Suspects' Narrative Discourse and Identity Construction in Police Investigative Interviews

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Abstract

This study, using conversation analysis as the research methodology, probes into the relationship between suspects' narrative discourse and identity construction in Chinese police investigative interviews. It is found that suspects may employ different expressions to construct various identities in the interaction. Hedging expressions in their narration depict their identity as narrators and through the use of direct speech, they could construct different identities of both themselves and other characters involved in the crime events. In the responsive turns, they adopt various language practices to normalize their illegal behaviors, attribute the blame to the victims involved in the case or mitigate the losses caused by their illegal behaviors.

Key words: Suspects; Narrative discourse; Identity construction; Police investigative interviews

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language use and identity has long been of interest to researchers. As "an extremely complex construct" (De Fina, 2003, p.15), identity is viewed by many scholars as being constructed through language and formed and shaped through the relationships we have to ourselves and each other (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Butler, 2010; Gergen, 2009). In the interaction, participants' language use may signal consciously or subconsciously the social class or group that they belong to (Locher & Graham, 2010, p.2). It is generally believed that "talk reflects who people are and is also the instrument through which people build who they want to be" (Tracy & Robles, 2013, p.20).

Identity can be regarded as a kind of resources which is used by speakers in the interaction to perform certain pragmatic functions. Specifically, identities can be used by communicators as a pragmatic resource in the passage of the whole conversation to realize communicative needs. Speakers could strategically employ one or more identities for the realization of their communicative needs (Yuan, 2016, p.20). As Chen (2013, p.30) argues, language users' choice of pragmatic identities can be reflected through a variety of language or nonlanguage means. People can judge whether a speaker is speaking as a colleague or as a teacher from the discourse he uses; in other words, his discourse constructs his pragmatic identity (Chen, 2013, p.30). Therefore, in the local context, participants' language choice to construct their identities may perform different social actions. This is especially true for participants involved in institutions.

In Chinese investigative interviews, police officers are thought to have complete power over the interaction (Zeng, 2011). This undoubtedly emphasizes the power of police officers in the interview, but neglects that of suspects. As Heydon (2005) argues, "all participants in police interviews have access to some resources that facilitate control over the interaction" (p.12), which indicates that suspects may manipulate the process by employing some strategies and display different identities in the local interaction. However, participants' roles in the investigative interviews lack empirical studies, which is the reason why the present study intends to do this research. This study, using conversation analysis as

research methodology, aims to make an empirical study on how suspects' narrative discourse reflects and constructs their identities in the investigative interviews.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of police-suspect investigative interview is a process of interaction between police officers and suspects, the essential core of which is language. The interpersonal meaning expressed through police interrogation discourse, the interrogation objectives, strategies and discourse structure have been involved in the relevant research on police interrogation, which show that police interrogation discourse are unique, different from court discourse and classroom discourse. Thus researchers focusing on the study of police-suspect interviews examine the ways that language has been used in the interview and what kind of action is being accomplished through that interaction (Huang, 2010a, b; Huang, 2014; Ye, 2010; Zeng, 2011).

Some researchers have studied language used by police and explored the social actions accomplished through police talk. For example, the design, placement and action orientation of some silly questions and a particular phrase used regularly in police interview can be analyzed using the method of conversation analysis (Stokoe, 2009; Stokoe & Edwards, 2010). Fuzzy language tacitly used by police officers in the interrogation can prompt suspects' confession (Deng & Bian, 2010; Gao, 2007; Liu, 2008). Evans et al. (2010) examine paraphrasing used in investigative interview and explore its effects on eliciting information from the interviewees. Heydon's (2005) detailed Australian study combines conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis to analyze the macrostructure and participation framework of police interviews, their turn taking and topic organization and police officers' formulations of the suspects' testimony. Huang's (2010b) study explores the pragmatic functions implemented in police officers' language use, which prove the influence of various factors on police officers' language practices.

