
RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Interpersonal Analysis of Identity Construction in Chinese and American Leaders' Political Speeches

Lehan Li

School of International Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, China

Corresponding Author: Lehan Li, **E-mail:** lilh75@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

Although political discourse has been extensively examined from various perspectives, comparative studies of identity construction in political speeches by leaders from different countries remain relatively limited. Drawing on Halliday's interpersonal metafunction within Systemic Functional Grammar, this study investigates how Chinese and American leaders construct political identities through interpersonal resources in the mood and modality systems. The analysis is based on the English version of China's Government Work Report (GWR) and the United States' State of the Union Address (SUA), aiming to identify similarities and differences in identity construction and to explore the underlying motivations behind these discursive choices. The findings reveal that declarative clauses are the most frequently employed mood resource in both GWR and SUA, followed by imperative and interrogative clauses. In terms of personal pronoun use, the Chinese leader shows a clear preference for the first-person plural pronouns we and us, whereas the American leader more frequently employs the first-person singular pronouns I and me, as well as the second-person pronoun you. Regarding modality, GWR predominantly adopts median-value modal operators, while SUA favors high-value modal operators. Moreover, SUA demonstrates greater diversity in both clause types and modal operators than GWR. These linguistic choices contribute to the construction of distinct political identities. In GWR, the Chinese leader is represented as a determined executor, authoritative guide, and responsible statesman who emphasizes collective wisdom and shared efforts in serving the people and the nation. In contrast, SUA portrays the American leader as a strategic politician, persuasive speaker, and inspiring guide who highlights personal charisma and capacity to achieve his political ideals and engage diverse stakeholders. The differences in identity construction can be largely attributed to the distinct political systems and ideological orientations of the two countries.

KEYWORDS

political speech; identity construction; interpersonal metafunction; mood system; modality system; comparative discourse analysis

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1. Introduction

Since politics is the art of persuasion (Zetter, 2011), politicians tend to convey their ideologies to influence others' thinking and fulfill social practice by the manipulation of language, which has triggered increasing academic attention to political discourse. Among them, domestic and foreign linguists have been dedicated to the studies on political discourse from different approaches, including critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Sowińska, 2013), conceptual metaphor (Lakoff, 2002; Liao, 2020), pragmatic strategies (Zhang, 2011; Al-Gublan, 2015), and so on. As relevant research continues, some scholars turned to interpret the identity construction and underlying motives in political discourse. Although some endeavors have been undertaken to examine different candidates' identity construction in political debates (Gleibs, Hendricks & Kurz, 2018; Yao, 2022) and explore specific leader's political identities in national speeches (Li, 2018; Rauf, Sajjad & Malghani, 2019), there is still a research gap in the comparisons between different national leaders' identity construction in political speeches.

As the representatives of different ideologies, China and America exert great influence on shaping the world pattern, during which process, their national leaders are actively engaged in both domestic and international affairs. As an important political tradition, Chinese and American leaders normally make an annual address or report to review the government's work in the past, state the national and international situation at the present, as well as propose administrative and legislative plans for the future. At the beginning of 2023, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang delivered a Government Work Report regarding the achievements in the past, economic and social policies for 2023, and the prospect of major-country diplomacy while US President Joe Biden made the State of the Union Address concerning the implementation of proposed legislation, the call for the bipartisanship, and the reconstruction of international relations. Both Chinese and American leaders' political speeches have aroused heated domestic and international discussions, thus imperceptibly influencing public opinions.

To achieve specific political purposes, different national leaders tend to construct their own political identities to win high recognition at home and even abroad through skillful language. In that case, it is of significance to draw a comparison between Chinese and American leaders' identities constructed in political speeches, thus revealing the underlying motives. To figure out the lexico-grammar realization of identity construction, Halliday's (1978, 2004) interpersonal metafunction of systemic functional grammar can provide helpful insight because the interpersonal analysis aims to reveal the way people construct self-being, influence others, and maintain relationships. On this basis, this study conducts a comparative interpersonal analysis to explore Chinese and American leaders' identity construction in the Government Work Report and the State of the Union Address.

