

A Contrastive Study of Chinese and American Almanacs: From the Perspective of Contrastive Linguistics and Systemic-functional Linguistics



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Abstract: An almanac is a book published annually giving statistical information on various subjects. Underpinned by the theories of CL and SFL, this study adopts both qualitative and quantitative analysis with a contrastive approach to full or sample texts, on the level of lexicogrammar, three metafunctions and genre stratum respectively, to see to what extent Chinese and American local comprehensive almanacs are similar or different in dealing with equivalent information through the same genre. Based upon the empirical data we have collected of local materials and copies of American almanacs, it is found that the genre of almanac, as a kind of reference book, conditions the ideational metafunction in fundamental objectivity, the interpersonal metafunction in objectivity and straightness, and certain lexicogrammatical features in objectivity, detachment, result-orientation, economy and accuracy. Combining the three lines of inquiry, we can see that genre is positioned as an abstract level of analysis coordinating field, tenor and mode (known collectively as register), and register is realized in turn through language (discourse semantics, lexicogrammar, etc). Both show the linguistic features of almanac as detached, result-oriented, economical and accurate. However, due to the linguistic conventions, social and cultural differences, Chinese and American almanacs have rather observable distinctions in generic structure. It is believed that the present study can bridge the gap between linguistics and almanacs, and pave a new way for the development of both CL and SFL, and almanac studies.

Keywords: Almanac; Contrastive Analysis; Systemic-Functional Linguistics; Genre

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research motivation and Purpose

An almanac is a book published annually giving statistical information on various subjects, e.g. nature, politics, economy, culture and society, etc. Generally speaking, almanacs can be classified into comprehensive or specialized by content, or national (international) or local by range. They intersect with each other to make up four types: (i) national (international) comprehensive almanac, e.g. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, *Almanac of People's Republic of China*; (ii) local

comprehensive almanac, e.g. *Texas Almanac*, *Shanghai Almanac*; (iii) national (international) specialized almanac, e.g. *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, *China Linguistics Almanac*; (iv) local specialized almanac, e.g. *Shanghai Cultural Almanac*, *Almanac of Shanghai International Studies University*.

As editors of *Minhang Almanac*, we intend to conduct a contrastive analysis of Chinese and American almanacs underpinned by the theories of CL and Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), drawing upon the local materials we have collected and some copies of

American almanacs. The purpose of our study, no matter with the contrastive approach at the level of lexicogrammar, or from the three metafunctional view, or at the stratum of genre analysis, is to see to what extent the Chinese and American local comprehensive almanacs are similar or distinct in dealing with the equivalent information through the same genres.

Based on the empirical findings, we hope to enrich the research methodology of almanac studies while at the same time testing the interpretability and applicability of the theories of CL and SFL.

1.2 Corpus

The data collected includes four kinds and six copies of Chinese and American local comprehensive almanacs: *Texas Almanac 2014-2015* (Alvarez, 2014) [1] (henceforth TA), *Florida Almanac 2002-2003* (D. Marth & M. J. Marth, 2002) [2] (henceforth FA), *Shanghai Almanac 2013* [3] (Compilation Committee of *Shanghai Almanac*, 2013) (henceforth SA), *Shanghai Almanac 2011* [4] (Compilation Committee of *Shanghai Almanac*, 2011) (henceforth SA'), *Minhang Almanac 2013* [5] (Compilation Committee of Minhang local chronicles, 2013) (henceforth MA) and *Minhang Almanac 2011* [6] (Compilation Committee of Minhang local chronicles, 2011) (henceforth MA'). Together they constitute the corpus of the present study.

2 Previous Related Studies

To date, of all the literature on almanacs, none has been found about *Texas Almanac*, *Florida Almanac* and *Minhang Almanac*, except for some about *Shanghai Almanac*. As for the contrastive analysis between Chinese and foreign almanacs, two books have to be mentioned here.

One is *A Survey of Almanac Studies* (Xiao *et al.*, 1991) [7], in which the writer puts forward the idea of “contrastive almanac studies” and contrasts Chinese-foreign almanacs from both a macroscopic and microscope view: the former relates to the development history and social function, and the latter relates to the target readership, content selection, way of presentation and column organization.

The other is *Practical Almanac Studies* (Xiao & Shao, 2000) [8], in which the writers contrast Chinese-foreign almanacs based on the analysis of practicality, including content selection, data type, column organization, retrieval system, way of presentation, writing form and style,

bookbinding and layout, and publishing time lag. Then they explore the causes of these differences in practicality: the influence of historical and traditional heritage, the influence of political, economic, cultural and social background, the influence of compilation system, the influence of function orientation, and the influence of personnel and equipments.

In contrasting “writing form and style”, the authors point out some defects of domestic almanacs, for instance, the prevailing writing style of work summary, which can correlate with the analysis of textual metafunction in SFL; the redundant usage of “了” as a tense and aspect marker (see Section 3.6), which can be a lexicogrammatical analysis in CL. Also, they draw attention to the more diverse text genres in foreign almanacs, and ascribe such linguistic differences to the influence of some socio-cultural factors (see Martin’s genre theory, 2012). [9]

Recently, Lü (2014) [10] has made an innovative attempt to list the new framework and obligatory elements of the English edition of *Shanghai Almanac* by borrowing those from several foreign almanacs, and has made suggestions on the innovation of domestic almanacs by analyzing some features of America’s *The Old Farmer’s Almanac*. Nevertheless, like their forerunners, they contrast Chinese-foreign almanacs basically from the angle of editing studies, if anything—but not of linguistics.

3 Lexicogrammatical Study of Chinese and American Almanacs

3.1 First-Person Pronoun and Determiner

As a general rule, SA takes a third-person narration, so the first-person personal pronoun “我/我们”, possessive determiner “我的/我们的¹” and demonstrative determiner “我/本” are not allowed to use in its main body—entries.

Very similarly in TA, there’s no occurrence of “I/my” except in quotations and advertisements, but does have quite few use of “we/our”. See examples:

(1) The chalky rock that we now call the “Austin Chalk” was deposited when the Texas seas became deeper. (TA:87)

1 “我的/我们的” can also be classified as determinative genitive pronoun (Zhang, 1995:127) [11]

(2) Primary services of the Texas Workforce Commission and our network partners are funded by federal tax revenue and are generally free to all Texans. (TA:499)

The *we* in sentence (1) is the generic use of personal pronoun. “Generic *we* is used in formal style, commonly occurring in serious writing whose author seeks to make an intimate appeal to the reader and involve the reader in a joint enterprise.” (Zhang, 1995:50) [11]. However, this situation is impossible to be found in SA.

