

Salience of Nonverbal Communication in Mandarin Chinese Interactions

Ping Yang

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

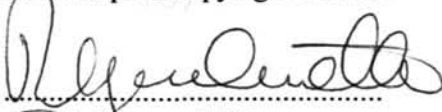
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Dedicated to Xin Chen and Shuo Yang



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	IX
ABSTRACT.....	XI
TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS.....	XII

List of Figures:

Figure 2-1: Network of Nonverbal Behaviour.....	14
Figure 2-2: Systems and Subsystems of Nonverbal Communication.....	15
Figure 2-3: Mandarin Chinese Nonverbal Interaction.....	17
Figure 3-1: From Verbal/Nonverbal Behaviour to Verbal/Nonverbal Communication	58
Figure 3-2: Sequence of Organization and Context Management.....	60
Figure 3-3: Forms of Common to Institutional and Mundane Conversation.....	61
Figure 3-4: Two Interactional Categories in Mundane Talk.....	62
Figure 3-5: Two Interactional Categories in Institutional Talk.....	63
Figure 3-6: Social Psychological and CA Approaches to Interpersonal Communication.....	65
Figure 3-7: Time Intervals between Nonverbal Actions.....	80
Figure 3-8: Components of Vocal Behaviour.....	82
Figure 4-1: Features of Chinese <i>Zhù Shì</i> “Gaze”.....	100
Figure 4-2: Positive and Negative Emotions of Different Types of <i>Xiào</i> “Smile”.....	105
Figure 4-3: Types of Mandarin <i>Dòngzuò</i> “Gestures”.....	106
Figure 6-1: Social Network of Mandarin Chinese Interpersonal Relationships.....	177
Figure 6-2: Sequence of <i>Wēixiào</i> “Gentle Smile” in Interaction.....	200
Figure 7-1: Features of Chinese <i>Liǎn</i> and <i>Miǎnzi</i>	216
Figure 9-1: Directness of Speech Acts and <i>Miǎnzi</i> -Saving in Mandarin Context.....	302

List of Tables:

Table 2-1: Functions of Nonverbal Communication.....	19
Table 3-1: Composition of Taped Participants.....	75
Table 3-2: Category of Participants’ Age, Gender and Status (CNU).....	76
Table 3-3: Category of Participants’ Age and Gender (GSUSTC).....	77
Table 3-4: Information about Participants’ Status (GSUSTC).....	77
Table 3-5: Category of Participants’ Age and Gender (BUAA).....	77
Table 3-6: Information about Participants’ Status (BUAA).....	77
Table 4-1: Different Styles of <i>Xiào</i> “Smile” and Their Implications in Chinese.....	104
Table 6-1: Communicative Functions of Eye Behaviours.....	179
Table 8-1: The Use of <i>Nǐ</i> and <i>Nín</i> in Chinese Context.....	272
Table 9-1: Features of High- and Low-Context Culture.....	300
Table 9-2: Function and Meaning of Mandarin Chinese Nonverbal Actions.....	309

