

周芹芹◎著

汉语恭维回应语的社会语言学研究

——拉波夫的语言变异观

A Sociolinguistic Study of Compliment Responses in Mandarin Chinese:

From a Labovian Perspective



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内 容 提 要

本书以社会语言学的变异观和和语用学礼貌理论为基础,采用拉波夫范式的社会语言学研究方法,通过参与观察法收集了上海言语社区1190对恭维语及恭维回应语自然语料,运用定量研究中的多元回归分析法探讨了不同语境因素对汉语恭维回应语的影响。

本书可供从事社会语言学、语用学、英汉语言对比、语料库语言学及对外汉语教学等相关领域研究的专业人士,包括英语教师、研究生和英语专业的学生等参考使用。本书的内容对汉语作为外语的教学也具有一定的启示,从而帮助汉语学习者更好地掌握汉语恭维语这一言语行为。

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序

我国三千年前的《诗经·周颂》中的一首农事诗里说：

粃粃良耜，俶载南亩。

播厥百谷，实函斯活。

或来瞻女，载筐及筥，其饁伊黍。

其笠伊纠，其锄斯赵，以薅荼蓼。

荼蓼朽止，黍稷茂止。

获之挈挈，积之栗栗。

其崇如墉，其比如栉，以开百室。

百室盈止，妇子宁止……

这首《良耜》古诗描绘了古代人们春天播种到秋天收获的完整过程。为学之道又何尝不是如此呢？只有耕耘、播种才会有收获。我欣喜地看到周芹芹博士的新著《汉语恭维回应语的社会语言学研究——拉波夫的语言变异观》即将出版，这是她近5年来辛勤努力的成果。

近年来，国内外语言学研究学者对汉语恭维回应语的研究日益增多，纷纷从恭维回应语的话题差异、语言形式、应答差异和性别等方面，对恭维回应语进行了多纬度、多角度的分析和研究。与国内外众多其他的恭维语回应研究不同的是，《汉语恭维回应语的社会语言学研究——拉波夫的语言变异观》是典型的整体多维度的大型定量研究，是从拉波夫范式下的社会语言学变异观和语用学礼貌理论相结合的理论视角进行的一个相当成功的尝试。该研究探讨了现代汉语恭维回应语的模式和准则，并且分析了社会语境因素，如年龄、性别、社会地位、教育程度、社会阶层、社会网络关系、英语熟练程度等因素对其语用变异的制约作用，涉及的样本量大，面广，变量多而复杂。

学术研究的最难能可贵之处在于创新：新材料、新方法、新发现。这些创新要素恰恰在这部著作中得到了充分的显现：

首先，语料收集方法上，该研究采用社会语言学的参与观察法，收集了上海言语社区恭维语及恭维回应语自然语料，同时还采集包括相关的语言使用者的社会背景信息，如年龄、性别、社会地位、教育程度、社会阶层、社会关系、英语熟练程度等附加信息。语料选取有代表性，素材翔实，例证丰富。

语料分析上,切合这类大型定量研究的特点。该研究主要借鉴了社会语言学上的变项规则分析法,极其细致地采用计算机软件进行了多变量回归分析,试图说明在哪些条件下,何种恭维回应语策略更可能被语言使用者采用。同时辅以频率统计、百分比计算以及卡方检验等定量统计方法分析。其研究分析方法客观、科学、严密。

研究发现上,通过多因素分析,该研究首先得出了上海语言社区最常使用的汉语恭维回应语模式是接受型回应模式,其次是间接型回应模式,最后是拒绝型回应模式,这和以往文献中的有关汉语恭维回应语的研究结果有所不同。由此作者得出了中国人的礼貌准则正在经历一个由谦虚准则到一致准则过渡的阶段。可以说,在这一领域,本研究从汉语使用角度构建了新颖的理论模型,这一模型具有相当的解释力。

本著作的价值不仅在于它得出了具有现实意义的社会语言学和语用学结论,更重要的是该研究还对其他类似的研究具有参考价值和借鉴作用,从而有助于我们更加清晰地认识在各种不同语言文化背景下,各种言语行为表现出来的一些共性和差异。

周芹芹博士的这本新著是在其博士论文的基础上修改加工而成,论文结构严谨,逻辑清晰,行文流畅。她在上外做博士论文期间,研究认真踏实,思路清晰细致,分析问题能有独特的视角,其博士论文曾得到答辩专家及评审专家一致的好评。希望她再接再厉,不断有新的研究成果问世。

