RESEARCH ARTICLE

RESEARCH ON THE INTERPERSONAL FUNCTION IN ZUCKERBERG'S HARVARD GRADUATION CEREMONY SPEECH

[1]Xiangyu Luo, [2]Junhong Dong and [3]Xiangfang Luo

[12]School of Foreign studies in Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China
[3]Longyan College, Longyan, Fujian, China

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Halliday pointed out: People use their interpersonal functions to express their opinions, attitudes, identities and intentions, establishing and maintaining a specific society and interpersonal relationship. The graduation ceremony speech is a kind of public speech and one of the important components of campus cultures. Scholars from different fields have studied it from different perspectives. However, these studies focus on the analysis of speech skills, text structure or language style and those are less interpreted from the perspective of language interpersonal meta-function theory. The author attempts to use the interpersonal meta-function theory to explore the interpersonal meta-function and its implementation in the speech of Zuckerberg's Harvard University graduation ceremony. The study found that: first, the statement tone, interrogative tone and command tone are the types of tone in interpersonal function in the graduation ceremony speech, but the main form of realization is the statement tone. Second, at the graduation ceremony, speakers tend to use median and low-value modal words, and rarely use high-value modal words as the use of high-modality words imposes obligations and pressure on the audience, and the use of median and low values makes the audience more acceptable and more convincing.

INTRODUCTION

Halliday (1994), a system functional linguist, divided the pure functions of language into ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. Among them, interpersonal function refers to the speaker who establishes and maintains interpersonal relationships in a language and expresses his attitude and inferences to others trying to influence others' attitudes and behaviors. Systemic linguists emphasize the communicative function of language and think of language as a tool of social communication. With the continuous development of SFG in China in recent years, the theory of interpersonal function has received the attention of scholars. Especially, the use of modality system to analyze text has become a hot topic in recent years. The graduation ceremony speech, which is a particular type of public speech and an important part of campus culture, has been studied from different perspectives at home and abroad. However, there were a few researches have been done from the perspective of interpersonal meta-function theory. Therefore, there is much research room left untouched in this field and it is a great significance to study the interpersonal meta-function and its realization in the commencement address. The reasons why Zuckerberg's Harvard Graduation Speech is selected as the study material in this paper are as follows: First of all, Zuckerberg is the founder of Facebook which is one of the

most important social networking sites in the world, and he is the world's youngest self-employed billionaires, so his speeches always attract worldwide attention thus worth analyzing. Secondly, Harvard's commencement address are often recognized as outstanding public speeches, which has a great influence and deserve to be analyzed from different perspectives. Last but not least, Zuckerberg's Harvard commencement address is a real masterpiece, which bears the typical characteristics of commencement addresses. Therefore, the author try to use Halliday's systemic functional theory, especially in the interpersonal meta-function to explore the interpersonal meta-function and its realization in Zuckerberg's Harvard commencement address.

The Interpersonal Function

The interpersonal function is one of the three major meta-functions of the language put forward by Halliday. The three major functions put forward Halliday are: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. The ideational function serves for the expression of "content": that is of the speaker's experience of the real world, including the inner world of his own consciousness. Interpersonal function serves to establish and maintain social relations: for the expression of

social roles, which include the communication roles of questioner or respondent, which we take on by asking or answering a question; and also for getting things done, by means of the interaction between one person and another. The interpersonal function also includes the speaker's comments on the probability, relevance,etc, of the message, and of his attitude towards it. The textual function enables the speaker or writer to construct "text", or connected passages of discourse that is situationally relevant;and can enable the listener or reader to distinguish a text from a random set of sentences. Through the textual function, language provides for making links with itself and with features of the situation in which it is used.

