

# Interpreting the Interpersonal Grammatical Metaphor in Nobel Speeches in Literature

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**Abstract**—This paper intends to analyze the use of interpersonal grammatical metaphor in Nobel Speeches in Literature. 29 speeches are downloaded from the Nobel official website as data. The occurrences of the metaphors of mood and metaphors of modality are counted, summed up, and listed; the frequencies of each are calculated as well. Our research results show that interpersonal grammatical metaphor does exist in these speeches and indicate that the metaphors of modality are used more widely than metaphors of mood in speech style. They serve such functions as helping the speakers convey their thoughts successfully and making the thoughts be accepted by audience easily.

**Key words:** *interpersonal grammatical metaphor; Nobel speeches; modality; mood*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nobel Prize has been regarded as one of the most prestigious awards in the world. Each December in Stockholm, an official Nobel Speech is presented by the Nobel Laureate at the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony.

The Nobel Speech is well received for having wisdom, individual thoughts, and personal language style. The laureate in literature is the language master who has made great accomplishment. On such special and important occasion, the laureate conveys not only ideas, but also emotions, truths, and ideologies. The Nobel Speech is very influential and has been translated into many languages. More often than not, the content of Nobel Speech is an attention-getter. However, the language features and laureate's intentions are neglected. To the researchers' knowledge, the Nobel Speech has not been touched upon from the perspective of discourse analysis.

As a critical part of systemic-functional grammar, grammatical metaphor has often been used in discourse analysis, especially in science and news discourse. Grammatical metaphor is one kind of language deviance that is effect-oriented. As an integral part of grammatical metaphor, interpersonal grammatical metaphor focuses on the interpersonal function, that is, to indicate, establish or maintain social relationship between people. In speech genre, interpersonal grammatical metaphors may help listeners get to know the attitude of speaker, degree of intimacy, and mutual relationship between the speaker and audience.

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This paper sets out to interpret the use of interpersonal grammatical metaphors in Nobel Speeches in Literature. Specific attention will be given to. To deepen the understanding of grammatical metaphor, especially interpersonal grammatical metaphor, help people to appreciate Nobel Speech in Literature and understand the communicative intentions of laureate, this paper attempts to interpret the phenomenon of interpersonal grammatical metaphor in Nobel Speech in Literature.

## II. INTERPERSONAL GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR

Systemic-functional grammar suggests that language is multi-level: semantic, lexicogrammatical, and phonological. The relationship between levels is "realization". From the semantic level to lexicogrammatical level, the realization is far from a one-to-one relation, and it can be one-to-many relationship. Grammatical metaphor is an incongruent realization of meaning at lexicogrammatical level. Halliday put forward the term "grammatical metaphor" and gave it a systemic and detailed explanation (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Since then it has drawn increasing interest of scholars around the world, like Martin (1991), Goatly (1997), Thompson (2000), Hu (1996), Yan (2000), Zhu (2000, 2006), and Fan (2007). They investigate the theory of grammatical metaphor, emphasizing different features like the nature, classification, means of realization, working mechanism and so on.

Grammatical metaphor falls into ideational grammatical metaphor, interpersonal grammatical metaphor, and textual grammatical metaphor. The interpersonal function is to use language to express speaker's participation and impose on others, to express his wishes, feelings, attitudes and judgments. It is a kind of deviance in mood or modality system, helping to achieve some communicative intentions. It is made up of metaphors of mood and metaphors of modality. Therefore, it is defined as an incongruent realization of meaning in mood and modality system.

### A. *Metaphors of Mood*

Mood performs not only speech function of statement, but also that of question, offer, and command, which in turn transit the speaker's speech acts such as showing politeness,

effort saving, interest arousing, cooperating, etc. (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday, 1994).

According to Halliday (1994: 68-69), an act of speech can be viewed as a kind of exchange. From a speaker’s perspective, he is either “giving” or “demanding” something to and from his listener. From the angle of the commodity being exchanged, it is either “goods-&-services” or “information”. In this way, four speech functions have formed: “offer, command, statement and question” (Halliday, 1994: 69). Speech roles are illustrated in the following table.

