



ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOKS



The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Discourse Studies

Edited by Shi-xu

Cultural Discourse Studies is a field committed to locally grounded research and critical engagement with human communication as a global system of diverse cultural discourses enmeshed in unequal relations of power. The globally diverse contributions to this handbook exemplify that commitment while advancing the field in many important ways.

Robert T. Craig, University of Colorado Boulder, USA

Cultural Discourse Studies is a remarkable edited collection certain to shape the field of communication powerfully. The book is theoretically sophisticated, wholly imaginative, and more importantly exactly what we need to read right now to improve the world. Cynicism, insults, and oppression harm the ability for humans to cooperate; *Cultural Discourse* courageously seeks to improve the conversation, steering it toward more healthy dialogues and outcomes. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to live in a world where people get along!

Kent A. Ono, University of Utah, USA

Shi-xu has assembled a remarkable collection of studies on culture and discourse studies that should be of interest to scholars and students. The book offers a sweeping survey of key concepts and case studies from contributors from around the world. The contributions address classic debates as well as recent cases about the way groups and organizations use discourses to mobilize meaning, as well as the challenges for intercultural communication in a global world. All in all, this is a stimulating book that raises important questions and lays out rich empirical findings.

Silvio Waisbord, George Washington University, USA

Of all the fields of Discourse Studies, Cultural Discourse Studies, starting with Dell Hymes in the 1960s, was the first, and, as shown in this much needed Handbook, still is a crucial approach to the study of text and talk all over the world, as is also shown in the selection of topics and the impressive international team organized by the prominent cultural discourse studies scholar Shi-xu.

Teun A. van Dijk, Pompeu Fabra University, Spain

The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Discourse Studies represents an ambitious effort to map out the philosophical underpinnings, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical challenges faced by humanity as we (fail to) come together to communicate about how to avoid the global existential threats we are facing today.

Ingrid Piller, Macquarie University, Australia

With a wealth of fresh perspectives and innovative case studies, this is an exciting, provocative volume which undoubtedly helps expand the scope of discourse studies.

Crispin Thurlow, University of Bern, Switzerland



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THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CULTURAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

In response to the cultural challenges in society and scholarship, this handbook presents the conceptions, assumptions, principles, methods, topics and issues in the studies of cultural forms of human communication—*cultural discourses*—by experts from around the world.

A culturalist programme in communication studies (CS), cultural discourse studies (CDS), as represented in this handbook, is a new current of thought in human and social science and a form of academic activism, but above all, it is a fresh paradigm of research committed to enhancing cultural harmony and prosperity on the one hand and facilitating intellectual plurality and innovation on the other hand. This handbook is the first of its kind; it is concerned with the identities of, and interactions between, the world's diverse cultural communities through locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical approaches to their communicative practice. Contributors apply such insights, precepts and techniques, not merely to discover and describe past and present communication, but also to design and guide future communication.

This handbook is ideal for scholars and students interested in cultural aspects and issues of communication/discourse, as well as researchers of other fields looking to apply cultural discourse methods to their own projects.

Shi-xu is Changjiang Distinguished Professor and Director of the School for Contemporary Chinese Communication Studies at Hangzhou Normal University, China. He is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* (Routledge, ESCI) and General Editor of the Cultural Discourse Studies Series (Routledge). His books in English include *Cultural Representations* (1997), *A Cultural Approach to Discourse* (2005), *Read the Cultural Other* (as lead editor) (2005), *Discourse as Cultural Struggle* (as editor) (2007), *Discourse and Culture* (2013), *Chinese Discourse Studies* (2014) and *Discourses of the Developing World* (2015).

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THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CULTURAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

Edited by Shi-xu

Designed cover image: Getty

First published 2024

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-07501-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-07506-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-20724-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003207245

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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INTRODUCTION

Shi-xu

Cultural discourse studies (CDS) concerns itself with human communication, parallel to communication studies (CS) broadly conceived. That is, it takes as its object of study social interaction in which people use linguistic symbols and other means purposefully and consequentially in historical and cultural context and seeks to describe, interpret and critique it. In this view, communication is a social process which encompasses multiple elements and dimensions (e.g. language, gesture, technology, channels, time and place). As such, communication functionally constructs reality, exercises power and changes the world.

