Structuring Hard and Big Lies in Chinese Telephone Frauds

Leyi Xu

1480987

Leiden University

(MA) Linguistics: Language and Communication

Supervisor: Dr. Maarten Kossmann

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore hard and prolonged lies in real talks. Such big and hard lies are typically presented by scamming calls in China and result in numerous loss for ordinary people. The approach I adopt to study this problem is detailed case study, because in a single case, the whole procedure of such scam could be revealed. Fortunately the Internet offered plentiful material for such study. Taking deception theories and communication theories as the basis for analysis, the results obtained in this research include the specific description of the fraud discourse, the characteristics of telephone scamming, and the difference between daily, simple lies and hard, prolonged deception. The obtained results are specific features to distinguish such scamming discourse: plentiful details, frequent repetition, and discourse dominance. Since these three features differ with what is raised in present popular deception theories for short or harmless lies, the results suggest that more research for hard and big lies is necessary for further analyzing deception and lies.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Back in my homeland, I sometimes received strange calls. These calls, either had odd telephone numbers, such as “+111”, or did not match any numbers in my mobile address book. Occasionally I would pick a call up to ensure whether I had missed friends or acquaintances or not, but they always began in this way:

“Excuse me, is that Miss Xu Leyi? I am a police officer in charge of... You are involved in a case of... You should do as we say to prove your innocence...” (translated from Chinese version)

This beginning sounded really horrible and ridiculous, because on one hand, I, as a harmless university student, did nothing more than secretly saying something bad of strict professors or classmates, and on the other hand, police officers were really busy. If I had been a suspect, they would arrest me as soon as they can rather than call me to imply “you should run”. As I had such pre-knowledge of police, and as I remarked that the speakers in such calls had an obvious accent of southern China, I immediately concluded “ah, frauds” and hung up the call. Because such calls were obviously ridiculous, I have never evaluated or tried to understand their details. I used to think people who were cheated by such calls were stupid to go to a bank and transfer money to such frauds. This is what most people think even now. Such biased and subjective thought of course does not help solving any question, and it is
unfair to blame victims.

A typical scamming call often begins with a scammer acting as a police official and stating the hearer’s personal information, such as name, ID number, and bank card number. After that, it turns to a serious criminal case in which the hearer is involved. In such criminal case, some criminal suspects opened bank accounts with the hearer’s personal information for their criminal funds. In this way, the hearer’s bank accounts and money on them are all suspicious. In order to vindicate the hearer’s innocence, the scammer then requires the hearer to cooperate with their investigation by honestly answering questions of personal information. Such questions focuses on gathering more detailed backgrounds of the hearer, such as job, monthly income and expenditure, savings and living situations. What the scammer wants to know is the hearer’s financial situation, and thus this scammer could modify the following steps according to how much money the hearer has on each account. Then the scammer emphasizes again on the seriousness of the case, and informs the hearer about the following police action, blocking all hearer’s accounts for a long time. Such information spontaneously terrifies a hearer. Having created such fear, the scammer then tells the hearer that he can argue for a better treatment. For this arguing and appealing, the call can be transferred to another official “in charge of banking issues”, who is acted by another scammer.

After the hearer agrees to transfer the call, the conversation happens between the hearer and another scammer who is acting as a banking official. Because of the former information, the hearer would express anger and fear, which are expected by the scammer of this part. For such feelings, this scammer first suppresses the hearer’s resentful complaints with sayings strongly showing his bureaucratic identity. After stopping the hearer’s
complaints, this scammer briefly introduces more details of the criminal case then quickly turns to “special protection” for the hearer. In this part, the scammer introduces technical terms such as “safety code” or “security account” as the way to protect the hearer’s money. The scammer then thoroughly teaches the hearer how to install a “safety code” with a cash machine. After telling all the procedures, the scammer stresses the suspicion of bank staff, saying they might be responsible for revealing the hearer’s personal information. In order to protect the hearer, the scammer then requires the hearer to keep being connected so that they can know everything the hearer does in the installment of “safety code”. This call lasts until the hearer completes the transfer and is ended by the scammer.

According to Hou and Zhang (2010), potential victims in such calls make out only a small ratio in the whole population. That is, if frauds call 100 times, they would succeed at most 6.5 times (data based on receivers living in Beijing). In 2013, the population of Beijing was over 21 million\(^1\), that is, the potential victims would still be over 1.365 million. From this aspect, these calls harm numerous victims, and what is the weapon for scammers is language and speech. However, studies of such calls most regard them as sociological and criminal cases, and do not take interest in their linguistic and communicative nature or characteristics.

Frauds of this type are basically linguistic and communicative. Before I went to the Netherlands, some hospitable person reminded me of housing rent frauds. Such frauds were passive ones if compared with Chinese telephone frauds. In contacting the so-called landlord or landlady, this person would respond with plenty details, both in emails and calls. Through language interaction, students or new settlers would gradually believe them, just as one of my

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\(^1\) (Chinese) 北京市统计局、国家统计局北京调查总队. 北京市 2013 年国民经济和社会发展统计公报
friends. She believed a person who contacted her occasionally on the other side of the phone rather than me, who directly said this was a fraud. Situations are similar when turning back to Chinese frauds. Actual police officers and bank employees both try to persuade victims of these calls to stop bank transfers, but they usually fail. Similar failure forces me to rethink my previous attitude towards frauds, for there must be some power in frauds’ language to strengthen reliability and truthfulness of themselves, and scammers obtain this power and convey it to a victim successfully while we outsiders ignore it.

In Chinese sources, previous studies only emphasized on how to investigate criminal cases of telephone frauds (Ming, 2011), mass knowledge of such frauds (Hou & Zhang 2010), methods of precaution (Kong et al., 2014), or types of telephone frauds (Hong & Yao, 2010). At least in China, few researchers have realized such frauds are part of communication studies. Such communication reaches its aim with every victim. It really forces us to face this serious problem with the large quantity of potential victims and the apparent success of their communication. In this situation, the stereotypical thought should be changed from regarding such calls as low level and stupid frauds. Neither Chinese nor Dutch calls for deceit are shallow, and an outsider should change position in order to understand insiders. Furthermore, knowing a problem is the precondition to solve it, or at least to put forward improving suggestions. However, previous studies mostly skipped this part and went directly to solutions, which often triggers doubts and questions.

The following sections aim at filling the research gap in previous studies, looking into the communication procedure of fraud calls. For this purpose, some researches on lying and deception will be introduced in the next section, as the theoretical basis for the discussion.
These theories and models discuss speeches which are against truth mainly from linguistic and pragmatic ways. They all regard the communicative characteristic of lying and deception as a precondition, though the definition of lying and deception differs. After that, there will be a case study of a recent vocal recording of a Chinese fraud call. In this recording, the hearer pretended to be a person knowing nothing about fraud calls, and positively reacted to what the fraud said. In this way, the whole procedure of fraud calls is fully presented.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Linguistic aspects (Meibauer 2011)

There are numerous approaches for analyzing and discussing lying in current literature, because lying is part of daily life. It can be as normal as answering “fine” when a person suffers personal problems, and it can be as serious as in criminal cases such as frauds. Many publications view lying as a topic of ethics, religion or pedagogy (Vrij, 2000). Some psychologists are interested in its cognitive procedure (Walczyk, 2013, Vrij et al., 2010, Sporer & Schwandt, 2006, 2007). It can be studied as a sociological question (Barnes, 1994), as well as consideration for jurisprudence (Green, 2007). Moreover, there are a number of efforts in testing lying in speech communication (Park et al. 2002, Blair et al. 2010). In addition, it is a topic within the philosophy of morality with long history (Carson 2010). With all these aspect in mind, one should not forget that lying is constructed and presented mostly in a linguistic way. This linguistic feature of lying is supported in most literature, in the sense of the examples the authors provide to support their views. All this proves, though indirectly, the necessity to analyze lying linguistically.

Concentration, as Meibauer (2011) mentions, should be put on three issues: intentionality, implicature, and imprecision. All these three issues are fundamental for explaining syntactic and semantic aspects of lying. For the first concept of intentionality, Meibauer proposes a definition of assertion as below:
(1) Assertion

A asserted at t that p

iff (a) A uttered at t the declarative sentence σ meaning p,

(b) by uttering the declarative sentence σ, A presented p as true,

(c) by uttering the declarative sentence σ, A intended that an addressee B to whom A uttered p actively believes that p.

