

湘潭大学

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硕士学位论文

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圣经语言的人际意义研究

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## 摘 要

语言的人际功能来自韩礼德功能语法对语言纯理功能的划分。在功能语法的理论框架中，人际功能指的是在话语情境中说话人与话语接受者之间的互动关系，以及通过互动建立和维持人际关系的功能，此外它还具有表达说话人身份，地位，动机和态度的功能。人际功能具有多种实现方式，语气和情态是其中两种最重要的手段。

《圣经》是当今世界最重要的宗教圣典之一，它对整个世界尤其是对西方社会的影响甚至是其它经文所不及的。全世界的每一个角落几乎都有《圣经》的信奉者。作为一部影响巨大的经典，它的魅力与它的语言尤其是上帝的语言是分不开的。

本文试图从圣经语言的功能出发，在功能语法人际意义理论的框架下，对圣经语言尤其是上帝语言进行分析，揭示圣经魅力尤其是它凝聚力的根源。本文的分析主要围绕圣经语言中语气，情态和上帝对人们爱的语言表达来展开。

通过分析我们发现圣经语言是典型的反映权势关系的语言，但同时也是传达上帝普爱、仁爱和博爱的语言。在语言选择中上帝语言明显偏向能反映权力和地位优势的语言，但上帝语言始终展示他爱的本质。其他人的语言选择则明显反映他们从上帝获得权利的多少及对上帝的态度。

本文的创新主要体现在两方面：从纯理功能来研究宗教语言；从整个语篇层面来研究人际意义。

本文的最终目的并不是研究经学，而是通过一部极具影响与语言魅力的文本来探讨语言在一定语境下人际功能的实现，从而为人们语言的选择和运用提供有力的参考，同时也为人际功能在语篇层面的分析展开新的视野。

**关键词：**人际意义；话语分析；圣经语言

## **Abstract**

Interpersonal function comes from the metafunctions proposed by Halliday. In his systemic functional grammar, interpersonal function refers to the function in which we use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relationships with them, to influence their behavior, to express our own viewpoint on things in the world, and to elicit or change other people's opinions. Interpersonal meaning can be realized in various ways, among them, mood and modality are the two most important.

The Holy Scripture, or the Bible, is one of the most important religious books in the world. Its influence on the world especially in western countries cannot be matched by any other books. Almost in every corner of the world, the Bible attracts huge numbers of believers. With such an influential book, its charm cannot be separated from its language, especially that of God.

By taking interpersonal function as the theoretical framework, this thesis tries to make a detailed analysis of biblical language especially the language of God, and find out the source of the Bible's attraction. In the whole process, the paper develops its study from the aspects of love, mood and modality.

Through our study, we find that biblical language is one that typically reflects power relations and conveys God's love for people. God's language obviously shows his superior power and status, while the language of other people indicates how much power they get from God and what attitude they have towards God.

The originality of the present research is embodied in two points: firstly, it researches religious language from the aspect of metafunction; secondly, it inquires into interpersonal meaning from the level of the whole text.

The final goal of this thesis is not to study religious scripture, but to study language using a book with strongly attractive language. Through this study, the paper aims to find out the interpersonal meaning realized by language in a certain context and enlighten us about people's use of language; furthermore, it is also expected to provide new viewpoints for the study of interpersonal meaning with a whole text.

**Key Words:** interpersonal meaning; discourse analysis; biblical language

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## **Chapter I Introduction**

### **1.1 Interpersonal Meaning**

#### **1.1.1 Brief Introduction to Interpersonal Meaning**

Language reflects social activity. As a main tool of human communication, it functions in many ways. The functional school, represented by Halliday, classified the function of language into three metafunctions: ideational (experiential) metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction.

Experiential metafunction is a function that ‘constructs a model of experience’, while interpersonal metafunction ‘enacts social relationships’ and textual metafunction ‘creates function relevance to context’ (Halliday 1994:36).

In Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, interpersonal function is described as enabling people to interact through language, that is, “to establish and maintain appropriate social links with people”(Thompson 2000:38). Specifically, interpersonal function not only embodies the speaker’s identity and status, but also shows his attitude, motivation or inference to the surroundings. In all, interpersonal metafunction expresses social and personal relations.

When we analyze the interpersonal meaning of a text, we study the clause not as ‘clause as representation’ in terms of participants, processes and circumstances, but as a ‘clause of exchange’ in terms of exchange, the speaker’s judgment of and attitude toward the validity or truth of the statement (modality).

Interpersonal meaning at discourse level is mainly realized by the use of mood and modality at the lexico-grammatical level, and through key at the phonological or prosodic level.

#### **1.1.2 Literature Review of the Study of Interpersonal Meaning**

The study of language function has been a long history, but the study of interpersonal function is new field of study initiated by scholars who argue that language has a multiple function. Distinguished scholars in this field include Malinowski, Buhler, Jakobson, Hymes

and Morris.

Malinowski (1923) is the first to come up with a dichotomy distinction of language function: pragmatic function versus magical function. By pragmatic uses of language, he means all pragmatic functions, including the “active” and the “narrative” functions. The magical includes all religious and ritualistic uses of language.

After Malinowski, Karl Buhler (1934) provides a trichotomy distinction of language function: expressive (where the “self” or the “speaker” is stressed), conative (or ‘vocative’, as sometimes called, which is oriented towards the “hearer”), and representational (covering all other things).

Roman Jakobson (1960) adds three more functions to Buhler’s scheme, which include poetic function (where the message is more important than anything else), transactional function (where one is using language merely to establish channel, by saying the predictable ‘Good morning’ or ‘A very good day to you all’, etc.) and the metalinguistic function (by which we use language to talk about language, as we are doing now, or as the grammarians do).

Dell Hymes (1964, 1972) completes the picture of seven speech factors matching with seven speech functions when he proposes to add yet another function: the situational or the contextual function.

Morris (1967) has a completely different way of classifying speech functions. His categories include information talking, mood talking, exploratory talking and grooming talking. But researchers prefer to adopt the Buhler-Jakobson-Hymes model of function classification.

Influenced by the multi-functional view of language, especially by Buhler’s distinction of language function, Halliday proposes his own multi-functional view of language. Halliday (1970, 1973, 1985) classifies metafunction of language into three sub-functions: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction. This classification is the first concrete division of metafunctions, and it is also the origin of interpersonal metafunction.

Halliday (1994) presents a functional framework for interpreting grammar in the context of English. Before its appearance, there have been presentations of functional theories used in typological sampling across languages of the world, but there is no presentation in English of

a functional theory of grammar applied in a unified and comprehensive functional interpretation of a particular language. The functional framework by Halliday starts the comprehensive functional description of both a particular language and English grammar that can be used in discourse analysis. So we say Halliday has given a historical contribution to the study of functional system, his study of metafunctions including interpersonal metafunction is actually a hallmark to the study of systemic functional grammar.

However, Halliday's functional system is not without limitation. The abstruse explanations and the amount of new terminology in his system are great obstacles for researchers especially for those who are not familiar with his way of looking at language. For this reason, Thompson (2000) provides a much easier way to help researchers understand the important and useful insights in Halliday's functional system, especially in the three metafunctions.

Besides the scholars abroad mentioned above, there are also some scholars at home who have devoted to the study of interpersonal meaning, among them Hu Zhuanglin, Zhu Yongsheng and Zhang Delu are pioneers. It is these scholars who have first introduced the concept of functional grammar to China. By providing Chinese students and researchers the Chinese version of functional grammar, they have greatly helped the understanding of functional grammar in China.

Besides the domestic scholars mentioned above, some other Chinese scholars such as Huang Guowen, Yan Shiqing, Miao Xingwei etc. who have contributed to the study of interpersonal meaning should not be overlooked. By their papers and works, they have not only helped our understanding of interpersonal meaning, but also provided us a critical way of thinking about interpersonal meaning. It is their research that further puts forward the study of interpersonal meaning to a wider and deeper field.

Strictly speaking, a monograph on interpersonal meaning has not appeared until the publication of *Interpersonal Meaning in Discourse* in 2002 by Li Zhanzi.

Although functionalists have taken the leading role in the study of interpersonal meaning, many scholars in other fields have also participated in the study of interpersonal meaning, such as Tony Bex, Wittgenstein, etc. The former believes that the interpersonal potentials of language include the forms of greeting, the lexical choices and even features of typographical

layout, and the latter by his Game theory offers an enlightened look on verbal communication from the perspectives of both the speaker/writer and audience/reader.

In all, since the beginning of language function study, especially the proposing of interpersonal meaning by functional grammar, the study of interpersonal meaning has never been stopped and has been achieved more and more importance.

## **1.2 Biblical Language**

Before our discussion of biblical language, it is very necessary to give an explanation of the version of the Bible used in this thesis.

The Holy Book analyzed in this paper is *Good News Bible* (Today's English Version) published in 1976 by United Bible Societies. What makes the writer use the *Good News Bible* as the text resource of this thesis is the language and content of this Holy Book.

Firstly, this Holy Book does not follow the traditional vocabulary and style found in the historic English Bible versions. Instead, it presents the biblical content and message in standard, everyday, natural English, which is very helpful for the writer, a non-native English speaker, to catch what is carried by language in it. Secondly, the Holy Book has well abided by the principle to be faithful to the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts, which provides the writer all the possibilities to have a maximum understanding of biblical stories.

### **1.2.1 Brief Introduction to Biblical Language Study**

As we know the Bible has been translated into over 100 languages, its influence on the world, especially on western cultures, cannot be matched by any other religious works.

Because the Bible is such an influential and deep-rooted book, many researchers have devoted themselves to the study of it. Many of them have tried to find out why so many people, especially Christians, have been attracted to the Bible for so long. Most of their research starts from the aspect of theology, but there are also quite a number of them focuses on biblical language itself.

The study of biblical language can be traced to the beginning of this era. The earliest study of the language of the Bible was the translation of the Bible. About 300BC, in answering the request of the King of Egypt, the Bishop of Jerusalem sent altogether



seventy-two translators to Alexandra to undertake the task of translating the Bible, their translation is regarded as the earliest translation of the Bible (Li Chichang & You Bin 2003:4).

Since biblical language study began, it has never stopped. Although the research of biblical language from a pure linguistic view is various, most of it can be put into two fields: the translation of biblical language and the influence of biblical language on the world's language, culture and literature.

Generally, the existed study of biblical language mainly emphasizes the existing facts of language itself rather than the reasons behind those facts.

### **1.2.2 Meaning of Biblical Language**

Alfred J. Ayer (1952) demonstrates that there are only two kinds of propositions that are of meaning, one is analytic propositions (e.g. logical or mathematical propositions) and the other is synthetic propositions (e.g. the propositions that can judge the real material world). Ayer's demonstration is based on logical positivism, which emphasizes that any meaningful propositions can be proved by facts.

However, if we take Ayer's standard to judge the language of the Bible, we will find that quite a large number of propositions in the Bible especially those on God are pseudo-propositions and are of no meaning, because we can neither see nor feel God.

However, John Macquarrie (1978) proposes different ideas on the meaning of language. He points out that religious language concerns not only theology but also morality, the meaning of religious language should be understood from its own interpretative power. From this standpoint we get that Ayer's standard should not be regarded as the only judgment on the meaning of propositions, especially on those in religious language. So we say biblical language is not meaningless, but expresses its meaning in a different and comprehensive way.

### **1.3 Goals and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of the study in this thesis comes both from interpersonal meaning and from the Bible itself.

The Holy Bible, as one of the most influential and widely accepted religious books, has value far beyond religion itself. With its various writing styles and distinguishing stories, the

Bible has been one of the most outstanding literary works in the world. The language of the Bible has made great impact on both Christians and non-Christians, though it is mainly used by a group of people with religious belief.

Although the study of biblical language has been a long history and great achievements have been made by researchers in this field, most of the research is still focused on elaborating the phenomena caused by the language itself instead of intending to find out the deep reasons behind those phenomena.

The importance of biblical language mainly comes from its function in moral teaching and persuading people to live in harmony. This function is actually part of interpersonal function. However, the study of biblical language under the theoretical framework of interpersonal function is still a blank in linguistic field.

Although the metafunction study has a relatively short history, the study of it, led by Halliday, has made great achievements. Among the three metafunctions, interpersonal meaning has been studied relatively less systematically than the other two. This is because it is more complex and less systematic and tends to be scattered prosodically throughout the whole linguistic structure. Besides, it also involves a lot of factors.

Although functional grammar emphasizes that the analysis of metafunctions should be based on a whole text, the present research of interpersonal function is mainly based on discourses. As it is hard to get certain functional traits when taking a whole text as a researching resource, Halliday (1994) takes the fragments or paragraphs in a text as the research corpus, or even takes the sentences he made by himself as the research resource. If the research resources are not studied from the whole context in which the discourses exist, it may restrict the understanding of interpersonal meaning in a wider context, and the analysis result from those 'artificial' sentences may lose its truth as well.

As Thompson (2000: 67) suggests we should not restrict our research of interpersonal meaning to a clausal level, but to formalize the links within a wider context as much as possible, because in many cases a sentence can be thoroughly understood only by putting it back into its whole context. E.g

(1) Have you had your lunch?

In Chinese culture, the interpersonal function of this example can be understood as greeting or showing concern for someone else. However, if this sentence comes from the context that the addresser wants to ask the addressee to play badminton together, the function of it may be changed to the inquiry: “Are you free?”

From this example we see that only in a wider context can the interpersonal meaning of the information exchanged be thoroughly understood. So in this thesis, we will try to extend the study of interpersonal meaning from the clausal level to the whole text of the Bible. The examples listed may be single sentences, but our analysis of them is from the whole context from which they are taken.

Although the limitation of the present study of interpersonal meaning is a very important impetus for the study of interpersonal meaning in this thesis, it is not the only motivation. The greater force of this study comes from the importance of interpersonal meaning itself.

