

Full Length Research Paper

Looking at Chinese parent-teenager conflict talks from the perspective of the rapport management theory

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As a common but complex linguistic phenomenon, conflict talks (CTs) frequently occur in daily communications. This study aims to carry out analyses of parent-teenager CTs in two Chinese TV series *A Love for Separation* and *Home with Kids* to reveal the three steps of CTs. From the perspective of the rapport management theory, this study mainly centers on probing into the causes as well as the influence on harmonious interpersonal relations, and then tries to provide some measures to reduce parent-child CTs, to improve the ability of using language to build a harmonious family interrelationship. The major finding of the study lies in that when Chinese parents threaten their children's face or limit their sociality rights, CTs would probably occur, and when they oversight or even attempt to challenge the rapport, CTs would be even escalated.

Key words: *A Love for Separation*, conflict talks, *Home with Kids*, parent-teenager, rapport management theory.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient China, people attached great importance to their families and to filial piety. Thus, parents had absolute power in traditional families. Gradually, however, with the development of this society, the emergence of nuclear family has changed the original family patterns. With the 30-year implementation of China's family control policy, its population structure has become an upside-down triangle, with the aged on the top. The two generations cherish their children with whole-hearted "love", which has a taste of overreaching with the arbitrary imposition. The over-nurtured love from their grandparents as well as parents surrounds the children every minute every hour every day. As a result, parents

and teenagers are in a state of lord-servant relationship. The powerrelationship shifts from the grandparents or parents-centered tradition to the children-centered trend, which has become a striking contrast in the society and has resulted in a number of inevitable conflict talks (hereafter CTs), constant disputes, broken affections, children's psychological problems as well as unusual behaviors.

The present study is based on some episodes of CTs collected from two Chinese TVseries:*A Love for Separation*, and *Home with Kids*. And the data is initially analyzed from the linguistic patterns and characteristics of CTs. Then from the perspective of the rapport

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management theory, the causes and the influence on harmonious interpersonal relations are focused upon. Eventually some measures to reduce parent-teenager CTs are suggested to release the tension between them. It is hoped that this research would be a starting point that leads to building a harmonious parent-teenager relationship.

Earlier studies of CTs

CTs are a very common social behavior. There are a lot of different terms to delineate CTs, such as adversative episode (Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981), oppositional argument (Schiffrin, 1985), disputes and disputing (Brenneis, 1988), dialogical asymmetry (Knoblauch, 1991), quarrel (Antaki, 1994) and so on.

Taking foreign researches since the end of 1970s as an example, this paper finds that Brenneis and Lein (1977) and Boggs (1978) started to pay attention to the structure of children's debate or dispute. Subsequently, more and more scholars expanded and deepened the research of CTs, forming various studies based on different disciplines such as conversation analysis, ethnography of communication, cross-cultural communication and interactional sociolinguistics (Liu, 2012). Conversation analysis studies the stylistic features of CTs (Tannen, 1990), the structural features of CTs (Atkinson and Drew, 1979), such as preference organization and adjacency pair, and strategic features of CTs (Brenneis and Lein, 1977; Boggs, 1978), such as tone, gestures, facial expressions, etc. Ethnographic research refers to that scholars obtain first-hand information about CTs through long-term field investigation and analyse CTs according to contextual variables, which reveals context factors. Since the 1980s, Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) have conducted a series of detailed studies on CTs of American (black) children and adolescents aged between 4 and 14, which makes a unique contribution to the development of CTs analysis. Among the researches on cross-cultural communication, Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) were relatively famous. They studied the disputes in the peer culture of American and Italian nursery-school children, finding that Italian children are easier to get into conflict talks because of dissatisfied requirement. Interactional sociolinguistics has made outstanding contributions to the study of CTs from the perspectives of rhetoric, different contextual variables and transgender. Recently, some scholars studied doctor-patient CTs (Liu, 2016; Hu and Song, 2020). Liu pointed out that CTs have both positive and negative effects on interpersonal relationship. Hu and Song studied CTs from the perspective of ecolinguistics and found that patients and doctors both will respond to non-aggressive conflict to express their dissatisfaction. Besides, CTs are more closely related to identity construction (Blitvich, 2018), which reflects the functionality of CTs. Since super diversity and globalization have become more

visible (Blommaert, 2013), identity may be destroyed (Naz et al., 2011: 2), or proliferated (Tomlinson, 2003: 271). De Fina (2013) studied transnational identity of Latinos in the context of the US, finding that Latino identity is a transnational, top-down, imposed identity.

