

Analysis of Face Theory and Politeness Principle

-- Based on Liu Xin and Trish• Regan's TV Debate

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Abstract: At 8:25 a.m. on May 30, 2019 (8:25 p.m. EST on May 29), CGTN female anchor Liu Xin was invited to talk with Trish Regan, the female anchor of Fox Commercial Channel, on the Sino-US trade and other related topics, which draws widespread international attention. The conversation was presented in the form of a television interview. The paper mainly uses Face Theory and Politeness Principle to conduct research and analysis on the cross-cultural interview on TV programs between the two anchors of China and the United States— Liu Xin and Trish Regan. Through the analysis, it is found that the both parties of the conversation violated the principles of politeness, which would generate the implicature and let the hearer guess what the speaker's real intention is. Due to some uncontrollable factors, such as the context, the difference of the common knowledge between the hearer and the speaker and the cultural idea of the two parties, the implicature may not be understood. This paper also discusses the common discourse strategies and techniques used in cross-cultural interviews from the perspective of politeness and face-saving theory, which can help the participants in intercultural interview to communicate and exchange more reasonably and better present the image of China, as well as promote the viewer better comprehend and appreciate the cross-cultural TV talk shows, and improve the pragmatic ability of foreign language learners.

Keywords: The debate of Liu Xin and Trish Regan, Face Theory, Politeness Principle.

1. Introduction

1.1. Significance of the Study

The study of dialogue in TV talk shows is important for the following reasons: first, TV talk shows dialogue is one of the daily conversations. In everyday communication, people always inevitably focus on Face and use Politeness strategies in conversation; secondly, focusing on Face Theory in conversation is beneficial to the maintenance of the relationship between the two parties in conversation. The corpus selected for this paper is from the TV debate between Liu Xin and Trish. Although the dialogue is political in nature, it is closer to daily conversation and has some research significance because the preparation time of both parties is short and it is presented through a cross-ocean live broadcast. On the basis of previous studies, this paper attempts to further analyze and study the conversations in TV talk shows programs from the perspective of Face Theory and Politeness Principle, which can broaden the research scope of the Face Theory and help both sides to better dialogue in intercultural communication.

1.2. Research Methodology

The content of pragmatic inference in Face Theory involves a wide range of fields, and the Politeness Principle also has important research value. Combined with the background of the times and under the guidance of existing theories, to study the conversation is the foothold of this paper. Therefore, this paper mainly adopts the methods of literature analysis, comparative research, the method of analysis and synthesis.

1.3. Organization of the Thesis

The paper is made up of five sessions. The first section includes a presentation of the significance and the research methodology of the study. The second section is committed to

theoretical framework and literature review. This chapter includes the previous studies on Face Theory, Politeness Principle and the five maxims followed, and then it also provides a elaboration to the studies on TV talk shows. The third section is the main and crucial part. It is about the case analysis based on the theories. The fourth section talks about the strategies in intercultural communication in TV talk shows. The fifth is the conclusion part. It contains major findings and implications followed by the limitation, and at the same time the author also puts forward some suggestions for further studies.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. The Face Theory

The Face Theory is proposed by Brown and Levinson in their monographs *Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena* (1978) and *Politeness: Some Universals of Language Usage* (1987). The theory is based on the concept of "face" of Goffman (1967) and also drew on other researchers such as Grice and Leech, which is included by three notions: face (positive and negative), face-threatening acts and politeness strategies. It is considered to be the first systematic exploration of the concept of face and politeness. (Chen Rong, 1986) In their books, "politeness is various rational actions which are taken by a model person to satisfy the desire of face. The face of the model person is the public self image that each member in a society wants to earn, including negative face and positive face". The introduction of the Face Theory has generated extensive academic discussion. On the surface, Face Theory is only a part of Politeness Theory. However, in people's daily interactions, observing politeness is only to maintain face. Therefore, the whole set of Politeness Theories is actually discussed around the central point of face.