(Meibauer, 2011, p.280)

In Meibauer’s building of assertion, t means a situation or A intends to declare, and p is the information A conveys of t. M-intended refers to M(eaning)-intended, which is Gricean notion of M(eaning)-intention. According to Meibauer, (a) is firmly related to declarative sentences, which serve as propositions that affect people’s judgment to the truth or false in certain contexts. The whole definition is constructed within embedded communication theory (Grice, 1989), which declares lying as a kind of communication. After this definition, Meibauer gives the definition to the term “lie”, following Falkenberg (1982):

(2) Lie

A lied at t,

iff (a) A asserted at t that p,

(b) A actively believed at t that not p.

(Meibauer, 2011, p. 281)

In discussing the issue of implicature, Meibauer defines conversational implicature for the purpose of “lying while saying the truth”. That is a person tells the actual facts, but his/her purpose for saying these facts is to imply some false information. In this way,
Meibauer explains the non-speech acts in insincerity conditions, and thus extends the definition of a lie:

(3) Lie: extended definition (Meibauer 2005)

A lied at t by uttering the declarative sentence $\sigma$

(a) if the definition of the lie [as in (2)] holds,

(b) or if $A$ thereby conversationally implicated that $q$, but actively believed that not $q$.

(Meibauer, 2011, p. 285)

In the issue of imprecision, Meibauer considers situations in which a speaker says neither truth or false sentences. These situations, in his opinion, are typically presented in measurement variations. For example, he mentions the semantic difference between “at three o’clock” and “at exactly three o’clock”. Another similar situation is mentioned in distance argument (Krifka, 2002). In this argument, speakers talk about the distance between Amsterdam and Vienna, which is exactly 965 kilometers. The argument “No, you’re wrong, it’s nine hundred and sixty-five kilometers.” is adequate only when the former statement tells the precise distance such as “The distance between Amsterdam and Vienna is nine hundred and seventy-two kilometers.”. When speakers talks about the distance as “one thousand kilometers”, such argument is “true but pedantic” (Krifka, 2002, p. 430-431). These examples show that a “precision level choice” exists in measuring an entity. That is, the adequate quantitative measurement in different situations differs according to the expression needs. Researchers such as Krifka suggest that long expressions in speech contribute to its precision and short expressions with vague interpretations are favored for the purpose of lying.
However, Meibauer objects such attitude. He states that precision could work with false implicatures in building up lies (Meibauer, 2011, p. 288). In this way, Meibauer suggests that, when taking advantage of different measurement, lying is more trustworthy and reliable. In other words, if a liar want to make the lie more trustworthy, the lie should base on precise information, and the imprecise information often leads to the argument between lie and truth.

Considering the three basic issues for lying: intentionality, implicature, and imprecision, the linguistic approach to analyzing lying seems to be clear. However, Meibauer avoids talking about the debate between minimalists (related to truth-conditional semantics) and contextualists (context influences meaning constitution). According to the various characteristics and situations, lying could be differently constructed. After all, Meibauer highly recommends further research for lying on sentence types, speech acts or level of imprecision.

2.3 Theories of lying and deception: IMT 2 and TDT

There are several other theories that have been proposed in recent years in order to analyze lying and deceptive discourse. In the following part, two theories for deceptive discourse will be described, in order to draw a view of pragmatic approaches in analyzing lying and deception. There are two systematical theories. One is Information Manipulation Theory 2 (McCornack et al., 2014), aiming to explain discourse production in lying and deception, and the other is Truth-Default Theory proposed by Levine (2014), which focuses on detecting lying.
2.3.1 Information Manipulation Theory 2

The Information Manipulation Theory 2 (IMT2) can be traced back to Information Manipulation Theory (IMT), which was formulated in order to account for mundane messages which were informative in misleading listeners. This theory followed the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1989), which claims that in interactions people need four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Manner and Relation. According to McCornack (1992), IMT implies that lying and deception violates “a conversational maxim” of the discourse, that is, by misleading listeners (Grice, 1989). Because IMT was structured loosely, and accounts for production mechanisms should be offered, IMT 2 is proposed.

IMT 2 has one central premise and 11 propositions (McCornack et al., 2014). The central premise offers the definition of deceptive discourse as the foundation for further discussion. This premise is stated as below:

> Deceptive and truthful discourse both are output from a speech production system involving parallel-distributed-processing guided by efficiency, memory, and means-ends reasoning; and this production process involves a rapid-fire series of cognitive cycles (involving distinct modules united by a conscious workspace), and modification of incrementally-constructed discourse during the turn-at-talk in response to dynamic current-state/end-state discrepancies.

(McCornack et al., 2014, p. 362)

In this premise there are some important characteristics for deception and lying. In the explanation of this premise, three of the five points are related to linguistic or
linguistic/pragmatic characters. For instance, this premise suggests that both deceptive and truthful discourse are output from one speech production system (Mohamed et al., 2006, Walczyk, 2013). The second related explanation is the three factors in the cognitive process which guide discourse production: a compulsion which is overarching to maximize efficiency, the structure contains working and long-term memory, and the cognitive framing of contexts suggesting “problem-to-be-solved”. The last explanation related to linguistic features is the fifth point in IMT 2. This point mentions the discourse construction, or sentence structure as means-ends reasoning, so that mid-utterance modifications will be common and frequent in such discourse streams. Such modifications refer to that, people in the middle of a certain conversation would change the information mentioned in the former part in order to reach the state they desire to end with. 

There are 11 propositions in this theory, and they can be divided into three categories which are similar to Meibauer (2011): Intentional States (IS), Cognitive Load (CL), and Information Manipulation (IM). These propositions can be tested in case studies in order to value their property. For example, in IM2, authors state “Quantity violations are the most frequent form of deceptive discourse.” According to this proposition, liars would avoid exact quantities and numbers in their deception, because of the potential nature of “information chunks in memory” (McCornack et al., 2014, p. 366). However, in telephone scams, scammers frequently mention quantities about the criminal case such as numbers of criminals or money without serious violations. This deviated situation suggests that telephone scams utilize the human nature of memory. While quantity violations are the clue of daily lying for most people, professional liars avoid such violations in order to make their utterance trustworthy. Thus it calls for separate discussions of daily lies and
professional lies.

2.3.2 Truth-Default Theory

While IMT 2 focuses on deceptive discourse production, another theory raised at the same time concentrates more on detection. This theory is Truth-Default Theory (Levine, 2014). This theory starts with the precondition that deception and lying highly depend on context. At the very beginning, Levine proposes the core of Truth-Default Theory (TDT): people operating on a default presumption that “what the other person says is basically honest”. Assuming others to be reliable and trustworthy is called “truth-biased” (McCornack & Parks 1986, Zuckerman, et al., 1981). This bias, on one hand, makes communication efficient and cooperative, on the other hand, leads to a correct view toward communication, for communication is honest most of time. However, this belief and default presumption also leave space and possibility of success for deception and lying.

Deception, in Levine’s (2014) definition, is “intentionally, knowing, and/or purposely misleading another person”. For this definition, there are three factors: intent, awareness and/or purpose to mislead. After this, the author defines lies as a subtype of deception, which is deceiving in a way of saying something “known to be false”. Levine (2014) mentions numerous aspects of deception, including demeanor or behavior, motivation, context, and acquired information. In TDT modules, there are some that are related to linguistic characteristics of deception and lying, such as Deception motive, Content in Context, Correspondence and Coherence, as well as Expert Questioning. For these four modules, linguistic analysis of a case would help, for instance, in describing the syntactic structure of
sentences typically expressing the motive. For correspondence and coherence, semantic features also play a role.

TDT suggests both in its modules and propositions that “most lies are told by a few prolific liars”, and this implies that lies should be further categorized, at least the distinction between normal lies and prolific/expertise lies should be declared. It is reasonable to regard these two kind of lies as different in structure, procedure and linguistic aspect. What makes TDT more accurate in detecting lies is “purpose, contextualized and correspondent information” as the author insists. As a method for detecting, this also implies that deception or lying in this theory are mostly long, goal-oriented and informative ones rather than short lies without strong purposes. It is proper to use the term hard lies to describe long, goal-oriented and informative lies, and use easy lies for short lies without strong motivations.

From the above, Levine’s Truth-Default Theory (2014), presents a good explanation for hearers trusting lies and deceptions, as well as how to achieve success as a liar. Furthermore, lies and deceptions are, as the author implies, contextualized, informative, and motivated. The deceptive discourses studied in the present essay fit this qualification, and thus TDT is valuable in this discussion. The aim of introducing TDT here is that it suggests how to distinguish hard lies, such as telephone scam, from easy lies.