In China, researches on CTs can be classified into the following five aspects (Ruan, 2018): 1. Domestic scholars use the relevance theory, the adaptation theory, the face threatening theory, the conversation analysis and the rapport management theory to study CTs. Ran (2012), discussed rapport management from the aspects of face management and sociality rights management based on Spencer-Oatey's rapport management theory. Zhou (2014) took the CTs in the TV series as the corpus and adaptation theory as the research perspective, believing that gender factors, life experience, values and family relations are the main reasons for the occurrence of family CTs. 2. Researches on CT structure are represented by Zhao (2004), who divided CT into three steps, the initiation step, the escalation step and the termination step with structural analysis method. 3. Researches on communicative strategies of CTs. Zou (2018) discussed the communicative strategies of family conflict discourse in the TV series *The First Half of My Life*. This study revealed the characteristics of the characters in the drama and divided the responses into conflict responses, false responses and silent responses. 4. Pragmatic effects of CTs; The pragmatic effects refer to the harmonies and challenges of personal relationship. However, Ran (2010) and Zhang (2016) believed that CTs plays a positive role in interpersonal harmony. 5. The researches on the generation mechanism of CTs mainly involve the causes of CTs. Zhou (2009) selected three episodes of intense CTs in the drama *Thunderstorm* as corpus and pointed out that the cause of CTs is the contradiction of speech space, and its terminative way reflects the control of having a voice.

CTs have made corresponding progress in China. On the one hand, studies have unified the concept of CT, which can be summarized as one party's disapproval of the other party in communication. CTs can be expressed in language or non-language and have features of divergence, negativity and interference. On the other hand, the research perspective is diversified. However, there still exists some insufficiency on its development in China. Firstly, researches on CTs are mainly based on conversation analysis. Secondly, numerous researchers have introduced or studied CTs from various approaches as aforementioned, but studies concerning CTs in Chinese TV series are few. Besides, previous studies mainly focus on the linguistic patterns of CTs, and characteristics of parent-teenager CTs are rarely mentioned. Lastly, the feasibility and practicality of the rapport management theory in CTs in Chinese TV series need to be testified. Therefore, application of this theory in CTs between parents and children in Chinese TV series is worth carrying out.

Rapport management theory

The rapport management theory raised by Spencer-Oatey (2000) is made up of two components: face and sociality rights (2000:540). Face consists of quality face and identity face. Quality face means that we have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities. Identity face refers to that we have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities and roles. Sociality rights consist of equity right and association right. Equity right refers to that people have the equal right to be treated no matter where they are and no matter what they are involved. And they should not be forced, ordered, or exploited by others without any reason. Association right refers to that where the communicator can associate with others that are keeping the type of relationship that we have with them.

Spencer-Oatey (2000: 29-30) came up with four types of rapport orientations: Rapport-enhancement orientation (a desire to enhance the harmony of relationship), rapport-maintenance orientation (a desire to maintain the current quality of relationship and level of rapport), rapport-neglect orientation (having no concern for the quality of the relationship) and rapport-challenge orientation (a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations).

Considering the research gap discussed above, the aim of the current study was to carry out analyses of parent-teenager CTs in two Chinese TV series *A Love for Separation* and *Home with Kids* to reveal the three steps of CTs. From the perspective of the rapport management theory, this study mainly centered on probing into the causes as well as the influence on harmonious interpersonal relations, and then tried to provide some measures to reduce parent-child CTs, to improve the ability of using language to build a harmonious family interrelationship.

METHODOLOGY

Parent-teenager CTs in real life are quite difficult to collect. Thus, this study collects data from two Chinese sitcoms. *Home with Kids* is mainly about a story that happened in a reorganized family. The father, Xia Donghai, having divorced and returned from US with his young son Xia Yu, met a divorced woman named Liu Mei who has a teenager son Liu Xing. They reorganized a new family. The story tells various issues they met in life and how they managed to solve them. A great number of episodes focus on the parents' attempts to educate their three kids. Conflict talks in this sitcom are typical examples of Chinese families.

A Love for Separation is mainly about a story that happened in three families. Fang Yuan and his wife Dong Wenjie had a disagreement on the daughter's education. Because their daughter Fang Duo had a bad performance in study, Fang Yuan tried hard to send Duo Duo to a foreign school. However, Wenjie opposed since she took domestic integrity seriously very much. Thus, they had a terrible fight about it. Wu Jiani tried to make her daughter Qinqin go abroad, but her husband Jin Zhiming disagreed. Finally, after a series of quarrels, Fang Duo made a great progress in study and

gave up studying abroad. Jin Zhiming reluctantly planned to sign on the adoption agreement for his daughter's future but his wife Wu Jiani gave up. The focus of these three families is the senior high school entrance examination that every student has to experience. In their parents' eyes, it will have a great impact on the future of their children.

Although CTs in sitcoms may have some dramatic features, it still can provide research value and can reflect phenomena that actually happened in nowadays society. Nowadays, children's education has become the most concerned issue for parents. *Home with Kids* reflects the family education received by the post-1990 generation. *A Love for Separation* reflects two social education hotspots, high school entrance examination and studying abroad since they are both concerned about the life between parents and teenager and continuous CTs are their common features.

