

The Communicative Functions of Language in the English Translated Novel *The Guest Cat*

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Courtesy: https://www.amazon.com/Guest-Cat-Takashi-Hiraide/dp/0811221504/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=The+Guest+Cat&qid=1600978901&s=books&sr=1-1

Abstract

This study was conducted at Assumption University, Thailand. There were three objectives posed: (1) To identify the different communicative functions presented in the novel *The Guest Cat*. (2) To determine the usage of the different communicative functions of language presented in the novel and (3) To identify the cultural features found that influence the communicative functions of language in the novel. The study adopted a qualitative research

methodology for the collection and analyses of the data that emphasized conducting a detailed examination of every single datum from the novel based on the principles of interpretive and critical social sciences.

The finding indicated that all six functions were found in the novel that they reflected different aspects of the messages transmitted in the communication. Also, these functions appeared as a whole, rather than isolated or divided that the writer used them integrated to fulfil the communication intentions between different characters and between the writer and readers. Furthermore, contextual cultural features influenced the expressions of different functions. The findings of the study imply that English language teaching (ELT) should pay more attention to this domain to improve students' communicative competence as well as achieve a higher level of language proficiency.

Keywords: Communicative Function of Language, Literature, *The Guest Cat*, Japanese Novel, English Language Teaching, Cultural feature.

Introduction

Language is an essential tool of human expression and communication, and its major purpose is the realization of people's intention to express and communicate. English is a global language that is widely used in daily conversation, academic communication, economic and trade activities, and other fields, it has been described as the world's lingua franca. Around 20% of the global total population speak English, and most of them are non-native English speakers. English is by far the most studied commonly foreign language in the world that there are numerous all ages of people who are in the process of learning or about to learn English (Lyons, 2017). The worldwide research on how to improve English learners' language competences has never stopped. There are a few reasons why this area is significant to study.

First is the importance of language functions in communication. According to Petroni (2014), the function of a language encompasses the nature of how it can be used to express the writer/speaker's intention. They are the inner laws of language expression underlying all kinds of communications (Hebert, 2011). The underlying functional model of language is the notion that language users make choices to achieve their intended purpose by using different language functions, therefore the study and application of language are inseparable from the study on understanding communication functions (Boaner, 2018).

Second, one of the major goals of contemporary second language learning is to gain communicative competence in the target language (Foley, 2012). ELT syllabuses today have covered this rich knowledge of grammar and vocabulary which enable students to scaffold their English language ability in China (Liu, 2003). However, there are still questions about the function of language and its universal characteristics that can be found in all languages. Tribus (2017) asserted that the current bestselling textbook's contents have not explicitly introduced

most of these functions, in other words, the language communicative functions are not fully discussed in the teaching process to build students' fundamental awareness. Richards (2015) also affirmed that although recently communicative language teaching led to the development of functional syllabuses as an alternative to structural syllabuses, students' materials still have a considerable gap between their grammatical competence and functional expressions.

Additionally, in the ELT field, especially in the context of China, literary works like a novel, seem to be the last resort the teachers will use in teaching English as more attention is given to the structure of languages such as vocabulary and grammar, than the communicative functions of language. However, literature can do more in teaching communicative functions. Language functions do not exist independently in any language form (Linask, 2018), thus, examples from real-used languages, such as literary works might be able to help students to familiarize the various functions of language from their day to day existence, because written language reflects the spoken language. Neuman (2014) asserted that the text is anything written that serves as a medium for communication that exists in books, magazines, or newspaper articles, musical lyrics, or other forms of written works. Not to forget, Booth (1961) argued that a novel can be viewed as communication between a writer and a reader, hence, as a genre of literature, the novel is a long story written in the form of prose which contains various communicative functions (both written and spoken) embodied in words, clauses, phrases, dialogues, discourses and so on.

