

多视角英语语言文化 与外语教学

ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CULTURE
AND LANGUAGE TEACHING
FROM MULTIDIMENSIONAL
PERSPECTIVES



刘恒 著



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P 前言

Preface

本书收录了作者在英语语言研究、英美文学研究、跨文化分析研究以及英语作为第二语言的外语教学研究等方面取得的学术成果。本书绝大部分章节用英文撰写，个别章节用中文撰写，适用于英语专业学生、英语教师以及对英语语言文化感兴趣的读者。

本书的编写离不开老师们的指导和帮助。第一部分包括了作者在跨文化分析方面的研究论文，感谢我的老师、美国教授 Andy Kirkpatrick 对本部分的认真校正和修改，这部分的中心思想是本土化的英语变体必须反映本土语用原则和文化传统。

第二部分是英美文学研究部分，包括了作者在英美文学方面的研究论文，对英美文学史上的一些著名作家作品的鉴赏和评论，涉及查尔斯·狄更斯的《大卫·科波菲尔》、福克纳的《八月之光》、杰罗姆·大卫·塞林格唯一的一部长篇小说《麦田里的守望者》、英国女作家勃朗特姐妹之一——艾米莉·勃朗特的《呼啸山庄》、莎士比亚的《哈姆雷特》、乔叟的《坎特伯雷故事集》、霍桑的《红字》和梭罗的《瓦尔登湖》。

感谢我的老师 James Bruner 教授对英美文学评论部分《〈八月之光〉中的种族主义》、《〈呼啸山庄〉书评》、《人文主义者哈姆雷特》、《社会的叛逆：〈麦田里的守望者〉中的 Holden Caulfield》和《〈大卫·科波菲尔〉中的家庭概念》中准确的质疑、中肯的批评与认真的修改。感谢我的老师 Yiling Ru 教授对《坎特伯雷故事集》总引、《大卫·科波菲尔》的订正，尤其是指导我怎样认真严谨地做



References 部分, 怎样对不同的语言评论家的观点进行归纳、分析和对比, 并总结出自己的观点, 使我受益良多。

本书的第三部分是语言研究部分, 主要包括认知语言学中的概念隐喻研究、概念隐喻与英语成语研究以及概念隐喻与汉语成语研究等。感谢北京航空航天大学博士生导师、北京外国语大学兼职教授李福印先生, 对我的硕士毕业论文《汉语成语及其思维意象: 成语意义可论证性的实验研究》给予的指导, 教会我应以科学严谨的态度对待教学研究。

第四部分是关于英语作为第二语言的外语教学部分, 作者主要从语言学、行为主义心理学和认知主义心理学理论, 二语习得中的语言输入理论和人本主义教育理论出发, 对“以学习者为中心”这一议题进行理论探讨。作者还用卡方分析、相关分析、统计频率和百分率等对学习者学习主动性重视度进行了实验分析。而数据分析法越来越受到学术界的认可与欢迎。同时, 还要感谢澳大利亚 Rod Ellis 对《英语阅读教学》部分的启发, 澳大利亚埃迪斯科文大学 (ECU) 的教学方法和教育理念与我们国家的大学有很多不同, 不同的教学方法和教学氛围为外语教学增添了许多全新的教学理念和视角。

感谢北京农学院何忠伟教授为本书的出版做了大量的工作; 特别要感谢我的爱人王玉玮和儿子王恒铂, 对我的科研项目和研究工作给予无私支持和积极鼓励。本书的出版得到北京农学院外语部“网络与多媒体环境下的大学英语教学与研究”(项目编号: 2084115007) 科研课题基金资助。

著 者

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Part One Cross-culture Studies

ABC

In this part, Chinese English and American English will be contrasted and compared as two varieties of English to illustrate the argument that nativized varieties of English must reflect native pragmatic norms and cultural conventions. Some pragmatic norms and cultural conventions from each variety of English will be described and discussed, which would result in misconception, prejudice or hostile feelings among the interlocutors if these pragmatic norms and cultural conventions are not fully understood. Compliments and apologies are used here as two examples to illustrate the differences of pragmatic norms and cultural conventions in American English and Chinese English. In view of the problems mentioned above implications for cross cultural communication and language teaching will be presented.