In Chinese written language, the demonstrative determiner “我” is used to address itself to others by a factory, department or school, etc, and the noun collocates with it is confined to be monosyllable. Also, “我” can be used to refer to its own member by a unit. (Lü 1982:557-558) [12] Likewise, the demonstrative determiner “本”, preceding a noun, is used by a speaker to refer to a group, organization or place where he is or which he belongs to. Besides, “本” means “this” when used by a speaker to show his status as maker or director. (Lü 1982:69) [12]

In SA, though its editorial office belongs to the Shanghai municipal government and is in the city of Shanghai, neither “我” nor “本” can be used by the editor. Therefore, it should be directly recorded as “上海/上海市” instead of “我市/本市”. Thus:

(3) 上海除汉族外, 有 55 个少数民族成份。(SA:29)

(3a) *我市除汉族外, 有 55 个少数民族成份。

(4) 上海市地处长江入海口、太湖流域东缘。(SA:30)

(4a) *本市地处长江入海口、太湖流域东缘。

Sentence (3a) and (4a) are grammatical Chinese but are unacceptable in SA. Although sentence (3) and (3a) or (4) and (4a) are of the same syntactic meaning, their narrative points of view are different: sentence (3a) and (4a) uses first-person narrative so its author is more subjective or involved in what he is telling, while sentence (3) and (4) uses third-person narrative whose author is more objective and detached from what he is telling.

It should be noted that the usage of demonstrative determiner “我/本” in Chinese can be converted into possessive determiner “our” or proximal demonstrative determiner “this” in English. For example, the equivalent form of “我市/本市” can be “our state/this state” in TA, in which there is no occurrence of “our state” but happens to have cases of “this state”:

(5) HJR 133 — Authorizing a political subdivision of this state to extend the number of days that aircraft parts

that are exempt from ad valorem taxation due to their location in this state for a temporary period may be located in this state for purposes of qualifying for the tax exemption. (TA:472)

From the above comparison, we can find that TA takes a third-person narration in unison with SA on the whole, but the former is a bit less strict than the latter in the rare use of first-person pronoun “we” and determiner “our”.

3.2 Adverb of Degree

It is first proposed by Wang L. (2011:131-132) [13] that adverb of degree in Chinese is roughly divided into two categories according to whether there has semantic comparison (i.e. object-of-reference): those with such comparison is relative adverb of

degree, such as “最(为)”, “更(加)”, “愈(为)”, “格外”, “比较”, “较(为)”, “稍(微)”, “略”, etc; those without it is absolute adverb of degree, such as “太”, “万分”, “极(其)”, “几乎”, “很”, “非常”, “十分”, “颇(为)”, “尤为”, “挺”, “甚”, “有点(些)”, “不大”, etc. In English, as comparison in relation to a higher or the highest degree is expressed by the inflected forms in “-er” or “-est”, or by their equivalents with “more” or “most” (Zhang, 1995:159) [11], adverbs of degree are fewer accordingly. See examples of relative adverb of degree in almanacs:

(6).....发现人类语言的语音多样性分布有规律可循, 欧亚大陆语言语音比较复杂, 非洲较简单, 美洲与澳洲更简单。语音最复杂的前几种语言都出现在中国,(SA:274)

(7) His second administration was even more frugal than his first; ... (TA:58)

(8) The Davis administration was the most unpopular in Texas' history. (TA:65)

However, as Zhang G. B. (1997) [14] points out, absolute adverb of degree is not without any comparison, rather, its object-of-reference is general instead of concrete, that is to say, it does not make a comparison with an objective thing of a kind, but with subjective, empirical concept or understanding. In this sense, objectivity or subjectivity of semantic feature distinguishes between relative and absolute adverb of degree. Although the occurrence of relative adverb of degree is commonplace in both books, the distinction becomes sharp for the use of absolute adverb of degree: none is found in the entries of SA; whereas in TA there

are still a few cases of them—"extremely", "too", "very", "quite", "rather", "greatly", "almost", "nearly", "somewhat", "a little", etc:

(9) This system produced extremely heavy rainfall, strong damaging wind gusts, and tornadoes. (TA:153)

(10) Critics called the budget too costly while others said it failed to keep pace with population and inflation and didn't restore enough of the 2011 cuts. (TA:467)

(11) Temperatures were very cool, particularly in West Texas. (TA:141)

(12) Motor vehicle sales, however, were quite robust in fiscal 2011,...(TA:614)

(13) Temperature varies rather widely between summer's heat and winter's cold. (TA:81)

(14) The demand for high-quality Texas peaches greatly exceeds the supply. (TA:694)

(15) By 1900, almost half the state's farmers were tenants. (TA:66)

(16) Nearly one-third of the population was in the cities. (TA:69)

(17) Cash receipts from farm sales of crops are reduced somewhat because some grain and roughage is fed to livestock on farms where produced. (TA:686)

(18) It is immediately west of the primary forest region, with less annual rainfall and a little higher elevation. (TA:115)

3.3 Statistical Adverb in Existential Sentence

Basically, the existential sentence is used to state that something is at someplace. It has several patterns of syntactical structure in almost every language: in Chinese, perhaps the typical one is "N 处+有+N 物"; in English, "There be+NP+locative adverbial". (Zhang, 1995:178) [11]

In Chinese, "共" means "to count up in number", which is one of the statistical adverbs attached to the adverb of range. (Yang, 2000) [15] One of the equivalent forms of "共" can be "a total of" in English. As regards existential sentence, an interesting phenomenon we find is that there are quite a few cases of adding "共" before "有" in SA, though such usage is much less usual than that without "共"; while in TA "a total of" is not found at all:

(19) 2012 年, 上海共有网吧门店 1583 家, 终端数量 208033 台,(SA:328)

(19a) 2012 年, 上海有普通中学 (不含中等职业学校)

760 所, 其中民办中学 107 所;(SA:306)

(20) There are 1,216 incorporated municipalities in Texas that range in size from 19 residents in Los Ybáñez to Houston's 2,100,263, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. (TA:518)

Indeed, it is hard to differentiate between "共有" in sentence (19) and "有" in sentence (19a) semantically. Also, if "a total of" is put after "There are" in sentence (20), no semantic change appears to be brought about. One possible answer would have to do with cognitive or psychological explanation: the author of sentence (19) is telling the statistical "result" while putting emphasis on the statistical "process", in other words, he gives a hint to reader that the "result" has come out with some efforts by a "process" of data counting (for instance, from annual statistics in a work summary); whereas the author of sentence (19a) is simply telling the "result" with no regard for "process". Nevertheless, what the reader cares about is the "result" rather than the "process". That can partly explain why the existential sentence without "共/a total of" is seen much more often in SA and TA.

