Original Paper

Analysis of Speech Behaviors among Chinese Family Members between Parents and Children during Winter Vacation

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Abstract

The speech act is an indispensable part of social communication. Among them, the speech acts between Chinese parents and their children have received more extensive attention and in-depth research. Under the theory of speech act, this study makes a study on the changes of the speech act of Chinese family members during the winter vacation from the perspective of politeness principle, cross-cultural differences, and other factors. Based on relevant theories, this study attempts to analyze the changes in speech behaviors of Chinese family members under special circumstances. Based on content analysis and discourse analysis, this paper analyzes the influence of request strategy, politeness degree of speech act on speech act, and the influence of speaker and listener's status in the family on speech act. Based on the principle of politeness, Chinese parents are more likely to use direct strategies in language communication with their children. However, in oral communication with their parents, Chinese children tend to adopt directive and indirect strategies. Study shows that Chinese family members will use different ways to express the speaker's respect or closeness to the speaker and listener. Chinese internally use modal words or politeness symbols to modify request speech acts.

Keywords

speech act, politeness principle, family relations, pragmatics

1. Introduction

The speech act is an important part of social communication and interaction. In the past few decades, a great deal of research has promoted the research of the request speech act. A large number of studies have focused on the comparison of various request speech acts in different languages. In these studies, cross-cultural speech act implementation projects are also carried out to further analyze and classify request speech acts. From the conclusion of the cross-cultural speech act implementation project, the

indirect request strategy is the most widely and frequently used request strategy. The indirect request speech act is one of the most representative and common speech acts in different cultures and languages. More specifically, some studies have concluded discourse completion tests. Speech acts of indirect requests account for nearly 65% of speech acts of Chinese requests, indicating that speech acts of indirect requests are one of the most widely used speech acts in Chinese. However, some critics argue that although the proportion of speech acts of direct request is less than 60% in Chinese speech acts of request, in Chinese, speech acts of direct request should be more effective and efficient than speech acts of indirect request (Cen Lu, 2018). While a growing number of studies have focused on the comparison of request speech acts in various languages, few have focused on specific communities or groups, such as friends, relatives, or even family members. Therefore, this study analyzes the development of indirect speech acts and direct speech acts during the holiday. Therefore, this study attempts to find out the general direction of speech behavior change of family members based on existing studies. This paper will begin with a family conversation. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the changes in speech acts by studying the communication patterns of Chinese family members at a certain time.

2. Method

2.1 Speech Act Theory

Based on Grice's theory of request speech act, the request speech act is a strategy that enables the listener to perform the expected behavior politely and appropriately according to the speaker's words (Grice, 1975). The request voice leaves the listener with the option to accept or reject the request, which shows the different characteristics between the request and the command. In interpersonal communication, the request is a frequent speech act. Especially in family communication, it can change at a particular time. However, in the Chinese family, how the speech behavior of requests changes. According to Request Strategy, Brown and Levinson (1978) propose that the speaker imposes demands on the listener, large or small. If the request speech act threatens the hearer's face, the speaker's intention will not be satisfied. Therefore, appropriate request speech ACTS are indispensable to a successful conversation. Therefore, the request strategy becomes very important to manage the appropriateness of the request speech act in this case.

A great deal of research focuses on the development of a classification system of request strategy. However, there is no consensus on the classification of request policies. In this study, Blum-kulka, House, and Kasper (1989)'s classification of request speech ACTS, which is known as the intercultural speech act implementation pattern project or CCSARP, was studied. The intercultural speech act implementation pattern project divides the request speech act into three levels. According to Blum-kulka (1989), the scope of directness and indirection can be explained and explained by the following three strategies: As for Direct Strategy: The illocutionary act can be recognized directly from linguistic forms, such as the verb phrases or the imperatives. For example, asking someone for help or

requesting someone to do something. The hearer can get the speaker's intention directly through the linguistic forms of the utterances. Regarding Conventionally Indirect Strategy: In the conventionally indirect strategy, the contextual precondition plays a necessary role in the speaker's performance because the performance is conventionalized in that language. This sort of indirect strategy is widely used in daily life. Last, Non-conventionally Indirect Strategy: Mostly, the non-conventionally indirect strategy has been generally regarded as a "hint". For the non-conventionally indirect strategy, the speaker needs to produce the utterances according to the context. This text will mention the following Levels of the Directness, separately, are Mood Derivable, Explicit Performatives, Hedged Per formatives, Obligation Statement, Want Statement, Suggestion Formula, Preparatory, Strong Hint, Mild Hint using these principles to analyze the corpus among Chinese family members.