The requirements for English teachers have been increased now. They are supposed not only to be bicultural themselves but also to help the students to understand the cultural differences. English teachers are expected to design programmes and use pedagogical theories concerning cultural differences. It is necessary to increase students' cross-cultural awareness so that fewer problems would arise in their interaction with people from another culture.



Apologizing

Abstract: Nativized varieties of English must reflect native pragmatic norms and cultural conventions. Apology, as a polite social behavior, was analyzed from the perspective of Chinese English speaker and American English speaker to emphasize the importance of the cross-cultural differences in pragmatic uses.

Key words: Apology American English speakers Chinese English speakers

Apology is a polite social behavior to maintain harmonious relationship between speakers, especially to save the face of the listener. It is offered by the speaker who publicly acknowledges that he or she has done what he or she is forbidden, or he or she has not done what is supposed to do. Politeness, in an interaction, can be defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face, which means the public self-image of a person and refers to the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. Politeness can be accomplished in situations of social distance or closeness. Showing awareness for another person's face when that one seems socially distant is often described in terms of respect or deference. Showing the equivalent awareness when the other is socially close is often described in terms of friendliness, camaraderie, or solidarity.

In American English apologies can be divided into two types—implicit apology and explicit apology. “I apologize”, “Excuse me”, “I’m sorry” and “Forgive me” are all considered to be explicit apologies as they can be recognized directly while “I wasn’t thinking”, “I did not mean to”, and “I promise it will not happen again” are implicit or indirect apologizing speech act. Chinese English speakers can make out the explicit apology and react to it immediately but will be slow in understanding these implicit speech acts as there are no



equivalent apologizing words except “sorry” in Chinese. The following are examples of different ways of apologizing in American English:

(1) Interruption.

A: Excuse me, could I cut in with just a word?

B: Sure, go ahead.

(2) Forgetting something.

A: Got the book I wanted?

B: Sorry. I forgot it completely.

(3) Spilling on someone's shoes.

A: Oh, I'm sorry (I beg your pardon)! I didn't mean to. It's so careless of me.

B: Well, never mind, it does not matter. I have bought new shoes anyway.

(4) Saying to one's superior.

A: (To the boss) I beg your pardon, Sir, but it is time to go.

B: Oh, is it? All right.

In Chinese English only “sorry” is used for all the situations. Chinese students are usually confused with the use of the apologizing words as they do not know which one can be used in the appropriate situation. They usually make some mistakes due to inadequate knowledge of and insufficient exposure to the target language.

“Excuse me, Mr. Buckingham, but can I talk to you for a minute?” Chinese students would often think that apology belongs to the politeness type. However, “Excuse me” is more of an attention getter to an English native. Chinese students interpret “Excuse me” the same way as “I am sorry” because most translations for the two phrases are mostly the same without considering the difference in their pragmatic use.

Chinese English speakers usually cannot distinguish between “Excuse me” and “I'm sorry”. When a Chinese English speaker declines the invitation to the birthday party, it is wrong to say “Excuse me, I'd like to go but I have a date with Mary at that time”. When a Chinese English learner reminds his teacher that class time is up, He or she may make another mistake by saying “I'm sorry, but it is time to finish”.

In American English “Excuse me” and “I'm sorry” are used as remedies



for one's inappropriate speech act in conversations. "Excuse me" would be more appropriate than "I'm sorry" when the speaker is focusing on his or her violation of social norms and principles. "I'm sorry" becomes more suitable when the speaker is focusing on the damage that the speaker has brought or might bring to the listener. Chinese English learners tend to ignore these differences and take it for granted that basic matters in culture are universal. Therefore, they pick up any words that come to their mind and make the mistake.

