

## *Original Paper*

# A Contrastive Critical Genre Analysis of Chinese and American Company Profiles

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### ***Abstract***

*As an expansion of genre analysis, critical genre analysis focuses not only on text-internal properties, but also on text-external factors. It is a multi-perspective and multidimensional genre analyzing approach, aiming at explaining professional practices under academic and professional context. Based on critical genre analysis, referring to the four-layered analyzing model put forward by Bahtia (2008), this paper makes a critical genre analysis on company profiles of 20 famous companies from China and America, in an attempt to study the interactive relationship between professional practice, professional culture and genre resources.*

### ***Keywords***

*Critical Genre Analysis, professional practice, professional culture, company profile*

## **1. Introduction**

Ning and Xu (2008) pointed out that the company profile is the most important component of an enterprise's external publicity materials. It is an epitome of an enterprise's image, achievements and cultural connotations, as well as a window for external communication. As a business genre, the company profile has specific communicative purposes and move structures. It follows certain industry conventions, yet varies due to specific industry backgrounds.

The early genre analysis was mainly used in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teaching. For multiple samples within a certain type, it analyzed the similarities and differences among these texts according to the purposes of the texts, their macrostructures and language choices. Business genres are characterized by complexity and dynamism, and traditional genre analysis has certain limitations when studying professional discourse.

Therefore, this paper intends to adopt the Critical Genre Analysis (CGA) method. Starting from the resources within the discourse, such as vocabulary, syntax and macrostructure analysis, and combining with industry practices and industry culture, it explores how company profiles utilize and manipulate genre resources, with the expectation of facilitating readers' understanding of company profiles and providing references for the writing of company profiles.

## 2. Literature Review

CGA was put forward by Bhatia at a roundtable conference on discourse analysis in 2006. It is not a new field but rather a further enrichment and expansion of the genre analysis framework that we have been using for more than thirty years (Wu & Chen 2018). Bhatia (2004) found that pedagogical discourse is different from real-life discourse. In teaching, most of the genres are single and simple, while in real life, most genres are complex and hybrid. Therefore, he pointed out that we need to pay attention to the complexity and dynamism of genres and understand the more complex and dynamic real world reflected by texts.

When studying written discourse, Bhatia (2004) established a three-dimensional analysis model that is multidimensional and multi-perspective. This model mainly includes three spaces: the textual space, the socio-pragmatic space, and the sociocultural space. Bhatia (2008) pointed out that scholars' analysis of professional genres had been incomplete all along and that professional practices had not been incorporated into the research. Therefore, he selected the practice of international commercial arbitration, proposed combining discourse practices with professional practices, and emphasized the importance of interdiscursivity in critical genre analysis. By this time, the four-dimensional analysis model of the critical genre analysis theory had already emerged in Bhatia's work.

Bhatia (2010) completely constructed a four-dimensional analysis model for the realization of discourse in a professional environment, elaborated on interdiscursivity in detail, and further reported on the research results of previous corporate auditing practices, international arbitration practices, and charity discourse studies.

Since its proposal, critical genre analysis has been developing for ten years. Its research is in the ascendant, involving multiple fields and having diverse research perspectives. The research on critical genre analysis in the business field occupies a dominant position.

Xu and Xiao (2016) took the Chinese and English annual report greetings of China's top ten banks in 2012 as corpora and the annual report greetings of the top ten overseas banks in the same period as a reference system. Under the theoretical framework of critical genre analysis and combined with Bhatia's four-dimensional model of industry discourse analysis, they innovatively constructed a five-dimensional model for business translation research and confirmed the help of incorporating industry practices and industry culture into business translation research in solving problems in business translation and improving the research model of business translation.

Wu, Niu, and Huang (2018) analyzed the advertising discourse of three foreign-funded supermarkets

on WeChat official accounts from three dimensions: text-genre, professional practice, and professional culture. They studied the genre structure, intertextual strategies, and reasons of this advertising discourse. This research provided a new research perspective for the study of WeChat official accounts and advertising discourse.

Natalia and Wanda (2009) took consulting projects as the object and used critical genre analysis to explain how the power relations among project participants were reconstructed and challenged, and illustrated the application of discourse resources in practice.