2.4 Other related views

As a further step beyond the theories mentioned above, Harwood (2014) suggests that in research of deception and lying one should make a distinction between easy, small lies and big lies, and such a distinction should be considered in order to distinguish actual lies which
are “encoded as a lie by the liar” from “easy lies” such as a dad responding to his daughter “it was beautiful, sweetie”, although he knew it was not so good. In this way, Harwood proposes that both IMT 2 and TDT have similar limitation in explaining such “easy lies”. Harwood points that in studies of lying, the main method is self-reports, which are very subjective. This subjectivity would cause an honest person to report his/her untruthful utterance just as the dad said to his daughter, though such saying bases on good intention and protects his daughter. In other words, different intentions among untruthful saying should be distinguished, basically those encoded as good, protective sayings from bad, malignant ones.

Furthermore, Harwood suggests that the study of lying should focus on big lies, because such lies are different from normal little lies, and the processes behind such big lies present things such as planning, anxiety, face-management and detection process. This implies that, big, long and complicated lies are worth to be analyzed. Another reason to study big lies exists in his discussion about possibility of planning, which is obviously different from McCornack’s IMT 2. This hypothesis is fit for the situations of telephone frauds. As Harwood (2014) points, “the preplanning of a lie exists along a continuum with the degree of preplanning depending on perceived likelihood of having to produce the lie.”

Similar to McCornack (2014) and Levine (2014), Harwood also puts emphasis on the nature of lying and deception as part of communication. As Harwood says, it is necessary to do descriptive, specific and empirical analysis of lies. Comparing different points, theories and attitudes toward lying and deception, a case study will help in testing propositions from those studies, and outlining the basic characteristics of lying. Since opinions vary both in
linguistic aspects (Meibauer in his construction of lying proposes different views from former researches) and communicative aspects (the different theories by McCornack and Levine, and suggestions by Harwood), it is reasonable to introduce a typical case which is unquestioned as to the precondition level of lying, thus limiting the discussion scope, for example, the intention and motivation of the untruthful saying being unquestioned in all attitudes. Such untruthful saying would be suitable for testing all proposed theories and hypotheses.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Current situations of Telephone Frauds and Case Study

In order to analyze the discourse of telephone frauds, a case study will be made, which typically presents the whole language procedure and the communication skills by the scammers. On the one hand, in several articles mentioned before, the study of telephone fraud focuses more on the victims or potential victims rather than how the scammers carried out the swindle. Researchers have discussed the knowledge which the potential victims acquire (Hou & Zhang, 2010), how the related institutions investigate such frauds (Ming, 2011), and how the public institutions such as police stations and bank branches react to prevent the mass from being scammed (Kong et al., 2014). In these studies, the researchers describe the fraud procedure, though nearly all of them ignore its language usage and its nature as a kind of communication. In this way most articles only discuss telephone frauds in the field of criminology or sociology, and seldom regard telephone frauds as a kind of linguistic communication. This is why they always offer general descriptions, and research it by means of surveys or interviews with potential or real victims of such frauds. On the other hand, public security departments and banks discovered and reported these telephone frauds mainly through the self-reports by victims or by the records from closed circuit television in the bank. This means that earlier studies lack empirical, firsthand and raw materials on the discourse in the telephone frauds. Therefore, the details and procedures of the telephone frauds still remain mysterious for both specialized criminal researchers and most ordinary people. A real
scam conversation with the scammers would help in better knowing such frauds, and knowing about it is the precondition for any possible suggestion and solution. In this way, the description and analysis of scam conversations are a necessary premise to any discussion of telephone frauds.

Although the real conversation with scammers is important in analyzing and knowing the telephone frauds, such real talks between a potential victim and several frauds are rarely reported because of the research focus and methods mentioned above. Besides these two factors, it is necessary to praise the mass public popularization of knowledge about scams. Such publicity is so successful that most people in China recognize telephone frauds immediately when they pick up a call, because such calls usually begin with sayings of the hearer’s personal information and something similar to “we are police in Shanghai/Beijing...we inform you that you are involved in a case of...”. For the majority, fraud calls are ended as soon as possible, because people do not want to waste time in talking with a fraud or to know how absurd such scammers are. Most scamming calls proceed in this way and most people are only familiar with the beginnings of such frauds. However, for a minority of the people that are called, things are entirely different.

Generally, the minorities include aged people, homemakers, middle aged people with low education or young students with few social experience. These people often engage in closed or limited social relations with others, as well as follow their fixed daily routines. According to a research done by Hou and Zhang (2010), age, education and monthly income are three factors present the knowledge of telephone scams. For age, they reveal that, the average amount of scam-related knowledge peaks at age groups of 40-49, then decreases
almost linearly, and the most aged group of 80+ answers least questions in their survey (Hou and Zhang 2010:39). This is reasonable because some aged people in China only communicate with few people besides their family members and close friends. At the same time, they lack the sufficient approaches to information about social changes and development such as online shopping and online banking systems. Some aged people still withdraw money at the counter of a nearby bank and rarely go to cash machines for any self-service. In urban regions, aged people enjoy their time mainly with their peers and families after their retirement. In the rural areas, since their offspring go out for jobs in the cities and towns, the common situation is that aged people living with their little grandchildren (after graduated from middle school or high school, most young people will go to cities for jobs, and thus leaving only very young kids with aged people) in the village. For such situations, aged people rarely communicate with people outside of their age-group. This leads to an information gap between aged people and younger people socialized in the modern world, leading to absence of knowledge about typical telephone frauds.

For the factor of education, Hou & Zhang believe that there is a distinction between who have college or higher education and those who have not been to college (p. 40). There is a suitable concept (Blom & Gumperz, 1972, Milroy, 1987) for such situations, these people “interact within a social network which is relatively defined and closed”.

Though the types of social networks (Blom & Gumperz, 1972, Milroy, 1987) were defined in order to study for language shift and maintenance, they can easily be adapted to encompass the acquisition of social knowledge. In this sense, the potential victims of such telephone frauds involve and interact in social networks which are closed, dense and limited.
Such networks, according to the above descriptions, restrain their members from knowing new information and knowledge from the outside community, as well as isolate these people from other social networks. The potential suggestion underlying the victim groups often appears as, they are those who live with few approaches to scamming knowledge. Such lifestyle is utilized by criminals and scammers, if they succeeded in acting as the only informer who was trustworthy and powerful. In order to become such an informer, the frauds have to pursue two elements in their scamming: distinguishing potential victims from other people and achieving deception.

Alongside these subjects, they also obviously aim at controlling the interaction territory, because such frauds base on the victim’s absence of specific social knowledge and this is what the scammers utilize in order to be trustworthy. Controlling the interaction territory is the way to keep victims’ ignorance and reliance on informers (scammers) and thus is the foundation of the whole scamming. Considering such subjects and aim, a telephone fraud is a kind of complicated lie with harmful intentions.

Both the aims and the intention of telephone frauds make it different from general lying and deception, as discussed in other research. In IMT2 and TDT, authors defined lying and deception as constructed by short conversations or by several turns of speech in a concrete background. In their description, most of the participants in such conversations share close relations such as boyfriend and girlfriend, or daughter and father. Generally the matrix of the communication is clarified by descriptions of conversation background. On the contrary, telephone frauds do not occur in such a background or base on such a matrix. This difference requires scammers to turn to something else to cover this lack of matrix in order to
form the truthfulness of the conversation as well as to make themselves trustworthy. Since conversation is the only way for communication and information exchange in the telephone frauds, the strategies which the scammers adopt necessarily present how they convey the intentionality, implicature and imprecision as in Meibauer’s (2011) linguistic analysis of lying.

The intentions of lying are apparent and consistent in various telephone frauds, no matter what details they mention. The core of such fraud is facilitating the victim to make a remittance or bank transfer to an account belonging to the scammers. Taking Meibauer’s (2011) three essential characteristics of lying into consideration, the intentionality in the telephone frauds is that the scammers assert that the addressee is involved in a serious criminal case, while they clearly know this is not true. The concept of implicature is “lying while saying the truth”, and thus the whole discourse would be prolonged in order to include both true and fake information. True information is important for constructing the lie, because reliance and truthfulness are established by the true information of victim’s personal data and functions of different government institutions. The third concept Meibauer offers is imprecision, vague information that cannot be sorted by its truthfulness. The conversation types of implicature and imprecision should be distinguished in analyzing a telephone fraud in order to decode the skills and strategies the scammers adopt. Above all, both of the current research situation and all kinds of lying theories call for detailed and careful analysis of the real conversations happening between a receiver/hearer (victim) and informers (scammers).
3.2 Source and Paralinguistic Features of the Case