俞东明

2013年5月30日于上海外国语大学

前言

根据 Holmes(1986)的定义,恭维语是一种礼貌的言语行为,是指说话者对听话者具备的良好素质或拥有物显性或隐形的赞美。那么人们对恭维语是如何回应的呢?由于各国的文化不同,人们的恭维回应语也呈现出不同的特征。

中国人一向以谦虚著称,传统上认为这主要是遵守了礼貌原则中的谦虚准则。通过对已有言语行为的实证研究发现,即使是同一种言语行为(如恭维回应语)在不同的文化、社会 and 语境中皆表现出不同的特征。其中恭维回应语差异在汉语为母语和英语为母语的说话人中表现得尤为突出,前者采用更多的不接受型策略(non-acceptance strategy),而后者更多采用接受型策略(acceptance strategy)(Spencer-Oatey, Ng, & Dong, 2000)。但随着全球化日益加剧和跨文化交流的不断增多,各种语言相互之间的影响日渐加深,现代汉语中人们对恭维语的回应又呈现出哪些新的模式、新的准则和特征呢?面对别人的赞扬和夸奖,人们现在究竟是谦虚地回应说“哪里,哪里”,还是欣然说一声“谢谢”呢?

基于社会语言学的变异观和礼貌理论,本书旨在探讨汉语恭维回应语的新模式、新准则和新特征,具体分析多个社会语境因素对其语用变异的制约作用。此外,还探讨了语言接触引起的语言变异和变化。具体来说,英语在语用层面对汉语的影响。

全书共分六章。第一章介绍了研究的背景,研究的目的、研究问题及主要研究方法。第二章回顾了国内外有关恭维回应语的相关理论研究及重要的实证研究。第三章介绍了语料收集方法、语料编码及语料分析方法。第四章阐述了研究的发现。第五章分别从宏观、微观的角度,礼貌理论,语言接触理论以及语言变异理论讨论了研究结果。第六章为结论部分。

本书依托的研究采用的调查方式为社会语言学的参与观察法,共收集了上海言语社区1190对自然语言状态下的恭维语及恭维回应语用例,

同时还包括相关的语言使用者的社会背景信息,如年龄、性别、社会地位、教育程度、社会阶层、社会关系网络、英语熟练程度等信息。依据采集自然语言状态下的语料,采用拉波夫范式的社会语言学定量研究中——变项规则分析法(variable rule analysis)来分析多个因素对汉语恭维回应语的制约作用。

在总结先前研究的基础上,本书对可能影响恭维回应语模式选择的因素组以及因素进行了相应的编码。然后使用专为分析变异语料而设计的软件Goldvarb X展开分析,同时辅助使用了频率计算卡方检验等统计学方法。研究结果发现,上海言语社区最常使用的汉语恭维回应语模式是接受型回应模式,其次是间接型回应模式,最后是拒绝型回应模式,这和以往文献中的有关汉语恭维回应语的研究结果有所不同。然而,和英语本族语者采用的恭维回应语模式相比较,中国人采用的接受模式仍然低于英语本族语者,而在采用间接型和拒绝型恭维回应语方面要高于英语本族语者。在以往的文献中,谦虚准则一直是中国人所遵循的礼貌准则。然而基于以上的研究发现,我们可以认为中国人的礼貌准则正在经历一个由谦虚准则到一致准则过渡的阶段。

我们还发现,正如音系、形态和句法变异一样,语用变异也受到各种社会因素,如年龄、性别、社会地位、教育程度、社会阶层、社会关系网络、英语熟练程度等因素的制约,而且呈现出一定的系统性。该研究还证明,英语作为一种强势语言向汉语语用迁移,已成为一种客观的语言事实。这尤其表现在中国人较以往更大量地使用“谢谢”这样一种表示接受的恭维回应策略。

总之,希望本书能在某种程度上进一步丰富语言变异理论、礼貌理论和语言接触理论。同时能对其他相关的言语行为研究提供一定的参考和借鉴,也希望能给汉语作为一种外语教学带来一点启示。由于本人水平有限,书中难免有所疏漏,恳请专家、学者批评指正。