2. Literature Review

For a long time, political discourse has been the hotspot of linguistic study. As for its definition, scholars have made constant efforts to clarify its features, functions, varieties, and so on (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997; Tian, 2002). It can be concluded that political discourse intends to construct, develop, and maintain power relations, structures, and hierarchies through specific language strategies in political news, debates, speeches, hearings, and so on (Rauf, Sajjad & Malghani, 2019). Dating back to the ancient Greek period, Aristotle explored the application of rhetoric strategies in political speech (Yue & Jiang, 2021), which represented the earlier studies on political discourse. In recent years, domestic and foreign linguists have been dedicated to the research on political discourse from different approaches, including critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Sowińska, 2013), conceptual metaphor (Lakoff, 2002; Liao, 2020), pragmatic strategies (Zhang, 2011; Al-Gublan, 2015), and so on.

Despite much attention given to the rhetorical analysis of political discourses in the early times, some scholars like critical linguists have turned to explore the relations between identity, power, and discourse. As one of the core concepts of social science, identity is concerned with personal experiences, social relationships, and value judgements that create a sense of self different from others (Li, 2008; Xiang, 2009). According to social constructionism, identity is not only embodied in power relations but also constructed in discourse (Bamberg, De Fina & Schiffrin, 2011). In that case, some attempts have been made to explore the identity construction in political discourse. For example, Gleibs, Hendricks & Kurz (2018) and Yao (2022) focused on the different candidates' identity construction in political debates, while Li (2018) and Rauf, Sajjad & Malghani (2019) explore specific leader's political identities in national speech. However, there is still a research gap in the comparisons between different national leaders' identity construction in political speeches.

As the interpersonal analysis aims to reveal the way people construct self-being, influence others, and maintain relationships, Halliday's (1978, 2004) interpersonal metafunction of systemic functional grammar can serve as a helpful approach to the research on identity construction and political discourse. For example, Miao & Yang (2021) explored the stance-taking function of negation in American leaders' political speeches from the perspective of appraisal theory, which revealed the way speakers conveyed their ideas and maintained unequal power. Gao & Wang (2014) analyzed the mood and modality system in Obama's political speeches, which indicated that the choices of interpersonal resources constructed a powerful and responsible leader's identity to win public recognition.

3. Theoretical Foundation

According to Halliday & Matthiessen (1999), language can construct our social collective and personal being, which constitutes the interpersonal metafunction other than ideational and textual metafunction. To explore how, which, and why Chinese and American leaders' identities are constructed in political speeches, this study adopts Halliday's (1978, 2004) interpersonal metafunction of systemic functional grammar as the theoretical foundation.

Concerning the interpersonal metafunction, some grammar of the clause contributes to establishing or maintaining the crucial roles in the exchange of meanings between interactants (Thompson, 2014). To be more specific, there are four basic speech roles during communicative interaction, including giving information, demanding information, giving goods-&-services, and

demanding goods-&-services, which serve to perform the functions of statement, question, offer, and command. Among them, statements (usually expressed by declarative clauses), questions (by interrogative clauses), and commands (by imperative clauses) are closely associated with particular grammatical structures in the mood system, while offers are strongly concerned with modality rather than a specific mood choice.

To figure out the lexico-grammatical realizations of interpersonal metafunction, it is of necessity to further examine the mood system and modality system. The Mood consists of two elements, namely Subject and Finite. While the Subject is usually a nominal group on which the validity of the clause rests from the functional approach, the Finite normally refers to a part of verbal groups through which the speaker indicates three basic claims (i.e. tense, polarity, and modality) about the validity of the proposition (Thompson, 2014). Meanwhile, it is important to identify the Subject and the Finite since their existence and position can determine the choice of clause types to a large extent. Specifically, the clause types in accordance with different structures of Mood are presented as follows (see Figure 1).