The Chinese online video website Youku.com, offers a variety of videos related to the topic of the telephone frauds. This website helps in presenting mainstream attitudes towards the telephone frauds. Moreover, it also offers the masses an access to upload and share daily experiences once a person has registered. According to these features, it provides some real talks between a potential victim and scammers, and thus contributes to supply the raw research materials. When searching with the keyword “telephone frauds” in Chinese, the results reached 2000 hits. This means a plentiful database for choosing and selecting. Most video records with this keyword are created by television program makers. Their emphasis is similar to studies by researchers, stating and analyzing the frauds with an outside view. In this way, many records present the general procedure, the types, the victim characteristics, the roles police officials and bank employees play, and methods to prevent people from being involved in such frauds. Such videos were uploaded as early as five years ago, and some of them are newly produced but convey similar attitudes, analysis and information about this scam. This suggests that video makers or mass media still treat the telephone frauds simply as an old-fashioned and obvious criminal act, and they do not pay more attention to further understanding such scams. On the other hand, conversations with scammers are also regarded as a special and amusing personal experience for those who have the time and patience to talk with scammers. And thus some people upload conversations with scammers as a kind of entertainment. These recordings are not so many, no doubt because few people have sufficient patience and free time to engage in these prolonged and complicated conversations, and often in these conversations the scammers have a heavy southern accent which makes
them difficult to follow or understand. Among those records of real talks with scammers, there is a recording which fully expresses the telephone fraud procedure by a male user called ‘hhhhh2248’. According to the content, he was called in the morning of November, 27th 2014. In this call, he pretended to be an ignorant person who knew nothing about the telephone frauds and cooperated with two scammers. His recording offers the suitable materials for the present case study of the telephone frauds. This vocal record can be visited at http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODM2NTMxMjI4.html.

Before introducing the conversation in this recording, some special features about the recorder should be declared. The first feature is that the maker of this recording had already acquired basic knowledge about the telephone frauds before he picked up this call. That is, in this call he just acted as a person who did not know any information about such frauds. Otherwise this record could not record it perfectly if this person had not recognised the scam immediately. The fact that he recorded the entire conversation means that he realized that the call was a fraud at the first time and thought recording it would help others to know such frauds better. The second characteristic is decided by the recorder’s intention in this conversation. Since he was pretending to be an ignorant victim, he induced the scammers to present all aspects of such frauds. That is, he induced the scammers to explain what he doubted, questioned the vague arguments in the conversation, appeared to be nervous and annoyed to find out how scammers ease his anger, and pretended trusting the scammers to reveal their sayings about transfer. It is questionable if real scams (in which the addressee is genuinely engaging with the scammers) would have similar fullness of content or contain all these elements. The third feature is that actually this conversation should be regarded as a
mutual deception, for the record maker was also misleading and cheating the scammers, although his intention was not harmful for the public, and did not cause loss by the scammers (although it costed scammers much for the call). This mutual deception is different from what TDT and IMT2 discussed.

As for the recording itself, it offered only verbal expressions of the conversation and other parts of communication were absent. However, this is enough since the topic aims to discuss the linguistic applications in discourse of lying and deception. As stated above, this conversation happened in a call, and thus it was impossible for both sides of participants to have nonverbal interactions. In this way, it excludes all factors except the discourse, such as facial expressions, motions and gestures in face to face communication. Secondly, the conversation lasted a long time. The provider described the conversation as “over 40 minutes” but he cut some irrelevant parts to make the length of the record as 29 minutes and 57 seconds. In this half an hour of discourse, there are few uncommunicative sounds or stops such as transferring the call to another person or sounds of a cash machine. In transcription, the whole conversation contains 7321 Chinese characters in total.

3.3 Social and Cultural Background of Telephone Frauds

In order to understand the fraud discourse better, it is both important and necessary to introduce the general social background of present China. Since the late 1970’s the whole country has been directed to focus on economic development. Therefore, a series of public policies were approved without considering much about their moral, social or environmental
rationality. As a consequence, class polarization occurred, stereotypical thoughts, such as common people should obey any bureaucrats, came back and new social problems emerged. When the government encouraged its people to earn money through any approaches, the results would be terrible. In history, British, Spanish and other European countries chose colonization, robbery as well as invasion to other counties. Similarly, some Chinese people regard money and richness as the only criteria of individual achievement. In realizing this personal achievement, most people choose to find a job according to their abilities and advantages, to begin their own business or to develop their skills and knowledge.

However, some people also hope to be rich without any hardworking, and thus they start their “career” which is illegal and immoral, such as frauds. Some of these people, as a group, designed the telephone frauds in China. They form swindler groups (Liu, 2009) and cooperate with each other. In a typical swindler group, the members each have specific roles: acting as different types of government officials, buying personal information, designing the discourses and the sayings, and withdrawing money on cash machines. Most of such groups settle in southeast China such as Taiwan. According to criminal investigations (Hu, Liu & Peng, 2010), some frauds even hire psychology experts from Taiwan to design their conversations for deception and lies. This means that deception and lies are professionally organized. The scammers acquire professional knowledge for deception, and fully understand the importance of the conversations. In this way, they design and carry out the fraud calls carefully. On the other hand, frauds utilize the management defects in most Chinese banks. Opening a bank account is surprisingly easy in China because most bank do not check the validity of personal information documents. In this way, the frauds can give fake information
to open dozens of accounts for receiving money. Once they receive a big sum of money on an account, they transfer it to dozens of other accounts so that they can withdraw all the money immediately without overreaching the daily withdrawal limit. Another convenience for frauds is that, since they use fake information in opening accounts, the police cannot trace the real holders. With the fake personal information, police have few clues to track them. Generally, the telephone frauds are systematically and professionally organized, while tracking and investigating face numerous difficulties.

We now turn to the general script of the victims. In numerous reports by or about victims, it appears that the victim loses a lot of money in a fraud. For instance, two victims each tried to transfer 38000 and 50000 Chinese Yuan (5400 and 7150 euro) to the scammers (Hou and Zhang, 2010, p. 34). These situations were presented in a normal television program introducing the telephone frauds. Things went even worse for richer victims. In another television program, it was reported that a rich aged lady brought 800,000 Chinese Yuan to a bank, saying she wanted to transfer it to a police woman’s account. The victims often appear to be obstinate when the bank employees or police officials try to stop their transfers. In the first television program mentioned above, both of the victims were apparently doubtful about what the bank employees said or reminded. They even clashed with the bank employees when they refused to proceed with their transfers. When being asked basic information about the recipient, the victims were similarly alarmed and offended. They attempted to avoid answering these questions or to fabricate the information about the recipient, the purpose of the transfer and their relation with the recipient. In other words, direct and face to face conversations failed in communicating with those victims while what
the frauds said influenced them much more deeply. Such influence difference implies the different trust, convincingness and obedience. From these different attitudes by the victims, we are again presented with the importance of analyzing the conversation by the scammers.

3.4 Three Research Questions

Most reports, either by victims or by the police, mention abrupt calls as the start of telephone frauds. These calls often occur on working days and offer the “bad news” directly. Such “bad news” is told at the very beginning, which contains a serious criminal case involving the victim and the hearer’s personal information. For most people, such a beginning is absurd because police or other government institutions would directly arrest a suspect or require a person to assist in the investigation with a warrant. However, this beginning is horrible enough for those who know little about investigation procedures. For them, the beginning with “bad news” and their personal information is sufficient to draw their attention, thus making them fully involved in the discourse. This sufficiency bases on the true personal information mixed with false and fake information about the “case”, which in Meibauer’s theory is implicature. The victims mentioned constantly “...but they know everything about me, the ID number, my address, my bank account number... ” when they were asked why they trust the scammers. Considering the two aspects of true and false information, the beginning of the telephone fraud will be helpful in presenting the real lies and deception.

Throughout the whole discourse, the two frauds replenish plausible details gradually
at any point to boost the discourse in order to realize their purpose of making the victim transfer money. Firstly they present the victim’s personal information. After that, they mention the details of a “case” to make it plausible. For instance, in the conversation we are analyzing here, at the very beginning, the female scammer introduced the “case” with plentiful information, such as the locale, the number of criminals, the situation of the case progress, the related amounts, and so on. According to IMT2 and TDT, a liar who lied would avoid too many fabricated details and fake information in structuring one’s deception, and the common way of lying is embedding untrue information in plentiful true details. However, the situation is different in this Chinese telephone fraud. Both of the scammers used large amounts of fake details in their prolonged conversations. In other words, they filled the discourse with plentiful untrue details.

For instance, when the victim was told his bank account would be blocked for 18 months, he acted as extremely annoyed and started continuously complaining about the efficiency of the police. In this way, the victim tried to control the conversation, and change the conversation topic. When he started to express his anger, the female scammer immediately interrupted his complaint with all kinds of related information: their work procedure, how the “criminals” opened bank accounts with the victim’s personal information, the reason why they would block the victim’s bank account, and how this situation would affect the victim’s daily life, and so on. According to the victim’s reaction, this complicated, detailed and prolonged information eased the victim’s anger, because he started his turn with a word “jiusuan” (although), which means concession, and a hesitating modal particle “hur”, which means he was managing his sayings. The function of fabricated details will be further
presented in the next section with examples from this recording. This general glance, the fabricated details would be much more essential than IMT2 or TDT stated, since in this big and sophisticated lie, fabricated details frequently occur.

