

# A Comparative Analysis of Audience Metadiscourse Used in Chinese and American New Year Speeches

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**Abstract.** Audience metadiscourse refers to the speech choices made by the speakers to indicate their metapragmatic awareness of the audience. It encompasses expressions including directly referring to the audience as “you” and “we”, generic expressions, imperative expressions, and rhetorical interrogative expressions. This study primarily focuses on describing and analyzing the representational forms, pragmatic functions, and different metapragmatic awareness reflected in audience metadiscourse in self-built corpus of Chinese-American new year speeches during about ten years. This study helps to enrich the dimensions of metapragmatic analysis by focusing on the pragmatic functions and usage of audience discourse from the perspective of the audience, highlighting the interpersonal and interactive nature of language use.

**Keywords:** Audience Metadiscourse; New Year Speeches; Metapragmatic Awareness.

## 1. Introduction

Metadiscourse, first introduced by structural linguist Harris in 1959, is commonly regarded as “discourse about discourse” (Crismore et al., 1993) and refers to aspects of a text which explicitly organize the discourse, engage the audience and signal the speaker’s attitude. Metapragmatic awareness is the motivation for the generation of metadiscourse (Cheng, 2009). According to Verschueren, metapragmatics is the study of the metalinguistic dimension of language in use (Verschueren, 2000). As maintained by Chen (2020), there are various types of metapragmatic awareness in verbal communication, and various metapragmatic awareness is embodied in different types of metadiscourse at the pragmatic level (Chen, 2020). Audience metadiscourse discussed in this research is one type of the new classification list of metadiscourse given by Chen Xinren, who categorizes various types of metadiscourse based on different metapragmatic awareness. Additionally, the study incorporates Jiang’s (2020) latest classification of audience metadiscourse, using speech discourse as the corpus.

The existing studies concerning metadiscourse have been diversified. Researchers have focused on the employment of metadiscourse from the perspective of academic discourse (Hyland, 2004; Gillaerts, 2010; Victor, 2018), classroom discourse (Ådel, 2017; Guo & Lu, 2020; Wu & Yang, 2022), media discourse (Al-Subhi, 2022; Dafouz-Milne, 2008); speech discourse and political discourse (Mirzaeian, 2020; Farghal & Kalakh, 2019). Recently, the analysis focusing on political discourse has been increasing. Political speeches are the most prominent and powerful types of political discourse because they are presented in front of the public to persuade them of the personality of the speaker and create a good image of self in the minds of the public (Mai, 2016). However, there is a lack of studies examining the application of metadiscourse in New Year speeches by Chinese and American leaders, especially from the perspective of audience.

The success of a speech largely depends on whether the speaker can resonate with the audience and influence their thoughts, beliefs, and actions (Jiang, 2020). Therefore, by analyzing the audience metadiscourse used by the speaker, we may gain an insight into the speaker’s perception of the audience. To this end, the present study uses new year speeches delivered by Chinese and American leaders as a self-built corpus to categorize audience metadiscourse, analyze the pragmatic functions of them in political speeches, and discusses the pragmatic awareness embodied in these audience metadiscourses, aiming to reveal how leaders use audience metadiscourse to highlight the existence of their audience, guide the audience to better understand their political philosophy and domestic and

foreign policies, and achieve the purpose of conveying information, explaining their views, expressing their attitudes, and guiding the audience to action.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous Studies on Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse, first proposed by Harris in 1959, refers to the use of linguistic devices to organize the text (spoken or written), express the text producer's stance towards both the text and the audience, and engage the audience with the text (Hyland, 1998b, 2019).

While there is no agreed-upon definition, researchers (Fu&Xu, 2012) typically divide metadiscourse into two categories: narrow and broad. Narrow metadiscourse focuses on rhetorical structures that refer to the text itself and is referred to as metatext or reflexivity, while broad metadiscourse is known as textual interaction metadiscourse. It encompasses linguistic devices used to guide the audience's understanding of the text information and author's stance. It also reflects the language and rhetorical devices used by the author to organize and evaluate the text and the interaction between the author and audience.

Metadiscourse has been studied based on various discourse types, including academic writing, classroom discourse, media discourse, speech discourse and political discourse and so on.

