

A Study on the Stance-taking of Advanced Oral English Teaching Materials—A Case Study of *Bridging Cultures*

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Based on the theory of stance in interactive linguistics and the corpus of *Bridging Cultures*, this paper studies the stance-taking of advanced oral English. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research to sort out and analyze the advanced oral corpus, the research finding suggests that people mainly use adjectives to express positive and negative stances, followed by nouns and verbs. Among the many grammatical constructions to express stances, “sub +is +adj” is the dominant structure, followed by “adv +adj”. It mainly presents four kinds of stance-taking in advanced oral English based on *Bridging Cultures* teaching materials: (1) positively evaluation stance-taking; (2) positive attitude stance-taking; (3) negative evaluation stance-taking; and (4) negative attitude stance-taking.

Keywords: teaching materials, advanced oral English, stance-taking

I. Introduction

The study of oral language is the focus of current linguistics research, which is also based on usage. Based on the *Bridging Cultures*, this paper explores the vocabulary and grammatical means for speakers to express different stances in oral conversation, tries to summarize the stance-taking of advanced oral English teaching materials, and provides reference for advanced oral English stance-taking teaching.

Research Background

The concept of “stance” originated in Western linguistic circles. Biber and Finegan first proposed the concept of stance in 1988, and later Conrad and Biber (2000) and so on. Since the 1990s, the study of “stance” has been flourishing, extending from the fields of discourse functional linguistics, systematic functional linguistics and conversation analysis to corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics and interactive linguistics. The main representative research paradigms of stance-taking include Berman et al. (2002), Hyland (2005a), Englebretson (2007a), Du Bois (2007), Haddington (2005) and other interactive linguistic research paradigms; Jaffe (2009), Ochs (1996) and other research paradigms of sociolinguistic and anthropological linguistics; Conrad and Biber (2000) et al.’s corpus linguistics research paradigm.

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Conrad and Biber (2000) put forward three sub-categories of stance: epistemic stance, attitudinal stance and stylistic stance. Epistemic stance refers to the comment on the certainty, reliability and limitation of the prostance, as well as the comment on the source of information; Attitude stance is the stance-taking of the speaker's attitude, feeling and value judgment; Stylistic stance is how a speaker or writer speaks or writes.

This study uses the stance triangulation model proposed by Du Bois (2007) to discuss the discourse stance in the interaction process of spoken English. The behavior of Stance stance-taking consists of three elements: Stance Subject 1, Stance Subject 2 and Stance Object. The first two are the two sides of the interaction, and the stance object refers to the topic or focus (characters, events, problems, etc.) that the interactor talks about.