Secondly, the case study will discuss the repetition of known information. For both the female and male scammers, repetition appears frequently. It seems that repetition is a way to eliminate doubts with the potential victims. In the first half of the recording, the female scammers repeated the amounts in this “case”, “3.6 million Chinese Yuan” five times. She mentioned it as the explanation for requiring the victim’s personal financial information such as in which banks the record maker had bank accounts, the deposit on those accounts and the personal income information. It could be said that saying “3.6 million Chinese Yuan” is a point for outline the female scammer’s purpose in the conversation between her and the record maker, because the scammer boosted the discourse with mentioning this amount. On the other hand, the scammers pushed the process of the discourse not only with the help of repeating the details, but also by adding new information every time they repeated. This also happened in the repetition of “3.6 million Chinese Yuan” of this telephone fraud. This phenomenon suggests that only focusing on the fabricated details in this complicated discourse is not enough. The analysis of details should take consideration of repetition of some emphasized information. In this way, the second question spontaneously turns to the function of repetition in such hard and prolonged lies of telephone frauds.

Another typical case of repetition is found when the male scammer misled the victim to go to a cash machine to install a so-called safety software with a safety code, which was actually a bank transfer. The male scammer called this transfer a “safety code” for installing
the safety software to protect the hearer’s accounts. After necessarily stating the procedure of this installing, he repeated “safety code” 8 times, in which most repetitions are not grammatically organized. That is, the sentences with this repetition are disordered. While the Chinese language uses subject-verb-object structure, this male scammer applied object-verb structure in repeating the norm “safety code”, which is an unusual and strange form of emphasizing the object. This kind of disordered repetitions imply that the scammers concentrated on valuable information firmly related to their aims. This concentration sometimes turns to be extreme and thus leads to disordered sentences. On the one hand, repetition serves as a way to change what the hearer focuses on. Before this repetition occur, the hearer tried to stay at the stage presenting his dissatisfaction and anger, which aimed to induce the explanation or scamming by the scammer. Although the hearer attempted to stay at this stage or drew the conversation topic back to this stage later, he finally was attracted by the scammer. That is, his questions and doubts moved from the blocking to the technical terms such as the function of monitor camera.

The third question focuses on different roles played by two scammers in this scamming discourse. Their roles are mutual cooperative in order to make the conversation reliable. In the first half, a female scammer acted as an policewoman in charge of informing the victim about the “bad news”. She informed him about a drug smuggling case. After making the hearer involved in the fictitious case, the female scammer offered a solution: contact another official in charge of banking issues. Then it turned to a male scammer who pretended to be a powerful official responsible for bank issues and assisting in protecting the victim. This male scammer directed the victim to install a “safety code” to protect his
accounts. In both of these conversations, the victim was told he “must do” something, facing the authorities: police and officials in charge of bank issues. However, the feelings of authorities and orders were expressed differently in the speech of the two scammers. The mood in the female’s utterance is more cooperative, mutual and placid than in the male talks. The talks between the two males were much more oppressive and unfriendly. This feature is apparent when comparing the beginnings of the two parts of the fraud discourse. The interesting thing here is that although the female speaker appeared to be more friendly, cooperative and respective in her talks, and she organized her words, both on the level of grammar and lexicon better than the male scammer, the male scammer achieved more in calling up the victim’s obedience.

This is shown by the victim’s reaction to the information “your bank account will be blocked for 18 months” in the discourses with the two scammers. To the female scammer, he complained four times throughout the prolonged explanation. On the contrary, his complaint only occurred shortly at the beginning of the discourse with the male scammer. This male scammer eliminated or suppressed this one-sentence complaint with a rude rhetorical question “are you talking with me?” implying his authority and power. These two entirely different reactions suggest that, in a big and hard lie, different genders choose different approaches to eliminate or suppress the doubts by the hearer. Correspondingly, the hearers react differently. Different reactions toward different scammers also suggest the process of building trust between two sides of the call. Since the conversation happened between participants who knew little about each other (especially the hearer, the scammers at least knew the personal information about the hearer such as name and ID number), making
themselves trustworthy is a necessary preparation for following scam. Scammers can achieve their goals of inducing the transfer only if the hearer fully trusts them. However, what is discussed in TDT and IMT 2 are lies and deception which happen between familiar participants sharing some trust. These different reactions by the hearers remind the researchers to consider the gender distinction in lying and deception, while this distinction is both excluded in IMT2 and TDT. For this reason, it is proper to consider the third question as the gender distinction in lying and deception.

Summarizing, in the following we will explore the following three questions:

1. How do fabricated details work in a Chinese hard and big lie of telephone frauds?
2. What is the function of repetition in the hard and big lie of telephone frauds?
3. How does different roles by the scammers affect the conversation strategies in the discourse of a hard and big lie?

The following section starts with a general description of the whole process in this telephone fraud, then presents the three questions with the content of this record of telephone fraud in sequence.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The conversation can be divided into two stages. In the first half, a female scammer (S1) acted as a police officer to inform the hearer that he was involved in a drug trafficking case. After telling this, the female scammer also aimed to gather banking information of the victim, she asked the victim in which bank(s) he opened an account and how much deposit the victim had on each account. Since the bank policies vary in different banks, the scammers need the bank names in order to adjust their speeches. For instance, in big and systematically organized banks, staff are careful with every transfer when a client asks for one. They ask detailed information about the transfer and warn about the risk in transfer. For these banks, the scammer has to persuade a person to go to a cash machine and avoid any staff in the procedure. Moreover, scammers also want to know how much money they can get from the victim’s account.

After gathering the banking information and establishing an atmosphere of being involved in a horrible case, the scam turned into the second stage. This procedure was implemented by another scammer, a male person (S2). His task was to urge the victim to install a safety code, which is indeed a transfer. In order to control the victim’s behavior and gain his cooperation, the male scammer tried to exaggerate the seriousness of this “case”. In this way he paid efforts in telling details of this case. After that, the male scammer turned to the main task: inducing the victim to install the safety code. He described this code as a way to protect the victim’s property. Then the discourse turned to specific steps of installment. In
stating these steps, the male scammer repeated the term “safety code” many times and put emphasis on trust issues with the bank staff. At the end of the recording, he demanded the victim to stay connected in order to know the hearer’s behavior.

4.1 Fake Details in Telephone Frauds

The first selection of the discourse is from the beginning of the whole conversation. It happened between the recorder (V) and the female scammer (S1). At the very beginning, S1 introduced herself as a police official, personal information about the recorder, and a brief description of the “drug trafficking case”. Then she required the recorder’s cooperation in their investigation. For such investigation, she went on asking several questions to the recorder. The recorder here pretended to be a potential victim, who was ignorant of investigation procedures of the police, bureau organization and regulation, and functions of the cash machine. On the other hand, the recorder also presented his trust and obedience to the government and authorized organizations such as the police. In the conversation of Example 1, the recorder acted as an honest, well-behaved and astonished person. With such disguise, the recorder could induce the scammer to present the scamming discourse. Thus the recorder answered all the questions by S1 obediently: his banking information, working situation, personal issues, such as where he lives and how much money he spends monthly. After these questions and answers, the recorder told S1 that he had 23,000 CNY on an account at the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and 200,000 on another account at the Bank of China. In Example 1, answers by the recorder are omitted because it focuses on
how S1 managed her questions with details and fabricated information, rather than how the
recorder answered those questions. Reactions by the recorder are briefly summarized in
brackets.

Example 1
(asking for hearer’s personal information and bank account information)

S1: OK, so for the aspect of identity information, I know.

At present, we police have no evidence to prove your innocence.

Furthermore, (it is) related to drug, the fund is up to 3.5 million.

We must verify whether your daily expenditure conforms to your income or not.

I ask you, now, do you have a job or not?

(asking questions about monthly income and expenditure)

S1: OK, for the information about expenditure and income, I have all information.

Now, I want to clarify as soon as possible whether the fund on your bank account is your
legal income or not, and whether it is from a normal income source or not.

(Whether it is) related to this 3.6 million drug funds.

Thus the following questions, you must honestly answer.

*We police will protect you.*

You report the amount of the deposit on your accounts exactly, do not overstate or
understate, avoid big deviation.

If overstated, we will investigate your income source, about its verification.

