

# A Contrastive Study of Two News Reports on a Tea Picking Activity: in terms of Thematic Analysis

Jiarui Xie<sup>1</sup>, Lingling Liu<sup>2</sup>, Xinyu Lu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>School of Foreign Languages, China Three Gorges University, Hubei, China

<sup>1</sup>xiejiarui917@outlook.com, <sup>2</sup>liulingling@ctgu.edu.cn, <sup>3</sup>2022431073@qq.com

**Abstract:** *This paper compares and analyses the news reports on international students' tea picking activity from 12 countries from Three Gorges University to Yicha Dafengkou Tea Plantation, a strategic partner of Yicha Group, organized by Angel Yeast and PR Newswire. This study compares and analyses the two news reports under the general framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), applying the Theme-Rheme theory of SFL, and analyses the information transfer mode and discourse theme-rheme features of these two news reports chosen by the writer so as to grasp the real intention and emotion of the original writer more closely, and to appreciate the subtle semantic differences and the deeper connotations from the perspectives of culture, economy and politics. The results of this study also show that the Theme-Rheme system can be used as an ideological tool for exploring the deeper intention behind the discourse.*

**Keywords:** Thematic Analysis, Systemic-Functional Grammar, Tea Picking Activity.

## 1. Introduction

As one of the carriers of information, news report has become the main medium for people to obtain information. Because of its increasing audience, news report discourse has a high linguistic research value. In recent years, with the vigorous development of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the perspective of language research has been gradually upgraded from the syntactic level to the discourse level, and more and more scholars have begun to analyse the discourse from the perspective of the discourse by applying the Theme-Rheme theory (Cao & Li, 2021).

The Theme-Rheme theory was initially proposed by Matthaeus in 1939, in which he believed that every sentence contains a discourse starting point and a discourse goal. So far, many scholars at home and abroad have carried out research on this basis in many aspects, the most representative is the inheritance and development of this theory by Halliday, a representative of Systemic Functional Grammar, which has made it into a completed theoretical system. The Theme-Rheme theory plays an important role in our understanding of the organization of the discourse, the distribution of information, the flow and development of information. Firstly, Theme-Rheme theory reflects the distribution of information in a sentence, such as what is known and what is unknown, what is the starting point of expression and what is the core of expression, and secondly, it reflects the status and role of these information, and by analyzing the order of them, we can find out the degree of importance of different information, and understand the structural characteristics of different languages. Thematic analyzing can enable us to grasp the real intention and emotion of the author of the original text more closely, and to appreciate the subtle semantic differences, so as to understand the original text more accurately.

Angel Yeast is a leading global yeast and biotechnology company headquartered in China. The company is dedicated to the development and production of high-quality yeast products for a wide range of food, beverage, brewing and biotechnology applications. Angel Yeast enjoys a good

reputation and influence in the industry, and not only has a wide customer base in the Chinese market, but has also expanded its business in the international market. The tea picking activity, on the other hand, is an important initiative of Angel Yeast, aiming to promote international friendship and cultural exchanges by inviting international students to visit Dafengkou Tea Plantation of the Yicha Group in Yichang and experience the tea culture. This kind of activity not only helps to promote the Chinese tea culture, but also demonstrates the cultural mission and social responsibility of Angel Yeast as a company. On April 14, 12 international students from Africa and Central Asia of the Three Gorges University, organized by Angel yeast, went to the Yicha Dafengkou Tea Plantation, Yicha Group's strategic partner, for an immersive experience of the whole process of picking.

PR Newswire, as an internationally renowned press release agency, is committed to providing clients with high-quality press release services and spreading their voices globally. In co-operation with PR Newswire, Angel Yeast and PR Newswire issued a press release on the tea picking activity respectively, which focused on different positions, reflecting different degrees of political, economic and cultural connotations.

In the recent past, systemic functional linguistics, rooted in the viewpoint of societal symbols, has significantly progressed by delving into, enhancing, and refining its theory. It endeavours to investigate the functions expressed through sentence meanings from a grammatical construction perspective and subsequently extends these functions to broader levels. Consequently, texts comprising numerous grammatical clauses have become foundational texts in systemic functional linguistics (Wan et al., 2023).