And yet crucially different from many common forms in CS whether they are rhetorical, conversational, textual or media analysis, CDS considers human communication, not as universal or culturally neutral, but as a global system composed of culturally diversified and competing **discourses**. Here the term discourse refers to a *culturally* particular form of communication, real or potential, of an ethnically and geopolitically characterised community, say the Chinese/Asian/Developing/Third World or American/Western/Developed World. So **culture** in this context refers to the set of ways of thinking, speaking and acting, often involving concepts, norms, values, rules, language, ethnicity, religion, traditions, as well as material artefact, that are embodied in and so characterise the discursive practice of such a community as just mentioned. In other words, culture is the defining feature of a discourse—hence *cultural discourses*—and of communication more generally. To study a discourse, then, is also to study a discursive community's culture.

Cultural discourses are not just different from one another. Very importantly, in the globalising world, they are in an interactive relationship and, consequently, relations of *power*—domination, exclusion, resistance, cooperation, etc.—saturate the process.

It may be stressed here that cultural discourses in general and culture in particular are not to be taken essentialistically, as if they were homogeneous, reified or fixed. Rather, they should be understood in *differential, dialectic* and *dynamic* terms: They have dissimilarities both within and without, they are interdependent and they are subject to change.

It may be pointed out, too, that any given community's discourse, or any particular cultural discourse, has its own system—**discourse system**. By this is meant the underlying, constitutive configuration of (a) *communicative institutions* (community, organisation, platforms, media technology, etc.—“the motor system”) and (b) *communicative know-how* (concepts, values, theory,

information, principles, tactics, etc.—“the nervous system”) which combine to enable, organise and sustain a community’s discursive practice at different levels of abstraction (e.g. the Developing World/Asian/Chinese) and fields of action (e.g. political, economic, scientific, artistic). It is the communicative competence of a given community and so can have profound impact on the outcome of its communicative practice. Therefore, it is crucially important to study the discourse system of a cultural community, as a whole and at its various social domains.

For practical research purposes, CDS categorises a cultural discourse into six interlocking components; they are **communicators**, **act**, **medium**, **purpose**, **history** and **culture** (CAMPHAC). Specifically, **communicators** imply discursive actors as cultural organisations and members for investigating who is (not) speaking and acting, in what position and capacity and with what characteristics (e.g. world views, ways of thinking, character, past experiences). **Act** is relevant verbal and nonverbal (inter)actions for studying what is (not) said and (not) done and how, how it is responded to and what social representation and relation result. **Medium** is the use of symbols, channels and other tools (e.g. specific languages, conventional and new media; occasion; time; place) for studying what means are (not) used and how (also in relation with language use) and why. **Purpose** is the causes, intentions, goals, effects and consequences for studying why the discursive activity in question has taken place, why it has done the way it did and what impact has resulted. **History** is the processes involving the aforementioned discursive categories for studying the nature, change and (ir)regularity of the discourse in question. **Culture** is the sum of features in all the previous categories, but in dialectic, differential and power relations to other relevant discourses, for studying the identity, distinction and intercultural relation and standing of the discourse in question. Depending on the particular research purposes and conditions of the data at hand, these categories may be mobilised either in part or as a whole. As should be reminded, too, since these categories are dialectically interconnected, a form of synthesis on the basis of their analyses is required in order to reach a comprehensive and so practically productive conclusion.

Immediately, it should be cautioned that, just like the notion of cultural discourse, these analytic categories must not be used as universal tools, either. They are proffered as heuristics, starting points, for studying specific cultural discourses. For, just as the diverse cultural discourses of the communication system may not have the same nature or shape, so do the analytic categories proposed here. Therefore, they are to be utilised subject to readjustment and reconfiguration according as the specifics of the particular discourses under investigation.

Profoundly concerned with cultural diversity, dynamic and division of contemporary communication, CDS is designed and dedicated to directing and practicing *locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical* study of cultural discourses with a view to fostering *cultural innovation in scholarship* on the one side and facilitating *cultural development, harmony and prosperity in society* on the other side. Locally-grounded, here, means drawing on native wisdom and scholarship; globally-minded means learning from foreign knowledge and expertise. Culturally conscious means being attentive to cultural difference and coherence of communication, whereas culturally critical is being supportive of cultural harmony and resistant to cultural hegemony. It is in these senses that CDS is *culturalist* in stance: It is an intellectual form of cultural politics.

