Appeals to Ethos and Pathos in Post-Crisis Communication: A Case Study of Press Conferences Handling Tianjin Blasts

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Abstract

This study focuses on the rhetorical appeals in post-crisis communication, and analyzes the influence of dynamically changing context on the speakers' choice of rhetorical means. Aristotle's three important rhetorical appeals-ethos, pathos and logos are investigated in the transcript of 14 press conferences handling Tianjin blasts. The changes in speakers' rhetorical appeals are explored in relation to the changing context in the evolving crisis. In post-crisis press conferences, the speakers most frequently used appeals to ethos and pathos to persuade. Specifically, when appealing to ethos, the speakers usually manipulated discursive resources to construct their credibility, expertise, and similarity with the audience; when appealing to pathos, such emotions of the public as the feelings of depression, need for appreciation, and expectation for a thorough investigation of the blasts were addressed. In addition, as the crisis unfolded, the context for communication was dynamically changing. There was a tendency for speakers to adapt their rhetorical appeals to the dynamically changing context.

Keywords: post-crisis communication, rhetorical appeals, persuasive strategies, changing context

1. Introduction

Post-crisis communication—what the organization says and does after a crisis—has been a growing field of study in recent years, partly due to the high frequency of crises in the society and the harms they do to either the stakeholders' interests or organizations' reputation (Coombs, 2007; Heath & O'Hair, 2009). Most of the studies to date have focused on image repair, impression management and best practices in post-crisis communication (e.g., Heath & O'Hair, 2009). Rhetorical theories drawing on concepts such as apologia (Piirainen-Marsh, 2006) and narrative (Heath, 2004) have been especially prominent. Surprisingly, although most of all the rhetorical theories can be traced back to Aristotle, few adopt an Aristotelian rhetorical framework. In addition, though compared with other genres of communication, post-crisis communication is distinctive in that it involves the critical incident in a dynamically changing context, seldom have scholars ever shown concern for the impact of the changing context on speakers' rhetorical choices. In view of the above two points, this paper uses Aristotelian rhetorical framework to investigate the rhetorical appeals adopted by the speakers in the press conferences after a serious crisis. At the same time, I explore the impact of the changing context on the speakers' choices of rhetorical appeals. Specifically, the paper attempts to get answers to the following two research questions:

RQ 1. What kinds of rhetorical appeals are frequently adopted by the speakers in the post-crisis press conferences? How are these rhetorical appeals realized discursively?

RQ 2. How does the changing context affect the speakers' rhetorical appeals?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Aristotelian Rhetorical Framework

Kenneth Burke once proposed that "whatever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is meaning, there is persuasion" (Burke, 1969, p. 72). Burke is right in emphasizing the persuasiveness of rhetoric. Rhetoric exists in every kind of communication, the public and political communication in particular, which, at

its core, is about persuasion. Scholars from different research fields have been exploring various theories and explanation related to persuasion in communication throughout the centuries, including Burke's (1945) analysis of "pentad", Black's (1970) analysis of "second persona" and Charland's (1987) analysis of constitutive rhetoric. Most of their studies are "derived from the work of Aristotle in some way or another" (Larson, 1992, p. 61). In Aristotle's classic book *On Rhetoric*, rhetoric is defined as "an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion" (p. 36). In order to effectively persuade the audience, three important persuasive appeals are identified—ethos, pathos and logos, corresponding to the persona of the speaker, the emotion of the audience, and the reason of the message, as was written by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.:

> Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on proof, or apparent proof provided by the words of the speech itself. (Aristotle, 1954: *On Rhetoric*, translated by Roberts)

