with the policies and plans of the government, with no competition among the publishing houses then. After the 1980s, with the market economy pushing forward in the whole nation, the government loosened control as the same time as providing less funding to the publishing houses. The publishing houses had to work as both producers of cultural products and profit seekers, leading them to draw upon market mechanisms for the pursuit of financial interests. To add to the mix, after the 1980s, there was a remarkable increase in the numbers of publishing houses due to the prosperity of the publishing industry in China. After the middle of the 1990s, competition among the publishing houses became very visible and fierce. More and more publishing houses realize that only truly understanding the readers' needs and keeping good track of market events and trends can they grasp opportunities to succeed in fierce competition. These social changes at the macro-level might have affected the production of university textbooks at micro-linguistic level.

In examining textbooks as a genre, prefaces in the textbooks play a predominant role in providing readers with an introduction to the textbook and covering stories as to how the textbook came into being. Prefaces also cover how the idea for the book was developed, and this is often followed by thanks and acknowledgments to people who were helpful to the author during the time of writing. This study aims at a genre-based investigation of diachronic changes of university textbook prefaces in China and disclosing its interaction with the socio-cultural contexts in which the evolution of this genre occurs. In this study, we will examine the genre of university textbook preface in China by drawing on four theoretical frameworks: genre theories (Bhatia 1993; Swales 2004), the discussion of generic structure potential (Halliday and Hasan 1985), and appraisal theory (Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005), as well as multimodal discourse analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). It examines changes in the generic structure, the lexical-grammar and the paralinguistic features of the genre in question during the past 45 years or so (from 1966 to 2010). In light of the detailed textual analysis of the texts, this study will also consider the possible contextual factors that contribute to the formation of commodification of the genre in question.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

Focusing as it does on the relationship between language and social context, critical discourse analysis has become a well-established branch in the field of discourse study. There are different perspectives and methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (e.g. Fairclough 1992; Wodak 1996; Scollon 1998; Gee 1999; van Leeuwen 1993). In light of the nature of the data collected, this study draws on Fairclough's work of critical discourse analysis as the principal theoretical framework. While regarding discourse use as a socially and historically situated social practice, Fairclough's primary concern is to study the relationship between discourse and social change. For that, Fairclough employs 'order of discourse' as a tool to examine the 'totality of discursive practices of an institution and relationship between them' (Fairclough 1993 : 138). While orders of discourse are not rigid or closed, but open and changing, the core of an order of discourse is to foreground the different relationships between different discourse types, and to investigate whether different discourse types in particular texts maintain strict boundaries or mix together. The same applies to the relationship between different orders of discourse. Different orders of discourse may overlap, blend together, or stay strictly within their own domain. Every discourse event (instance of language use) reproduces or challenges the order of discourse by creative use of language, such as absorbing different genres and discourses from other orders of discourse in a new way. The combination of different discourses and genres inside an order of discourse or across different orders of discourse results in the hybridity or heterogeneity of texts, or interdiscursivity in Fairclough's words (Fairclough 1992; 1995).

The structural changes in orders of discourse are closely related with conflicts and struggles on societal and institutional levels. As to Fairclough (1995), the restructuring of boundaries inside and between the orders of discourse is the reflection of power struggle and the changes of social culture on the level of discourse. The creative discursive practices of blending different genres and discourses are not only the signs of discourse and social cultural changes, but also are the driving force of discourse and social cultural changes (Fairclough 1992; 1995; Bakhtin 1986; Bhatia 2004). This insight enables analysts to incorporate elements of context into the analysis of texts so as to show the relationship between detailed linguistic features and the processes of social change on a broader scale.

As an example of mixed genres or interdiscursivity, Fairclough points out, 'the genre of consumer advertising has been colonizing professional and public service orders of discourse on a massive scale, generating many new hybrid partly promotional genres...' (Fairclough 1993: 141). This highlights the increasing tendency of commodification which is the discursive practice that this study concerns about. Commodification addresses 'the process whereby social domains and institutions whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption'(Fairclough 1992 : 207). In other words, commodification refers to a process in which discourse types associated with commodity production permeate the discursive practices of institutions not originally in the economic domain. In the real world, one can observe many domains such

as education, arts, politics, academia, whose orders of discourse are being colonized by the advertising genre (Fairclough 1992 ; Bhatia 2004). As a result, proliferations of discourse types, which combine features of advertising with features of other genres, have arisen.

Postulated as being one of the three main tendencies of discursive changes in contemporary society, along with democratization and technologization (Fairclough 1992), commodification has not attracted much attention so far in the linguistic field. Inspired by Fairclough's contribution, scholars, such as Michael Peace (2004), Karmen Erjavec (2004), and Vijay Bhatia (2004) have investigated commodified public discourse in contemporary society and produced some interesting findings. The current studies on commodification focus on political discourse, news discourse or talk show. And most of the research projects depend on case studies to investigate discursive practices happening at a synchronic level, whereas diachronic research could gain a more comprehensive analysis of the issue.

### ***3. Analytical Framework***

To investigate the changes of textbook preface genre, this study employs four modes of analysis: genre theories (Bhatia 1993; Swales 2004), the discussion of generic structure potential (Halliday and Hasan 1985), and appraisal theory (Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005), as well as multimodal discourse analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001) to investigate changes in the generic structure, lexical-grammar, as well as the paralinguistic features of the genre in question.