In academic discourse, Hyland (2004) analyzed 240 L2 postgraduate dissertations, proposing a more robust model of metadiscourse and examining how students use it in academic writing. In a study of 99 research articles across English, Computer Sciences, and Education disciplines, Birhan (2021) found significant differences in the use of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers. Gillaerts and Van de Velde (2010) investigated changes in the usage of three interactional markers in abstract writing in applied linguistics over three decades, conducting a quantitative analysis of abstracts of different studies published in the *Journal of Pragmatics*. Mu et, al. (2015) compared the usage of metadiscourse in 20 English and 20 Chinese RAs and investigated its contribution to knowledge construction. Following an established model of metadiscourse, they found English RAs exhibited more metadiscourse features, particularly interactional ones, than Chinese RAs.

In classroom discourse, Guo and Lu (2020) investigated the use of metadiscourse by teachers of native speakers of Chinese (NSC) and of native speakers of English (NSE) in classroom discourse from three functional dimensions: meta-talk, interactive metadiscourse and interactional metadiscourse. Ädel (2017) built the corpus of teachers' feedback on student writing, consisting of five teachers' 40,000 words comments on 375 student texts and defined comments as reflexive expressions referring to the evolving discourse, the writer-speaker, or the audience. Wu and Yang (2022) examined teachers' use of three personal metadiscourse markers in classroom discourse, based on data from four EAP teachers in the UK and identified four types of metadiscourse functions in teacher-student interactions.

In media discourse, Al-Subhi (2022) investigated the use of linguistic and visual metadiscourse markers in social media advertisements and their role in persuasion and built a corpus of 50 advertisements from Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. By analyzing textual and interpersonal markers in a corpus of 40 columns and investigates cross-cultural and cross-linguistic preferences, Dafouz-Milne (2008) found out how metadiscourse markers contributed to persuasion in opinion columns from two elite newspapers, *The Times* and *El País*'s, written in English and Spanish respectively.

In political speech discourse, by employing Dafouz's classification of interpersonal metadiscourse, Mirzaeian (2020) compared the use of interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the speeches of Barack Obama and Donald Trump concerning the Iran nuclear deal and found a statistically significant difference in specific preferences. Farghal and Kalakh (2020) based their study on Hyland's (2005) and Wieczorek's (2013) models of metadiscourse markers and Nord's (2007) concept of metacommunication in translation, and then explored how politicians used engaging language to persuade voters in American presidential debates and how this language can be translated into Arabic.

In their study, they mainly focused on the use of listener pronouns, appeals to shared knowledge, directives, questions, and personal asides as metadiscourse markers.

It is evident that research on metadiscourse in academic discourse primarily centers on research articles. In terms of classroom discourse, researchers have primarily examined the speech of teachers. Media discourse studies have predominantly focused on advertising, newspaper columns, and political discourse mainly focuses on campaign speeches, with limited studies investigating the new year speeches from the perspective of audience metadiscourse. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap by a comparative analysis of new year speeches delivered by Chinese and American leaders.

## 2.2 Previous Studies on Audience Metadiscourse

A number of scholars have conducted researches on the use of metadiscourse focusing on audience based on their classification of metadiscourses. Additionally, the interpersonal interaction and reflexivity of metadiscourse have been the subject of thorough investigation by many researchers.

Based on three basic principles of metadiscourse, Hyland (2005) proposed a new classification of metadiscourse: interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Interactional metadiscourse refers to the author's interaction with the reader through engagement markers such as "consider", "note", and "in fact" etc. in the text, with the aim of clarifying the argument and providing opportunities for readers to participate in the discourse discussion.

There are also a number of researches based on the Hyland's interpersonal mode of metadiscourse. Joseph and Lydia (2016) examined interactional metadiscourse in successful and less-successful argumentative essays written by Chinese ESL university students, and compared them to high-rated L1 students. They utilized three corpora of student writing and employed Hyland's (2005a) interactional metadiscourse model. Hu and Cao (2015) conducted a comparative study based on Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse to investigate disciplinary and paradigmatic influences on the use of interactional metadiscourse in the post-method sections of 120 research articles.

However, Hyland's research on metadiscourse classification did not include other types of metadiscourse that consider the audience's perspective or underscore the audience's presence. Also, his research mainly focuses on academic discourse rather than spoken discourse.

Ädel (2006) first introduced the idea of reader and participant-oriented metadiscourse in reflexivity. In addition to Mauranen's (1993) concept of metatext concerning the organization of discourse, Ädel advanced the classification of metadiscourse that focuses on writer-reader interaction, which is further subdivided into text-oriented, writer-oriented, reader-oriented and participant-oriented metadiscourse. Ädel's writer-reader interaction metadiscourse is marked by second-person pronouns, highlighting the role and degree of audience participation in the discourse, such as "You may be thinking..." and "You have probably never heard of..." etc.

