



TREATISES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATUR

英语语言与文学 研究文集

主 编 张泽健
副主编 唐君国
主 审 邓亚雄



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Preface

The 30 years' opening to the world has brought great changes in China. Nowadays China plays an increasing important role in international affairs, and China's development in politics, economy, science and technology, education and culture carries an increasing influence on the global arena. With the awareness of the significance of international communication, English learning has become a trend in all walks of life in China. As English, the international language, has become more and more popular in the communications among different nations, the aim of mastery of the English language has been pursued by millions of young students in China, which is also regarded as a sign of personal advancement. In most part of China, English language is offered as a compulsory course in primary and secondary schools, and universities and colleges. Therefore, a major task of how to improve the quality of English teaching and learning has been assumed by the teachers of English in educational institutions including primary, secondary and tertiary schools.

The education of English, or English language pedagogy, paves the way for the learners to use the language in their jobs or future jobs, yet at the same time, we have to realize that the education of English is part of quality education, for it offers the learner a new and broader perspective to see and understand the global village, and a new thinking pattern of judgment and criticism. Therefore it is necessary for the teachers in universities and colleges to better themselves in areas concerning the English language and language teaching and learning as well as related fields. In recent years in China, teacher development has become a much-discussed topic in education. One of the most important tasks of higher education institutions in China is to cultivate talents to meet the needs and development of the society. This entails qualified teachers, who should be equipped with modern educational ideas and can earnestly devote themselves in their research and teaching. In universities and colleges in China, teachers are not only to lecture on different subjects, but also should carry on some original researches in academic fields and pedagogy. They have to be aware of the current development of their subject area, to know the changes and development in educational theories, and to make use of the new information in their practice of teaching. Only in this way, can their teaching become more effective, and train more talents to meet the demands of the modern society.

Chongqing Education College is an institution of higher education and teacher training. In past years, the teaching faculties of the Department of Foreign Languages of Chongqing Education College have been working hard at academic research and teaching research. The book now in readers' presence is just part of their achievements in their effort to keep pace with

the development in higher education. From this collection of essays, we can see the teachers' research interests are varied, covering linguistics, sociolinguistics, literature, philosophy, psychology, translation, culture studies and language teaching and learning. Their researches reflect that the teaching of English does not only involve linguistics and literature, but also relates academic branches such as philosophy, culture, psychology, pedagogy, etc. The work of the teachers of English at Chongqing Education College will surely benefit the teachers' career development and help the improvement of their teaching qualities.

Teacher development is an area of study devoted to the life-long learning and job enhancement of teachers. As teachers of English in China, we have to arm ourselves with academic and educational theories. We should learn from the scholarly work done by specialists at home and abroad, but the most important thing is to combine the theories with our practical work, to improve our teaching quality and better prepare our students for their future profession, thus to make our contribution to the benefit of the people and the society. From this collection of essays, we can see clearly what the teachers of the Foreign Language Department of Chongqing Education College have achieved, and we sincerely hope they will continue their efforts and make greater contributions to the teaching English as a foreign language in China.

Wu Nian

目 录

一、英语语言研究

Analysis of a Communicative Event.....	MA Zhicheng (1)
Synaesthetic Metaphor and Its Interpretation.....	QIU Yuhua (10)
A Relevance-Theoretical Treatment of the Non-Referential Use of Personal Names	WANG Mao (17)
A Tentative Exploration of Metaphorical Thinking	WU Yong (28)
From Different Usage of Vocabulary to the Change of Society.....	XIAO Kunxue (35)
On Rhetorical Features of English Newspaper Headlines	XIONG Di (48)
On the Differences Between Formal and Informal English.....	ZHANG Min (55)
The Tentative Analysis of Systemic-Functional Grammatical Approach to English Existential Clauses.....	ZUO Tingting (66)

