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A Critical Analysis of Questions in Dialogues

by Jinjun Wang 王晋军◎著

会话中间句的
批评性分析



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藏书章

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序

王晋军在其博士论文的基础上，即将出版《会话中间句的批评性分析》一书。听到这一消息，我感到由衷的高兴。回想起她在参加博士生入学考试时，还在担心她能否把功能语言学学好。可喜的是，她凭自己的勇气，经过三年的寒窗，证明了自己的能力。

批评话语分析为近年来国内外语言学界关注的一个热点，而问句是人们日常生活中经常使用的一种语言手段。但是，对会话中间句进行批评性分析的专著，目前仍不多见。本书能根据系统功能语言学、社会心理学和社会符号学的理论，对英语会话中间句的权势问题展开独立的研究。从书中可以看到，王晋军博士在写作过程中阅读了大量的文献资料，仔细回顾了批评话语分析的各种理论和研究现状，同时也指出有些分析方法存在着重内容分析、轻实际语言分析的不足，不仅从理论上确立了问句与权势的关系，而且确立了可操作的问句批评分析框架，在话语层面上以新的角度论述了英语问句的社会功能。

这本书在提出自己的分析框架之后，能注意理论和实际分析的相结合，根据自己收集的 5 种语体的语料，利用统计的方法，从语音、词汇、会话结构和语类结构详细地分析了权势在问句中的体现形式以及分布情况，形成了可靠的结论。我们可以发现，本书能克服纯粹引述国外研究状况的缺点，以大量的实例分析从语音、词汇、会话结构、语类结构以及互文性等方面对疑问句进行深入的探讨，证实疑问句在日常会话和机构会话中的差别。王晋军博士在大量语料统计的基础上，论证日常会话和机构对话中的问句都是实施权势的重要手段，认为问句在日常生活中可以成为隐性的权势表达手段，而在机构对话中能成为显性的表达手段，在语篇的层面把问句看成与权势相联系的思想意识行为，把问答序列看成共享知识和图式的影响。她还阐述了问句在不同语类中的分布及其社会文化因素。

可以说，这本书所做的研究不仅具有理论意义，也具有实践意义，希望读者能从中受益。本人期待王晋军博士能在功能语言学的研究方面出更多的成果。

杨信彰

2006年5月12日于厦门大学

前言

语言与意识形态之间的关系历来是批评话语分析关注的焦点，而问句的使用及其表现方式则与意识形态尤其是话语活动参与者的社会地位和权势有着十分密切的联系。本书应用了符号学、认知和社会心理学以及系统功能语言学等理论，对问句在日常会话和机构对话中的使用情况及其与权势的相互关系进行了系统而深入的探讨，在话语层面从一个较新的角度论述了英语问句的社会功能，从而丰富了批评话语分析的理论和实践。本书的部分章节稍做修改后发表在国际刊物 *Discourse & Society* [17 (4), 2006] 上。

本书围绕着问句是会话中实施权势的重要手段而展开。基于对 5 种语类的语料统计和分析，本书论证了日常会话和机构对话中的问句都是实施权势的重要手段，即问句作为实施权势的手段在日常会话中较为隐含，而在机构对话中则较为突出。本书进一步指出日常会话中的问句控制着即刻话轮和临时话题，从而隐性地实施着权势。相比较而言，机构对话中的问句由于三个因素而显性地实施着权势：其一、问句使用的明显不对称导致话轮分配的明显不对称；其二、占主导地位的问句不仅控制着序列话题而且控制着会话话题；其三、是非问句和特殊问句在不同程度上实施着权势。

为了便于对会话中的问句进行批评性分析，本书依据系统功能语言学的理论确立了一个可操作的分析框架即从语音、词汇、会话结构和语类结构四个层面来揭示问句所实施的权势，然后再把这些分析手段应用到实际语篇分析之中。本书也从互文性的角度探讨了问句与权势的关系。