In this regard, this paper compares and analyses two news reports issued by Angel Yeast and PR Newswire on International students' tea picking activity from 12 countries from Three Gorges University to Yicha Dafengkou Tea Plantation, under the general framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and applies the Theme-Rheme

theory of SFL to the two discourses to analyze the mode of information transmission and the way of planning that the writer chooses to write in the discourse, so as to grasp the real intention and emotion of the author of the original text more closely, and appreciate the subtle semantic differences and profound connotations from political, economic, and cultural perspectives.

## 2. Literature Review

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) plays a key role in discourse analysis, especially in revealing patterns of speech transmission, modes of plotting, and the author's true intentions and emotions. The concept of "Theme" in modern linguistics was first proposed by Mathesius, a Prague linguist, in the late 1930s. He pointed out that theme is set on the departure of discourse and the topic of discussion. Mathesius proposes that a sentence can be carved up into three segments: Theme, Rheme and Transition. Among them, the point of departure of a discourse is termed as Theme, which is a common knowledge (known information) shared by both participants and the core of a statement is called Rheme, which is the new information that the writer or the speaker wants to convey. While, transition is a connection between Theme and Rheme. In the 1960s, Halliday used this term, put it into the category of textual function in Systemic Functional Grammar and developed it into an important theory. Halliday put forward the concept of themalisation, pointing out that one clause is composed of Theme and Rheme. Weng Yulian (2011) explored in her study two different genres of news messages and news commentaries in terms of the Thematic/Rhematic progression. She points out that different speech genres show different stylistic differences in Thematic/Rhematic progression and selection, and the selection of method will present certain trends. This study provides an important reference for understanding the mode of information transfer within news corpora. Xiao Junhong (2001) evaluated Halliday's and Firbas's view of Theme-Rheme theories. He thinks that Halliday et al.'s equating the theme with the first place of sentence structure is lacking in cognitive justification, whereas the Prague School's study of the theme and rheme from the perspective of the functional sentence view is more helpful to the understanding of decoding and encoding of the discourse.

Additionally, numerous scholars have delved into theme studies from various perspectives and introduced their unique viewpoints. Huang Guowen (2001b), for instance, has focused on exploring conflated themes and differentiating between non-contrast and contrast types within enhanced thematic structures. He has published five related articles on this theory during the late 1990s. Building upon prior research, Huang Guowen (2001b) proposed methods for syntactic semantic analysis in 1996. Furthermore, he delved into the constituent elements of conflated Themes, including wh-interrogative elements, wh-relative elements, and referring elements, identifying two concurrent functions within these components. Additionally, he scrutinized the functional roles of two types of enhanced themes at the discourse level (Huang, 2001a). In 2009, Huang Guowen (2001a) extensively discussed the concept of "complex themes" in his work "Complex Theme in the Textual Metafunction."

Currently, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has established itself as a crucial and indispensable area within the field of linguistics. Numerous scholars have dedicated their efforts to examining news discourse through the lens of SFL. The interpersonal metafunction, as explored by Gao Yali, sheds light on how news articles establish relationships between the writer, the audience, and the subjects of the news. This focus reveals the underlying power dynamics and social interactions embedded in news language, offering a deeper understanding of the persuasive and influential nature of media discourse. Dong Xin's examination of thematic structures further enriches this understanding by highlighting the organizational patterns that guide the flow of information in news texts. By dissecting how themes are introduced and developed, Dong's work illustrates how coherence and emphasis are achieved, facilitating the reader's comprehension and engagement with the news. This approach underscores the importance of thematic progression in shaping the narrative and interpretative frameworks of news stories. Overall, the contributions of scholars like Gao Yali and Dong Xin demonstrate the robust analytical capabilities of SFL in deconstructing the complex linguistic mechanisms at play in news discourse. Their research not only advances theoretical knowledge but also offers practical implications for improving media literacy and critical reading skills, enabling audiences to more effectively navigate and interpret the information presented in the news.

To sum up, the previous research results are of great help to the later scholars to do the similar researches. Many scholars have studied the news discourse from various aspects. However, there are few researches on the news discourse from Theme and thematic progression patterns. This will provide a new perspective for the research of the news discourse.