**Table 1: Basic speech roles**

| Commodity exchange<br>Role in exchange | (a) good-&-service                  | (b) information                         |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| ( i ) giving                           | ‘offer’<br>Would you like this pot? | ‘statement’<br>He’s giving her the pot. |
| ( ii ) demanding                       | ‘command’<br>Give me that pot!      | ‘question’<br>What is he giving her?    |

In the system of mood, there is a one-to-one typical relation between speech functional categories (semantic level) and mood categories (lexicogrammatical level). Typically, a statement supplies information in declarative mood. A question demands a response to information in interrogative mood. A command demands goods-&-services in imperative mood. An offer is realized by a variety of mood to give goods-&-services. However, in real communication, one speech function may be realized by various mood types, which generates the metaphors of mood.

*B. Metaphors of modality*

Modality shows a speaker’s angle, either on the rights and wrongs of the proposal or on the validity of the assertion. The modality system of consists of such basic concepts as the orientation of modality and the types of modality (Halliday, 1994: 358).

The “TYPE” in modality is comprised by modalization and modulation, which are defined according to their relationships to the two kinds of clause. When the clause is adopted to exchange information, it is termed as proposition; when the clause is adopted to exchange goods-&-services, it is termed as proposal. Modalization refers to the modality which is used to indicate the probability or frequency of propositions; modulation refers to the modality which is used to indicate the obligation or inclination of proposals (Halliday, 1994: 357).

Halliday (1994, p. 358) clearly points out that strictly speaking, the explicitly subjective and explicitly objective forms of modality are all metaphorical, because all of them represent the modality as being the substantive proposition. There are some examples.

(1) a. I think it’s going to rain, isn’t it? (probability)

b. It’s probably going to rain. (isn’t it?) (the congruent form)

The former example is a typical case of the explicitly subjective form of modality because modality is typically reflected by modal elements (modal verbs or adjuncts) in a clause, the projecting clause showing that modality is metaphorically realization. What’s more, there is another expression of metaphors of modality—nominalization. By nominalization, processes (congruently expressed by verbs) and properties (congruently expressed by adjectives) are reworded as nouns; instead of functioning as Process or Attribute in the clause, they function as “thing” in the nominal group. Nominalization is a grammatical process of forming nouns from other parts of speech, usually verbs or adjectives. Halliday (1994:352) indicates that nominalizing is the most powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor.

(2) The determination to succeed made her ruthless.

(3) There’s no need for us to start yet.

In these nouns, modal meaning is constructed as a “thing” which is hard to doubt, as a result, the source of modality is concealed. Modalization and modulation can be nominalized to express the explicitly objective orientation. It can be inferred that the speaker wants to make his statement more objective instead of being subjective because of the use of nominalization which conveys modality meaning.

In addition, metaphors of modality may also be expressed through some prepositional phrases showing explicitly subjective or explicitly objective orientation. For example:

(4) In my opinion, it will snow tomorrow.

(5) You are right to some extent.

In a word, instead of modal adjuncts, metaphorical realizations of modality — clause, nominalization and prepositional phrase are used to express modal meaning. This phenomenon is called metaphors of modality.

III. ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

*A. Analytical procedures*

The analytic steps are specified in the following:

1) Data are downloaded from the official website—www.nobleprize.org. Since interpersonal grammatical metaphors are highly form-dependant, subject to alteration or even loss in translation process, only those speeches delivered in English are collected. Altogether, there are 105 Nobel Speeches in Literature ranging from 1908 to 2007, among which only 29 are made in English (see Table 3).

2) The interpersonal grammatical metaphors are

identified in these samples.

- 3) The occurrences of the metaphors of mood and metaphors of modality are counted, and summed up. The frequencies of each are calculated.
- 4) The functions of metaphors of mood and metaphors of modality are explored and the motives of speaker to use such kind of forms are explained.

