

On the Application of Ideational Grammatical Metaphor in English Business Contracts

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Abstract: In today's economic globalization background, economic cooperation is getting closer and the role of English business contracts is essential. So it is necessary to identify the characteristics of English business contracts. There are a large number of grammatical metaphors in English business contracts. Nominalization is the main form of ideational grammatical metaphor. Based on Halliday's ideational grammatical metaphor, this paper analyzes nominalization in English business contracts, and points out that the application of ideational grammatical metaphor can better reflect the objective, formal, concise and authoritative stylistic features of business contracts.

Introduction

English Business contract is a kind of functional texts, which bears prominent and unique stylistic features. This paper aims to discuss the application and functions of ideational grammatical metaphor in English business contract. Halliday's systemic-functional grammar focuses on how language constructs meaning. The process from experience to meaning is a multi-layer systemic choice and construction. The process reveals the complicated relation between grammar and semantics, as well as between meaning and form.

Grammatical metaphor, which demonstrates the relation of correspondence and variation between languages and reality, is an approach to expand semantic resources and a natural prolongation of the language itself. Nominalization is a most powerful means to realize ideational metaphor, which abounds in English business contract discourse. In the internal structure of English, the realization of metaphorical form is attained by processing a series of transformations. According to Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, there are two main types of grammatical metaphor in the clause: metaphor of mood (including modality) and metaphors of transitivity. In the terms of our model of semantic functions, these are, respectively, interpersonal metaphors and ideational metaphor (1994:343). The theory of grammatical metaphor inaugurates a new era of metaphor study and makes a breakthrough to the traditional views of metaphor which are still confined to lexical metaphor.

Chinese linguists like Hu Zhuanglin, Yan Shiqing, Zhu Yongsheng and Mo Zaishu also make a great contribution to researching ideational grammatical metaphor of science discourse. Their researches provide more evidence for Halliday's findings. Mo Zaishu (2003, 87) analyze grammatical metaphors in English business contracts and find out that grammatical metaphor is one major characteristic of English business contracts. Nominalization, as the major form of ideational grammatical metaphor create objectivity of English business contracts. From the above analysis, we may find that there aren't systematic researches and analyses on ideational grammatical metaphor in English business contract discourse; it might be useful to redefine and re-categorize ideational grammatical metaphor in English business contract discourse under the systemic-functional framework.

Ideational Grammatical Metaphor in Systemic Functional Grammar

Under the framework of Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics, language is attached with three major functions as ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. The ideational function is the content function of language, language about something. This is the component through which the language encodes the cultural experience, and the speaker encodes his own individual experience as a member of the culture. It expresses the phenomena of the environment: the things. There are two parts to this: one is the representation of the processes themselves, which we refer to as the "experiential"; the other one is the representation of the relations between one process and another, which we refer to as the "logical".

Ideational grammatical metaphors are the metaphorical expression of the meaning of a clause as representation through the transitivity system. The representation of a process involves three steps: (i) selection of process type (material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential processes etc) realized as (ii) configuration of transitivity functions (Actor, Goal, Sensor, and Manner etc. representing the process, its participants, and any circumstantial elements) realized as (iii) sequence of group/phrase classes (nominal group, verbal group, adverbial group, conjunction group, prepositional phrase and their various sub-classes). Plainly speaking, the clause realizes the ideational structure through the grammatical system of transitivity by the selection of process types, which is realized as the selection of transitivity functions, which in turn is realized as the selection of sequence of phrase classes. Variation that takes place in any of the three steps of selection will result in ideational metaphors.

In 1990s, Halliday published a series of papers to further illustrate ideational metaphor. He showed the congruent realization as follows: the relater is construed by conjunctions, the circumstance by propositions, the process by verbs, the quality by adjectives and the entity by nouns. Any variant of this one-to-one realization will result in the metaphorical realization --- ideational metaphors. Halliday makes thorough investigations into the metaphorical realizations between the semantic function and the grammatical word class. Later, he summarizes the metaphorical realizations and proposes his new model of 13 types of ideational grammatical metaphors.

Features of Ideational Grammatical Metaphor in English Business Contracts

According to Halliday, changes take place in the level of lexical grammar and the most frequent one is nominalization, which belongs to grammatical metaphor, to be specific, ideational grammatical metaphor (Chen, 2005). Transitivity acts as a semantic system aimed at realizing language's ideational function, which categorizes people's experiences or conducts into several patterns of process, explaining the participant and circumstantial elements related to each process.

