

A Study of Jocular Mockery with Conversation in Welcome to the Mushroom House

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Abstract: There are fruitful research results about politeness and its strategies at home and abroad, but the research on mock impoliteness and its various practical activities still needs to be deepened. Combining previous researches with the corpus of collected conversational data from episodes 1-3 of *Welcome to the Mushroom House*, this paper analyzes the pragmatic mechanism and dynamic construction of the mock impoliteness practice activity of jocular mockery from the three dimensions of triggering mechanism, framing mechanism, and responding mechanism. The article is expected to provide more ideas for jocular mockery research. In the future, it can be combined with empirical research to explain the pragmatic phenomenon.

Keywords: mock impoliteness, jocular mockery, triggering mechanism, framing mechanism, responding mechanism

1. Introduction

Politeness, as a social norm, is an integral part of interpersonal communication. In the field of pragmatics, politeness research has become an important research direction. In recent years, with the increasing frequency of cross-cultural communication, politeness research has been receiving increasing attention in pragmatics. It has been more than 40 years since Lakeoff classical politeness study was introduced [1]. Impoliteness has also attracted great attention since the end of the 20th century. Culpeper [2] summarized the statutorily formulated expressions and strategies of impoliteness from the perspective of real impoliteness. However, in everyday communication, people often joke and make fun of each other, which does not appear to be impolite but enhances the relationship between them. This kind of impolite behavior is obviously not really impolite, but rather "a form of impoliteness or lack of politeness in establishing and maintaining intimate relationships" [3].

As a kind of "superficial impoliteness", mock impoliteness can be realized in various ways, and jocular mockery is one of them. "As a small branch of politeness research, there are few studies on jocular mockery, and the existing studies mainly focus on the dynamic construction of it. Carmen [4] discusses the use of jocular mockery in Spain and the United Kingdom by comparing the use of jocular mockery on social media Facebook, and discusses the triggers of jocular mockery in different cultures. Schnurr and Chan [5] summarized four response strategies commonly used by subordinates by generalizing the specific ways in which subordinates respond to jocular mockery emitted by superiors in the work environment. Qiao Han [6] categorized the receptive response strategies used

by third parties in jocular mockery discourse into five sub-strategies: ascending, descending, stuttering, lining up and inverting, and explored the motivations for choosing receptive response strategies.

However, few people have analyzed the complete mechanism of jocular mockery, most of them just make a passing reference to it, and most of the corpus used comes from social media, which does not guarantee that the mockery unfolded by the speaker to the hearer must be joking. In this paper, the author takes the reality show *Welcome to the Mushroom House* as the text corpus, and analyze the conversational activities of the re-employed men's group, who have been friends for more than ten years, to further elucidate the three mechanisms of triggering, framing, and responding to jocular mockery.

2. Literature review

Leech [3] defines "mock impoliteness" as the appearance of impoliteness that is actually politeness. Brown & Stephen [7], Culpeper [2], Bousfield [8], and a large number of scholars have embraced Leech's view of mock impoliteness. But this view of mock impoliteness has since been questioned by some scholars: is mock impoliteness really superficial impoliteness? Culpeper [9] revised his earlier view of mock impoliteness; mock impoliteness is not always superficially impolite in the eyes of different participants, and may be real impolite or irrelevant impolite especially to the target of the mockery. Haugh & Bousfield [10], building on Culpeper's [9] study of mock impoliteness, proposed that mock impoliteness itself should be viewed as a social evaluation of irrelevant impoliteness (non-impolite) and should not be subsumed under the theoretical framework of politeness or impoliteness.

Antaki & Widdicombe [11] state that a person's identity is "molded" by "shaping" a person into a type with "relevant characteristics or traits". When a person is evaluated in a way that is inconsistent with the identity that has been previously molded about him, this poses a threat to him or his identity. At the same time, this inconsistency can also pose a threat to the relationship between the person being mocked at and the other participants. However, if the participant perceives the offense as maintaining and fostering social relationships, then the threat to identity and relationships is considered "permissible". This permissible offense is then referred to as "irrelevant politeness" that is neither evaluated as polite nor impolite [10]. Haugh & Bousfield [10] note that speech or behavior that can be evaluated as mock impoliteness is often characterized by recognizable interactions. These behaviors typically involve the co-construction of a joking, non-serious, or flirtatious frame of understanding. Such behaviors contain, for example, teasing, jocular insult, jocular abuse and so on.

