An Analysis of Illocutionary Force in the Diplomatic Language of Zuozhuan

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Abstract—**Modern linguistics has contributed a lot to the development of literature analysis and translation theory. Being a central subdomain of pragmatics, the theory of speech acts is an important theoretical foundation in the pragmatic approach. According to the theory, human beings do not simply produce sentences that are true or false, but rather perform speech actions through utterances. The performative intention embedded in every utterance is usually called "illocutionary force". Illocutionary force can be explicitly stated on the surface of utterances, or it can be implicitly unstated and hidden under the surface representations. Zuozhuan is a famous historical and literary work of the Spring and Autumn period in China. In the concise diplomatic language of this book plentiful implicit illocutionary forces are contained and expressed. Considering this distinctive feature, this paper gives a tentative study of the modes of expressing illocutionary force in the diplomatic language of Zuozhuan based on speech act theory.**

Keywords—Zuozhuan; speech act theory; illocutionary force; diplomatic language

I. INTRODUCTION

Being a central subdomain of pragmatics, the theory of speech acts is an important theoretical foundation in the pragmatic approach to language analysis. According to the theory, human beings do not simply produce sentences that are true or false, but rather perform speech actions through utterances. The performative intention embedded in every utterance is usually called "illocutionary force". Illocutionary force can be explicitly stated on the surface of utterances, or it can be implicitly unstated and hidden under the surface representations. With respect to the analysis and translation activity which involves the communication between two different language systems, a paramount consideration should be the retrieving and re-expressing of the full illocutionary force from the source language to the target language so that the author's true intention is conveyed to the reader.

Zuozhuan is a famous historical and literary work of the Spring and Autumn period in China. A tentative study of the diplomatic language in Zuozhuan from the angle of pragmatics shows that plentiful implicit illocutionary forces are contained in the concise diplomatic language of this book. On account of this distinctive feature, the theory of speech acts, which takes illocutionary force as one of its major research objects, may be used as an effective pragmatic approach to the analysis and translation of Zuozhuan.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF SPEECH ACT THEORY

Speech act theory was developed by the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin whose lectures in 1955 were published posthumously as How to Do Things with Words (1962). The theory analyses the role of utterances in relation to the behavior of speaker and hearer in interpersonal communication. It constitutes a central subdomain of pragmatics and has a strong impact on a wide range of disciplines.

A. Trichotomy of Speech Acts

Austin (1962) declares that speakers do not simply produce sentences that are true or false, but rather perform speech actions such as requests, warnings, assertions, etc. In discussing the speech act, Austin distinguishes three main facets, that is, three main ways in which it can be described as a "doing"(1962:91－120):

- the act of saying something or locutionary act, to be further analyzed into the act of uttering certain noises (phatic act), the act of uttering noises of certain types, conforming to and as conforming to certain rules (phonetic act), and the act of using the words uttered with a certain meaning (rhetic act);

- the act of doing something "in" saying something or illocutionary act, which may be exemplified by such acts as promising, ordering, warning, asking, thanking, and stating, all performed, according to Austin, on the basis of conventions and taking effect in conventional ways;

- the act of doing something "by" saying something or perlocutionary act, which may be exemplified by such acts as persuading, alerting, getting someone to do something, all consisting of the production of psychological or behavioural consequences by means of an utterance.

According to Austin (1962), "speech act" is a communicative activity, defined with reference to the intentions of the speaker while speaking (the illocutionary

force of his utterances) and the effects he achieves on his listener (the perlocutionary effect of his utterances). For example, "open the window" is in a sense an imperative that could conceivably carry the force of a request, which could simply have the consequence of annoying the hearer. The verbs which are used to indicate the speech act intended by the speaker are called performative verbs. Austin also has proposed several categories of speech act, i.e. verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositivs.

B. Theory of Indirect Speech Acts

The theory of speech acts has been taken up and greatly developed by the following study on it, starting from J. Searle (1969). Searle is the most important contributor to the systematization and development of Austin's speech act theory. He (1969) proposes the so called "felicity conditions" to provide the criteria that have to be satisfied for a speech act to be successfully performed. He also distinguishes five new major types of speech acts, i.e. assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

The chief contribution that Searle made to speech act theory is the development of the theory of indirect speech acts. During his research Searle (1979) finds that there are cases in which the speaker may utter a sentence and mean another illocution with a different propositional content, for instance, the utterance of "Can you pass me the salt" may mean not only a question but also a request to pass the salt. As a consequence, Searle provids a new type of classification of speech act, namely the direct and indirect speech act. Indirect speech act refers to an utterance whose linguistic form does not directly reflect its communicative purpose, e.g. the use of an interrogative not to ask a question, but to make a request; while direct speech act refers to the speech act where a direct relationship exists between the structure and the communicative function of an utterance, e.g. using an interrogative form to ask a question. When the utterance "I'm feeling cold" functions as a request for someone to close a door, it is an indirect speech act. If, on the other hand, someone produces the same sentence to express, literally, the fact that he was feeling cold, then the speech act would be direct. According to Searle, indirect speech act can be further divided into conventional and non-conventional indirect speech act.