Reflexivity emphasizes the discourse organizing function of metadiscourse rather than reader awareness. It is believed by Mauranen that not including evaluations and interpersonal features in the category of metadiscourse is necessary to better distinguish and clarify the direction of metadiscourse. Based on reflexive model, Ran and Ran (2015) discussed the remaining problems of narrow approach, the broad approach, and the interpersonal mode, and mainly examined the reflexive model focusing on its four criteria of metadiscourse identification as well as its classification. Finally they explored the breakthroughs of the reflexive model in metadiscourse studies.

Compared with the engagement markers in Hyland's (2005) model, Ädel's (2006; 2010) audience metadiscourse emphasizes the directive and reflexive functions of metadiscourse for the audience and highlights the speaker's (author's) self-awareness of the audience from a metadiscourse perspective. However, Ädel only focuses on the audience metadiscourse marked by the second-person pronoun "you" without covering other types of audience metadiscourse. Therefore, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive and adequate description and discussion of the speaker's (author's) awareness of the audience.

However, the existing studies have not deeply explored the reason behind the use of metadiscourse from the perspective of pragmatic awareness: explaining why the speaker (author) would choose to use audience discourse and employ specific language expressions to characterize the audience discourse. The study of audience discourse from the perspective of metapragmatics is expected to help us answer these questions (Chen, 2020). Metapragmatics is ‘the pragmatic study of meta-interactive discourse in use’ (Hübler, 2011:108). The metapragmatic level not only focuses on specific language forms, but also studies the pragmatic functions and effects of discourse in use (Jiang, 2019).

### 2.3 Previous Studies on New Year Speeches

New year speeches “are one of the most important outlets for the public expression of political opinions by the head of state” (Čech, 2014). As a unique form of political speech, New Year speeches are usually delivered by heads of state or government, with significant political significance and linguistic research value. Therefore, there are a number of studies investigating the new year speeches from the perspective of linguistics.

Čech (2014) used quantitative linguistic methods to measure the thematic concentration of new year speeches given by Czechoslovak and Czech presidents in 1949-2010 and revealed the relationship between ideology and language. Yang and Liu (2017) demonstrated the strategies of pragmatic identity construction using the data drawn from American president Obama’s New Year addresses. It is suggested that Obama deliberately chose and shaped the certain pragmatic identities from his social identities and describes his primary pragmatic identity through derivative identities. Using the cognitive metaphor theory, Mai and Shi (2020) investigated the differences among new year speeches delivered by American, Singaporean and Chinese leaders in 2016-2018. They classified the metaphor in political discourse, and made a further analysis and comparison of different metaphors. Under the principle of Fairclough’s three-dimensional model in critical analysis, Ma (2020) explored relationship between language and ideology in 14 pieces of American President’s New Year Speeches from the perspectives of linguistic features, production mechanism and social context. Wang (2022) conducted a comparative study on metadiscourse features in General Secretary Xi Jinping’s and Chancellor Merkel’s New Year speeches. Based on the theoretical discussion on metacommunication in Germany, Wang explored how metacommunication/metadiscourse served as illocutionary act indicators and then tried to find out the characteristic of metadiscourse used by two leaders in their speeches. Chang (2022) based her research on the interpersonal function proposed by Halliday and analyzed the tone, modality, and person system in the 2022 New Year’s addresses of the heads of state in China and Germany, two countries with different ideologies to explore the linguistic strategies used to maintain interpersonal relationships. Additionally, it summarized the distribution of modal verbs in German.

These studies did not discuss how national leaders use audience metadiscourse to highlight the audience’s presence and achieve interaction with the audience from the perspective of conversation analysis. To some extent, whether or not the speaker can achieve the desired effects mostly lies in whether he or she can pay attention to the audience considering about the addressee’s knowledge background, psychological needs and other factors. Therefore, a successful speaker should be equipped with addressee-oriented awareness, which will be discussed in this study. Therefore, the analysis of this study may facilitate to fill the gap in new year speeches studies from the perspective of metapragmatics.

Based on previous studies, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What types of audience metadiscourse are employed in new year speeches delivered by Chinese and American leaders?
- (2) What are the pragmatic functions of audience metadiscourse in new year speeches delivered by Chinese and American leaders?
- (3) What metapragmatic awareness of the Chinese and American leaders in their respective new year speeches is reflected in the use of these audience metadiscourse?