This can lead to the importance of literature in ELT. Literature is full of unique languages that are normally influenced by writers' culture, value, and life experience. 'The Guest Cat' was written by the Japanese novelist Takashi Hiraide in the form of "I-novel", a genre of Japanese novel which was based on the story inspired by the writer's own life.

Depending on how a novel is written, it involves in portraying the vivid character images, narrating the unique stories, and expressing the colorful emotions creatively and attractively, this is seen as the beauty of literary works (Akyel & Yalçin,1990), as this reflects different styles of the communicative expression. Second language learners need to acquire both the functions and the forms of language that make up the English language in order to reach a higher level of English language proficiency (Cook, 2007). As what students learn normally comes from their teachers, therefore, teachers need to understand the language demands and support students' English language understanding.

Conceptual Framework

This study uses the below conceptual framework to guide the research process towards answering the research questions and achieving the study goals.

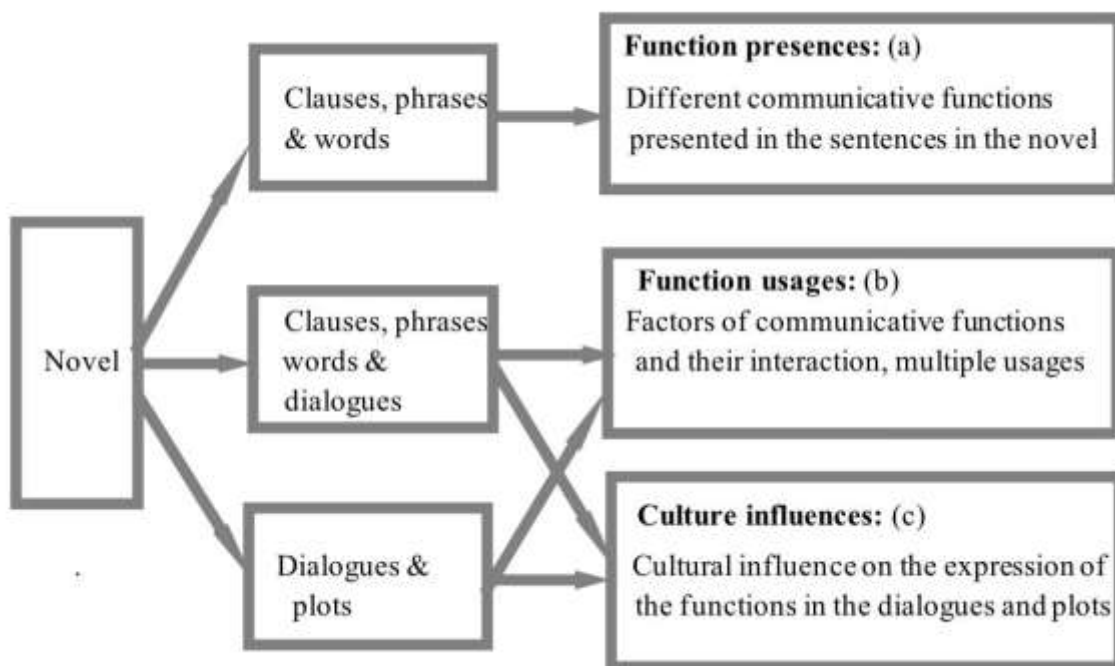


Figure 1.1: The conceptual framework of the study

Review of Literature

Factors of Communication and Functions of Language

Linguist Hebert (2011) further interpreted Jakobson (1960)' theory and illustrated a clearer model of the language functions with six factors of communication and corresponding six functions of language that would cover any kind of communication. Six factors are as follows:

- a. A context is where the message takes place.
- b. An addresser is a sender.
- c. An addressee is a receiver.
- d. A contact is a type of mediator between an addresser and the addressee.
- e. A common code is used when an addresser and the addressee need to check whether they use the same code for the same meaning.
- f. A message is a piece of information that is transmitted in the communication process.

Each factor is the focal point of a function that works between the message and in the communicating process. These six language factors require six language functions to carry out. These functions can be described as follows (Hebert, 2011).

