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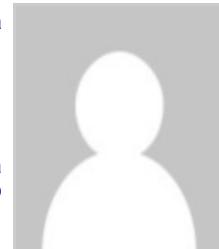
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Maximizers hyping in Chinese MA learners' and experts' academic discourse: An EUM-based study / Гиперболизация максимизаторов в академическом дискурсе китайских студентов-магистрантов и ученых: исследование на базе EUM

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Аннотация: Исследование посвящено максимизаторам как основному инструменту риторической стратегии гиперболизации в научном тексте научных статей, опубликованных в международных журналах (ILJA_C) и магистерских диссертаций (CLMA_C) китайских лингвистов, пишущих на английском языке. Максимизаторы, которые передают семантику повышенной интенсивности и личное отношение автора, играют основную роль в формировании риторических стратегий гиперболизации в академическом дискурсе. В исследовании используется модель EUM (расширение значения слова). Использование данной модели позволяет исследованию внести значительный вклад в разъяснение мотивации выбора максимизатора в научной коммуникации. Целью является анализ коллокационных особенностей максимайзеров в CLMA_C и ILJA_C. Цель определяет выбор предмета исследования – выявление сходств и различий в использовании максимизаторов двух базах данных (научных статей, опубликованных в международных журналах (ILJA_C) и магистерских диссертаций (CLMA_C) китайских лингвистов, пишущих на английском языке). В исследовании используется модель EUM для анализа максимизаторов, что позволяет всесторонне изучить как их коллокационные возможности, так и контекстуальное значение. Анализ включает исследование лексических моделей, сопоставлений, семантических предпочтений и семантической просодии, предлагая многогранное понимание того, как максимизаторы используются в риторической стратегии гиперболизации в научном тексте. Научная новизна заключается в использовании модели EUM расширения значения слова Джона Синклера, согласно которой носителем лексического значения является лексическая единица, в состав которой может входить несколько слов, что позволяет описать максимизаторы одновременно в синтагматическом аспекте и с учетом контекстуального значения. Результаты показывают сходство в использовании лексических моделей и существенные различия в семантических предпочтениях и семантической просодии. Так, в базе данных китайских магистерских диссертаций (CLMA_C) при использовании лексической единицы *fully* 'полностью' не представлены коллокации, на которые влияет использование английского языка как иностранного. Что касается семантической просодии, китайские ученые (ILJA_C) используют рекомендательный тон, в то время как китайские магистранты – утвердительный тон.

Ключевые слова:

максимизатор, расширение значения слова, английский как иностранный, лексика, магистерская диссертация, научная статья, гиперболизация, академический дискурс, английский язык, корпусное исследование

Introduction

The academic paper, vital for disseminating scientific knowledge, gains credibility from research findings' scientific rationality and disciplinary value. Traditionally viewed as objective, academic papers refrain from rhetorical language due to concerns about over-interpretation [1, 2], setting up a dichotomy with science [3]. While scientific knowledge involves not only objective facts but also persuasive elements shaping universal truths through scientists' rhetorical strategies [4].

Academics use various language strategies to promote the significance and value of their research methods and findings. Millar et al. [5] referred to the phenomenon of authors using

exaggerated or laudatory language to embellish or promote their academic research as "rhetorical hype". Maximizers, which serve as boosters in academic writing, play the role of "rhetorical hype" [6, p. 191]. They can be seen as interactional metadiscourse, serving to interact with the reader in the academic discourse and help authors eliminate or reduce reader confusion, avoid controversy over propositions, and actively and accurately express and promote their own attitudes [7, p. 52]. For example, in the sentence "As a consequence, findings on students' beliefs entirely confirm the second hypothesis," the maximizer item "entirely" demonstrates the hyperbolic strategy of exaggeration or intensification. It emphasizes the complete and unqualified confirmation of the second hypothesis by the findings on students' belief.

Correct use of maximizers can accurately indicate the speaker's attitude and help persuade others to accept the author's views. In academic writing, appropriate use of maximizers helps authors express the certainty of propositions, enhance the authority of propositions, strengthen the persuasive power of academic discourse, promote academic communication, and achieve the purpose of academic interaction. However, due to the fact that maximizers express the highest degree of meaning, these words are usually treated as synonyms in the process of learning. Difficulty in distinguishing the similarities and differences between them during the learning process [8-10] makes it challenging for EFL learners, leading to the inaccurate hyperbolic use of maximizers in academic writing and subsequently impacting the quality of learners' academic writing to some extent.

