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Using Dialectics to Build Leader-stakeholder Relationships: An Exploratory Study on Relational Dialectics in Chinese Corporate Leaders' Web-based Messages

Abstract

In large Chinese corporations operating in the Greater China region, there is an increasing use of web-based bilingual messages by its corporate leaders for fostering relationships with stakeholders. Although frequently presented as literal translations of each other, leaders' bilingual communication sometimes tends to exhibit non-literal variations. This study aims to examine the relational dialectics theory in the construction of leader-stakeholder relationships in leaders' bilingual web-based messages, and explores the dialectical oppositions that are embedded in the Chinese and English versions of these messages. The results suggest that leaders' communication is characterized by the deliberate use of different dialectics that allow them to tailor their communication to the perceived needs of stakeholders from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In particular, the Chinese version of the message is adapted to exude greater connection, openness, affection, and predictability in content as well as style, which is believed to strengthen relationships with stakeholders.

Keywords

Relational dialectics, leader web-based messages

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1. Introduction

With the proliferation of leading listed corporations in the Greater China regions of Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland and Taiwan (Weidenbaum, 1993), Chinese leaders' communication with stakeholders via corporate websites has become increasingly important (Segars & Kohut, 2001). We define "leaders" as presidents, CEOs and chairmen who assume major responsibilities on behalf of their corporations; in particular, they formulate and implement corporate strategies (Kitchen & Schultz, 2001). The leaders of multinational corporations commonly use web-based messages to communicate with stakeholders (Segars & Kohut, 2001). The messages are designed to encourage interaction and develop relationships with stakeholders, and usually present information and updates on the corporations' business goals and operations. The communicative purposes of these messages are not only to inform stakeholders but also persuade them to form opinions that support the corporation's interests and strategic intent.

A thorough examination of bilingual leader web-based messages translated from Chinese into English indicates that the majority of such messages are translated literally. However, some messages are translated non-literally to increase the effectiveness of leaders' communication with their stakeholders from different linguistic and cultural origins (AUTHOR, 2014). These inter-textual messages are said to be naturalized (Axiela, 1996) to suit the needs and culture of the target readership.

Ngan (2009) notes that translators tend to adopt a "bilingual representation" strategy to enhance communication when translating business discourse from Chinese into English (p. 41). She

explains that a translator may change the register, format, style, and organization of a source text to produce a text that is culturally and linguistically suited to the communicative needs of the target readership. However, the findings of our study indicate that the Chinese leaders of some corporations deliberately incorporate or exclude certain information in the translated English versions of their bilingual e-messages to manage the dialectical oppositions so as to strengthen their relationships with stakeholders from different regions. To a certain extent, therefore, Chinese leaders' beliefs and values may determine their choice of communication practices with English-speaking and Chinese-speaking stakeholders (AUTHOR, 2014).

This paper draws on the relational-dialectics theory of Baxter and Montgomery (1996) that explains how people manage oppositions in different situations (Erbert, 2014) to demonstrate how the bilingual web-based messages reveal differences in leaders' practices for communicating with English and Chinese-speaking stakeholders in Greater China in the globalized era.

2. Relational-Dialectics Theory (RDT)

Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) dialectical approach views ongoing relational contradictions or oppositions or dialectics as inherent in any relationship that constantly changes over time. Relationships according to RDT are complex, and people often hold contradictory beliefs about their own relationships but this is not viewed as a problem. Rather, this creates opportunities for people in the relationship to engage in dialogue and the oppositional forces in relationships such as the simultaneous need for both disclosure and privacy are the essence of constantly changing relationships (Baxter, 1990). It is important to clarify the notion of contradictions, oppositions and dialectics. A "contradiction" refers to "the dynamic interplay between unified

oppositions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p.8) and this specifically indicates the "ongoing dynamic interaction between unified oppositions" (p.10). "Opposition is a necessary but not sufficient condition for contradiction" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 9). Many oppositions "are likely to exist in relation to a given bipolar feature" and "oppositions must simultaneously be unified or interdependent with one another" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 9). For example, autonomy and connection are unified oppositions and the complete autonomy of an individual negates connection and vice versa, but autonomy and connection have an interdependent unity in that connection with others helps in the formation of one's sense of self while connection is also inter-related to one's autonomy (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). A "dialectic" is defined as the simultaneous presence of two relational forces on a continuum that are interdependent and mutually opposing (Baxter, 1988).

RDT is different from other perspectives in that it does not view relationships as developing in simple patterns (O'Boyle, 2014). Dualism views relationships as "either/or" rather than "both/and", the latter of which is the essence of RDT (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). A healthy relationship is defined as:

> not one in which the interplay of opposites has been extinguished or resolved…[but] one in which the parties manage to satisfy both oppositional demands. That is, relational well-being is marked by the capacity to achieve "both/and" status as opposed to "either/or." (Cools, 2011, p. 41)

In healthy relationships, due to the opposing forces, the relational partners manage the relationship and experience change both internally and externally (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Baxter (2011) states: "RDT is a theory of relational meaning-making – that is, how the meanings surrounding individual and relationship identities are constructed through language

use" and how these meanings are constructed from "competing, often contradictory, discourses" (p.2). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) articulate RDT with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of personal dialogue. Bakhtin regards the essence of human experience as communication and interaction with other people (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Baxter (2011) draws on Bakhtin by arguing that all utterances or speech are inherently relational. Bakhtin (1981) argues that all social life entails tension and contradiction between two opposing tendencies. As Baxter (2004) notes, proponents of the dialectical approach assume that social life involves ongoing contradiction between discourses. Managing contradictions and change is integral to relational life (Montgomery, 1992; Sahlstein, 2004).

As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) observe, RDT is an interpretive theory of meaning-making between parties in a relationship, and offers neither generalizations nor predictions. Rather, its aim is to provide insight into situated communication. RDT is rooted in four major assumptions: 1) relationships are not linear but entail negotiation between contradictory desires; 2) relationships are characterized by change; 3) contradictions are inherent and inevitable in all relationships; and 4) communication is necessary to manage and negotiate contradictions in relational life (West & Turner, 2010, p. 204). Baxter and Braithwaite (2010) assert that the main assumption of RDT is that "meaning making is a process that emerges from the struggle of different, often opposing, discourses" (p. 50).

