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Parody and Garden Path

A case study of Chinese rhetorical constructions from the perspective of lexico-constructional pragmatics

Abstract: This is a study of Chinese rhetorical constructions, parody and garden path (GP), from the perspective of lexico-constructional pragmatics (LCP). LCP adopts a holographic view of lexicon and construction so that they can be analyzed alike. We take parody and GP examples from Chinese advertisements for analysis. The LCP analysis highlights the pragmaticity and rhetoricality of each case: for a particular effect. When difficulty arises, pragmatic means may be used to "pragma-coerce" the right, clever, or erroneous use of a rhetorical construction for delivery of a retrievable intended effect, an Aha-effect. We conduct a mini-questionnaire with two cases, the former dealing with parody and the latter with GP. The study indicates the humor competence of ordinary Chinese participants (around the level of BA) as far as parody and GP are concerned and the participants' potential for cognition of the pragma-rhetorical values of parody and GP or their potential for generation of such utterances. It is suggested that rhetorical constructions outwit the less rhetorical or grammatical constructions *iff* they are available and accessible, and that LCP can offer us a feasible interpretation of such tropes as parody and GP.

Keywords: *Aha*-effect; Chinese rhetorical construction; lexico-constructional pragmatics; pragma-rhetorical value

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1 Introduction

In this study we first explain lexico-constructional pragmatics (LCP) as a new approach to language and rhetoric, and then we illustrate the LCP approach to parody and garden path (GP) in Chinese discourse. It is partly demonstrated

that LCP can offer a plausible account of the two types of rhetorical construction, given various shortcomings of other older linguistic or rhetorical approaches.

2 Lexico-constructional pragmatics: A new approach

LCP is an integrated or interface approach to language or constructions (Hou 2015a, b; Hou and Feng 2017). Cashing in on the merits and avoiding the demerits of lexico-pragmatics (lexical pragmatics) (Blutner 1998; Wilson 2003) and construction grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006; Michaelis 2008) or constructional pragmatics (pragmatic view of construction grammar) (Kay 2004/2006)[1], LCP is a new approach, capable of plausible accounts for various constructions and linguistic and rhetorical phenomena as well.

If lexico-pragmatics and constructional pragmatics differ from earlier counterpart approaches, like lexicology and construction grammar respectively, it is their input of pragmatics that counts, hence the label of "pragmatic(s)." The word "pragmatic(s)," with these terms, suggests not only the exploitation of all the general thoughts and concepts of pragmatics as a discipline, but also that of Cooperative Principle, Principle of Least Effort, Humor Principle, Irony Principle, and Relevance Principle in description and interpretation. In other words, it is not one or two pragmatic theories or models but as many as available for the latest gestalt developments of the discipline *per se*. Then, the marriage of lexico-pragmatics (see Blutner 1998; Wilson 2003) to constructional pragmatics (see Hou 2015a: 245–248, 2015b: 18–19) results in the outcome of LCP (Hou 2015a: 248–251, 2015b: 19–20). LCP builds up a connection between phonetics, lexicology, syntax, semantics, rhetoric, and pragmatics, breaking the walls and fences between any two of them, provided that a construction is more often than not a matter of a string of words for the making of a construction utilized for a syntactic slot, articulated in a certain manner (phoneticity, phonetically speaking), for the expression of a certain meaning (semanticity, semantically speaking), and the realization of (part of) a pragmatic goal (pragmaticity, pragmatically speaking). If the mainstream of construction grammar claims to

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1 He does not confess himself or his construction grammar works to be constructional pragmatics, though for this paper he explicates the pragmaticity in the title: "Pragmatic aspects of grammatical constructions." In spite of the title, this paper is not very pragmatic (Hou 2015b: 19).

link up phonetics, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, its actual analysis of constructions tends to be strong in syntax and semantics and weak in phonetics and pragmatics, let alone otherwise. LCP enjoys a huge inventory of research topics (at least forty-five, like construction and non-construction, construction system/network(s); see Hou 2015a: 249–251, 2015b: 19–20), and as needs vary, may have all of these aspects (phonetics, syntax, etc.) while focusing on any one of them that deserves foregrounding. For a rhetorical construction, for instance, LCP can be more pragma-rhetorical than phonetic, semantic, or syntactic, unless the construction exploits a figure of speech based on phonetic, semantic, or syntactic means (e.g. phonetic pun, polysemy pun, [syntactic] syllepsis, respectively).