在本书即将付梓之际,我想对长期关心帮助我的各位师友表示最衷心的感谢。首先,特别感谢恩师俞东明教授,他学识渊博,治学严谨,对我的悉心指导和热忱鼓励,让我受益终身。感谢上海外国语大学英语学院诸位老师,感谢他们的传道、授业与解惑,尤其是何兆熊教授,先生睿智博学,德高望重却平易近人,曾不吝推荐我的书稿出版,使我备受鼓

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借此机会还要感谢我至爱的家人。父母含辛茹苦培养我成人,感谢他们多年来无私的爱与关怀。感谢我的爱人郭鸿杰博士和爱女郭晓乐,感谢他们多年来默默的支持,给我家的温暖,爱的滋润。光阴荏苒,爱女已从一个蹒跚学步的幼儿成长为一名可爱懂事的小学生,带给了我无限的欢乐。仅以此书献给我的家人,以慰藉他们这么多年来无私奉献。

周芹芹

2013年5月于上海文馨苑

Abbreviations

ANOVA	analysis of variance	方差分析
C	compliment	恭维
CCCE	corpus of Chinese compliment events	汉语恭维语料库
CR	compliment response	恭维回应语
CS	Chinese speakers	说汉语的人
DCT	discourse completion test	话语补全测试
EFL	English as a foreign language	英语作为外语
F	female	女性
H	hearer	听话者
FTA	face-threatening act	威胁面子的行为
L1	first language	第一语言; 母语
L2	second language	第二语言
M	male	男性
N	number	数字, 数量
NES	native English Speaker	英语为母语者
PP	politeness principle	礼貌原则
S	speaker	说话者
SA	speaker A	说话人 A
SB	speaker B	说话人 B
VRA	variable rule analysis	变项规则分析

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Objectives	3
1.3	Research Questions	4
1.4	Methodology	5
1.5	Organization	5
2	Literature Review	6
2.1	Introduction	6
2.2	Theoretical Review	6
2.2.1	Speech Act Theory	6
2.2.2	Politeness Theory	9
2.2.3	Variation Theory	17
2.3	Review of Empirical Studies	20
2.3.1	Previous Work on Compliments	20
2.3.2	Previous Work on Compliment Responses	25
3	Methodology	34
3.1	Introduction	34
3.2	The Field Work	34
3.2.1	Data Collection	34
3.2.2	Participants	35
3.2.3	Task	36
3.3	The Lab Work	37
3.3.1	Coding Scheme for Compliments	37
3.3.2	Coding Scheme for Compliment Responses	39
3.3.3	Coding Scheme for Sociolinguistic Factors	49

3.3.4	Inter-rater Reliability Study	54
3.4	Data Analysis	55
4	Findings	58
4.1	Introduction	58
4.2	Compliments	58
4.2.1	Topics of Compliments	58
4.2.2	Gender of Complimenters and Receivers	61
4.2.3	Personal Focus of Compliments	64
4.2.4	Social Status of Complimenters and Receivers	67
4.3	Compliment Responses	70
4.3.1	Distributional Analysis	70
4.3.2	Multivariate Analysis	134
5	Discussion	144
5.1	Introduction	144
5.2	Macro and Micro Level Compliment Responses	144
5.3	Politeness Theory	146
5.4	Language Contact Theory	148
5.5	Variation Theory	151
6	Conclusion	153
6.1	Introduction	153
6.2	Findings	153
6.3	Implications	158
6.4	Limitations and Suggestions	160
	Appendices	163
Appendix I	Record of the Complement Event Data	163
Appendix II	Figure of Chinese Social Class Hierarchy	167
Appendix III	Samples of Coding Strings of Compliment Responses	168
	Bibliography	192

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

According to Holmes (1992), sociolinguistics is the study of linguistic structure in relation to social structure. Sociolinguists are interested in language variation occurring in society. They seek to explain why people speak differently in different social contexts, and try to identify the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. Thus, a sociolinguistic study is often concerned with the relationship between social factors (age, gender, social status, ethnicity, education, etc.) and language factors (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, language function, etc.), which has been mirrored specifically in the concept of the speech act (Manes, 1983).

