跨文化交际：
探索与实践

Intercultural Communication: Exploration and Practice

—Proceedings of China's 4th Symposium on Intercultural Communication

主 编 杜瑞清

西安交通大学出版社
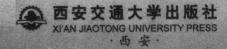XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

跨文化交际：
探索与实践

Intercultural Communication:
Exploration and Practice

—Proceedings of China's 4th Symposium
on Intercultural Communication

主　编　杜瑞清

副主编　李本现

　　　　田德新

西安交通大学出版社
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY PRESS
·西安·

Opening Remarks at China's 4th Symposium on Intercultural Communication

Du Ruiqing（杜瑞清）

Xi'an International Studies University

Good morning!

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues.

UNESCO has proclaimed 2001 the Year of Dialogue between the Cultures. We, as scholars in the teaching and research of communications, are gathered here to respond to the UNESCO initiative and contribute to the dialogue. Our endeavor is particularly praiseworthy because it is the first such symposium in the 21 century, a time when understanding across cultures becomes all the more imperative. Our voices for this objective may not be seriously heeded outside the academic circle, but they will certainly be heard. It is with this fervent hope that I extend, on behalf of the organizing committee of the present symposium and Xi'an International Studies University, my warm welcome and sincere thanks to all the scholars from across China and different parts of the globe for coming to this ancient city for the biennial intercultural communication symposium. It is a regret that Prof. Hu Wenzhong, president of the China Association for Intercultural Communication, is not able to attend the symposium for business reasons. His congratulatory message, however, will compensate for his absence. It certainly shows that he has not forgotten us. Some other noted scholars in the field are also absent for a variety of reasons. Prof. Chen Jianping of Guangdong Foreign Studies University and Prof. Lin Dajin of Fujian Normal University called at the last minute apologizing that they won't be able to come in time for pressing administrative responsibilities. And unfortunately, a number of American scholars in the field cancelled their trips because of the disaster a month ago. This, in itself, demonstrates the need for effective, constant communications across cultures. And this makes us wonder whether cultures can indeed be ways of living together. In spite of the regrets, we have over 50

scholars with papers covering a wide range of intercultural communication, and we have old as well as new faces, and certainly younger faces —all of those who have dedicated themselves in the field and made notable contributions. We are here to compare notes and share what we have persistently achieved on an individual basis. In addition to discussing the harmony, conflict and diversity in intercultural communications, the Symposium is blessed with papers on more current and urgent issues such as Internet and ICC and social-cultural dimensions of language choice in post-colonial H. K. Many others will likewise stimulate our minds and generate a great deal of interest at the ensuing sessions, whether plenary or concurrent. The stimulation of mind and generation of interest will, I hope, lead to us to think about and address some of the major intercultural problems in the new millenium, which is characterized by economic globalization. As China is getting itself increasingly involved in it and its modernization, what contribution can we render in our capacity as English language teachers with emphasis on and research interests in cross-cultural communication? Have we, for example, been placing emphasis on understanding and learning other cultures at the expense of slighting or even ignoring our own cultures? In other words, have we done enough to promote Chinese culture and to explain Chinese ways of life with the English language as an effective means? English is the language of information and has become an indispensable international language for communication. The question we have to ask, and as is asked by a noted Japanese scholar, "If the world's EFT is culturally Anglo-American oriented or dominated, what is going to happen when Japanese and Thais meet?" Well, a two-day academic exercise such as ours is too brief for such profound and even controversial issues, but some food for thought will give the present symposium a boost and facilitate the following one two years later with the venue to be determined before we wind up the sessions. For the next symposium, we need volunteers. As host of the present Symposium, we are doing our utmost to provide adequate services. More importantly and perhaps for selfish reasons, we will benefit from the symposium proceedings. As an institution of higher learning located in China's western region and with emphasis primarily on languages and related programs we are disadvantaged in geographical, economical and academic aspects. But with concerted and persistent efforts, we are catching up. In addition to the 7 languages that are taught at both the undergraduate and

2

graduate levels we have diversified our curricular offerings to include communication studies, international politics, human geography and a host of other disciplinary areas. Building on the strengths of almost 50 years of the teaching of foreign languages we place much importance on and organize cross-cultural seminars and researchers on a regular basis. Your presence with presentation will, no doubt, further the intercultural awareness and boost intercultural teaching and studies on our campus. For that, let me once again extend my deep appreciation to your presence on behalf of the 9,800 full and part-time students and 1,100 faculty and staff members we have on campus.

