

A cross-cultural comparison of Evaluation between concert reviews in Hong Kong and British Newspapers



Review Genres

- ▶ “the public evaluation” (Lindholm-Romantschuk, 1998) of intellectual / artistic outputs (books, films, concerts, exhibitions, computer software)
- ▶ “provide a platform” for members of a discourse community to share ideas and analyses (Hyland & Diani, 2009)
- ▶ Were neglected, more studies in recent years, mostly on academic book reviews

Focus of this study

- ▶ Music criticism - classical concert reviews
- ▶ Hong Kong Chinese vs. British English
- ▶ The use of **positive** and **negative** evaluative acts
- ▶ Textual analysis + in-depth interviews with music critics

Significance

Why music?

- ▶ Musicology is an understudied disciplinary area of written discourse studies
 - Scarcity in studies of humanities, especially music
 - Previous research in music: Record reviews (Ha 2011)
 - Forthcoming research: Concert reviews (Ha in preparation)

Concert reviews

- ▶ A prominent genre in music criticism
- ▶ Fills a research gap: evaluative features of music criticism
- ▶ Professional / general audience (concert reviews majority published in popular media today)
- ▶ Set in a wider cultural/social context (e.g. media, commercial)
- ▶ Pedagogical value

The Corpora

▶ UK English Newspapers:

The Times, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph

▶ Hong Kong Chinese Newspapers:

The Hong Kong Economic Journal (信報), Ming Pao (明報), Ta Kung Pao (大公報)

▶ Why these newspapers?

- Largest numbers of concert reviews published over 10 years
- Many reviewers - results not dominated by few reviewers and their individual styles of writing

The Corpora

Period: 10 years (August 2003 - July 2013)

	English	Chinese
Number of Reviews	150	150
Total number of reviewers	25	26
Total number of characters/words	53416	198793
Number of characters/words per review	356	1525

Selecting criteria

To minimise variables:

- ▶ **Single concert ONLY**
- ▶ **Western classical music ONLY** (no folk, jazz, pop, metal, new age, etcetera)
- ▶ **NO Chinese classical music**

Methods

- ▶ **Qualitative data analysis:**
 - a **hand-tagged** analysis of
 - **evaluative acts** (praise / criticism),
 - **background comments** on aspects other than the concert itself (positive and negative),
 - and **non-evaluative remarks**;
 - using Nvivo
- ▶ **Quantitative data analysis**
 - using SPSS to compare and contrast the statistics
- ▶ **Initial framework** (majorly based on Hyland 2000)
 - Mitigation strategies: praise-criticism pair, hedging, personal attribution, other attribution, implication.

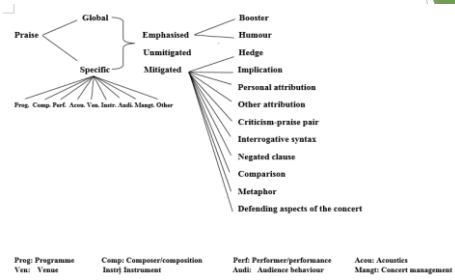
Principles regarding coding

(Hyland 2000; Ha 2011)

- ▶ A clause/paragraph containing more than one positive/negative semantic item will be coded as one instance of evaluation if it only refers to a single aspect of the concert under review
 她的聲線有力，咬字清晰
 Her voice was **strong** and the articulation was **clear**.
 (Unmitigated praise/performance)
- ▶ Every evaluative strategy will be counted if more than one appear in a single clause/sentence
 The music, **all played for more expertly than it deserved** by the London Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Harding **are they really that short of work?** was **profoundly depressing**.
 (Praise - booster/performance; Criticism - booster, impoliteness / composition)

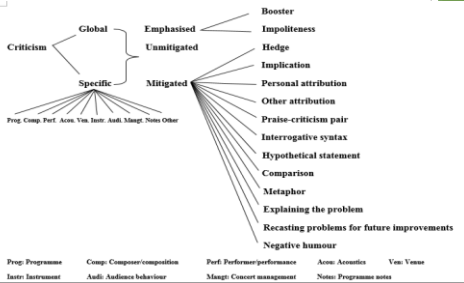
Analytical framework (Praise)

(Hyland 2000 & 2004, Hyland & Hyland 2001, Culpeper et al 2003, Shaw 2004)



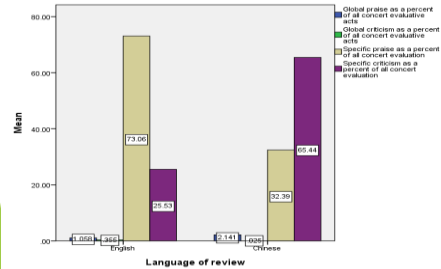
Analytical Framework (Criticism)

