

Features of Translation on Ancient Memorials Based on Interpersonal Function Analysis-Exemplified by a Selection of Classical Chinese Essays from *Guwen Guanzhi*

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Abstract

Translation has been a prominent focus in linguistics for six decades, yet scant attention has been paid to the stylistic nuances found in ancient Chinese memorials. The study aims to find out the linguistic features of translations of the ancient memorials. The paper starts with a brief introduction of Halliday's interpersonal function theory and the definition of the memorial. Through analyzing the data, we collected from the two well-known Chinese ancient memorials. The former is *State of Dispatching Troops* and the later is *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case*. Results show the features of memorials regarding mood, modality, and personal pronoun and how these features achieve interpersonal functions through quantitative and qualitative research. This paper provides a simple model for analyzing Chinese ancient literary style memorials and compensates for the lack of theory about stylistic linguistic and systemic-functional linguistics in the English-Chinese translation field. The realization of interpersonal functions reflects the speaker's status, intentions, tendencies and, the other information. In essays, more polite usage is used instead of the common first-person *I* and second-person pronoun *you*. The above analysis is considered by translators when they translate the memorials into English.

Keywords: translation, interpersonal function, mood, modality, personal pronoun

1. Introduction

As classic literary works persist across generations among the Chinese populace, they serve as poignant representations of the spiritual essence of the Chinese nation, holding significant research value. Among these, memorials stand out as a distinct literary form, constituting letters penned by officials addressed to the king, aiming to articulate their emotions and intentions. Notable among these memorials are *The Former State of Dispatching Troops* and *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case*, revered and translated variously due to their profound significance in ancient Chinese literature.

In this scholarly investigation, Luo Jingguo (2005)'s rendition is selected for analysis, esteemed for its fluid and eloquent language — a quality praised by numerous Chinese translators. *The Former State of Dispatching Troops* embodies Zhuge Liang's earnest gratitude toward the late king and his resolute commitment to stabilizing the Central Plains. Conversely, *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case* delicately portrays the nurturing influence of the narrator's grandmother and the internal conflict between familial duty and assuming an official role. Crucially, the memorial form dictates a constrained dialogue between speakers and listeners, exclusively comprising the emperor and the official, thereby demanding deliberate language selection to convey intentions with utmost deference.

In actuality, the dynamic between the monarch and subjects reflects the relationship between ruler and the ruled,

necessitating the narrator's expression of humility and reverence within the text. Adhering to the interpersonal function, translators must comprehensively consider the original text's contextual background, the narrator's intentions, identity, and social status when translating the material into the target language.

In the article, the theoretical framework is interpersonal function theory. Using statistical analysis, the results are converted into charts with the help of Excel. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the similarities and differences in the achievement of interpersonal functions between the two articles and to summarize the translation methods of the ancient stylistic memorials in the realization of interpersonal functions.

2. Literature Review

Systemic-functional linguistic theory is founded by British linguist M.A.K. Halliday in the mid-1950s and has a history of more than 60 years. In Systemic-functional linguistics, language is seen as a product of social activity for human communication which has a series of social functions. Halliday (1994) holds that meta-functions of language include conceptual function, interpersonal function, and textual function (Halliday, M. A. K, 1994). The theory has been applied in the translation field for more than half-century, especially the interpersonal function theory is tied to the analysis of literary translation. The interpersonal function of language can express the relationship between the two speakers, and reflect their identity, attitude, and motivation which can influence the situations and listener's actions.

2.1 Definition of Interpersonal Function

Interpersonal functions are one of the three meta-functions of language proposed by Halliday, which refers to the speaker's use of language to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, express his attitude to others, and influence others' attitudes and behaviors. (Hu, Z. L., Zhu, Y. S., & Zhang, D. L, 2005, pp. 115) In Systemic Functional Linguistics, interpersonal function refers to the function that people use language for social activities, including various interactions between the speaker and the hearer, the speaker's attitude to the information received and conveyed, and the speaker's judgment and evaluation of persons or events with the function of mood, modality, and personal pronoun.