LCP takes a holographic view of lexicon and construction, treating all elements in the linguistic inventory of a particular language like family sharing some properties so that they can be dealt with in the same approach (Hou 2015b: 17). The chief thrusts/points of LCP can be thus outlined (Hou 2015a):

1) All linguistic constituents, regardless of their rank or rung (e.g. phoneme, morpheme, word, phrase, construction, sentence) of actual use or occurrence, have a bearing on pragmatics (Hou 2015a: 122, 230–231, 233, 241);

2) All linguistic disciplines responsible for a particular rank of language have a bearing on pragmatics (Hou 2015a);

3) All expressions are realized as a configuration of cognitive, semantic, grammatical, rhetorical, and pragmatic considerations (Hou 2015a: 241–255);

4) A construction, regardless of form, length, intricacy, rhetoricality, etc., is the outcome of interaction of sound, form, meaning, and effect, or SFME grouping, rather than merely a matter of form-meaning or form-function pairing as thought of by traditional construction grammar (e.g. Goldberg 1995, 2006; Hou 2015a: 342);

5) Pragma-Priority Principle: From a top-down perspective, all logical forms are initially pragmatically motivated – serving the intention of the communicator(s) in a certain context, followed by the choice of meaning, forms, and rhetorical means (Hou 2015a: 255–261; also see Levelt 1989: 2–5);

6) Words and constructions can be discussed in light of some of the seven attributes and their seven corresponding prominent principles: expressibility vs. Principle of Expressibility, processibility vs. Clarity Principle, relevance vs. Relevance Principle, effortlessness vs. Principle of Least Effort, iconicity vs.

Iconicity Principle[2], felicity vs. Felicity Principle, effectiveness vs. Effectiveness Principle (Hou 2015a: 262–291);

7) Pragmatic Constraint/Coercion Hypothesis: This is composed of the "Pragma-constraint View" (pragma-constraint governing proper uses and idiomatic uses), and the "Pragma-coercion View" (pragma-coercion governing misuses, *ad hoc* uses, and clever uses, and the pragma-constraint and pragma-coercion lie in mutual dependency (Hou 2015a: 292–357);

8) All linguistic schools, e.g. the contending cognitive linguistics and generative grammar, can reconcile between and to some extent benefit from each other in theorizing and data analysis in the global framework or context of LCP (Hou 2015a: 357–387);

9) A construction (or construct), in theory at least, can find its parent or daughter construction/construct in the construction inventory as far as a language is concerned, so that a series of construct(ion)s fall in the same category and enjoy the property of one construction family of top-down inheritance, partly for cognitive economy (Hou 2015a: 387–408).

From the perspective of LCP, Hou (2015a: 418–502) analyzes some constructions, like *that* constructions, some rhetorical constructions, the "的时候" (*de shihou* 'when, at the time of') construction, reiterative personal deixis in a Buddhist scripture, the "某 V 某的 N" (*mou* V *mou de* N, sb. V sb.'s N) construction, translation matters, and so on. Huang and Hou (2015) use LCP to analyze involvement-modulation causative verbs. Hou and Feng (2017) attempt to analyze Chinese pragmatic GP from the perspective of LCP. In this research, by means of LCP, we mainly discuss two kinds of rhetorical construction in Chinese discourse, parody and GP, which are not as much studied as metaphor or metonymy.

3 Parody constructions in advertisements

Parody means "writing, music, art, or speech that intentionally copies the style of someone famous or copies a particular situation, making the features or qualities of the original more noticeable in a way that is humorous" (*Cambridge Dictionary* [online]), for example:

(1) 食话食说 (name of a Quanzhou restaurant)

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2 Iconicity Principle encompasses these three daughter principles: Quantity-Iconicity Principle, Sequencing-Iconicity Principle, Markedness-Iconicity Principle (Hou 2005a: 271–274).

T_1: to be frank; to be honest; let me tell you the truth
T_2: chat-over-table

(2) 出色**箱伴** (ad of Hendry luggage carrier)
T_1: It is good *to be accompanied by our luggage carrier*.
T_2: a wonderful trip with our luggage carrier

In (1), "食话食说" (*shi hua shi shuo*, meaning literally 'chat over the table' of T_2) is a parody of the Chinese four-character idiom "实话实说" (of the same sound, meaning T_1). In (2), "出色箱伴" (*chuse xiang ban*, meaning T_1 or T_2) parodies the set phrase "出色相伴" (of the same sound, meaning 'to have a wonderful companion'). As seen in (1–2), homophones are often exploited in the making of a parody in Chinese (and also English) discourse.

Parody has often been studied in China from a rhetorical perspective (Dai 2005; Luo et al. 2010), from a cognitive perspective (Huang 2007; Liu and Xie 2007), from a pragma-cognitive perspective (Niu and Xi 2009), from a cognitive and psychological perspective (Long 2008), or from a pragmatic perspective (Jiang 2014). In LCP, a well-formed parody, as a rhetorical construction, is possibly made of construction 1 (C_1) plus construction 2 (C_2), one of them as parodier parodying the punch term of construction 3 (C_3), part of the parodied (see Jiang 2014: 31). In other words, C_1 plus C_2 makes up the parody construction, which is similar to C_3, and either C_1 or C_2, but not both, copies part of C_3 for the parody effect.

The *sine qua non* for an unmarked "good" (well-formed, successful, *bona fide*) parody equates the following seven conditions[3]:

1) The parodist, humor-driven, looks for potentials or possibilities in a certain point of the text/discourse for parody humor.