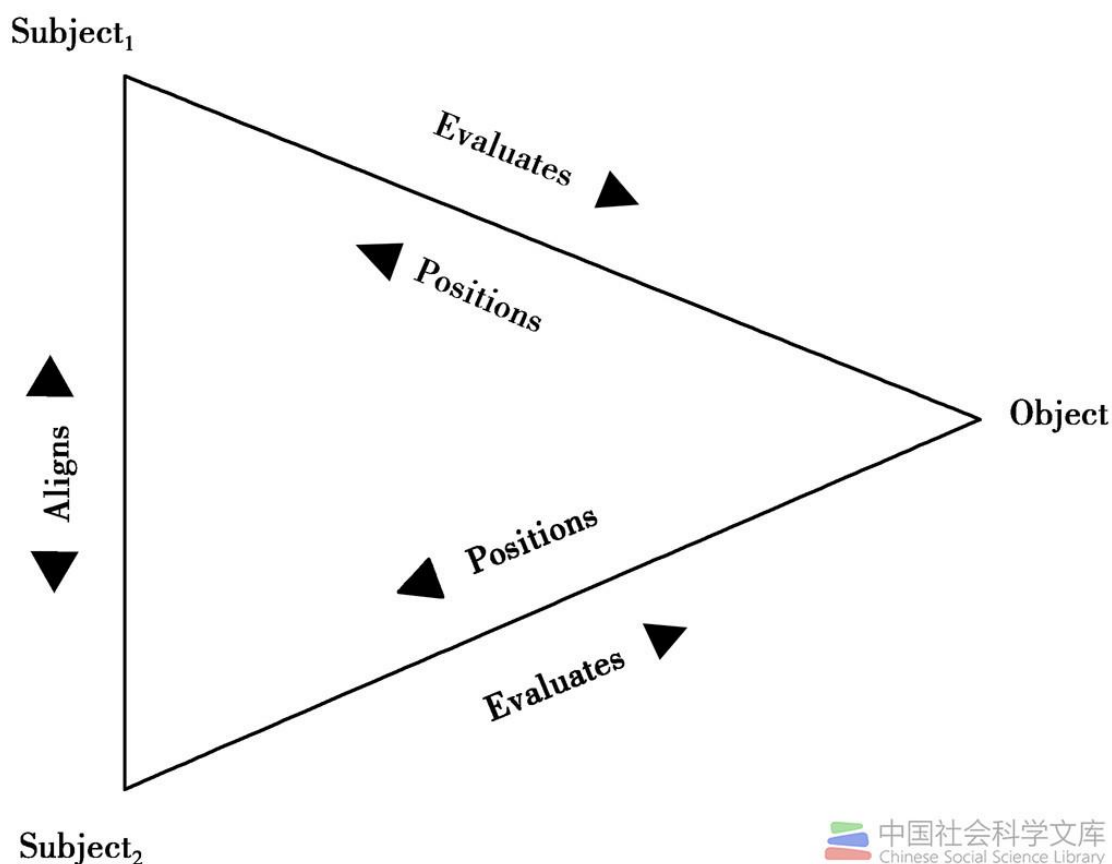


Figure 1. Stance Triangle. (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163)

Research Motivation and Objective

Stance-taking is the key and difficult point of English learning for Chinese students. The purpose of this study is to help Chinese English learners better grasp the vocabulary and grammar of oral stance-taking, tries to summarize stance-taking vocabulary and grammar for Chinese English learners, and help Chinese English learners improve their oral English.

II. Words and Stance-taking

The survey of *Bridging Cultures* shows that in advanced oral English communication, speakers will use a large number of adjectives to express their stances, and occasionally use verbs and nouns. These words mainly

express the speaker's attitude and evaluation of objective things. The positive and negative aspects will be discussed.

Adjective and Stance-taking

The statistical textbook found that 117 adjectives expressed a positive stance and 23 adjectives expressed a negative stance.

Adjective and Positive Stance-taking

The survey of *Bridging Cultures* shows that out of 117 positive adjectives, 111 expressed the speaker's positive evaluation of an objective object, such as "top, best, advanced, good, interesting, wonderful, awesome, nice.....". There are six adjectives that express the speaker's positive attitude toward something objective, such as "interesting, favorite, ideal, glad, happy, lovely".

a. In the whole textbook, most speakers choose to use adjectives with positive meaning to express the speaker's positive evaluation of objective things, while taking into account the face and image of the listener, giving full respect to the listener, thus making the dialogue atmosphere more friendly and easier to promote.

Example (1) *Ming*:*I want to further my studies at the Columbia University in New York.*

Visa officer: *Oh, it's a top school.....*

In dialogue (1), when the speaker Ming mentions that he is going to further his study in Columbia University in New York, the listener Visa officer immediately says that Columbia University is a top university and uses the adjective "top" to express positive evaluation of Columbia University and take care of Ming's face. Make the whole conversation more friendly and relaxed.

b. In individual cases, speakers may consider using the superlative adjective to express a positive assessment of something objective. Such as "best, biggest, smartest".

