'History's silent?': The Self-Advertising of Chinese Universities

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Abstract

Inspired by the alternative understanding that history is in fact a particular (re)interpretation of the past and university history (the history of a university) is an effort at public relations, this paper examines how Chinese universities construct values about themselves in their texts of history for self-advertising in the context of the internationalization of higher education. Supported by a corpus and anchored in the Appraisal model, the analysis finds that, overall, the Chinese universities take advantage of the apparent objectivity of history for their subjective purpose of commodifying marketable qualities: under the values of Normality and Capacity, these respects of importance, excellence, and strength are foregrounded with the market in view. Predominantly realized in an overall tone of assertiveness and authority derived from the frequent manipulation of single and contracting voices, these values become, as it were, truths that the universities persuade the reader into accepting, and meanwhile they, especially those invoked by government-related features, suggest an ideology of power dependence that the universities show off in self-advertising. This study of university history seems to render the so-called distinction between promotional and less promotional public genres irrelevant in the neoliberal, consumerist culture.

Key words: Appraisal, Chinese universities, internationalization of higher education, power dependence, self-advertising, university history

1. Introduction

A popular or a layman's view of history is that it is a factual and even a flat record of the past, with historians' purpose being to reproduce chiefly in writing what things really were and how they actually happened. Nevertheless, 'writing is increasingly regarded as being socially situated; each situation may entail special consideration to audience, purposes, level of perfection, and correspondingly may require varying amounts of revision, collaboration, and attention to detail' (Connor 2004: 293). In fact, more and more historians have come to realize that they do not reproduce what actually happened so much as to represent it from a particular point of view (Burke 2001: 239). Historical writing, then, has shifted from a discovery of the objective, neutral or value-free Voice of History to a socially reflexive practice of heteroglossia (ibid: 6). That is, history is more created than found: it is a particular (re)interpretation of (giving new and different values or meanings to) the past, which in turn is constrained by the historian's assumed value systems, view of

knowledge, and historical method (Jenkins 1991); in the continuous deconstruction and reconstruction of history from varied and opposing voices to create a particular image, rhetorical/linguistic strategies and devices play a central role in selecting, ordering, and allocating significance to, past events (Callinicos 1995; Goldstein 1994). In this way, the seemingly objective and disinterested historical inquiry becomes a means of resolution of difference, reproducing in an uncontentious mode the forms and meanings of a culture (Coffin 1997).

In tandem with the foregoing shift has been that historians, away from the traditional paradigm of diplomatic, economic, and political history, increasingly identify their research interests with the New History, which, based on the assumption that everything has a history and the philosophical foundation that reality is socially or culturally constructed, aims to reconstruct 'the total history' of human activities, hence revitalizing the role of the once marginalized, story-like 'history from below' within the discipline, and cultivating and encouraging a trend to write and read such history with new viewpoints (Burke 2001). One area of increasing interest in this New History movement has been university history (UH, meaning the history of a university) as many universities have reached the centenary milestone.

Nonetheless, the writing of UH 'does not always conform to historical methodology or critical distance' (Strydom 2016: 57) in that the author, oftentimes an alumnus or staff member commissioned and even directly supervised by the university authority, relies heavily on the sources it provides and is trapped by a facts-and-rulers-template, telling from an administrative perspective and in an overall celebratory or triumphalist tone the university's story by emphasizing the executive, policies, and achievements while shying away from difficult topics and warts (McIntire 2003; Rothblatt 1997). As Welsh (1998: 185) points out, '[o]fficial institutional histories are often tedious, uncritical efforts at public relations, rather than serious scholarly works.' That is, UH instantiates 'the promotional culture' of modern consumerist society (Wernick 1991), where information meanwhile promotes what it represents, advocating certain features about it.

However, although almost every university has some form of published history, UH has been neglected by the vibrantly ongoing research into the effect of the internationalization of higher education (IHE) on university public discourse (UPD). Until now, focus has been on '*fully* promotional texts in their own right' (Askehave 2007: 725) like job advertisements (Kheovichai 2014; Xiong 2012), brochures (Ng 2014; Osman 2008), prospectuses (Askehave 2007; Fairclough 1993; Teo 2007), and mission statements (Morrish and Sauntson 2013), with UH being in fact neglected as a genre 'originally of a less promotional nature' (Askehave 2007: 740). This negligence is most likely to undermine the strength in the examination of the impact of IHE on universities' discursive development of competitive edges over competitors on the market. For one thing, UH is an important genre that has its own ways of discursive construction.

Thus, the present study aims to examine the advertising nature of UH by focusing on the ways in which Chinese universities discursively construct values about their own past, adding weight to a scholarly understanding of the effect of the contemporary context of IHE on UPD. It is argued that UH,

rather than a factual or flat record, is a significant piece of advertising serving as a key platform in the university's marketing strategy.