As we know the very basic aim for language communication is to establish and maintain relationships, which means that one of the most basic functions of language should be interpersonal function. From this understanding we see that interpersonal function is very important in human communication.

In short, it is the importance of both biblical language and interpersonal meaning, and the limitation and blank in their research field that motivate the author’s study of interpersonal meaning of biblical language in this thesis.

With the combination of biblical language and interpersonal meaning, this thesis aims to find out how interpersonal meaning of biblical language is realized and what interpersonal meaning biblical language may have. Furthermore, this paper also attempts to enlighten people about their daily communication and teach them how to catch the exact meaning of words and to use words appropriately.

## Chapter II The Essence of Interpersonal Meaning of Biblical Language : Love by God, Love for God and Love among God's Believers

### 2.1 Omnipresence of Love in Biblical Language

The Bible is a widely accepted religious book. Its status in the religious world is unshakable, which mainly comes from its ethical spirit: love. Love in the Bible always encourages and persuades people to behave correctly and morally.

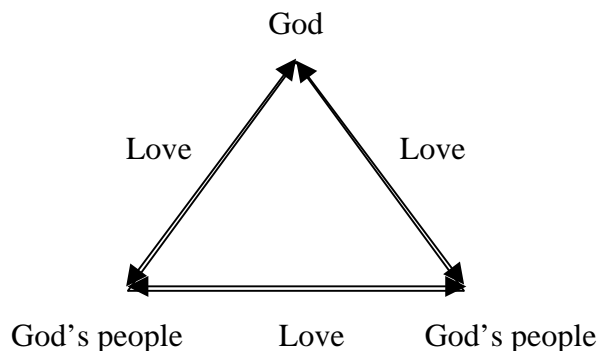
Reading through the whole Bible, we can easily find that love is embodied throughout the whole book, it is the epitome of all virtues and one of the most important interpersonal resources.

God is the main character throughout the whole Bible, who judges and punishes those who do wrong, leads and helps His people and shapes their history. In the whole process, what God contributes is His concern for people.

In the Bible, God is omnipresent, so is His love, because "God is love" (1 John 4:16). God's love is not only given to those who are chosen to be His servants, but also cast to all those whether they believe in Him or not. His love is like the sunshine giving light and heat to people in every corner of His world.

In the Bible, we cannot only find God's love for people, but also people's love for God. With their obedience to God's commands, God's people take various ways to show their worship of God. At the same time, they also express their brotherly love to one another.

Here we can use a triangle to describe the omnipresent love in the Bible.



From the triangle we can see love exists not only between God and His people but also among His people themselves. From the arrows of the triangle we can also see that love in the Bible is reciprocal. God not only gives love to His people, but also receives love from them. And this reciprocation also appears among God's people.

Being one of the most important interpersonal resources and the spirit of the whole Bible, love always functions as the strong cohesive force between different people.

## **2.2 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by God's Love**

### **2.2.1 Understanding Love by God**

As love is such an abused term, it is very hard to give an accurate definition to love by God.

Generally, God's love has two broad meanings, one is universal affection, the other is benevolence, charity, kindheartedness, etc. By the former sense, it shows that God's love is not limited to a single person or certain group but to all people alike in His world. And by the latter sense, it shows the nature of love by God.

Our study of interpersonal meaning realized by God's love in this section will start from the two broad senses given above. Please read the following examples.

(1) I will show *love* to those who were called "Unloved," and to those who were called  
"Not-My-People." (Hosea 3: 23)

In (1), by claiming his love will also be given to those "Unloved" and "Not-My-People", God clearly shows people His love is indeed universal affection, it is like the sunshine, cast on all people.

By providing people with His love indiscriminately, God gets more people to know about Him and gains the maximum possibility to establish relationships with people from all corners of the world. With love as the lubrication of interaction, God wins universal gratitude and potential adoration, and finally leads people to follow Him.

God's love in the second sense is expressed in different ways. However, whatever way it may take, God's love always shows the nature of God. For example:

(2) How can I give you up, Israel? How can I abandon you? ..... My heart will not let me do it! My *love* for you is too strong. (Hosea 11:8)

Example (2) is said by God when He decided to forgive Israel's mistake. Although Israelites once deserted Him, in the end God decided to forgive them and restored His relationship with them. With this forgiveness, God not only shows people His magnanimity but also shows them His true concerns for them. His love for them is just what He says: "too strong." Actually, God's love expressed by forgiveness in this speech is an indication of His kind nature, by showing this nature, God gains more respect from His people.

Reading through the whole Bible, we can find that God's love is not only expressed by His direct proclamation of "love" as we illustrated in the above examples, but also expressed in other indirect ways in more cases. Among them, covenants and commands are the most important and typical forms. In the following sections, we will try to make a detailed analysis of the function of God's covenants and commands in establishing and maintaining relations in the Bible.

As love has no fixed structure or specific, perceivable features in itself, it is difficult to pin down the interpersonal meaning of love in different communications. But whatever love may mean, it always serves as the ethical spirit in the Bible, it is in nature the ethical issue, so in the whole process of our discussion in this part, both morals and ethics will be taken into consideration.

### **2.2.2 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by God's Love—Love in Covenants**

In *The Old Testament*, the word 'Brit' was mentioned over 287 times. This word means contract, agreement or alliance. In modern English, Brit is usually translated to covenant. In the Bible there are covenants between peoples and groups, but the most common and important are those between God and His people (雷立柏, 2002:14).

According to the content of covenants, there are the "two-way covenant" and the "single-way covenant" in God's speech. The former means God gives people love but

demands them to return Him love, while the latter means God's unidirectional, unconditional offering, hence also called "covenant of grace".

Whether the covenant embodies unidirectional or bidirectional love, its function is more than an agreement between two sides. The covenants, especially those between God and His people, are actually the ways how God loves His people. For example:

(3) I will faithfully reward my people and make an eternal *covenant* with them.

(Isaiah 61:8)

The covenant in (3) is made by God Himself. In order to make people believe what He promised for them, God offers to make a covenant with them.

The covenant here not only shows God's willingness to reward people, but also gives us clues to track His love for people. By making a covenant with people, God provides His people with a sense of security and manifests Himself as trustworthy.

As we know in our assessment of another person's personality, the sense of security plays a vital role. It provides us important information for whether we should establish a relationship with that person or not. Based on this point, we understand that God's covenant here can greatly increase people's trust for Him and help them form positive attitudes, which will finally push forward the relationship between God and His people.

As people involved in God's covenant are often more than one singular person, the effect of His covenant may be brought to a wider group. And in this case, the interpersonal function of covenant in God's speech is more than establishing a relationship between God and one person but to all people involved in the covenant. The following example is good evidence of this.

(4) Now if you obey me and keep my *covenant*, you will be my own people.

(Exodus 19:5)

Example (4) is what God asks Moses to tell Israelites. 'You' here refers to all Israelites. According to Martin North's amphiktyony hypothesis, before ancient Israel has its own king, it was just a union between cities, branches and tribes. The basis and principles for their unity

was a covenant. Based on this sense, by covenant, God here intends to unite people and prevent them from living in chaos.

According to Cohen ( 1978 ) among the three stages for achieving intimacy, to make people feel they are in a same group is one of the most important stages. By getting all Israelites under the same covenant with Him, God brings people to feel they are members of the same group, which will greatly shorten the distance between them. So we say covenant in (4) actually plays the role of binding Israelites together.

Moreover, as God's covenant is often made by God with all His people, His covenant, in many cases, is a universal ruling scale and the binding force of it is for people of all walks of life.

In short, a covenant between God and His people not only provides people with ethical standards, but also shortens the distance between God and His people and between all people under that covenant. The covenant is the link for all people involved in it.

As the analysis above explains, God's covenant in the end is not to get something for Himself but to make people unite and live in harmony. So we say that God's covenant is indeed a way for Him to express His love for people. In this way, He has always sought to make people closer to Him and to all others.

### **2.2.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by God's Love—Love in Commands**

As we know God's influence on people mainly comes from His leading role as guiding and regulating people's behaviors with moral principles. Among the various principles, commands are the most important taken by God to convey His demands.

If we say the form of God's commands shows us God's power and status, the content of His commands are the best expression of His deep concern for His people.

In the Bible, among the various commands given by God, the most prominent and famous are the Ten Commandments, which are given to Moses and through Moses to all people.

The specific content of the Ten Commandments is:

1. Worship no god but me.
2. Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water



under the earth. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals.

3. Do not use my name for evil purpose.
4. Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Respect your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not accuse anyone falsely.
10. Do not desire another man's house; do not desire his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkey, or anything else that he owns.

(Exodus 20:1-17)

From the strong imperative mood taken by God in declaring all of these commands, we can infer that God's attitudes to these rules are quite positive.

Based on the content of the ten commands, we can divide them into two groups: the group that gives guidelines to our relationship with God, and the group that concerns interpersonal behaviors and how we should act towards one another. The former group includes the first four commands, and the latter includes the next six.

Judging from the content of the commands, we can see that these commands are actually more than rules or suggestions, but demands with deep interpersonal meaning. By providing people principles to live by, God shows his will for people to establish relationships both with Him and with other people, and it is in fact another way taken by God to express His love for people.

Now let us give a detailed analysis of interpersonal meaning realized by the Ten Commandments.

In the first commandment, God demands people "*Worship no god but me.*" This command gives people the impression of God's identity as selfish. However, if we have a look at the background from which the commandment comes, we will find it is an identity of

love not selfishness.

After a forty-year journey to the Promised Land, the Israelites have come together as a tribe of nomads. But hundreds of years of living in the polytheistic culture of Egypt has nearly made them lost to themselves. When they come to live in a new community, a common belief is urgently needed for them to unite. God's selfishness and exclusiveness implied in the first commandment is the forceful way that consolidates people's common belief and gets them from all directions to unite.

In the second command, God reemphasizes those implied in the first one and explains "*I am the LORD your God.*" By this explanation, God tells people "He is ours", and the true God is a person who has entered into a relationship with His human creatures.

The third commandment is actually the one used by God to keep His dignity. As we know God's very name represents who He is, His power, nature and character. To take God's name in vain is to discount His position and authority. If people no longer respect God's name, the position of God in their heart will be shaken, which will weaken God's function as a bond to His people and finally lead to people's divergence in belief and estranging in relation.

If we say the first four commandments established God's absolute status and reinforced His binding force, the next six commandments, especially the last five, would direct people's act to the right way.

In the last five commandments, God injects law into them. He forcefully forbids them from doing harm to other people. With so many "*Do not's*", God is actually giving instructions to people's behaviors and bringing them to enter upon the road leading to their perfection as human beings.

### **2.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Love for God**

Halliday (1994:69) listed different responses to giving and demanding. In the Bible, people's responses to God's love are mainly acceptance. However love in the Bible is not just the single way proposed by God, in most cases, it is also a process of interaction. When receiving God's love, people also give their love to God in return, as John said in his first letter, "*We love Him because He first loved us*" (1 John 4:19).

The way for people to express their love to God also takes a variety of forms, but the most important way for them to express their love is to follow the commandments given by God, as we can read from the Bible, “*If you love me, you will obey my commandments*” (John 14:15). To obey God’s commandments has been regarded as a principal standard to judge a person’s love for Him.

Besides the various performances of action, people’s obedience to God’s commandments is also embodied in their speech. For example,

(5) I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than daily bread. (Job 23:12)

(6) The commands of the LORD are trustworthy, giving wisdom to those who lack it. (Psalms 19:7)

By the statement in example (5), Job fully shows his positive attitude to God’s commandments. It is more than obedience but piety. From his comparison between bread and commandments, we can clearly see the position of God’s commandments in his heart. Similarly, example (6) also shows people’s attitudes to God’s commands. From the high praise and evaluation of the commands in (6) we can see people’s obvious approval to God’s commandments.

As we know commandments are the basic moral regulations of God, so people’s approval and obedience to His commandments are actually their approval and obedience to God. It is another expression of their worship and fellowship with Him, and it’s their love for God in nature.

People’s love for God is also embodied in grammatical forms; the typical one is what will be discussed in the following examples.

In the Bible, there are a great number of discourses that make God as the appositive. Grammatically, appositive is just the explanation to another element in a clause, it has the same lexical meaning as the one being explained. However, when God as appositive is given prominence by its speaker in the Bible, we find it is more than a pure grammatical element. For example:

(7) To you, O LORD, I offer my prayer; in you, my God, I trust.

(Psalms 25:1)

(8) I praise you, LORD, because you have saved me and kept my enemies from gloating over me.

(Psalms 30:1)

(9) O LORD, my defender, I call to you.

(Psalms 28:1)

As we know ‘LORD’ is more than a common address to God, it also implies people’s respect to God. Both in example (7) and (8), the speaker firstly takes ‘you’ to address God directly, but another respectful form of address ‘LORD’ is soon added. By adding this appositive, the speaker gives prominence to the object of his action, he emphasizes that it is God who is worthy of being prayed to, trusted and praised.

Example (9) also has an appositive, but it is different from the last two. In the way of explaining God’s identity, here the appositive emphasizes the function of LORD. By this emphasis, the speaker’s appreciation to God’s help is clearly manifested.

So we say if we put the appositives above in their whole context, we will find appositives here are more than explanation, they manifest the speaker’s feeling related to their attitude and appreciation of God.

Besides the ways we discussed above, people’s love for God is often expressed by their direct praises to Him, which are typically expressed in exclamatory sentences. E.g.

(10) O LORD, my God, how great you are! (Psalms 104:1)

(11) How good you are--- how kind! (Psalms 119:68)

As we know exclamatory sentence usually express a speaker’s strong feelings toward someone or something. By putting complimentary terms ‘great’ and ‘kind’ in exclamatory sentences, both (10) and (11) expressed the speaker’s strong positive feelings for God. The praises by the two examples are actually people’s love for God from the bottom of their heart.