Therefore, under the general framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), this study compares and analyses the two discourses by applying the Theme-Rheme theory in SFL, analysing the mode of information transmission, the way of writing chosen by the speaker and writer and the characteristics of the theme and rheme, so as to grasp the real intention and emotion of the author of the original text and to appreciate the subtle semantic differences and profound meaning from the perspectives of politics, economy, culture and so on.

## 3. Analytical Framework

On the basis of inheriting the relevant theories of three linguists, Malinowski, Whorf and Firth, Halliday established and developed the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics, which pertains to functionalism whose purpose is to research how individuals exchange meanings through language forms. This theoretical system includes three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. Under the textual meta-function, there are three sub-systems: the Theme- Rheme system, the Given- New information system and the cohesion - coherence system. This paper makes a thematic analysis of two news to the experience of international students to Yichang Black Tea At Dafengkou Tea Plantation which written by PRNewswire and angel yeast respectively.

One of the most distinguished and influential scholar in Theme-Rheme theory is Halliday. Halliday developed Theme-Rheme theory and classify them further as well as had some new viewpoints. Halliday distincts the Theme and Rheme by the sequential ordering of clause elements. He defines Theme as, "The element which serves as the point of departure for the message; it is that with the clause is concerned" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). According to Halliday, "in all languages the clause has the character of a message: it has some form of organization giving it the status of a communicative event" . In English the clause is organized as a message structure by having two parts: Theme and Rheme. As stated above, Theme is that element which functions as the starting-point of the message, and what the clause is concerned. Rheme, by its definition, is "the remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed". This kind of message structure is either called "Theme-Rheme structure," or "thematic structure" or "Theme structure".

According to Mona Baker (Baker, 2018), the theme has two functions (a) it was as a point of orientation by connecting back to previous stretches of discourse and thereby maintaining a coherent point of view and, (b) it acts as a point of departure by connecting forward and contributing to the development of later stretches.

### 3.1 Simple Theme, Multiple Theme and Clause as Theme.

Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) defined Theme into three

**Table 1:** Multiple Theme

E.g. Well, but, confidentially speaking, John, wouldn't your students get annoyed if you don't reply their emails?

<i>Well</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>Confidentially speaking</i>	<i>John</i>	<i>Wouldn't</i>	<i>Your students</i>	<i>Get annoyed if you don't reply their emails</i>
continuative	Conj.	comment	vocative	finite	Participant topical	Rheme
textual	interpersonal					
theme						

Clause as theme means that the whole clause serves as the theme, as shown in Table 2, but what Halliday calls "clause as theme" usually contains only conceptual elements, and thus is essentially a simple theme, so here we will mainly analyse simple and multiple theme (Wang, 2009).

**Table 2:** Clause as Theme

<i>Theme</i>	<i>rheme</i>
What the duke gives to my aunt	Will be that teapot
If the duke gives anything to my aunt	It'll be that teapot

### 3.2 Marked and Unmarked Theme

Markedness of the theme is a relative concept, as opposed to unmarkedness of the theme. Bloor T and Bloor M (2013) point out that the markedness of the theme refers to the probability of a single grammatical event in the context as a holistic piece of language, rather than to a particular grammatical event that exists in a particular context.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), each independent clause is associated with mood. They are either indicative mood or imperative mood. In the indicative mood, clauses can be either indicative or interrogative. In the interrogative mood, clauses can be non-questions or special

kinds: simple theme, multiple theme and clause as theme. As for the multiple theme, it has internal structures and can be further classified into the experiential Theme, interpersonal Theme and textual Theme.

Simple theme refer to the theme that contain only the conceptual components as Halliday says without the interpersonal and discourse components (Wang, 2009). For example, my parents (theme), gave me a new bicycle (rheme).

When explaining multiple themes, Halliday & Hasan (2014) stipulated the principle relevant to the thematic structure, "The theme always contains one, and only one, of these experiential elements. This means that the theme of a clause ends with the first constituent that is participant, circumstance, or process. Since a participant in thematic function corresponds fairly close to what is called the 'topic' in a topic-comment analysis, we refer to the experiential element in the theme as the TOPICAL THEME" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The topical theme may be preceded by elements, which are textual and/or interpersonal in function. The textual theme is any combination of continuative, structural and conjunctive, in that order. The interpersonal theme is any combination of vocative, modal and mood marking. The typical ordering is textual interpersonal experiential; in any case, the experiential element (the topical theme) comes last-anything following this is part of the Rheme. See table 1.

questions.