2.2 Politeness Theories

In 1952, speech act theory was put forward for the first time by British philosopher J. L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*, and he made clear that some expressions are not only about words but also about actions. His opinion was further improved by Searle who introduced indirect speech act theory, which aimed to study the real intention of the speaker. Then, Grice put forward the Cooperative Principle (CP) including four maxims. He believed that the participants in daily communications may cooperate by four maxims. And he claimed that when the speaker violates one or some of the maxims, the hearer may naturally connect to the related knowledge and experience to establish the deeper association. Even if the deeper connection is not related to surface meaning, the in-depth meaning of speech could be understood by the hearer beyond literal meaning if the hearer believes that the speaker complies with the cooperative principles. However, he did not explain why people indirectly express their intentions by flouting CP. To solve this problem, politeness theory was proposed. In this part, Leech's politeness principle, Gu Yueguo's Chinese politeness maxim as well as Brown and Levinson's face theory are going to be illustrated the practical examples respectively in detail.

3. Result

3.1 Chinese Family Dialogue Record

The first paragraph is the first stage of the holiday homecoming.

M: 要吃什么吗？我来做.

C: 不用，随便吃点.

M:要不要买点你爱吃的？

C:不想吃。

Since Chinese parents are more likely to use direct strategy when they conduct request speech acts to their children. It proves that illocutionary acts can be directly understood employing the sentence structure. Based on the five sub-parts of the direct strategy, which this study has been mentioned in chapter two, this study illustrates the request speech act from mood-derivable, explicit performative, hedged performative, obligation statement, and want statement with the examples that have been

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pointed out from this dialogue. In the above dialogue, the children have just finished their school life in another city. The mother and the children have not seen each other for several months. Mothers try to take care of their daughters when asking their children what they would like to eat. It is used in a very tactful and indirect way. It is just like two strangers who just met each other, both out of a relatively unfamiliar state.

The second paragraph is the second stage of the holiday homecoming

1. Mood Derivable: The imperative is the most outstanding example of mood derivable. The locution conventionally determines its illocutionary act, which derives from the grammatical mood. The imperative verbs would make rearrests sound more like commands.

Here are three examples:

(1) 这个对身体好，拿着呀!

(2) 那你再拿个橙子嘛!

(3) 你走开!

The first example reveals that the parents tend to produce imperative request speech act to their children; the first and second examples show that the modal particle, "呀" and "嘛", which can express the affection of a mother to her daughter and a wife to her husband. The modal particle can increase the degree of politeness; the third example presents an intensive mood that conveys up-grader to impose the request speech act between peers (wife to husband). The imperatives can be realized as a request speech act through specific verbs, which can express the speaker's intention clearly. The imperative verbs also make the requests sound more like commands to the hearer.

2. Explicit Performatives: The utterance is explicitly conveyed through the speaker's illocutionary act, such as asking, ordering, requesting.

Situation 1

M: 你作业做完没有啊，去做饭吧.

C: 没有，还在努力，不想写了.

Situation 2

M:今天咱们什么也都不说,就吃饭，高高兴兴的.

M:别训你妹妹了，行不？

C:那她不是找打吗？不好好写作业，我还不能说她了.

The first example shows the explicit performative, asking, which is performed from mother to her child. The second example sounds like a command but it is a request that conveys by using performatives, which is also performed from the mother to her child. So, this study concludes that most of the explicit performatives are performed from the parents to their children among Chinese family members. After being with their parents for some time, compared to the period when they just came back, the changes of both parents and children become more and more clear over time, and they naturally return to the way they are.