Chapter 1. Introductory Remarks

1.1. Introduction.....1

1.2. Why Study Mandarin Chinese Nonverbal Communication?.....2

1.3. Analytical Approach: Etic or Emic.....3

1.4. The Research Scope.....4

1.5. Significance of the Research.....6

1.6. Thesis Plan and Structure.....10

Chapter 2. A Review of Nonverbal Communication Research

2.1. Introduction.....12

2.2. Definition of Nonverbal Communication.....12

2.3. Nonverbal Communication & Verbal Communication.....18

2.4. Issues in Nonverbal Communication Studies.....20

2.4.1. Smiling:Innate or Learned?.....21

2.4.2. Smiling as a Mask 22

2.5. Nonverbal Studies in Intercultural Communication.....24

2.5.1. Nonverbal Similarities 26

2.5.2. Nonverbal Differences 28

2.6. Analysis of Nonverbal Actions in Social Interaction Research.....32

2.6.1. Gaze 35

2.6.2. Gestures..... 37

2.6.3. Gender-related Nonverbal Behaviour..... 41

2.6.4. Interpersonal Affiliation..... 43

2.7. Nonverbal Studies on Mandarin Chinese Communication.....44

2.7.1. Comparative Studies..... 45

2.7.2. Joint Projects on Chinese NVC..... 45

2.7.3. Gestures from the Chinese Point of View 47

2.7.4. NVC Research by Chinese in Education Context 52

2.8. Summary.....54

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction.....55

3.2. Conversation Analysis.....57

3.2.1. Everyday Talk-in-Interaction 59

3.2.1.1. Mundane Talk.....61

3.2.1.2. Institutional Talk.....63

3.2.2. Empirical vs. Intuitive 64

3.2.3. Preference Phenomena in Talk..... 67

3.2.4. Conversation Studies in the Chinese Context..... 69

3.2.4.1. Overlapping/Interrupting in Talk.....70

3.2.4.2. Word Order: Repairing or Emphatic.....71

3.2.4.3. Telephone Conversation.....72

3.2.4.4. Conversing and Strengthening Interpersonal Relationship.....72

3.3. Data Selection and Collection.....74

3.3.1. Participants..... 74

3.3.2. Procedure 77

3.3.3. Recording Equipment..... 78

3.3.4. Audio and Video Data Analysis 79

3.4. CA Transcription.....80

3.4.1. Notational Systems..... 83

3.4.2. Transcription Issues..... 89

3.5. Summary.....96

Chapter 4. Typology & Functions of Mandarin NVC

4.1. Introduction.....98

4.2. Categories of NVC Cues.....98

4.2.1. Zhùshì “Gaze” 99

4.2.2. Biǎoqíng “Facial Expressions”..... 103

4.2.3. Dòngzuò “Gestures” 106

4.2.4. Shǒuchù “Touch” 109

4.2.5. Zītài “Posture” vs Zīshì “Pose” 110

4.2.6. Nonverbal Complexes 112

4.3. Functions of Nonverbal Actions.....115

4.3.1. Emblems..... 117

4.3.2. Illustrators 125

4.3.3. Regulators 132

4.3.4. Adaptors..... 137

4.3.5. Emotional Expressions 141

4.4. Summary.....145

Chapter 5. Nonverbal Aspects of Turn Taking

5.1. Introduction.....146

5.2. The Turn-Taking System.....147

5.3. Nonverbal Turn.....148

5.4.	Nonverbal Turn Taking.....	152
5.4.1.	Turn Yielding	152
5.4.2.	Turn Up-taking	155
5.4.3.	Turn Maintaining.....	161
5.5.	Summary.....	170

Chapter 6. Affiliation and NVC

6.1.	Introduction.....	172
6.2.	Network of Interpersonal Relationships.....	176
6.3.	<i>Zhùshì</i> “Gaze”	178
6.3.1.	Interactive Attentiveness	180
6.3.2.	Mutual Monitoring	184
6.3.3.	Regulating Interaction	187
6.4.	<i>Tóushì</i> “Head Gesture”.....	189
6.4.1.	Acknowledging	190
6.4.2.	Affirming.....	193
6.4.3.	Agreeing	195
6.5.	<i>Wēixiào</i> “Gentle Smile”.....	197
6.5.1.	<i>Xiétiao</i> “Coordination”	197
6.5.2.	<i>Tōnggǎn</i> “Empathy”	201
6.6.	<i>Shǒuchù</i> “Hand Touch”.....	204
6.6.1.	Self Touch	204
6.6.2.	Other Touch.....	206
6.6.3.	Mutual Touch	208
6.7.	Summary.....	210