To achieve the broad objectives set out here, a spate of interrelated tasks that CDS practitioners may and should be taken up are provided. These are, to name but a few more urgent and badly needed ones, as follows:

- (1) **To highlight and deconstruct ethnocentrism in the communication/discourse field with a view to rebalancing and reforming it.** To that end, research questions could revolve around:

How does the field of CS constitute ethnocentrism (i.e. cultural domination, prejudice and exclusion), e.g. who are the dominant speakers/gate-keepers and who are excluded? Whose cultural scholarship (theory, concepts, values, methods, topics, questions, etc.) is being universalised and whose marginalised? What is the current order of scholarly communication flow like? What does scholarly ethnocentrism imply for academic innovation and societal development? How are we to transform the current unbalanced order of CS discourse in favour of cultural-intellectual diversity and creativity for CS?

- (2) **To (re)construct and apply the frameworks of cultural discourses of the world's diverse communities, but especially those unfamiliar, repressed or otherwise disadvantaged ones, with a view to reclaiming identity and regaining voice, thereby enlivening, expanding and enriching communication/discourse studies.** To accomplish this task, efforts may be made to query such questions as: What are the worldviews, ways of thinking and acting, norms and values, etc.—the identity and distinctions—of a discourse community concerned like? How are we researchers to (re)construct culturally conscious and critical frameworks of cultural discourses, such as the Asian, African, Latin American or of the developing world as a whole, which have hitherto been under-theorised and understudied? What should be the agenda for their scholarship in CS like? What are the philosophical, theoretical, methodological and topical assumptions for researching their discourses? What are the properties, problems and potentials, not just of the culturally dominant discourses, but especially of those that have hitherto been misunderstood, misrepresented or silenced? How have the disadvantaged discourses been evolving? How are they related and compared with their historical past? How are they related and compared with their cultural others? How are discourses of cultural cooperation, mutual learning and shared benefit constructed?
- (3) **To compare and critique relevant cultural discourses in terms of commonality, difference and interrelations, with a view to enhancing intercultural empathy, equality and cooperation.** This means that research may be rendered into such questions as: What are the common grounds, similarities, equivalences, linkages, differences and contradictions between particular cultural discourses concerned, if any? What are the possible or actual discourses of complementation, cross-fertilisation, sharing, helping, collaboration, synergy, solidarity, and otherwise domination, demonisation, coercion, prejudice and exclusion like? How are such discursive acts enabled, formed or changed? How may those positive ones be recreated or promoted and negative ones undermined, reduced, transformed or otherwise prevented?
- (4) **To craft new discursive strategies for the world's cultural communities to come together to confront common, pressing issues and crises facing humanity, with a view to ensuring a future world of security, peace and prosperity.** To do that, researchers should endeavour to come up with answers to questions like: What are the real, important and urgent problems facing humanity (what about poverty, climate change, nuclear threat) where communication has a role to play? What should the world's diverse communities do in order to ensure continued, egalitarian and sustainable communication? How could communication/discourse studies contribute to solving those existential problems? With the fast scientific and technological advancement (say artificial intelligence [AI]), what would happen to society and to human communication and so what preparation must be made?

These tasks may of course be taken up separately, in tandem, in parallel or as an ensemble according as the particular research aims are chosen and the specific research conditions allowed.

To come to terms with human-communicative, or more specifically, cultural-discursive, richness and complexity, and more particularly, to accomplish the research tasks, CDS develops a comprehensive and integrated, though still evolving, system of explicit approaches, as follows.

Intracultural Analysis: To search for identity, distinction, particularity or peculiarity of a cultural discourse, through description and explanation of the relevant discursive components and their relations in the data at hand (e.g. self-image, concepts, values, major themes, strategies of meaning-making); because there is no parallel comparative analysis, the results do not guarantee any cultural uniqueness.

Transcultural Analysis: To search for incursion by, influence from or fusion with aspects of relevant other cultural discourses by discovering borrowings, transfusions or recreations of concepts and ideas, norms and values, topics and expressions or else responses and reactions of some sort in the discourse under study.