3.4 Demonstrative Determiner "The" and "该"²

In linguistics, demonstratives are often deictic words (they depend on an external frame-of-reference) that indicate which entities the speaker refers to and distinguish those entities from others.

In this category, the frequent use of "该" in Chinese almanacs needs elaboration. According to *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (2005:435), "该" is mainly used in official documents referring to somebody or something that has been mentioned above. Originated from the Ming Dynasty, "该" was first used before a name of official position, by the superior to the junior or by the government to the people, showing a strong condescending attitude, e.g. "该吏", "该衙门", particularly in official documents. But in modern Chinese, not only its usage has been so broadened that it can occur in different styles of writing and can collocate with various nouns, but its sense of superiority has been fading and disappearing, that is, the writer is almost

2 In this section, every "该" under discussion is a demonstrative, unless specified otherwise.

dispassionate to the referent (e.g. “该问题”, “该犯”). (Li, 2008) [16] Currently, the emotive or evaluative meaning of “该+NP” is usually neutral, sometimes pejorative, but never commendatory. (Wang, 2011) [13]

The function of “该” is partly analogous to “the” in terms of reference in discourse. Let’s see examples in almanacs:

(21) 3月5日, 上海电气集团在印度新德里宣告成立上海电气印度有限公司。该公司是上海电气集团投资1000万美元成立的全资分公司, 是其最重要的海外总部。(SA:136)

(22) *Bastrop State Park* is 3,503.7 acres one mile east of Bastrop on TX 21 or from TX 71. The park was acquired by deeds from the City of Bastrop and private owners in 1933-35; (TA:179)

In sentence (21) and (22), “该公司” and “The park” are used to refer back to “上海电气印度有限公司” and “Bastrop State Park” respectively. Such usage of reference is anaphoric, as the information has already been given before “该” or “the” occurs. Unlike “the” which can be anaphoric, cataphoric or homophoric (Note: “these various types of reference are not mutually exclusive. A given occurrence of ‘the’ might have any two or three functions at the same time”. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:73) [17], “该” serves as anaphoric only. From the angle of etymology, ‘the’ could derive from demonstrative itself as it “may be considered a weakened ‘that’”, either phonetically or semantically (Jespersen, 2006:122) [18]; while “该” derives from the verb “该” (e.g. “当该”, “该管”) which means “to manage” or “to be on duty” through a process of grammaticalization. (Li, 2008) [16]

In SA, the occurrence of “该” is twice as much as that of “这” and “那” combined. why is “该” so preferred? First, almanac is regarded as a sort of reference book in written and official language, corresponding with the register of “该”, which often occurs especially in weighty documents—legal, scientific, bureaucratic, etc. The use of “该” is somewhat characteristic of classical Chinese and could add some elegance to the writing. (Li, 2008) [16]

Second, when using “该”, the narrator is deliberately keeping distance from the object being narrated to show a neutral or detached standpoint, if not slightly disrespectful occasionally. (Wang, 2011) [13] Such objectivity is a must for almanac. (compare “这/那家公司” with “该公司”, the former inevitably bears a little psychological closeness or distance of the narrator)

Third, since the usage of “该” as reference is anaphoric, “该+NP” can be used to refer to a preceding antecedent which may be long (as in sentence (21)). Thus the use of “该” complies with a succinct and economical manner of writing required in almanac as it can avoid a complete repetition of the antecedent.

In brief, it seems undeniable that “该” sometimes functions as “the” to a certain extent, which is particularly conspicuous in almanac, although we cannot conclude they are exact equivalents.

3.5 Temporal Words

In the entries of SA, most of the temporal words have been written down as specific time or date (cf. “ostensive temporal word” “实指性的时间词” (Lü, 1982:216) [12], that is to say, one cannot use such words as “今年”, “去年”, “明年”, “本月”, etc (cf. “demonstrative temporal word” “称代性的时间词” (Lü, 1982:216) [12] or such words as “近几年”, “最近”, “现在”, “几年来”, “不久以前”, etc. For instance, to express the year 2012, it is better to write “2012年” specifically, or in the cases when a specific time has often occurred in previous part of the context, use “当年³”, “同年” or “年内”, or use “全年” when it is more likely in statistics, but never “今年”. Thus:

(23) 2012年, 上海有全日制普通高等院校67所, 其中民办高校20所。(SA:302)

(24) 年内, 市决咨委办公室决策咨询课题立项29个, 当年结项,(SA:289)

(25) 2012年, 因出演电视剧《焦裕禄》被中国电视剧导演协会提名为优秀男演员, 同年他主演的电影《生死罗布泊》获“五个一”工程奖。(SA:475)

(26) 全年共帮助529人成功创业。(SA:497)

TA is quite similar to SA on this point, for there is the use of “same year”, “annual” or “yearly” instead of “this year” or “current year”:

(27) In 2013, there were 13 counties wholly dry. (TA:531)

(28) In 2003, Dolphin Bay opened to house its Atlantic bottlenose dolphins. The same year, the Environmental Discovery Center opened,... (TA:198)

3 “当₁ (tone: dàng) 年” under discussion means “the same year”, different from “当₂ (tone: dāng) 年” which means “in those years/days”.

