

Developmental Study of Manipulated Speech - Weighing Recipient Intimacy and Consequence with
Moral and Social-Conventional Values

SZETO, Ching Yee Lovenner

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy
in
Psychology

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

July 2012

概述

本項研究的目的主要是探討兒童和成人如何評鑑不同類別的溝通技巧，並分析成長過程對其之影響。當中我們會進一步探究道德規範和社會常規如何影響人們對於「坦率的真話」和「扭曲的謊言」的分析和評價。為了研究環境因素會否影響人們對於溝通技巧的分析，我們分別掌控了故事當中資訊接收者和資訊提供者的關係，以及資訊對於資訊接收者的重要性。

是次的研究對象為七歲，九歲，十一歲的兒童以及一群大學生。他們需要閱讀八個有關日常對話的小故事，並對故事當中主角所說的「傷人真話」和「漂亮謊言」給予評分。結果指出隨著年齡的增長，人們對於善意的謊言有著更正面的評分，而對於傷人的真話之評分則恰恰相反。

此外，在分析真話與謊言時，人們處理有關資訊接收者的相關變素亦有著不同的態度。當分析真話時，不論資訊對於接收者的重要性，成人皆會偏好於向好朋友說出的真話多於向新同學說出的真話。近似地，兒童也傾向偏好於向好朋友說出的真話多於向新同學說出的真話，但這個差距在資訊重要性較高時會更被放大。當分析謊話時，成人會同時考慮到資訊接收者和資訊提供者的關係以及資訊對於資訊接收者的重要性。他們比較重視較近的關係，於好朋友是資訊接收者時更留意資訊的重要性，並對於重要情況下所說的謊言予以更負面的評價。但兒童只會集中於分析資訊對於資訊接收者的重要性；因此不論是好朋友還是新同學，他們也會對於在重要情況下所說的謊言予以負面評價。

從自我評分分析中，我們更可以肯定不同的年齡層在分析溝通技巧時所著重的價值有所不同。年齡較輕的傾向注重誠信價值，比較偏好於提供正確的資訊；而年長的則更會留意有關社交及環境因素的影響（如禮貌，資訊提供者和接收者的關係，資料重要性等等），誘使他們更接受善意的謊言。我們更發現不同的家庭管教方式能夠顯著地預測人們應用哪些道德和社交價值去分析不同的溝通技巧。

總結以上的結果，是次研究展示了成長過程對於人們分析及評鑑不同類別的溝通技巧有著顯著的影響作用。

Abstract of thesis entitled:

The current study investigated the developmental trend on the evaluation of different communicative strategies among children and adult. Their justification on the appraisal of blunt truth and twisted information in prosocial situations were examined in relation to their emphasis on moral values and social-conventional rules. To test the sensitivity of contextual factors for analyzing these conversational strategies, recipient-related factors including the relationship between the interlocutors and the importance of the feedback were manipulated. Children aged 7, 9 and 11 year-olds with a group of college students participated in the present study. Participants were given eight daily social scenarios of which the protagonist either told a hurtful blunt truth or a pleasing twisted discourse to the recipient, and the participants were asked to evaluate what the protagonist had said. Result revealed that as one grew older, individuals tended to evaluate more positively for false information with prosocial intentions, and rated more negatively for hurtful blunt truth. Age differences on the impact of recipient-related variables were found to be varied across the statement valence. When evaluating the truthful statements, adults rated those told to close friends more positively as compared to new classmates; consistent across the consequence factors. Similar to adults, children favored blunt truth for close friends compared to new classmates; but the effect would be magnifying in high consequence situations. Whereas when evaluating the manipulated statements, adults take into consideration both the factor of intimacy and consequence, and rated falsify message told in high consequence situations more negative as compared to low consequence situations when the recipients were their close friends. While the children group only focused on the consequence impact and rated more negatively for any twisted information in high consequence situation as bad across friendships. The two piece of information together illustrated that children who valued more on honesty would evaluate deeper on the blunt truth condition, while adults who valued more on politeness would have a more thorough analysis for the manipulated speech condition. Justification analysis provided further support on the age difference on values weighting in analyzing the usage of these speech strategies. While younger generation focused more on the importance of honesty, which

enhanced the preference of accurate information; older participants on the other hand attended more on social and contextual factors including politeness, relationship factors, and feedback consequences, encouraging their acceptance of prosocial speech manipulation. Parenting styles were found to predict significantly the adoption of different moral and social values in explaining the evaluation. Overall, our study revealed significant developmental changes for the evaluation and justification of the conversational strategies.

