下岗女工身份的社会语言学研究

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自序

近三十年来，改革、开放和全球化给中国带来了经济、社会和文化等方面的全面变革，新兴的社会群体不断涌现。其中，国有企业的下岗职工，尤其是下岗女工，引起人们的关注。在 1949 年解放后，女职工曾被誉为"半边天"，然而，在市场化的转型过程中却沦为弱势群体，其社会身份的变化值得研究。

为了更好地研究下岗女工的身份，我们首先对国外有关身份的社会语言学研究进行了批评性综述，如 Labov 的语言变异研究、言语社区理论、实践社区理论、身份的社会构建理论以及身份的叙事构建理论，从而构建跨学科的、现实主义的视角。

我们运用个案分析方法、Bakhtin 和 Lemke 的体裁分析方法、Labov 的叙事分析评价模式以及批评性语篇分析等方法对三种语料进行分析，即相关政府文件、媒体报道和下岗女工本人的叙事语篇。三个层次的分析（即对下岗女工本人的叙事语篇、政府机构的描述和媒体的社会性阐释的分析）分别与三类语境（即情景语境、机构语境和文化语境）中的三种身份构建过程（即叙事构建、理论描述和媒体折射）相对应。其中，政府对其身份进行的理论描述是决定性的因素；媒体与政府的相关政策保持一致，起到正确的舆论导向作用；下岗女工对自我身份的构建必然会受到相关政府政策和媒体宣传的影响。我们的研究表明：下岗女工的社会身份是在特定的社会、文化和历史语境中形成的动态的、多重性的意义构建过程。

本选题对下岗女工这一社会群体的身份研究突破了主流社会语言学在言语社区模式下进行的语言变异及固定先在的社会范畴（性别、群体、阶级等）之间相关关系的研究，以在中国巨大社会经济变革中新兴的社会范畴（下岗女工）为研究主体，并创新性地提出在中国的社会现实中，她们的身份具有多重性的特征，即政府理论描述的身份，

媒体折射的身份以及下岗女工本人叙事构建的身份。

本选题采用了现实主义社会学的理论视角，既强调在社会实践（包括话语实践）中人的能动性，又考虑到社会结构的制约力，指出"下岗职工"这一社会范畴的出现与消失是政府从完成国有企业改革的目的出发，在特定的社会、经济和历史条件下对其身份进行的理论描述。该研究视角也可以用于分析中国转型时期其他新兴的社会群体的身份构建过程。

本选题跨学科的理论和分析模式打破了社会学和语言学之间的界限，是当前国际上社会学中出现的"语言学转向"和语言学中有关社会变革研究的"社会学转向"的重要实践，对于语言与社会之间关系的研究具有一定的借鉴意义。

我们希望借鉴国外社会语言学和语篇分析的相关理论和方法，分析下岗女工的身份构建过程，旨在拓宽国内社会语言学和语篇分析的研究领域，在一定程度上弥补此类研究的空白，同时，也希望此项研究对政策制定者具有一定的参考价值。

本书是在我的博士论文的基础上修改完成的。2002 年 9 月至 2005 年 6 月，我在南开大学外国语学院英语系师从张迈曾教授攻读英语语言文学专业的博士学位。张老师治学严谨，对学生要求非常严格。从博士生课程的学习，到选题、语料收集与筛选、建立理论和分析框架、论文撰写与修改，张老师都悉心指导，亲自修改，花费了很多心血。我从张老师身上学到了如何治学、如何为师、如何做人，这使我受益终身。

2005 年 7 月我回到吉林大学外国语学院英语系继续任教。在授课之余，我对我的博士论文进行修改与完善，并撰写相关论文。我邀请我系张广林副教授（现任吉林大学公共外语教育学院副教授）和华中师范大学金小红博士成立课题组，于 2006 年初获得了吉林省社会科学规划办公室的资助，本人为项目负责人。**本书为作者 2006 年承担的吉林省社会科学基金项目，项目编号：2006206。**本书是在我的博士论文的基础上由我执笔修改完成的，但是这也是我们课题组成员共同努力的结果。张广林副教授和金小红博士参加了该课题的研究工作。我们共同探讨遇到的问题，研究解决的办法。我请两位老师对初稿进行校

Abstract

Turning our attention to the sociolinguistic facts of the contemporary Chinese society, we find one of the most dynamic and robust loci for the study of social identity. Over the past three decades, the reform implemented in all sectors of the Chinese society, opening up to the outside world and globalization have given rise to comprehensive economic, social and cultural transformation in China. With the reshuffle of the social structure inherent in a centrally planned economy, new social groups have been coming into existence. Among these newly emergent groups, the laid-off staff and workers, particularly laid-off women workers, of the state-owned enterprises have caught the attention of the policy makers, since their problems have a direct and crucial bearing on the social stability and the whole progress of China's modernization drive. Those women, who were once considered to be "Half the Sky" after the liberation in 1949, have been reduced to a weak and socially marginalized group in the course of the country's transition to a socialist market economy. The vicissitude of their social position and career trajectory is projected into their changing identity, and accompanying their struggle for reemployment is the process of constructing their new social identity.