In order to achieve the aim of study, quantitative analyses were applied to 17 cases collected from *Home with Kids* and 17 cases collected from *A Love for Separation* which aims at revealing the structure of CTs. Then this study analyzed CTs with 3 cases based on the quantitative analyses. Case study is a strategic qualitative research methodology (Noor, 2008). According to Yin (1989), case study refers to an empirical inquiry that analyses a current phenomenon within its real settings, which may be an event, an entity, an individual or even within a unit of analysis. In this study, 3 cases reveal three typical kinds of CTs between parents and teenagers which will enhance the accuracy, validity and reliability of the results by capturing the holistic essence of CTs studied.

Episodes like the following are typical cases of CTs. The Chinese sentences are [sic] and the English sentences are translation.

Initiation	{	<p>Turn 1: 方朵: 妈, 我要养弗兰克, 慧慧是我最好的朋友, 她在走之前对我唯一的请求就是养弗兰克, 所以不管怎样我都要养弗兰克。(Turn 1: Fang Duo: Mom, I want to raise Frank. Huihui is my best friend. Her only request before she left is to raise Frank.)</p> <p>Turn 2: 方爸爸: 回头咱们再商量, 再商量。(Turn 2: Fang Yuan: let's discuss it later.)</p> <p>Turn 3: 董文洁: 什么叫不管怎样你都要养啊, 你不可以这样。(对抗性应答)(Turn 3: Dong Wenjie: What do you mean you must keep it? You can't do that. (counterclaim))</p> <p>Turn 4: 董文洁: 你什么事都要跟大人商量, 你不能说你要养就养啊, 你怎么养啊?(反问) 你赶紧给我把狗送走去。(否定)(Turn 4: Dong Wenjie: You need to consult with your parents. You can't do as you like. How can you raise it? (posing the question) Give it back! (negation))</p>
Maintenance	{	<p>Turn 5: 方朵: 你要是把弗兰克送走, 那也别养我了。(Turn 5: Fang Duo: If you send Frank back, you also don't have to raise me up.)</p> <p>Turn 6: 董文洁: 你这么跟妈妈说话是吗? 好好, 朵朵, 你这么跟妈妈说话是不是?(反问)(Turn 6: Dong Wenjie: Do you talk to your mother in this way? Well, Duoduo, you talk to me like that, don't you? (posing question))</p>
Termination	{	<p>Turn 7: 方爸: 好好。(第三方介入)(Turn 7: Fang Yuan: Ok. (the third party interruption))</p>

Every CT extracted from two Chinese TV series must include these three stages. And each stage will embrace at least one characteristic strategy. The next part will carry out a dominating analysis from both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The initiation stage

Eisenberg and Garvey (1981:150) suggested in their

influential study, "an adversative episode is a sequence which begins with an opposition". That means a CT may be initiated by an oppositional reply to an action, a request or an assertion in different ways. Detailed numbers and percentage of the initiation stage are represented in Table 1.

It clearly shows that among the 34 CTs, claim-counterclaim (41%) and provoking question-opposing answer (47%) constitute a large proportion, that is to say, parents and kids may mostly use these two ways to start or initiate a CT, order-refusal is also employed in the fictional CTs among parents and their children.

As for the reason, the teenagers are undergoing a tremendous change both physically and mentally. Their opinions will be completely different from their parents. Thus, when their parents claim what they thought, teenagers will immediately counterclaim it to express themselves. And in this period, they are more sensitive to and much easier to be irritated by their parents' opposing intonation. So if their parents raise a provoking question, they will give an opposing answer.

The escalation or maintenance stage

Once a CT has been initiated, both opponents have to express their own different opinions to reject their opponent's view during the next phase (Gruber, 2001). That is the escalation or maintenance stage which can be achieved by various ways. Detailed numbers and percentage of the maintenance and escalation stage are represented in Table 2.

Here, we can see that there will be more than one way to maintenance and escalation in a CT. In these 34 CTs, 13 of them is negation (31.71%), 11 are posing questions (26.83%), 8 of defense (19.51%), 5 of repetition (12.20%) and 4 are interruption (9.76%). That is to say, negation is the most frequently used formats of the stage of maintenance and escalation but repetition is of the least.

Smetana and Villalobos (2009) claims the cognitive development of an individual in a particular area. Cognitive maturity means that what teenagers used to think of as something within parental authority is now something that they think should be left to their own discretion, and if parents are still trying to maintain their power, the conflict will be intensified. So, when parents use power to negate their children's thoughts, requests or rights, CTs will be escalated.

The termination stage

Not all CTs will be terminated by agreement of both sides. Instead, the participants would try to end it neither with submitting nor with concessions (Leung, 2002). To achieve this goal, participants' linguistic choices are very important, which can initiate or terminate the CT. Detailed numbers and percentages of the termination stage are

represented in Table 3.

Here, submission is 41.67%, withdrawal for 33.33%, compromise and concession for 13.89%, third party interruption for 8.33%, humor for 2.78%. To sum up, submission might be the most frequently employed format in the CTs between parents and their kids.