二、外国文学研究

Mythic Allusions in John Keats' Poetry.....	CHEN Yan (75)
An Exploration of Dickens' View of Revolution.....	HE Sifeng (82)
Hemingway's Iceberg Principle in "Hills Like White Elephants".....	HUANG Xiaorui (90)
The Objective Obstacles to Hamlet's Revenge	LI Wenyan (97)
A Feminist Reading of <i>The Color Purple</i>	LIANG Benbin (103)
An Investigation into <i>The Thorn Birds</i> Ralph de Bricassart and Meggie Cleary	SHUI Qian (109)
Psychological Elements: the Core of Hamlet's Tragedy.....	SONG Benlong (115)
On Milton's Sonnets.....	TANG Junguo (123)
Treatment of Time in William Faulkner's <i>The Sound and The Fury</i>	WANG Liqin (136)
Social and Cultural Elements in Stephen King's Horror Fiction	YANG Shuo (144)
Antitheses in Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	ZHANG Misha (152)
Bartleby, an Individual Tragedy	ZHANG Xiaoqing (158)

On Pessimism and Female Characters in Thomas Hardy's Novels.....	ZHOU Lijun (164)
Moralist or Realist?—On the Narrator of <i>Two Fishermen</i>	ZOU Juan (172)
Anna Wulf's Spiritual Evolution: Schizo-analysis in <i>The Golden Notebook</i>	ZOU Li (178)

三、文化与翻译研究

Raymond Williams on Mass Culture.....	LIU Ying (188)
Literature and Architecture as the Reflection of the Spirit of Times.....	MING Zhu (195)
Fashion's Impact upon American Masculinity.....	SHI Haixia (203)
Selfishness: Overriding Principle for the Preservation of Life.....	ZHANG Zejian (212)
Current Trends of Interpreting Studies.....	BAO Gang (222)
A Study on the Translation of “龙”—Constructing the Culture of “龙” ...	LIANG Shuang (227)
The Conveyance of Image in Classical Chinese Poetry Translation.....	TANG Tao (233)

四、外语教学研究

The Significance of Teaching Thinking Skills in English Teaching in High Schools	DING Cujin, WANG Xingmei (241)
Rethinking Grammar Teaching in China.....	HE Li (249)
Using Internet Resources in College English Teaching in an Information Age.....	LI Jia (259)
Thinking Skills—Learning to Learn	LIU Lihua (267)
A Statistical Study of the Foreign English Teachers Working at Universities and Colleges in Chongqing	MA Ping (275)
A Brief Analysis of Bilingual Teaching Development in China.....	OU Weihong (282)
A Review of Critical Thinking in the West.....	WANG Xingmei (291)
A Preliminary Study of English Curriculum Models in China.....	YAN Wenya (303)
On English Large Sentence Parsing.....	YANG Hua (308)
English-Spanish Bilingual Education for Mexican-Americans.....	ZHANG Lian (315)
Teaching and Learning English Vocabulary in the Chinese Primary School Classroom	ZHAO Xiaoyi (323)
A Critical Thinking of Applying CLT in College English Teaching.....	ZHOU Lingli (331)

Analysis of a Communicative Event

MA Zhicheng

Abstract: Any common talk can naturally unveil both linguistic information and non-linguistic norms. Studying the speech community can help communicators gain better comprehension of the unspoken social conventions and the relationship between the language and its culture. By taking field notes and using the method of “participant-observation”, a communicative event is analyzed in relation to the eleven components: Type of event; Topic; Purpose or Function; Setting; Key; Participants; Message Form; Message Content; Act Sequence; Rules for Interaction; Norms of Interpretation.

Key words: communicative event, analysis, components of discourse

1. Introduction

A communicative event refers to the situation in which language is used. For most of us, it is a crucial part of our daily lives to talk or communicate. As Langford (2002) states, “Using language is very much a part of what it is to be human and live the life of a human being”. Communication in societies can be divided into “different kinds of events with more or less well defined boundaries between each, and different behaviour norms appropriate for each kind” (Saville-Troike, 1989:135). “Event boundaries may be signalled by ritual phrases, changes in facial expression, participants, topics, purposes, tone of voice, or bodily position between one communicative event and the next, or a period of silence”. (Saville-Troike, 1989:136) No matter what sort of communicative event occurs, it pays to give an analysis of the discourse so that we have a better comprehension of the way in which people come together and exchange information and maintain social relations. Studying the speech community, as proposed by Saville-Troike (1989:107), can let us “gain some understanding of its social organization and other salient aspects of the culture, and formulate possible hypotheses concerning the diverse ways these sociocultural phenomena might relate to patterns of communication”.

