

Differences in Brother Sway's Chinese and English Talk Shows Based on Cooperative Principles

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This study is the analysis of the differences in Brother Sway's Chinese and English talk shows based on Cooperative Principles. From four maxims of Cooperative Principle and violations of four maxims, this article uses the method of comparative analysis to study the differences between Brother Sway's Chinese and English talk shows. In order to produce humorous effects, he deliberately violates some of maxims in Cooperative Principle. Facing with audiences from different cultural backgrounds, Brother Sway violates the principles within talk shows in different ways, which actually reflects the characteristics of different languages and various habits of speaking. Based on the comparative study, the thesis has answered the four research questions, that is: Facing Americans and Chinese audiences, Brother Sway has adopted different cooperative principles to produce humorous effects; in the organization of language and the creation of his works, Brother Sway deliberately organizes and creates based on Chinese and American language expression; different responses of the humor have been achieved in the same performance both on Chinese and American audiences; aiming that, Brother Sway purposely violates some maxims in Cooperative Principles to cater to the audiences. The thesis is expected to help learners better appreciate Brother Sway's talks show and comprehend different cultures of the two countries.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, talk show, humor

Introduction

Brother Sway is a popular talk show actor both in America and China. Once graduated from Beijing University, Brother Sway went abroad after his graduation and studied law at Seattle University. He found a lot of part-time jobs and started a business in his study. Realizing the importance of communication with native Americans, Brother Sway began his try in talk show in America. He became famous gradually and the record of his performance pasted online by his friend brought him great popularity. His humor and language characteristics in his talks show are mainly based on his own experiences of 30 years' living abroad and his acute observation of the differences of Chinese and American cultures.

This study focuses on the differences between Brother Sway's English and Chinese talk show based on Cooperative Principle of H. P. Grice (1975, pp. 1-10). Based on the analysis of the four maxims, the following questions will be probed: Facing Americans and Chinese audiences, how and why does Brother Sway choose his topic to attract more people? How does he organize his language and create his works to produce humor? What about the humorous effects of the same performance both on Chinese and American audiences? And how does Brother Sway adjust to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience?

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Literature Review

Brief Introduction of Cooperative Principle

Cooperative Principle was first proposed by American Linguist H. P. Grice (1975, pp. 1-10), which is ubiquitous with large quantities of examples of conversational implicature applied to conversations in several areas. He argues that in the course of communication and conversation, the two sides seem to have intentionally or unintentionally followed a certain principle towards a common goal and direction in order to not only cooperate with each other effectively but also complete the task of communication. Quite often a speaker can mean much more than what is said and the hearer can understand the speaker's meaning.

The four principles are quantity maxim, quality maxim, manner maxim, and relevance maxim. Quantity maxim means that people say no less than the conversation requires and say no more than the conversation requires. Quality maxim means that people do not say what you believe to be false and do not say things for which you lack evidence. Manner maxim means that people are not obscure and ambiguous. They should be brief and be orderly. Relevance maxim means that people's talking should be relevant. The conversation between the speaker's own introductory remarks should be relevant (Hu, 2016, pp. 173-174).

For practical needs, people will deliberately violate the Cooperative Principle, that is to deliberately violate the surface meaning to convey their implication in order to express another meaning or to achieve a certain conversation effect such as humor, exaggeration, and irony.

Relative Studies on Talk Show

In China, a lot of scholars have done relative studies on talk show. Lin Liting's (2020, pp. 73-74) study takes the principle of cooperation as the theoretical basis and uses the cultural exchange talk show "Informal Talk" as the material to analyze the humorous effects produced by violating the principle of cooperation. Since "Informal Talk" is a cross culture TV shows, the date is selected very well. Chen Huanhong (2010, pp. 181-183) selected the Chinese and American talk shows as the source of corpus, and randomly collected the humorous sentences generated by the host and the celebrity guests to conduct a comparative study of pragmatic strategies. Jing Ran (2019, pp. 95-96) used some of the works from the Chinese "Talk Show Conference" in 2019 as the research corpus, and selects the performances of many talk show actors for analysis, studying the rules and logic of discourse usage that violate the principle of cooperation, and the humorous effects produced by them.

The United States belongs to those countries of low power distance, individualism, and short-term orientation, while China belongs to those countries of high-power distance, collectivism, and long-term orientation. In view of the large differences in the cultural dimensions of the above three aspects, Lin Dan (2018, pp. 56-58) focused on the comparison and analysis of the differences between "Lu Yu You Yue" and "Oprah Talk Show" from three perspectives of Hofstede's cultural dimensions' theory, in order to analyzes their cultural variations.

