



A Study of Ideological-Political Instruction in Systemic Functional Linguistics Class

Li Manliang¹, Tian Ying², Wang Yong³,

¹Foreign Languages College, Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot, China

²School of Foreign Studies, South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China

³Foreign Languages College, Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot, China

Correspondence: flclml95@imu.edu.cn

Abstract: Ideological-political instruction in curricula is a hot topic in the current education of various levels in China, and it is also a crucial element in the courses and classes of the discipline of foreign languages and literature. Systemic functional linguistics as a mainstream general linguistics theory has become an obligatory or optional course in the graduate and undergraduate program for majors of foreign languages and literature. This paper aims to investigate the ideological-political factors in systemic functional linguistics, mainly focusing on the metafunctions. It is hoped that this study can provide a little implication and inspiration in the study of the ideological-political instruction in systemic functional linguistics in particular as well as in linguistics in general.

Keywords: Ideological-political instruction in curricula, metafunctions, systemic functional linguistics

Introduction

Ideological-political instruction is a crucial element in the higher education and meanwhile it is a necessary and effective approach to integrate ideological-political education into the courses and classes. Besides, ideological-political instruction in the discipline of foreign languages and literature has its specific features and every course in the area of this discipline can be connected closely to the ideological-political factors. Systemic functional linguistics as a mainstream general linguistics theory has become an obligatory or optional course in the graduate and undergraduate program for majors of foreign languages and literature ^[1]. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that the concept of metafunctions is the core and the most significant part in systemic functional linguistics ^{[2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]}. This paper aims to investigate the ideological-political factors related to the three metafunctions, ideational metafunction (mainly experiential metafunction), interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction. Namely, we will specifically discuss how we can fuse ideological-political factors into the courses and classes in systemic functional linguistics when we are learning metafunctions together with the students. As we learn and study the information in linguistics associated with these parts, we learn to apply the ideas of metafunctions we have learnt in books and classes into our work, our further studies and even into our daily life.

This paper will firstly give a brief review of the literature related to ideological-political instruction studies, especially in relation to the classes of linguistics. This is followed by the analysis and discussion of how the ideological-political elements can be added to the study of metafunctions. To explain this, we are to apply specific examples to illustrate. It is hoped that this study can provide a little implication and inspiration in the study of the ideological-political instruction in systemic functional linguistics in particular as well as in linguistics in general.

2. Literature Review

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In the report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, moral education is first put forward as the fundamental task of education. As a crucial part of Chinese higher education, foreign languages education in universities not only assumes teaching responsibility, but also shoulders the responsibility of cultivating morally and ideologically equipped foreign language professionals in an all-round way, thus further spreading Chinese culture.

Admittedly, China has always attached great importance to the political and ideological education of students of various levels, especially in school education. According to Chen ^[9], China's political and ideological education has experienced three stages: (1) from political and ideological education to ideological and political work; (2) from ideological and political work to moral education and disciplinary moral education; (3) from disciplinary moral education to ideological-political instruction in curricula. To some extent, the notion of "ideological-political instruction in curricula" gradually wins its place and thus comes into people's vision.

Since moral education is of great importance, ideological-political instruction in curricula has been a deep concern of many scholars in recent years, covering a wide range of disciplines ^{[10], [11], [12], [13], [14]}. In terms of the various research fields involved in foreign languages and literature, each research field needs to participate in the ideological-political instruction in curricula ^[15]. Accordingly, this section will review ideological-political instruction of foreign language curriculum, mainly concerning literature, translation studies and linguistics aspects which are closely related to the discipline of foreign languages and literature.

In the field of literature, with the notion of "ideological-political instruction in curricula", Yang ^[14] inspires and guides students not to blindly follow western ideological theories and literary forms of expression, but consciously carries out perspective taking, employing Chinese cultural thoughts and ethical values to examine the issues of common concern of human beings involved in different cultures. Wang ^[16] points out that foreign literature teaching and research have been endowed with new perspectives and methods. Naturally, foreign literature courses in universities can play an important role in political orientation, value orientation and cultural guidance.

Translation, in addition to the function of conversion between linguistic symbol systems, is more prominent as one of the important ways to construct cultural perception, national image and international relations ^[17]. Wu and Wang ^[18] lay their emphasis on the necessity of integrating professional courses with ideological-political education in translation courses and constructing the working mechanism of ideological-political education for translation majors. Zhang and Zhang ^[19] put forward some suggestions on interpreting courses based on China's political formulaic phraseology, so as to enhance interpreters' ideological-political consciousness as well as interpreting skills. Broadly speaking, the translator's national consciousness is the fundamental guarantee for the construction of national strategic interests, discourse power and national image.

