An Analysis of Ingratiating Discourse in Social Interaction

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Abstract: Ingratiating discourse is a social phenomenon that appears under the background of social transformation and new network interpersonal relationship. It is mainly manifested in several forms, such as modal particles, exclamation mark, and emoticons, which reflect people's discourse carnival under social needs and network memes under digital living situations. In this paper, I explore the expression of ingratiating discourse in social activities. The paper mainly reveals the cases and reasons of ingratiating discourse, the differences between different genders in the use of ingratiating discourse.

Keywords: Ingratiating Discourse; Social Interactions; Reasons; Gender Differences

1. Introduction

Ingratiating discourse in social interaction refers to the phenomenon that in real life or online social networking, in order to express their politeness and kindness, individuals tend to strengthen the modal particle or express something with more emojis online to make words more friendly and amiable. Nowadays, a growing number of people use a euphemistic way of speaking or add some friendly modal particle at the end of their communication in real life. In the meantime, people also consciously or unconsciously use many lovely and friendly modal particle to express themselves online with emojis and exclamation point in social media.

2. Literature Review

Ingratiating discourse is the product of the modern social interaction. No matter in real life communication, or online social chat, ingratiating words appear frequently in our discourse expression. This paper aims to explore the reasons and gender differences behind the ingratiating discourse.

Miao Xiaowen and Ye Lixia (2021) studied the relationship between ingratiating discourse posture and interpersonal relationship. [1] Their methodology has positive impact on my research methodology. In order to study the part of differences in the use of ingratiating discourse between different genders, I collected data through interviews based on the methods of these two scholars.

Pu Ping and Chen Qian (2024) studied ingratiating discourse generated in digital platforms. In addition, this article introduces some specific cases of ingratiating discourse. Many people do not use "ok" when replying to others, but use "okk", which looks more friendly. [2] The example inspired me to demonstrated the use of ingratiating discourse in real and online social interactions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Literature Research Method

In the research on the ingratiating discourse in social interaction, firstly, literature related to ingratiating discourse is collected by searching keywords related to this research in major Internet literature databases and data sharing platforms (such as CNKI, VIP). Secondly, I also collected literature related to this research in various offline libraries and other places.

3.2 Way of Qualitative Analysis

3.2.1 Survey

A total of 350 college students in Nanjing were randomly selected, 30 invalid interviews were eliminated, and 320 valid interviews were obtained. The average age of the participants was about 21. Among them, 45 percent were males and 55 percent were females.

3.2.2 Measure

Interviews on the use of ingratiating words in social interaction: In ingratiating speech, discourse markers such as "ne," "ya," and "hey"

in Chinese are typically used to soften language expression and enhance affinity, serving as buffers and regulators. Research indicates that these linguistic elements can reduce confrontation in communication, increasing acceptance and intimacy between interlocutors. We have designed the following three directions for interview items:

(1) Do you often use pleasing speech markers, such as "ne," "ya," "hey," etc., in your daily conversations? A.Yes B. No

(2) Do you frequently use friendly emojis or punctuation marks, such as smiley emojis or exclamation points, in your online social interactions? A.Yes B. No

(3) Why do you use such expressions?

A. To express politeness B. To leave a friendly impression on others C. Out of habit

Question	Answer	Total	Male	Female
Do you often use polite expressions in daily communication, such as "ne", "ya", "hey", etc.?	Yes	190	80	110
	No	130	60	70
Do you often use friendly emojis or punctuation in online social interactions? Such as smiley emojis, exclamation marks.	Yes	220	70	150
	No	100	74	26
Why do you use such expressions?	To express politeness	72	28	44
	To leave a friendly impression	210	104	106
	Habit	38	12	26

3.2.3 Data Processing

The collected answers data were processed and analyzed using Python. The chi-square test of independence was employed. The chi-square test of independence effectively determines whether there is an association between two categorical variables by comparing the differences between observed and expected frequencies. If the statistic exceeds the critical value, it indicates a significant association between the two variables; otherwise, it indicates no significant association.