- (1) The referential function serves to direct to the context
- (2) The emotive function is used to direct to the addresser

- (3) The conative function is used to direct to the addressee
- (4) The phatic function serves to establish, and maintain communication
- (5) The metalinguistic function is used to explain one same code between different people
- (6) The poetic function forces readers more than other functions to attend to the signifier (Hebert, 2011). These functions do not occur in isolation in any language unit.

Referential Function

This function is the leading task of numerous messages (Astifo, 2017) which deals with contextual meaning. It refers to any message that speaks/writes to convey information, and it is the most obvious language function when words are used to indicate things or facts (Boarner, 2018).

Emotive function

Klinkenberg (1996) suggested this function should not be comprehended in the usual sense, as only referring to human emotion. Any message, including the most neutral, reveals the condition of its addresser/sender. Boarner (2018) asserted when a speaker/writer does not speak/write to convey information, but to express their feelings or attitude, the communication is more for the speaker/writer than for the addressee and accordingly involve emotive function.

Conative Function

Boarner (2018) asserted that conative comes to work when one tries to make other people do or do not do something, in other words, the message somehow affects its receiver/addressee's behaviour.

Phatic Function

This function concerns the channel of communication that is used to maintain contact or communication between addresser and addressee. People share feelings, goodwill, or other pleasant moods rather than give information in to reinforce social relations (Boarner, 2018) in this function.

Metalinguistic Function

It refers to any message that is constructed to indicate the code used. In other words, when a message is used to check whether the addresser and the addressee have the same understanding of code, and its focus is the code.

Poetic Function

This function aims to put the focus on the message for its speaker/writer's specific purpose of expression (Jakobson, 1995) in the communication by using rhetoric or other creative ways of using language (Hebert, 2011). In other words, the poetic function manipulates the language to achieve special expression effects in communication (Boarner, 2018).

Function and Genres

The presence of the functions can be used not only to identify the usage of language functions in language units but also to classify its type. For example, what distinguishes poetry from other genres is not so much the presence of the poetic function as its dominance. And one more example is that epic poetry which focused on the third person, as opposed to lyric poetry (first-person) or poetry of the second person, strongly connected with the referential function. (Hebert, 2011)

Relations between Different Functions

In general, when one function is emphasized, it usually tends to diminish the importance of the others, and the opposite happens when the function is weakened. But we will also assume that some functions generally appear in pairs in a more definite inverse relation. The most obvious pairs are the emotive and conative functions and the referential and poetic functions. (Hebert, 2011)

Core Features of Language and Communication

Language is a system for representing things, actions, ideas, and states, also a system of meaning shared among people. There are several core features of Human Language and communication, this study focuses on two of them:

- Productivity which means people can talk about whatever they want to talk, and they can manipulate to cope with new situation and diversity of context (this feature manifests itself most in literary works) (Boaner, 2018).
- The cultural transmission which means that language is a major symbol of culture, and we can pass it from one generation to the other. Language is the genuine means of transmitting the cultural heritage of any speech community (Boaner, 2018). Language is a functional phenomenon; the use of language is to fulfill a certain function (Boaner, 2018).

The Importance of the Communicative Functions of Language in ELT

Tribus (2017) suggested communication is powerful and significant, the way people express in communicating influence the effect of expression, even cause misunderstanding.

The referential function is crucial for students in their school academic activities especially in college, and as the most common communicative function of language with multimodality, it is essential for greater language proficiency.

The absence of the Emotive function not only deprives the English language learner of the ability to engage emotionally with an interlocutor, but also may reduce the possibility of expression, or development of a fully formed L2 identity, further indicating his/her ability to communicate effectively (Pavlenko, 2007).

A mild or inappropriate expression can cause uncertainty and unnecessary procrastination. Teaching common conative structures and raising awareness of the dimensions that affect their use will help students to employ and interpret conative utterances appropriately. Students should get familiar with structures and types of imperatives and practice using them in different registers.