As a pragmatic theory of human communication, Relevance Theory (RT) proposed by Sperber and Wilson has some hypotheses which are suited to interpret how humorous effects are created in verbal communication. In this paper, RT is used to analyze how and why verbal humor in Joe Wong's talk show is produced. S. J. Xi and W. Bin (2012, pp. 44-48) analyzed Wong's verbal humor from a cognitive perspective and explored into the reasons why his utterances create so huge humorous effects. Based on Cooperative Principle, L. Xin and L. Xin (2019, pp. 29-34) analyzed the humor of young comic actor Yue Yunpeng's cross talks and hoped that people have a better understanding of cross talks and traditional culture.

J. Lee (2019, pp. 133-149) examined scaling as a resource in Korean television talk shows, and specifically the moment-by-moment sequential implications that scaling has for challenging and defending one's argument. He found that by challenging an interlocutor and making that person the target of collective tease, the participants not only perform argumentative operations on the talk but also secure opportunities for viewer entertainment. Through interviews with the producers and the analysis of a selection of episodes, M. Malmberg and I. Awad (2019, pp. 213-230) examined Ali and Husu's daring and unapologetic racial humor as well as its combination of funny and serious talk.

Cooperative Principles in Sway's Talk Show

Violation of the Maxim of Quantity

Talk show performers always deliberately violate the four maxims of Cooperative Principles to create humorous effects, so is in Brother Sway's talk show. According to Grice (1975), the maxim of quantity requires that one's words should provide enough, but not too much information. When a speaker fails to obey the maxim of quantity deliberately or purposelessly, if he does not offer what's people requires or if he provides too much information, humorous effects will come out.

Example 1 (Background: Someone came on stage to serve water to Brother Sway):

Sway: Can you open the cover for me, please?

Audience: Okay.

Sway: Thank you. Are you married? Married people should not even understand this thing, we all say that we are educated by the wife for many years. When I encountered difficulties in the United States, I took out the photos of my wife and said that I could cope with her, and there was nothing I could not do. (2011.12.13, New York)

It was supposed to be just an impromptu incident on stage, when someone handed Brother Sway water. Taking advantage of this interaction, Brother Sway made up a joke to make people laugh. He was supposed to end the conversation after thanking the man, but he added a lot of additional information. For example, he asked whether the man married or not, because he believed the married man should have this habit. Finally, he used exaggerated metaphors to make fun of that he is henpecked by his wife, constantly throwing out new information to make people laugh and achieve humorous effect.

Brother Sway also makes good use of the violation of quantity maxim in order to produce humorous effects in his English talk shows.

Example 2:

Brother Sway: We could order by this rap. Excuse me, sir. Excuse me. I want to order a Luckin coffee. Don't put sugar and don't put tea. Here's a 5.0 dollar, you can keep the tea. Thank you. (2011.03.05, Seattle)

Brother Sway said when Chinese people want to order coffee, they can say his own creation of this rap. Here he violated the maxim of quantity of the Cooperative Principle. He said more informative, and the implication was that the Chinese were used to adding spices to soup. It produced humorous effect by violating the maxim of quantity of the Cooperative Principle.

Violation of the Maxim of Quality

Brother Sway always provides some false and interesting Chinglish translations in his talk shows, thus leading audiences to associate other words with partial tone.

Example 3:

Sway: After the Olympics, English was spoken on the streets. A person to practice English self-introduction, "My name is Liu Hongtao". Because the English name is at the end, he keeps practicing "My name is Hongtao Liu". One day he met a foreigner on the road and wanted to practice it, so he said "My name is Hongtao Liu". The foreigner was good at Chinese, so he replied "My name is Fangkuai Qi". (2011.12.13, New York)

Here two people were introducing their names to each other. Chinese people thought it was more standard to put his family name after his first name. But the homophonic sounded very much like the name of a card in playing cards, and the name was misunderstood by foreigner. The foreigner had a good command of Chinese, so he introduced himself as another card in the playing card. The Chinese people said, "My name is Hongtao Liu". And the foreigner replied, "My name is Fangkuai Qi". His name was untrue and incorrect. As a result, his answer violated the maxim of quality of the Cooperative Principle for humorous effect.

In the following example, Brother Sway talks about his own experience in a coffee shop.

Example 4:

Sway: I was curious and I wanted to say how people drank coffees. I saw Chinese buy mocha and cappuccino, and they started look around. They stayed in their line, so I asked, "What are you looking for?" They said, "Where is the soy sauces?"

In this conversation, speakers deliberately violate the quality maxim of Cooperative Principle. Speakers actually know that there would not provide relevant spices for customers. However, they still ask the following question, which shows that their deep-rooted habit.

Violation of the Maxim of Relevance

Based on his own experience, Brother Sway always shares what he saw and what he listened in the daily life.