Micro language uses in police interview have received more and more researchers' attention. For example, Gaines (2011) has explored the multifunctionality of discourse operator *Okay*. Through the analysis of the discourse of an interviewing police officer, Gaines illustrates how *okay* can be recruited to perform the interactive work of not only task management but also, in other instances, of solidarity overture and of confrontation. At last, Gaines concludes that in recruitments signaling confrontation, a global approbative "meaning" can be seen to govern *okay*'s multifuntionality in unexpected ways. Some studies examine words used by police officers in the process of investigative interview because certain words may be evocative of emotion that may cause psycho-physiological responses (Gordon & Fleisher, 2011). Antaki and Stokoe (2017) examine police officers' follow-up questions after

suspects' seemingly cooperative responses and contend that there are three motivations for police officers' follow-ups: testing the credibility of suspects' accounts; preparing for more challenges and eliciting more information related to events. Some studies focus on the discursive practices of police officers that can influence the construction and quality of linguistic evidence (Mason & Rock, 2020).

Besides studies on police officers' language use, some researchers study language used by suspects, including verbal and nonverbal language. Close examination of suspects' narrative is by far the best way to detect deception in suspects' narrative. Lingwood and Bull (2013) point out that the omission of crime-relevant information and statement-evidence inconsistency is considered diagnostic of deception. Gordon and Fleisher (2011) argue that when describing a crime, there are notable language differences in the way that guilty and innocent suspects respond to the investigator's questions. Cerovic (2016) explores suspects' use of rhetorical questions in police interrogations and finds that most of the suspects' rhetorical questions are treated as challenges and are counter-challenged by police officers. Johnson and Newbury's (2006) study examines the suspect's resistance strategies in relation to the institutionally more powerful interviewer. Liu (2008) analyzes language choice in police interrogation and emphasizes the importance of interpretation of suspects' confessions.

Suspects' language use may be influenced by some factors. For instance, St-Yves (2006a)'s study shows that confessions by sex offenders seem to be closely linked to two major factors: the personal consequences (shame, humiliation) and the attitude of the investigator. Nonverbal microexpression, measurement of brain waves and functional magnetic resonance imaging scans of the brain to detect differences in activity between truth telling and lying have been analyzed in some studies (Gordon & Fleisher, 2011; Sun & Wang, 2014; Lv, 2014).

However, when studying suspects' verbal behavior, the relationship between suspects' narrative discourse and identity construction is usually neglected. This study aims to find out how suspects' narrative discourse in the responding turns help to display and construct their identities in the investigative interviews.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data sets used in this study are police interrogations, videoed between the year 2011 to the year 2014, in one of the major provinces in China. These interviews were videoed by three local police stations and the authors got the official permission to collect the data, with the only purpose for academic research. All together 100 interviews are involved and most of these interviews are with neighbourhood crime and other community problems. All the suspects involved in these interviews are later proven to be guilty in the legal process. The data were transcribed

using Jefferson (2004)'s system for conversation analysis and translated from Chinese into English. The first line is Chinese *pinyin* and the second line is idiomatic translation. During the process of transcription, place names and people's names have been replaced with pseudonyms for the protection of confidentiality and privacy. The present study only focuses on the verbal language features of these interviews.

Conversation analysis is adopted as the research method for the present study. Conversation analysis aims to explore the patterns, structures and practices that are to be found in conversation: turns at talk and turn taking, turn design, social action, and sequence organization (Drew, 2005, p.79). According to Drew (2013, p.132), turn design refers to how a speaker constructs a turn-at-talk and speakers employ a variety linguistic and other resources in designing these components and thereby building turns-at-talk, resources that include lexis (or words), phonetic and prosodic resources, syntactic, morphological and other grammatical forms, timing. Besides, conversation analytic approach argues that "institutionality" or institutional identities are emergent properties of talk-in-interaction (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p.87). By using conversation analysis as the research methodology, this study examines suspects' narrative discourse and identity construction in Chinese investigative interviews.

