

A Contrastive Study on Interpersonal Function of Chinese and English Drug Instructions

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Abstract: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is an applicable linguistic theory. This paper will use this theoretical framework to make a comparative analysis of the interpersonal meaning embodied in seven Chinese and seven English drug instructions, so as to summarize the respective characteristics of interpersonal function in Chinese and English drug instructions. The research shows that there are similarities and differences in the choice of subject and clause types between Chinese and English instructions. And the results of this paper aim to have more localized instructions for imported or exported drugs, so that patients and medical staff can understand and apply the instructions more correctly and benefit for patients.

1. Introduction

With the vigorous development of economy, politics and science and technology, China's drug import and export trade is also booming, and the drug instructions are directly related to people's life safety, so its accuracy and precision are particularly important. At present, only a few scholars have discussed and studied the style of instructions, so the author tries to make a comparative study on the interpersonal meaning embodied in Chinese and English drug instructions by using Halliday's systemic-functional grammar. The paper tries to explore the similarities and differences in mood system between them, so as to better understand drug instructions, and provide new enlightenment for discourse analysis and development at home and abroad of drug instructions.

2. Interpersonal Function of Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics is an effective tool for language analysis and an important medium for linking language with society. Halliday (1994) puts forward three metafunctions of language, namely, conceptual function, interpersonal function and textual function^[1]. Interpersonal function refers to the function that language not only expresses the speaker's personal experience and inner activities, but also expresses the speaker's identity, status, attitude, motivation and his inference, judgment and evaluation of things.^[2] People communicate with others through language, and establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. In English and Chinese, interpersonal metafunction is mainly embodied by mood, modality, polarity, evaluation and other systems. Functional grammar regards mood as the main component of interpersonal meaning, and the analysis of mood can better reveal the interpersonal relationship of dialogue participants. Halliday

also divides the exchanged goods into goods and services and information.^[3] Communicative roles and communicative objects constitute four most important speech functions: offer, statement, question and order. These four speech functions are embodied by the mood system. Generally speaking, declarative sentences reflect declarative mood, interrogative sentences reflect interrogative mood, imperative clauses reflect imperative mood, and providing functions has no typical form.

3. Brief Introduction of Drug Instructions

Drug instructions are legal documents that contain important information of drug information and are legal guidelines for drug selection. As an important reference material to provide medical staff and patients with drug information, it guides them to use drugs correctly. Drug instructions refer to the instructions and explanatory words attached to or written on the drug packaging, aiming at providing medication guidance for medical staff and patients. It is a kind of scientific and technological practical writing, commonly called Package Insert, which has the characteristics of simple structure, rigorous wording, clear purpose and strong functionality. Usually, professional and fixed words are used in drug instructions, and abbreviations are often used. Fixed vocabulary refers to common vocabulary, which is generally an outline vocabulary with relative stability. While professional vocabulary refers to medical vocabulary used in the medical industry. Its format is relatively fixed. Generally, it consists of the following parts: drug name, drug description, pharmacological action, indications, dosage and administration, precaution, side effects, contraindications, storage, etc. They are not directly related to each other, and are written separately. Drug instructions are short, mostly one page, with compact structure and clear introduction.

4. Corpus Analysis

The analysis corpus of this paper randomly selects seven Chinese instructions from China food and drug administration (CFDA) and seven English instructions from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), totaling 14 articles. Based on this corpus, this paper makes a comparative study of the interpersonal meaning conveyed by Chinese and English drug instructions, so as to make the drug instructions more localized and promote the import and export of drugs better.

(1) Subject

As the starting point and basic point of information in the text, the subject is the focus to attract the attention of the audience and readers. Besides the choice of subject highly attracts the readers' focus of the instructions and the drug itself, so the choice of subject also plays a very important role in the drug instructions. There are generally three kinds of subjects in drug instructions: drug name itself, patient and no subject.

1) Take the drug name or "this product" as the subject, using this category as the subject can widen the social and psychological distance from the listener and cause strangeness to the listener. For example:

TAMIFLU is contraindicated in patients with known serious hypersensitivity to oseltamivir or any component of the product.

This sentence takes the drug name itself as the subject, which introduces that the drug is not suitable for patients who are highly allergic to oseltamivir. Because the patients themselves are unfamiliar with this kind of drugs and do not understand it and choose to actively believe what is said in the instructions, when taking the drug name as the subject. Thus it greatly opens the distance between the two sides of the dialogue, thus establishing the authoritative image of the drug manufacturer.

2) Take the patient as the subject, such as: Lao nian huan zhe chang ban you shen gong neng jian

tui, ying yong ben yao yi yin qi gan du xing, gu lao nian huan zhe sheng yong.