In Aristotelian rhetorical framework, ethos is the first important persuasive appeals, which refers to the persona or character the speaker wishes to present in his speech. It includes the credibility and trustworthiness of the speaker (Hartelius & Browning, 2008), or the authority of the speaker as conferred by the audience (Green, 2004). As for Aristotle, ethos "may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 1954). Pathos focuses on the part of speech appealing to the passion or will of the audience, which relies on activating such emotions of the audience as happiness, satisfaction, pity or fear (Aho, 1985). To use appeals of pathos, the speaker has to, first of all, assess the psychological state of the audience, and then decide which emotions of the audience he should try to trigger with words. Burke regards this process as a kind of emotional "identification", similar to the process in which "the persuader selects from a cluster of attitudes which surround a subject/object those that will evoke the pattern of experience persuasive to one's cause" (Schwartz, 1966, p. 211). Finally, logos are the clarity and logical arrangement of the speech, stressing the appeal to reason (Green, 2004). In order to appeal to logos, the speaker should carefully think about the logic organization of his speech so as to make it easily understood by the audience.

Aristotle's rhetorical framework has been adopted to analyze discourse of various genres, such as the meetings (Clifton & Van de Mieroop, 2010), the social/environmental reports (Higgins & Walker, 2012), visions statements of organizations (Eryilmaz, 2014), and political talks on Youtube (English et al., 2011). Unfortunately, this framework has seldom been applied to explore communicators' rhetorical choices in a crisis context.

2.2 Rhetorical Analysis in Post-Crisis Communication

Broadly speaking, crisis communication is a form of rhetoric, in which communicators strategically use rhetorical devices to influence thoughts, feelings, or behaviours. In discourse-based crisis research, we have an abundance of studies attempting to describe the effective rhetorical strategies adopted by communicators to maintain or repair organizations' image. Of all these studies, rhetorical strategies of apologia are most frequently addressed. Benoit (1995) and Coombs (1995) have proposed the most influential rhetorical strategies of organizational apologia. Benoit (1995) identifies 14 effective strategies for image restoration after the occurrence of an organizational crisis. However, his analysis of crisis communication strategies is mainly descriptive in nature, and does not take the situational constraints into consideration. Coombs (1995) proposes a very important Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), connecting crisis response strategies with crisis types. In SCCT, Coombs and his supporters have identified three crisis types: the victim cluster, the accidental cluster and the preventable cluster, and they argue that for effective post-crisis communication, communicators should adapt their rhetorical strategies to different crisis types. This analysis is advanced in that it takes into consideration a possible factor constraining communicators' choice of rhetorical strategies in post-crisis communication. However, crisis type is not the only constraining factor in a crisis context. More contextual factors should be considered when choosing appropriate rhetorical strategies, such as changes of public attitudes, feelings and thoughts, and emergence of different voices in an evolving crisis.

In addition to Benoit (1995) and Coombs (1995), Jerome & Rowland (2009) focus on the rhetoric of interorganizational conflict, using the Ford/ Firestone tread separation crisis to investigate the rhetorical devices for apologia in the crisis. Liebersoh et al. (2004) analyzes cultural rhetorical resources and public apologic speech in the context of political crisis, emphasizing cultural impact on speakers' choices of rhetorical strategies. Fuoli & Paradis (2014) examine the rhetorical devices for repairing trust between the organization and its stakeholders in BP oil spill crisis. All these studies prove that it is useful for organizations to use communication to protect their public images, and all of them have provided an abundance of rhetorical devices for organizations to respond to crises. However, the relationships between communicators' rhetorical appeals and the situational

characteristics of the crises remain unclear.

3. Methodology

This section provides a detailed description of research methodology adopted in this study. Specifically, it describes the sources of data and elaborates on the methods for analyzing the data.

3.1 Data

In August 2015, a series of blasts occurred at Tinajin port in China, killing more than one hundred people and injuring hundreds of others. In response to this crisis, Tianjin officials held 14 press conferences from August 13 to August 23, aiming to appease the public and manage the crisis to a great extent. This paper used these press conferences as the research data. The first six press conferences did not include much interaction with the press. After being criticized for "lack of candor" and the use of "bureaucratic language", the last eight press conferences held by the local government made changes in their communicative content and style. In addition to these press conferences, related news stories and commentary remarks were collected and analyzed to provide information about the changing context in which the post-crisis communication was situated.