Table 3: English samples of Nobel Speeches in Literature

| Name                  | Year | Nationality    |
|-----------------------|------|----------------|
| Rudolf Eucken         | 1908 | German         |
| Rabindranath Tagore   | 1913 | India          |
| William Butler Yeats  | 1923 | Ireland        |
| Sinclair Lewis        | 1930 | USA            |
| Eugene O'Neill        | 1936 | USA            |
| Pearl Buck            | 1938 | USA            |
| T.S. Eliot            | 1948 | United Kingdom |
| William Faulkner      | 1949 | USA            |
| Bertrand Russell      | 1950 | United Kingdom |
| Winston Churchill     | 1953 | United Kingdom |
| Ernest Hemingway      | 1954 | USA            |
| Salvatore Quasimodo   | 1959 | Italy          |
| John Steinbeck        | 1962 | USA            |
| Giorgos Seferis       | 1963 | Greece         |
| Patrick White         | 1973 | Australia      |
| Saul Bellow           | 1976 | USA            |
| Isaac Bashevis Singer | 1978 | USA            |
| Czeslaw Milosz        | 1980 | Poland and USA |
| William Golding       | 1983 | United Kingdom |
| Wole Soyinka          | 1986 | Nigeria        |
| Nadine Gordimer       | 1991 | South Africa   |
| Derek Walcott         | 1992 | Saint Lucia    |
| Toni Morrison         | 1993 | USA            |
| Kenzaburo Oe          | 1994 | Japan          |
| Seamus Heaney         | 1995 | Ireland        |
| V. S. Naipaul         | 2001 | United Kingdom |
| J. M. Coetzee         | 2003 | South Africa   |
| Harold Pinter         | 2005 | United Kingdom |
| Doris Lessing         | 2007 | United Kingdom |

*B. Analytical results*

We use frequency (*f*) to find out the occurrences of interpersonal grammatical metaphors within a sentence. Thus, sentence is taken as the unit to count the occurrences. Frequency of interpersonal grammatical metaphor is listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequency of interpersonal grammatical metaphor

| Speech No. | Sentence Totals | Metaphors of Mood ( $f_1$ ) | Metaphors of Modality ( $f_2$ ) | Interpersonal Grammatical Metaphor ( $f_3$ ) |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1          | 251             | 7(0.028)                    | 19(0.076)                       | 26(0.104)                                    |
| 2          | 1               | 1(1)                        | 0(0)                            | 1(1)   |
| 3          | 121             | 1(0.008)                    | 13(0.107)                       | 14(0.116)                                    |
| 4          | 129             | 1(0.008)                    | 18(0.140)                       | 19(0.147)                                    |
| 5          | 13              | 0(0)                        | 3(0.230)                        | 3(0.230)                                     |
| 6          | 347             | 5(0.014)                    | 13(0.037)                       | 18(0.052)                                    |
| 7          | 25              | 1(0.04)                     | 2(0.08)                         | 3(0.12)                                      |
| 8          | 20              | 0(0)                        | 1(0.050)                        | 1(0.50)                                      |
| 9          | 236             | 3(0.013)                    | 25(0.106)                       | 28(0.119)                                    |
| 10         | 28              | 2(0.071)                    | 1(0.036)                        | 3(0.107)                                     |
| 11         | 15              | 0(0)                        | 2(0.133)                        | 2(0.133)                                     |
| 12         | 163             | 3(0.018)                    | 7(0.043)                        | 10(0.061)                                    |
| 13         | 43              | 0(0)                        | 7(0.163)                        | 7(0.163)                                     |
| 14         | 217             | 1(0.005)                    | 6(0.028)                        | 7(0.032)                                     |
| 15         | 6               | 0(0)                        | 1(0.167)                        | 1(0.167)                                     |
| 16         | 225             | 11(0.049)                   | 12(0.053)                       | 23(0.102)                                    |
| 17         | 49              | 0(0)                        | 4(0.082)                        | 4(0.082)                                     |
| 18         | 154             | 5(0.032)                    | 11(0.071)                       | 16(0.014)                                    |
| 19         | 221             | 11(0.050)                   | 12(0.054)                       | 23(0.104)                                    |
| 20         | 242             | 5(0.021)                    | 8(0.033)                        | 13(0.054)                                    |
| 21         | 117             | 5(0.043)                    | 5(0.043)                        | 10(0.085)                                    |
| 22         | 195             | 6(0.031)                    | 4(0.021)                        | 10(0.051)                                    |
| 23         | 163             | 2(0.012)                    | 3(0.018)                        | 5(0.031)                                     |
| 24         | 175             | 1(0.006)                    | 6(0.034)                        | 7(0.04)                                      |
| 25         | 161             | 3(0.019)                    | 9(0.056)                        | 12(0.074)                                    |
| 26         | 325             | 1(0.003)                    | 15(0.046)                       | 16(0.049)                                    |
| 27         | 147             | 9(0.061)                    | 2(0.014)                        | 11(0.075)                                    |
| 28         | 379             | 3(0.008)                    | 15(0.040)                       | 18(0.047)                                    |
| 29         | 309             | 3(0.010)                    | 14(0.045)                       | 17(0.055)                                    |
| Total      | 4477            | 89                          | 238                             | 327  |
| $\bar{f}$  | 154             | 0.020                       | 0.053                           | 0.073  |