2) The parodist chooses the right point in a construction to be parodied for the construction of a parody.

3) The parodist tries the most effortless or economical means of parodization, i.e. s/he repeats the right construction(s) and parodies the right construction (for convergence).

4) In cases of several parodying possibilities, the parodist opts for the parody that best meets the relevance expectation and achieves the relevant, retrievable parody effect.

5) The parodist ensures that, like the parodied, the parodier makes the entire parody construction effective on the prerequisite of grammaticality and meaningfulness.

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3 Also see Jiang's five pragmatic conditions (Jiang 2014: 32–33).

6) The parody construction agrees in attitudinal or affective meaning with the text/discourse where it occurs, so that there is no room for affection incongruity.

7) The parodist guarantees that the interpreter is capable of parsing the semanticity and the rhetoricality (markedness), based on the given textual/discoursal and contextual cues.

Suppose a parody construction is composed of three elements: C_1, C_2, plus C_3, then, in principle, the parodist can generate six different parodies, regardless of ±desirability (to achieve a desirable or undesirable effect):

1) $C_1'\ C_2\ C_3$ (C_1 being the parodier, hence the label '')

2) $C_1\ C_2'\ C_3$ (C_2 being the parodier)

3) $C_1\ C_2\ C_3'$ (C_3 being the parodier)

4) $C_1'\ C_2'\ C_3$ (two parodiers, i.e. C_1 and C_2)

5) $C_1'\ C_2\ C_3'$ (two parodiers, i.e. C_1 and C_3)

6) $C_1\ C_2'\ C_3'$ (two parodiers, i.e. C_2 and C_3)

With more constructions involved in the making of a parody construction, the above matrix, from 1) to 6), can likewise snowball into greater complexity, but as far as parody is concerned, one thing is certain: the more parodiers, the worse-formed the parody. According to Hou's (2015c) "CEVER Model for Parody," which is a model of convergence-economy, variation-effectiveness, and relevance, a well-formed parody is an economical convergence of the parody construction and the parodied, with the right extent of relevant and effective variation. Such being the case, it can be inferred that, other things being equal, 1)–3) above prevail in semanticity and rhetoricality as a parody over 4)–6) due to the number of parodiers in the same one parody construction. If 1)–3) in principle enjoy the same status as parody candidates in a particular point of a text/discourse, they are by no means equally acceptable as a parody, or equally optimal – usually only one looms prominent for optimal selection. And an average parodist knows, among the six candidates, which to opt for, motivated by parody humor, governed, so to speak, by the CEVER. A successful parodist, in the making of a parody, is ready to make use of one more trope, like syllepsis, hyperbole, pun, metaphor or the like, for a greater markedness of expressing the parody, with an *Aha*-effect of allusion or association discovery and recovery. Here are a couple of advertisement examples we recently encountered in China:

(3) 指爱你 (ad for a manicure shop)

T_1: I *only love* you.

T_2: Fingers/only [I] love you.

(4) 趁早下**"斑"**，请勿**"痘"**留 (ad for a cosmetic shop)

T₁: I want *to go off work* ASAP. Don't *stay here* please.

T₂: I don't want speckles (on my face). Nor [...] whelks/acne.

(5) 一**"臭"万年**，香飘千里 (ad for a fermented bean curd)

T₁: *It will stink for ten thousand years*, with fragrance spreading a thousand *li*.

T₂: In spite of the name, *the smelly bean curd's attraction* is felt a thousand miles away.

In (3), "指爱你" (*zhi ai ni*, meaning T₂) parodies the homophonic catchword "只爱你" (*zhi ai ni*, meaning T₁), with the pun effect of "指" (fingers), homophonic to "只" (only). In (4), "下'斑'" (*xia ban*, 'remove speckles') and "'痘'留" (*dou liu*, 'keep whelks') respectively parody the frequently used homophonic words "下班" (*xiaban*, 'go off work') and "逗留" (*douliu*, 'stay (on)'), since no one, least of all girls, would wish to keep "斑" (*ban*, meaning 'speckles') or "痘" (*dou*, meaning 'whelk/acne') on their face. In (5), the first part, i.e. "一'臭'万年" (*yi chou wan nian*), parodies the homophonic idiom "遗臭万年" (*yi chou wan nian*, 'a bad thing never dies'; 'go down in history as a symbol of infamy' (*Youdao* [Online] *Dictionary*)). Like durian, the fermented bean curd is some people's favorite specialty. Note that if the ad employs "臭名远扬" (*chou ming yuan yang*, synonymous with "遗臭万年" above), it can expect approximately the same effect (see T₂ above).