2.1.1. The Positive and Negative face

In the opinion of Brown and Levinson, all the capable adult members of a society are concerned with their own face, because that is the self-image presented to others. People in society have a need to save face. Some scholars hold that the greatest contribution of Brown and Levinson is to distinct the concept of positive face and the negative face. (Wang Yinan, Yang Zhongfang, 2005) Positive face refers to the desire to get the approval, respect appreciation and love of others; negative face means the social members refuse to the will that others impose on them and their actions should not to be interfered with and hindered by others. Actually, positive face requires the acceptance and recognition of others, which is essentially a collectivist idea, and is more similar to the Chinese face culture. As for negative face, on the other hand, requires a state of independence and autonomy, which is closer to Western individualism and has little in common with Chinese culture.

2.1.2. The Face Threatening Acts

Brown and Levinson point out that in a conversation, both types of face can be violated, either the positive and negative face of the speaker or the positive and negative face of the listener. (1987, 56-78) Therefore, such an act of conversation is the Face Threatening Acts. The research of them indicates that nearly all the verbal behavior are face threatening acts, and some actions offend face saving need of others. (1987,65) Face Threatening Acts can be divided into the following categories:

(1) Acts threatening to the hearer's positive face.

This type of behavior implies that the speaker does not care about the feelings, interests, and needs of the listener.

(2) Acts threatening to the hearer's negative face.

It means that the speaker is asking the listener to do something that makes him or her feel reluctant. And it often includes words such as commands, requests, suggestions, and warnings.

(3) Acts threatening to the speaker's positive face.

Actions like apologies, confessions, self-deprecation and self-contradictions can directly damage the positive face of the speaker.

(4) Acts threatening to the speaker's negative face.

This type of acts has similarities to the third type of acts, which includes gratitude, apologies, and reluctant promises and so on.

2.2. Leech's Politeness Principle

The Cooperative Principle was introduced by Grice in 1975. It is an important principle of dialogue, and both parties may deliberately violate the Cooperative Principle to express their ideas. However, the British linguist Leech argues that the Cooperative Principle can only regulate what people say in a communication and explain the "implicature" in discourse, but it cannot explain why people use a series of ambiguous speech acts. In order to perfect the Cooperative Principle, Leech put forward the Politeness Principle. In his opinion, the verbal conversation in communication is actually a rhetorical phenomenon, and the communicative processes are governed by some rhetorical principles. The Politeness Principle is an important part of interpersonal rhetoric principles, which can explain the problems that cannot be explained by the Cooperative Principle and play a greater role in communication.

There is no denying that the Politeness Principle has some academic significance, but it is overly idealistic in the view of

linguistic behavior and also fails to take into account the constraints of the linguistic context. Discourse is always subject to the constraints of a certain linguistic environment. A sentence that is considered polite in a certain context may not necessarily be polite in another context. The phenomenon of politeness also varies from one linguistic context to another.

2.2.1. Maxims of Politeness Principle

Leech summarizes and divides the Politeness Principle into six maxims, each of which includes two sub-rules.

