姚俊 著

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Yao Jun

September, 2007

言语反讽(或称"反语")是一种较为常用的语言现象,对这一现象的研究具有非常悠久的历史,研究所涉及的面也非常广泛(Colston & Gibbs 2007: 3)。作为一种修辞手段,言语反讽历来是修辞学、文体学和文学研究中所关注的研究对象。言语反讽的机理和社会文化特征又是哲学、心理学、人类学和社会学所探讨的内容。而从现代语言学的角度来研究言语反讽,则主要是在最近三四十年中,随着语用学和认知语言学的兴起而展开的。近年来国外此类研究中最为重要和最有影响的一些成果都收录在 A Brief History of Irony(Colston & Gibbs 2007)中。姚俊博士在本书中的研究顺应了这一当代语言学发展的潮流,对汉英电视辩论语料中出现的言语反讽现象,从形式、功能、语用和认知的角度进行了较为深入、系统的探究。

本书的基础是作者于 2005 年在上海外国语大学完成的外国语言学及应用语言学方向的博士论文。我觉得,作为一篇博士学位论文,其创新性和贡献主要体现在如下三大方面:

首先,本书以认知语言学中的原型理论为基础,提出了一个综合性的言语反讽本质观,并在此基础上确定了鉴别言语反 讽的基本原则,为汉英言语反讽对比建立了一个合理的比较平 台。

在一些修辞学论著中,英语中的 irony 常常被认为是与汉语中的"反语"基本相同的两个修辞格。但是,通过对大量汉英文献的阅读、梳理和比较,姚俊博士发现,英语中的 irony一词具有远比汉语中的"反语"更为为宽泛的含义。即便除去dramatic irony 和 situational irony 等其他类型的 irony 不论,仅

就本书的研究对象 verbal irony 而言,其含义也要比汉语中所说的"反语"宽泛和复杂得多。那么,作为一项汉英对比研究,究竟是采用英语中的 verbal irony,还是汉语中的反语来作为对比描述的出发点和参照点,即两种语言的共同对比基础(简称TC,见许余龙 2002: §2.2,2007)呢?这是每一项对比研究首先需要解决的问题。本书在原则上采用英语中的 verbal irony 作为对比描述的 TC,并特意采用"反讽"作为 irony 的汉译,以示与汉语中的"反语"相区别。

然而,英语中的 verbal irony 本身是一个宽泛、复杂和含糊的概念。例如,在 Webster's New Millennium™ Dictionary of English 中,verbal irony 的定义是: "a figure of speech in which what is said is the opposite of what is meant(言语反讽是一种修辞格,其所说的与所表达的意思相反)"。这个定义十分简洁,似乎也很明了,但是对其理解却可以见仁见智。比如,究竟什么是所说的,什么是所表达的,在什么意义上两者的意思相反,对于这些问题各人可以有各人不同的见解。而且,Colston和Gibbs(2007: 4)甚至认为,"在大多数(而且有可能是全部的)言语反讽实例中,所理解的并非对应于所说话语的相反意义",因为我们很难清楚地确定什么是话语字面意义的相反意义,实际上甚至连话语表达的字面意义本身是什么也很难断定。

因此,姚俊博士在制定鉴别言语反讽的基本原则之前,首 先在前人研究的基础上提出了如下一个综合性的言语反讽本质 观:"反讽是一个基于原型的范畴,反讽话语和非反讽话语之间 没有明确的界限;反讽通常被用来表达说话者对某事物或者某 个人的评价;反讽的认知往往是因为听话者在语境信息的提示 下察觉到该话语中隐含着某种不相容性而促成的;反讽的使用 必须达到某种语用效果。" 在这一基于原型理论的言语反讽本质观的指导下,本书确定了鉴别言语反讽的基本原则,用于识别和厘定在实际话语交际中使用的言语反讽。其基本观点是:"听话者对反讽话语中存在的多层面的不相容性的察觉是确认反讽的一个必要因素。要辨认一句话语是否为反讽,应该衡量它与原型反讽的相似性而不是看它是否具备了反讽所有的区别性特征。"