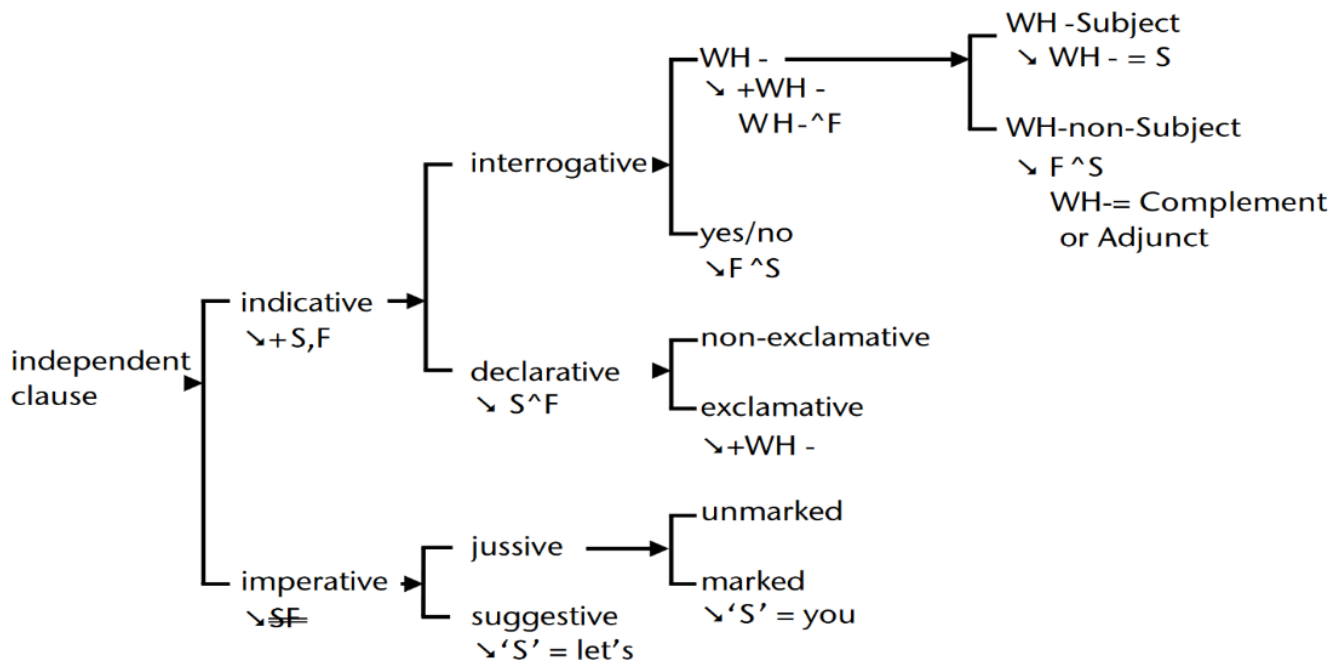


Figure 1. The mood system in English (Thompson, 2014)

As for the modality system, it refers to the intermediate space between the positive and negative poles which exerts varied significance for propositions and proposals (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). To understand how modality plays a vital role in fulfilling interpersonal functions, it is important to specify the types and values of modality. There are two basic types of modality corresponding to propositions and proposals in exchange of different commodities. While modalization deals with the validity of information exchange in terms of probability or usuality, modulation concerns the obligation to carry out the command or the inclination to fulfill the offer when giving or demanding goods-&-services (Thompson, 2014). Since the propositions and proposals may present varied degrees of certainty, it is of significance to establish three basic values which point on the high, median, and low scales, thus investigating the speaker's commitment to the validity of the utterances (Thompson, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Examples of modal operators and their values are as follows (see Table 1).