3. Hedged Performatives: The illocutionary act is modified by the hedged utterances. The hedged

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performatives are mainly used to convey necessity and uncertainty in Chinese. Here are three examples.

(1) 把累惨了，脑子不转了，都不知道该怎么说话了.你带护手霜了吗?

(2) 剩下半罐给我放到另一边啊.

(3) 把你的写给她换换吧.

These three examples contain three basic elements of hedged performatives. First, all the requests conveyed from the mother present the child as uncertain, such as "吗" and"吧". These expressions are out of the speaker's politeness. Second, all these examples show the necessity of the request. Third, although all these examples do not show the expression, such as "I want...", these examples can present the mother's needs and her willingness.

4. Obligation Statement: Obligation statement refers to the request speech act that is performed by the speaker needed to be carried out by the hearer. The speaker produces the obligation statement to let the hearers know that they should do or should not do something according to the speaker's utterance. The following words are largely used in Chinese: "should", "ought to", "have to", and "must". Most Chinese parents are more likely to choose to use these expressions to convey their requests to their children.

(1) 睡不着觉就睡不着觉嘛，你可以数羊啊.

(2) 不管怎样，在我下班之前 你要不找到一家愿意试用你的店,要不找五

家店，问问人家愿不愿意录用你，好吗?

(3) 看啊, "虽然"和"但是"造句，你给爸爸读一下.

These three examples present the speakers' requirements that needed to be carried out by the hearer.

5. Want Statement: The speaker produces the statements with requirements. The hearer is expected to perform the act according to the speaker's wish. The following words have been frequently used in want statements.   The speaker usually uses the expressions like "I want..." and "I hope...".

The third paragraph is the third stage of the holiday homecoming.

(1) 我是觉得,找一个好男人把自己嫁出去,那才是正经事.

(2) 平儿，你最多只能玩半个小时，一会就洗脸睡觉了啊!

(3) 你最近睡前课外读物还读吗? 玩也不能耽误学习啊!

From the three examples above, this study concludes that most Chinese parents are more likely to perform requests by using a direct strategy. Also, the direct strategy is largely used between peers or couples in a Chinese family. Towards the end of the holidays, parents and children enter a period of tiredness.

(1) 说说骂骂，你就让她说两句啊. 左耳朵进右耳朵出的，不要跟她太计较.

(2) 别管他！

According to the data, this study finds out that both Chinese family members are inclined to use more alert to get the hearer's attention. Since using a more alert can also increase or decrease the degree of politeness, the request speech acts can reflect the power distance between the speaker and the hearer.

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Sometimes, the more alert can be omitted because of the shorter physical distance between the speaker and the hearer.

4. Discussion

The study represents the request speech act performed from parents to children, peers to peers, and from children to parents. The findings show that Chinese parents prefer to use a direct strategy to request their children; however, Chinese children are more likely to use conventionally indirect strategies to produce their request speech acts to their parents. According to the request strategy and the politeness principles, this study concludes that Chinese children are inclined to use conventionally indirect strategies with a relatively higher degree of politeness. Because of the influence of Chinese culture, Chinese people have a large amount of addressing forms, such as kinship terms and nicknames; Chinese people are inclined to use internal modification to modify their requests. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Chinese family members prefer to use various supportive forms to modify their requests. In China, people are more likely to place the supportive parts in front of the head act. Some other factors influence the different and similar aspects of the request speech act Chinese family members.

This study points out three factors: the language factor, social and cultural factors. The language changes caused or affected by parents to their children during winter and summer vacation mainly come from language environment, culture shock, ideological learning, and so on. Parents do not go to school and learn new things as their children do. What's new here is that the social environment outside the home is different from the family environment at home during the winter vacation. Children are exposed to or learn a variety of skills and new content in school when they are studying abroad, but their parents do not have such conditions to continue learning. The third point is that he is in a different cultural environment, which will change his thinking.

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