1. Preliminary Remarks

This paper presents an analysis of the 60th anniversary ceremony of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU for short hereafter) in China held in 2001 in a lecture theater with about 500 participants. The ceremony, lasting about 66 min, was videotaped live. The video streams were digitalized and stored in avi format. It is possible nowadays to approach a video text straightway without resorting to an orthographic transcription first. In other words, the orthographic transcription, or rather verbal representation will become secondary, playing a supplementary rather than primary role in data representation. This is the approach the present study adopts: It is a video-text-based analysis of BFSU’s 60th anniversary rather than an orthographic transcription-based or audio-text-based study.

The paper narrowly focuses on the issue of how 500 participants’ individual behaviors constitute an institutional birthday ceremony. This is an interesting issue because, in a sense, although the ceremony is embodied in the interactions between the participants, it is NOT a simple sum of all the individual participants’ behaviors put together, just as a print text, embodied in single sentences, is not a simple sum of the sentences.
2. **Institutional Anniversary Ceremony as Behavior of a System: A Triple-Component Model**

So let us start with this working definition of an anniversary ceremony of a social institution: It is an interaction between a system, i.e., the host institution, BFSU, and participants, i.e., those attending the ceremony to mark a special occasion that is held dear by and to, the system (see Section 3 below for fine-tuning the definition). The nature of the interaction is considered to be neither interpersonal or intrapersonal, the macro (i.e., the system) versus the micro (i.e., the individual). I shall “transcend” the dichotomy by adopting Coleman’s triple-component model, a trichotomy, so to speak. Coleman suggests “explaining behavior of a social system by means of three components: the effects of properties of the system on the constraints or orientations of actors; the actions of actors who are within the system; and the combination or interaction of those actions, bringing about the systemic behavior” (1990: 27).

Coleman’s three components are generic, and need to be rendered study-specific. In the present case, the three components will be: (1) BFSU’s effects on the participants; (2) the participants’ actions; and (3) the ceremony, i.e., the “systemic behavior” of the system as a result of the interactions of the participants whose behavior was both enabled and framed by the system. While it is true to say that an anniversary ceremony is materialized in the participants’ actions, they carry the “stamps” of the system. There are interactions not only between participants themselves, but also between the participants and the system. For ease of reference, the way we look at the data will be captured as a triple-component model of an institutional anniversary ceremony as systemic behavior, as is graphically shown in Figure 17.1.

![Figure 17.1. A triple-component model](image-url)