E.g.:

*Indicative mood-declarative mood: Tom likes apples.*

*Indicative mood-interrogative mood: Does Tom like apples? (yes/no)*

In declarative sentences, when the subject acts as the theme, this kind of theme is called unmarked theme, and when other constituents (e.g., complements, gerunds) act as the theme, they are called marked theme. Marked versus unmarked Theme reflects the magnitude of the probability of different functional constituents of a sentence acting as the theme. This is also true for sentences in other moods.

From a semantic point of view, the unmarked theme is the natural starting point for a speech function. In question clauses, it means "this is the information I want to know", while in declarative clauses it means "this is the entity being talked about" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Theme can be used to structure ideas at the sentence (and paragraph)level to organize our ideas in a more coherent and purposeful manner, which acts as a kind of "sign-post"which signals to readers what is important to us as writers and what

we want our readers to pay attention to. Therefore, good thematic choices create a synergy between write intention and reader understanding, which is a key to a well-organized piece of writing.

#### 4. Methodology

It is necessary to clarify the source and basis of text selection before moving to the next step. The news reports of tea picking experience tour of international CTGU (China Three Gorges University) students from 12 countries in Yicha Dafengkou Tea Plantation is selected from PR Newswire and Angel Yeast. PR Newswire is a global leader in news distribution and public relations services. It helps organizations disseminate their news to a wide audience, including media outlets, journalists, and the public. Established in 1954, PR Newswire enhances visibility and engagement through its extensive distribution network. And Angel Yeast is a leading yeast and biotechnology company based in China. Established in 1986, the company specializes in the production of yeast and yeast derivatives, serving various industries including baking, food, and biotechnology. PR Newswire and Angel Yeast both wrote news about the International Student Tea Picking Event, but these two news reports have different thematic choices. Because theme acts as a kind of "sign-post" which signals to readers what is important to us as writers and what we want our readers to pay attention to, the comparative study of the Themes of related reports of the PR newswire and Angel Yeast can provide a reference for what they want to emphasize. This makes us more aware of the similarities and differences in the theme structure between writers, and helps us to grasp these patterns and to analyse as well as write news discourse

in other industries more accurately and more authentically.

Therefore, this paper proposes and attempts to solve two research questions:

1) What are the differences between Angel Yeast and PR Newswire's news reports on international students' tea picking activity in terms of the thematic structure ?

2) What are the similarities and differences between Angel Yeast and PR Newswire's news reports on international students tea picking activity in terms of their thematic structure in the aspects of politics, economy and culture?

#### 5. Contrastive Analysis of Two News Reports

Two researchers received thematic analysis training conduct detailed manual analysis of the two discourses according to the classification principle of Theme-Rheme theory in SFL respectively. Firstly, the two discourses are classified to find out the theme and rheme of each clause according to classification principle of Theme-Rheme theory, and then the multiple themes are classified into three categories: simple theme, multiple theme, and clause as theme; classify simple themes into unmarked and marked; classify multiple themes into textual, interpersonal and topical theme, then researchers calculate the number of each kind of theme, decode the topical themes. Finally compare the results of the two researchers, 90% of the results are the same, and the rest of the 10% different results are discussed by the two researchers and finally come to the consistent results. Table 3 and Table 4 show the results of the Contrastive analysis of the thematic structure of the two news.

**Table 3:** Thematic analysis of RP Newswire news discourse

	Clause	Theme				Marked theme	Unmarked theme
		Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Ellipsis		
Total	26	10	0	24	4	1	23
Percentage of total clauses		38.4%	0	92.3%	15.4%	3.8%	88.5%

Note: The 18/26 (69%) clause does not contain textual theme and interpersonal theme, but only topical theme.

**Table 4:** Thematic analysis of Angel Yeast news discourse

	Clause	Theme				Marked theme	Unmarked theme
		Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Ellipsis		
Total	39	10	2	35	9	2	33
Percentage of total clauses		25.6%	5.1%	89.7%	23.1%	5.1%	84.6%

Note: The 24/39 (61%) clause does not contain textual theme and interpersonal theme, but only topical theme.

