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Exploring Collective Identity and Community Connections: An Interpersonal Analysis of Online Visitor Reviews at the Overseas Chinese Museum (2012–2023)

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ABSTRACT

The Overseas Chinese Museum in Xiamen, Fujian, is a cultural historical museum in China that promotes heritage tourism and strengthens the community connection among the overseas Chinese diaspora, international and local visitors. The museum has become a platform for interpreting the immigration experience of overseas Chinese communities around the world. In this study, we examine visitors' feedback to the Overseas Chinese Museum through a linguistic analysis of their reviews. The visitors' reviews, 207 English-language online reviews, were collected from various travel forums between 2012 and 2023, totaling 11,584 words. We divided the data evenly into two distinct time periods, Stage I (2012–2017) and Stage II (2018–2023) and used statistical corpus log-likelihood analysis to quantify and understand if there were significant linguistic differences over time. Some of the key differences emerging from the linguistic analysis were related to conjunctions, e.g., *also*, *while*, *after*, and *so*, evaluative language and how identity was construed through language. Findings adopting an appraisal analysis suggested an increase in visitor satisfaction, possibly due to enhanced exhibits and changes in visitor expectations. The findings from analysing the reviews also showed that visitors shared similar values, developed a social bond with overseas Chinese, and engaged with this cultural historical community. The study contributes to a wider discussion on language in digital communication and cultural heritage. In addition, the visitors' feedback and preferences could be used to improve communication and promotional strategies that ultimately increase the number of visitors to the museum.

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1. Introduction

Millions of tourists visit cultural and historic sites each year as part of heritage tourism, which has become a significant sector of the global travel industry[1]. Heritage tourism promotes intercultural communication and exchange, particularly at heritage tourism museums, where visitors can interact with cultural artefacts, explore historical narratives, and share experiences. These museums serve as important sites for intercultural dialogue[2, 3]. Heritage museums provide authentic visitor experiences and are important for cultural preservation and tourism development in cities[4]. Alberti et al.[5] explored the relationships between heritage, tourism, and regional competitiveness, focusing on clusters that drive economic and cultural growth. Zhang et al.[6] investigated how stakeholders of heritage tourism shape national identity through collective memory in museums. Wardoyo and Zef[7] examined the role of open museums in preserving urban heritage and promoting sustainable tourism. Later, ShawHong[8] discussed the importance of local heritage museums in Malaysian heritage tourism, as the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board identified heritage tourism as a new market segment after 2013. That study examined the development of sustainable heritage tourism as well as the challenges faced by the Malaysian museum sector. Murdy et al.[9] also highlighted the changing nature of heritage consumption and the need for professionals to adapt to new trends.

Founded in 1956 by renowned overseas Chinese leader Mr. Chen Jiageng (also known as Mr. Tan Kah-kee), the Overseas Chinese Museum is a unique cultural and exhibition center that celebrates the historical contributions of Chinese emigrants in various regions of the world, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Canada and the United States[10, 11]. The Overseas Chinese Museum was the first museum fully supported by Chinese migrants to showcase the achievements and history of the Chinese diaspora[12]. The museum focuses on the experiences of overseas Chinese communities through dioramas, street scenes, and other exhibits[13]. These exhibits and displays help shape visitors' perceptions

and understanding of the experiences of the Chinese diaspora. As such, the museum provides a unique setting for cross-cultural exchange between international and Chinese visitors[13]. By displaying the hardships of overseas Chinese migrants, the museum also serves as a center for national patriotic education to strengthen cohesion and solidarity[14].

Since 2000, the rise of digital communication and online platforms such as TripAdvisor, Agoda, Booking.com, and Google Reviews has had a significant impact on how people access and exchange information when planning their trips[15, 16]. Travellers use the experiences, thoughts, and opinions of others to make decisions about their social activities. These online comments are significant for hotels, restaurants, and airline industries, as well as heritage attractions, such as museums[17–19]. In the present study, the online review data from 2012 to 2023 were collected and strategically divided into two stages: Stage I (2012–2017) and Stage II (2018–2023). This division is based on the growth of online travel forums. Online reviews for the Overseas Chinese Museum were initially posted in 2012, which was the starting point for data collection. Stage I (2012–2017) marks the early development of online discourse surrounding the museum, as evidenced by the gradual adoption of digital platforms where experiences were shared. In contrast, Stage II (2018–2023) reflects a more mature phase of digital engagement by visitors, and the online reviews increased in length and number of posts. Two corpora were developed, and we adopted a log-likelihood test to undertake a comparative analysis reviewing the frequency of lexical and grammatical features. The temporal division of the two corpora provided an opportunity to explore how language and interpersonal meanings have evolved in the context of digital communication and visitors' experiences at the museum.

Despite the growing interest in online visitor reviews, limited research has been undertaken that addresses a comprehensive linguistic approach focusing on conjunction analysis, evaluative resources and the exploration of collective and individual identity in the context of overseas communities' online visitor reviews of heritage museums. The present study addresses this gap by providing a novel perspective on how

language in online reviews construes interpersonal meanings and negotiates collective identity and community connections. This study merges linguistic analysis with insights into intercultural representation. The present study examined how international and Chinese visitors to the Overseas Chinese Museum perceived and interpreted the exhibits between 2012 and 2023. This study adopted a discourse approach to identify the underlying cultural and linguistic dynamics constructed by visitors from different cultural backgrounds by dividing the period into two stages: Stage I (2012–2017) and Stage II (2018–2023). It examined the use of conjunctions and continuatives in English reviews of the Overseas Chinese Museum, drawing on a systemic functional linguistic framework[20]. External conjunctions, such as *also*, *while*, *after,* and *because*, are used to connect clauses and indicate logical relationships between ideas; they establish logical relationships in texts and express a writer's thoughts and expectations about a situation[21]. Continuatives are a collection of connectors that represent addition (e.g., *too* and *as well*), comparison (e.g., *only* and *just*), and time (e.g., *again* and *already*)[21]. They manage expectations in terms of comparison and time. Comparative continuatives indicate whether an event is more or less than expected, and time continuatives indicate whether something will happen sooner or later[21]. Studying conjunctions and continuatives in reviews can help us explore the order of events and the motivations that influence visitors' evaluations of museums on social media platforms. The present study focused on how these linguistic features frame the narrative structure of visitor interactions, then examined how visitors use evaluative language choices to determine the quality and value of a museum visit using Martin and White's[22] appraisal system for appreciation and graduation resources. The appraisal system developed by Martin and White[22] using SFL enabled a systematic interpersonal analysis of the attitude, engagement, and graduation of emotions expressed in language, revealing visitors' attitudes towards the reviews. Finally, this study examined the ways in which local tourists and international tourists came to present a shared identity in their reviews. The significance of the differences between examples was determined using the statistical corpus tool of log-likelihood[23]. In order to achieve the research objectives, we asked the following research questions:

Q1. What is the difference between the Phase I (2012–2017) and Phase II (2018–2023) reviews of the Overseas Chinese Museum in terms of external conjunctions and appraisal resources?

