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Interpersonal Function in Paul Biya's 2018 French Inaugural Speech and its English Translation

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A B S T R A C T

In this paper, Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar theory (1985) is used to analyze the interpersonal metafunction of language, with focus on the mood system, across two linguistics mediums. The corpus analyzed is a political speech namely, Cameroonian President Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech in French and its English translation. Specifically, the paper seeks to know if the mood system of the political speech in the French language is preserved in its English translation. The paper leads to the conclusion that, with regard to mood choices in the French and English texts respectively, declaratives account for 96.42% and 97.79%, imperatives account for 3.58% and 2.21% while there is no representation of the interrogative in both texts. Therefore the mood system in a vast majority of the clauses in the French Source Text is preserved in the English Target Text. This is proof that in the English Translation of Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech, the translator tried as much as possible to keep the original style of the political speech.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

I.   INTRODUCTION

Within the communication process between political actors and their audience, political speeches appear as essential tools which are characterized by the variety of strategies employed by the actors to drive across their message and to ensure a better understanding of their political ideologies. In Cameroon, 2018 was an electoral year and for the seventh consecutive time, the current president, Paul Biya, was re-elected into office on 7 October. The election process took place against a background of rising violence, with the jihadist group Boko Haram still operating in the Far north region of the country while the English-speaking regions of the Northwest and Southwest are facing a serious socio-political crisis since the end of 2016, which turned into an armed conflict at the end of 2017.

In the midst of these conflicts and the relatively uneven social climate in the country and in keeping with constitutional provisions, Paul Biya was sworn in on 6 November 2018 in an official ceremony during which he delivered his inaugural speech, stressing that his action in the service of the Cameroonian people during his next seven-year term of office, will be guided by two major principles: absolute loyalty to the institutions of the Republic and an irrevocable personal commitment to comply with the obligations defined by the country's Constitution.

Political speeches, and especially presidential inaugural speeches like that of Paul Biya of Cameroon, have always been used as research data because of their great importance, for instance, in terms of the language resources deployed by the presidents to achieve certain goals. Many scholars have therefore carried out research on presidential inaugural speeches around the world from different perspectives, including functional grammar. In this regards, Zheng and Liu(2010) in Kuang and Liu (2017), analyzed the interpersonal metafunction in Bush's speech, Wang, Yin, and Wang (2011) compared the interpersonal meaning in English and Chinese political speeches, and Qin and Xu (2016) studied Hillary's first election speech through the interpersonal metafunction. Coming on the heels of these studies on the interpersonal metafunction of language, this paper examines Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech with the difference that, it is a cross-linguistic and contrastive study that seeks to know if the mood system of the political speech in the French language is preserved in its English translation.

Political Speeches in Cameroon

Political speeches here are understood as speeches by Cameroonian heads of State, especially those delivered by Paul Biya since he assumed office in 1982. These are speeches which lay emphasis on the message and it relevance, the medium through which it is delivered and the people to whom the message is addressed. In Cameroon, and since 1982, Paul Biya's political speeches, which contents mainly focus on national unity, development, rigor and moralization, have always been translated into English, owing to constitutional provisions establishing English and French as two languages of equal status, and especially ensuring their use in all government services.

In an analysis of a shift in political communication policy by the Cameroonian leader in 2009,Zambo (2010) classifies Paul Biya's speeches into two categories: 1) Ordinary speeches, often described as "traditional" because they are provided and expected within the functioning of the State machinery. They include his end of year address to the nation on 31 December; his annual address to the youths on 10 February, eve of the Cameroon national youth day; and his speech before the diplomatic corps every beginning of January, during the presentation of New Year wishes to the President of the Republic; 2) Circumstantial speeches, which refer to special outings by the President of the Republic either during national events such as

the reception of the senior national football team 'the Indomitable Lions'' following their victory in the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations in Gabon; during international events such as sub-regional, regional and international summits; or during crisis situations such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far-North of Cameroon since 2014 and the current "Anglophone Crisis" in the Southwest and Northwest regions of the country.

Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech in French and its English translation, which form the textual data of this analysis, therefore, falls within the first category of speeches mentioned above. Although its context differs slightly from the other speeches, its purpose is generally the same as that of most speeches of the same nature, that is, to: (1) convey his vision and directions in managing his government, and general policies for each political sphere; (2) pledge to do his best in running the government for the nation and country; and (3) ask cooperation for making a hopeful new era.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Systemic functional grammar and the mood system

Michael Halliday's 1985 theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar *(henceforth SFG)*, which falls within the realm of his social semiotic approach to language known as Systemic Functional Linguistics, is now commonly used by scholars and researchers to study the interpersonal function realized in presidential inaugural speeches around the world. In his book *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday (1985/1994) defines functional grammar as 'essentially a "natural" grammar, in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used'. In other words, the purpose of Functional Grammar is to provide a theoretical framework for both spoken and written discourse analysis. Halliday further divides the way language is used into three different metafunctions: the ideational/experiential metafunction, through which he considers language as an instrument of thought or conceptualization of the world; the textual metafunction, which underscores the fact that language is used to organize discourse and create continuity and flow in our texts or in conversations; and the interpersonal metafunction which, according to Thompson (2000), in Kuang and Liu (2017) means people using language, in both its oral and written form, to interact with others, to establish and maintain relations with them, to influence their

behavior, and to express their viewpoints on things in the world.

In the English language, this last but not the least metafunction is realized in various aspects including mood and modality as major ones but this paper focuses on the mood system, as represented in figure 1 below, which stands out as the major grammatical component within which choices are made with regards to the following key parameters outlined by Lavid and Zamorano-Mansila (2010: 229-230): (i) the purpose of the exchange, where two main purposes can be distinguished: either the speaker intends to obtain something from the addressee or he/she intends to give something to the addressee; (ii) the object involved in the exchange, which is generally presented in linguistic interactions as the exchange of two kinds of commodity: information or goods-and-services, or in terms of command and offer whereby the speaker is either offering to do something for the addressee or is trying to affect the addressee's behavior;(iii) the structural function of the utterance in the exchange, which has to do with how the speaker and the addressee's contributions complement each other to form a normal dialogue with initiating and responding moves in the form of questions, commands, offers and statements; and(iv) the sense of the responding move, which completes an initiating move by showing two possible reactions to it: either the responding move supports the initiating move or confronts it.
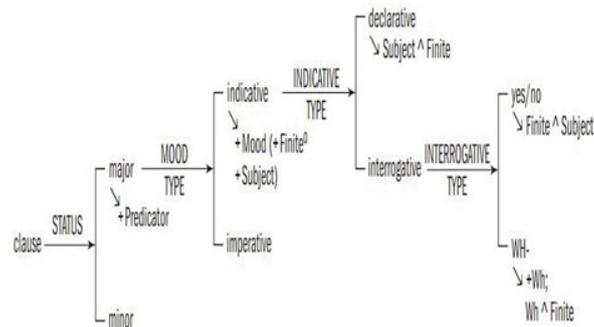

Figure 1
The Mood system network (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 24)

According to Halliday (2000), and as demonstrated in the above figure, by studying the different order of the subject and finite, SFL identifies the basic grammatical category for information exchange as imperative and indicative. The characteristic expression of statement within the indicative category is declarative while that of the question is interrogative. Within the category of interrogative, there is a further distinction between yes-no interrogative for polar questions and Wh-interrogative for content questions.

This description suggests that the grammar of language and, in the case of this study, the grammar of speech does not only serve to produce correct linguistic constructions but also helps to structure information and transfer ideology, just as Wang (2010: 254-261) demonstrates in his study of the interplay of language, ideology and power in Obama's first victory and inaugural speech from the point of transitivity and modality.

Therefore, to better understand Paul Biya's inaugural speech in its French and English versions as an effective discourse for its own purpose and make comments on the speech about whether the translator endeavored to keep the original style of the political speech, the following analysis of the speech from the perspective of the interpersonal metafunction mainly involves the analysis of the Mood system as described above.