#### **3.1 Genre Analysis**

Genre is 'the use of language associated with a particular social activity' (Fairclough 1993 : 138). It is widely presumed that genres are embedded in their social historical contexts (Swales 2004; Bakhtin 1986). Understanding genre will reveal how societies manifest their discursive practices in language (Bex 1996). It is argued that genres have integrity. That means that they have stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexicogrammatical as well as discursive resources. This suggests texts of the same genre may have similar generic structures and linguistic features. Despite great emphasis on integrity, genres are by no means static or fixed; they are often 'complex, dynamic, versatile and unpredictable' in the real world (Bhatia 2004 : ix). With the aim of describing and summarizing changes of the genre in question, the concept of move is advocated by Swales (1990) who is a main figure in English for Specific Purpose (ESP). ESP Scholars view genres as recognizable communicative events, which are highly structured and conventionalized constructs (Swales 1990; Bhatia 2004). They place primary emphasis on moves in the analysis of the rhetorical structure of a genre. According to Swales, move is 'a discursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse' (Swales 2004 : 228). It is a kind of cognitive structuring which depends on the communicative purposes it serves. Texts in a same genre may have similar or nearly similar move structures. Step is the substructure of move. One move may be realised by several steps. As the basic element of a text, move can be

used to describe the generic structure of a genre, which is identified in terms of rhetorical function, not in terms of formal unit (Bhatia 1993; Swales 2004).

### 3.2 Generic Structural Potential

Generic structure potential (GSP) refers to the potential of the textual structure of a genre. Hasan (1985) thinks that the generic structure potential of a genre is a highly condensed abstract model concluded from many individual texts, which describes all the possible textual structures of a genre type. She believes this potential covers obligatory elements and optional elements. Obligatory elements determine the genre type to which a text belongs, while optional elements result in the changes of a genre. Hasan argues that the generic structure of a genre should be established in a perspective of semantics or function, which is in accordance with ESP school's understanding of generic structure through move analysis. Thus, combining the tool of ESP school's move analysis with the theory of generic structure potential by Hasan, this study attempts to identify and analyse moves and steps in each sample text, to establish the generic structure potential of the university textbook prefaces in China, and finally to investigate to what extent the generic structure of the genre in question changes or varies during the three periods we have set above.

However, prior to further analysis of the genre in question, we would like to address one issue concerning the sequence of elements in the generic structure potential. Hasan (1985) believes that the obligatory elements of a genre must be sequenced in a fixed order. However many genres do not exhibit a fixed order in the real world. The sequence of obligatory elements of a genre may vary in different texts. Some scholars' research (e.g. Paltridge 1997; Ventola 1998) has also provided evidence of this phenomenon. This study accepts that the generic structure potential of a genre consists of optional and obligatory elements, but does not agree that their sequence is fixed. Thus, we will not use sequence marks in the analysis of the generic structure potential of the university textbook prefaces in China.

### 3.3 Appraisal Theory

Appraisal framework is an extension of Halliday's systemic functional grammar, and it explores, describes and explains evaluative linguistic resources of texts. There are various evaluative linguistic resources employed by authors in university textbook prefaces with the purpose of giving a good description of the work and realizing a persuasive task. This study draws on appraisal theory to investigate the positive evaluative resources in the genre in question. Appraisal theory divides appraisal resources into three categories, namely, engagement, attitude and graduation. In consideration of the aim of the study and characteristics of data in question (most appraisal resources in the data are concerned with production of textbooks), this study only deals with analysis of attitude, especially that aspect of attitude related to 'appreciation', and analysis of 'graduation' on the level of lexico-grammatical analysis of the genre in question. Appreciation is a system for evaluating products and process, which addresses aesthetic and socially valued qualities of objects, entities and natural phenomena. Graduation deals with the resources for grading values. Through an appraisal analysis, a clear picture

can be established as to how authors evaluate, grade and give value to their textbooks.

### 3.4 Multimodal Analysis

Meaning is made not only in language, but also in extra-linguistic or paralinguistic areas (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). In other words, meaning is made in different modes and media through semiotic resources. Over the years, modern society has exploded with a diversity of communicative modes—language, image, sound, music etc. Multimodality now surrounds us with different modes integrating to construct meaning. It is found that the textbook prefaces demonstrate distinct diachronic changes in the construction of meaning with modes. An increasing number of textbooks are inclined to use paralinguistic resources to increase readability of contents and attract readers. Through multimodal analysis, this study examines the visual elements and layout arrangement of the textbook prefaces in these three time periods with a view to uncovering how paralinguistic features of Chinese university textbook prefaces have changed with time.

### 3.5 Data Collection

This study set the timeframe for data collection for the period 1966 to 2010. In Chinese history, 1966 was the year when Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution, and the year of 1978 is the turning point in the history, from which China embarked on its reform and opening-up. During the more than 30 years since then, every sectors and institutions in China have changed considerably due to the introduction of market economy by the Chinese government, adopting such free market practices as ‘cutting production cost, producing only popular products and advertising products to increase sales and the profit margin’ (Kwong 2000 : 89). With an aim of exploring interactions between the genre in question and the social contexts in which it occurs and develops, this study divides the chosen timeframe into three periods: 1966-1980, 1981-1995, and 1996-2010, for data collection. The second period (1981-1995) is the time when China began to push forward market economy and developed rapidly. While in the third period (1996-2010), under the influence of economic globalization, China had entered the era of consumption in a large scale. It is considered these three periods form a representative division of China’s development since the year 1966.