Note:

1.  $f_1$  stands for the frequency obtained by dividing the total sentences in each speech into the total number of metaphors of mood;  $f_2$  and  $f_3$  are obtained in the similar way.
2.  $\bar{f}$  stands for the average frequency. Thus,  $\bar{f}_1$ ,  $\bar{f}_2$ , and  $\bar{f}_3$  stand for the average frequency of metaphors of mood, metaphors of modality, and interpersonal grammatical metaphor (the total of  $\bar{f}_1$  and  $\bar{f}_2$ ) respectively.

Data in Table 4 indicates that both metaphors of mood and metaphors of modality can be found in the texts we collected. Therefore, the linguistic phenomenon of interpersonal grammatical metaphor does exist in Nobel Speeches. Generally speaking, the number of metaphors of modality is larger than that of metaphors of mood in every speech. The metaphors of modality are used more widely than metaphors of mood. Comparing  $\bar{f}_1$  and  $\bar{f}_2$ , we can find that the frequency of metaphors of modality is larger than that of metaphors of mood, that is to say, the metaphors of modality occur more frequently than metaphors of mood.

## IV. DISCUSSIONS

## A. Metaphors of mood

(1) *The headmaster has embezzled the school funds and is suspended, arousing the question familiar to all of us but usually in more august contexts: **How is it these people behave like this when they must know everyone is watching them?** — 2007*

Though the speaker said “arouse the question”, he did not intend to elicit the answer to the reasons why the headmaster embezzles the money from such a poor school. He wants to strengthen the idea that these people should not behave like this when they know everyone is watching them. The speaker uses a question here is not to demand information but to carry the accusing tone and to condemn the people’s behavior. In Nobel Speech in Literature, the speaker needs to express his distinct standpoints or assertions and convey thoughts or ideas in order to persuade and evaluate. Metaphors of mood can highlight speaker’s viewpoints by the metaphorical realization.

(2) ***Let me again emphasize the fact - for it is a fact - that I am not attacking the American Academy.** — 1930*

In this example, it is obvious that the use of imperative mood is not to demand goods or service from audience. Speaker endeavors to make the viewpoints clearly and stresses his standpoints by the metaphorical use of imperative mood.

The metaphorical use of the interrogative mood and imperative mood functions as a way to stress speaker’s viewpoints. Rhetorical question is not to ask for a response from the audience but serves as a topic for discussion, though the answer is self-evidently embedded in the questions. In this way, the opinions are forceful and non-negotiable. The interrogative mood is deviant in form while it is more powerful and convincing in function. The imperative mood foregrounds the speaker’s points by directing audience’s attention to focus on them.