2.2 Previous Studies

In China, twenty years ago, Huang Guowen (2002) applied the systemic-functional linguistic theory to the translation analysis of the poem *Qingming* to justify this research method is feasible and it can be used in translation research or other fields, which sets up a good sample for the further study. (Huang, G. W, 2002) His study also provides a new perspective for the study of ancient poetry translation for the other scholars. Since then, the study of translation analysis has been closely integrated with the theory of interpersonal function, especially in field of Chinese classic literature translation. In terms of ancient literary works, various studies have emerged vigorously in the past ten years. Chen Yang (2010) focused on the text analysis in the translation study of *The Analects of Confucius* and Han Ying (2011) compared three different versions of the *Tao Te Ching* and tried to explain differences in the realization of interpersonal functions. (Chen, Y, 2010; Han, Y, 2011) Lu Yang (2019) and Chen Dandan (2020) also discussed the realization of interpersonal function in *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *Shangshu* respectively, which further enriched the research on interpersonal function theory in classical literature. (Lu, Y, 2019; Chen, D. D, 2020) Zhu Yanling (2020) discussed the achievement of interpersonal function in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, focusing on analyzing the important role of the mood system and modality system. (Zhu, Y. L, 2020)

In recent years, the research based on the theory of interpersonal functioning has continued to intersect other fields, mainly in the field of speech. Zhang Jingfang (2015) used the theory of interpersonal functioning in Mandela's inaugural speech, and other statesman's speeches were also considered by linguists by combining qualitative methods. (Zhang, J. F, 2015) Huang Longchuan (2016) used the method of comparative research to illustrate the similarities and differences in the realization of interpersonal functions between Steve Jobs and Bill Gates in their Stanford commencement speeches; in the field of foreign language teaching. (Huang, L. C, 2016) Xi Hongmei and Wu Yang (2011) put forward suggestions to improve the roles of teachers and students and create a harmonious classroom relationship by analyzing the language of English teachers. (Xi, H. M., & Wu, Y, 2011) In the field of film and television works, Cao Yawen and Huang Fengling (2019) analyzed and compared the differences in the frequency of using modal verbs and adverbs among different characters in *Friends*. (Cao, Y. F., & Huang, F. L, 2019) In the field of literature works, Ma Xiaohua and Zhao Yue (2019) analyzed the modal system of *Pride and Prejudice*, and deeply studies the relationship between discourse and characters' status. (Ma, X. H., & Zhao, Y, 2019) They held the view that writers should pay attention to factors such as context, culture, pragmatics, interpersonal relationships, etc. In addition, the works of some other famous writers have also received extensive attention. The interpersonal function theory has been developed prosperously, and the range of its application is wide across world as the growth of the global economy.

3. Study Design

Professor Luo Jingguo selected 32 classical Chinese essays from *Guwen Guanzhi*, showcasing ancient prose's pinnacle. His fluent English translations not only enhanced literary influence but also advocated bilingual learning. Focusing on memorial essays, the author analyzed two from the collection, notable for their distinct language choices due to the official-emperor relationship. The essays analyzed were *The former State of Dispatching Troops*, advising Liu Chan on governance, and *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case*, expressing gratitude to a grandmother and declining an offer due to familial duties. These essays exemplify sincerity, subtlety, and the nuanced use of language.

In this scholarly pursuit, the research methodology encompasses both theoretical and technical approaches. The overarching goal is to summarize the accomplishments of interpersonal functions within the two essays. Initially, data collection from the essays is undertaken. Subsequently, this data is meticulously classified into three distinct categories—namely, mood, modality, and personal pronouns—utilizing Excel as an organizational tool. Furthermore, the author conducts an extensive review of relevant literature, consolidating and synthesizing the distinct characteristics found in memorials.

The process involves a systematic and rigorous approach: data gathering from the selected essays, followed by a structured classification of this data to extract patterns related to mood, modality, and personal pronouns. This methodological framework is complemented by an exhaustive examination of existing literature, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the unique features inherent in memorial essays.

