An Analysis of Tour Commentary from the Perspective of Interpersonal Meaning in SFL

Haihu Zhao

Guangdong Mechanical and Electrical Polytechnic, Guangzhou, China

zhh256058@126.com

Abstract: Based on the interpersonal meaning of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), this paper conducts an analysis on tour commentary in terms of mood and modality. Then we make comparisons between good commentaries and the bad ones from the perspective of subjects of clauses, moods (declarative, interrogative, exclamative and imperative), as well as modality. Through the differences between good commentaries and the bad ones, we summarize the characteristics for the creations of excellent tour commentaries.

1. Introduction

According to the prediction of World Tourism Organization (WTO), China will become the biggest tourist destination in the world by 2020, with 137 million tourists coming to China for visitation. Besides, with the booming development of inbound tourism in China, our country firstly set the ambitious target of building China into "The Strong Tourism Country in the World" in 2000. Therefore, how to introduce perfectly and completely each scenic spot, especially the world famous ones, to tourists coming from other parts of the world has become an important topic in tourism industry in China, especially for the tour guides, or the personnel creating English tour commentaries.

According to the theory of Newmark P. (1988), tour commentary has four functions: (1)representational; (2) expressive; (3)vocative; (4) aesthetic. One on hand, tour commentary is presented by the tour guide to show the information of a certain scenic spot to tourists, so that tourists can know something about the spot. On the other hand, during the tour, in particular for the long tour lasting for quite a few days, tour guides need to make use of some language skills to attract tourists' attention, and to make the tour more interesting instead of being bored. From the perspective of linguistics, tour commentary can embody rich interpersonal meaning. This paper will conduct an analysis on the good and bad tour commentaries, and make comparisons between them in terms of mood and modality. In this way, we hope to discuss the features of tour commentary as a genre and how to realize the purpose of it through interpersonal meaning.

2. Interpersonal Meaning of SFL

Interpersonal function is one of the three meta-functions of language, and it means people express their attitude and judgment through language to affect and change other people's ideas, even the world. Therefore, different people can build and keep a certain type of social relationship. To realize the interpersonal meaning, mood and modality are two important ways.

2.1 Mood

In actual speech, though people exchange different roles of speech, there are only two main communicative roles, Giving and Demanding. What to give or demand can be information, which is called Proposition, or can be Goods & Services, which is Proposal. Combining them together, we can get four Speech Roles, which is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Giving or demanding, goods-&-services or information (Halliday, 2000)

Role in exchange / Commodity exchanged	(a)goods & services	(b)information
(1)giving	'offer' would you like this teapot?	'statement' he's giving her the teapot.
(2)demanding	'command' give me that teapot!	'question' what is he giving her?

Mood is composed of Subject plus Finite. "Subject + Finite" is the key for clause exchange. Thus, mood is the core of communication. For this, Thompson points out, Mood plays a special role in carrying out the interpersonal function of the clause role in exchange in English"(Thompso,1996). The order of subject and finite decides the mood. Usually, if subject is before finite, it is the declarative. If finite is before Subject, it realizes interrogative. If there is no Subject and Finite, it realizes imperative (Halliday, 2000).

Usually, the three speech roles 'statement', 'question', and 'command' are realized by the mood: 'statement' is realized by declarative, 'question' is realized by interrogative, 'command' is realized by imperative, 'offer' can be realized by any of the three moods.

2.2 Modality

According to SFL, for communication, besides the two poles Positive and Negative, there are possibilities between the two, that is Medium. The possibility or medium between positive and negative is called Modality. Modality is speakers' attitude and opinion towards a certain proposal or proposition, which shows speakers' willingness or judgment. Modality system conveying information through proposition consists of two parts, Probability and Usuality. Modality system exchanging goods & services through proposal also consists of two parts, Obligation and Inclination. Table 2 shows the degree of various modal words. Through the differences of degrees, we can know the attitude of the speakers.

