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ACADEMIC SERIES ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES

PRAGMATIC AND COGNITIVE STUDIES OF LINGUISTIC PHENOMENA

语言语用及认知研究

刘国辉等 著



重庆大学出版社

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Pragmatic and Cognitive Studies
of Linguistic Phenomena

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江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

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内 容 提 要

正如维特根斯坦所言,语言是一种“游戏”,但这种“游戏”背后是有隐含规则或规律的,这就需要去认真探讨和研究。本书从语用、认知视角对一些语言现象,如英汉请求回应、英汉中动结构、英汉名词性领属结构、“Ulysses”象似性和英汉时间隐喻进行了多角度考察。该研究对语言研究者或爱好者有较高的学术参考价值与实用价值。

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出版人:张鸽盛

社址:重庆市沙坪坝正街 174 号重庆大学(A 区)内

邮编:400030

电话:(023) 65102378 65105781

传真:(023) 65103686 65105565

网址:<http://www.cqup.com.cn>

邮箱:fxk@cqup.com.cn (市场营销部)

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序 言

当代语言学,如果说从乔姆斯基时代算起的话,到现在半个世纪了。在这期间语言学研究之兴盛,不管是从学派、思潮上看,还是从人数、研究成果上看,都是历史上很少见的,也许是过去几百年的总和,因为这期间出现了很多具有全球影响的世界级大师,如 Chomsky, Halliday, Hymes, Levinson, Leech, Lakoff, Langacker, Talmy, Taylor, Goldberg 等等。各种学术派别或学术思潮,如生成句法学、生成语义学、语用学、社会语言学、系统功能语言学和认知语言学等相继诞生,的确让人眼花缭乱,目不暇接。这一方面说明人们对语言观察和研究的深入,另一方面说明当前信息时代对语言研究有着特殊的需求和要求,特别是机器翻译、人机对话等更离不开语言处理。

然而不管是哪个派别或学者,对语言的处理与研究都离不开一个“自然真实性”,因为这样的语料才可靠,才是真正的语言。也就是说,“真实的语言交际”离不开三个基本条件:一个是物理语境,一个是认知语境,还有一个是社会的人。为什么会这样呢?众所周知,一方面,我们的任何交际都需注意:(i)时间;(ii)空间;(iii)对象;(iv)相互关系;(v)交际方式和(vi)交际目的或意图等参数的变化,否则交际就达不到预期的目标,甚至会失败。另一方面,我们又要尽其所能将客观世界全部描述出来,做到100%的“全真”象似度,但实际上做不到,同时也不必,因为这样既不经济、省力,又不现实。为此,要想使“有限符号达到无限使用”之目的,我们只好走另一条路——隐喻式扩展,以解决现实需求。我们在此所涉及五个课题就是自然语言所涉及三个条件的一个初步展示、观察与分析:(i)英汉请求回应对比研究(由刘国辉执笔);(ii)英汉中动结构认知语义对比研究(由戴婷婷执笔);(iii)英汉名词性领属结构认知对比研究(由王君执笔);(iv)“Ulysses”象似性研究(由蒋艳执笔)和(v)英汉时间隐喻认知对比研究(由陆建茹执笔)。最后,由刘国辉进行调整、修改、统稿并编辑而成。

最后,非常感谢重庆大学外国语学院和重庆大学出版社的大力支持,这样才有了该成果问世。

刘国辉
2007年5月

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Chapter One

A Contrastive Study of Responses to Requests in English and Chinese

该研究共有三组被试参加了调查(合计 324 人):他们分别是美语组(美国人),语际组(外语组)和汉语组(中国人)。问卷以英汉两种形式提供,英语问卷供美语组和语际组使用,汉语问卷供汉语组使用。为了调查的有效性,我们根据以往研究的情境模式选择了 12 个情境,这些情境包括了现实交际中所有的社会关系参数或变量,如社会距离、控制(权势)、年龄、性别等等。另外,该研究利用会话完形测试(DCT)这个工具来从被试中获取有关他们表达请求能力的信息。该测试模式是由 Levenston (1975)首先提出来的,主要用来测试当时到加拿大的成人移民的口语水平。它主要有以下优点(Wolfson, et al. 1989: 183-184):(1)可以快速收集大量材料;(2)对自然语言中的语义模式和策略进行了初始分类;(3)提供了社会认可的合适反应的典型框架。结果发现,就请求行为的回应而言,在与不熟悉的陌生人之间交际时,美语组多用积极回应,而汉语组则刚好相反。然而在熟人之间,汉语组则多用积极回应,可美语组并非这样。不管是陌生人还是熟人,语际组始终处于前面两个语组之间。关于英汉两种语言请求回应策略的差异的主要动因,我们认为个体主义与集体主义,内群体与外群体观念的差异。从个体主义角度看,面子在很大程度上是个人。但若从集体主义角度看,个人的面子就是个人所属群体的事,不管这个群体是个人所属的家庭、文化群体还是公司,都可能采取特殊的话语形式来保持内群体与外群体间的界线。