To mitigate and terminate a conflict, the key factor in choices of strategies involves face issue. Thus strategy choices of speakers should diminish the degree of opponent's face threatening act and adapt to their mental, social or cultural world as far as possible out of love and understanding. Submission is one of the effective strategy choices. After disputing several turns long, one participant accepts the other's position or obeys the other's order, CT is thus resolved.

Case study

The following analyzes three typical cases from the data to study the linguistic patterns and characteristics of CTs from the perspective of rapport management.

Case 1

Turn 1:董文洁：你说这是什么？(煽动性提问) 我正要问你呢!(Turn 1: Dong Wenjie: What do you think it is? I was going to ask you! (provoking question))

Turn 2:方朵：你们怎么乱翻我东西啊!这是我个人东西啊，你知不知道！(Turn 2: Fang Duo: How can you go through my things? These are my private things, you know?)

Turn 3:董文洁：方朵,你干什么你？你急什么你？什么叫我们乱翻你东西啊？啊？你自己扔到垃圾桶里，妈妈给你捡起来的，我不是乱翻你隐私啊！(Turn 3: Dong Wenjie: What are you doing, Fang Duo? Why are you so nervous? What do you mean we rummage through your stuff? Ah? You throw it into the trash can, and I picked it up for you. I didn't rummage your privacy!)

Turn 4:方朵：那是什么啊？(反问)(Turn 4: Fang Duo: What's that? (posing question))

Turn 5:董文洁：什么这什么呀，你扔到垃圾桶里的。方朵你别跟我横啊，你上次参加歌迷见面会，我没这么重说你吧。你现在倒好，你搞这些东西，你把你的时间，全浪费在这个上面了。这什么破东西啊，乱七八糟写的！(Turn 5: Dong Wenjie: What? You put it in the trash. Fang Duo, don't be mad. I didn't say anything you attended a fan meeting last time.

Table 1. Quantitative analysis of the initiation stage.

The initiation stage	Number	%	Example
Claim-Counterclaim	14	41	方朵:所以不管怎样我都要养弗兰克。(表态性陈述)(Fang Duo: So I must raise Frank. (claim)) 董文洁:什么叫不管怎样你都要养啊,你不可以这样?(否定性表态)(Dong Wenjie: What do you mean you must raise Frank? You can't do that. (counter-claim))
Order- Refusal	4	12	刘梅:刘星,你给我过来。(命令)(Liu Mei: Liu Xing, come here! (order)) 刘星:不过去。(拒绝)(Liu Xing: No. (refusal))
Provoking Question - Opposing Answer	16	47	董文洁:你说这是什么?(煽动性发问)我正要问你呢!(Dong Wenjie: What do you think it is? (provoking question) I was going to ask you!) 方朵:你们怎么乱翻我东西啊!(对抗性应答)(Fang Duo: How can you go through my things? (opposing answer))
Total	34	100	

Table 2. Quantitative analysis of the escalation or maintenance stage.

Maintenance and escalation stage	Number	%	Example
Repetition	5	12.20	刘梅:少在这儿贫嘴。不许去,就是不许去。(重复)(Liu Mei: cut it out. I said no. No. (repetition))
Interruption	4	9.76	方圆:现在初三了,学习压力那么大,那么紧张,你这写东西,耽误。。。 (打断)(Fang Yuan: now you're in junior three. The study pressure is so great and you're so nervous. If you write things, it wastes...(interruption)) 方朵:我都说了不想提这件事了,分数是吧,现在你们满意了吧?(Fang Duo: I said I didn't want to mention it. As for the score, are you satisfied with what you saw?)
Negation	13	31.71	刘梅:害怕,害怕失去生态平衡。你看,光有老鼠没有猫,那多不平衡啊。(Liu Mei: I'm afraid, afraid of losing ecological balance. You see, all mice and no cats, how unbalanced that is.) 夏雪:不用解释了,(否定)你就是那只猫,你就是要把我变成害怕你的老鼠。(Xia Xue: You need not to explain. (negation) You are the cat. You just want to turn me into your mouse.)
Posing Questions	11	26.83	戴明明:有您这样的家长吗?(反问)不让自己的女儿读书。(Dai Mingming: Are there parents like you who doesn't allow your daughter to study? (posing question)) 戴天高:废话,再读就读到大西北去了。(Dai Tiangao: Nonsense, you would go to the Northwest.)
Defence	8	19.51	夏东海:刘星,你这好奇心,怎么越来越重了。(Xia Donghai: Liu Xing, why are you so curious?) 刘星:我这不是好心关心他们吗?真的是好赖都不懂。(辩解)(Liu Xing: I just care about them. You don't know the good heart. (defense))
Total	41	100	

Now, you're doing all this stuff. You're wasting all your time on it. What a piece of shit!

Turn 6:方朵:破东西,浪费时间?你们眼里除了成绩还有什么啊?(反问)出去!出去!(Turn 6: Fang Duo:

What a waste of time? What else do you care besides grades (posing question)? Out! Get out!