Whether students are learning English for business or pleasure, they need to become familiar with the language and social conventions that allow them to make appropriate conversations and integrate into society successfully. The phatic utterance, especially at the beginning of a conversation can maintain a good feeling between interlocutors. (Cruz, 2013), also, the use of phatic function increases the listener's perception of the speaker's language proficiency although they are just quite brief utterances like "really?" "Great!" (Tribus, 2017)

The Metalinguistic Function is useful for both teacher and students that they use it to explain the meaning of some specific terms/codes or require for the explanation.

The Poetic function is crucial for language users to achieve special expressive effects creatively and personally.

The Role of Literature and Culture in ELT

Literature and the Teaching of Language Skills

According to Hismanoglu (2005), there are three major advantages for a teacher to use literature in the classroom

1. Valuable and authentic material
2. Cultural enrichment
3. Language enrichment.

Jahanforouz (2018, p.2) affirmed: literature can be regarded as a rich source of authentic language samples and it enhances English learning through three aspects in its written text:

- a. 'language in use' Collie and Slater (1988, p.4)
- b. aesthetic representation of the spoken language.
- c. culture enrichment.

Sell (2005) asserted that "literature written in the target language or translated into the target language may give learners an insight into other non-target language cultures, thus preparing them to act competently and appropriately in future dealings with representatives from those cultures." (p.86)

However, when engaging literature into the language classroom, skills should not be taught in an isolated but in an integrated way (Hismanoglu, 2005). Through reading literary works, students can develop a closer relationship with language, since they are reconstructing

the target language on their own for their learning process (Ansari, 2018). Literature can help non-native students not only in their communicative ability but also in exploiting mental and linguistic potentials that monolinguals' lack (Cook, 2007)

Benefits of using a short novel in Language Teaching

Bakhtin (2000) defined the novel as a

- Diversity of social speech types.
- Stratification of language which means that language constitutes layers of social dialects, group behavior, professional, generic languages of age groups.

Hismanoglu (2005) suggests that “Short fiction is a supreme resource for observing not only language but life itself” (p. 61).

Introducing a short novel in the English language teaching brings at least a few benefits:

- to arouse students' curiosity about the world.
- to promote critical thinking skills.
- to introduce a foreign culture.
- to help students to find out the meaning between the lines not only the patent meaning.
- to broaden the worldviews of the advanced level students about diversified cultures.

Japanese literature

I-Novel

I-Novel (私小説 *shōsetsu* first-person point of view) is a 20th-century Japanese literature genre that is characterized by self-revealing narration, with the writer usually as the central character. This genre emerged based on the Japanese reception of Naturalism during the Meiji period and is prevailing in contemporary Japanese literature (Miyoshi, 1989, p. 153). *The Guest Cat* is exactly such an I-Novel. It was written by Japanese poet and novelist Takashi Hiraide in 2001.

Patterns of Japanese culture

Contradictory

Benedict (2005, p. 2) asserted Japanese personality is extremely contradictory:

“Aggressive and unaggressive, militaristic and aesthetic, insolent and polite, rigid and adaptable, submissive and resentful of being pushed around, loyal and treacherous, brave and timid, conservative and hospitable to new ways...”

Ambiguity and Harmony

In Japanese culture, ambiguity and harmony are two of the distinctive features which means they avoid expressing their ideas clearly which means they do not say yes or no directly because they do not want to create any serious problem for the group's harmony (Davies & Ikeno, 2011).

Shame Culture

Japanese care a lot about what other people think of them, therefore, external forces tend to influence the behavior pattern and choices of themselves (Benedict, 2005).