Nominalization

Nominalization is a major way for realizing ideational grammatical metaphor. Just as Halliday mentions in his work *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1994:352): "Nominalization is the single most powerful resource for creating ideational grammatical metaphor". He also pointed that nominalization is the process of transforming process, property and circumstance to things, by means of which " processes (congruently worded as verbs) and properties (congruently worded as adjectives) are reworded metaphorically as nouns; instead of functioning in the clause, as Process or Attribute, they function as Things in the nominal group".

It can be seen from the literal meaning that the term "nominalization" is a grammatical process in which nouns or noun phrases are generated from other parts of speech, such as adjectives, verbs, prepositions or conjunctions. In this sense, nominalization can be seen as a metaphorical expression that occurs at the lexical level. For example:

- (1) Advanced technology has been applied to explore the outer space.
- (2) Advanced technology has found application for the exploration of the outer space.

Sentence(2) is derived from nominalizing the verbs "applied" and "explore" into "application" and "exploration". Such a transformation is the reflection of nominalization in ideational grammatical metaphor.

Among Halliday's thirteen categories of ideational grammatical metaphor, the following five categories are accomplished through nominalization.

1) quality→ entity: Epithet= Thing;

E.g. unstable→ unstability, safe→ safety

2) process→ entity: (i) Event=Thing;

E.g. transform→ transformation, invent→ invention;

(ii) Auxiliary=Thing

E.g. will/be going to→ prospect, can/could→ possibility, potential;

3) circumstance→ entity: Minor process--- Thing;

E.g. with--- accompaniment, to→ destination;

4) relator→ entity: Conjunctive=Thing;

E.g. so→ cause/proof, if→ condition;

5)[zero]→ entity;

E.g. the phenomenon of;

Nominalization has the function of increasing lexical density and promoting technical abstraction, as Halliday remarks that "The nominalizing metaphor is actually the principle on which all technical terminology is ultimately based", so is technical terminology in English business contract.

Transitivity System

The system of transitivity is an important part of ideational metaphor in Halliday's system functional grammar. Its main manifestation lies in the metaphorization and transference between different processes.

According to Halliday(1994), the system of transitivity refers to people's expression of the objective world. He then divides this system into six processes: material process, relational process, verbal process, behavior process, existential process. Halliday's transitivity system stimulates the aspect of grammatical analysis because it puts its emphasis on the process of language using on the basis of semantics from a social perspective, which is a step further as compared with the syntactic analysis. And he claims that language is enabled to give a precise description of the objective world independent of human beings, and the same incident could be proved by different processes by different persons.

The experience of the external real world cannot be manifested only by a specific grammar system. Therefore, the experience created by ideational metafunction can only be expressed through a specific semantic system, namely transitivity (Zhu, 2006).

Under common circumstances, there is a natural congruent relationship between three types of elements and phrase classes. (i) process typically realized by verbal group. (ii) participant realized by nominal group. (iii) circumstance realized by adverbial group or prepositional phrase (Halliday, 1985:177). It is under common circumstances when the type of element strictly corresponds to the phrase class. But this kind of correspondence can sometimes be disorganized. In this case, the ideational grammatical metaphor, more specifically, metaphor of transitivity, occurs.

Application of Ideational Grammatical Metaphor in English Business Contract

According to Halliday's linguistic theory, nominalization is the main form of ideational metaphor. Then we will analyze the application of nominalization in English business contract.

English Business Contract and Register

English Business contract is a kind of written legal binding document signed by parties with legal status in business activities. It can be inferred that business English is a kind of English unique to the business culture group. The language of English business contract is formed, developed and used in commercial activities; it is based on English as common language with the characteristics of both commercial and law English.

It is a language function variant that has a special purpose and it is formed in the long history of language use according to the pragmatic factors such as social and cultural environment, communicative purposes and communicative objects. It does not have a special language material or an independent grammar system, but act as a language variant or register for some special use when English is applied in a legal and commercial context. It is generally believed that English business contract is a kind of frozen style and is the highest level of formality. Mo Zaishu (2003) pointed that in order to highlight its stylistic feature of solemnity as well as emphasize the legal effect of English business contracts in business communication, English business contracts have distinct language features in grammar.