Turn 7:爸爸:好好好,朵朵,朵朵。你先出去,你先站外面(对海清说的)。爸爸跟你说,朵朵,朵朵,

Table 3. Quantitative analysis of the termination stage.

The termination stage	Number	%	Example
Compromise and concession	5	13.89	张亮忠:行了, 这事儿就算过去了。(Zhang Liangzhong: Ok, let it go.) 张小宇:行吧, 行吧, 行吧。(妥协) (Zhang Xiaoyu: ok, ok, ok. (compromise))
Withdrawal	12	33.33	张小宇:行啊你, 老张, 她诬陷我, 你都不向着我说一句话, 你还向着她, 你眼睛里只有这个坏女人, 我告诉你, 你跟她才是一家人, 我是外人, 行行行, 我走, 我走, 你们落清静, 我走。(退出) (Zhang Xiaoyu: fine, Old Zhang, she framed me. But you do not say any word for me. You can only see this bad woman. I tell you, your family only include her and you, not me. Fine, I'll go to leave quiet for you. (withdrawal))
Third Party Interruption	3	8.33	董文洁:你这么跟妈妈说话是吗?好好, 朵朵, 你这么跟妈妈说话是不是?(Dong Wenjie:Do you talk to your mother in this way? Well, Duoduo, you talk to me like that, don't you?) 方爸:好好。(拉走) (第三方介入) (Fang Yuan: Ok. (away) (the third party interruption))
Humor	1	2.78	刘星:妈, 您别打呀, 您要给他们打, 他们肯定认为是我指使的您。妈, 您就同意吧, 我们班同学, 都说您刀子嘴豆腐心, 您是豆腐脑做的。(Liu Xing: mama, don't call please. They would know that's my idea if you call them. Mom, please. our classmates all said that your mind gets angry but your heart still cares. You are just like uncongealed tofu.) 刘梅:啊?我什么做的, 我什么做的。(Liu Mei: ah? What?) 刘星:我说我们今天年夜饭准备吃豆腐脑。(幽默)(Liu Xing: I said that we'll prepare uncongealed tofu for the New Year's eve meal.(humorous reply))
Submission	15	41.67	刘梅:你说你怎么那么欠哪你, 怎么一天到晚弄碎玻璃啊。你从小到大我给你赔了多少玻璃钱, 啊, 怎么那么讨厌呀你。你有能耐你弄自己家玻璃呀!(Liu Mei: Why are you so terrible? You break glasses all day long. How much many I compensate for the broken glassess? Ah? Why don't you break our glasses?) 刘星:不敢我。(屈服) (Liu xing: I can't. (submission))
Total	36	100	

朵朵。(被关出门外)(Turn 7: Dad: Ok, Ok. You go out first. You stand outside first. Have a talk with Daddy, DuoDuo? (Shut out the door))

Turn 8:董文洁:方朵,你给我开门,你太过分了,你给我把门开开来。方朵,我数三下,你给我把门开开来。方朵,你要是不把门打开的话,我告诉你,我就去找小宇他爸,我看小宇他爸不揍死他。(Turn 8: Dong Wenjie: Fang Duo, open the door! You're out of line. Open the door for me. Fang Duo, you open the door for me on the count of three. Fang duo, if you don't open the door, I will tell Xiaoyu's father what has happened. I guess he must beat him to death.)

Turn 9:方朵:你要是这么说的话,别认我这个女儿。(屈服)(Turn 9: Fang Duo: If you do that, I'm not your daughter any more.) (A Love For Separation, 2015, E06)

In the background of this example, Fang Duo entered into her bedroom, finding her parents, Dong Wenjie and Fang Yuan were rummaging around in the drawer.

In Turn 1, Dong Wenjie raised a provoking question to

show her anger when she saw Fang Duo's fiction written by herself. Fang Duo did not answer her but payed more attention to her private right. In Turn 3, Dong Wenjie gave three opposing questions to scold Fang Duo's bad attitude and claimed that she did not rummage her private things. But Fang Duo did not believe, thinking that her parents have seen her fiction. In Turn 5, Dong Wenjie said that Fang Duo spent more time in unimportant things but not study and that what she wrote is worth nothing. She denied Fang Duo's ability in writing novels and threatened her quality face. In Turn 6, Fang Duo opposed that study is the only thing her parents focused on and asked them to get out of her bedroom. In these several turns, Fang Duo and Dong Wenjie both used language to challenge or even destroy the harmonious relationship. In Turn 7, Fang Yuan wanted to coordinate between his wife and daughter, but he was also closed out of the bedroom. In Turn 8, Dong Wenjie ordered Fang Duo to open the door. Otherwise, she would let Zhang Liangzhong know what Zhang Xiaoyu did. In this way, she threatened Fang Duo's equality right. In Turn 9, Fang Duo retorted that "if you did that, I would not be your daughter".

