

Interpersonal Meaning and Translation Strategy

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Abstract—To grasp the meaning of the original language is the first step in translating. Interpersonal meaning is one of the key point in understanding the meaning of the original language. This paper examined the different expressions of interpersonal in English and Chinese, including the different system of mood and modality in both languages. Based on the analysis, the paper examined the translation strategies, especially the strategies about the interpersonal meaning.

Index Terms—context, mood, modality

I. THE MOOD SYSTEM OF ENGLISH AND CHINESE AND TRANSLATION STRATEGY

There are many ways to express interpersonal meaning both in English and in Chinese. According to the Functional grammar, one way of Interpersonal meanings of roles and relationships is realized through ways which is called mood.

According to the functional grammar, mood mostly relies on the different types of sentence structure such as declarative or interrogative, the degree of certainty or uncertainty expressed in the usage of modality, the usage of tag questions, vocatives, attitudinal words that either has a positive or negative meaning, expressions to show the degree of intensification, and usages to show various extent of politeness. In functional linguistics, transitivity system is about what is the content of propositions, and mood system is concerned with the approach how that content is presented. Because of the mood system, the relationship between communicative exchanges and grammatical forms can be shown. In this way, when translating, translators will change to the mechanisms which link the highly abstract and universal propositions with the totally physical and context-dependent message or passage.

In the introduction of 《近代汉语语气词》, the author points out some characteristics of mood:

1) Mood indicates the different functions of sentences, and it can express the various sentiments of different communication purpose.

2) Mood is adhered to the whole sentences.

3) Mood is grammatical category, and different kinds of moods can express different grammatical meanings.

In all languages, intonation can express the mood on oral English. Even the words and sentences are the same in written language, different intonation can show quite different meaning. But it is difficult to record vocal sound to prove this, so the paper is going to analyze the diversified forms of written language only. Besides intonation, there are many other ways that have the same function in written language. Let's look at the mood structures of English first.

A. The Mood System of English

When we come to look closely at statements and questions of English, we will find that in English they are typically expressed by means of a particular kind of grammatical change, leaving the reminder unaffected.

Halliday, the writer of *Brief Introduction to Functional Grammar* gives us the following example. (Halliday, 2000, p.36)

The duke's given away that teapot, hasn't he?

-Oh, has he?

-Yes, he has.

-No, he hasn't!

-I wish he had.

-He hasn't; but he will.

-Will he?

-He might.

In this dialogue, what is happening is that one particular component of the clause is tossed back and forth in a series of rhetorical exchange, and it is this component that carries the argument forward. Meanwhile the reminder, here "away that teapot", is simply left out. In functional grammar, "the component that is bandied about is called mood. The mood structure of the clause refers to the organization of a set of functional constituents. It consists of two parts: the (1) subject, which is a nominal group, and (2) the finite operator, which is part of a verbal group" (Halliday, 2000, p 45).

The subject may be any nominal group or pronoun. It supplies the rest of what it takes to form a proposition. The finite element is one of a small number of verbal operators expressing tense by reference to the time of speaking, or modality (*can, must*) by reference to the judgment of the speaker. It has the function of making the proposition finite by relating the proposition to its context in the speech event. In some instances, the finite element and the lexical verbs are connected into a complete word. e.g. *loves, loved*. This happens when the verb is in simple past or simple present tense,

active voice, and positive polarity. In fact, these 'fused' tense forms are the two most common forms of the English verb.

The finite verbal operators are listed as follows (Halliday, 2000, p56):

Temporal Operators:

	Past	Present	Future
positive	did, was, had, used to	does, is, has	will, shall, would, should
negative	didn't, wasn't, hadn't	doesn't, isn't, hasn't	won't, shan't, wouldn't, shouldn't

Modal Operator:

	low	medium	high
positive	can, may, could, might	Will, would, should, is/was to	must, ought to, need, has/had to
negative	needn't, doesn't/didn't +need to, have to	Won't, wouldn't, shouldn't	mustn't, oughtn't to, can't couldn't mayn't, mightn't hasn't/hadn't

What is ideal is that one typical function is corresponding to one mood structure, and also one structure is corresponding to one typical function, as is listed in the following column.

Speech function	Typical mood in clause
statement	declarative mood
question	interrogative mood
command	imperative mood
offer	modulated interrogative mood
answer	elliptical declarative mood
acknowledgement	elliptical declarative mood
accept	minor clause
compliance	minor clause

But language is not that simple, there are many other types that do not belong to these columns which are called non-typical clause moods.