In this report, an ordinary conversation between two overseas Chinese is chosen as a communicative event to be explored because it is “the activity that other forms of talk-in-interaction are derived from” (Gardner, 1994:98) and “conversation is seen as an activity which is directed to social goals (e. g. the establishment of roles, presentation of self) as well as the linguistic goals (communication of meanings)” (Richards & Schmidt, 1983:116). Any common talk can naturally disclose both linguistic information and non-linguistic norms. According to the analysis of the conversation, Chinese culture and social rules underlying the words are explicitly shown.

2. The Data

The data is collected from the conversation between Kim, a 19-year-old Chinese boy from Guangdong Province, and me. Field notes are taken for the purpose of analysis. It is a twenty-minute conversation, which involves two participants: P1(I) and P2 (Kim). Kim has been in Australia for two years and is an immigrant now. We are studying at the UNE, living in the same flat. Our conversation took place in my room one night when he came to see if I would need any help since I had been here for only a few weeks. Kim was informed that notes would be taken and he agreed to this material being used for research purposes.

The method of data collection used to analyze the communicative event is “participant-observation” in that I am familiar with the culture permeating into the utterance and explore the event at a greater depth by acting as a participant-observer. Saville-Troike (1989:119) comments this method as: “the most common method of collecting ethnographic data in any domain of culture”. I shall discuss this data in relation to her eleven components of a communicative event: Type of event; Topic; Purpose or Function; Setting; Key; Participants; Message Form; Message Content; Act Sequence; Rules for Interaction; Norms of Interpretation (Saville-Troike, 1989:106), exploring the unspoken social norms and conventions that can be interpreted intuitively, and analyzing briefly the relationship between the language and its culture.

3. Analysis of the communicative event

3.1 Type of Event

When people talk to each other, sort of things that are happening in the talk can be considered as speech activities. As there are different episodes in our daily lives, speech activities are accomplished in different speech events in which people have linguistic choices according to kinds of participants, setting, topic and function stated by Holmes (2001:8). As proposed by Saville-Troike (1989), it is essential to identify communicative events by recognizing their boundaries. Langford (2002) in his book *Analyzing Talk* also puts forward the factors influencing speech events:

- Participants, purposes and situation
- Boundaries and phases
- Interactional tasks
- Turn-taking and turn design

(Langford, 2002:157-165)

With these theories, it is easy to identify the communicative event that I am exploring and distinguish it from other events. It can be mainly viewed as an ordinary conversation or talk because the talk involves two persons who recently go to know each other and want to develop and keep good terms with each other. The situation is not so formal as a job interview or meeting, but friendly and open to talk about what they are interested in. The participants take turn to contribute to the conversation, mutually promoting it from one topic to another, from one phase

to another. Of course, it is not a simple communicative event, but one mixing with another type of speech event. This can be illustrated in this exchange:

Example 1

P1: I am 32 years old and getting old.

P2: But now, Chinese people say, "Men in their thirties are like flowers." You are now a flower everyone likes.

P1: Oh, really? Can you smell the fragrance?

P2: Aha...

In Example 1, P2 gives a funny response to P1's statement by comparing P1 with a flower, assuming P1 is not very old. Following P2's words, P1 makes more fun to the interaction. In this case, the speech event belongs to a joke.

3.2 Topic

"In some cases the topic has proved an influence on language choice" (Holmes, 2001:8). In speech events, topics are selected by speakers to introduce and develop conversations. Not all topics can be chosen and conversed in utterance. The choice of topics is closely associated with cultural norms and particular conversation in particular, just as Richards and Schmidt (1983:136) state, "Even within a particular culture, topics are constrained by the speech event or activity in which talk occurs."

The conversation that I undertook covers several topics, from talk of personal information, as "men are more likely to discuss things" (Coates, 2000:130), to attitudes to study and life. Let us look at the following two examples:

Example 2

P2: What's your job in China?

P1: I'm an English teacher.

Example 3

P2: What do you think of studying and living here?