Q2. How did personal pronouns, verb processes and identity markers differ in response to the museum's representation of Chinese diasporic history between Phase I and Phase II?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Reviews of Heritage Museums in Travel Forums

Travel platforms such as TripAdvisor and Agoda rely on detailed reviews of various travel-related services to attract users[24–26]. These platforms typically use a bubble rating system that allows visitors to give an overall score of 1 to 5 points, ranging from terrible to excellent[27]. Bubble ratings provide an average score for quick comparison, and those posting a review can leave specific comments as user-generated content, which is important in the world of travel forums[28]. With thousands of visitors writing these reviews, they are generally considered trustworthy for their authentic and unbiased descriptions of hospitality, dining, sightseeing, etc.[29, 30].

In tourism, understanding visitors' experiences is crucial for museums to effectively meet their visitors' needs[31–33]. The use of social media travel forums has proven to be an important and effective tool for gaining insights into the cultural heritage and experiences of museum visitors from different geographical areas[32]. For example, Carter[32] analyzed online reviews of the Laura and Oak Alley plantations, which are popular tourist destinations, and identified common terms and topics found in the reviews, such as *Laura*, *family*, *Creole*, *house*, *home*, *beautiful*, *grounds,* and *slave*. Similarly, Baniya et al.[31] examined online reviews of Angkor Wat, Cambodia's UNESCO World Heritage Site, between 2015 and 2019. The overwhelmingly positive nature of these reviews focused on the architectural structure of the attraction and the experience of witnessing the sunrise and sunset. However, negative aspects such as clothing styles, constant vending, and crowding also influ-

enced visitors' impressions of Angkor Wat.

In Italy, Riva and Agostino[33] examined 10,663 Italian reviews to identify latent dimensions of visitor experiences at 30 popular Italian museums. According to their study, the visitors' reviews discussed the museums' cultural heritage and services, as well as their personal experiences. In their findings, local visitors placed greater emphasis on the "wow factor" and hospitality, while non-local visitors emphasized time management and negative experiences. Closer to home, Gillette and Boyd[34] examined Chinese tourists' perceptions of national mining heritage using online user-generated content from three coal mines that were turned into heritage parks. Their study explored the meaning-making process of visitors to these sites and how their experiences aligned with notions of mining tourism found elsewhere. The accounts emphasized the scenic landscapes of the parks, which many described as striking, unique, and offering distinctive experiences. Various associations with the landscape, such as industry and memory, were also observed in their study. By actively identifying and responding to online reviews, museums can better meet the diverse needs of their audiences and improve the overall visitor experience.

2.2. Systemic Functional Linguistics and Museum Discourse

Building on these studies, the present study used online travel forums to explore how international and local visitors expressed themselves after visiting the Overseas Chinese Museum. We compared linguistic features to gain a better understanding of how different visitor groups contributed to evaluation and identity formation in the museum setting. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) was used to examine patterns of discourse structure in online reviews. Drawing on Halliday and Hasan[35] and Martin and Rose[21],we analyzed conjunctions and continuations to reveal how visitors connected ideas and events, providing insights into the narrative structure and coherence of their experiences. External conjunctions involve four logical relationships: addition (e.g., *and* and *also*), comparison (e.g., *like* and *while*), temporal sequences (e.g., *before* and *after*), and consequences (e.g., *so* and *by*)[21].These conjunctions are used to connect activities by establishing a field of experience that extends beyond the text and links different events[21]. This was complemented by an analysis of the appraisal system to examine

how evaluative language, such as lexical phrases, adjectives, and adverbs, was used to express and negotiate attitudes and emotions[21, 22].

The appraisal system consists of three main domains: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude is the expression of feelings and opinions in terms of affect (i.e., evaluating personal feelings), judgement (i.e., evaluating the behaviors of others), and appreciation (i.e., valuing objects and events). Engagement involves acknowledging and responding to the perspectives of others and positioning oneself and one's audience in relation to an issue[21, 22]. Graduation is concerned with adjusting the intensity of a stance and is analyzed by means of force, which amplifies the meaning, or focus, which narrows or expands the writer's stance[21]. Appraisal analysis enabled us to identify patterns in the visitors' evaluations of the quality of the museum in terms of exhibitions, facilities, interpretation, and overall experience based on online forum feedback. More importantly, we were able to track visitors' emotional and evaluative responses to the Overseas Chinese Museum over time.

Collective identity at the group level refers to a shared identity derived from members' common interests, experiences and solidarity, which can be investigated by examining shared beliefs, values and opinions[36, 37]. Previous research explored the use of pronouns, adjectives, and inclusive language as indicators of collective identity. Language is used as a means of constructing identity. For example, McGlashan[38] used a critical discourse analysis approach to explore collective identity on Twitter. His research examined language use and the relationships between following hashtags, showing that identities were most diversely constructed in relation to politics, religion, and geography. Richardson and Langford[39] found that participants used different pronouns (i.e., we/they language) depending on their insider/outsider perspectives in the Canadian out-of-home childcare movement. Collective narratives from a diaspora community help communities to survive, transform, combat negative stereotypes, and promote social recognition, as illustrated by Karner's[40] study of the Lebanese diaspora.

In addition to linguistic analysis, it is important to consider the socio-cultural context that influences visitors' perceptions and assessments of the Overseas Chinese Museum. Museum visitors can be divided into different groups, such as international visitors, local Chinese visitors, and the next

generation of overseas Chinese. All come from different countries and have varying reasons for visiting (see [41, 42]), such as personal or family ties to the Chinese diaspora, an interest in Chinese history and culture, or educational goals. Furthermore, the museum's marketing efforts and specific exhibitions all have an impact on attracting visitors and shaping their perceptions and evaluations [43]. By considering these socio-cultural factors, we can gain a better understanding of the motivations and wider community connections that they reflect. Thus, our analysis captures not only linguistic features, but also some of the socio-cultural interactions that contribute to the collective identity and community connections of the museum's visitors.

3. Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to examine online visitor reviews of the Overseas Chinese Museum from 2012 to 2023. We focused on interpersonal meanings and community connections conveyed in selected excerpts from the reviews. A quantitative analysis was first conducted to examine the frequency and p-value of selected lexicogrammatical features in the reviews, using log-likelihood ratio tests to compare the two different stages of data collection: 2012–2017 and 2018–2023. A qualitative analysis was then conducted using a systemic functional linguistic (SFL) discourse approach. Qualitative analysis is essential to capture the language details that quantitative methods may miss. It is worth noting that the present study excluded visual elements such as emoticons and images from the online reviews. Although these elements may add additional layers of meaning, the primary aim of this study was to focus on the textual analysis of the linguistic features and interpersonal interactions found in written reviews.