Example (2) *interviewer*--*Why do you choose our school?*

student--*I want to further my study at your school because it's one of the best schools in the United States.*

Example (3) *interviewer*--*Why do you choose to study at Columbia University?*

student--*This university offers the best courses.*

In Dialogue (2), when the interviewer asked the student why he chose this school, the student used the highest level of the adjective "good" to answer because this school is one of the best schools in the United States.

In Dialogue (3), when an interviewer asked the student why he chose to study at Columbia University, the student used the superlative "best" of the adjective "good" to answer because the university offers the best courses.

On the occasion of interviewing students at school, students use "best" to express their recognition and firm choice of the chosen school, which is the greatest respect of the school interviewer, and also conducive to the interviewer's admission of students.

c. There are six adjectives that express the speaker's positive attitude toward something objective, such as "interesting, favorite, ideal, glad, happy, lovely".

Example (4) Meeting the Homestay Family

Ms.Li: *That's good. My daughter is at Beijing Art College.*

She's majoring in Chinese folk dance.

Amanda: How interesting! Can I watch her practice?

Ms.Li: Yes. Of course. Actually she's going to perform at the Art Festival of her School next week. We can go together to her show.

In conversation (4), Amanda is going to stay at Ms. Li's house. When Ms. Li introduced her sister to study folk dance at Beijing Arts Institute, Amanda said "How interesting!" to express her interest in Ms. Li's sister studying folk dance in Beijing Academy of Arts, which further narrowed their relationship and made them instantly familiar with each other when they met for the first time. In the following dialogue, Ms. Li also readily said that she would take her to see her sister's performance. The use of "interesting" made the whole dialogue achieve good results.

Adjective and Negative Stance-taking

The survey of Bridging Cultures shows that out of 21 negative adjectives, 19 expressed the speaker's negative assessment of objective things, such as "complicated, boring, sucked, trouble, slow, serious, slow.....". There are three adjectives that express the speaker's extremely negative attitude towards objective things, such as "biased, pain, bad".

a. When the speaker uses adjectives with negative meanings to evaluate things, it will attract the listener's attention, and the listener will respond appropriately to the speaker according to the context, providing necessary explanations, comfort and encouragement.

Example (5) Tasting Tea

Chris: Is this the way Chinese drink tea? It looks so complicated.

Lily: Kinda. This is a special type of tea. We call this Gongfu Cha in Chinese.

Chris: What does it mean?

Lily: Gongfu in Chinese means "it takes time".

In conversation (5), Chris thinks that the Chinese way of drinking tea seems "complicated". The listener Lily patiently explained that it was a special kind of tea called kung fu tea. Negative comments often attract the listener's attention, and the listener will explain further.

Example (6) Delivering a Commencement Speech

Sean: (whispering back) Thank you. You think it was good? I hope I didn't pronounce the Chinese part wrong. I'm always worried about my tones.

Lily: Don't be so modest. You did very well.

In dialogue (6), Sean is worried about his Chinese pronunciation and hopes that he can make no mistakes in his Chinese speech. Lily just told him not to be too modest, which he always said. When the speaker uses the negative evaluation "wrong", it often attracts the listener's attention, and the listener uses "modest" and "well" to comfort and encourage Sean.

b. There are three adjectives that express the speaker's extremely negative attitude towards objective things, such as "biased, pain, bad". The speaker's negative attitude often elicits comfort from the listener.

Example (7) Talking About TCM Treatment

Amanda: It was amazing. Look, I'm sorry that I missed several classes. I feel bad about that.

Lily: Well, your teachers will understand that.

In dialogue (7), Amanda is worried about missing class, saying that she “feels bad” and has a negative attitude. Lily comforted Amanda patiently, saying that the teacher would understand. A negative attitude often elicits reassurance from the listener.

Noun and Stance-taking

Throughout the entire textbook, we only find two nouns that express negative evaluation stance, such as “trash and hardwork”. The use of nouns to express one’s negative stance, coupled with metaphors and other rhetorical means, will make the language stance-taking more vivid and dynamic.

