

be a community norm (and institutionalized in the site-wide convention of referring to one's children with abbreviated forms like DD/DS that stand for 'darling' son/daughter), in practice it is common for that ideal to be referenced in ironic, humorous and self-mocking ways that implicitly challenge or undercut it.

An interesting example which Mackenzie discusses in some detail is a thread called '*Can we have a child exchange?*', in which contributors humorously appropriate the register of advertising to appeal for someone to take 'unsatisfactory' children off their hands. In this context, the references to 'darling' children read as ironic, communicating the dual message '*I am devoted to my children but I sometimes find them annoying and not very lovable*'. This thread speaks to the way Mumsnet is perceived by site-users as a safe space in which to express feelings that run counter to the ideal of the 'good mother'. In joking about their occasional lapses from the norm of unconditional devotion and self-sacrifice, participants reassure one another that their feelings are normal and acceptable. Yet the oblique and non-serious way in which this is done suggests that the scope for resistance is limited. You can safely joke about your failure to live up to the 'good mother' ideal, or criticize those who take it to extremes, but a serious challenge to the child-centric norm itself might be a riskier proposition. In the other thread that is analysed in detail, '*Your identity as a mother*', there are a couple of cases where a contributor does express serious anger and resentment about being, as one puts it, '*the least important person in my own life*'. It would have been interesting to know how these more overtly transgressive contributions were received and responded to.

Although this is a short book, in which Mackenzie is only able to present a fraction of the data she analysed, I think it does the job she intended it to do, namely, illustrating the utility of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis in exploring 'the multiple ways in which individuals may position themselves, or be positioned, in relation to ... norms [of gender and parenthood]' (p. 7). I found the material interesting and the book as a whole well written. For me, though, as a rather different kind of feminist, it did also illustrate the limitations of an approach that does not seek to relate what individual subjects do in discourse to the historical, political and economic conditions that shape their life-experiences and the positionings available to them.

References

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Xinren Chen (ed.), *Politeness Phenomena across Chinese Genres*, Sheffield and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2017; xiv + 294 pp., £75.00/\$100.00 (hbk), ISBN 9781781791769.

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This edited volume contributes to the studies of variations in politeness across different genres in Chinese. It sits within the tradition of variational pragmatics – a subfield of

intercultural pragmatics. The book looks at the impact of genre on the production and interpretation of politeness within 'the Chinese-speaking culture', which is manifested in various Chinese discourses from not only Mainland China but also Hong Kong and Taiwan. Exploring intra-cultural politeness-related variations across genres, the volume is different from previous intercultural pragmatics research that focuses predominantly on cross-cultural comparisons. The types of data covered include everyday interaction (e.g. at dinner tables or in Internet forums), academic, journalistic, medical and recreational genres, and articles that demonstrate genre-specific preferences and features in speech acts such as introductions and responses, refusals, disagreements, advice-giving, compliments and responses, and so on.

Chapter 1 is an introduction by the editor, which outlines the rationale, theoretical and methodological considerations, and limitations of the volume as well as directions for future research. The rest of the volume is divided into four parts, each dealing with one aspect of politeness in Chinese discourses. Part I examines how Chinese politeness behaviours embrace Grand Strategies of Politeness (GSP) (Leech, 2014) in introductions. In Chapter 2, Wang explores how politeness maxims are used and realized in guest-introducing and responding acts at Chinese dinner tables. Chen, in Chapter 3, examines the opening sequence of guest lectures in Chinese universities, focusing on how the host introduces the visiting professor. Both the introduction and the response by the visitors are analysed in detail. Qian (Chapter 4) analyses the introductory segment of three Chinese TV celebrity interview programmes, in particular, the exchanges of compliments between the hosts and the guests.

Part II of the volume deals with identity construction in different Chinese genres. In Chapter 5, Ren investigates the linguistic strategies of the host of a Chinese radio call-in programme that deals with public service complaints. Wu and Lin, in Chapter 6, examine the types of speech acts and facework that are used to build 'connectedness' by Chinese celebrities with their followers on Sina Weibo. Chapter 7, by Ran and Chen, looks at advice-giving in PhD oral defences in Chinese universities, and explores how supervisors construct identities in relation to the management of interpersonal rapport with the candidates.

Part III explores how rapport is managed in face-sensitive interaction, especially when Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) (Brown and Levinson, 1987) such as refusals and disagreement occur. In Chapter 8, Hsiang and Rau compare the different strategies of refusals adopted by female guests on TV dating shows in Taiwan and Mainland China. With special reference to politeness orientation, the study shows that the relationship between the interlocutors is neglected and challenged by the females in the Mainland versions, whereas it is maintained and strengthened by the females in the Taiwanese ones. The focus of Chapter 9 by Zhang and Wang is the common patterns and strategies that panellists adopt when expressing disagreement during academic conference discussions. In Chapter 10, Lee and Shum demonstrate how Cantonese interlocutors present implicit disagreements, quoting from words and phrases of Confucian canon and neo-Confucian works in online discussion forums.

