A Comparative Study of Interpersonal Function
Between English and Chinese Political Speeches
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This is a comparative study on the interpersonal meaning in English and Chinese political speeches given by American and Chinese politicians on college campus from the perspective of modality, mood and person system on the basis of Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG) established by M.A.K. Halliday. In order to help utilize appropriate modality, mood and person system in realizing interpersonal communication, the research aims to reveal the similarities and differences of employing them in two languages and to discover their respective functions.

In terms of modality, generally speaking, English political addresses utilize far more modal operators to realize interpersonal function than Chinese political speeches. As far as the value of modal operators is concerned, in English political speeches, low value modal operators take the first place, and medium value modal operators go second, while in Chinese political speeches, high value modal operators rank the first and then low value modal operators. In terms of mood, however, the research results show no great differences between the selected two groups of speeches, namely, both English and Chinese political speeches utilize nearly the same percentages of the mood structures respectively. To put it more specific, in both English and Chinese political speeches, the declarative mood takes more than 96% of mood structures, while the interrogative mood and the imperative mood are both used in a small scale. As for the person system, on one hand, the English political speeches make use of far more person pronouns than the Chinese political speeches. On the other hand, both of the English and Chinese political speeches make use of far more first person pronouns than the second and the third person pronouns. Especially in Chinese political speeches, the second and the third person pronouns are always used in low frequency and in some speeches they are not used at all.