Cross-Cultural Analysis: To search for differences, variations, contrasts as well as ambivalence between cultural discourses in question through comparison of relevant discursive components or aspects so as to discover differential representations of the ‘same’ reality, variable attitudes towards the ‘same’ issue, contrary actions, unique features, etc.

Pancultural Analysis: To search for commonalities, similarities, equivalences and interconnections between different cultural discourses in question by analysing all relevant discursive components or aspects (e.g. types of communicators, ways of thinking, conceptions, values, objectives, shared experiences).

Intercultural Analysis: To search for and make sense of self and other representations by and processes of interaction between different, and by implication multiple, cultural discourses in question and so also the resultant identities, actions performed, penetrations, relations of power (e.g. domination, exclusion, marginalisation, resistance, cooperation, synergy) and changes of situation.

Axiocultural Analysis: To offer evaluations over aspects or properties of a cultural discourse(s) in question and propose new ways and norms of communication in order to enhance cultural development, unity and prosperity. In this regard, CDS has its own cultural-political criteria, global and local. Namely, while the global criterion, subject to continuing dialogue within our discipline, is whether and to what extent a discourse is in favour of cultural flourishing—development, unity, prosperity—the local standards are contingent upon the specific needs, aspirations and traditions of the communities concerned, whether or not they impinge upon sovereignty, security or socio-economic advancement.

It may be added that these methods may be employed selectively or in combination, depending on the goals of research and the nature of data at hand.

Finally, to ensure the attainment of the culturalist ideal and the accomplishment of these outlined tasks, a set of rules applies as to the practice of CDS. They may be classified into two kinds, one positive and one negative: On the one hand, (a) to give due attention to local context (e.g. its relevant norms, values, habits), (b) to be conducive to native wishes and concerns, (c) to tap into native intellectual resources (e.g. wisdom, knowledge, scholarship), (d) to take into consideration international, intercultural and global interests, (f) to be mindful of history and progress (e.g. new media, AI, ChatGPT) and (g) to be modest and open to dialogue (e.g. by continuous and cultural-mutual learning); on the other hand, (a) not to monopolise or dominate in scholarship (e.g. not to universalise one’s own culture), (b) not to ignore, disregard or marginalise foreign intellectual traditions and (c) not to be blind to inequality and repression.

Introduction

This handbook is organised in four parts or at four levels—philosophical, theoretical, methodological and empirical—so the comprehensive research system or paradigm of CDS is presented to the reader.

Part One has five chapters; it critically reflects on the relevant fields, defines the object of study and highlights its character, projects research directions and stipulates appropriate approaches of CDS. Thus, Chapter 1 outlines the contours of CDS in terms of its background, scope, directions, paths and rules. Chapter 2 identifies and critiques sociological and epistemological forms of colonialism in discourse studies and suggests ways of transformation. Chapter 3 proposes what is called Asiaticentricity as metatheoretical impetus for steering culturally productive investigations into Asian discourses. Chapter 4 excavates the historical complexity and diversity of intercultural communication research, exposing its current parochialism, ethnocentrism and nationalism thereby. Chapter 5 argues from a non-hierarchical perspective for the re-merger of the discursive and the material in the study of discourse. All in all, the reader is proffered a road map for doing CDS.

Part Two contains seven chapters and canvases various levels and domains of cultural discourse theory. Thus, Chapter 6 brings the reader to a central issue in CDS—power struggle—and offers an analytic concept that highlights its assemblages and operations. Chapter 7 sheds light on multiple cultural dimensions and aspects of communication, outlining a broad and multifaceted theory thereby. Chapter 8 shows the importance of understanding bicultural identity and, by implication, multicultural identity as well as their formative processes in the study of communication in general and of discourses in particular. Chapter 9 propounds Asiaticentric womanism as an alternative framework that resists the hegemony of Eurocentric feminism, redefining emancipation and empowerment for women within and without Asia as a result. Chapter 10 presents an integrated research system for contemporary Chinese discourse, complete with philosophical, theoretical, methodological and topical components. Chapter 11 offers an account of ethnic media and journalism in the less explored milieu of Russia. Chapter 12 reconstructs European science as a cultural discourse by teasing out the history of European scientific discourse, uncovering intellectual imperialism in the process. Chapter 13 focuses on basic, important concepts of social life and highlights their differences cross culture and history.

