The Study of the Interpersonal Meaning of "The Grand Course" Speech

Fan Luyuan

School of English, Xi'an Internationl Studies University, Xi'an, China

Abstract: The "FLTRP Cup" National English Speech Contest, a very popular speech contest jointly organized by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and Higher Education Universities of the Ministry of Education, has become a popular speech contest among college students with the largest scale and deep influence. It has selected many talents with excellent comprehensive English proficiency, and it is of great significance to study the speech strategies of such outstanding talents. Therefore, this paper selects the corpus of the winner and runner-up of "The Grand Course" as the speech theme in the speech finals of the FLTRP Cup in 2022, based on interpersonal function in Halliday's systemic functional grammar. This paper analyzes the corpus from the three aspects, mood system, modality system, and person system, to explore how interpersonal function is developed in speech. By analyzing the interpersonal meaning of such speech activities, this paper not only provides reference for future speech participants, but also for the corresponding teaching of speech activities.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

With the development of the country, English has become one of the basic skills for high-end talents, and Speaking English is also an important way to spread the traditional culture of the country. "The FLTRP Cup" National English Speech Contest, as one of the speech competitions, has attracted much attention since its inception, and it is already the top level in China in terms of the number of participants, scale, and difficulty. Its contest titles are based on the requirements of international talents. The elements of thinking, expansion, and creativity are integrated into the speech. Its purpose is to enhance students' cross-cultural communication awareness, broaden their international vision, and improve their international literacy. In addition, its competition system is very rigorous and progressive, the contestants need to rely on fluent oral English and excellent comprehensive ability to pass the screening. Interpersonal function, as one of Halliday's three meta-functions, focuses on the analysis of communication and interaction between people, and pays attention to the relationship between speaker and listener. And English speech contest is the interaction between the speaker and the audience. So it is most suitable for the analysis of speech activities. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the interpersonal function of the winner and runner-up's speech in the 2022 "FLTRP Cup" National English Speech Contest to provide reference

for future speech participants, and also for the corresponding teaching of speech activities.

1.2 Research Questions

This study selected the corpus of the winners and runner-ups of the "FLTRP Cup" National English Speech Contest in 2022, whose speech theme was "The Grand Course", focusing on the mood system, modality system, and person system in interpersonal function, so as to explore how the mood, modality, and person system are realized in the "The Grand Course" speech.

1.3 Research Significance

The research has certain references and guiding significance both in theory and practice. Theoretically, analyzing the interpersonal function of "The Grand Course" not only broadens the application field of this theory but also proves the feasibility of this theory in speech discourse once again. In practice, the analysis of the winner's and runner-up's corpus not only provides a reference for future speech contestants but also provides inspirations for the teaching of speech courses.

2. Literature Review

Compared with the ideational function and discourse function, the interpersonal function pays more attention to communication and interaction between people, so it is widely used in speech discourse. Most studies focus on leaders' speeches. Wang Lei [1](2016) takes Putin's political speeches as the corpus to analyze their interpersonal meaning, which concluded that politicians give full play to their interpersonal functions through carefully designed language to achieve their political goals. And then the research is on the speeches of some famous people. Liu Dan[2] (2019)took Ma Yun's overseas speeches as the corpus to explore their interpersonal meaning. Next, in the study of TED talks, Bai Zhihong[3](2019) analyzed the interpersonal meaning of TED entertainment talks and concluded that the declarative mood, modal verbs of medium and low value, and the first person were used most frequently. Chen Xue [4](2018) investigated the interpersonal meaning of college students' English speech words and pointed out that the three systems of mood, modality, and person are important means to realize interpersonal functions in speech competitions.

3. Interpersonal Function Theory

Systemic functional grammar takes the actual use of language as the object of study and clauses as the basic unit of study. Halliday[5] (1994) creatively proposed three meta-functions of language, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Among them, interpersonal function refers to the function that speakers and listeners communicate through language to establish and maintain interpersonal relationship. Interpersonal function emphasizes the interaction between the speaker and the listener. The speaker can convey the information or express their attitude through language, and exert influence on the listener's attitude or behavior. Speech competition is an activity in which through language, the speaker persuades the audience and influences their attitude and behavior, to make them agree with the speaker's views. And interpersonal function is just an important way to achieve this goal. Mood, modality and person system are three subsystems of interpersonal function. This paper explores how to present interpersonal meaning in speech contest from these perspectives.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the theory of interpersonal meaning in systemic functional grammar, this paper analyzes the speech "The Grand Course" in 2022 from three aspects: mood system, modality system, and person system.