The data collected are prefaces of university textbooks in China published across 1966-2010. A total of 60 sample texts were collected, with 20 samples selected respectively from each period (i.e. 1966-1980, 1981-1995, and 1996-2010). Please find a detailed list of all the prefaces collected in the Appendix. All the data were from two digital databases named Superstar and Duxiu, which are widely available in China. To ensure the representativeness of the data sets, a number of criteria were applied in the data collecting process. First, to ensure a variety of subjects and authors, the data cover textbook prefaces for subjects in both natural and social sciences. Second, only prefaces published by prestigious professional publishing companies (such as People’s Education Press, Higher Education Press and famous university presses in China, etc.) were collected. These presses are authorized by Chinese government as the main producers in the field of China’s university textbook

publication. The textbooks published with them have dominated the majority of textbook markets and presumably represent the main features of developments and changes in university textbooks in China. Third, only prefaces written by distinguished scholars with high standing and profiles in their academic disciplines were collected. The prefaces in their books might be taken as models to be followed and imitated, leading the discursive trend of the time.

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 Generic Structure Analysis

Generic structure potential (GSP) is a descriptive term, and does not imply compulsory regulations for textual structure. It means that every instance does not always have to use same generic structure if to be regarded as members of the same genre (Paltridge 1997). This view accords with the notion of 'probability' in systemic functional grammar. This study treats GSP elements whose occurring frequencies are over 95% as obligatory elements; those whose occurring frequencies are 5%-95% as optional elements. The generic structural potentials of the university textbook prefaces during the three periods are typically presented in the moves and steps set out in Tables 1-3. They present the generic structure potentials of the sample texts in the three periods; Table 4 presents the occurring frequencies of each move. For the convenience of description, the corpus of data in 1966-1980 is named Group 1, while the corpus of 1981-1995 is named Group 2 and the corpus of 1996-2010 is named Group 3 respectively.

Move 1 : Establishing the relevant field of study
<b><i>Move 2 : Introduction to textbook</i></b>
Step 1 guiding principles
Step 2 background, aim and significance of writing
Step 3 main contents
Step 4 weakness of textbook
Step 5 assignments of cowriters
Step 6 scope of application
Step 7 suggestions for application
Move 3 : Establishing credentials
Move 4 : Acknowledgement
<b><i>Move 5 : Self-modesty and soliciting response</i></b>

**Table 1:** Generic structure potential in Group 1

Table 1 shows the generic structure potential of sample texts in 1966-1980 (Group 1). Move 2 and move 5 which are in italics, are obligatory elements. Moves 1, 3 and 4 are all optional elements. Among these moves, only move 2 is realised by 7 steps.

<p>Move 1 : Establishing the relevant field of study</p> <p><u>Move 2 : Justification of writing aims</u></p> <p>Move 3 : Establishing credentials</p> <p><b><i>Move4 : Introduction to textbook</i></b></p> <p>    Step 1 guiding principles</p> <p>    Step 2 background, aim and significance of writing</p> <p>    Step 3 main contents</p> <p>    Step 4 specialties s of textbook</p> <p>    Step 5 weakness of textbook</p> <p>    Step 6 assignments of cowriters</p> <p>    Step 7 scope of application</p> <p>    Step 8 suggestions for application</p> <p>Move 5 : Acknowledgement</p> <p><b><i>Move 6 : Self-modesty and soliciting response</i></b></p>
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**Table 2:** Generic structure potential in Group 2

Table 2 indicates the generic structure potential of sample texts in 1981-1995 (Group 2), which includes 6 moves. Move 4 which is realized by 8 steps and Move 6 in italics are obligatory elements. Moves 1, 2, 3 and 5 are all optional elements. Among them, Move 2 is a newly emerging move in this period.

<p>Move1 : Establishing the relevant field of study</p> <p>Move 2 : Justification of writing aims</p> <p>Move 3 : Establishing credentials</p> <p>    Step1 presenting qualification of textbook and editing staff</p> <p>    Step2 describing using effect</p> <p><b><i>Move4 : Introduction to textbook</i></b></p> <p>    Step 1 guiding principles</p> <p>    Step 2 background, aim and significance of writing</p> <p>    Step 3 main contents</p> <p>    Step 4 specialties s of textbook</p> <p>    Step 5 assignments of co-writers</p> <p>    Step 6 scope of application</p> <p>    Step 7 suggestions for application</p> <p>Move 5 : Acknowledgement</p> <p><b><i>Move 6 : Self-modesty and soliciting response</i></b></p>
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**Table 3:** Generic structure potential in Group 3

Table 3 illustrates the generic structure potential of sample texts in 1996-2010 (Group3). Moves 4 and 6 in italics are obligatory elements. Moves 1, 2, 3 and 5 are optional elements. Moves 3 and 4 are the ones which are realised by steps.



Moves	Introduction to relative field of study	Justification of writing aims	Establishing credentials	Introduction to textbook	Acknowledgement	Self-modesty and soliciting response
Periods						
1966-1980	20%		5%	100%	60%	100%
1981-1995	35%	25%	30%	100%	90%	95%
1996-2010	55%	40%	50%	100%	70%	95%

**Table 4:** Moves in the genre across the three periods

Table 4 presents the comparison of occurring frequencies of the moves emerging in the three periods, which are counted by the total number of a particular move dividing the total number of sample texts in each period.

From Tables 1-4, it can be seen that the university textbook prefaces' generic structures vary through the three periods, although due to the conventionality and integrity of a genre, the obligatory elements of the genre remain the same. The obligatory elements include 'introduction to textbook' and 'self-modesty and soliciting response', whose occurring frequencies are all over 95% in the three groups. However, the optional elements demonstrate distinct changes within the timeframe. Compared with Group1, a new optional element named 'justification of writing aims' (the move underlined in Tables 2 and 3) occurs in both Groups 2 and 3, and its occurring frequency increases as time passes (See Table 4).