The illocutionary force of an utterance is the speaker's intention in producing that utterance. Searle (1979) believes that when an utterance is performing an indirect speech act, it usually has two illocutionary forces. In communication activities, the hearer has to derive the indirect illocutionary force from the literal force so as to grasp the speaker's real intention.

C. Speech Act Theory and Pragmatic Equivalence

Equivalence can be said to be the central issue in translation although its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy, and many different theories of the concept of equivalence have been elaborated within this field. Generally speaking, equivalence is understood as the relationship between a source text and a target text that

allows the target text to be qualified as a translation of the source text in the first place.

A number of writers on translation have referred to pragmatic equivalence. In the pragmatic approach to translation much attention is paid to the dynamics of the whole process of the translating activity, namely, from the discovery of the author's intention to the creation of the target reader's expected response. As the study of these two dynamics corresponds well with the study of "illocution" and "perlocution" in speech act theory, the theory of speech acts becomes a paramount theoretical foundation in pragmatic translation. Or we can say, it is based on the trichotomy in speech act theory that the pragmatic approach to translation has been set up primarily.

As we have mentioned, speech acts occupies a very important position in the study of pragmatics. Speakers do not simply produce sentences that are true or false, but rather perform actions through utterances. The distinction of three aspects of message construction in speech act theory, namely locution, illocution and perlocution, is very important in translation and interpreting, "particularly when the intended force departs from conventional sense, or when the ultimate effect defies the expectations based on either facet". By acquiring the ability to perform acts, language itself begins to carry force. In the trichotomy, the illocutionary act is proved to be the one which by definition bears the "communicative force" of the utterance. The communicative force contained in the illocutionary act, namely the so called "illocutionary force", conveys the speaker's intention of producing the utterances (Searle 1969). There are mainly two kinds of illocutionary force: one is explicitly stated, and the other implicitly unstated below the surface. In any meaningful communication event, one must try to grasp the intended force, be it directly stated or hidden under the surface representation (the locutionary act) before he can perform the perlocutionary act expected by his interlocutor. In translating, one dominant consideration should be the re-expressing of the illocutionary force to ensure that the author's intended meaning is conveyed to the reader. As frequently the formal meaning of a message is not the same as the real intention, it is important for a translator to identify the implicit forces as they appear in the various contexts. Translators are required to understand the source message fully and to covert it accurately into the other language with the same illocutionary force, portraying the speaker's original intentions.

III. A Brief Introduction to Zuo Zhuan

Zuozhuan, with the full name Chunqiu Zuoshi Zhuan, is a late fourth century B.C. historical text covering events during what is known as the Spring and Autumn period (722 －453 B.C.) of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, inconclusively attributed to Zuo Qiuming, a contemporary of Confucius.

Zuozhuan is actually a book devoted to render an interpretation of Chunqiu (The Spring and Autumn Annals). Chunqiu is a very bare outline of internal events of the old state of Lu, combined with shortest reports of inter-state relationships with other feudal states and records of natural

disasters in the Spring and Autumn period. Since the book is involved with the Confucian thinking and most of their entries are quite brief, it is natural that there emerged gradually the compilation of various commentaries to relate the historical background touched up in this ancient chronicle and to discuss the moral significance that Confucius attached to this work. Of all these products the commentary by Zuo Qiuming is the most important one. It is included into the "Thirteen Classics in the Field of Confucianism". *Zuozhuan*, together with another two commentaries (i.e. Gongyangzhuan and Gulianzhuan) handed down from the ancient times, makes up the so-called "Sanzhuan" (Three Commentaries on the Spring and Autumn Annals).

By recording the concrete historical events in a chronical order, Zuozhuan has offered systematically an all-round norm of political and moral principles for the feudal society of China over the previous long years. With the norm deeply penetrated in the heart of the Chinese people, the book has played an important role in the formation of the characteristics of the Chinese nation.

Judging by the presentation of content, Zuozhuan has offered a vivid and detailed picture of the social development for more than two hundred years during the Eastern Zhou dynasty. It contains a great wealth of political, military, social, geographical and astronomical information as well as literature, tradition, folklore and religion shared by Lu and sixteen other important feudatories of the Zhou dynasty as well as numerous smaller ones which were absorbed throughout the period by their larger neighbours. The appearance of Zuozhuan has had an immense influence on the later Chinese literature and historiography. It is no wonder that this gigantic work has long been recognized as a masterpiece of the Chinese early prose tradition.