1.1 Introduction

The description of the response to a speech act like request is equally significant because it is an integral part of a speech act and the responses of utterances based on the real life observations are not likely to be neglected. This paper is intended to describe and explain the common and different responses to requests employed in both English and Chinese in a contrastive approach, which is based on the questionnaire survey of Americans and the Chinese people. Through our study we find that in responding to requests, most of the subjects would like to offer positive rather than negative responses. The chief motivation may result from the instinctive altruism and cooperation of human beings. Meanwhile the CHN group prefers the pattern $A > B > C$ for positive responses and $C > B > A$ for negative responses, viz, when Chinese people use positive responses, they like to be terse and when they have to give negative responses, they often say much more about the reasons concerned. However, the AM group prefers the pattern $C > B > A$ for both positive and negative responses, which perhaps is why Americans are talkative, enjoying social interaction. Furthermore, in terms of social distance like among strangers, the AM group prefers positive to negative responses while the CHN group goes to the contrary in most cases.

Hancher (1979) argues that with invitations, bets and offers, the speech act is "incomplete" until the addressee acknowledges and accepts the speaker's offer. For requests, the more emphatically the speaker expresses the certainty of the proposition, the more likely it is that the speaker is expecting explicit assent from the addressee. In other words, speech acts involve the interaction of the speaker and addressee, not simply the execution of an utterance by the speaker. Requests are satisfied when they are complied with, i. e. causing the requestee to make the world fit the content of the request. Morally speaking, it is a virtue to be ready to help others when they are in need of help, but it does not mean that we should

not say "No" to a request for help. In fact, when the request is beyond our ability or it is illegal, we should not be hesitant to say "No". However, even on these occasions, there are people who find it hard to say "No". This is largely because they are afraid of "losing face". They fear to be considered incompetent if they admit themselves incapable of offering the help; they fear to be regarded as miserly or selfish if they turn down a request from a friend; they fear to be laughed at as a coward if they refuse to help to do something dangerous, sometimes even illegal. However, it is also harmful not to say "No" when you ought to, because instead of giving others help, you may probably put yourself into trouble. If you force yourself to do something beyond your means, you may go astray, too. Well, the requesting responses in our questionnaire survey generally do not constitute any kind of flavor of illegality, but obviously involve people's ability and facework. Even in certain situations where people have to refuse, they must offer some reasons and select appropriate strategies, just as Beebe, et al. (1985) put, Americans usually employ three major strategies which were found to be used in sequence at the beginning of a refusal. These were (a) an expression of positive opinion such as "I'd like to", (b) an expression of regret such as "I'm sorry", and (c) an excuse, reason or explanation such as "My children will be home that night" or "I have a headache". Other strategies include a statement of an alternative, a condition for future or past acceptance (e. g. If you had asked me earlier...), a promise of future acceptance (e. g. I'll do it next time.), a statement of principle (e. g. I never do business with friends.), a statement of philosophy (e. g. One can't be too careful.), a statement letting the interlocutor off the hook (e. g. Don't worry about it.), self-defense (e. g. I'm doing my best.) and nonverbal avoidance such as silence or a topic switch.

Though responses to requests are of vital significance, very little attention has been paid to them in the speech act literature and now most of

the acts under research are initiating acts which are characterized and listed in the works of linguists such as Austin(1962), Ohmann(1972), Vendler(1972), Bach & Harnish(1979), Searle(1979), Searle & Vanderveken(1985). The main reasons may be: (a) the description of illocutionary acts is often done by the semantic analysis of performative verbs instead of the functional examination of utterances in discourse. (b) many responding acts do not have a corresponding performative verb at all, as in Example (1). (c) comparatively speaking, the initiating acts seem to play a more important role than responses in the whole components of a speech act.

(1) A: Hey, can you guys give me a lift when you all go home?

B: Oh, I don't know.

B's response to A's request for permission to get a lift home cannot be described in terms of the performative verb because B does not have such a choice at all. So its illocutionary force can only be obtained from the expressions like "I don't know", which means that B "refuses in a vague manner to commit himself". The next issue is how to identify a responding move in discourse. Obviously not any move following an initiating move is the right responding move in (2).

(2) A: What's the time now? Please tell me.

B: a. Ten.

b. Time for lunch.

c. I have no watch on myself.

d. Ask Xiao Zhang.

All of B's responses are related to A's requesting for time information. But only (a) and (b) are the responding moves because they fulfil the illocutionary force of A's elicitation, they provide what A wants to seek, although (b) is somewhat indirect. A can deduce the relevant information from the lunch time. However (c), (d) do not fulfil the illocutionary force of A's elicitation. The main reasons lie in the pragmatic felicity conditions of a request. Tsui (2000) classifies the responses to a request into two

categories: positive responding act and negative responding act (including temporization) in (3).

(3) A: Excuse me, could you pass me the ball, please?

B: a. Yes.

b. No, I could not.

c. Oh, I don't know.

According to Tsui, in B's responses, (a) is a positive responding acts, (b) is a negative responding act and (c) also belongs to negative responding acts; it's a kind of act to postpone the decision-making. As for (a) and (b), I agree with Tsui's classification. But for (c), I have a different idea that it should not be put into the negative acts, because it suspends the answer between "yes" and "no". We'd better offer another category to this act—null responding act (i. e. meaningless act, to some extent) for the time being.