'Justification of writing aims' is to inform about the objectives of the book and usually to present the justification of the importance and necessities of the textbook, with suggestions of the value of the textbooks and as conduits for the purpose of persuasion. For example,

**Excerpt 1** (from Sample 7, Group 3)

在我国研究生教育不断发展的形势下，编写高质量的、切合研究生实际的教材是时代发展的需求，是社会进步的体现，同时更是体育事业发展的需要。(With the continuous development of postgraduate education in China, the production of high-quality textbooks which would meet the practical need of postgraduates is not only the need of the times and the reflection of social development, but also the need for the development of physical education.)

Another difference deserving attention is the optional element of 'establishing credential' which presents distinct diachronic variation. In Group 1, the occurring frequency of this move is 5%. Only one sample text uses this move. In addition, the way of establishing credentials in this case is very objective. See excerpt 2:

**Excerpt 2** (From Sample 4, Group 1)

在编写过程中，听取了有经验的老工人、专业教师和工农兵学员的宝贵意见，也参考并学习了兄弟院校——如大连工学院铸工和金相专业教育革命的经验。本教材编出后，曾在我院的工科试验班和文化革命后第一届工农兵学员中试用，在批林批孔运动中，又在此基础上进行了修订。(During the editing process, we accepted valuable advice from experienced workers, professional teachers and Gongnongbing students (i.e. students directly recruited from workers, farmers, and soldiers without formal written examinations), and drew on revolutionary education experiences from some brother colleges, such as Dalian Engineering College as a reference. Upon completion of the editing work, this textbook was used in both the experimental engineering class in our college and the first cohort of Gongnongbing students after the Cultural Revolution. During the campaign of Pilin Pikong (criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius), further revision was made on the basis of the previous usage.)

Excerpt 2 establishes the credentials of the textbook by introducing the experienced advice that the textbook in question referred to, as well as its application and revision history. No direct evaluative words or expressions are found to illustrate the qualification of the textbook, just a presentation of facts. Compared with Group 1, the occurring frequencies of the ‘establishing credentials’ move in Group 2 and Group 3 demonstrate a distinct increasing tendency, having 30% in Group 2 and 50 % in Group 3 respectively. In addition, the way of establishing credentials in these two groups is generally direct, demonstrating positive evaluation. Especially in Group 3, slightly more than half of its sample texts establish credentials by using positive expressions. For example,

**Excerpt 3** (From Sample 7, Group 3)

本书是一部汇集了国内体育人文社会科学领域的一线专家、学者共同编写的体育专业研究生参考用书。(This book is a reference book for physical education major postgraduates, which is co-edited by many front-line specialists, scholars in the domestic field of sports humanistic social science.)

The underlined expressions of ‘many front-line specialists, scholars’ in Excerpt 3 establishes the credential or authority of the textbook by presenting the qualifications of the editing staff, which are all positive evaluations.

**Excerpt 4** (From Sample 5, Group 3)

本教材已在哈尔滨工业大学试用四次，收到了较好的教学效果。(This textbook has been used four times in the Harbin Institute of Technology, and achieves better teaching results.)

‘Better teaching results’ in Excerpt 4 is also a direct and positive expression, which, combined with the fact of ‘has been used four times’, establishes the credentials of the textbook by indicating its practising record and good teaching results.

Besides moves, steps of the genre in question also present distinct diachronic changes. Table 5 shows the diachronic changes of the steps through the three periods.

	Establishing credentials		Introduction to textbook							
	Qualification of textbook and editing-staffs	Describing using effect	Guiding principles	Background, aim and significance of writing	Main contents	Specialties	Weakness	Suggestions for application	Assignments of co-writers	Scope of application
<b>1965-1980</b>	5%		55%	50%	80%		5%	5%	45%	30
<b>1981-1995</b>	30%		50%	40%	80%	15%	5%	20%	70%	45
<b>1996-2010</b>	40%	15%	45%	40%	70%	60%		20%	85%	35

**Table 5:** Steps in the genre across the three periods

Table 5 illustrates the occurring frequencies of all the steps emerging in the three periods with the percentage of number of times a particular step occurred in each period. From this table, it is seen that the steps mainly appear in two moves – ‘establishing credentials’ and ‘introduction to textbook’. In Groups 1 and 2, the move of ‘establishing credentials’ covers only one step – ‘presenting qualification of textbook and editing staff’, but its frequency increases along with the time. In Group 3, a new step ‘describing using effect’ occurs in this move. See the example,

**Excerpt 5** (From Sample 18, Group 3)

近年来，本教材的内容在天津大学工科专业中进行了教学实践，取得了良好的教学效果。(In recent years, the materials in this textbook have been used in teaching the engineering majors at the University of Tianjin, and it has achieved good teaching results.)

This step indicates that the material has proved useful by introducing into teaching practice for similar target users. With the purpose of establishing credentials, this strategy is often employed in advertising texts for persuading and gaining the trust of customers (Bhatia 2004).

The other move realized by steps – the move of ‘introduction to textbook’ – also demonstrates distinct diachronic changes in the step structures. A close examination shows that the step of ‘specialties of textbook’ enters into the main steps of the move with an occurring frequency of 60% in Group 3. In sharp contrast, this step doesn’t appear in Group 1, and its occurring frequency in Group 2 is only 15%. The main function of the ‘specialties of textbook’ step is to introduce the distinctive features of the textbooks, which is usually undertaken by positive evaluation and attempts to facilitate the

reading and use of the textbook. For example,

**Excerpt 6** (From Sample 5, Group 3)

本教材在保证一般工科大学化学基本体系、基本知识、主要内容的前提下突出了一下几点：1 应用性... 2 启发性... 3 通用性...4 新颖性... 5 先进性... 6 连贯性...(Under the premise of ensuring the basic system, the general knowledge, as well as the main contents of chemistry in general engineering colleges, this textbook characterizes the following points : 1 applicability... 2 heuristic...3 versatility... 4 novelty... 5 advancement... 6 consistency....)