Zuozhuan is endowed with many outstanding characteristics. One of them is that the language employed in the book is both refined and succinct, especially the diplomatic language in it. diplomatic language is the special language system applied in diplomatic occasions with the goal of fulfilling diplomatic purposes and maintaining national benefits. The language merits of Zuozhuan have always been praised in admiration by people. As regards speeches recording, the famous writer Qian (钱钟书 1986) speaks highly of this work: "Among all the ancient chronicles of our country, no other work can match Zuozhuan in keeping records of speeches"[1] . With these simple words he confirms the high value of Zuozhuan in Chinese literature.

The description of inter-states diplomatic activities during the Spring and Autumn period, in which the author has paid much attention to the speeches, is one of the most important contents in Zuozhuan. According to preliminary statistical data, there are 180,000 words in the whole book, among which the words used in keeping records of diplomatic speeches have reached to the amount of more than 25,000, accounting for one seventh of the total word number. From the 4th year of Duke Lu (719 B.C.) to the 27th year of Duke Ai (468B.C.) there are more than 380 diplomatic language communication activities.

The achievements in recording speeches obtained by the author of *Zuozhuan* lie mainly in that he has really fulfilled the aim of careful diction. His words are full of meanings between lines, and the best part always lies in what is left unsaid, so people can often enjoy aftertastes after reading. Analyzing the book from the perspective of pragmatics, we find that the author excels at making use of both verbal and non-verbal devices, and choosing proper writing skills and language styles according to various factors in communication contexts. In this way, he has successfully expressed abundant illocutionary forces through concise language.

IV. ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE IN THE DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE OF ZUOZHUAN

As we have discussed, one important feature of Zuozhuan is to convey plentiful illocutionary forces of utterances through all kinds of methods. This section is devoted to the analyzing of the modes of expressing illocutionary force in Zuozhuan. Based on an all-sided study of the diplomatic language materials in the whole book, we can find that there are mainly four ways in Zuozhuan to convey illocutionary force, namely context, sentence pattern, figure of speech and non-verbal device.

A. Context

Any language communication is bound to happen in a certain communicative environment. The environment, which is usually called context, can influence the choice of language style and writing skill. On one hand, the context influences the overt communicative factors directly, e.g. topics, purposes, objects, time and places. On the other hand, it can also indirectly influence the covert factors in communication, e.g. social customs, cultural background and speaker's personal factors. As Wittgenstein declared: "…the meaning of a word is its use in the language",[2] if we want to discuss meaning, we have to discuss the context in which the word, sentence or text dwell. To cite Roger T. Bell (1991:103): "…word meaning can only be arrived at through the study of the meaning of the word in the linguistic co-text of the sentence and that sentence meaning depends, just as crucially, on the setting of the sentence in its communicative context."

In keeping records of diplomatic speeches, the author of Zuozhuan has taken various contextual elements into consideration and performed the illocutionary acts through contexts properly. For example:

1) 鼎之轻重，未可问也。(宣公•三年)

"鼎" is a special kind of tripod caldron in ancient China which symbolizes the royalty. Owning "鼎", the owner is sure to occupy the dominant position of the whole country. So when Duke Zhuang of Chu inquired about this tripod caldron, his wild ambition of becoming a new ruler of the whole country was shown. Wang Sunman, a minister of Zhou who saw through Duke Zhuang's intention, made a

tactful diplomatic speech to answer Duke Zhuang's inquiry. He ended his speech with the sentence above, suggesting that it was unwise for Duke Zhuang to ask about the "鼎" now and he should get rid of that dangerous ambition. In this sentence, the illocutionary force is transmitted through cultural context.

B. Sentence Pattern

Sentence is a basic unit in language application that has its certain components, form and intonation. In order to meet the need of communication, the author of Zuozhuan has given much attention to the choice of sentence patterns.

In Zuozhuan, the author has mainly applied two kinds of sentences to express implicit illocutionary force. One is the use of rhetorical questions. For example:

2)越国以鄙远，君知其难也，用亡郑以陪邻（僖公•三十年）

3)君唯不遗德、刑，以伯诸侯，遗诸敝邑？（成公•十六年）

4)合诸侯之师，以为不信，无乃不可乎（襄公•二十七年）

In the sentences above, different expressions are used to help form rhetorical questions, namely interrogative pronoun "yan(焉)", adverb "qidu(岂独)" and fixed structure "wunai⋯hu(无乃⋯⋯乎)". Despite the structures are different they have all added to the sentences some implicit information that the speaker wants to transmit to the others.