### 3. Methodology

New year speeches are a special type of political text in which national leaders deliver New Year’s speeches to the public, and generally include a review of the past year and an outlook for the New Year. In New Year speeches, the speaker with his or her special and important identity would consciously elaborate his governance thoughts and domestic affairs. This kind of text usually contains a clear intention and purpose of conveying information, explaining opinions, indicating attitude, and guiding the audience to understand. Therefore, the characteristics of this discourse are worth exploring.

The corpus chosen for this study is drawn from the 2010-2023 American new year speeches delivered by Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden and 2014-2023 Chinese New Year speeches delivered by President Xi Jinping. The total number of words is 19,438 English characters. The classification model applied in this study is based on different definitions and classifications of audience metadiscourse (Chen, 2020; Crismore, 1989; Hyland, 2005; Ädel, 2006; 2010; Jiang, 2020). Additionally, the software Antconc 4.2.0 is used as an auxiliary retrieval tool, combined with specific context, where the manual retrieval method is employed to identify addressee-oriented discourse.

The identification of audience metadiscourse includes five categories: The first category is to directly refer the addressee as pronoun “you” to highlight the presence of the addressee. The second category is expressions including addressee like “we, us, and our”. Using “we” to refer to addressee and the addresser can reflect the sense of belonging of the audience. The third category is generic audience expressions that generally refer to the audience. The fourth category is imperative sentences that implicitly refer to the addressee. The fifth category is rhetorical interrogative, including rhetorical questions and interrogative questions, they are used in the form of inquiries to guide or reinforce a certain viewpoint or concept, prompting the audience to engage and think actively, thereby facilitating an implicit dialogue between the speaker and the listeners. The imperative expression and the rhetorical doubt expression of the audience are both meta-discourse resources to realize the closeness and effective interaction with the audience (Hyland, 2010).

This study first identifies the representation forms of audience metadiscourse in new year speeches and classifies these discourses into five categories according to the aforementioned classification standard. Then, the differences existing in Chinese and American new year speeches will be analyzed.

After that, from the perspective of metapragmatics, the study analyzes how speakers use certain category of audience metadiscourse in order to achieve the purpose of conveying their ideas of governance and domestic and foreign affairs, as well as guiding the audience to comprehend.

### 4. Distribution of Representation Forms of Audience Metadiscourse in Chinese and American New Year Speeches

**Table 1.** Distribution of representation forms of audience metadiscourse in new year speeches delivered by President XiJinping

Category	Examples	Frequencies	Percentage
Directly referring addressee as pronoun “you” and “your”	I wish you all a happy New Year, To the many people who are still busy working at this very moment, I salute you all Your hard work is greatly appreciated	21	3.7%
Including addressee “us, our, we”	us, our, we	368	65.5%
Implicitly referring addressee in imperative sentences	Let's seize the day and live it to the full, let all the people in this country live in happiness	19	3.4%
Generic audience expressions	Chinese workers, Chinese Sparks of talent are coming together, Officials and the general public, particularly medical professionals	154	27.4%
Total		562	100%

Based on the audience metadiscourse drawn from the self-built corpus, the following is the distribution of representation forms of audience metadiscourse in Chinese and American new year speeches.

**Table 2.** Distribution of representation forms of audience metadiscourse in new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden

Category	Examples	Frequencies	Percentage
Directly referring addressee as pronoun “you” and “your”	I want to wish you all a Happy New Year, you can do right now that will also make a big difference in your health	80	14.5%
Including addressee “us, our, we”	We,us, our	377	68.4%
Implicitly referring addressee in imperative sentences	Let's work together, to do what must be done to keep our country safe	21	3.8%
Generic audience expressions	Americans, everyone, one, all the workers, doctors, scientists, and members of the military workers, anyone, everyone, no one	66	12%
Rhetorical interrogative	But what if we tried to stop even one?	7	1.3%
Total		551	100%

**Table 3.** The comparison of distribution of representation forms of audience metadiscourse between Chinese and American new year speeches

Category	China	America
Directly referring addressee as pronoun “you” and “your”	3.7%	14.5%
Including addressee “us, our, we”	65.5%	68.4%
implicitly Referring addressee in imperative sentences	3.4%	3.8%
Generic expressions referring to audience	27.4%	12%
Rhetorical interrogative	0%	1.3%

In terms of the distribution pattern of representation forms of audience metadiscourse, it appears that there are similarities between Chinese and American new year speeches. Based on the statistical data, a total of 1,113 audience discourse markers were used in Chinese and American new year speeches. Among them, directly referring the addressee as pronoun “you” accounts for 3.7% and 14.5% respectively. Additionally, presidents of both America and China favored using “we, us, our” to include addressees, accounting for 65.5% and 68.4%. However, employing imperative sentences to implicitly refer addressee only accounts for 3.4% and 3.8%. However, the Chinese leader also prefers the use of general audience expressions, with the proportion accounting for 27.4%, and his American counterparts only employ 12% general audience expressions.