Although Apker, Propp, and Zabava Ford (2005) argue that RDT has not been applied adequately in the organizational context, it is observed that some bilingual leader web-based messages exhibit characteristics of dialectical oppositions. The "both/and" rather than "either/or" communication practices used in these messages reflect a conflict between leaders' desired goals. For instance, leaders may wish to be both connected and autonomous, or both

open and protective, in their relationships with stakeholders. Although they may reconcile these conflicting goals in their messages, they do not ultimately prioritize one over the other. In Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) words, "[f]rom the perspective of relational dialectics, social actors give life through their communicative practices to the contradictions that organize their relationships. The social reality of contradictions is produced and reproduced by the communicative action of the social actors" (p. 59). Based on Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) argument and our observation of the bilingual leaders' web-based messages presented by major corporate leaders in Greater China, this study seeks to examine if corporate leaders of index-listed corporations in Greater China exhibit different tendencies in the use of relational dialectics in their communicative practices with stakeholders from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This paper suggests that a dialectical perspective may shed some light on the complex changing nature of corporate communication.

In an attempt to better understand the use of relational dialectics in Chinese corporate leaders' communicative practices, we draw on a variety of dialectics that structure relational life as suggested by Baxter (1990) and leader-stakeholder relationships in western cultures as proposed by Zorn (2001). The six most relevant oppositions to leader-stakeholder relationships in Greater China are the dialectics of openness and protection, connection and autonomy, equality and inequality, favoritism and impartiality, instrumentality and affection, and novelty and predictability. The application of these dialectics are supported by examples extracted from our corpus of leaders' web-based messages collected from 225 corporations listed in major indexes in Greater China from 2010 to 2011.

Openness and Protection

This dialectic describes the conflict between leaders' desire to reveal information openly to their stakeholders, and their desire for privacy and exclusivity in their communication (Baxter, 1990). This dialectic is best illustrated by messages that both exhibit candor and self-disclosure and suggest a desire for concealment. Openness may entail responsiveness and empathy (Bell, 1987, as cited in Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Berg, 1987). Zorn (2001) has later retitled protection as "closedness" (p. 33). Corporate leaders to their stakeholders exhibit the openness dialectic through the provision of elaborate information and a willingness to communicate emotionally laden information. Whereas the protection dialectic is manifested in messages where details are omitted and a business-like or professional tone is adopted. For instance, the bilingual speech delivered by the General President of Wuhan Iron and Steel (Group) Corporation (WISCO) in China on its corporate website demonstrates the openness and protection dialectic when he elaborates the changing external environment faced by WISCO.

Chinese version

近年来，武钢面对国内外经济环境复杂变化和重大风险挑战，面对钢铁行业风云变幻和激烈的市场竞争... (Literal translation: Recently, WISCO has faced risks and challenges from the changing external economic environment, changing dynamics of the iron and steel industry as well as the strong market competition)

English version

Since the reformation and opening to the outside world, WISCO has, taking Deng Xiaoping's theory and "Three representatives" as guidance, been deepening enterprise reformation and tentatively set up the modern enterprise system with technical advance and renovation starting at a high point.

The Chinese version demonstrates the openness dialectic by acknowledging the difficulties and challenges faced by the corporation whereas the English version focuses on the Communist strategies that have guided the company through its difficult times.

Connection and Autonomy

The dialectic between autonomy and connection is the desire to be close to others and simultaneously to be independent of others (Baxter, 1990). Leaders who provide stakeholders with more updates on their corporations' operations and their own activities, and use the inclusionary "we" in their discourse, tend to have a closer relationship with their stakeholders. "We" and "our" are inclusive pronouns that represent leaders and stakeholders as a collective entity, and in turn build greater rapport between a corporation and its stakeholders (Gocheco, 2012). The autonomy dialectic is exhibited through the adoption of a formal and impersonal style and register while the connection dialectic is manifested through the provision of additional information that indicates leaders' willingness to strengthen their relationship and build a sense of solidarity with their stakeholders. For example, the address from the President of China Railway Group Limited in China makes good use of the connection dialectic in his ending remark:

> We sincerely look forward to working closely with our friends for the future development and to win great achievements together!

Equality and Inequality

The equality and inequality dialectic is seen in workplace relationships (Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Zorn, 1995) where leaders often downplay status differences, creating an informalization of discourse (Fairclough, 1992) to promote an egalitarian relationship with stakeholders (Zorn,

2001). For instance, the Chairman message of Dragon Hill Wuling Automobile Holdings Limited includes an ending remark that demonstrates the equality dialectic by thanking the employees for their hard work and effort:

> I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the group and the board, to express my sincere gratitude to everyone at Dragon Hill Wuling Automobile for their hard work…

Favoritism and Impartiality

In contrast to Bridge and Baxter's (1992) characterization of organizations as being "guided by a moral order that involves the equitable treatment of everyone" (p. 203), Zorn (2001) argues that stakeholders have a strong need to "feel special" (p. 35). The tension between "equitable treatment" and the need to "feel special" is manifested in the opposing dialectics of impartiality and favoritism. Leaders who provide special favors to some of their stakeholders and employ strategies to make these stakeholders feel special exhibit the dialectic of favoritism while leaders who treat all their stakeholders equally and provide the same information to them exhibit the dialectic of impartiality. The CEO message of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited exhibits a strong sense of impartiality in his communication with his shareholders, employees and the public:

> We insist on honesty and integrity. We are honest to our shareholders, employees, and to the public alike...We abhor cronyism. We do not seek favoritism from the government or any government official…

Instrumentality and Affection

The instrumentality and affection dialectic describes the conflict between leaders' desire to prioritize the benefits obtained from their relationships with stakeholders, and their desire to be cordial, sincere and affectionate in their communication (Rawlins, 1989). Leaders who focus on instrumental benefits (e.g. profits, rewards, financial performance, maximization of shareholder value) to stakeholders exhibit the dialectic of instrumentality. However, leaders who lay emphasis on gratitude and acknowledge stakeholders' importance (e.g. thanking the stakeholders and using slogans to bond with stakeholders) tend to exhibit the dialectic of affection. For instance, the Executive Director of China Resources Power Holdings Company Limited in China exhibits both the instrumentality and affection dialectic in his message on the corporate website:

Chinese version

我们视客户为上帝，尊重客户，善待客户 (Literal translation: we regard the customer as "GOD"; we respect customers and treat them well)

English version

We firmly believe that customer satisfaction generates mutual benefits to both our customers and the Company.

The Chinese version indicates a strong inclination towards the "affection" dimension of the instrumentality-affection dialectic, while the English version illustrates the inclination towards the "instrumentality" dimension.

Novelty and Predictability

This describes the conflict between the desire to be original, spontaneous and uncertain and the need for stability, routine and certainty (Baxter, 1990). The novelty dialectic is exhibited in the style of writing through the use of phrases such as "life-changing shifts," "keeping ahead of the curve," "the courage to seek something new," and "to make our customers' dreams a reality." The predictability dialectic is exhibited in the use of words such as "tradition" and "perseverance in achieving results", indicating a tendency to follow tradition. A typical example can be found in the CEO message of Uni-President Enterprise Corporation in Taiwan. The novelty-predictability dialectic is made noticeable in his message. Presented below are two paragraphs extracted from the English version of the CEO message:

Paragraph 1

Uni-President will be everyone's all time favorite symphony of food and be showered with praises and recognition from all…Every employee at Uni-President follows the spirit of "a kiss to the spirit of the future" so that our products and services soar like the enticing notes in a symphony and that our consumers around Asia would work with us to create a brighter future.