In light of LCP, these examples of ad parodies or parody ads are well-formed, for they satisfy the aforementioned seven conditions or *sine qua non* of parody well-formedness. And in each three-or-four-character phrase or longer phrase or clause, the parodist generally chooses one punch term or parodier for the making of a parody, and it is well placed, capable of triggering the homophonic parodied (source) construction. In (1), the ad maker chooses to repeat the parodier "食" for the prosody of the traditional four-character idiom effect ("实话实说" (*shi hua shi shuo*, 'to be frank') (cf. "话食说食," "话食食说," "食话说食," "说食食话" – reordered variants of (1)'s "食话食说"). In (2), every word is located in the right slot ("出色箱伴") so that it is exactly homophonic with the idiom "出色相伴" (meaning 'to have a wonderful companion') (cf. "出色伴箱," "箱伴出色" – reordered variants of (2)'s "出色箱伴"). In (3), the parodist omits the agent "我" (*wo*, meaning 'I'), implying that it is my fingers that I love (only) and that metonymically I love my hands and body (cf. "我指爱你," "爱你我指," "我指我爱" – reordered variants of (3)'s "指爱你"). In (4), the structural antithesis of the ad gives way to the two parodies, one in each part, which in itself sounds like an independent phrase (cf. "趁早去'斑,请勿留'痘'" – (4)'s synonymous variant). Finally, with four characters in each part, (5) has each word put in the right syntactic slot so that the entire parody construction bears the same pronunciation as the idiom "遗臭万年" (cf. "'臭'万年,""'臭'一万年,""一万

年'臭'" – all being its reordered or synonymous variants). With all these examples, the parodier and the parodied converge economically, relevantly, and effectively so that the interpreter can effortlessly (by the right effort, by no extra effort) gain the meaning and more notably the *Aha*-effect of the parody.

(6a) 哈密瓜运到河南，不出七日就能**从田间到舌尖**。(CCTV news/ad[4] about Hami melon, July 10, 2016)
T_1: The Hami melons, transported to Henan within seven days, *reach the consumers there*.
T_2: ... experience a tour from fields to mouths.

Talking about the melon, the news does not have to mention "田间" (*tianjian*, meaning 'fields') since the melons have been on their way for seven days, but for the effect of parody, the news-script writer makes one by putting "舌尖" (*shejian*, meaning 'tongue tip') alongside "田间," since the two disyllabic words share the same end sound *jian* (homophones). The compound preposition "从...到..." (from A to B) links up the two items, strengthening the parody effect. Compare:

(6b) ⋯⋯就能**到舌尖**。(... can arrive at the tips of the tongues)
(6c) ⋯⋯就能**享用了**。(... can be consumed/enjoyed)

(6b–c) are correct in terms of grammar and semanticity, but compared with (6a) they lack the interestingness characteristic of commodity promotion news or ads.

(7) 从**"榕"**出发，**"美"**好可期 (ad for Xiamen Airlines)
T_1: New Horizons with Xiamen Airlines
T_2: From Fuzhou (Banyan Town) to New York (heart of America), greatest expectations!

This is an advertisement for a Fuzhou–NY airline opening on February 15, 2017, its own translation being T_1. The ad carries further information about three-times-a-week flights (on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, and the exact take-off time from Fuzhou or New York). Fuzhou, capital of Fujian Province of China, has been growing banyan trees (榕树) since the Eastern Jin Dynasty (AD 317–420), enjoying perhaps the biggest number of banyans, hence the nickname of "Banyan Town." "从榕" (*cong rong*), metonymically referring to "从榕城" (*cong rong cheng*, 'from Banyan Town'), is apparently a parody of the homophonic Chinese set phrase "从容" (*congrong*, 'unhurriedly, leisurely, take your time'). Then as "美好" (*meihao*) means 'happy, glorious, fragrant', "美"

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4 It is not a commercial but acts as one.

(*mei*) in isolation within quotation marks is indication enough for this word to suggest, in addition to part of the phrasal meaning as mentioned above, that one can expect a pleasant voyage to and from USA, for "美," as far as a country is concerned, is the abbreviation of '美国' (*meiguo*, the United States). Thus, the two parodies are effective by homophonic puns as well as parodies *per se*.

It is interesting to note that though Fuzhou has other (nick)names, like "福州" (*Fuzhou*, meaning 'autonomous prefecture of eudaemonia'), "闽都" (*Mindu*, meaning 'capital of Fujian Province'), "闽中" (*Minzhong*, meaning 'mid-Fujian'), "三山" (*Sanshan*, meaning 'three hills'), "左海" (*Zuohai*, meaning 'left-hand sea'), "合沙" (*Hesha*, meaning 'sands closing up'), "东越" (*Dongyue*, meaning 'the state of Dong Yue King'), none of them fits the construction "从 A 到 B" qualifications and the PP or "prep. + N" parody mechanism. "从" plus a nickname character either is incapable of referring to Fuzhou proper, or fails on the score of parody effect, like "从福" (*cong fu*), "从左" (*cong zuo*), or "从东" (*cong dong*). In terms of saving the Chinese "from A to B" construction (if not the parody), "从福" is meaningless and weak, and "从左" means 'from the left', and "从东" means 'from the east' – all quite misleading. With all this taken into consideration, the first part of the advertisement is very successful as a parody pun or pun parody, better than the second part.