Therefore, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of maximizers in international journal articles and English academic papers written by learners, and compare their differences. Prior research on maximizers has mainly focused on their lexical collocations and grammatical collocations [8, 9, 11], and pragmatic collocations [12, 13]. However, fewer scholars have systematically examined these types of collocations from a macro perspective. This study will use Sinclair's Extended Units of Meaning (EUM) model [14] to conduct a multidimensional investigation of maximizers.

Therefore, this study's examination of maximizers mainly involves four tasks: first, extracting the strong collocates around maximizers and categorizing them from a grammatical/colligational perspective; second, categorizing these strong collocates based on semantic preference; third, categorizing these strong collocates based on semantic prosody; and fourth, conducting a comparative analysis of the collocational features of Chinese learners and international journal authors from the perspective of the entire extended meaning unit model.

Based on these four tasks, this study's research methodology mainly involves corpus-driven analysis, discourse analysis and contrastive interlanguage analysis. The construction of the EUM model requires bottom-up corpus data driving, and the collocational features of maximizer usage between Chinese learners and international journal experts need to be compared. The attribution of differences between the two requires a combination of discourse analysis and contrastive interlanguage analysis (CIA) in second language acquisition.

The object of this study is to conduct a contrastive analysis of maximizers hyping between Chinese linguistic MA novices and linguistic experts. The subject of this study is to explore the similarities and differences in the EUM of these maximizers within the academic discourse of these two groups.

In the field of applied linguistics, maximizers are employed to delineate the utmost intensity within a specified degree range [15, 16]. They operate at the semantic level to articulate the absolute degree of a property or state, exemplified by expressions such as "completely different," "absolutely endorse," "totally mix up," etc. On the pragmatic level, as defined by K. Hyland [7, p. 52], they function as boosters, constituting an interactional metadiscourse that enables writers to preclude alternative interpretations, forestall conflicting viewpoints, and assert certainty in their assertions.

Given that Maximizers are often construed as synonyms in traditional dictionaries, the distinction between them is frequently nebulous, posing a significant challenge for EFL learners in the process of acquisition of the highest degree language.

S. Granger [8] studied French EFL students' maximizer usage, noting their overuse of "totally" and "completely" compared to native speakers. This overuse stemmed from frequent French translational equivalents, driven by a tendency to make "safe bets." G. Lorenz [9] explored maximizer collocations in German EFL students' writing, revealing a tendency to use maximizers in inappropriate contexts. Yaoyu & Lei Lei [17] analyzed maximizer usage in Chinese doctoral dissertations, finding Chinese PhD EFL learners tended to overuse "totally" but underuse "entirely," with "congruent collocations" indicating a non-native writing style. A.S. Özbay & T. Aydemir [12] investigated semantic prosody features of maximizers in Turkish EFL learners' academic papers, noting incompatibility for some maximizers due to a lack of semantic prosodic awareness in English. M. Alrajhi [13] explored EFL Saudi students' use of four maximizers, finding favorable prosody in all, with semantic preferences reflecting emotions and states of mind, diverging from Partington's study [18].

Extended Units of Meaning (EUM) is a corpus-driven approach to language analysis introduced by Sinclair [14]. It comprises five components: core, collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody. This methodology integrates form and meaning, providing a multifaceted description of a specific node word. EUM enables the simultaneous examination of lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic layers, breaking away from previous studies that focused on individual words or fixed phrases as the basic units of analysis. It broadens the scope of semantic research to encompass all relevant forms surrounding the node word. This aligns with Sinclair's advocated maximal approach, which extends the exploration of meaning units beyond single words or fixed phrases.

According to this approach, every unique meaning in language can be associated with its unique lexical form. The generation of lexical meaning comes from two levels: the general meaning of the lexical item and the adjusted meaning generated by co-selection with other lexical items within the meaning unit [14]. Meaning is not simply divided into lexical meaning and grammatical meaning, but is created by continuous text as a whole. Meaning itself is unstable, usually temporary, and negotiable.