Paragraph 2

The process of internationalization has helped Uni-President to cultivate the ability to communicate directly with consumers in Asia with different cultural backgrounds, in order for more consumers to appreciate the wonderful consumer experience brought by Uni-President and recognize the company's effort and insistence on quality.

Paragraph 1 demonstrates the novelty dimension of the novelty-predictability dialectic as the CEO employed metaphoric expressions like "symphony of food" and "a kiss to the spirit of the

future" to represent the corporate culture and ideology of the corporation. By contrast, Paragraph 2 exhibits an instrumental and predictable style of communication when explaining the corporate communication strategy adopted amid the process of internationalization.

All of the above opposing dialectics— openness-protection, connection-autonomy, equality-inequality, favoritism-impartiality, instrumentality-affection, and novelty-predictability— interact continually and dynamically with each other (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Zorn, 2001) in leader-stakeholder relations. To date, research on corporate web-based messages and dialectical oppositions embedded in such messages has been non-existent. The present study therefore focuses on the extent to which corporate leaders of listed corporations in Greater China exhibit different tendencies in the use of dialectics when communicating via web-based messages with target stakeholders in Chinese and English languages.

Research studies have shown that people from different cultures communicate differently (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). For example, Hall (1976) found that in high-context cultures like China, the non-verbal elements of the context assume an important role and only little information is explicitly expressed in the message. However, for low-context cultures such as the American culture, most information is communicated verbally and directly. For the Chinese culture, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) argue that particularism is commonly seen where more emphasis is placed on developing personal relationships than rules while in the Western culture, universalism is adhered to in which objective rules are treated as most important. Particularism is consistent with the notion that *guanxi* or personal relations are considered as important by the Chinese (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004). The Chinese also tend to be collectivistic which refers to the fact that group goals are more important than individual goals (Hofstede, 1980). In addition,

the Chinese tend to have higher uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede & Hoftstede, 2005). Based on the above cultural differences, we contend that Chinese corporate leaders may communicate with their English-speaking versus Chinese-speaking stakeholders in different ways due to the assumptions they hold about their stakeholders' cultural backgrounds in line with the above theories and their need to avoid imposing their own cultural values embedded in their linguistic style on stakeholders from other cultures. Similarly, it is expected that the dialectics exhibited in web-based messages intended for English versus Chinese stakeholders might vary in view of these cultural differences.

3. Research Questions and Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The aim of this exploratory study is to shed light on the meaning-making processes embedded in leaders' communication practices, with specific attention to their representation of corporate bilingual web-based messages. Specifically, the aims were to:

1) explore and determine which dialectics are exhibited and the tendency of dialectical oppositions in the web-based messages of leaders in major corporations in Greater China; and

2) unravel the manifestation of opposing dialectics in the non-literally translated Chinese and English web-based messages.

3.2 Method

The aim of this study was to explore whether dialectics underlie leaders' corporate web-based messages and structure their communication practices with stakeholders from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in Greater China.

Stage One

The first stage of the research involved a series of in-depth interviews with senior corporate communication (CC) and public relations (PR) professionals. However, as some researchers have noted (Pettigrew, 1981), one of the main issues with in-depth interviews is access. Fortunately, all CC/PR professionals were contacted through a Hong Kong-based university. They were selected for their substantial experience in drafting, writing, reading, translating, editing, and proofreading of messages circulated by the leaders of listed corporations in one or more of the indexes in the major stock markets in Greater China. Five senior CC/PR professionals from three top-listed corporations in the Hong Kong Hang Seng Index, and one PR Agent who has served and supported listed corporations in the Hong Kong Hang Sang Index, Shanghai Composite Index, and Taiwan Weighted Index were invited to attend an in-depth 90-minute individual interview with a trained researcher from May to July, 2013. Three more CC/PR professionals from top-listed corporations in the Hong Kong Hang Seng Index were invited to attend a 90-minute individual interview from September to October, 2014. Table 1 provides a brief account of their demographic data. The interviews were conducted in Hong Kong with in-house CC/PR professionals from different sectors: public utilities and railroad, energy, chemical, financial services, law enforcement, and practitioners from public relations agencies.

[INSERT TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE CC/PR PROFESSIONALS INTERVIEWED]

A semi-structured interview format was used and interviewees were asked open-ended questions about dialectics and related keywords found in leader web-based messages addressing Chinese-speaking and English-speaking stakeholders in Greater China. They were also requested to elaborate on the dialectical tendencies, related communication practices and inter-textual variation of the dialectics in the bilingual web-based messages, if appropriate. Interviewees were allowed to elaborate on any issues they felt were particularly important in their experience of drafting, translating, editing, and writing messages. Interviews were then transcribed and analyzed to ascertain the salience of dialectics and related keywords as revealed in the interviewees' responses.

Stage Two

After CC/PR professionals from major corporations in Greater China were interviewed to ascertain the dialectical tendencies exhibited in leaders' web-based messages intended for Chinese-speaking and English-speaking stakeholders, the second stage of the research design involved identifying and examining whether dialectics were embedded in leader bilingual web-based messages posted on corporate websites.

We built on our previous study of CEO communication where we examined 225 corporate websites of listed corporations in major stock indexes operating in major economic zones in Greater China from 2010 to 2011 including all 38 Blue Chip corporations and 90 Red Chip corporations in the Hong Kong Hang Seng Index, all 50 listed corporations from the Taiwan

Weighted Index, and 47 listed corporations in the Shanghai Composite Index. 26 out of 69 bilingual corporate leaders' messages and addresses presented on these 225 corporate websites of listed corporations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Shanghai, which aim to communicate with stakeholders from Chinese and western cultures, were identified and selected for further study. Because these were the only messages and addresses, which were bilingual, and aimed at communicating with stakeholders, rather than messages focusing on financial performance, they were selected. We decided not to include messages reporting the financial performance of the corporation since they "do not generally emphasize communicating other corporate information, such as operating philosophy, sustainability, CSR, or business opportunities, to internal and external stakeholders" (AUTHOR, 2014, p. 358). Of these 26 bilingual messages, 3 were from Hong Kong blue chips, 9 from Hong Kong red chips, 6 from corporations included in the Shanghai Composite Index, and 8 from corporations included in the Taiwan Weighted Index, thus creating a corpus of 29,000 words (AUTHOR, 2014, p.362).