In addition to lexical or phrasal parody, there may be sentential parody, tone parody, textual/discoursal parody (e.g. poem parody) (Zhang 2006: 188–190), and even stylistic parody. One can, for instance, write in the style of Lu Xun (1881–1936), a Chinese short-story writer, or speak in the style of Yi Zhongtian, a professor and public speaker from Xiamen University. Sometimes it may be parody of several categories. Given the constructionality of an entire passage, for instance, only one part (construction) is parodier (cf. parodied), or only the style of saying becomes parodier where the parodied is supposed to be. In a passage telling about a hospital director talking to a computer repairer about the former's PC under repair, the repairer enumerates all the sophisticated items of repairing, which means a huge sum of money. His way of calculating and charging actually sardonically parodies that of the hospital (director) which/who makes a lot of money out of a small discomfort on the part of a patient. This case is a sentential, tone/tonic, textual, and stylistic parody all in one.

4 Garden path constructions in Chinese discourse

Garden path (GP) has seen tremendous research during the last four decades, from the perspective of (cognitive) psycholinguistics (Bever 1970; Frazier and Rayner 1982), syntax (Pritchett 1988; Frazier and Clifton 1998; Slattery et al. 2013), and pragmatics (Dynel 2009). Most of these traditional approaches (except perhaps Dynel) see GP constructions as "locally[5] and temporarily ambiguous sentences" (Hou and Feng 2017: 47), or sentences with local, temporary ambiguity, like (8):

> (8) 躺在床上没多久，他**想起来了**。
> T$_1$: He did not lie in bed so long before *wishing to get up*.
> T2: He did not lie in bed so long before *recalling the thing that had occurred*.

In (8), "想起来了" (*xiang qilai le*) is ambiguous in that "起来" (*qilai*, meaning 'get up') can be a VP *per se*, the object/goal of "想" (*xiang*, meaning 'to think of/want'), or "想起" (*xiangqi*, 'think of') is followed by "来" (*lai*, 'come') which serves as a VP supplement particle, as in the "*xiangqi* N *lai le*" construction. Not all ambiguities lead to GP, for GP is a rhetorical means that achieves an *Aha*-effect by ambiguity, be it local or global ambiguity, generated by speaker motivated by the humor consciousness or salience in his mind in a certain context, to be retrieved by hearer who, guided by the humor-relevance cues in the online context, can achieve the satisfaction of the *Aha*-effect in addition to the semanticity of the utterances. Thus, (8) is regarded as GP in the context set up by the first clause (namely, the context of lying or sleeping), which optimizes the parsing of the latter clause as T$_1$ (meaning 'before wishing to get up'), *iff* T$_2$ is the only correct interpretation that is intended and retrievable, on the condition that it presupposed the fact that he had been possibly remembering something forgotten. The following examples, loaded with ambiguity, may and may not be GP – it just depends upon the context and the intention of the speaker.

> (9) 我院每个教职员工都能加薪，**这是不可能的**。
> T$_1$: *It's impossible* for every one of our faculty to get promotion.
> T$_2$: Every one of our faculty will get promotion – *that's impossible*.

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5 According to Pritchett (1988), with "globally ambiguous sentences," "more than one local syntactic analysis proves well-formed" while with "strictly locally ambiguous sentences," "certain local structural assignments prove to be globally untenable" (Hou and Feng 2017: 47).

(10) 他**背着媳妇**做了不少事。
T_1: He, *with his wife on his back*, did a lot of work. (desirable)
T_2: He, *without his wife's knowledge*, did a lot. (undesirable)

(11) 他的**包袱**可不轻呀。
T_1: His cloth-wrappers/package/load are/is heavy.
T_2: His *responsibility* is big.

Example (9) is GP because the proposition of the first part is extinguished by the added-up "这是不可能的" (*zhe shi bu keneng de*, 'it's impossible'). Actually, at least in Chinese, any (declarative) sentence (given a falling intonation) of any length or complexity can be likewise negated. (10) can readily serve as GP because in many Chinese dialects (rather than Mandarin), "背着" (*bei zhe*) has no tone distinction, and given the possible contextual cues, though misleading, it can create a GP (effect) if the hearer is led to a second thought and the right interpretation – the right parsing is T_1 or T_2, but not both. (11) can be GP in a context that licenses the interpretation of T_1, for instance, he has for his travel luggage some heavy cloth-wrappers, but in the conversation his responsibility as a husband, father, worker, manager or the like seems to be relevant, or more so at second-thought. There is no GP where T_1 obviously defeats T_2 or vice versa.

