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復旦大學

博 士 学 位 论 文

误解的认知研究

Misunderstanding: A Cognitive Approach

院 系 (所): 外国语言文学系

专 业: 英语语言文学

姓 名: 孙 亚

指导教师: 熊学亮 教授

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Abstract

Misunderstanding, as a form of unsuccessful communication, has been receiving extensive attention from linguists, sociologists, psychologists, researchers of communication, etc. Misunderstanding may produce an effect as slight as humorous and funny jokes, or as serious as quarrels, conflicts and even fighting. Further research may help people recognize the inevitability of misunderstanding, minimize negative consequences, and ensure harmonious interpersonal relationship. The dissertation expects to obtain new findings from a cognitive perspective.

The dissertation, which is composed of eight chapters, is divided into three parts: the introductory part (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2), the body (from Chapter 3 to Chapter 5), and the concluding part (Chapter 6).

The aim of Chapter 1 is to make initial attempts for the dissertation, i.e. formulating objectives, providing the rationale for the current study, and clarifying the scope and methodology of the current study. Chapter 2 offers a review of three major points concerning misunderstanding: definition, origins and types of misunderstanding. Misunderstanding is mainly defined as the result of the mismatch between the speaker's intended meaning and the hearer's interpreted meaning, which is characterized by being inevitable and unintentional by default. The inevitable misunderstanding is due to various factors regarding the nature of communication, language use, and communicators. In general, previous work tends to be more descriptive than explanatory, to be based more on intercultural communication than on intracultural communication, and to be grounded in objectivist theories of understanding.

The body part is a process of hypothesis formation (Chapter 3) and hypothesis evaluation (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). Chapter 3 presents a theoretical framework for examining misunderstanding. In this chapter, the widely accepted models of communication and understanding are investigated to reveal their objectivist nature.

Then an experiential view of understanding is outlined within the framework of cognitive linguistics, especially Lakoff's theory of idealized cognitive models (ICMs). At the end of the chapter, hypotheses are raised about origins of misunderstanding based on the new framework: ICMs' conflict (both external and internal), and ICMs' indeterminate reasoning.

Chapter 4 investigates the emergence of misunderstanding due to ICMs' conflict, i.e. the conflict between Speaker ICM and Hearer ICM. ICMs' conflict is further divided into external conflict and internal conflict, i.e. conflict across ICMs and conflict within ICMs. Specifically, the former indicates the case in which speakers and hearers trigger different ICMs. When it comes to the latter, speakers and hearers may refer to different entities in the same reference-ICM, or retrieve different instantiations in applying the same event-ICM, even though they share the same reference-ICM or event-ICM.

These conflicts confirm three views of cognitive linguistics: the experiential view, the prominence view and the attentional view. Since linguistic expressions play the role of triggering ICMs, this chapter focuses on how ICMs' conflict originates from the following cases: underinformativeness and overinformativeness of linguistic expressions, problematic reference, improper choice of linguistic expressions in terms of prototypical effects and granularity, and prominence on language use.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the relation of misunderstanding and cognitive reasoning. It confirms the imaginative nature of reasoning and presents three basic inference patterns (image-schematic structuring, metaphoric mapping and metonymic reasoning) to facilitate human understanding. The indeterminacy of those patterns creates the possibility of misunderstanding, specifically the transferability of image-schematic structuring and metaphoric mapping; the case of mapping a concept metaphorically onto different domains; the removability of metonymic reasoning.

Chapter 8 presents a gist of all the chapters and summarizes main findings. Through the process of hypothesis formation and hypothesis evaluation, the dissertation has achieved the following findings and implications:

1. The current study has clarified the relationship between misunderstanding and

coherence. Lack of coherence is certain to lead to misunderstanding, but coherence does not ensure that misunderstanding will not occur because it is diverging on some occasions.

2. The dissertation has identified some cognitive principles underlying communication, i.e. the principle of iconicity and economy, the principle of implicitness, the principle of prototypical interpretation, and the principle of accessibility. In addition, the dissertation has confirmed the imaginative nature of reasoning and summarized inference patterns: image-schematic structuring, metaphoric mapping, and metonymic reasoning.
3. The dissertation has offered new lights on describing understanding and misunderstanding from a cognitive approach. Cognitive understanding is a process of triggering ICMs, instantiating ICMs, and constructing experience, while cognitive misunderstanding is described as the case of cognitive disparity between Speaker ICM and Hearer ICM in terms of instantiating ICMs differently, failing to share the same ICM, and employing different inference patterns.
4. The dissertation contributes to an on-going dialogue between pragmatics and cognitive linguistics by applying theories of ICMs to pragmatic issues.