According to Zhao Yingling, a CT consists of the initiation stage, maintenance and escalation stage and the termination stage. This CT is triggered by Dong

Wenjie's provoking question "你说这是什么? (What do you think it is?)" maintained by Fang Duo's opposing question and terminated by Dong Wenjie's submission, which is a failed talk because Dong Wenjie's identity, a mother was threatened and the end format is unfavorable to establish a harmonious family atmosphere.

The cause of the above CT is greatly related to the unequal relationship between Chinese parents and children. In China, parents pay little attention to children's privacy, and they manage to know everything about their children so they can make sure that their kids are on the right way. However, their kids would be disgusted with what they did. Thus, CTs can be initiated between teenagers and parents. In addition, Chinese parents pay a lot of attention to children's study performance and usually deny their children wholly only because of their bad performance in study. And parents would limit their freedom for this reason. They hope their kids could be absorbed in study so that they would make progress and get a satisfactory result. This study suggests Chinese parents emphasize more on their children's personality development rather than good grades, given their children are able to adapt to various environments, to live independently, to deal with the relationship between friends. So, based on such an idea, children's personality development has become a more important issue for Chinese parents.

Case 2

Turn 1: 蒂娜: 你先订正, 我再签字. (Turn 1: Tina: You revise it first and I'll sign it then.)

Turn 2: 张小宇: 我这不着急打架子鼓没功夫吗? (Turn 2: Zhang Xiaoyu: I have no time since I'm in a hurry to play drum?)

Turn 3: 蒂娜: 不行, 我前几次给你签字都被你爸教训了, 我再给你签, 我得顶多大鸭梨啊. (Turn 3: Tina: no, I can't. Your father blamed me for my signing several times before. I'll be under great pressure to sign it for you again.)

Turn 4: 张小宇: 你告诉他干吗呀, 我要想让他知道, 我还找你签干什么呀? (煽动性发问) (Turn 4: Zhang Xiaoyu: Why do you tell him? If I gonna let him know, why did I ask you to sign? (provoking question))

Turn 5: 蒂娜: 他是不小心看到的, 我不是故意的. (Turn 5: Tina: He saw it by accident. I didn't mean to.)

Turn 6: 张小宇: 你就是故意的, (否定) 刘蒂娜, 你这个人怎么这样, 你诚心给我搞黑状, 你还真把你当我妈是吧, 咱俩一平等关系, 你帮我, 我帮你, 咱俩和谐

友爱, 你怎么就摆不正你自己的位置呢, 你给句话你到底签不签? (Turn 6: Zhang Xiaoyu: You are definitely deliberate, (negation) Tina Liu, how can you do that? You backstabbed me. Do you really treat yourself as my mother? We are equal and should be supportive so we can be harmonious. Why can't you just put yourself in the right place? Sign it or not?)

Turn 7: 蒂娜: 我不签, 张小宇, 我就算不是你妈, 也是你长辈, 你怎么说话呢? (Turn 7: Tina: I won't sign it, Zhang Xiaoyu. Though I'm not your mother, I'm the elder. How can you talk like that?)

Turn 8: 张小宇: 长辈, 你可别扯了, (否定) 我十五了, 你有二十五吗, 你才比我大几岁, 在这儿充长辈, 你跟我爸站一块儿, 知道的是老夫少妻, 不知道的还以为, 姑娘伺候爹呢, 咱俩最后落一平辈. (Turn 8: Zhang Xiaoyu: Elder? Please! (Negation) I am 15. Are you 25? You are just older a few years than me. When you stand together with my dad, people who know would think that you're chronophilia, but those who don't would think that you're the daughter of my father. We are peers.)

Turn 9: 蒂娜: 张小宇, 给我站住! (Turn 9: Tina: Zhang Xiaoyu, stop!)

Turn 10: 张小宇: 怎么着, 你还想打我, 我告诉你, 刘蒂娜, 我就不订正, 我就拼命地打鼓, 你最好别在老张那里给我闹什么幺蛾子, 不信抬头看, 苍天饶过谁. (走掉) (退出) (Turn 10: Zhang Xiaoyu: What? Do you want to beat me? I tell you, Tina Liu. I won't revise it and I will desperately play drum. You'd better not backstab me. Evil will be recompensed with evil. (leave away) (withdrawal)) (A Love For Separation, 2015, E09)

In the above example, Zhang Xiaoyu hoped that his step-mother, Liu Dina could sign her name on his paper so that he would not be scolded by his father. But his father, Zhang Liangzhong already knew the fact by accident. This CT is triggered by Zhang Xiaoyu's provoking question "你告诉他干吗呀, 我要想让他知道,

我还找你签干什么呀? (Why do you tell him? If I gonna let him know, why did I ask you to sign?)" He asked Liu Tina why she told his father.