3.2 Data Analysis

This study mainly adopts a qualitative method of rhetorical analysis and contextual analysis. Based on the previous literature on the analysis of rhetorical appeals in discourse (e.g., Higgins & Walker, 2012), I examined the content and discursive features of the transcript of all the 14 press conferences available online (http://china.caixin.com/2015-08-16/100840173_9.html) to investigate how the three important rhetorical appeals-ethos, pathos and logos, were strategically deployed by the speakers in the conferences with the purpose of persuading the audience. In addition, I also examined the news stories and commentary remarks by the press related to the emerging situations and the audience's response to the press conferences in order to provide a detailed picture of the dynamically changing contextual factors. Finally, since the first six press conferences had been negatively commented and responded to, a comparison of the use of rhetorical appeals in the previous six conferences and that in the later eight conferences was carried out to examine the possible impact of the changing context of an evolving crisis on the speakers' choice of rhetorical appeals.

4. Results and Discussion

This section reports the results of data analysis in sufficient detail. It is divided into two parts: part one focuses on the rhetorical appeals adopted by the speakers in the press conferences handling Tianjin blasts, and part two focuses on the impact of changing context on the speakers' rhetorical choices.

4.1 Rhetorical Appeals in Press Conferences Handling Tianjin Blasts

Just as Burke pointed out, "where there is meaning, there is persuasion" (1969, p. 72). Meaning is a sure product in post—crisis communication, and therefore persuasion necessarily happens on such occasions as press conferences in response to the crisis. In press conferences, the information is constructed and transmitted to the audience in a way that it can most effectively influence them and persuade them: "they are persuaded to act or not act, and they are persuaded how to act" (Springston et al., 2009, p. 269). Rhetoric exists for the purpose of persuading. Our data analyses find that two of the three rhetorical appeals in Aristotelian framework are frequently adopted—ethos appeal and pathos appeal. In the following parts, we provide a detailed description of how these rhetorical appeals are discursively realized.

4.1.1 Appeals to Ethos

Ethos has been regarded as one of the most important and effective means in persuasion. Researchers (e.g., O'Kafee, 2002) have proved that speaker's credibility, expertise and similarity to the audience are very important aspects of his ethos for the persuasiveness of his speech. In the press conferences handling Tianjin blasts, the speakers are also found to appeal to their ethos by discursively constructing their credibility, expertise, and similarity to the audience.

Constructing credibility. One important way for the speakers to construct their credible characteristics is using precise data and/or scientific proof to prove the truth of the statement. In example (1), in the first press conference, when the head of Tianjin Environmental Protection Bureau reports the environmental monitoring results, he attempts to construct his credibility by referring to the precise time of monitoring and precise data related to the density of some poisonous gas:

(1) 05：30 分的时候，监测出甲苯的浓度为 3.7 毫克/立方米，同时在 05：30 分的时候，监测出三氯甲烷浓度为 1.72 毫克/立方米。

At 5:30, the density of toluol is 3.7 milligram per square meter, and the density of chloroform is 1.72 milligram per square meter.

In example (2), scientific proofs are used by the speaker to provide further evidence for the credibility of his statement.

(2) 截止 8 月 16 日上午 9 时，共发现遇难者遗体 112 具。需要说明的是 DNA 比对科学性和法律性很强。

Until 9:00 am on August 16, the death toll is 112. It is necessary to make clear that the DNA contrast has strong scientific and legitimate base.

In this example, when the speaker reports the death toll, he adds that "DNA contrast has strong scientific and legitimate base" in order to clear up the public's doubt about the data he has provided. By doing so, he emphasizes that his information is reliable and trustworthy.