From a myriad of empirical studies undertaken so far on speech acts, it is true that the same speech act is very likely to be realized quite differently across diverse social, cultural, and linguistic settings. A good case in point is compliment response (CR) behavior, which has been shown some striking differences between Chinese speakers (CS) and native English speakers (NES). The former seem to adopt more non-acceptance strategies, whereas the latter employ acceptance strategies much more often (cf. Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1989, 1990; Holmes, 1988; Knapp, Hopper & Bell, 1984; Ye, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, Ng, & Dong, 2000). However, considering the available research findings for this category of speech act in the literature to date, the preferred strategies of CSs and NESs cannot be definitely described (cf. Chen, 1993; Ye, 1995, for Chinese speakers; cf. Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1989; Knapp et al., 1984, for Americans). On the one hand, Chen's (1993) study indicates that the Chinese highly prefer Non-acceptance forms, whereas Ye's (1995) study reveals that they prefer amendment strategies. On the other hand, Knapp et al.'s (1984) and Chen's (1993) American participants show a great preference for acceptance strategies, but Herbert's (1989) participants prefer amendment forms. In spite of the seeming inconsistencies, the Chinese

speakers indeed adopt many more non-acceptance and fewer Acceptance strategies than do the American English speakers.

Apart from the different inter-cultural social values, previous studies on the compliment event show that the linguistic manipulations of CRs might also have demonstrated enormous variation because of a range of intra-cultural social and individual variables. CRs prove to be “worth studying because, like all speech acts, they can show us the rules of language use in a speech community” (Yuan, 2001, p. 273). Therefore, the study of CRs in cross-cultural, socio-linguistic contexts can make an important contribution because it can provide insights into speech communities as well as into the linguistic and sociolinguistic rules of a language (Nelson, El-Bakary & Al-Batal, 1993).

In order to understand more about cross-linguistic as well as intra-lingual similarities and differences in compliment responses, the study is therefore designed to center on the sociolinguistic features of the speech act of compliment responses in Chinese contexts. Specifically, whether sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, social status, education level, social distance, social class, and use of English, exert an influence on the compliment response, and if so, how?

It is observed that many English learners transfer their first language (L1) rules of politeness to their second language (L2) speech act production. This is referred to as sociolinguistic transfer, defined to be “the use of the rules of speaking of one’s own speech community or cultural group when interacting with members of another community or group” (Chick, 1996, p. 332). Sociolinguistic transfer as a potential causal factor for pragmatic failure has drawn attention from pragmatists, who have undertaken a wide variety of data-based studies in contrastive pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics since the 1980’s in different areas of speech acts (e. g. , refusal, apology, request, compliment response, and the like.). For instance, previous studies of Chinese responses to English compliments suggest that Chinese tend to reject English compliments. Liu’s (1994) study of 20 Mainland Chinese students at the Oklahoma State University reports that 70% of them said “No! No!” to reject English compliments in natural conversations. Chiang and Pochtrager (1993), who studied the compliment responses of 15 Chinese females from the mainland in New York City, reported that 69% of their responses were either denials (e. g. , “No, not at all. ” “No, my baby is ugly. ”) or negative accounts (e. g. “The house is a bit too

small for us.”). Their study also indicates that Chinese females were especially negative toward appearance-related compliments, for 62% denial responses were made to appearance-related compliments. Although only 10% denial responses were given to performance compliments, 59% responses indicated a sense of duty (e. g. , “It is my duty. ”) or emphasized a need for further improvement (e. g. , “I still need a lot of improvement. ”).

These studies tend to focus on the influence of L1 on L2 under the rubric of contrastive analysis; however, virtually not much research has been conducted on the impact of L2 on L1 from a historical linguistic perspective. Taking a different track, the present study attempts to ascertain whether Chinese speakers transfer English pragmatic rules of speech act to compliment responses production in Chinese, especially given the fact that as a prestigious language, English has left a noticeable imprint on Chinese lexicon, morphology, semantics, grammar, and discourse (Wang, 1943/1954; Xie, 1989; Guo, 2005; He, 2009).

Therefore, it is expected that the outcomes of the study provide empirical evidence and rich implications not only about the linguistic forms of compliment responses in the Chinese language, but also about the social etiquette and value systems which are culture-specific.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are four-fold.

First, there has been a debate on the issue of universality versus culture-specificity in speech act studies. Some researchers claim that speech acts operate by universal principles of pragmatics (e. g. , Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975), as well as by some general mechanisms such as principles of cooperation (Grice, 1975) or of politeness (e. g. , Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). In contrast, other theorists maintain that realization patterns of speech acts are mainly motivated by differences in deep-seated cultural norms and values rather than on general mechanisms (e. g. , Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). Accordingly, the present study widens the scope of speech act studies by examining the Chinese language, and may hence shed some light on the issue of universality versus culture-specificity.

