

A Case Study of Verbal Humor Phenomenon in the Framework of Politeness Principle (PP) - Take the Variety Show Welcome to the Mushroom House as an Example

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the process and conditions of humorous discourse from the perspective of politeness principles by analyzing the corpus of humorous effects generated in “Welcome to the Mushroom House”, in order to help people better apply politeness principles and understand the generation of humorous discourse in natural conversations.

Keywords: Language Art

1. Introduction

1.1 Research object

I chose the variety show Welcome to the Mushroom House as the object of my study mainly from the following considerations: firstly, from the point of view of the current social situation, the art form of variety show has occupied an indispensable position in the entertainment life of the contemporary people, and the study of this art form is of high practical significance; secondly, the program Welcome to the Mushroom House has achieved a better response after broadcasting. Secondly, the program Welcome to the Mushroom House has been well received after its broadcast, and the participating guests of the program (who are known as 0713 Re-employment Boys Group) have become popular again because of the program, which proves that the program is representative and meaningful for research; there are also some other reasons that will be clarified in the literature review part of the combing of the previous similar researches.

1.2 Research objective

It aims to investigate the process and conditions of humorous discourse from the perspective of the Politeness Principle by analyzing the corpus of Welcome to the Mushroom House that produces humorous effects, so as to help people better apply the Politeness Principle as well as understand the production of humor discourse in natural conversation.

2. Literature review

2.1 The development of Politeness Principle

The famous American linguistic philosopher H.P.Grice sat in three lectures at Harvard University in 1967, and the contents of these lectures were formally published in 1975, including the famous pragmatic theory of Cooperative Principle. Grice (1975) thinks that the reason why people do not speak incoherent words in verbal communication is that both parties to the communication have a common purpose, and in order to realize this common purpose, both parties to the communication will abide by some basic principles to satisfy each other's needs as far as possible. These common principles are called Cooperative Principle. However, Grice's Cooperative Principle has some defects. For example, it does not explain why the speakers will not adhere to the Cooperative principle for certain specific interactions and how the listener should deduce the particular meaning of the speaker's words in such scenarios. Therefore, in order to supplement and further develop the principle of cooperation, many other theories have been proposed by numerous scholars represented by Lakoff, Leech and Levinson. One of the more representative ones is the Politeness Principle proposed by British scholar Geoffrey Leech. Leech (1983) divided the Politeness Principle into six maxims, namely Tact Maxim,

Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Majesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. The Politeness Principle not only complement the principle of cooperation in more varied situations, but also help one to understand certain communicative situations in which the Politeness Principle is broken in order to achieve a particular result.

2.2 Studies of Humorous Discourse Generated in Unnatural Situations

Humor is one of the representative situations in which these principles of cooperation and politeness are broken. To date, there have been many studies revolving around breaking the Politeness Principle for the effect of humor. Overseas, Kriangkrai (2012, pp.383-391), a Thai scholar, had presented a study in the 4th International Conference on Language and Communication (ICLC 2012) on the example of the humorous language of the character Phoebe Buffay in the American drama *Old Friends*, in which he pointed out that Phoebe maximizes face threatening by violating the Politeness Principle; Purwanti and Herbianto (2021, pp.79-86) conducted a study on the British comedy series *Mind Your Language*. On the domestic side, there are a large number of studies on humor in the art of sitcoms: Sun Yanbo (2018, pp.1-5) takes the classic American drama *The Big Bang Theory* as an example to study the apology speech that violates the Politeness Principle, and analyzes the reasons for its humorous effect; Zhu Jingjin (2021, pp.187-189) takes the comic strips of Yue Yunpeng and Sun Yue as an example to conduct a study; Liu Yu (2022, pp.47-50) takes the American drama *Teenage Hilton Seasons 4 and 5* as an example; Liang Shaoning (2023, pp.180-188) analyzed some of the humorous dialogues in the CCTV Spring Festival Gala skit *Huan Bu Huan* in 2022 as an example. However, most of the studies on the creation of humorous language in violation of the Politeness Principle have taken comedy films, comedies, sketches and other art forms with humorous lines set up in advance as the object of study, and there are fewer studies on the humorous discourses produced in natural dialogue situations, both domestically and abroad.

2.3 Studies of Humorous Discourse Generated in Natural Conversation

Compared with domestic, foreign countries have more studies on humorous discourse produced in natural conversational situations: German scholar Kotthoff (2006, pp.271-204) conducted a study on two natural corpus of humorous conversations at a gathering of friends in a German academic setting and a humorous conversation in a Viennese bar; Mael, Septiana and Retnani (2018, pp.239-241) analyzed humorous discourses arising from daily interactions between graduate students as a corpus; Mubarakah, Djatmika, and Sumarlam (2019) examined how the traditional Javanese wedding ceremony in Indonesia, in which *Cucuk Lampah* (the wedding procession's leader) created humor by violating the Politeness Principle. However, the dialogues that unfold in such natural conversational situations are often limited by the conditions of corpus collection, and the amount of corpus available for analysis tends to be small. In contrast, in the study conducted by Nisa, Rustono, and Haryadi (2021, pp.227-237), which took the art form of talent show as its object of study, we can find that such a source of corpus was able to collect both as much as possible of the corpus in natural communicative situations.