这一基于原型理论的言语反讽本质观和鉴别原则与经典范畴理论形成了鲜明的对照。在经典的亚里士多德范畴理论中,范畴是由一套必要和充分条件来定义的。范畴与范畴之间具有明确的界线。项目的归类也是非此即彼:要么是某个范畴的成员,要么是非成员;而且亦无程度上的差异。而基于原型理论的范畴观则认为,原型是某一范畴的典型实例,其他实例是根据其与原型的相似性而归入该范畴的,并具有与原型不同的相似程度。就言语反讽而言,言语交际中实际出现的不同的反讽实例,视其与反讽原型的相似程度而具有不同的反讽值。姚俊博士综合采纳了 Utsumi(2000)和 Yus(2000)研究成果的合理内核,并作了适当的修正和补充,提出了具体确定反讽实例的反讽值的 6 个因子:(1)话语对说话者期望的提及程度;(2)话语的语用不诚实度;(3)话语对否定或者肯定意态的间接表达程度;(4)不依赖语境的话语本身的合意度;(5)说话者期望的显性程度;(6)话语的语用效力。

近年来,国外遵循类似的思路所作的进一步博士学位论文研究有Kalbermatten(2006)。这说明,本书立论的基本理念把握住了当代外国语言学研究的思潮流变,是处于同类研究的前沿的。

其次,本书以上述言语反讽的本质观和鉴别原则为基础, 紧扣书名中所说的"言语反讽的形式与功能",从形式和功能两 方面进一步对所确立的 TC 进行细化,为本书的主体内容—— 汉英言语反讽实证对比研究,构建了一个具体的、具有可操作 性、可重复和验证的对比分析框架。

在言语反讽的形式方面,本书系统梳理了说话者用于实现 反讽而采用的语用语言形式。对于听话者而言,这些语用语言 形式构成了将话语识别为反讽的语用语言提示。同时,对于话 语分析者而言,这些语用语言形式也构成了将话语识别为反讽 的具体形式标准。这些语用语言提示主要分为如下 4 类:(1) 词汇提示,包括使用具有固有的非常强的正面或负面含义的名 词、极端性形容词、强化副词、指示词、称呼或指称语、谚语 等;(2)句法提示,如使用焦点主题化和平行结构等;(3)一 些典型用于实现反讽的修辞手段的应用,如夸张、含蓄渲染、 明喻、隐喻、双关、委婉、仿拟、设问等;(4)一些常用于表 达在其他情况下可能发生、但与现实情况或真实情感不符的语 用行为或策略的应用。

在言语反讽的功能方面,本书将实际话语交际中说话者使用的反讽语用策略和听话者对反讽的应答方式结合在一起研究。这是一种明智的处理方法,因为作为话语分析者,我们可以从听话者对反讽的典型应答方式中,反观、推测和进一步确定说话者使用反讽的语用目的,即言语反讽在话语交际中的功能。作者在总结前人研究的基础上,从反讽对听话者以及对说话者与听话者之间的关系所产生的影响的角度,归纳了言语反讽的4个主要语用功能:(1)强调说话者的反讽态度,特别是负面评价态度;(2)用于戏谑调侃;(3)用于维护面子;(4)建立团派关系。

为了进一步评估言语反讽的语用功能,作者结合实际话语语境,将听话者对反讽的应答方式分为如下 4 类: (1) 直接应

答,针对反讽隐含义提出严肃的反对或纠正;(2)间接应答,接着反讽字面义作进一步调侃;(3)以笑来应对;(4)以沉默或转移话题的方式不予直接回应。

姚俊博士的这种结合应答的反讽功能研究模式,符合当代 反讽研究的重点从局限于对反讽话语本身的修辞功能和心理实 现研究,转向对自然交际话语中交际双方实际使用和感受的反 讽进行研究的总趋势。近年来,国外采用这一研究模式所作的 进一步博士学位论文研究有Christodoulidou(2006)。这说明, 本书的研究方法同样也是把握住了当代外国语言学研究的思潮 流变,处于同类研究的前沿。