Chapter 7. Nonverbal *Miànzi* and *Lǐmào* Strategies

7.1. Introduction.....212

7.2. Chinese *Liǎn* and *Miànzi*.....213

7.2.1. *Liǎn*.....214

7.2.2. *Miànzi* 214

7.3. Chinese *Lǐ* and *Lǐmào*.....219

7.3.1. *Lǐ*.....219

7.3.2. *Lǐmào*.....221

7.4. Culture Specific Aspects of Chinese *Miànzi* and *Lǐmào*.....223

7.5. Self-*miànzi*, Other-*miànzi* and *Lǐmào*.....228

7.6. Nonverbal Disinvolvement.....230

7.6.1. *Biānshì* “Gaze-away” as MSAs.....230

7.6.2. *Xiàshì* “Gaze-down” as MSAs.....234

7.7. *Wēixiào* “Gentle Smiling” and *Miànzi*-saving Acts238

7.7.1. *Wēixiào* “Gentle Smiling” as SMSAs... 239

7.7.2. *Wēixiào* “Gentle Smiling” as Other-*miànzi* Design.240

7.8. Interruption Avoidance.....245

7.9. Hand Gestures.....249

7.10. Indirect Requesting Hint as *Miànzi*-threatening Avoidance Acts.....255

7.11. Summary.....264

Chapter 8. Cultural Aspects of Nonverbal Asymmetries

8.1. Introduction.....266

8.2. Status.....267

8.2.1. High Status and Low Status 269

8.2.2. Transactional and Interactional Goals 279

8.3. Power Distance.....280

8.4. Different Status, Different Cues.....281

8.5. Nonverbal Asymmetry.....288

8.6. Verbal and Nonverbal Dominance.....288

8.6.1. Sequential Dominance 289

8.6.2. Participatory Dominance..... 291

8.6.3. Quantitative Dominance..... 294

8.7. Summary.....295

Chapter 9. Culture and Nonverbal Communication

9.1. Introduction.....297

9.2. Mandarin Style of Interaction.....298

9.3. Chinese *Hánxù* in Its High Context Culture.....300

9.4. Chinese Self and Other.....303

9.5. Hierachy: Social Status and Interersonal Relationship.....306

9.6. Nonverbal Actions, Language and Culture.....308

9.7. Directions for Future Studies.....312

Appendix: Picture 1.....315

Appendix: Picture 2.....316

Appendix: Picture 3.....317

Appendix: Picture 4.....318

Appendix: Picture 5.....319

Appendix: Pictures 6-9.....320

Appendix: Picture 10.....321

Appendix: Picture 11.....322

Appendix: Picture 12.....323

Appendix: Picture 13.....324

References.....325

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ABSTRACT

This project studies the nonverbal aspects of Mandarin Chinese interaction with focus on the communicative and pragmatic functions of nonverbal actions used in interaction. Their functions are examined through an emic approach of analysis, drawing on theories and findings from nonverbal communication (NVC) and conversation analysis (CA), pragmatics and social psychology.

Natural occurring audio-video data were collected from eighteen adult dyads who were studying and working at three universities in Beijing, P. R. China and one dyad studying at Macquarie University in Sydney. A typology of Mandarin Chinese NVC is proposed and nonverbal actions are examined with reference to the cultural context in which they are executed. Mandarin words and phrases relevant to those nonverbal actions are used to retain their cultural meanings. Some of them are *diǎntóu* “head nods”, *wēixiào* “gentle smile”, *zhùshì* “gaze”, *shǒuchù* “touching”, *shǒushì* “hand gesture”. Their nonverbal forms and functions in Mandarin context are also discussed with reference to established categorization of emblems, illustrators, regulators, adaptors and emotional expressions. Nonverbal actions *zhùshì* “gaze”, *diǎntóu* “head nod”, *wēixiào* “gentle smile” and *shǒuchù* “hand touch” can be used as nonverbal affiliative devices. Gaze-away/down, *wēixiào* “gentle smiling” and some *shǒushì* “hand gestures” are executed for the purpose of nonverbal *miànzi* “face” including self-face saving and *Other*-face saving strategies and *lǐmào* “politeness” in interpersonal communication. Finally, participants’ status can also impose impact on the nonverbal cues displayed. Low-status use more forward lean, *zhùshì* “gaze”, and *diǎntóu* “head nod” due to listening-centeredness while high-status employ more spacious hand gestures and backward lean while speaking. Studies of natural audio-video data indicate that nonverbal cues displayed in Mandarin Chinese conversational context conform to the Chinese cultural values and norms.