Of the 26 bilingual messages identified, we examined whether the source text, which is the Chinese version of the leaders' messages, closely aligned with the translated target text in the English version by conducting a parallel sentence-by-sentence comparison of the Chinese and English text by one of the authors who possesses professional qualifications in translation. We found that for four of these 26 messages, over 60% of the sentences of the source text did not align with the target text and the Chinese version of one message differed very much from the corresponding English version with one-fourth of the content deliberately excluded from the target text. As a result, these five non-literally translated bilingual leader web-based messages representing communication between corporations and stakeholders were selected for thorough examination of the relational dialectics embedded in them. Three of these messages were from the red-chip corporations viz. Franshion Properties (one-fourth of the source text was omitted

from the target text), China Resources Power Holdings Company Limited (60% non-alignment) and China National Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited (90% non-alignment) in the Hong Kong Hang Seng Index; one message came from ASUSTek Computer Inc. (86% non-alignment) in the Taiwan Weighted Index; and one message from Wuhan Iron and Steel (Group) Corporation (67% non-alignment) in the Shanghai Composite Index. We then analyzed the dialectics underlying these messages using a qualitative research approach.

In the following section, a summary of the dialectical tendencies and related keywords that interviewees generated and commonly used in drafting, writing, translating, and editing leaders' messages and the themes associated with them is given to explore whether the six dialectics described above (autonomy-connection, openness-protection, equality-inequality, favoritism-impartiality, instrumentality-affection, novelty-predictability) are exhibited in leader-stakeholder communication.

4. Findings

4.1 Salience of Dialectics and Keywords Employed in Leaders' Messages Intended for Stakeholders in Greater China

All interview respondents agreed that Chinese leaders' communication suggested an inclination towards the "connection" dimension of the connection-autonomy dialectic, while a strong tendency of leaning towards the openness and predictability dialectics, and a moderate tendency of leaning towards the equality, impartiality and affection dialectics were also apparent. Table 2 shows a summary of the dialectical tendencies, related communication

practices and keywords/phrases uncovered from the in-depth interviews with seasoned CC/PR professionals.

[INSERT TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF DIALECTICAL TENDENCIES, COMMUNICATION PRACTICES AND KEYWORDS/PHRASES REVEALED BY INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS]

The "connection" dimension of the autonomy-connection dialectic was considered as important by all eight interviewees as they indicated that leaders in their corporations focused on "building a closer relationship with stakeholders through keeping them informed about the latest developments of the corporations" with the frequent use of the inclusionary pronoun "we" in their messages. As mentioned earlier, "we" and "ours" are inclusive pronouns that represent leaders and stakeholders as a collective entity and help to strengthen relationships. All interviewees concurred that leader messages "addressed stakeholders" interests" and "were accountable to stakeholders."

Six of the interviewees agreed that the "openness" dimension of the openness-protection dialectic was illustrated in leaders' communication since "leaders provided transparency" and "disclosed a lot of information" to all stakeholders with the use of "an open communication approach." They also noted that leaders tend to treat stakeholders as teammates, and keywords like "teamwork" and "responsible" were cited by them. Six interviewees concurred that the "predictability" dimension of the novelty-predictability dialectic was exhibited in the leader messages in their corporations where "conventional communicative approaches like incorporating Chinese idioms and analogies are frequently employed" by leaders in communicating with stakeholders and "a predictable tone and style are used." Most

interviewees said: "Chinese leaders are more predictable." The dimension of "novelty" was apparent in one corporation in that leaders there employed "an innovative and professional style of communication" and keywords such as "creative" and "innovative" were used.

We also asked the interviewees to comment on the appropriateness of the "instrumentality-affection" dialectic underlying leader communication in their corporations. Three interviewees pointed out that the "affection" dimension was evident in leader messages in their corporations with leaders frequently "adopting a cordial, dynamic and engaging tone." They elaborated that leaders "used an appealing tone and conventional communication practices in Chinese like couplets and slogans to engage their stakeholders." Key phrases such as "sustainable", "serve the community", and "environmental protection" were adopted to demonstrate leaders' affection towards stakeholders and their responsibility to the environment. One interviewee also said: "Chinese leaders are more affectionate; they always have concluding remarks; they avoid sensitive and conflicting issues." Two interviewees stated that the "instrumental" dimension was apparent in leader messages in that leaders often referred to "instrumental benefits" such as using phrases like "investment", "resources" and "mutually beneficial." Three interviewees found it difficult to comment as they said both the dimensions were exhibited in leader messages although the salience of the instrumental-affection dialectic in leader messages varied depending on the "corporate culture, context and intended receivers of the messages."

Six interviewees agreed that the "equality-inequality" dialectic was embedded in leader messages. Four of the respondents noted that the "equality" dialectic was exhibited in leader communication as "different groups of stakeholders were addressed in leaders' communication" and "given equal emphasis" with key phrases such as "everyone in the

market", "different groups of stakeholders", and "reliable" being predominant. Whereas two of the interviewees highlighted that leaders in their corporations "treated everyone as special" and "personalized messages to cater to different groups of stakeholders" with key phrases used such as "treat everyone specially." Two interviewees did not give any comments since they pointed out that their "corporate culture" did not explicitly focus on these dimensions in leader messages.

For the dialectic of "favoritism-impartiality," four interviewees commented that leaders "treat every stakeholder equally" and words such as "integrity", "ethical", "pursuing a common goal", and "management" were employed. Two respondents highlighted that "shareholders should receive special treatment from leaders" and the latter should "adopt an engaging tone" when communicating with the former. Two interviewees had no comments as they said leader messages in their corporations did not seem to exhibit these dialectics.

The responses from the CC/PR professionals from major corporations in Greater China provide support for our argument that dialectical tendencies are revealed in leaders' communication with stakeholders. In particular, we found that web-based messages intended for Chinese-speaking stakeholders exhibit a salience of the dialectics of connection, openness, and predictability in their content and style.

The respondents were also asked to comment on the inter-textual variation in dialectics in the English and Chinese web-based messages of their corporations. They pointed out that this inter-textual variation in dialectics was not salient in some literally translated bilingual web-based messages. This echoes with our analysis of the 26 leaders' bilingual web-based messages obtained from the websites of 225 corporations, in which we found that only 5 out of 26 non-

literally translated bilingual web-based messages exhibited a different tendency of dialectics. In the next part of our analysis, we therefore use these five cases of bilingual leaders' web-based messages that manifest the four core opposing dialectics (autonomy-connection, openness-protection, novelty-predictability and instrumentality-affection) identified in the interviews to compare the dialectics revealed in the Chinese messages with those that arise in the translated English versions of the messages. We determine the relative salience of each of the four dialectics in leader-stakeholder web-based messages. We include the instrumentality-affection dialectic even though three respondents made no comments as the salience of the instrumentality or affection dimension in leader messages depends on the "corporate culture, context and intended receivers of the messages."

