Interpersonal Significance Analysis of Alberto Fernández's Speech Against Epidemic Situation

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Abstract. Based on the interpersonal function of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), this paper builds Fernandez Speech Corpus for Anti-epidemic, and analyzes the interpersonal meaning of the speech delivered by the current Argentine President Alberto Fernández during the COVID-19 epidemic in two aspects-mood and modality. Therefore, the way of Alberto Fernández's speech through interpersonal meaning during the anti-epidemic period was explored.

1. Introduction

The global spread of COVID-19 epidemic has brought challenges to most countries in the world. On the afternoon of January 30, 2020 local time, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, held a press conference in Geneva, announcing the novel coronavirus epidemic as an "international public health emergency". With the spread of the epidemic, Latin America has gradually become the "epicenter", which has had a serious impact on the local society. At the same time, due to the high poverty rate and the relative shortage of medical resources in Latin America, the impact of the epidemic on Latin America is special.

As one of the important countries in Latin America, Argentina's anti-epidemic measures and attitudes will have a great impact on Latin America. And President Fernández plays an important role in the process of fighting the epidemic.

Based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar theory, this paper attempts to focus on interpersonal meaning analysis. Nine public speeches of President Alberto Fernández of Argentina during the epidemic period were selected as the corpus, and the corpus was self-built. With the help of corpus retrieval and analysis software, this paper makes quantitative statistics on the corpus, and reveals the ideology and intention implied in President Fernández's political speech at the beginning of the epidemic and during the aggravation of the epidemic through interpersonal meaning analysis and examples.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Interpersonal function of systemic functional linguistics

Language is the product of social activities, and it takes on many functions in the process of communication. Halliday classifies them into three pure functions: ideological, interpersonal and textual functions (Kang Junying 2012:150). Language not only has the function of expressing the speaker's personal experience and inner activities, but also has the function of expressing the speaker's identity,
status, attitude, motivation and his inference, judgment and evaluation of things. This function of language is called "interpersonal function" (Hu Zhuanglin 2008:115). Interpersonal function is mainly embodied by mood system and modality system (Wu Liqin 2009:12). The function of mood system is to express the speaker's hope to achieve through speech, while modality system is a semantic system to express the speaker's judgment or evaluation of things (Wu Liqin 2009:12).

2.1.1. Mood system. In the process of communication, the speaker can change his "speech role" at any time, such as stating his own opinions, asking questions, giving orders, giving instructions, expressing feelings of surprise or fear, and expressing doubts. Although the speech roles of language are various, its most basic tasks are only two, giving and seeking. The communicative objects in communication can also be divided into two categories: goods and services, and information.

Two variables, speech role and communication object, constitute four main speech functions: "providing", "commanding", "stating" and "questioning".

| Communication role | Exchange |   |
|-------------------|----------|---|
|                   | Goods and services | Information |
| Give              | Provide   | Statement |
| Seek              | Command   | Question |

From the perspective of grammatical structure, statements, questions and orders are realized by declarative mood, interrogative mood and imperative mood respectively, and can be realized by different moods only if exceptions are provided.

The mood consists of two parts: the subject, which is acted by noun phrases; The finite element is a part of a verb phrase (Hu Zhuanglin, 2008:121). Tone is the core of communication (Zhong Lijun, 2010:80). The rest includes predicate verbs, appendixes and complements. The position of subject and determiner determines the information of mood. Generally speaking, if the subject is before the determiner, it is declarative; if the subject is after the qualifier, it is interrogative; if there is no subject and qualifier, the sentence is imperative (Halliday, 1994). Language form is not arbitrary, it is dominated by meaning and reflects meaning (Kang Junying 2012:152). Investigating the mood system can analyze how speakers express their personal opinions through mood selection, so that their personal values can be recognized and their attitudes and judgments can be supported.