The knowledge and understanding of the nonverbal cues displayed in Mandarin Chinese conversation and their communicative and pragmatic functions dealt with in this thesis are essential to those engaged in communication with Chinese speakers.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Some of transcription conventions are selected from Atkinson & Heritage (1984) and they are exemplified with conversation fragments from my database.

I. Overlapping Utterances

The single left-hand bracket like [indicates the start of overlapping utterances and the single right-hand bracket] indicates the end of overlapping utterances.

Ex-1:

→ 1. *Wáng*:=*Guāng ràng wǒ xué shùxué de huà, qítā shēnmō* [*dōu bù xué*
only let me learn math speech others what all NEG learn
“If I were to learn math only without any other subjects,”

→ 2. *Qiáo*: [*Shì: ma?*
be Q
“Really?”

The bracket like [] indicates the start and end of overlapping.

Ex-2:

→ 1. *Qiáo*: *Nà* (0.1) *nà nǐ kāishǐ de shíhóu, [nǐ bà]* (0.2) *duì nǐ shī jiā*=
That that you beginning time your dad on you impose
“At the beginning, you dad influenced you.”

2. = *yǐngxiǎng*
influence

→ 3. *Wáng*: [*wǒ bà*]
my dad
“My dad”

II. Continuous Utterances

= It indicates that no interval exists between adjacent utterances, with the latter being latched immediately to the former.

Ex-3:

→ 6. M: *Tāmen chī de guì, ěrqiě hái bú hǎo. wǒ gēn*=
they eat DE expensive and additionally NEG good. 1-sg and
“They spent more on food, but they still didn’t eat well. I and...”

→ 7. W: =*Tā gēn nǐmén hái bú zài yìqǐ?*
 he and you EMP NEG in together
 “You didn’t stay in the same type of accommodation as he, did you?”

The equal signs are also used to link different parts of the same speaker’s continuous flow of speech that has been carried over to another line.

Ex-4:

→ 4. M: *Wǒmén bú suàn guì. Rénjiā* (0.2) *nà ge Yuán lǎoshī tāmen*=
 we NEG consider expensive. Others that: CL Yuan teacher they
 “We did not spend much. People like Mr *Yuán* spent more.”

→ 5. M: =*guì.*
 expensive

III. Intervals Within and Between Utterances

Intervals are timed in tenths of a second and put in parentheses, either within an utterance or between utterances. Pauses and gaps are distinguished by Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974:715).

Intervals within an utterance are called pauses.

Ex-5:

→1. *Wáng: Shùxué: yā::?* (0.1) *wó juéde xué shùxué tǐng: hǎo de.*
 math interj I feel learn math very good PT
 “I feel it good to learn math.”

Intervals between utterances by different participants are called gaps.

Ex-6:

1. *Zhōu: Wǒ yòu méi:yǒu jīngjī láiyuán:: zhè g... er...*
 I EMP not-have financial income this CL er...
 “I don’t have any source of income, this...er...”

→2. (0.2)

3. *Zhāng: °Nǐ yòu bú zhèng° qián:::*
 you EMP NEG earn money.
 “You don’t earn any money.”

IV. Characteristics of Speech Delivery

- < > It is indicated by being enclosed between this symbol, when part of an utterance is delivered at a pace slower than the surrounding talk.
- > < It is indicated by being enclosed between this symbol, when part of an utterance is delivered at a pace faster than the surrounding talk.
- ° ° indicating utterance within the a degree sign is said quieter than the surrounding talk (see Line 3 in Ex-6).

Capitalised letters are used to indicate an utterance that is spoken much louder than the surrounding talk.