2. China's Internationalization of Higher Education

The university is a social as much as an intellectual institution involved in constant exchange with society, rather than being merely an independent or autonomous entity (Kearney 1970: 11). The traffic between the university and its broader social context suggests that an apt reappraisal of the university lies in treating among other things UH as a constituent of the social history of a society within the wider currents of history and hence studying it as more than commemorative (Strydom 2016: 58-59). From the perspective of historical writing, as the past ceases to be a place where past truths can simply be discovered, it is the present that becomes foregrounded (Coffin 2003: 219). That is, 'historical writing has strong roots in the contemporary environment' (Silver 2006: 139), a statement which indicates that universities recognize current values as a defining influence in retelling their stories.

The contemporary environment that contributes greatly to the transformation of universities across the world is IHE, in practice a process of commercialization of research and education and international competition to generate revenue (via e.g. recruiting high tuition fee-paying foreign students), secure national profile, and build international reputation (Huang 2007a; Khorsandi 2004). Clearly, contemporary IHE 'is much more strongly driven by economic factors in a more competitive environment at a global level' (Huang 2007b: 51), showing that the contemporary world has been increasingly taken over by neoliberal market values, and that the relations of competition are installed among universities, turning them consumer-oriented and inevitably challenging their public interest values (Rutherford 2005).

Since the 1990s, IHE in China has been advancing at a rapid pace as the country tactically prioritizes education in its socioeconomic development, making its university governance more responsive and efficient in addressing the ever-changing world by getting involved in more international collaboration and exchange (Mok 2010: 90). However, while, for example, IHE in the United States and many developed European countries 'is more commercially-driven by an entrepreneurial spirit' (Huang 2007b: 51) and hence represents a typical free-market approach, IHE in China represents a top-down, government-regulated one: on the one hand, the state recognizes global ideas and practices and drives the universities to go international and benchmark with world famous universities, but on the other, it still exerts centralism, keeping final control over them (Huang 2007a; Mok 2010). Given that the universities in the Chinese context are generally public institutions directly administered by the state, this government-regulated approach in IHE embodies the state's will to steer the universities' education and research to serve the national socioeconomic development.

China's most important means of IHE is to build up its own centers of excellence by enhancing a certain number of universities' quality of education and research up to that of world-class or world-renowned institutions of

higher learning, which as a result is expected to function as an exemplar for, and an important link with, the development of many of its other universities. By broadening their horizon and getting immersed in international rules, Chinese universities are supposed to train internationalized talents qualified for engagement in international affairs and competition, participate in, and even take the lead in organizing, large-scale scientific planning or revolutionary, scientific projects at a regional or international level (The State Council 2015).

In the 1990s, two major projects, Project 211 and Project 985, were introduced and regulated by the Chinese government for a rapid and great boost in the countries' international profile of higher education and academic standard. Project 211, officially promulgated in 1995, aimed primarily at 'strengthening about 100 higher education institutions and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the twenty-first century' (Mok 2010: 90). This project, involving 112 universities and about 300 key disciplinary areas, was supported by the state with bulkier budgets, with for example an investment of about 10.9 billion *yuan* during the period of 1996-2000 alone (see Mok 2010: 91). And Project 985, an upgraded version of Project 211, was implemented as a quick response to the call that Jiang Zemin, President of the time, issued in his speech delivered on the one hundredth anniversary of Peking University in 1998 that China should construct world-class universities, hoping that some universities and key academic areas should reach a world-class level and be internationally recognizable within the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Over the years, Project 985 has involved 39 stronger universities selected out of the 112 universities in Project 211 and has absorbed a more tremendously enlarged budget. For example, 1.8 billion *yuan* was specially allocated to intensively fund the teaching and research work of Peking University and Tsinghua University (Mok 2010). China's carrying out Project 211 and Project 985 indicates that it has been trying to establish its own centers of excellence and to participate in global competition rather than being confined to individual personal mobility and joint programs involving foreign partnership (Huang 2007b: 55). Overall, the two projects have played an important role in promoting, internationalizing the Chinese universities, and enhancing their quality of education and research.

Recently, China has quickened and further upgraded its establishment of centers of excellence in the process of IHE by introducing 'The Project of Constructing World First-class Universities and World First-class Disciplines' (hereafter briefly 'The Twin Constructions'). Announced by the State Council in 2017, this new project aims to propel China into a fairly strong country of education by around 2050 via constructing a number of world first-class universities and world first-class disciplines, a vision that parallels the overarching, solemn proposal to build China into an adequately developed nation by the mid twenty-first century as made by President Xi Jinping in his report to the Nineteenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2017. The new project includes two components during its first phase (2018-2020): the construction of world first-class universities, which involves 42 universities (the original 39 members in Project 985 plus 3 new members upgraded from Project 211), and the construction of particular world first-class disciplinary areas in 95 universities (including the remaining Project 211 members and some other newly chosen universities).