P1: It's really a big challenge for me.

In Example 2, "I'm an English teacher." shows P1 tells P2 the information about his career, while the question in Example 3, "What do you think of studying and living here?" indicates P2 wants to get P1's opinion.

Topic switch can be made in the form of a question, a statement or silence. For example, when P1 says, "what do you usually do for fun?" indicating the topic is switched from family background to personal hobbies as indicated in Example 4:

Example 4

P2: I'm the only child in my family. My parents love me and I love them very much.

P1: So you have a happy family.

P2: You can say that again.

P1: What do you usually do for fun?

P2: I like listening to music, playing soccer and surfing on the Web.

Compared to Example 4, the way the topic changes in Example 5 is a little different. The sentence “Tell me something about famous things in Chongqing.” signals the change of topics from hobbies to introduction to P1’s (my) hometown.

Example 5

P1: I like playing Ping pang. It’s my favourite sport.

P2: Cool. You are from Chongqing. Tell me something about famous things in Chongqing.

P1: Hot pot is the well-known food in Chongqing.

3.3 Purpose or Function

Any verbal interaction is operated for one or two purposes. Without a function, communication cannot be achieved. Conversation can fulfill many different functions, such as sharing ideas, expressing feelings, maintaining social relationship, enhancing friendship, reaching an agreement, negotiating a project, solving a problem, etc. These functions generally fall into two groups: referential and affective functions (Holmes, 2001:10). In our conversation, when Kim and I exchange what we like, the referential function emerges. The affective one is covered in the conversation when I ask him the question in Example 6.

Example 6

P1: Do you miss your parents?

P2: No so much. They often call me.

From the conversation, we can see the affective function is to enhance personal understanding and establish friendship.

3.4 Setting

Saville-Troike (1989) defines the setting, including location, time of day, season of year, and physical aspects of the situation, may affect the communicative event. Our conversation occurred in my tiny room of 9 square meters, which determined the formality of interaction. The low formality of the setting reflects informal interaction between the speakers. The conversation happened at 7 pm on Tuesday, when I was at home and might have finished my dinner. Kim knew that and came and had a talk with me. The talk was not very long, just twenty minutes, for he had classes the next day.

3.5 Key

The key of a speech event is equal to the emotional tone of the event. It means “the tone, manner, or spirit in which a particular message is conveyed: light-hearted, serious, precise, pedantic, mocking, sarcastic, pompous, and so on” (Wardhaugh, 1998:243). The event I am analysing includes such tones: friendly, casual, sympathetic and surprising. Take one exchange to be explained as follows:

Example 7

P1: Starting a new life in a different culture is really hard for me.

P2: I agree. I had the same experience when I first came here. It’s just a process for people to go through. Take it easy, and you will feel better day-by-day.

In Example 7, P2 shows sympathy for P1’s suffering, comforting him to endure this period

and encouraging him to overcome the difficulty.

3.6 Participants

The participants are composed of various combinations of speaker-listener, addressor-addressee, or sender-receiver in terms of specified role that each part plays. In my surveyed conversation, the participants belong to the mode of speaker-listener. That is, Kim and I act as both the speaker and the listener. Besides the observable traits, the adequate description of the participants should also focus on “background information on composition and role-relationship within the family and other social institutions, distinguishing features in the life cycle, and differentiation within the group according to sex and social status” (Saville-Troike, 1989:142-143). Kim and I are from southern and western areas in China respectively. We belong to the same gender group, but not age group. I am in my early thirties, while he is still a teenager. We share the same culture, but speak a different variety of the same language, have distinct life experiences and expose a little difference in cultural preference.

3.7 Message Form

The message form includes both vocal and nonvocal channels, and the nature of the code which is used. Holmes (2001) tells us there are differences of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar in the various dialect spoken in different regions. Owing to our regional differences, Kim and I speak a distinctive variety of Chinese. He speaks Cantonese in contrast to my Chongqing dialect. However, we both use Mandarin or English to interact with each other. We speak standard Chinese to converse for a couple of reasons, because we want to communicate smoothly and easily, and intend to identify ourselves as belonging to one speech community.