(29) Poultry and eggs annually contributed about 9.65 percent to the average yearly cash receipts (including government payments) of Texas farmers in 2011. (TA:698)

Another example is how to express “the year before this year”. Usually it should still be written down as a specific date, whether in texts or tables. But when statistical comparison happens between years, the situation becomes distinct: in SA, the specific date is avoided, and “上年” is chosen to be frequently used as temporal demonstrative, though it is grammatically less conventional than “去年” or “旧年” (Wang, 2011:222) [13]; whereas in TA, it would rather keep the specific date than barely use “last year” or “previous year”. Examples are:

(30) 2011 年, 在她努力下, 再次争取到 JICA 援助。 (SA:474)

(31) 2012 年, 郊区耕地面积 19.90 万公顷, 比上年下降 0.3%; (SA:118)

(32) Worldwide aircraft shipments were mixed in 2012 with total piston deliveries down to 881 from 898 in 2011, 889 in 2010, and 963 in 2009. (SA:698)

(33) Enrollment in Texas public schools reached a peak of 4,978,120 students in 2011–2012, ... That is an increase of almost 44,503 students over the last year; enrollment was 4,933,617 in 2010–2011. (TA:596)

(34) The change over the period April 2012 to April 2013 to the previous year was a decrease of 6.2 percent. (TA:629)

Generally speaking, barring the usage of “上年” in SA, more unspecific temporal words (including such adverbs of time or time adjuncts) have appeared in TA, especially when they denote a span of vague time, namely “now”, “currently”, “(until) recently”, “in recent years”, etc:

(35) It is now considered extinct in Texas. (TA:127)

(36) This destructive insect is currently at very low levels in East Texas. (TA:124)

(37) Recently, they have been introduced into the same areas with success. (TA:129)

(38) Drought has reduced receipts in recent years. (TA:686)

3.6 Tense and Aspect Marker

Tense and aspect are two fundamental grammatical categories in relation to time in a language. The former relates to the time when an action or state takes place, the latter to what stage or phase an action or state is in. Manifestations of such categories are distinct in different languages. As for Chinese and English, they take the

means of lexicon (e.g. “着”, “了”, “过”) and verb inflection (e.g. “-ing”, “-ed”) respectively. Here we just discuss such “tense and aspect markers” (TAM) with reference to predicate verb in a sentence.

An apparent distinction between SA and TA is that the former has very few TAM, while the latter keeps the TAM as they are. See examples:

(39) 2012 年, 印度尼西亚、埃塞俄比亚、哥伦比亚在沪设立总领事馆..... (SA:441)

(40) 2012 年.....20 个乡镇影院完成数字化改造投入运营, 完善了上海影院的布局。 (SA:336)

(41) State Pie—Pecan pie was named the state pie by the 83rd Legislature in 2013. (TA:23)

(42) In 2013, the University of North Texas and the University of Texas at San Antonio joined the conference. (TA:216)

One may argue that Chinese aspect markers such as “了” are themselves optional in most cases in view of the fact that aspects (perfective or progressive) of Chinese are non-obligatory grammatical categories with a low degree of grammaticalization (Wu, 2005), therefore the quantity of TAM does not account for the distinction.

However, according to a statistical result of two narrative texts in Chinese and English, the TAM ratios are 131/10,000 words and 663.3/10,000 words (Li, 2010:111). [19] Chinese TAM included in the statistics are “着”, “在”, “正在”, “过”, “了”, “将”, which, in a rough estimate, only total no more than 200 in the over one-million-word SA. In other words, the ratio of TAM in SA is approximately 2/10,000 words, far below that of the Chinese sample text.

That gives rise to suspicion that the TAM is purposely avoided in SA. In fact, as almanac editor, we are just told to edit every “了” functioning as TAM out unless ambiguity arises. It could not but lead to the assumption that as reference book, SA omits optional words as far as possible, even though it may run the risk of overdoing at times.

Another reason would have to do with genre. Generally in almanacs, the time of speaking is “this year” or “now”, and the time spoken of is “last year” (for SA) or “the past” (for TA). Hence the editor always takes a retrospective view: he only records what (has) happened, with no intention of involving what will happen; also, he (as well as the reader) is much more concerned about the completion or result of an action than its continuous situations. Thus the future tense and the progressive aspect are quite rare, and so are their corresponding TAM.

To conclude, the ratio of Chinese TAM is originally much lower than that of English TAM. In almanac, the difference is even made vast due to the conscious omission of Chinese TAM and the particular genre of almanac.

4 Metafunctional Analysis of Chinese and American Almanacs

4.1 Contrastive Texts I

Both in China and America, a census is carried out by the bureau of statistics of governments at all levels every few years. As a basic fact about a particular administrative area, it is naturally included in the local almanacs. SA' and MA' include a 2010 census in the subsidiary columns of "Special Articles" and "Documents" respectively, while TA and FA include a latest census just in the column of "Population".

In general, the censuses in the four almanacs record the local population and its variation compared with the past, its proportional make-up in terms of sex, age, minority (especially in the two American almanacs), immigration, education, region, household, etc. However, FA and TA are slightly different from SA' and MA' in that the former has not only a vertical comparison with the nation in the rate of population increase but also a horizontal comparison with other states in population ranking and rate of change. Some even have analysis of the causes of certain population changes, as in SA' and FA.

4.1.1 Comparability

In the four censuses, their field is a kind of document recording local population as well as its components and changes; their tenor is authority to common readers; their mode is official written language. In this sense, the texts of census in almanac are highly comparable.

4.1.2 Analysis of Ideational Metafunction

(i) Analysis of Transitivity

The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types, among which, material, mental and relational are the three main types, and behavioural, verbal and existential are further categories located at the three boundaries of the main types.

Table 1 Distribution of process types in contrastive Texts I

	TA	FA	SA'	MA'
Material	13(30%)	30(42%)	68(44%)	31(42%)
Relational	30(68%)	37(52%)	87(56%)	43(58%)
Mental	0	4(6%)	0	0
Behavioral	0	0	0	0
Verbal	0	0	0	0
Existential	1(2%)	0	0	0
total	44	71	155	74

From Table 1, we can see that material and relational processes are the two main process types, except for four mental processes in FA and one existential process in TA. A bit surprising is that relational processes outnumber material processes. In FA, SA' and MA', relational processes are more than half of the total processes. In TA, relational processes even account for over two-thirds of the total processes and are more than material processes by two to one. As generally relational and material processes are mostly used in depiction and narration respectively, Texts I is more depictive than narrative.

