Conversation Analysis of Film Carrie

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Abstract: Based on Conversation Analysis Theory, the author of the study chose the conversation between main characters in the film Carrie as the research objective. Through analyzing the conversations, the social status and social class of t he characters could be uncovered. The research is mainly qualitative study, and there is also quantitative study, thus the number of the conversations and the length of the conversation are counted, which are able to reveal the characters' social information. Besides, the adjacency pair and the feedback in the film are also the research objectives of the study.
Keywords: Carrie; Conversation Analysis Theory

1. Introduction

The film Carrie is a 1952 film adaptation of Sister Carrie. It told the story of a rural handsome girl Carrie, who sold her body and soul in a materialistic American capitalist society and eventually became a popular actress.

The dialogue of characters to a certain extent contains information about the emotions, attitudes and sociocultural background of the characters. Conversation Analysis Theory can provide a comprehensive explanation of how the characters in a film make their language choices in a particular context, and how such choices reflect the social relations and social distance between them. According to Wardhaugh (2000), how much and how long interlocutors utter, and how they respond to each other reflect their relations. Therefore, characters' conversations will be analyzed based on turn length, adjacency pair and feedback. Conversation Analysis (CA) was developed in the 1960s by Harvey Sacks together with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (e.g. Sacks et al. 1974).

1.1 Turn Length

In a conversation, a turn is the most basic and essential part. According to Sacks (1974), a turn is what a speaker says before the next speaker begins to say, which takes different forms of language units. Turn length is roughly considered as the total words of all the turns created by a speaker in a particular context.

1.2 Adjacency Pair

Sacks(1974) put forward the concept of adjacency pair to study how the speakers are related. An adjacency pair includes a pair of utterances uttered by both the two participants in an uninterrupted way. An adjacency pair takes many forms, such as greeting-greeting, question-answer, invitation-acceptance (or rejection), inform-acknowledge and assessment-agreement (or disagreement). The forms of adjacency pair of the two characters in Carrie will be summarized, through which conversation structures will be demonstrated.

1.3 Feedback

In conversation, the listener should provide some feedback to show that they are listening to the speaker. The feedback can be classified into verbal feedback and non-verbal feedback. According to Stubbe (1998), verbal feedback refers to short expressions to respond to the other participants. And non-verbal feedback includes smiles and other body languages. According to Xiao (2018), in a conversation, feedback is related to speakers' social identity and social power. He believed that the less authoritative party would give more feedback to respond what he has received. In this study, the two characters' feedback form will be collected to explain the relation between language form and social identity, social and power relations.

According to Schegloff (1992), at the beginning of a conversation, what a speaker says shows how he classifies himself,

through which his social identity and social relation with others will be presented. Therefore, a speaker's identity and social relations with others can be distinguished through his language.

2. Conversation Structure

To implement the present study, the following two steps will be done by adopting quantitative and qualitative analysis. The first step of the research concentrated on exploring the number and length of the turns of Carrie and Mr. Hurstwood respectively, then based on the data, each part of the film was analyzed.

The second step of the research is to analyze how the two characters respond to each other during their conversations mainly from the perspective of adjacency pairs and feedback. In the first instance, main forms of adjacency pair in each section will be exhibited, such as "question-answer, " "request-acceptance (or denial)" and "assessment-agreement (or disagreement)." Secondly, different modes of feedback, such as verbal feedback and non-verbal feedback, will be described and explained. Through these analyses, it's hoped to clarify how language interact with characters' social identity, social roles and social relations. Interlocutors' social relation is partly reflected in how much and how long they utter, and how they respond to each other. Examples will be given to qualitatively summarize their conversation mode mainly from the forms of adjacency pairs.

2.1 Quantitative Study on Turn Length

The data the study choose was the conversations between the hero and the heroine in the film Carrie, released in 1952. The conversations were further divided into four parts according to the plot development and the change of the characters' relations. The distribution of the data was as follows.