(1) Tact Maxim

Minimize cost to other

Maximize benefit to other

(2) Generosity Maxim

Minimize benefit to self

Maximize cost to other

(3) Approbation Maxim

Minimize dispraise of other

Maximize praise of other

(4) Modest Maxim

Minimize praise of self

Maximize dispraise of self

(5) Agreement Maxim

Minimize disagreement between self and other

Maximize agreement between self and other

(6) Sympathy Maxim

Minimize antipathy between self and other

Maximize sympathy between self and other

2.3. Current Studies on TV Debate

Generally, the TV interview programs are known as the TV talk show in the United States. The TV talk shows is a calculated social behavior pattern (Karen 1991). And the Encyclopedia of TV provides a clear definition of TV talk show. A talk show includes all the types of programs in which dialogue and direct-to-audience narration are not scripted in advance. The live talk without speech script is a fundamental factor that distinguishes television from the film, photography, recording and book business. A talk show is essentially a language program that must begin and end within strict time limits. As a powerful entertainment program, TV talk shows are playing an increasingly important role in public life, transmitting information, changing people's lifestyles and affecting social values. Some categorize different types of TV talk shows and then make comparison and analysis between them. Current academics divide TV talk shows into two categories based on content and form. Taking an example, Scott (1996) divides talk shows into four smaller groups according to the content of the program: news-information, sideshow-comics-interview, interpersonal relationship, self-help, psychological and daily-life programs, special talk shows for specific audience (such as shows on business or financing counseling, religion, sports, etc.). And the Chinese scholars include TV debates in the genre of TV talk shows. (Miao Di, Wang Yilin, 2006) The TV debate is derived from the TV talk show, which presents the other form of the talk show. It is all about the exchange of ideas by picking hot topics of the moment. The communicative and linguistic value have made it become the important source of study. Apart from the cultural perspective, different schools of study may operate from different points of view. In short, different perspectives have enriched the researches of TV talk debate, and they all have certain reference significance for later researches.

3. Case Analysis on Liu Xin and Trish Regan's TV Debate

3.1. The Politeness Principle in the case

Both Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle are the most basic principles of conversation that should be followed by two parties in verbal communication. The Politeness Principle and the Cooperative Principle should be used interchangeably. However, as mentioned earlier, the Politeness Principle is proposed to compensate for the deficiencies of the Cooperative Principle. Therefore, in major formal situations, the Cooperative Principle should give way to the Politeness Principle in order to ensure the smooth conduct of communication. The TV debate between Liu Xin and Trish discussed in this paper is actually a political diplomacy, and in such an occasion, the Politeness Principle should be followed all the more in the conversation between the two sides. Here we will look at the implicature of each maxim. Targeted dialogues are categorized based on the use of Politeness Principle and its corresponding maxims. Analyzing the dialogue in the case helps us understand the true attitude of China and the United States towards the trade war between U.S. and China, and it is also conducive to the development of China's diplomacy.

3.1.1. Tact Maxim and Generosity Maxim

The Tact Maxim means minimizing the loss to others and maximizing the benefit to others. And the Generosity Maxim, on the other hand, is to try to benefit yourself as little as possible. Both are considered from the perspective of benefit and loss, and are actually two sides of the same issue, so the two maxims can be discussed together. The former focuses on how to treat others, while the latter focuses on how to treat ourselves.

(1) Example

Trish: There's evidence there that China has stolen enormous amounts of intellectual property. How do American businesses operate in China if they're at risk for having their property, their ideas, their hard work stolen?

Here Trish mentions China has stolen too much intellectual property from America. She compares China as a thief who purposefully stealing from Americans. In fact, despite the intellectual property disputes between China and the United States, China cannot be described simply by the word "stolen". It is a derogatory term with strong emotional overtones. And it is outrageous and rude to use language that portrays a country as a thief in front of the world. Trish blames China for all the infringement of intellectual property, as if there had never been any infringement of IP in the United States. To some extent, it is a humiliation to our country. According to the tact maxim and generosity maxim, her verbal behavior is a violation.

(2) Example

Liu Xin: You have to ask American businesses whether they wanted to come to China, and cooperate with Chinese businesses (has not been) profitable or not, and they will tell you their answers. Many American companies.....they're very profitable..... And of course, there are cases where individuals, where companies go and steal, and I think that's a common practice probably in every part of the world, and there are companies in the United States.....

Faced with Trish's accusations of intellectual property rights in China, Liu Xin chooses to respond it with facts in an

indirect way. She mentions that the American companies can make a lot of money each year from Chinese market. For business, the core interest is the only principle. The intellectual property infringement as a universal phenomenon that can occur in any countries, and the United States is no exception. In such an environment, the great majority of American companies continue to invest in China and explore a bigger Chinese market. In addition, China is stepping up its protection of intellectual property rights. Instead, now it is the tariff policy of President Trump makes an uncertain future for the business of both sides. Liu Xin doesn't deny the facts presented by the other side, but instead graciously admitted it. She cleverly and decently used the bigger facts to refute the narrow facts, which defends the face of our country. So, the generosity maxim operates here.