Chinese English learners would follow their own "logical" ways in situations where there is no equivalent in Chinese culture and the transfer cannot happen. In Chinese English "It does not matter" is usually used to accept apology from other people, which is a common mistake for Chinese English learners. In fact, only "That's all right", "That's Ok" or "No Problem" are used as acceptance of apology. Chinese English learner has transferred directly from their first language "mei guan xi" to their second language without considering different cultural background and pragmatic norms.

Language behavior is often based on cultural assumptions of what is appropriate for particular situations, and that these differ greatly across culture. American English speaker like to apologize for even slight inconvenience they have brought to the others. For example, they are walking too close to a person or cough. Chinese English speaker would be shy in saying "I'm sorry" unless they have made a rather big mistake or they have caused trouble for other people.

American English speaker are extrovert and would apologize to anyone including their family members while Chinese English speakers are introvert and it is an unusual phenomenon that the old apologize to the young or a father apologizes to his son for only slight mistakes. Chinese people are usually shy and obedient to the authority because China has a feudalism history for five thousand years. Confucius, one of the greatest thinkers in Chinese history, has great influence on Chinese thoughts and has left in Chinese culture some moral norms such as filial piety, respect for the old to be obeyed by generations of Chinese people.

It is due to cultural differences that Chinese English speakers are at a loss as to the use of apologizing phrases in various situations. In addition, there are many ways of apologizing in English compared with those in Chinese, which



also create great difficulty for Chinese English learners. Misunderstanding can often be caused by inappropriate social linguistic behavior. The American English speaker will often interpret such behavior as being calculated to mislead or confuse them. But when they look behind the behavior, which may on the surface cause misunderstanding or irritation, they would come to understand that it has its origins in good intentions.

As is illustrated above nativized varieties of English must reflect native pragmatic norms and cultural conventions. Chinese culture differs greatly from American culture. In English learning and teaching two languages and indeed two cultures come into contact. Cross-cultural differences constitute the main task to both the teacher and the learner. English teachers have the responsibility to help students improve their cultural awareness while it is highly expected that the teacher themselves are bicultural experts. They should familiarize the students with the cultural values and pragmatic norms in target language by selecting materials which have an intercultural point of view. Students should be encouraged to find differences in pragmatic norms and cultural conventions and develop their intercultural awareness and communicative skills in classroom and after class activities.

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Complementing

Abstract: Nativized varieties of English must reflect native pragmatic norms and cultural conventions. Complements, as a polite social behavior, is analyzed from the perspective of Chinese English speaker and American English speaker to emphasize the importance of the cross-cultural differences in pragmatic uses.

Key words: Complements American English speaker Chinese English speaker

Complements have many social functions. They are used to start a conversation, greet somebody or break the ice among people. When we are going to give a complement to someone, we usually try to make people understand our positive evaluation of them. Of course, people who receive our complements will respond to the compliments to show their politeness.

Owing to different pragmatic norms and cultural conventions, the addresser or addressee would sometimes not be aware that “this is a compliment” and then neglect the speech act, which would be very rude to the other side. In American English such phrase as “I love it” or “I like it” are often used as compliments while Chinese English speakers tend to use sentences like “You look awesome!” as compliments. It is because Chinese tend to use “you” in complimenting the others.

Here is another example of problem caused by different ways of speaking and understanding. An American man was visiting a Chinese man's house and said “Who's the cook?” after having the dinner; “Who's the gardener?” after seeing the garden; “Who's the artist?” after viewing the painting. The Chinese man felt that the American man was rather curious and answered all the seemingly apparent questions from the American man. The Chinese man was honest and didn't realize that the American man was in fact complimenting the Chinese



man's good dishes, beautiful paintings and garden. The communication failure has its origin in the fact that American English and Chinese English reflect their own social norms of interaction, which differ greatly from each other.