The diachronic change in the ‘specialties of textbook’ step suggests that the writers in Group 3 are increasingly inclined to highlight the values and the unique characteristics of the textbooks in question for the purposes both to inform and convince readers. Another interesting finding in the analysis of the data is the changes of the ‘weakness’ step. This step occurs both in Group 1 and Group 2, specifically pointing out the shortcomings of the textbooks in question. For instance,

**Excerpt 7** (From Sample 14, Group1)

限于编者水平，本书仍有一些不足之处，如在无机化学中如何运用化学热力学理论以及加强元素与理论部分的有机联系等，都还需要在今后教学实践中逐步加以解决。(Due to the shortcomings of the compilers, some weaknesses still remain in the book. For example, some problems still need to be resolved in future teaching practice, such as how to apply chemistry thermodynamics theories in inorganic chemistry and how to strengthen the integration between elements and theories.)

The instance above openly indicates the weak points of the textbook in question. From a pragmatic functional perspective, it aims to achieve the effect of objectivity and authenticity, while being against the purpose of promotion. In contrast, this step is not found in the sample texts in Group 3, which tend to accord with the tendency of introducing advantages and specialties. Another subtle change that can be seen in Table 5 is concerned with the step of ‘suggestions for application’ which appears more frequently in Group 2 (20%) and Group 3 (20%) than in Group 1 (5%). This step mainly recommends to teachers, as its target readers, suitable course teaching hours for the primary part of the contents. The increasing tendency of this step suggests that the authors of textbooks in recent years have started to take the needs of potential customers into consideration, in light of the fact that university lecturers now have the primary right to decide which textbook to be used for their courses.

## 4.2 Appraisal Analysis

An examination of the evaluative aspects of the university textbook prefaces reveals that both types of appraisal resources of interest to our research — attitude and graduation—are employed in the prefaces. When expressing attitude, appreciation is used most frequently.

	Occurring Amounts	Occurring Frequencies/per text
Group 1 (1966-1980)	27	1.35
Group 2 (1981-1995)	40	2
Group 3 (1996-2010)	127	6.35

**Table 6:** Positive lexical resources in the prefaces

Table 6 depicts the occurrence of positive appreciation resources in the three periods. The occurring amounts refer to the total number of positive appreciation lexis used in the sample texts in each period. Occurring frequencies are calculated by dividing the total number of positive appreciation lexis by the total number of sample texts in each period, resulting in an average.

The results demonstrate that preface writers in Group 3 tend to use a large number of positive appreciation resources (such as excellent, new, novel, impressive, rich information) to describe textbooks and present their attitude. In total 127 positive appraisal lexical units attributed to the textbooks were found in the sample texts in Group 3, averaging 6.35 positive lexical units occurring in each sample text. In addition, high strength evaluative expressions appear frequently in this group, such as 趣味盎然 (fully amusing and interesting)、别具特色 (unique and distinctive)、赏心悦目 (perfect delight to one's eyes), and strong-force graduation resources, such as, 非常 (very), 广泛 (comprehensively), 大大 (greatly) were also found in this group. Such results suggest that the language of the textbook prefaces in Group 3 is not as objective or neutral as the languages of academic introductions used to be. Instead, the language projects an obvious positive evaluative voice of the writers. In Group 2, 40 positive appraisal lexical units attributed to the textbooks were identified with 2 lexical units on average in each sample text. Only 27 lexical units with positive appreciation meaning were found in Group 1, with an average of 1.35 lexical units occurring in each sample text. In addition, the rarely-used positive appreciation resources in Group 1 are generally graded by weak-force expressions such as 较 (relatively more), or 较为 (comparatively), indicating the authors' conservative and prudent comments on the textbooks in question and echoing the objectivity of academic introduction discourses. For instance,

**Excerpt 8** (Sample18, Group 1)

本教材部分内容取材较为深广,介绍了一些现代物理的应用,以适应不同的专业要求。(Parts of this textbook are relatively more comprehensive, and introduce some applications of modern physics so as to meet different professional requirements.)

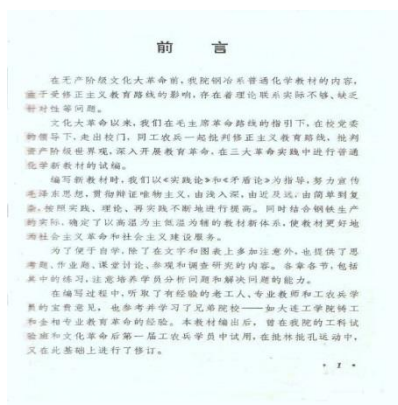
### 4.3 Multimodal Analysis

People tend to expect different modes to be used for meaning making in different genres. As part of genre analysis, a general principle is to analyse what modes (i.e. various visual and audio resources, and languages etc.) are employed in the meaning making and how they integrate in texts (Fairclough

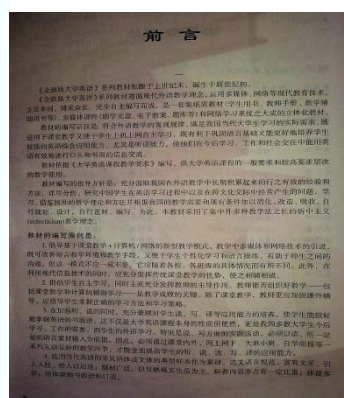
1989). Taking a close examination of the three groups of the data, several distinct paralinguistic features are identified and an overwhelming number of the visual elements or layout arrangements tend to distinguish Group 3 from the other two groups. First, the sample texts in Group 3 present an emphasis on the elaborate design of layouts with colour printings found in 6 out of the 20 texts in this group. In addition, many sample texts in this group use bold, italic, bold italic or coloured typefaces for highlighting important phrases or expressions. The design of letter fonts is used as another strategy to construct a visual image of texts in order to attract readers' attention. Another feature in this regard is that some sample texts in Group 3 use beautiful pictures as layout backgrounds. Some even present the authors' photos as illustrations. The analysis also shows that the sample texts in this group are relatively lengthy, containing more information than the sample texts in the other two groups. For example, Sample 19 in Group 3 is 4 pages long with more than 4000 Chinese characters.