Translation studies and the SFG theory

Translation Studies (henceforth TS) is the field of study that deals with the theory, description, and application of translation. It examines translation not only as interlingual transfer but also as intercultural communication. It is also described as an interdisciplinary field that cuts across a variety of other fields such as comparative literature, cultural studies, gender studies, computer science, history, philosophy, linguistics, and discourse analysis. A major step forward in this discipline occurred in the 1970s with Holmes' "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies" (1972) setting out orientations towards

the scholarly study of translation. Since then, different areas of his conception of TS, as shown in figure 2 bellow have been influenced by scholarls around the world, prominent among which has been the Hallidayan influence of discourse analysis and SFG, which views language as a communicative act in a sociocultural context, and which has been applied to translation in a series of scholarly publications such as Bell (1991), Baker (1992) and Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997).
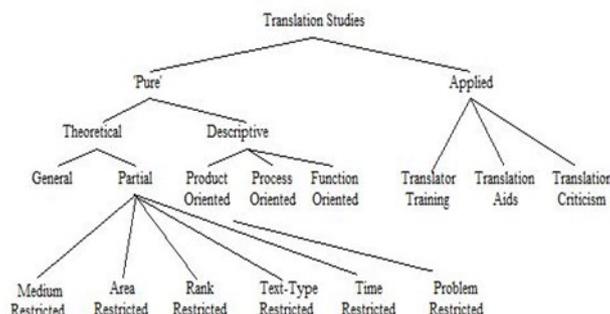

Figure 2
Holmes' conception of translation studies (Toury, 1991: 181)

In the first volume of her publication series entitled Translating Text and Context: Translation Studies and Systemic Functional Linguistics, Manfredi (2008), endeavors to clarify the link between TS and SFG by simply referring to Halliday himself, who states that grammar "*is functional in the sense that it is designed to account for how the language is used. Every text [...] unfolds in some context of use [...]. A functional grammar is essentially a 'natural' grammar in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used*". From this definition by Halliday, Manfredi rightly concludes with Taylor (1996: 87-119) that Functional Grammar is not concerned with a static or prescriptive kind of language study, but rather describes language in actual **use** and centers around **texts** and their **contexts**. Therefore, since Functional Grammar concerns language, and how language is realized in texts, it is consequently also fit to deal with the actual goal of a translator, which is translating texts, and Mood here can help translators to determine whether a Source Text*(henceforth ST)* writer has been objective in his/her writing or if he/she has just been speculative, whether the writer has distanced himself from his/her writing or not, and to decide whether an idea stated in a ST is expressed as an order, a necessity or a probability and therefore needs to be translated as such in the Target Text *(henceforth TT)*. Manfredi (2008: 38) however suggests that in dealing with a ST and its translation, a "Bottom-Up" approach should be adopted, starting from the micro-level of lexico-grammatical realizations to the macro-level of text and context and this is exactly Hallidays'

opinion when he says that "*A text is a semantic unit, not a grammatical one. But meanings are realized through wordings; and without a theory of wordings – that is, a grammar – there is no way of making explicit one's interpretation of the meaning of a text*". Halliday (1985: 18)

Given that SFG is the theoretical basis of this paper, and considering Halliday's viewpoint that the unit of analysis in SFG should be the clause, the following sections will be concerned with how these elements are dealt with in the French ST of Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech and its English TT.

III. ANALYSIS OF PAUL BIYA'S 2018 INAUGUAL SPEECH

The corpus

The corpus of this contrastive analysis is Biya's inaugural speech in its original French version and English translation. As mentioned in the introduction above, 2018 was an electoral year in Cameroon and Paul Biya was running for the seventh consecutive time as President of the Republic. On 7 October 2018, he was re-elected into office. In keeping with constitutional provisions in Cameroon, he was sworn in on 6 November 2018 in an official ceremony during which he delivered an inaugural speech. This speech was important because, like most political speeches, characterized by the variety of strategies employed to drive across messages and ensure a better understanding of political ideologies by their audiences, it was an opportunity for the President of Cameroon to exchange with his people, and to elaborate on the major principles

that will guide his actions in the during his next seven-year term of office, namely, absolute loyalty to the institutions of the Republic and an irrevocable personal commitment to comply with the obligations defined by the country's Constitution.