The breakdown in communication between a native speaker and a non-native speaker may be caused by transfer. People transfer their speaking norms from their first language to their second language and they do this unconsciously. An American mother is complimenting a Chinese mother about the cleverness of her son. The dialogue runs like this:

American Mother: "Your son is admitted by Beijing University. He must be very intelligent."

Chinese Mother: "Oh, No, He is not as clever as you said."

The American mother would be very surprised because the son of the Chinese mother would not be admitted by Beijing University unless he is very bright. She would suppose that the Chinese mother is not honest and not willing to tell the truth. If an American mother is complemented, she might respond like this:

Chinese Mother: "Your son is admitted by Beijing University. He must be very intelligent."

American Mother: "Thank you. Yes, he is doing very well."

The American mother would accept the compliment happily, which seems to be very arrogant to the Chinese mother. Chinese mother would usually not accept compliments from others to show their politeness. Objections seem to be the appropriate behavior for them.

As is widely known, China is a country whose civilization goes back thousands of years. Chinese people have developed their ways of behaving, unique cultural traditions and a system of values. Chinese people are deeply influenced by the values and perceptions that they have commonly experienced within their social cultural groups. Chinese society puts many emphases on personal modesty as is shown in the dialogue mentioned above. Chinese mother usually rejects the compliments to show her modesty and to make the other people feel comfortable, which is an appropriate behavior from Chinese cultural values while the American way of accepting the compliments would be considered inappropriate.

American society is originally made up of immigrants from different coun-



tries, for which it is known as a “melting pot”. People build up a new paradise for themselves, for which they need to be creative and confident. In this individual-oriented society people are respected for their independence and autonomy. They are extremely conscious of their own identity. It is perhaps just for this reason that they tend to say “I like it” or “I love it”. When complimenting the others and they would also accept compliments from the others with great ease.

Failure to understand their respective pragmatic norms would hinder the communication between American English speaker and Chinese English speaker. In China complimenting others too much would mean flattery, which is considered low and mean in Chinese culture. Less consideration would be given if you are complimenting the Americans as they seldom regard compliments as flattery but as a way of recognition of their individual efforts.

It is a common phenomenon for American family members to compliment each other. “You look great today.” This kind of compliment is not going to happen that often between Chinese family members. “You look younger in your new dress.” “You have not changed much.” would not be considered as compliments for American English speaker, but Chinese English speaker would be happy to hear compliments like this. This is caused by different cultural values. The old is respected in China, while being old would mean useless for American English speaker.

English has been widely used as the world’s lingua franca from which different varieties of English have developed. Chinese English and American English are just two varieties among them. Chinese and American people have transferred their respective pragmatic norms and cultural values into English and thus resulted in misunderstanding between Chinese and American English speakers if they fail to understand their differences.

Different cultures have different ways of speaking and communication patterns. In 1979, Robert Kohls defines “culture as an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristics of the members of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does and makes.” (Wenzhong Hu, 1988)

Any language is part of a culture and any culture is a part of lan-



guage. Culture and language are intricately related. It is not enough for English learners just have a good command of English grammar, lexis and phonology to facilitate communication with native English speakers. English learners in China must understand that the use of pragmatic norms and the expressions of speech-act functions. English learners should understand the cultural difference concerning social variables as age, sex, race and social status.

Nativized varieties of English must reflect native pragmatic norms and cultural conventions. Second language speakers transferred consciously or unconsciously their respective cultural patterns and conversation norms from their first language to their second language. It is necessary to increase people's cross-cultural awareness so that fewer problems arise in their interaction with people from a different culture. Cultural conventions and pragmatic norms in two cultures should be compared and contrasted to establish similarities and identify differences. The acquiring of cross-culture awareness is often a complicated process of psychological adaptation, which is a time-consuming difficult task for and invites joint efforts from English promoters in China.

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