Table 1. Modal operators and values (Halliday, 2004)

Value	Low	Median	High
Positive	can, may, could, might, (dare)	will, would, should, is/was to	must, ought to, need, have/has/had to
Negative	needn't, doesn't/ didn't+need to, have to	won't, wouldn't, shouldn't, (isn't/wasn't to)	mustn't, oughtn't to, can't, couldn't, (mayn't, mightn't, hasn't/hadn't to)

Based on Halliday's (1978, 2004) interpersonal metafunction of systemic functional grammar, this study mainly examines the mood and modality system including the clause types, varied pronouns, and modal operators to explore the identity construction in Chinese and American leaders' political speeches.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research questions

Based on Halliday's (1978, 1994) interpersonal function of systemic functional grammar, this study aims to explore Chinese and American leaders' identity construction in political speeches by revealing the choices of interpersonal resources in the mood system and modality system between the English version of the Government Work Report of China and the State of the Union Address of America, comparing the similarities and differences of Chinese and American leaders' identities, and discussing the motives behind the identity construction. In detail, this study intends to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the distribution of interpersonal resources in the mood system and modality system between Chinese and American leaders' political speeches?
- 2) What identities are constructed by Chinese and American leaders in political speeches?
- 3) What factors account for the similarities and differences between Chinese and American leaders' identity construction in political speeches?

4.2 Data collection

To draw a comparison between Chinese and American leaders' identity construction in political speeches, this research selected the State of the Union Address of America (henceforth SUA) and the Government Work Report of China (henceforth GWR) as the corpus for two reasons. On the one hand, both SUA and GWR are annual political speeches delivered by the chief national leaders to the Congress which mainly involve the review and prospect of government work, national achievements, and domestic issues. Therefore, both of them share similarities in the speech themes and political aims. On the other hand, although Chinese and American leaders deliver GWR and SUA in different languages, Chinese authorities tend to publish the English version of GWR on the official website, which can facilitate the comparison between Chinese and American leaders' political speeches in this study.

To ensure the accuracy of the data, this study chose the 2023 GWR and SUA from the English website of the State Council of China (english.www.gov.cn) and the official website of the American white house (www.whitehouse.gov) respectively. While Chinese Premier Li Keqiang delivered GWR at the opening meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress on March 5th, 2023, US President Joe Biden made SUA to the Congress of the United States on February 7th, 2023. Since the texts of SUA include the reactions and responses from the audience which are never involved in the texts of GWR, this research only considers Chinese and American leaders' words in two selected political speeches and the corpus of the 2023 GWR and SUA comprises 14,676 words and 9,416 words separately.

4.3 Research methods

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods are adopted to guarantee research reliability and validity. As for the quantitative methods, this research employs the analytical tool WordSmith 4.0 to search the high-frequency keywords and figure out the distribution of interpersonal resources in the mood system and modality system between Chinese and American leaders' political speeches, which facilitates the calculation of the frequency and percentage of clause types, varied pronouns, and modal operators. Based on the keywords and their concordance presented by WordSmith 4.0, qualitative methods are used to draw a comparison between Chinese and American leaders' identities and interpret the motives behind the identity construction through detailed textual evidence.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Identity construction in mood system

According to Thompson (2014), there are three basic clause types in the mood system, namely declarative mood, imperative mood, and interrogative mood, which separately perform the functions of giving information, demanding information, and demanding goods-&-services during communicative interactions. To figure out Chinese and American leaders' identity construction in the mood system of political speeches, the distribution of different mood types in GWR and SUA is presented below (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2 The distribution of different mood types in GWR

Mood Type	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative Mood	680	96.87%
Imperative Mood	22	3.13%
Interrogative Mood	0	0%
Total	702	100%

Table 3 The distribution of different mood types in SUA

Mood Type	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative Mood	403	80.76%
Imperative Mood	72	14.43%
Interrogative Mood	24	4.81%
Total	499	100%

The tables above show that a large number of mood types can be found in Chinese and American leaders' political speeches, with a total number of 702 in GWR and 499 in SUA. Concerning the frequency order of different mood types, the occurrence of declarative mood ranks at the top with the number of 680 in GWR and 403 in SUA; the frequency of imperative mood ranks second with the number of 22 in GWR and 72 in SUA; and the last one is interrogative mood, with the number of 24 in SUA and without its appearance in GWR. Although the total number of clauses in GWR outweighs those in SUA, SUA involves greater varieties of clauses than GWR. Specifically, declarative mood dominates GWR with a proportion of 96.87%, while the clauses in SUA take various forms and show less central tendency with a separate proportion of 80.76%, 14.43%, and 4.81%. The results show that GWR and SUA have definite and different preferences for mood types during communicative interactions. GWR tends to give and demand information, while SUA performs the functions of statement, question, and command.