Underlined Chinese *pīnyīn* (see Line 2 in Ex-1 and Line 1 in Ex-6) indicates speech delivered with stress or emphasis.

V. Nonverbal Symbols

1. *Zhùshì* “Gaze”

A line above the utterance indicates that the prior speaker marked is directing *zhùshì* “gaze” toward the recipient. The absence of a line indicates lack of *zhùshì* “gaze”. Dots mark *zhùshì* “gaze” transition during talk-in-interaction. Dots before the line mark the transition movement from *bú zhùshì* “non-gaze” to *zhùshì* “gaze” and those immediately after the line mark the transition movement from gaze to non-gaze. The point where gaze reaches the other is marked with an “x”. A line below the utterance indicates that the recipient marked is gazing toward the prior speaker. They are all in the shaded areas.

Ex-7:

- 1a. *Wáng*: 
1. *Wáng*: *Yī xué huàxué wùlǐ, jiù bù xíng le.* (1.0)
Once learn chemistry physics, then NEG O.K. ASP
“Whenever I lay my fingers on chemistry or physics,”
I just can’t do it well.”
- 1b. *Qiáo*: 
- 2a. 
2. *Wáng*: *Huàxué xué de tài cì le.*
chemistry learn PT too poor ASP.
“I’m too poor at chemistry.”

2. Other Nonverbal Symbols Used

- This left-hand margin of the transcript is used to point to a feature of interest to the analyst at the time the fragment is introduced in the text.
- η jerking one's head for negative meaning.
- ↕ nodding one's head for agreement.
- ⇔ shaking one's head for disagreement.
- ⇔⇔ shaking one's head for uncertainty.
- ⊗ waving one's finger of right hand for no.
- ☺ smiling.
- ☺ laughing
- ® rubbing his/her nose.
- © touching his/her glasses.
- ℞ laughing with one's right hand over the mouth.
- ℞ laughing with one's left hand over the mouth.
- ☒ laughing with one's two hands over the mouth.
- ▲ raising one's head
- ▼ gazing down
- ↖ leaning backward
- ↘ leaning forward
- ☞ pointing with his/her right index finger.

3. Abbreviations Used

Main abbreviations used in the discussion are as follows:

NVC: Nonverbal communication

VC: Verbal communication

NVAs: Nonverbal actions

VAs: Verbal actions

NVB: Nonverbal behaviour

VB: Verbal behaviour

TUC: Turn construction unit

PNTS: Potential next-turn speaker

TRP: Transition relevant place

DIU: Designed incomplete utterance

SUR: Surname

Other abbreviations are used in transcription conventions, which follow those that were used by Li & Thompson (1981), because they provide some symbols applicable to the some auxiliary and category words in Chinese. Part of them can also be found in use by P. Chen (1996) like:

ASP:	aspect particle
BA:	a proposed object marker
CL:	classifiers or measure words
CSC:	complex stative construction
EXP:	experiential aspect
PFV:	perfective aspect
Q:	question
POS:	possessive case
PT:	particle
PRE-M:	pre-modifier
PRE-C:	present continuous aspect
EMP:	often used with negative form for emphasis.
CON:	often used at the end of a declarative sentence to indicate the continuation of an action or a state.
SUG:	a suggestion, a request or a mild command.

4. Tones for Chinese *Pīnyīn*

Simplified Chinese characters are used as a written form (e.g. newspapers) of communication in mainland China. In this thesis, I use Chinese *pīnyīn* in italics to represent the pronunciation of the characters. As many characters share the same sound, the use of tone (pitch) is used to identify the difference in meaning of the same sound. There are basically four tones in Chinese and when *pīnyīn* is used the tones are marked with, for example, *ā* (1st tone/high level pitch), *á* (2nd tone/rise in pitch), *ǎ* (3rd tone/low dipping pitch) and *à* (4th tone/abrupt falling in pitch). Besides, neutral tone or unstressed sounds (*qīngshēng*) is used for some function words and particles. The vowel does not carry any tone with it (see Line 2 in Ex-7).