Overall, this methodological approach integrates empirical data analysis with theoretical insights, fostering a nuanced comprehension of how interpersonal functions manifest within these specific essays.

4. Text Analysis Based on Interpersonal Function

4.1 Analysis of Mood System

The author classified the sentences of the two essays into five types to find the characteristics of sentences in memorials. The five types of sentences are declarative sentence, interrogative sentence, imperative sentence, subjective sentence, and exclamatory sentence. In addition, the author analyzed the proportion of each kind of sentence.

Table1. Sentence Type of the former State of Dispatching Troops

	Declarative Sentence	Interrogative Sentence	Imperative Sentence	Subjunctive Sentence	Exclamatory Sentence
Frequency	36	0	0	7	0
Percentage	83.7%	0%	0%	16.3%	0%

Table 2. Sentence Type of Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case

	Declarative Sentence	Interrogative Sentence	Imperative Sentence	Exclamatory sentence	Subjunctive Sentence
Frequency	32	0	0	2	4
Percentage	88.8%	0%	0%	5.5%	11.1%

The former State of Dispatching Troops has twenty sentences in the original text, and the target text contains forty-three sentences. *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case* has twenty-four sentences in original text and the target text contains forty-seven sentences. The length of the translation version is usually twice as long as the original text. According to Table1, there are two types of sentences in *The former State of Dispatching Troops*. They are declarative sentences and subjunctive sentences. And the proportion of declarative sentences accounts for 83.7% of the translation text, while the proportion of subjunctive sentences accounts for 16.3% of the translated text. According to Table 1, there are three types of sentences in *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case*. They are declarative sentences, subjective sentences, and exclamatory sentences. However, the proportion of the exclamatory sentence is small, only accounting for 5.5%. Based on the data analysis, the main sentence types in form of the memorial are declarative sentences and subjective sentences.

Based on interpersonal theory, the purpose of using declarative sentences is to provide information for the emperor. Here are some examples taken from the two texts.

Sample 1 I was a commoner who had to wear clothes made of hemp, and tilled lands in Nanyang.

Sample 2 There should be impartiality in meting out rewards and punishments to officials from either

administration.

Sample 3 In this way can errors be amended, negligence avoided, and greater results attained.

Sample 4 I am forty-four years of age and my grandmother is ninety-six.

Sample 5 But my grandmother is at her last breath, and she is like the setting sun beyond the western hills.

The sample 1 and the sample 4 show the identity of the persons. In sample 1, the translator uses commoner to the social status of Zhuge Liang. In sample 4, the translator introduces the ages of Li Mi and his grandmother. The sample 2, sample 3 and sample 5 show the development of the events. For example, in sample 3, the translator uses *in this way* to introduce the positive effect of the solution. By using declarative sentences, the writer can state the personal factors and social factors clearly and directly. Zhuge Liang's attitude can be conveyed by these sentences as well.

What's more, there are usually no interrogative sentences and imperative sentences in the text. Because the reader is the emperor and he is the person with the highest status in feudal society. Using interrogative sentences or imperative sentences is unsuitable because the status of officials is lower than emperors. Hence, the translators avoided to using these sentence types in the two texts to show their respects for the emperor.

The purpose of using subjective sentences is giving suggestions to the emperor politely. If the narrators state the advice directly, it will be unwilling for emperors to accept it. There are some examples.

Sample 6 It is injudicious Your Majesty should unduly humble yourself, and use metaphors with distorted meanings, lest you should block the way of sincere admonition.

The translator uses *injudicious* and *should unduly humble yourself* to show that Zhuge Liang advises the emperor that he should receive officials' opinions. For the reason that Zhuge Liang is the official he must use polite and humble language to give suggestions to the emperor.

Sample 7 I humbly suggest that military concerns, regardless of weight, be first met with his consultation.

The translator uses *I humbly suggest* to show Zhuge Liang's humiliation and respect for the emperor.

Sample 8 But for her, I would not have become what I am today.

The translator uses *but for* to show Li Mi's gratitude towards his grandmother and all his achievement is contributed to grandmother's help.