Submitted by SZETO, Ching Yee Lovenner

For the degree of Master of Philosophy in Psychology

at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in July 2012

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of significant main effect and two-way interaction effect of overall analysis	65
Table 2: Means and standard deviations of significant effects for blunt truth and manipulated speech blunt truth and manipulated speech scenarios analysis	66
Table 3: Frequency (Percentage) of categories of justification made by participants about the evaluative ratings	67
Table 4: Mean scores and standard deviations of different parenting styles	68
Figure 1: Mean scores for the evaluation of blunt truth and manipulated speech across scenarios	69
Figure 2: Mean scores for the evaluation of blunt truth across scenarios	70
Figure 3: Mean scores for the evaluation of manipulated speech across scenarios	71

Content Page

Chapter 1:

Introduction	11
Definition of Manipulated Speech	11
Prevalence of Manipulated Speech among Adults	12
Necessary Conditions for the Employment of Speech Manipulation	14
Language and cognitive abilities	14
Theory of mind	14
Emotion understanding	15
Summary	16
Impact of Socialization on the Appraisal of Speech Manipulation	16
Parenting styles	16
Summary	18
Developmental trend for Various Manipulated Discourse	18
Egocentric lies	19
Prosocial lies	20
Conclusion	21
Developmental trend for Conceptual and Moral Understanding	21
Conceptual understanding of manipulated discourses	21
Evaluation of lies	23
Linkage between moral evaluation and moral behaviors	25
Conclusion	26
Other Important Factors Guiding the Usage of Conversational Strategies	27
Consequential factors	27
Relational factors	28

Conclusion	30
Current Studies	30
Conceptual understanding	31
Evaluation of statement (Overall)	31
Evaluation of statement (Recipient Intimacy)	31
Evaluation of statement (Recipient Consequence)	31
Evaluation of statement (Interaction)	32
Justification of the rating	32
Parenting styles analysis	33
Evaluation of statement (Emotion understanding)	33
Chapter 2:	
Method	35
Participants (Overall)	35
Procedure	35
Procedure for child participants	35
Procedure for undergraduates	36
Materials	36
Blunt truth and strategic speech vignettes	36
Need for approval	40
Theory of mind understanding	40
Parenting styles	42
Chapter 3:	
Result	43
Analysis on the evaluative ratings of the target statements	43
Preliminary analysis	43

Combined analysis (blunt truth or strategic speech)	43
Analysis for the scenarios of blunt truth	44
Analysis for the scenarios of strategic speech	45
Adoption of justification by age (statement values, intimacy and consequence)	46
Usage of honesty as justification of the evaluative ratings	46
Usage of politeness as justification of the evaluative ratings	46
Usage of intimacy as justification of the evaluative ratings	46
Usage of consequence as justification of the evaluative ratings	46
Analysis of evaluative ratings by justification types	47
Blunt truth scenarios	47
Strategic speech scenarios	47
Adoption of justification by parenting styles	48
Justification: honesty	48
Justification: politeness	48
Justification: intimacy	49
Justification: consequence	49
Analysis of evaluative ratings by emotion perception of the speakers and the recipients	49
Blunt truth scenarios	49
Strategic speech scenarios	49
Chapter 4:	
Discussion	50
Overview	50
Conceptualization of blunt truth and manipulated speech	50
Valence of the Statements	51
Sensitivity of Contextual Factors – Recipient-related Variables	52

Blunt Truth Scenarios	53
Manipulated Speech Scenarios	55
Moral Values and Social-Conventional Rules	56
Parenting	57
Emotion Understanding	59
Contribution, Limitation and Future Research	60
Conclusion	64