Nonvocal channels can also be picked up in our conversation. When I told Kim I could sing some Cantonese songs, he opened his eyes and mouth widely without saying a word, showing surprise that I could do that since I do not speak and understand Cantonese. Moreover, we also use gestures, facial expressions (smiling, confusion, etc.), and body movements (e.g. shrug) to express ideas.

3.8 Message Content

“Message content refers to what communicative acts are about, and to what meaning is being conveyed.” (Saville-Troike, 1989:150) To some extent, the topic, the purpose or the message form in a communicative event determines its message content. The utterances given by the speakers as well as the message underlying the words can both exemplify message content. In our conversation, major message content from verbal and nonverbal information is offering to help, exchanging personal information and stating opinions. Minor content or meaning from extra-linguistic context or participants’ expectations includes having more contact with each other and sharing the same culture.

3.9 Act Sequence

The act sequence means the actual form and content of what is said within a speech event. Generally speaking, any verbal interaction consists of 3 parts: beginning, development (process) and end. The sequence of communicative acts in our conversation, therefore, is organized into

the following phases:

Phase One: Opening

P2 knocks at P1's door; greeting

P1 responds greetings to P2

invites P2 in

offers a seat, a cup of water and peanuts

Phase Two: Conversation (Talk)

P2 asks P1's feeling of study and life

P1 has difficulty in starting a new life

P2 shows sympathy and gives advice and help

P1 wants to know P2's age by telling his age first

P2 avoids answering it and makes a joke

P1 asks P2's hobbies

P2 exchanges likes with P1

P1 suggests playing soccer together

wants P2 to show him around the town and to buy a T-shirt

P2 accepts the request

Phase Three: Closing

P1 asks if P2 has classes tomorrow

P2 is to leave; closing salutation

P1 closing salutation

3.10 Rules for Interaction

The rules for interaction refer to "an explanation of the rules for the use of speech which are applicable to the communicative event" (Saville-Troike, 1989:154). That means, when people talk to one another, there are some principles of the speech community for them to follow. As Coulthard (1977) comments:

All communities have an underlying set of non-linguistic rules which governs when, how and how often speech occurs. (Coulthard, 1977:48)

In the explored conversation, the rules for interaction include:

3.10.1 Turn-taking

Turn-taking is a basic form of organization for conversation. It's a process of establishing who talks first and who next, which helps conversation take place smoothly. During our talk, Kim and I abided by the rule of taking turns to raise a question, give the response, or express the idea, playing two roles in turn. Langford (2002) has the following point on turn-taking:

Language used in spoken verbal interaction involves two or more participants each taking on at different times, along with any other roles they may have, the reciprocal roles of sender of messages, the speaker role, and receiver of messages, the recipient role. (Langford, 2002:70)

3.10.2 Adjacency pairs

An adjacency pair is a unit of conversation that contains an exchange of one turn each by

two speakers. The turns are functionally related to each other in such a fashion that the first turn requires a certain type or range of types of second turn. Each participant in our conversation interacts properly in accordance with the statement or question. For example, when P2 offers to help P1, saying "Please be free to ask if you need any help". P1 replies, "Thank you very much", which is thought as the appropriate way of interaction.

3.10.3 Cooperation

Apart from codification and coordination, cooperation is another perspective on discourse analysis in terms of the production of conversation. It views communicators as active, goal seeking agents in understanding the production of conversation and is concerned with cooperative dialogue and contexts for conversation. In China, given that a guest, who does not make an appointment with you, comes for a visit, it is natural or polite to invite him (her) to come in and have a small talk, even if you are not ready for that, as shown in Example 8:

Example 8

(A knock on the door)

P1: Who's that?

P2: Kim

P1: (open the door) Hello, Kim. What's up?

P2: Nothing much. Just wanna have a talk with you.

P1: Please come in.

What is more, if you are asked where you have bought something and how much it costs, you are supposed to "call a spade a spade". This can be illustrated in Example 9:

Example 9

P1: Your T-shirt looks good. Where did you get it?

P2: Sydney.

P1: How much is it?