Ladies and gentlemen, Xi'an is a city with a history of over 3,000 years. It served the most glorious history and culture of China, and experienced extensive intercultural interactions between China and other lands in ancient times. I hope the field trips after the rigorous sessions will be both a feast to the eye and an enrichment of the mind.

In conclusion, may I wish the symposium success and all of you a pleasant stay in Xi'an.

Thank you.

Contents

Opening Remarks (*Du Ruiqing*)

Part Three   Cultural Differences in Discourse and Communicative Style

Part Four   Case Studies on Intercultural Communication Conflicts

Part Five   Globalization and Cultural Diversity

Part One Theoretical Exploration

The Sociocultural Dimension of Language Choice in Postcolonial Hong Kong

Jane Jackson

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract: In Hong Kong, students are influenced in varied degrees by both Chinese and Western cultures and languages. How have recent cultural, political, educational, and linguistic experiences shaped their sense of self and their language choices for various academic and social situations? This paper reports on a sociolinguistics study that was conducted in an intercultural communications course at a bilingual (Chinese-English) tertiary institution in Hong Kong. Twenty-five Chinese students, who were English majors, completed a survey, which provided background data and information about their use of English or Chinese. They also wrote cultural identity papers in which they reflected on their life experiences, cultural background (sense of belonging to particular groups), and factors affecting their choice of language(s) in various contexts. Most of the subjects then expanded on their views in reflexive interviews in their first language. The analysis of the narratives and transcripts helped explain their reluctance to use English when not required in classroom situations. This paper provides an overview of the analysis of the students' narratives and interviews, identifying common issues that emerged in the discourse. It provides insight into some of the complex social, psychological, and cultural factors that are impacting on the students' cultural identities and their choice of Chinese, English, or code-mixing.

Key words: language choice; cultural identity; code-mixing; postcolonial Hong Kong

1. Introduction

The issue of language choice and cultural identity has long attracted the

interest of sociolinguists in many parts of the world (Bolton 1990; Giles and Pierson 1988; Genesse and Bourhis 1988; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 1982; Kamwangamalu 1992; Tong, Hong, Lee and Chiu 1999). Questions about the attitudes and perceptions of bilingual or multilingual speakers when choosing to speak in a particular language have merited scrutiny especially during times of great political or social change. This paper aims to contribute to the growing literature on this issue by focusing on the language choices of ethnic Chinese university students in Hong Kong. Of particular interest will be the factors that now affect the language choice of the subjects in various settings.

2. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

(1) Do the subjects experience themselves differently in different languages? E. g. , One self in Cantonese and another in English?

(2) What are the connections between their languages (e. g. , Cantonese and English) and their most important relationships?

(3) Are there contexts in which they use code-mixing (a mixture of Cantonese and English)? In which situations do they use it most often?

(4) How do they feel when they see two Hong Kong Chinese speaking English with each other when there are no native speakers of English present?

(5) In Hong Kong, why do they think there is a reluctance on the part of English majors to use English outside situations when it is not required? (e. g. outside class)

3. Methodology

The study followed an ethnographic approach and included an important element of triangulation (Geertz, 1973; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). In particular, narrative inquiry and reflexive interviews were employed to investigate the subjects' views about the factors affecting their language choices (Bruner, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1994; Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995; Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1994; Witherell and Noddings, 1991).

In an intercultural communications course at the Chinese University of Hong

Kong, the subjects were asked to write a 5-7 page paper in which they reflected on factors affecting their language choices in various situations. At the end of the course, they were invited to participate in individual interviews with a bilingual (Chinese-English) research assistant. In these sessions that were conducted in Cantonese, the subjects were encouraged to expand on their personal views about language and identity issues.