4. SUSPECTS' NARRATIVE DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Suspects' identity in the interview is mainly constructed by responding to police officers' questions. Through these responding turns, suspects tell stories to police officers and construct who they are and who they are not, which is central to understanding of their identities (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005). Detailed conversation analytic studies on suspects' use of expressions in their crime narratives can show how suspects enact and maintain their identities.

In the investigative interviews, suspects' narration in responding turns can be used to reconstruct the crime events which they are involved in. Different expressions in suspects' narration can be used to implicate suspects' intentions and project their multiple identities. The following table demonstrates the relationship between suspects' different expressions in the narration and their identity construction.

Table 1
Suspects' expression in the narration

Types of suspects' expressions	Identities projected
Hedge expressions	Storyteller
Direct speech	Storyteller
Expressions to normalize	Justifier
Expressions to blame victim	Justifier
Expressions to mitigate	Justifier

Table 1 shows those in suspects' response turns, they may employ hedge expressions, direct speech or other expressions to narrate or justify their own behaviors. These expressions have close relationship with their identity construction. For instance, hedge expressions and direct speech can vividly display the suspects' identity as storytellers. Besides, suspects use different expressions to normalize, blame victims and mitigate their own illegal behaviors. All of these expressions will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Suspects' Use of Hedge Expressions

In daily conversation, speakers' use of hedges can be used to protect themselves, make clarification, mitigating the mood, etc. They can also be used to establish close relationship with listeners (Cui, 2012, p.45). As Piotti (2014) argues, hedging expressions can perform social actions such as saving face, mitigating responsibilities, showing deference and politeness or showing doubt or uncertainty. In investigative interviews, suspects use hedging expressions a lot in their narration of past events. For instance, suspects use expressions to show that they are uncertain about some information , such as "*wo wangle liangzhang sanzhang le, fanzheng sanbai lai kuai qian*" ('I forget the exact amount. Anyhow it is more than three hundred yuan.') , "*dagai ershi duo sui le*" ('Probably in the twenties'), "*shengao zai yimiqier zuoyou, ranhou e busuan taipang*" ('About 1.72 metres high and not too fat').

Suspects use hedge expressions primarily because they are uncertain with the information provided, which is a kind of repair to the truthfulness of their utterance. Suspects' confession constitutes reconstruction of past events and during this reconstruction, they may indeed fail to remember the specific second when the event happens, thus they have to use approximators in the narration. Such kind of uncertainty does not lead to the suspicion of suspects but increases the truthfulness of suspects' words. When narrators narrate past events, it is quite natural that they forget some details. Thus, suspects use hedges in their narration mainly because they are uncertain about some details of the events. Hedges, in this sense, can increase the truthfulness of speakers' proposition. More modifiers involved in the expressions, more truthful are the utterances (Cai & Dai, 2002). See the following extract.

Extract 1
1. Police： ni huihuai de naxie dongxi dei jiazhi duoshao qian a zai?
What is the value of those things that you destroyed?
2. Suspect： → jiazhi yinggai ye jiushi zai babai.
Its value is around eight hundred yuan.
3. Police： 800 yuan zuoyou?
About eight hundred yuan?
4. Suspect： Ai.
Yeah.

In this extract, the officer asks the value of those things destroyed by the suspect at line 1. The suspect answers with "*jiazhi yinggai ye jiushi zai babai*" ('Its value is around eight hundred yuan.'). In this response, the suspect uses a hedge "*yinggai*" ('should'), expressing his uncertainty about the exact value of these things. Facing this answer, the officer asks the suspect to confirm this information by partly repeating the suspect's response. At line 3, the officer uses "*zuoyou*" ('or so'), which is also hedging expression. And this question receives a confirmative response from the suspect at line 4. This example displays that when suspects narrate the past events, it is true that they can not use accurate figures to describe certain details, and have to use some hedges. Such types of hedges usually will not affect police officers' decision about punishment to the suspects.

Most of the hedges used by suspects in their narration show that they are uncertain about the answers to police officers' questions. Therefore, suspects' hedges in the narration do not necessarily mean that they want to hide relevant crime events, but to show their deference to police officers. Suspects' identity as narrators and confessors can be illustrated through the use of hedging expressions.