(1) Multiple theme include topical, textual and interpersonal theme. In the two news discourses written by PR Newswire and Angel Yeast, topical theme accounted for 92.3% and 89.7% of the total number of clauses respectively; textual theme accounted for 38.4% and 25.6%, respectively, while interpersonal theme accounted for 0 and 5.1%, respectively. From this, we conclude that both news discourses of PR Newswire and Angel Yeast contain mainly topical theme, while textual theme and interpersonal theme are used relatively less. As a result, both news discourses of PR Newswire and Angel Yeast are permeated with weak emotional factors and tend to be factual, trying to be objective and impartial.

(2) In terms of the markedness of the theme, 3.8% and 5.1% of the two news discourses from PR Newswire and Angel

Yeast are marked themes, while 88.5% and 84.6% are unmarked themes.

(3) Even though there are some clauses with textual themes in the two discourse pieces, most of the clauses are parallel relationship, in which "and" and "but also" accounted for 60% and 82% of all textual themes, followed by "which, that" with 40% and 18%, while interpersonal theme does not appear once in PR Newswire, and they appear twice in Angel Yeast, they are "truly, indeed". It can be concluded that Angel Yeast news discourse is more inclined to use interpersonal theme to express subjective comments and attitudes, to express the fun and success of the tea-picking event, and to improve the relationship with the readers, while PR Newswire avoids the use of this kind of theme and shows a more objective and neutral style of reporting.

(4) Since readers receive this type of news by reading it, the length of the two news articles is generally concise and the vast majority of them are simple clauses (65.4%, 71.8%). Since Angel Yeast, as a biotechnology company, mainly produces yeast and sells it, and Tea Industry is also a wholly owned subsidiary of Angel Yeast, in order to promote the product and advertise the product, the percentage of simple clauses in Angel Yeast news is higher because the readers of this Angel Yeast news will be more potential consumers, so in order to make it easy to understand and accept for potential consumers to read, more simple clauses are used, see Table 5 and Table 6.

**Table 5:** Clause analysis of RP Newswire's news report

Total	Clause Type		
	Simple	Compound	Subordinate
26	17	6	3
	65.4%	23.1%	11.5%

**Table 6:** Clause analysis of Angel Yeast's news report

Total	Clause Type		
	Simple	Compound	Subordinate
39	28	9	2
	71.8%	23.1%	5.1%

(5) From Tables 7 and 8, the tendency of the components of topical theme in the two discourses can be clearly seen. The components of topical theme in the PR Newswire news discourse are, from high to low, as follows Angel Yeast (35%) > tea/tea culture (30%) > international student (20%) > tea-picking activity (15%). The components of topical theme in Angel Yeast news, in descending order, is International student (39.3%) = Tea-picking activity (39.3%) > Tea/tea culture (21.4%) > Angel Yeast (0). PR Newswire news discourse focuses more on the introduction of Angel Yeast to introduce Angel Yeast's products and achievements to the public, whereas Angel Yeast news is highlighting the tea-picking activity of international students, depicting the whole process of tea-picking by the students and their good feelings. Both discourses use a certain amount of topical theme to describe Tea/tea culture, which highlights Angel Yeast's promotion of tea culture, and presents and promotes tea as a commodity, aiming to expand market share and enhance brand image, and thus realizing the growth of business interests.

**Table 7:** The components analysis of topical theme in PR Newswire news report

Topical Theme	the Components of Topical Theme				
	Angel Yeast	Tea/tea culture	International student	Tea-picking activity	
total	20	7	6	4	3
Percentage of the topical theme	35%	30%	20%	15%	

**Table 8:** The components analysis of topical theme in Angel Yeast news report

Topical theme	the Components of Topical Theme				
	Angel Yeast	Tea/tea culture	International student	Tea-picking activity	
Total	28	0	6	11	11
Percentage of the topical theme	0	21.4%	39.3%	39.3%	

## 6. Discussion

This study compares and analyses two news reports issued by Angel Yeast and PR Newswire about International students' tea picking activity from 12 countries from Three

Gorges University to Yicha Dafengkou Tea Plantation. Based on the thematic analysis of two news reports, this part is to make a discussion to answer the second research question: What are the similarities and differences between Angel Yeast and PR Newswire's news reports on international students tea picking activity in terms of their thematic structure in the aspects of politics, economy and culture? Therefore, according to the findings, it can be discussed from three perspectives: politics, economy and culture, and reveals the deeper intention behind it and its subtle semantic differences.