When discussing people’s love for God, we cannot leave out one address used by people to refer to God: Father. Besides the titles such as “the Sovereign God,” “the Almighty

LORD,” etc., Father is another widely used address taken by people to call their God. For example:

(12) Yet, O LORD, you are our *Father*. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Isaiah 68:4)

(13) I praise you, *Father*, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, *Father*, for this was your good pleasure. (Luke 10:21)

(14) To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my *Father* on his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

If we say the address such as “LORD” is the expression of people’s love for God related to respect and appreciation, the address of Father is the full expression of people’s love of God with family intimacy.

As we know ‘father’ is a term not only signifying status but also implying love and responsibility. To call God Father is the manifestation of people’s approval to what God has done for them, more importantly it is the best voice for people to express their love to God. This love is different from any other kinds of love, for it is based on ‘family relation,’ it is a son’s love for his father, pure and wholehearted.

Of course, the address of Father has also greatly shortened the distance between people and their God, and makes their relationship reach a much higher level.

Whatever the specific way people may take in dealing with God, all their obedience, praise, reverence, respectful addresses, and positive attitudes are their expression of their love for God. It is this love that makes God’s Love not a single way of denoting, but an interpersonal interaction. It is not only the return for what God has done for them, but also the expression of people’s fellowship with God.

## **2.4 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Love among God’s Believers**

God's love originates in Himself, but is perfected in His believers.

In the Bible, we cannot only see “*We love Him because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19), but also find “*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*” (1 John 4:11).

To love one another, in the Bible, is regarded as the standard to judge people’s fellowship with God. For example, “*No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us*” (1 John 4:12). To love one another is also another command and obligation from God. As we can read from “*the obligation you have is to love one another*” (Romans 13:8), “*we must love one another*” (1 John 3:11), etc. Besides, loving one another is also people’s adherence to God’s decrees, as it is said that “*to love, then, is to obey the whole law*”(Roman 13:8).

Love among God’s believers also has a very broad sense, besides the two senses implied in God’s love; it may also mean attraction between a man and a woman. But among all of the senses, the most important and precious is the brotherly love between different people.

In the Bible, we cannot only see the warm and respectful address “Father”, but also find another genial address between God’s believers, “brother”. This is the most widely used address by His believers to refer to each other. Loving one’s brother in the Bible is more than a responsibility but an obligation. See “*whoever loves God must love his brother also*” (1 John 4:21).

Similar to what “Father” means, “brother” in the Bible is more than a common address; it is the embodiment of people’s concern for each other and the reflection of their close relationship.

(15) For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my *brother* and sister and  
mother. (Matthew 12:50)

(16) Whoever does God’s will is my *brother* and sister and mother.  
(Mark 3:35)

(17) You are my *brothers*, my own flesh and blood. (2 Samuel 19:12)

In both (15) and (16), the speaker explains the condition to be brothers and other relatives is “the will of God”. As we know, God Himself is love, God’s will in nature is loving will, from which we can infer that to do God’s will indeed is to love one another. From this understanding we know that brother in the Bible is itself a concept of love in nature.

All brothers in the Bible are those who believe in God and act as His will demands. This implies that brothers are actually a group with the same Father, God. This innate connection makes them more intimate than any others.

In example (17), the speaker even describes his brother as his own flesh and blood, which fully shows the status of brother in his heart.

Brother in the Bible is not just a concept that signifies the close relation among God's believers, more importantly it is the factor that forever encourages His believers to show their love to each other. Please read the following examples:

(18) Therefore, if what I eat causes my *brother* to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

(1 Corinthians 8:13)

(19) For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my *brothers*, those of my own race.

(Romans 9:3)

The speakers in both of the two examples above express their willingness to make sacrifices for their brothers, which not only reveals their greatness as God's children, but also shows their love is a pure unselfish feeling coming from deep in their hearts.

As we know a brother in any culture is a very important being in a person's life. The relationships between brothers are more bounded to consanguinity and morality than laws. By addressing each other as brother, the believers of God put an ethical spirit into people's emotions and make themselves aware of their responsibility to love each other.

Bearing this idea in mind, God's believers deal in their relations with all others by pure love, which not only greatly shortens the distance between them, but also helps them to live in unity and amity.

## **Conclusion**

People are social animals they need others and are needed by others. All God's power and status comes from His devotion to meet people's need for spiritual support. By engaging

Himself in providing love and getting His people to love each other, God makes Himself approved and gives His people a bridge to get to know each other and finally unite.

The senses of love are various according to different situations, and the ways for expressing love are also diversified. Love in nature is always based on the concern for other people. It always plays a vital role in interpersonal problem solving and relationship establishment and maintenance.

In short, love in the Bible is light in the darkness and sunshine in cold winter. With God's love for people, God gives people enlightenment and gets them to live in harmony; with people's love for God, they show their approval and worship of God; and with love among the believers themselves, they keep each other warm and united.



## Chapter III Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Mood in Biblical Language

### 3.1 Brief Introduction to Mood

#### 3.1.1 The Structure of the Mood System

According to Halliday (1994), statements and questions in English are typically expressed by means of a particular kind of grammatical variation and the variation extends over just one part of the clause, leaving the remainder unaffected.

The typical example given by Halliday on information exchanging can be found in Halliday (1994:71). By that example, Halliday defines Mood as the particular component that is tossed back and forth in a series of rhetorical exchanges (ibid: 71).

Mood structure of a clause refers to the organization of a set of functional constituents, it consists of two parts: the Subject (a nominal group) and the Finite Operator (part of a verbal group). The structure of mood can be analyzed as shown below:

(1) The LORD	has sent	his messenger to the nations
subject	operator	residue

(Obadiah 1:1)

The term ‘Subject’ often corresponds to the “grammatical Subject,” but here it is being reinterpreted in functional terms. The label ‘grammatical Subject’ seems to imply a grammatical function whose only function is to be a grammatical function; whereas the element in the question above is semantic in origin, like all other elements of the clause. The Subject is not an arbitrary grammatical category; being the Subject of a clause means something (Halliday 1994:72).

Finite element refers to the morpheme inflection which signifies simple tense in either main verbs or auxiliaries. It is not an independent element, but is always attached to an auxiliary or main verb. Finiteness is expressed through two systems: primary or simple tense

and modality. The former is by reference to the time of speaking, and the latter is by reference to the judgment of the speaker.

The Finite element, as its name implies, has the function of making the proposition finite. It circumscribes proposition and relates proposition to its context in the speech event, which can be done in two ways: one is by reference to the time of speaking; the other is by reference to the judgment of the speaker. In grammatical terms, the former is called Primary Tense, which means past, present or future at the moment of speaking, and the latter is called Modality, which means the speaker's judgment of the probabilities, or the obligations involved in what he is saying.

Besides Subject and Finite operators discussed above, Modal adjuncts are also included in Mood system, they refer to those that express the speakers' judgment regarding relevance of the message, such as probably, personally, in general, etc. Halliday (1994) has given a list of various kinds of modal adjuncts (see Halliday 1994:49).

### **3.1.2 Mood as a Main Device Realizing Interpersonal Meaning**

Mood in a clause is variable, it can refer to the type of clause structure (declarative, interrogative, etc.), the degree of certainty or obligation expressed (modality), the use of tags, vocatives, attitudinal words which are whether positively or negatively loaded, the expressions of intensification, and politeness markers of various kind.

The main concern of mood system is the way information is expressed, which is almost inherently linked with the roles which speakers adopt in the use of language.

Halliday (1994) takes the interaction between different participants as the process of exchange. During this exchange, two variables are concerned: speech role (giving vs. demanding) and commodity (goods and services vs. information). These two variables define four primary speech functions: offer, command, statement and question.

According to Halliday (1994), the four speech functions of language are mainly realized by the choices of the mood system. A statement gives closed information and thus is usually realized by the declarative mood. A question demands a response to open information and is mainly realized by the interrogative mood. A command demands goods and services and is mostly realized by the imperative mood. An offer gives goods and services and can be realized by different moods.

In all, what commodity is exchanged and what role people may take in an interaction, when they need to make their thought verbalized, they have to select one or more than one mood to present their view.

### 3.2 Interpersonal Relationships in the Bible

As we know the study of interpersonal meaning is mainly focused on how words reveal the relationships between the speaker and the listener, or how their relationships influence their choices of words, so it is very necessary to make out different interpersonal relationships in the Bible before our study of interpersonal meaning of biblical language.

In Halliday's functional system, the study of interpersonal meaning is based on the interaction between the speaker and reader on the micro-society level, however Li Zhanzi (2002) points out that the interpersonal meaning model based on micro-society level has its limitation when it is used to analyze written language, so she broadens the model taken by Halliday to a three-element two-level one as shown below: (Li Zhanzi 2002: 69)

Level	Element
Micro-society (writer—reader)	epistemic, evaluative
Macro-society (multi-voice in discourse—reader)	interactional evaluative

Table 3.1 Double-level interpersonal meaning model based on discourse

In Li's model, both micro-society and macro-society are taken into consideration. She explains that interpersonal relationships in written language are more complex than those in spoken language because participants in written language not only include those in discourse but also include those outside discourse, such as writer and reader.

As our research source here is a written version of the Bible, both micro-society level and macro-society level will be considered in our analysis of interpersonal relationships.

From 'Genesis' to 'Revelation', every story in the Bible has its own participants, the existence of so many people in the Bible makes it difficult to make out all of the roles in it.

But generally, we can put all the people in the Bible into two categories: God and His people. According to this classification, we can define two types of interpersonal relationships in the Bible, the relationship between God and His people, and the relationship among His people. Besides the two relationships, another relationship will be added to our discussion, that is, the relationship between writer and reader.

As we know God is the key character in the Bible, and all of the interactions and relations in the Bible are closely connected with Him, therefore the most important relationship in the Bible is the one between God and His people.

### **3.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Mood in Biblical Language.**

#### **3.3.1 Mood System Choice and Interpersonal Meaning**

Mood systems are various, but the most fundamental systems are declarative, interrogative (Yes/No interrogative and WH-interrogative) and imperative (Modal and Non-modal). According to Eggins & Slade (1997:150), mood choice is a key means in status difference enacting and constructing.

Our discussion of interpersonal meaning realized by mood in this chapter will be first focused on mood system choice by different people.

Firstly, let us come to the conversation between God and His first chosen person, Moses.

(2) God: "Moses! Moses!"

Moses: "Yes, here I am."

God: "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals,.....I am the Lord ....."

God: "I have seen .....I have heard.....I know.....So I have come down.....I have indeed heard....."

Moses: "I am nobody. How can I ....."?"

God: "I will be with you, .....You will worship me..... That will be ....."

Moses: "When I go to .....So what can I tell them?"

.....

God: "Put your hand inside your robe."

Moses: “No, LORD, don’t send me. I have never been a good speaker, .....

God: “Who gives man his mouth? Who makes him deaf.....It is I, the LORD.”

(Exodus 3:4 – 4:12)

From the conversation above we can see that all three kinds of mood systems are used by God. With the command of preventing Moses’ coming close to Him and demanding him to take off his sandals, God clearly tells people his holy identity.

Although “Put your hand inside your robe” is just a common command, this command is of special meaning here, because it implies the superpower of God. Moreover, it is from this command that God starts to show His love to people and sends Moses on the path of salvation.

By declarative in His “*I have seen*” discourse, God explained the reason for his coming down to help people. With “I” as the subject and the perfect present tense here, God increased the credibility of what he said and gained more people’s understanding and support. The declarative mood in “*I will be with you,...*” has reinforced God’s obligation to help His people.

Although the interrogative is also used by God in the last sentence in (2), it has none of the meaning of doubt or uncertainty, because the answer has been in His own mind.

Moses has also used all three kinds of mood in (2), however by contrast to those used by God, his imperative of “*don’t send me*” is actually a request to God. The declarative mood in “*Yes, here I am*” is a careful answer to God’s call, and his declaration “I am nobody” is just his explanation for his inability and lack of qualification not a forceful declaration.

Compared to the interrogative in God’s speech, the interrogative in Moses’ speech has quite a different meaning; it clearly shows Moses’ doubt, uncertainty or even fear.

From the analysis of mood choice by God and by Moses in example (2), we can find that mood choice is an obvious way to reflect the power differential between participants in a conversation. Mood in the example above clearly shows us that in the conversation between God and His people, God is forceful and takes a dominant role, while Moses is careful and less positive, and takes a lesser and supporting role.

Although the declarative and imperative mood have always been the predominant mood in God's speech as shown in (2), mood system choice by Moses is not always the case as in example (2). Let us read another example:

(3) "Obey all the laws that I am teaching you, and you will live and occupy the land...."

"People of Israel, listen to all the laws that I am giving you today."

"There are all the laws that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you."

"Obey faithfully all the laws that I have given you today,....."

"Listen, people of Israel !"

(Deuteronomy 4-9)

All the sentences in (3) are taken from Deuteronomy; they are the first sentences of Deuteronomy 4 to Deuteronomy 9. From these sentences spoken by Moses to the people of Israel, we can find that the mood taken by Moses here is quite different from that taken by him in his speech with God. In the first, second and fourth statements in (3), by using imperative mood, Moses distanced himself from other people. In the last sentence in (3), by ending the statement with an exclamation mark, Moses makes the imperative here stronger than those in the other statements. The imperative mood in the last sentence obviously shows Moses' prominence over those who are addressed by him.

From the comparison above we can see that mood choice in the Bible is the typical reflection of power and status owned by the speakers. Generally, the imperative and declarative moods appear more frequently in God's speech than in other people's speech, which fully reflects God's superior power and dominant position. From the analysis above we can also find that mood taken by God's chosen people varies according to different situations. When God's chosen people are talking with Him they use less imperative or declarative mood, while when they are talking with other people they use these mood much more. In all, the choice of mood by God's chosen people is also the reflection of their power and status.