5.1.1 Identity construction through declarative mood

In Chinese and American leaders' speeches, the vast majority of clauses are declarative moods, which indicates that both GWR and SUA serve as annual political reviews to provide information concerning various fields of national and international situation. Meanwhile, personal pronouns like "we", "I" and "you" also serve to realize specific interpersonal meanings. To illustrate how the choices of declarative mood and varied pronouns contribute to national leaders' identity construction, more detailed textual evidence and interpretations are as follows.

Examples from GWR

- 1) We formulated plans for the task of ensuring overall economic stability.
- 2) We stepped up supervision and support to ensure policy implementation by local governments and assisted them in fully leveraging the potential of policies, and supported major economically developed provinces in shouldering greater responsibility.
- 3) We gave priority to ensuring stable growth, employment, and prices, thus bringing about a steady economic recovery.

Examples from SUA

- 4) I signed over 300 bipartisan pieces of legislation since becoming President, from reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act to the Electoral Count Reform Act, the Respect for Marriage Act that protects the right to marry the person you love.
- 5) And I mean this sincerely: I want to thank my Republican friends who voted for the law. And my Republican friends who voted against it as well. I still get asked to fund the projects in those districts as well, but don't worry. I promised I'd be a President for all Americans.
- 6) Folks, my economic plan is about investing in places and people that have been forgotten. So many of you listening tonight, I know you feel it. So many of you felt like you've just simply been forgotten.

In Examples 1-3, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang provides the information about Chinese government's implementation of economic policies to deal with downward pressure and promote stable development through successive declarative moods. Meanwhile, a series of plural first-person pronouns "we" stress and confirm that the achievements of steady economic recovery should be attributed to the joint efforts and collective wisdom of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In that case, it contributes to constructing Chinese leadership including the speaker Li Keqiang as determined doers to reinvigorate the country.

In Examples 4-6, American President Joe Biden provides information about his contribution to legislation, gratitude to the party, commitment to the American public as well as intentions behind the economic plan through several declarative moods. In contrast to the GWR delivered by Chinese Premier, Biden uses a series of the singular first-person pronoun "I" to highlight his vital role and value in political practice, while several second-person pronouns "you" are adopted to stay related to the audience's feelings and sufferings, thus winning their recognition. In that case, it contributes to constructing American President Joe Biden as a leader with personal capacity to inspire people and achieve his political ideal.

5.1.2 Identity construction through imperative mood

In Chinese and American leaders' speeches, several imperative moods serve to perform the functions of requesting, demanding, appealing, suggesting, and so on. Meanwhile, personal pronouns like "us", "me" and "you" also serve to realize specific interpersonal meanings. To illustrate how the choices of imperative mood and varied pronouns contribute to national leaders' identity construction, more detailed textual evidence and interpretations are as follows.

Examples from GWR

- 7) Let us rally more closely around the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and fully implement the guiding principles from the Party's 20th National Congress.
- 8) Let us forge ahead with perseverance and resolve, promote sound and sustainable economic and social development, and keep working to build a modern socialist country.
- 9) Let us strive to advance national rejuvenation on all fronts and build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful.

Examples from SUA

- 10) Imagine if you lost that child at the hands of the law. Imagine having to worry whether your son or daughter came home from walking down the street or playing in the park or just driving a car. Imagine having to worry like that every single time your kid got in a car. Imagine how much courage and character that takes.
- 11) Let me say it again: We pay more for prescription drugs than any major nation on Earth... Let me be crystal clear ... Let me give you a copy of the proposal.

In Examples 7-9, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang appeals to the fellow deputies to insist the Party leadership over ideological work as well as make great efforts to promote social and economic development through several imperative moods. Meanwhile, a series of "let us" highlights the importance and necessity of forming a united force in CPC. In that case, it contributes to constructing Chinese leadership as a confident and powerful guide to steer China successfully into a great modern socialist country.