A GP construction, in nature, is composed of construction 1 (C_1) playing the role of "lead-in" for the garden path or erroneous first-thought, followed by construction 2 (C_2), a "follow-up," i.e. more supporting words, and finishing with construction 3 (C_3), which functions as a "switch" or "GP-trigger" by its incongruity-making, turning-point potentiality, as illustrated by Diagram 1 (Hou and Feng 2017: 51):
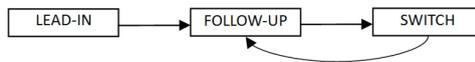

LEAD-IN → FOLLOW-UP → SWITCH

Diagram 1: The Making of GPP

According to this diagram, (8) can be reanalyzed as:
C_1 = "躺在床上没多久" (He did not lie in bed so long)
C_2 = "他想起来/起床了" (before wishing to get up)
C_3 = "他想起什么事来" (before recalling the thing that had occurred) (triggered and retrievable in the context)

With example (8), in default contexts where *qilai* as a phrasal verb needs a stress, C_2 gets the floor of prior/initial inferencing, esp. when following a *tang* (lie) phrase. In other contexts, however, for example when something important

has to be recalled or retrieved, *qi* and *lai* as (post-) verb particles should be unstressed. The default inferencing priority (C_2) giving way to a different parsing (C_3) causes the birth of a GP – actually regardless of *qilai* being stressed or unstressed. This case is one of the pragmatic GP phenomena, one of pragmatic ambiguity.

Dynel's (2009) study of GP is featured by her generalization of GP ambiguity or ambiguity GP such that her GP "goes beyond local ambiguity" to reach "pragmatic ambiguity." GP occurs with strong deviation from or flouting of "default/salient meaning" (pp. 23, 145–154, 244–272), and such a GP can be implicature or presupposition GP (Hou and Feng 2017: 51). Hou and Feng further generalized GP, encompassing more pragmatic factors, discovering more pragmatic GPs, and according to them (p51), the *sine qua non* for a "good" (well-formed, successful, *bona fide*) GP, as far as Chinese is concerned at least, should contain six elements:

1) grammaticality (it must be well-formed, constructionally appropriate),

2) constructionality (it must have the three components: lead-in, follow-up, and switch),

3) semanticity (it must be semantically/pragmatically meaningful),

4) ambiguity (it must carry a covert ambiguity),

5) intentionality (it must be intended ambiguity and intended humor), and therefore,

6) functionality (it must (be meant to) fulfill a humor/*Aha*-effect).

(12) 甲：一个离过五十次婚的女人，应该怎么形容她？
乙：前公尽弃。
T_1: A: How do we describe a woman divorced fifty times?
B: She wasted all her previous efforts (passed by the board).
T_2: A: How do we describe a woman divorced fifty times?
B: She abandoned all her ex-husbands.

In (12) speaker A looks for a conundrum (brain teaser/twister) in B's reply, which is a homophone and parody of the idiom "前功尽弃" (*qian gong jin qi*, 'all one's previous efforts wasted'), exploiting the fact that "公" (*gong*, meaning 'male, husband') is identical in sound to "功" (*gong*, 'effort, achievement'). To ensure the production of an idiom or idiom-like phrase for the response, speaker A may indicate the necessity of answering by a four-character phrase/idiom. And s/he may even demand a conundrum. Now that conundrums are very often used for humor in daily or non-institutionalized conversations, even questioning without conundrum-indication is likely to result in the pun-GP effect on the grounds that the hearer/answerer is likely to come to a solution other than the expected. If in (12) speaker A expects an ordinary description to

the effect that the woman was marrying once a year, B's "前功尽弃" (*qian gong jin qi*) would strike A's ear as a pun-GP. Such being the case, there can occur interaction between speaker and hearer for a GP to appear. GP can also be encountered in advertisements, like (13):

(13) 任劳任怨，**只要还有一口气**。(ad for a tire)
T$_1$: I will work for you *if I can breathe*.
T$_2$: I will bear the burden of hard work, *if there is air inside*.

The idiom "任劳任怨" (*ren lao ren yuan*) is inevitably said of a man that is hard-working, and metaphorically of such a farming animal. The clause "只要还有一口气" (*zhiyao hai you yi kou qi*) reinforces this human description, only to be canceled by a car's moving tire(s) on TV. The audience, on second-thought, parses (13) as a personification metaphor, treating the tire advertised as a trustable servant or friend.

5 Mini-questionnaire and discussion

Now that the study of all Chinese texts or all Chinese constructions by LCP is an impossible job, we take parody and GP as used in Chinese discourse as two cases of rhetorical constructions. With the above discussion, it is intriguing to explore questions like: Does an average Chinese speaker use parody and GP when possible? Or in cases of parody or GP uses, can s/he distinguish between the least and the most humorous? In other words, does a man in the street make use of rhetorical constructions where possible? If so, how? For this we conducted a mini-questionnaire in Chinese that takes 7–10 minutes, with two cases, the former dealing with parody and the latter with GP, each asking the subject to tell which of the five items is the least humorous, and which the most humorous. We had 1,500 subjects in all for the questionnaire, including 1,400 of and above BA and 100 below. The gist of the questionnaire is presented below, now bilingually:

