

Analyzing

Language and **D**iscourse **as**

Intercultural and **I**ntracultural

Mediation

■ Edited by Ming-Yu Tseng

(曾銘裕)

Language studies

Intercultural communication

Multimodal discourse analysis

Syntax

Phonology

Cognitive semantics

Center for the Humanities
National Sun Yat-sen University

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Introduction:

Language and Discourse as Intercultural and Intracultural Mediation

Ming-Yu Tseng (曾銘裕)

This volume consists of eight articles which share two important concerns of language studies in a global multilingual context. First of all, it centers on languages spoken, used and/or learned in Taiwan and on discourses produced or consumed by Taiwanese people. Such languages include Chinese, Min (a dialect family of Chinese), Yami (an Austronesian language), and English (as a foreign language). Taiwanese people are native speakers of Chinese, Taiwanese Southern Min, or a Taiwanese aboriginal language, and many of them are also learners of English. The other shared concern of the volume is its attempt to cross the linguistic, cultural and historical boundaries in its investigations into language use in Taiwan.

This volume contends that language use as well as multimodal discourse, whether produced within the same culture or communicated cross-culturally, exemplifies intracultural and/or intercultural mediation. The term *intercultural and intracultural mediation* in the book title is intended to bridge the language-culture divide, thus fostering awareness that language use is mediated communication and, meanwhile, can also mediate culture. Language as well as discourse can tell us about the culture where it is used as a native language, where it is learned and read as a foreign language, and where a translated text in a target language is used (e.g. an English translation for international tourists or a Chinese translation of an English novel).

All of the chapters covered in this volume have taken this contention on their agendas and have set out to engender a better understanding of language in relation to culture and/or to demonstrate the cross-fertilization of theoretical and methodological approaches. For example, **Ya-Ting Yang, Yu-Fang Wang, Huifen Lin, and David Treanor** explore different linguacultures in terms of their communicative styles and preferences. They address how the act of disagreement was executed by two groups of different cultural backgrounds: 16 native speakers of Chinese (NSC) living in Taiwan and 16 learners of Chinese as a second language (LCSL) from the US. Both groups are composed of university students. The study shows that the NSC group employs a much wider range of linguistic strategies (e.g. modality, final particles) than the LCSL group. Besides, the NSC group tends not to express their disagreement when confronted with people with more power (e.g. advisors). By contrast, the LCSL group tends to voice their disagreement directly or indirectly even when talking with

advisors. This difference is attributed to cultural differences between the two groups. The results have practical implications for teaching Chinese as a second language.

Jian-Shiung Shie demonstrates an interesting way to conduct intercultural studies of language. Unlike previous studies of cross-cultural communication, which center on communication outputs, the chapter by Shie analyzes how 15 Taiwanese teachers of English responded to foreign-derived allusive intertexts used in *spiked*, a British online magazine. Intertextuality is a common strategy that writers or speakers use to achieve a certain goal (e.g. persuasion). Nevertheless, how readers respond to an intertext in a cross-cultural reading context also merits attention. Shie's contribution indicates that most of the subjects showed little interest in knowing the sources of the unknown intertextual references. This being so, issues such as cultural literacy and cross-cultural reading in EFL contexts cannot be ignored (cf. Shie 2012).

The chapter by **Shu-chen Ou** takes issues with phonological cores of English as an International Language (ELF) (Jenkins 2000). Based on an experiment conducted to evaluate 20 Taiwanese university students' comprehension of some pair words or phrases, the study argues that both units of analysis (e.g. utterance- or word-based) and intelligibility evaluation need to be carefully considered in order to fully understand what should count as phonological cores of EIL (cf. Ou, 2010, 2012).

The chapter by **Chia-lun Tu** takes a diachronic, comparative- phonological approach to Min dialects. It identifies four different strata of *guoshe* in Min dialects dating back to different historical periods. History is always part of culture. The diachronic perspective enriches our understanding of language, history and culture (cf. Tu, 2009, 2010).

Shu-ing Shyu investigates English cleft constructions (e.g. *it is...that...*) in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and Mandarin clefts containing *shi...(de)* in a Chinese translation of the novel. Unlike previous studies that treated clefts as merely a syntactic issue, Shyu's analyses of English and Mandarin clefts are undertaken in a syntactic-pragmatic perspective. The structural investigation of clefts is enriched and complemented by considering context, i.e. the co-text of a given cleft. The syntactic-pragmatic account not only reveals a wide range of functions that clefts can fulfill in the two languages but also explains differences in frequency and distribution of clefts in the original English text and the Chinese translation.