In light of our findings, there do exist three types of responses, they are positive, null and negative respectively. To obtain more information concerning politeness, verbosity or terseness in discourse among three groups (i. e. the CHN, the AM, the IL), we classify positive and negative responses further into three different levels: A, B and C respectively. A is the simplest act with only one utterance like "yes" or "no"; B is an act with a little bit explanation of two utterances and C, an act with enthusiastic explanations of over two utterances. And here null responses refer to suspending responses like (c) in (3), we would not classify null responses into three different levels because any kind of levels, long or short, is still dubious, so it is of no great significance for our analyses in the present study. For the sake of describing convenience we would use the symbol " \emptyset " to stand for it in our statistical tables of later analyses. Examples of the three different levels of positive and negative response categories are delineated as below:

Positive responses in (4)

(4) A: Hey, guys, can you give me a lift home?

B: (A) Sure.

(B) Sure, get in please.

(C) Yeah, no problem, which end of the street do you live at?

Negative responses in (5)

(5) A: Excuse me, ma'am? I wonder if you happen to have change for a five-pound note. I don't have any change for the meter and I see a meter maid coming. Thanks a lot!

B: (A) No.

(B) Sorry, I don't have, either.

(C) Sorry, I have used up for my parking yesterday and now I do not have got yet.

Apart from the above three kinds of responses, in real discourse we would often encounter the fourth one—non-verbal responses from the addressee such as in (6).

(6) (在人才招聘会的一个摊位上。)

(In front of one stand for a talent recruitment fair.)

招聘人:请先谈谈你的情况。

(Recruiter: First introduce something about yourself, please.)

应聘人:我本科学的是师范,我很喜欢做老师。

(Recruitee: My major for BA is teaching, and I do like to be a teacher.)

招聘人点头。

(Recruiter nods his head.)

应聘人:本科毕业后,我在中学任教了五年,已拿到中级职称。

(Recruitee: After I graduated for BA study, I have worked at a middle school for five years, obtaining a intermediate position in my profession.)

招聘人点头。

(*Recruiter nods his head.*)

应聘人:我已在各种刊物上发表六篇专业学术论文。

(*Recruitee: I have already published 6 professional academic papers in all kinds of journals.*)

In this situation the addressee would simply respond with the nodding of his or her head, namely, body language. It is a pity that we can't acquire this kind of information due to the written form of our questionnaire survey. Now let us examine the actual situations in which Americans, Chinese people and English language learners choose among kinds of responses to requests.

1.2 Subjects

There are three groups of subjects (totalling 324) from colleges or universities¹ participating in this study: a group of NSs of American English (AM, totalling 84 with 33 males to 51 females), a group of Chinese learners of English (IL, totaling 128, with 16 males to 112 females), and a group of NSs of Mandarin Chinese (CHN, totalling 112 with 64 males to 48 females). We choose the three groups as our subjects mainly because native speakers of American English can represent the Occidental culture, native speakers of Chinese in the mainland can represent the Oriental culture and the interlanguage speakers stay between the two poles of opposite cultures. In other words, (a) American English, instead of British English, nowadays dominates most of the world media, and almost all aspects of our daily life. For example, TOEFL is taken every year around every corner of the globe; (b) the mainland Chinese enjoys the most authoritative status in the Chinese language and has over one billion speakers and it's used widely across the whole country, even in Taiwan, Macao and Hong Kong; (c) from the IL group we can get some information concerning how the non-native speakers who keep their own culture are influenced by Western culture. We do believe that we can find out where the major differences in request responses

between them lie in by the comparison of the three groups. As for the number of the subjects in our survey, I would like to say something more. Here we are chiefly concerned with the probability distribution of the request responses, i. e. the percentage rather than the number itself. The reason is that even 1,000 or 10,000 subjects are not enough if considered exclusively from the quantitative perspective. Actually, we could not exhaust the infinite number, and meanwhile it is not necessary for us to do so, especially in social science study.

1.3 The Questionnaire

Social distance between interlocutors is considered to be low (- SD) for members of a nuclear family, friends and relatives, and high (+ SD) for strangers. By dominance, we mean the power of the speaker over the hearer in a given role relationship. Thus, a situation in which a lecturer is speaking to a student is considered to be speaker dominant ($X > Y$), but status equals ($X = Y$) if the exchange is taking place between two students (Montserrat, 1999). Table 1 below shows the variation of social distance and social power (dominance) in our questionnaire survey situations. We employ 12 situations altogether², they are situations 1-8, 12 taken from the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989: 14-15), situations 9 and 10 from Gibbs (1985), situation 11 from Fraser, et al. (1980). However, the questions are designed by the author of this paper. For more details, see the APPENDIX.

Table 1 Social distance and dominance variation for each request responding situation

Situations	Social distance	Dominance
S1 Kitchen	- SD	$X = Y$
S2 Street	+ SD	$X = Y$
S3 Notes	- SD	$X = Y$