

# Analysis on President Xi's New Year Greeting from Perspective of Transitivity

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**Abstract:** On the eve of New Year's Day in 2021, President Xi Jinping expressed his New Year's greeting to the people of the whole country. President Xi Jinping's greeting is representative and prominent. The study of Xi Jinping's 2021 New Year's greeting from the perspective of transitivity in systemic functional linguistics is of great significance. We can not only understand the ideational meaning conveyed by the greeting but also to understand President Xi's humanistic sentiments and the leadership style of being close to the people and loving the people.

**Keywords:** Ideational function; Transitivity; President Xi's New Year Greeting

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## 1. Introduction

Halliday's systemic functional grammar had a profound impact on linguistic theoretical research in the second half of the 20th century. Halliday believes that language has three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. The ideational function is to convey new information, conveying content that the listener does not know. The ideational function is mainly composed of transitivity and phonetics. Transitivity is only the ideational grammar of clauses. It consists of six different processes: material process, behavior process, mental process, verbal process, relational process, an existential process. This article selects Xi Jinping's New Year's greeting in 2021 and analyzes it from the perspective of transitivity. This article focuses on the following two questions: 1. How are the six processes in Xi Jinping's congratulatory greeting distributed? 2. What is the role of the six processes in Xi Jinping's greeting? The main purpose of the article is to analyze the language ability of President Xi Jinping, discuss the distribution of various types of greetings, and the use of major participants. Not only can one deeply understand the artistic conception conveyed by the greetings, but also the people-oriented feelings of President Xi Jinping and the leadership style of being close to the people, loving the people, and serving the people.

## 2. Data collection

The text is Xi Jinping's New Year's greeting in 2021. The text comes from Xinhua News Agency, edited by Tang Xiaomin and Zuo Zhuo. The full text has a total of 1106 words and 63 sentences. General Secretary Xi Jinping's 2021 New Year's speech demonstrates the political courage and responsibility of walking on the road, seeking the overall situation, welcoming the big exam, and passing the customs. The speech was full of affection, touching, inspiring, and inspiring. General Secretary Xi Jinping summed up China's achievements in the past year and made plans for the next year's development. The heroic declaration of the general secretary demonstrates self-confidence, and his eloquent words are full of wisdom and strength. This fully demonstrates China's image and positive prospects.

## 3. Analytical framework

Systemic functional linguistics is the most influential school in the linguistic tradition based on anthropology. The leading figure of this school is the British scholar MAK Halliday. Halliday(2000) believes that language is the carrier of culture, and all cultures will reflect some meta-functions of universal significance in language, namely ideational functions, interpersonal functions, and textual function, and each function has its corresponding functional system to achieve. The ideational function of "transitivity" is realized by the transitivity system. The difference between the transitivity system and the concept of transitivity in traditional grammar is that "the transitivity system" is a system of clauses. It not only affects the verb as a process but also affects 'participant' and 'circumstance'(Halliday, 2008). Therefore, this article conducts a transitive analysis of the original. Halliday's functional grammar divides the verbs that act as "processes" into six types, namely, material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, and verbal process, and existential process.

## 4. Findings and discussion

The transitive system is one of the basic grammatical systems with ideational functions. To explore the deeper meaning behind the text, we should examine the transmission process of each clause in Xi Jinping's New Year's greeting. As shown in *Table 1* below.

The statistical results show that in Xi's news messages, the three processes that account for the most are material processes, mental processes, and relational processes. The second is the verbal process and the existential process. Among them, there are 96 material processes, accounting for 73%. There are 14 mental processes, accounting for 11%. There are 14 relational processes, accounting for 11%. There are 5 verbal processes, accounting for 4%. There are 2 existential processes, accounting for 1%. Through analysis, the author found that there are 3 commonly used processes. They are material processes, mental processes and relational processes. Therefore, this article mainly analyzes these three processes.

Table 1. Transitivity analysis of Xi Jinping's 2021 New Year's greeting

greeting process	Quantity	Percentage
Material process	96	73%
Mental process	14	11%
Relational process	14	11%
Verbal process	5	4%
Existential process	2	1%
Behavioral process	0	0%
Total	131	100%

#### 4.1 Material process

The material process is the process of doing reflected by verbs. And it is used in this text most frequently, up to 95 times, accounting for about 72%. "Material processes are not necessarily specific physical events; they may be abstract behaviors and events" (Halliday, 2000: 111).