Both convergence and divergence exist across the Twin Constructions and the two previous projects. As a noticeable divergence, the Twin Constructions is designed to be competitive, replacing and terminating Project 211 and Project 985 because one serious problem with these two projects has been the lack of an elimination mechanism since their implementation in the 1990s. There being no such an elimination mechanism, the last two-odd decades have witnessed one abnormal phenomenon in which no university has been removed from either of the two projects due to poor performance. The Twin Constructions project, with great emphasis on a connotational development of higher education, highlights what has been neglected by Project 985 and Project 211, namely an elimination mechanism based on a stricter framework of efficiency and accountability. This means that assessment of the first phase performance shall remove those universities who have not lived up to the specifications. Judging by this, the new initiative of the Twin Constructions is more competitive within the community of Chinese universities on their way of going international and competing to benchmark with the best universities overseas.

Nevertheless, the Twin Constructions and the two previous projects still converge in that they all represent China's government-regulated approach in its IHE. Although the Twin Constructions is more competitive than both Project 211 and Project 985, it is likewise extended to the state's chosen few, which, including those listed for the construction of world first-class universities and those for the construction of particular world first-class disciplinary areas, account for less than 5% of all the 2,595 regular, full-time public institutions of higher education in China. In other words, as can be seen in the foregoing descriptions, the two forerunners of Project 211 and Project 985 and even the current Twin Constructions, though generally representing different historical stages in China's so-called nationwide IHE, have a very much limited coverage and mobility in selecting universities for internationalization. Whatever project of internationalization it is, it seems, it is only those established and venerable universities who are repeatedly selected by the state to compete at the international arena of higher education and research. Undoubtedly, this government-regulated approach in China's IHE over the decades has granted the chosen universities such advantages as preferential policies, secure identities, extra support budgets, and key research and education programs, which the 'other-ized' universities and colleges admire.

3. The Model of Appraisal

The analysis of the ways in which universities construct values about their past is anchored in Martin and White's (2005) model of Appraisal. As an extension of and elaboration on the interpersonal metafunction of language as theorized by the Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics (SFL), the Appraisal model explores, describes, and interprets the constructive role of the language of evaluation in negotiating and naturalizing such intersubjective positions as solidarity and alignment with the audience. The model thus fits in well with the aim of this study of UH as advertising given that advertising is a

campaign usually empowered by language to align consumers and by extension persuade them to accept a set of values or buy a particular product.

The Appraisal theory is a multidimensional one incorporating the expression of values (as categories of Attitude), the manipulation of the strength of values (as Graduation), and the introduction and management of voices to whom values are attributed (as Engagement) (Hood 2004: 26). The semantics of Graduation is a central, defining property of both Attitude and Engagement, with the value or volume of each being augmented or mitigated on a sliding scale. Thus, the interaction among Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement makes the Appraisal model 'an effective means of analysing how values are encoded and constructed in texts' (Morrish and Sauntson 2013: 65). Nevertheless, given the daunting extensiveness of this model, the characteristics of data in question (see the Data section below) and the aim of this study, focus is on the subsystem Judgement under Attitude and its interaction with Engagement, with other (sub)systems being mentioned only when necessary.

3.1 Judgement

Different from the other Attitude categories of Affect (the set of choices having to do with emotional responses or psychological states) and Appreciation (the realm of aesthetic assessments of things, products, and naturally occurring phenomena), Judgement is a semantic region that positions an individual or institution within a broader sociocultural system by construing and passing value onto their character or the way they behave according to social or ethical norms. An institution is treated as animate or conscious considering that the neoliberal conception of personhood is not exclusive to human individuals but 'is also extended to other entities---corporations, enterprises, and even markets---as agentic beings' (Clarke 2008: 141). Obviously, the university is no exception, being drawn into the logic of market rationality, an understanding that has been incorporated into Judgement analysis of universities in the context of internationalization and/or marketization (Morrish and Sauntson 2013: 66). As with all the other Attitude categories, Judgement can be either positive or negative, and can be realized either explicitly or implicitly. An explicit or direct realization is typically through a lexical item and an implicit or indirect one is usually by a string of words, describing some feature of (in the case of Judgement) an individual or institution and as a whole evoking the audience to provide an evaluation of them. Judgement allows more delicate categorization of types of Appraisal:

- *Normality* construes how unique, special or unusual someone is (e.g. *excellent, prestigious, dated*);

- *Capacity* construes how capable someone is (e.g. *able, competent, weak*);

- *Tenacity* construes how dependable, faithful or resolute someone is (e.g. *dependable, persevering, impatient*);

- *Veracity* construes how honest someone is (e.g. *candid, honest, deceitful*), and

- ***Propriety*** construes whether someone is reproachable or irreproachable (e.g. *altruistic, charitable, just, selfish*).