4.2 Suspects' Use of Direct Speech

In the investigative interviews, suspects' confession of past criminal activities is usually performed by making aligning responses to police officers' questions. Through these aligning responses, suspects narrate and reproduce the past criminal events that they are involved in. In this process, suspects could project their own identities or the identities of other characters. Direct speech, a conversational means to represent interactions, is the basic precondition at the level of the narrative world to analyze the emergence of identities (Archakis & Tsakona, 2012, p.60). The representation of past dialogues by means of direct speech appears as a practical resource by means of which participants could enact multiple identities such as mother and caregiver and thereby reflexively construct and negotiate the related epistemic entitlements (Berger & Doehler, 2015). Suspects' use of direct speech in their narration of past events can help them construct different kinds of identities. See the following extract.

Extract 2

1. Suspect：→ranhou wo wo gen ta shuodeshi, zan yihuo kaidao X zhuang qu,

2. → wogeini xiu, hua duoshaoqian wo-wo geininong.

Then I told him that we drove the car to ((place name)) **and repair it. I pay for the repair.**

3. Police：O.

Oh.

4. Suspect：E-:ranhou ta nashihou jiu-zhenghao zheshihou wo muqin guolai le.

Uh: Then at this time my mother happened to come here.

5. Police：O.

Oh.

6. Suspect：→ wo muqin guolai zhihou ye-ye yizhi genta shuo haohua, shuo you

7. →shenmeshi zan manman shuo. Zhediandian shi zan gai zenmenong

8. →de zenmenong. Kaidao X zhuang qu geini xiuxiu.

After my mother came here, she kept on putting in a good word for him and said that this was not a big deal and we could deal with it together as it should be. We drove to ((place name)) and repair it for you.

9. Police：O.

Oh.

This is chosen from an interview with assaulting others. When the suspect narrates the event, he uses direct speech twice both at line 1-2 and lines 6-8. By using direct speech here, the suspect displays his status when the event happens and realizes the desired social actions through his talk. It can help depict the suspect's image as a responsible person when the accident happens. Suspects could also employ direct speech of other characters' words, casting the characters as central figures in the telling, as people whom the story is about (Griswold, 2016, p.83).

Voiced direct speech is often regarded as "a sequentially relevant interactive practice of stance taking in conversational storytelling" (Niemela, 2005, p.216). According to the views of Niemela (2005), by attributing utterances to those characters involved in the crime events, the suspect can depict their personalities and display their stance towards the crime events.

4.3 Suspects' Use of Expressions to Normalize

Suspects' confession is mainly exhibited through making aligning responses to police officers questions. And these responses constitute suspects' narration of past criminal events. In suspects' narration, suspects use different linguistic expressions, trying to justify their illegal activities. In investigative interviews, suspects as narrators may choose to foreground some events or participants and background others, so that the same event can be reconstructed in different ways, which may influence identities that suspects try to construct (Bamberg, 2005). Through expressions to normalize their behaviors, suspects could build up particular versions of the crime events in their own interest. The analysis of the data shows that there are two main means that suspects can employ to normalize their behaviors:

 1) accentuating the contingency of the event (usually through using words such as "*pengqiao, zhenghao*" ('by chance, happen to'));

2) accentuating the ordinariness of the event (usually through using ordinary words to describe their behaviors, such as "*wanhui*" ('play for a while'), "*dahui*" ('play for a while')instead of "*dubo*" ('gamble')).

When talking about the motives of crime, the suspects avoid saying that their criminal action is organized,

while emphasizing it's done by chance. The following example is excerpted from an interview with gambling. When talking about how the gambling is organized, the suspect emphasizes the contingency of gambling by using the word "*zhenghao*" ('happen to'), "*pengqiao*" ('by chance').