Table1 Comparison of turn length between Carrie and George in Carrie

	CHARACTERS	TURN NUMBER	TURN LENGTH
PART1	Carrie	64	184
	George	64	509
PART2	Carrie	24	142
	George	23	366
PART3	Carrie	43	454
	George	45	550
PART4	Carrie	19	237
	George	20	240
TOTAL	Carrie	150	1017
	George	152	1665

The first part talks about George's pursuit to Carrie. George uttered far more words than Carrie. In terms of turn-length, George's(509words) is nearly three times longer than Carrie's(184words). At the same time, their conversations were initiated and controlled by George, who owned high social status. At this stage, they were at first acquaintance and their conversations were influenced by their social relations. Through these conversations, their social identity as a rural and innocent girl and a rich gentleman is uncovered.

In second part, George tried to explain his love to Carrie and prove himself. After knowing the fact, Carrie didn't want to see George any more.Therefore, George uttered far more words than Carrie. In terms of turn-length, George's(366words) is nearly 2.6 times longer than Carrie's(142words). .

In the third part, because of George's thieving money from Mr.Fitz, he couldn't find a job, which made a difficult life. They quarreled with each other. George, once a gentleman with high social status, the poverty made him lost. Carrie gradually found that George was not a gentleman any more, and he lived in past and refused to accept the real life, so Carrie increasingly encouraged George, which reflected her personality of kindness. From table 1, the number of turns and the length of the size between the two were quite approximate.

The last part told the different fortunate of the two. There wasn't much difference between the number and the length of the turn. After losing her baby, Carrie knew that she needed to make efforts by herself. Therefore, she encouraged George to seek help from his son, and then she left. Finally, she became a famous actress. However, George became a beggar and commit suicide. Carrie was full of sadness, and she wanted to compensate him. However, George was seriously ill, and he did not want to say more like before. Therefore, there existed a sharp comparison between the turn length.

2.2 Adjacency pair and Feedback

In Carrie, the conversations between Carrie and George have the following characteristics. Firstly, they frequently adopt two forms of adjacency pairs, "assessment-agreement (or disagreement)" and "question-answer"; Secondly, the two characters

would use verbal and non-verbal feedback to make response.

2.2.1 Adjacency pair

In the film, the two characters sometimes agreed or sometimes disagreed with each other. And thus the form of adjacency pair, assessment-agreement (or disagreement) appeared.

Example:

G: I think you're very lovely.

C: I try to behave as if I were Mrs. Drouet. I will always behave that way. Thank you for the book and for coming to call on us.

Facing George's assessment, Carrie felt uneasy and a little angry because she thought she had been offended. Therefore, Carrie showed her disagreement with George's praise, and her utterances reflected her frankness and innocence, which was also relevant to her social identity as a rural girl from a farm.

2.2.2 Verbal Feedback and Non-verbal Feedback

Verbal Feedback Example:

C: They can't wait, George. They need the money just as much as we do. I can't buy food and things and not pay for them. It's not honest.

H: What do you mean?

C: Well, it's like stealing.

H: Shut up!

In this example, from George's point of view, he provided the answer " Shut up!", at the same time, it was also a kind of verbal response to Carrie. Because of George's "thieving money" in Chicago, he could not find a good job and had no financial support, which made him suddenly dropped from high social status. Therefore, when he heard Carrie's "stealing", he couldn't help being indignant.

Non-verbal Feedback Example:

G: I've gambled on your loving me. If you don't, Carrie, you must get off now. But if you do...If you do love me...

C: (without speaking, but thinking about her decision with tormenting facial expressions)

Although Carrie did not speak, she showed her response through facial expressions. George was going to let Carrie make a choice whether to go with him or not. From her response, it can be found that she still loved George despite his marriage, which also reflected the weakness of Carrie. She lived in low social status, and she couldn't get good life without depending on man in capitalist society where man is the controlling power.

3. Conclusion

Based on Conversation Analysis Theory, this study analyzed the conversations in the film Carrie quantitatively and qualitatively. The study picked out the conversations and counted the number and the size. The adjacency pair and feedback were also studied. The main forms of adjacency pair in the film were question-answer and assessment-agreement(disagreement). There are mainly two kinds of feedback, including the verbal feedback and the non-verbal feedback, through which the character's social identity and relations can be uncovered.

Carrie and George were the social individuals in community, and they used the linguistics resources provided by the social background to produce and interpret meaning, at the same time, the social relationships can be proven from the results of the quantitative study of the turn size and feedback between the two by utilizing the Conversation Analysis Theory.

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