Jocular mockery is a type of teasing. Alberts [12] considers teasing as "a possible insult or aggressive comment", which implies that "teasing" could also be jocular or non-serious. Haugh [13] suggests that jocular mockery can be analyzed in three ways: 1) what triggers jocular mockery in a local sequential context; 2) how the speaker frame the jocular mockery; 3) how the recipient and other participants reacted.

Haugh summarizes the triggers of jocular mockery based on the previous research: exaggeration, slip-ups or exploitable ambiguity, and face concerns. Likewise, speakers frame jocular mockery by using lexical exaggeration, topic-shifting markers, contrastiveness, prosodic cues, inviting laughter, and facial or gestural cues. There are three broad categories of responses to jocular mockery: 1) denying the jocular mockery as untrue or exaggerated; 2) playing along with the mockery or pretending to accept; and 3) ignoring the mockery [13].

3. Data analysis

The data chosen for this paper is the reality show *Welcome to the Mushroom House*. According to the strict selection criteria, the invalid part of the dialogues is eliminated, and only the dialogues that

satisfy the jocular mockery in the local sequential contexts are selected to form the corpus of this paper. *Welcome to the Mushroom House* is a spin-off show of *Back to Field*. *Welcome to the Mushroom House* initiates the concept of sharing mushroom houses, which allows different guests longing for an idyllic life to live in the mushroom house in the form of sharing, and live a slow and self-sufficient life. The first three issues by the Re-employed Men's group Chen Chusheng, Wang Zhengliang, Su Xing, Zhang Yuan, Lu Hu, Wang Yuexin as a guest, the last issues by the members of the College of Detectives as a guest.

Jocular mockery is more common among people with close relationships such as friends, relatives and family members [14]. *Welcome to the Mushroom House* invites Re-employed Men's Group as guests in the first three issues, as they have been friends for more than ten years, the members of the Re-employed Men's Group have a relatively close relationship with each other, so the interactive dialogues that occur between long-time friends in the show can provide usable data for this study. Therefore, in this paper, the first three issues of *Welcome to the Mushroom House* (the last two issues were replaced by other guests, so they were not used) were selected as the research data, from which 31 local sequential contexts were screened out as the research data. During the collection process, the author and two other facilitators with a background in pragmatics strictly followed the definition of "jocular mockery" given by Haugh & Bousfield [10] to repeatedly screen the corpus to ensure its credibility. On the basis of Haugh's theory, the authors further analyze the triggering mechanism, framing mechanism, and responding mechanism of jocular mockery, and discuss them in turn in relation to the specific data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Triggering mechanism for jocular mockery

Jocular mockery is usually a response to the previous move of the person being flirted with [15], in which the triggers include exaggeration, slip-ups or exploitable ambiguity, as well as face concerns [13]. Since jocular mockery mostly occurs between relatives and friends who are more intimate in their relationship. There are also many cases of active triggering, so the authors include active trigger as a separate category in this section. Combined with the data of this paper, we give examples of each:

4.1.1. Exaggeration

Examples of exaggeration including complaining, extolling and bragging as well as overdoing polite routines and compliments, or being overly earned at the topics [13].

Example (1):

陆虎:(指着修好的地方)怎么样不错吧!(炫耀的表情)达咩(比出 X 手势)

张远:你以为它(鸡)们看得懂啊。

(Lu Hu: (pointing to the repaired area) How's that? Not bad, huh? (Showing off.) DAMA (making X sign)

Zhang Yuan: You think they (chickens) can read?)

Lu Hu realizes that the fence of the chicken coop is broken and persuades Zhang Yuan to repair the coop together. Zhang Yuan thought that the chickens could fly out from the fence and escape, so there was no point in repairing it. After Lu Hu repaired the broken hole, he even put a red x mark on it. At the same time, he gave Zhang Yuan a smug look. But Zhang Yuan didn't care him. Zhang Yuan had already made it clear that he didn't approve of the significance of what Lu Hu had done, while Lu Hu was still bragging about his labor "how's that? Not bad, huh?", an exaggeration that triggers Zhang Yuan's jocular mockery with him --- "You think they can read?"