This study of linguistic patterns and changes in visitors' experiences over time examined 11,584 words of online reviews about the Overseas Chinese Museum from travel forums between 2012 and 2023. The period from 2012 to 2017 included 3,690 words, and the period from 2018 to 2023 included 7,894 words. About half of the reviews were written in English, while the rest were automatically translated from Chinese to English using Google Translate. **Figure 1** illustrates the frequently common lexical choices in

the data, such as *people*, *place*, *building*, *historical*, *motherland,* and *diaspora*. Appraisal resources that contained attitudinal meanings were frequently found, such as *good, famous, interesting, large, cultural, patriotic,* and *unique.*

Figure 1. Common tokens of attitudinal meanings in the data.
Source: This image was generated using www.simplewordcloud.com.

This study used Rayson and Garsides' [23] log-likelihood analysis at http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html to compare the frequencies and distributions of specific linguistic features across the different stages. Log-likelihood analysis is rooted in corpus linguistics and is particularly useful for robust statistical comparisons between two corpora of different sizes [44], and provides valuable insights into changes in linguistic patterns over time in this study. This statistical technique compares the probabilities of two sets of data based on their observed frequencies of conjunctions, appraisal resources, and identity markers. These lexical items were counted manually and examined in detail. **Appendix A Tables A1–A4** contain full lists of the conjunctions, appraisal resources, personal pronouns, and process verbs examined in the data. Items with a log-likelihood greater than 3.84, indicating significant use in the corpus at the p < 0.05 level, are marked with an asterisk in the tables.

To address potential linguistic errors in automatically translated comments, we implemented a verification process to ensure that the analysis was accurate. The online visitor reviews analyzed in this study were primarily obtained from travel forums, where some comments were originally written in Chinese by mainland Chinese visitors and then automatically translated into English. Our bilingual researchers, who are native Chinese speakers and fluent in both Chinese and English, carefully reviewed these automated translations. We compared the translations to the original Chinese texts to ensure that the meanings were preserved and that there were

no mistranslations. This process improved the reliability and ensured that the discourse reflected in the reviews accurately represents visitors' perspectives in the most appropriate manner.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Semantic Patterns of Discourse Realized Based on Conjunctions and Appraisal Resources

The Overseas Chinese Museum's exhibitions focus on the challenges faced by overseas Chinese communities, their adaptability to new environments, and their contributions to society. By emphasizing the immigrant experience, the museum reinforces values such as resilience, determination, and the transmission of traditions through generations[45]. We found that the online reviews revealed significant differences in discourse structure and lexicogrammatical features between 2012–2017 and 2018–2023. In the following figure, red dots represent Stage I and blue dots represent Stage II. The red lines indicate decreases in the relative frequencies of specific categories between the two periods, whereas the blue lines indicate increases. **Appendix A Tables A1–A5** contain the raw frequencies, relative frequencies, log-likelihood ratios (LL), and p-values for conjunctions, continuatives, appreciation and graduation resources, personal pronouns, verb processes, and identity markers.

4.2. Conjunctions and Continuatives (N = 710)

Conjunctions connected different parts of narratives in the museum reviews, affecting the overall coherence and organization of the texts. The relative frequencies and distributions of conjunctions and continuatives indicate changes in discourse structure over time. Stage I reviews were more fragmented and disjointed, with lower overall use of conjunctions and continuatives. In Stage I, the comparative conjunction *but* was explicitly used. In the data, *but* was frequently associated with visitors mentioning the lack of explanatory English subtitles next to the exhibits. **Table 1** contains examples of *but* from Stages I and II.

In Stage I, the conjunction *but* was closely related to visitors' reactions to the absence of English subtitles/translated texts next to the displays. According to the data, in-

ternational visitors may have had minor complaints about this issue. However, their comments were generally polite and respectful, with phrases like *displays were pretty self-explanatory*, *worth it*, *you have a general idea of what you're looking at*, and it *doesn't detract from interest*. We believe that the museum has recognized and addressed the issue with the English subtitles. This is because such complaints were no longer present in the Stage II reviews. In 2020, a visitor mentioned that the museum had *many English text displays*. The Stage II online reviews were more coherent, employing more addition conjunctions such as *and*, *also*, and *as well as*. **Table 2** provides examples of these addition conjunctions. An increase in addition conjunctions indicates a shift towards more explanatory narratives and better chronological organization of experiences.

In Stage II, both the log-likelihood (LL) and the relative frequency ratio were greater for the consequence conjunction *by*. The frequency of *by* in Stage II was 6.46, while the LL ratio was 4.26, indicating a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the two stages. As shown in **Table 3**, the actors of the sentences were more ambiguous in Stage I, such as *a Chinese expat*, *museum founder*, or *famous overseas Chinese Chen Jiajun*. In Stage II, the appositives used to evaluate Chen Jiajun's leadership role became more specific than in Stage I, such as *a famous overseas Chinese patriotic leader*, *the late overseas Chinese patriotic leader Chen Jiajun*, and *the late patriotic leader*. The second research question explored naming and its implications for identity construction.

4.3. Appreciation Resources of Museum Quality (N = 365)

Among the subcategories of the appraisal system (Martin & White, 2005), appreciation had the greatest influence on visitors' attitudinal evaluations of the museum. Visitors used appreciation resources to evaluate the quality of the museum's presentation style, exhibits, and facilities. Appreciation resources create value in things and are divided into three categories: "reactions" to how things attract our attention, the "composition" of the balance and complexity of nature, and the "valuation" of things (Martin & White, 2005, p. 36). Despite very positive ratings of museum quality in both periods, Stage I visitors used more appreciation resources to describe their immediate reactions to the exhibitions. **Table 4** lists examples of *hard*, *interesting*, *rich*, *good*,

Table 1. The comparison conjunction *but* in the data.

Stage I/II	Text/Year of the Review	Examples of *but* in the Text
Stage I	Text 1/2012	There wasn't a lot of information in English, *but* a lot of the displays were pretty self-explanatory.
	Text 2/2012	Some of the exhibits had translations, *but* it would have been more interesting if the descriptions of all the exhibits had been in both Chinese and English.
	Text 6/2014	Although it was so frustrating that the subtitles were not in English, I felt like I was missing out on so much! *But* it was worth it as it is centrally located and free and not crowded at all.
	Text 11/2015	It's true that a lot of the captions are in Chinese, *but* the introductions to each section have English captions, so at least you have a general idea of what you're looking at.
	Text 14/2015	There could be a few more English titles, *but* that doesn't detract from the interest.
Stage II	Text 173/2020	There are not only many precious cultural relics, *but* also many English text display works.

Table 2. The addition conjunctions *and, also,* and *as well as* in the Stage II data.