So we say mood choice in the Bible is not random, it is the presence of hierarchy. By identity construction, mood in the Bible reflects the power and status of the participants and

constructs the social world as well as the relationships between God and His people, and among God's people themselves.

What we want to mention here is that if the speaker/listener takes negative attitudes to the other side's status or power, mood choice will not take its meaning as the reflection of power or status. For example:

(4) Joshua: "Get some food ready, because in three days you are going to cross the River Jordan to occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you."

Joshua: "Remember how Moses, the LORD's servant, told you that.....Your wives, your children, and your cattle will stay here, but your soldiers, armed for battle, will cross over ....."

Tribes of Reuben and Gad and to half the tribe of Manasseh:

"We will do everything you have told us and will go wherever you send us. We will obey you.....May the LORD your God be with you.....! Whoever questions your authority or .....will be out to death. Be determined and confident!"

(Joshua 1:10-18)

(5) Amos: "Jeroboam will die in battle, and the people of Israel will be taken away from their land into exile."

Amaziah: "That's enough, prophet! Go on back to Judah.....Don't prophesy here.....This is the king's place of worship, the national temple."

(Amos 6:11-13)

Both Joshua and Amos are God's chosen people, according to the power pyramid we mentioned earlier, both of them should be put on the same level in relation to status and power. However in (4) and (5), people take quite different moods in their conversation with them. In (4), people who are talking with Joshua choose declarative to express their obedience and resolution, while in (5), Amaziah takes the imperative mood to express his denial of what Amos said. In (4), the people's attitude toward Joshua is full of respect and approval, while in (5), Amaziah's attitude toward Amos is totally negative, he does not believe Amos's speech at all.

From the analysis above we find that the choice of mood system is of deep interpersonal meaning. It is not only the reflection of power and status, but also the embodiment of people's attitudes towards each other.

### **3.3.2 Mood Components and Interpersonal Meaning**

As we mentioned above, mood consists of two components, the Subject and the Finite. In the actual use of them in the Bible, each of the two components plays a specific and meaningful role in the realization of mood. In this section, we will make a tentative study of the interpersonal meaning of mood realized by the two components in biblical language.

#### **3.3.2.1 Interpersonal Meaning of God-as-Grammatical-Subject in Biblical Language**

As we know God is the absolute leading role in the Bible. His words, will and wisdom are all re-emphasized throughout the Bible. According to Halliday, "the typical Subject of an offer is the speaker, and that of a command is the person being addressed" (Halliday 1994:76). In the Bible, especially in *The Old Testament*, God often plays the role of the Subject of an offer, so in the analysis of the interpersonal meaning of Subject, we will focus our research on the Subject of God.

Since one of the revealing features of creating interpersonal meaning is Subject choice, our analysis of the Subject choice of God will greatly help us get the interpersonal meaning of god as a grammatical Subject in biblical language.

##### **3.3.2.1.1 Interpersonal Meaning of God-as-Grammatical-Subject in God's Quotations**

Reading through the whole Bible, we can find that God's speech is typically egocentric, what he wants to talk about is Himself but not others. In God's speech, the overwhelming Subject is Himself and not His interlocutors. The most common form of grammatical Subject in God's speech is the pronoun "I", which mainly appears in the mood structures such as '*I (will)*', '*I am*', '*I have+done*', etc. Our discussion of God as grammatical Subject in this part will be based on these three mood structures. Firstly, let us come to God as grammatical Subject in the '*I will*' mood structure.

God as Subject is used with a high frequency in the '*I will*' mood structure. This structure typically appears in 'goods and services' proposal clauses, by making "I" the Subject, this



structure puts emphasis on what “I” do for people. For example:

(6) *I will* unite them into one nation. (Ezekiel 37:22)

In example (6), the Subject “I” specifies the one that is responsible for realizing (carrying out) the offer or command in this clause. By giving prominence to the actor of the process, the ‘*I will*’ mood structure emphasizes that it is “I” but not somebody else will offer “you” help.

As God never breaks His promise to people, so what “I” promise is actually what “I” do. By what “I” will do, God’s people get to know His power and warm-hearted nature.

The Subject “I” in the “*I am*” mood structure usually shows God’s identity or status. E.g.

(7) *I am* the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.  
(Exodus 3:6)

Sentence (7) is actually God’s introduction of Himself in the time that He first appears in the Bible. With the explanation of who “I” am, God clearly shows people His special identity and high status. By emphasizing “*I am your ancestor,*” God shows people the relation between “I” and them, and shortens the distance between them.

Halliday (1994) proposes that the Subject in the mood supplies the rest of what it takes to perform a proposition: namely, something by reference to which the proposition can be affirmed or denied (Halliday 1994:76). The Subject in a discourse usually specifies the entity. It is also responsible for the success of a proposal. In God’s speech, this point is typically presented by the “I” Subject in “*I have+ done*” mood structure. For example:

(8) *I have* given help to famous soldier. (Psalms 89:19)

In example (8), the Subject “I” functions not only as the “starting point” of the message but also as the “resting point” of the argument, it is “I” who have helped people. So we say by taking “I” as the Subject in the ‘*have done*’ structure, God have not only convinced people to

believe His ability and credibility, but also helped them form positive attitudes towards Him.

### 3.3.2.1.2 Interpersonal Meaning of God-as-Grammatical-Subject in His People's Speech

God as grammatical Subject appears not only in His own speech but also in His people's speech.

According to Halliday (1994) and Simon.Dik (1997), interpersonal meaning can be understood from two aspects: interaction and attitude. The interpersonal meaning of God as grammatical Subject in His people's speech mainly comes from people's attitude implied in the Subject of God.

In the Bible, when God plays as the grammatical Subject in people's speech, He often takes the form of "the LORD," "LORD God Almighty," "Sovereign LORD," etc. For example:

(9) *The LORD* rejected his altar and deserted his holy Temple.

(Lamentations 2:7)

(10) *The LORD* asked him, "Where have you been?" (Job 3:2)

(11) Then the *LORD God Almighty* will be with you, just as you say he is. (Amos 5:14)

(12) The *LORD God Almighty* himself says, ..... (Amos 6:14)

(13) The *Sovereign LORD* will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8)

From the forms of God as grammatical Subject in the examples above, we can find that the Subjects of God are all the respectable addresses to Him. By taking these eye-catching complimentary addresses instead of other derogatory appellations as the Subject, God's people show us the glory and holiness of God, at the same time, they also express their respect and positive attitudes towards Him. From these complimentary Subjects, we can feel people's approval of God.

### 3.3.2.2 Interpersonal Meaning of Present Tense in Biblical Language

As we introduced above, mood consists of two parts: the Subject and the Finite operator. According to Halliday (1994:75), the main function of the Finite element is to make the

proposition finite so that it is something arguable, and this can be done by primary tense and modality.

The system of primary tense is principally concerned with the expression of events which occur in time as related to the moment of the speaker's utterance. The system of primary tense is a basic category in grammar. Principally, it relates the verbal group to a fixed time reference.

As Bakhtin says "meaning does not reside in the word or in the soul of the speaker or in the soul of the listener," it is "the effect of interaction between speaker and listener produced with the material of a particular sound complex" (Bakhtin 1929:103). MacCarthy and Kart (1995:94) also suggest the particular choice of language can reflect the relation between different participants in a dialog. Tense in itself has no meaning except expressing particular time, however, when it is used by speakers or writers with particular intentions, more meaning will be attached to it.

Although interpersonal meaning of tense has not been researched as much as that of ideational meaning, in a recent study about functional grammar, it has been given more and more importance (Li Zhanzi 2002:177).

The basic tense taken by the narrator in the Bible is simple past tense; however it is frequently interrupted by simple present tense. By using simple present tense to represent what happened in the past, the writer is not without intention. By using simple present tense in the narration, the narrator not only brings vividness to the readers and avoids losing them in the past, but also leads them to participate in evaluation and thought. This function of simple present tense is typically shown in rules, commands and praises.

#### **3.3.2.2.1 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Present Tense in Rules and Commands**

As we know the main purpose of the Bible is to teach people ethical principles and persuade them to do as God asks. In the Bible ethical principles mainly take the form of rules and commands. When retelling those rules and commands, we find that the writer always takes present tense in his narration. For example:

- (14) My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love,  
which shows itself in action." (1 John 3:18)

(15) Do not commit murder.

(Deuteronomy 5:17)

Morally we think what is expressed by (14) and (15) is right and should be followed by those who are addressed by God. However the writer does not restrict these commands only to people in the Bible. When retelling these rules and commands, the writer takes simple present tense with direct speech instead of simple past tense with indirect speech. By this way, the writer greatly shortens the distance between the past and now, and brings the 'present' in the story to 'present' in modern life.

Imagine if the writer had narrated with past tense as in the sentence, "The God told His children that they should...", which would lead readers to think that the rules and commands are nothing more than history, and that they should have been kept by the people in the Bible but not by themselves. But by using present tense here, the writer cuts remoteness and makes them know the rules and commands are not only said to those in the Bible but to 'you' outside the Bible. So we say simple present tense here has become a way which brings readers to evaluate the rules and commands, and join the army of God's people and obey as He commands.

### **3.3.2.2.2 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Present Tense in Praises**

We not only use language to create relationships but also use it to construct attitudes and evaluations to ourselves or others.

Among the various forms of evaluation, praise is one of the most important. In the Bible, praise is a very common way taken by people to express their positive attitudes towards other people, things or phenomena. Praises especially those for God are the most direct expression for people's worship of God. Praises for God not only include those for His words and deeds but also include those for His glorious personality.

Praises in the Bible are mainly expressed by present tense. Since the present tense here is not intended to indicate something happening now, but states something that the speaker appreciates, present tense in praise actually functions to present the speaker's attitude or evaluation to something or someone. For example:

(16) The LORD is king, He is clothed with majesty and strength. (Psalm 93:1)

From the present tense in (16), we can find that the speaker's evaluation of God is an everlasting evaluation. With present as the primary tense here, the speaker takes 'king' as God's everlasting identity, and 'majesty' and 'strength' as His particular attributes. In short, present tense in (16) has greatly increased the objectivity of the praise of God and makes the speaker's evaluation more credible.

What attracts us is that in (16) present tense is not only taken by the speaker in his praise of God, but also used by the writer in his narration, that is, the writer in his narration has brought the 'present' in history to the 'present' in modern life. By taking present tense here, the writer pulls the reader to truthful thinking and helps them form the idea that the praise of God is not just the speaker's evaluation, but the objective description of God.

Quirk et al (1985:241) take present tense that refers to no specific time as "the state present." They explain that statements with the state present indicate no time limitation and are eternal truths.

In the Bible, when present tense is used in praises with strong declaration, its evaluative function often moves from expressing subjective appreciation to indicating objective eternal truth. For example:

(17) God is love.

(1 John 4:16)

To study the clause in (17) as a whole we can find that "is" here is more like an equation mark in a mathematical equality, it tells us God equals love. From this understanding we know that "God is love" is more than a praise to extol His everlasting loving nature, it is also an eternal truth just like the sentence, "the earth moves round the sun".

Lexically, by present tense, the writer seems just to retell what is said by the speaker in the Bible in an objective way. However, it is this 'objectivity' that implicitly shows us the writer's agreement with the speaker in the Bible. By taking present tense here, the writer is doing more than engaging in story telling, he is also showing his own evaluation of God.

So we say when present tense is used to identify time in the Bible, in many cases, it should not be understood only as imposing a restricted "moment of speaking." It may imply more than what it signifies in the dictionary.

In short, by getting readers out of remoteness and helping them capture the moment the story happens, present tense in the Bible greatly shortens the distance between the 'present' in story and the 'present' in modern life. During this process, the writer helps people make an experiential connection with the Bible and feel connected to God and God's spirit.

## **Chapter IV Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Modality in Biblical Language**

According to Halliday (1994), Simon Dik (1997) and Li Zhanzi (2002), interpersonal meaning can be defined from three aspects: interactive aspect, epistemic aspect and evaluative aspect. Generally, the first aspect is mainly realized by mood, while the last two are mainly realized by modality.

In the last chapter, we have given a detailed analysis of interpersonal meaning realized by mood, in this chapter we will try to make a tentative study of interpersonal meaning realized by modality in biblical language.

### **4.1 Theoretical Survey of Modality**

Modality in traditional grammar refers to the meaning given by a series of modal verbs. It is regarded as the same as modal expressions by traditional grammarians. However, modern linguistics has brought semantic change to modality; it now has been widely referred to as speaker's attitudes towards, or opinions about, the truth of a proposition, event or situation. The expressive form of modality now is no longer limited to modal verbs, it also includes modal verbs (e.g. *must*), assertive speech act verbs (e.g. *insist that*) and modal adverbs.

The definition and description of modality has been one of the most pervasive and persistent problems in linguistics history. Generally, the history of the definition and description of modality can be divided into three major periods: the period represented by Ehrman (who holds a mono-semantic view and sets up a basic meaning model); the period represented by Palmer (who takes a poly-semantic view and establishes categorical models); and the period represented by Coates (who brings the fuzzy set modal).

Ehrman (1966) states every modal verb has its basic meaning, and all other meanings are just the extension of this basic meaning. This point is also consented to Perkins (1980; 1983).

Lyons (1977) defines modality as "the speaker's opinion or attitude" (Lyons 1977:452) and separates it into two categories: deontic modality and epistemic modality (ibid:793). The former is concerned with matters of knowledge, belief or opinion rather than fact, and the

latter is concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents.

According to the characteristics of the two kinds of modality proposed by Lyons, Palmer (1979:2) classifies modality into alethic modality, epistemic modality and deontic modality. And Palmer (1986) further explains epistemic modality as “the modes of knowing” (Palmer 1986:230) and deontic modality as “the modes of obligation” (ibid:230). Roughly speaking, epistemic modality and deontic modality are concerned with “language as information” and “language as action” respectively (ibid:121).