4.1 Mood System

Mood system is the main grammatical system to realize the interpersonal meaning. The mood system embodies the roles of both parties in communication. The element of mood structure mainly includes the finite element of the subject and predicate verb. The change in the grammatical structure of clauses is the realization of the speech function expressed by the mood system, which includes four kinds of mood: statement, question, imperative, and exclamation. The following are the statistics of the mood distribution of "The Grand Course" speech.

Table 1: Mood Distribution of "The Grand Course" Speech

Type	declarative	interrogative	imperative	exclamatory
Number	78	3	2	3
Proportion	90.7%	3.5%	2.3%	3.5%

According to Table 1, it can be found that the participants used many declarative moods, accounting for 90.7%. On the contrary, the number of interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory moods is very small, accounting for 3.5%, 2.3%, and 3.5% respectively.

The contestants use the declarative mood to explain the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the people-centered philosophy, and the power of united struggle to create a great path and achieve common prosperity, which describes this great fact and makes the speech fit the competition theme very well. The main function of the declarative mood is that the speaker states and transmits information to the audience, and in a speech, the speaker usually uses a lot of declarative mood to explain his ideas to the audience. Therefore, the declarative mood appears most frequently.

Compared with the declarative mood, the interrogative mood is used for obtaining information, by throwing their questions to the audience, so that the audience can think about it.

(1) "What is the key to its success?"

(2) "Why would our government overcome such difficulty just to make it reality?"

(3) "What I can do ?"

The three clauses begin with the specific question word. The use of "what" and "why" is to stimulate the audience to think about the content and reason, get them involved in the speech, and deepen the audience's impression of the speech theme.

In addition to conveying information, the exclamatory mood also plays a role in expressing emotions, especially strong emotions.

(1) "What a strong, energetic, harmonious, and prosperous country we are living it!"

(2) "What an aspiration!"

(3) "What a wonderful world!"

Exclamations usually start with"What"or "How", and these three clauses all start with "What". Through the use of exclamatory mood, the speaker strongly expresses his praise for the motherland and good expectations for the future, so that the audience can feel the same feeling and be encouraged.

Imperative mood is often used to command, invite, and persuade people to do something,

(1) "look now!"

(2) "Now, let's start with a little story of a small village."

The first clause is an imperative in the notional verb form. The speaker uses the imperative to let the listener observe now that we live in a prosperous country. The second clause is an imperative sentence beginning with Let's, which invites people to join in telling the story of a small village. Both imperative sentences are used to interact perfectly with the audience.

In a word, it can be found that the declarative mood appears most frequently, indicating that the speaker mainly provides information to the audience during the speech. The interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative moods appear very rarely. The interrogative and exclamatory moods are used to stimulate the audience's interest and arouse resonance, while the imperative moods are used to command or invite the audience to do something. In a word, they all realize the interaction between the speaker and the audience and realize the interpersonal meaning.

4.2 Modality System

The meaning expressed by the modality system is also an important part of the interpersonal meaning, which is the speaker's judgment on the success and validity of the proposition he has said, or the obligation he asks the other side to bear in the command, or the personal will to be expressed in the proposal. This paper mainly discusses modal auxiliary verbs. Modal auxiliary verbs are verbs used by speakers to express modality, including high-value modal verbs, median-value modal verbs, and low-value modal verbs. The level of modal value affects the expression of the modal meaning of discourse. The following are the statistics of the Modality distribution of "The Grand Course" speech.

Table 2: Usage of Modal Auxiliary Verbs in "The Grand Course" Speech

Value	High		Middle		Low	
Modal Auxiliary Verbs	have to	be to	will	would	can	could
Number	1	2	1	5	3	2
Proportion	21.4%		42.9%		35.7%	

From Table 2, it can be found that the modal auxiliary verbs in speeches in the "The Grand Course" speech appear a total of 14 times, and the median modal verbs with the highest frequency appear a total of 6 times, accounting for 42.9%. The frequency of low-value modal verbs is 5 times, accounting for 35.7%; The lowest frequency is the high-value modal verb, accounting for 21.4%.