The other pattern often used in Zuozhuan is conditional sentence. For example:

5)朱不用命于楚，君王将立东国。若不先从王欲，楚必围蔡（昭公•二十一年）

6)其输之，则君之府实也，非荐陈之，不敢输也。其暴露之，则恐燥湿之不时而朽蠹，以重敝邑之罪。（襄公•三十一年）

In the above sentences, the ancient Chinese connective structures "若⋯必⋯" and "其⋯则⋯" are used to connect some suppositive conditions and their possible consequences. In these sentences the speaker's real intention is not shown directly, but is left to the listener to reveal it by himself following the hint embedded in the relationship between clauses.

C. Figure of Speech

In Zuozhuan, several types of figures of speech, such as euphemism, quotation, simile and metaphor have also been applied to convey the illocutionary force in utterances. The author is adept in applying these rhetoric devices to achieve a certain effect, just as Liu (刘知几 1978) said, "the utterance is stopped but its meaning has not given full expression, so the reader have to infer the essence from the appearance, just as identify the bone from the fur. In the utterances one can see only one thing but can draw many inferences about other cases outside" [3] . For example:

7)寡人之从晋军而西也，亦晋之妖梦是践，岂敢以至？（僖公•十五年）

8) 牛虽瘠，愤于豚上，其畏不死？（昭公•十三年）

9)谓我敝邑，迩在晋国，譬诸草本，吾臭味也，而何敢差池？（襄公•二十二年）

10)君处北海，寡人处南海，唯是风马牛不相及也。（僖公•四年）

In the examples above, euphemism, metaphor, simile and quotation are applied separately. In example 7), the Duke of Qin said that he accompanied Duke Hui of Jin to the west, but the truth was that he had captured Duke Hui and sent the captive back to Qin. His words sounded modest and polite, but actually the joy of victory was expressed by the purposely-applied euphemism in a hidden way. If taken literally, example 8) means that a weak bull can still hurt a pig easily. Here the metaphor is used to refer to the two states of Jin and Lu, in which Shu Xiang implied that no matter how weak the state of Jin was, it would be a great threat for the state of Lu. 9) is a typical simile introduced by the word "譬诸", which is similar to the word "as" in English. Here the relationship between the states of Jin and Zheng is compared to the relationship between the plant and its fragrance, implying that Zheng dared not betray Jin. 10) is a quotation of the old Chinese saying "风马牛不相及". The quotation helps to provide a firm foundation for the argument, and it helps to add information to the diplomatic language itself as well.

D. Non-verbal Device

In addition to the recording of diplomatic speeches, the author has also taken the non-verbal factors in communication into consideration. Through the description of a speaker's posture, gesture, facial expression and other non-verbal elements, more information is provided in communication other than the speech itself. For example:

11)楚子退入自皇门，至于逵路。郑伯肉袒牵羊以逆，曰"⋯⋯"。（宣公•十二年）

12)秦行人夜戒晋师曰："两君之士皆未悠也，明日请相见也。" 史骈曰："使者目动而言肆，惧我也，将遁矣，必败之。"（文公•十三年）

In 11) "肉袒牵羊"(with one's shoulders bared and leading a sheep) is an ancient formality to show that one is willing to submit himself to the rule of the other. So before the Duke of Zheng began his words his major idea had already shown from his activities. In 12) Yu Pian discovered observantly the uneasiness of the envoy of Qin from his expression in his eyes(使者目动), in consequence he judged that the envoy was afraid of them and was telling a lie.

From the above examples we can see that the non-verbal descriptions are helpful complementarities to the diplomatic speeches in diplomatic communication activities. They can transmit those meanings that cannot be transmitted by words easily, appropriately or conveniently.

V. CONCLUSION

The establishment of pragmatics as a discipline of its own right can be traced to the time when J. Austin delivered his famous speech at Oxford. Sine then, this new branch of linguistics, and some of its main findings, soon found their way into the literature on translation.

The theory of speech acts, being concerned with the use-value of utterances is often linked to translation. In order to achieve pragmatic equivalence the translator is required to

take the dynamics of the whole translating process into consideration, namely, from the discovery of the author's intention embedded in the illocutionary act to the creation of the same expected effect. As a result, the study of speech act theory, in which the illocutionary force of an utterance is one of the main objects, may be helpful to reach pragmatic equivalence in translation.

The aim of this paper is to apply the theory of speech acts to the analysis of the ancient diplomatic language in Zuozhuan, and consequently proposes the speech-act-theoretic approach to pragmatic translation. The unique language characteristics of Zuozhuan have been discussed from various angles by many scholars. In this paper we have viewed it from the perspective of pragmatics. Based on the practical application of the theory of speech acts to the analysis of Zuozhuan, we have proposed some means of understanding and analyzing the illocutionary force of the diplomatic language of this ancient book. We suggest that the analysis of illocutionary force based on speech act theory can be a practical guide to achieve pragmatic equivalence in translation, especially for the translation of those texts with an abundance of implicit meanings.

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