Example (8) --*Do you like Hollywood movies?*

--*Well, some are good, but others are just trash.*

In Dialogue (8), the speaker asks: Do you like Hollywood movies? When the listener uses the noun “trash” to express his dislike of some movies, he uses figurative rhetorical means here to make the language stance-taking more humorous, graphic and vivid.

Example (9) --*That’s tough. I heard you owned a repair plant*

--*Yes, after 15 years’ hardwork, I built my own plant.*

In dialogue (9), when the speaker says that the listener has opened a repair shop, the listener uses the noun “hardwork” to express that it is not easy to open this repair shop. Using the noun “hardwork” will make people feel more vivid and is also a modest stance-taking.

Verb and Stance-taking

Throughout the whole textbook, we only find two verbs that express the speaker’s positive attitude towards objective things, such as “like, love”.

Example (10) Having Christmas Dinner

Ming: I’m from Beijing, China. Across the ocean.

Mr.Giunta: How do you like New York?

*Ming: I like this city. It’s a place with lots of diversity,virality,
And dynamism.*

.....

Mrs.Giunta: Dinner is ready.

Joe:Great! Time for turkey, Mom’s special recipe. I love holiday

In Dialogue (10), when the speaker Mr.Giunta asked Ming how he liked New York? Ming uses the verb “like” to express a liking attitude. Joe is Mrs.Giunta’s child. When she hears her mother say that dinner is ready, she is very excited. She uses the verb love to express her love for the holidays.

III. Grammatical Structure and Stance-taking

The survey of *Bridging Cultures* shows that speakers will use specific sentence structures to express their stances in oral English communication. These sentence structures mainly express the speaker’s attitude and evaluation of objective things, and the positive and negative aspects will be mainly discussed.

A. Grammatical Structure and Positive Stance-taking

The survey of *Bridging Cultures* shows that out of 50 positive stances, 37 expressed the speaker's positive evaluation of objective things, "that is very good, that's very interesting, pretty good, very well, so wonderful...". There are 13 stance-takings of the speaker's positive attitude toward something objective, such as "I/you'd like to, I'm passionate/crazy about, I'd love to, you'd better, have a good trip, my pleasure.....". In the whole textbook, most of the speakers choose to use positive grammatical structures to express the speaker's positive evaluation of objective things, while taking into account the face and image of the listener, giving full respect to the listener, thus making the dialogue atmosphere more friendly and easier to promote.

1. Of the 37 positive evaluation constructions, 7 are sub +is +adj constructions, such as "It is well recognized, that is very good, that's very interesting, it's great."

Example (11) Visa officer—*Why do you want to go to U.S.?*

Ming--: I want to study computer science, but there are not many good programs in this field in China. The U.S. is very advanced in this field.

In dialogue (11), when The speaker Visa officer asked Ming why he wanted to study in the United States, the listener Ming immediately said: "The U.S. is very advanced in this field", "The U.S. is very advanced" not only expresses its positive evaluation of American academics, but also takes care of the listener's face, which is conducive to the visa officer's approval of his visa.

Example (12) *Meeting the Advisor.*

Ming: Hi, I'm Ming Chen. You must be Dr. Philip Snow.

Dr.Snow: Yes, I am. Good to see you, Ming. Come on in.

Take a seat, please.

Ming: Thanks. It's great to finally meet you, Dr.Snow.

Dr.Snow: So when did you arrive?

Ming: Last week. I've been here for more than a week.

In dialogue (12), when the speaker Dr. Snow mentioned that he was very happy to meet Ming, Ming used "It's great to finally meet you" to respond to Dr. Snow, which is not only a friendly reply but also an stance-taking of respect to Dr. Snow, which can promote the conversation well.

2. Of the 37 grammatical constructions used to express positive comments, seven were "adv +adj" constructions, For example, "quite interesting, pretty good, quite thrilling, so wonderful, very much, very well, too yummy", etc. The "adv +adj" structure is relatively simple and clear in oral conversation, and directly expresses the positive evaluation of the speaker, which will be further explained with examples.