Mei-Chih Tsai contrasts how space is represented in English tourist discourse with how it is done in their Chinese counterpart. Drawing on systemic functional linguistics and cognitive linguistics, her study points out a Chinese style of representing space in tourist discourse originally written in Chinese. The style is characterized by an in-between of tour type (i.e. like physically taking a tour from one place to another) and map type (i.e. like a map indicating places of interest), and its

thematic cohesion relies heavily on places and their features instead of personal pronouns (cf. Tsai 2012). Furthermore, the style is also characterized by its frequent use of the image schema of PART-WHOLE and by its evocation of feeling and ambience through space representation. Tsai's contribution has a practical implication for translation: translating tourist discourse effectively involves more than the mere task of faithfulness to the source text. It is crucial to consider the preferred style of tourist discourse in the target language.

By combining the scholarship of eco-anthropology, morpho-syntax and cognitive linguistics, **Jackson Hu** and **Victoria Rau** analyze fish names used by Yami speakers, who live on Orchid Island, off the southeastern coast of Taiwan. Their study shows that Yami's conception of ecology is manifested in the community's use of fish names, full of metaphorical and metonymic expressions: ecology itself is seen as a continuum in which every species in the natural environment is somehow connected to one another. Yami's conception of ecology as reflected in their fish names is also a reflection of their society and their culture, including how they view fish, their shapes and even their actions and emotions. This interdisciplinary in-depth study reveals Yami's culture, which is closely tied with fish as sign.

By shifting the focus of enquiry from language to multimodal discourse, **Ro-Ning Chiang** and **Ming-Yu Tseng** explore a kuso video—an increasingly popular genre that has emerged as a way of responding to social and political issues in Taiwan. The genre refers to videos which remix and recontextualize monomodal and multimodal intertexts from various sources in an entertaining and parodying way. Building on social semiotics and sociolinguistics, they propose Functional Multisemiotic Model, aimed at demonstrating how multimodal semiotic resources create meaning potentials and facilitate identity negotiation. The contribution calls for attention to the role that multimodal signifiers play in shaping and mediating culture.

All in all, this volume offers diverse approaches to analyzing language and discourse as intercultural and intracultural mediation. It embraces not only potential integrations of insights from linguistic, pragmatic, cognitive studies (cf. Downes, 2011, 2012; Tseng, 2012) but also encourages further studies on intercultural and intracultural communication and mediation in this light.

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How to Express Disagreement: A Cross-cultural Study

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Abstract

This study explored and compared the linguistic forms and pragmatic strategies employed by native speakers of Mandarin Chinese (NSM) in Taiwan and native speakers of American English who learned Mandarin as a second language (MSL) when they executed disagreement speech acts in Mandarin. A controlled role-play approach was adopted in order to elicit disagreement responses from the subjects: 16 American college students and 16 Taiwanese non-English major college students. The results showed that from a linguistic perspective, the MSL learners had a similar pattern with the NSM group in opting for the use of hedges and contrastive connectors in their disagreements. Pragmatically, the NSM group favored avoiding both direct and indirect disagreements with their interlocutors, while the strategy they favored most was no disagreements. On the other hand, indirect disagreement was the strategy most commonly used by the MSL learners. It is hoped that the results of this study can aid and inform future design of Chinese teaching materials.

Keywords: speech acts, disagreements, linguistic forms, pragmatic strategies

摘要

本研究旨在探討和比較以中文為母語的台灣人(NSM)和學習中文為第二外語的美國人(MSL)在中文異議語的語言形式及語用策略使用上的異同。此研究所採用的研究方法為角色扮演，以便對實驗對象誘發出異議語的反應。此研究之對象為 16 個美國大學生和 16 個台灣非英語主修的大學生。研究結果顯示，從語言詞彙和句型的角度來看，MSL 組與 NSM 組在模糊語及對比連接詞的使用上有著類似的模式。從語用來看，NSM 組在和他們的對話者對話時，傾向避免使用直接和間接異議語，並偏好使用無異議語的語用策略。相反的，MSL 組最常使用間接異議語。希冀本研究結果可作為華語為第二外語教材設計的參考。

關鍵詞：言語行為、異議語、語言形式、語用策略

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been research on ‘discourse structure’: the structure of speech above the sentence level (Schiffrin, 1994). Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) observed that there are coherent structures among utterances in conversation discourse, which ensure successful communication between conversation participants. They therefore proposed a theory of Conversation Analysis (CA) in which they claim that in most interactions, people take turns when speaking. One particular type of such turn-taking is an ‘adjacency pair’: a type of utterance by one speaker which requires a specific utterance by another, e.g., questions call for answers, greetings invite another greeting, and farewells lead to another farewell (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In adjacency pairs, the second part is further divided into preferred and dispreferred social acts. The preferred act is structurally favored and expected, for it maintains the first speaker’s positive or negative face. Conversely, the dispreferred act is not welcomed by the first speaker, for it jeopardizes his/her positive or negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, a first part that contains an assessment is typically made with the expectation that the second part will be an agreement. Levinson (1983) suggested that preference organization is a property of conversational sequential structures, which is independent of the internal psychological preference of conversationalists. Therefore, preference organization indicates a socially determined structural pattern and it has little to do with each individual’s mental or emotional desires.