2.1.2. Modal system. One of the important components of interpersonal meaning is the speaker's judgment on the success and validity of his proposition, or the obligation that the other party is required to undertake in the order, or the personal will to be expressed in the proposal [9]. This part of interpersonal meaning is realized by the modal system of grammar [10]. Through the investigation of the discourse modality system, we can not only figure out the extent of the speaker’s responsibility for the authenticity of the discourse proposition and the commitment or obligation to the future behavior, but also understand the speakers to the recipient and related the attitude of the event, the social distance and power relationship between the speaker and the receiver, etc. [11]. Halliday divides modality into modality and mentality, which involve levels and stages. The former refers to the probability and frequency of different values. The latter refers to obligations and wishes of different values [12], as shown in Figure 1.
Modality covers the meaning area between "yes" and "no", which is an intermediate area between positive and negative poles (Halliday 2000). Modality has a regression pole, and the regression of modality is related to magnitude (Cao Xia, Sun Qiyao, 2014:13). Therefore, the value of modality can be "quantified", with three values: high, medium and low (Cao Xia, Sun Qiyao, 2014:13). Thompson (2000:69) thinks that modal value indicates the speaker's commitment to the validity of proposition or proposal: the speaker can express higher or lower affirmation of the validity of proposition, or exert higher or lower pressure to make others complete instructions.

3. Corpus sources and research methods
The research corpus comes from 9 important speeches (https://www.casarosada.gob.ar) delivered by Alberto Fernández during Argentina's fight against the new crown pneumonia epidemic in 20201. The time node is from March 20 to August 30. The corpus of "fernández anti-epidemic speech" was built by ourselves, with a total of 32100 words. With the help of corpus retrieval and analysis software casualconc, the corpus was quantified and the results were observed. By analyzing mood and modality, this paper summarizes the interpersonal meaning in fernández's speech.

4. Results and discussion
4.1. Quantitative analysis of mood

4.1.1. Quantitative analysis of sentences with various moods. In Fernández's nine speeches, a total of 3,856 clauses were used. Among them, there are 3793 statements, accounting for 98.37%; There are 42 interrogative sentences, accounting for about 1.1%; There are 21 imperative sentences, accounting for about 0.5%; Exclamatory sentences are 0 sentences, accounting for zero percent.

In the public speeches during the anti-epidemic period, Fernández used the most declarative mood. Secondly, there are questions and imperative mood, and there is no sigh tone.

Speakers publicize their political opinions and provide some information to the audience, so that the audience can understand themselves. In order to achieve the purpose of persuasion and appeal, this is mainly achieved through declarative mood, because the function of declarative mood is to provide information. On the other hand, the ultimate goal of the speaker's speech is to persuade and encourage the audience, urge them to trust themselves, and demand and appeal to the audience to take action, which is mainly achieved through imperative mood. Because imperative mood has the functions of command,

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1 On the afternoon of March 3, 2020 local time, the Argentine Ministry of Health held a press conference to announce that Argentina had confirmed the first case of COVID-19 pneumonia. On March 19, local time, President Fernández announced that from March 20 to 31, the whole population would be isolated, and residents were not allowed to go out except for purchasing essential commodities. On April 25 local time, fernández said it would extend the national quarantine period to May 10. On the evening of 4 June, fernández extended the quarantine for another three weeks. On July 1, the Argentine government began to re-introduce mandatory social isolation measures.
demand and appeal, and is authoritative [15]. In addition, the use of imperative sentences also reflects the interpersonal relationship between the two parties, showing the identity and status of the speaker. The use of imperative sentences means that "the speaker (thinks himself) is in a powerful position (the addressee can express rejection)" [16]. "In interrogative sentences, the speaker seeks information or checks existing information." [17]

As the President of Argentina, Fernández is the transmitter of information, and he uses many statements to objectively state the severe epidemic situation facing the country, which is very convincing. For example, when talking about the current epidemic situation, he said:

pero lamentablemente este es el tiempo que nos tocó, y en este tiempo la pandemia sigue presente, y en este tiempo la pandemia sigue atacando, y en este tiempo la pandemia sigue enfermando y llevándose vidas. (18/07/2020)

(Unfortunately, it's our turn to face this moment. At this moment, the epidemic still exists, threatening and even taking away our lives.)

Los casos han aumentado en la Argentina y ya hay más de 110 mil casos, creo, y el 89 por ciento de esos casos ocurren en el Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires. (18/07/2020)

(The number of cases in Argentina has increased and exceeded 110,000. 89% of the cases were concentrated in Buenos Aires metropolitan area.)

Imperative sentences can directly express feelings, appeal to listeners, arouse their resonance, and make speeches more infectious and inflammatory [18]. Fernández successfully used imperative sentences in his anti-epidemic speech to appeal to the people to strengthen prevention and stimulate their sense of mission (for example 3), and at the same time recognized their presidential status and assured the people that the government can lead the people out of difficulties (for example 4).

