

# Advice-giving in newspaper weather commentaries

Gabriella Rundblad<sup>a,\*</sup>, Huijun Chen<sup>b,\*\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> King's College London, London, UK

<sup>b</sup> China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China

Received 22 July 2014; received in revised form 11 September 2015; accepted 14 September 2015

Available online 23 October 2015



## Abstract

Receiving accurate and timely advice about extreme weather events can impact a person's likelihood to survive, cope with and minimise exposure. Advice-giving seems to be a common interpersonal strategy in weather commentaries in many Chinese newspapers, yet research into weather advice-giving is greatly lacking. This study investigated whether the discourse of advice-giving in newspaper weather commentaries differed depending on the newspaper source and/or on the weather reported. We focused on two popular metropolitan newspapers: *Beijing Morning Post* and *Beijing Evening News*. Forty texts from each source were chosen (20 for ordinary weather and 20 for extreme weather). Results showed that the advice given stems from a vast reservoir of advice themes, and we found clear differences depending on weather, with significantly more advice given during extreme events. We also found that *Beijing Evening News*, in general, provided more advice in their weather commentaries. Finally, writers who were prone to take an authoritative stance tended to increase their use of imperatives and "high-status" vocatives during extreme weather, whereas those who positioned themselves "with" their readers also used more imperatives, but did not change their vocative preferences.

© 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

**Keywords:** Advice-giving; Written discourse; Weather commentary; Extreme weather event; Interpersonal strategy

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Following the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003 and an increasing string of extreme weather events, the People's Republic of China Emergency Response Law was adopted in 2007, and in 2008 the weather emergency management system established new protocols for weather monitoring, warning and information sharing (Yang and Mao, 2012). Importantly, the China Meteorological Administration developed an information sharing mechanism that also includes the Xinhua News Agency, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and the State Administration of Radio Film and Television. Thus, full use of newspapers, radio and television, as well as new media outlets, has become a vital part of Chinese disaster communication (Yang and Mao, 2012).

Weather information has been an important resource utilised by Chinese newspapers to attract readers ever since their first appearance in China in 1882 (Ye and Chen, 2011). To meet the needs from agriculture, industries, commercial

\* Corresponding author at: Department of Education and Professional Studies, Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication, King's College London, Waterloo Road, London SE1 9NH, UK. Tel.: +44 20 7848 3136.

\*\* Corresponding author at: School of Foreign Languages, China University of Geosciences, 29 Xueyuan Road, Haidian District, Beijing 100083, China.

E-mail addresses: [gabriella.rundblad@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:gabriella.rundblad@kcl.ac.uk) (G. Rundblad), [chenhuijun2000@sina.com](mailto:chenhuijun2000@sina.com) (H. Chen).

businesses, and the general public, some newspapers even dedicate an entire colourful page to weather information. It has been argued that weather forecasts are very low in informativity because of their tightly constrained format, topic, situation and medium (de Beaugrande, 1997). However, weather commentaries seem to vary greatly between countries. So while de Beaugrande's statement might be true for some cultures, it does not apply to Chinese weather commentaries, which are not limited to rigid formulaic forecasts about temperature, wind and rain. (Examples of commentaries are available in Section 2.2.)

In China, weather commentaries can contain reviews of past weather (e.g. *It was a scorching hot day yesterday*), forecasts (e.g. *It is going to rain today*), as well as advice on how to accommodate the forecasted weather (e.g. *Don't forget your umbrella*). Thus, advice on health related precautions, risk and safety, recommended actions and activities, and general health-care are typical parts of Chinese weather commentaries. The advice provided is widely recognised as valuable information and as an appreciated tool in everyday life (e.g. Liu, 2011; Ye and Chen, 2011). In Chinese culture, advice-giving is generally viewed positively as an expression of friendly concern (Hinkel, 1997). Furthermore, in Chinese society, perhaps unlike many other cultures, there are presumed and reinforced direct links between weather and health. With time, the availability of weather advice in top national and local newspapers seems to have contributed to a culture even more attuned to this link; in fact, present-day thoughts about the impact of climate change on human health are increasingly incorporated into these weather commentaries.