In Turn 5, Liu Dina explained that it was not her fault because Zhang Liangzhong saw the picture of the paper accidentally. However, Zhang Xiaoyu negated that Liu Dina imparted the secret to his father deliberately. Negation is often used by speakers to express disagreement as well as refusal, which makes it threaten the hearer's both face management and sociality rights

management. It can be achieved by simple negatives, such as no, not to be, not right, do not and so on. Negation will usually make CT move on. In the second underlined turn, Liu Dina thought that she should be treated respectfully because of her identity as a step-mother. But Zhang Xiaoyu negated her identity, mocking her young age. Generally speaking, all the negatives escalate the CT thus their relationship ended on a sour note.

This CT terminated by Zhang Xiaoyu's withdrawal “不信抬头看，苍天饶过谁(Evil will be recompensed with evil)”, which is a relatively unhappy talk because Zhang Xiaoyu refused to do what Dina said and walked away.

The causes for the conflict between parents and teenagers can be partly explained by the influence of culture. In Chinese culture, the relation between a child and a step-mother is really difficult to deal with especially when the step-mother is younger than his mum. For the kid, he/she has to accept a stranger as his/her mother. Maybe he would be hostile to the step-mother because he is afraid that the step-mother would treat him badly. For the step-mother, maybe she would not treat the step-son and her own child equally for benefits or blood relation. Thus CTs between them are relatively severe. And parents would always stress that their position is higher than their kids and they have more power than their kids, so kids should be obedient to them. When the kids have their own thoughts, parents would use their identity to control kids. Thus CTs would be caused because children's equality right and sociality right are threatened.

Case 3

Turn1:刘星:你怎么能为了玩儿不学习呢?你要有问题呢,老师同学都不在身边,你要有问题你问谁去啊?(**Turn 1:** Liu Xing: how can you choose entertainment instead of study? If you have any questions, whom could you turn to when teachers and classmates are not here?)

Turn2:刘梅:你还敢说人家呢你,你能说人家吗?你有资格吗你?(煽动性发问)(**Turn 2:** Liu Mei: Do you have a say here? (provoking question))

Turn3:夏雪:妈,我是不是错了。(Turn 3: Xia Xue: Mom, I'm wrong?)

Turn4:刘梅:也不能算有什么错,你说的也有道理,就是看书都能看懂,何必耽误你玩儿的时间呢?你回屋吧,回屋休息去吧。走走走,快走,上补习课去。(Turn 4: Liu Mei: No, you're right. Since you have already had a good command of your study, why not have fun? Go to your bedroom and have a relax. Go, go, go, have your after-school classes).

Turn5:刘星:干吗呀,凭什么呀。凭什么她能旷课我不能旷啊?(反问)(**Turn 5:** Liu Xing: Wait! Why? Why can she skip the class and I can't? (posing question))

Turn6:刘梅:你跟她能比吗?(Turn 6: Liu Mei: Do you think you are the same with her?)

Turn7:刘星:我怎么不能和她比啊?同样的家庭,同样的父母,同一件事她对的我就是错的呀。我看书还能学会呢。我还不不想浪费玩儿的时间呢,凭什么呀。(辩解)(**Turn 7:** Liu Xing: why can't I compete with her? The same family, the same parents, and the same thing, why is she right but am I wrong? I could still study. I even didn't want to waste my time on playing. Why? (defense))

Turn8:刘梅:你,你还。。。(**Turn 8:** Liu Mei: you, you ...)

Turn9:夏雪:妈,真的是我让刘星这么做的。(Turn 9: Xia Xue: Mom, it's really I that let Liu Xing do this.)

Turn10:刘梅:你看看,你姐姐怎么袒护你,替你承担责任,你呢?(Turn10: Liu Mei: look, your sister protects you and takes responsibility for you. What about you?)

Turn11:刘星:我怎么了。(Turn 11: Liu Xing: What about me?)

Turn12:刘梅:你刚才说什么来着。(Turn 12: Liu Mei: what did you say?)

Turn13:刘星:说什么了。(Turn 13: Liu Xing: What did I say?)

Turn14:夏雪:妈,真的是我让他这么做的。(Turn 14: Xia Xue: Mom, I really made him do this.)

Turn15:刘梅:你别替他说话,你回屋歇着去。(Turn 15: Liu Mei: You don't have to explain for him. Go back to your bedroom and have a rest.)

Turn16:刘星:我今儿就不去了,我看你能把我怎么样。(屈服)(Turn 16: Liu Xing: I won't go anywhere today. What can you do? (submission).) (Home With Kids, 2004, S02E73).

In the above example, Liu Xing's sister, Xia Xue did not plan to go to the after-school class. Liu Xing tried to persuade Xia Xue because she can turn to her teachers and classmates for help there. However, Liu Xing's mother, Liu Mei thought that it is fine if Xia Xue does not go to the class and that Liu Xing must go.