Constructing expertise. One of the commonest ways for the speakers to construct expertise is to make full use of the "tech" terms and jargon which are hard for the laypersons to understand. For example, when the experts in the field of environmental monitoring are required to provide the related information in the press conferences, most of them make their oral presentation full of such kinds of "tech" terms, jargon and abbreviations, constructing their expertise in the specific domain. For instance, in the above example (1), the speaker's expertise has been constructed through the use of such "tech" terms as "甲苯 (toluol)" and "三氯甲烷 (chloroform)".

In addition to the use of "tech" terms and jargon, the speakers' expertise in the press conferences is sometimes constructed through his detailed description of the scientific behaviour. For example:

(3) 在每次监测，首先要进行一些筛查监测，然后再将筛查监测的结果进行详细的分析，送到实验室。这个过程，筛查监测的过程比较短，十几分钟就能得到结果，经过比色、比对。

In the process of monitoring, first of all we will go through some kinds of screening test, the results of which are then analyzed carefully and sent to the lab finally. In this process, the duration for monitoring test is short. Usually, we can get the results in ten minutes after making comparison and contrast.

In this example, when the speaker is stating the information related to the monitoring of air and water quality after the blasts, he makes a detailed description of how they usually do in the process of monitoring, which more or less gives hint to the audience that the speaker is an expert in the related field since for a person to have some certain identity is "to be cast into a category with associated characteristics or features" (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, p. 3), and vice versa, some associated characteristics of features such as typical behaviours of a person can also reveal the person's possible identity.

Finally, some speakers also construct their expertise by overtly labeling themselves as the "experts" and informing the public of their rich experience in the related fields to convey their expertise. For example:

(4) 我是受国家卫计委的委托，事故发生的凌晨，我们七位专家坐第一班火车赶过来。我们当天陆续到达了 30 几位不同专业的专家，我们主要都是参加过一些大的重大的救援工作的一些有经验的专家，比如说汶川地震、庐山地震。

Entrusted by the National Health and Family Planning Commission, we seven experts in medical field took the earliest train here before dawn after the blasts took place. 30 experts arrived that very day from different fields, and most of us are experts who participated in the rescue of Whenchuan earthquake and Lushan earthquake.

In this example, the speaker is required to present the information related to the medical treatment and curing of the injured in the blasts. He makes an introduction to his team, labeling himself and his team members as "we seven experts in medical field" and the "experts who participated in the rescue of Whenchuan earthquake and Lushan earthquake", thus constructing his expertise in an overt way.

Constructing similarity. By constructing similarity, or appealing to similitude (Higgins & Walker, 2012), the speaker constructs a good ethos by emphasizing similarities or commonalities of himself and the audience. It "bolsters identification", and "is most evident with the choice and use of pronouns" (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 198). In the press conferences handling Tianjin blasts, a high frequency of the "inclusive we" are adopted by the speakers to make salient the mutual similarity of the both parties, the speakers and the audience. In the following example, the speaker, by strategically deploying the "collective we", conveying that both he himself and the audience are same in expecting eagerly for a thorough investigation so as to "suggest commonality" (Higgins & Walker, 2012) and "establish an impression of cohesion, harmony and community" (Cheney, 1993).

(5) 此次爆炸事故给周边的企业和社区居民以及天津港集团公司都造成了重大的损失，我们急切盼望国务院事故调查组查明爆炸事故的原因。

This accident has caused great loss to the neighbouring business, residents and Tianjin Port Group as well. We hope the state council investigation team can make clear the cause of the accidents.

In this example, the speaker uses the first person plural "我们 (we)", referring not only to the Tianjin Port Group where he works with, but also to those victims, including the neighbouring business and residents. With the deployment of the "inclusive we", the speaker conveys the opinion that he, as the representative of Tianjin Port Group and the audience have common interest and wishes, thus constructing their similarity.