Case 1:
假如讨论一场电影：某人租了一匹马，按路程计费，如一公里两块钱，到几十公里以外的地方办一件紧急的事，你会如何对家里人描述？请从下面的五个选项中，分别以打钩和打叉方式选择最幽默和最不幽默的表达式。请按最不幽默到最幽默重新排序。
(Suppose you are discussing a film with your family. In the movie, a man hired a horse and he was charged by the kilometers/distance the horse ran. Please tick off the most

humorous and cross out the least humorous you would choose for description to your family. Reorder all the items from the least to the most humorous.)[6]

(14)
a. 他租了一匹马，按路程计费，如一公里两块钱。
T: He hired a horse, charged by distance, e.g., two dollars a kilometer.

b. 那时没有计程车，他只好租了一匹马，按路程计费，如一公里两块钱，这匹马就像计程车一样。
T: At that time there was no taxi. All he could do was hire a horse, to be charged by distance, e.g., two dollars a kilometer. Then this horse was like a taxi.

c. 那时没有计程车，他只好租了一匹马，恰巧是按路程计费，如一公里两块钱。
T: At that time there was no taxi. All he could do was hire a horse, only to be charged by distance, e.g., two dollars a kilometer.

d. 那时没有计程车，他只好租了一匹计程马。
T: At that time there was no taxi. All he could do was hire a Taxi-horse.

e. 那时没有计程车，他只好租了一匹马，按路程计费，如一公里两块钱，这匹马就是计程车。
T: At that time there was no taxi. All he could do was hire a horse, to be charged by distance, e.g., two dollars a kilometer. This horse was his taxi.

Case 2:
假如你下午去汗蒸了，晚上用微信或 QQ 留言告诉几个友人，请从下面的五个选项中，分别以打钩和打叉方式选择最幽默和最不幽默的表达式。请按最不幽默到最幽默重新排序。(Suppose you went to a sauna room in the afternoon and later, in the evening you tell friends by WeChat or QQ what you did and felt using one of the following items. Tick off the most humorous item and cross out the least humorous one. Reorder all the items from the least to the most humorous.)

(15)
a. 今天下午我过着水深火热的生活。（*待对方问"怎么啦？"*）汗蒸了。
T: What an afternoon! So hot! I was almost a baked potato! (*after the hearer asked, "What happened?"*) I went to the sauna room.

b. 今天下午我汗蒸了。（同上）里面好热呀！
T: This afternoon I went to the sauna room. (ditto) It was so hot inside!

c. 今天下午我差点热死了。（同上）汗蒸了。
T: This afternoon it was so scorchingly hot! (ditto) I went to the sauna room.

d. 今天下午我过着水深火热的生活，差点没热死。（同上）汗蒸了。

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6 The translation of the two question directions is our addition for the readers of this study.

T: What an afternoon! So hot! I was almost a baked potato! Almost burned to ashes. (ditto) I went to the sauna room.

e. 今天下午好热呀！（同上）汗蒸了。
T: What an afternoon! So hot! (ditto) I went to the sauna room.

1,500 people were involved in the questionnaire, but due to invalidity of some answers, there were 1,410 subjects whose questionnaires were valid: 1,326 BA, MA, and PhD students (from various universities in China), and 84 middle school students (64 from Luzhou, Sichuan, China and 20 (Chinese-American students) from California, USA). Among the former group, we had 751 subjects from Huaqiao University (671 English and non-English majors and 80 overseas Chinese or foreign students), and 575 from other universities: 65 from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, 29 from Liming Technical College, 89 from Quanzhou Teacher's College, 82 from Minnan Normal University, 16 from Zhejiang Wanli College, 34 from Zhejiang Yuexiu Foreign Language College, 110 from Yunnan College of Business Management, and 150 from Gannan Medical University. We do not see much difference between the various groups of subjects (in terms of age, level, or area), so for the sake of economy, we put the overall valid data and their percentage into the following table, illustrated by one figure for each case.

Table 1: Questionnaire results (1,410 subjects)