4.1.2. Sip-ups or ambiguity

Sip-ups or ambiguity refers to exploiting potential weak spots (ambiguity) in what a previous speaker said by echoing with a completely different reading.

Example (2):

张远:我们要不要最后投一个球。祝我们六个都顺顺利利。

苏醒:不不就你一个你一个。

王铮亮:你的事跟我们没有关系。

(Zhang Yuan: Shall we throw one last ball. Good luck to all six of us.

Sue Wake: No no just you one you one.

Wang Zhengliang: Your business has nothing to do with us.)

Before leaving the Mushroom House, Zhang Yuan wanted to throw one last ball and remembered that he hadn't said goodbye to his brothers yet, so he said, "Good luck to all six of us". But due to the construction of the basketball hoop in the morning, Zhang Yuan bet his fate for the next one year on the ball, but he didn't score in three consecutive throws. This time, Su Xing and Wang Zhengliang were afraid that Zhang Yuan's blessing was actually betting the fate of all six on this one ball, so they rushed to stop it. Apparently, the ambiguity of Zhang Yuan's blessing triggered Su Xing and Wang Zhengliang to employ impolite tactics to jokingly mock at Zhang Yuan: "you one you one" "Your business has nothing to do with us".

4.1.3. Face concerns

Face concerns triggers jocular mockery through participants particular expectation about the connection or separateness face.

Example (3):

张远:鄢姐你看过《最好的我们》吗?

鄢姐:(沉默)

王栎鑫:她不需要看《最好的我们》,她只认识我一个人。

(Zhang Yuan: Have you seen The Best of Us, Yan?

Yan: (SILENT)

Wang Yuexin: She doesn't need to watch The Best of Us, she only knows me.)

The men's group went to a villager's house to have lunch, and during the meal they tried to find out who had the highest popularity, but Yan said that she only knew Wang Yuexin himself. At this point, Zhang Yuan asked Yan if she had seen the TV series "The Best of Us" starring Wang Yuexin. But Sister Yan fell into silence, a silence that threatened Wang Yuexin's face. In order to maintain his face, Wang Yuexin adopted an impolite strategy to fight back against Zhang Yuan: "She doesn't need to watch The Best of Us, she only knows me."

4.1.4. Active trigger

Although exaggeration, slip-ups or exploitable ambiguity, as well as face concerns in the turns can trigger jocular mockery. However, in the data of this paper, the initiator of jocular mockery does not have any of these three situations in the previous moves, but still triggers jocular mockery discourse.

Example (4):

苏醒:这个头围太大,应该不是我。

陆虎:这么浮夸的动作,是张远。

(Su Xing: This head circumference is too big, it shouldn't be me.

Lu Hu: Such a pompous move, it's Zhang Yuan.)

The director team has prepared silhouette cutouts for the Re-employed Men's group and tried to let them guess. Su Xing first denied that it was himself, at which point Lu Hu took the initiative to launch into a mock at Zhang Yuan: "Such a pompous move, it's Zhang Yuan."

4.2. Framing mechanism for jocular mockery

Mockery can be projected within a non-serious or humorous frame, and thus as a "laughable", in a number of ways, including through various combinations of laughter particles, prosodic or phonetic cues, lexical exaggeration, implicit contrasts with known facts, formulaicity and topic shift markers, as well as facial or gestural expressions. formulaicity and topic shift markers, as well as facial or gestural cues, as has been noted in studies of teasing and improprieties more generally[16-21]. Combining the previous frameworks, the authors focus on the aspects of lexical exaggeration, contrasiveness, and formulaicity¹. In addition to these strategies that may occur in the data of this paper, the authors also found a callback strategy.

4.2.1. Lexical Exaggeration

Lexical exaggeration can be exploited in either the form of overstatement claiming on a higher scale than actually is or through extreme case formulations [22].

