

Abstract

Although people try to avoid opposition for the sake of politeness or other reasons, disagreement, which may threaten interpersonal relationship and the success of communication, is inevitable in our daily life. Previous studies on disagreement (including dispute, argument, conflict, etc.) have not probe into the nature of the referential content—whether it is content-based (in this study, C-disagreement) or evaluation-based (in this study, E-disagreement), and the influences of social factors on disagreement have rarely been examined in Taiwan. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to see what type of disagreement are most likely to occur in daily conversations and to examine whether age is an influential factor on linguistic choices for in disagreement in Chinese society. This study uses the framework of conversational analysis (CA), and adopts speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975), Cooperative Principles (Grice, 1975) and Politeness Principles (Brown and Levinson's, 1978, 1987; Leech, 1983) as the theoretical foundations.

12 conversations by speakers of 8 same-age groups (including 4 old groups and 4 young groups) and 4 cross-age groups were examined for disagreement. Related data are categorized, analyzed, and discussed by types of disagreement, linguistic markers, pragmatic strategies, social variable (in this study, age), and the interaction among the four.

The results of the data analyses show, first, people adopt nearly twice more E-disagreement than C-disagreement; moreover, E-disagreement based on personal judgment emerges more often than E-disagreement based on socio-cultural evaluation. Second, for linguistic markers, negation, pre-announcement marker, and affirmative (in this order) are adopted more in disagreement. However, preferences for linguistic markers change according to types of disagreement. In C-disagreement, direct

syntactic markers, such as negation and affirmative, are used more frequently than the others; however, in E-disagreement, direct negation (syntactic) and indirect pre-announcement (lexical) are used with equal frequencies. Third, among pragmatic strategies, correction, account, and challenge (in this order) are adopted more frequently than the others. The usage of pragmatic strategies varies with types of disagreement. In C-disagreement, correction is highly adopted. But in E-disagreement, correction, account, and challenge are used with equal percentages. Fourth, the fact that more varieties of linguistic markers are used in each pragmatic strategy in E-disagreement than in C-disagreement may imply impoliteness, since face-threatening force is more serious in E-disagreement than in C-disagreement, which, in turn, indicates that more careful manipulation is needed in using E-disagreement. Fifth, age is influential in disagreement. More disagreements are found in the same-age groups than in the cross-age groups. Last, the hearer's role is found to be more influential than the speaker's role.