

Pragmatic Features in Chinese Women's Chatting Language

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Abstract. Language is the tool of communication for people. Every language is deeply stamped with the brand of gender, even within the same gender. Chinese women's chatting language is a special style and a special social phenomenon, very interesting. This paper specializes in the pragmatic features in Chinese women's chatting language, trying to decrease socio-pragmatic failure and put forward some enlightenment for intercultural communication.

Introduction

Language reflects the use of culture and thought consciousness. There is one kind of fixed pattern in people's mind as the genders differ in social division and culture role. Due to the existence of the social division of labor, personal characteristics, and physiological characteristics between men and women, people's chatting languages are very different, just as Halliday ever said: "Everyone is a 'social person.'" In real life, everyone has a certain social position and forms social relationships with others. Many pragmatic features can be found in them. This paper will find out the pragmatic features in Chinese women's chatting language, trying to decrease socio-pragmatic failure and put forward some enlightenment for intercultural communication.

Pragmatic Features in Chinese Women's Chatting Language

Generally speaking, women are much noisier than men, as the saying goes, three women can make a street. Making a small talk is an art, anywhere; different cultures go about it in different ways, and learning Chinese women's way to chat is as important as getting your pronunciation and tones right. If you want to make a connection with someone, especially using their language, knowing what they like to talk about and how to approach them will make them feel much more comfortable. Also it will help you not look like a bumbling idiot. Pragmatics is the use of language in interaction. Pragmatics is concerned with bridging the explanatory gap between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning. This paper will study the relationship between utterances and the contexts and situations in which they are used.

Conversational Implicatures

Implicature is one of the main concerns of pragmatics, which is a term derived from the work of the philosopher H. P. Grice and now used as part of the study of conversational structure. Implicature refers to any meaning that goes beyond a literal meaning. Conversational implicatures refer to the implications which can be deduced from the form of an utterance.

In China, an old granny would like to ask, "What did you buy?" as she peers into your shopping basket. The taxi driver will ask, "Have you eaten?" The hotel receptionist will belt out, "Where are you going?"

You may be asked some questions that are strictly taboo in the West. You might feel too uncomfortable. In fact, the above questions aren't necessarily meant to be answered. Though they might sound intrusive, there are some of the most common greetings. In this case what the speaker said is distinct from what the speaker thereby meant. They performed one speech act (meaning that they are asking you something) by performing another (saying that they are greeting you). So a simple "I'm going out," or "I bought some things," is all you are expected to say. Actually, at this moment, if you feel like your privacy has been invaded, and then someone is trying to be your friend.

It must be pointed out that a conversational implicature can be determined not only by conventional meaning but also by the supposition that the speaker is following.

Co-operative Principle

According to the British philosopher Grice, people try to cooperate with each other in communication. The success of a conversation relies not only on what speakers say but on their approach to the interaction between them. Speakers try to get along with each other by following some conversational maxims that underlie the efficient use of language.

Grice's cooperative principle states that 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.'

Chinese women sometimes violate the maxims of the cooperative principles either purposefully or unintentionally, for instance, they may lie, be sarcastic, try to be different, or clever --- but conversation goes on, basing on the assumption that speakers are not doing so.

Take the followings as examples: According to social deixis, Chinese women choose the use of forms which reflect the social status of a speaker in relation to the addressee is different from westerns, including the choice of personal pronouns, the selection of different forms of names, titles and kinship terms of address, or the use of particle words indicating respect or reverence. For instance:

If they were expecting you to come, and you were late, they would say, "You idiot! Where did you die?"

If a girl loves a boy very much, she would like to call her boyfriend, "You dead stuff."

If a wife received a \$ 200 bracelet on her birthday from her husband, she felt surprised and pleased but she would say, "You are dying. Why did you spend so much money?"

In most time, Chinese women use the word 'dead' or 'idiot' to show their amiability, especially before their close friends.

Politeness Theory

According to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, people want to maintain other's face, but they are often forced to commit face threatening acts. And as a result, politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearer's face when face threatening acts are inevitable or desired. Politeness theory is believed to play a regulative role in social communication, but this is not the case in Chinese women's chatting. Politeness theory is quite limited to explain the natural Chinese women's expressions.

If the husband went home late, she wished him back soon, she didn't say softly, "I hope you back. I am so boring alone at home." On the contrary, she would say rudely, "What are you doing back? You shouldn't go home too late!"

If she felt hot, she would say, "Why not open the window?" Instead that "I feel very hot, would you mind if I open the window?"

They often use such querulous patterns as "Why not...?" and they don't mind doing so. They like to say some sarcastic words when to meet each other, "How do you have your hair cut? It looks like being chewed by a dog." They share their friendship in this way.

If you and she are close friends, and you say thanks to her for something, she would feel you don't treat her as a real friend. She would say, "No thanks. Don't say this."

Maybe you would feel these are face-threatening acts which can easily make other persons lose face. But I want to say all these expressions are acceptable in China. Though Chinese women also have the desire for appreciation and approval by others, they just maintain and demonstrate their membership in a social group in this way.