Now, let's look at the non-typical clause moods that are often used.

non-typical moods

Speech function	Typical clause mood	Non-typical clause mood
command	imperative	Modulated interrogative declarative
offer	Modulated interrogative	Imperative declarative
statement	declarative	Tagged declarative
question	interrogative	Modulated declarative

Usually we call the typical mood structure marked structure and call the non-typical mood marked structure.

The choice between a marked or an unmarked structure will be influenced by contextual demands, so in order to study this field more clearly, we have to explore the connection between clause structure and contextual dimensions.

e.g. (1) Would you like to put it back?

(2) You'd better put it back.

(3) You have to put it back.

(4) Put it back.

All the four sentences have the same function, but they belong to different mood structures. The first three are marked structures. In the first sentence, the command is expressed by an interrogative sentence. This can show the politeness of the speaker. In the second and the third one, the two statements also have the meaning of command, and the minute difference between the two sentences lies in the different interpersonal meaning of the two verb phrases "had better" and "have to". "Had better" has the meaning of suggestion, but "have to" means it is compulsory. There are many such phrases that can show minute differences, and we will examine then later. The last one is the typical imperative sentence that has the function of command. The above examples show that different mood system may have different interpersonal meaning and indicate the various relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Four Types of Adjuncts that can express mood

There are many kinds of adjuncts, which can be classified by their meta function, and there are four types of adjuncts that can show the interpersonal meaning. They are mood adjuncts, polarity adjuncts, comment adjuncts and vocative adjuncts.

Mood adjuncts are those that express the speakers' judgment regarding the relevance of the message. There are only two polarity adjuncts: *yes* and *no*. These two types express meanings which are directly related to the mood constituents, but comment adjuncts function to express an assessment about the clause as a whole. They are considered interpersonal elements in the clause, since they add an expression of attitude and evaluation, but because the scopes of comment adjuncts is the entire clause, they should be seen to operate outside the mood structure altogether. Like comment adjuncts, vocative adjuncts do not impact directly on the mood constituent of the clause, but affect the clause as a whole.

Therefore adjuncts also carry the interpersonal meaning. The following table shows the detailed information of the four types of adjuncts (Halliday, 2000, p65).

	type	meaning	example
Mood Adjunct	Probability frequency typicality obviousness	How likely? How often? How typically? How obvious?	Probably perhaps Usually sometimes Generally regularly Of cause, surely
Polarity adjunct	Positive negative	Yes no	Yes no
Comment adjunct	Belief Admitting Persuading Request Assumption Desirability Preservation Validation Evaluating Foreseeing	I believe In my opinion I am sure I want you to I think I really hope Generally speaking It is true that To be frank I predict that	In my opinion To be honest Honestly, believe me Please, kindly Evidently, no doubt Fortunately At first In general Wisely, foolishly To my surprise
Vocative adjunct	Person's name		John, Mike, George

B. Mood System of Chinese

Now look at the following example first.

现在去?

现在去吗?

难道现在去?

难道现在去吗?

All the four sentences can express rhetorical mood functioning as interrogation, but they use different ways. In the first sentence, intonation plays the central function; in the second one, the last word can show the rhetorical mood clearly; in the third one, an adverb "难道" also plays the same role; in the last sentence, both adverb "难道" and modal auxiliary word "吗" are used. The examples show that in Chinese, besides intonation, the expressing of mood is mainly depends on adverbs and modal auxiliary words. Though the intonation is an important way of expressing mood, the adding of some adverbs and modal auxiliary words will make the sentences much clearer. In addition, the intonation can only express some limited kinds of mood, and it is very hard to transmit the subtle sentiments of the speaker by itself alone.

Like English, there are also four types of mood in Chinese: declarative sentence, question sentence, imperative sentence, exclamatory sentence. Different word order can show different moods and in turn show different interpersonal meanings. Besides word order, some adjuncts can also have clear interpersonal meaning.

The paper will use Halliday's modal as the reference to examine the adverbs that can express mood in Chinese.

Modal Adjuncts

The following table shows the comparison of adjuncts in English and Chinese to express mood

	type	meaning	example
Mood adjunct	Probability Usuality Typicality obviousness	How likely How often How typically How obvious	也许、或许、可能、一定 通常、经常、有时、总是 一般情况、多数情况 很清楚、很显然
Polarity adjunct	Positive negative	Yes no	是 不是
Comment adjunct	Belief Admitting Persuading Request Assumption Desirability Preservation Validation Evaluating Foreseeing	I believe In my opinion I am sure I want you to I think I really hope Generally speaking It is true that To be frank I predict that	我认为, 我想、个人观点 坦白来讲 真的、确实是 请、希望 毫无疑问、很显然 令人高兴的是、幸运的是 一般来说, 总体来说 奇怪的是 明智地、愚蠢地、错误地 出乎意料地、不出所料地
Vocative adjunct	Person's name	Mr. White, Tom	王石青, 老王, 王教授, 王爷爷

Modal auxiliary words

Unlike English, Chinese doesn't have finite elements to express mood, but it has modal auxiliary words such as

“啊”“吗”“吧”“呢”with the same function. In declarative sentences there is no need to have modal auxiliary words and it is called unremarked mood. In interrogative sentence, we should add “吗”“呢”etc. In imperative sentence, we should use “吧”“啊”to express mood, and “啊”“啦”can be found in exclamatory sentence.