Compared with Group 3, the sample texts in Group 1 are all presented in a single mode of written language. All sample texts are in traditional black lettering with none using pictures as layout background or the author's photo as illustration. The typefaces used in Group 1 have a consistent size and colour (black) in all texts. Through this monotony might have resulted from the undeveloped printing technology of that period. In addition, the texts in Group 1 are overwhelmingly short, with an average length of 600 Chinese characters. In the sample texts of Group 2, other modes are rarely used as well. Only two texts use different typefaces to differentiate the title and the text body. None of the 20 samples in Group 2 employ visual elements like colours, pictures or photos in the text.

To better illustrate the variation of the samples in the multimodal aspect, two sample prefaces selected from Group 1 and Group 3 respectively are presented in the following:



Sample 14 (Group 1)



Sample 20 (Group 3)

From the above two samples, it is found that Sample 14 from Group 1 generally presents a simple and traditional layout with the text solely in black and white. The body of the text remains in a consistent size and colour. The title is in the same typeface as the text body. The whole text is short, only one page long, and without any subheadings. In contrast, Sample 20 from Group 3 is designed with an elaborate and eye-attracting layout. A colour picture is used as the print background, the main points of the text are foregrounded

with bold and large sized typefaces, and important phrases are highlighted in red. The whole text is three pages long, with numbers to mark different sections and the title of the text is in a different font.

In sum, the multimodal analysis reveals that the sample texts in Group 1 and Group 2 generally keep on a traditional style in the aspect of modes with language as the predominant source of meaning making. By contrast the texts in Group 3 have an overwhelming tendency to use visual elements to strengthen the expressive effect for appealing to the readers. Given that the layout, including visual design and other paralanguage of any text in print, creates the first impression to its readers, the employment of visual elements in Group 3 indicates that the producers of the sample texts have made great efforts to attract potential readers by enhancing the readability of the textbooks. It, hence, has made great contributions to the realization of the communicative purposes of the texts.

## ***5. Discussion and Conclusion***

The current study examines 45 years' evolution of university textbook prefaces in China through an empirical analysis of three groups of data. The analysis demonstrates some distinctive diachronic changes with the social development. In the period 1966-1980, the university textbook prefaces in China generally presented as objective, conservative and monotonous in design. From the 1980s, new promotional moves and steps emerged and became increasingly visible throughout the period 1996-2010. It is found that in the period 1996-2010 moves such as 'specialties', 'establishing credentials' and 'describing using effect', popularly employed in advertising and promotional discourse (Bhatia, 2004), have been employed in the textbooks so as to make the prefaces both informational and promotional. The same applies to the move 'justification of writing aims', which seems to share a similar meaning potential with the move of 'justifying importance of products' in advertising discourse. In addition, university textbook prefaces in China have tended to deploy more positive appreciation and strong force graduation resources since the 1980s, taking readers' psychological needs into elaborate consideration. Moreover, since the 1980s, university textbook prefaces in China have tended to increase the use of visual elements in the meaning making process.

The findings of this study suggest that university textbook prefaces, a typical subgenre of academic introductions, have tended to be increasingly promotional while bearing the informational communicative purpose. The emergence of typical promotional moves and steps, large numbers of positive appraisal resources and extensive use of visual elements in university textbook prefaces, are all indications of promotional input, with functions of promoting or selling the product. These textual devices, reminiscent of the advertising genre, are creatively appropriated in the genre of textbook preface and point to the mix of academic introductory discourse and promotional discourse. This phenomenon starts from the 1980s and becomes more noticeable in the period 1996-2010, signifying the gradual changes of the genre with the passage of times.

Thus, this study argues that the genre of university textbook prefaces in China has been migrating from the traditional academic introduction into a new, hybrid and promotional genre, which is in fact indicative of undergoing a commodification process. It also confirms that the order of discourse in university textbook prefaces in China has been colonized by advertising or promotional discourse, as the communicative purposes of the prefaces do not restrict themselves to introduction and description, but also extend to positive image construction and self-promotion. The mixing-up of 'information' with 'publicity' and/or 'telling' with 'selling' exemplifies the negotiation and contest between the discursive boundaries of the academic and promotional discourses. However, the commodification of the Chinese university textbook prefaces doesn't mean the collapse of the genre's integrity. As indicated in Tables 1, 2, 3, the obligatory elements of the genre under investigation remain the same through the three periods, suggesting that the textbook preface is highly conventional with telling remaining the main function. It also suggests that these two discourses of information and promotion are trying uneasily to coexist in the texts rather than being fully integrated.

Another interesting point worth noticing is that most of the samples in Group 1 are found to use quotations of Chairman Mao as the guidelines of their writings and most of the authors in this group signed collectively, for example as a compilers group or as a teaching team, instead of using individual names. This phenomenon reflects the main ideology of the Cultural Revolution of that time in China: to highlight Mao Zedong's political thought and collectivism, which, in yet another way, depicts the dialectical relationship between discourse and society.