Second, this study proves to illuminate our understanding of sociolinguistic

influence on speech act behavior—specifically compliment responses in the speech of Chinese speakers. It is hoped that information gained in this study will help us identify the mode of sociolinguistic influence on speech behavior. And thus, the results of the present research will contribute to our understanding whether an interpretation of the linguistic variable is appropriate to the study of pragmatic variation in the variationist sociolinguistic framework. This is even more pertinent as the study of pragmatic variation has been a moot point among variationists, not least because its object, the pragmatic variable, does not fit mainstream definitions of the linguistic variable.

Third, information obtained about compliments in the speech of Chinese can be used to assess the influence of English on the pragmatics of spoken Chinese owing to the increasing language contact between Chinese and English; that is, whether Chinese speakers model the way Americans give compliments.

Fourth, sociolinguistic studies have shown that speech communities are different in their rules of speaking because the same speech act (such as the act of complimenting), expresses or reinforces a different set of norms, values, expectations, attitudes, beliefs, and the like, across communities. As a result, foreign language learners are at times failing to express or interpret intended meanings owing to a lack of knowledge of the norms of speech behavior in the foreign language. Therefore, it is believed that this study built on the research of the speech act set of compliment and compliment response in Chinese culture will shed light on some information for cross-cultural communication. Specifically, information obtained about compliment responses in the Chinese context can be used to guide the learners of the Chinese language in dealing with cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influences as well as their effect on second language learning.

1.3 Research Questions

The following principal questions guide the research:

1. What are the norms and patterns of compliment responses in natural conversations of Chinese speakers?
2. Are there any drastic changes in the way Chinese speakers respond to compliments compared with earlier studies?
3. Are there cross-cultural similarities and differences as well as intra-cultural or

intra-lingual variations among speakers in the Chinese speech communities?

4. Is the Maxim of Modesty the sole driving force of response strategies in the speech of Chinese speakers?

5. How do the sociolinguistic variables determine the selections of complement response strategies, including gender, age, social status, social distance, social class, and education?

6. To what extent does English exert an influence on the pragmatics of spoken Chinese?

1.4 Methodology

Natural speech, which proves to enjoy the unarguable advantage of being authentic and close to life, has been extensively used in pragmatic and sociolinguistic studies. Accordingly, our corpus used in this analysis consists of 1,190 examples of compliments and compliment responses collected with the assistance of college students and colleagues throughout the ten months of our field work in Shanghai, China. We wrote down all the compliments and compliment responses that occurred around us, with or without our participation. Careful records were kept about the interlocutors' ethnographic information including age, gender, social distance, social class, social status, English proficiency, education background, and the like. Other methods, such as interviews or questionnaires, which look into native speakers' intuitions, were rejected because of their oft-noted limitations (c. f. Wolfson, 1983).

1.5 Organization

The ensuing chapters are organized as follows: Chapter Two provides the review of related literature which consists of review of related theories and review of related empirical studies. Chapter Three introduces the methodology of the study. It justifies the choice of research tool and discusses the execution of the fieldwork and the detailed quantitative work. Chapter Four presents the salient findings of the investigation. Chapter Five discusses the findings. The conclusion is provided in Chapter Six, which discusses implications of the findings, and suggests directions for further research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of the present study was to gather Chinese speakers' responses to compliments in order to explore how social variables may affect their choices of response strategies to compliments. This chapter reviews the theoretical background and empirical researches relevant to this study. It is organized into two sections. Each section is organized into a number of subsections. Section One reviews the theoretical underpinning for understanding the speech act of compliments and compliment responses. Section Two includes a review of empirical studies of cross-cultural comparisons of C-CR speech act and an overview of pragmatic studies in Chinese contexts.

2.2 Theoretical Review

Three theories, namely speech act theory (Austin, 1962), politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983; Gu, 1990), and variationist theory (Labov, 1984; Sankoff, 1982, 1988) will be used as the theoretical frameworks of the study. On one hand, speech act theory and politeness theory are relevant because the consideration of being polite underlies many human behaviors, including paying and responding to compliments. The theory can again help explain why people do what they do in the Chinese language. On the other hand, the variation theory is relevant because the central theme of the present study is variation. The variation theory will provide an explanatory tool to account for any systematic variation found in the use of the compliment responses in Chinese.

2.2.1 Speech Act Theory

Since the compliment is a speech act, it is necessary to discuss speech act theories, in particular those by Austin and Searle. Historically, the term "speech