

言语反讽的关联理论研究

——《傲慢与偏见》个案分析

A Relevance-Theoretic Approach to Verbal Irony:
A Case Study of *Pride and Prejudice*

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序

《言语反讽的关联理论研究——〈傲慢与偏见〉个案分析》是赵虹博士在她的博士论文基础上撰写的一部研究言语反讽的著述。听到本书即将出版的消息，我由衷地为赵虹博士感到高兴。三年苦读，顺利毕业并获得博士学位，如今专著即将付梓，可喜可贺。

对反讽现象的研究自柏拉图时代就已经开始了，在历史的长河中，反讽现象一直是修辞学家和语言学家所热衷研究的对象，到目前为止，有关反讽的论著已是浩如烟海。在国内，至少已有两篇博士论文从认知和语用的角度对反讽进行了深入系统的研究。一篇是文旭博士的《反讽话语的认知语用研究》（中国社会科学出版社2004年版），另一篇是曾衍桃博士的《言语交际中反讽话语的理解——语用认知研究》（2006年改称为《反讽论》，由中国社会科学出版社出版）。两位博士分别是周流溪教授和何自然教授的高徒，两篇博士论文不仅是反讽研究领域的亮点，而且代表了反讽研究的新高度。当赵虹在博士论文开题中提出要研究反讽时，我不禁为她捏了一把汗。我当时问的一个问题就是：你准备在哪些方面进行创新，理论上还是方法上？赵虹的回答是：运用关联理论对《傲慢与偏见》中的言语反讽进行研究。这一回答反倒让我为这一选题更增加了几分担忧。一方面，用关联理论来研究反讽会不会只是重复已有的研究？另一方面，对《傲慢与偏见》中反讽的研究

也已经很多了,如何有新的突破?还有,以《傲慢与偏见》中的反讽作为语料能不能达到博士论文的工作量?经过反复论证,论文的脉络越来越清晰,我的顾虑也逐一被消除了。论文将以Yus在关联理论基础上提出的“反讽的最佳可及性标准”为理论框架,从语境激活、最佳可及性和诗学效果等方面对《傲慢与偏见》中的言语反讽进行研究。在论文的撰写过程中,赵虹不但对《傲慢与偏见》进行了反复的阅读,而且对其中的反讽现象逐一分析、归类、阐释,并最终把这块硬骨头啃了下来。过程虽然艰辛,但结果令人欣慰。论文以优异成绩通过了匿名评审,并在论文答辩中获得了答辩委员会的一致好评。赵虹的博士论文不但从关联理论的角度对反讽现象作出了令人满意的阐释,而且为解读奥斯汀言语反讽艺术的独特魅力提供了一个新的视角。

赵虹博士基础扎实,勤奋好学,在学术上有着执著的追求。本书的出版只是赵虹博士在学术道路上的一个起点,还有更多的领域和问题等待她去研究和探索。记得赵虹在山东师范大学攻读硕士学位期间就已经对关联理论产生了浓厚的兴趣,并专门跟我借阅了这方面的论文和书籍。经过反复研读,她对关联理论的理解越来越渗透,发表了一些学术论文。这为她后来博士论文的撰写打下了坚实的基础。如果从1986年Sperber和Wilson的专著《关联:交际与认知》的出版算起,关联理论已有二十多年的历史。在过去的十几年中,关联理论一度成为语言学研究的一个热点。尽管如此,该理论中的许多问题仍然值得我们进行更加深入的研究和探讨。在国内,许多人热衷于语言学理论的介绍,这是好事,但是理论介绍到国内之后,很少会有人静下心来去对这些理论进行更加深入的研究。希望赵虹博士继续保持勤奋好学的优点,迎难而上,在这一方面贡献出更多的研究成果。

苗兴伟

2008年12月于山东大学

前 言

本书是在作者 2007 年的博士学位论文《言语反讽的关联理论研究——〈傲慢与偏见〉个案分析》的基础上撰写而成的。全书共分七章：第一章为引言。第二章为文献综述，从语义、语用和心理语言学三个方面对反讽研究进行述评。第三章至第六章为本书的主体部分。其中，第三章阐明了研究的关联理论框架；第四章至第六章在该理论框架下对《傲慢与偏见》中的言语反讽进行个案研究。第七章为结论，总结了研究成果、局限性和未来的研究方向。