In view of the importance of ideological-political instruction in linguistics courses, the academic circle has also carried on the preliminary discussion and research on it. Li and Wen ^[20] illustrate the urgent problems existing in linguistics teaching for English majors in China, outlining the objectives and the specific practice path of ideological-political instruction in the courses of linguistics. In addition, Wen ^[21] discusses the necessity of integrating ideological-political factors into linguistics teaching, with linguistics teachers as the key and linguistics textbooks as an important carrier.

Especially in the circle of systemic functional linguistics, Halliday ^[22] clearly elucidates that systemic functional linguistics is designed to solve problems. Based on a problem-oriented approach, Huang ^[23] conducts discourse analysis of English textbooks from the perspective of ideology and politics to explore ideological and political elements in non-ideological and political discourse. By investigating the value orientation behind language, students are further advocated to think about problems from the angle of language and express their views positively and energetically.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the ideological-political factors in systemic functional linguistics should not be ignored. Systemic functional linguistics, as a mainstream linguistics theory in modern linguistics, generally points to two orientations, for one thing, a general linguistic theory ^{[24], [25]}, and for the other, an applicable linguistics ^{[26], [27]}. Naturally, it has become an obligatory or optional course in the graduate and undergraduate program for majors of foreign languages and literature. Halliday is committed to the study of language in the political context, employing the ideas and methods of Marxist philosophy to study language ^[28]. Language is not a passive reflection of reality, but an active creation of reality ^[29]. To be specific, this has a natural connection with the idea that "ideological-political instruction in curricula" considers language as the carrier and implants ideological-political elements.

To sum up, among all these existing studies, ideological-political instruction in curricula is a relatively hot topic relating to

multifarious aspects. Whereas, it is noted that the bulk of previous research probing into the ideological-political factors in systemic functional linguistics is far from being comprehensive. Halliday ^{[2], [3]} assigns to all the specific functions of language into three types, namely the ideational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction and the textual metafunction. Against such backdrop, exploring the ideological-political factors in systemic functional linguistics, mainly centering on the metafunctions, is a radical necessity.

3. Metafunctions and Ideological-political Instructions in Curricula

As is mentioned above, systemic functional linguistics has been a mainstream linguistics theory in the current field of modern linguistics, and it has been included as either an obligatory course such as at Foreign Languages College of Inner Mongolia University ^[1], or an optional course, both for MA students of English Language and Literature and for those of Linguistics abroad and Linguistics Applied. Moreover, it is even an optional course for BA students of English Language and Literature. In this sense, ideological-political instructions in curricula can be conducted on the basis of the academic levels and characteristics of the students.

Systemic functional linguistics consists of many organic parts, such as metafunctions, systemic functional syntax, register theory, grammatical metaphor as well as others, among which the concept of metafunction is the central one and has close connection with others in one way or another. The following sections are to analyze how we can have ideological-political instructions in teaching and leaning the metafunctions in systemic functional linguistics. As far as the information about systemic functional linguistics is concerned in the following sections, see ^{[2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]}.

3.1 Experiential Metafunction and Ideological-political Instructions in Curricula

According to Thompson ^{[6], [7], [8]} ideational metafunction is subdivided into experiential metafunction which means that we use language to express our experience of the world including the inner world in our mind, and logical metafunction which indicates that we use language to show the logical connections between messages. The fundamental concept of experiential metafunction is transitivity. Transitivity refers to a system for describing the whole clause in language, rather than just the relation between verb and its Object or Complement. This is quite different from the use of transitive and intransitive verb in English. There are usually three basic questions that can be asked about any process and the clause of which it forms the nucleus: What kind of process is involved? What are the participants of the process? What circumstantial elements such as time, place and manner are accompanied with the process? There are mainly six processes in the clause which are material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process.

At least two aspects can be considered in teaching this type of metafunction. First, experiential metafunction implies that we ought to get as much information as we can in various disciplines. Both our native language and foreign languages carry fruitful information of human civilizations in the world. Our native language and its varieties all deserve to be learned and studied. The varieties include many local regional dialects and social dialects, which are all useful and feasible in specific contexts, context of culture and that of situation. Furthermore, foreign languages provide bridges to probe into and communicate with different cultures in the world. Sufficiently making great use of the privilege of foreign languages is an effective way to broaden and enrich our cognition and understanding of information on advanced and dated development of many disciplines. In this sense, through comprehensively learning and studying foreign languages is a vital in school education especially in higher education.