Mood: The most basic purpose of communication is to give and obtain. According to the giving and obtaining of information, sentences in graduation ceremony speech can be divided into: statement sentence, interrogative sentence, imperative sentence and exclamatory sentence. The main function of the statement is to pass the information.The function of the question is to express the problem to obtain the information and the speaker wants to obtain the information from the hearer. Imperative sentences usually convey instructions. When a speaker chooses to use an imperative sentence to express his or her meaning, he usually views himself as one of the next orders and the hearer as one who should comply with the order. What kind of role the speaker plays in communication and what kind of image he wants to present to the listener determines his choice of sentence. Halliday said that the theme of English is   closely related to the mood function, because the theme is usually the first part of the sentence, the order of the different mood sentences in English varies greatly. There are different word order in the sentences, interrogative sentences, imperative sentences and exclamatory sentences. Therefore, analyzing the usage of various types of sentences in graduation ceremony speech helps us to analyze the tone of the speech and then analyze the application of interpersonal meta-functions in language.

Modality: To understand the modality, we first need to understand the term polarity. Polarity includes two opposite polarities: positive and negative. Modality is the choice between the two poles of varying degrees. The choice of polarity is inherently either positive or negative. However, the possibilities are not limited to a choice between yes and no. There are intermediate degrees: various kinds of indeterminacy that fall in between, such as "usual", "often" and so on. Halliday divides modalities into two types, one modality in propositions, including probability and usuality, expressed in might, may, usually, always, etc.The other is the modality in the proposal , Including obligation and inclination, can be expressed using modal auxiliaries such as will, would, shall, and etc.

The analysis of zuckerberg's harvard graduation ceremongy speech

Interpersonal Function Realized by Mood: Halliday holds that people can give the information to each other by language and also express the demand for information by language. In functional grammar, mood is a main component of the interpersonal function, indication the speaker role in communication. From functional grammar, it is known that giving and demanding are the two main language roles in communication.

The commodity we exchange can be either the information or goods & services. Statement, offer, question and command are the four main speech functions, composed by the role in exchange and commodity exchange. It is obvious that the relevant moods will appear when we use the for speech functions and the relevant moods are mainly expressed by declarative mood, interrogative mood and the imperative mood. The subject and finite element make up a component of the clause called mood. Mood is the main point and core of the communication between clauses. When respectively analyzing the mood system in Zuckerberg's graduation speech, the paper uses the quantitative approach to investigate the distribution of mood types in the speech. From the following tables, it gives us a view of the distribution of Mood types in Zuckerberg's Harvard graduation ceremony speech. Zuckerberg's Harvard graduation ceremony speech is made up of 270 sentences. Table I clearly shows that declaratives occupy an overwhelming percentage, accounting for 93% of all mood types used in the selected address. Interrogatives are used 11times, while imperatives 8times, only a small percentage of the total, which are 4% and 3% of the total mood types.

Table 1. Mood types in zuckerberg's harvard graduation ceremony speech

Mood Type	Number	Frequency
Declarative	251	93%
Interrogative	11	4%
Imperative	8	3%
Total	270	100%

Declarative: According to Halliday, the indicatives are the grammatical category. And it is used to exchange the information. While in the category of the indicative, the declatatives refer to the typical expressions of a statement. As Table 3-1 demonstrate, the selected addresses contain 251sentences are declaratives. In Zuckerberg's speech, he not noly delivers information to the graduates in the speech, but also provides a face to face communication, sharing his own knowledge and experience about his work and life with the graduates. In this way, the persuasive and instructive functions of the graduation ceremony speech can be realized. The Examples below show how the declaratives function in the speech:

Example1: " I was late so I threw on a t-shirt and didn't realize until afterwards it was inside out and backwards with my tag sticking out the front."

Example 2: "I had just launched this prank website Facemash, and the ad board wanted to "see me".

Example 3: "As luck would have it, Priscilla was at that party with her friend." From the Examples above, Zuckerberg employs the declatatives to tell the graduating studengs his study experience. By his description, it can presents the graduating students a general view on himself.   From this way, the intimate personal relationship between the speaker and audience is formed. As Zuckerberg's statement focus on his true stories, the graduating students can feel the true emotions form his speech, and then the attention and interest of audiences are raised. Besides that, the recalling about his own college life may make the graduating students feel familiar, making the speech more natural to some extent, hence the mental distance between the speaker and the audience is closing.