Stage II		
	Text 170/2020	**Example of *and* in the text**
		The museum depicts the history of overseas Chinese from semi-colonial *and* semi-feudal areas to post-New China, *and* also reaffirms the contribution of overseas Chinese to the motherland.
	Text 150/2019	**Example of *also* in the text**
		They have spread the fine tradition of the hardworking, simple and down-to-earth people, and *also* introduced advanced foreign military, aviation, science and technology to the country.
	Text 147/2019	**Example of *as well as* in the text**
		The interior displays Mr Chen Jiajun's collection and donated cultural relics, calligraphy and paintings, etc., *as well as* some of the old gentleman's letters.

nice, and *pleasant* and their associated texts. These positive adjectives can convey a shared appreciation (reaction) of the museum experience.

As shown by the relative frequencies in **Figure 2**, from 2018 to 2023 there was a shift towards a more in-depth evaluative approach, with an expansion to broader historical and national themes and spiritual connections beyond the exhibits. **Table 5** includes examples of appreciation resources (valuations) such as *ancient cultural relics exhibitions*, *historical contribution*, *treasure*, *a Chinese immigrant in Singapore who dedicated his fortune…*, *valuable historical painting,* and *the most meaningful place*. **Table 5** shows that the raw frequency of positive appreciation (valuation) adjectives and nouns increased, indicating that visitors were increasingly engaged with the themes of the museum. The majority of these valuation resources were used to praise the museum's exhibits and the efforts of the overseas Chinese community,

reflecting the cultural and educational value they had created. Another possible explanation is that the museum's exhibits had improved over time. These changes may have been noticed by the visitors and reflected in their online reviews.
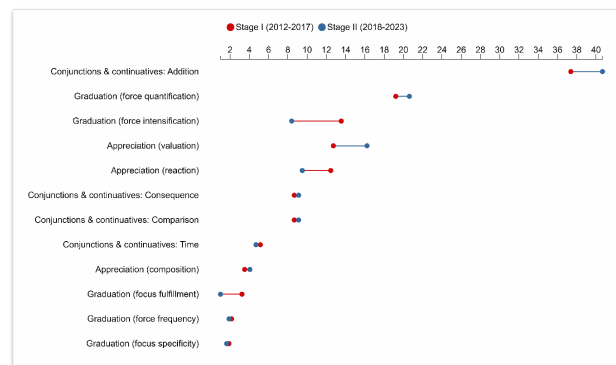

Figure 2. The evolution of the relative frequencies of conjunctions, continuatives, and appreciation and graduation resources between Stage I (2012–2017) and Stage II (2018–2023).

Table 3. The consequence conjunction *by* in the data.

Stage I/II	Text/Year of the Review	Examples of *by* in the Text
Stage I	Text 1/2013	… donated *by* a Chinese expat.
	Text 13/2015	… donated *by* the museum's founder.
	Text 56/2017	… donated *by* the famous overseas Chinese Chen Jiajun.
Stage II	Text 151/2019	…founded *by* Mr Chen Jiajun, a famous patriotic overseas Chinese leader.
	Text 187/2021	… initiated *by* the late patriotic overseas Chinese leader Chen Jiajun in September 1956.
	Text 196/2022	Museum, initiated *by* the late patriotic leader Chen Jiajun, is a granite palace-style building.

Table 4. The appreciation resources (reactions) *hard, interesting, rich, good, nice, and pleasant* in the Stage I data.

	Text/Year	Example of *hard* in the text
Stage I	Text 1/2012	the *hard* manual labor
		Example of *interesting* in the text
	Text 13/2015	*interesting* artefacts
		Example of *rich* in the text
	Text 74/2017	The collection is very *rich*.
		Example of *good* in the text
	Text 8/2015	It's a *good* place to visit.
		Example of *nice* in the text
	Text 64/2017	very *nice* museum
		Example of *pleasant* in the text
	Text 41/2017	*pleasant* scenery

In addition, log-likelihood analysis showed a significant increase in the use of *unique* in Stage II. The relative frequency increased from 0.27 to 2.41 from Stage I to Stage II, with a significant LL ratio of 8.92 (p < 0.001). Table 6 shows examples of *unique* and their associated texts. This suggests that the visitors were more aware and appreciative of the uniqueness of the assessed elements, such as the building, geographical location, status, and historical culture of the museum, than before.

4.4. Graduation Resources for Grading the Appreciation Resources of Museum Quality (N = 424)

Graduation refers to the intensity with which attitudinal meanings are graded up or down[21]. As shown in **Figure 2**, the graduation resources in the reviews differed between the stages, with Stage I using more force (intensification) and focus (fulfillment). **Table 7** shows examples of strength (intensification) resources such as *very*, *most*, *should,* and *better* that were used to emphasize the positive aspects of the museums.

In addition, focus (fulfillment) resources such as *found* were used to indicate visitor satisfaction. For example, *even though the English signs were limited, I found it interesting* (Text 4, 2013). During this earlier period, the reviewers used more intensifiers and explicitly focused on the fulfillment of specific experiences or expectations. Furthermore, **Table 8** includes examples of force (quantification) in Stage II, along with their associated texts. Reviews in Stage II employed more force quantification, such as *many models*, *more than 2000 cultural relics and handicrafts*, *large stones engraved*, *long ago*, *only the blood and flesh of ancestors*, *landmark here*, and *just a few hundred meters*. These graduation resources (quantifications) generally indicated a preference to quantify and emphasize sizes, timeframes, locations, and museum features in the reviews.

Table 5. The appreciation resources (valuations) *cultural, contribution, treasure, dedicated, valuable,* and *meaningful* in the Stage II data.

	Text/Year	Example of *cultural* in the text
	Text 160/2020	ancient *cultural* relics exhibitions
		Example of *contribution* in the text
	Text 156/2020	Historical *contribution* to the revival and development of the state and nation.
		Example of *treasure* in the text
	Text 151/2019	I found that the *treasure* was inside the museum.
Stage II		**Example of *dedicated* in the text**
	Text 206/2023	a Chinese immigrant in Singapore who *dedicated* his fortune to the development of his hometown of Xiamen
		Example of *valuable* in the text
	Text 174/2020	There are many *valuable* historical paintings and relics that you would not have a chance to see in other cities.
		Example of *meaningful* in the text
	Text 172/2020	The Overseas Chinese Museum is the most *meaningful* place we visited in Xiamen.

Table 6. The appreciation resource (valuation) *unique* in the Stage II data.

	Text/Year of the Review	Examples of *unique* in the Text
	Text 107/2018	It is a *unique* building that can be seen from afar. It is known as the "*Unique* Overseas Chinese History Museum in the World" by the British writer Han Suying.
Stage I	Text 156/2020	Fujian Province, with its *unique* geographical location and historical culture, has made the overseas Chinese group play a key role in China's great historical process.
	Text 161/2020	This museum is the world's *unique* overseas Chinese museum, China's only overseas Chinese museum, China's first comprehensive and systematic display of the history of overseas Chinese.