Extract 3

1. Police：ni xiangxi shuoshuo ni dubo de qingkuang.
Tell us in detail the gambling case you are involved.

2. Suspect：→ jintian wanshang chiwanfan, chiwanfan meishile

3.　　→guangyou zhenghao
After we finished dinner tonight, we wandered outside and happened to

4. Police：E. ni shuo.
 Hmm. Go on.

5．Suspect：→ guangle yihui zhenghao yuzhe, pengqiaole,

6.　→yi gahuo an jiu guoqude
When we were wandering outside, we happened to meet with each other and someone called on us to play cards together.

7. Police：douyou shui a?
Who were involved in the case?

8. Suspect：nage wo-
I-

9. Police：zainali yudao de?
Where did you meet?

10. Suspect：→ wo chiwanfan zhenghao yudao an nage XXX, yudao XXX
After I finished dinner, I happened to meet ((person name)).

11. Police：XXX shui a？
Who is ((person name))?

12Suspect：xxx.
((person name)).

13. Police：En.
Hmm.

14. Suspect：→ zhenghao XXX,XXX shuo wanba, meiwan, zhenghao taqule,

15.　→sigeren wande. Sigeren wande, zhenghao wanle you

16.　→bange xiaoshi
((person name)) happened to call at that time and we asked him to play cards and he did not play. ((person name)) happened to go there, so we four played cards together for just half an hour.

As is shown in Extract 3, the suspect uses "*zhenghao*" ('happen to') in lines 3, 5, 10, 14 and 15. The suspect uses this expression in order to emphasize this gambling activity is not organized. They gamble together just because they happen to meet with each other when they are walking outside. Such kind of expression appears frequently when suspects are asked to talk about how they start to be involved in the case. When talking about details of the crime events or tools that they use in the crime,

suspects also use the expression "*zhenghao*" ('happen to') so as to emphasize the coincidence of the event and shirk their own responsibility.

From the above analysis, it can be inferred that in suspects' narration of crimes, they tend to avoid saying that their activities are premeditated and thus try to normalize their own behaviors. They would regard their behaviors as some events happening incidentally. The suspects' narration tends to show that they have no intention to be involved in the crime activities. And the fact that they are involved finally is either because they happen to meet their relatives or friends and they have no other choice but to accept the invitations to be involved in the crime activities or because the provocation of the victim. By normalizing their own behaviors, suspects hope to construct their innocent image in the crime event.

In the interviews with gambling cases, suspects would often emphasize that they do not take part in the gambling activities intentionally, and tend to elaborate the events they are involved in before gambling such as having a gathering with their friends or having tea with their friends or relatives or neighbours. The following words are reasons for the same gambling case given by different suspects involved in the same case.

Suspect 1: an jige tongxue yikuai hejiu, hewanjiu shang-shangliangzhe wan-wanhui, jiu wanhui
Some classmates and I drank wine together and after that we decided to play cards together.

Suspect 2: hejiulai women ganhuo yao zoudelai, he-hebaijiu, hezhehezhe jiu dale maeryan, zhehui shuijiao taizao, dahuiba, jiu dale yihui.
At first we decided to go to work and then we drank together. And after drinking we dozed off. But it was too early to go to bed, so we played cards together.

When asked who the organizers of this activity are, both of the suspects' responses avoid providing the exact information. They use expressions such as "*wanhui*" ('play for a while')or "*dahui*" ('play for a while') to normalize their own behaviors. It is strikingly the same in the narration of other different gambling cases.

The fact that suspects try to normalize their illegal behaviors is not limited to the narration of gambling cases. In an interview with a case of disturbing the institutional order, the officer asks the suspect why they gather around the gate to disturb the order of an institution, the suspect responds, "*buzhidao weishenme, jiushi jintian pengqiaole, doulaile*" ('I don't know why. It is coincidence that we all came here.'). Through the use of the phrase "*pengqiao*" ('by chance'), the suspects try to conceal their true motive and emphasize that their illegal behaviors are just an incident in a "normal" situation.