If understated, the unreported fund, after our investigation, which you don’t report and
can’t explain the source, will be regarded as drug fund, and be confiscated.

Did you get it?

(asking for bank issues about deposit and in each bank)

In these two passages by S1, she promoted the conversation to the information she wanted with fabricated details. In her first saying, she fabricated the situation of their investigation, with the saying “have no evidence to prove your innocence”. Such saying implied that the hearer’s reaction would become to show his innocence. In this way, S1 related the awkward questions for private information to a plausible situation: the hearer should tell such information in order to exclude himself from a serious case. The next sentence also served for deepening such seriousnessness with the specific and large sum of drug funds. They together emphasized to the hearer the importance of cooperation. However, knowing of incomes and expenditure was not enough for S1, because she needed the hearer’s real deposit in order to figure out a proper transfer amount as “safety code” for the next stage. That is, knowing the exact amount of deposit was her core purpose in asking various questions for personal information. She described such questions as one of their investigation procedures, “clarifying legal incomes”. Furthermore, in order to gather the exact amount of the deposit, she again mentioned “3.6 million drug funds” to show seriousness. In the following sentences, she combined sentences which imitate police discourse (police will protect you) with sensitive questions about the exact amount of the personal deposit. She utilized the true information (police will protect you) to raise the misleading demand (You report the amount of deposit on your accounts exactly). Commonly a person would feel alarmed when a
stranger asked private issues such as bank deposit, but such questions could be rationalized by a special identity and a serious situation, such as S1 did, especially when these sayings became very formal and regulated.

After gathering information about the hearer’s personal deposit, S1 turned to tell what they would do in the following investigation. She told the hearer that his accounts both would be blocked for 18 months immediately. This was opposed fiercely by the hearer. Seeing to S1’s response in Example 2, this fierce reaction is what the scammer expected, because she prepared and structured her speech well. Here S1 raised a result which was unacceptable for any person, which means the hearer could not use any of his own money for 18 months. Thus in following conversations, the topic turned to bank accounts and how to manage issues related to bank accounts and deposits. Excessive demands can upset the hearer, so that he might start to bargain for other solutions with more tolerable requirements, such as installing a safety code or transfer money to a safe account. It is important to consider the way S1 reacted to the anger by the hearer. Both at the beginning and the ending of this example, S1 adopted plentiful details in prolonged speech.

Example 2

S1: Oh, do you have anything else to replenish?

    We’ll check that with the bank.

    If we check with the banking system and find there were other accounts opened with your ID card, which

    you haven’t reported, we will confiscate them, and turn (money) it to the state treasury.
If you are innocent, then you can be at ease.

We police will never wrong any good person, nor let off a bad one.

Did you get it?

V: uh, yes, I got it, got it.

S1: At present, because it is an important and complicated case, (it is) investigated by us police, the procuratorate and the Banking Regulatory Bureau,

Do you know what BRB is?

V: I know.

S1: Yes, BRB is short for Banking Regulatory Bureau, which is responsible for (investigating) bank accounts.

Now, we three departments, that is, the procuratorates, the police and the BRB, establish an investigation team for investigating this case.

Now, we, the police, have no positive evidence to prove your innocence.

Thus we, the investigation team, according to the national investigation procedure, decide that, the deposit on your account will be blocked today at 10:00.

The blocking period will be 18 months.

V: Oh, no, such a long time, 18 months!

S1: Er, yes.

V: No, I, even though you are the police, you can’t, can’t do that, OK?

I, I, you, directly making a complaint, I, in any situation, you, 18 months!
I just cooperate with the investigation,

As a law-abiding citizen, I can’t let you block my fund for 18 months!

How can I buy food!

what if I have something (need money)

S1: Sir, don’t be anxious.

Why we are going to block your account,

We mainly want to find out this your...

V: If you’re blocking accounts to investigate (that) is not necessary to block for 18 months,

OK?

You doing like this

I don’t care (your investigation procedure), I... You can investigate (the case) in any way you like

S1: What I just said...

V: I’m going today to...

S1: What I just said

V: Withdraw all the deposit.

S1: this, Mr. X, you

What I just said, you have not precisely understood.

We are blocking the deposit for 18 months

Why we are going to block this account,

We mainly want to find out whether this deposit is your legal income or not

Whether it is related to this 3.6 million drug fund.
This (investigation) needs time to process.

We, the police, investigate a case based on facts and directed by law, (we) hope you understand.

This is to say that we can’t distinguish which (of these accounts) were opened with your ID card by criminals, and which (of them) were opened by yourself.

We need to find out, on your account, whether your deposit is related to this 3.6 million drug fund or not.

Besides, now you can not use your valid credentials.

This, er, that is to say, after blocking your valid credentials and accounts, will it influence your daily life?

If it does, you can raise it now.

Because now explicitness in investigation is advocated.

You, you just said that, the long period would influence your life, right?

Before telling the hearer the news “block the deposit on your account today at 10:00”, S1 here gave an extended explanation, including warning the hearer he should answer all questions honestly, what they would do next, and how they would dispose with undeclared money. After that, S1 promised that they would fairly treat the hearer, then she introduced another department in their investigation team, Banking Regulatory Bureau (BRB). What S1 stated, including the blocking of the deposit, is all fabricated. Such fake details were designed to evoke the hearer’s strong attention and opposition. The scammer must obtain the hearer’s obedience, such as in answering personal information questions and in directing the hearer
what to do to cooperate with their “investigation”. On the other hand, only obedience was not enough to support this big lie. In the first half of Example 2, if the hearer had answered “OK, you can block my account, I can wait until you finish the investigation”, then the call would end with an unsatisfying results to scammers. Thus triggering the hearer’s strong opposition and inducing the other solution are necessary for scammers. For these purposes, S1 introduced newly fabricated details in this part, so that she could change the conversation topic according to the hearer’s strong opposition, and “kindly” offer other solutions. However, this section ends with the question “You, you just said that, the long period would influence your life, right”. by S1. This question oriented the conversation back to former complaints by the hearer, thus encouraged the hearer go on complaining. In the following conversation, the hearer did complain again and interrupted the scamming procedure by S1 with expressions of anger. The details here mainly explained why police would block the hearer’s accounts for a prolonged period. S1 stated the necessity supported by the investigation procedure. Such statement acted as a way to persuade the hearer to accept this blocking, which was contradictory to the inducing end “You, you just said that, the long period would influence your life, right?”.

4.2 Repetition in Telephone Frauds

The Conversation in Example 3 happened between the male scammer (S2) and the recorder. Before this passage began, the recorder just finished the discourse with S1. At the end of that discourse, S1 told the hearer that his accounts would be blocked and if he did not accept this,
he could contact a Director in BRB, who was in charge of account issues. The hearer could appeal for other solutions to this official. Thus, the hearer pretended to be anxious, annoyed with this blocking and complained a lot to S2. S2 suppressed complaints by the hearer with a strong rhetorical question, which reminded the hearer that he was talking to an authorized and powerful bureaucrat. Different from S1, S2 did not explain much about the blocking. He enumerated some specific information about the case, especially those about funds in this drug trafficking. After briefly enumerating, he immediately turned to the solution he could offer, which was actually a transfer on cash machines. Example 3 presents how S2 legalized this solution as “safety code” and how he ordered the hearer to accomplish this operation. What S2 said presents the crucial feature of repetition in rationalizing a concept and directing operations.

Example 3

S2: now I’m talking to you, according to the account bill of this case,

Especially for your present situation, which involved this criminal case, this drug case and the economical loss

We will offer some convenience

What this convenience is, we will apply a bank safety code, after that,

We will install software for monitoring and protecting.

What kind of software will be installed (by us)?

That is, firstly apply for safety code software for you
For this safety code and this installment, your fingerprint will be recorded.

In every bank, any cash machine has a camera.

You know (that), right

V: Yeah...

S2: When (you) input this safety code you should pay attention to the safety code...

V: The camera only records one’s face, right?

S2: What?

V: The camera only records one’s face so how you... it only records my face, so what if, what if I wear a cap,

It couldn’t record me...

S2: When I am speaking, you shouldn’t interrupt, OK?

V: OK

S2: When I say something you can’t understand, you can call me back, is that clear?

V: yes...

S2: ah, now that is, ah...

When you install this safety code, (it) records both your photo and fingerprint

After we add your photo and fingerprint

On our banking system, installing(?) your photo

In this way, once you go to a bank for deposit in person, your deposit in that bank will be safe.

And if the criminal goes to a bank to steal the deposit, our banking system will inform the police.
After informing the police, we will arrest the criminals.

That is, after you add this safety code and install the protecting software, your deposit will all turn legal.

Whether it is safe or not, and at the same time (this) will prove your innocence in this case.