Although researchers represented by Palmer have recognized the variety of the meanings of modality, their classification of modality is too clear, it neglects the fuzziness and compatibility of the meaning of modality. Because of this oversight, Coates (1983) develops a “fuzzy set modal,” which is based on the idea that modality has not only basic and typical meaning but also non-typical meaning, and these different kinds of meaning may overlap in a certain range.

Based on Lyons’ classification, Simpson (1993) provides a more concrete classification of modality, it is comprised of four modal systems: deontic system, boulomatic system, epistemic system and perception system (Simpson 1993:47-48).

Though Simpson (1993) provides a more detailed classification of modality, most researchers prefer to take the two way classification proposed by Lyons.

Halliday (1994) defines modality as “speaker’s judgment of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying” (Halliday 1994:75). Modality in Halliday’s functional system has been classified into modalization and modulation, which respectively correspond to epistemic modality and deontic modality given by Lyons. Although Halliday’s classification of modality has been criticized by many researchers who argue that modalization and modulation should not be regarded as the two branches of modality, his classification does provide us with different views on modality.

## **4.2 Modality and Interpersonal Meaning**

Halliday (1994:88-89) regards modality as the intermediate degrees and the resources concerned with the domain of the negotiation of the proposition or proposal between the



categorical extremes of positive or negative poles. If the commodity exchanged is information, modality relates to how valid the information is in terms of probability or usuality. If the commodity is goods and services, modality related to how confident the speaker can be of the eventual success of the exchange. In commands, this concerns the degree of obligation on the other person to carry out the command, while in offers it concerns the degree of willingness.

No matter what form modality may take, it always reveals personal opinions toward a proposition or proposal either directly or indirectly, because “subjectivity is the basic characteristic of modality” (Palmer 1986:16). From this point we can see that modality is more than what it means in logic or traditional grammar, it is actually a very important device for interpersonal meaning realization.

The attributes of modality always make speakers select appropriate modality to modify their message. During the process of selecting, the speakers have to take type (modulation/modalization), value (high/medium/low) and orientation (subjective/ objective, explicit/implicit) into consideration in order to make communications more successful.

## **4.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Modality in Biblical Language**

### **4.3.1 Modality in Biblical Language**

As MacCarthy (1991) points out, every piece of information has its way to choose modality, the ways for modality expression in the Bible are various, but the most common judgment made by modality comes from the modal verbs in it. It is by these modal verbs that modality expresses its meaning by showing the speaker’s assessment of probabilities, degree of obligation, possibility, prophecy, or intention.

As the modes of expression for modality in the Bible are various, it is beyond the capacity of this paper to list and analyze all modal expressions in the Bible, so our research in this chapter will be focused on the language that is marked with modal verbs.

Firstly let us have a look at the occurrence and frequency of modal verbs in the conversation between God and His chosen people.

Modal verbs	God		Moses	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	62	54.9%	4	36.36%
must	22	19.5%	0	0%
mustn't	5	4.4%	1	9.09%
can	9	7.9%	2	18.18%
can't	0	0%	1	9.09%
might	1	0.8%	0	0%
may	6	5.5%	0	0%
shall	7	6.2%	1	9.09%
should	0	0%	2	18.18%
needn't	1	0.8%	0	0%
Total	113		11	
Modal verbs	God		Solomon	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	11	91.6%	0	0%
shall	1	8.4%	0	0%
Total	12		0	
Modal verbs	God		Jeremiah	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	61	64.9%	2	15.4%
must	8	8.51%	1	7.8%
mustn't	6	6.38%	0	0%
would	8	8.51%	3	23%
wouldn't	1	1.06%	1	7.8%
can't	3	3.19%	3	23%
can	4	4.26%	3	23%
have to	1	1.06%	0	0%
should	1	1.06%	0	0%
shouldn't	1	1.06%	0	0%
Total	94		13	

Table4.1 Appearance of modality in the speech of God and His chosen people

(Modal verbs in the conversation between God and Moses are taken from Exodus; Modal verbs in the conversation between God and Solomon are taken from 1 King 9 and 2 Chronicles 7; Modal verbs in the conversation between God and Jeremiah are taken from Jeremiah 1-20.)

Now that we have a general understanding of modality in the conversation between God and His chosen people, now let us come to modal verbs in the conversation between God's chosen people and other people.

Modal verbs	Peter & John		Jews and other people	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	10	50%	2	66.7%
must	4	20%	0	0%
shall	2	10%	1	33.3%
should	2	10%	0	0%
can't	2	10%	0	0%
Total	20		3	
Modal verbs	Jesus		Disciples	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	7	50%	3	50%
should	3	21.4%	0	0%
shouldn't	1	5%	0	0%
can	2	14.2%	2	33.3%
would	1	5%	1	16.7%
Total	14		6	
Modal verbs	David		Abibail and others	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	3	33.3%	6	75%
should	2	22.2%	1	12.5%
have to	1	11.1%	1	12.5%
can	2	22.2%	0	0%
mustn't	1	11.1%	0	0%
Total	9		8	

Table 4.2 Appearance of modality in the speech of God's chosen people and others

(Modal verbs in the conversation between Peter and John and Jews and others are taken from Acts 2-4;

Modal verbs in the conversation between Jesus and Disciples are taken from John 6; Modal verbs in the conversation between David and Abigail and others are taken from 1Samuel 25-27.)

From the figures in the two tables above we conclude the following:

1. God adopts more modal verbs than His chosen people do. Modal verbs are used more frequently in God's chosen people's speech than in other people's speech.

2. The density of *will* in God's speech is remarkable. The frequency of *will* in God's speech is much higher than that of any other modal verbs in His speech.

3. *Will* in God's people's words takes priority over other modal verbs as it does in God's speech.

4. Although *must* only makes a small percentage in God's speech, it is the second most frequent modal verb in His speech.

### **4.3.2 Interpersonal Meaning of Modality in Biblical Language**

As we discussed above modality in biblical language is mainly performed by modal verbs. From Table 4.1 and 4.2, we can see that among the various modal verbs, *must* and *will* are the two most prominent modal verbs both in God's speech and in other people's speech.

As we know interaction is a highly selective matter, the phenomena that certain modalities are specific to, or that are dominant in particular speech are all the result of selection, so we say the phenomena that *must* and *will* are the predominant modal verbs in the Bible is not without reason, in the following discussion, we will try to give a detailed analysis of the two preponderant verbs respectively.

#### **4.3.2.1 Interpersonal Meaning of *Will* in Biblical Language**

According to Halliday, among the various modal verbs, the one that is of the highest positive value is *must*, however, as the most powerful person in the Bible, God has not chosen *must* as the predominant modal verb in His speech, instead, He takes the moderately positive modal verb *will* as the main one in His speech. In the following discussion we will try to find out the interpersonal meaning implied in this 'abnormal' phenomenon.

According to our statistics of *will*, we find that *will* most often takes God as its grammatical subject. For example:

(1) I *will* watch over it and protect it for all time. (2 Chronicles 7:16)

(2) But I *will* bless the person who puts his trust in me. (Jeremiah 17:7)

As the content of what “I will” do in both (1) and (2) is God’s concern for His people in nature. With the first person pronoun “I” as the subject, *will* in both (1) and (2) denotes that it is God who wants to do what he says in his own willingness, God’s deep concern for His people comes from the bottom of His heart but not from someone else.

So we say by choosing *will* here, God is actually showing His love to people and constructing part of His identity---- His kind and warm-hearted nature. By showing love to people, God gains more people’s love to Him, and by constructing His nature, He establishes a very good image of Himself and gains more people’s approval.

By the analysis of *will* in God’s speech, we also find that much of what is expressed by *will* is not something that can be finished by ordinary people. For example,

(3) I *will* take away the sin of this land. (Zechariah 3:9)

(4) I *will* bless you and give you many descendants. (Hebrews 6:14)

Obviously, what *will* expresses in the above examples is beyond the ability of ordinary people. These unusual tasks taken by *will* fully show us God’s superior power and ability. What we should pay attention to is that although both (3) and (4) imply that God has the ability to fulfill those tasks, the modal verb *can* has not been used by God. As we know if *can* is used by God in these statements, it would just mean God has the ability to do it but not mean He has the willingness to do it. So we say by choosing *will* here, God is not only manifesting His ability but also showing His personality.

As we know a sense of security plays a very important role in interpersonal relationship establishment, because people to some degree greatly depend on a sense of security to assess other people and organize their perceptions about them. With the sense of security obtained from other people, people predict what a person will do in a range of circumstances and form their ideas of trust for that person, which will finally become the very important basis for people’s judgment of other people.

In order to gain people's trust, God quite often provides people a sense of security in His communication with them. This is typically reflected in His use of the modal verb *will*. For example:

- (5) The God said to Moses, "I now make a covenant with the people of Israel. In their presence I *will* do great things such as have never been done anywhere on earth among any of the nations. (Exodus 34:10)

From the *wills* in (5) we can see that God not only shows people He wants to do for them, but also tells them He decidedly will do for them. In order to make people believe His promises, God is even willing to make a covenant with them. By formalizing what He *will* do in the form of a promise, God intends not only to show He has the power and ability to accomplish His *wills*, but also to tell people He is reliable and trustworthy.

The interpersonal meaning of *will* is various, *will* in different contexts may have different meanings as we discussed above, and *will* in the same context may also have a variety of meanings. For example:

- (6) I am the Lord; I *will* rescue you and ... I *will* raise my mighty arm to ..... I *will* save you. (Exodus 6: 6-7)

In example (6), what the two *wills* express is not only God's promises but also His willingness. By using *wills* to confirm people's expectations and provide them with help, God not only tells people about His reliability and trustworthiness, but also shows people His responsible identity and His love of nature.

From the analysis above, we can understand that *will* in God's speech is often what we call influence modality. By choosing *will* in different situations, God reveals His inner nature to His people and helps them form their judgment of Him. The modal choice here is a way by which God gets people to understand Him and form positive attitudes towards Him. So we say the modality selection of God in His speech is not random, He has neither used *can* most frequently to emphasize His ability nor used *must* to convey He has no choice but to help

them.

In sum, the modality choice of *will* in God's speech is more than what *will* means in itself but has deep interpersonal meaning. It is not without intention for God to choose *will* as the most frequent modal verb in His speech. *Will* in God's speech on the one hand expresses His virtues and care for people either implicitly or explicitly, on the other hand gets people to love and respect God either consciously or unconsciously.

Compared to *will* in God's speech, *will* in God's chosen people's words expresses less subjective intentions, because the subject of *will* in people's speech is not the speakers themselves in most cases. What's more, even though the subject of *will* is identical with the speaker, the willingness expressed by *will* often comes from God but not from the speaker himself. Please read the following example.

(7) I *will* never turn away anyone who comes to me, because I have come down from  
heaven to do not my own *will* but the *will* of him who sent me. (John 6: 38)

In example (7), the speaker clearly denotes that his *will* comes from God rather than from himself. So we say *will* in God's people's speech is often another form of expression of God's good *will*. To be identical with what *will* means in God's speech, *will* in people's words not only shows people's kind identity as that of God but also tells their fellowship with God.

What we want to mention is that in many cases the distinction between tense and modality is not very clear. Although we left time reference of *will* in our discussion in this chapter, *will* in many cases is not separated from time, it may imply both modality and future, this is what Palmer refers to as *Modal Future* (1989).

#### **4.3.2.2 Interpersonal Meaning of *Must* in Biblical language**

Among all the modal verbs, *must* is regarded as the one that is of the strongest recommendation and highest degree of possibility or necessity. If we take politeness principle into consideration, we will find *must* is the modal verb least capable of establishing good relationships. However the figures in Table 4.1 tell us *must* frequently appears in God's words and even in God's people's words. In this section, we will try to figure out how *must* realizes its interpersonal function in biblical language.

From the analysis of *must* in God's speech we can find that the grammatical subject of *must* in God's speech is either God or God's people. Firstly we will make an analysis of *must* with God's people as the grammatical subject.

Although God has never stopped to establish good relationships with His people, he has not intended to put the status of Him and His people in an equal line, for He knows once He puts people's status in an equal with line with Him, all His commandments will lose their efficacy. So in the process of relationship establishment, God quite often selects *must* to express modality and takes His people as the grammatical Subject of *must*. By taking His people as the grammatical Subject of *must* in His speech, God clearly shows people His superior status, and tries to establish the relationships based on power between Him and His people. For example:

(8) Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you *must* keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come." (Genesis 17:9)

In (8), God selects the strong obligation modal verb *must* instead of other polite negotiating modal expressions to convey His commandment to Abraham. By using the second personal pronoun 'you' as the Subject of *must*, God placed the distance between 'you' and Him. At the same time, He also manifests His status and authority.

Besides manifesting authority and status, *must* is also used to express God's personal evaluation and attitudes to what He says. For example:

(9) If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he *must* be punished. (Exodus 21:20)

*Must* in (9) not only conveys the law about violent acts given by God, but also shows God's attitude towards beating slaves. By imposing His obligation on people, God here is actually making His own judgment on what He says.

As well as in God's speech, *must* also appears in other people's speech, though not as frequently as in God's speech.



Table 4.2 tells us *must* not only appears in the speech of God's chosen people but also in that of others. From Table 4.2 we can also see that *must* appears more frequently in the speech of God's chosen people than in that of others. Based on the analysis of *must* above we understand that the different frequency of the appearance of *must* in people's speech is actually the reflection of the difference of their power and status.

From Table 4.1 we get *must* is even used by God's people when they are talking with Him. For example:

(10) Yet I *must* question you about matters of justice. (Jeremiah 12:1)

From example (10) we find that by using *must* here, Jeremiah does not give any obligation to God or other people, but gives obligation to himself. From the context in which *must* exists we know that *must* here is just the expression of Jeremiah's strong willingness to get an answer from God.

