

Research on Interpersonal Relationship from the Perspective of Pragmatics

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Abstract—People use language to express ideas and communicate. When people express their ideas indirectly, the meaning of the language is beyond the literal meaning, and there will be the phenomenon of incomplete ideogram or even the phenomenon of the literal meaning being completely different from the actual thought, which is the category of pragmatics. With the turn of interpersonal relationship in pragmatics, more and more scholars begin to pay attention to the important role of pragmatics in interpersonal relationship, especially in cross-cultural communication. On the basis of presenting the concept and main principles of pragmatics research, this paper discusses the application of pragmatics in intercultural communication and proposes pragmatic strategies for constructing harmonious interpersonal relations in intercultural communication.

Keywords—pragmatics; interpersonal relationship; intercultural communication; principle; strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

In conversation, people use language to express ideas and realize communication and exchange. When people express ideas directly and accurately in words, the literal meaning is consistent with the expressed ideas. However, when people express their ideas indirectly, the language carries more meaning than the literal meaning, and the ideogram may be incomplete or even completely different from the actual thought, which is the category of pragmatics. Since the 1960s and 1970s, more and more scholars have started to devote themselves to the study of pragmatics, focusing on the relationship between language symbols and language users. With the deepening of relevant studies, pragmatics, sociology, cross-cultural communication and other disciplines have achieved interdisciplinary integration. In the 1980s and 1990s, the study of pragmatics showed an obvious turn towards interpersonal relationship, paying more attention to the social value of language, that is, how to use language to build interpersonal relations in different communicative environments, which has attracted more and more attention in the study of interpersonal relations, especially cross-cultural communication. Intercultural communication refers to pragmatic communication in which non-native speakers or communicators from different countries and regions use the same language. In this process, different cultural backgrounds, values and ways of thinking, as well as strategies of using language to maintain

interpersonal relations, greatly increase the amount of meaning carried by the language in conversation beyond the literal meaning, leading to pragmatic errors of the communicators, resulting in communication failure and even communication conflict. Therefore, the study of interpersonal relationship from the perspective of pragmatics, especially the study of building harmonious interpersonal relationship in cross-cultural communication, is of great significance. Based on the summarization of the concept and main principles of pragmatics research, the paper discusses the application of pragmatics in intercultural communication and puts forward pragmatic strategies for constructing harmonious interpersonal relations in intercultural communication.

II. THE CONCEPT AND MAIN PRINCIPLES OF PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics is a discipline that studies the standards that affect language behavior and rules that govern speech rotation. Discourse, context and communicator are the three elements of pragmatics. In conversation, people's thoughts are not only expressed through the literal meaning of the words, but also integrated with the context and communicators. [1] When learning a language, especially a foreign language, it is easy to find that the meaning of the utterances cannot be accurately and completely understood from the perspective of vocabulary and syntax alone, and the intention of the speaker is even more difficult to understand in communication. It is also necessary to understand in combination with the context, the type of communication and the background of the communicator, which requires people to use pragmatic strategies in communication, which is also the significance of pragmatics.

As early as the 1930s, American scholar Charles Morris put forward the concept of pragmatics in the *Theoretical Basis of Signs*. In the 1960s, American professor Grice put forward the famous cooperative principle and studied the sociality of language. It was not until the 1970s that pragmatics became an independent discipline and developed rapidly. The indirect speech act theory put forward by American philosopher Searle, study on pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication and the politeness principle proposed by British linguist Leech, the face saving principle proposed by Brown and Levinson, Verschueren's Adaptation

theory, and the social-cognitive approach to pragmatics proposed by Isvan Kerkos from the perspective of intercultural communication are of great significance to the development of pragmatics. The academic paper *Pragmatics* published by Professor Hu Zhuanglin in the 1980s officially initiated the development of pragmatics research in China. Since then, pragmatics in China has been developing continuously. More and more scholars begin to pay attention to the main principles of pragmatics, such as cooperative principle, politeness principle, adaptation theory and face saving principle. Although there is no breakthrough, it further explains the main principles of pragmatics to some extent, and makes innovative research on interpersonal relationship and harmonious interpersonal relationship management model, conflict discourse in interpersonal communication and pragmatic strategies in cross-cultural communication from the perspective of pragmatics, which has made an important contribution to the study of pragmatics and language learning and application in China.

In general, the main principles of pragmatics include cooperative principle, politeness principle, face saving principle, adaptation theory and relationship management theory. Cooperative principle and politeness principle refer to the modification of cooperative discourse with various language means. Both the speaker and the listener express their ideas and make responses according to the pragmatic principle, so as to successfully achieve the goal in communicative behaviors. The cooperative principle includes the four principles of quantity, quality, relevance and method, which focuses on the concept of cooperation, reducing the voice-over outside of the literal, and express the intention more clearly and simply, so as to improve the efficiency of the conversation. The politeness principle includes six principles: propriety, generosity, praise, humility, approval and compassion. The emphasis is on the output of altruistic discourse, so as to promote cooperative discourse and maintain friendly conversational relationship. From the practice of conversational communication, politeness principle is an effective supplement to cooperative principle. [2] As Brown and Levinson have pointed out, "politeness is a variety of rational behaviors that are typically taken to meet the face demand". The face-saving principle put forward on the basis of this theory mainly refers to the fact that in communication activities, people do not directly talk about things that damage "face", and saving "face" of both parties in communication is conducive to the smooth progress of communication, so as to build a more harmonious interpersonal relationship. People with different cultural backgrounds have different "face", so the application of "face saving principle" should take into full consideration the cultural background and cultural taboos of communicators. In addition, adaptation theory and relationship management theory have also made important studies from the perspectives of mutual adaptation between language deconstruction and context, interpersonal harmony management mode, etc., which are of great significance to the application of pragmatics in interpersonal relationship construction.