Sample 9 I should have done so but my grandmother's failing health detained me.

The translator uses *should have done* to show Li Mi as an official he must fulfill his duty; however, he can't leave his grandmother.

In *The former State of Dispatching Troops*, Zhuge Liang gives a lot of suggestions to the king and his attitude is sincere. To convey his loyalty, the translator uses *I humbly suggest that* to show the humility of a low-status person when advising a high-status person. Compared with Zhuge Liang's language, Li Mi need explain the reasons why he can't accept the offer politely and show his loyalty to the emperor at the same time. The translator uses subjective sentences to explain that accepting the offer is the responsibility as an official and looking after his grandmother is his obligation. In sample 9, the translator uses *I should have done so* to show Li Mi's loyalty.

Although the form of memorial is limited to some extent, the translators can use exclamatory sentences can be used to strengthen the tone and emotion. *How dare I hesitate and cherish any aspirations* shows Li Mi admits that receiving the offer is the responsibility and show his loyalty directly.

4.2 Analysis of Modality System

The modal system is used to express the speaker's subjective judgment on whether the proposition is valid or not, or to reflect the obligations and personal wishes. Modality can be divided into high modality value, medium modality value, and low modality value. In discourse or conversation, the modality chosen by the speaker is often restricted by speaker's social role. In addition, there are various factors affecting the choices of modality, such as the personalities and the degree of intimacy between the speakers, the official and the emperor.

The author collected the modality of the two essays and calculated the proportion of each modality in order to find out the characteristics of the modality system in memorial.

Table 3. Modality of the former State of Dispatching Troops

	High-value modality				Medium-value modality				Low-value modality			
Modality	must	ought	have	need	will	would	shall	should	may	might	can	could

		to	to									
Frequency	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	11	0	0	4	0
Percentage	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	8.3%	0%	45.8%	0%	0%	16.6%	0%

Table 4. Modality of Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case

	High-value modality				Medium-value modality				Low-value modality			
Modality	must	ought to	have to	need	will	would	shall	should	may	might	can	could
Frequency	0	0	1	0	4	2	0	0	3	0	3	2
Percentage	0%	0%	6.6%	0%	26.6%	13.3%	0%	0%	20%	0%	20%	13.3%

According to Table 3 and Table 4, there are no high value modality in *The former State of Dispatching Troops* and the proportion of the high value modality in *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case* is very low. Because of high social status, speakers in high position often use high value modality when speaking. For example, in the relationship of emperors and officials, the officials are at the lower status; hence, he can't choose high value modality.

When the intimacy is dominant in the situation, the formality of the choice of modality between the participants will directly be affected. Hence, the choice of the modality between the emperor and the officials may also be affected by the intimacy. In *The former State of Dispatching Troops*, the medium value modality accounts for 79.1%, which is for more than that in *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case*. Because the relationship between Zhuge liang is more intimate and the translator tends to choose more medium value modality to show their intimacy.

Taking medium value modality and high value modality into consideration, the modality can be divided into four types, which are inclination, ability, probability, and obligation. Inclination refers to people's different tendencies in the decision-making process, which reflects the preferred behavior, value or will. Speakers generally use modal verbs such as *will* and *would* to express their inclinations. Probability refers to the probability of an event occurring. It is generally conveyed by modal verbs such as *can*, *may*, and *might*. Obligations refer to what an individual owes to others or society. The modal verbs *must*, *should*, and *have to* often express obligation. Ability refers to the capacity of doing something. It is usually conveyed by *can*. Here are some examples.

Inclination:

Sample 10 Although I am inferior in ability like a worn out horse or a blunt knife, I would do my outmost to root out treacherous evildoers, rejuvenate the Han Dynasty, and move the capital back to the old city.

The translator uses *would* to show Zhuge Liang's tendency and his will that he will tries his best to root out treacherous evildoers.

Probability:

Sample 11 Then can the prosperity of the Han Dynasty be soon realized.

The translator uses *can* to show that the probability of the achievement of Han Dynasty.