Example (13) --*How was your first week?*

--*Quite interesting. I met several interesting people and had a wonderful talk.*

In dialogue (13), when the speaker asked the listener how the first week was, the listener used "Quite interesting" to positively evaluate his campus life in the first week, and then mentioned that he met several interesting people and had interesting conversations.

Example (14) --*Do you get along with your host family?*

--*Pretty good. The lady of my host family cooks very well. They've got a lovely five-year-old-boy. We spend a lot of time learning Chinese pin-yin together.*

In dialogue (14), when the speaker asked the listener how he got along with his host family, the listener used “Pretty good” to positively evaluate his life in the host family, and then said that the hostess was a very good cook, he taught the host’s 5-year-old son to learn Chinese every day, and the life was harmonious.

Example (15) *Discussing School*

Student: I really need your guidance. What should I start with?

Advisor: You should start by drawing up a study plan. Bring it next time we meet. We can go over it together.

Student: That’ll be great! Thank you.

In the dialogue (15), when the student told the tutor that he really did not know how to start a new study life and needed further guidance from the tutor, the tutor suggested that the student first make a study plan and bring it to discuss with him next time. Students use “That’ll be great!” to positively evaluate the mentor’s advice and express gratitude.

B. Grammatical Structure and Negative Stance-taking

The survey of *Bridging Cultures* shows that among the 16 grammatical structures that express negative stances, 12 express the speaker’s negative evaluation of objective things, such as “not good, not very good, too loud, too bad, a little too much, no big deal, it was quite something, I have problem, look at the time. . . .”. There are four ways to express the speaker’s negative attitude towards objective things, such as “I’m afraid, I don’t like, I’m sorry, sorry to hear that”.

1. Of the 12 grammatical constructions used to express negative comments, five were “adv +adj” constructions, such as “not good, not very good, too loud, too bad, a little too much”. The “adv +adj” structure is relatively simple and clear in oral conversation, which directly expresses the negative evaluation of the speaker, and will be further explained with examples.

Example (16) *Viewing Fireworks and Taking Leave*

Lily: Hey , Let’s go see the fire works.

Sean:

Lily:

Sean: Wow! It’s so beautiful! Look at that!

Lily: What? It’s too loud. I can’t hear you.

Sean: IT’S BEAUTIFUL!

In dialogue (16), when the speaker Sean said that the fireworks were beautiful, Lily used “It’s too loud” to negatively comment that the fireworks were so loud that she could not hear them. So Sean exclaimed, “IT’S BEAUTIFUL!”

Example (17) *Lily--How are you today?*

Sean--Actually I’m not feeling that great.

Lily--What’s the matter?

Sean--I’ve still got a bad toothache

Lily--That’s too bad. You should go see your dentist.

Sean--You’re right.

In dialogue (17), when Lily and Sean exchanged pleasantries and Sean said that she had a toothache, Lily used “that’s too bad” to negatively evaluate Lily’s toothache, expressing her empathy and suggesting that she go to see a dentist. Sean agrees, and saying “You’re right”.

2. In 4 grammatical structures to express negative attitudes, such as “I’m afraid, I don’t like, I’m sorry, sorry to hear that”.

Example (18) *Looking For Housing*

Ming: Good morning.

Ms.Neilson: Morning. How can I help you?

Ming: I’m Ming from China. I’m a graduate student in the Sociology Department. I wonder whether I can apply for the on-campus student housing.

Ms.Neilson: Well, I’m not sure We actually have far more applicants than the rooms available. We will inform you when there’s a vacancy.

Ming: I’m afraid I can’t wait. You know, I’m presently staying in the guesthouse and kind of desperate to find my own place.

Ms.Neilson: I understand that, but I’m sorry I can’t be of much help. Maybe, you can consider the off-campus housing.