The use of graduation resources in the reviews changed over time, suggesting that the language of the reviews became more factual and objective. The use of graduation resources may indicate that more experienced visitors prefer quantitative information about their museum experience and are more satisfied with specifics. Changes in the perceptions of the museum experience, as well as changes in communication styles, had an impact on the language used in the online reviews.

4.5. Identity Development in the Museum Context

This section relates to the second research question about identity development in the museum context, specifically the pronouns (N = 38), process verbs (N = 161), and markers of identity (N = 323) in the visitor reviews. **Figure 3** shows the relative frequencies of these markers between the stages.
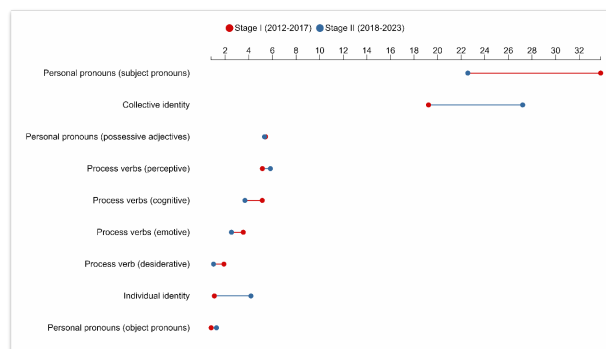

Figure 3. The evolution of the relative frequencies of personal pronouns, process verbs, and markers of identities between Stage I (2012–2017) and Stage II (2018–2023).

Table 9 shows examples of pronouns and their associated texts. In Stage I, museum visitors frequently used the subject pronoun *I*, such as *worth a visit. I like the landscape*, to emphasize their own perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, the use of possessive pronouns such as *their* was common, for example, *the history of their life abroad in the past centuries has a significant meaning*, indicating a link

Table 7. The graduation force (intensification) resources *very, most, should,* and *better* in the Stage I data.

	Text/Year	Example of *very* in the text
	Text 1/2017	*very* elegant looking building
		Example of *most* in the text
	Text 31/2016	The *most* beautiful spot in Xiamen
Stage I		**Example of *should* in the text**
	Text 68/2017	You *should* really understand the local history.
		Example of *better* in the text
	Text 44/2017	*Better* understanding of history.

Table 8. The graduation force (quantification) resources *many, more, large, long, only, here,* and *just* in the Stage II data.

	Text/Year	Example of *many* in the text
	Text 157/2020	There are *many* models of the former cinema pawnshops.
		Example of *more* in the text
	Text 100/2018	We saw *more* than 2000 cultural relics and handicrafts donated by overseas Chinese. This was what Tan Kah Kee had envisioned. There were also *more* than 1000 specimens of rare birds, animals and aquatic animals.
		Example of *large* in the text
	Text 160/2020	There are two *large* stones engraved on the door, "Don't forget the country" and "The world is the public".
		Example of *long* in the text
Stage II	Text 105/2018	The second floor mainly records some of the deeds of the overseas Chinese working people who built the Pacific Railway *long* ago, and also shows China's shipbuilding technology.
		Example of *only* in the text
	Text 76/2018	Now it is *only* the blood and flesh of the ancestors who crossed North America.
		Example of *here* in the text
	Text 199/2022	The landmark *here* is a large stone that can be seen at a glance, engraved with the words "Forget the Former Country".
		Example of *just* in the text
	Text 107/2018	The Overseas Chinese Museum is located on Siming South Road in Xiamen, *just* a few hundred metres from the end of the red sand slope.

to the museum's representation of the history of the Chinese diaspora.

Table 10 provides examples of cognitive verbs such as *know* and *think,* which may have indicated more subjective mental engagement and an understanding of the museum's representation of the history of the Chinese diaspora. Furthermore, emotive verbs such as *enjoy* expressed emotional experiences and personal connections to the museum's displays of calligraphy and the painting room. Visitors during this stage were actively engaged in cognitive and affective processes related to their understanding of the museum's content.

Stage I (2012–2017) coincided with a period of personal exploration and reflection, for example, *I know, I think,* and *I enjoy.* Earlier visitors may have reflected more on their own connections to the museum's content. On the other hand, the museum's Stage II online reviews (2018–2023) emphasized collective identity and history, with a focus on diaspora connections to larger communities, heritage, and cultural roots. **Table 11** includes collective markers such as *overseas Chinese*, *motherland*, and *group*, which indicated a sense of belonging and shared heritage across borders, such as in Singapore and Southeast Asia. This shift emphasized the museum's role in representing the entire Chinese diaspora.

Table 12 shows examples of the specific individual identity *Chen Jia-Jun* in the Stage II data, implying that visitors during this stage appreciated many of his contributions and his selfless spirit. For example, one reviewer wrote *the personal exhibition (of Chen JiaJun) is quite precious, just one collection is enough to live the rest of your life, let alone*

Table 9. The personal pronoun (subject pronoun) *I* and the processive pronoun *their* in the Stage I data.

	Text/Year	Example of *I* in the text
Stage I	Text 61/2017	Worth a visit. *I* like the landscape.
		Example of *their* in the text
	Text 15/2015	For the overseas Chinese, the history of *their* life abroad in the past centuries has a significant meaning, painful, challenging, but also proud.

Table 10. The cognitive verbs *know* and *think* and the emotive verb *enjoy* in the Stage I data.

	Text/Year	Example of *know* in the text
Stage I	Text 2/2012	I did not *know* that 4,000 of the approximately 17,000 Chinese who worked on the Canadian railway lost their lives, and that many of them were from Fujian province.
		Example of *think* in the text
	Text 8/2015	I *think* the exhibition should be improved with in-depth studies on specific countries where Chinese communities exist.
		Example of *enjoy* in the text
	Text 27/2016	On the third floor, there is an antique calligraphy and painting room that is worth taking time to *enjoy*.

more than a thousand pieces? In addition, the increased use of perceptive verbs such as *see* indicated a shift towards a more observational and descriptive approach that focused on the sensory aspects of museum visits and tangible experiences, which may have indicated a more experiential approach to identity development.

The online reviews during the second phase (2018–2023) of museum exhibition showed a shift from a personal and subjective experience to a more collective and observational approach. Museum management and curatorial teams may have changed their operation strategies over time, emphasizing the collective identity and experience of the Chinese diaspora and revealing important details about how museums represent Chinese diasporic history and engage their audiences. This shift in language and focus may encourage a more communal and inclusive approach to exploring the collective and individual identities of museum visitors in the future.