- eg. declarative: 他是王梅的哥哥。
 interrogative: 你是学生吗?
 interrogative: 谁在敲门呀?
 imperative: 注意啊! 比赛马上就要开始了!
 exclamatory: 这是多么安静美好的夜晚啊!

The analysis of the mood system of English and Chinese show that both languages can express the interpersonal meaning by different modal adjuncts, so when translating, the translators should try to use the corresponding one to replace the adjuncts in the original. There are still differences between the two systems of the two languages. For example, the finite operators can express the interpersonal meaning in English, but there are no such kind usages in Chinese. There are modal auxiliary words in Chinese; but there are n such kind auxiliary words in English. When we translate, sometimes we cannot find the corresponding words, but have to use other ways to translate the meaning.

II. TRANSLATION STRATEGY ON INTERPERSONAL MEANING

A. Addition of Auxiliary Modal Words

Different from English, Chinese doesn't have tense or inflection or finite elements to show the meanings expressed by these grammatical elements in English, so Chinese have to choose the different Chinese characters to express this kind of meanings, in other words, translators have to add some characters when translating from English to Chinese.

eg. 1) We might just well go the whole hog and stay overnight.

我们索性在这里过夜吧。“吧”has the meaning of giving a suggestion or asking for the agreement of the listener, and the same meaning is expressed by the word "might" in English.

2) Don't be angry anymore. I already said I felt deeply sorry, didn't I?

别再生气啦, 我不是已经说了我很内疚了吗? “啦”“吗”has the feeling of making others become calm from angry feeling. In English this meaning is not expressed by words, but a tag question which is a typical grammatical usage.

3) We think we have freed our slaves, but we have not. We just call them by a different name.

我们自以为奴隶已经解放了, 实际上并没有。我们只不过用一种不同的名字来称呼他们罢了。

The phrase “罢了”in Chinese can express the modal meaning of dissatisfaction.

4) Don't take it seriously. It's only a joke.

不要认真嘛! 这只不过是开个玩笑而已。

The adding words “嘛” and “而已”can express the modal meaning in the Chinese translation version.

non-typical mood:

Like English, there are also non-typical moods in Chinese. For example, the declarative sentence is not telling a statement, but it is a kind of command; an interrogative sentence is not asking a question, but it is used to give kind of information; and there are many other types of marked moods. When we translate these kinds of sentences, we should pay much attention to the real intention of the original, and try our best to transfer the original interpersonal meaning.

e.g. 1) Ouch! Isn't that a little steep for a room like this size?

literal translation: 哎呀! 才这么大的一间房, 租金不是太贵了吗?

Actually, this is not a question, but a statement. If we change the question into statement when we translate, it should be better.

change: 哎呀, 才这么大的一间房, 房租未免太贵了吧?

2) Isn't it funny?

literal translation: 不是很好玩吗?

change: 真逗!

3) We shouldn't need very much for a start.

literal translation: 我们不应该在一开始就需要这么多。

change: 一开始何必需要这么多呢?

B. The Translation of Subjunctive Mood

Subjunctive mood is an important grammatical category in English, but there is no such corresponding category in Chinese. This needs us to use lexical ways to translate this kind of mood.

1) If you finished the job, you wouldn't have said that.

如果你已经完成这项工作的话, 你就不会那样说了。

2) If I were you. I'd get up at 5 in order not to miss the train.

假如我是你的话, 我就会在早晨 5 点钟起床赶火车了。

The subjunctive mood is expressed by tense in English, but in Chinese, the meaning can be translated using “如果.....”