Example (5):

(陈楚生:(笑)

王栎鑫:你笑什么?你这个家伙你笑什么?(作势要攻击陈楚生)

陈楚生:雷王!你打一晚上雷。)

Chen Chusheng: (laughs)

Wang Yuexin: What are you laughing at? You guy what are you laughing at? (gestures to attack Chen Chusheng)

Chen Chusheng: King of Thunder! You hit the thunder all night.

This night Re-employed Men's group share one bed, Wang Yuexin's snoring never stops. Chen Chusheng unbearable disturbance, forced to move to the next room to sleep. The next morning, Chen Chusheng as soon as he saw Wang Yuexin showed a laughing face, which caused Wang Yuexin's dissatisfaction. Wang YueXin made a gesture to kick Chen Chusheng, and this exaggerated action triggered Chen Chusheng's jocular mockery, calling him "King of Thunder". The use of lexical exaggeration helps the initiator to frame a jocular mockery, and makes it easier for the recipient to accept the discourse as joking.

4.2.2. Contrasiveness

Contrasiveness can also frame jocular mockery as nonserious by incongruous imagery [17].

Example (6):

鄢姐:你跟他可能也差不了两岁(张远 36,王铮亮 44)

王铮亮:虽然我比他(张远)小一点,但是你这样说我也勉强接受。(喜笑颜开)

张远:什么??!!(如遭雷劈)

(Sister Yan: You're probably not even two years apart from him.

Wang Zhengliang: Although I'm a little younger than him (Zhang Yuan), I can barely accept it if you say so. (beaming)

Zhang Yuan: What?!!!! (as if struck by lightning))

¹ Prosodic cues and nonverbal cues are out of place for the analysis of our data in this thesis.

When the men's group has lunch in the villagers' home, they asked Sister Yan to guess their ages. After guessing Zhang Yuan's age, Sister Yan went on to guess that the difference between Wang Zhengliang's age and Zhang Yuan's age wasn't too much, but in fact Wang Zhengliang was 8 years older than Zhang Yuan. At this point, Wang Zhengliang was incredibly happy. At this point, he launched into a flirtation with Zhang Yuan, "Although I'm a little younger than him (Zhang Yuan), I can barely accept it if you say so." Wang Zhengliang semantically expressed his dissatisfaction with Yan's guess that he was the same age as Zhang Yuan, but in reality, he was just being nice. Although the bearer of the jocular mockery at this point is the third party, Zhang Yuan, and not Sister Yan, who is conversing with Wang Zhengliang, it does constitute jocular mockery. This contrasiveness maneuver is one of the common strategies used in framing jocular mockery.

4.2.3. Formulaicity

In general, formulaicity refers to the feature of expressions in fixed patterns used in a specific context [20]. Idioms, slangs, and taboo words are all types of formulaicity, with a focus on taboo words here. The term taboo word refers to words that many people consider offensive or shocking. They are generally considered inappropriate in certain contexts.

Example (7):

张远:你(陈楚生)那天那个骂我

陆虎:大概的话术是什么呢?

陈楚生:黄毛 SB!白毛 SB!

张远:当时我染那个白头发。

(Zhang Yuan: You (Chen Chusheng) scolded me the other day.

Lu Hu: What are the approximate words?

Chen Chusheng: Yellow hair idiot! White hair idiot!

Zhang Yuan: At that time I dyed that white hair.)

In this example, Chinese taboo words such as "SB" are utilized. This Chinese phrase means "stupid". When negative words appear in the discourse, the initiators are likely to be emotional. They may be disturbed by some external factors. In this example, Chen Chusheng's mock was directed at Zhang Yuan because Zhang Yuan had dyed his hair and made a very strange style when he went to Sanya to perform, and these styles triggered Chen Chusheng's mockery of him. However, Chen Chusheng had expressed his concern for Zhang Yuan by telling him that dyeing his hair would damage his scalp. Therefore, the impoliteness caused by the jocular mockery formed by the taboo words is permissible.

4.2.4. Callback

It is realized through an callback with what is presupposed or known amongst those participants as mentioned before [23].