(3) Example

Liu Xin: I think if it is through cooperation, if it is through mutual learning, if you pay for the use of this IP or high technology, it's absolutely fine, why not?I think that's fine so long as it's not illegal, I think everybody should do that and that's how you get better.

According to the previous context, Trish asks Liu Xin whether China would share the core technology with the United States without reservation. It is all known that the core technology of the IT industry is very important and cannot be transmitted randomly. Not to mention sharing such core technology with other countries, especially when the Sino-U.S. relations are so sensitive. Here, instead of directly refuting the other side's argument, Liu Xin puts forward a premise: pay for intellectual property and cooperate with each other to learn. This not only highlights China's awareness of intellectual property protection, but also decently responds to Trish's question. As for whether the payment will allow the use of the other party's technology, that depends on the official attitude, at least Liu Xin gave a very standard and reasonable answer. This is in line with the tact maxim.

(4) Example

Trish: At what point will China decide to abandon its developing nation status and stop borrowing from the World Bank?

Liu Xin: But it depends on how you define developing country? If you look at China's overall size, the overall size of the Chinese economy, yes, we are very big. But don't forget we have 1.4 billion people, that is over three times the population of the United States. So if you divide the second largest overall economy in the world, basically when it comes down to per capita GDP we are less than one sixth of that of the United States, and even less than some other more developed countries in Europe.

This conversation appears at the point when the Trish tries to ask Liu Xin when China will stop to describe itself as a developing country, which is now a second economy in the world. And then Liu Xin analyzes the population size and per capita GDP of China compared to the United States and Europe to refute the view of Trish. A refutation often occurs in an argument when the two sides do not agree on the other's ideas. People usually defend their own views by refuting others' views. It's the same in political debates, where different parties will fight for their positions. In such a situation, both parties act in their own interest, and verbal communication is made to benefit themselves. As different representatives of two countries, Liu Xin and Trish must speak for their own countries. So, Liu Xin's refutation is a violation of the generosity maxim in a conversation.

(5) Example

Trish:that was charged on an American good in China was 9.9%. hey, to heck with these tariffs, let's get rid of them another. Would that work?

Liu Xin: we talk about tariffs it's not just between China and the United States. I think the last time the world agree on the kind of tariff reduction China should commit to, was exactly the result of multilateral and years of difficult negotiations. The United States saw, in its interests, and decided to what degree they could agree, or to what degree they could lower their tariff – nobody put a gun to their head. And China agreed, although with some difficulty, to lower their, our tariff considerably, it is all the decision of countries according to their own self-interest. 20 years later, if you don't like the rules, we'll change the rules, but it has to be a multilateral process.

According to the conversation, Trish cites figures showing that China imposes higher tariff on the United States and suggests that China and the United States unify to reduce tariffs on each other, which Liu Xin believes is a complex issue. The issue of tariffs is related to the interests of the country. China's previous decision to lower tariffs was made in a global environment and based on its own interests. The move of the United States to lower the tariff is also out of the national interest. Liu Xin points out the truth that the interest is the first priority for the tariff and the measure to lower the tariff is the result of the multi-party game. It is a violation of generosity maxim not to accepting the advice of the other part and then contradict it.

3.1.2. Approbation Maxim and Modesty Maxim

The approbation maxim means to praise others as much as possible and to reduce criticism of others. As for the modesty maxim, it refers to reduce compliments about yourself in front of others and try to disparage yourself. Both maxims are approached from the perspective of praise and derogation and can be discussed together here.

(6) Example

Trish: There's evidence that China has stolen enormous amounts of intellectual property. Hundreds of billions of dollars' worth.