Firstly, from a cultural point of view, both news had 30 percent topical themes about tea or tea culture. So they emphasize the richness and inheritance of Chinese tea culture, and promotes the dissemination and exchange of tea culture by organizing international students to visit tea plantation and experience tea culture, thus deepening their knowledge and understanding of tea culture. The two news reports also differ in their descriptions of tea culture, PR Newswire's news report, the sixth sentence as an example "Tea, a globally popular healthy drink, is also a culture that (a culture) conveys inclusiveness." highlight the depth and inclusiveness of tea culture. This description not only enhances the news report's message, but also its message of inclusiveness. This description not only enhances the cultural weight of the news, but also makes it easier for readers to understand the unique charm of Chinese tea culture. Angel Yeast's news report, on the other hand, focuses more on the details of the activities to show the pleasure and satisfaction of the international students in experiencing the tea culture. For example, it quoted vivid details such as sentence 11 "Being in the green tea plantation, the international students were excited, singing and dancing, among which Ghizlane, a Moroccan student, enthusiastically demonstrated the production process of Moroccan mint tea with Yichang tea, and the exotic cultures were mingled in a cup of tea at this moment, overflowing with a different aroma.", so that readers could more intuitively feel the charm of tea culture and the fun of the activity. In terms of the components of topical theme, the topical themes in PR Newswire's news report were mainly focused on Angel Yeast (35%), tea/tea culture (30%), and international students (20%), whereas in Angel Yeast's news report, international students (39.3%) and tea-picking activities (39.3%) took up the major part of topical theme. This difference reflects the difference in focus between the two, with PR Newswire focusing more on the Angel Yeast and its products and achievements, while Angel Yeast indirectly promotes its tea products by detailing the tea-picking experience of the international students and showcasing the appeal of tea culture.

Secondly, from an economic perspective, the two news reports spend a lot of space on tea, and more than 20% of the topical theme is related to tea or tea culture, which highlights Angel Yeast's promotion and marketing of tea culture, and makes tea as a commodity to present and promote, aiming at expanding the market share and enhancing the brand image, and thus achieving the growth of commercial interests. PR Newswire's and Angel Yeast's news reports differ in terms of the thematic features and the way in which the message is conveyed. Data analysis shows that PR Newswire's news has a higher proportion of textual theme (38.4%), while Angel

Yeast prefers interpersonal theme (5.1%). PR Newswire enhances the coherence and logic of the message through the use of textual theme, so that the readers can have a clearer understanding of Angel Yeast's business and products, and achieve the effect of implicit advertising. In contrast, Angel Yeast has achieved the effect of implicit advertising through the use of interpersonal themes, such as sentence 31 "Truly, the tea was nothing short of exquisite, a testament to the hospitality of Angel Yeast and the rich tapestry of Yichang culture.--Zaheer Udin Baber (Pakistan)" and in sentence 39 "INDEED YICHANG'S TEA IS THE BEST TEA.-- Florida William Morrice (Tanzania)." Among them, "truly" and "indeed" focus more on the emotional connection with the readers and indirectly promotes its tea products by describing the enjoyable experience of the international students. This approach not only enhances brand affinity and awareness, but also effectively attracts potential consumers and achieves the purpose of economic promotion. In terms of the markedness of the theme, the proportion of marked themes in Angel Yeast's news was slightly higher than that of PR Newswire (5.1% and 3.8 %, respectively). The use of marked theme helps to highlight specific points of information, attract readers' attention and enhance the attractiveness of press releases. Angel Yeast makes its news more attractive through the moderate use of marked theme, which enhances potential consumers' interest in and recognition of the brand.