Key words: misunderstanding; cognitive linguistics; idealized cognitive models

Classification number: H030

摘 要

语言学家、社会学家、心理学家、交际学家等都一直关注着误解这个课题,各派学者都从不同角度做了大量细致的研究,本文试图从认知的视点出发以期获得新的发现。本文有八章组成,分为三个部分:引言部分(第一、二章),主体部分(从第三章至第五章)、结论部分(第六章)。

第一章主要阐释研究目的和动机,探讨研究方法和范围,以及说明语料收集的途径。第二章是文献回顾,主要归纳了以往研究中比较集中的三个问题:误解的定义、来源和分类。一般以为,误解是说话人意欲表达的意义与听话人所获得的意义之间不等同的情形。大量事实证明误解是不可避免的,这主要取决于言语交际的性质、语言使用的特点以及语用者本身。

假设形成和假设验证构成了主体部分。第三章首先审视了文献回顾中涉及到的言语交际和理解的诸多模式,并揭示出了它们以真值条件为基础的客观主义性质。传统模式忽略了人的认知在言语交际中的作用,而经验主义认知观强调语言是人类认知活动的结果,强调认知来源于人类的物理和社会经验,尤其强调人的身体经验和想象性思维在言语交际中的作用。因此,本文以认知语言学、特别是Lakoff的理想化认知模式为基础刻画了言语交际和理解的理论框架,重点在理想化认知模式如何影响言语理解,并以此形成了关于误解来源的假设,即理想化认知模式之间或内部的冲突和理想化认知模式的不确定推理。

第四章研究由于说话人理想化认知模式与听话人理想化认知模式之间的冲突所造成的误解。这种冲突有外部冲突与内部冲突之分,前者指言语交际中说话人和听话人激活了不同的理想化认知模式。如果说话人和听话人共享同一理想化认知模式,但在将此理想化认知模式投入使用时出现了差异,则是内部冲突。

由于言语表达在激活理想化认知模式起着关键作用,所以把两种冲突主要归结如下五种情形:言语表达的信息过少、言语表达的信息过多、不恰当的言语表达选择、言语表达被语用者赋予不同的突显和注意、指称表达的或然性。

第五章阐述了由于认知推理的不确定性所造成的误解。想象性的认知推理主要有三种模式:意象图式、隐喻映射和转喻推理。造成误解的不确定认知推理表

现在三个方面：意象图式和隐喻映射之间的可转换性；转喻推理的可取消性；同一概念被隐喻映射至不同领域的可能性。

第八章总结本文研究的成果并指出其局限性。经过验证假设，本文取得了预期的目标。首先，归纳了误解与连贯的双重关系，语篇缺乏连贯必产生误解但具备语篇连贯并不保证交际成功。其次，归纳了言语交际中的认知原则（如经济原则、可及性原则、理解典型化原则）和推理模式。再者，刻画了认知理解和认知误解，认为认知理解就是激活理想化认知模式、投入理想化认知模式、构建经验的过程，而语用者激活了不同的理想化认知模式或投入理想化认知模式时产生差异或运用了不同的认知推理模式，于是产生认知误解。最后，本文运用认知语言学的原理解决语用学课题，促进了语用学和认知语言学两学科的融合和对话。

关键词：误解；认知语言学；理想化认知模式

分类号：H030

List of Abbreviations

MIS	misunderstanding
ICMs	idealized cognitive models
RICM	reference-ICM
EICM	event-ICM
HICM	hearer ICM
SICM	speaker ICM
IE	individual experience
CE	collective experience

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

More and more linguists, who have been increasingly interested in the study of language use, have reached an agreement that the most important use of language is for the purpose of communication between human beings. As far as language use and communication are concerned, language production and language comprehension (understanding), speaker (writer, addresser) and hearer (reader, addressee) come into focus. Successful communication between human beings, either within a culture or across cultures, requires that the message and meaning intended by the speaker be correctly received and interpreted by the hearer. Successful communication is always the highest goal pursued by both the speaker and the hearer. However, there is some degree of miscommunication in most human interactions. The endeavor to achieve the goal, like any other human activity, can go wrong or amiss in a variety of ways.

The Oxford English Dictionary includes many words indicating unsuccessful communication, which make up a 'mis-' family, such as *misapply*, *misapprehend*, *miscalculate*, *mishear*, *misinform*, *misinterpret*, *misname*, *mispronounce*, *misquote*, *misread*, *misrepresent*, *misspell*, *misunderstand*, *misuse*. Misunderstanding¹ (MIS for short) is so commonplace and universal that it has been receiving extensive attention from linguists, sociologists, psychologists, researchers of communication, etc. Though intensive studies have been done on this issue from various perspectives, the dissertation still expects to obtain new findings through careful research on MIS from a cognitive point of view.

1.2 Rationale and objectives

It is not hard to imagine how often MIS appears in everyday communication.

¹ "Misunderstanding", in its single form as an uncountable noun, is used to refer to a pragmatic phenomenon as a whole, while its single or plural form as a countable noun refers to actual cases.