的话”。

III. MODALITY OF ENGLISH AND CHINESE

A. Modality of English

Modality is the other way of expressing interpersonal meaning, without which we cannot give a perfect description of interpersonal meaning. In the modal adjuncts, the term polarity has been introduced. Polarity is the choice between the positive and negative. In English, the polarity is expressed in the elements which has both the negative and the positive usages. However, in reality, besides the two ends yes and no, there are many other levels which are not definitely yes or no. There are many intermediate degrees: various kinds of indeterminacy that fall in between. These intermediate degrees, between the positive and negative poles, are known collectively as modality. "Modality is the expression of the speaker's attitude towards what s/he's saying, and it has a close relationship with mood. It is the way the speaker gets into the text: expressing a judgment about the certainty, likelihood, or frequency of something happening or being." (Bassnet, 1998, p.76) Modality is an inherently pragmatic phenomenon and it involves many ways in which attitudes can be expressed. Modality should be studied in proposition and in proposal. It may be accomplished by means of modal operators, but it is not necessarily expressed by the modal operators. There are many other ways that have similar function. Adverbs (frankly, seriously, obviously), adjectives (it is probable that, it is certain that) and even prosodic means can be used to express modality.

In functional grammar, there are two main types of modality. The first type is the modality expressed in proposition, and the second type is the modality in proposal. "In proposition, there are two kinds of intermediate possibilities: (1) degree of probability: possible/ probably/ certainly; (2) degree of usuality: sometimes/ usually/ always" (Halliday, 2000, p.125). Halliday uses the term "modalization" to refer them.

If the speaker chooses to express modalization, this may be achieved grammatically in the following three ways: " (1) by a finite modal operator in the verbal group. (2) by a modal adjunct of probability and usuality. (3) by both "(Halliday, 2000, p. 138)

In proposals, there are also two types of intermediate possibility depending on the speech function, whether command or offer. (1) In a command, the intermediate points represent degrees of obligation. (2) In an offer, they represent degrees of inclination. Halliday refers these two types as modulation.

- e.g. 1. They must have known.
 2. They certainly knew.
 3. They certainly must have known.
 4. It must happen.
 5. It always happens.
 6. It must always happen.
 7. You must be patient.
 8. You are required to be patient.
 9. I must win.
 10. I'm determined to win.

As far as we have concerned, the finite modal operators and the modal adjuncts have already been covered. There is another word that can function as modal adjunct, and that is the word "not", and in this case, it is phonologically salient and may also be tonic. Because it belongs to the function of prosodic feature, it will not be examined in detail in this paper.

e.g. We were /not im/pressed.

B. Modality of Chinese

The modality of English can be expressed by modal operators: can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would, ought to, used to, need, dare, have to, and modal adjuncts or by both. In Chinese, there are no operators and the modality is expressed by these words:能, 能够, 会, 可以, 敢, 愿意, 肯, 要, 得, 应该, 应当, 该 etc. These words have similarity with the modal operators when used to express the interpersonal meaning.

- e.g. 1.你能解决这个问题。能
 2. 他们可定会通知老师的。肯定
 3. 硬让我去, 一定得捅出乱子来。一定得
 4. 你这样自以为是是要栽跟头的。要
 5. 这种事经常发生。经常
 6. 这种事不应该经常发生。不应该经常
 7. 你得常回家看看。得
 8. 我愿意到高校当老师。愿意

1). The Translation Strategy of Modality

The last section of this paper has analyzed the two systems of modality in Chinese and English, and the two systems show that there are a lot of differences between the two languages, so the translation of the modality is not simply to

find the corresponding words of the original language, but to understand the meaning of the original modal operators of English and the *nengyuan* (能愿) words in Chinese, then to find a proper way to translate the interpersonal meaning.

e.g. 1. If I didn't walk every day I should expired.

我一天不散步就会断气。

2. You ought to go and try Macy'. They may have some right ties to go with your suit.

你应该去梅西百货公司看看，他们可能有配你的西服的领带。

3. He might pay us. He is quiet well off now.

他也该还我们钱了，他现在已经相当富裕了。

4. Her trip to Latin America may offend some 19th century chauvinists but the first lady's striking a blow for the full partnership of women.

这位第一夫人的拉美之行也许会触犯某些十九世纪式的大男子主义者，但她的这次出访是为妇女的充分参政打出了有力的一击。

IV. CONCLUSION

All the modal operators in these examples are translated into *nengyuan* words in Chinese. However, because of the two different systems, *nengyuan* words in Chinese cannot fully express the subtle differences of the original. For example, in English, the three modal operators must, ought to and should have minute difference: the meaning of "ought to" is stronger than "should", and both "ought to" and "should" emphasize the objective meaning, but "must" emphasizes the subjunctive meaning. This minute difference is difficult to translate into Chinese because there is no corresponding usage in Chinese, so this requires the translators to choose different words and use lexical ways to transfer the subtle meaning.

Actually, vocatives, pronouns, verbs, nouns, and adjectives can also carry the interpersonal meaning. For example, you may use some words that can show your politeness and respect when you talk to your professor or someone who has the higher rank, but you will use a totally different vocabulary if you talk to your best friends.

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