Example 5:

Sway: When I was eating, I saw another guest arrive, it seemed to be a Japanese man who ordered a dish called shredded pork with garlic sauce. While eating, pick dishes and say to the waiter: "This is a fish-flavored shredded pork, why no fish?" The waiter said, "If you want a braised meat balls in brown sauce, I have to give you the whole lion." Besides, if you want a couple's lungs, I'll have to kill a couple for you. (2013.05.25, Santiago)

The maxim of relevance of the cooperation principle was mainly violated here. Chinese food had a long history, and there were many ways to name dishes. Sometimes the name of a dish was from a story. Most dishes were named according to their taste and appearance, paying attention to symmetry and tidiness. On the contrary, their English names of dishes were related to their raw materials, such as shredded pork with garlic sauce and braised meat balls in brown sauce. As a result, it was not surprising that a Japanese person would ask this question in a Chinese restaurant. But instead of answering his question directly, the waiter asked two other questions. The waiter gave two examples to tell him that the name of a dish did not correspond to the ingredients in it. It produced humorous effect exaggravatively by violating the relevance maxim.

Example 6:

Sway: I read an American medical journey. It says, "One third American people cannot sleep." They go to the doctors, and the doctors says "I'd like you to watch a Chinese opera." (2011.03.05, Seattle)

This answer violated the relevance maxim. Doctor's answer should be relevant to the topic. Patients told doctors that they had insomnia. However, the doctor advised them to listen to Chinese Beijing opera. Seemingly

irrelevant answer implied that Beijing Opera has a sleep-inducing effect. In this way, implicit meaning and humorous effect can be expressed by violating the relevance maxim of Cooperative Principle.

Violation of the Maxim of Manner

Example 7:

Host: It is said that the American way of education is not the same as that in China, that the American education is like a cheerleader. Is there any difference?

Sway: Chinese parents are called judges, commentators or critics. You often hear parents say you shouldn't do that. Why did you do it. I told you how you did it again. But look at American parents, a child said to his mother today, "Mom, I want to study philosophy." Mother said: "Oh yeah, right. This is great. Oh my god. Philosophy is great." And then a month later he said, "Mom, I'm not going to study philosophy." I want to learn poetry." Mother said: "Oh, really? You will be a good poem. You're gonna be a poet. Oh, my God, that's so wise." (2015.01.14, Beijing)

This answer violated the manner maxim, which dictated that you should be as concise as possible and avoid being long-winded. And here Brother Sway repeated a lot of examples to prove that education like cheerleading in the United States.

Example 8:

Sway: Today we talk to all the Chinese people. I mean all the Chinese people in the world, 1.4 million people. (2011.03.09, Brother Sway PK Starbucks)

According to the maxim of manner of the Cooperative Principle, we should speak as succinct as possible to avoid miscellany and repetition. Here Brother Sway deliberately violated the manner maxim, and repeated all the Chinese people. Since in the beginning of a talk show, this is a way to get the audience's attention and keep them focused on what he's saying. It can also be humorous through repetition.

In his talk show, there are also few examples of humor produced by violating the manner maxim. That is because humor is repetition.

Thus, based on the above comparative study, the thesis has answered the four research questions, that is: Facing Americans and Chinese audiences, Brother Sway has adopted different cooperative principles to produce humorous effects; in the organization of language and the creation of his works, Brother Sway deliberately organizes and creates based on Chinese and American language expression; different responses of the humor have been achieved in the same performance both on Chinese and American audiences; aiming that, Brother Sway purposely violates some maxims in Cooperative Principles to cater to the audiences.

Conclusions

After the research of the paper, several questions probed at the beginning have been solved. On the one hand, we can find the differences between Brother Sway's Chinese and English talk shows. In his Chinese talk shows, he is used to using the real experience to show the American's thinking for Chinese people is curious about American world view. Besides, he usually uses the violation of the quantity maxim and quality maxim to produce the humor effects. On the contrary, he likes to use Chinglish translations as examples in his English talk show. And he prefers to use the violation of the manner maxim and relevance maxim to make audiences laugh in his English talk shows. However, whatever in Chinese or English talk shows, repetition is the key for Brother Sway to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience.

On the other hand, humorous effects often derive from breaching Grice's Cooperative Principle and its four maxims. The Cooperative Principle and its four maxims can be regarded as the language foundation of humor creation. Moreover, it is not hard to find that the study is useful for the transmission of culture. Brother Sway is a native-born Chinese and lives in America for 30 years. For Chinese culture, he has his own deep understanding and his voice. However, he has missed the fast-developing period of China, which causes that some of his speaking still contains stereotypes. Although China has developed strong and prosperously, the stereotypes and deep expressions cannot be eliminated easily.

According to this study, the way about how Chinese and English produce humor is clearly known. Based on that, people could create the humor effects by violating the Cooperative Principle. Finally, people have to cherish and use the right of speaking properly, helping the transmission of the various culture.

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