4.6. Different Socio-Cultural Backgrounds, Motivations and Interpretations of Museum Visitors

The Overseas Chinese Museum attracts visitors from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds, including the next generation of overseas Chinese, as well as international and local Chinese visitors. These different groups bring different motivations, expectations and interpretations in their engagement with the museum's content. As shown in **Table 13**, some visitors from Southeast Asian countries that have a strong Chinese diaspora presence, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, express deep gratitude to their ancestors. These visitors acknowledged their ancestors' contributions and connection to both China and their home countries. This sense of connection is realized through the use of inclusive language such as *we*, *us* and *our*, which reinforces their identity as part of an overseas Chinese community. These visitors generally express a sense of nostalgia and pride when exploring their cultural roots and may be more interested in how cultural narratives of their own home countries relate to the overseas Chinese community in the museum.

Our data showed that international visitors, particularly those from Western countries such as the United States and Europe, often visit the museum for educational and cultural exchange purposes. They are usually motivated to learn more about the global impact of different cultures, world history and the humanities in order to broaden their cultural horizons. They may view the museum from a more comparative perspective than other visitors. This socio-cultural background may allow international visitors to see the overseas Chinese community in a more objective way and evaluate the museum's content with a more comprehensive perspective.

Local Chinese visitors, on the other hand, are primarily motivated by social and political considerations. Many visitors expressed in their reviews a desire to foster national pride and patriotism for their country and its achievements.

Table 11. The collective markers of group identity *overseas Chinese, motherland,* and *group* in the Stage II data.

	Text/Year	Examples of *overseas Chinese* in the text
Stage II	Text 102/2018	Singapore's prosperity today owes much to the pioneering generation of *overseas Chinese* from Fukien and Guangdong provinces.
	Text 180/2020	If you like *overseas Chinese* culture, if you like how Chinese culture and Southeast Asian culture organically combine, integrate and penetrate each other.
		Examples of *motherland* in the text
	Text 102/2018	China, the *motherland*, is like the roots of a tree, while the overseas Chinese scattered all over the world are like its leaves.
	Text 102/2018	While many overseas Chinese have pledged their loyalty and allegiance to their new countries, many are still very hopeful and are closely following the development of the *motherland*.
		Examples of *group* in the text
	Text 156/2020	Fujian Province, with its unique geographical location and historical culture, has made the overseas Chinese *group* play a key role in China's great historical process.
	Text 156/2020	From the generation of the overseas Chinese *group* to the struggle for survival and development for more than 100 years, through the physical and written objects to show people how the Chinese people represented by the overseas Chinese are with tenacity.

Table 12. The marker of individual identity *Chen Jia Jun* and the perceptive process verb *see* in the Stage II data.

	Text/Year	Examples of *Chen Jia Jun* in the text
Stage II	Text 198/2023	The museum was built by *Chen Jiajun* and is open to the public. It displays the items used by the overseas Chinese and also collects some valuable porcelain, jade, bronze, calligraphy and painting relics.
	Text 80/2018	The "*Chen JiaJun* Collection of Thousands of Collections" in the personal exhibition is quite precious, just one collection is enough to live the rest of your life, let alone more than a thousand pieces?
		Example of *see* in the text
	Text 160/2020	From the cultural relics and materials displayed, you can *see* the "life before and life now" of a city, and understand the city more thoroughly.

This group often emphasizes the role of the museum in promoting China's progress and contributing to the country's development. This group is also particularly interested in how the museum's exhibitions relate to the education of future generations. As a result, the Overseas Chinese Museum not only caters to a diverse audience, but also allows visitors to engage in a variety of meaningful interactions and create their own interpretations of Chinese heritage. This diversity of perspectives underlines the museum's role as an effective cultural bridge, bringing together different inspirations and motivations, and fostering connections and understanding between people from different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Despite the overwhelming positive feedback for the Overseas Chinese Museum, the few negative comments provide insights into possible areas for improvement, as shown in **Table 14**. Among the limited negative comments, the animal display on the second floor appears to be the most common source of dissatisfaction, especially during the earlier period. Visitors described this section as *really outdated* and *really don't feel like they belong here*. This could be inter-preted as this display was not consistent with the museum's main theme, resulting in a sense of disconnection from the museum's mission and overall themes of Chinese heritage and community connections. As a result, some visitors may have perceived a lack of cohesion, which reflects visitors' underlying concern about the relevance of various displays to the overall theme. The museum could use this feedback to ensure that all displays relate back to the core themes of the overseas Chinese community. For example, revising the animal display presented in this section by emphasizing the links between local wildlife and heritage, or creating new material that illustrates contemporary and historical narratives relevant to the Overseas Chinese experience, could lead to a more cohesive experience.

Furthermore, two comments from 2017 and 2018 characterized the visitor experience as *very general* and *so-so*. This could indicate a lack of emotional connection between the museum and its visitors. One visitor stated that he was accompanying a local friend but found the experience unimpressive. Thus, the museum can improve its offerings to

Table 13. Motivations of the museum's visitors.

Types of Visitors	Text/Year	Examples in the Data
Next generation of overseas Chinese	Text 23/2016	As an overseas Chinese, it is interesting to be reminded of the hardships *our ancestors* experienced when they migrated overseas. Many of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asian countries migrated from Xiamen.
	Text 152/2019	As part of the Chinese diaspora, we are especially grateful for the opportunity to enter this museum. The furnishings, videos, explanations, and cultural relics tell us about *our parents*, or the pieces of the *previous generation's* settlement in the South.
International visitors	Text 16/2015	I have learnt not only the knowledge of overseas Chinese, but also world geography and humanities.
	Text 25/2016	The special culture developed from interaction and inter-marriage with locals. A great place for a history lesson.
	Text 84/2018	The most moving thing here is the story of the Nanyang mechanic who returned to China to join the war of resistance! I have already learnt something at the Singapore Museum. This time it is more profound!
	Text 174/2020	The Overseas Chinese Museum is the biggest prize of our trip to Xiamen and the most recommended attraction. There are many valuable historical paintings and relics that you would not have a chance to see in other cities.
Local Chinese visitors	Text 147/2019	It is often used as a place for patriotic education activities, and students from primary and secondary schools come to visit.
	Text 151/2019	There were many middle school students reading at the door, and there were teachers leading the students to take pictures. They stood at the door of the museum, carrying their school bags one by one, facing the noon sun. The smiles were bright.
	Text 184/2021	Chinese culture, vast and deep, overseas Chinese heart of the motherland!

Table 14. Some dissatisfactions from visitors.