Regarding the study of the maximizers in the past, it was rarely studied as a whole EUM unit like scholars such as Sinclair did from the perspectives of word frequency, collocation, colligation, semantic preference and semantic prosody. Collocation reflects the collocational words that co-occur with the core (usually a single word or phrase); colligation reflects the grammatical categories that co-occur with the core; semantic preference reflects the semantic field of words that co-occur with the core; semantic prosody reflects the semantic function realized by the entire EUM. "Studying words from the perspectives of form, meaning, and function is a useful tool for synonym discrimination and cross-language

equivalence research" [\[19\]](#). Compared with studies that only focus on word frequency, collocation, and semantic prosody as a single research point, this research model can more comprehensively, objectively, and accurately describe language. Therefore, this paper takes EUM as a whole and based on international linguistic journal articles and Chinese linguistic MA thesis texts to mainly answer the following two questions:

- (1) What are the hyping collocational characteristics of high-frequency maximizers in Chinese linguistic MA theses and international linguistic journal articles?
- (2) Concerning high-frequency maximizers, what are the similarities and differences of the hyping collocational features between them? And what are the reasons?

Research methodology

This study utilizes the self-constructed Chinese linguistic MA theses corpus (CLMA_C) and international linguistic journal articles corpus (ILJA_C), comprising 804,935 and 802,490 words, respectively. These include 50 English master's theses by Chinese linguistic MA learners and 100 articles by linguistic experts. The research process involves:

- (1) Identifying maximizers, following D. Biber et al. [\[20\]](#) and Kennedy's [\[21\]](#) framework, including "fully," "totally," "completely," "entirely," "absolutely," and "perfectly."
- (2) Employing AntConc 3.4.4 for maximizer retrieval, determining top 1 maximizer by frequency, extracting concordance lines, and conducting analysis.
- (3) Observing and analyzing co-occurring words, identifying collocations, classifying colligation patterns, summarizing semantic preference, and analyzing semantic prosody within the EUM.

Finally, conducting a contrastive analysis on lexical collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody features of target maximizer in both corpora.

Analysis and discussion

According to Table 1, there is no significant difference in the total frequency of maximizers between the two corpora.

Table 1. Frequency statistics of maximizers in CLMA_C and ILJA_C

Maximizers	MA_C		IJA_C		Chi-square	Significance (p)
	RF	SF	RF	SF		
fully	74	92	9.19	11.46	2.01	0.156
totally	58	11	7.21	1.37	34.97	0.000
completely	53	46	6.58	5.73	0.47	0.491
entirely	22	39	2.73	4.86	4.85	0.028
absolutely	13	5	1.62	0.62	3.66	0.056
perfectly	5	7	0.62	0.87	0.34	0.559
Total	225	200	27.95	24.92	0.93	0.336

Note: "RF" stands for "raw frequency"; "SF" stands for "standardized frequency (per 10,000)"; $P < 0.01$ indicates a strong significant difference; $0.01 < P < 0.05$ indicates a significant difference; $P > 0.05$ indicates no significant difference.

When examining individual lexical items, only "totally," "entirely," and "absolutely" exhibit noteworthy distinctions, while the remaining ones do not. In this methodology, we solely

scrutinize the maximizers with significant differences in the two corpora, overlooking the high-frequency maximizers. Nevertheless, adopting the Extended Units of Meaning (EUM) perspective enables a comprehensive analysis of maximizers across lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions. Due to space constraints, this paper offers an in-depth exploration of "fully" in the subsequent sections.

Table 2 The top 10 significant collocates of *fully*

CLMA_C					ILJA_C				
Collocates	F(c)	F(n, c)	MI3	LLD	Collocates	F(c)	F(n, c)	MI3	LLD
be	29637	37	11.06	152	be	25357	45	11.84	200
not	2511	14	10.42	94	to	20200	37	11.32	162
understand	696	8	9.85	66	not	3479	19	10.97	120
can	3850	10	8.34	54	that	9806	21	9.91	94
explain	384	5	8.67	44	language	3324	13	9.4	72
they	2363	7	7.51	38	this	5649	12	8.29	52
reflect	268	4	8.22	34	understand	750	7	8.87	50
English	3183	6	6.41	28	develop	491	6	8.81	48
teacher	786	4	6.67	28	more	2519	7	7.12	34
use	4190	7	6.68	28	yet	193	4	8.4	34

Note: F (c) represents the raw frequency of collocates. F (n, c) is the co-occurrence frequency of the node and collocates (± 5). The co-occurrence frequency, LLD value and MI3 are set to 2, 3.84, 3, the majority of verbs (including be verb) covers all their inflected form.