In dialogue (18), Ming hopes to apply for a dormitory on campus, but the administrator, Ms. Neilson, replies that she is not sure yet and will inform him when a room becomes available. But Ming used the phrase “I’m afraid I can’t wait” to express that he couldn’t wait, and then explained that he was living in a guest room and needed to find his own place. Ms. Neilson uses “I’m sorry” to express that she can understand but can’t do anything about it, and gives other suggestions.

IV. Stance-taking of Bridging Cultures

Throughout this paper, it mainly presents four kinds of stance-taking in advanced oral English based on *Bridging Cultures* teaching materials: (1) positively evaluation stance-taking; (2) positive attitude stance-taking; (3) negative evaluation stance-taking; and (4) negative attitude stance-taking.

Positively Evaluation Stance-taking

The positive evaluation stance-taking mainly consists of the positive evaluation stance-taking of adjectives and the positive evaluation stance-taking of grammatical structures. The adjective positive evaluation stance-taking has the largest proportion, including 111 common adjectives, such as “top, best, advanced, good, interesting, wonderful, awesome, nice.....”. Grammar structure positive evaluation system also accounts for a large proportion, 37 expressed the speaker’s positive evaluation of objective things, “that is very good, that’s very interesting, pretty good, very well, so wonderful...”.

Table 1

Positively Evaluation Stance-taking (148)

the positive evaluation stance-taking system of adjectives (111)	top, best, advanced, good, interesting, wonderful, awesome, nice.....
the positive evaluation stance-taking system of grammatical structures (37)	that is very good, that’s very interesting, pretty good, very well, so wonderful...

The positively evaluation stance-taking is mainly composed of adjectives and grammatical constructions containing adjectives, and the positive evaluation stance-taking also occupies the largest proportion among the four kinds of stance-taking, accounting for 71.8%, which shows the importance of adjective in advanced oral English stance-taking.

Moreover, the study shows that the adjectives here are mainly qualitative adjectives. Qualitative adjectives mainly express the nature and characteristics of objective things, so these adjectives shoulder the function of expressing evaluation in advanced oral English.

Positive Attitude Stance-taking

The positive attitude stance-taking mainly consists of adjective positive attitude stance-taking and grammatical structure positive attitude stance-taking. There are six adjectives that express the speaker’s positive attitude toward something objective, such as “interesting, favorite, ideal, glad, happy, lovely”. There are 13 stance-takings of the speaker’s positive attitude toward something objective, such as “I/you’d like to, I’m passionate/crazy about, I’d love to, you’d better, have a good trip, my pleasure.....”.

Table 2
Positive Attitude Stance-taking (19)

the positive attitude stance-taking system of adjectives (6)	top, best, advanced, good, interesting, favorite, ideal, glad, happy, lovely
the positive attitude stance-taking system of grammatical structures (13)	I/you’d like to, I’m passionate/crazy about, I’d love to, you’d better, have a good trip, my pleasure.....

The positively attitude stance-taking is mainly composed of qualitative adjectives and grammatical constructions containing verbs and adjectives, and the positive attitude stance-taking also occupies the third proportion among the four kinds of stance-taking, accounting for 9%, which also shows the importance of qualitative adjective and verb in advanced oral English stance-taking.

Negative Evaluation Stance-taking

The negative evaluation stance-taking mainly consists of three parts: adjective negative evaluation stance-taking, noun negative evaluation stance-taking and grammatical structure negative evaluation stance-taking. Statistics textbooks found that 18 expressed the speaker’s negative assessment of objective things, such as “complicated, boring, sucked, trouble, slow, serious, slow.....”. Throughout the entire textbook, we only find two nouns that express negative evaluation stances, such as “trash and hardwork”. Statistics textbooks found that among the 16 grammatical structures that express negative stances, 12 express the speaker’s negative evaluation of objective things, such as “not good,not very good, too loud, too bad, a little too much ,no big deal, it was quite something, I have problem, look at the time.....”.