最后,本书采用上述研究方法和用此研究方法建立具体分析框架,首次对中美电视辩论节目中的言语反讽现象进行了较为系统全面的汉英对比研究,并从语言、认知和文化的角度探讨了造成汉英差异的原因。

为此,作者首先精心选取了著名的中美电视辩论节目作为对比分析的汉英语料。这些中美电视辩论节目由一两位有名的主持人主持,辩论的内容是关于公众所关注的当前焦点时政问题,辩论双方通常都是某一时政问题的专家学者,代表了正反不同意见,可以自由即席发表自己意见。这样的语料具有在语场、语旨和语式三方面的语域(register)对应性,从而确保了所选汉英语料的可比性和对比结果的可信性。

在进行具体的语料对比分析之前,作者就反讽的应答方式与反讽功能之间的联系提出了如下理论假设:在正式公开辩论场合,如果听话者针对反讽隐含义直接应答,那么反讽的主要语用功能是负面评价;如果听话者对反讽字面义作间接应答,那么反讽的主要语用功能是以幽默的方式建立团派关系;如果听话者以笑或沉默来应对,那么反讽的主要语用功能是以调侃

的方式维护面子。这样,作者通过对汉英语料的分析,不仅可 以对比在相似的语用场合,具有不同文化背景的中国和美国人 在使用言语反讽的形式、功能和应答方式上的异同,而且也可 以检验上述理论假设是否同时适用于解释中国和美国人为何使 用言语反讽。研究所得出的结论,作者已经在书中表述得很清 楚了,在此不再赘述。

总之,本书的特点是从言语反讽的本质入手,提出了一套识别反讽的基本原则,构建了一个研究反讽的对比描述框架,着重对比分析了汉英两种语言在言语反讽的运用和应答方面的异同。作者采用定性研究与定量分析相结合的方法,研究设计规范合理,结构严谨,例证翔实,分析细致,数据充分,结论可信。

王尔敏先生在谈及他研习思想史的心得做法时指出,他治 史的目的之一是"锻炼超然的观察能力,历练缜密辨析问题的 习性,培养追逐抽象思路的耐心"(转引自李洪岩,2007)。我 觉得,这同样也是语言学治学的目的之一,同时这一说法也凝 练地概括了治学的主要方法。本书在问题的观察和辨析,以及 理论的抽象提升方面下了不少功夫,作了有益的尝试,读者一 定可以从中获益。

当然,这并非意味着,本书对汉英言语反讽的研究已经尽善尽美了。书中所涉及的许多问题仍值得进一步研究,这在本书的最后一节中已提到。仅就本书对比研究的出发点和参照点,即英语中的 verbal irony 的汉译而言,正如其他一些研究者(如Colston & Gibbs 2007)所指出,以及本书对 verbal irony 的功能研究所表明的那样,大部分所谓的"言语反讽"既无"反"意,又无"讽"图。如果确实是这样的话,那么"言语反讽"似乎并非是 verbal irony 的好译名。然而,由于中美语言文化的差异,

要定一个贴切的译名确非易事,至少我还没有想出来。这同时 也说明,做任何一项汉外对比研究,仅依据一些表面的相似之 处而立论似乎并不难,但要深究其本质却没有那么容易了。我 们还需要不断努力。

> 许余龙 上海外国语大学语言研究院 2008年2月19日

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Abstract

This dissertation is intended to examine the similarities and differences of the use of verbal irony between two divergent languages: Mandarin Chinese and American English. The study is devoted to two aspects of irony: the pragma-linguistic forms and pragmatic strategies in irony realization (or the pragma-linguistic cues for irony), and the pragmatic functions of irony.