In addition to the use of "inclusive we" to implicitly convey the similarity, the speakers also tend to state the similarity of both parties in an explicit way. For example,

(6) 我想我们的媒体朋友和我们军人一样都有着很强的职业精神，这是我们相通之处。

I think you, the media staff and we, the soldiers, both have very strong professional ethics. That's our similarity.

In this example, the speaker who is the chief of general staff of the Beijing military region, states explicitly the similarity between himself, as a representative of Chinese army men, and the audience, reporters from the media circles: we both have strong professional ethics. By doing so, he is trying to construct a good ethos to effectively influence the audience.

4.1.2 Appeals to Pathos

In addition to ethos appeals, the speakers in the press conferences more often than not present their speeches with the mood or tone that appeal to the passions and will of the audience, a realization of pathos appeal in Aristotle's terms. According to Burke (1969), pathos appeal is achieved through "identification", a process in which the speaker sends the message that he understands what the audience really need, expect and desire. Our data indicate that the speakers usually appeal to pathos by expressing depression, appreciation, and determination to investigate the cause of the accident.

Expressing depression. On the occasion of Tianjin accident when so many people lost their family members, relatives, friends and colleagues, sadness of depression is the very emotion that the speakers should convey to the audience so as to win a good impression from them. The feeling of depression is expressed more frequently than other feelings in our data. For example, in the tenth press conference when the major of Tianjin municipality presents his speech, he first of all tends to the sad feeling of the audience by making the following opening remark:

(7) 造成如此重大的人员伤亡和财产损失，我感到十分悲痛和自责。我向遇难者表示深切的哀悼，向其家属、受伤人员和受灾群众表示亲切的慰问。

I feel deeply depressed for the huge loss of lives of properties in this accident. I'd like to express my deep condolences to the families of victims and the injured.

In this example, the mayor uses such emotion-loaded expressions like "感到十分悲痛 (feel deeply depressed" and "表示深切哀悼" (express my deep condolences) to convey to the public his understanding of their sadness and depression in the accident. Similar appeal to the sad and depressed feelings of the audience can be found in example (8), in which the speaker clearly expresses that "I have the same sad and depressed feelings as you do."

(8) 这些天来，我每天都能感受到我们这次事故所造成的重大的人员伤亡和财产损失，所以我的心情 也和我们在座的大家一样，也是非常悲痛和沉重。

These days, I can feel the great loss in lives and properties caused by this accident, so I have the same sad and depressed feelings as you do.

Expressing appreciation. Showing appreciation and praise to the audience is also a realization of pathos appeal. In the press conferences, some speakers adopt this kind of strategy to do persuasion. They usually appreciate the press for their being supportive and helpful and praise the public for their strong will to fight against the difficult times and their great effort in the rescue work. For example, most of the speakers would like to start their information statement with the following remark:

(9) 各位媒体朋友大家好，感谢大家对我们工作的关心和支持。

Hello, my dear friends from the media circle, thanks for your care and support for our jobs.

In addition to expressing appreciation to the press, the speaker also highly praises the public in the crisis to arouse their good impression. For example, in the first press conference, one of the speakers makes use of such a

strategy to appeal to the audience's emotion.

(10) 事故发生后，广大人民群众自发组织参与应急救援，各位媒体界的朋友也给予我们充分的理解和支持，让我们深受感动。

After the accident, many people voluntarily helped us in the rescue, and all the friends in media circles were also very understanding and supportive, which touched us deeply.

In this example, the speaker adopts pathos appeal in his persuasion. By tending to the audience's rational desire of being praised and appreciated, he expresses his appreciation to the public who "voluntarily helped us in the rescue" and the press staff who "were very understanding and supportive" so as to leave a good and likable impression on the audience for the ultimate purpose of effective persuasion.