Table 2 degree of modal words(Xuanwei, Peng, 2000)

	low	medium	high
Positive	Can, may, could, might, (dare)	Will, would, should, is / was to, shall	Must, ought to, need, has /had to
Negative	Needn't , doesn 't/ didn 't+ need to have to	Won't , wouldn 't , shouldn 't , (isn't / wasn't to)	Mustn 't, oughtn't to , can 't , couldn 't , (mayn't), mightn 't, hasn't/ hadn't to

3. Analysis of Tourism Commentary from the Perspective of Interpersonal Meaning

In this research, firstly we select 38 tour commentaries from the National Tour Guiding Contest for Vocational College Students. The 38 tour commentaries include 4 types, 5 of the first prize, 9 of the second prize, 12 of the third prize, as well as 12 of winning no prize. Then based on SFL, we make analysis on the 38 tour commentaries from the perspective of interpersonal meaning, including mood and modality.

3.1 About National Tour Guiding Contest for Vocational College Students

National Tour Guiding Contest for Vocational College Students is an official contest held by China Ministry of Education every year. Vocational students from all over China are selected to participate in the contest. In the contest, contestants of the first prize, the second prize and the third prize are elected through a series of performance, including written test, tour commentary speech, and talent show.

3.2 Analysis of tour commentaries from the perspective of subject in Mood

From Table 3, we can see that in the tour commentaries of the first prize, the subject of "the third person" accounts for 62%, with the most percentage. "The third person" includes "it", "she", "he", and the specific names of the third person. In the tour commentaries, tour guides need to make introduction of the scenic spot to tourists, and lots of information needs to be offered. For example, the introduction of a person, a place, a story etc. Thus, lots of the third persons need to be mentioned. Such as, in the tour commentary of *The Butterfly Lover*, "So Yingtai could only look through the window to watch longingly the boys on their way to school. She admired them very much. So one day she worked up some courage and said to her parents". In these clauses, the third persons of "Yingtai" , and "she" is used to state the story about Zhu Yingtai.

The other reason for the frequent use of the third persons is the use of direct speech. In the tour commentary, in order to make the introduction more vivid and lively, tour guides describe the speeches of the persons in the stories by direct speech, mocking the tone of the figures. E.g. the commentary from *Fubo Hill*, "He cried: 'Yes! Yes! I witnessed that he did all the good things needed.'" Here, subject of "he" is used to make the indirect speech, so that the speech can be more vivid and attract tourists' attention.

Another apparent difference is in the subject of "we". In the tour commentaries of winning no prize, "we" is frequently used, with a percentage of 36%. According to the commentaries, "we" is used to guide what the tour guide and tourists should do next or to tell their positions. E.g. the tour commentary of *Panshan Mountain*, "We are arriving at Panshan Mountain in a minute. Now we come to the entrance. Now we enter to the gate. Now we see two characters Rusheng. Now we are arriving at the large stone bridge. Now we will go to the Tiancheng Temple." In this tour commentary, nearly each paragraph begins with the clause of "we……", it seems the sentence patterns of the commentaries are boring without too many changes, and it is no help for attracting tourists' attention.

Table 3 Distribution of various subjects in tour commentaries

	I (%)	you (%)	we (%)	the third person (%)
First prize	20.3	10.2	7.1	62.4
Second prize	13.2	17.5	16.1	53.2
Third prize	12.1	9.2	25.5	43.2
No prize	18.6	8.1	35.1	38.2

3.3 Analysis of the tour commentaries from the perspective of mood

In table 4, it is shown that in the tour commentaries of each prize, declarative accounts for the most percentage. This is in accordance with the genre of tour commentary. Tour commentary is to present the information of scenic spots, e.g. the geography, history, general introduction, layout etc., to tourists. Doubtlessly, statements are used the most to pass the relevant information.