Table 3
The Negative Evaluation Stance-taking (32)

adjective negative evaluation stance-taking (19)	complicated, boring, serious, bad, dizzy, tired, negative, tough, hard, sucked, trouble, slow, serious, wrong, deaf, confusion, danger, failure, hardest
noun negative evaluation stance-taking (1)	trash
grammatical structure negative evaluation stance-taking (12)	not good, not very good, too loud, too bad, a little too much ,no big deal, it was quite something, I have problem, look at the time, no big deal, a bad cold, it is not proper

The negative evaluation stance-taking is mainly composed of adjectives, nouns and grammatical constructions containing negative words and adjectives. And the negative evaluation stance-taking also occupies the second proportion among the four kinds of stance-taking, accounting for 15.5%, which also shows the importance of adjective in advanced oral English stance-taking.

In the negative evaluation stance-taking, the proportion of nouns is very low, only 1, “trash”. But in today’s speech, such nouns take on the adjective character, and “trash” is used in conversation as a negative evaluation, such as “*Do you like Hollywood movies? Well, some are good, but others are just trash*”.

Negative Attitude Stance-taking

The negative attitude stance-taking mainly consists of two parts: the negative attitude stance-taking of adjective and the negative attitude evaluation stance-taking of grammatical structure. There are three adjectives that express the speaker’s extremely negative attitude towards objective things, such as “biased, pain, bad”. There are four grammatical structures to express the speaker’s negative attitude towards objective things, such as “I’m afraid, I don’t like, I’m sorry, sorry to hear that”.

Table 4

Negative Attitude Stance-taking (7)

the negative attitude stance-taking of adjective (3)	biased, pain, bad
the negative attitude evaluation stance-taking of grammatical structure (4)	I’m afraid, I don’t like, I’m sorry, sorry to hear that

The negative attitude stance-taking is mainly composed of adjectives and grammatical constructions containing adjectives and verbs. And the negative attitude stance-taking system occupies the fourth proportion among the four kinds of stance-taking, only about accounting for 3.3%, which also shows the importance of adjective in advanced oral English stance-taking.

But most of these adjectives are state adjectives, such as “pain, bad, afraid” and so on. Verbs are emotional verbs that express inner feelings, such as “like, sorry” and so on.

V. Conclusion

Based on the theory of stance-taking in interactive linguistics, this study studies the stance-taking of advanced oral English based on *Bridging Cultures* by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research to sort out and analyze the advanced oral corpus.

Throughout the whole paper, in many English speech categories, people mainly use adjectives to express positive and negative stances, followed by nouns and verbs. Among the many grammatical constructions to express stances, “sub +is +adj” is the dominant structure, followed by “adv +adj”.

Throughout this paper, it mainly presents four kinds of stance-taking in advanced oral English based on *Bridging Cultures* teaching materials: (1) positive evaluation stance-taking; (2) positive attitude stance-taking; (3) negative evaluation stance-taking; and (4) negative attitude stance-taking.

There is a great imbalance in these four kinds of evaluation stance-taking. The positive evaluation stance-taking mainly consists of the positive evaluation stance-taking of adjectives and the positive evaluation stance-taking of grammatical structures. The adjective positive evaluation stance-taking has the largest proportion, grammar structure positive evaluation stance-taking also accounts for a large proportion. The positive

attitude stance-taking mainly consists of adjective positive attitude stance-taking and grammatical structure positive attitude stance-taking. The negative evaluation stance-taking mainly consists of three parts: adjective negative evaluation stance-taking, noun negative evaluation stance-taking and grammatical structure negative evaluation stance-taking. The negative attitude stance-taking mainly consists of two parts: the negative attitude stance-taking of adjective and the negative attitude evaluation stance-taking of grammatical structure.

Due to the limited corpus in this study, it is necessary to further expand the corpus for verification in future studies. In addition, this study mainly focuses on the stance stance-taking of senior students. In future studies, we can make oral stance-taking of different grades and further compare it.

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