When the patient is the subject, it naturally pulls into the distance between the two sides of the conversation. At this level, the drug manufacturer plays the role of a friend and provides advice to patients. More importantly, it can better guide patients how to take drugs. For example, the above sentence points out that patients with allergic history to edaravone and elderly patients should pay attention to it. It can be seen that patients who meet the situation will read it carefully and attract attention. If their lives are endangered because of careless misreading of the instructions, patients should bear all the responsibilities themselves.

3) No subject, such as: Known, suspected, or history of breast cancer.

The case of omitting the subject is because the pharmaceutical manufacturer knows that the patient knows what the subject is, which can not only save the space for the pharmaceutical manufacturer to write pharmaceutical instructions, but also make the sentences easier to understand and avoid creating trouble for consumers. The main content omitted in these sentences is that drug manufacturers tell consumers what to do, which can shorten the psychological distance between producers and consumers. At the same time, omitting the subject in the instructions can make the drug instructions more objective and help to establish an authoritative image in the medical field.

After statistics, it is found that “this product” is often used as the subject in Chinese, reaching 45%. It can be seen that Chinese instructions pay more attention to the drug itself and convey true and objective drug information to patients and medical staff, and less take patients as the subject; In English instructions, there are mostly no subjects, and the proportion is close to half.

(2) Declarative Sentences and Imperative Sentences

Compared with imperative sentences, declarative sentences can describe the whole process of occurrence, development and end more calmly, objectively and completely. The purpose of drug instructions is to enable medical staff and patients to understand the key information of drugs, such as pharmacological effects, usage methods, drugs, indications and contraindications, so as to ensure that patients can use drugs reasonably and safely and achieve the purpose of saving lives.

Eg: FACTIVE should be used only to treat infections that are proven or strongly suspected to be caused by bacteria.

The use of imperative sentences in drug instructions can give readers an authoritative message, thus making them realize the importance of using drugs according to the instructions. They are often used in the instructions for drug use, contraindications, precautions, storage, etc. Eg: Yong yao qian xu xiang xi xun wen huan zhe guo qu bing shi, bao kuo yong yao shi, guo min fan ying yi ji wu jia zu bian tai fan ying ji bing shi.

By counting the types of clauses in seven English instructions and seven Chinese instructions, it is found that declarative sentences are the most frequently used in Chinese and English instructions, up to 64%; Followed by imperative sentences. The proportion of declarative sentences in English instructions is higher than that in Chinese instructions, while the proportion of imperative sentences is lower than that in Chinese instructions. Neither of them uses interrogative sentences or exclamatory sentences.

5. Comparative Analysis

(1) Identity

Both Chinese and English drug instructions use the drug name itself as the subject. Because in the drug instructions, drug manufacturers deliberately widen the power gap with patients in order to create an authoritative image of the medical profession and make patients consciously follow the doctor's advice to avoid improper use of drugs. The use of unowned sentences can save space for writing pharmaceutical instructions, and also narrow the distance between pharmaceutical

manufacturers and patients to some extent. Both types of instructions use declarative sentences and imperative sentences, because the main function of declarative sentences is to provide information. The use of declarative sentences in drug instructions can clearly and objectively convey the speaker's intention and accurately convey drug-related information to patients or medical staff. The imperative sentence mainly has the functions of command and demand, which can make patients strictly follow the instructions in the instructions and achieve the most effective treatment effect.

(2) Differences

Chinese drug instructions mostly take "this product" as the subject, while English drug instructions mostly use no subject. Chinese drug instructions intend to widen the psychological and social distance between drug manufacturers and patients, create a sense of strangeness for patients, and make patients consciously follow the doctor's advice to avoid accidents. However, the English drug instructions use no subject, which shows that the English drug instructions effectively shorten the psychological distance between patients and the contents of the instructions pay more attention to simplicity and clarity. Direct and concise medication instructions are transmitted in this form, which also achieves authoritative medical effects. English instructions use more declarative sentences, which shows that English instructions pay more attention to conveying real drug information and make patients trust drug manufacturers more. The use of more imperative sentences in Chinese drug instructions has established a certain medical authority by giving patients appropriate suggestions and warnings with a large number of imperative sentences.

6. Conclusions

Under the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics, this paper makes a comparative analysis of Chinese and English drug instructions, and discusses the identity, differences and reasons behind them. The analysis results show that English drug instructions tend to convey drug information subjectively, which shows that they are very confident in drugs and their own authority. However, Chinese drug instructions try to provide objective drug information in a more polite and accurate way, taking into account individual differences. The analysis of this paper is helpful to localize the expression of drug instructions for import and export, so that more patients at home and abroad can understand and apply drug instructions, which can also promote the development of drug import and export trade to some extent.

References

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