V: Er, yes, but I, I have a question. I really haven’t heard that the cash machine could record one’s fingerprint.

S2: Ah, what

V: Yeah, can the cash machine record fingerprints?

S2: We’ll arrange your photo and fingerprint, after enter this safety code and security code with this camera, do you understand?

V: No, the camera, can it shoot fingerprints? I have some doubts...

S2: Sir, about what you said, I remind you that, now our new, just updated rules and regulations of the Criminal Law Supervision and Management Center of the People's Republic of China*. (According to the regulations) require the holder’s fingerprint, do you get it?

V: Ah, got it.

In this passage, S2 repeated “safety code” constantly in his statements as underlined in the text. The dialogue represented by Example 3 shows how the scammer disguised the transfer as a protecting tool “safety code”. This conception was raised at the beginning of this
example. In addition, S2 also mentioned the function of this safety code: recording the hearer’s fingerprint. However, he did not further discuss this but confidently turned back to repeat “safety code” as if this concept was self-explaining. Such confidence with the concept can be found in the saying “When (you) input this safety code you should pay attention to the safety code...” after his explanation for the camera on a cash machine. This suggests that S2 believed that he has created a situation in which he had knowledge but the hearer was ignorant, thus the hearer would trust anything he informed. At this stage, his task concerned ordering the hearer to do what he said, by the strategy of playing an arrogant bureaucrat, which was expected a high-status officer. Such a role consolidated the trust by hearer. Thus he focused on presenting his own demand instead of treating this discourse as a kind of mutual cooperation. In such situations, S2 did not think about the hearer’s reaction but regarded his own speech as importance, because he was sure that establishing such an identity contributed to make his words trustworthy. On the other hand, the power underlying this role also assisted in calling up obedience.

For another, “safety code” can be a kind of technical terminology in this conversation section. At this stage S2 took for granted that the hearer was less knowledgeable with banking issues. Thus he assumed that a high-technology term would help to exclude the hearer’s participation. This is a strategy to shut the hearer up and let him control the conversation. In this way, S2 used repetition of “safety code” to disguise the money transfer. He constantly mentioned it to conceal this fact. Furthermore, such repetition also deepened the importance of such “safety code” for the ignorant hearer. Here the hearer raised the question of the camera. When S2 was asked “The camera only shoots one’s face so how you...”, he avoided
this question by the command “When I am speaking, you shouldn’t interrupt, OK?” and went on describing the function of the “safety code” and how it worked. For a person with little knowledge about cash machines, these descriptions might be enough to change the topic, but here the recorder raised the question about the camera again. As a reaction, S2 repeated this concept with a vague statement “We’ll arrange your photo and fingerprint” and a rhetorical question. However, when the hearer raised the question the third time, S2 finally changed his response with a fabricated law which sounded official. S2’s reaction suggests that repetition works in wiping any doubts by the hearer. In order to eliminate the doubt and questions at this stage, the scammer first applied a strategy of repeating the main concept with explicit details. When this strategy did not work, he suppressed the doubts by interrupting the hearer’s speech. Finally, fabricating other explanations temporarily was the last choice.

4.3 Different Strategies to Dominate Discourse

Example 4 shows how the recorder presented his anger towards S1’s statements. In the previous conversation, S1 had told the hearer that all his accounts would be blocked for 18 months to cooperate with their investigation (as in Example 2). In this dialogue, the hearer took the opportunity to control the discourse. That is, different from passively answering what the scammer asked in the previous conversation, the hearer could express his feelings and thoughts. He expressed his anger rather than his fear, what often appeared in real victim’s reactions (Liu, 2009, p. 108). It should be kept in mind that the recorder was not a real victim in such telephone fraud. The purpose of this recording, according to his own statement, was
to show how the scamming proceeded in such calls. Thus the recorder tried to induce scammers to present as many of their strategies as possible. The recorder often obstructed the conversation procedure, for example by questioning the function of cameras in Example 3, as well as pretending to be extremely angry with what the scammer said.

V: Er, although you... A normal person has some money, what if some emergency happens?

You block it for 18 months

Even if it is only a month, I think it is long enough.

You want to investigate then you should do it as soon as possible

You police, several days, normally it should be within three days or seven days.

This is what I can suffer.

You suddenly say, they will be blocked for 18 months

Such a long time! How can it be!

At worst, I withdraw all my money today.

I put it home then no one can...

S1: You, you can’t use this money.

If you use it, you are interfering with the police

That is illegal transfer of funds, you know this right?

V: You can arrest me as you want, you can block (the account) as you like, I don’t care

I don’t believe.

Seriously, I’m not a criminal, why you block my...

S1: We didn’t say you are a criminal
The only thing is, we think this (identity information) was stolen, right?

Thus now we want to investigate whether your funds are related to this 3 million drug fund or not.

It needs some time to proceed.

V: Then, you just say, your (investigation), how to do it, OK?

S1: Because we, the police, are in charge of investigation and arresting criminals,

Er, Director Yang of the Banking Regulatory Bureau is responsible for account issues.

Er, now if you want to solve this practical problem in real life, you have to communicate with

Director Yang of BRB.

Er, according to my current investigation, personally I think you are innocent, (you) might be a

victim.

I also regret that you are involved (in this case)

Now, the only thing I can do for you is to do you a favor and turning you to Director

Yang’s office in BRB.

Er, when you contact with Director Yang, you can tell him your difficulty and claims, to see whether

he has solutions for you or not. Did you get it?

V: Er, OK, OK, OK.

In this part of conversation, S1 reacted explicitly to what the recorder expressed. When the
recorder mentioned a solution by himself, S1 immediately responded “You, you can’t use this money”. The explicit and quick reaction also occurred when the recorder complained “I’m not a criminal...”, S1 attempted to comfort the recorder with the saying “We didn’t say you are a criminal”. Such explicitness in reacting to complaints suggests that, S1 was in search of mutual understanding, especially understanding of what the hearer expressed, when the conversation was controlled by the other participant. This implies that, S1 to some extent, considered the hearer’s thoughts and feelings in conversation. Although this conversation aimed to order the hearer to follow the demand by the scammers, and S1 here pretended to be an powerful official, she still consciously but actively tried to seek cooperation based on mutual understanding. This characteristic is also embedded in her questions “you know this right?” and “Did you get it?”. These questions can not exist if she cared nothing of the hearer’s experience with what she had presented. By asking such questions, S1 pretended that such understandings are common ground in this conversation, but actually they are not and return the burden to the hearer.

The recorder, on the other hand, also deliberately expressed his anger to the other scammer to record the reaction by S2. In Example 5, the beginning of the conversation between S2 and the recorder is presented. This example happened right after the complaint in Example 4. The recorder also pretended to be highly annoyed and aggressive in this conversation. He adopted such anger and dissatisfaction in order to take the ownership in the discourse. With this purpose, he prolonged his expression with strong emotion to prevent S2 from saying anything. However, S2 reacted in a different way from S1. In Example 4, S1 reacted to the recorder after he completely presented what he wanted to say, but here in S2,
he chose another method which is much more oppressive. Towards similar anger and complaint, scammers in one fraud group differed in reacting to a possible opposition. Accordingly, these different strategies resulted to different behaviors by the hearer. This passage happened before S2 ordered the recorder to install the “safety code” in Example 3. After S2 suppressed the complaint by the recorder, he shortly provided some more details about the case, and quickly turned to the discourse in Example 3.

S2: Hello, here is Director Yang of BRB and joint investigation team with Xiaogan police. Hello, please speak.

V: Er, it is that, just now, there is a Chen, inspector Chen

You, you, she told me, my, my...

My ID card is related to a drug case, drug funds of 3 million,

Then I am very confused

Then she said (she was) going to block my bank accounts, so I’m extremely angry

Why (you) block (my account), especially (for) 18 months

Then, if my money is all blocked, how can I live, *what if some emergency happens?*

S2: Er...

V: I can cooperate with you police in the investigation, but this cooperation should have some limits, right?

If you are going to do this, I’ll withdraw all my money immediately.

I put it all at home, you can investigate in any way you like.

Come to arrest me, if you can!
I can’t believe, there is no law!

I am not a criminal, why you ask and demand me!

S2: xx (V’s name), you are talking to me

What are you talking to me, ah?

(both silent for a while)

Now, that is, we found in total 15 bank cards on a criminal.

V: Yes?

S2: They were all opened with your ID card.