Normality, Capacity, and Tenacity constitute the broad semantic domain of social esteem, evaluating whether the behavior or character conforms to the socially desirable standards of a given culture, and Veracity and Propriety compose the domain of social sanction, assessing whether the behavior or character is seen as right or wrong in that culture (cf. Morrish and Sauntson 2013: 66). Thus, whether a lexicogrammatical realization is attitudinal or not is dependent on the cultural and ideological situation in which it happens and, more specifically, on the field of discourse in question and the analyst's reading position in view of the practices of the community and the readers' expected attitudes toward such practices (Martin and White 2005: 64). In this analysis, the analyst's reading position is one of a member in the field of higher education, which bears on classifying a Judgement evaluation as positive or negative and as explicit or implicit. In addition to these distinctions, although a detailed Graduation analysis is beside the focus of this study, Judgement, like the other Attitude subsystems, works on a sliding scale of Graduation, with its volume being turned up or down through either lexical items fused with the sense of *very* or *most* (e.g. *excellent, leading, imbecilic*) or isolated terms (e.g. *really* important, *slightly* eccentric).

3.2 Engagement

Inspired by Bakhtin's/Voloshinov's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia that all utterances exist against a backdrop of alternative voices or opinions on the same theme and simultaneously anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined audience, Engagement in the Appraisal model provides a systematic account of how the dialogistic positionings of values are achieved linguistically: the degree to which speakers acknowledge prior speakers, that is, whether they present themselves as standing with, as standing against, as undecided, or as neutral, objective or even factual concerning those other speakers; and how they expect their audience to respond to the value positions they are advancing (cf. Martin and White 2005: 92-93).

Broadly, the dialogistic positioning of value can be achieved via either Monogloss or Heterogloss. Monogloss has to do with advancing a value position in a bare or categorical assertion with no recognition of dialogistic alternatives and hence construing it as taken-for-granted or self-evidently right (e.g. *It was the first university in Chinese history with the main mission of training excellent teachers and specialists*). By contrast, Heterogloss means advancing a value position with recognition of dialogistic alternatives, which comprises Contract and Expand. Contract acts to fend off or restrict the scope of alternative voices (e.g. *demonstrate, appoint, approve*), whereas Expand actively invokes or allows for dialogistically alternative voices around a value position being advanced (e.g. *claim, argue, perhaps, think, it seems*). Thus, Monogloss, Contract, and Expand constitute a sliding scale of allowance for dialogistic alternative voices in setting out a value position: on the one end, Monogloss declines alternative voices, in the middle, Contract restricts the scope of such voices, and on the other end, Expand opens up the scope of such voices (Tian 2013: 186).

4. Data

The 42 universities within the component of the construction of world first-class universities under the Twin Constructions project were targeted for UH texts gathering. Just as the Russell Group universities are with little disagreement the most prestigious syndicate in the UK, so these 42 universities as a whole are the most influential among Chinese institutions of higher learning in that, as Section 2 has shown, they have been members of Project 211 and/or Project 985 and now are members being advanced into world first-class universities. On the one hand, many of these universities enjoy a long history, even quite a few having a history traceable as far back as the late nineteenth century, and hence history is a significant part of their pride. On the other, compared with other groups of universities, this group of universities over the decades, again favored by the foregoing projects, have been more exposed to internationalization in terms of pace and intensity, and as a result may be more experienced and varied in discursive self-promotion, that is, they might in this regard be a model or benchmark for other Chinese institutions of higher education. The 42 universities then appeared an ideal locale where their UH texts could be garnered for the aim of this study.

Usually positioned leftward on the catalogs bar atop the official website homepage of a university, 'About us' is the first catalog the reader is expected to click open to read about the university before browsing the other catalogs. In fact, 'About us' is a key platform in a university's marketing strategy in that the first-person plural pronoun therein has 'the potential 'migration'' from the business and corporate world in terms of semantic reference and communicative purpose (Caiazzo 2011: 244). Fairly regularly constitutive of this marketing, umbrella catalog are entities like 'Overview', 'History', 'Motto', 'Mission statement', 'University governance', inter alia. The semiotic space of 'About us' thus suggests the significance of exploring UH texts from an advertising perspective.

Thirty-five UH texts written in English were obtained from within the entity 'History' under the 'About us' catalog on the official website homepages of 35 universities belonging to the group for the construction of world first-class universities. As of the time of downloading, seven out of the 19 sci-tech oriented universities (or better polytechnics) within the said group did not have under the 'About us' catalog the special entity 'History' where a discursively-constructed history text was expectable, regardless of the presence of such entities as 'Overview', 'President's welcome', 'Facts & Figures', inter alia. Although these entities might carry some amount of the polytechnic's history and promote it at that, they did not represent the orthodox view of history texts and as a result for the sake of internal and external validity were left aside as different subgenres in relation to 'History' under the 'About us' catalog. The corpus of 35 UH texts consisted of 37,509 English words, with an average of 1,071 words per text.