Jiang (2015) mainly discussed the important role of critical genre analysis in promoting the teaching and research of business discourse. However, it did not conduct a typical application of critical genre analysis. The author put forward his own opinions on the future research directions and advocated quantitative research based on corpora.

Han and He (2012) started from the aspect of academic paper writing, narrowed the research scope to second - language acquisition research and second-language writing research, and used the critical genre analysis method to study the complex relationships between disciplines and among genres in academic language. This research serves as a reference for understanding the relationship between introductions and abstracts in different disciplines. Antonio (2015) collected two types of academic speech discourse corpora and used CGA to analyze how experts and scholars achieve the “private purposes” of “professionals” through language. This research has abundant corpora and expands the research of critical genre analysis on academic discourse.

Bonini (2010) took the practice of public competition for recruiting professors in Brazilian universities to explain how to use critical genre analysis in specific social practices. Lung (2015) also applied CGA to social practices. The author used CGA to study interdiscursivity in public relations.

To sum up, it is identifiable that currently, there are very few researches on critical genre analysis, and the researches are concentrated in the business field, but researches on business genres are still insufficient. Therefore, the author intends to take Bhatia’s four-dimensional analysis model as a framework to continue to expand the application of critical genre analysis in the business field.

### 3. Research Method

Critical genre analysis pays more attention to text-external factors and emphasizes combining discourse analysis with the practices of specific industries or disciplines, that is, viewing the habitual behaviors of industries and organizations from the perspective of language use. The critical genre analysis method proposed by Bhatia (2008) combines extra-textual factors to explain genre structures and analyze the usage issues of genre resources, expanding the research scope centered on textual features.

Based on the three-dimensional spatial analysis model of written discourse, Bhatia (2008) constructed a four-dimensional spatial analysis model that includes industry practices and industry culture in combination with industry discourse, reflecting the “text-context” relationship and the “genre-industry practice” relationship in industry discourse analysis and mirroring the interactive state of resources

inside and outside the text. The resources within the text include move structures and lexical-syntactic features, while the text-external factors include professional practices that determine genre composition and professional culture that influences discourse practices. Bhatia (2008) pointed out that any comprehensive analysis of industry discourse needs to integrate these resources: textual resources, genre conventions, industry practices, and industry culture.

The internal structure of the company profile is characterized by obvious features and it is a typical business genre. To ensure the comparability of research samples and the reliability of research results, the enterprises selected are from the same industry and have comparable rankings. The Chinese and American company profiles in this study are respectively selected from the top 10 enterprises in the food and beverage industry on the lists of “Fortune China 500” and “Fortune 500” published by Fortune Magazine in 2022. These enterprises all possess strong comprehensive strength, attach great importance to corporate publicity, have relatively complete company profiles, and are highly comparable. This study mainly uses Antconc 4.3.1 to conduct keyword retrieval and word frequency analysis.

#### **4. Analysis of Company Profiles Based on Critical Genre Analysis**

As a business text, the lexical and syntactic features and move structures in the company profile are resources for achieving the purposes of the genre, and there are underlying reasons such as industry practices and industry culture behind them. The specific manifestations of the text are vocabulary and syntax. Genres have unique rhetorical features and different discourse segments, that is, moves. This paper intends to analyze the restrictive relationship of extra-textual resources to intra-textual resources from the perspectives of professional practice and professional culture.

##### *4.1 Choice of Self-referential Terms*

As the official external publicity materials of an enterprise, the company profile represents the image of the enterprise, so its stylistic style is relatively formal. Such professional practices and professional culture determine the characteristics of its vocabulary and sentence structures.