In speech, the median modal verb can express the speaker's expectation and the propositional attitude. In "The Grand Course" speech, "Would" is the modal verb most frequently used, expressing the time in the future, as well as a will and determination.

(1) "Why would our government overcome such difficulty just to make it a reality?"

"Would" expresses both the speaker's attitude and that of the Chinese government. By using the word "would", the speaker expressed the determination of the Chinese government to overcome various difficulties.

Low-value modal verbs are used to express an ability or possibility. Because the information conveyed is easy to be accepted by the audience.

(1) "But small can become mighty."

(2) "Together we can make a big difference."

Both clauses use the word "can". The "can" in the first clause expresses the possibility that small things can become great. The second "can" means the ability to make a difference when people come together. By skillfully using the modal verb "can", the speaker makes the message more relevant and easier for the audience to accept.

The speaker communicates his firm position and attitude by using high-value modal verbs. High-value modal verbs reflect the speaker's status and authority. It appears only three times in the speeches of the three contestants.

(1) "Just as President Xi said, the ultimate purpose of the development is to improve the lives of people."

"Be to" shows that the speaker agrees that the ultimate purpose of a country's development is to improve people's life quality. At the same time, it also reflects that President Xi supports this idea firmly.

4.3 Person system

Li Zhanzi[6] (2002) believes that personal pronouns can reflect how the author views the characters involved in the text, and the use of personal pronouns can help the author establish a specific interpersonal relationship with the reader. The use of personal pronouns also occurs in the speech process. The speaker chooses different personal pronouns to establish and maintain the relationship with the audience. The nature and purpose of the speech as well as the status and authority of the speaker will affect the choice of personal pronouns. The following is the use of personal pronouns in "The Grand Course" speech.

As can be seen from Table 3, in "The Grand Course" speech, contestants use the first person most frequently, accounting for 87.6%, followed by the second person and the third person, both accounting for the same proportion, accounting for 6.2%. From this, it can be seen that the contestants use different person system to carry out their speeches.

First person pronouns are often used to express the speaker's opinions, attitudes, and experiences. "I paid tributes to people's power in introducing du jiang yan." In this clause, the speaker expresses his recognition and respect for people's power by using the singular first person pronoun "I".

Table 3: Usage of Personal Pronouns in "The Grand Course" Speech

Type	First Person						Second Person		Third Person		
	I	me	my	we	us	our	you	your	she	her	their
Number	11	5	14	19	6	16	4	1	1	2	2
Total Number	71						5		5		
Proportion	87.6%						6.2%		6.2%		

"You will see that spirit of striving in unity has been important and played a fundamental role on the grand course." By using the second person pronoun "you", the speaker makes the audience think about the importance of unity and struggle to interact with them which achieves the interpersonal meaning.

"She was really grateful to the local government, and enterprises that made the villagers better off." The use of the third person pronoun "she" expresses the gratitude of the third party to the efforts made by the local government and enterprises. And the use of the word "She" also objectively reflects the facts.

5. Conclusion

Based on the interpersonal function of Halliday's three meta-functions, this study analyzes the mood system, modality system, and person system of "The Grand Course" speech. The study found that, in terms of mood system, speakers mainly use the declarative mood to convey a large amount of information to the audience. The interrogative mood is used to obtain information from the audience, the imperative mood is used to command or invite the audience to do something, and the

exclamatory mood is used to create a certain atmosphere and make the speaker and the audience resonate. In terms of modality mood, the speech has a high frequency of mid-value modal verbs, followed by low-value modal verbs, and finally, high-value modal verbs. Speakers use modal verbs with medium values to express their intentions, low values to indicate objectivity, and high values to indicate a firm position. In terms of the person system, speakers use a lot of first-person pronouns to express their views, second-person pronouns are mainly used for interaction, and third-person pronouns are used to state the views of third parties. By analyzing the interpersonal function of the speech of the winner and runner-up of the 2022 FLTRP Cup, this paper can be used as a reference for speech contestants. And it has certain teaching significance for the course of speech. At the same time, it helps Chinese young people to spread Chinese culture better.

References

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