In Examples 10 & 11, American President Joe Biden makes full use of varied imperative moods to bring forward the proposals to think in other's shoes and make a request to clarify his statements. On the one hand, a chain of similar imperative expressions "Imagine ..." is adopted to involve and immerse people in the possible situations in reality, which can effectively arouse public empathy and obtain their favor for the new law. On the other hand, a series of "Let me" in SUA indicates that Biden intends to trigger public attention and stress his opinions in the following utterances. In that case, it contributes to constructing American President Joe Biden as a speaker with great skills to achieve specific political goals.

5.1.3 Identity construction through interrogative mood

In Chinese and American leaders' speeches, interrogative moods account for the smallest proportion with no occurrence in GWR. In addition to raising questions, the interrogative moods also perform other functions in SUA with no responses from the audience. Meanwhile, personal pronouns like "we", "I" and "you" also serve to realize specific interpersonal meanings. To illustrate how the choices of interrogative mood and varied pronouns contribute to American leader's identity construction, more detailed textual evidence and interpretations are as follows.

Examples from SUA

- 12) If your spouse gets cancer or your child gets deadly ill or if something happens to you. Are you going to have the money to pay for those medical bills? Are you going to have to sell the house or try to get a second mortgage on it? With the Inflation Reduction Act that I signed into law, we're taking on powerful interests to bring healthcare costs down so you can sleep better at night with more security.

- 13) Putin's invasion has been a test for the ages, a test for America, a test for the world. Would we stand for the most basic of principles? Would we stand for sovereignty? Would we stand for the right of people to live free of tyranny? Would we stand for the defense of democracy? For such defense matters to us because it keeps peace and prevents open season on would-be aggressors that threatens our prosperity.

In Examples 12 & 13, American President Joe Biden states the outcomes of the Inflation Reduction Act and his stances on the Russia-Ukraine War through several interrogative moods. It is important to note that Biden uses parallel rhetorical questions to attract public attention and stress his own following statements rather than expecting the answers from the audience. On the one hand, he presupposes a family's sufferings from high healthcare costs in interrogative moods "Are you ...?", which evokes public concerns and paved the way for the proposal of the legislation. On the other hand, he reminds people of the connections between Putin's invasion and relevant topics like the defense of democracy and sovereignty in interrogative moods "Would we ...?", which attempts to clarify the injustice of Putin's invasion and emphasize the legitimacy of American acts in public opinions. In that case, it contributes to constructing American President Joe Biden as a leader with great ambition and eloquence to guide public opinions and serve national interests in domestic and international affairs.

5.2 Identity construction in modality system

According to Thompson (2014), modal operators not only perform the functions like probability, inclination, and obligation but also reflect the speaker's commitment to the validity of the utterances through three basic values which point on the high, median, and low scales. To figure out Chinese and American leaders' identity construction in the modality system of political speeches, the distribution of modal operators and their values in GWR and SUA is presented below (see Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4 The distribution of modal operators and their values in GWR

Value	Modal Operator	Frequency	Percentage
High (11.94%)	Must	8	5.97%
	Need	2	1.49%
	Will	6	4.48%
Median (82.84%)	Would	4	2.99%
	Should	107	79.85%
Low (5.22%)	Can	7	5.22%
Total		134	100%

Table 5 The distribution of modal operators and their values in SUA

Value	Modal Operator	Frequency	Percentage
High (46.97%)	Must	9	6.82%
	Ought to	1	0.76%
	Need	21	15.91%
	Have/has/had to	22	16.67%
	Can't	8	6.06%
	Couldn't	1	0.76%
	Will	16	12.12%
Median (28.79%)	Would	9	6.82%
	Should	8	6.06%
	Is/was to	1	0.76%
	Won't	3	2.27%
Low	Wouldn't	1	0.76%
	Can	26	19.70%