Research Methodology

The Population and Sampling Technique

As the purpose of the study was to identify the different communicative functions of language presented in the novel 'The Guest Cat' (Hiraide, 2014), thus this study involved the 29-chapter and a 140-pages novella. To meet the established research's objectives (identify the use of communicative functions and various functions of language presented in this novel), this study used a convenience sampling technique from the population (the whole content of the novel) to provide sufficient data to the researcher. these data were collected to present major language functions (referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic, poetic) with diverse forms and distinctive cultural characteristics and the researcher could carry on the analysis to answer the different questions.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative approach for the collection and analyses of data. The design of the study relied on the principles of interpretive and critical social sciences (Neuman, 2014) which emphasized on conducting a detailed examination of the data from the novel based on an empirical judgment of the six communicative functions of the language. An inductive approach was used in which similar data were grouped to identify and categorized together to deepen an understanding of finding what is being asked in the research questions (Goddard & Melville, 2004).

Research Instrument

The 29 chapters of the novel (see Table 3.1) were used as instruments for the selection and gathering of data. And then the data selected were the subject for the analysis and interpretation. This instrument was paired with the checklist as a guide for the organization of the different communicative functions found.

Results and Discussion

The findings and analysis of research question 1

All six different communicative functions were found in the novel, the Guest Cat, these include, the referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic function. These functions lay in the intersection of the characters, the narrations, and the monologues of the writer.

Among them:

1. The referential function was dominant and fundamental. This underlay most of the expressions that were used broadly to convey messages.

2. The emotive function that expressed the addresser's attitude and feeling is found in the narrations and monologues.
3. The phatic function is found in the conversation but normally with physical contact.
4. The conative function is mostly presented in the conversation between interlocutors.

The findings illustrated that no function had to be limited to any particular linguistic structure, as this emerges from the communicative context as a whole (Linask, 2018). As the communicative function of language is one of the universal characteristics of any language, these are viewed as constant no matter how and to whom they are carried out (Astifo, 2017). These can be acquired unconsciously based on a speaker's culture and environment. For, the language communicative function in English however, especially for EFL or English as foreign language learners, these should be learned consciously. As Astifo (2017) suggested, to achieve the purpose of expression in real-life communication can be applied accordingly based on the context and needs of communication.

Communication in general is an indispensable part of any community life, thus learners need to follow things beyond words, the function of utterances, and the communicative function of language. They need to know how to say something as well as when, where, and to whom to say it (Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019).

The findings and analysis of research question 2

In this novel, the writer used the above six functions to

1. narrate an event with the time and the place; narrate the process of a conversation, describe the situation with details; describe the characters' personality.
2. express the character's personal feeling and attitude to something or someone.
3. express the plea, advise, and persuasion to change other's behavior.
4. start a conversation, keep a good relationship with the interlocutor and maintain conversation line
5. explain the contextual meaning of a specific code to make sure they were comprehensible and usable.
6. create specific expression effects by using creative use of languages such as rhetoric devices and diction.

Through analyzing all the examples, the study found that at least one function presented in the effective communication, however, it was rare that a message only expressed one function, in other words, the functions rather appeared in the communicative situation as a whole. This identifies Hebert (2011)'s assertion that the classifications of the six communicative functions of language do not mean they should be thought as mutually exclusive, rather, each utterance can be classified into the function whose primary purpose it serves, and it is sometimes up to the discretion of the reader/listener to determine the intent behind the messages expressed.

The findings and analysis of research question 3

In this novel, cultural features were found to influence the usage of six communicative functions of language. These cultural features include

1. the patterns of Japanese culture such as harmony, contradictions, ambiguity.
2. the symbol of Japanese cultures such as divination, sumo, calligraphy, traditional architectural art, kanji, traditional folklore, symbolic color, the monarchy, and the Emperor.
3. the characteristics of Japanese communication behavior such as politeness, silence, refrain, reserve, ambiguity, and smiling (Midooka, 1990).
4. The belief of Japanese people such as belief in life and death, Buddhism-influenced philosophy and western-influenced philosophy *Fortuna*, belief in a lucky cat.