Finally, from a political perspective, these two news reports demonstrate the charm and influence of Chinese culture by organizing international students to visit tea plantation and experience tea culture, using tea culture as a display of soft power and a means of cultural diplomacy, aiming to enhance China's image and image in the international arena. The difference in the thematic structure of the two news reports reflects different political intentions. 30% of the topical theme of PR Newswire's news report is about tea or tea culture, for example, PR Newswire's news report quotes "In 2022, China's traditional tea-making was added to the intangible cultural heritage list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)", and in the sixth sentence, official information such as "Tea, a globally popular healthy drink, is also a culture that conveys inclusiveness." These topical themes highlight Chinese tea culture on the international stage and demonstrate China's achievements in cultural heritage and preservation, and reflects political cultural confidence. Comparatively, 21.4% of the topical theme of Angel Yeast's news report is related to tea culture, for example, in sentence 14, " among which Ghizlane, a Moroccan student, enthusiastically demonstrated the production process of Moroccan mint tea with Yichang tea, and the exotic cultures were mingled in a cup of tea at this moment, overflowing with a different aroma." This is a Moroccan student's feeling of Chinese tea culture, and it can be seen that more attention is paid to the personal experience and cultural exchange of international students, emphasising the main theme " hope to introduce Chinese tea culture and heritage to people all over the world", which reflects the promotion of international understanding and co-operation through cultural exchanges. This narrative makes the news reports more humane and further strengthens international students' sense of identification with Chinese culture.

## 7. Conclusion

In summary, this study reveals the thematic characteristics in Angel Yeast and PR Newswire's news discourse and the deeper intention behind it. PR Newswire focuses on the logic and objectivity of the information, and strengthens the authority and credibility of the report through a higher proportion of the textual theme, marked theme more topical theme related Angel Yeast and tea. Angel Yeast, on the other hand, draws closer to the readers through a higher proportion of interpersonal theme and more topical theme related international students and tea-picking activity, and enhances brand affinity and attraction. These findings provide new perspectives for understanding the writing strategies of news discourse and provide valuable references for future related research. Future research can further explore other types of press releases and promotional materials to verify the generality and applicability of these findings.

## References

- [1] Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2013). *The functional analysis of English: A hallidayan approach*. Routledge.
- [2] Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A Coursebook on translation*. Routledge.
- [3] Cao, J.& Li, Y.(2021).Research on the Features of Theme and Thematic Progression Patterns in Online News Discourses.*Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University*, 28(03), 106-116+161.
- [4] Dong, X. (2013). *Analysis of the Thematic Progression Patterns in English News Discourse*. ShanDong University.
- [5] Gao, Y. L. (2006). *Research on the Interpersonal Meaning Realization of News Text*. Northwestern Polytechnical University.
- [6] Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *An introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge.
- [7] Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (2014). *Cohesion in English*. Taylor and Francis.
- [8] Huang, G. W. (2001a). On Conflated Theme in Systemic Functional Grammar . *Linguistics & Applied Linguistics* (2), 111-120.
- [9] Huang, G. W. (2001b). Complex Theme in the Textual Metafunction. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching* (2), 111-120.
- [10] Wan, Y. X., Liu, J. X., & Liu, L. L.. (2023). The national image of China in the welcome banquet for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics under the transitivity system. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 5(1). [https://doi.org/10.53469/jssh.2023.5\(01\).20](https://doi.org/10.53469/jssh.2023.5(01).20)
- [11] Wang, J. (2009). An analysis of the thematic structure in English Ad texts. *Journal of Xiangtan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 33(05), 159-161.
- [12] Weng, Y. L. (2011). The contrastive studies of the Thematic /Rhematic Progression in the internal news stylistic. *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 41(06), 146-149. DOI:10.16152/j.cnki.xdxbsk.2011.06.035.
- [13] Xiao, J. H. (2001). A Comparison of Theme and Rheme Theories in Halliday(1994) and Firbas(1992). *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages*, (01), 37-40.

**Author Profile**

**Jiarui Xie** is a first-year Master's Degree Candidate at School of Foreign Languages of China Three Gorges University.

**Lingling Liu** is an associate professor in China Three Gorges University and a master supervisor for postgraduates majoring in both Applied Linguistics and English language teaching. Her research interests include second language writing, English for academic purposes, and English language teaching.

**Xinyu Lu** is a first-year Master's Degree Candidate at School of Foreign Languages of China Three Gorges University.