4.2 Manifestation of Opposing Dialectics in Parallel Chinese and English Discourse

4.2.1 Variations in the Autonomy-Connection Dialectic

The first example is a bilingual leader message from Wuhan Iron and Steel (Group) Corporation (WISCO) in Shanghai, which places emphasis on the corporation's innovations, with the frequent use of phrases such as "the modern enterprise," "science and technology" and "scientific evolution." The General President shares the organization's latest developments and elaborates on its future plans with his English-speaking stakeholders. In addition to this stress on novelty and the instrumental value of innovation, the style and register of the English message are formal and impersonal, with an absence of inclusionary pronouns (underlined below). This illustrates the "autonomy" dimension of the autonomy-connection dialectic.

Since the reformation and opening to the outside world, WISCO has, taking Deng Xiaoping's theory and "Three representatives" as guidance, been deepening enterprise reformation and tentatively set up <u>the modern enterprise system</u> with technical advance and renovation starting at a high point. It has persistently strengthened its management, upgraded quality and profitability of economic growth and stimulated "3-civilization" in harmonic development by sticking to "Rely-on" policy. Moreover, with <u>science and technology</u> as guidance and following <u>the road of quality-profitability,</u> WISCO has stridden toward the modern enterprise.

<u>The employees of WISCO</u> are full of spirit. It will, by the end of the first decade of this century, under the guidance of <u>scientific evolution</u> view, insisting on export-oriented development mentality, and realizing the Central, West and South China Development Strategy, build itself into <u>an advanced iron and steel enterprise</u> at first world level, a main automobile and silicon sheets production base, and one of the top 500 enterprises in the world to do its bits for making the country into a powerful iron and steel country from a big one.

The Chinese version of the message includes additional information on efforts made to raise the staff's living standards, increase motivation and conserve energy. This reflects the General President's desire to increase the corporation's connection with its stakeholders through candor and the provision of information. In mentioning the staff's living standards, the General President attempts to forge a closer relationship with the corporation's stakeholders and express warmth toward them, thus emphasizing affection and connection, the core people-oriented values of Confucian and Chinese culture (underlined below). Below is an extract of the Chinese version of the General President's address.

而今，<u>武鋼人正豪情滿懷……著力提高職工生活水準，努力建設成為自主創新型、資源節約型、環境友好型，</u>備受社會尊重，具有強大綜合實力的國際一流鋼鐵集團。 (Literal translation: Today, Wu Steel people are full of pride. WISCO focuses on improving the living standards of workers, striving to become a self-innovative, resource-saving and environmental-friendly, socially respected and highly integrated world-class Iron and Steel Group)

One notable point is the use of the noun phrase "武鋼人" (Wu Steel people) by the General President in the above paragraph, which evokes a sense of solidarity and belonging within the corporate community, and indicates the corporation's strong connection with its employees. The same phrase is rendered in English in a more formal register, as "the employees of WISCO."

4.2.2 Diametric Oppositions in the Openness-Protection Dialectic

Bilingual web-based messages from China National Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited, a red-chip listed corporation in Hong Kong, are presented below to highlight the corporation leader's opposing goals of openness and protection.

Compared with the Chinese version of the leader's message, the English version is more concerned with the corporation's business nature, operations and ranking, whereas the Chinese version focuses on the company's history, development and corporate culture. The additional information provided in the English message on Guofeng Iron and Steel Co. Ltd. and the highlight of corporation's real estate business (underlined below) illustrate the inclination towards the "protection" dimension of the openness-protection dialectic, in that the leader

exercises restraint in disclosing information about the corporation's future development and culture. The overall emphasis is on instrumentality, and the message is rendered in a concise, professional and business-like tone. The relevant paragraphs are provided below with the key phrases underlined:

> The main business of HKCTS is tourism. <u>HKCTS is now the oldest and largest provider of travel services</u>, encompassing a wide travel business network in the mainland, Hong Kong and overseas. This is attributed to the spirit of perseverance and pioneering management over generations. HKCTS now possesses a perfect travel chain… <u>Guofeng Iron and Steel Co. Ltd., a large-sized integrated corporation with hundred millions tons of production scale, focuses on expertise and accuracy, cost-cutting and environmental harmony. The main economic, technical and environmental-protection indices have already topped the national iron and steel industry. In terms of real estate, the reputation of HKCTS has served as a great advantage. Now, HKCTS has invented and developed its own "Travel Green Real Estate Brand"</u>...

The Chinese web-based message includes more detailed information than its counterpart in English, especially pertaining to the challenges faced by the corporation and the corporate mission (underlined below). For example, the company's recovery following major setbacks such as the SARS virus and the economic damage caused by a recent tsunami is elucidated in the first paragraph, and pertinent information is provided on the company's subsequent development. This suggests that the leader is willing to communicate emotionally laden information, which increases stakeholders' sense of his warmth, affection and responsiveness. The SARS outbreak is tied to traumatic and emotional experiences, and the leader's readiness

to share his own experiences with the corporation's stakeholders portrays him as an affectionate leader.

In the Chinese version of the message, additional information is provided at the end of the first paragraph about the corporation's past and future 10 years and its mission and vision. This indicates the leader's desire to communicate in more depth with the corporation's Chinese-speaking stakeholders. It is worth noting that the leader specifies 83 years of development rather than rounding the number to 80 to add precision to his account of the company's development. The Chinese message is rendered as follows:

尤其是最近十年，經歷了 SARS 和全球金融海嘯磨練的港中旅人更加團結一心，攻堅克難…… 83 年後的今天，港中旅集團已經成爲中國旅游業的領航旗艦。

(Literal translation: Especially in the last decade, we have experienced SARS and the global financial tsunami... 83 years later, Hong Kong China Travel Service Group has become the flagship in China's tourism).

Even more importantly, the Chinese version is embellished with slogans and couplets, especially in the second paragraph, which are delivered in a cordial tone and exude warmth and sincerity. For instance, the Chairman uses the couplets "雄關漫道真如鐵，而今邁步從頭越" (Hero gate long road real as iron, and now take a step from the beginning) and "星旅相伴、行者無疆" (star trip accompany; traveller across boundary) to describe the corporation's ongoing hard work and its determination to move forward. He uses the slogan "服務大眾、創造快樂" (serving the public; creating happiness) to emphasize the corporation's mission to serve the interests of the public and create happiness.

The above reflects the leader's desire to be more open, candid, and affectionate when addressing Chinese-speaking stakeholders. In the English version, such details are omitted, and the message is delivered in a business-like tone. The affection and openness of the Chinese message are replaced with an emphasis on instrumentality and protection in the English message.