Appraisal analysis involves identifying what is being appraised, and in this study the appraised was considered at a more macro level rather than a micro one that identifies and codes what is being appraised as a specific entity or phenomenon. This is because the macro level 'facilitates the identification of patterns in the orientation of ATTITUDE across the texts' (Hood 2004: 29).

An analysis of the corpus revealed two broad human entities onto whom values had been passed: university and on some occasions university people (faculty, staff, and students), who in the Results and Discussion section will be recognized by default unless the appraised appears not to be a university or a university person.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Judgement Values in the UH Texts

5.1.1 Overall findings

As Table 1 shows, all Judgement values in the corpus are achieved overall more frequently in implicit ways (about 58%) than in explicit ways (around 42%). In other words, a larger part of the construal of values in UH texts are 'objectified' in the form of narrative.

Values	Normality	Capacity	Tenacity	Propriety	Veracity	Totals
Explicit	218	79	39	20	7	363
Implicit	299	134	29	32	6	500
Subtotal	517	213	68	52	13	863

Table 1: Occurrences of Judgment values in the corpus

This higher frequency of implicit realizations of Judgement seems to evidence on the surface the layman's understanding of history as a factual record of the past but more accurately testifies to the scholarly assumption that the ratio of explicit to implicit constructions of communities of shared values and normative assessments is genre-specific (Thompson 2004: 78). Meanwhile, Table 1 shows that constructing values about an institution in view of Judgement alone is already a complex process that may involve meanings of different kinds and thus communities with different membership. Nevertheless, the value system of Judgement in the corpus is dominated by Normality and Capacity (accounting for almost 85% of the total), with Tenacity, Propriety, and Veracity occurring quite less frequently (only about 15%). As a result, focus in the upcoming analysis is on the defining Judgment features of Normality and Capacity in the corpus while giving due attention to the other values.

5.1.2 Explicit realizations

Explicit realizations of Judgement, though in the corpus less frequent than the implicit ways, are still a significant resource through which universities construct values about themselves. Below are some examples of explicit Judgement values in the corpus, with the appraising items in bold and the type of Judgment annotated in the square bracket.

(1)   Today, Tsinghua has become a **leading** [Normality] university.

(2)   Fudan developed into a **distinguished** [Normality] university **renowned** [Normality] for developing applied skills in the fields of business...

(3)   We became a **key** [Normality] national university covering a wide range of disciplines...

(4)   Building on our **strength** [Capacity] in engineering, the university will promote the of science and management departments.

(5)   The university has been **dedicated** [Tenacity] to cultivating patriotism and collectivism in students and developing their abilities to serve the country.

(6)   We have contributed significantly to the **friendly** [Propriety] exchange with people around the world.

(7)   In 1959, Jiang Longji, a **learned** [Capacity] and **honest** [Veracity] person became president of the university.

The adequate recurrence of explicit Judgement values in the corpus testifies to the claim that, in historical writing, 'it is difficult to avoid moral judgements altogether as so many of the words we use have moral overtones, suggesting at least approval or disapproval' (McCullagh 1984: 225). Therefore, the explicit Judgement realizations in the corpus indicate that the writing of UH, like that of the rest of social history, is endowed with subjective moralization of reality. Nevertheless, as examples (1) through (7) and Table 2 show, the explicit construction of values in the history texts of Chinese universities draws on almost exclusively positive items, nearly 40% of which are frequently intensified or augmented (mainly via lexical items like *key, excellent, top, prestigious,* and *master,* with 133 cases associated with Normality and 11 cases with Capacity), lending weight to making UH a discourse of assurance that intends to leave the reader in no doubt of the truth of the value positions being made on the universities.

Normality	Capacity	Tenacity
key (59)	strong/strength (13)	dedicated (5)
comprehensive (23)	independent (12)	persevering (5)
famous (20)	high-level (7)	
leading/leader (15)	successful (7)	
excellent/excellence (11)		
top (10)		
well-known (9)		

Table 2: Frequent explicit items of some Judgement values in the corpus (frequency bracketed)

In other words, given universities' administrative intervention with historical writing, the UH texts are far from critical, which, leaving out negative events

and difficult topics, are used by the universities to seal approval of themselves, inviting and persuading readers to see them in a positive and favorable light.

Thus, in fact, the explicit realizations of Judgement of the UH texts in the corpus are an important resource whereby the Chinese universities negotiate solidarity and alignment with the readership, doing self-promoting with their past in the competition-oriented IHE context. Although the occasional explicit realizations of Tenacity, Propriety, and Veracity flag on some scale that the Chinese universities are still public interest institutions who guard the Enlightenment inheritance and the Kantian ideal of reason by creating knowledge for the greater good of humanity, it is Normality and Capacity (accounting for around 82% of the total explicit Judgement realizations) which constitute the more noticeable selling point in the universities' explicit ways of self-advertising. The emphasis on these two values in the corpus compares with that found (though labeled somewhat differently) by other studies of UPD (Morrish and Sauntson 2013; Ng 2014), suggesting that, UH, like other public discourses of higher education, is concerned with an accentuated construction of the values favored and shared by the community of universities in the IHE context.