My fieldwork was carried out in my hometown Changchun in February and March, 2004. Changchun is the capital city of Jilin Province in northeast China. With abundant natural resources, this region once was one of China's old industrial bases, and the large-scale state-owned enterprises played an important role in boosting the development of China's planned economy from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Yet this region has been hardest hit by the intensified reform of the state-owned

enterprises since the early 1990s. The regional economic development has been comparatively slow, and there are more laid-off women workers in this region than elsewhere in the country.

Chinese women workers today suffer from the inequalities of market economy more than men workers do. Chinese labor experts say that job shortages and inadequate skill training are forcing women to lower their job expectations. The welfare and reemployment of the socially marginalized group of laid-off women workers have become one of the major concerns of the Chinese policy makers.

The identity of laid-off women workers, as an issue of economic, social and political significance, became a topic to be dealt with from a discourse analytical perspective. Discourse produces and reproduces social opinions, beliefs and ideologies. The government's definition of the social category of "the laid-offs", and what counts as "unemployment" or "(re)employment" in policy-making are also a linguistic meaning-making process. Thus government documents and leaders' reports are taken as the data for analysis, which are the guidelines for the strategies against unemployment to increase employment and reemployment in various public spheres.

In researching the identity issue of laid-off women workers, the mediating function of news media cannot be overlooked. How do the news media project their shifting identity via covering their life stories? We shall study to what extent the media-mediated identity is an echo to the theoretical description of their identity by the government. Responses to such questions will reveal another aspect of their identity issue. In analytical terms, the focus is placed on the generic structures of the news reports on the women laid-offs. I put forward such a postulate that such discourses are generically composed of four sections: Reporter's stance— Contexts—Problems—Solutions. Among them, "reporter's stance" reflects the government's attitudes towards laid-off women workers; "contexts"

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reflects the context of the reform of the state-owned enterprises; "problems" refers to the issue that a large number of staff and workers have been laid off; "solutions" reflects the government's reemployment policies that the laid-offs should be self-reliant and get reemployed by themselves. The similarities of the generic structures of these reports reflect the role played by the media in correctly guiding the public opinion and in propagating the government's reemployment policies.

Another important perspective is the narrative analysis of identity construction. People always tell stories about themselves, and share their experiences with others. The transformation of personal experience into narratives and the ways of narrating can show certain aspects of the identity of the narrator. In order to have a better understanding of how the women laid-offs, via narratives, reproduce their social life, social relationships and social identities, we conducted the tape-recorded interviews of 20 laid-off women workers in Changchun for the narrative analysis of their identity construction.

The above three aspects of the women laid-offs' identity construction point to the major breakthrough of this research, which, overthrowing the traditional variationist approach to the study of social identity on the basis of the sociolinguistic reality of the contemporary Chinese society, aims at revealing the laid-off women workers' complicated identity construction process. Most importantly, this research posits the multiplicity of their social identity, namely, their identity as theoretically described by the government; their identity as media-projected and their identity as constructed by the laid-off women workers themselves through narratives. Such an approach to identity as a multi-faceted meaning-making process has not been found reported in the literature of sociolinguistic identity studies in China, as far as I know.

To elaborate on the multiplicity of laid-off women workers' identity, a large corpus is set up. For the analysis of the government's theoretical description of their identity, relevant government documents concerning the laid-offs and their reemployment are downloaded from various websites on the Internet, especially from the website of Xinhua News Bulletin. For the analysis of the media-mediated identity of the laid-off women workers, 161 third-person news reports on laid-off women workers are collected from the Chinese Academic Journal Full-text Data Base. For the analysis of the narratively-constructed identity by the laid-off women workers, tape-recorded interviews with twenty women laid-offs in the city of Changchun are conducted, each lasting forty to fifty minutes.

With a view to formulating the theoretical and analytical framework of this research, some influential approaches to identity study are critically reviewed, namely, Labovian variationist study, the speech community theory, the communities of practice theory, the social constructionist approach to identity and the narrative construction of identity. The revisit to these diversified approaches leads to an interdisciplinary and realist perspective.