To conduct such a contrastive study, we must solve two crucial problems beforehand. One is how to identify an utterance as ironical; the other is how to set up a workable framework for the contrastive study on the complicated pragmatic phenomenon of irony.

In the attempt to work out the rationale for the identification of irony, a review of previous studies on the nature of irony is provided first. Then in view of these previous accounts, an integrated view on the nature of irony is formed: irony is a prototype-based category in that there is no clear-cut line between ironic and non-ironic utterances; it is generally employed by the speaker to make a critical comment on something or a person; it is recognizable because the hearer detects a certain incompatibility embedded in the utterance with the help of available contextual sources; and the use of irony must achieve at least a particular pragmatic effect. Given this integrated view on the nature of irony, a rationale for the identification of irony is proposed. It is held that the recognition of multi-dimensional incompatibilities is an

essential factor in the identification of irony, and the determination of whether an utterance is ironical or not should be based on the assessment of similarities between the utterance concerned and the prototype irony instead of identifying the co-existence of all the distinctive features of irony. The degree of ironicalness is calculated by a formula involving six values: the degree of Allusion of an utterance to the speaker's expectation, the degree of pragmatic Insincerity, the degree of indirect Expression of negative or positive attitude, the degree of context-independent Desirability, the degree of Manifestness of the speaker's expectation, and the degree of pragmatic Force.

In the effort to set up a framework for the contrastive study, the dissertation focuses on two issues: the pragma-linguistic forms and pragmatic strategies in irony realization, and the ways of responding to irony. Based on previous studies, a tentative list of the pragma-linguistic cues for irony is presented and major types of responses to irony are summarized, serving as the TC (tertium comparationis) for our contrastive case study.

To ensure the validity of the comparison, we confine our data to the context of pro and con TV debates. Both Chinese and English data are drawn from popular pro and con TV discussion programs, namely *Current Affairs Debates* from the Phoenix TV and *Crossfire* from the CNN. Altogether 139 Chinese instances of irony out of 176 *Current Affairs Debates* programs and 150 English instances out of 67 *Crossfire* programs are identified.

Our analysis of the data consists of two parts: the examination of the similarities and differences of the pragma-linguistic cues for irony between two languages and the investigation of the preferred ways of responding to irony in each language with a view to exploring the pragmatic functions of irony. The major findings in our first part of study are: 1) Chinese are particularly good at exploiting honorifies or marked terms of address to signal their ironic intention; 2) hyperbole is a favorite rhetorical device for Americans to realize irony; 3) rhetorical questions seem to be popular in both languages; 4) Chinese prefer to use innuendo (sometimes with the manipulation of proverbs) more than Americans do; and 5) in the use of the strategy of fallacious reasoning, it seems that Chinese ironists are good at analogical reasoning while English ironists are skilled in cause-and-effect reasoning. The major findings in the second part of our study include the following points: 1) Americans are less hesitant to counterattack than Chinese, which reveals that Americans attend to the critical and aggressive function of irony more frequently than Chinese in the context of formal public debates. 2) There are more cases of accepting the irony and playing along in American English data, showing that Americans are good at constructing a cooperative and playful atmosphere in group settings. It also indicates that even in the context of public competition, the humorous effect of irony does not go unnoticed, nor is it hampered by the dominant critical function. 3) Laughing seems to be a favored way of response to irony for the Chinese people, who seem to be aware of the face-saving function and opt to attend to the amusing function of irony. 4) In choosing not to commit any reaction to the irony, Chinese tend to keep silent whereas Americans prefer to change the topic. Finally the possible factors that result in these findings are explored from linguistic, cognitive

Forms and Functions of Verbal Irony in Mandarin Chinese and American English and cultural perspectives.

Key words: verbal irony; multi-dimensional incompatibilities; prototype-based category; ironic cues; pragma-linguistic forms and pragmatic strategies in irony realization; ways of responding to irony