According to Goffman (1967), face work permeates every aspect of people’s daily interactions. People’s public face is determined by others; therefore, the safest way of securing one’s face is not to jeopardize others. This is why people tend to use polite language for the sake of maintaining harmonious relationships with others. Following Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) investigated the language cultures of English as well as native languages in Mexico and south India, and proposed their ‘Politeness Principle’ theory. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), ‘face’ represents people’s public self-image. This image has two varieties: one ‘positive’ and the other ‘negative’. Positive face is one’s desire to seek approval of other people and generally be liked and agreed with. In order to save interactants’ positive face when interacting with others, involvement strategies are adopted, for example, complimenting or agreeing with others. On the other hand, negative face denotes one’s desire to not be opposed upon and not be impeded upon by others.

In Chinese culture, people also put a premium on ‘face’ (Gu, 1990; Lii-Shih, 1994). To be polite in Chinese discourse is “to know how to attend to each other’s *mianzi* and *lian* and to enact speech acts appropriate to and worthy of such as image”

(Mao, 1994: 463). Based on different interactional purposes, face can be threatened, maintained or satisfied depending on what strategies we employ in executing a particular speech act. In the second part of an adjacency pair, there are usually two choices, one is the preferred choice aiming at maintaining the first person's face; the other is a dispreferred second turn which may endanger the first person's face. For instance, in situation where either agreement or disagreement is called for, Pomerantz held that "agreement is a preferred next action across a large diversity of initial assessments" (1984: 64). For most speech acts, agreement is a preferred, unmarked form in turn-taking speaking events, while disagreement or no response at all (keeping silent) is seen as a dispreferred, marked form. Nevertheless, preferred choices are not necessarily a preferred next action in all situations. For example, in situations that involve a person's self-deprecation, the preferred speech act performed by the interlocutor should be disagreement instead of agreement. "What is the preferred next action is structured in part, by the action performed with the initial assessment" (Pomerantz, 1984: 64).

From linguistic perspective, agreements and disagreements are routinely performed in distinctive ways in that agreements are usually given clearly and without delay, while disagreements are often accomplished with a variety of forms, ranging from unstated to stated (Levinson, 1983; Pomerantz, 1984). Most frequently, disagreements are performed in weak forms in order to mitigate their inherent derogative force. This is why disagreements are often formed as partial agreements or partial disagreements. Moreover, disagreements are normally delayed within a turn or over a series of turns, unlike structurally simpler agreements, which are performed with a minimal gap between the completions of the first turn in an adjacency pair. In other cases, the intention of a disagreement can be perceived by an interlocutor if indirect pragmatic strategies such as delay, token agreements, gaps, requests of clarification, accounts, hedges, or excuses are employed. On one hand, these strategies are used to delay the occurrence of impending disagreements, while on the other hand, from a politeness perspective, the face-threatening force will be mitigated with these devices.

However, the use of different strategies to express one's disagreement can be complicated due to contextual variables such as gender, social status, familiarity between conversationalists, and the formality of the situation. In addition, there also exist different degrees of 'face want' and 'tolerance of face threatening' in different cultures. Thus, a language learner may suffer from severe miscommunication and misunderstanding when interactions take place between interlocutors from different or unfamiliar cultural backgrounds.

As mentioned above, people from different cultures have different levels of

tolerance toward face threatening acts (FTAs) and may have miscommunication and misunderstanding when they interact with each other. Investigating pragmatic transfer in Japanese ESL refusals, Yamagashira (2001) maintained that L2 learners normally go through the stage of utilizing L1 pragmatic knowledge while communicating in target languages. In addition, according to Kasper (1992), pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics refers to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of their native languages and cultures on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information. Based on these claims, the researchers of this paper wonder how Chinese learners whose native language is English express disagreement in Chinese, since being indirect and vague rather than being direct and clear in the expression of disagreement is valued highly in Chinese culture. Driven by this wonder, the researchers of this paper conducted this study looking at how Chinese learners whose native language is English express disagreement in Chinese and whether or not their expressions are different from the norms of native Chinese. As for the subjects, there were two groups in this study. The first group was composed of 16 Americans who are learning Chinese as a second language. The second group consisted of 16 native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan. The questions addressed in the study were:

- (1) Which linguistic forms did these two groups use when they performed the speech act of disagreement?
- (2) Which pragmatic strategies did these two groups use when they performed the speech act of disagreement?

It is hoped that the findings will be of great use in the design of Chinese language learning textbooks and in teaching certain appropriate pragmatic aspects of Chinese to learners of Chinese.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Studies on Linguistic Features in Disagreement

According to various studies on disagreement, a number of different strategies and linguistic features have been discovered and categorized by scholars. Regarding the categorization of linguistic features, Levinson (1983) generalizes that the dispreferred second turn (in this case, a disagreeing response) is characterized with the features of delays, prefaces, accounts, and declination components. Pomerantz (1984), in her study of agreeing and disagreeing with assessments, observes that in most verbal exchanges, agreements and disagreements are formally different in terms