4.2.3 Differences in the Instrumentality-Affection Dialectic

The third example is from Franshion Properties, a red-chip corporation in Hong Kong. Throughout the English version of the message, the leader uses the inclusive pronoun "we" to develop a closer relationship with the corporation's stakeholders. "We" allows the leader to strengthen the relationship with stakeholders, which reflects the desire for connectedness. As Ngan (2009) notes, the stiff competition faced by many corporations today has necessitated more aggressive business operations, in compensation for which corporation leaders may seek to cultivate a customer-friendly and personal tone when writing to their stakeholders. This may entail the use of first-person pronouns such as "I" and "we." Further to Ngan's comment, the use of "we" in leader's discourse for the purpose of building rapport between the leader and stakeholders could also be regarded as an instrumental behavior adopted in line with the communicative norm in the corporate environment.

In addition, the Chairman's explicit indication (shown in the extract below) that the corporation will reward both its shareholders and society at large illustrates a tendency towards the "instrumentality" dimension of the instrumentality-affection dialectic.

We have full confidence in the development of China's high-end commercial properties and Franshion Properties. We are convinced that China's rapid economic development and accelerated urbanization will offer rare historic opportunities for a fast growth of the company. We are also eager to contribute our bids to China's economic development in this great historical period.

In the future, we shall continue to work hard, pursue excellence and be modest, fearless, persevering and devoted. We are confident that under the guidance of the strategy to develop and own high-quality commercial properties in the prime areas of the frontline cities, Franshion Properties will be extremely competitive and successful in its development. We shall continue to reward our shareholders and the society by improving the contents of our operations, pursuing a steady and healthy development of our business and turning our company into the most influential enterprise in China's high-end commercial properties.

The leader seems to exhibit greater affection towards the corporation's stakeholders in the Chinese version of the message than in the English translation. An additional paragraph in Chinese is included to extend gratitude to stakeholders that have invested in the corporation for their trust and support, especially the Sinochem Group; this illustrates a stronger "affection" dimension of the instrumentality-affection dialectic. The relevant paragraph of the Chinese version of the Chairman's address is provided below.

我們感謝包括中國中化集團公司在內的每一位方興地產的投資者，你們的信任與支持，造就了方興地產過去的輝煌；你們的信任與支持，給予了方興地產追求偉大目標的澎湃動力。(Literal translation: We are grateful to every investor in Franshion

Property including Sinochem Group; your trust and support, creating the past glories of Franshion Property; your trust and support have empowered Franshion Property to pursue its goal).

In sum, the affection-instrumentality dialectic is manifested differently in the Chinese and the English versions of the message. In the former, the leader places emphasis on gratitude and sincerity, while in the latter, the leader emphasizes the instrumental value of relational life in plain and business-like language.

A similar emphasis on connection is apparent in the translated English version of the web-based message, from China Resources Power Holdings Company Limited, a red-chip listed corporation in Hong Kong. Again, the "we/our" inclusionary style is used throughout the message to address the company's stakeholders. As in the first case, emphasis is also placed on instrumentality in respect to the financial performance of the corporation, with an explicit reference to the "maximization of shareholder value," along with phrases such as "monetary and mental satisfaction," "generating higher-than-industry average profitability and outstanding share price performance" and "generates mutual benefits." The relevant parts of the English message are provided below.

> Our corporate culture and management philosophy is value-creation-oriented. We are committed to maximizing value for our shareholders as well as our staff members. We wish our employees would grow with the Company.

> We regard shareholder value as the best yardstick to measure company value. There is an inter-dependent relationship between shareholder value and employee value. On one

hand, <u>maximization of shareholder value</u> is the pre-condition of that of employee value…
<u>We</u> pursue continuous value creation for <u>our</u> stakeholders. What shareholders need is return. <u>We</u> would satisfy our shareholders through <u>generating higher-than-industry average profitability and outstanding share price performance</u>. What our customers need is steady, safe, reliable and economical electricity supply. <u>We</u> would satisfy our customers through excellent generation efficiency. What <u>our</u> employees need is <u>monetary and mental satisfaction</u>. <u>We</u> would satisfy <u>our</u> employees through human resources policies and career development opportunities. What <u>our</u> government needs is a clean environment, stable revenue and job opportunities for citizens. <u>We</u> would satisfy <u>our</u> government through maintaining an environmental friendly operation, being a responsible taxpayer, and creating job opportunities for society…

In the Chinese version of the second web-based message, however, the leader conveys affection through the use of stylistically parallel couplets and slogans such as "世界一流、中國最好" (top company in the world; the best in China), "挑戰自我，持續進步" (constantly challenge oneself; improve continuously), "持續創造價值" (sustain and create value), "業績導向，結果第一" (revenue- and outcome-oriented), "客戶滿意，互利雙贏" (satisfy customers; mutual victory), "激情投入，追求最好" (indulge emotionally; go for the best), "誠信立身，言行一致" (honesty and walking the talk), and "以人為本，團隊致勝" (people-oriented; team victory). The description of the team's achievement of excellence in the sixth paragraph (underlined below) reinforces readers' sense of the leader's affection for the company and its employees.

我們宣導「挑戰自我，持續進步」的公司精神。我們堅信，最大的敵人是自己，自知者明，自勝者強；我們堅信，工作生活的任何方面都是可以改善的。我們是一支敢於挑戰自我，否定自我、戰勝自我、塑造新我的勇敢者隊伍，自加壓力尋求不斷的自我更新和自我超越是我們有力的武器；謀求持續改善和不斷進步是我們的生活方式；從優秀到卓越是我們永無止境的奮鬥目標。 (Literal translation: Our company advocates the spirit of "challenge ourselves, progressively improve." We firmly believe that one's biggest enemy is oneself. Knowing oneself will make one strong. We firmly believe that any aspect of work life can all be improved. We dare to challenge ourselves. Through continuous self-challenges, we develop into a strong team. The pressure forces us to seek improvement constantly. Seeking continuous improvement and continuous improvement is our way of living. Pursuing perfection is our never-ending goal).

Furthermore, additional information on sustainable social growth, green energy and the company's use of a dynamic-management strategy and an Economic Value Added valuation system are provided both at the beginning of the Chinese message and in its fifth-to-last paragraph. This reflects the leader's willingness to disclose information, and generally, therefore, to be more candid and open. This also indicates the salience of the "openness" dimension of the autonomy-openness dialectic in the Chinese version of the message, as the leader provides more information to his Chinese-speaking than to his English-speaking stakeholders.