Primero, miremos la tasa de incidencia acumulada, esto quiere decir cada cien mil habitantes cuántos contactos existen. (18/07/2020)

(First, let's look at the cumulative incidence rate. This data means how many contacts exist per 100,000 residents.)

Entonces ver de qué modo unimos esfuerzos para seguir trabajando juntos, ya que nos salió bien esto de trabajar juntos en la enfermedad, trabajemos juntos cuando estemos sanos. (18/07/2020)

(The result of our joint efforts to prevent and cure this disease is optimistic, and when we are healthy, let us work together.)

4.1.2. Quantitative analysis of mood structure

1) Quantitative analysis of sentence subject

The subject can be a noun, or any word, phrase or even clause with noun characteristics. Personal pronouns are of great significance in realizing interpersonal meaning. The speaker can "subtly express interpersonal meaning" by choosing personal pronouns, which is helpful to "adjust and control the interpersonal relationship between readers and authors". This is more effective than using nouns or noun phrases to express interpersonal relationships [19].

In the nine speeches, the first person singular as the subject was the highest, followed by the first person plural; the second person singular and plural personal pronouns were not involved; the third person singular personal pronouns were slightly less frequent. It is found that the first person singular refers to Fernández himself, and the plural refers to all Argentines including himself (Example 5). Most of the third person singular refers to the address of journalists to the president, and the plural refers to doctors, nurses and other anti-epidemic personnel besides Argentine nationals (Example 6), see Table 2.
Table 2. Number of occurrences of personal pronouns in a text

| Category | First person (singular, plural) | Second person (singular, plural) | Third person singular | Third person plural |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Personal pronoun morphology | Yo | Nosotros | Tú | Vosotros | Él/Ella/Usted | Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes |
| Frequency | 103 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0/0/8 | 6/0/19 |

E.g:

5. Nosotros, desde el primer día, nos hemos planteado un plan, el plan era decirles la verdad, estamos enfrentando una pandemia, decírles la verdad, necesitamos ordenar el sistema de salud y necesitamos ganar tiempo para ordenar el sistema de salud, y mientras ganamos tiempo, le damos tiempo a la ciencia para que encuentre la solución médica. (14/08/2020)

(We, from the first day, have disclosed the truth, that is, we are facing a pandemic disease, we need to strive for time to arrange the deployment of the health system, and at the same time, give the medical department time to find a solution.)

6. Se suele decir que uno admira aquello que es incapaz de hacer, soy absolutamente incapaz de hacer esto, lo acaban de corroborar y por eso tengo tanta admiración por lo que ustedes hacen y les damos las gracias, en serio, a todos. (15/05/2020)

(As the saying goes, a person is always full of respect for what he can't do. I just confirmed this point, and I can't do it, so I admire your efforts and sincerely thank you.)

In the sentence with the first person singular as the subject, the high-frequency substantive verbs that appear after excluding non-substantive verbs such as auxiliary verbs and modal verbs are arranged as Table 3:

Table 3. Different semantic content verbs

| Semantic types of verbs | Example |
|-------------------------|---------|
| "Thanks" category | agradecer (thank), dar las gracias (give thanks) |
| "Request" category | pedir (request) |
| "Wish" category | querer (hope, attempt) |
| "Judgment" category | insistir (insist), estar seguro de (assurance), confiar (believe) |

When using semantic verbs like "thank you", Fernández expressed his gratitude to the Argentine people, the governor, the director of the Social Security Bureau, the medical staff, and the test agent research and development personnel. In particular, thanks to provincial governors (Example 7), among the three major federal countries in Latin America, only the Argentine President followed the sub-national government to announce isolation measures and coordinated with provincial governors (Jin Xiaowen 2020). E.g:

7. Yo agradezo a cada Gobernador y a cada Gobernadora porque yo siento que estamos hablando el mismo idioma y siento que tenemos exactamente la misma preocupación, y siento y estoy convencido que estamos viendo del mismo modo de la realidad. (14/08/2020)

(I thank every governor. I speak the same language and share the same concerns with you. I'm sure we have the same view on the present.)

8. Yo le agradezco a cada argentina, a cada argentino por haber entendido lo que nosotros queremos hacer, que no es otra cosa que no sea cuidar la salud de los argentinos. (25/04/2020)

(Thanks to every Argentine for understanding our goal—to take care of the health of Argentines.)