III. THE APPLICATION OF PRAGMATICS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

As mentioned above, reasonable application of pragmatic principles plays an important role in maintaining friendly and efficient conversational relations and building harmonious interpersonal relations, which is especially evident in the process of cross-cultural communication. With the development of pragmatics, more attention has been paid to pragmatics in cross-cultural communication. Many experts and scholars in pragmatics have devoted themselves to the study of cross-cultural pragmatics. It can be said that the study of pragmatics in cross-cultural communication is not only the inevitable development of pragmatics, but also the practical needs of cross-cultural interpersonal communication and the construction of harmonious interpersonal relations. Culture carries the historical geography, values, ways of thinking, codes of conduct, customs and so on of the nation. The cultures of different countries and nations are obviously different. The conversational parties from different cultural backgrounds often express their communication according to their own cultural habits and evaluate each other's discourse behavior from their own cultural concepts, which makes it easy to make pragmatic mistakes in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, reasonable use of language in cross-cultural communication is an important part of effective communication and harmonious interpersonal relationship.

The main content of intercultural communication pragmatics involves three levels: language, culture and strategy. Language mainly focuses on the pronunciation, font, word meaning and grammatical structure of different languages. For example, verbs in English have the present tense and the past tense, while verbs in Chinese do not. From the perspective of culture, language and culture are closely connected. Behind a language is the culture of a country or nation, and the most important carrier of culture is language. Understanding the culture behind the language can not only understand the meaning of the language more comprehensively, profoundly and accurately, but also greatly reduce the pragmatic errors in cross-cultural communication. For example, Chinese idioms and two-part allegorical saying have much more actual meaning than the literal meaning. Without understanding the Chinese historical and cultural background behind them, it will be difficult to understand the real meaning, and even cause serious misinterpretation. "Strategy" means that pragmatic subjects in cross-cultural communication follow the cooperative principle, politeness principle, face saving principle, etc. to reduce the implication, maintain friendly conversational relations, and promote the improvement of language communicative competence in cross-cultural communication.

IV. CONSTRUCTING PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES FOR HARMONIOUS INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Cooperation and conflict are two main forms of interpersonal communication, which are no exception in cross-cultural communication. Whether in the context of cooperative discourse or conflict discourse, it is necessary to

use pragmatic strategies reasonably to build and maintain harmonious interpersonal relations, and to follow the cooperative principle, politeness principle and face saving principle. It is worth noting that there are often conflicts between "cooperation", "politeness" and "face" in actual communication, which requires both parties to comprehensively apply pragmatic strategies according to specific communication situations, make their discourse more appropriate, avoid embarrassment and resolve conflicts as much as possible while achieving effective communication, so as to realize the positive purpose of cross-cultural communication.

In the process of cross-cultural communication, especially in the context of cooperative discourse, the cooperative principle is mainly followed. Both parties of communication hold the desire to cooperate and exchange information through conversation. On this basis, the two sides follow the cooperative principle, reduce the voice over, express ideas directly and concisely, and adopt the same principle to respond, which can keep the flow of information exchange and improve the efficiency of the conversation to the maximum extent. [3] In a given context, direct and concise expression of ideas and responses can lead to embarrassment and conflict. In the context of conflicting discourse, politeness principle and face saving principle should be fully considered or even given priority to be applied, so as to smoothly promote the conversation and maintain good interpersonal relations in communication. For example, it is an important pragmatic strategy to use euphemisms to express politeness and save the face of both communicative parties. When speaker A asks: "Why is Mary on a diet?", listener B answers "Mary is on Diet now because she wants to keep slim", which can save the face of Mary. The use of "to keep slim" is more polite than that of "she is fat" directly. [4] In a quiet environment, A suddenly sneezes and interrupts the conversation. B can say "bless you" and A should say "thank you". In Western religious belief, a sneeze can cause a person's soul to jump out of his body and give the devil a chance. However, B's "bless you" not only reflects the understanding of western cultural belief, but also eases the embarrassment and facilitates the continuation of the conversation. In order to avoid embarrassment and unpleasantness, when refusing the invitation or request of the conversational party, the speaker may not directly express his or her true thoughts, but euphemistically express his or her refusal. However, the listener should understand the speaker's meaning and infer his or her true thoughts. When speaker A says "Why did you turn down the party invitation?", B can say "I don't like it" or "Well, that's just not my thing". It's obvious that the second form of rejection is more polite. For another example, speaker A wants to continue a topic, while listener B does not want to continue talking about the topic or wants to end the conversation, listener B can say "Well, It's interesting" or "It was nice talking to you" to end the conversation politely. In addition, "polite" is also reflected in the use of positive politeness means to express praise, sympathy, proximity and other emotions to carry on the conversation, such as "You look very beautiful today", etc., creating a positive atmosphere for the conversation.

V. CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, cooperative principle, politeness principle and face saving principle are not only important principles in pragmatics, but also important principles in interpersonal communication, especially in cross-cultural communication. In the process of cross-cultural communication, based on the cooperative principle, people should comprehensively apply the "politeness principle" and the face saving principle, actively adapt to the change of context, and flexibly and reasonably use pragmatic strategies, so as to achieve the communicative goal and build harmonious interpersonal relations.

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