1. Identify the collocates of maximizers and classify the colligation patterns of "fully" in CLMA_C and ILJA_C respectively.

In ILJA_C, the collocates to the left side of "fully" can be grammatically categorized into two types: infinitive phrases and Be-verbs. To the right side of "fully," most of the collocates are lexical verbs, such as "understand," and "develop," or adjectives, such as "acceptable". Overall, they can be classified into two types of colligation patterns: "infinitive phrases+fully+mental verbs" and "Be-verbs+fully+passive voice of communication verbs/action verbs/happening verbs /evaluative adjectives."

In CLMA_C, "fully" is often collocated with modal verbs and Be-verbs. The prevalence of modal verbs is attributed to native language transfer, as Chinese learners frequently use "能/能够 (have an ability to do something)" in Chinese, conveying the author's subjective confidence in interpreting linguistic phenomena. The English equivalents are typically "can/could/will." On the right side, collocates resemble those used by experts, involving lexical verbs like "understand," "explain," and "reflect," or adjectives like "consistent" and "grammatical." These form two colligation patterns: "modal verbs + fully + communication/mental/existence verbs" and "Be-verbs + fully + passive voice of communication/action/happening/mental/existence verbs, or evaluative/relational adjectives." The first pattern is less common in ILJA_C, potentially indicating the developmental aspect of Chinese MA learners and their seemingly congruent colligational patterns.

2. Identify the collocates of "fully" and summarize the semantic preference and semantic

prosody of "fully" hyping in ILJA_C and CLMA_C respectively.

Through indexing concordance lines, it can be found that in ILJA_C, when "fully" is collocated with "require to", "need to", "enable to" at the left side, indicating obligation and ability, most of the collocates to the right side of it are mental verbs, such as "understand", "develop", etc. These mental verbs are usually accompanied by noun phrases such as "the complexity of", "factual information."

In ILJA_C, when "fully" is paired with expressions like "require to," "need to," and "enable to" indicating obligation and ability, the subsequent collocates on the right side often include mental verbs such as "understand" and "develop." These mental verbs are frequently accompanied by noun phrases like "the complexity of" and "factual information."

Experts strategically employ the maximizer "fully" in their research papers to accentuate or hype a high degree of involvement. The semantic preference of "fully" is evident in its collocation with expressions indicating obligation and ability on the left side, such as "require to," "need to," and "enable to," as well as with mental verbs like "understand" and "develop" on the right side. The use of accompanying noun phrases, like "the complexity of" and "factual information," highlights the author's preference for emphasizing the thoroughness and completeness of mental processes, aligning with the maximizer "fully." This semantic preference conveys the idea that when grappling with intricate theories or data, a comprehensive and thorough approach is essential. It underscores the notion that the actions described by the mental verbs should be executed to their fullest extent.

The semantic prosody of "fully" in this context is positive, contributing to a tone that is affirmative and commendatory. The author's choice of words creates a positive association with the maximizer "fully," suggesting that a thorough engagement with complex theories or data is not only recommended but also essential and praiseworthy.

In summary, the semantic preference of "fully" here emphasizes thoroughness and completeness in mental processes, especially in understanding and developing approaches to complex theories or data. The semantic prosody aligns with a positive and commendatory tone, reinforcing the notion that a comprehensive approach is not only advisable but also imperative and commendable.

When "fully" is paired with Be-verbs on the left, most right-side collocates are passive constructions of lexical verbs related to communication, action, occurrence, and evaluative adjectives, like "explained," "supported," "acceptable," etc. This pattern suggests a semantic preference, conveying "The theory or data is thoroughly explained, substantiated, and appropriately accepted, aligning with the intended state of the author," indicating a positive stance. Overall, the semantic preference of "fully" in international journal articles can be summarized as "facing complex theories or data, the author must fully comprehend and articulate them. This ensures readers readily accept their perspectives, reaching the expected state of the author," presenting an objective and positive semantic prosody.