该书由导论、结论和六个章节组成。导论部分介

绍了研究背景、目标、研究方法和语料收集情况，并勾画出全书的轮廓。

第一章对批评话语分析的研究内容和发展状况作了简要阐述，指出了批评话语分析重书面语篇而轻口语语篇、重内容分析而轻语言分析的不足。

第二章回顾了前人对问句的研究成果，同时指出对问句进行批评性分析的必要性。

第三章从符号学、认知和社会心理学以及系统功能语言学的角度对问句与权势关系做了理论阐述。

第四章探讨了问句在日常会话和机构对话中实施权势的不同方式。

第五章从语音、词汇、会话结构和语类结构等四个层面确立了对会话中问句进行批评性分析的框架，并将这个框架运用于不同会话语类的分析。

第六章探讨了互文会话中的问句与权势关系。

结论部分总结了全书的主要内容，并指出了需要进一步深入研究的问题。

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Introduction

In this part, we will present the background knowledge of the present study, the objectives to achieve, the research methodology adopted, the data collection and the general outline of the book.

1. Background

As social men, we spend much of our lives talking. Talk is what moves the world, no matter in private life or public fields. Undoubtedly talk is a prominent and necessary part of our everyday activities. With regard to a face-to-face interaction, several terms are used alternatively. Van Dijk (1985, iii) regards a face-to-face verbal interaction as spoken discourse, whose alternatives include such forms as talk, conversation, and dialogue. Yet, he favors dialogue for the title of his paper as a form of discourse and interaction. Cameron (2001) argues that the use of different terms like conversation, talk and spoken discourse refers to the same thing. There is numerous literature adopting dialogue, talk, spoken discourse, verbal interaction and conversation interchangeably, namely Linell's (1998) *Approaching Dialogue*; Eggins & Slide's (1997) *Analyzing Casual Conversation*; Thornborrow's (2001) *Power Talk*; Coulthard's (1992) *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis*; Ventola's (1987) *The Structure of Social Interaction* and so on.

The reason that dialogue^① rather than talk or conversation is chosen as the title of this book mainly lies in the fact that dialogue has a wider coverage than talk or conversation in terms of its data sources because it can involve talk and conversation both in spoken and written forms. Owing to the fact, the book is concerned with two kinds of dialogue, that is, institutional dialogue and casual conversation. In accordance with Burton's (1980) viewpoint, drama dialogue bears some similarities to naturally occurring conversation. It can be inferred that fictional, dramatic and screen dialogues in one way or another resemble to real conversations despite the subtle differences between them. Such reason is the main support for the data collection in this book, which covers dialogues in novels, dramas, film scripts and textbooks.

Questions^②, as a basic and indispensable linguistic form in a dialogue, have drawn much attention for a long time. Due to their anticipation and expectation of answers, questions are regarded as the key and obligatory element in a dialogue. Patterson (1988: 38) once stresses that questions are the life of dialogue; dialogue is the source of meaning; meaning is the substance of life. It has been said that when dialogue ends, everything ends. Here let it be added that when the question ends, everything ends. It is obvious that questions have been the major concern of scholars. Roughly speaking, the previous studies of questions primarily concentrate on the dual characteristics of questions, i. e. syntactic forms and semantic meanings of questions. The syntactic research on questions has been carried out from two perspectives, i. e.

① Dialogue used in this book is limited to face-to-face verbal interaction, which is defined by Linell (1998: 9) as any dyadic or polyadic interaction between individuals who are mutual co-present to each other and who interact through language.

② Questions locate their habitat in dialogues or conversations. According to Biber et al.'s (2002: 211) findings, there is on average one question per every 40 words in conversation and questions are many times more common in conversation than in writing.

traditional syntactic approach to questions and contemporary syntactic research on questions. The traditional syntactic research on questions focuses on the formal or syntactic classification of questions. Contemporary syntax highlights transformational grammar, which expounds in detail how surface structures of questions are generated from their deep structures by way of a set of transformational rules.

The semantic research on questions has been developed into two general orientations, i. e. the linguistic semantics of questions and the functional studies of questions. The linguistic semantics of questions is basically associated with the elaborated denotation of propositions that constitute possible answers. The functional studies of questions have been undertaken from three perspectives, i. e. the pragmatic approach to questions, CA approach to questions and the structural-functional approach to questions.