## Conclusion

By the discussion of modality choice, this chapter has given a detailed analysis of people's linguistic construction of status, identity and alignment by modality. As Eggins and Slade (1997:97-99) point out speaker's modality choice not only implies the space between addresser and addressee but also shows their status and identity.

Because of the absolute power and special status of God, *will* and *must* take obvious priority over other modal verbs in God's speech. However, the modality selection in the speech of God's people tends to be more context dependent and less subjective.

## **Chapter V Interpersonal Meaning of Biblical Language: A Case Study of *John***

### **5.1 What Motivates an Exhaustive Case Study of *John***

According to the content of the Bible, we can divide it into three states: Someone is coming, which is described by the Old Testament, Someone has come, which is narrated by the first four books of the New Testament, and Someone is coming again, which is recorded by the rest of the New Testament.

Because of the significant status of God in the whole Bible, our discussion in the previous chapters is mainly focused on the addresses given by Him. However, if we only put emphasis on the discourses given by God and leave out that given by His Son Jesus, we will make our research an incomplete one, because Jesus “*was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was the same as God*” (John 1:1).

Although the New Testament is only about one-third as long as the Old Testament, it is not less important than the Old Testament. If we compare the importance of the two testaments, we will definitely say that the New Testament is of greater importance than the Old one.

The Old Testament only prophesies of Christ, while the New Testament clearly reveals Christ to people; the Old Testament tells of God’s plan for man’s salvation, but the New Testament tells about how God actually accomplishes salvation for humans through Christ; the Old Testament commands laws, ceremonies, and animal sacrifices, while in the New Testament we see Christ fulfill all of God’s Law and offering himself as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sins; in the Old Testament we hear the inspired words of the prophets, but in the New Testament we hear God’s own Son speak.

Among the twenty seven stories in the New Testament, the four Gospels are the most important stories in it. They present Jesus as both the Son of God and Son of Man, and record his whole life story, his words and the miracles made by him. Although each of the four Gospels tells the story of Jesus in different ways and with different emphasis, there is still some overlap among them.

Among the four Gospels, the *Gospel of John* is regarded as the one that provides the most complete record of Jesus, because the writer of *John* is one of the first twelve disciples of Jesus and therefore an eye-witness (John 19:35). It brings ever deeper appreciation of who Jesus Christ is, and of how we can know and experience him today.

In all, it is the status of Jesus, the importance of the New Testament and the completeness of *John* that motivates the case study of *John* in this paper.

## 5.2 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Mood in *John*

As we discussed earlier, mood system choice is not random. Mood in a conversation often provides us with information about the relation between different participants, the status of them, and the power distance between them.

In order to get a more comprehensive understanding of mood in *John*, we will make a count of the mood system in it by taking a great number of samples from it. Our study of the mood system in this section will be developed based on the figures we get from these samples.

As mood choice in conversations is the most obvious way to show the interpersonal relationship between Jesus and other people, our study of mood choice here will be focused on the conversations between Jesus and other people. The following table is the statistical result of mood choice by Jesus and by other people in their conversations. The data in Table 5.1 comes from the samples taken from stories two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve and fourteen in *John*.

Mood system	Jesus	Other people
Declarative (amount)	164	31
Imperative (amount)	28	3
Interrogative (amount)	16	33
Clause ended with exclamation mark (amount)	11	15

Table 5.1 Mood in conversations between Jesus and other people

## 5.2.1 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by the Declarative Mood

As Table 5.1 shows, the declarative mood appears most frequently in the speech of Jesus. The number of times declarative mood is used in Jesus' speech is greater than the total number times all the other moods occur in his speech combined. The declarative mood in Jesus' speech is also more prevalent than it is in other people's speech. In the following discussion of declarative mood, we will focus on the declarative mood taken by Jesus, and our discussion of the declarative mood in Jesus' speech will be based on the mood structures in which the declarative mood exists most commonly.

### 5.2.1.1 Interpersonal Meaning of Declarative in *I Am* Mood Structure

If we read the whole story of *John*, we would find that the declarative mood is chosen by Jesus very commonly in mood structures with "I" as the subject and "*am/am doing*" as the operator. For example:

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| (1) <i>I am</i> the bread of life that came down from heaven.           | (6: 51) |
| (2) <i>I am</i> the light of the world.                                 | (8:12)  |
| (3) <i>I am</i> the way, the truth, and the life.                       | (14: 6) |
| (4) <i>I am</i> the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. | (10:11) |
| (5) <i>I am</i> who I am.   | (8:27)  |

All the examples from (1) to (5) are the explanations of the identity of Jesus. In these examples, by taking different metaphorical expressions, Jesus compared himself to different things in the world and helped people form their ideas about him more concretely.

As we know bread is the basic material for the existence of human beings, and light is also very important in people's daily life. By comparing himself to bread and light, Jesus clearly shows people a life-giving and light-giving Word, at the same time, he also implicitly tells people his inner relation and importance to all other humans.

Example (3) is given by Jesus when he is asked by his disciples how they can get to where Jesus will be. With this metaphorical answer, Jesus not only tells people his illuminating nature, but also teaches them the right way to follow him.

In example (4), by claiming himself as the shepherd of his sheep, Jesus clearly reveals to us the relationship between him and his people. What is noticeable is that Jesus does not just aim to get people to know his power and priority by showing this identity, but puts emphasis on the responsibility attached to this identity. By telling his people he is willing to die for them, Jesus shows people his deep love for them.

The clause of example (5) is the answer given by Jesus when he is asked, “Who are you?” This answer is exactly the same as that given by God when he is asked by Moses what His name is. Here in this declaration, the grammatical Subject has the same meaning as its Object, which fully shows Jesus’ certainty about his own unique identity and authority. With this special answer to who he is, Jesus differentiates himself from other common people and establishes his holy status among people. Furthermore, by using the same identification of himself as God, Jesus shows his unity with God.

Besides in the ‘*I am + N*’ mood structure as we discussed above, the declarative also appears in ‘*I am + doing*’ structure. In *John*, the most typical statement with ‘*I am + doing*’ structure is “*I am telling you the truth*,” which is said by Jesus and always appears when Jesus is going to make an important declaration or statement. In the whole story of *John*, this declarative statement with ‘*I am + doing*’ structure appears altogether twenty seven times, the following examples are some of them.

(6) *I am telling you the truth*: everyone who sins is a slave of sin. (8:34)

(7) *I am telling you the truth*: whoever receives anyone I send receives me also; and  
whoever receives me receives him who sent me. (13:20)

(8) *I am telling you the truth*: you will see heaven open and God’s angels going up and  
coming down on the Son of Man. (1:51)

By taking the serious declaration “*I am telling you the truth*,” Jesus not only intends to draw the listeners’ attention, but also intends to declare the importance of the truth that he will give.

From the content of the truth made by Jesus in “*I am telling*” mood structure, we can find that the declarative here is of deep interpersonal meaning.

In example (6), with truth telling, Jesus is actually teaching people his principle of “do not sin,” this principle is in fact another expression of God’s statement, “Do not commit crime.” From this understanding we know that the declaration in (6) is in fact the expression of Jesus’ concern for his people, this concern is like love implied in God’s commands as we discussed earlier.

By Example (7) Jesus clearly shows people the inner relation between God and him, and between his chosen people and him. The declaration by example (8) in itself is the implication of power and unique status of Jesus, because the prophecy in this declaration is not something that can be predicted by any common person.

From the analysis above, we can understand that by using the declarative in the “*I am*” mood structure, Jesus shows people his identity, his inner relation with people and with God, the Father. At the same time, he also tries to convince people to believe what he says and get them to make fellowship with him.

### 5.2.1.2 Interpersonal Meaning of Declarative in *I Will* Mood Structure

In Jesus’ speech, besides “*I am*” mood structure, the declarative also appears very frequently with the “*I will*” mood structure. Please read the following examples:

- (9) If anyone hears my message and does not obey it, *I will not* judge him. I came, not to judge the world, but to save it. (12:47)
- (10) If you ask me for anything in my name, *I will* do it. (14:14)
- (11) Tear down this Temple, and in three days *I will* built it again. (2:19)

In *John* a lot of miracles and judgments are made by Jesus, with these miracles and judgments, Jesus reveals his unique power and status to people. However, Jesus’ final aim is not to show people his priority, but to save them and persuade them to believe in God and to follow Him. The statement in (9) is the best evidence of his mission as the Son of God.

By showing people what he “will” and “will not” in example (9), Jesus reveals to people his kind nature and the aim of his journey to the world. With the declaration of “will” and “will not” here, Jesus helps people understand his identity as the saving Word and gets them to respect and worship him.

Jesus in example (10) tells people of his willingness to help them. By showing people his warm-heartedness; Jesus tries to get people to believe his identity as the promised Saviour, the Son of God.

Example (11) is said by Jesus in answering the request to show his miracles. The use of the declarative here fully shows Jesus' confidence in his own power and ability, besides, it also provides people with more reason to believe in him as the Son of God.

In sum, the declarative mood in Jesus' speech not only shows people his power and ability, but also reveals his identity as the eternal Word of God. At the same time, the miracles and certainty brought by the declarative in Jesus' speech also allows people to get to know him gradually and finally starts their fellowship with him.

## 5.2.2 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by the Imperative Mood

Imperative mood is regarded by functional grammar as an obvious way to judge the relationship between speakers. By construing the addressee as slightly passive and carrying the implications of power by the speaker, imperative mood often indicates that the speaker is not only claiming his power, but also distancing himself from the passive addressee.

Although the status of Jesus is higher than that owned by anyone else in *John*, from Table 5.1 we can see that imperative is not the mood that is taken most frequently by Jesus. In this section, we will try to analyze this 'contradictory' phenomenon and make out the interpersonal meaning implied in this phenomenon.

Based on the communicating function, imperative mood in Jesus' speech can be classified into six different types as shown in the following table.

Imperative Mood		
Function	Clause Amount	Percentage
To order	10	36%
To persuade	5	18%
To make miracle for people	1	3.5%
To comfort	5	18%
To teach and instruct	6	21%
To give moral command	1	3.5%

Table 5.2 Imperative mood in Jesus' speech

From Table 5.2 we can see that the imperative in Jesus' speech is mainly used to express his concern for his people instead of showing his superiority. For example,

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (12) Believe in God and believe also in me.       | (14:14)  |
| (13) Go, your son will live!                      | (4:50)   |
| (14) Don't be worried and upset; don't be afraid. | (14: 27) |
| (15) Go, but do not sin again.                    | (8:11)   |

What is expressed by the imperative in example (12) is more like persuasion and preaching instead of order. With the imperative here, Jesus clearly tells people his hope for their fellowship with him and with God. Moreover, by saying "believe in God," Jesus, in (12), also implicitly shows his trust and piety to God.

Sentence (13) is the reply given by Jesus in answering a government official's request to heal his dying son. This sentence actually functions as act because it creates a miracle to heal the official's dying son. So we say the imperative in (13) not only shows Jesus' power as God's Son but also proves his identity as Saviour and gets people to trust in him.

In *John*, we can find that whenever people are scared or upset, Jesus always provides comfort to them and puts them at ease. Sentence (14) is one of the best examples of this. In (14), although the imperative is used to express Jesus' order, this order is full of his concern for people.

The Imperative in (15) is used by Jesus under the circumstance that a woman is caught committing adultery. When Jesus was asked to punish her, he did not use the Law given by Moses; instead, he freed her and gave her the command to be moral. In (15), there are two commandments, one is "go" and the other is "do not sin again." The former shows Jesus' magnanimity, and the latter reveals his Saviour identity. By the use of the imperative mood in (15), Jesus here gains more people's appreciation and approval.

From Table 5.2 we can see that among the six functions of the imperative mood in Jesus' speech, 'order' takes the highest percentage, however if we put these orders into the context they appear, we will find that in most cases they convey Jesus' concern for his people or his worship of God instead of the delivery of his power. For example:



(16) Make the people sit down. (6:10)

(17) Stop making my Father's house a market-place! (2:16)

When Jesus saw hundreds of hungry people have no food to eat, he was very sympathetic to them, so he ordered them to sit down so that he could distribute bread to them. The order in (17) by Jesus seems a little tough and even overbearing; however it is this tough order that expresses Jesus' firm belief in God. He puts God in a very holy status so he cannot bear people to make deals in His place.

By the analysis of the imperative in Jesus' speech, we find that Jesus does not aim to take the imperative mood to show his superiority over other people or put distance between himself and others, instead, he uses the imperative as a forceful way to express his strong feelings towards people and his worship of God, so we say Jesus does not intend to show people an arrogant and aloof Word, but to prove himself as the Son of God, the Son of Man and the Saviour of the world.

As we mentioned above, the imperative is the obvious implication of power owned by the speaker. Though the power owned by other people in *John* is much less than that had by Jesus, the imperative mood is also taken by other people in their conversations with Jesus as we can see in Table 5.1. For example:

(18) Sir, give me that water! (4:15)

(19) Sir, give us this bread always. (6:34)

(20) Teacher, have something to eat. (4:31)

If we analyze the clauses above from the context they exist, we will understand that imperatives in the three clauses are actually expressing people's entreaty rather than conveying their superiority in power or status. By taking the imperative in their speech, people explicitly express their eagerness to get what they want, at the same time, they also implicitly convey their trust in Jesus.

### 5.2.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by the Interrogative Mood

From Table 5.1 we find the interrogative mood is the one that is used by other people with the highest frequency. It is the only mood that is used more commonly by other people than by Jesus. Our analysis of the interpersonal meaning realized by the interrogative mood in this section will be developed by the comparison of the interrogative mood in the conversations between Jesus and his disciples and in the conversations between Jesus and non-disciples.

Please read the following examples.

(21) Simon Peter: Where are you going, Lord?

Jesus: You cannot follow me now where I am going, but later you will follow me.

Simon Peter: Lord, why can't I follow you now? I am ready to die for you!