At the lexical level, the company profile is a self-referential introduction, using a large number of self-referential words, which helps the enterprise clarify its own subject status and emphasize its behaviors, achievements and characteristics. By using the word list retrieval function of Antconc 4.3.1, this study screened out the self-referential words of Chinese and American enterprises and found that there are relatively large differences in the word usage characteristics of self-referential aspects in the company profiles of Chinese and American enterprises. The specific word frequency distribution is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Frequency of Use of Referential Words in Company Profiles**

Chinese company profiles		American company profiles	
Self-referential terms	frequency	Self-referential terms	frequency
The full name or abbreviated name of the company	65	The full name or abbreviated name of the company	166
“公司”	150	“We”	285
“集团”	51	“Our”	442
“本企业”	0	“Us”	28
“我们”	6	“Company”	15

Through Table 1, it can be found that the third-person referential expressions are commonly used in Chinese company profiles, such as the full name or abbreviated name of the company, “公司” (company), “集团” (group). This helps to enhance the objectivity of the company profile and thus improve its credibility. Among Chinese company profiles, the word “公司” (company) is the most widely used. Most enterprises frequently use this word to refer to themselves when elaborating on various business operations, development situations, product features and other information, which is the most common way of self-reference. Some enterprises use the abbreviated names of the company more often (such as “伊利” (Yili), “蒙牛” (Mengniu), “双汇” (Shuanghui), “农夫山泉” (Nongfu Spring), etc.). This helps to strengthen the brand image, makes it easier for readers to remember the enterprise brand, and makes the expression more concise and straightforward. The word “集团” (group) is used in some large enterprise groups (such as “伊利集团” (Yili Group), “五粮液集团” (Wuliangye Group), “青岛啤酒集团” (Tsingtao Beer Group), etc.) to distinguish between the group level and the specific businesses or companies under its umbrella, emphasizing the overall structure and diversified business layout of the enterprise. The use of “我们” (we) is relatively rare. Only China Resources Beer and Nongfu Spring use it when elaborating on the corporate vision and public welfare undertakings respectively. For example, “农夫山泉一贯积极投身和倡导社会公益事业。不论是 1998 年长江抗洪，还是 2008 年汶川地震、2010 年云南大旱，我们都会竭尽所能帮助灾区民众。我们还发起了旨在帮助贫困地区学校改善体育设施的“阳光工程”，以及旨在帮助水源地的贫困孩子、感恩水源地人民的“饮水思源”等多项公益活动。我们将公益活动作为我们应尽的社会责任。” (Nongfu Spring has always been actively involved in and advocated social public welfare undertakings. Whether it was the fight against the flood on the Yangtze River in 1998, the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, or the severe drought in Yunnan in 2010, we would do our best to help the people in the disaster areas. We also launched a number of public welfare activities such as the “Sunshine Project” aimed at helping schools in poor areas improve their sports facilities, and the “Remembering the Source of Water” aimed at helping poor children in water source areas and expressing gratitude to the people in

water source areas. We regard public welfare activities as our due social responsibilities.) This reflects the enterprise's willingness to pursue goals together with consumers, shareholders and other parties. However, the word “本企业”(this enterprise) is basically not used as a self-referential term in these profiles. Perhaps it is because this word is more often used to describe a commercial entity, and other words are already able to accurately express the concept of the enterprise subject.

Moreover, in specific contexts, expressions like “公司”(company) or the abbreviated names of the company are more commonly used and more natural. Different Chinese enterprises have differences in the choice of self-referential words. Some enterprises prefer to use abbreviated names (such as “伊利”(Yili), “蒙牛”(Mengniu), “双汇”(Shuanghui), “农夫山泉”(Nongfu Spring), etc.) to highlight their brand images and make it easier for readers to remember their enterprise brands. While other enterprises use more formal words like “公司”(company) and “集团”(group) (such as WH Group, Kweichow Moutai, Wuliangye, China Resources Beer, Tsingtao Beer, etc.) to emphasize the organizational structures and commercial attributes of the enterprises. The usage frequencies also vary depending on the richness and focus of the content of the company profiles. For example, when Yili Group and Wuliangye Group elaborate on various aspects of the enterprises in detail, the self-referential words are used more frequently. However, when Haidilao and Kweichow Moutai highlight key information, the usage frequencies are relatively low but more precise.

In the company profiles of American enterprises, the use of self-referential words is relatively diversified, which helps enterprises elaborate on their own situations, concepts and actions from different perspectives, and enhances communication with readers and the conveyance of information. They often use the first person, such as “we”, “our”, “us”. For example, PepsiCo uses “PepsiCo”, “Pepsi”, “Pepsi-Cola” to refer to itself and mentions them many times when introducing the company's products, business segments, development history and other contents, like “PepsiCo products are enjoyed by consumers more than one billion times a day in more than 200 countries and territories around the world.” “PepsiCo Beverages North America (PBNA) is one of the largest beverage companies in North America today”, etc. Especially in the introduction of the company's development history, the company name is frequently used to emphasize the enterprise's subject status and various business activities.