Register Theory is derived from "language variation" in applied linguistics. It is said that the language people use changed based on the change of its context and is confined by its context. Halliday initiated Register Theory in 1978 and has been perfecting it since then. In 1985, he defined register as "variation according to use" (Halliday,1985:41). According to the theory of register, the language of English business contract is a language functional variation resulted from commercial purposes and settings with unique practical use and regularity. Halliday also believes that the mark of register variation is a linguistic material, which revealed by vocabulary as well as grammar, and they will change with the change of the register. Since grammatical metaphor as well as ideational metaphor is usually related with scientific and formal writings because it renders a sense of objectivity and authority, it holds a significant place in English business contract discourse.

Application of Nominalization

In Halliday' view, nominalization is the main sources of grammatical metaphor, more specifically, ideational grammatical metaphor. There are some examples of nominalization applied in English business contract.

Type 1: From quality to thing

In this type of nominalization, an adjective congruently encoding a property is converted into a noun or a nominal group. For example:

(4-1a): Metaphorical form:

The Seller shall be responsible for the adequacy, stability and safety of site operations, of all methods of construction and of all the works. thing qualifier

(4-1b): Congruent form:

All site operations should be made adequate, stable and safe, and the seller shall be responsible for that.
participant quality

Here the quality "adequate, stable and safe" in the congruent form is transferred into an entity "adequacy, stability and safety", while the participant into the qualifier. In terms of grammatical class, it is from adjective to noun; in terms of grammatical function, it is from Attribute to Thing. Undoubtedly, through this way of transformation, the abstractness and formalness of the transferred is notably increased, thus suits the color of legislative discourse.

Type 2: From process to thing

This type accounts for the largest share of ideational grammatical metaphor, in which the verb encoding a process is transformed into a noun encoding an entity. The process of transference meanwhile changes the role of the associated participants or circumstance in the congruent form. For example:

(4-2a): Metaphorical form:

By introducing the Head noun "election", the Contractor's action "to terminate the Contract" is generalized as an election, making the focus lie on the noun "election". The introduction of the Head noun apparently standardizes the sentence in an authoritative manner.

Generally speaking, ideational metaphor generates new grammatical structures which involve the downgrading from the higher semantic level to the lower one.

Functions of Ideational Grammatical Metaphor

In the light of Halliday's systematic functional linguistic theory, the application of ideational grammatical metaphor in English business contract discourse are carried out step by step. It is demonstrated that English business contract discourse finds abundant use of ideational grammatical metaphor; and ideational metaphor, especially nominalization, redounds to the objectivity and highlights the frozen style and characteristics of English business contract discourse.

Ideational metaphor highlights the formal level of the English business contract.

Ideational metaphor plays an important role in human language because it is a kind of lexico-grammatical resources in English. According to the last part of this paper, it's easy to be found that the phenomena of ideational metaphor distribute widely in English business contract and these phenomena incorporates Halliday's systemic functional linguistic theory. Therefore, ideational metaphor can highlight the frozen style of English business contract discourse.

(2) Ideational metaphor highlights the objectivity of the English business contract.

As mentioned above, ideational metaphor causes downgrading. Ideational metaphor generates new grammatical structures as the variation of the express which mainly involve the downgrading from the higher semantic level to the lower one. A noun typically refers to an entity which is something existing in the world. By nominalizing a process, the established meaning can be treated as something existing with the abstract sense of thing.

On the other hand, English business contract lays particular stress on objectivity and plain for eliminating the effect of individual feelings and willing. Nominalization transforms the process and logical relationship reflected by verbs in congruent form into nominal group so as to rid itself of subjectivity described in oral language and the effect of action process. As a result, nominalization, the main form of ideational metaphor, realizes the objectivity of the English business contract. So it is concluded that ideational metaphor highlights the objectivity of the English business contract.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the analysis that nominalization is the main form of ideational metaphor in English business contracts, which highlights formal level and objectivity of English business contracts. With the expansion of the influence of economic globalization, China's foreign trade is becoming more and more frequent, the number of contracts signed is increasing and the amount of English business contract is increasing. We need to understand and use the ideational grammatical metaphor in English business contract correctly, because it is applied in many areas of contracts and plays a decisive role. This redounds to the objectivity and highlights the frozen style and characteristics of English business contract discourse. Above all, we should keep pace with the times and make full use of ideational grammatical metaphor in English business contract.

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