(13:36-37)

(22) Thomas: Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way to get there?

Jesus: I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.

(14:5-6)

In example (21) and (22), both Simon Peter and Thomas use interrogative as the main mood in their speech and make themselves inquirers and Jesus answerer. Instead of expressing query, interrogatives in both of their speech express the speaker's strong eagerness to follow Jesus. When Simon Peter is told by Jesus that he cannot follow him, he even gives a strong explanation that he will die for him, which fully shows his willingness and resolution to follow Jesus.

From the analysis above we can understand that although interrogatives in the speech of Jesus' disciples express the speakers' uncertainty, they function more to show the speakers' positive attitude or worship of Jesus Christ.

After our discussion of the interrogative in the speech of Jesus' disciples in their conversation with Jesus, let us have a look at the interrogatives taken by those non-disciples when they are talking with Jesus.

Please read the following examples.

(23) Jesus: Take them out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market- place!

Jewish authorities: What miracle can you perform to show us that you have the right to do this ?

( 2:16, 2:18)

(24) Jesus: When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me.

Greeks: Our Law tells that the Messiah will live for ever. How, then, can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted ?

( 12:34)

In example (23), when the Jewish authorities are asked by Jesus to do as he commands, they haven't answered his request, instead, they use the interrogative mood to query what right he has to order them to do so. In (24), the Greeks take the interrogative to express their skepticism of what is said by Jesus. So we say what is expressed by the interrogative mood in (23) and (24) is quite different from that expressed in (23) and (24), interrogatives here not only mean inquiring but also express the speakers' doubt and even strong negative attitudes towards Jesus.

In the conversation between Jesus and his disciples, interrogatives in the speech of disciples tend to be more careful, they express the speaker's uncertainty and respect for Jesus, while in the conversation between Jesus and the non-disciples, interrogatives in the speech of the non-disciples tend to show the speaker's doubt to the person they are addressing. So we say the interrogative mood in *John* is actually a very important interpersonal resource, which often tells us the speaker's attitudes towards the participants in a conversation.

### **5.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by Modality in *John***

In order to get a more complete understanding of modality in *John*, we made a statistical summary on modal verbs covering all those in the conversations between Jesus and other people in *John*. In our later discussion of the interpersonal meaning realized by modality, the figures in the following table will be taken as the research basis.

Modal verbs	Jesus		Other people	
	amount	percentage	amount	percentage
will	64	54.2%	3	10.3%
must	10	8.5%	2	6.9%
mustn't	2	1.7%	0	0%
should	3	2.5%	1	3.4%
shouldn't	2	1.7%	0	0%
can	15	12.7%	11	38%
can't	8	6.8%	2	6.9%
could	0	0%	3	10.5%
couldn't	1	0.8%	0	0%
may	1	0.8%	0	0%
might	1	0.8%	1	3.4%
would	6	5.1%	1	3.4%
wouldn't	1	0.8%	2	6.9%
shall	3	2.5%	2	6.9%
shall not	1	0.9%	1	3.4%
Total	118		29	

Table 5.3 Appearance of modality in the conversations between Jesus and other people

From the figures in Table 5.3, we conclude the following:

1. Modal verbs are much more frequently used by Jesus than by other people. Jesus uses modal verbs almost three times as often as other people do.
2. Jesus has used almost all kinds of modal verbs in his speech, among these modal verbs, *will*, *can* and *must* take priority in occurrence over other modal verbs. *Will* is the one used most frequently by Jesus.
3. Except *can*, all the other modal verbs have a very low frequency in other people's speech.

In our later discussion in this section, we will focus our research on the most frequently used modal verbs *will*, *can*, and *must* in Jesus' speech and *can* in other people's speech.

### 5.3.1 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by *Will*

As the power center in *John*, Jesus has not used *must* with the highest frequency in his speech, instead, he uses *will* most often.

As the book itself says in the beginning, the *Gospel of John* is written so that its readers might believe that Jesus is the promised Saviour, the Son of God, and that through their faith in him they might have life (The New Testament: 115). From this explanation, we find that Jesus' choice to use *will* as his most frequent modal verb is not without reason. In our discussion in this section, we will try to find out the interpersonal function of *will* in fulfilling what the book aims to do.

According to Quirk et al (1985:306-309), *will* as modal verb can be defined as a prediction or volition, both of which are included in Jesus' speech. Firstly, let us come to *will* expressing prediction.

- (25) You *will* see heaven open. (1:51)
- (26) Those who have done good *will* rise and live, and those who have done evil *will* rise and be condemned. (5:29)
- (27) And you *will* die in your sins if you do not believe that 'I Am Who I Am.' (8:24)
- (28) I am the light of the world, whoever follows me *will* have the light of life and *will* never walk in darkness. (8:12)

From what is predicted by *will* in (25), we see that the prediction in (25) is not common in itself because it is not something that can be predicted by ordinary people, so we say *will* here is actually a symbol of Jesus' superior power and special status.

Although *wills* in (26) have helped Jesus to predict what will happen to people, they function more to give people warnings. The repayment and punishment predicted by *wills* in (26) are Jesus' moral teaching in nature, which prevent people from committing crimes and guide them to do good.

Like *wills* in (26), *will* in (27) has the function of warning too, and the warning here is in fact Jesus' concern for his people. As we know to believe "I Am Who I Am" is in fact to believe Jesus is the Word of God. To bear this idea in mind, people would think of love and would not do evil, because God Himself is love.

*Will* in (28) is not only prediction but also Jesus' persuasion for people to have fellowship with him.

When Jesus himself is the Subject of *will*, *will* in his speech often expresses his volition. Please read the following examples.

(29) And I *will* do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son. (John 14:13)

(30) Everyone whom my Father gives me will come to me. I *will* never turn away anyone who comes to me. (6:37)

(31) My Father will love whoever loves me; I too *will* love him and reveal myself to him. (14:21)

From the above examples we find that different from *will* with the subject "I" in God's speech, *will* in Jesus' speech is more related to his love and worship of God. In all the three examples above we find that when Jesus expresses his willingness, he always gives the hint that his willingness comes from God. So we say *will* here on the one hand shows Jesus' concern for his people and on the other hand reveals God's glory and Jesus' piety to Him.

### 5.3.2 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by *Can*

From Table 5.3 we find that besides *will*, *can* is another modal verb commonly used by Jesus, it is also the most frequently used modal verb by other people in *John*. From the structure in which *can* appears in *John*, we can classify *can* into different types as shown in Table 5.4. Our study of *can* in this section will be based on the classification in this table.

<i>can</i> in Jesus's Speech		<i>can</i> in People's Speech	
form	amount	form	amount
No one <i>can</i> ....	7	How <i>can</i> /how... <i>can</i> ....?	6
I <i>can</i> do nothing...	3	... <i>can</i> you/people ....?	2
How <i>can</i> you .....?	2	Who <i>can</i> ...?	1
...you <i>can</i> ....	2	<i>Can</i> it be...?	1
...a person <i>can</i> ....	1	...so that I <i>can</i> ...	1

Table 5.4 *Can* in Jesus and other people's speech

Quirk et al (1985:296-299) defines the three major meanings of *can* as permission, possibility and ability. From this explanation, we can find that almost all *cans* in Jesus' speech imply the third meaning except the two in the 'how *can*' structure.

From Table 5.4 we can see that *can* in Jesus' speech is mainly used in the structure with 'no one' as the Subject, so here we will start our research of *can* from those with 'no one' as Subject. Please see the following examples.

(32) No one *can* snatch them away from me. What my Father has given me is greater than everything, and no one *can* snatch them away from the Father's care. The Father and I are one. (10:28-30)

(33) No one *can* have anything unless God gives it to him. (3:27)

(34) No one *can* come to me unless the Father makes it possible for him to do so. (3:65)

*Can* in all the three examples above means common ability, however, its meaning is not limited to ability here, there is something more implied in it. By using the negative word 'no' together with *can*, the speakers in the above examples transferred the focus of what *can* means from ability to the reason to "no one *can*."

In (32), by emphasizing "snatch away" is beyond people's '*can*', Jesus emphasizes his power and relation with God, and tells people he and God are the union. In (33), *can* with a negative subject is actually another expression of God's ability and superior power. And in (34), *can* with 'no one' as the subject not only gives prominence to God's ability and power

but also stresses Jesus' status.

From Table 5.4 we can see that *can* with another form of negative expression also appeared in Jesus' speech just as the following examples show.

(35) I *can* do nothing on my own authority, I judge only as God tells me.

(John 5:30)

(36) I am telling you the truth: the Son *can* do nothing on his own; he does only what he sees his Father doing.

(John 5:19)

(37) I am the vine, and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you *can* do nothing without me.

(John 15:5)

In (35) and (36), by combining *can* with 'nothing', Jesus shows people his own inability. However, by reading the whole clause, we find that '*can* do nothing' of Jesus is just the reflection of '*can* do everything' of God. With this obvious comparison, Jesus guides people to know God and His power. In the same way, Jesus emphasizes his own power and importance to people in (37). So we say *can* in this kind of sentence structure is actually taken by the speaker to express his evaluation of the power or importance of God and himself indirectly.

Almost all *cans* in other people's speech appear in interrogative clauses. Though *can* in other people's speech mainly means ability as it does in Jesus' speech, it is more commonly used to show the speaker's attitude towards the addressee. For example:

(38) What miracle *can* you perform to show us that you have the right to do this?

(John 2:18)

With the interrogative word "what," *can* in (38) fully expresses people's doubt about Jesus' ability and their negative attitudes towards him.

### 5.3.3 Interpersonal Meaning Realized by *Must*

Among all the modal verbs, *must* is regarded as the one with the strongest obligation, it is often regarded as one of the most obvious marks to signify the difference of status or power



owned by different speakers. The density difference of *must* in Jesus' and in other people's speech shown by Table 5.3 is the best evidence of the power difference between different speakers.

Though Jesus takes *must* more frequently than other people do, Table 5.3 tells us *must* is not the modal verb used by Jesus with the highest frequency. Moreover, according to our statistics, half of the *musts* in Jesus' speech take first person pronouns as their Subjects. In our later discussion in this part, we will try to find reasons behind such 'uncommon' phenomena from the aspect of interpersonal meaning.

Please read the following examples.

(39) Jesus answered them, "My Father is always working, and I too *must* work."

(5:17)

(40) ....but the Father who sent me has commanded me what I *must* say and speak.

(12: 49)

(41) There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheepfold. I *must*

bring them, too.

(10: 16)

In (39), Jesus tells people his *must* does not come from someone else but from himself, *must* here not only expresses his resolution to save people, but also embodies his fellowship with God and his absolute obedience to God. *Must* in (40) also has the same meaning.

By taking *must* to stress his resolution to help people, Jesus in (41) shows himself not only as the kind-hearted Word but also as the responsible Word.

In all the three examples above, by using the first person pronoun "I" as the Subject of *must*, Jesus tells people he is not putting obligation on other people but on himself. As this obligation has a positive meaning for both God and other people, to some degree, it will help Jesus get more people's approval.

*Must* with a first person pronoun as the subject in Jesus' speech is the reflection of his concern for people and his obedience to God, while *must* with a second or third person pronoun as the Subject in his speech is mainly used to command people to follow God or Jesus, and to carry on God's spirit of love. For example:

- (42) Whoever wants to serve me *must* follow me. (John 12:26)
- (43) A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you *must* love one another. (John 13:34)
- (44) Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it *must* remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (John 15:4)

In (42), by *must*, Jesus makes “follow him” as the necessary condition to serve him. As Jesus is the ‘eternal Word of God,’ following Jesus here actually has the same meaning as following God. From this analysis, we can say that Jesus here is in fact asking people to follow God and to be God’s disciples.

As we discussed earlier, to love one another is the most important command of God, all His commands in nature is to ask people to love one another. In (43), by using *must*, Jesus makes “love one another” an obligation. What *must* implies here is actually a forceful way to tell people to establish good relationships with each other.

Example (44) is a metaphorical expression, by using *must*, Jesus makes people believe that only by following him they can get what they want. *Must* here expresses strong persuasion.

## Conclusion

The interpersonal meaning of biblical language in *John* is mainly realized by the choice of appropriate words in the lexico-grammatical system. Among the various choices, mood and modality choices are still the most important ways for the realization of interpersonal meaning.

By our analysis above, we find that mood and modality are actually the reflection of people’s power, status or attitudes. By selecting more forceful expressions of mood or modality, Jesus shows people his higher status and relative power as compared to other people or shows his obedience to God. The selection of mood and modality by other people in their conversations with Jesus is also of deep interpersonal meaning, it often reflects their attitudes

towards Jesus.

By the study above, we also find that mood and modality choice in Jesus' speech is almost identical with the choice by God in his speech, which further proves that "he was the same as God" (John 1:1).

In all, the interpersonal meaning realized by mood and modality in Jesus' speech is mainly embodied in three aspects.

Firstly, although Jesus shows the unequal status and power between he and his people, he never intends to put himself far away from them. Instead, he shows his deep concern for them and proves himself as the Saviour of the world.

Secondly, by demonstrating his relation with God, Jesus always shows his identity as the Son of God, at the same time, he never forgets to give prominence to God and show his obedience and worship of Him.

Thirdly, by language choice, Jesus has never stopped persuading people to believe in him as the eternal Word of God and to follow him.

## Conclusion

Functional grammar represented by Halliday identifies three metafunctions of language, the ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction. Among them, interpersonal function is explained as closely related to the human activity of communication, but it has been studied less systematically than the other two because it is more complex and less systematic.

The systemic functional has provided the approach to conversation analysis by opening the ways to theorize the links between language and social life, but it has not taken a whole text to research how interpersonal function is realized in and above clause.