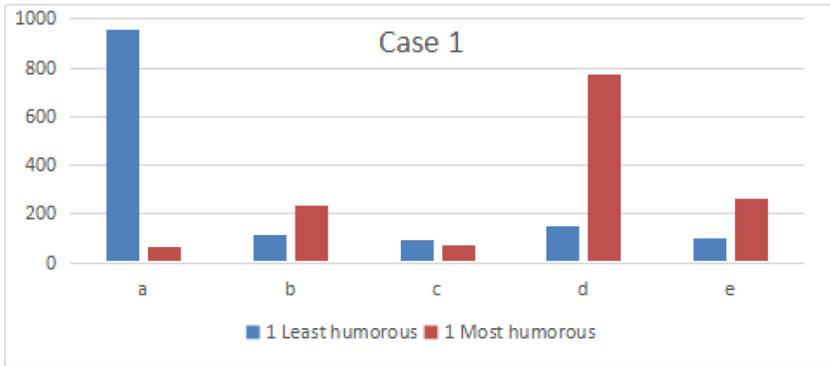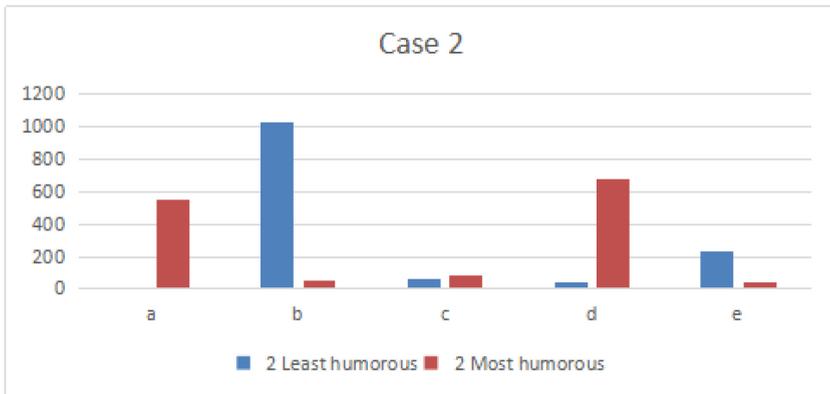| Cases	Questions	a	b	c	d	e
1	Least humorous	954 (67.7%)	112 (8%)	92 (6.5%)	149 (10.5%)	103 (7.3%)
	Most humorous	67 (4.8%)	235 (16.7%)	71 (5%)	774 (54.9%)	263 (18.6%)
2	Least humorous	44 (3.1%)	1025 (72.7%)	65 (4.6%)	44 (3.1%)	232 (16.5)
	Most humorous	554 (39.3%)	51 (3.6%)	81 (5.7%)	678 (48.1%)	46 (3.3%)

Figure 1: Degrees of humor for case 1

Figure 2: Degrees of humor for case 2

As we see it, (14) is a matter of using parody or not, and the five options should be ordered thus on the humor scale from the least to the most humorous: a, c, b, e, d. That is to say, (14a) is the least humorous for shortage of parody or any other trope, and (14d) is the most humorous for the parody and metaphor and its succinctness. (14e) is also humorous (for its metaphor) but less effective for its redundancy. The result of the questionnaire (for Case 1) agrees with our hypothesis, for 67.7% of the participants take (14a) as the least humorous, and 54.9% regard (14d) as the most humorous.

In Case 2, (15b) is far from humorous since it just narrates the happening *per se*. An interesting speaker, or one that tends to be so, possibly elicits GP humor by using any of the other items, (15e, c, a, d), which are successively more

humorous. While (15e) is humorous for its GP, (15c) is more so by its overstatement, and then (15a) is even more humorous via a metaphorical idiom "水深火热" (*shui shen huo re*, literally 'in deep fiery water,' figuratively 'undergoing an abyss of suffering'; cf. our translation: 'I was almost a baked potato!'). Rhetorical figures and idiomatic sayings often lend humor to Chinese discourse. And greater humor is engendered out of a cooperation of tropes and idioms, as in (15d). The result of the questionnaire shows that most subjects (72.7%) consider (15b) to be the least humorous, and (15d – 48.1%) or (15a – 39.3%) to be the most humorous, agreeing with our own stance.

What is most interesting about this questionnaire is that we did not tell by any means that the two cases have a parody or garden path or have to do with rhetoric and that, nevertheless, most of the subjects seem to share the same humor intuition with regard to parody and GP in Chinese discourse. It indicates humor competence on the part of the common Chinese (around the level of BA) as far as parody and GP are concerned: either their potential for cognition of the pragma-rhetorical values of parody and GP sayings, or that for generation of such utterances. These findings align with our earlier LCP claims and merits, disclosing not merely how the rhetorical constructions outwit the less rhetorical or grammatical constructions *iff* available and accessible in the repertoire of the average Chinese speakers, but also how rhetorical constructions can be analyzed in light of LCP (and thus how differently from other approaches including construction grammar, the closest neighbor of LCP).

6 Conclusion

In this study, we offer an account of LCP as a new approach to Chinese discourse or construction analysis. And in light of LCP, we choose parody and GP for constructional analysis. If, as can be assumed, traditional approaches, like lexicology, syntax, semantics, construction grammar, pragmatics, and rhetoric, are each responsible for one rank or facet of language, LCP attempts to build up an interface or integrated approach, putting language phenomena on the scales of sounds and forms and meanings, and more emphatically discovering their effects or effectiveness as are retrievable in a certain text and context. Namely, LCP highlights the pragmaticity and rhetoricality in its linguistic analysis. By detailed analyses of parody and GP in Chinese discourse, supplemented by a mini-questionnaire, we suggest that, among other things, LCP can offer us a feasible interpretation of such tropes as parody and garden

path, and that LCP can lend impetus to, or open up a new outlet for studies of other tropes and commonplace sayings and constructions.

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