To be specific, the more noticeable selling point which the Chinese universities communicate to the outside world, again, as examples (1) to (7) and Table 2 demonstrate, centers around such specific semantic respects as importance, excellence, and strength. As the realizations of these aspects are frequently amplified, it seems that, in their explicit seeking of solidarity, the universities intend to position the readers to feel strongly about them in terms of these values and through these shared values to belong. This is understandable given that IHE in China, guided by the government-regulated approach, has been proceeding generally toward the neoliberal market, with the universities' research and education being treated as service to be delivered for consumers to choose. Judging by this, the Chinese universities' competition at the international arena also represents a spontaneous societal order 'somewhat akin to the generalizations of Darwinian evolution' (Gray 1984: 31), which favors those who are outstanding, strong, and fit, and which as a result pre-empts or disregards the role of emotions or psychological states like love, care, modesty, and restraint in defining who someone is (Lynch and Baker 2005).

5.1.3 Implicit realizations

The noticeable selling point with Normality and Capacity at the core is likewise present in the implicit realizations of Judgement in the corpus. In fact, the higher frequency of the implicit realizations suggests that a restrictive focus on the explicit realizations achieved mainly through the same few nouns and adjectives, as found in Morrish and Sauntson (2013), clearly would not be adequate enough to do justice to the function of promotion or communality of Chinese universities' UH texts in the contemporary IHE context. In the corpus, the implicit Judgement values are mainly constructed with a focus on the description of a university as a whole and of its certain features, namely ideational meanings, the selection of which 'is enough to invoke evaluation, even in the absence of attitudinal lexis that tells us directly how to feel' (Martin and White 2005: 62) (Table 3). Below are a few examples intended to illustrate the working of some chief features as summarized in Table 3, with

the stretch of expression inviting the reader to provide evaluation italicized, and the feature and Judgement type annotated in the square-bracket:

(8)   We are *New China's first university in science and technology*. [Time: extent; Normality]

(9)   Now Zhejiang University is *under the direct administration of China's Ministry of Education, with joint support from both the Ministry of Education and Zhejiang Provincial Government*. [Administration; Normality]

(10) *MAO Zedong, chairman of the central government, appointed Dr. MAO Yisheng as president of the university*. [Name-dropping; Normality]

(11) In 1996, the University *participated in China's "Project 211", a national development project committed to providing first-class, international level education and scholarship*. [National project; Normality]

(12) We are *located in a garden-like city near the coast*. [Location; Normality]

(13) Over the past decades, ECNU *has fostered a large number of excellent teachers and educators*. [Education achievement; Capacity]

(14) In 1990, *our many products were applied in Beijing Asian Games*. [Research achievement: Capacity]

(15) Now the University *has turned a new page for its evolution*. [University as a whole; Capacity]

(16) The University *has gone through the tests of time, wars and quite a few times of campus moving*. [Perseverance through hard times; Tenacity]

(17) The University *has opened a series of specialties catering to social demands*. [Service for society; Propriety]

(18) Over the past 70 years, the university *has kept serving the main tasks of the Party and the country and stuck to the Yan'an spirit in running the school and educating the students*. [Loyalty to the state; Veracity]

Similar to their explicit counterparts, the implicit realizations of Tenacity, Propriety, and Veracity seem to align the reader with the universities that they have loyally served the state and the people while going through a series of hard times with them. This reflects the hard times such as the Anti-Japanese War (1931-1945) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) on top of the fact that China has been a communist party-ruled nation since 1949. Nevertheless, the universities' focus in the implicit realizations, as in the explicit ones, is still on the specific respects of importance, excellence, and strength, all of which fall within Normality and Capacity.

As Table 3 demonstrates, one group of features through which the Chinese universities construct Normality and Capacity as a way to reinforce their selling point as established by the explicit realizations has to do with their

more 'natural' or independent aspects (N=115) such as time extent, location, size, and the university as a whole. While the description of the university as a whole, as example (15) shows, can invoke a general, creditable value of the university, time extent, being the most frequent feature in the corpus and like in example (8) being typically realized via *first* and some temporal adjectives in the superlative degree, traces and 'extends' the historical length of the university in question from a particular perspective and hence distinguishes the university from the others. Such a distinguishing, promotional coloring is also associated with location or size. As example (12) demonstrates, to the university's credit, the author of the history text highlights that the university has pleasant outside surroundings and hence is worth coming to. The implicit, positive realizations in view of such 'natural' or independent features constitute the favorable brand positioning dimension of learning environment for students (Askehave 2007; Gray et al. 2003; Osman 2008).