Labov's early variationist work can be taken as a blueprint for the study of large-scale patterns of variation, that is, making quantitative analyses of the structured heterogeneity of language and relating linguistic patterns of variation with abstract social categories, such as age, class and gender. With his prestige-oriented interpretation of linguistic variation, he fails to interpret the relationship between the linguistic structure and the social structure. Labov categorizes speakers into abstract, pre-existing and fixed socio-economic classes, neglecting their active role as social agents in their identity construction through language use.

The "speech community", as a unit of analysis for sociolinguistic patterns of variation, is variously defined, but shared attitudes and values regarding language forms and language use constitute its defining features.

As one of the representatives of the speech community theory, Labov fails to locate individual speakers, especially the socially marginalized individuals, in a multi-dimensional social space for analysis.

As an ethnographic, practice-based approach, the communities of practice theory provides an alternative to the speech community model for sociolinguistic investigations of identity, and for linguistic descriptions and social explanations of particular social groups. Breaking down the boundaries of speech communities, Eckert (2000) employs the ethnographic methods in her search for local categories in order to have a better understanding of what social structures, ideas and values are relevant to language in a community of practice. Gender and other aspects of identity are considered to be fluid, and studied from the point of view of the individuals.

Social constructionism poses a radical challenge against essentialism. The social constructionist approach to identity discards any fixed category that "sets forward essential or core features as the unique property of a collective's members" (Cerulo, 1997: 387), and emphasizes the multiple ways that social identities are constructed. Thus identity, as a practice-based concept, is socially constructed.

Besides, people often construct their identities through narratives, which constitute the majority of social interaction. Different levels of narratives reflect a dynamic identity construction process; therefore it is impossible to understand identity without narrative analysis.

Drawing upon the strengths of the above reviewed models, this study adopts a realist approach to the study of the identity issue of the newly emergent social group of laid-off women workers, and emphasizes both the human agency in the social practice (including linguistic practice) and the constraints of the social structure. The social identity of the women

laid-offs is actually the theoretical description by the Chinese government for specific purposes of reform under particular socio-economic and historical circumstances. This claim is evidenced by the detailed analyses of relevant official documents. The government defines the social category of "laid-off staff and workers" into and out of existence according to the scheduled timetable of the reform of the state-owned enterprises and the projected targets of the entire modernization drive. This social reality-based approach interprets the media-mediated identity of the women laid-offs as an indexical of the echoing press to propagate the government's reemployment policies. If the above two perspectives on the women laid-offs' identity are top-down categorical ones, then the bottom-up local category of them is constructed through the narratives of their own past experiences.

In this study, a qualitative analysis of the data is carried out, drawing upon the approaches such as case study, Bakhtin's and Lemke's genre theories, Labov's evaluation model for narrative analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. These approaches are applied to the analysis of three kinds of data: relevant government documents, media reports and narratives of the women laid-offs. The three levels of analysis (that is, personal narrative, institutional description by the government and social interpretation by the media) correspond to the three kinds of identity construction processes (namely, narrative construction, theoretical description and media projection) in three types of contexts (that is, context of situation, context of institution and context of culture) respectively. Among them, the government's theoretical description of their identity is a decisive factor; the media echo the relevant government policies and correctly guide the public opinion; the laid-off women workers are sure to be influenced by relevant government policies and the active propaganda by the media. In this sense, the multiplicity of their identity is a very salient feature.

The data analyses indicate that the women laid-offs' social identity, far from a fixed social category that constrains their linguistic practice, is a dynamic multi-faceted meaning-making process in specific social, cultural and historical contexts. To sum up, the realist approach of this research, equipped with the powerful analytical approaches, can account for the multi-faceted identity construction process of the emergent social group of laid-off women workers in the course of drastic socio-economic changes in China.

With the ever deepening and on-going social changes in contemporary China, the transient social group of the women laid-offs is bound to go through changes. In order to give a more comprehensive account of their social identity, the following are some possible areas to be further examined.

First, among the twenty women laid-offs we interviewed, most have been reemployed, and some of them are even very successful in their new jobs. But with the majority of the women laid-offs still out of work, how would the policy-makers categorize them? What kind of identity would they construct through narratives? Answers to these questions can only be found through investigations on a larger scale.

Moreover, in view of the reluctance of some of the research participants to admit to their identity as laid-offs, the ethnographic elements in the empirical study should be increased so as to obtain the more natural narratives of their experiences. With regard to the sociolinguistic interviews conducted at the work places or homes of the research participants, although the interview settings and the topics of their personal experiences have provided a context for them to articulate who they are, their discursive practices in other situations should also be examined in order to make a more comprehensive study of their active use

of language to construct their identity, and of the relationship between their linguistic practices and other social practices. This will help overcome the "observer's paradox". Due to the lack of assistants, funds and time, I just interviewed a small number of laid-off women workers within certain region. With the deepening of reform and opening up to the outside world and the economic globalization, new social groups keep emerging, and their identity construction processes are worth paying further attention to and studying.