Obligation:

Sample 12 I should have done so but my grandmother's failing health detained me.

The translator uses *should have done* to show Li Mi's responsibility of taking care of his grandmother.

Ability:

Sample 13 I sincerely hope Your Majesty may show mercy on me so that I can fulfill my lifelong wish to serve my grandmother till she has lived her full span.

The translator uses *can* to show his capacity of looking after his grandmother, especially the *fulfill* can show the meaning of obligation.

Given the above sentences into analysis, the functions of the modality are making the requirement more polite and showing the respect for the emperor.

4.3 Analysis of Personal Pronoun

According to Halliday's theory, personal pronoun can reflect the social status or attitudes of the speakers; hence,

the choice of personal pronoun needs to be considered carefully by the translator. The author collected the usage of different personal pronoun in the two essays in order to find out the characteristics of the interpersonal function in memorial. What's more, first-person pronoun, second-person pronoun, and third-person pronoun can achieve different interpersonal function by reflect intimacy or social status.

The author calculated the usage of different personal pronouns in the two essays in order to find out the typical features of personal pronoun in translation version of memorial. The author used Table 5 and Table 6 to show the results and analyzed the different personal pronouns one by one.

Table 5. Personal Pronoun of the former State of Dispatching Troops

	First person pronoun singular	First person pronoun plural	Second person pronoun	Third person pronoun singular	Third person pronoun plural
Personal pronoun	I/me/my	we/us/our	you/your/yours	he/him/his/she/her	they/them/their
Frequency	35	6	15	10	13
Percentage	44.3%	7.5%	18.9%	12.6%	16.4%

Table 6. Personal Pronoun of Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case

	First person pronoun singular	First person pronoun plural	Second person pronoun	Third person pronoun singular	Third person pronoun plural
Personal pronoun	I/me/my	we/us/our	you/your/yours	he/him/his/she/her	they/them/their
Frequency	66	1	16	11	2
Percentage	68.8%	1.0%	16.7%	11.5%	2.1%

4.3.1 Analysis of First Person Pronoun

According to Table 5 and Table 6, the first-person pronoun accounts for 51.8% in *The former State of Dispatching Troops* and the first-person pronoun accounts for 69.8% in the *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case*. The data shows the proportion of the first person is the most in the form of a memorial because the memorial is mainly for expressing the narrator's feelings and thoughts. The translator will use *Your humble servant* to replace *I* because *Your humble servant* can show the Zhuge Liang and Li Mi's identity and their respect towards the emperor.

Using *we* can narrow the distance between the Zhuge Liang and the emperor so that it can make the meaning be friendly accepted. At the same time, the speaker can also express his views more politely and implicitly and show humility, without highlighting his status. Here are some examples.

Sample 14 Now the whole south is under our rule and we have plenty of fighters and armament.

The translator uses *we* to give information about the country and narrow the distance between emperor and official.

Sample 15 Soon afterwards we suffered a military defeat.

The translator uses *we* to show that Zhuge Liang's judgement and he wants the emperor can realize the situation.

From the two sentences, we can see that Zhuge Liang's attitude is thoughtful and humble and he tries to convey his feelings to the emperor. The translator uses *Your humble servant* to replace *I*, which can show the identity of the narrator.

4.3.2 Analysis of Second Person Pronoun

The roles usually played by the speaker are "giving" and "receiving", and they have different speeches. To a certain extent, the speaker not only has to do things by himself but also the listener to do things on his own. In this case, it is necessary for the speaker to give the hearer certain information, and to ask or guide the reader to do certain things.

The number of the second person pronoun in the two essay is few, because the translator always uses *Your Majesty* to replace *you* in order to make the tone more polite.

4.3.3 Analysis of Third Person Pronoun

The object referred to by the third person is not present, the relationship between the third person and the narrator is relatively distant, and the intention and requirements of the narrator cannot be fully realized. In the text, the translator uses *Shizhong*, *Shilang*, *General*, *Shangshu*, *Zhangshi*, *Canjun*, *Grandmother Liu*, *Prefect*, *Cish*, *xiuca* to refer to the persons are not present. Although the emperor doesn't familiar with them. he can know their identity.