These accounts in their own words were essential to develop an appreciation of the dynamic and complex psychological process of language choice in this cultural setting. The gathering of qualitative data was intended to uncover aspects of the subjects' perceptions that would have been lost in quantitative forms of inquiry such as surveys. Thus, in keeping with an ethnographic, emic (insider) perspective, the voices of the subjects (excerpts of their narratives or interviews) guide and dominate the discussion in this paper.

4. The Participants

The participants in this study were 25 full-time undergraduates at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. All of the subjects wrote a reflective paper about their cultural identities and language choices; twenty-one of them were interviewed after the course ended.

Of the 25 subjects, 19 were female and 6 were male, with an average age of 20. 8 years. All of them were majoring in English. Four (16%) were in their second year of studies and 21 (87. 5%) were in their third and final year of their Bachelor of Arts (B. A.) program.

All of the subjects were ethnic Chinese; two were born in Mainland China while the rest were born in Hong Kong. Twenty-four spoke Cantonese as a first language and one, a male student from Mainland China, spoke Hakka, a Chinese dialect. English was as an additional language for all of the subjects. In the background survey, the respondents were asked to rate their overall proficiency in English using a six-point scale ranging from very poor to excellent. One rated himself as poor; 10 indicated their proficiency was fair and 9 selected good. Only one felt that his English was very good. None rated their proficiency in English as excellent.

The subjects were also asked to indicate if they had spent time outside Hong Kong. Twenty-one had been to other parts of Asia: 11 had ventured to an

English-speaking country and 6 had been to a non-English speaking country
(e. g. , France or Germany). Sixteen had been outside Hong Kong for less than a
month at a time; 3 had been abroad for two months, 2 had been abroad for 6-12
months and 2 had been outside for more than a year. Nine had studied outside
Hong Kong, in China (1), the U. K. (5), U. S. (1) or South America (1);
most participated in short exchange or study abroad programs.

5. Results and Discussion

The following section provides quotations from the subjects' narratives and
interviews which address the research questions. The code number and gender of
each subject is provided with each excerpt. The excerpts in their narratives have
not been altered in any way; the interviews have been translated and attempts
have been made to retain the subtle nuances of their discourse.

(1) *Self-perceptions when using different languages*

In response to the first area of inquiry, many of the subjects indicated that
they felt differently when using English and Cantonese, with one person when
speaking their mother tongue and another when communicating in English. In
effect, many felt that they possessed a dual identity. For nearly all of the
subjects, their Cantonese self is their "true" self, while the English self is more
foreign. The following comment was typical.

> I experience myself differently when using Cantonese and
> English. When I use Cantonese, I experience myself as a Chinese.
> When I use English, I experience my other self in English and I feel
> like a person who has an English background. These experiences of
> different selves are so distinctive to me that they increase my sense of
> being a Chinese. (female, 2, narrative)

Some of the subjects noted that their level of proficiency had a significant
impact on how they felt when using a language. Not surprisingly, those who
were less competent in English felt ill-at-ease and inhibited when using it.
Moreover, nearly all of the subjects emphasized the high level of comfort they
felt when using their mother tongue. In the following excerpt, for example, the
author used a metaphor to describe the joy that enveloped her when using
Cantonese. It is in these moments that she is untethered and flies free as a bird.

I am more worried about communicating with those who speak in English because I do not know how to express my feeling in an efficient and presentable way. When I speak Cantonese, I feel totally comfortable just like a bird flying freely in the sky; but when I speak in English, I think I am incompetent and I would sometimes feel speechless. (female, 17, narrative)

For those who were more proficient in English or at least had much more confidence in using the language, their attitudes towards the language were quite different. And for these individuals, the prestige factor was very important. For example, the following interviewees felt "superior" when using English.