Part IV of the volume explores how backchannelling varies across Chinese genres. In Chapter 11, Hu and Chen investigate the interconnection between backchannelling and politeness in TV talk shows from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chapter 12,

by Mao and Yang, explores the interconnection between backchannels and politeness management in four radio call-in counselling programmes from Mainland China. In Chapter 13, Zhong examines backchannelling on Chinese Internet forums. The functions of backchannelling are classified into seven categories: emoting, endorsement, evaluation, acknowledgement, attention, gratitude and disapproval. These functions conform to the sub-maxims of Leech's (2014) GSP and serve as strategies of showing 'pos-politeness' or 'netiquette'.

In general, this volume is well-structured and functions as a comprehensive survey of research in Chinese politeness. It revisits a pervasive phenomenon in language – politeness, which has been studied in depth in the past three decades. Filling a gap in politeness research, in particular in Chinese languages, this volume has several strengths. First of all, it is the first collection of articles to focus on how linguistic behaviours towards politeness vary across genres in contemporary Chinese languages, covering not only face-to-face and written forms of communication but also those in computer-mediated contexts. Furthermore, the volume focuses on intracultural variations in discursive strategies across different types of interaction, including introduction, identity construction, rapport management and backchannelling. The volume is also innovative, as it embraces diverse approaches to politeness and a range of naturally occurring data. Rather than adhering to a single model or paradigm, this volume adopts theoretical modules of Leech's (2014) GSP, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Face Theory (FT), Spencer-Oatey's (2000) Rapport Management Model (RMM) and Constructivists' views of politeness (Arundale, 1999; Haugh, 2007; Kádár and Haugh, 2013; Watts, 2003).

Nevertheless, the volume has some limitations. First, the four modules of politeness theories have their own merits and defects, which are not necessarily complementary to each other. Therefore, the results produced using different frameworks do not facilitate cross-study comparison. Second, though there is a variety of topics covered in this volume, certain areas are given more focus. For instance, academic genres are covered in several studies, including lecture openings in Chapter 3, PhD oral defences in Chapter 7 and panel discussions at academic conferences in Chapter 9. Internet and TV are the other two genres under focus, for example Weibo posts in Chapter 6, Internet forum discussion in Chapters 10 and 13, and TV interviews in Chapters 4, 8 and 11. In contrast, everyday face-to-face interaction, which would give better insight into politeness in Chinese-speaking cultures, is sparsely discussed in the volume.

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Delia Chiaro, *The Language of Jokes in the Digital Age*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2017; xii + 166 pp., £20.99 (softcover), ISBN 135137995X.

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The field of humour studies is characterized by multidisciplinary, with theories and approaches emanating from psychology, philosophy, linguistics and media studies, among others. Cutting across this rich but at times hard to reconcile diversity, Chiaro's *The Language of Jokes in the Digital Age* offers an adroit synthesis of relevant strands of scholarship, exploring how humour functions in contemporary modalities and addresses present issues. The book begins with a summary of scholarship on the language of humorous discourse to date, then proceeds to extend the discussion across specific genres and cultural themes, often pairing linguistic observation with critical commentary.

The introduction discusses the dichotomy between our physical and digital realities, the impact this has on our communication, and the pervasiveness of humorous discourse in digital media. Chiaro then gives an overview of the following chapters, which focus on how the language of humorous discourse interacts with translation, gender and online discourses, and touches on the rising status of comedy and satire both as a barometer for public opinion and as commentary on current affairs.

The first chapter begins by questioning whether the language of humorous discourse has changed since Chiaro's first book on humorous discourse, *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*, was published in 1992. The proliferation of smartphones and accompanying explosion in digital communication is flagged as the primary cause for any change. Chiaro makes a point of adopting a broad definition of humorous discourse that encompasses the various registers and genres afforded by digital texts and presents a synthesized account of key points of discussion in humour studies, such as Rod Martin's definition of humour as 'a form of mental play comprising cognitive, emotional, social and expressive components' (cited in Chiaro, 2017: 8). She also presents some initial observations on how digital media might interact with issues such as laughter, timing and audience. Chiaro then reviews the most widely accepted theory for linguistic humour, Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humour, summarizes Norrick's (2000) notions of the three-part narrative joke structure, and lists the archetypical joke themes/targets identified by Davies (2011), including the stupid underdog, the canny protagonist, sex, religion, disasters and the suspension of disbelief. The first chapter thereby anchors the following discussion in the relevant scholarly tradition and cultural context.

The second chapter discusses the impact film, television and digital technology have had on humorous discourse over the past century, and the emergence of the United States as the world's primary media exporter. Chiaro observes that these developments have