Types of Dissatisfaction(s)	Text/Year	Examples in the Data
Animal exhibition	Text 1/2012	I found these *boring*, so I only had a quick look around.
	Text 3/2013	The stuffed animal section was *really outdated*.
	Text 13/2015	A "wildlife" exhibition of stuffed animals that *really don't feel like they belong here*.
Not impressive	Text 58/2017	Accompanied by local friends, I took a turn. I took care of my friends' faces, *very general*.
	Text 95/2018	It's *so-so* here, just go and have a look!

meet the diverse preferences of visitors. The museum management can also set up a feedback system to collect ongoing visitor comments so that exhibitions can be tailored to specific visitor expectations.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The present study investigated how visitors constructed online reviews of the Overseas Chinese Museum in Xiamen, China, by examining various linguistic features embedded in these reviews in the digital English review texts. It primarily contributed to the field of systemic functional linguistics by broadening linguistic analysis to include visitor experiences at heritage museums. This study examined English data from travel forums from 2012 to 2023, revealing changes in discourse structure, museum quality, and linguistic markers of collective identity. The findings clearly demonstrate that the museum narratives and visitor experiences were dynamic, shifting over time. Specifically, there was a noticeable shift towards more cohesive reviews, as evidenced by increased use of conjunctions and continuatives. Furthermore, the findings of the appraisal resources indicate an increase in visitor satisfaction, which could be attributed to improved exhibits, changes in visitors' expectations, or the museum listening and responding to visitors' reviews and experiences. The present study shows that there is a need for museums to enhance visitors' experiences by incorporating relevant themes and fostering connections that reflect their cultural values and preferences. Museum exhibitions have the potential to strengthen links and cooperation between overseas Chinese communities and their cultural heritage in other countries. The findings of this study have implications for understanding the collective identity and community connections of visitors to the Overseas Chinese Museum in online reviews.

The reviews show how visitors from different socio-cultural backgrounds interact with the museum's exhibits and their own personal and collective identities. This study also helps to highlight the role of cultural institutions in promoting intercultural dialogue and community cohesion. One of this study's limitations is its reliance on online reviews from travel forums, which may not represent all visitors' experiences. Future research and practice could include other types of museums or cultural institutions, allowing for more in-depth cross-cultural comparisons. In addition, a wider range of data sources, such as visitor surveys, interviews, or focus group discussions, would be beneficial for exploring the complex dynamics of visitor experiences at cultural museums for heritage tourism.

Author Contributions

Initial research design, concept generation, theoretical framework, data analysis, writing, Y.N.W.; concept generation, theoretical framework, data analysis, writing, revising, advising and editing, G.F.

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Data Availability Statement

No new data were generated in this study. Data sharing does not apply to this article.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Conjunction and continuatives in the data.

External Conjunctions		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II (2018–2023)	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
1. Addition						
1a. addition	*and*	Stage I	111	30.08	0.83	
		Stage II	263	33.32		
	also	Stage I	14	3.79	0.75	
		Stage II	39	4.94		
	in addition	Stage I	2	0.54	0.56	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	as well as	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	both	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
1b. alternative	*if... not*	Stage I	6	1.62	2.4	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	or	Stage I	2	0.54	0.01	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	then	Stage I	0	0	0.77	
		Stage II	1	0.13		

Table A1. *Cont.*

External Conjunctions		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II (2018–2023)	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
2. Comparison						
2a. similarity	*like*	Stage I	5	1.36	0.14	
		Stage II	13	1.64		
2b. contrast	*but*	Stage I	14	3.79	1.03	
		Stage II	21	2.66		
	while	Stage I	2	0.54	0.15	
		Stage II	3	0		
3. Time						
3a. successive	*before*	Stage I	5	1.36	0.88	
		Stage II	6	0.76		
	when	Stage I	5	1.36	0.88	
		Stage II	6	0.76		
	after	Stage I	2	0.54	0.01	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	since	Stage I	1	0.27	0.09	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	now that	Stage I	2	0.54	1.52	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	finally	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
3b. simultaneous	*while*	Stage I	2	0.54	0.15	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
4. Consequence						
4a. cause	*so*	Stage I	8	2.17	2.95	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	since	Stage I	1	0.27	0.09	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	because	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	although	Stage I	1	0.27	0.09	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	however	Stage I	3	0.81	6.86 **	p < 0.01.
		Stage II	0	0		
4b. means	*by*	Stage I	13	3.52	4.26 *	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	51	6.46		
4c. condition	*if ... then*	Stage I	6	1.63	2.4	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
Continuatives						
1. addition	*as well*	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	too	Stage I	2	0.54	4.58*	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	0	0		
2. comparison	*only*	Stage I	4	1.08	1.74	
		Stage II	17	2.15		
	just	Stage I	2	0.54	6.04	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	even	Stage I	4	1.08	4.92	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
3. time	*still*	Stage I	2	0.54	1.43	
		Stage II	10	1.27		
	already	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		

Note: * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. *** p < 0.001. **** p < 0.0001.

Table A2. Appreciation and graduation resources from the appraisal system in the data.

Appraisal System		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
Appreciation						
1a. reaction (impact)	*famous*	Stage I	3	0.81	2.56	
		Stage II	16	2.03		
	hard	Stage I	7	1.90	1.42	
		Stage II	8	1.01		
	interesting	Stage I	6	1.63	2.4	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	rich	Stage I	2	0.54	0.15	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	valuable	Stage I	0	0	3.07	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	exciting	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
1b. reaction (quality)	*beautiful*	Stage I	3	0.81	0.49	
		Stage II	10	1.27		
	good	Stage I	6	1.63	2.4	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	nice	Stage I	5	1.36	0.88	
		Stage II	6	0.76		
	love	Stage I	3	0.81	0.11	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	enjoy	Stage I	4	1.08	1.89	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	antique	Stage I	2	0.54	0.56	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	green	Stage I	3	0.81	3.13	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	ok	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	pleasant	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	welcome	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
2a. composition (balance)	*renovated*	Stage I	2	0.54	1.52	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	complete	Stage I	2	0.54	1.52	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	inconsistent	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
2b. composition (complexity)	*well-*	Stage I	5	1.36	0.09	
		Stage II	9	1.14		
	long	Stage I	2	0.54	0.41	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	clean	Stage I	0	0	3.07	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	convenient	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	advanced	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	simple	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	clear	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
3. valuation (value)	*worth*	Stage I	16	4.34	2.92	
		Stage II	19	2.41		
	cultural	Stage I	8	2.17	0.93	
		Stage II	25	3.17		
	free	Stage I	9	2.44	0.05	
		Stage II	21	2.66		
	unique	Stage I	1	0.27	8.92***	$p < 0.001$.
		Stage II	19	2.41		