Despite the merits that these studies have achieved, their drawbacks can be detected without difficulty. First, the syntactic research on questions mainly concentrates on the form or the syntactic structure of questions and how surface structures of questions are generated from their deep structures, but it pays little attention to the semantics of questions. Secondly, as to the semantic research on questions, the linguistic semantics or pure semantics of questions is chiefly associated with the elaborated denotation of propositions that constitute possible answers to questions and disregards functions of questions. Thirdly, the functional studies of questions likewise remain deficient. Although the pragmatic approach to questions regards questions as speech acts to produce effects on our action and to suggest concrete conversational implicatures, the exploration of functions of questions from this perspective is preliminary and very limited. Concerning the CA approach to questions, as Coulthard (1977) points out that the analytic methodology and the categories of CA remain informal and imprecise, the CA approach does not provide a precise and operational way to analyze questions. Although the structural-functional approach reaches

the peak in the functional studies of questions, there is something neglected by the Birmingham School, that is, the failure to disclose the reason that within a classroom a teacher has the right to elicit questions whenever s/he wants to, while students are obliged to contribute to answers when asked.

In general, the most distinct drawback of these studies is that questions as a linguistic form and a social act fail to reflect social role relations and social identities between participants in communication. According to Halliday (1978), language is a product of social process and a means to reflect and influence things. Language not only can mirror but also can change social and individual ideology. On the basis of the systemic-functional theory and critical linguistic theory, this book attempts to analyze questions from a new perspective, i. e. the critical semiotic perspective in order to disclose question's close connection with ideology and power and to reveal power hidden in question-laden dialogues, which are often taken for granted, however.

To analyze questions from a critical perspective is necessary not only for our further and thorough understanding of the nature of questions, but also for the perfection of analytical tools of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) per se. Such an argument embodies two sides. One is that CDA has put many efforts on written texts and produced many effective approaches to attain the demystification of power and ideology in written texts. However, its exploration of spoken texts is virtually scarce and neglected. The other is that CDA has paid certain attention to spoken texts, and yet, its analytical approaches appear unsystematic and vague.

As a critical approach to discourse analysis, CDA aims to unmask power relations hidden in discourse and how discourse is shaped by way of its relations with power and ideology. In fact, Halliday's systemic-functional grammar has been the main tool for critical discourse analysts to make a fruitful analysis of written texts. Some major linguistic tools of written texts include "transitivity", "modality", "classification",

“coherence” “syntagmatic models”, “passivization”, “nominalization” and so on. However, critical discourse analysts rarely pay attention to spontaneous and naturally occurring spoken texts except Fairclough’s (1992) deficient description.

Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) has mentioned some analytical approaches to spoken discourse. In particular, he (1992: 138) has proposed some analytical tools of spoken discourse after analyzing three samples, such as “interactional control (including turn-taking, exchange structure, topic control, control of agendas, formulation), modality, politeness, and ethos”. He (ibid.) further explains that “interactional control is a dimension of text structure, modality a dimension of grammar), and politeness an aspect of what I called ‘force’. Ethos transcends the categories—and is motivated by the focus on the self.” Although Fairclough argues that his selection of these particular topics for attention is not arbitrary, it is not difficult to discern that his analytic tools of spoken discourse remain unsystematic and sometimes vague. In Fairclough’s view, interactional control is concerned with conversational structure, while modality pertains to lexico-grammar and politeness has something to do with pragmatic implicature. In this sense, we can infer that Fairclough’s approaches to spoken discourse are unsystematic and incomprehensive. In particular, his “ethos” is ill-defined and remains ambiguous. Besides, the tools he describes are not convenient to operate in a concrete discourse analysis. As a result, owing to the drawbacks that Fairclough’s analytical approaches to spoken discourse have left behind, this book attempts to renew a critical framework of spoken discourse, which is supposed to be systematic, lucid and operational, compared with Fairclough’s model.

2. Objectives

The current research is an attempt to make a critical analysis of