(24.24%)	May	4	3.03%
	Could	2	1.52%
Total		132	100%

The tables above show that a large number of modal operators can be found in Chinese and American leaders' political speeches, with a total number of 134 in GWR and 132 in SUA. Although there is roughly an equal number of modal operators in GWR and SUA, SUA involves greater varieties of modal operators than GWR. Specifically, SUA includes 15 kinds of modal operators while GWR only contains 6 types. As for the modal operators of three basic values, GWR features the prominent occurrence of the median-value modal operator "should", while SUA presents the high frequency of high-value modal operators "need" and "have/has/had to", median-value modal operator "will" as well as low-value modal operators "can". In general, Chinese leader tends to adopt median-value modal operators with a prominent proportion of 82.84%. Although the American leader shows a preference for high-value modal operators with a proportion of 46.97%, modal operators of the other two values in SUA also make a great contribution to meaning-making. The results show that Chinese and American leaders have definite and different preferences for modal operators of different values in political speeches. While GWR mainly adopts median-value modal operators to express objectivity, SUA involves a greater variety of modal operators to convey affirmation, objectivity, and politeness.

5.2.1 Identity construction through high-value modal operators

High-value modal operators are usually adopted to convey a strong sense of determination, affirmation, and necessity to the listener. To figure out how the choices of high-value modal operators contribute to national leaders' identity construction in GWR and SUA, more detailed textual evidence and interpretations are as follows.

Examples from GWR

- 14) We **must** face these problems and challenges squarely, make every effort to make improvements, and do all we can to live up to the people's trust.
- 15) We **need** to pursue a proactive national strategy in response to population aging, improve elderly care services, and refine supporting policies on childbirth.

Examples from SUA

- 16) We still **need** to monitor dozens of variants and support new vaccines and treatments. So Congress **needs** to fund these efforts and keep America safe.
- 17) We **have to** be the nation we've always been at our best: optimistic, hopeful, forward-looking. We **have to** see each other not as enemies, but as fellow Americans.

In Examples 14-17, both Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and American President Joe Biden puts emphasis on the government's obligation to implement effective measures, overcome development challenges, and serve people's needs through several high-value modal operators including "must", "need" and "have to". During this process, they intend to kindle a sense of responsibility and activate a flow of energy in fellow Chinese and Americans which can be transformed into joint efforts in building a better nation. Therefore, it indicates that Chinese and American leaders not only shoulder the responsibility to promote national development but also encourage the endeavors of different participants.

5.2.2 Identity construction through median-value modal operators

In political speeches, Chinese and American leaders tend to use median-value modal operators like "will" and "should" to convey their inclinations in a relatively neutral and objective way. To figure out how the choices of median-value modal operators contribute to national leaders' identity construction in GWR and SUA, more detailed textual evidence and interpretations are as follows.

Examples from GWR

- 18) These efforts **will** set the stage for building a modern socialist country in all respects. In doing so, we **will** open a new chapter of unity between the military and the government and between the military and the people.
- 19) Workplace safety supervision **should** be strengthened, and disaster prevention, mitigation, and relief efforts **should** be bolstered.

Examples from SUA

- 20) If China threatens our sovereignty, we **will** act to protect our country.
- 21) All of you at home **should** know what those plans are.

In Examples 18 & 19, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang shows his prospect for a brighter future in China and his inclination to witness the implementation of effective measures through median-value modal operators “will” and “should”. On the one hand, the median-value modal operator “will” is adopted to reduce the subjectivity and make the statements more convincing. On the other hand, Chinese leader uses the median-value modal operator “should” to alleviate the pressure on relevant departments and decrease the urgency of their actions. Therefore, it indicates that Chinese leader not only looks to further development but also cares about the fellows involved in national construction.

In Examples 20 & 21, American President Joe Biden uses median-value modal operators “will” and “should” to convey his opinions concerning domestic and international affairs in a relatively neutral and objective way. On the one hand, the median-value modal operator “will” is adopted to express his willingness to safeguard national interests without making definite commitments to destroy Sino-U.S. relations. On the other hand, the American leader uses the median-value modal operator “should” to weaken the fellows’ necessity to know about the plan, which allows for further negotiations. Therefore, it shows American leader’s political acumen in dealing with domestic and international affairs.