As argued by Bakhtin (1986: 65), genres are signs of social semiotics, which 'directly, clearly, flexibly reflect all the changes taking place in the social life.' They are 'the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language' (ibid). The commodification of the university textbook prefaces in China can be attributed to the particular socio-cultural contexts in which this genre occurred and developed. Without consideration of the institutional context of social organizations and the wider socio-cultural context, the changes of discursive practices cannot be properly comprehended (Halliday and Hasan 1985; Fairclough 1995). In light of this, this study suggests that, as the main contextual factors, the ideological influence of promotional culture and the powerful position of advertising discourse in the current society have made contributions to the commodification of university textbook prefaces in China.

It is known that with the fast economic development pushed by the market economy, contemporary Chinese society has been undergoing a spread of promotional culture since the 1980s and entered a consumer-oriented society after the middle of the 1990s (Zheng 2006). Various aspects of social life in Chinese society have been influenced by consumer or promotional culture, urging a shift of ideological focus from economic production to economic consumption. The widespread of promotional culture makes it increasingly difficult for people not to be involved in promotion. In addition, consumer culture enables the generalization of promotion as a communicative function. Discourses are used as instruments for selling products, services, organizations, ideas or people (Fairclough 1992). The inevitable consequence of this development is that many institutionalized genres, whether they are



social, professional, or academic, are seen as incorporating promotional input. The powerful influences of advertising discourse in contemporary society also partly results in the commodification of the university textbook prefaces in China. As the most versatile and fast developing discourse, advertising has become the 'genre of governance' (Fairclough 1992) in modern society. It is expanding and colonizing discourses across different boundaries, casting great influences on contemporary orders of discourse. Academic, professional and institutional genres are being colonized by advertising and promotional discourses, producing many new, promotional hybrid genres. The commodification of the university textbook preface in China is postulated to be exemplifying such colonization.

### ***Notes***

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**Appendix**

<b>Samples in Group 1 (1966-1980)</b>				
	<b>Textbook</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Publication Time</b>	<b>Author/ Composer</b>
1	分析化学(Analytical Chemistry)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1966	汪葆浚 (WANG Baojun)
2	生物统计学 (Biostatistics)	江苏人民出版社 (Jiangsu People's Publishing press)	1966	范福仁(FAN Furen)
3	兽医基础教材(A Textbook of Basic Veterinary Science)	解放军兽医大学出版社(People's Liberation Army Veterinary University Press)	1970	中国人民解放军兽医大学 (China People's Liberation Army Veterinary University)
4	普通化学( General Chemistry)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1974	东北工学院化学教研室 (Chemistry Teaching & Research Section,Northeastern Engineering University)
5	英语 (English)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1975	上海大学英语教材编写组 (English Textbook Writing Group Shanghai University)
6	金属矿地球物理勘探 (Geophysical Prospecting For Metallic Deposits)	地质出版社 (Geological Publishing House)	1975	成都地质学院物探系 (Department of Geophysical Prospecting, Chengdu Geological College)
7	基本有机化学工程 (Basic Organic Chemical Engineering)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1976	天津大学有机化工教研室 (Organic Chemical Teaching & Research Section, Tianjin University)
8	微生物工程 (Microbial Engineering)	上海人民出版社 (Shanghai People's Publishing House)	1976	微生物工程编写组(Microbial Engineering Writing Group)
9	电子技术基础(Basic Electronic Technology)	山东科学技术出版社 (Shandong Science & Technology Press)	1976	山东省科学技术宣传馆电子技术基础编写组 (Basic Electronic Technology Group, Shandong Sci & Tech Museum)
10	预算会计( Budget Accounting)	天津人民出版社 (Tianjin People's Publishing House)	1977	天津财经学院财经金融系 (Department of Finance & Economics, Tianjin Finance College)
11	有机化学 (Organic Chemistry)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1978	天津大学有机化学教研室 (Organic Chemistry Teaching & Research Section, Tianjin University)
12	大学英语 (College English)	商务印书馆 (The Commercial Press)	1978	鞍山钢铁公司七二一工人大学 外教研室(Foreign Languages Teaching Section,721Worker's College of Anshan Iron & Steel Co)
13	高等数学(Higher Mathematics)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1978	同济大学数学教研室 (Math Teaching & Research Section, Tongji University)

14	无机化学(Inorganic Chemistry)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1977	无机化学编写组(Inorganic Chemistry Writing Group)
15	马克思主义哲学原理 (Principles of Marxist Philosophy)	吉林人民出版社 (Jilin People's Publishing House)	1979	吉林省《马克思主义原理》写组(Writing Group of <i>Principles of Marxist</i> , Jilin Province)
16	果树修剪学 (Technology of Fruit Tree Pruning)	上海科学技术出版社(Shanghai Scientific & Technical Publishers)	1980	吴耕民(WU Gengmin)
17	植物系统学(Plant Systematics)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1966	张景抒 梁家骥(ZHANG Jingshu LIANG Jiaji)
18	电磁学 (Electromagnetics)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1979	赵凯华 陈熙谋(ZHAO Kaihua CHEN Ximou)
19	复变函数论(Complex Analysis)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1978	四川大学数学系(Mathematics Department, Sichuan University)
20	古代汉语 (Classical Chinese)	天津人民出版社 (Tianjin People's Publishing House)	1978	朱星(ZHU Xing)
<b>Samples in Group 2 (1981-1995)</b>				