Table A2. *Cont.*

Appraisal System		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
	distinctive	Stage I	4	1.08	4.92*	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	recommend	Stage I	3	0.81	1.76	
		Stage II	14	2.15		
	contribution	Stage I	4	1.08	0.19	
		Stage II	11	1.39		
	treasure	Stage I	1	0.27	0.72	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	dedicated	Stage I	0	0	4.6*	
		Stage II	6	0.76		
	new	Stage I	1	0.27	0.35	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	educational	Stage I	3	0.81	1.67	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
3. valuation (value)	*valuable*	Stage I	0	0	3.07	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	original	Stage I	1	0.27	0.09	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	meaningful	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	memorial	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	authentic	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	helpful	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	deep	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	necessary	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
Graduation						
	very	Stage I	30	8.13	1.73	
		Stage II	47	5.59		
	most	Stage I	3	0.81	1.76	
		Stage II	14	0.77		
	so	Stage I	8	2.17	2.87	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
1a. force (intensification)	*should*	Stage I	5	1.36	2.14	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	must	Stage I	0	0	3.07	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	better	Stage I	3	0.81	6.86**	p < 0.01.
		Stage II	0	0		
	important	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	many	Stage I	9	2.44	2.26	
		Stage II	33	4.18		
	more	Stage I	9	2.44	0.21	
		Stage II	23	2.91		
	people	Stage I	10	2.71	0.19	
		Stage II	18	2.28		
	some	Stage I	8	2.17	1.7	
		Stage II	9	1.14		
1b. force (quantification–amount)	*large*	Stage I	1	0.27	1.63	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	addition	Stage I	2	0.54	0.56	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	total	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	several	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	thousands	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		

Table A2. *Cont.*

Appraisal System		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq.	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
1b. force (quantification–extent: scope–time)	*long*	Stage I	2	0.54	0.04	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	years	Stage I	1	0.27	0.35	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
1b. force (quantification–extent: scope–space)	*only*	Stage I	3	0.81	3	
		Stage II	17	2.15		
	part of	Stage I	2	0.54	0.56	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	huge	Stage I	3	0.81	6.86**	$p < 0.01$.
		Stage II	0	0		
1b. force (quantification–extent: distance–time)	*here*	Stage I	2	0.54	1.05	
		Stage II	9	1.14		
	ancient	Stage I	2	0.54	0.56	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	now	Stage I	2	0.54	1.52	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	recent	Stage I	0	0	1.56	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
1b. force (quantification–extent: distance–space)	*world*	Stage I	3	0.81	0.21	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	local	Stage I	4	1.08	0.62	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	just	Stage I	2	0.54	0.04	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	national	Stage I	4	1.08	0.62	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	country	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
1c. force (frequency)	*each*	Stage I	2	0.54	0.41	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	every	Stage I	2	0.54	0.01	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	always	Stage I	3	0.81	6.86 **	$p < 0.01$.
		Stage II	0	0		
	everyone	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	often	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
2a. focus: specificity	*known*	Stage I	2	0.54	0.18	
		Stage II	6	0.76		
	special	Stage I	2	0.54	0.15	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	particularly	Stage I	2	0.54	1.52	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	original	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	clear	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
2b. focus: fulfillment (completion)	*found*	Stage I	4	1.08	3.05	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	success	Stage I	3	0.81	3.13	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	return	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
2b. focus: fulfillment (actualization)	*could*	Stage I	3	0.81	3.13	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
	seems	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		

Note: * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$. **** $p < 0.0001$.

Table A3. Personal pronouns in the data.

Personal Pronouns		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II (2018–2023)	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq. (x1000 Words)	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
1. subject pronouns	*I*	Stage I	60	16.26	30.29****	p < 0.0001.
		Stage II	43	5.45		
	it	Stage I	34	9.21	0.6	
		Stage II	85	10.77		
	you	Stage I	18	4.55	0.02	
		Stage II	40	5.07		
	they	Stage I	5	1.36	0.01	
		Stage II	10	1.27		
	he	Stage I	9	2.44	20.59****	p < 0.0001.
		Stage II	0	0		
	we	Stage I	2	0.54	0.41	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
2. object pronouns	*us*	Stage I	0	0	3.84*	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	them	Stage I	2	0.54	0.15	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	me	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
3. possessive adjectives	*their*	Stage I	7	1.9	0.09	
		Stage II	13	1.65		
	my	Stage I	6	1.63	0.44	
		Stage II	9	1.14		
	your	Stage I	2	0.54	0.41	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	its	Stage I	2	0.54	0.41	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	our	Stage I	2	0.54	0.01	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	his	Stage I	1	0.27	0	
		Stage II	2	0.25		

Note: * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. *** p < 0.001. **** p < 0.0001.

Table A4. Verbs serving as process in mental clause in the data (adopted from Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013, p. 210).

Process Verbs		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II (2018–2023)	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq. (x1000 Words)	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
1. perceptive	*see*	Stage I	14	3.79	0.74	
		Stage II	37	4.69		
	feel	Stage I	5	1.36	0.51	
		Stage II	7	0.89		
	taste	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
2. cognitive	*know*	Stage I	9	2.44	6.81**	p < 0.01.
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	understand	Stage I	3	0.81	0.27	
		Stage II	9	1.14		
	think	Stage I	3	0.81	0.37	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	expect	Stage I	3	0.81	1.67	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	forget	Stage I	1	0.27	0.35	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	appreciate	Stage I	0	0	2.3	
		Stage II	3	0.38		
	Remember	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
3. desiderative	*want*	Stage I	3	0.81	0.11	
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	decide	Stage I	3	0.81	6.86**	p < 0.01.
		Stage II	0	0		

Table A4. *Cont.*

Process Verbs		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II (2018–2023)	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq. (x1000 Words)	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
3. desiderative	*hope*	Stage I	0	0	1.53	
		Stage II	2	0.25		
	agree	Stage I	1	0.27	0.28	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
4. emotive	*like*	Stage I	7	1.9	0.08	
		Stage II	17	2.15		
	enjoy	Stage I	6	1.63	4.57*	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	3	0.38		

Note: * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. *** p < 0.001. **** p < 0.0001.

Table A5. Markers of identity in the data.

Collective and Self-Identities		Stage I (2012–2017)/ Stage II (2018–2023)	Raw Freq.	Relative Freq. (x1000 Words)	Log Likelihood (LL)	p-Value
1.group	*overseas Chinese*	Stage I	54	14.63	5.08*	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	163	20.56		
	people	Stage I	10	2.71	0.19	
		Stage II	18	2.28		
	motherland	Stage I	3	0.81	1.06	
		Stage II	12	1.52		
	public	Stage I	1	0.27	2.15	
		Stage II	8	1.07		
	group	Stage I	0	0	3.84*	p < 0.05.
		Stage II	5	0.63		
	community	Stage I	1	0.27	0.35	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	root	Stage I	0	0	3.07	
		Stage II	4	0.51		
	society	Stage I	2	0.54	1.52	
		Stage II	1	0.13		
2. individual	*Chen Jiajun*	Stage I	4	1.08	9.12**	p < 0.01.
		Stage II	33	4.18		

Note: * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. *** p < 0.001. **** p < 0.0001.

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