

Interpersonal Function in English Version of President Xi Jinping's New Year's greetings on 2018

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Abstract: Based on interpersonal function-one of the pure theoretical functions of Halliday's systematical functional grammar, this paper analyzes the English translation of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018, and explores how President Xi Jinping can use the New year's greetings to inspire people and to convey Chinese friendship and Chinese self-confidence.

1. Introduction

Contemporary linguistic theories have two major trends of thought: Formalism that emphasizes the linguistic forms or rules, and Functionalism that emphasizes function of language information transmission, but the latter is mostly affected by Systemic Functional Linguistics. The advocate, M.A.K.Halliday, claims that language has three basic functions--ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. Based on interpersonal function, one of the pure theoretical functions of Halliday's systematical functional grammar, this paper analyzes the English translation of the president's New year's greetings, that is, it shows how interpersonal function constructs the relationship between the president and the people of the whole country and even the people of the world in the New Year's greeting. On the one hand, the president's New Year's greeting summarizes the brilliant achievements of the country in the past year and looks forward to the blueprint for the work of the new year. On the other hand, the president's New Year's greeting passes on Chinese friendship and national confidence to the people of the world. On the occasion of the coming of 2018, President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings not only let the people in the whole country understand the current situation of the country's development to strive ahead, but also convey Chinese friendship and national confidence to the people of the world. Therefore, with an eye to person, modality and tone in interpersonal function, this paper analyses interpersonal function in the English translation of President Xi Jinping's 2018 New Year's greetings.

2. Interpersonal Function

The systemic functional grammar created by Halliday provides a theoretical framework for discourse analysis, which is used to analyze all oral and written discourse in English. Halliday claims that language has three basic functions--ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. Interpersonal function means that people can use language to communicate with others, establish as well as maintain interpersonal relationships, and also to express opinions about the world, and even influence other people's behaviors. Interpersonal function pays more attention to the interaction between the speaker and the listener, because one of the main goal of communication is to establish and maintain certain social relationship. When a speaker makes a speech act, his/her ideational metafunction has to convey the information exactly if he/she wants the listener to understand his/her speech and goal. In this process, interpersonal metafunction is related to the success of discourse communication, and also establishes the appropriate interpersonal relationship. Halliday point out that the lexico-grammatical resources are mainly tone, modality, intonation and embodied in the person system, attitude modifiers and words with implicit meaning(Halliday 1994).

2.1 Personal Expression

In the process of interpersonal communication, if there is no personal expression, the conveyed information will lack directivity, so interpersonal communication will not proceed normally. To a certain extent, the use of personal expression can reflect the affinity of interpersonal relationship. For example, to call someone's name and to call someone's name shows two kinds of different interpersonal relationship. Therefore, personal expression plays a very important role in interpersonal communication. Li Zhanzi claims that besides tone and modality, personal pronouns also have the function of realizing interpersonal meaning of words(2002). In English, personal pronouns are divided into first person, second person and third person, and their respective singular and plural. In spoken language, it is usually considered that the first person is the speaker and the second person is the listener, but this is not absolute. The role that the personal pronoun refers to will change due to the change of the occasion. Generally, in the New Year's greetings, the use of the first person(I, me, my, we, us, our) use is often used.

2.2 Modality

Halliday believes that, as one of the important components of interpersonal meaning, modality is the speaker's judgment on the success and the validity of the proposition that he is speaking, or the task that the other party is required to undertake in the proposition, or the personal preference expressed in the proposal(69-362 2000). According to the different exchanges, Halliday divided the modal system into modality and meaning. Modality can be implemented in a variety of ways such as modal verbs (can, will, must, etc.), modal adverbs (probably, certainly, etc.), and so on. In addition, the magnitude of modality can be reflected by different modal operators. Modal operators that have different magnitudes can also represent varying degrees of possibilities, usualness, obligation and willingness. As shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Modality Magnitude(Halliday 2000)

	Possibility	Usualness	Obligation	Willingness
high	certain	always	required	determined
middle	Probable	usually	supposed	keen
low	possible	sometimes	allowed	willing

Table 2 Magnitude of Modal Verbs(Halliday 2000)

high	middle	low
must, ought to, need, has/have to	will, would, shall, should	may, might, can, could

2.3 Tone

Tone plays a very important role in the realization of interpersonal functions. Halliday believes that there are two main types of the communicative role in the interpersonal process: giving and demanding. The communicative object can be "good and service" or "information." The communicative role and the communicative object are the two factors involved in the use of language as a communication tool, which together constitute the four main speech functions: offer, statement, order, and asking questions. As shown in Table 3:

Table 3 Communicative Role and Function(Halliday, 2000: 69)

role \ object	(a)good and service	(b)information
(i)giving	offer Would you like this teapot?	statement He is giving her the teapot.
(ii)demanding	order Give me that teapot!	asking questions What is he giving her?

Halliday defines the tone structure as "subject + qualifier"(72 2000). The subject which is an important component of the proposition is responsible for the validity and success of the proposition or proposal. However, as the reference point of the proposition, the qualifier links the proposition to the context of communication. The positional relationship between subject and qualifier determines tone information. For example, if the subject is before the qualifier, the sentence is a statement. If the subject is after the qualifier, the sentence is a question. If there is not a subject and a qualifier, the sentence is imperative(124 2000).