9. Yo les agradezco este tiempo que me han regalado y este permiso de meterme en el trabajo de ustedes, que me ha dado mi querida Fernanda, para poder hablarles como les estoy hablando. (13/08/2020)
(I thank you for giving me time, and my dear fernanda for giving me the opportunity to join you and communicate with you in this way2.)

10. Yo les quiero dar las gracias, particularmente, a cada trabajador y cada trabajadora de la salud, a expuesto al riesgo del contagio. (14/08/2020)

(I especially want to express my gratitude to every medical worker who risks infection.)

"Request" semantic verbs. The Argentine people are required to understand and cooperate with the government's measures. E.g:

11. Para que estos números no crezcan, yo les pido por favor que entienda que esto no es un acto de autoritarismo, ni un acto de prepotencia, entiendan que el riesgo de aumentar la circulación, de acercar los contactos físicos, es un problema.

(In order to prevent the number of infected people from increasing, I ask you to understand that this measure is not dictatorial or extreme, and that the danger of increased traffic and physical contact is the problem.)

3) The semantic verbs of "will" are entrusted with Fernández's confidence and yearning for victory against the epidemic.

12. Yo quiero que la Argentina cambie, y quiero que cambie para bien. (13/08/2020)

I hope Argentina will change and get better and better.)

4) "Judgement" semantic verbs often express their certainty of an event. For example, in Example 7, he is sure to have the same concerns as the governors.

2) Quantitative analysis of sentence restrictive components

4.2. Modal analysis

There are five basic modal verbs in Spanish: deber, poder, querer, saber, soler Soler. And three modal structures: deberede, tenerque and haberque. Because Spanish is a inflected language, the word form will change with person, tense and mood. Therefore, we take the different word forms of each verb as search words, extract all verbs in the corpus and determine the frequency, see Table 4.

| Modal verb | Deber | Querer | Poder | Soler | Tener que | Haber que | Deber de |
|------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Frequency  | 43    | 88     | 97    | 3     | 52        | 21        | 0        |

Since most Spanish adverbs end with "-mente", we search the adverbs at the end of the word through corpus, screen out modal adverbs that express probability or frequency, and count the frequency, see Table 5.

| Modal adverbs | posiblemente | generalmente | absolutamente | seguramente | claramente |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Frequency     | 1            | 1            | 12            | 9           | 10        |

According to statistics, Fernández used modal auxiliary verbs 304 times in 9 speeches. In which:

1. Modal auxiliary verbs about ability/potential and willingness are used most frequently, followed by modal verbs of obligation.

2. There are more modal expressions of high magnitude, and less modal expressions of medium and low magnitude. Specifically, the middle and lower magnitude modal verbs poder, querer are the most frequently used. Among modal adverbs, modal adverbs with high magnitude, absolutamente, seguramente and claramente, have the most frequency.

Maria Fernanda Raverta, María Fernanda Raverta, currently holds the post of Director of the Social Security Agency of Argentina.
4.2.1. *The interpersonal meaning of type selection.* Fernández uses most modal auxiliary verbs to express ability/potential modality and will, but less modal auxiliary verbs of obligation type. It shows the informalization and democratization in his speech process.

13. Entonces, vamos a tener datos más claros de cómo se incuba la enfermedad y de cómo podemos trabajar sobre quienes efectivamente tuvieron el virus, incubaron la enfermedad y podemos atenderlo adecuadamente. (30/03/2020)

(We will get clearer data so that we can know the identity of infected people and treat them at the same time.)

On March 19, 2020, the Argentine government issued an emergency decree, ordering the implementation of national compulsory quarantine. Example 14 is taken from Fernández's speech on March 20th, calling on people to actively cooperate with the government and actively fight against the epidemic. On the one hand, the subject of modal auxiliary verbs used three times is the first-person plural, and the speaker draws the audience to the same position as himself, which makes the audience feel more cordial. Secondly, it also shows that Fernández is not standing in the personal position, but in the position of Argentina’s national interests and people, which is more appealing. On the other hand, the use of a large number of capacity / potential modal verbs shows Fernández's potential confidence in the victory of the epidemic, and also shows the government's attitude to the people: it has the ability to lead the people to victory.