Part Three is composed of five chapters and provides tool kits for exercising CDS. So Chapter 14 introduces and advocates a new notion of spirit as epistemological prompt for CDS intellectuals to expand their horizons of sensing, feeling, thinking and creating in the continuing Power/Other dialectic and dialogue. Chapter 15 provides a methodological framework for multimodel cultural discourses. Building upon the tradition of the ethnography of communication, Chapter 16 explicates how cultural discourse analysis can serve as an effective tool for investigating intercultural contact and mobility. In association with the same tradition, Chapter 17 spells out the new analytic categories of discursive hubs for identifying and specifying identities, actions, feeling and many other elements in cultural discourses. Chapter 18 recommends Freire's interrelated perspectives on marginalised groups and literacy as crucially important strategies for the study of cultural discourses.

Part Four is the largest of all with ten chapters; together they showcase a diversity of cultural forms of communication under empirical and practical lenses. Thus, through using a notion of speech-action nexus, Chapter 19 identifies two divergent versions of an ideology within the Israeli discourse that underlines trust in language. Proceeding from a decolonial perspective, Chapter 20 shows that hate speech is rendered in Argentina through the language of prejudice couched in common sense. Chapter 21, similarly, engages with right-wing discourse in Argentina by scrutinising its intragroup competing self-representations. Chapter 22 brings into sharper relief the Western political priorities that sustain global inequality and discord by examining document design and photography in the websites of voluntary carbon markets. Chapter 23 looks at Chinese social

media on popular culture with a view to discovering transcultural tensions. Chapter 24 explores local and global interaction in the Argentinian discourse of space and place. Chapter 25 critiques the populist styles of impolite discourse by reflecting on its impact on democracy at both local and global levels. Through a cross-cultural study of Chinese and British business discourses, Chapter 26 highlights the role of industrial norm in corporate communication in the age of globalisation and digitisation. Chapter 27 provides a critical reflection on an educational initiative conducted in Brazil that aims to expand cultural perspectives of university students. Finally, Chapter 28 recounts an African experience in the production and use of harmonised orthography for African languages in favour of socio-economic development.

PART I

Philosophical foundations



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1

CULTURAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

A culturalist approach to communication¹

Shi-xu

Introduction

Our world has never been so desolate and desperate as it is today. A few figures speak volumes. The World Bank reports,

by the end of 2022, as many as 685 million people could still be living in extreme poverty. . . . Given current trends, 574 million people—nearly 7 percent of the world’s population—will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day in 2030.²

Global Wealth Report says, “the overall regional disparities . . . are reflected in the fact that North America and Europe together account for 57% of total household wealth, but contain only 17% of the world’s adult population”.³ According to the World Health Organization,

almost all of the global population (99%) breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits and contains high levels of pollutants, with low- and middle-income countries suffering from the highest exposures. . . . The combined effects of ambient air pollution and household air pollution is associated with 7 million premature deaths annually.⁴

The Swedish Thinktank reports,

approximately 90 percent of all nuclear warheads are owned by Russia and the United States, who each have around 4,000 warheads in their military stockpiles; no other nuclear-armed state sees a need for more than a few hundred nuclear weapons for national security.⁵

As the old crises of poverty, climate change and nuclear weapon rivalry are being exacerbated by the new virus of COVID-19, humanity has chosen anything but solidarity and cooperation. At the 76th United Nations (UN) meeting, the Secretary General Guterres summarised it well:

Our world has never been more threatened. Or more divided. We face the greatest cascade of crises in our lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has supersized glaring inequalities.

The climate crisis is pummeling the planet. . . . And economic lifelines for the most vulnerable are coming too little and too late—if they come at all. Solidarity is missing in action—just when we need it most.