3. Interpersonal Function in English Version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018

3.1 Tone

The New year's greetings of the president are not just a blessing, but convey the political information. Therefore, due to the particularity of the identity and the mission of the publisher, “giving” and “demanding”, the two most basic tasks of the communicative role, have a very obvious performance. On the one hand, the president of the country provides some information to the people of the country and the rest of the world: the current development and the future work of the country. On the other hand, the president expresses greetings to inspire the people in the country and to convey Chinese friendship and national confidence to the world. Therefore, in New year's greetings, the complete statement is dominant, and the interrogative sentence is generally not used, which may reduce the solemnity and rigor of the president.

The English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018 has 65 sentences. Among them, 63 sentences are statements, accounting for 97%. Through these statements, President Xi Jinping expresses his congratulations on the New Year to people and mainly reviews the important achievements of China in the past year. For example, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the development of completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and scientific and technological achievements, etc. What's more, President Xi Jinping reports the blueprint of China in2018 and also shows the position and the attitude of China to the world. On the one hand, President Xi Jinping wants to show the Chinese people that the country has been improving the people's livelihood and inspiring the people to work hard; on the other hand, President Xi Jinping also conveys China's attitude and confidence to the world.

3.2 Modality

The use of modal verbs can indicate the speaker's attitude, willingness, and perspective, and also allow the listener to understand the speaker's attitude toward something. Through the uses of modal verbs, the speaker imposes his or her attitudes and opinions on the listener, and hopes that the listener can perform these intents. Therefore, in the political speech like the President's New Year's greetings, an effective way that the speaker conveys his intentions to the audience is to use the modal verbs appropriately in the speech. Hence, there are many modal verbs in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018. As is shown in table 4:

Table 4 The number of Modal Verbs in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018

Modal verb	will	would	should	could	must	have to	sum
number	7	2	2	1	2	1	15
percent	47	13.3	13.3	6.7	13.3	6.7	

“must, have to” are high-value modal verbs, and “will, would, could as well as should” are median-value modal verbs. From the table, there are 15 modal verbs in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018. Among them, “will” appears 7 times, “would, should, must” appear 2 times, “could, have to” appear 1 time. It is obviously shown that “will” appears most frequently, and the rest of the modal verbs appear relatively frequently. Therefore, this article mainly analyzes the interpersonal meaning that “will” is reflected in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018.

As a median-value modal verb, “will” has two functions: a time mark simply indicating the future; a median-value modal verb representing “willingness”. “will” appears 7 times, accounting for 47% of all modal verbs, which shows both the blueprint of China in the future and President Xi's encouragement. For example:

By 2020, China will lift its rural impoverished population out of poverty by current standards. That is our solemn commitment and we will honor it. With three years left until 2020, the whole of society must leap into action and, with concerted efforts and targeted measures, continuously strive for fresh victories. After three years, we will win the final phase of the war on poverty. This will be the first time in thousands of years of Chinese history that extreme poverty has been eliminated.

“will” is used 4 times in this paragraph which “will” appears most frequently in the English version. Through using “will”, President Xi Jinping shows the people the goal that China will achieve by 2020. Therefore, in this English version, the function of “will” is not only to make the Chinese people understand the achievements China will make in the coming years and to inspire them, but also to show China's strength to the world and establish China's self-confidence.

3.3 Personal Expression

In verbal communication, as an important pragmatic strategy, personal expressions are often used to construct the identity of a speaker (23-28 2016). The construction of identity aims to achieve a certain interpersonal meaning and communicative effect. Generally speaking, the first person is often used to refer to the speaker; the second person is used to refer to the listener; the third person refers to a third party other than the speaker and the listener. However, when the occasion of communication changes, the discourse role of the personal pronoun will change accordingly. There is the number of personal pronouns in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018 in following table.

Table 5 The number of personal pronouns in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018

personal pronoun	I/me	we/our	you	it/its	they/their	sum
number	16	22	2	4	7	51
percent	31.37	43.13	3.92	7.84	13.73	

From the table, personal pronouns are used 51 times in the English version of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018. The first person with 38 times appears the most frequently, accounting for 74.5%. The second and third person appear less frequently. The former appears 2 times, accounting 3.92%. The latter appears 11 times, accounting 21%. Hence, this article will analyze the use of the first person “we”.

“we” has two kinds of meaning: inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion includes the listener (“I” and “you”), which has a strong appeal. Therefore, it can narrow the distance between the speaker and

the listener, increase the trust of the listener to the speaker, and enable them to reach a common interest relationship. Exclusion does not include the listener(“I” and “others except for you”), which is highly authoritative to allow the hearer to feel the overwhelming power of the speaker.

“we” and “our” appear 22 times in the English version, accounting for 43.1%. Among them, inclusion contains 20 times and exclusion contains 2 times. This New Year’s greeting is delivered by President Xi Jinping who has the same interests with the Chinese people. Inclusion gets closer to people, but exclusion strengthens the authority of President Xi Jinping before officers.

4. Conclusions

Interpersonal metafunction means that people use language to make a contact, to establish and maintain interpersonal relationship, to affect others’ behaviour, and to express opinions to the world(2001). Based on interpersonal metafunction, this thesis analyses the English translation of President Xi Jinping's New year's greetings on 2018 from tone, modality, and personal expressions. Through the analysis, this thesis finds that President Xi transfer the personal expression, chose the appropriate modality, and use the suitable tone to inspire the Chinese people and convey China’s confidence.

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