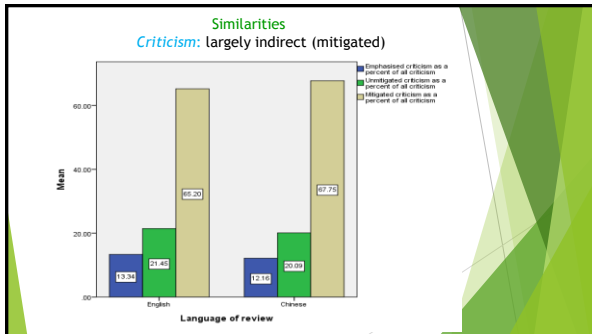
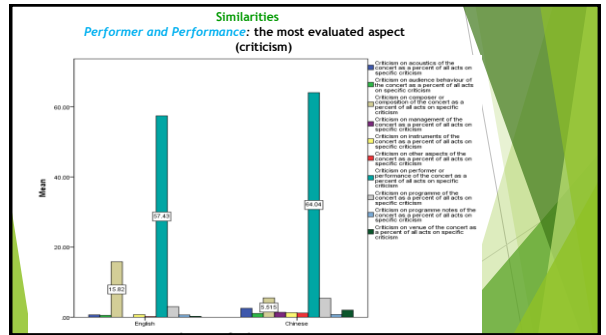
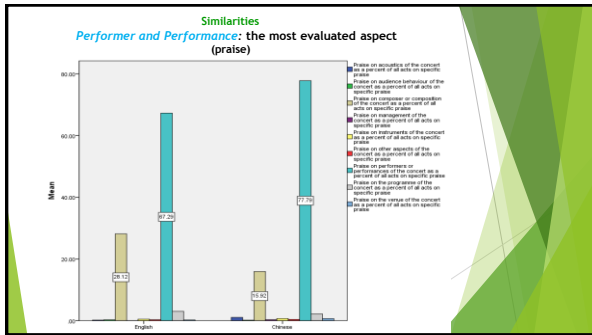
(Hyland 2000 & 2004, Hyland & Hyland 2001, Culpeper et al 2003, Shaw 2004, Itakura & Tsui 2010)



Observations: Similarities (English vs. Chinese reviews)

Specific evaluation largely exceeds Global evaluation
 Global praise > Global criticism





Similarities

Reviews open and close with positive remarks > negative remarks

		Number of English concert reviews (N = 150)	Number of Chinese concert reviews (N = 150)
Reviews opening remarks	Positive	95 (63.33%)	75 (50%)
	Negative	18 (12%)	7 (4.67%)
Reviews closing remarks	Positive	104 (69%)	94 (62.67%)
	Negative	40 (26.67%)	42 (28%)

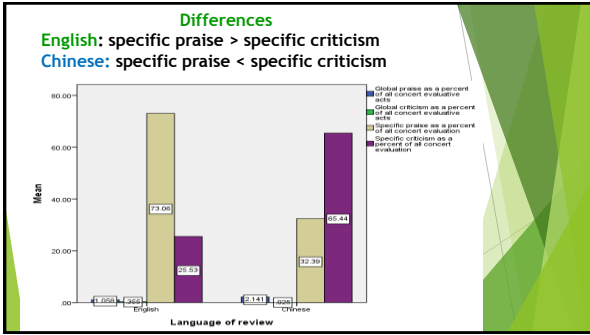
The **similarities** suggest that

- ▶ Music criticism is a genre that serves **similar purposes** across cultures
- ▶ **Professional culture** seems to be stronger than national influences

English vs. Chinese reviews: Differences

Chinese reviews contain more evaluation

		English	Chinese
Number of concert evaluative acts per review		15.6	20.4
Number of praise acts vs. criticism acts per review	Praise	11.2	13.0
	Criticism	4.4	7.4



- ### Differences
- ONLY Chinese reviews comment on Concert Management**
- Aspects of a concert:
- ▶ Programme
 - ▶ Venue
 - ▶ Composer/composition
 - ▶ Performer/performance
 - ▶ Acoustics
 - ▶ Instrument
 - ▶ Audience behaviour
 - ▶ Programme notes
 - ▶ Concert Management

- ### Possible explanations for the differences
- ▶ Differences in editorial policies, esp. restriction on word length
 - ▶ Hong Kong critics are harsher (?)

Conclusion

	English	Chinese
Number of evaluative acts	15.6	20.4
Reviews opening remarks	Positive: 12 (76%) Negative: 18 (12%)	Positive: 12 (59%) Negative: 7 (4.67%)
Reviews closing remarks	Positive: 104 (69%)	Positive: 94 (62.67%)
Most common critical acts		Mitigated

Though general trends suggest more similarities than differences between English and Chinese reviews,
 More differences are expected to be found in the way specific strategies are realised.

Thank You!

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