4.4 Suspects' Use of Expressions to Blame Victim
The above section mainly deals with the tendency that suspects want to normalize their own behaviors. When suspects are ordered to narrate the whole event, and when they begin to narrate the reason for some conflicts, for

instance, they would tend to avoid narrating their own faults, while shift the blame onto others (in some cases the victims). It is found that there exist two strategies that suspects may employ to blame victim and shirk their own responsibilities:

1) Deliberate choice of certain details of crime events and avoidance of others;

2) Deliberate presentation of events in different orders.

When narrating the crime, suspects would present different evidence to show that their own behaviors are not premeditated but are ignited by the other party's challenge. For instance, suspects would select certain details and arrange them in different orders to narrate the same event. Different presentation of the same event would exert great influence on the interviewers' understanding of the crime story. Since narrative events are usually organized according to the order of time, "the chronological order among events embody certain relations or logical relations between these events" (Deng, 2012, p.37). Take a case of fistfight as an example. In the interview, Suspect A and Suspect B blame each other. For example, Suspect A says that he beats up Suspect B because Suspect B curses him, while Suspect B emphasizes he beats up Suspect A because Suspect A goes to the building lot for deliberate provocation. Both Suspect A and Suspect B avoid assuming responsibility to ignite the conflict.

This kind of avoidance can be shown in another case of assault. When the two suspects involved confess to the crimes, they both shirk their own responsibility. Suspect A emphasizes "*wo qu shaozhilai, ta xianwo budaqian, jiu mawo le*" ('I went there to pray. He cursed me because I didn't greet him.') , while she avoids mentioning the fact that it is she herself who curses Suspect B's husband at the very beginning. Suspect B, on the other hand, emphasizes it is because Suspect A curses her husband that they begin to assault each other. Thus, in the process of narrating the crime, suspects tend to blame each other so that it may be beneficial to them when being convicted and sentenced. From the truth value of the narration, however, suspects' avoidance of certain details does not mean that they lie. They just want to foreground some details which may be beneficial to them, while avoid those that may be strongly against them in the following judicial process. By blaming victims and shirking responsibility to ignite the crime, suspects could justify their own behaviors and aim to establish their identity as innocent person in the case.

4.5 Suspects' Expressions to Mitigate

Mitigation, as an aspect of defensive behavior, is usually defined as a complex cognitive, emotional, pragmatic and discursive process whose main function is to reduce vulnerability (Martinovski, 2006, p.2066). As Caffi (1999) argues, mitigation can achieve the interactional effects by monitoring relational and emotive distance between interlocutors. In legal settings, mitigation is used to describe self-defense or defense without denial of

direct responsibility of wrongdoing (Martinovski, 2006, p.2066). Such expressions are often used by suspects in the inverstigative interviews.

In suspects' narration of crimes, they tend to avoid talking the losses that their behaviors make to the victims. If they are required by the interviewer to comment on the losses, they tend to mitigate the losses. For example, they would resist the legalese wording used by the police officer. When speaking of the victim's injury, suspects usually adopt the attitude of denial, evasion or mitigation. For instance, in a case of fistfight that involves two suspects, these two suspects give different description of their own behavior and their counterpart's injury, which is listed as follows:

Suspect A: wo jiu tongta xiongkou yixia.

I just poked him in the chest once.

Wang Xing jiu tita yixia.

Wang Xing (Suspect A's confederate) kicked him only once.

Tita xiaofu yixia.

He kicked him in the lower abdomen.

Ta mei shoushang a, mei dachu shang lai.

He was not injured.

Suspect B: wo-wojiuyong-yongshou lianxu data sanquan.

 I just struck him with my fists.

Ta ye meishang ba.

He might not have been injured.

While when describing their counterpart's behavior and their own injury, they say:

Suspect A: da-dawo nage zuoyan xiajiao.

He hit me in the left eye.

Wo-wolianshang youshang.

I was injured in the face.

Chuxianle shangqing.

I was injured.

Suspect B: tiwo yinbu.

He kicked me in the private parts.

Dangshi jiu zuo nali qule.

I fell down on the ground at that time.

Duzi you yizhenzhen teng.

I suffered from a burst of stomachache.