In our communication, every particular form taken by the grammatical system of language is closely related to the social and personal needs that language is required to serve. By choosing particular language forms, participants show their status, attitude, evaluation, intimacy, etc. As Diamond (1996:15) points out, personal attitudes and social relations are communicated in many ways by speakers: by what people say, by how they say it, by the types of utterances speakers make, and by conversational structure. So we say the way to realize interpersonal meaning is various and complicated. But the ways taken by speakers always show us the interpersonal elements and provide us the clue of interpersonal meaning either implicitly or explicitly.

The Bible is one of the few most influential religious books in the world. We have no records to prove what is said in it, but whether there is God or not is no longer important, because the status of the Bible has shown us its value has far more than the story itself.

In the very long history of human beings, the Bible has entered into quite a large number of people's heart. It has enlightened a great number of people, saved a large quantity of people and united people from all walks. Its believers can be found in every corner of the world.

As such an influential book, it is not without reason. Read through the whole Bible, and we can find the long term attraction of the Bible, in a great degree, comes from its own spirit. This spirit is not something like blind preaching but principles for people to treat each other

morally. From this understanding, we know that the Bible is a book of deep interpersonal function. By its spirit, it teaches people to treat each other kindly, live in their community harmoniously and unite with each other closely.

However the spirit conveyed by God in the Bible is not directly told by God Himself, but through a story teller. In the written Bible, all the information about the Bible is transmitted and explained by a writer in a certain language.

In our study of interpersonal meaning in this paper, we have not put the Bible but biblical language into our research focus, because language is the form of thought in the Bible.

In our study of the interpersonal meaning of biblical language, we make our research both from micro and macro levels. The context of this study mainly concerns the Bible itself, but sometimes it also extends to all of human society both in and outside the Bible. So the participants in our interaction have a very large scope. Besides God, there are also people both inside and outside the Bible. The interaction between different people in this research is relatively complex, it includes not only that between God and His people, that among His people themselves, but also that between the writer and readers.

After the introduction in the first part, the second part of this thesis concentrates on the research of the whole spirit in the Holy Scripture: love. Concerning the variety and complexity of the meaning of love, this part classifies biblical love into different senses. By the analysis of love shown by God both directly and indirectly, we find that God's love plays an important role in relationship establishment and maintenance. Through the use of affection, people of all classes are brought to understand the nature of God, and gradually become his worshippers. Besides, people's love for God and love amongst themselves also greatly help them to live in harmony.

The third part of this paper takes mood as one of the most important devices to realize interpersonal function. After our analysis of mood system, we find that mood in people's speech is not used at random. The use of a particular mood is a typical reflection of speaker's attitudes or the distance between different participants in the discourse. God as grammatical subject in His own speech is typically egocentric, which is the best prove of His identity and unique status. Present tense in the Bible dramatically shortens the distance between the

historical present and now, it pulls stories from the remote past to now and brings people into the world of the story. In this process, the writer's orientation and evaluation are implied in his choosing of the present tense. Of course, the choice of particular present tense by people in the Bible is also not without intention. It is a way to convey their opinion.

The fourth part of the paper has presented an attempt to probe into modality in realizing interpersonal function. As the core notion of modality, modal verbs are quite often used in biblical language. Modal verbs especially those with strong obligation are relatively obvious ways to convey a speaker's subjective attitudes. Moreover, they are also an important clue to judge the intimacy or space between the addresser and the addressee. Our analysis in this part focuses on the two typical modal verbs in the Bible, *will* and *must*. The research is developed by how judgments and attitudes are expressed by *will* and *must*. Although the modal verbs analyzed by our research are not exhaustive enough as to include all the modal verbs in the Bible, it provides us important evidence for people's linguistic construction of status, identity and alignment by modality in certain context.

The fifth part in this thesis provides us with an understanding of the interpersonal meaning of biblical language through the God who lived among people: Jesus Christ. By the analysis of language in *John*, this chapter deepens our study of interpersonal meaning realized by biblical language.

In all, based on the achievement by former researchers, this research highlights some typical ways of conveying interpersonal meaning and explores socially meaningful participant relationships operating in a situation, namely status relations, and the degree of affective factors involved.

With our study of the typical way of conveying interpersonal meaning, we hope to help people understand both the Bible and interpersonal meaning more thoroughly and completely. At the same time, the author also hopes the research in this paper will guide us to improve our efficiency of communication and help us establish good relationships by using words appropriately.

Besides the achievements in this study, there are also some limitations in this paper. Firstly, because the resources for the realization of interpersonal meaning in biblical language are various, the discussion in this paper on interpersonal meaning has not permeated every

aspect of the Bible. Secondly, as mood, modality and love are very complicated and delicate; the existing research is very limited and has not analyzed all the interpersonal meanings realized by them.

In my future study, I will try to fill in the gaps in this research and bring my study to a wider and deeper direction.

## Notes

Eggins (1999:12) identifies interpersonal metafunction as the interpersonal meaning of the semantic system of a language concerning our role relationships with other people and our attitudes towards each other. From this definition and other functional linguists' definitions of interpersonal metafunction, there is no difference between interpersonal meaning and interpersonal metafunction, so in this paper, interpersonal meaning means interpersonal metafunction.

In our discussion there is no difference between 'love in the Bible' and 'love in biblical language' because the love that is expressed in biblical language is love that exists in the Bible.



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## **Appendix A: Publications during the Program**

- [1] 季红琴. 语境对指示语的意义推导[J] 零陵学院学报, 2004 ( 6 ) :156
- [2] 季红琴. 隐喻的人际功能研究[J] 内蒙古农业大学学报, 2005 ( 2 ) :136

## Appendix B: Informative Abstract in Chinese

### 圣经语言的人际意义研究

语言的人际功能来自韩礼德功能语法对语言纯理功能的划分。在功能语法的理论框架中，人际功能指的是在话语情境中说话人与话语接受者之间的互动关系，以及通过互动建立和维持人际关系的功能，此外它还具有表达说话人身份，地位，动机和态度的功能。语言的人际功能具有多种实现方式，在词汇语法层面人际功能主要通过语气和情态来实现，在音系层面则主要通过语调来实现。

《圣经》是当今世界最重要的宗教圣典之一，全世界的每一个角落几乎都有《圣经》的信奉者。《圣经》对整个人类社会尤其是对西方社会的影响已经不再停留在宗教领域，而是扩展到了语言、文化等其他领域。作为一部经久不衰、影响巨大的神学经典，《圣经》的魅力与它的语言尤其是上帝的语言是分不开的，从某种意义来讲，《圣经》已不仅是一部神学经典，也是一部文学巨作。

数个世纪以来，对《圣经》的介绍、解释和研究已成为宗教学术界的一个热门话题，但在语言学领域，人们对圣经语言的研究主要还停留在《圣经》的翻译和《圣经》对文化的影响等方面。

圣经语言从本质上来说是一门充满道义说教的语言，它在传递宗教教义的同时，也为人们的社会行为提供了良好的道德规范。本文试图从圣经语言的功能出发，在功能语法人际意义理论的框架下，对圣经语言尤其是上帝语言进行分析，揭示圣经魅力的根源。

本文的分析主要分为五个部分，第一部分是对人际意义以及圣经语言研究现状的阐释，同时本部分也对本文研究的目的和重要性进行了说明。本文的主体包括第二、三、四和五部分，它通过对圣经语言所蕴涵的爱及语气和情态选择的分析揭示了圣经语言的人际意义。

爱是《圣经》的主题，也是整部《圣经》的精神实质。《圣经》的爱包含十分广泛的意义，它不仅指上帝的普爱、仁爱和博爱，也包含人们对上帝的虔诚、顺从和尊重，同时它还包含人们之间的相互帮助、关心等。爱是圣经语言人际意义的核心所在。

本文对爱的人际意义的分析主要集中在三个方面，即上帝对人们的爱所包含的人际意义，人们对上帝的爱所包含的人际意义和人们之间的爱所体现的人际意义。

上帝是《圣经》的核心人物，《圣经》中的上帝是“全爱”的上帝，因为“上帝本身就是爱”。上帝语言是传递爱的语言，它以各种方式向人们传递着上帝的关爱。本文对上帝语言所传递的爱的研究主要围绕上帝与人们之间的“盟约”和他所订立的“十戒”来展开。

《圣经》中的“盟约”不仅包括个人与个人之间的“盟约”，也包括团体与团体之间的“盟约”，但最重要的是上帝与人之间的“盟约”。通过“单向盟约”，上帝不仅给人以承诺和帮助，更重要的是为人提供了安全感，让人了解他本质的同时也为他赢得了人认可和尊重。“双向盟约”在定义上虽然是义务与要求并存的盟约，但通过对“双向盟约”内容的分析我们发现，上帝在“双向盟约”中对人们的要求并不是为了自己，而是为了其他的子民。这些要求在本质上是以契约的形式来规范人们的行为，推动人与人之间的互助、互爱。同时上帝的“双向盟约”也使得“契约”下的另一方获得同一团体的归属感，让他们感到自己是“一家人”。在履行共同义务的过程中，通过互动建立起彼此间的信赖，拉近彼此的距离。

“十戒”是《圣经》中最基本也是最富生命力的戒律，它以命令的形式为人们的行为提出了严格的道德规范。从某种意义上来说，“十戒”具有法律的效应。“十戒”从形式上体现的是上帝的权威与尊严，但从内容上反映的却是上帝对人们的终极关怀。

人们对上帝的爱在语言上主要体现在对戒律的遵守和对上帝的赞美与称呼等方面。通过对戒律的遵守，人们所表达的不仅是对道德规范的认可，更多是对上帝的虔诚与顺从。对上帝的赞美则是人们对上帝的肯定与崇拜最直接的表达方式。

《圣经》中“父亲”、“主”、“崇高的上帝”等极富感情色彩的称呼同样也表达了人们对上帝的崇拜与尊重。当人们把上帝称为“父亲”时，人们不仅表达他们对上帝的爱，而且极大地缩短了和上帝的距离。它使得上帝与人的关系不再停留在“神”与“徒”关系，而是升华到了“父”与“子”的关系。

本文对人们之间的爱的分析主要围绕“兄弟”这个称呼来展开的，通过对“兄弟”这个词本身所蕴涵的感情意义的分析，揭示出人与人之间的爱所体现的深刻的人际意义。

在对圣经语言人际意义的探讨过程中，本文不仅对圣经语言所蕴涵的精神实质进行了分析，还对语言中语气和情态的选择进行了研究。

语气是人际意义最重要的语法资源之一。语气的选择不仅体现讲话者的身份、地位，也表明讲话者的态度、动机以及与听话者的关系和亲密程度等。

语气结构包括主语和限定成分两部分。本文对语气所实现的人际意义的研究主要围绕语气系统的选择及主语和时态的选择来展开。

在对语气系统进行分析时，本文采用了对比分析的方法。通过对比摩西在与上帝会话和与其他人的会话时的语气选择，我们发现《圣经》中语气系统的选择明显地反映了讲话者的身份、地位和权势关系。总体来说，上帝在语气选择中明显偏向使用祈使语气和陈述语气，这种语气选择正是上帝权力和地位的体现。而上帝的选民的语气选择则根据他们的说话对象来确定。上帝的其他子民的语气选择则不仅反映他们的权势关系，同时也反映出他们对上帝和对上帝的选民的态度。

除了对语气系统本身进行分析以外，本文还对上帝作为语法主语进行了较深入地分析。通过对不同语气结构中上帝作为语法主语的分析，我们发现上帝在主语选择中明显地以自我为中心，但这种自我为中心的主语选择并不是为了拉开他与人的距离，恰恰是为了更好地体现他对人的爱。

《圣经》中现在时的使用明显带有评价的功能。在叙说的过程中，通过将“历史现在”带回到“说者现在”，作者不仅生动地再现了历史，而且将读者带入到对他所讲述事情的评叙，同时也表达了自己对这件事情的评价。

情态是实现人际功能的又一重要的语法资源。在对语言中情态进行分析时本文主要采用了定量分析的方法。通过对圣经中不同阶层人们语言中情态的统计分析，我们发现上帝使用情态动词的频率明显高于其他人。上帝的选民使用情态动词的频率也高于其他子民。这种情态选择的差异明显地反映了上帝、上帝的选民及上帝的其他子民之间权利和地位的差异。通过对圣经语言中出现频率最高的两个情态动词的对比分析，我们还发现上帝的情态选择并不是为了展现一个高高在上的自我，而是为了展示他仁慈的本质。

《圣经》中其他人对的情态选择在很大程度上则体现了人对上帝的态度。

如果说“旧约全书”中上帝的话语是“神话”，“新约全书”中基督耶稣的话语则为“道说”。本文第五部分以“约翰福音”为文本，从语气和情态两方面对“新约”中语言的人际意义进行了探讨。本部分的研究主要建立在统计分析的基础上。通过对基督在“约翰福音”中语气选择的统计，我们发现基督对语气系统和情态动词的选择都与上帝的选择很相似。从语气所表达的功能来看，基督使用强势语气的目的并不是为了显示自己的权力和地位而是为了使人相信他作为“救世主”的身份和仁爱的本质，同时语气的选择也体现了基督对‘圣父’的虔诚与顺从。

本文最后得出的结论是：圣经语言是典型的反映权势关系的语言，在语言选择中上帝语言明显偏向能反映权利和地位优势的语言，但上帝的语言选择并不是为了展示一个高高在上的上帝，而是为了展示一个充满普爱、仁爱和博爱精神的上帝。爱是上帝一切语言的精髓，也是它的精神实质。上帝在赋予人们爱的同时，也向人展示了他“全爱”的本质，赢得了人们的尊重和崇拜。在上帝之爱的感悟下，人们不仅学会了爱上帝，也学会了爱自己。人与人的相互关爱已成为良好人际关系的纽带，也成为了社会和谐与稳定的基础。所以说上帝语言从本质上来讲是具有重要人际意义的语言。通过分析我们也了解到《圣经》中其他人的语言选择明显的反映了他们从上帝那里获得权利的多少及他们对上帝的态度。