1	机械设计 (Mechanical Design)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1981	华中农学院(Huangzhong Agricultural College)
2	兽医微生物学 (Veterinary microbiology)	农业出版社 (Agricultural Publishing House)	1981	甘肃农业大学 (Gansu Agricultural University)
3	西方哲学史 (History of Western Philosophy)	上海人民出版社 (Shanghai People's Publishing House)	1983	全增嘏 (QUAN Zengxia)
4	经济统计学概论 (An Introduction to Economic Statistics)	中国财政经济出版社 (China Financial & Economic Publishing House)	1985	钱伯海 (QIAN Bohai)
5	概率论与数理统计 (Probability and Mathematical Statistics)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1984	周概容 (ZHOU Gairong)
6	机械零件课程设计指导书 A Guidance For Mechanical Parts Course Design	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1982	哈尔滨工业大学Harbin Institute of Technology
7	电子技 (Electronic Technology)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1989	杨福尘 (YANG Fuchen)
8	生物物理学 (Biophysics)	人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press)	1981	程极济 林克椿 (CHENG Jiji LIN Kechun)
9	水环境化学 (Water Environment Chemistry)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1987	陈静生 (CHEN Jingsheng)

10	基础量子化学原理 (Basic Quantum Chemistry Theory)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1987	封继康 (FENG Jikang)
11	西方经济学导 (An Introduction to Western Economics)	北京大学出版社 (Peking University Press)	1993	梁小民 (LIANG Xiaomin)
12	模拟电子技术基本教程 (Basic Analog Electronic Technology)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1986	浙江大学电子学教研室 (Electronics Teaching & Research Section, Zhejiang University)
13	材料力学 (Material Mechanics)	同济大学出版社 (Tongji University Press)	1989	同济大学材料力学教研 (Material Mechanics Teaching & Research Section, Tongji University)
14	计算机应用基础 (Basic Computer Application)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1987	程光柳 陈庚华 (CHENG Guangmao CHEN Gengha)
15	土木工程英语 (Civil Engineering English)	科学技术文献出版社 (Scientific and Technical Documentation Press)	1994	姚仰平 惠宽堂 (YAO Angping HUI Kuantang)
16	高级英语阅读教程 (Advanced English Reading Course)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	1988	汪士彬 (WANG Shibin)
17	市场经济学教程 (A Textbook of Market Economics)	湖北人民出版社 (Hubei People's Press)	1995	辜胜阻 简新华 (GU Shengzu JIAN Xinhua)
18	管理心理学 (Management Psychology)	中国物资出版社 (China Logistics Publishing House)	1990	乐国安 (YUE Guo'an)
19	法学概论 (Introduction to Law)	北京大学出版社 (Peking University Press)	1995	张云秀 (ZHANG Yunxiu)
20	新编教育学教程 (A New Textbook of Education)	华东师范大学出版社 (East China Normal University Press)	1991	叶澜 (YE Lan)
<b>Samples in Group 3 (1996-2010)</b>				
1	经济法概论 (An Introduction to Economic Law)	华中理工大学出版社 (Publishing House of Huazhong University of Science and Technology)	1998	戚昌文 (QI Changwen)
2	微生物学 (Microbiology)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	2000	沈萍 (SHEN Ping)
3	线性代数与空间解析几何 (Linear Algebra and Space Analytic Geometry)	哈尔滨工业大学出版社 (Publishing House of Harbin Institute of Technology)	2000	郑宝东 (ZHENG Baodong)
4	动物免疫学 (Animal Immunology)	中国农业大学出版社 (China Agricultural University Press)	1996	杨汉春 (YANG Hanchun)
5	工科大学化学 (College Chemistry for Engineering Students)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	2003	许崇泉 强亮生 (XU Chongquan QIANG Liangsheng)
6	有机化学 (Organic Chemistry)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	2005	汪小兰 (WANG Xiaolan)

	Chemistry)	Education Press)		
7	体育人文社会学导论 (An Introduction to Sports Humanistic Sociology)	人民体育出版社 (People's Sports Publishing House of China)	2008	李宗浩毛振明 (LI Zonghao MAO Zhenming)
8	新编现代西方经济学 教程(New Modern Western Economics)	上海财经大学出版社 (Shanghai University of Finance & Economics Press Co., Ltd)	1996	郭羽诞 陈必大(GUO Yudan CHEN Bida)
9	C语言程序设计基础 (Basic C Language Programming)	高等教育出版社(Higher Education Press)	2005	廖雷(LIAO Lei)
10	大学物理学 (College Physics)	同济大学出版社(Tongji University Press)	2006	毛俊建 顾牡(MAO Junjian GU Mu)
11	西方经济学导论(An Introduction to Western Economics)	北京大学出版社(Peking University Press)	1999	盛小白(SHENG Xiaobai)
12	大学语文(College Chinese)	武汉大学出版社 (Wuhan University Press)	2007	贺严 (HE Yan)
13	英国文学与文化 (British Literature and Culture)	中国人民大学出版社 (China Renmin University Press Co., Ltd.)	2009	李成坚(LI Chengjian)
14	经济地理学(Economic Geography)	高等教育出版社(Higher Education Press)	1999	李小建 (LI Xiaojian)
15	新编计算机应用基础 (New Fundamentals of Computer Application)	清华大学出版社 (Tsinghua University Press)	2002	王军 韩伟峰(WANG Jun HAN Weifeng)
16	大学英语语法标准教 程(Standard College English Grammar)	北方交通大学出版社 (North China Jiaotong University Press)	2002	李京平周红红(LI Jingping ZHOU Honghong)
17	热工基础(Basic Thermal Engineering)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	2001	张学 李桂馥(ZANG xue LI Guifu)
18	材料力学 (Material Mechanics)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	2007	王世斌(WANG Shibin)
19	公共经济学 (Public Economics)	高等教育出版社 (Higher Education Press)	2007	王雍军(WANG Yonjun)
20	全新版大学英语综合 教程 (第二版) New College English Integrated course (second edition)	上海外语教育出版社 (Shanghai Foreign language Education Press)	2010	李萌华 (Li Menghua)