Relational clauses serve to characterize and to identify, which are processes of being and having. In relational clauses, there are two parts to the "being": something is said to "be" something else. In other words, a relationship of being is set up between two separate entities. (Halliday, 2008:213) [20] English operates with three main types of relation—"Intensive", "Possessive" and "Circumstantial"; and each of these comes in two distinct modes of being—"attributive" and "identifying". One important difference between the two modes is that the former is reversible while the latter is not. These two systems intersect to define six categories of relational clause. (Halliday, 2008:215) [20] We now exemplify them in turn:

(43) Despite the influx of children, Floridians got older. (FA:287)

(44) Texas is the second largest state after California,... (TA:415)

(45)全市常住人口为2301.92万人,.....(SA':65)

(46) The growth of Andrews and Midland counties reflects the oil and gas boom taking place in the Permian Basin,... (TA:415)

(47) 此次人口普查.....也反映了人民生活质量得到进一步提高。(SA':65)

(48) With population densities ranging from Liberty County's less than nine to Pinellas County's nearly 3,000,... (FA:287)

(49) They [The three groups of Cubans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans] were outnumbered by the total number of national groups from the rest of the Hispanic world.

(FA:286)

(50) Texas has three of the 10 largest cities in the nation... (TA:415)

(51) Monroe, which consists of the Florida Keys and the Everglades wilderness on the mainland,...(FA:286)

(52) 以上各种受教育程度的人包括各类学校的毕业生、肄业生和在校生。(MA':446)

Sentence (43) is attributive Intensive; sentence (44)—(47) are identifying Intensive; Sentence (48) is attributive Circumstantial; sentence (49) is identifying Circumstantial; Sentence (50) is attributive Possessive; Sentence (51) and (52) are identifying Possessive. Within texts I, English texts cover the six subtypes, while Chinese texts only have three.

Material clauses are processes of “doing” and “happening”. They express the notion that some entity “does” something—which may be done “to” some other entity. The source of the energy bring about the change is typically a participant—the Actor. A second participant which the Actor directs at or extends to is the Goal. (Halliday, 2000:110; 2008:179-180) [20] Each material process consists of an obligatory Actor and an optional Goal.

A “material” clause may be (i) “intransitive”, if the change is confined to the Actor itself and there is only one participant inherent in the process; (ii) “transitive”, if the change is extended to the Goal; (iii) “creative”, if the Actor or Goal is construed as being brought about into existence; (iv) “transformative”, if a pre-existing Actor or Goal is construed as being transformed. (Halliday, 2008:184) [20] Examples are given below:

(53) A large majority of population growth in the state occurs in its four largest metropolitan areas...(TA:415)

(54) Orlando’s Hispanic population grew 141 percent. (FA:286)

(55) 全区常住人口.....10 年共增加了 1212063 人, 增长 99.57%。(MA':445)

(56) 上海市第六次全国人口普查取得反映上海人口总量、素质、结构、分布、迁移流动等大量基础数据,(SA':65)

(57) ...the increase in population will give it [the state] two congressional seats in 2003, bringing its total to 25 seats. (FA:286)

(58) [外省市来沪常住人口的性别比].....一定程度上拉高了全市常住人口性别比。(SA':66)

Sentence (53) is creative Intransitive; sentence (54) and (55) are transformative Intransitive; sentence (56) is creative Transitive; sentence (57) and (58) are transformative Transitive. Within Texts I, both English and Chinese texts lack one subtype, and the transformative type is much more common than the creative type.

In a mental clause, there is always one participant who is human—the Senser; that which is felt, thought, wanted or perceived is the Phenomenon whose position is in a sense reversed. The Phenomenon may be not only a thing but also an act of a fact. (Halliday, 2008:197, 203) [20]

Within Texts I, only FA has four mental processes, which take up 6 percent of the total processes. Let’s see three of them:

(59) Jefferson saw its population of children drop by 10 percent. (FA:287)

(60) The new districts are expected to be in South Florida and in Central Florida, north of Orlando. (FA:286)

(61) Citrus County, which was thought to be getting younger, got older and logged in a median age of 53. (FA:287)

In sentence (59), the place “Jefferson” has been dressed up to look as if it was a participant, an onlooker “seeing” the population change. Obviously, it is not a typical way of saying things in comparison with “its population of children dropped by 10 percent in Jefferson”. We can analyze either as in Figure 1 or as in Figure 2:

Jefferson	saw	its population of children drop	by 10 percent
Senser	Mental	Phenomenon	Manner

Figure 1 Analysis of metaphorical form of sentence (59)

its population of children	dropped	by 10 percent	in Jefferson
Actor	Material	Manner	Place

Figure 2 Analysis of congruent rewording of sentence (59)

From the above analysis, we can see that “Jefferson” is congruently a circumstance of Place and metaphorically a Senser. Thereby, material process is converted to mental process by the metaphorical use of the verb “saw”. Halliday (2008:244) [20] classifies it as one type of grammatical metaphor.

Sentence (60) and (61) are passive voice, of which the hidden Senser—probably a generic entity—is avoided to be mentioned or is hard to be made clear. Such expression is often seen in journalistic writings and reports, but it gives people a feeling of uncertainty and inauthenticity. As mental processes bear human subjectivity more or less, it is unusual in Texts I.

Existential clauses represent that something exists or happens, which is typified by the “There be” pattern. (Halliday, 2008:256) [20] Academic views diverge on definitions and patterns of existential clause in Chinese language. Here we adopt the point of Lü (1982:24) [12] that in an existential clause, the position of the Subject is generally filled by place or time. By this standard, there is no existential process in Chinese texts. The only one in TA is:

(62) While there was a population increase in these places, ... (TA:415)

In sentence (62), the Existent “a population increase” is introduced as central participant in a circumstance.

In summary, Texts I is both description and narration, and the former outweighs the latter. Besides, Texts I is fundamentally objective rather than subjective as it almost has no mental, behavioral and verbal processes which are typically related to human (or human-like).

(ii) Analysis of Voice

Here we just consider the voice in Texts I by the traditional standard of the “active” and “passive”, without regard to the “middle”. (Halliday, 2008:297) [20]

Table 2 Count of voice in contrastive Texts I

	TA	FA	SA'	MA'
Active	42(95%)	65(92%)	151(97%)	74(100%)
Passive	2(5%)	6(8%)	4(3%)	0
total	44	71	155	74

Table 1 shows that the active voice is in a dominant position (over 90%), though there is more passive voice in English texts (over 5%) than that in Chinese texts (less than 3%). English passive is more overt as it is expressed with clear “be + -ed participle” marker as in sentence (63), but Chinese passive is often covert as in sentence (64):

(63) The rise was attributed to the changing demographics of the state,...(FA:287)

(64).....主要是近年来上海城市基础设施建设和郊区新城建设不断加快, 城市布局进一步优化和产业结构调整深化等一系列因素对人口流动的导向作用明显,(SA':66)

4.1.3 Analysis of Interpersonal Metafunction

In Texts I, every clause is a proposition, or to be specific, a statement. An examination of Texts I shows that all the clauses are declaratives, that is, neither interrogative nor imperative is found. This fact is consistent with the function of almanac to give information and get readers informed.