Tact Maxim

Tact maxim is the most important pragmatic principles. It can minimize cost to others or maximize benefit to others. In other words, minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to others; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to others. Chinese women apply this for their successful verbal communication so as to improve their communicative efficiency.

In China, women prefer to use tag questions to express their uncertain euphemism, also to achieve tactful results. For example, they like to say, “The lecture is terribly interesting, isn’t it?”. This is a strategy for Chinese women to use questions or tag questions to promote the communication. Other common sentences may go like:

“That’s pretty silly, wasn’t it?”

“Would you mind taking the heavy bag for me?”

“Could you open the door for me?”

“Will / Would you have a cup of coffee?”

And so on. Some of surveys found that women use questions 2.5 times more than men. The main purpose of doing so is the women respect each other in order to establish a harmonious atmosphere of communication.

Enlightenment for Intercultural Communication

Due to the social and cultural differences, people from different countries would always encounter pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication, which may lead to the breakdown of communication. In cross-cultural communication, it is easy to bring socio-pragmatic failure due to the cultural background, mode of thinking and mode of inference. We cannot help feeling that language is not only its pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar rules, also includes its forms, culture background and language environment. It is not enough only to master language form, the language’s appropriateness is important as well. The problems revealed by pragmatics are the emphasis and difficulties of cross-cultural communication. The meanings are conveyed not by single sentences but also by more complex interactions, including the participants’ beliefs and expectations, the knowledge they share about each other and about the world, and the situation. Some enlightenment can be gained from the Chinese women’s chatting language.

Context Awareness

The language must exist in the context, including language context, communicative context and background knowledge. First, we say that words are in the sentence, sentences in the segment, segments in the discourses, which is “context” language sense; second, the choice of words, sentences and rules are all occurred in a particular context; third, the encyclopedic knowledge or background information on the cognitive level. It is this contextual knowledge that enables us to express ideas, pass emotion, or understand the current discourse. How to make the simple, incomplete information discourse become full, enriched, build a relationship between language and context are what we should pay attention to. If we don’t properly estimate the background knowledge or grasp each other’s conversation situation, it will bring to communication barriers, and even lead to communication failures.

Role Consciousness

Intensive role consciousness can improve the efficiency of cooperative study. People tend to act as many roles in society, and they often have different ways of languages communication because of different rights and obligations. Being a boss, he may have the right to express his ideas directly to his subordinates, but subordinates can’t do this way. Establishing the role awareness, understanding social attributes so as to communicate with others decently.

The role of conscious and unconscious processes in language learning is one of the problems under dispute in applied linguistics. Richard Schmidt argues, in his article: *The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning* (1990), that the notion of consciousness is both useful and possibly necessary in second language learning. Conscious processes are important in second language learning, but unconscious processes should not be neglected in language comprehension and production, both of which contribute to second language learning. He concludes that much more research is needed on learners’ noticing, which becomes intake when combined with input, on incidental learning, on implicit learning, and on what learners are conscious of as they learn a second language. This theory lays a new theoretical foundation for constructing the theories of foreign

language learning, and provides the theoretical support for renewing teaching ideas, improving learning strategies.

Cultural Awareness

Language ability is a kind of special skill gained during the human being evolution. Of course it also needs language environment. Social linguistics Goodenough, W. H. believes that language is a kind of social cultural phenomenon, and the relevant researches should be done from the perspective of the relationship between culture and language in his book. He argues that culture during the process of learning and using. Without knowing its culture, a foreign language can not be comprehended and used correctly (Goodenough, W.H. 1981).

Cultural awareness in language learning is the ability to be aware of cultural relativity following reading, writing, listening and speaking. As Claire kramsch points out, If...language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching, cultural awareness must then be viewed as enabling language proficiency... (Claire kramsch.1993: 23).

Language itself is defined by culture. Language competent cannot be achieved without a good understanding of culture that shapes it, especially in foreign language learning. It is not only therefore essential to have cultural awareness, but also have cross-cultural awareness, such as the understanding of the relationship between target culture and native culture.

Body Language Awareness

Body language is one of the most important means in human communication, and in certain circumstances it is more effective in expressing emotion than those spoken and written language. Because of the cultural differences, body language has evident national characteristics, and the same body language in different cultures may show different or even opposite meaning.

Language use and communication of occasions will due to factors such as those which have formal and informal points according to different occasions and participants. For communicative effects, if you use colloquial in formal occasions, you will give others frivolous, cotton feelings; while if you use written language in informal occasions, you will give others dull, estranged feelings.

Conclusion

Pragmatics theories can help to distinguish intended meaning from literal meaning, cultivate communicative competence and avoid socio-pragmatic failures so as to facilitate cross-cultural communication and increase the ability of using language appropriately and successfully. Pragmatics is a mirror, reflecting the society develops. We can learn the values and moral concepts of the society through it. If we make good use of pragmatics, it will accelerate and facilitate human communication. People's interpersonal relations will be more harmonious. We can make our life more colorful.

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