2.4 Summary

We can find that the discourse analysis of humor under the framework of Politeness Principle has a relatively mature research system and rich case study results, but on the whole, most of the research materials are limited to the humor language under unnatural communication. the dialogues in -natural conversational situations are often limited by the conditions of corpus collection, causing a small data set. In order to sum up the above, the humorous discourse in variety shows was chosen for this study in order to fill the gap in the domestic analysis of humorous discourse in natural communicative situations, as well as in the hope of obtaining as much

Maxims	Sub-Maxims
I. Tact Maxim	Minimize cost to other
	b. Maximize benefit to other
II. Generosity Maxim	Minimize benefit to self
	Maximize cost to self
III. Approbation Maxim	Minimize dispraise of other
	Maximize praise of other
IV. Modesty Maxim	Minimize praise of self
	Maximize dispraise of other
V. Agreement Maxim	Minimize disagreement between self and other
	Maximize agreement between self and other
VI. Sympathy Maxim	Minimize antipathy between self and other
	Maximize sympathy between self and other

corpus as possible.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research questions

The present study is devoted to the application of the Politeness Principle to study the mechanisms of humorous language production in natural communicative situations, as well as to explore and analyze the impact of interpersonal relations between speakers on this phenomenon.

3.2 Theoretical framework

This study refers to The Six Maxims of Leech's Politeness Principle as a theoretical framework, as shown in the following table (Leech,1983) :

3.3 Data collection

By transcribing the dialogues from the program that fit the research design, here is a total of 10 dialogues that can be used for analysis, as shown in the table below.

Types	Conversation number	Amount
Violating Tact Maxim	Conversation 1 ; Conversation 2 ;Conversation 3	3
Violating Generosity Maxim	Conversation 2 ; Conversation 3	2
Violating Approbation Maxim	Conversation 4 ; Conversation 5	2
Violating Modesty Maxim	Conversation 6 ; Conversation 7	2
Violating Agreement Maxim	Conversation 8 ; Conversation 9	2
Violating Sympathy Maxim	Conversation 10	1

4. Case analysis

4.1 Case : violation of the Tact Maxim

The conversation took place when Lu Hu showed the eggs he had secretly kept that had not been taken away by the program team, and Zhang Yuan and Lu Hu had a conversation around these eight eggs, in which they adopted an extremely witty and exaggerated tone. After listening to their conversation, Wang Zhengliang used the word "idiot" to describe them. There was no doubt that this term of address was inappropriate, detrimental to the interests of others and violated the Tact Maxim, thus creating a humorous effect.

This conversation took place while Wang Yuexin was preparing dinner for everyone, while Su Xing and Wang Zhengliang watched Wang Lixin cook. During this process, Su Xing made more demands on Wang Yuexin, who was cooking, maximizing the costs of others, thus creating a humorous effect.

4.2 Case : violation of the Generosity Maxim

In the conversation 2, Wang Yuexin maximized his own benefits while maximizing others costs, so it is also a case of the violation of the Generosity Maxim.

4.3 Case : violation of the Agreement Maxim

This conversation took place when Zhang Yuan was lying on a chaise longue under the eaves of the house, and Lu Hu saw this and questioned him. In this conversation, Zhang Yuan first expressed his disagreement with Lu Hu's assertion that "napping is for the elderly" and refuted it with "Gu Ailing sleeps fourteen hours a day". However, Lu Hu then disagreed with Zhang Yuan's analogy with Gu Ailing, stating that Zhang Yuan is not an Olympic champion like Gu Ailing so he could not agree with Zhang Yuan's analogy. In this dialogue, the two men created a humorous effect by maximizing their disagreement of both sides.

This conversation took place when the guests were playing a game of guessing a person by looking at a picture that only retained the silhouette of the character. The crew gave a picture of the silhouette of the character jumping up on two legs, which Zhang Yuan suggested could be a picture of him. Su Xing immediately expressed his disagreement with Zhang Yuan's assertion and questioned whether Zhang Yuan was able to perform the maneuver, as well as how skinny the character in the picture looked, pointing out that Zhang Yuan was once not that skinny. Lu Hu then immediately expresses his disagreement with Su's point of view again, pointing out that their previous pictures would have been retouched as well. Here the speaker maximized the disagreement between them and others by questioning , creating a humorous effect.

References:

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