Apparently people misunderstand each other's words, silence, gestures or attitudes all the time. MIS happens not only between people with different languages or cultures, but also between close friends, spouses, adults and children, doctors and their patients, and teachers and their students, in all walks of life. Consequently, "it is widely assumed that misunderstanding is ubiquitous—an assumption supported by the availability of specific repair structures in conversational turns and their frequent use" (Dascal, 1999).

MIS may have slight effects on communication or interpersonal relationship. For example, when A says to B "Please give me the bucket", and B bring a different bucket from the one A has in mind. On some occasions MIS even becomes the source of humor. On a bus, for instance, a little boy has a running nose and produces unpleasant noises. Then the woman nearby says to him, "Do you have a handkerchief, young boy?" Unexpectedly she receives a reply, "Yes, I have. But I do not want to lend it to others." The woman will feel rather funny than annoyed. Hence, MIS may even pass entirely unnoticed.

However, not all effects of MIS are as slight and entertaining as the above. It is also common that MIS leads to frustration, resentment, anger, quarrel, clash, conflict and even warfare. It may even arouse racial discrimination and hatred between people from different cultures or countries. Therefore, it is still necessary to study MIS at least for the sake of minimizing negative effects and maintaining harmonious relationship in communication.

In addition to practical significance mentioned above, research into MIS also displays its theoretical value. Language understanding, as part and parcel of language use, constitutes the greatest concern of pragmatics. From Austin's speech act theory to Grice's conversational implicature and Cooperative Principle, from Leech's Politeness Principle to Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory, previous scholars endeavor to put forward their own models of language understanding. As the opposite of understanding, MIS has been touched upon more or less in previous work. It is inevitable that many followers of pragmatics have done an intensive and plentiful research on this topic in the past years when pragmatics has been amazingly popular

at home and abroad. Despite their efforts there is still much to be desired.

MIS, as a kind of miscommunication, naturally receives attention from researchers of communication, especially of intercultural or cross-cultural communication. In a broad sense, cross-cultural MIS happens between people from different cultures, from different races, from different classes, from different professions, between a man and a woman, and between a child and an adult. Further research from a new approach will offer new insights into intracultural communication and intercultural communication.

MIS, as a form of errors in language learning, is also worth efforts from scholars of Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching. Further research from a new approach may shed new lights on why foreign language learners may make various kinds of pragmatic errors and what they should do to avoid or at least minimize the risk of such errors.

Most important of all, this dissertation expects to contribute to theoretical development of research on MIS. The starting point of the present study is the belief that previous research on MIS is based on objectivist theories of language use. Those theories “explicitly or implicitly regard language as a human faculty which is independent of the rest of cognition, also involving perception, motor movement and image formation” (Marmaridou, 2000:2). By contrast, the present study is to explore the emergence of MIS from the perspective of experientialism and cognitive linguistics. The expected findings include:

1. The description of cognitive understanding and cognitive misunderstanding;
2. The outline of origins of misunderstanding based on cognitive linguistics;
3. The picture of integrating cognitive linguistics with pragmatics.

1.3 Data collection

In the previous studies, examples of MIS are collected from natural and simulated discourse. By way of tape-recording most scholars obtain natural data and give detailed transcriptions of data. However, some of them who have worked on MIS

have exposed difficulties in collecting examples of MIS from natural discourse. For example, Milroy (1986: 25) says, "by its nature, material on miscommunication is hard to collect in any systematic way, since such instances occur unpredictably and sometimes infrequently". Humphreys-Jones (1986:37) also conveys the same idea as follows:

Initially, in an attempt to collect data, surreptitious recording was carried out in a family home, a student flat and a university room, where a wide range of conversations took place between various different participants. The number of misunderstandings to emerge from these recordings was low and was not satisfactorily productive in proportion to the time spent listening for them on tape.

As far as the current dissertation is concerned, it is impossible and impractical to do tape-recording and corresponding transcription due to lack of necessary equipments and tight schedule intended for the dissertation. Moreover, the approach adopted in the current study is not based on conversation analysis. Hence, it does not make much difference without much tape-recorded natural data. In general, there are three ways of data collection.

Firstly, some examples of MIS in the current study are collected by the diary method, which means that examples are found by chance in conversations happening among close friends, relatives, and even strangers. Its authenticity may make up for the shortage of tape-recorded natural data. All English versions of Chinese examples are given by the current author.

Secondly, plays and novels provide a reliable source of simulated examples. Some of them can be regarded as natural to a large extent because conversations in plays and novels cannot be free from the influence of natural discourse. Since simulated examples are available for prolonged and repeated investigation, limitations of memory in analyzing natural discourse can be avoided a great deal.

Finally, some examples are adapted from other scholars' research. In some cases, comparative studies can be done between their analysis and the current examination, which may reveal differences between the current approach and previous ones.

Therefore, there are two kinds of MIS under discussion: MIS happening among