Based on the results, we can clearly see the differences of the use of audience metadiscourse between Chinese and American new year speeches.

## 5. The Similarities in the Use of Audience Metadiscourse in Chinese and American New Year Speeches

### 5.1 Inclusiveness of Addressee by Using “We, Us, Our”

As shown in Table 3, the addressee intervention marker (we, us, our) is the first most frequently used addressee-metadiscourse markers in the American-Chinese corpus, accounting for 24.7% and 12% respectively. This result aligns with the study by Caliendo and Compagnone (2014). They compared the use of personal pronouns in TED talks and academic presentations and found that in

TED talks, the usage of “We” slightly surpasses that of “You”. Through the use of “we” expressions, speakers in TED talks aim to establish an intimate and cooperative relationship with the audience. While in academic presentations, presenters prefer the usage of “you” to “we” because the social relationship between the presenter and the audience is typically professors and students, which is unequal.

Example 1.

**We** are facing all challenges with new solutions and **we're** seizing new opportunities with brimming confidence and boundless resolve.

*(2018 new year speech delivered by Donald Trump)*

In example 1, the possessive pronoun “we” is frequently used. This is a typical instance of using the audience metadiscourse marker. Through this approach, President Donald Trump not only refers to himself but also includes all the Americans, making them feel a sense of shared identity with the President. Building on this, in his new year speech, he encouraged the people to collectively address challenges faced by them and to be confident at the same time.

Example 2.

**We** are now pursuing a lofty mission. Only perseverance will lead to victory, while giving up halfway will lead **us** nowhere. **Our** blueprint is ambitious, but **our** task is arduous.

*(2016 new year speeches delivered by Xi Jinping)*

In example 2, pronoun “we” and “our” were employed by General Secretary Xi Jinping to narrow the distance between himself and the addressee. Therefore, the addressee, Chinese people could realize that they and President Xi are the shared entity. Based on this realization, President Xi could achieve his purpose of encouraging people to pursue working hard instead of giving up.

## 5.2 Implicitly Referring Addressee in Imperative Sentences

Imperative sentences that implicitly refer to the addressee in American-Chinese new year speeches account for 3.8% and 3.4%, which consist only a small amount of audience metadiscourse but function as an important role. However, they still play an important role in relating to addressee. In new year speeches, imperative sentences generally refer to the citizens and ask or propose the audience to do something jointly, which will indirectly or directly affect the will or behavior of the audience.

Example 3.

So, this Christmas, **let's** spread a little kindness.

This Christmas, **let's** be that — that helping hand, that strong shoulder, that friendly voice when no one else seems to care for those who are struggling, in trouble, in need.

*(2022 Christmas eve speeches delivered by Joe Biden)*

In example 3, “let’s” are frequently used in President Joe Biden’s Christmas eve speeches. Through the use of “let’s” Biden could narrow the psychological distance between him and Americans and call on everyone to do more good deeds and help those in need in a more acceptable way. At the same time, he also created a positive image of himself in the hearts of the people.

Example 4.

Everyone is holding on with great fortitude, and the light of hope is right in front of us. **Let's** make an extra effort to pull through, as perseverance and solidarity mean victory.

*(2023 new year speeches delivered by Xi Jinping)*

This speech was delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping in the third year of Covid-19 when many people were fatigued with the COVID-19 prevention and control measures. By using imperative sentences, President Xi was able to bridge the gap between himself and the Chinese people, reducing the official tone and creating a closer connection. This approach was more conducive to inspiring hope and encouraging everyone to persist in prevention and control efforts.

## 6. The Differences in the Use of Audience Metadiscourse in Chinese and American New Year Speeches

### 6.1 Directly Referring the Audience as "you"

Example 5.

It was good to see Members of Congress do the right thing for millions of working Americans. But it was only possible because you added your voices to the debate. Through email and Twitter and over the phone, you let your representatives know what was at stake. Your lives. Your families. Your well-being. You had the courage to believe that your voices could make a difference. And at the end of the day, they made all the difference.