Values	Chief features	Typical realizations
Normality	time extent (81)	time extent: first (57), earliest (6), oldest (5);
	state administration (67)	
	name-dropping (45)	state administration: under the (direct) administration of (34)
	national projects (39)	
	location (12)	
	size (campus, etc.) (12)	
	university as a whole (10)	
Capacity	achievement:	
	research (31)	
	education (25)	
	university as a whole (23)	
Tenacity	perseverance in hard times (7)	
Propriety	service for society or nation (9)	
Veracity	loyalty to the state (3)	

Table 3: The chief features invoking the Judgement value system in the corpus

The features described more frequently to reinforce the selling point are those that are more government- or power-related (N=151), including state administration, name-dropping, and national projects. These have to do with the government in that contemporary China is an intensely-centralized country in which a relevant government organ like the Ministry of Education and high-ranking officials have the final say in the operation of the universities modeled on a top-down, government-regulated approach. Hence an unwritten rule that the universities, rather than upholding academic

democracy and autonomy, attach importance to cultivating the ties of kinship with higher authorities, which expands the Chinese *guanxi* ('connections') society from individuals to the public sector. As example (9) indicates, being under the direct administration of the state and/or the provincial government constitutes an administrative edge for the university as this means the availability of more resources and preferential treatment. This is a point that is also evidenced by example (11), which is about the university's feeling special or privileged for being chosen by the state to participate in the national project, Project 211. In fact, it is usually those universities under the state's direct administration that enjoy more preference from above in the implementation of similar projects. Such a feeling of privilege is meanwhile conveyed via name-dropping (normally well-known statesmen). As example (10) shows, the university, when it comes to the presidential appointment, name-drops Mao Zedong, founder of the People's Republic of China, to upscale its importance and social status. Thus, in addition to sharing the 'natural' features with their international counterparts, the Chinese universities emphasize the translation of government-related features into a competitive edge, which indicates a strong ideology of power dependence and showoff in their constructing a selling point at the IHE market.

5.2 Contracting Alternative Voices in the Construction of Judgement Values

In the corpus, the ways in which the Chinese universities manage alternative voices in the construction of Judgement values are an important aspect of their marketing strategy. Table 4 summarizes the pattern of Engagement resources in the UH texts of the corpus.

Monogloss	Contract	Expand	Total
535	119	3	657

Table 4: The Engagement occurrences in the Chinese universities' UH texts

As Table 4 shows, an overwhelming majority of the Judgement values were constructed in barely asserted propositions (N=535). On the face of it, these assertions attend only to the issue of truth conditions, characterizing on a large scale the UH texts as objective or even factual. However, a rather different landscape emerges when they are seen from the perspective of interpersonal, dialogistic functionality, namely that all verbal communication takes place against a backdrop of alternative voices and other viewpoints. Thus, these assertions, as examples (1) through (18) show, are categorically monoglossic, constructing the values with no recognition of alternative voices. The pervasiveness of such monoglossic assertions in the corpus exercises a very strong ideological effect of construing a putative audience, who are got in alignment with the value positions and for whom these value positions are expected to be taken as given but not for discussion. Constructing (via commissioned writers) their own past by generally downplaying negative experiences and taking advantage of the popular conception that history is

objective, the Chinese universities stay far from dialogistic or critical, doing self-advertising with an institutional identity marked with factiveness.

The second most noticeable Engagement feature of the UH texts, Contract markers are deployed by the Chinese universities to narrow down the scope of alternative voices in their realization of Judgement values by resorting mainly to items like *list* (N=23), *approve* (N=16), *(re)name* (N=8), and *appoint* (N=7). In the examples below, the Contract makers are underlined, with implicit realizations invoking values italicized, and attitudinal items in bold.

> (19)   The university, <u>approved</u> by the State Council, was the first to set up a graduate school in the South China region in the early 1990s. [Normality]
>
> (20)   We were <u>reclassified</u> as a national university directly under the Ministry of Education. [Normality]
>
> (21)   In the 9th and 10th five-year plans, the university was <u>appointed</u> *a member of Project 211 and Project 985 respectively*. [Normality]
>
> (22)   The University, <u>approved</u> by the Ministry of Education, secured cooperation with Lancaster University, the UK, in running the universities following a Chinese-foreign paradigm. [Capacity]
>
> (23)   In the same year, the State Council <u>listed</u> us as one of the nation's ten **top** [Normality] colleges and universities.