Overall, “we” and its variants “our” are the most frequently used self-referential words. Almost all enterprises use them in large quantities when elaborating on enterprise concepts, actions, goals and other aspects, emphasizing the enterprise's teamwork, proactive planning and social responsibility. The use of company names (such as PepsiCo, Tyson Foods, The Kraft Heinz Company, etc.) is also quite common, which is used to clarify the enterprise's subject identity and is often applied when introducing specific information such as enterprise business, products, and development history. Some enterprises will also use some special expressions according to their own characteristics. For example, Mars, Incorporated emphasizes its family-owned nature with expressions like “As a family-owned business, we...”. The differences in the choice and usage frequency of self-referential words among different

enterprises are closely related to factors such as enterprise culture, development strategies and publicity focuses. For example, enterprises that attach importance to team culture and social responsibility may be more inclined to use “we”, while those that emphasize brand image and enterprise scale will use the full or abbreviated names of the company more often.

#### *4.2 Characteristics of Sentence Structures*

In terms of sentence structure, through comparing the company profiles of Chinese and American enterprises, this study found that both Chinese and American company profiles tend to use long sentences, declarative sentences, compound sentences and adverbial clauses, which enhances the coherence and professionalism of the articles.

In order to convey information accurately and comprehensively in company profiles, long sentences are used more frequently. Long sentences contain multiple modifiers, parallel structures or complex logical relationships and can cover a lot of content in one sentence. For example, “万洲国际有限公司（「万洲国际」）是全球最大的猪肉食品企业，其市场份额于中国、美国和欧洲的所在市场均排名第一，拥有包括生猪养殖、生鲜猪肉、猪肉制品、分销与销售在内的完整猪肉产业链，并凭借独特的全球垂直一体化业务平台，在猪肉行业形成了领先的竞争优势。”（“WH Group Limited (WH Group) is the world’s largest pork food enterprise, ranking first in market share in its markets in China, the United States and Europe. It has a complete pork industry chain covering live pig breeding, fresh pork, pork products, distribution and sales, and has formed a leading competitive advantage in the pork industry by virtue of its unique global vertical integration business platform.”) This sentence elaborates on multiple aspects of the corporate status of WH Group Limited, market share, business scope and competitive advantage through multiple parallel components.

“PepsiCo, a global leader in convenient foods and beverages, with products enjoyed by consumers more than one billion times a day in over 200 countries and territories, generated more than \$91 billion in net revenue in 2023, driven by a complementary beverage and convenient foods portfolio that includes Lay’s, Doritos, Cheetos, Gatorade, Pepsi-Cola, Mountain Dew, Quaker and SodaStream.” In this sentence, there are both appositive structures (a global leader in convenient foods and beverages), postpositive attributives (enjoyed by consumers...), participle phrases used as adverbials (driven by...) and parallel structures listing products, which detail PepsiCo’s industry status, product consumption situation, revenue and business driving factors.

Declarative sentences are absolutely dominant in use, which are employed to objectively state the factual information of enterprises, such as the establishment time of enterprises, business scope, product features, market position, development history, and honors obtained. For example, “伊利集团位居全球乳业五强，连续十年蝉联亚洲乳业第一，是中国规模最大、产品品类最全的乳制品企业，也是在亚洲、欧洲、美洲、大洋洲实现产业布局的国际化企业。” (Yili Group ranks among the top five dairy enterprises in the world, has ranked first in the Asian dairy industry for ten consecutive years, is the largest dairy product enterprise with the most complete product categories in China, and is also an international enterprise that has realized industrial layout in Asia, Europe, America and Oceania.)

This declarative sentence directly elaborates on various achievements of Yili Group in the dairy industry. “Tyson Foods built its name on providing generations of families with wholesome, great-tasting chicken. But today’s Tyson Foods is so much more. As values and behaviors around food have changed, so have we.” Through declarative sentences, the development and change process of Tyson Foods is clearly stated.