Modal Aux	may	might	can	could	will	would	should	has to
Times	3	1	7	5	5	6	2	1

Table 2. Values of modal auxiliaries

High	Must, ought to , need, has to, is to
Median	Will , would, shall, should
Low	May,might, can could

Example 4: "But it's not enough to have purpose yourself. "

Example 5: "Ideas don't come out fully formed. They only become clear as you work on them. You just have to get started."

Example 6: " As technology keeps changing, we need to focus more on continuous education throughout our lives." Through the examples above, Zuckerberg tries to give the graduates his advice. These declarative sentences provide the information which concern how to achieve success in the modern society. His suggestions demonstrate his beliefs and lead the graduate students to think about how to deal with the coming social life.The usage of the imperative is considered as an effective way to realize the persuasive and instructive functions of the graduation ceremony speech.

Interrogatives: The interrogatives are used in a low frequency in Zuckerberg's speech which count for 4%. The interrogative sentences are adopted to find a answer by asking question for a variety of reasons. And we use it to realize the interactive function of questioning or requesting information. Besides, using the interrogatives to ask a question is not just for the answer directly in the graduation speech.From the following examples, we can see how the function of the interrogatives is realized:

Example 7: "What about your first lecture at Harvard?"

Example 8: "How many of you remember exactly what you were doing when you got that email telling you that you got into Harvard?"

Example 9: " So what are we waiting for? "

By the examples above, Zuckerberg does not mean to make the graduating students answer directly, on the contrary, he does it by his own from his own opinion. Because he is the information provider, he presents these interrogatives to give himself a chance to recall his life in Harvard. By doing so, an interactive communication environment can be form between Zuckerberg and the students who graduate.

Imperatives: The imperative regards the role of speaker as the commands giving while the audience's as one expected to follow commands. " I want you to do something" or " I want us(you and me)to do something" is the typical example of an imperative clause. The imperatives not only serve as a role of command, suggestion and request to realize, or express the social status of speaker, but also appeal the audience directly and make them act accordingly. In this way the imperative encodes a relationship between thee speaker and audience, serving primarily as an interactional function or the expression of interpersonal meaning.By analyzing, the imperatives take up the least frequency in Zuckerberg' s speech, which is 3%. In the following examples, the functions of the impertives are demonstrated.

Example 10 : "To keep our society moving forward, we have a generational challenge -- to not only create new jobs, but create a renewed sense of purpose."

Example 11 : " Be prepared to be misunderstood."

Example 12 : " Let's do big things, not only to create progress, but to create purpose."

In this example, Zuckerberg make a request to the students to create both new work and new purpose. What's more he encourage students to be idealistic no matter people understand you or not. By doing so, the imperative create a relationship between Zuckerberg and students.

Interpersonal Function Realized by Modality: By Halliday, Modality can be considered as the speaker's cognition of a state,emotion, and attitude towards his will, which reveals the speaker's uncertainty and estimation to the recognize the things. The speaker can express his attitudes and evaluation by employing different levels of possibility. Modality auxiliary, also called modal auxiliary verb or finite modal operator, present abundant resources for attracting attention to external world, or to personal relationships in the discourse. There are 14 modal auxiliaries in the English language. The use of auxiliary is the most common way to realize modality. In the perspective of values, modal auxiliary can also be divided into three groups, as shown in the following table:

The paper calculates the frequency of their occurrence in the speech respectively, as illustrated in the following Tables. As we can see from Table III , "can", "would" ,"could" are the three major auxiliaries which are used most frequently in the speech. Besides, Low-value modal auxiliaries are used for 16 times and the median-value modal auxiliaries are applied for 13 times, while the high-value modal auxiliaries is the least one, which is only 1times. That's because the high-vale imposes the obligation and pressure on the audience in the address, whereas the usage of the median-vale and low-value make the audience much more convincing and more acceptable.