The communication approach to social reality, it would seem, has not, however, been quite concerned or equipped to help with the existential issues such as these. This may be demonstrated by screening the contents of the field's Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) journal publications. For this, 28 communication-related SSCI-indexed journals for the year of 2022 were selected where a total of 1031 articles was found. The key words of poverty, nuclear and environment/climate change were used to identify the number of relevant publications. Results are flabbergasting: on poverty, 1; on nuclear, 3 and on environment/climate change 12. More broadly, as has been observed, communication theory, if there were indeed such a thing, had been divided with disparate interests and foci such that complex communication problems lack comprehensive, integrated approaches (Craig, 1999; García, 2021). In connection with that, more seriously, intellectual West-centricism, or intellectual imperialism as has been called, has served to consolidate Western domination, exploitation and exclusion, which results in the non-Western world being alienated, devalued and marginalised (Asante, 2006, 2008; Gordeon, 2007; Ishii, 2004; McQuail, 2005; Miike, 2006, 2008; Shi-xu, 2009, 2014).

The present chapter sets out to delineate an emerging paradigm in communication studies (CS, including all forms of discourse analysis), alternative to the mainstream: Cultural discourse studies (CDS). It will do so in terms of its scope, assumptions, objectives, tasks and norms of doing CDS. It will be argued that CDS may serve as a culturalist disciplinary antidote in CS; it seeks to facilitate cultural harmony and prosperity on the one hand and achieve communication/discourse research innovation on the other through a locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical, methodology. Further, it will be indicated that, inspired by this metatheoretical blueprint, an accompanying academic movement is on the way, complete with communicative platforms. The chapter will end with an illustration of its practical operation through a study of Chinese and the US national defence discourses.

(Re)Emergence of culture in communication studies

Following the aforementioned inaction and inadequacy of mainstream communication studies, let us look at an exemplar thereof, critical discourse analysis (CDA) (*à la* Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Wodak, 2001), before expounding CDS. This strand can be regarded as a good case because, to say the least, it is sustained by several SSCI-indexed journals under the rubric of communication in the Web of Science system.

This particular mode of research may itself be seen as a distinct cultural discourse that has significant scholarly and societal implications (cf. Jones, 2007; Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999; Widdowson, 1995). First, the foundational and leading speakers come from a European linguistics background, as is reflected in the topics of interest selected and the approaches adopted. Second, reproduced by Anglo-American corporations, the master text(book)s, as well as associated journal publications, present CDA as culturally neutral or universally applicable, as they are marketed and distributed globally. Third, it follows a binary pattern of thinking and divides up the complex lifeworld into ‘text/discourse’ on the one side and ‘context/society/cognition’ on the other side. Here, as may be pointed out, it does so in order to dismiss the latter and focus on the former, whether or not it proclaims a ‘dialectic’ or ‘explanatory’ perspective. Coupled with this move, fourth, is the West-accustomed ‘container metaphor’, namely, the presumption that ‘text/discourse’ is the vehicle of

meaning. Fifth, CDA uses Western values and stances as universal—without taking into consideration local cultural systems and traditions. As a result of this, its conclusions may more often than not misrepresent culturally variable realities and, not surprisingly, negate them indiscriminately, perpetuating existing stereotypes thereby. Finally, possibilities of intercultural-intellectual dialogue and debate then become precluded and non-Western scholarly heritages marginalised (Alatas, 2006; Chakravarty et al., 2018; Demeter, 2020; Scheurich, 1993; Shi-xu, 2009).

Indeed it is high time that communication scholarship pay more attention to common and pressing issues threatening humanity, seek more innovative objectives and reply on more inclusive perspectives and resources (Shi-xu, 2005, 2009, 2012). Of course, that is not to say that there has been no work on the dimension of culture.

In response to the cultural blindness and Westcentrism in the mainstream tradition, there has actually (re)emerged a current of consciousness for culture in CS, in particular through various culture-centred approaches (Baker, 2021; Blue, 2019; Collier, 2000; Durán, 2018; Gavriely-Nuri, 2010, 2012; Gordeon, 2007; Ishii, 2004; McQuail, 2005; Miike, 2006, 2009; Pardo, 2010; Prah, 2010; Shi-xu, 2005, 2009, 2014; Tomlinson, 1997; Wolton, 2001), the field is witnessing a retheorisation of communication. These trends form part of the background to CDS as they provide insights, inspirations and frames of reference. For the purpose of exposition, these approaches may best be characterised as “communication as culture-general”, represented by ethnography of communication and cultural discourse analysis; “communication as culture-particular”, represented by Asiatic and Afrocentric theories and “communication as culture-incidental”, represented by intercultural communication theory.