In SFL, polarity is the opposition between positive and negative. Typically it is expressed in the Finite element; the positive clause is formally unmarked, while the negative is realized by some additional element: in English, by the word “not”/“不, 没” located in the neighborhood of the verb. In addition, negative polarity can also be identified by other negative expressions including Mood adjuncts (e.g. “no”/“无, 没有”, “never”/“从不”, “hardly”/“很少”). (Halliday, 2008:143) [19] Within Texts I, negative is quite rare, as there are only two cases in FA, two cases in SA' and MA', none in TA. See examples:

(65) No county lost population. (FA:286)

(66) The three groups combined, however, did not make up a majority among Hispanics. (FA:286)

(67) 全市常住人口中, 文盲人口(15岁及以上不识字的人)为631018人,(SA':66)

However, the possibilities are not limited to a choice between yes and no. There are intermediate degrees: various kinds of indeterminacy that fall in between, like “sometimes” or “maybe”. These intermediate degrees, between the positive and negative poles, are known collectively as Modality, which is the speaker’s judgment, or request of the judgment of the listener, on the status of what is being said. (Halliday, 2008:143,146) [20] Regarding propositions or proposals, Modality is divided into Modalization or Modulation. As all the clauses in Texts I are propositions, we only need to discuss the former.

In a proposition, there are two kinds of intermediate possibilities: (i) degree of probability: “possibly(可能)/probably(也许)/certainly(当然)”; (ii) degree of usuality: “sometimes(有时)/usually(通常)/always(总是)”. These

scales are referred to as Modalization, which can be expressed in the same three ways: (a) by a finite modal operator in the verbal group (e.g. “can”, “will”, “must”); (b) by a modal adjunct of probability or usuality; (c) by both together. (Halliday, 2008:147) [20] Within Texts I, no such words are found. The lack of the usage of Modality is not unnatural at all. It accords with the particular function of almanac to tell readers as definitely as possible the facts in the way that should be impartial and undistorted, without involving the attitude of the author.

In summary, Texts I is featured by all declaratives, rare negative and no Modality, which shows an objective and straight way of writing with cautious use of attitude. Note that in a statement the modality is an expression of the speaker’s opinion. Even a high value modal (“certainly”, “always”) is less determinate than a polar form: *certainly no county lost population* is less certain than *no county lost population* (sentence (65)). In other words, you only say you are certain when you are not. (Halliday, 2008:147) [20]

4.1.4 Analysis of Textual Metafunction

As a message structure, a clause consists of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme; and the structure is expressed by the order—whatever is chosen as the Theme is put first. In a declarative clause, the mapping of Theme on to Subject is referred to as the unmarked Theme; while a Theme that is something other than the Subject is referred as a marked Theme. (Halliday, 2008:64-65, 73) [20]

Table 3 Count of Themes in contrastive Texts I

	TA	FA	SA'	MA'
unmarked	28(82%)	45(92%)	44(71%)	21(55%)
marked	6(18%)	4(8%)	18(29%)	17(45%)
omitted	0	0	4(6%)	0
total	34	49	62	38

Note: the omitted Theme is not included in the total, and its percentage is worked out by its number to the total.

Table 1 shows that the Themes in Texts I are mainly unmarked. But in Chinese texts, the marked Themes take up higher proportions, especially in MA', close to half (45%). The most usual form of marked Theme is an adverbial group or prepositional phrase functioning as Adjunct in the clause. See examples:

(68) From 2010 to 2012, a total of 96 of the state’s 254 counties had declining populations. (TA:415)

(69) Statewide, the Puerto Rican population increased 95 percent to 482,027,... (FA:286)

(70) 全市常住人口中，汉族人口为 2274.33 万人，.....(SA':66)

(71) 根据国务院的决定，我国以 2010 年 11 月 1 日零时为标准时点进行了第六次全国人口普查。(MA':445)

The cause of more unmarked Themes in Chinese texts could be:

First, as a parataxis language, a Chinese clause has more inclination to put its Adjunct(s) to the initial position, such as:

(72) 在市、区政府的统一领导和全体普查对象的支持配合下，通过全区 1.26 万普查工作人员的艰苦努力，圆满完成了人口普查的现场登记和复查任务。(MA':445)

Second, so long as no ambiguity arises, a Chinese clause is likely in the habit of omitting its Subject (note the content in “[]” in the following examples), so that its original position of possible unmarked Theme is taken over by other words functioned as marked Theme as in sentence (73) or no Theme at all (also can be considered as omission of Theme) as in sentence (74):

(73) [全区常住人口] 平均每年增加 79160 人，.....(MA':445)

(74) [这] 反映上海经济的快速发展和大都市的魅力，同样吸引着边远地区的少数民族人口。(SA':66)

Besides, the phenomenon of omission of Theme (as in SA') should not be skipped over, on which we are going to elaborate in Section 4.2.5.

4.2 Contrastive Texts II

“Crime” or “Public Security” is a regular column in an almanac. In TA or FA, “Crime” mainly includes the change of the overall crime rate, the change of rate of the respective crime categories, the value of property stolen, and the possible new trend in crime. In addition, “Crime” sketches some actions taken by the police agencies. However, in SA or MA, besides the record of the change of different crime rate, “Public Security” elaborates a variety of actions taken by the public security organs. Just as their titles suggest, the former lays stress on the crime itself, while the latter puts emphasis on the law-executors and their actions fighting against crime.

4.2.1 Comparability

Compared with Texts I, Texts II has much more distinction in discourse structure between Chinese and English texts. Even so, there is no doubt that the four texts

are nearly of the same register, and therefore comparable.