These cultural features influenced the way the writer narrated the story, expressed the characters' feelings, attitudes, and emotions, described the time, places, environments, and the characters' personalities, also influenced the way the characters communicated with each other. On the other hand, how the readers comprehend these cultural features depends on his/her cultural background. Shepherd (2002) asserted that there are culture-specific differences between different cultural background readers, as literature does not intend to urge people to believe or act in any particular way. Instead, writers offer cues for readers to draw inferences.

Cruz (2010) asserted that culture opens the door for L2 students to gain their knowledge of the target culture as they can critically reflect on people's way of life, behavior, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and consider how these elements manifest in different language categories. When L2 learners pay attention to the culture alongside the language, they can not only find the influence of the target language culture but also develop critical thinking about what their own culture's response has been. Teaching culture increases students' cultural awareness and makes them more sympathetic to people across the world, this can be called intercultural communicative competence that is another objective of ELT.

Discussion of the overall findings

The findings illustrate how the novel provided rich samples of the communicative functions of language in real life. The novel "The Guest Cat" shows how language can be communicated depending on its function, such as face-to-face and simultaneous communication between the characters and non-face-to-face, non-simultaneous communication between the writer and the reader (Zhang, 2013).

In terms of the usage of different communicative functions of language in the novel, the analysis of data found that

1. The referential function was used extensively to convey the messages about the storyline and details mentioned above.

2. The conative function was used to express the addresser's request, requirement, and permission that can change the addressee's attitude or behavior.
3. The phatic function was used to keep the communicative line during physical contact.
4. The metalinguistic played a role in explaining codes in order for the addressee to understand including the cultural symbols and other codes in the context in this novel.
5. The emotive function was used to express the writer himself and other characters' personal feelings, attitudes, and emotions which appeared normally in the monologues and narrations.
6. The writer used the poetic function by means of rhetorical devices and word choice to express special effects for its own sake which means this function needed no immediate response or physical contact and normally appeared in the narrations and monologues.

The above six functions did not work on their own individual but cooperated to fulfil multiple expression needs (Hebert, 2011). The analysis also found when the reader used the function of language principle to analyze the text of the novel they were closer to the writer and could better understand the patent and latent meaning of the words, phrases, and discourses of the novel for they needed to read the texts carefully with all details.

In terms of the cultural features that influenced the communicative functions of language, on the one hand, as Japanese writer, the writer encompassed Japanese cultural features into his novel which influenced his style of expression in the novel. On the other hand, the readers used their cultural background to interpret the novel. Eaglestone (2017) argued that in reading the readers decode the language of the text to find the ideas the writer has hidden within. Keeping the consciousness of the cultural features in the novel can help the reader deeply understand the culture-specific difference in the use of the communicative function of language. Conversely, paying attention to how people communicate in the novel by using different functions of language can help the readers learn more about the contextual cultural patterns.

Considering that different functions have different characters and play different roles in communication, the findings have different pedagogical implications for teaching and learning. the suggestions to teach communicative function are presented accordingly as follows:

1. The referential function

This function is crucial to conveying contextual meaning appropriately between communicators. Without understanding and deliberately using this function in their communication, students will not be able to communicate effectively whether in spoken or written forms. Therefore, Teachers should teach this function explicitly to build on students' contextual knowledge and social-cognitive awareness by utilizing models from various genres

of materials. By observing, analyzing, and imitating the uses of this function from the models, the students can familiarize this function and apply it in both written and spoken communication.

2. The emotive function

This function expresses the communicators' feeling or attitude to somebody and something and correspondingly reflect the personality of the speakers. People communicate not only to transmit information but also to exchange feelings. Without emotive function, the communication may be dull or boring, and lack of attraction and appeal to the listeners. Learning plenty of real-used examples of emotive function expressions in the literature and accumulating common emotive words and phrases to build a word bank can help students get familiar and use this function, afterward make their utterances more expressive.

3. The conative function

This function is to change the thoughts and actions of others. The study showed that the tone and intensity of conative expression are different in different situations. Misuse of this function may cause conflict between communicators or weak influence on the addressee. Teaching common conative structures by analyzing the relevant models in the literature and raising awareness of the factors that affect the usages will help students to get used to and apply this function appropriately in the specific communication context.