Modal Auxiliary "Can" "Can" is the modal auxiliary mainly used to express three basic meanings. They are ability, permission and possibility. Depending on different contexts in which a very frequent use of "can" show the ability. Example 13: "We can all make time to give someone a hand. Let's give everyone the freedom to pursue their purpose -- not only because it's the right thing to do, but because when more people can turn their dreams into something great, we're all better for it." Example 14: "The third way we can create a sense of purpose for everyone is by building community." For the examples above, "can" here expresses a kind of ability of human being. He trusts the graduate students have the ability to solve problems they face. However, he does not mean to force the graduating to accept what he said,as "can" is a low-

value modal auxiliary and the low-value modal auxiliary can make the audience acceptable easier, he just points out his opinion in a natural way.

Modal Auxiliary "Would"and "Will"

As we know, "would" is the past tense form of "will". "Will" and "would"are used to make general predictions about what will happen in the future or relate with the commitment of the coming events which are based on the speaker's predictions, intentions and belief.

Example 15: "And yes, giving everyone the freedom to pursue purpose isn't free. People like me should pay for it. Many of you will do well and you should too." In this example, Zuckerberg uses "will" to demonstrate his prediction about events in the future. By using the median-vale modal auxiliary "will", he encourage students to purpose purpose and be optimistic to the future.

Modal Auxiliary "have to" The modal verbs "have to" are usually adopted to enhance the speaker's personal opinion in a subjective way, offering advice or commands to the audiences and demand the audiences' response. However, an excessive use of "have to" in public speech may hurt their their feeling and making them uncomfortable. Example 16: "But it's not enough to have purpose yourself. You have to create a sense of purpose for others." In this example, Zuckerberg tries to tell the graduate their responsibility which is create purpose for others. He uses the high-value modal auxiliary "have to" to emphasize the importance of his suggestion. By doing so,the speaker intensify the credibility of his speech and influences the graduating students' opinion and action.

Conclusion

Based on the theory of Halliday's systemic functional grammar, this paper attempts to explore the interpersonal function and its realization in Zuckerberg's Harvard graduation. The major findings can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the declarative, interrogative and imperative types are the main mood types for graduation ceremony speech to realize the interpersonal function. Among them, declarative mood make up the largest part which accounting for 93% of all mood types in the Zuckerberg' s Harvard graduation ceremony speech. And the declarative is employed mainly to give various information so as to realize the persuasive and instructive function of the speech.

Interrogatives facilitate the effective interaction between Zuckerberg and graduating students, by drawing the students' attention to the question raised and inviting them to think. Imperative mood is used to express Zuckerberg's request, suggestions and expectations. Secondly, when having a graduation ceremony speech, speaker tends to use because the median-value and low-value modal auxiliaries and seldom use the high-value. Because the high-value imposes the obligation and pressure on the audience in the address, whereas the usage of the median-vale and low-value make the audience much more convincing and more acceptable.By proper use of the modal auxiliaries, speakers successfully express their expectation and encouragement to the graduating students. Absolutely, the paper still have its limitation such as the limited study resources in this paper. Therefore, there still has much space for improving.

REFERNCES

Cao, T. 2017. "A Comparative Study of the First TV Debate between Trump and Hillary Clinton in the Theory of Interpersonal Function——Taking the Analysis of Modal System as an Example," *Journal of Hefei University of Technology(Social Science Edition)*.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar,* 2nd ed. *London*: Arnold.

Hu, Z. L., Zhu, Y. S. and Zhang. D. L. 1989. *Introduction to Systemic Functional Grammar,* 1st ed. Changsha: Hunan Education Press.

Hu, S. L. 2011. "Study on the Interpersonal Metafunction of Bill Gates Harvard Speech from the Perspective of System Function Theory," *Shandong University*.

Huang, L. C. 2016. "Comparative Analysis of Interpersonal Functions of Steve Jobs and Bill Gates at Stanford Graduation Ceremony from the Perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar and Evaluation Theory," *Guangxi University*.

Xu. C. Z. 2004. "Research on Interpersonal Function of Systemic Functional Grammar," *College of Foreign Languages, Jilin University*.

Yanga, Y. Z., Yu. X. C. 2001. "The Metafunction Thought in Systemic Functional Linguistics," *Journal of Sun Yat-sen University*.

****