本书是在关联理论取得的研究成果的基础上，以言语反讽作为个案，综合地解释了反讽用法所基于的生成和运作机制以及它可能产生或意欲获得的交际效果，从而充分地揭示了反讽意义的丰富性、功能的多样性以及用法的复杂性。其研究焦点集中在文学文本中的反讽话语的理解上。言语反讽是对先前某种意义的回声式解释，从而传达说者对该话语意义的贬抑性态度。因此，识别言语反讽的关键在于找到话语的回声性和说者对话语所持的贬抑态度。多源语境信息的激活可以加速对反讽话语的识别。语境信息与命题内容所提供的信息之间的某种不相容性突显了说者的贬抑态度，从而帮助听者识别话语的反讽意图。所探索到的不相容性越多，反讽越容易被提取和处理。本书进一步运用关联理论框架分析文学文本中的反讽话语。为了实现最佳关联，作者对读者

的语境资源作出判断与推测,通过含蓄地表达贬抑态度表明她与读者具有一定的同谋程度。为了对反讽话语作出最佳相关的理解,读者需要付出努力扩展语境。其结果是交际双方的关系更加亲密,言语反讽的诗学效果应运而生。

本书的重要研究意义在于运用上述理论框架对《傲慢与偏见》中的反讽话语进行个案研究,并采用定性与定量分析相结合的方法。这些理论探讨和实际应用又能进而导出更深层次的引申。这些引申比如前所述的那些论断的意义更为深远。一方面,对《傲慢与偏见》反讽话语的个案研究证明了关联理论框架下的反讽理解模式在文学文本分析中的可行性和强大的阐释力,进而拓宽了关联理论的应用范围;另一方面,该模式也为解读奥斯汀言语反讽艺术的独特魅力提供了一个新的视角,从而在认知语用学与文学批评结合研究方面进行了一次有意义的尝试,作为文学语用学发展的有机组成部分值得更深入的研究。

本书成稿前受到我的导师苗兴伟教授的精心指导和巨大鼓励。苗教授平易近人,为人正直,治学态度严谨,特别是在研究方法上让我获益良多。同时,我也有幸得到北京大学姜望琪教授、河南大学牛保义教授、南京国际关系学院张辉教授、中国海洋大学张德禄教授,以及山东大学博士生导师刘振前教授和王俊菊教授的点拨。此外,山东大学出版社为本书的出版给予了极大的支持,在此一并表示诚挚的感谢。

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作 者

2008年12月于济南

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Despite the assistance of others, I remain solely responsible for all the misconceptions and misinterpretations in this book.

Abstract

The present book is based on the author's dissertation in 2007, entitled "A Relevance-Theoretic Approach to Verbal Irony: A Case Study of *Pride and Prejudice*". Based on the achievements made within the relevance-theoretic framework, the book takes verbal irony as a case and presents a comprehensive account of the generative and operative mechanisms underlying its use as well as the communicative effects it may produce or is intended to achieve in order to fully reveal its richness of meaning, diversity of function and complexity of use, especially in the case of literary texts.

With Sperber and Wilson's *echoic-interpretation theory of irony* and the relevance-theoretic approach to context as background, Yus's model of irony comprehension is utilized as the core of the theoretical framework of the present study. The echoic-interpretation theory of irony defines verbal irony as a variety of echoic interpretive use, in which the communicator dissociates herself from the opinion echoed with accompanying ridicule or scorn. Therefore, for the identification of verbal irony it is essential to find the echoic quality of the utterance and the

speaker's attitude of dissociation towards this utterance. Although the echoic-interpretation theory of irony is more explanatory and predictive than the classical approaches, Sperber and Wilson do not specify how the hearer identifies the speaker's dissociative attitude during the process of irony comprehension. As a further development of Sperber and Wilson's hypothesis, Yus's model of irony comprehension assumes that some kind of incompatibility between the information provided by contextual sources and the proposition expressed by the utterance is necessary to foreground the speaker's dissociative attitude, thus helping the hearer to grasp the ironic interpretation of utterances. The identification of verbal irony can be speeded up with the multiple activation of contextual sources. Yus summarizes seven irony-relevant contextual sources; A. Encyclopedic, factual information; B. Mutually manifest physical environment (setting); C. Speaker's nonverbal behavior; D. Addressee's background knowledge of addresser's biographical data; E. Mutual knowledge; F. Previous utterances in the conversation; G. Linguistic cues. Yus's *criterion of optimal accessibility to irony* has been proposed to account for the different possibilities in irony comprehension. The spirit of his criterion is that the more (simultaneous) incompatibilities detected by the hearer, the easier to access and process verbal irony.