During the days when we addressed the hardships together...

We overcame the impact of the pandemic...

...China made the historic achievement...

(33)...China has eradicated extreme poverty...

In these examples, we can find that most of the material processes are mainly used to review the achievements made in the past year, such as "made", "addressed", "eradicate", etc, which visually show the efforts and achievements made by the party and the country in the past year. In the greeting, President Xi used "overcome" when referring to difficulties and use "deepen" when pointing out goals.

(41)...we should further deepen reform...

(47)People from all over the world should join hands...

(61)and our people to live in peace...

From the perspective of participants, "we" as actors appeared 13 times. "China" appeared 3 times. "People" appeared twice. On the one hand, it shows that President Xi regards the people of all ethnic groups in the country as a unified family, and on the other hand, it shows that President Xi always stands on the same front with the people (Wu and Hu, 2014).

#### 4.2 Mental process

The mental process is the process of "perception". This process is used to describe what happens in the internal world of the mind. The mental process is the process of mental activities such as "feeling", "reaction" and "perception" (Halliday 2005:76). The mental process consists of four sub-categories: cognition (convincing and knowing), affection (liking and pleasing), desideration (wanting and desiring), and perception (sensing and hearing)" (Halliday 2000). The mental process used 14 times in congratulations, accounting for 11%.

China has seen breakthroughs in scientific explorations...

2021 will see the 100th birthday of the Communist Party of China.

These two sentences belong to the perceptible category. These verbs vividly convey Xi Jinping's joy in his achievements.

(15)We salute all the ordinary heroes!

(16)I am proud of our great motherland and people...

(61)I wish our land to be splendid...

Through the above examples, we can see that the general secretary's affectionate praise has stimulated the national self-confidence and pride, strengthened the national cohesion and centripetal force, and aroused strong resonance. This inspires the Chinese people to open a new chapter with a pioneering spirit, strive to compose the magnificent picture of rural revitalization, and steadily move towards the goal of common prosperity.

#### 4.3 Relational process

The relational process explains the relationship between two or more participants. "Strictly speaking, the basic empirical terminology "process" and "participants" are not suitable for this category" (Thompson, 2008: 96). The relational process is mainly implemented by the verb "be" or some other copulas. It appears 14 times, accounting for 11%. In the process of "identifying" the relationship, "is" is used 3 times, which clearly and intuitively presents information such as the development stage of the country to the audience.

(23)China is the first major economy worldwide...

(42)...the whole world is one family.

(39)Pilot trials have become models and leading forces, and explorations to innovate have become leading forces of innovation.

Examples (23) (42), "was" is used to show that a lot of things have happened in the past year, which is an extraordinary year. The identified person "the whole world" appeared twice in the article, indicating that President Xi Jinping upholds the attitude of

developing together with the world. Example (39), “have become” is used to indicate the specific identity of the subject at present. It also reflects that “pilot trails” and “explorations” have now made great progress.

(13)Every person is remarkable!

(30)Everywhere were vibrant scenes of confident...

Examples (13) (30) sentences belong to the “attributive” relationship process, emphasizing the role of each individual and each place, indicating that they play a vital role in the development of the country.

(56)The road ahead is long...

(61)...our country to be prosperous...

Examples (56) (61) sentences both talked about the country’s future development trend. The country has a long way to go, and it has given great expectations to the country’s future development. This is enough to show that Xi Jinping has great confidence in the country’s development and progress.

## 5. Conclusion

The 2021 New Year’s message delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping demonstrated the political courage and responsibility to walk the road, seek the overall situation, welcome the big exam, and pass the mark. The greeting is full of affection and moving, and it is inspiring. The heroic declaration of the general secretary demonstrates confidence and pride, sonorous words are full of wisdom and strength, affectionate praises inspire pioneering and forge ahead, passionate prospects, wishing happiness and well-being. Through the analysis of the transitivity of President Xi’s 2021 New Year’s message, we found that the material process is used most often, mainly to review the achievements of the past year and the outlook for the new year. The use of mental and verbal processes is mainly to express blessings and gratitude to the people of all ethnic groups across the country, which inspires national self-confidence and pride and enhances national cohesion and centripetal force. The relationship process mainly shows that the chairman is optimistic about the development of the country, which is enough to show that Xi Jinping is very confident in the development and progress of the country. In short, President Xi’s New Year message is simple, rich in content and pragmatic, showing the unique style of a national leader.

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