Compared to ILJA_C, CLMA_C shows a reduced collocation frequency between "fully" and infinitive phrases but an increased frequency with modal verbs. Notably, many of these modals, like "can," "could," "may," "will," are permission or volition verbs. The right-side lexical verbs, often co-occurring with these modals, include communication, mental, and existential verbs like "explain," "understand," "reflect." Concordance lines suggest these verbs often pair with noun phrases related to "theory, utterances, evaluative features," indicating a semantic preference of "subjectively desiring to fully interpret the theory and understand the meaning of language," expressing the author's positive subjective initiative.

The semantic preference of "fully" in CLMA_C suggests a subjective desire for a thorough interpretation of theories and understanding language nuances, reflecting the author's positive initiative. The semantic prosody maintains a positive and affirmative stance. In contrast, the commendatory tone in ILJA_C leans towards "rhetorical hype," using rhetorical devices to exaggerate descriptions for praise, admiration, or approval. This creates a positive atmosphere, aligning with the goal of rhetorical exaggeration, distinct from the affirmative tone in CLMA_C that focuses on confirmation or agreement.

Therefore, when aiming for the strategy of "rhetorical hype," it is more suitable to employ a "commendatory" tone to emphasize, exaggerate, and capture attention effectively.

When "fully" is collocated with a Be-verb to the left, the types of verbs and adjectives to the right resemble those found in international journal articles, demonstrating a semantic preference of something to be fully utilized and reach expectation state. But the subject of the Be-verb is typically a relatively vague concept. For example:

(1) ...and thus **the public expectations are fully satisfied** (CLMA_C).

(2) *It is claimed that the theoretical statements are fully consistent* with... (CLMA_C).

In contrast, the subject of international journal authors is usually a more concrete concept. For example:

(3) ... writers whose **language proficiency is not fully developed** (ILJA_C).

(4) **Silva and Leki's (2004) description** of L1 composition's view of language, **is most fully articulated** by Berlin (1988) (ILJA_C).

Chinese English learners, using "fully," prefer vague subjects like "public expectations," indicating fulfillment or general statements. This reflects a tendency toward generalized language use. In contrast, experts pair "fully" with concrete subjects, emphasizing maximization in specific contexts, making its usage more specific.

In Chinese MA examples, the semantic prosody of "fully" may convey a positive tone, indicating satisfaction or accomplishment. In contrast, international journal experts emphasize completeness in specific contexts, reflecting a rigorous and in-depth approach.

Chinese English learners tend to select vague concepts as subjects when using "fully," possibly indicating a preference for generalizations and a potential variation in their understanding of specificity and accuracy in academic writing. This may stem from differences in language learning stages and familiarity with specific terms and concepts.

In contrast, international journal authors prioritize presenting the degree of "fully" in specific contexts with concrete subjects, indicative of a higher requirement for precision and specificity in academic expression.

Table 3 and Table 4 provide specific information of EUM of maximizer "fully" hyphen in ILJA_C and CLMA_C respectively.

Table 3 The EUM of *fully* in ILJA_C

Collocation	require to, needed to, enable to, etc.	fully	understand, develop, grasp etc.
	be, is, are, was		explained, supported, acceptable, etc.
	infinitive phrases		mental verb

Colligation Be-verbs passive forms of verbs related to communication, action, occurrence, and evaluative adjectives
Semantic preference	the author intends to convey the idea that when engaging with complex theories or data, it is crucial to approach them with a comprehensive and thorough mindset.	
	The theory or data is thoroughly explained, substantiated, and appropriately accepted, aligning with the intended state of the author.	
Semantic prosody	with a positive and commendatory tone	
	objective and positive semantic prosody	

Table 4 The EUM of *fully* in CLMA_C

Collocation	can, could, may, will	fully	understand, explain, reflect	
	be, is, are, was		utilized, reflected, grammatical, consistent	
Colligation	Modal verb	fully	communication, mental or existence verbs	
	Be-verb		passive forms of verbs related to communication, action, occurrence, and evaluative adjectives	
Semantic preference	Leaners' subjective desire for a thorough interpretation of theories and understanding language nuances			
	something to be fully utilized and reach expectation state and generalizations or a potential variation in their understanding of specificity and accuracy in academic writing			
Semantic prosody	a positive and affirmative stance			
	positive inclination towards a more generalized and broadly-stated language usage style			