S2 started his conversation with a brief and professional self-introduction. Correspondingly, the recorder acted as a confused and panicking person in search of help. The recorder firstly summarized what happened to him by means of a disordered description and expressed some worries with the blocking “what if some emergency happens?”. At this point, S2 joined the conversation and interrupted the recorder’s expression. Nevertheless, the recorder obstructed S2’s participation with rapid complaints and provocation, which included what he might do and the saying “Come to arrest me, if you can!” For such fierce opposition and noncooperation, S2 chose neither to comfort the hearer nor to seek for mutual understanding. He called the hearer’s full name, which is impolite and offending for most Chinese people, and aggressively reminded the recorder “you are talking to me”, which implied that he was an authorized and powerful bureaucrat as he had introduced himself before, and, since he had such an identity, the hearer should change his attitude in this conversation to a more respectful one. On the other hand, calling the full name is also a common way for an
upper-status person to imply there are some important and serious issues to the owner. This combination of calling the full name and reminding the status difference worked well in interrupting the hearer’s expression, and indeed S2 efficiently seized the control of the conversation, and made the hearer turn back to a hearer in following discourse.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

From all the above, a hard, complicated, and prolonged lie such as the telephone fraud basically should be analyzed from two aspects: macroscopic and microscopic. As an entity, such big and hard lies base on obvious intention which is inducing the hearer to transfer money to the liars’ account. It has the lie structure which asserts the hearer is involved in a fabricated case, but the liar knows clearly this is not the truth. From this aspect, such a big lie fulfills the definition of deception by Meibauer (2011), which considers both the logical structure and the motivation of speech. However, for understanding such a extended lie, general evaluation is not enough. This calls up analyzing the telephone fraud in detail. Thus, based on theories aimed to test deception (TDT and IMT 2), examples are provided in order to find whether they help in distinguishing the lie or not. In this detailed analysis, the fraud discourse shows its distinctive features of fabricated details as basic elements, repetition as an important persuasive strategy and suppressing input by the victim as controlling method. Among these three features, only the second meets with what McCornack called “Cognitive Load” about repetition of successful deceptive discourse. The other two features are both not covered by the theories discussed here, including Meibauer’s lying system. This deviation reminds us that hard, complicated, professional and vicious lies are entirely different from the lies described in TDT, IMT 2 and Meibauer’s theory.

In Example 1 and Example 2, one sees that the liar utilized fake details in telling and gathering the information she needed. Furthermore, within the whole conversation, it can be said that this deception was built on such fake details. In the first example, the liar presented
her purpose directly at the beginning: verify the income and expenditure information, and applied details about the drug case to explain such questions.

The situation in Example 2 is similar. Details about the investigation acted as the cushion before the bad news “blocking accounts for 18 months”. On the other hand, details in such big lies also assist in deepening the seriousness of the topic. In these two examples, mentioned details focus on presenting the amount of the fund, the constitution of the investigation team, the possible serious results of noncooperation. Thus such details can aggravate the hearer’s fear when hearing them, and thus make the hearer obey more easily.

These details can be regarded as lies according to Meibauer’s definition, but he have not captured functions of these systematically structured small lies in an extended, complicated and big lie. That is, in Meibauer’s discussion, lies and deception are built with single assertion, which declares an event as another. In this way, it produce a lie of Meibauer’s type. However, the big lie of telephone scam is built with, in general, a series of fake and misleading assertions which support each other. Thus, based on Meibauer’s structure, these details belong to intentional lies which share a common purpose beyond what they semantically mean.

In IMT 2 for deceptive production, McCornack offers correctives for always regarding deceptive discourse as more “load-intensive” than truthful discourse. One of such correctives is the Cognitive Load: “Deceptive discourse that proves successful in efficiently reconciling problematic initial-state/end-state discrepancies is repeated recurrently when similar states arise.” (McCornack, 2014, p. 365). This CL could be found in the representation of repetition in Example 3, although this reconciling was not so successful according to three times of
asking the question about the camera by the hearer. Nevertheless, the repetition of “safety code” in this example shows that CL of repeating a concept in constant modification is the strategy a liar applied in making a big lie. The liar constantly repeated the technical term “safety code” and used it as the way to eliminate the hearer’s doubt. This might imply that such repetitions in successful deception are efficient, otherwise he would not use this term so much for almost every doubt from the hearer. The liar changed to other methods (such as fabricating other fake information or taking the advantage of identity) only when the doubts by the victim were unavoidable. However, such methods still share a similar feature with “safety code”. For example, the scammer played a trick of similar terminology with “regulations of the Criminal Law Supervision and Management Center of the People's Republic of China”, a long, official and complicated concept about which the hearer has few knowledge. For another, this example also suggests a way to distinguish lies and deception from truth telling based on repetition. In such extended discourse, intentions and motives are hidden and concealed by plentiful and prolonged sentences so that they can be not very obvious. Hiding intentions obstruct the hearer to acquire necessary and useful information to structure “expert questions” (Levine, 2014, p. 383) in order to test the truthfulness. To solve this vagueness, a hearer can start with the repeated concepts in a certain discourse, because according to McCormack (2014), this is the way a lie achieve its success, and considering the empirical practice in this telephone fraud, the repetition tells what the speaker should focus on. It is interesting that, in a non-deceptive conversation, the repetition helps in making the topic clear and getting out of the vagueness. Here in prolonged deception, the scammer used the repetition to make the hearer unfocus on the deceptive part, and thus moved the hearer’s
attention to what he focused on, the “solutions” by “safety code”.

Example 4 and 5 show how different liars react differently toward similar oppositions and angers in discourse. Since S1 and S2 cooperated with each other for the same purpose in this discourse and shared the same accent (their accent implies that these two scammers are from southeast China, probably Fujian or Taiwan), their difference in reactions should arise from other reasons, such as gender distinctions and identity difference. For the female scammer’s speech in Example 4, she presented more willingness for mutual cooperation when she faced the strong reaction by the recorder. She received the information the recorder expressed and reacted to such information directly and immediately in her answers. She was also concerned with the acceptance by the hearer in her utterance such as “you know this right?” in Example 4. Such questioning implies that she was seeking for acknowledgment and mutual understanding. For S1, although the conversation was full of the hearer’s complaint, she still explored possible paths for mutual cooperation in discourse. However, such efforts did not work well in comforting the recorder even when S1 and the hearer were going to end the discourse. The identity difference in their roles is very important for this deception. For the female scammer, she played a communicative and good officer who considered the hearer a lot and was willing to offer possible solutions for the hearer. Thus she could make the hearer trust her and then induce the hearer into the following procedure by the other scammer. After establishing the trust, the following conversation matched the expectation of bureaucrats by the bad-tempered, inconsiderate and arrogant role of the male scammer. Such conversations carry an underlying information which strongly tells the hearer this solution is unchangeable and mandatory if he wants to protect his property. On the other hand, such conversations also
technically fit the role the male scammer is playing: a busy, superior officer who has little
time for unimportant things but just technically tells the hearer what to do as a favor.

Compared with the invalidity of S1’s cooperative communication, S2 chose another strategy,
which was entirely opposite to S1’s way. S2 focused on expressing in his own pace rather
than regarded the discourse as a mutual cooperative project. Furthermore, he utilized the
fabricated identity more of its power and authority. In Example 5, he utilized this identity to
interrupt the recorder’s complaint and thus dominated the conversation. Such interruption
was effective in this typical context. Compared to how the hearer reacted at the end of
Example 4, the hearer presented his obedience and even fear in the short silence in Example 5,
but an impatient answering to the female scammer. According to these different results and
their underlying emotion status, the suppressing and self-centered ways probably work more
efficiently than normal thoughts of treating discourse as a mutual cooperative activity.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, hard, big, complicated and prolonged lies such as telephone frauds are different from deception discussed in deceptive theories such as TDT and IMT 2. On the other hand, because some features from these theories work but others do not, absorbing all definitions to analyze big and complicated lies would also cause deviation. Among Meibauer’s three concepts: intentionality, implicature and imprecision, only the feature of intentionality works in this case of telephone frauds. Thus the empirical practice of hard and prolonged lies calls for more attention, as suggested by Harwood (2014). For such big and complicated lies with malicious intention, some specific characteristics can be concluded from the case study. For telephone frauds in China, there are three obvious features in structuring: plentiful fake details, rationalizing the demand with repetition, and efficient suppressing utterance in dominating discourse. Some of these features are against results and views in established theories. In the fraud record, liars both mentioned fake details of quantity, such as the amount of drug funds, related bank accounts and the number of criminals. Such details suggests an emphasis on the maxim of quantity. Such emphasis is opposite to MacCornack’s rules of Information Manipulation. The deviation from theories suggests further research for the hard and big lies. On the other hand, such characteristics of hard and big lies also provide methods in distinguishing lies from truth-telling discourse. If the long discourse appears to be over-detailed, repetitive and suppressing in daily situations, it might hide the original intention and induce the hearer to misunderstand.
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