*(2012 new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama)*

In this example, Obama hopes that more and more people can contribute to the public well-being. He employs "you" to shorten the psychological distance with the reader and actively encourage the public to voice their opinions. Additionally, the usage of "you" accounts for 14.5% of the total number of samples, thus reflecting a high level of interactivity in American new year speeches.

While in Chinese new year speeches, the expression containing the personal pronoun "you", which appears 21 times, accounting for 3.7% of the total number of sample. The commonly used sentence patterns are "I extend my New Year wishes to you all", "greetings to you all". Although the employment of second personal pronoun "you" only constructs a small amount of audience metadiscourse, the speaker still wants to narrow the distance with the audience and express his heartfelt wishes through the use of "you".

### 6.2 Generic Expressions Referring to Audience

Example 6.

As we gather with loved ones this holiday, Americans across this land are grateful for all the men and women in uniform who keep us safe: our military, our police, and everyone in law enforcement.

*(2019 Christmas eve speeches delivered by Donald Trump and Donald Melania)*

The frequency of using general audience expressions in American texts is relatively low compared with their Chinese counterparts, accounting for 12% of overall addressee-oriented metadiscourse usage. President Obama employed underlined parts in Example 6 to directly engages with the audience by listing various professionals working on New Year's holidays, including soldiers, police and legal professionals. This indirect dialogue and expression of gratitude towards them reflects President Obama's efforts to interact with the public.

Example 7.

At this happy moment of ringing out the old year and ringing in the new, I would like to extend my New Year wishes to people from all ethnic groups across China, to our compatriots from Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, to our compatriots from Taiwan region and overseas, and to friends from all countries and regions across the world.

*(2017 new year speeches delivered by Xi Jinping)*

This approach is the more frequently used in addressee-oriented metadiscourse category in Chinese language corpora, accounting for 27.4%. As indicated by the underlined portions in Example

7, the generic audience expressions metadiscourse category is extensively used in General Secretary Xi Jinping's New Year address. The specific linguistic strategies employed include references to Hong Kong compatriots, Macao compatriots, Taiwan compatriots, overseas Chinese, workers, farmers, intellectuals and so on, covering Chinese people in various registers. This vividly demonstrates General Secretary Xi Jinping's inclination and efforts to interact with the audience by mentioning their identities, professions, and the expression of New Year wishes to all Chinese people at home and abroad on the occasion of the New Year.

Also, it should be noted that there are some variations in their usage patterns. General Secretary Xi Jinping also utilized "Chinese people" to arouse the attention of all Chinese citizens towards the content of his speeches. On the other hand, in the American language corpus, besides "we", there was a higher occurrence of second person pronoun "you" at a rate of 4.2%, reflecting that the Americans are more inclined to engage in dialogue and communication using "you" with individuals.

### 6.3 Rhetorical Interrogatives

American Presidents also use interrogative sentences (1.3%) to inquire about the addressee's position, willingness, etc., indirectly expressing the verbal intention of the request.

Example 8.

But **what if** we tried to stop even one? **What if** Congress did something – anything – to protect our kids from gun violence?

*(2016 new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama)*

In example 8, President Obama employs two interrogative sentences to indirectly express his purpose of calling for American citizens to act to reduce or stop gun violence. While the use of interrogative sentences are rare in Chinese corpus. This may be resulted from the different official nature of the speeches in China and America. In China, a new year speech will be delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping at the end of a year as a summary of the past year and expectation for the next year. While in America, there is no tradition like this, and there is no fixed pattern for a new year speech. Therefore, the sentences used in American new year speeches could be more colloquial.

## 7. The Categories of Pragmatic Functions of Audience Metadiscourse in Chinese and American new year speeches

The essence of audience metadiscourse lies in its reflexive orientation towards the audience in communication (Jiang, 2020). In Chinese-American new year speeches, the speakers' reflective consideration of the addressees aims to emphasize their presence and engagement awareness and predict the possible emotions, thoughts and attitude of the audience. The purpose is to enhance the audience's experiential engagement with the speech content, stimulate their enthusiasm and identification with the speech, and influence their thoughts and behaviors.

Based on the specific orientations of audience metadiscourse towards the audience, and from the textual function and the interpersonal function, we categorize them into the following four types: contextual setting guides, emphasis of the speaker's intention, prediction of audience's stance and attitude, and involvement and participation prompts.