The pronoun in the text can tell us how the author views the characters involved in the text. These personal pronouns help to establish a specific relationship between the narrator and the reader, that is, the personal pronouns have the function of realizing the interpersonal meaning of the discourse or conversation.

At last, the author compared the different translation version in the two essays in order to find out the typical features of personal pronouns in memorial. The translator uses the position title to name the people which can show their social status and their language should be consistent with their identity. The following are as the examples in the two essays.

Table 7. Comparison of the Translation in the Two Essays

Version	先帝 (Xian di)	陛下 (Bi xia)	臣 (Chen)	Others
<i>The former State of Dispatching Troops</i>	late king	Your Majesty	Your humble servant	臣 (Chen): the officials at court/counsels of officials 侍中 (Shi zhong): Shizhong 侍郎 (Shi lang) Shilang 将军: (Jiang jun) General 尚书: (Shang shu) Shangshu 长史: (Zhang shi) Zhangshi 参军: (Can jun) Canjun
<i>Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case</i>	none	Your Majesty	Your humble servant	祖母刘 (Zu mu liu): Grandmother Liu 太守 (Tai shou): Prefect 刺史 (Ci shi): Cish 秀才 (Xiu cai): xiucai 东宫 (Dong gong): His Highness 州司 (Zhou si): governor of the District

Given the above analysis, translators should use modality, different sentence types, and personal pronouns to achieve the interpersonal function, which refers to expressing narrators' attitude to emperors, and influence emperors' attitudes and behaviors.

When translators translate the memorials, they need consider the following factors. First, translators can use more declarative sentences to give background information and use a few subjective sentences to achieve narrator's communicative purposes. With the help of exclamatory sentences, translators can show narrator's emotion. Secondly, when translators translate the memorials into English, they can use more low-value or medium-value modality and avoid using high-value modality because low-value or medium-value modality can make the expression more polite. Thirdly, translators should consider the degree of intimacy between the narrator and the emperor and the formality of the choice of modality between the participants will directly be affected by the degree of intimacy. Furthermore, first-person pronoun, second-person pronoun, and third-person pronoun can achieve different interpersonal function by reflect intimacy or social status.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Limitations

The sample size is too small because the samples are only confined to the two articles because of the lack of time and the proficiency of the author. What's more, the controversy about systemic-functional linguistics is existing in the field of translation. And the samples of stylistic analysis of memorials are lacking in the present studies.

5.2 Recommendation for the Further Studies

The analysis of memorial can be combined with the theory of the stylistic linguistic and the researchers can collect more data from the other corpus or other classic articles. Some advanced tools can be used for data analysis to strengthen the validity of the research.

5.3 Summary of the Typical Features of Memorials

The analysis of typical features connects with interpersonal function theory. The mood, modality, and personal pronoun are usually speaker-oriented, which can show the speakers' feelings, emotions, identity, and status. (Lee, N. K., 2009) In the form of memorials, the roles of speakers are confined to the officials and the receivers of information are confined to the emperor. Hence, the language in memorials has its own typical features which should be considered by translators in order to achieve interpersonal functions.

In the mood system, translators should pay attention to the use of declarative sentences to present background information and state development of events and use subjective sentences to show the narrators' politeness or obligation.

In the modality system, translators should use more medium-value or low-value modality to express the narrator's inclination, probability, obligation, and ability in the letter for the emperor. The medium-value or low-value modality is usually used by the person with the low social position.

In the personal pronoun system, when translators want to use the second person pronoun, they should choose the more polite form, for example, *your Majesty*. In opposite to the usage of second-person pronoun, when translators use the first-person pronoun, they should use *your humble servant* to replace *I* to show respect for the emperor and use *we* to shorten the distance between the narrator and the emperor. When translators state the other person, they can use their profession to replace *he* or *she*, for example *General Xiang Chong* because the receivers are not familiar with them so they can only do a judgment by their profession and the attitude of the narrator.

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