The Contract markers, appearing on most occasions in the passive voice and collaborating predominantly with Normality (with merely four cases occurring in consort with Capacity), suggest a duality of voices around the construction of values in the context of Chinese higher education: the internal authorial voice and the external source voice, the former being that of the commissioned writer of the UH text, and the latter being that of the collective subjectivity of the government. As stated before, in intensely-centralized Chinese society, the final say in the management of the universities lies with the state, the representing agency being usually the Ministry of Education, which has fostered a culture in which the universities compete to win favor with higher authorities for preferential policies or financial support. Typically, the government voices its authority in processes like *approve, accredit, list,* and *appoint,* passing it down almost always with no resistance or objection at the grassroots level. What the internal authorial voice does is accept and relay the voice of authority by instantiating it into relevant value positions, treasuring them as correct, valid, and even unchallengeable. This is a process whereby the favored universities dramatically contract and restrict other potential voices, intending the reader to realize that they are under the government's warranty or even harborage, a better treatment to which not every Chinese university is entitled. This is more easily felt in cases (N=57) where, as examples (19) through (22) illustrate, Contract markers are associated with government-related features like direct state administration and national projects. The fairly frequent Contract markers in the corpus, thus, further testify to the Chinese universities' strong ideology of power dependence in their constructing a selling point in the course of internationalization.

The dominance of monoglossic assertions and Contract resources has left just a few Expand cases in the corpus. Nevertheless, even these Expand occurrences suggest the impact of the government-regulated approach on the universities and hence their appendage to higher authorities. Consider the following example:

> (24) In February 1993, Fudan University proposed its plan 'to pursue quality and compete to be the **best** [Normality]. [Veracity]

Here, the alternative voice backdrop of the centralized government is found still at play. The internal authorial voice, by dint of *propose*, construes the university as modest and even humble and therefore entertains very much the government's authoritative voice in giving the final approval regarding the future value position of excellence. However, the university's doing so is a way of promotion, which is intended to communicate to the reader that it is one of those few universities qualified to apply to the higher authorities, whose approval of the plan in question usually means a series of support.

The Chinese universities' historical texts are therefore overall monoglossic and contracted, with the commissioned writers being in a minimal amount of dialogue with alternative voices other than those of the government. The predominance of Monogloss and Contract in the corpus indicates that the texts have been composed by not strictly following an academic, historical methodology. Nonetheless, it is the assertiveness and authority derived from these two main features of Engagement that the Chinese universities manipulate in constructing values to promote themselves against the global IHE backdrop.

6. Conclusion

Inspired by the general, alternative understanding of history as a particular (re)interpretation of the past and the specific conception of UH as an uncritical effort at public relations, the research found that, in the contemporary IHE context, the Chinese universities use the 'History' text under the category 'About us' on the homepage of their official websites as a key platform in doing self-advertising by highlighting, as far as their characters and behavior are concerned, a selling point with Normality and Capacity at the core while giving some attention to Tenacity, Propriety, Veracity. In other words, Normality and Capacity, which in the corpus focus on such specific respects of importance, excellence, and strength, have become the Chinese universities' key 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) whereby they brand themselves and sell their reach and influence in the process of IHE. Thus, the UH texts not only embody the conceptualization of institutional history as a particular (re)interpretation of the past but are exploited by the Chinese universities for the subjective purpose of commodifying marketable qualities.

Specifically, while the Chinese universities' explicit claims on values, with Normality and Capacity occurring more frequently, suggest that UH, like other constituents of social history, is not exempt from direct moralization, they, seen from the interpersonal perspective of solidarity, usher the reader into a positive and favorable history of the university, a point that is reinforced

by the narration of the more recurrent, dominant ideational meanings like university as a whole piece and other particular features. More than noticeable among these features are the government-related ones, which are usually narrated by the universities in reference to the single, authoritative voice of the state, invoking government-endorsed values about themselves. While the overall tone of authority and assertiveness created by the frequent occurrence of bare assertions and contracted statements contributes greatly to persuading the reader into accepting the values as truths, the universities' ideology of power dependence enacted by their frequent recourse to state-related features and Contract devices becomes a unique and significant aspect in their constructing a competitive selling point at the market, which reflects the impact of the government-regulated approach and the Chinese culture of favoritism on their way of internationalization.

Thus, the Chinese universities follow the particular socio-cultural communicative purpose of advertising in writing their own history, giving a favorable interpretation of it in relation to the IHE context. The point is that, covered by the common belief in the objectivity or factuality of history, the role of interpretation has been backgrounded whereas the idea of the true account has been foregrounded. Such interpretations 'generally correspond to a range of power bases that exist at any given moment and which structure and distribute the meaning of histories along a dominant-marginal spectrum' (Jenkins 1991: 26). In other words, what the Chinese universities are mainly concerned with is that the objectifying advantages of the linguistic resources of historical narrative can serve effectively their work of branding themselves at the competitive, international market of higher education. In this sense, UH is an exemplar of showing that the promotional and neoliberal culture increasingly blurs the distinctions between fact and evaluation in the promotion of individuals and institutions, which seems to render the so-called distinction between more promotional and less promotional public genres irrelevant.

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