I feel, to some extent, a sense of superiority if I can speak English. This is because those who can speak English in Hong Kong are also related to the educated, civilized and rich. People gain more social recognition and confidence when speaking English. Hong Kong is a capitalistic and materialistic place; therefore people see money as a tool for better living and view money as the target of life. Those who can speak English in Hong Kong are viewed as educated, since they must have been highly educated. In turn, those who can speak English can have a good job and earn a lot of money. Therefore, one who can speak English is a successful person. Actually, I do experience the sense of superiority when I speak in English to a non-Chinese speaking person. I feel I am wiser and higher in social rank when I speak in English to an English native speaker or a non-Chinese speaking person, for instance, a Filipino. There were many times I talked to my lecturer who is a native English speaker outside the classroom, for instance, on the school bus or in the canteen, I am proud to show the passers-by I can talk fluently in English and I can communicate well to a westerner. (female, 13, interview)

My sense of identity is paradoxical when I use English to communicate with foreigners (either native or non-native English speakers). I feel a sense of superiority when I am speaking English for it not only acknowledges my English competence, but also widens my world. Since English is a global language, speaking English

enables me to communicate with people from different cultures. Through the process of sharing, not only do I understand the characteristics of other cultures, but also recognize how my culture differs from the others and this in turn helps me to confirm my own identity. Also, the problem of "losing face" shrinks because I am aware that peoples in other cultures, especially those from the Western culture would not think in the way that Chinese do. So, my enthusiasm for using English recovers and I can perceive a clear image of my identity through the cross cultural communication. (female, 12, narrative)

The emotions many felt when using the languages differed considerably. Using their mother tongue made them feel like home.

I speak Cantonese with my friends, Hakka with my family, English in class and Mandarin when I am in China. I feel like I have many identities through these languages. Hakka, one of the dialects in China, is my family language. Though this language does not sound softly like French or Shanghainese, it makes me feel like home. It suggests something most private and intimate that only passes through in the family. I cannot imagine what I will feel like if my teachers speak Hakka in class. (male, 6, narrative)

Language is one of the aspects of a culture. The language I speak is a reflection of my cultural identity. I can speak three languages: Cantonese, English and Putonghua. I speak Cantonese because I am a Hong Konger. I speak English because I am considerably influenced by the Western Culture. I speak Putonghua because I am a Chinese. I can listen to the Hakka dialect, which is the mother tongue of my father. However, I cannot speak it and I seldom have the chance to speak, so I do not include it in my languages. It also shows that I am quite detached from the very traditional Chinese culture. When I use these languages, I have very different feelings. Among them, of course I feel most easy when speaking Cantonese as it is my mother tongue. It almost becomes a reflex for me to speak or react to others in it. I use Cantonese expression naturally as if the language had

already penetrated my mind. This is most obvious when I want to express some immediate and strong emotions such as screaming because of pain, excitement or anger. Then, I will choose Putonghua as my second language... I feel easy when speaking Cantonese and yet I feel proud when speaking Putonghua. For English, I think it is a perfect, international communicative language, but I do not have much feeling when speaking it. (female, 11, narrative)

(2) *The connection between languages and relationships*

Many of the interviewees view their mother tongue as something intimate and private. For them, the use of Cantonese creates a private circle, that is, a deep personal bond between the speakers. By contrast, most typically, English is regarded as an impersonal, formal language that would be intrusive if used in personal situations.

I prefer to use Cantonese for my private discourse. I use Cantonese either when I talk with my family, relatives, and friends, or when I talk about my private matters, feelings, and emotions. When I speak Cantonese with my family and friends, I feel an invisible tie linking us together which makes us feel intimate and close. Once I used English to talk with my sisters at home, but then my mother seemed surprised and asked me why I spoke English at home. I'm not surprised at her reaction because we have classified English as a language that is not ours, so when English is used privately, it would be regarded as an intrusion and alienation to our private circle. (female, 2, narrative)

We feel free to express ourselves when using our first language. Whenever I think, the language that is conducting in my mind is also Cantonese instead of English. So, using Cantonese can make my conversation smoother and more fluent and accurate. Besides, most of us use Cantonese to communicate with family members and close friends. It becomes deep-rooted that whenever we want to share something or talk something secret, we use a more "intimate" language rather than the one that we use to conduct with formal classmates or colleagues. (female, 8, narrative)