A first, the culture-general approach assumes that culture exists across communication, though variably, such that it is possible to use a general framework to discover the particular forms and meanings of communicative practice of particular communities in question (Boromisza-Habashi & Fang, 2023; Carbaugh, 2005, 2007, 2017; Carey, 2008; Gumperz & Hymes, 1986; Kuo & Chew, 2009; Saville-Troike, 2003; Scollo, 2011). Thus, theory of cultural forms of expression and methods of analysis are created for identifying distinctive cultural codes as well as cross-cultural differences. Although this approach recognises cultural similarities and variations in communication, it fails nonetheless to take into consideration the complex interactive processes between different cultural discourses and consequently the power practice and relations involved, let alone possibly unique aspects of particular cultural discourses.

A second, culture-particular approach proceeds from the notion that different cultures have different ways of thinking, world views, concepts, values, rules, etc. that organise their communication and therefore, formulates culturally specific and unique, for example Afrocentric, Asiatic, theories of communication (Asante, 2006, 2008; Miike, 2008, 2009; Xiao & Chen, 2009). Such a move enables the construction of culturally distinctive models of communication, effectively encouraging the establishment of the identity and authenticity of relevant and especially marginalised scholarly communities, undermining the presumed universality and superiority of Westcentric theory thereby. However, this approach, smoothing over possible convergences of communication, may hamper the chances of intercultural-intellectual dialogue (cf. Wang & Kuo, 2010) and moreover, similar to the approach delineated earlier, gloss over the interaction between different cultural systems of communication and so also the power relations therein.

A third, culture-incidental approach is predicated on the understanding that questions of culture or cultural background set in when people from different communities come into contact and communicate with one another. Here communication itself is considered neutral and universal and separate from culture whereas the latter, in terms of the native language, knowledge, norms of behaviour, etc., is but an external factor that can engender miscommunication and

misunderstanding (e.g. Spencer-Oatey, Isik-Güler & Stadler, 2012, p. 572). So the task of intercultural communication research is to identify cultural features that cause problems in communication. In such a perspective, not only is culture seen as negative, but also the cultural nature of communication in general is overlooked, whereby the power-saturated character of cultural communication is left out of the picture.

Beyond these, it may be noted that tenets over power and prejudice, as well as values of inclusiveness and harmony, from a diversity of intellectual heritages, movements and currents—such as Chinese and African philosophy (e.g. Tianren Heyi, Umbutu, see Cheng, 1987; Krog, 2008), postmodernism (e.g. social construction of reality, de-centreing, see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008), postcolonialism (e.g. resistance to prejudice against and repression of the non-Western world, see Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978, 1993), antiracism (e.g. fight against white supremacy, see Scheurich, 1993; Scheurich & Young, 1997), feminism (e.g. fight against gender inequality, see Spender, 1980; Stanley & Wise, 1983), as well as critical intercultural communication (e.g. power-oriented notion of culture, see Halualani, Mendoza & Drzewiecka, 2009; Holliday, 2011; Nakayama & Halualani, 2011; Neuliep, 2011)—have fertilised CDS, too. But as these currents are more focused on culture than on discourse and communication, we shall discuss no further but go on to a more thoroughly cultural programme in CS.

Cultural discourse studies

It is against the backdrop of the cultural crises and awakening, both societal and scholarly, that cultural discourse studies has emerged (see literature for example in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*). CDS concerns itself with human communication, like CS in general. That is, it takes as its object of study the social interaction in which people use language and other mediums in context, purposefully and consequentially, and seeks to describe, interpret and critique it. In this view, communication is a social process which encompasses multiple elements and dimensions (e.g. language, gesture, technology, channels, time and place).

And yet different from many common forms of CS, CDS considers communication, not as universal or culturally neutral, but as a global system composed of culturally diversified and competing *discourses*. Here discourse refers to the *cultural* form of communication, real or potential, of an ethnically and geopolitically characterised community (say the Chinese/Asian/Developing/Third World, American/Western/Developed World). Culture in this context refers to the particular ways of thinking, speaking and acting, often involving concepts, norms, values, rules, language, ethnicity, religion, traditions, as well as material artefact that are embodied in the discursive practice of a community. Thus culture is the defining feature of a discourse—hence cultural discourse—and of communication more generally; to study discourse and communication, then, is also to study culture.