Example (8):

张远:你们两个为什么不盖一床被子?

王铮亮:他蹬我,他开始一直在蹬我。

王栎鑫:真的啊?

王铮亮:因为你昨晚上一直在又打呼又蹬我。你说我怎么睡?

张远:也可能这是你离婚的原因吧。

(Zhang Yuan: Why don't you two share a blanket?

Wang Zhengliang: He stomped me, he kept stomping me at first.

Wang Yuexin: Really?

Wang Zhengliang: Because you kept snoring and stomping on me again last night. How do you think I can sleep?

Zhang Yuan: Or maybe that's why you got divorced.
(laughter))

The night before, Wang Yuexin had said that he was not living in a good state because he had just gone through a divorce. When they woke up early the next morning, they had a discussion about last night's sleeping conditions, and right in the middle of the discussion between Wang Zhengliang and Wang Yuexin, Wang Zhengliang said that he didn't sleep well last night because Wang Yuexin snored and kicked him. At this point, Zhang Yuan launched a jocular mockery with Wang Yuexin: "Or maybe that's why you got divorced." The strategy of callback is involved here, and this strategy helps to establish the jocular mockery toward Wang Yuexin.

4.3. Responding mechanisms for jocular mockery

Drew [17] in his study of ways of responding to teasing discourse, suggests six non-serious ways of responding: ignoring; responding in a serious manner; realizing that one is being made fun of by others through the sound of others' laughter; rejecting or correcting with a laugh; laughing, then rejecting; and engaging in a submissive manner. Haugh [13] points out that there are three main ways of responding to jocular mockery in face-to-face conversations: Ignore, Deny, and Accept. We combine the findings of the two scholars that jocular mockery categorizes response methods specifically as non-acceptance, acceptance, and ignorance.

4.3.1. Non-acceptance

Haugh argues that the method of response to jocular mockery is denial in addition to ignorance and acceptance, but the authors argue that there is a counter-attack in addition to denial.

4.3.1.1. Denial

Participants reject the prior instances of jocular mockery, that is, they deliver the rejection with concomitant laughter or explanation, in a way that made it evident the rejection was serious without treating it as a laughable [24], although notably other participants often treated it as a laughable in such cases.

Example (9):

张远:躺一躺吧

王栎鑫:你这午睡的老年人

张远:午睡才不是老年人呢。谷爱凌一天睡十四个小时。

(Zhang Yuan: Have a lie down.

Wang Yuexin: You the nap of the elderly.

Zhang Yuan: It's not the elderly who nap. Gu Ailing sleeps fourteen hours a day.)

In this example, Wang Yuexin initiated a jocular mockery against Zhang Yuan's living habits, Zhang Yuan first adopted a response strategy of denial and then made further explanations, and Zhang Yuan did not take Wang Yuexin's words seriously and proceeded to nap after he finished speaking. This kind of denial can precisely show that the recipient did not take the jocular mockery seriously.

4.3.1.2. Counterattacks

Most people are inclined to counter the mockery they receive directly, instead of just denying mocking utterances. They tend to fight back the "attack" they have suffered by producing jocular mockery in a similar way.

Example (10):

王栎鑫:玩音乐,玩音乐(不要打球了)

张远:你有玩过什么红的音乐吗

王栎鑫:你个婚庆歌手

(Wang Yuexin: Play music, play music (don't play basketball))

Zhang Yuan: Have you played any hit music?

Wang Yuexin: you wedding singer)

Wang Yuexin called off Zhang Yuan's basketball activities and wanted everyone to sit together and play music. Zhang Yuan jokingly teased Wang Yuexin about not playing any hit song, but Wang Yuexin countered with Zhang Yuan calling him a wedding singer, intending to show that Zhang Yuan wasn't much of a popular singer either. Wang Yuexin used this counterattack to maintain his positive face. The recipient did not interpret this flirtation as a serious and earnest flirtation because he was still taking care of Zhang Yuan after his counterattack.

4.3.2. Acceptance

Given that jocular mockery "appears to be behavior designed to strengthen and confirm (amongst other things) the social bonds of friendship", rejecting it may be regarded as a disruption of social rapport. friendship" [10], rejecting it may be regarded as a disruption of social rapport.