Expressing determination for a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident. In an accident resulting in such great loss of lives and properties, apart from feeling sad and depressed, another common desire of the public is to find out the cause of the accident and the persons responsible for it. Adapting to such a desire and expectation of the public, another realization of the speakers' pathos appeal in the press conferences is to express their strong determination to investigate the cause of the accident and to punish the possible persons responsible for the accident. For example, when being asked the cause of the accident, the deputy mayor in Tianjin municipality who is in charge of security of the city, makes the following statement:

(11)国务院调查组会对整个事故发生的原因进行认真的调查。一旦发现有违规、违法这些行为，要坚决地惩处，这样给人民一个交代，给受害者、遇难者和群众一个交代。

The state council investigation team will make a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident. Any wrongdoings or illegal behaviours are found, we will punish them severely so as to give people, the victims and the public, a satisfactory explanation.

In this example, the speaker aims to persuade the audience by echoing their desire for an explanation from the government related to the crisis. He clearly states that the official will "make a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident", and promises that any wrongdoings or illegal behaviours will be punished and the government will give all the people involved in the crisis a "satisfactory explanation". By expressing such determination, he apparently adopts the pathos appeal in his persuasion.

4.2 Adapting Rhetorical Appeals to the Changing Context of the Crisis

In section 4.1, I have provided a text-based qualitative analysis of the rhetorical appeals (appeals to ethos and pathos) adopted by the speakers in the press conferences handling Tianjin blasts. In this section, I attempt to investigate how the dynamically changing context of a crisis impacts the speakers' rhetorical appeals in the post-crisis communication.

4.2.1 Analysis of the Changing Context

Compared with other organizational communication, one typical feature of the post-crisis communication lies in its dynamically changing context with the crisis unfolding gradually. New data and evidences are found, new investigation results are reported and new voices are heard, all of which lead to the changing context in the crisis. In the case of Tianjin blasts, from the first press conference on August 13 to the fourteenth press conference on August 23, as the crisis evolves and the investigation furthers, the context in which these press conferences are situated is dynamically changing. Among all the contextual factors, the changing of the audience's emotion and mood and their reaction to the officials' words and actions constitute the most important contextual factors influencing the rhetorical appeals in post-crisis communication.

Changes of the audience's emotion and mood. As the crisis evolves, the audience's emotion and mood had been dynamically changing. At the occurrence of the blasts, the initial feeling of the audience was that of shocking and depression. They were shocked with the severity of the blasts and depressed for the loss of lives and properties in the crisis. As the crisis gradually unfolded, the audience's feeling of panic also increased. The poisonous and dangerous chemical products in the explosion, the air pollution and the water pollution became the main concern of the audience. When the online message about the firemen wearing the chemical protective clothing in the accidental site and the emergence of a lot of dead fishes in the rivers in Tianjin city was spreading, the public became increasingly terrified and panicked, feeling uncertain about their safety after the blasts. As the investigation furthers, the public also expressed their strong desire for a thorough investigation of the cause of the accident.

Emergence of negative voices. Apart from the changing of the audience's emotion and mood, some negative voices from the press and the public regarding the officials' words and actions gradually emerged after the first

six press conferences being held. At the beginning, the negative comments from the public could be found on some popular social media sites like Weibo and WeChat. Later, some major online media, including the online media of China's official press *The People's Daily*, also criticized the previous six press conferences severely. For example, an commentary conducted by a think tank affiliated with *the People's Daily* accused the first six post-blasts press conferences as "催生次生舆情（produce secondary communication difficulties)", and pointed sharply that one of the "communication difficulties" was that the speeches in the press conferences "lacked humanistic care" to the audience. *The People's Daily* also criticized the officials' way of speaking in the first six press conferences with the following remark:

其实很多看起来百口莫辩的问题，真诚直接地说点家常话，并没有那么难解释。（《人民日报》2015 年 8 月 17 日）

The way public concerns have been addressed in the press conference held for Tianjin blasts: things wouldn't be that hard to explain if officials could speak less jargon, more down-to-earth language and   address them in a more candid way." (The People's Daily, August 17, 2015)

In addition, this official press also provided some suggestion for Tianjin officials in the appropriate rhetoric in the same commentary:

