A Study on the Pragmatic Function of New Year Addresses in External Communication

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Abstract: Extreme Case Formulations (ECFs) play an important pragmatic function in the English translation of New Year addresses over the years. This research, grounded in Iñigo-Mora's theoretical model, utilizes the English renditions of the New Year addresses from 2014 to 2024 as a closed corpus. It employs word frequency statistics and conversation analysis techniques to examine the practical roles of ECFs in New Year addresses, focusing on two facets of lexico-grammatical classifications and discourse dynamics. The results reveal that ECFs within lexico-grammatical classifications exhibit varied practical roles and expressions in evaluating discourse tactics in the English rendition of New Year addresses over time. And during the discourses, reiterating identical ECFs can improve the consistency of the subject's structure, and the frequent application of varied ECFs may mirror the speaker's purpose, rendering the information more comprehensive and impactful.

Keywords: external communication, extreme case formulations, new year addresses, pragmatic function

Introduction

Extreme case formulations refer to the expression of the maximum or minimum attribute of an event or thing in semantics, such as *everyone*, *nobody*, *always*, *never*, *completely*, *nothing*, etc. (Whitehead 2015). The ultimate expression in discourse is to deal with many social problems. To achieve their communicative purposes, speakers often use language strategies in narration or evaluation to show their position, maintain their views, and even persuade others to accept their attitudes. Therefore, the ECFs, a frequently occurring language phenomenon, have become a powerful means of human cognition and communication. The concept was first introduced by Pomerantz (1986),who pointed out that they can be used to emphasize the rationality of complaints, prove the universality of a certain behavior, explain the causes of phenomena, and claim the correctness or error of a certain behavior. However, the current ECFs' researches are very inadequate. This study is to explore the linguistic strategies and communicative functions of ECFs in the English versions of New Year addresses from the aspects of lexico-grammatical categories and textual processes, to enrich the ECFs' application and reveal their different pragmatic functions in the addresses.

1. Research methodology of ECFs in new year addresses in external communication

As a political discourse, the New Year addresses often puts forward Chinese ideas and voices, and attracts wide attention at home and abroad. It is unique, concise and comprehensive, including a summary of the past year and a vision for the future. The dissemination of English to external world is conducive to showing the image and strength of contemporary China on the international stage[1]. Therefore, the content contained in the New Year addresses also have some research value.

1.1 Research questions

The study will focus on the practical function of ECFs in the English version of New Year addresses from 2014 to 2024. The research questions were as follows:

(1) What is the distribution of ECFs in New Year addresses over the years?

(2) In the course of foreign exchanges, what pragmatic functions have the ECFs played in the English translations of New Year addresses over the years?

(3) What is the current trend of external communication, and what inspiration do the ECFs of the New Year addresses reflect?

1.2 Research purposes

The research aims to explore the linguistic strategies and communicative functions of ECFs in the Chinese New Year addresses from 2014 to 2024, aiming to enrich the scope of application of ECFs and reveal the changes in China's national circumstances and comprehensive strength in the ECFs' external communication of Chinese New Year addresses.

1.3 Research corpus

This study is based on the English version of New Year addresses from 2014 to 2024, with a self-built corpus of about 12,755 words in the source language. Based on the theoretical framework of Iñigo-Mora (2007), this paper explores the pragmatic functions of ECFs in communicative discourse from the aspects of lexico-grammatical categories and discourse processes through word frequency statistics and conversation analysis.

1.4 Research methods

The study mainly uses the combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Taking the classification framework of ECF by Iñigo-Mora as the retrieval category in the library, the text data after screening and sorting are counted, so as to further refine the understanding of ECF in New Year addresses over the years. Then, through the induction and analysis of the corpus collected, the pragmatic function of the ECF in the New Year addresses is further discussed[2].

2. Data analysis and discussion of ECFs in new year addresses in external communication

The text data selected and collated in this study (see Table 1) show that the total number of words in the English translation of New Year addresses from 2014 to 2024 is about 12,755, and the number of words in the corpus of a single year is unevenly distributed. The result is consistent with the findings of Inigo-Mora (ibid.). He points out that the frequency of ECF also changes when the topic is similar.