4.2.2 Analysis of Ideational Metafunction

(i) Analysis of Transitivity

Table 4 Distribution of process types in contrastive Texts II

	TA	FA	SA	MA
Material	15(60%)	7(78%)	74(97%)	75(96%)
Relational	9(36%)	2(22%)	2(3%)	2(3%)
Mental	0	0	0	0
Behavioral	0	0	0	0
Verbal	0	0	0	0
Existential	1(4%)	0	0	1(1%)
total	25	9	76	78

From Table 4, we can see that material and relational processes are the two main and only process types, except for one existential process in TA and MA respectively. But very different from Texts I, Texts II features a clear preponderance of material process: in English texts, material processes are more than half of the total processes and even near to four-fifths; while in Chinese texts, to our surprise, material processes are almost all. Although relational processes account for a small part, English texts have a much higher ratio than Chinese texts in relational processes. In other words, Texts II is largely concerned with actions and events, and it is much more narrative than depictive. See examples:

(75) 全年发生火灾事故 354 起,(MA:134)

(76) The overall major crime rate in Texas for 2012 decreased 3 percent compared to 2011. (TA:558)

(77) 查处违法犯罪嫌疑人 77174 人, 比上年下降 11.9%。(SA: 426)

(78)建成市局、分(县)局两级公安机关现场执法场所联网实时监督系统平台。(SA:426)

(79) Florida's Department of Law Enforcement has compiled crime statistics from county and municipal law enforcement agencies since 1930. (FA: 305)

(80)破获各类经济案件 9028 起, 追回经济损失 26.52 亿元。(SA: 426)

(81) Police agencies have placed renewed emphasis on domestic violence,...(FA: 305)

Sentence (75) is creative Intransitive; sentence (76) and (77) are transformative Intransitive; sentence (78) and (79) are creative Transitive; sentence (80) and (81) are transformative Transitive. Within Texts II, English texts lack one subtype, but Chinese texts have all the four subtypes. In general, the transformative type is more common than the creative type.

Then let's see some examples of relational processes:

(82) Murder was up 4.8 percent,... (TA:558)

(83) 全市公众安全感调查总体评价指数为 83.28,(SA:426)

(84) ...the actual number of crimes for 2012 shows a 1.2 percent increase in violent crimes over 2011,... (TA:558)

(85) The latest available figures cover 2000, a period in which both the overall crime rate and violent crime rate declined again. (FA:305)

(86) Data are estimated for non-reporting agencies and those that did not have 12 months of data. (TA:558)

(87) 上海市公安局闵行分局 (简称“公安闵行分局”) 设有指挥处、政治处、.....(MA:133)

Sentence (82)–(84) are identifying Intensive; sentence (85) is identifying Circumstantial; sentence (86) and (87) are attributive Possessive. Within Texts II, English texts cover three subtypes, while Chinese texts only have two.

Finally let's see the only two existential processes:

(88) In 2012, there were 3,766.8 crimes per 100,000 people,... (TA:558)

(89) 全年有 30 个集体、775 人次受到记功、嘉奖。(MA:133)

There are no mental, behavioral and verbal processes in Texts II.

(ii) Analysis of Voice

Here we also consider the voice in Texts II by the traditional standard of the “active” and “passive”, without regard for the “middle”.

Table 5 Count of voice in contrastive Texts II

	TA	FA	SA	MA
Active	25(100%)	8(89%)	76(100%)	78(100%)
Passive	0	1(11%)	0	0
total	25	9	76	78

Table 1 shows that the active voice is all (as in TA, SA and MA), except for one case of passive voice in FA:

(90) Crimes are indexed in seven categories: ... (FA:305)

4.2.3 Analysis of Interpersonal Metafunction

Just like Texts I, all the clauses in Texts II are declaratives. It shows that the function of almanac is to pass information to readers.

Within Texts II, negative is rather rare, as there are only one case in TA:

(91) Data are estimated for non-reporting agencies and

those that did not have 12 months of data. (TA:558)

Within Texts II, there is also no usage of Modality.

Therefore, the conclusion is exactly the same as in Section 4.1.4.

4.2.4 Analysis of Textual Metafunction

Table 6 Count of Themes in contrastive Texts II

	TA	FA	SA	MA
unmarked	19(79%)	7(87%)	8(50%)	7(39%)
marked	5(21%)	1(13%)	8(50%)	11(61%)
omitted	0	0	26(163%)	23(128%)
total	24	8	16	18

Note: The omitted Theme is not included in the total, and its percentage is worked out by its number to the total.

Table 6 shows that in Texts II the unmarked Themes still take up a larger proportion in English texts, but in Chinese texts it is the other way round: the marked Themes are no less than the unmarked Themes or even outweigh them, which is quite different from the situation in Texts I. The usual marked Theme is still adverbial group or prepositional phrase as in Texts I.

However, in Texts II, one striking feature in Chinese texts is that the number of omitted Themes are surprisingly more than the total of both unmarked and marked Themes. See examples:

(92) [上海公安机关]严厉打击危害经济金融安全 and 关系群众切身利益、影响社会稳定的经济犯罪。[上海公安机关]开展清理整治网络黑市、深化打击整治网络违法犯罪等专项整治行动，全年破获包括“8·1”特大网络制贩枪支案在内的涉网案件 2600 余起。[上海公安机关]整治治安突出问题，全年查处治安案件 726396 起，行政拘留 6.7 万人。(SA:426)

(93) [上海市公安局闵行分局]刑事拘留犯罪嫌疑人 3708 人，比上年增长 17.0%；[上海市公安局闵行分局]查处 2470 人，比上年增长 26.2%；[上海市公安局闵行分局]抓获网上追逃对象 442 人。(MA:134)

In sentences (92) and (93), the contents in “[]” are omitted Themes (or Subjects) which are “上海公安机关” and “上海市公安局闵行分局” respectively. As a matter of fact, in Chinese texts all the omitted Themes are the two names of bureau of public securities. What causes the noticeable disparities of Theme between the English and Chinese texts?

First, it is generally accepted that English is a Subject-prominent language and Chinese a Topic-prominent language. Therefore, in an English

sentence it is almost hard to dispense with the Subject, whereas in a Chinese sentence the Subject is often optional so that it can in that case be omitted and will not affect the semantic expression. In effect, in many contexts, the omission of Subject is more idiomatic than the recovery of Subject. Chinese is such a language whose Subject is more often than not dropped so that the Actor does not appear. As in sentence (92) and (93), since “上海公安机关” and “上海市公安局闵行分局” play the role of discourse Topic, it is not obligatory for them to appear in each sentence or clause as Subject or Theme.