Beside, interrogative takes up 15.2%, while in the tour commentary winning no prize, interrogative only 3.6%. In tour commentary, interrogative is of great importance. Through asking questions, tour guides can make interactions with tourists. On one hand, it helps to attract tourists' attention. On the other hand, it will make tourists to think, so that they might have deeper impression on the scenic spot. As an excellent commentary, tour guides not just make introduction alone, but also interact with tourists. E.g. The commentary of *Mountain Tai*, "How do you feel now? Do you feel that 'the sun is nearer and cloud's lower', and 'everything around is at your feet except for the sky'"? Through the asking by tour guides, tourists can enjoy the beautiful sceneries around, and their

attention is attracted.

Lastly, in the commentaries of the first prize, imperative account for 14.5%. As for imperative, it is used mostly to show directions for tourists in tour commentaries. E.g. "Now please follow me to visit the Fengxian Temple.", "Ok, my friends, please follow me into the park and here we arrive at the highlight of our tour, Pearl-Returning Cave.", "Well, let's enjoy them in turns.", "Now please look at these four niches." By the imperative, tourists know where they are and where to go. This is an important guiding for tourists as a tour guide.

Table 4 Distribution of various moods in the tour commentaries

	Declarative (%)	Interrogative(%)	Imperative(%)	Exclamative(%)
First prize	60.3	15.2	14.5	10
Second prize	72.8	10.1	9	8.1
Third prize	80.5	7.3	8.1	4.1
No prize	85	3.6	5.2	7.2

3.4 Analysis of the tour commentaries from the perspective of modality

From table 5, there is no apparent difference of modality among tour commentaries of different prizes. However, from this table, we can know that in tour commentary, modal words of low and medium degree , such as "would", "will", "shall", "can", are used more often, while words of high degree, such as "must", are used less. Modal words of low and medium degree are euphemisms, and more polite. While modal words of high degree demonstrate compelling and obedience. Tour commentary is the dialogue between tour guides and tourists. As a tour guide in the tertiary industry, he or she should be polite to tourists, offering comfortable and considerate service to tourists.

Table 5 Distribution of various modal words of different degrees in tour commentary

	Low (%)	Medium(%)	High(%)
First prize	42.3	47.3	10.4
Second prize	48.5	42.2	9.3
Third prize	46.3	5.4	3.3
No prize	50.7	45.2	4.1

4. Conclusion

This paper has makes an analysis of tour commentaries from the perspective of interpersonal meaning in SFL. From the above analysis, we can know that interpersonal meaning is of great importance in tour commentary creation. In order to create excellent tour commentaries, subject in Mood should be widely distributed, with "the third person" the most to present as much information to tourists as possible. In terms of mood, declarative is distributed the most. However, other moods such as interrogative and imperative should also be used widely, so as to make more interactions with tourists and attract tourist s' attention, or to provide some necessary guiding for tourists. With regards to modality, there are no apparent differences among tour commentaries of different prizes. But in the tour commentaries, modal words of low and medium degree should be used often, which shows politeness and euphemism, while modal words of high degree demonstrate compelling and obedience.

English Intensive Reading Textbook in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Constructivism)

References

[1] Guowen Huang. Studies in Functional Linguistics and Discourse Analysis (VII)[M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press. 2019.

[2] Halliday , M . A . K .. An Introduction to Functional Grammar [M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press . 2000.

[3] Lijun Zhong. Interpersonal Meaning Analysis on Obama' s Speech [J]. FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, 2010,(3):80-82.

[4] Newmark, P.. Approaches to Translaiton[M]. London: Prentice Hall. 1988.

[5] Palmer, F. R. Mood and M odality [M]. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press . 1986.

[6] Thompson, Geoff. Introducing Functional Grammar [M]. Beijing : Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 1996.

[7] Yanyan Chen. Interpersonal Meaning in Speeches of Declaring Wars---Based on Mood and Modality in SFL [J]. Journal of Fuyang Teachers College(Social Science), 2006,(5):52-55.

[8] Zhuanglin Hu. General Introduction on Systemic Functional Linguistics [M]. Peaking University Press .2017.