In Turn 2, Liu Mei raised several provoking questions “你还敢说人家呢你,你能说人家吗?你有资格吗你? (Do you have a say here?)”to tell Liu Xing that he cannot teach his sister how to do for his own bad performance in study. In this way, Liu Xing's quality face was threatened

because his mother was doubtful about his ability in study. In Turn 3, Xia Xue asked Liu Mei if she was wrong. In Turn 4, Liu Mei comforted Xia Xue, making her come back to her bedroom for a rest but required Liu Xing goes to the class. In Turn 5, Liu Xing proposed his dissatisfaction “干吗呀，凭什么呀。凭什么她能旷课我不能旷啊？(Wait! Why? Why can she skip the class and I can't?)”with posing questions. In Turn 6, Liu Mei gave the reason that Liu Xing cannot compete with Xia Xue. Then Liu Xing's equality right was threatened because Liu Mei treated them unfairly. In Turn 7, Liu Xing defended for himself that he was not worse than his sister since they have the same family background. In Turn 8 to Turn 15, Xia Xue explained that it was her fault because she asked Liu Xing to do that. In Turn 16, Liu Xing claimed that he would not go to the after-school class.

This CT is triggered by Liu Mei's provoking question, maintained by Liu Xing's opposing question and terminated by Liu Mei's submission, which is a failed talk because Liu Mei had no way to ask Liu Xing go to the class and the end format is unfavorable to establish a harmonious family atmosphere.

The CT reflects the typical attitude of parents toward their children with a poor performance in study. Chinese parents often compare and contrast their children with neighbors' children, friends' children, and their peers, and even with other children from the city or the country. Chinese parents want to encourage their children by others' achievements, but they ignore a Chinese proverb, saying that "behind an able man there are always other able men". Blind comparison and contrast will result in their children's confidence lost. This study suggests Chinese parents make longitudinal comparisons of their children's own growth. And they should not be too stingy to praise their children. Parents' encouragement accompanies the children's development, so their children will have more confidence in themselves. Although parents are eager for their children's winning, but they will not show it obviously. What they should be after is their children's incomparable beauty and rich inner world, but not their own vanity.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of the primary data collected from two Chinese TV serials, this paper analyses the linguistic patterns of CTs between parents and teenagers combined with employing rapport management theory to provide a qualitative analyses. Some findings with regard to initiation, maintenance and termination stages of CTs between parents and teenagers are thus presented.

Firstly, by collecting the CTs data from two Chinese TV series *A Love for Separation* and *Home with Kids* and analyzing the examples, the study finds out that claim-counter claim and provoking question-opposing answer

are two main speech acts that easily initiate parent-teenager CTs. The three main speech acts that can escalate or maintain parent-teenager CTs are negation, posing questions and defense. Submission, withdrawal, compromise and concession are the three main methods to terminate a parent-teenager CT.

Secondly, parent-teenager CTs can be caused by the following two reasons. One is that the parents threaten their children's face, quality face or identity face. The other one is that parents limit their children's sociality right, asking them to pay more attention to their study. When parents and teenagers do not desire to enhance or maintain the relationship, CTs would happen. Once the CT is initiated, if one side attempts to neglect or destroy the relationship, then the CT would be escalated. What is more, when the Utterer's voice has a provoking intonation, CTs are more likely to be initiated. The rhetorical question is a question without doubt, which is used by the hearer to express the negation of what the speaker said with the meaning of criticism and dissatisfaction.

In this special period, teenagers feel that they have grown up and can get rid of the control of their parents. They have their own ideas and think that everything they say and whatever they do are all right. Therefore, once parents object their offer, they would feel their face or rights are challenged. In fact, at this stage, the leadership pattern that parents and children get along with each other previously should be transferred to the pattern that friends get on with. Instead of trying to control their children with the old mindset of "you must listen to me", "I'm doing it for your own good" and "you're too young to understand many things", parents should be like friends, listening to their thoughts, understanding their wishes, and giving advice based on their own experience. If parents don't change themselves, blindly denying the child, they will find that the communication with the child will be less and arguments will be more, thus forming a vicious circle.

Of course, parent-teenager CTs cannot be completely avoided. What we need to do is to reduce the harm caused by CTs. When the CTs occur, both sides have to try to think twice before speaking. Once you say something that hurts the other party's face or rights, you should explain yourself in time and apologize to the other party to avoid the intensification of the CTs. Once a CT has formed, both sides should try to resolve it. As the saying goes, never could father and son be enemies. Parents and teenagers can not resort to cold violence, ignoring each other. They should take the initiative to give each other a step down. Sometimes a call can let the child feel warm and let parents feel pleased.

Limitations

Firstly, the data chosen from this paper do not come from

real life but from Chinese TV series. Although to some extent, these two Chinese TV series show the general situation between parents and their children in China nowadays, they are not so authentic due to dramatic effects. Secondly, since CTs are dynamic, many variables, such as age, gender, living environment, education level, life experience and so on, were not discussed in detail. Last but not the least, the paper only collected a total of 34 examples from two TV series which can be enriched to prove the findings more convincingly. With a larger data, the paper can analyze them from different perspective.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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