The above words are excerpted from suspects' narration of crimes. When the same police officer asks Suspect A the injury of Suspect B: "*Zhang San shenshang de shang shi zenme xingchengde*" ('How was Zhang San jinjured'), at the very beginning Suspect A answers, "*ta shenshang meishang*" ('He was not injured.'). After the officer's constant inquiring about this same question, Suspect A insists that "*ta shenshang meishang*" ('He was not injured.'). This is challenged by the police officer: "*meishang ni zenme zoude talai?zenme dade*?" ('If he was not injured, how did you beat him?'). Suspect A answers: "*wo jiushi tongta xiongkou yixia*" ('I just poked him in the chest once.'). When asked how his confederate "Wang

Xing" beats Suspect B, Suspect A answered, "*Wang Xing jiu tita yixia*" ('Wang Xing kicked him only once.'), "*tita xiaofu yixia*" ('He kicked him in the lower abdomen.'), and insists on emphasizing "*ta meiyoushang*" ('He was not injured.'). When describing his own injury, however, Suspect A emphasizes "*wo-wo lianshang youshang*" ('I was injured in the face.'), "*da-dawo nage zuo-zuoyan xiajiao*" ('He hit me in the left eye.'), "*chuxianle shangqing*" ('I was injured.').

In the meantime, when police officer asks Suspect B to describe his own injury, Suspect B says that Suspect A kicks him in the private parts, which makes him fall down on the ground and "*duzi you yizhenzhen teng*" ('I suffered from a burst of stomachache.'). While asked the injury that his beating causes for Suspect A, Suspect B answers, "*wo-wo jiuyong-yongshou lianxu data sanquan*" ('I just struck him with my fists.'), "*ta ye meishang ba*" ('He might not have been injured.'). When the officer asks both sides the reason why they fight with each other, Suspect A argues that is because Suspect B curses him, while Suspect B does not mention the curse and declares there is no conflict between them.

Through the comparison and contrast between these two suspects' narration of the same case, it can be found that suspects tend to emphasize the harm or injury that the counterpart does to themselves, while mitigate those that they themselves do to their counterparts. For example, when Suspect A confesses how his confederate and he beat Suspect B, he uses the word "*jiu*" ('just, only') twice so as to mitigate his and his confederate's criminal action. The same expression also appears in Suspect B's narration. Thus, mitigating their own illegal behavior and the harm that their illegal behaviors make to their counterpart is one of the main features of suspects' crime narrative. Aggravation of others' guilt may result in minimization of the speaker's guilt (Martinovski, 2006, p.2069). All kinds of mitigation and strategies of indirectness are conventionally associated with socially appropriate behaviour (Blas Arroyo, 2010, p.423). When facing different narration about the same crime story, police officers should take full account of the identities and positions of different suspects, discern contradiction between suspects' narration and suspects' evasive responses and make preparation for further investigation.

5. CONCLUSION

Although suspects are expected to be confessors, what they say in the responding turns may aim to construct different kinds of identities. In some cases, suspects confess to their crimes but at the same time they try to justify their behaviors and defend themselves. Sometimes, suspects even resist answering police officers' questions. This study shows that when suspects confess in the interview, their language expressions exhibit different features. For instance, hedging expressions usually depict their real identity as narrators and through the use of direct speech, they could construct different identities of both themselves and other characters involved in the crime events. In the responsive turns, they adopt different language practices to normalize their illegal behaviors, attribute the blame to the victims involved in the case, or mitigate the losses caused by their illegal behaviors.

Besides these linguistic devices, when they confess, suspects could also use some other interactional strategies to establish rapport with the officers and enact their own identities. For instance, suspects' silence, interruption and other disaligning responses in the interview may indicate their negative stance towards the officers' prior turns. To sum up, suspects' discursive practices either on the linguistic level or on the interactional level can display or construct their stances and identities in the interview: storytellers, confessors, justifiers and resisters. Suspects' narrative discourse exhibits their own power in investigative interviews, which needs to be further explored.

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