5.2.3 Identity construction through low-value modal operators

Despite the smallest proportion in political speeches, low-value modal operators usually serve as carriers of euphemism and politeness in communicative interactions. To figure out how the choices of low-value modal operators contribute to national leaders’ identity construction in GWR and SUA, more detailed textual evidence and interpretations are as follows.

Examples from GWR

- 22) More than 90 percent of government services **can** be accessed online; over 200 high-demand services, including household certification and the transfer of social security accounts, **can** be handled on an inter-provincial basis.
- 23) We should create an environment in which enterprises under all forms of ownership **can** compete and grow on a level playing field.

Examples from SUA

- 24) By building 400,000 schools and childcare centers, every child in America **can** drink the water, instead of having permanent damage to their brain.
- 25) And, by the way, Chief Justice, I **may** need a court order. She gets to go to the game next week. We got to work something out here.

In Examples 22-24, both Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and American President Joe Biden make predictions about the achievements of varied political measures through the low-value modal operator “can”. In addition to the capacity, “can” also refers to the possibility. On this basis, Chinese and American leaders make themselves less accountable for their commitment and leave enough space to modify previous utterances. Besides, the American leader also adopts the low-value modal operator “may” to show his politeness when making a request to the Congress member, which contributes to maintaining social relationships. In general, the choices of low-value modal operators indicate that Chinese leaders are cautious about their statements meanwhile American leaders put both emphasis on self-preservation and social contact.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study conducts a comparative approach to exploring Chinese and American leaders’ identity construction in political speeches by revealing the choices of interpersonal resources in the mood system and modality system between GWR and SUA, comparing the similarities and differences of Chinese and American leaders’ identities, and discussing the motives behind the identity construction, thus revealing the relations between identity, power, and discourse.

It is found that in the mood system, declarative clause is the most frequently used mood resource in GWR and SUA, followed by imperative clause and interrogative clause. Meanwhile, Chinese leader tends to use plural first-person pronouns “we” and “us” while American leader tends to use singular first-person pronouns “I” and “me” as well as second-person pronoun “you”. In the

modality system, GWR tends to adopt median-value modal operators while SUA shows a preference for high-value modal operators. Besides, SUA involves a greater variety of clauses and modal operators than GWR. On this basis, the interpersonal resources in GWR construct the Chinese leadership as the determined executor, authoritative guide, and responsible statesman with collective wisdom and endeavor to serve people and country. However, the interpersonal resources in SUA construct the American leader as strategic politician, persuasive speaker, and inspiring guide with personal charisma and capacity to achieve his political ideals and maintain relations with different agents. It is important to note that national leaders' identities constructed by interpersonal resources can be attributed to political systems and ideologies.

In GWR, the system of collective leadership and the doctrine of the mean exert great influence on Chinese leader's identity construction. As the system of collective leadership stresses the joint efforts and collective wisdom to achieve common goods, GWR not only constructs the united identity of Chinese leadership by stating the plural first-person pronouns "we" and "us", but also voices authoritative propositions and acts through declarative and imperative moods. Moreover, the doctrine of the mean, as the core of Confucianism, intends to moderate one's words and deeds. In that case, GWR uses more median-value modal operators to express the leader's inclinations in a rather neutral and objective way. In SUA, American leader's identity construction can be attributed to the constitutional system of distributing political power and the concept of individualism. In contrast to the centralization of state power, the American President has to negotiate with different power agents, which leads to the choices of a greater variety of clauses and modal operators to strike a balance between political propositions and interpersonal interaction. On the one hand, he attempts to use declarative moods, imperative moods, and high-value modal operators to stress his opinions and achieve his own political ideals. On the other hand, he also adopts interrogative moods, median-value, and low-value modal operators to interact with the audience and win more public recognition. Influenced by the concept of individualism, the American President tends to stress personal role and value in political practice by using singular first-person pronouns "I" and "me".

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