4. The phatic function

This study identified that people frequently use the phatic function in communication to break the silence, start a conversation, express respect, politeness, and empathy. This function was ignored all the time in China's ELT because few teachers explicitly mentioned or taught it in the ELT classroom. Although the phatic expressions normally are just short and brief utterances like "really?" "good job", they can increase the listener's perception of the speaker's language proficiency. Therefore, Students should get familiar with structures and types of imperatives expressions and practice using them in different registers by imitating the models presented in the materials.

5. The metalinguistic function

The study showed that metalinguistic function often appears in the communication to clarify whether the interlocutors understand each other about a specific term (code) in the context. In ELT, teaching students to use clarification/repair strategies to make themselves understood and issue indicators of non-understanding to acquire explanations are necessary and beneficial. On the other hand, teachers also need to use this function to make students understand some unusual terms or expressions. Again, relevant models can choose from literary works or other materials.

6. The poetic function

This function gets the greatest benefit from the literature learning because the study illustrated that this function was used frequently in a novel which made the messages in

communication more colorful, vivid, or gains other special effects. The use of this function, such as the use of metaphor and simile in daily communication or in written work can obviously make the spoken and written communication more attractive, expressive, and avoid dullness and tediousness. Interpreting examples from literary works of various genres and subjects can help students not only appreciate the charm of literature but also understand how the writer used these language functions to realize this charm.

Conclusion

This study has three research objectives as underpinnings, 1) to identify the different communicative functions presented in the novel, *the Guest Cat*; 2) to determine the usage of the different communicative functions of language presented in the novel, *the Guest Cat*, and 3) to identify the cultural features that influence the communicative functions of language in the novel, *the Guest Cat*.

The findings of the three questions supported by the three objectives listed above have indicated that there were six communicative functions of the language used by the writer/narrator in the novel. Every meaningful language unit, for instance, a word, phrase, clause, dialogue, and the plot contained one or more than one of these functions. These were referential function, emotive function, conative function, phatic function, metalinguistic and poetic function. These functions were used in the novel to narrate the storyline, portray the characters and personalities of the characters, explain the socio-economic and cultural background, and reveal the theme of the novel, that is, to achieve the writer's writing intention. Moreover, cultural features found in the novel illustrated the way people used the communicative function of the language was influenced by their cultural background. These impacts were reflected in the way people conveyed the information, the extent people persuaded others to change their behavior, the way people greeted to each other to keep their good relationship, the way people explained the meanings of specific terms, the way people expressed their personal emotion or feeling, and the words the writer used to generate a special effect of expression.

Communication is the way people exchange information or messages. Language is a tool while communication is the process of using that tool. Language form focuses on words and grammar, while communication focuses on the message. This study explored a possible method to introduce the communicative functions to English learners by interpreting the examples in the novel 'The Guest Cat'. Through this method, the students can foster their awareness of the communicative functions, and afterward improve communicative competence by using these functions.

The analysis result illustrated the communicative functions of language play critical roles in communicating effectively and fulfilling the writer's specific writing intentions. This implied that familiarizing and using these functions flexibly can improve English learners' language proficiency and realize effective communication in any context. Meanwhile, literary works provide rich sources of the use of these functions such as the examples presented in the

novel. Therefore, using literary works such as a novel, or other genres works as a model of learning the communicative function of language is beneficial and feasible. Furthermore, the study illustrated that cultural features influence the way people use these functions. Therefore, cultivating cultural awareness should be included in the learning of communicative functions.

In China, ELT teachers do not explicitly involve the communicative functions in their teaching. Therefore, this study suggests the ELT materials for higher-grade students, such as high school students and undergraduate students can include this part. Meanwhile, the function learning process can adopt the methodology of interpreting literary work in this study. By familiarizing and applying these functions consciously, students will improve their expressing skills in both speaking and writing situations.

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