(3) *The motif was simple enough, the theatrical format a tried and tested one, faithful to a particular convention. **What then was the problem?** It was one, I believe, that affects most writers. — 1986*

This example shows that the question raised by the speaker needs not to be answered, because the speaker answer it himself. On the one hand, the question is an appropriate way to give freedom and room to audience, so they can develop their own thinking. On the other hand, the audience may feel that they talk face-to-face with the speaker, because the speaker builds a relationship between speaker and audience in this question-and-answer way, which makes the speech like a dialogue. It appears that the speaker and the audience are taking their different turn, for the speaker asks question and then he himself takes the turn to answer it. The feeling of participation makes the audience more easily to accept the speaker’s idea.

(4) *There has been no Chinese Defoe, no Chinese Fielding*

*or Smollett, no Austin or Brontë or Dickens or Thackeray, or Meredith or Hardy, any more than Balzac or Flaubert. But there were and are novels as great as the novels in any other country in the world, as great as any could have written, had he been born in China. **Who then wrote these novels of China?** That is what the modern literary men of China now, centuries too late, are trying to discover. — 1938*

Here, the speaker thinks that Chinese novels are among the highest level in the world, but there are few writers who are famous as those like Dickens in the western. Then she poses the question and says people now want to trace the answer. This question here triggers the interests of audience. More importantly, it introduces the latter part which is about most Chinese writers produce novel because their pure fondness of novel.

(5) *Such questions are far too little considered. However, **let us, for the present, forget the Koreans, and consider the human race.**— 1950*

“Let us” is an imperative mood in form, but actually it is a declarative in function. Speaker does not demand any good or service from audience; he wants to change the topic from Koreans to human race. Therefore, he uses “let us” to attract audience’s attention and then lead to the new topic. The imperative mood functions as a transitional sentence.

## B. Metaphors of Modality

(6) ***I think** every big town should contain artificial waterfalls that people could descend in very fragile canoes, and they should contain bathing pools full of mechanical sharks.— 1950*

(7) ***I believe** that Strindberg rarely sang the “Star-Spangled Banner” or addressed Rotary Clubs, yet Sweden seems to have survived him.— 1930*

(8) ***I suppose** that in the universities of Sweden and France and Germany there exist plenty of professors who prefer dissection to understanding.— 1930*

The first person “I” shows that the opinions is subjective and personal, and “think” “believe” “suppose” are words with different values. The speakers use “I think”, “I believe” to foreground their points of view and project the proposition as a fact. The modality which is encoded in a projecting clause shows personal assertion clearly. In Nobel Speech, it is inevitable for the speaker to give prominence to his viewpoints. The subjectivity of viewpoints makes speaker’s opinions more clear and assertive. The most effective way to show subjectivity is to embed the subjective form of modality in a projecting clause. A mental process of cognition is usually reflected in such modal clauses, which clearly indicate the speaker’s responsibility for his judgment or assertion.

(9) ***It is possible that** there is no other memory than the memory of wounds.— 1980*

(10) ***It became apparent that** an end had been set abruptly and prematurely, and that the soul had depths not fully*

*sounded by it.*— 1908

These two examples dress up the modality as a proposition by metaphors of modality. Speaker's opinions embedded in projecting clause seem to be a fact that can reject any possible doubt. In this way, speaker's viewpoints are expressed covertly.

The other way is nominalization of modal verbs. Nominalization generally disguises the explicit intrusion of the speaker, so it may sound as if the speaker depends on the distinct evidence of the possibility rather than his own reasoning. Nominalization is a powerful weapon because it is associated with non-negotiability and avoids its possible outcome of rejection.

(11) *For if motion does not find its balance in a state of rest superior to it from which it can be comprehended, the possibility of life's existence within itself disappears.* — 1908

(12) *In my heart there may be **doubt** that I deserve the Nobel award over other men of letters whom I hold in respect and reverence - but there is no question of my pleasure and pride in having it for myself.* — 1962

“Possibility” and “doubt” are all nominalization. In the former, actually it is the speaker opinion that the life's existence within itself is possible. “Possibility” appears to be an objective fact. So does “doubt”. The speaker ingeniously includes his opinions in the nominalization. There seems to be something existing and likes a kind of abstract “thing”, which is more difficult for the audience to disagree it.