Second, the Thematic progression of the English and Chinese texts is distinct: the former has no clear unitary thematic pattern, while the latter is typical of the “radial pattern”, that is, several sentences share the same Theme but each of them has different Rheme:

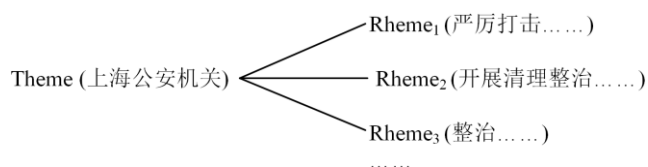


Figure 3 “Radical” pattern of Thematic progression exemplified by sentence (92)

Figure 3 presents that in Chinese texts the Rhemes center round the same Theme (“上海公安机关” or “上海市公安局闵行分局”) to narrate and elaborate it over and over. In CL, this phenomenon is quite similar to “zero anaphora”, when personal pronoun functioning as anaphoric is omitted in a text featured by “topic-chain”—the topic of several consecutive sentences are about the same person or thing. (Xu, 2010:162-163) [21]

In short, although the contrastive texts belong to the same genre—“Crime” or “Public Security” column in almanac, due to the Chinese and American social and cultural differences, they still have rather observable distinctions in generic structure.

Genre Analysis of Chinese and American Almanacs

It is widely believed by Systemic Functionalists that context of culture gets into a text through generic structure. That is to say, different generic structure helps the readers or listeners to recognize different contexts of culture or different genres, because generic structure is the realization of such contexts. Thus the analysis of discourse from a socio-cultural perspective should start from generic structure.

Comparing Hasan’s GSP with Martin’s Schematic Structure approaches, we find the former is more

applicable for the analysis of generic structure of our contrastive texts, while at the same time we adopt Martin's notion that genre is at the stratum above register and is conditioned by context of culture such as institution or ideology. Therefore, the present study integrates the theories of both sides as we find it is more conducive to our analysis.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

First, through the contrastive study of Chinese and American almanacs on the lexicogrammar level, their commonalities are: third-person narration, rare use of the absolute adverb of degree, uncommon use of statistical adverb in the existential sentence, common use of the demonstrative determiner (“the” / “该”) to refer to the antecedent, and common use of specific temporal words, all of which show the linguistic features of almanac as objective, detached, result-oriented, economical and accurate. However, there are still differences between them: (i) The American almanac is less strict than the Chinese almanac in the rare use of first-person pronoun “we” and determiner “our”, and absolute adverb of degree, which show a lesser degree in objectivity and detachment; (ii) The American almanac has more unspecific temporal words, especially when they denote a span of vague time, which shows a lesser degree in accuracy; (iii) The Chinese almanac has much more statistical adverb “共” in existential sentence, which still bears a touch of consciousness of statistical “process” rather than “result”; (iv) The Chinese almanac deliberately omits its TAM typified by the word “了”, which reinforces an economy of words.

Second, through the three metafunctional analysis of contrastive Texts I (“Census”) and Texts II (“Crime” / “Public Security”), their commonalities are: (i) As for ideational metafunction, material and relational processes are in a dominant position, which shows they are fundamentally objective rather than subjective as they almost have no mental, behavioral and verbal processes that are typically related to human or subjectivity; (ii) As for interpersonal metafunction, they are featured by all declaratives, rare negative and no modality, which shows an objective and straight way of writing with discreet use of attitude. However, their differences are: (i) Texts I is more depictive than narrative as relational processes outnumber material processes, while Texts II is much more narrative than depictive as material processes overwhelm relational

processes; (ii) In Chinese almanacs, the marked Themes take up higher proportions and even outweigh the unmarked Themes, which represents the characteristics of Chinese as a parataxis language that has more inclination to put the Adjunct(s) to the initial position or omit the Subject in a clause; (iii) In Chinese almanacs of Texts II, omitted Themes (mostly name of government organ) are surprisingly more than the total of both unmarked and marked Themes, which can be in relation to the factors of the Topic-prominent Chinese language, the “radial pattern” of Thematic progression and generic variations.

Third, through the genre analysis still of contrastive Texts I and Texts II, their commonalities are: the GSP for CC of Texts I and Texts II are “local population ^ change rate ^ ethnic population change” and “crime number and change of rate ^ action(s) of the police” respectively, which could be regarded as the obligatory elements of their particular genres. However, their differences are: (i) The generic variations of Texts I are mainly influenced by institution (i.e. local conditions) in that American almanacs include “national statistics” while Chinese almanacs include “migrant population change” and “change of educational levels”, which are the optional elements of its genre; (ii) The generic variations of Texts II are mainly influenced by ideology (i.e. socio-cultural status of the almanac editor) in that Chinese almanacs list various measures, actions, events, efforts and even honors of the police in detail while American almanacs nearly neglect them.

Finally, combining the three lines of inquiry, we can see the effect of linguistic stratification as in Figure 1, that is, genre is positioned as an abstract level of analysis coordinating field, tenor and mode (known collectively as register), and register is realized in turn through language (discourse semantics, lexicogrammar, etc). In other words, as reference book, the genre of almanac conditions the ideational metafunction in fundamental objectivity, the interpersonal metafunction in objectivity and straightness, and certain lexicogrammatical features in objectivity, detachment, result-orientation, economy and accuracy.

5.2 Significance

Theoretically, the present study bridges the gap between linguistics and almanacs, and thus paves a new way for the development of both CL and SFL, and almanac studies.

Practically, through this study, the Chinese and American almanacs could attempt to overcome their respective

weaknesses by learning from each other. For example, under the guiding principle of objectivity, Chinese almanacs could moderately shift the view of socio-cultural status from government-orientation to market-orientation (or public-orientation) by erasing the writing style of work summary, that is, by greatly reducing the records of various measures, actions, events, efforts and even honors of government organs and thereby decreasing the over-much omitted Themes of their names, and by avoiding the use of the statistical adverb “共” in existential sentence, etc. In turn, American almanacs could raise the degree in objectivity and accuracy to be more authoritative and avoid the suspicion of advertising by reducing as much as possible the use of first-person pronoun “we” and determiner “our”, absolute adverb of degree, and unspecific temporal words that are associated with a span of vague time, etc.

Admittedly, the corpus is relatively small and the analysis not all-sided. To secure more reliable research outcome, a study based on a large-scale corpus covering more almanacs and genres is in need. We expect to see improvement or optimization in the future and further explorations.

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