P2: \$ 15

3.11 Norms of Interpretation

This refers to "the other information about the speech community and its culture which is needed to understand the communicative event" (Saville-Troike, 1989:155). Coulthard (1977) also observes:

All speech communities have unique norms for interpreting the messages conveyed both verbally and non-verbally, and thus the same formal realisations may have different values in different communities. (Coulthard, 1977:51)

Two typical norms of interpretation from the surveyed conversation include:

3.11.1 Visiting without making an appointment

Traditionally, Chinese like to visit their friends or relatives without giving an announcement or making an appointment ahead of time. They probably drop in so as to show their care and close relationship with the one being visited. More recently, this norm is meeting challenge because people don't want to be disturbed by a surprising visit. A majority of city people

normally make an appointment with someone to make sure he or she is available. Some people, however, are still accustomed to accepting this inveterate social norm.

3.11.2 Talking about private matters

It's also a traditional custom for Chinese to ask about personal things, eg, "Are you married?", "How much do you earn every month?" These questions can often be found in their ordinary conversations or talks. Also, utterances like "Do you want children?" "How many years apart in age between you and your husband?" are not recognized as inappropriate expressions for traditional Chinese. On the contrary, they indicate mutual intimacy between the two speakers.

3.11.3 Chinese generosity

Chinese are very generous and hospitable. If you are paying a visit to a traditional Chinese family, you may experience the such generosity. They may make tea for you, serving you fruits, snacks, or whatever delicacies they have, even if you don't want to have. While having the meal, they may serve you dishes, hoping that you make yourself at home. One example reflects in the surveyed conversation is when P2 comes to my room, I treat him to peanuts, asking him to have more. As proper response, you may say thanks to the host or leave the food without having it. Example 10 illustrates this:

Example 10

P1: Please have some peanuts.

P2: That's very kind of you.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of a communicative event with an ethnographic approach can help us to make the unspoken norms and rules of speech events explicit, understand what it means to be a competent speaker of a given language, how we choose proper words in proper situations, and why people use the language in a diverse linguistic contexts embedded with a particular culture.

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Synaesthetic Metaphor and Its Interpretation

QIU Yuhua

Abstract: Synesthesia and metaphor are often listed separately as different rhetorical devices. But in English there indeed exists the phenomenon of synaesthetic metaphors. The association between these two devices, metaphorical transfer, makes synaesthetic metaphors possible. Investigated frequency of types of synaesthesia and synesthetic metaphors in English reveals that for physiological synaesthesia, coloured sounds are most common while in English literature tactile sounds are most common. Of the various senses, hearing is the most frequently expanded and elaborated upon by both synesthetic sensory perceptions and synesthetic metaphors.

Key words: synaesthesia, metaphor, metaphoric transfer, perception, senses

1. Introduction

Francis Bacon's famous saying "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested" brings us to the topic of synaesthetic metaphors. Books are usually enjoyed with eyes, but Bacon described the enjoyment done with tongues. This is a typical example employed to illustrate the rhetoric device of synesthesia. Synesthesia and metaphor are often listed separately as different rhetorical devices. But in English there indeed exists the phenomenon of synaesthetic metaphors.

Originally, synesthesia is a psychological term, which means an emergency psychological process when one kind of people's sensory organs is stimulated. When synesthesia is used in literal works, it is a rhetorical device, which makes use of the description of one kind of sense perception to refer to another, as in the phrase "shining metallic words". As a result, the sound has taste, the taste has colour, and the colour has sound. Namely, this kind of feeling is "the transfer of sense". This kind of rhetorical devices can be seen widely in literature, as well as daily remarks, such as "Your handwriting is a piece of sweet music to my ears".

With the information collected from current research in neurology, a new interpretation views synaesthetic metaphors as culturally and linguistically shaped, but with some neurological foundation. This view allows for cross-linguistic studies to explore and separate the layers of semantic trends and cognitive processes, and reveals that non-linguistic methods may be used to distinguish the innate trends. Synaesthesia, at least of that kind which is used in common language and art, is not a "co-sensation", but rather a "co-imagination" or "co-feeling". By its psychological nature, it is "association", specifically "inter-sensory association". And, as any association, it can be of passive, active, or creative kind, having various degrees of emotional experience.