This study contributes to not only the recent development of a practice-based approach to the sociolinguistic study of identity, but also the application of discourse analysis approaches to real world problems so as to strengthen the relationship between academic study and social change. There are few such kind of socially-oriented discourse studies in the literature of Chinese discourse analysis, and they are proved to be one of the most promising integrated approaches to the study of language and social change.

"Laid-off women workers" is a special social category in a specific historical period in China. With the establishment of the social security system and the implementation of the reemployment project initiated by the government agencies and the increasing job opportunities, this category is yet to show its mutability. In this sense, a sociolinguistic study of the multiplicity of their identity helps reveal the social factors that influence their identity construction and their own agency in this process, thus contributing to the understanding of the constitutive effects of discourse on laid-off women workers' identity construction process in particular, and of the dynamic interplay between discourse and social change in general.

In sum, the integrated approach adopted for the study of the identity construction of the laid-off women workers points to the trend of the "linguistic turn" in the social sciences, taking social analyses of language and interaction as indispensable to social inquiry on the one hand, and the

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"social turn" in the linguistic analysis of the social change cross-fertilized by the findings of social theories on the other hand. The approach to this study, by breaking down the boundaries between the social theories and the linguistic theories, can provide systematic and explanatory accounts of the interplay between language and social categories. The three main original achievements of this research may be summarized as follows:

First, the identity study of the social group of laid-off women workers has broken through the study of the relationship between linguistic patterns of variation and fixed and pre-existing social categories, such as gender, age and class, in terms of the speech community model of the mainstream sociolinguistics. "Laid-off women workers" is a newly emergent social category in the course of drastic socio-economic changes in China. This research takes such a social category as the research subject, and puts forward the notion of the multiplicity of laid-off women workers' identity, namely, the identity that is theoretically described by the government, the media-projected identity, and the identity that is constructed through their own narratives.

Second, this study takes the realist approach and emphasizes both the human agency in the social practice (including linguistic practice) and the constraints of the social structure. It is pointed out that the social category of "laid-off staff and workers" is theoretically defined into and out of existence by the government in order to complete the reform of the state-owned enterprises in specific socio-economic and historical circumstances. This is a powerful analytical approach to the analysis of the identity construction processes of the newly emergent social groups during the transformation period in China.

Third, the interdisciplinary theoretical and analytical framework of this research has broken down the boundaries between social sciences and

linguistics. This approach points to the trend of the "linguistic turn" in the social sciences and the "social turn" in the linguistic analysis of social change. Such a practice may be taken for reference in the sociolinguistic study of the interplay between language and social categories.

Key words: sociolinguistic study; multiplicity of identity; laid-off women workers; realist approach; interdisciplinary research

摘　要

　　当我们关注当今中国社会的社会语言现实时会发现这里是进行社会身份研究的最具活力的场所之一。近三十年来，在社会各个层面推进的改革、开放和全球化给中国带来了经济、社会和文化等方面的全面变革。随着计划经济遗留下来的社会结构的改组，新兴的社会群体不断涌现。其中，国有企业的下岗职工，尤其是下岗女工，引起了政策制定者的关注，因为他们的问题对于社会稳定乃至中国的现代化进程都具有直接的、决定性的影响。这些下岗女工在1949年解放后曾被誉为"半边天"，然而，在市场化的转型过程中却沦为弱势群体，被社会边缘化，其社会地位和职业生涯的变迁体现在其不断变化的身份中。她们在再就业的奋斗过程中不断构建着新的社会身份。

　　语料搜集工作是于2004年2、3月间在我的家乡长春市进行的。长春是中国东北部吉林省的省会。该地区自然资源丰富，曾经是中国的老工业基地之一。20世纪50年代至70年代该地区的大型国有企业曾经在促进中国计划经济繁荣发展的过程中发挥了重要作用。然而，90年代初期以来，伴随着国有企业改革的深化，该地区受到的冲击也最为严重，其经济发展相对落后，而且该地区的下岗女工比中国其他地区要多。

　　与男职工相比，中国女工在当今的市场经济中遭受到了更多的不公正待遇。中国的劳动力问题专家指出：工作机会的短缺和技能培训的不足迫使女工降低对工作的期望值。被社会边缘化的下岗女工群体的福利和再就业问题已经成为中国决策者关注的主要问题之一。

　　下岗女工的身份，一个具有经济、社会和政治意义的问题，也成为语篇分析的论题之一。语篇可以生成和再生成社会观念、信念和意识形态。政府对于"下岗职工"这一社会范畴的定义以及在政策制定

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