Table 1 Statistics on the number of words in the English version of the New Year addresses and the number of ECFs contained in them

Year	The number of corpus words	The number of ECFs	The proportion of the number of ECFs (%)
2014	547	19	3.47
2015	946	21	2.22
2016	1,000	19	1.90
2017	1,167	20	1.71
2018	1,278	26	2.03
2019	1,432	22	1.53
2020	1,444	25	1.73
2021	1,106	37	3.35

2022	1,074	42	3.91
2023	1,435	51	3.55
2024	1,326	34	2.56
Total	12,755	317	2.49

2.1 The Lexico-grammatical categories

This study begins with an analysis and discussion of lexico-grammatical categories, including totality, exclusiveness or zero, extreme adjectives or adverbs and superlatives, formulaic expressions and softened or negated ECFs. However,this paper only discusses two categories[3].

2.1.1 Totality

Totality refers to the total number or quantity of something, or describes what happens all the time. The corpus is embodied by the five key words: *all*, *every*, *everything*, and *always*. Table 2 shows that *all* has the highest frequency of use, accounting for 32.49% of the total ECF, while *everything* and *everyone* have the lowest frequency of use, accounting for only 0.63%, and the rest have different frequencies of use.

Table 2 The Statistics of Totality

Keyword	Total Quantity	Proportion (%)
all	103	32.49
every	18	5.68
everything	2	0.63
everyone	2	0.63
always	19	5.99

I. Example sentences containing Totality：

(1) I extend my best New Year wishes to <u>all</u> of you. (2023)

(2) We vigorously pushed forward the exercise of our Party's strict governance in <u>every</u> respect, unswervingly cracked down on both "tigers" and "flies". (2017)

(3) <u>Everything</u> is flourishing across our motherland. (2020)

II. Pragmatic Analysis of Totality

(4) I sincerely hope that <u>all</u> the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation will join forces to create a brighter future for our nation. (2022)

In example (4), the speaker expressed his ardent hope for the Chinese. Through *all*, he hopes to call on the vast majority of Chinese people to devote themselves to the future construction of the motherland. The ECF of *all* with the help of integrity makes the whole sentence more appealing. It not only has the effect of encouraging Chinese youth to contribute actively to the country, but also helps to establish a big country image of caring for youth and cherishing talents in the process of external communication.

(4) We cherish peace and development and value friends and partners as we have <u>always</u> done. (2023)

In example (4),the speaker articulated the idea that China consistently values peace, development, and maintains a deep affection for its friends and partners. The term *always*, being the most commonly used adverb, is employed in the preceding sentence to more precisely express his assertion. Through external dialogue, employing comprehensive and intense language can convey to international audiences China's deep-seated commitment to peace and progress, along with its amiable reputation for forming friendships and partnerships[4].

2.1.2 Exclusiveness

Exclusiveness refers to the nature of a thing that does not allow other things to coexist with itself within the same scope. In pragmatics, exclusiveness reflects the speaker's negation of the content or expression of others' opinions,

generally with strong subjectivity, negativity and emotional language potential, which is reflected in the corpus as *never, anything, only, nearly,*etc. Table 3 shows that *only* is the most frequently used, accounting for 5.99% of the total extreme expressions, while *nearly* and *none* are the least frequently used, accounting for only 0.32% of them. Other expressions were used with different frequencies.

Table 3 The statistics of exclusiveness

Keyword	Total Quantity	Proportion (%)
never	6	1.89
any	5	1.58
only	19	5.99
nearly	1	0.32
none	1	0.32

I. Example sentences containing Exclusiveness

(5) We will continue to comprehensively push forward strict party discipline, <u>never</u> hesitate in improving our work style. (2015)

(6) It is only natural that hard work pays off, and it brings changes for the better every day. (2018)

(7) None of these achievements would have been possible without the sweat and toil of the numerous Chinese people. (2023)

II. Pragmatic Analysis of Exclusiveness

(8) To ensure that everyone leads a better life, we must <u>never</u> rest on what we have achieved, and there is still a long way to go. (2022)

In example (8), the speaker cautioned the Chinese populace in his New Year address to be vigilant against self-satisfaction and self-satisfaction, emphasizing that China has much progress yet to make. Employing the term *never* to denote extreme exclusivity doesn't negate China's past successes, but rather underscores the need for our future growth to embrace modesty, entrepreneurial spirit, and continual advancement. Employing *never* demonstrates that China's accomplishments are transparent and superior, indicating a future of open-mindedness and entrepreneurial spirit.