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

4. Analysis

4.1 Instances and Reasons

4.1.1 Obedience, Cater and Giving

In social activities, some ingratiating discourse are often reflected as obedience, cater and giving. In many cases, when faced with a request from others, people tend to say yes with a relaxed tone, even if they are not willing to. Around our lives, some college students do not want to participate in activities, but they often hide their inner reluctance and say to the person in charge of the activity, "Of course I will go. I am very happy to participate! " This is a typical way of ingratiating discourse. Therefore, in discourse communication, their ways of communication are often submissive and accommodating. In terms of specific social actions, they will take the initiative to meet the needs of others and sacrifice themselves.

4.1.2 Lack of Independent Thinking and Independent Thinking Ability

In social situations, some individuals are always more willing to be a listener and a doer. They seem to suppress the ability to express ideas when communicating in discourse. When their reason conflicts with their tendency to conform to others, they get into psychological conflict. Their words are usually "OK", "I agree", etc., giving people an impression of good temper and friendliness. For example, at a gathering with old friends, when other people ask which restaurant they want to eat, this kind of people do not participate in the discussion or give own opinions. Until the decision is made, they will say "OK, do what you want. This restaurant looks good." The fact is that these people tend to come across as easy-going and approachable, however, their own ability to think independently and express ideas also gradually

weaken.

4.1.3 Repression of Critical Discourse

Another form of ingratiating discourse is actually silence and the inability to use critical language. For instance, in group work or discussions, when their opinions conflict with others, they tend to remain silent or express their concurrence. In online group chat discussions, they like lurking in the group chat and do not express their opinions. Sometimes, they also choose to send a cute emoji of a nod or OK gesture to show their approval. Whether in real or online networking, such people are often silent or say "no" even when others explicitly ask if they have any questions or suggestions.

4.1.4 Reasons

Interpersonal withdrawal and avoidance. People who often use ingratiating discourse tend to grow up in a more controlling environment. In their family environment, the parents of such people will be strict and even critical. They often project that those around them will view them in the same critical light as their parents, which can trigger anxiety. In this case, they tend to focus on pleasantries in their speech expression, and always use polite and friendly ways when talking or chatting online.

Accumulation and processing of negative emotions. First of all, people who use ingratiating discourse often doubt whether they are really liked by others, and need to constantly confirm. Secondly, due to the inequality of the relationship and the inferiority, such people tend to have a lot of shame at the subconscious level, and hate for the object of ingratiation. Aware that these feelings of shame and hate are uncomfortable and dangerous, they tend to suppress these feelings. In order to cope with negative emotions, they need to mobilize psychological defense mechanisms, including fantasy and denial.

The suppression of one's own personality. At online social events, social media has gradually improved and become the main carrier of people's social communication. However, the alienation of individuals in the network space leads to the strangeness and alienation between subjects, which causes various restrictions and barriers for the network virtual performance. In order to eliminate strangeness and distance and achieve the purpose of quickly establishing contact with others, people often spend great effort in choosing words and sentences when communicating, and sometimes simulate interactive scenes in their hearts, and speak in a tone and way that the other party can accept happily. [3]

4.2 Research Gender Differences of Ingratiating Discourse Expression

Among the interviews of 350 college students, 320 interviews are valid. Students were randomly interviewed by academic unit to answer the questions. We summarize and calculate the chi-square values for all cells, as shown in the table below. The formula for calculating the degrees of freedom is: Degrees of freedom = (number of rows - 1) × (number of columns - 1) = (7 - 1) × (2 - 1) = 6

At a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the critical value for 6 degrees of freedom is 12.59. The calculated chi-square statistic is 56.39, which is much greater than the critical value of 12.59. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant association between gender and response options. Through this statistical analysis, we can be 95% confident that gender indeed has a significant impact on the survey results, indicating that this influence is not due to chance. This result tells us that this significant association indicates that when designing and interpreting survey results, we need to consider the impact of gender factors.

Discussion and Conclusion

The paper focuses on the analysis of the ingratiating discourse in social interaction. The main research methodologies of this research are literature research method and way of qualitative analysis. The key findings of this paper are the reasons, differences between different genders of ingratiating discourse.

To sum up, this paper reveals that there are differences in the use of ingratiating discourse by different genders. In social communication, there are only disguised politeness and friendliness, but no real feelings are limited and meaningless. Being reasonably authentic and self-worth, and trying to be more authentic in our social interactions with others, can build truly healthy and meaningful relationships.

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