In this conversation, Trish has directly accused China of stealing American intellectual property without mercy, and comparing China to a thief. Undoubtedly it is a verbal aggression and insult to China. According to the relevant information, Trish has obvious political leanings, and her rhetoric is relatively sharp. Under such a background, Trish's verbal behavior is clearly against the approbation maxim as well as the tact maxim which is talked before.

(7) Example

Trish: 'hey sure, Huawei, come on in, but here's the deal, you must share all those incredible technological advances that you've been working on, you've got to share it with us', would that be ok?

Intellectual property rights have something to do with the competitiveness of enterprises and the creativity of society, and it can bring great economic benefits to enterprises. As a global company, Huawei is in direct competition with some American companies. Trish asks if China is willing to share their technology including the core technology to America completely. Generally speaking, it is out of the question. Trish knows it well. But she still employs the exaggeration to show her satire, which will threaten others image. Obviously, Trish violates the approbation maxim.

(8) Example

Trish: Let me turn to China right now which is, wow, the second largest economy. At what point will China decide to abandon its developing nation status and stop borrowing from the World Bank?

The implication of Trish's question is that China is already the second largest economy in the world and is rich enough to stop borrowing money from the World Bank as a developing country. But as Liu Xin explains later, China is still a developing country. Despite the rapid pace of development, there is still a big gap between our country and developed countries such as Europe and the United States. What Trish said is like a satire on China, which only borrows money from the World Bank to develop itself. But Liu Xin also contradict her with the fact that China has made contributions to the world. In this dialogue, the conduct of Trish doesn't accord with the approbation maxim.

3.1.3. Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim

In daily life, people need to express whether they agree or not with a viewpoint when having a discussion. Under this way, the agreement maxim needs to be considered. Usually, out of courtesy and in order to maintain the conversation, both sides will try to exaggerate their agreement with each other and reduce their differences. And for the sympathy maxim, it is followed by the agreement maxim. It refers to reducing the emotional opposition between the two sides and trying to empathize with each other emotionally. Much of the time, you can only establish an emotional connection if you agree with the other person's point of view. Therefore, the agreement maxim and sympathy maxim are put together here.

(9) Example

Trish: I would stress that trade wars are never good. They're not good for anyone. So I believe that something can get done.

Liu Xin: (Agreed)

Liu Xin agreed with Trish's statement that a trade war would not benefit either China or the United States. The topic of this debate is the Sino-U.S. trade war, and affirming some of the other side's points can make the rest of the talks go more smoothly. And the most important is that what Trish said is also the truth indeed. According to the agreement maxim, the behavior of Liu Xin is polite.

(10) Example

Trish: You mentioned something pretty important, which is that you should pay for the acquisition of that (IP).

In the previous conversation, Liu Xin mentions that the technology can be shared as long as one pays for the intellectual property, and Trish expresses her strong agreement. This shows that both parties attach great importance to the protection of intellectual property rights. The two sides have relatively little difference of opinion on this topic. This is consistent with the agreement maxim.

(11) Example

Liu Xin: a socialist economy with Chinese characteristics, we are actually quite mixed, very dynamic and actually very very open as well.

Trish: I think you need to probably keep being open. I think that that, as a free trade person myself, I think that that's the direction to pursue and ultimately that leads to greater economic prosperity for you and better economic prosperity for us, so then you get a win-win.

Liu Xin explains to Trish that the socialist economy with Chinese characteristics, although under the control of government, is still a very dynamic and open economy. And Trish, who is a supporter of free trade, expresses her

agreement on the open economy and the wish for prosperity of the Chinese and the United States. That makes it sound good. Despite the differences occur, Trish's polite words will increase the goodwill of the other part. It corresponds to both the agreement and the sympathy maxim.