(13) *I do not suppose that American universities are alone in this. I am aware that to the dons of Oxford and Cambridge, it would seem rather indecent to suggest that Wells and Bennett and Galsworthy and George Moore may, while they commit the impropriety of continuing to live, be compared to anyone so beautifully and safely dead as Samuel Johnson. I suppose that in the universities of Sweden and France and Germany there exist plenty of professors who prefer dissection to understanding.*— 1930

Three metaphors of modality are found in example 13) which are all explicitly subjective forms. The first person “I” is the given information, which is the starting point of every sentence. Then “I” initiates a new clause which contains new information. The pattern goes like first given information and then new information, and then repeats. This gives prominence to new information and makes the whole passage coherent.

From the above discussion, the motives of interpersonal grammatical metaphor can be explored. For the metaphors of mood, the interrogative mood is not taken as a real question, but a device to achieve the speaker's intentions naturally. In Nobel Prize speech, the speaker is the laureate, who has won the highest award. On this occasion, the laureate wants to show his personal style and establish a good image. The use of question can indicate the speaker's humble attitude, and his willingness to discuss or communicate with the present and potential audience. Both

speaker and audience would feel very close psychologically. The imperative mood mostly demands an object or an action. However, in real life, the demanded commodity of symbolic exchange is information. Imperative mood reveals the status and the relationship between participants. If the participants are strange or not quite familiar, it may sound a little rude and impolite. In the situation of speech, speaker and audience are usually strangers. When a speaker uses imperative mood, it shows that the speaker thinks that he is at a higher status to press the audience to give some response. The use of imperative mood is likely to undermine the acceptability of viewpoints or damage the image of speaker. Actually the imperative mood is declarative mood in function. It can catch people's attention from the calm flow of speech, either to stress or explain some viewpoints or change the topic naturally. Therefore, the seemingly inappropriate mood is a good way to achieve some tasks successfully. Though the imperative mood is under the disguise of command, the metaphorical realization does not appear to be rude and it would not hurt the feelings of audience. Instead, the use of imperative mood can generate the humorous effect and make the viewpoints more acceptable.

As for the metaphors of modality, the use of explicitly subjective form is a way to avoid being absolute. The speaker attempts to make reservation for his opinions, by which he can show respect to the viewpoints of audience. If the opinions are conveyed by explicitly objective form or nominalization, they seem like a “thing” that is hard to doubt. It makes the opinions sounds so authoritative that there is no room for discussion or even debate. It also leaves the impression that the speaker has too much certainty about his words and tries to impose his opinions on the audience no matter the audience accept them or not. Speaker's choice of explicitly subjective form of modality shows his consideration of audience's feelings.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Our study shows that interpersonal grammatical metaphor does exist in Nobel Speech in Literature and it can perform a series of functions. Speaker selects this special language device—interpersonal grammatical metaphor to accomplish some designed effects. No matter which mood is metaphorically used, it is planned to emphasize the speaker's opinions or attitudes, shorten the psychological distance or introduce a new topic. No matter which form of modality is showed, it is planned to foreground subjectivity, create objectivity or make the discourse cohesive. All these functions contribute to the fact that the speaker in Nobel Speech in Literature wants and does his best to convey the thoughts and ideologies successfully, and make them sounds more acceptable. The motives behind the fact are that the speaker would not like to be at a high status or utter some complicated or profound words to confuse audience. The speaker endeavors to pay respect to the audience and establish a good relationship with audience, avoiding being

arrogant or conceited.

There are some implications of this paper: First, the study confirms that the systemic-functional grammar characterized by multi-level and multi-function, provides a theoretical framework for genre analysis; Second, the analysis of interpersonal grammatical metaphor enables people to get a better understanding of Nobel Speech in Literature from a brand-new perspective; Third, the research shows the psychology of people who uses interpersonal grammatical metaphor. It can contribute to the correct understanding of language in daily communication.

However, there is still much room for future analysis and study, such as the contrastive research of the interpersonal grammatical metaphors between Nobel Speech in Literature made by native English speakers and that made by non-native English speakers.

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