This paper seeks to address whether the amount of advice provided in Chinese newspapers and the discourse utilised differ depending on type of newspaper and the severity of the weather.

### 1.2. Advice and advice-giving

While research on advice-giving in weather commentaries is greatly lacking, abundant relevant work has been done on advice-giving in a variety of discourse settings. This section will briefly review these settings, but first we will define the meaning of *advice*.

There is no agreement on a clear definition of *advice* in discourse analysis (DeCapua and Huber, 1995; Vine, 2004), but we can distinguish between a micro-structural level and a macro-structural level. At the micro-level, following Searle's (1969) tradition, advice is seen as "a directive or a recommendation towards a course of action that the advice giver considers profitable or relevant" to the recipient (Vehviläinen, 2012:32; see also Haverkate, 1984). Thus, there is a presupposed problem (Angouri, 2012), and the instrumental purpose of giving advice is to trigger an action (Schmidt and Richards, 1980) or a promise of a future action from the hearer (Searle, 1969). Hyland and Hyland (2012:53) have suggested that advice "is generally only ever given by those who feel they know what is best for the recipient". Importantly, their observation does not assume personal knowledge or contact between speaker and hearer. This means that when we judge whether an expression constitutes advice or not, we are in part judging whether the (future) action can be seen as beneficial or not (Rintell, 1979; Edmondson and House, 1981; Banerjee and Carrell, 1988; Trosborg, 1995; Flor, 2005).

At the macro-level, advice is considered a type of speech event (Kouper, 2010) or an activity type (Culpeper, Crawshaw, and Harrison, 2008); that is, we distinguish between the advice itself and the act of advising, or advice-giving, which is a complex type of interaction (c.f. Drescher, 2012). Specifically, Angouri (2012:123) has offered a working definition for peer advice in academic talk on essay and dissertation writing: "a discursive phenomenon co-constructed by an advisor and an advisee where the advisor's open agenda is to assist the advisee in meeting his or her needs, desires and expectations [and] in order for the advice to be enacted both parties need to understand an utterance as having an advice giving function". The act of advice-giving is typically sequential (Heritage and Sefi, 1992; Pudlinski, 2012).

According to Locher (2006), most studies are conversation analyses, focusing on institutional face-to-face encounters. Whatever the communication, it is important to establish a relationship between speaker/writer and hearer/reader (Hyland, 2005). Depending on how writers cognitively position themselves in relation to putative readers, writers of weather texts may give advice as an expert, a reporter, a colleague, or a friend. Such interpersonal relations are realised in texts through the use of interpersonal linguistic resources such as vocatives, modality, and appraisal words (e.g. Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). However, both the use and interpretation of the interpersonal linguistic resources need strategies to make communications successful. Choices of advice-giving strategies may be greatly affected by advice-givers' perceptions of social status (Matsumura, 2001). Failure to correctly use the strategies on the writer's part and failure to correctly perceive and interpret the strategies on the reader's part both can cause serious failures in communication (Banerjee and Carrell, 1988; Borderia-Garcia, 2006).

In the context of educational feedback on dissertations or essays, Waring (2007, 2012) and Angouri (2012) observed peer interactions. Waring explored the use of explanatory accounts in advice-giving, noting in particular how accounts can be present in several sequential positions. Angouri, on the other, depicted how even peer-advisors enact an expert or senior advisory role in non-formal interactions. Hyland and Hyland (2012) studied advice-giving in teacher written feedback on ESL academic writing. In particular, they looked at the interpersonal role, the forms and patterns of teacher feedback as advice, and students' response and interpretation of the advice. The study revealed a mismatch of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/932550>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/932550>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)