4.2.4 Divergence in the Novelty-Predictability Dialectic

In the English version of the final case addressed here, a web-based message from the Taiwanese listed corporation ASUSTek Computer Inc., the Chairman places a clear emphasis

on novelty with the fairly frequent use of such phrases as "inspiring innovation," "life-changing shifts," "keeping ahead of the curve," "the courage to seek something new," and "to make our customers' dreams a reality" underlined below. Moreover, novelty is exhibited in style and content, as it is rather unconventional for the Chairman of a listed corporation to use an informal phrase like "mumbo jumbo" to describe the corporation's guiding philosophy. Phrases such as "our belief" and "our commitment" reflect the Chairman's attempt to develop a closer bond with the corporation's stakeholders. Below are the extracted paragraphs from the English message:

<u>Inspiring Innovation</u> • Persistent Perfection

Inspiring Innovation • Persistent Perfection (IIPP) is the ASUS brand promise. It symbolizes <u>our commitment</u> to <u>making life better through innovation</u>, and <u>our</u> belief that <u>life-changing shifts</u> can only be achieved by <u>keeping ahead of the curve</u> and not resting on past successes.

Inspiring Innovation • Persistent Perfection isn't mere management <u>mumbo jumbo</u> — it is a guiding philosophy that manifests itself in a myriad of ways within the ASUS organization.

<u>Inspiring Innovation</u> — Where Exciting Possibilities Emerge

"Inspiring Innovation" dates back to ASUS' humble beginnings in 1989, where one small step resulted in a giant leap. Inspiring Innovation is the firm belief that things can always be improved. It is the ability to look beyond known solutions and have the <u>courage to seek something new</u>, and it describes the desire to <u>make our customers' dreams a reality</u> through ASUS' expertise and dedication…

In the Chinese version, the content—including the additional description of the company's profile, development and brand value in the first paragraph—exhibits an emphasis on the ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions and perseverance in achieving results as suggested by Hofstede and Hofstede's long term orientation (2005). The overall register and style of the message exhibit the "predictability" dimension of the novelty-predictability dialectic. The message is provided below.

華碩自 1989 年起，從一家小公司開始經營，逐漸成長至今，成為以創新與品質而聞名的全球性企業，營收超過 80 億美元，品牌價值高達 13.24 億美元。(Literal translation: Asus, since 1989, has grown from a small company to become known for its innovation and quality of global enterprise, with revenues exceeding eight billion, and a brand value of 1.324 billion U.S. dollars).

Chinese-speaking stakeholders have become accustomed to receiving leader messages in a predictable writing style. In the Chinese version of this message, the elaborate information presented on the product's awards and achievements in the penultimate paragraph of the Chinese message, which is absent from the English version, also illustrates the Chairman's willingness to disclose more pertinent information and therefore to communicate more openly with the corporation's Chinese-speaking stakeholders.

我們的努力已獲得各種產業及媒體獎項的肯定。例如，華碩在「2009 年華爾街日報亞洲企業 200 強」中榮獲在「產品與服務品質」及「創新」項目的第一名。華碩在可靠性的調查項目中同樣表現優異，Rescuecom 和 SquareTrade 均認為華碩筆記型電腦具有業界第一的可靠性。華碩的產品在工業設計方面也同樣非常成功，

贏得多項享譽業界的獎項，例如日本的優秀設計獎和德國的 iF 設計獎及紅點設計獎。 (Literal translation: Our efforts have received a variety of awards and media industries. For example, ASUS won the "Product and service quality" and "Innovation" project award in "2009 Wall Street Journal Asia 200." ASUS's reliability survey project has had outstanding performance. Rescuecom and SquareTrade both agreed that ASUS notebooks are the most reliable products in the industry. ASUS is also very successful in product design and has won a number of renowned industrial awards, such as Japan's Good Design Award and the German iF Design Award and Red Dot Design Award).

The above analysis indicates that some bilingual leader web-based messages are not translated literally, which opposes Ngan's (2009) theory of a homogeneous bilingual-representation strategy. Rather, the translated messages addressed above deliberately omit or include information and are represented in ways that reveal the dialectical oppositions and goals of the leaders of these corporations. The differences between these dialectics as manifested in the Chinese messages and their non-literal English translations are also noteworthy. Discourses of instrumentality, autonomy and novelty are more salient in the translated English web-based messages, as opposed to discourses of connection, openness, affection and predictability, which are more prevalent in the Chinese versions of the messages. In the following section, we discuss these dialectics in more detail, with particular reference to the different communication practices and cultural environment they reveal.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if relational dialectics are embedded in Chinese leader web-based messages. Based on the in-depth interviews and detailed analysis, the results

suggest 1) the salience of the four core dialectics of connection, openness, affection and predictability in Chinese leaders' web-based messages when they communicate and build relations with their stakeholders; 2) a different communication practice is used by the Chinese leaders of the above corporations to render messages embedded with certain dialectics in addressing stakeholders from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These findings suggest that the relational dialectics theory is useful for understanding corporate web-based messages and ongoing communication with stakeholders in Greater China organizations. Our analysis also counters the bilingual-representation strategy theorized by Ngan (2009), who argues that translators modify texts to achieve the same communicative effects in both the original Chinese messages and their translations into English. Our findings suggest that certain information is intentionally included or omitted by corporate leaders in versions of messages in different languages, and different writing styles are used to cultivate different kinds of relationships with stakeholders from a variety of cultural and linguistic origins.

In the following section, we determine the salience of each of the dialectical oppositions exhibited in the leaders' messages from the sampled corporations and argue that leaders' communication practices with their English-speaking versus Chinese-speaking stakeholders are underpinned by different dialectical oppositions.

5.1 Salience of Dialectical Oppositions in Web-based Messages Addressed to Stakeholders from Different Cultural Regions

The findings suggest several opposing dialectics to underlie leaders' communication with their stakeholders in different regions. The Chinese versions, which can usually be regarded as the original messages, tend to be more affectionate and foster a closer connection with the

corporations' stakeholders, since they address a wider variety of themes, include more information, and are delivered in a more cordial register. The English versions, also known as the target versions, place a greater emphasis on instrumentality, and the engagement with stakeholders is established mainly through the use of inclusive pronouns such as "we" (Gocheco, 2012). In particular, information on the corporations' history, development, challenges and mission, and the expression of gratitude to stakeholders in the form of traditional couplets and the use of a cordial writing style, are more salient in the Chinese versions of leaders' web-based messages.