With respect to the bilingual nature of Cameroon, with English and French as the two official languages, the Constitution of the country establishes equal status for these languages and especially ensures that they are used in all government services. Paul Biya's inaugural speech, as an official document, was therefore translated into English by the relevant translation service at the Presidency of the Republic before his inauguration ceremony.

The physical features of both French and English texts retrieved from the official website of the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Physical presentation of the French and English versions of Paul Biya's inaugural speech
(Ms Word formats)

Statistical Features	French ST	English TT
Pages	8	7
Paragraphs	71	80
Words	2,090	1,924
Lines	343	257
Characters (including spaces)	13,482	11,957
Characters (without spaces)	11,170	9,932
Clauses	140	136

The analytical process

With M.A.K. Halliday's (1985) SFG theory as research foundation, and based on the statistical features relating to the physical presentation of the texts under study as mentioned in Table 1 above, the first step consists in determining the mood system in the two texts and this is done by identifying the nature and number of clauses contained in each of the mood types. Secondly, the number of clauses in the Source Text is compared with those of the Target Text to determine the correspondence or lack of it between the French political text and its English translation and an analysis follows thereafter.

Findings and Discussion

Following Halliday's understanding of role in exchange, the basic types of speech role are giving and demanding, while the exchanged commodities are service and goods or information. Therefore, the exchanged roles and commodities can consist of four fundamental speech functions: offer, command, statement and question. Accordingly, these functions can be realized by different mood types: declarative mood, imperative mood, interrogative mood, and exclamative mood. The exclamative mood type is not considered here since it can also be expressed through either the imperative mood or through the declarative mood to maintain the inequality role between speaker and audience (Eggins and Slade, 1997: 85). Table 2 below presents statistics on Mood types in Paul Biya's inaugural speech.

Table 2

Statistics of mood types in Paul Biya's inaugural speech

Mood Types	French (ST)		English (TT)	
	Total	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
Declarative	135	96.42	133	97.79
Imperative	5	3.58	3	2.21
Interrogative	0	0	0	0
Total	140	100	136	100

Declarative mood in Paul Biya's inaugural speech

From the table above, it is evident that declarative and imperative moods are used in Paul Biya's speech. But the distribution of these two mood types is highly unbalanced and declaratives are predominantly used with a high percentage of 96.42% and 97.78% in the French and English texts respectively, with a slight increase in usage in the English text. In sharp contrast, imperatives only account for 3.58% and 2.21% respectively. The reason why declaratives have such a particularly high percentage is that the main communicative purpose of presidential speeches is to give information. As the chief officer of the executive branch, the president potentially has more power than his audience. More power equals access to more information. The information on his side and on the side of his audience is unequal. Because the president has more information on his side, he wants to change the mind or attitude of his audience towards some critical issues and to appeal to them to take desired actions afterwards. But, he cannot possibly impose his own idea upon the audience; first, he has to provide a full, clear and objective picture of the situation and present his own idea based on the prevailing situation. Eventually, it is up to his audience to accept his ideas or not. Although, imperatives only cover a very small percentage, less than two percent, the functions they perform cannot be possibly underestimated. Towards the end of his speech, the president calls upon his audience to take the actions he sees fit to address the problems mentioned earlier in his speech. Through detailed analysis and his personal reasoning about the key issues, both the audience and the president may reach a common understanding on those issues. Usually, those issues cannot be readily resolved and the president needs to unite, and mobilize listeners, declaratives step in to play such a role.

The following are examples selected from Paul Biya's inaugural speech in French and English:

Comme par le passé, ce sont ces principes qui guideront mon action au service du peuplecamerounais au cours du septennat des «Grandes Opportunités» qui s'ouvreaujourd'hui.

As in the past, these principles will guide my action in serving the Cameroonian people during the seven-year term of "Great Opportunities" beginning today.

Au plan de la sécurité, nous avons d'abord été confrontés aux attaquesrépétées du groupeterroristeBoko Haram, qui a semé la terreuret la désolationdansl'extrême-nord de notre pays.