These addressee-oriented metadiscourses are conscious pragmatic choices made by the speakers, which help them consciously regulate and manage the communication process from the perspective of audience. They reflect the speakers' metapragmatic awareness of managing the speech audience. In the following part, this study will illustrate how the speakers employ various types of addressee-oriented metadiscourse to highlight the position of the audience, thereby demonstrating metapragmatic awareness in different registers.

## 8. Metapragmatic Awareness Embodied in the Audience Metadiscourse in Chinese and American New Year Speeches

New Year speeches, as one type of political discourse, serve as a significant platform for national leaders to articulate their governing philosophy, domestic and foreign policies, and important ideas. The speakers have a clear intention and purpose to convey messages, elaborate on viewpoints, express attitude, and guide audience to understand them. Consequently, the key lies in the ability of the speakers to ensure that their audience comprehend and accept their viewpoints.

The metapragmatic awareness in the audience metadiscourse is mainly embodied in the regulation of the audience's understanding of speech content and the establishment of interaction between the speakers and the v, the speculation of the audience's psychological state such as attitude and emotions, and the establishment of awareness of audience interaction and emotional identification.

In this part, this research will mainly analyze from the perspective of metapragmatic theory, combined with the representational form and pragmatic function of audience metadiscourse, related research on metapragmatic awareness, and the communicative purpose of speakers. The metapragmatic awareness embodied in the audience metadiscourse is mainly divided into the following four aspects:

### 8.1 Regulating the Audience's Awareness in the Process of Understanding the Speech Content

The process of understanding the policies or intentions and information conveyed by the speaker is the core of communicative purpose. For audience, the immediacy of the speech, the volume of information processing, and the brief time left for understanding the information all constrain their cognitive processing of information. Audience metadiscourse can assist the speaker in managing the organization of information and the addressees' understanding of the speech content, or organizing and explaining the speech content in an orderly manner to alleviate the cognitive processing pressure on the audience, helping them to better interpret the discourse information and manage the audience's process of information understanding.

The audience for New Year speeches mainly consists of citizens from the United States and China. They primarily seek comfort and encouragement from the speeches of their national leaders. Therefore, in terms of the textual function of audience metadiscourse, speakers firstly mention the original and old information of the audience to create a sense of immersion in a virtual scenario and initiate interaction with the audience. Then speakers introduce new information including the new situation to give the audience encouragement. The transition between old and new is to guide the audience into the situation created by the speakers.

#### Example 9.

Seven years ago, we were addicted to foreign oil. Now our oil imports have plummeted, our clean energy industry is booming, and America is a global leader in the fight against climate change.

*(2016 new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama)*

During the days when we addressed the hardships together, we saw the heroic spirit of marching straight to the frontlines, holding posts with tenacity, taking responsibility to get through thick and thin, sacrifices with bravery, and touching moments of helping each other.

*(2021 new year speeches delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping)*

In example 9, both Chinese and American leaders first mentioned problems and issues in the past year, thus creating an imaginary situation to engage the audience in the speech. Also, by mentioning the old situation, the President Obama and General Secretary Xi Jinping showed their sympathy and concerns and bridged the psychological distance between them and the audience, thus satisfying the audience's needs for comfort. Then, President Obama kept talking about the solution of the problem, thus giving his audience encouragement.

## 8.2 Guiding the Audience to Understand the Speaker's Communicative Intention

The process of communication involves the transmission of information and the inference of speech intentions. While both parties are active participants in communication, the speakers express their intentions through various speech acts, while the audience passively receives and interprets these acts. In Chinese-American talks, speakers indicate their communicative purposes through phrases including “quote”, “give”, and so on. These intentional prompt phrases are used by the speakers as the first-person pronoun “I” to show their identity and attitude. For example, “I am going to show you” explicitly indicates the speaker’s intention and directs the audience’s attention, guiding them to understand the speaker’s speech intentions.

Example 10.

**Let me give you an example.** A family of four with an income of around \$95,000, they can still get a subsidy to lower their health care premiums.

*(2015 new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama)*

Going forward, China will be a country that performs miracles through hard work. Here **I want to quote Su Shi**, a renowned Chinese poet, “Charge at the toughest and aim at the farthest.” It means to take on the biggest challenges and go after the most ambitious goals.

*(2023 new year speeches delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping)*

In example 10, President Obama and General Secretary Xi Jinping use intentional prompt phrases like “Let me give you an example” and “I want to quote Su Shi” to explicitly indicate their intention of persuading their audience to act by providing more specific information like examples to their audience. By doing so, they assist their audience in better understanding their viewpoints. Additionally, when using these speech verbs to express intentions, speakers may employ vague phrases like “want to” and “let me” to mitigate the coercive force on persuading the audience.