Conclusion

This paper mainly examines the EUM of maximizer "fully" hyphen in CLMA_C and ILJA_C. The study found that overall the EUM of high-frequency "fully" in both corpora have significant differences in their colligation, semantic preference and semantic prosody. At the formal level, compared to international journal experts, Chinese MA learners tend to use collocates and colligational forms that are rarely used by international journal authors. This phenomenon may be influenced by native language transfer and embodies their interlanguage developmental features. Concerning semantic preference, Chinese MA learners tend to hype their subjectively desiring to fully interpret the theory and understand the meaning of language. While international journal experts tend to hype their engagements with approaching complex theories or data in a comprehensive and thorough mindset. In the realm of semantic prosody, experts employ a commendatory tone, while Chinese MA learners manifest a positive and affirmative tone, which does not effectively showcase the use of hyphen strategies. In teaching practice, teachers should enhance learners' awareness of the relationship between form and meaning in language use. Learners should accurately grasp the EUM of each maximizer from both the formal and semantic levels to improve the quality of academic writing.

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Результаты процедуры рецензирования статьи

В связи с политикой двойного слепого рецензирования личность рецензента не

раскрывается.

Со списком рецензентов издательства можно ознакомиться [здесь](#).

Представленная на рассмотрение статья «Гиперболизация максимизаторов в академическом дискурсе китайских студентов-магистрантов и ученых: исследование на базе EUM», предлагаемая к публикации в журнале «Litera», представлена на английском языке, несомненно, является актуальной, ввиду возрастающего интереса к изучению различных видов дискурса и их языковых особенностей.

В рамках рецензируемой работы автор обращается к изучению особенностей академического дискурса.

Целью статьи является изучение характеристики максимизаторов в международных журнальных статьях и академических статьях на английском языке, написанных обучающимися и выявления их особенностей.

Отметим наличие сравнительно небольшого количества исследований по данной тематике в отечественном языкоznании. Статья является новаторской, одной из первых в российской лингвистике, посвященной исследованию подобной проблематики. В статье представлена методология исследования, выбор которой вполне адекватен целям и задачам работы. Автор обращается, в том числе, к различным методам для подтверждения выдвинутой гипотезы. Основной методологией явились: метод сплошной выборки, методы дефиниционного и лексико-семантического анализа, интерпретативный анализ отобранного материала, статистические методы и др. К сожалению, в работе автор не указывает объем практического материала отобранного для проведения исследования. Данная работа выполнена профессионально, с соблюдением основных канонов научного исследования. Исследование выполнено в русле современных научных подходов, работа состоит из введения, содержащего постановку проблемы, основной части, традиционно начинающуюся с обзора теоретических источников и научных направлений, исследовательскую и заключительную, в которой представлены выводы, полученные автором. Отметим, что заключение требует усиления, оно не отражает в полной мере задачи, поставленные автором и не содержит перспективы дальнейшего исследования в русле заявленной проблематики.

Библиография статьи насчитывает 21 источник, среди которых представлены работы исключительно зарубежных исследователей. К сожалению, в статье отсутствуют ссылки на фундаментальные работы отечественных исследователей, такие как монографии, кандидатские и докторские диссертации. Высказанные замечания не являются существенными и не умаляют общее положительное впечатление от рецензируемой работы. Опечатки, орфографические и синтаксические ошибки, неточности в тексте работы не обнаружены. В общем и целом, следует отметить, что статья написана простым, понятным для читателя языком. Работа является новаторской, представляющей авторское видение решения рассматриваемого вопроса и может иметь логическое продолжение в дальнейших исследованиях. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в возможности использования его результатов в процессе преподавания вузовских курсов по теории дискурса, а также курсов по междисциплинарным исследованиям, посвящённым связи языка и общества. Статья, несомненно, будет полезна широкому кругу лиц, филологам, магистрантам и аспирантам профильных вузов. Статья «Гиперболизация максимизаторов в академическом дискурсе китайских студентов-магистрантов и ученых: исследование на базе EUM» может быть рекомендована к публикации в научном журнале.