Parallel structures are often used in company profiles to list multiple businesses, product categories, honorary awards and so on of enterprises, making the presentation of information clearer and more comprehensive. For example, “蒙牛专注于为中国和全球消费者提供营养、健康、美味的乳制品，形成了包括液态奶、冰淇淋、奶粉、奶酪等品类在内的丰富产品矩阵；拥有特仑苏、纯甄、冠益乳、优益 C、每日鲜语、蒂兰圣雪、瑞哺恩、贝拉米、妙可蓝多、爱氏晨曦等明星品牌。” (Mengniu focuses on providing Chinese and global consumers with nutritious, healthy and delicious dairy products, and has formed a rich product matrix that includes categories such as liquid milk, ice cream, milk powder and cheese. It also owns star brands like Telunsu, Chunzhen, Guanyiru, Youyi C, Daily Fresh, Dilanshengxue, Ruibuen, Bellamy’s, Milkground and Arla.) Through the parallel structure, the product categories and star brands of Mengniu are introduced respectively. “We’re not just inspired to make great food, we’re inspired to make a difference for our customers, team members, consumers, shareholders and the communities where we live and work.” Hormel uses a parallel structure to emphasize the company’s responsibilities in multiple aspects.

In order to explain the purposes, business models or achievements of enterprises, corresponding adverbial clauses will be used. For example, “为了保障持续大量的优质天然水供应，农夫山泉独具战略眼光，前瞻性地在中国布局了十二大稀缺的优质天然水源，奠定了为消费者提供长期天然健康服务的基础和能力，形成长期稳定的竞争优势。” In this sentence, “为了……” leads a purpose adverbial clause, elaborating on the purpose of Nongfu Spring’s layout of water sources and then describing the results it brings. ” To sustainably grow by delighting more consumers globally, the Kraft Heinz Company is committed to growing its iconic and emerging food and beverage brands on a global scale.” When the Kraft Heinz Company mentions its vision, it uses a purpose adverbial phrase to strengthen the logical relationship between sentences, enabling readers to better understand the enterprise’s business strategies and development plans.

#### *4.3 Adoption of Moves*

Critical genre analysis holds that the use of any genre resources is a purposeful behavior, driven by industry culture and corporate purposes (Xu & Xiao 2016). The company profile is an important promotional material for customers and consumers to understand an enterprise. By introducing various aspects of the company, it gains the trust of customers and consumers, having both introductory and persuasive purposes. Guided by the communicative purposes of the company profile, this study divides the selected Chinese and American company profiles into different moves. This study analyzes the selected 20 Chinese and American company profiles and summarizes three basic moves (M), and each move is divided into several specific steps (S) depending on the situation of the enterprise.



The first move is basic information, which reflects the introductory purpose of the company profile and introduces the basic information of the enterprise, such as its industry leadership position, enterprise scale, business scope, and management structure. The second move is to display the enterprise's history and achievements, which reflects the expository and persuasive purposes of the company profile. It gains the trust of the target readers with the enterprise's strength in various aspects, specifically including the enterprise's development history and honorary awards. The third move is the introduction of enterprise partners, which also reflects the persuasive purpose of the enterprise, highlighting the wide range of business and high brand reputation of the enterprise. The last move is corporate culture, which has both expository and persuasive purposes. Specifically, it can be divided into corporate vision, social responsibility and corporate governance, leaving an impression on customers and consumers that the corporate culture is excellent and the enterprise is brave enough to take responsibilities. The details of the move structure selection of the company profiles selected in this study are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of the Distribution of Move Structures in Chinese and American Company Profiles**

Basic moves and steps		Frequency in Chinese company profiles	Frequency in American company profiles
<b>M1</b>	Corporate Profile	10	10
S1	Industry Leadership Position	9	10
	Scale and Business Scope	10	10
S2	Management Team	10	10
S3	Development History	10	10
<b>M2</b>	and Achievements		
S1	Development History	10	10
S2	Honorary Awards	7	3
<b>M3</b>	Partners	1	4
<b>M4</b>	Corporate Culture	10	10
S1	Corporate Vision	9	10
S2	Social Responsibility	10	10
S3	Corporate Governance	1	4