In some instances, even when the same themes are addressed in the English and Chinese versions of a message, the content varies. For example, information on corporations' political and historical backgrounds and cultural values is attenuated in the Chinese messages. The salience of affection, connection and openness in the content and style of the leaders' Chinese messages may be attributed to China's particularistic national culture, which places a high value on the development of personal relationships as a precursor to the disclosure and sharing of information (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). This is consistent with the finding that *guanxi* or personal relations are viewed as important by the Chinese (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004). Trust is also more likely to be developed when there is open and transparent communication (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). The Chinese tend to be more collectivistic in that group goals are perceived to be more important than individual goals (Hofstede, 1980). However, our findings depart from those of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012), who find the Chinese to be more neutral or reserved in expressing their feelings than people from other cultures. In fact, our analysis suggests that leaders in Greater China adopt an affectionate and cordial tone when addressing Chinese-speaking stakeholders, which echoes Yum's study on Confucianism induced affective communication practice in East Asia (1997).

Regarding the dimension of "predictability" of the novelty-predictability dialectic, both the Chinese and the English versions of the messages incorporate common themes such as leaders' responsibility to investors, employees and customers, which are also core themes underlying leaders' communication in corporations operating both in the Greater China region and in Western countries (AUTHOR, 2014). Chinese versions of the message exhibit a greater sense of predictability, and traditional Chinese values are often emphasized to develop a sense of solidarity with stakeholders and to reduce any sense of uncertainty (Hofstede & Hoftstede, 2005). It is thus interesting to note that a tendency of adopting the predictability dialectic sets the tone for Chinese leaders when addressing stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds.

5.2 Communication Practices Underlying Inter-textual Practices

It is seen that the web-based messages addressed to Chinese-speaking stakeholders are usually more detailed and informative, and are often embellished with articulations of gratitude in rhetorically distinctive slogans and couplets. These messages are delivered in a candid, engaging and cordial tone. The corresponding English messages aimed at English-speaking stakeholders tend to be more concise and business-like and less informative, and omit literally translated Chinese proverbs or couplets to avoid foreignizing the leaders' messages (Axiela, 1996). This provides support for the argument that dialectics underlie Chinese leaders' corporate web-based messages and structure their different communication practices with stakeholders from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The affective communication practice used by Chinese corporate leaders when communicating with Chinese-speaking stakeholders, which involves being informative and exuding warmth,

is due to the similarity in cultural values held by the corporations and their target readership, and the emphasis placed on developing relationships in the Chinese culture (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). This is supported by Johnson (2009), who suggests that corporations with strong regional backgrounds and connections with local communities such as Chinese corporations, are likely to communicate with their stakeholders in more depth when using their own language.

When communicating with English-speaking stakeholders, Chinese leaders are inclined to use a reserved communication practice, which entails being less informative and more neutral and business-like. We contend that this inclination may stem from leaders' perceptions of the target stakeholders and their consequent unwillingness to impose the political and cultural values embedded in the Chinese language on these English-speaking stakeholders. The leaders may hold assumptions about English-speaking stakeholders that encourage them to pursue a universalized and neutral approach, in line with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's findings (2012). In other words, they emphasize objective facts and rules on the grounds that emotions have no place in business. This suggests that Chinese leaders' assumptions about the kinds of messages and dialectics considered acceptable by target stakeholders underlie their translation strategies, as they are reluctant to articulate and present their beliefs and values—which are intricately tied to their linguistic style—to English-speaking stakeholders. Therefore, leaders are inclined to deliver information to these stakeholders in web-based messages with a neutral and professional tone.

6. Implications and Conclusion

To summarize, the most significant findings of this study are that stakeholders constitute meaning from the "interpenetration of opposing discourses in ways that are productive" (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 358), and that the rendering of leader web-based messages reveals divergence in relational dialectics that have implications for practitioners in the workplace. In particular, the observation that the web-based messages intended for Chinese-speaking stakeholders tend to be more elaborate with a salience of the dialectics of connection, openness, affection and predictability in the content and style of such messages, while the corresponding English messages catered for English-speaking readership are more likely to be business-like with a salience of instrumentality, autonomy and novelty in the content, might be negatively viewed by English-speaking stakeholders in the sense that leaders seem to be more willing to share detailed information and exude more warmth in their communication with Chinese-speaking stakeholders. This might be an impediment for interaction between leaders and non-Chinese-speaking stakeholders and in turn, may have an impact on the corporation's image, reputation and brand loyalty.

The assumptions held by leaders about what kind of content and tone are considered as appropriate by their English-speaking stakeholders, might undermine leaders' efforts in further developing relations with these stakeholders and this continues to pose a challenge for Greater China corporations aspiring to enter the world market. It is concluded that non-literally translated leader web-based messages are structured by different relational dialectics that allow leaders to tailor their communication to the perceived needs of stakeholders from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This finding may enhance leader-stakeholder relations in corporations operating in Greater China.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations. First, it is based on a simplistic conceptualization of the above dialectical oppositions. Each of the opposing pairs of values is viewed on a single continuum; however, they may interact dynamically over time, as suggested by Baxter and Montgomery (1996). Researchers may also argue that many other dialectics influence leader-stakeholder communication apart from those addressed in this study. We acknowledge that our dialectical framework is not exhaustive, but contend that other contradictory value systems may be subsumed within the dialectics we describe. As Baxter (2006) argues, the value of RDT lies in its capacity to explain the complex, interwoven processes of relational life and it provides a productive heuristic approach to research questions. Furthermore, the theory offers an explanation of the conflicting "push and pull" desires that people experience in the real world, and shows how both relational partners and dialectical systems interact dynamically in relational life (West & Turner, 2010).

The most important limitation of this study is the small number of leaders' bilingual web-based messages available for analysis since the use of leaders' web-based messages in major corporations in Greater China is not very prevalent (AUTHOR, 2014). Given that this study has only examined five bilingual messages, it lacks magnitude and longitudinal focus, which would enhance an understanding of the meaning-making process over time (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Apart from this, this study interviewed only eight CC/PR professionals from corporations in Greater China to gain insight into the dialectics underlying their leaders' communication and this reduces the generalizability of findings. Despite the small sample size, this may be regarded as a pilot study. Interviewees were asked to think about the salience of dialectical oppositions in corporate web-based messages but the ongoing dynamic inter-relation between the oppositions may not have been fully explored.

Future research might address a larger corpus of leaders' web-based messages from a greater variety of corporations to investigate the dialectics in bilingual messages, especially in literally translated communication. D'Aprix (2009) argues that leaders' credibility is undermined when they do not openly communicate information with employees about issues of relevance to them, so research could be conducted to determine whether leaders that are more open and willing to divulge information to stakeholders in web-based messages have higher credibility. The findings regarding the different communication practices adopted by leaders with Chinese-speaking as opposed to English-speaking stakeholders should also be rigorously tested by case studies addressing more such messages. In general, the findings from this exploratory study support the conclusion that the relational dialectics theory is useful for analyzing corporate leader web-based messages in the Greater China region and leaders' web-based communication practices with stakeholders from different linguistic and cultural origins are characterized by different dialectics.

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