4. Strategies of TV debate in Intercultural Communication

4.1. Strategies from the View of Politeness and Face

An intercultural TV debate is actually a cross-culture communication. In cross-cultural communication, because the two parties of a conversation are in different cultural groups, they each have different cultural backgrounds. Usually, in people's daily communication, the way people communicate is always constrained by their own cultural thinking, which can lead to cultural conflicts. Therefore, in cross-cultural communication, in order to ensure the relationship, it is important to use some polite strategies appropriately and try not to hurt the face of the other party.

In the previous section, we have already conducted a brief discourse analysis of Liu Xin and Trish's debate on Sino-U.S. trade issues, focusing on the phenomenon of their deference and violation of the Politeness Principle. Through this analysis, we conclude that the tact maxim is the most commonly used among the Politeness Principle in a major political debate. Leech believes that people should develop their communication according to the Politeness Principle. But it is not a must to strictly adhere to the principle in all situations. For example, like in the political debate between Liu Xin and Trish, both sides who is based on their own national interests, have to refute each other's views in order to prove the correctness of their own views, which positively violates the Politeness Principle. However, as said before, this is a cross-cultural political debate and it is still necessary to follow some maxims of politeness. Under this circumstance, the tact maxim undoubtedly becomes the most observed maxim. At the beginning of the conversation, both parties create a good atmosphere for the conversation at first, and both parties are as polite as possible in their words. As the conversation progresses, various strategies are employed to refute each other when it comes to sensitive issues where both sides hold different views. Throughout the negotiation process, the agreement maxim may only occur when one side has convinced the other. Sometimes out of politeness, one side affirms the other side, narrowing differences with the opponent and increasing agreement between the two sides. It is the use of the agreement maxim. In a debate, the first principle is always to respect the other side. It is not random to show an all-negative attitude towards other's point of view, the reasonable argument is essential.

McLuhan holds the points that media is the message. Ideas from TV debates can rely on the media to be widely disseminated. Ultimately, an intercultural TV debate is a public conversation between different cultures. At the beginning of the dialogue, it is necessary to figure out which country and culture the dialogue is with in order to achieve effective dissemination of ideas. In the process of conversation between the two sides, the Politeness Principle and Face Theory should be considered. One should show the sincerity and willingness to communicate and express himself by using the concise and simple utterances. When a dispute arises, try to speak with facts yet to be aggressive.

All in all, the Politeness Principle and Face Theory are widely used in intercultural communication. Both parties should pay attention to politeness and strengthen communication without overly hurting other's face. Only in this way can effective communication be achieved.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Major Findings

This paper uses the Politeness Principle of Leech and the Face Theory of Brown and Levinson as a framework to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Liu Xin and Trish's debate discourse. As a social phenomenon, politeness and face are prevalent in any culture, and they have been studied in academia for a long time. Goffman introduced the concept of face from a sociological perspective, and later Grice proposed the Cooperative Principle in conversation. To compensate for the shortcomings of the Cooperative Principle, Leech put forward his Politeness Principle, which can explain the reason of violating the Cooperative Principle. Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson also developed the Face Theory based on the research of Goffman.

This paper combines the Politeness Principle and Face Theory, and selects typical examples from the TV debate conversation of Liu Xin and Trish Regan to analyze. There is a tendency to follow the Politeness Principle in daily interaction, but not in all situations. In the context of the political debate as we talked about above, the Politeness Principle is not always strictly followed. It is a political debate after all, unless both the two sides reach a consensus, or the agreement maxim will not be obeyed. But sometimes, in order to mitigate the difference, one will agree with the other. Through the analysis of the corpus, the tacit maxim runs through the entire talk. It is the first principle to be polite in the communication and try to save other face as much as possible, which is also the strategy for any cross-culture communication.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

It is inevitable that this article still has some limitations. This article is only a preliminary study of the use of pragmatics in the dialogue of interview programs. The classification of the examples in this paper is not very clear and some examples may already embody more than one maxim, but only the most typical parts are mentioned in the paper. The corpus of this paper is relatively not so strong, which makes the evidential support for this study a bit narrow. Later studies can provide a more comprehensive and detailed analysis of the Politeness Principle and Face Theory.

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