It can be seen from Table 2 that each enterprise profile in the research samples contains four basic moves, and there are differences in the manifestation of specific steps, reflecting the focus of professional practices and professional culture. From the perspective of professional practices, the

specific steps that account for a relatively high proportion in the writing of enterprise profiles include professional leadership position, scale and business scope, management team structure, development history, corporate vision and social responsibility. This is because the purpose of the enterprise profile is to present the basic information of the company and win the trust of customers and consumers, helping the enterprise to establish a good image. Therefore, each enterprise's profile contains both introductory and persuasive texts to achieve the communicative purpose of the enterprise profile. A complete leadership team and detailed introductions of leaders can improve the professionalism and trustworthiness of the enterprise. Corporate philosophy is the soul of an enterprise and the spiritual support for its employees.

From the perspective of professional culture, the food and beverage professional is closely related to the health of the public. For example, the corporate culture of Yili outline states that Yili culture is a healthy culture integrating healthy products, healthy operations and a healthy vision. It escorts the harmonious development of Yili, leads the healthy growth of the professional, and even powers the beautiful future of mankind. The professional culture of the food and beverage professional requires enterprises to form unique business concepts. The social responsibility section is the manifestation of an enterprise's assumption of responsibilities. In the professional practice of enterprise profiles, enterprises usually list the public welfare undertakings and environmental protection measures they have carried out, thereby enhancing the corporate image and achieving the communicative purpose.

There are certain commonalities in the move arrangements in the company profiles of Chinese and American enterprises. Usually, the enterprise profile is introduced first to give readers a basic understanding of the enterprise. Then, the enterprise's business and products are elaborated to display the core business contents and competitiveness of the enterprise. After that, the development history and achievements are reviewed to reflect the enterprise's development track and strength. Some enterprises will also mention their visions and social responsibilities to show their long-term plans and social commitments.

However, different enterprises have differences in the level of detail and emphasis of each move, which is related to factors such as the industry characteristics, development strategies and corporate culture of the enterprises. For example, liquor enterprises may pay more attention to the introduction of product craftsmanship and historical inheritance (such as Kweichow Moutai and Wuliangye). Dairy and beverage enterprises may highlight market share and product diversification (such as Yili, Mengniu, PepsiCo, and Mondelēz International). And catering enterprises may emphasize brand management and service concepts (such as Haidilao).

Meanwhile, some enterprises elaborate on social responsibilities in more detail (such as Yili, Wuliangye, Nongfu Spring, Tyson Foods, Hormel Foods, etc.), which reflects the importance that enterprises attach to shaping their social images. While some enterprises have relatively brief expressions or do not mention their visions or social responsibilities at all, and it may be necessary to further understand their relevant plans and actions through other channels.

At the same time, some enterprises have relatively brief elaborations on certain moves (such as JBS USA in terms of enterprise profile and development history), and it may be necessary to further understand their relevant information through other channels. However, some enterprises (such as The Coca-Cola Company and General Mills) have relatively detailed introductions in each move, comprehensively showing various aspects of the enterprises.

It can also be seen from Table 2 that Chinese enterprise profiles pay more attention to the presentation of enterprise honors. This may not be related to industry practices and industry culture but may be related to social culture. American enterprises have more prominent introductions in terms of partners and corporate governance, which may be because American enterprises have more international development strategies and a stronger sense of independence and competition.

## 5. Conclusion

This study applied Bhatia's four-dimensional analysis model to the research on Chinese and American company profiles and explored the influencing relationship between intra-textual resources and extra-textual resources of business genres. The study found that both Chinese and American company profiles can reflect industry practices and industry culture at the textual level and the genre level. Conversely, industry practices and industry culture influence the choice of genre resources in company profiles. There are significant differences in the choice of referential words in Chinese and American company profiles, but they are relatively consistent in syntactic patterns. The former cannot be explained by industry practices and industry culture, while the latter can reflect the industry practices and industry culture of the business genre of company profiles. In terms of the choice of move structures, the characteristics presented by Chinese and American company profiles are basically the same, indicating that they are restricted by industry practices and industry culture. In addition, this study found that industry practices and industry culture cannot exhaustively explain the choice of genre resources. Therefore, the social and cultural dimension can be added for discussion in cross-cultural genre studies.

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