(9) We will be rewarded with achievements <u>only</u> after tireless endeavors. (2017)

The instance (9) pertains to the labor issues faced by the general populace. The speaker, in a heartfelt congratulatory note, asserted that neither suffering, rewards, nor diligent effort will yield outcomes. Solely in the form of a quintessential extreme expression does this sentence underscore the significance of endeavors and amplify the speaker's fervent aspirations for individuals to forge an improved existence via diligent labor. Through external dialogue, incorporating such unique and radical phrases unmistakably portrays the world as a nation genuinely concerned about its citizens[5].

2.2 The discourse process

In the analysis of real data, it is important to consider both lexico-grammatical categories and discourse processes. According to the existing corpus, the most common manifestations of ECFs in the discourse process include the repetition of the same ECF within a single turn and the frequent use of different ECFs within a single turn.

2.2.1 Repetition of the same ECF in the same discourse

From the perspective of the discourse process, repeating the same ECF in the same speech round is a noteworthy language phenomenon. This study found the following examples in the corpus:

(10) <u>All</u> this stands as testament to the time-honored history of China and its splendid civilization. And <u>all</u> this is the source from which our confidence and strength are derived. (2024)

(11) I give my <u>best</u> wishes to China! And my <u>best</u> wishes to the world! (2019)

(12) The achievements have not come easily as they are the result of blood and sweat from <u>all</u>. I'd like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to you <u>all</u>. (2014)

The ECF of the above repetition belongs to the continuous repetition, and the purpose is to enhance the speaker's language potential and emotional situation. It as multiple the ECFs used by the same speaker in the same round. Among them, the ECF of *all* is the most frequently used, with 11 places. In the sentence (10), repeated *all* can better convey the national pride of the Chinese people to the international community, and the people of the world feel the cultural confidence of the Chinese people. The word *all* is also repeated in the sentence (12). *All* here is the speaker's recognition of the common achievements of the Chinese people. The example (11) repeated *best*, further deepening his wish for the friendship between China and the world, and demonstrating the feelings of a great country and its broad mind[6].

2.2.2 Common use of different ECFs in the same discourse

It is also a common phenomenon to use different types of ECF in the same session. Different ECFs in the same context to complete the pragmatic function of the same. In the self-built corpus, there are the following classic examples:

(13)To ensure that <u>everyone</u> leads a better life, we must <u>never</u> rest on what we have achieved, and there is still a long way to go. (2024)

(14) We will continue to <u>comprehensively</u> push forward strict party discipline, <u>never</u> hesitate in improving our work style. (2015)

The above shows the common use of different ECFs in the same turn, the purpose of which is to strengthen the speaker's intention through different types of ECFs. For example, in the example (13), the overall ECF *everyone* and the exclusive extreme expression *never* used at the same time could better strengthen the warning function of this sentence and makes it more explanatory; In the sentence (14), the ECF *comprehensively* with extreme adverbs and the exclusive ECF *never* are used together, which makes the promises conveyed by national leaders in the course of discourse more authentic and reliable.

3. Conclusion

This study explores the pragmatic effects and values of ECFs within the dialogue tactics of New Year addresses in English, reveals that ECFs like totality, exclusiveness, extreme adverbs, and superlatives serve distinct pragmatic roles and expressions. In the context of the discourse process, the repeated use of ECFs during a single turn is significant, as it can convey the speaker's feelings and succeed in convincing the other participant. Concurrently, it's crucial to focus on the frequent application of various ECFs during a single turn. Utilizing various forms collectively can clarify the speaker's purpose, thereby enhancing the completeness and efficacy of the information. Examining the practical role in the English version of New Year addresses reveals a yearly increase in the ECFs in the translation. Amidst ongoing international interactions, China's reputation has grown stronger, enhancing the genuineness and impact of its global dialogue. These elements are fundamentally linked to enhancing China's national power. Consequently, the adoption of ECF has become more customary in New Year addresses throughout the years. This also motivates to believe that properly utilizing extreme communications can more effectively communicate China's perspective to the global community and demonstrate China's robustness, thereby shaping a positive perception of China.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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