Secondly, in language or linguistics teaching classrooms, we can integrate ideological-political instructions with the study experiential metafunction through specific examples. If one wants to express his/her feelings to another person, one may have the following options:

- (A) *I love you.*
- (B) *I enjoy staying with you.*
- (C) *I now express my love to you.*
- (D) *I have an affection for you.*

(E) *You are my dearest.*

Option (A) contains a mental process in which *you* is the Phenomenon, and it is the most direct way. (B) also involves a mental process, while the Phenomenon is not the person but the Event *staying with you*, which construes an indirect expression. The process in (C) is a verbal one, *I* is the Sayer, and the meaning is condensed into the nominal group *my love to you* serving as the Verbiage in which *I* becomes the Modifier of the nominalized *love* and *you* is part of the Qualifier. This choice is a little bit wordy, but implies the speaker's hesitation. Both (D) and (E) include relational processes, of which (D) is an possessive one and (E) is an identifying one. All these options can contribute to doing the same propositional meaning of *I love you*, but each has its unique implications. Choosing which is often determined by the context and the interlocutors' then-and-there relationships.

3.2 Interpersonal Metafunction and Ideological-political Instructions in Curricula

Interpersonal metafunction means we use language to establish and maintain interpersonal relationship with other people. Since this type of metafunction has such a broad coverage, interpersonal metafunction is manifested in nearly every aspect in our daily life. The core concepts of interpersonal metafunction are mood, modality, evaluation and negotiation. Appropriate use of language in specific context would result in successful communication between the addressers and the addressees. Even the written language concerns itself with the communication between the writer and the readers although without immediate feedback as the spoken language, for the speaker and the hearer can have face-to-face exchange and get feedback immediately. In systemic functional linguistics classes, it is of great necessity to remind, encourage and teach the students to try their best to successfully communicate with any person in life, with classmates, roommates, and schoolmates in schools, with colleagues and unfamiliar people in work, and even with friends and family members. On the contrary, improper way of using language may lead to less successful communication, or even embarrassment or obstacles.

Let's take one element, negotiation, in interpersonal metafunction as an example. Negotiation means that when we talk with others, we enact a role and simultaneously project roles for the hearers whether the hearers will play that role as is expected or not [21], [22], [23]. For instance, if we want to get information, we usually ask questions by using interrogative clauses. In this sense, we enact the role of asker and meanwhile project a role of answerer for the addressee. During the interview, if the interviewer asks questions, the interviewee has to give answers. However, if the interviewer uses the declarative clause, he is making comments or statements. Thus, the interviewee does not have to answer. This seems to be useful for the students in thesis defence or in job interview. Proper reactions in the defence or interview would make a success or vice versa. In view of this, the students are supposed not only to acquire the information of linguistics but also to learn to communicate efficiently and successfully with others. Just as an old Chinese proverb says, good words make people feel warm even in cold winter, while bad ones hurt people seriously and thus make people feel like in cold winter even in hot summer. In interacting with others, we are to analyze the would-be feelings of the audience.

3.3 Textual Metafunction and Ideological-political Instructions in Curricula

Textual metafunction means that we use language to organize our messages in speaking and writing in such a way to make the linguistic items fit in with the context of co-text, and with the wider context of situation and that of culture. In class, we tell students not only to learn to do things well, but also to say and write well, especially when the students are required to do a summarizing and concluding remark of the hard working. Theme is not just the starting point of information, but also the topic of the clause, for the Rheme is the detailed description of the Theme. When we describe the Event in the classroom, we would have at least the following three optional ways:

(A) *The teacher is having the class for the students.*

(B) *The students are having the class.*

(C) *The teacher and the students are having class.*

The Themes of the above three clauses are separately the two nominal groups *The teacher*, *The students* and the nominal group complex *The teacher and the students*. We can see that the three clauses focus on: (A) what the teacher does, (B) what the students do, and (C) what the teacher and the students together do. As a matter of fact, the three clauses describe

the same Event happening in the classroom, but the different ways of description imply the distinct emphasis. *The chair declare the meeting open* highlights the chair, whereas *the meeting is open* emphasizes the meeting. From the concept of textual metafunction, students are supposed to learn to organize the message they convey, both the spoken or written ones in a way as is expected.

4. Concluding remark

Ideological-political instructions in curricula has quite broad and wide denotations, for it is not only confined to loving one's country or loving one's people. Rather, it covers the cultivation of students to learn to do things and to communicate with other people in every field and aspect of doing well in life. Through learning one unit of the course, the students can learn to behave and to deal with things well in life. The former is the ideological-political instructions in curricula in its narrow sense, and the latter in its broad sense. This paper has only conducted a brief discussion of how ideological-political instructions in curricula can be fused with the three metafunctions in systemic functional linguistics. Besides, this has been carried out in a panoramic view, without investigating the more specific cases. Consequently, the other elements, such as grammatical metaphor, register theory, or even systemic functional syntax, all can be associated with ideological-political instructions in curricula.

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About the Authors: Li Manliang, professor of English Language and Literature at Inner Mongolia University; Tian Ying, Ph.D. student of Linguistics abroad and Linguistics Applied at South China Normal University; Wang Yong, lecturer of English Language and Literature at Inner Mongolia University.

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