14. Podemos hacer un país mejor, esta es la prueba, no bajemos los brazos, sigan adelante. (1/06/2020)

(We can make the country better. It's just a test. Don't let go of your arms and move on.)

Argentina entered the epidemic peak in late May, and May 25th was Argentina's National Day. Facing this special period, on June 1st, he encouraged the general public to believe in the government and move forward.

Until August 12, Argentina announced that it would cooperate with AstraZeneca of Oxford University to produce the new crown vaccine being developed by Oxford University. Fernández is more determined to convey the government's ability to the Argentine people and enhance their confidence (Example 16).

15. Ahora: nosotros lo que queremos es que los argentinos cuanto antes puedan inmunizarse frente al riesgo del contagio, celebramos y agradecemos a Astra Zénica y a la Universidad de Oxford que hayan encontrado en Argentina un lugar para desarrollar la vacuna. (12/08/2020)

(Now: We expect all Argentines to be immune to the virus as soon as possible. We are very happy and grateful to AstraZeneca and Oxford University for their vaccine research and development in Argentina.)

4.2.2. *The interpersonal meaning of value selection.* Modal verbs of high, medium and low magnitude are reflected in Fernández's speech to varying degrees. The modal expression of high magnitude is less, and the modal expression of medium and low magnitude is more.

Excessive use of high-value modal words will give the audience or voters the impression that the speaker is too eloquent and pragmatic, so that the speaker will not use too many high-value modal words (Yu Chaoguo 2012:63). In addition, the medium-value modal words can make the speaker’s or speaker's claims free from coercion, make the information more easily accepted by the audience, increase the chance of the information being recognized by the audience, and avoid being criticized and challenged by the audience (Zeng Yaping 2009: 20). "Only powerful speakers are suitable to use responsible high-value modal verbs." (Li Zhanzi 2004:28) The epidemic spread rapidly in Argentina, and Fernández strongly instructed the people to act according to the instructions of the country. At the same time, facing the public's worries and anxieties, it encourages the people with a series of high value modal adverbs. No matter how difficult it is, the state has the ability to lead the people out of the predicament. It reflects the self-confidence and appeal of leaders and brings a sense of security to the people. For example:

16. Vamos a ser absolutamente inflexibles, la realidad es que está es una medida excepcional, que dictamos en un momento excepcional, pero absolutamente dentro del marco de lo que la democracia permite.(20/03/2020)
(We will never compromise. The fact is that this is an extraordinary measure we have taken during the extraordinary period, but the implementation of this measure is definitely within the scope of democracy.)

17. eso habla de la mejor Argentina, la Argentina que seguramente podemos construir entre todos.(1/06/2020)

(This is the better Argentina we are talking about. We can certainly build a better Argentina together.)

Compared with high-value modality expression, medium-value modality expression and low-value modality expression have a relative attitude, which leaves the listener some room for expressing opinions and making decisions, thus creating a harmonious and equal interpersonal atmosphere (Wei Benli 2005: 57). This way of expression makes the audience feel less about power, and more likely to accept the facts, orders and requirements given by the speaker, so as to achieve the purpose of persuasion (Cao Xia, Sun Qiyao, Xin Dan, 2014: 15). The use of quantitative modal verbs in Fernández focuses on future arrangements and the capacity of the government to show hope to the people.

18. Quiero decírselos que los que estamos aquí queremos cuanto antes a nuestra vida habitual, pero los que estamos aquí queremos preservar la vida de los argentinos, y los estamos aquí queremos que a nadie falte una cama, un respirador si lo necesita, y que vamos a seguir trabajando con ese objetivo. (18/07/2020)

(I want to tell you that we hope to return to normal life as soon as possible, but we prefer to safeguard the lives of Argentines. We hope that all patients will have beds and breathing machines, and we will continue to work hard to achieve this goal.)

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of modality and mood system, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the political speeches of the Argentine President during the anti-epidemic period. It is found that the modality and mood system in his political speeches contain rich interpersonal meanings. The use of a large number of declarative sentences is the need to state objective facts, while imperative sentences are the need to appeal and motivate people. On this basis, the use of a large number of modal verbs and adverbs with different values not only shows their various attitudes and positions during the anti-epidemic period, but also reflects the skills of how to communicate with the public. It is hoped that this study can provide some reference for the study of anti-epidemic discourse in Latin America.

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