今天，当突发事件发生时，谁都已经不可能封堵消息了，相反，很多时候政府部门是在千方百计提速公开发布。但信息的发布不仅要及时、准确，还需要用老百姓听得懂的语言，与老百姓最大的关切对接。比如，别忽略老百姓的感受。

Today when crisis happens, it's no possibility of blocking the message. Instead, for most of the time, the government is trying to publicize the message as soon as possible. However, not only should the related message publicized on time and accurately, it should also be spoken to the public with the language they can understand easily, addressing to their concerns. For example, when publicizing the message, the feeling   and emotion of the public should be considered.

Overall, with the evolving of the crisis, the audience's emotion and mood are changing, and the negative voices regarding the officials' words and actions in the crisis are emerging. All these changing contextual factors might impact the speakers' rhetorical appeals in the post-crisis communication, which can be shown from their manipulation of language in the later press conferences.

4.2.2 Changes of Speakers' Rhetorical Appeals in the Later Press Conferences

The results of our data analysis indicate that the speakers' rhetorical appeals in the first six press conferences differ greatly with those in the later eight press conferences. To be specific, in the initial six press conferences, most speakers tend to persuade the audience by constructing their credibility and expertise. In other words, the speakers in this initial phase of crisis communication most often than not attempt to make persuasion through their rhetorical appeal to ethos. Only four cases of pathos appeal are found in this initial phase. In all these four cases, the speakers construct pathos by expressing appreciation to the press and the public for their "understanding", "support", and "help" in the crisis context.

However, as the crisis evolves, in the second phase of crisis communication after the first six press conference, the speakers' obvious shift from ethos appeal to pathos appeal in the press conferences can be noticed. Taking into consideration the changes of the public emotion and the "lacking-humanistic-care" criticisms from both the public and the press on the previous six press conferences, the local officials show more concern to the audience's emotional needs, tending to adopt pathos appeal more frequently in the press conferences. Besides, the discursive strategies to realize pathos appeal are found to be more diversified than those in the first phase of crisis communication: expressing appreciation to the audience is not the only way for the speakers to do pathos. The public's need for understanding, their feelings of depression and sadness, and their strong desire for punishing the wrongdoers are echoed in the local official's speeches in the later eight press conferences. Thus, compared with the speakers' use of pathos appeal in the first phase of crisis communication, that in the second phase of crisis communication seems to be realized in much more diversified ways. For example, in the opening of the seventh press conference, the speaker first of all echoes the depressed feeling of the audience, who have lost their families, relatives, friends and colleagues in the serious blasts at Tianjin port, with the use of the following opening remark:

(12) 我和大家一样，这几天非常痛心，尤其我作为分管安全的副市长，感到深深的自责。在此，我代表市政府对遇难者表示沉痛的哀悼。

I feel deeply depressed these days, just as you do. As the deputy mayor in charge of the city's safety, I am also self-blaming. Here, on behalf of Tianjin municipality, I'd like to express my depressed condolences to the

victims in the accident.

In this example, the speaker attempts to influence the audience by tending to their depressed feeling, appealing to pathos with the use of emotion-loaded expressions like "非常痛心（deeply depressed)", "深深的自责（being self-blaming)" and "沉痛的哀悼(depressed condolences)". As a matter of fact, after being criticized by the press as being "cold" and "lacking humanistic care" to the audience, expressing depression, sadness and condolences seems to be a routinized speech act of the speakers in the opening of the later eight press conferences. The host in the eighth press conference even suggests a mourning ritual for the victims in the crisis before announcing the opening of the conference in example (13):

(13) 各位新闻界的朋友们，今天是天津港"8.12"瑞海公司危险品仓库特别重大火灾爆炸事故发生后的第七天。我提议向此次事故中的牺牲者和遇难人员默哀。下面请全体起立。默哀！

My dear friends from the media circles, it is the seventh day after the "8.12" blasts at Tianjin port. I suggest all of us join in a mourning ritual for the dead in the accident. Now please stand up for the ritual!