Security wise, we first had to deal with repeated attacks by the terrorist group, Boko Haram, which spread terror and desolation in the far-north of our country.

Generally, the declarative mood is widely used in presidential speeches to convey the information to listeners. During this process, listeners are persuaded to accept the presidents' ideas.

Imperative mood in Paul Biya's inaugural speech

In SFG, imperatives are used to express a request or command. The imperative mood of the interpersonal function finds its full manifestation in presidential speeches as the president makes use of it to appeal to his audience to take actions collectively. The president makes the best use of imperatives to appeal the audience towards the end of his speech. Imperatives can unite, embolden listeners to work together to address issues. The following are the examples selected from Paul Biaya's inaugural speech in French and English:

Je leur demande de ne pas perdre espoir et d'accorder tout le soutien possible à l'action des autorités en vue du rétablissement de la paix.

I call on them not to lose hope and to lend all possible support to the action of the authorities aimed at restoring peace.

J'en appelle tout particulièrement aux jeunes qui se sont laissé entraîner dans une aventure sans lendemain.

I am appealing particularly to youths who got involved in a futile adventure.

The above are imperative statements in the form of polite requests. The president tries to achieve his communicative purpose by persuading his audience to operate a change of mind and attitude towards issues of common concern. Imperatives which carry persuasive functions are widely used by leaders to bring their audience to follow their command. It is assumed that imperatives typically appear towards the end of presidential speeches and the above two examples corroborate this assumption. According to SFG, there is no one-to-one relationship between speech functions and mood choice (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, 247. The speech function of offer can be realized through different mood structures, for example, it can be realized by declaratives,

interrogatives and imperatives. The power relationship and social status between the president and his audience is not equal as can be seen in these other imperative statements which enable Paul Biya to foreground his authority as president:

A ces entrepreneurs de guerre, qui mettent à mal notre unité nationale et prônent la sécession, **il faut qu'ils sachent** qu'ils se heurteront non seulement à la rigueur de la loi, mais aussi à la détermination de nos forces de défense et de sécurité.

*These war-mongers who are jeopardizing our national unity and preaching secession **should know** that they will face not only the full force of the law, but also the determination of our defence and security forces.*

C'est pourquoi **je demande, ici et maintenant,** au peuple camerounais dont je connais le patriotisme, de m'aider à continuer dans la paix l'œuvre de construction nationale.

*That is why, **here and now, I am calling on** the Cameroonian people, who I know to be patriotic, to help me to continue the task of nation-building in peace...*

It is rather clear that the president has more power and higher social status. Therefore, he himself does not need permission from his audience to address some issues identified in his speech. Imperatives are used to realize offer because they help to highlight the speaker's power or authority.

Lack of interrogative Mood in Paul Biya's inaugural speech

In general, the speech role of interrogative is to demand information and the speech function is to get an answer for the question. However, Paul Biya completely ignores the interrogative mood in his inaugural speech because it can render the speech less convincing and less persuasive. Being an inaugural speech, it is less expected that the audience should respond to rhetorical questions and party slogans which are often very common in campaign speeches. Rather, this lack of interrogative is aimed at making the audience focus on the content of the president's speech.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the interpersonal metafunction of language has been analyzed, with focus on the mood system, across two linguistics mediums. Halliday's (1985)

Systemic Functional Grammar theory has been used as research foundation to examine a political speech, namely Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech in French and its English translation. Specifically, the paper sought to know if the mood system of the political speech in the French language is preserved in its English translation. Through the analysis the paper has found that mood has been strategically employed to construct interpersonal function in the political speech. Mood choices in the French and English texts respectively account for 96.42% and 97.79% of declaratives, 3.58% and 2.21% of imperatives, while there is no representation of the interrogative in both texts. Consequently, the mood system in a vast majority of the clauses in the French Source Text is preserved in the English Target Text. This is proof that in the English Translation of Paul Biya's 2018 inaugural speech, the translator tried as much as possible to keep the original style of the political speech. From the study therefore, it is clear that the theoretical framework of interpersonal metafunction can be applied to the cross linguistic study of political speeches.

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