In addition, an exploration is done with the applications of the theoretical framework to the analysis of ironic utterances in literary works. The relevance-theoretic framework can answer the question; what is it about the implicit expression of ridicule or contempt that gives rise to poetic effects associated with ver-

bal irony? In order to achieve optimal relevance, the writer has to estimate the reader's contextual resources in order to make decisions about the means of conveying her thoughts. By leaving her attitude implicit, the writer of an ironic utterance conveys a suggestion of complicity, that is, the reader and the writer share assumptions about what, for example, is ridiculous or absurd. The search for the optimally relevant interpretation of ironic utterances will lead in some cases to a wide extension of context and the consequent accessing of a large range of implicatures. The result is what Sperber and Wilson have defined as poetic effects, and the effort that the reader expends is rewarded by a closer relationship with the ironist. All these ideas form a bridge of applying the relevance-theoretic approach to verbal ironies in literary communication.

More significantly, on the basis of the theoretical framework discussed above, this book makes a case study of verbal irony in *Pride and Prejudice*. Quantitative as well as qualitative analysis is employed in the study to give statistic support to the findings. The first effort is devoted to a tentative study of the multiple activation of contextual sources in the comprehension of ironic utterances which are taken from *Pride and Prejudice*. The book enumerates typical examples for each category of irony-relevant contextual sources and makes a relevance-theoretic analysis of each of them to see how the contextual sources can be simultaneously activated to assist in the determination of the addresser's ironic intention. Then, the criterion of optimal accessibility to irony is explored in detail. As have been shown in the three prototypical cases exemplified by ironic examples taken

from *Pride and Prejudice*, the echoic-interpretation theory of irony may be complemented with a model of contextual activation which explains the identification of the speaker's attitude of dissociation and also the fact that the hearer may not be easily led to an ironic interpretation, or even choose a different interpretation from the ironic one intended. Finally, an in-depth study is conducted on the poetic effects of echoic irony in *Pride and Prejudice*. Three main kinds of poetic effects are produced in the novel; satirical humorous effect, joyous and cordial effect and vigilant effect. Among them, satirical humor is Austen's favorite style of writing and satirical humorous effect is the poetic effect that she exploits various devices to achieve.

These theoretical discussions and practical applications, in turn, lead to further implications, which are more significant than the claims themselves. On the one hand, the case study of *Pride and Prejudice* proves the feasibility and the strong explanatory power of the relevance-theoretic approach to verbal irony in literary works, making contributions to the wider range of application of relevance theory; on the other hand, the relevance-theoretic study on verbal irony provides a new perspective on the unique charm of Jane Austen's art of verbal irony, making a significant attempt to the combination of cognitive pragmatics and literary criticism. As a part of the development of literary pragmatics, it calls for further studies.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

As one of interesting and significant phenomena in conversational interactions, verbal irony has been puzzling scholars for years. So far, there is still no conformity as to its definition. To make it worse, none of previous researches can satisfactorily describe and interpret this language phenomenon. The present book is based on the author's dissertation in 2007, entitled "A Relevance-Theoretic Approach to Verbal Irony: A Case Study of *Pride and Prejudice*". Based on the achievements made within the relevance-theoretic framework, the book takes verbal irony as a case and presents a comprehensive account of the generative and operative mechanisms underlying its use as well as the communicative effects it may produce or is intended to achieve in order to fully reveal its richness of meaning, diversity of function and complexity of use, especially in the case of literary texts.

1.1 Facts and questions about verbal irony

At its simplest, verbal irony refers to spoken words only, a linguistic phenomenon. The linguistic pragmatist who attempts