In this example, the host's choice of pathos appeal can be considered as both an adaptation to the public's emotion of being sad and depressed and an adaption to a common social mind (Verschueren, 1999) in Chinese culture. In Chinese context, the first seventh day after a person's passing away is called "touqi" (first seven), an occasion for the families, relatives and friends to lament. Here, the speaker obviously grabs this opportunity to use pathos appeal for achieving good impression from the audience.

In addition to the more frequent and diversified use of pathos appeal in the later press conferences handling Tianjin blasts, the speakers' use of ethos appeal is also changing. In the first six press conferences, most of the speakers tend to do ethos by constructing their credibility and expertise with the use of a lot of "tech" terms, data, and evidences. Although these "tech" terms can help prove the speakers' special competence in certain domains, these domain-specific "tech" terms have also the side effect-making the speakers' discourse hard to be understood by the public. As a result, the vast use of such "tech" terms in the first six press conferences has been negatively commented by the public and the press, who urge the speakers in the press conferences to "用老百姓听得懂的语言（use the language the public can understand easily)". In response to this contextual factor, the speakers decide to change their communicative style in the later press conferences. A result is that when appealing to ethos, the speakers tend to construct similarity with the public more frequently with a lot of "candid" and "easy-to-understand" language. Even when they construct their expertise, the speakers also show an obvious concern to the use of the "oralized" discourse rather than "tech" terms. For example:

(14) 在这里也请转告公众，有要搬家的，回来拿东西的，一定不要触及到这些粉末。

Please let the public know that if they come back for something, do not touch the powder on the ground.

In this example, the speaker wants to give some suggestion to the audience as an expert in the field of environmental protection. His expertise is made salient to the public through his use of advising speech act rather than "tech" terms. In fact, he even deliberately avoids the use of "tech" terms to make his words easily understood: he calls the chemical material on the ground "the powder" purposefully in order not to confuse the audience.

To summarize, in the post-crisis communication, the speakers' use of language reflects a process of choosing rhetorical appeals in accordance with the changing context. As the crisis unfolds, the audience's feeling, emotion and mood are changing, and different voices from the audience are emerging. Adapting to these changing contextual factors, the speakers should carefully choose appropriate rhetorical appeals and their linguistic realizations so as to best influence the audience.

5. Conclusions

This paper investigates how the speakers in post-crisis communication use various rhetorical appeals to make persuasion from the perspective of Aristotelian rhetorical analysis, and examines how the speakers' choice of rhetorical appeals is influenced by the dynamically changing context. The results of data analysis indicate that Aristotelian rhetorical framework is quite applicable to the analysis of post-crisis communication. In the press conferences handling Tianjin blasts, the speakers adopt ethos appeal and pathos appeal most frequently. To be specific, when appealing to ethos, the speakers manipulate discursive resources to construct their credibility, expertise, and similarity with the audience; when appealing to pathos, the public's emotion like their feeling of depression, need for understanding, hope for appreciation, and expectation for punishing the wrongdoers, are activated in the statements of the speakers. Besides, as the crisis unfolds gradually, the context for post-crisis communication is dynamically changing, with the audience's feeling, emotion and mood altering and the negative voices from the press and the public emerging. Under such circumstances, there is an obvious tendency

for the speakers to adapt their rhetorical appeals in their speeches to the dynamically changing context.

Though the present study only touches a tip of the iceberg of the rhetoric in post-crisis communication, and the analysis is mainly a qualitative and descriptive one, it can, to some extent, help us to understand the rhetorical nature of the post-crisis communication (Millar & Heath, 2004), and to recognize at least the public speakers' effort in manipulating language to best influence the audience. It is advisable that the future studies extend the focus on the rhetorical effort made by speakers to the rhetorical effectiveness received by audience.

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