Example (11):

陆虎:他(苏醒)是一直绕着热点走的人,说唱不好的时候他搞说唱,说唱好的时候他又去搞别的了

苏醒:太懂我了

张远:就是因为《快乐男生》淘汰了我们这些不该淘汰的人,活该!

苏醒:如果我活该能让我认识你们的话,我特别开心,感谢我活该认识了你们

(Lu Hu: He's the one who keeps going around the hot spots, when rap is bad he raps, when rap is good he goes on to something else

Su Xing: You Understand me!

Zhang Yuan: It's because in Super Boy you eliminated those of us who shouldn't have been eliminated. You deserved it!

Su Xing: I'm especially happy if I deserved to know you guys, thanks to the fact that I deserved to know you!)

Lu Hu lamented that Su Xing had been missing out on a good time, and Zhang Yuan thought of how he was eliminated by Su Xing when he was on Super Boy, which triggered Zhang Yuan's jocular mockery. In the face of such m, Su Xing adopts the strategy of acceptance and joins in the speaker's jocular mockery about himself, "I'm especially happy if I deserved to know you guys, thanks to the fact that I deserved to know you!" Through this strategy of acceptance, the recipient skillfully brings the two parties of the conversation closer together, keeping the conversation in a joking atmosphere and maintaining a friendly relationship.

4.3.3. Ignorance

Some of the basic ways in which recipients interpret mockery as wit can be reached by ignoring the initiator's mock in addition to explicit non-acceptance as well as explicit agreement [17]. The following example demonstrates how the recipient of a jocular mockery demonstrates his ignorance of the mocking word.

Example (12):

陆虎:(骚包的摆造型)

张远:你这样的话确实没人认识你。

陆虎:前奏好长。

(Lu Hu: (posing tartly)

Zhang Yuan: It's true that no one recognizes you if you do like this.

Lu Hu: The intro is so long.)

After the Re-employed Men's group went to the villager Sister Yan's house for lunch, Lu Hu decided to sing a song for Yan, while Zhang Yuan and Wang Zhengliang watched on. During the prelude to the song, Lu Hu kept striking some strange poses, and these exaggerated poses triggered Zhang Yuan to tease him: "It's true that no one recognizes you if you do like this." At this point, Lu Hu did not accept the mock or not, but chose to ignore it, and this turn ended here.

4.4. Discussion

In the previous section, we found that although the triggering of jocular mockery is associated with pragmatic behaviors such as exaggeration by the recipient, slips-ups or ambiguity, and threats to the face of the current speaker, the initiator may also spontaneously initiate jocular mockery with the bearer; the initiator frames his or her jocular mockery in a variety of ways, most often in terms of lexical exaggeration, contrasiveness, formulaicity and topic shift markers, and callback; the recipient's interpretation of jocular mockery is reflected in the way she responds, and the three responses discussed in detail in this paper all indicate that the recipient does not interpret the jocular mockery as real impoliteness. The process from triggering to initiator's construction to recipient's response is a dynamic construction of the phenomenon of jocular mockery, and the actual results achieved by both parties to the discourse are conducive to mutual intimacy.

These findings support Haugh and Bousfield's [10] view that mock impoliteness should be analyzed as an evaluation in its own right rather than being seen as a form of politeness or impoliteness. It is also evident that "not taking yourself too seriously" [25]. It is also evident that "not taking yourself too seriously" [26] is a core value shared by the show participants, which is associated with a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at each other's foibles and weaknesses.

5. Conclusion

This paper qualitatively analyzes the discourse phenomenon of jocular mockery using the collected conversational data from episodes 1-3 of *Welcome to the Mushroom House* and discusses the dynamic process of triggering, framing and responding to it. However, this study also has certain limitations. First, although the data of this study is close to life and has the typical characteristics of life situations of friends getting along with each other, it still cannot replace the real authentic corpus. Secondly, due to the lack of time, this paper only deals with the data of 1-3 episodes of the show and is not exhaustive. In the future, it can be combined with empirical research to explain the pragmatic phenomenon strongly.

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