## 8.3 Establishing Interaction with the Audience and Highlighting the Awareness of the Audience's Existence

In the Chinese and American new year speeches, both Chinese and American leaders interact with readers through audience metadiscourse, highlighting the audience’s existence. The speakers establish a “face-to-face” interaction between the themselves and the addresses by extensively employing the referential pronouns including “you” and “we”.

Example 11.

More than anything else, you are the ones who make me hopeful about 2012. Because we’ve got some difficult debates and some tough fights to come. As I’ve said before, **we are at a make-or-break moment** for the middle class.

*(2012 new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama)*

**We are willing to join hands with** people of all countries in the world to build together the Belt and Road Initiative, and push forward the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and make unremitting efforts for the creation of a beautiful future for mankind.

*(2020 new year speeches delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping)*

In example 11, participation prompts including “we are willing to join hand with” and “we are at a make-or-break moment” are used to naturally introduce the reader into the situation or attract the attention of the audience, thus transferring the attention from the speakers to the audience.

## 8.4 Inferring the Awareness of the Audience's Mental State

The mentioning of “you” and “we” are not enough to establish effective interaction with the audience. Crismore (1989) emphasizes the importance of taking the audience’s perspective and predicting their reactions as a significant function of metadiscourse. The speaker can successfully

establish the speech act relationship of “speaking” and “listening” by gaining the addressees’ cognitive approval and aligning with their emotional state. Therefore, in order to make speeches more effective, the speaker needs to consider the addressees’ cognitive needs and emotional expectations. By predicting the audience’s emotions and attitude, using phrases such as “if you're not comfortable”, the speaker emotionally bridges the gap between themselves and their addressees.

Example 12.

And if you’re not comfortable going online or speaking on the phone, and you want to sit down with an individual to help you through this, you can find out where to go as well.

*(2015 new year speeches delivered by President Barack Obama)*

We are willing to join hands with people of all countries in the world to build together the Belt and Road Initiative, and push forward the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and make unremitting efforts for the creation of a beautiful future for mankind.

*(2020 new year speeches delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping)*

In Example 12, after the President Obama told his audience that they could have their healthcare by calling or searching online, he also used a conditional clause to anticipate the audience’s reaction to the matter, suggesting that there are various ways that American people could have their healthcare. Also, having talking about human history witnessed many peaceful moments and China’s commitment to promote common development, General Secretary Xi Jinping predicted the attitude of his audience (Chinese and other potential cooperative partners in implementing Belt and Road Initiative).

Therefore, audience metadiscourse awareness in new year speeches is mainly reflected in the following aspects: managing the audience’s understanding of speech information, and emotionally connecting with the audience by showing the attitude of the speaker in an audience-friendly way and inferring the audience’s attitude. By doing so, speakers can establish a caring and friendly image in their people’s mind, it can gain the audience’s trust and encourage the audience to act.

## 9. Conclusion

Audience metadiscourse refers to the speech choices made by the speakers to indicate their metapragmatic awareness of the audience. It encompasses expressions including directly referring to the audience as “you” and “we”, generic expressions, imperative expressions, and rhetorical interrogative expressions. This study primarily focuses on describing and analyzing the representational forms, pragmatic functions, and different metapragmatic awareness reflected in audience metadiscourse in Chinese-American new year speeches. This study found that both Chinese and American leaders prefer audience metadiscourse as “we, us and our” to emphasize the presence of the audience, while American leaders also employ a large number of “you” to directly address their audience. Based on the realization of pragmatic functions, audience discourse is categorized into context-setting language, intention-prompting language, perspective-attitude prediction language, and participation-inviting language. Speakers utilize audience metadiscourse to invite the audience to participate, and to guide the audience to comprehend their ideas. Audience discourse in Chinese-American new year speeches not only facilitates the audience’s comprehension of the speaker’s communicative intentions but also helps maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships between the speaker and the audience, ultimately contributing to the achievement of the speaker’s communicative goals.

This study enriches the dimensions of metapragmatic analysis by focusing on the pragmatic functions and usage of audience discourse from the perspective of the audience, highlighting the interpersonal and interactive nature of language use. The findings of this research provide insights for a deeper understanding of metapragmatic phenomena. However, it is important to note that this study only focuses on audience discourse in Chinese and American new year speeches, which

represents a relatively narrow genre. Future research could further explore more characteristics and usage patterns of audience discourse in other kinds of genres.

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