CDS is predicated on a number of interlinked assumptions. First and foremost, communication is a global system of verbal interaction in which people use language and other media purposefully and consequentially in particular historical and cultural relations. Secondly, the global system of communication is also at the same time culturally organised in that it consists in diverse and competing discourses (see further), hence cultural discourses. This implies that cultural discourses are sites of contention, cooperation and transformation. Thirdly, communication in general and cultural discourses in particular construct reality, perform action and exercise power, bringing about social cultural change thereby. Fourthly, cultural discourses as social events and practices are enabled, guided and shaped by underlying discourse systems (see further). Finally, the global order of communication is unbalanced, unfair and unjust but, with the perennial awakening of

humanity, is subject to change towards higher levels of civilisation, though over long epochal periods of time. These constitute a culturally conscious and critical—*culturalist*—view of communication that under-girds cultural discourse studies.

In this account, ‘discourse’ refers to a cultural form of communication (real or potential) in which people as cultural members or groups use language and other media (e.g. gesture, technology, channels, time, place) purposefully and consequentially in specific historical relations and in particular (inter)cultural relations (i.e. with other groups’ forms of communication). Discourse, as a cultural communicative practice (event and activity), constructs reality, exercises power and changes society (Burr, 2015).

‘Discourse system’ then is considered as the configuration of (a) *communicative institutions* (community, organisation, platforms, media technology, etc.—‘motor system’) and (b) *communicative know-how* (concepts, values, theory, information, principles, tactics, etc.—‘nervous system’) which enable, organise and sustain a group’s discursive practice in a particular field (say economy, diplomacy, health) and are in relation with other such discourse systems. It is the discursive competence of a given community which can have profound impact on the success or failure of their communication.

‘Culture’, in turn, means the system of ways of thinking and ways of acting, often involving concepts, norms, values, rules, language, ethnicity, religion, traditions, as well as material artefact, that are embodied in the discursive practice of a community (e.g. Chinese/Asian/Developing/Third World, American/Western/Developed World). Culture is a relational notion in that the culture of a discourse (community) exists only *in relation to* other such discourse systems. In this light, it is also saturated with power.

Emphatically, the concept of culture and, for that matter, East, West, Chinese, Asian, the Global South and the like are not to be understood essentialistically, as reified, fixed or homogeneous. Culture is internally fluid and externally open (Pang, 1993; Shi-xu, 2005); parenthetically, it is not considered metaphorically along, say, national, gender, generational, professional or organisational lines. Roughly speaking, a given culture is the discourse system of that cultural community in both *relational* and *functional* sense.

For analytic purposes, discourse, as hybrid social interaction, is categorised, heuristically into six interlocking components: **communicators**, **act**, **medium**, **purpose**, **history** and **culture** (CAMPHAC). Specifically, **communicators** include cultural groups and members for investigating who is (not) speaking and acting, in what position and capacity and with what characteristics (e.g. world views, ways of thinking, character, past experiences). **Act** is relevant verbal and nonverbal (inter) actions for studying what is (not) said and (not) done and how, how it is responded to and what social representation and relation result. **Medium** is the use of symbols, channels and other tools (e.g. specific languages, conventional and new media, occasion, time, place) for studying what means are (not) used and how (also in relation with language use) and why. **Purpose** is causes, intentions, goals, effects and consequences for studying why the discursive activity in question has taken place, why it has done the way it did and what impact has resulted. **History** is processes involving the earlier discursive categories for studying the nature, change and (ir)regularity of the discourse in question. **Culture** is the sum of features in all the aforementioned categories, but in dialectic, differential and power relations to other relevant discourses, for studying the identity, distinction and intercultural relation and standing of the discourse in question. Depending on the particular research purposes and conditions of the data at hand, these categories may be mobilised either in part or as a whole. It should be remembered that because these categories are dialectically interconnected, a form of synthesis on the basis of their analyses is required in order to reach a comprehensive and practically productive conclusion.

These analytic categories are formulated for describing, analysing, explaining, interpreting and evaluating discursive practice, either in part or as a whole. It should be cautioned, however, that, just like the notion of cultural discourse, these analytic categories must not be used as universal tools, either. They are proffered as starting points for studying specific cultural discourses. For, just as the diverse cultural discourses of the communication system may not have the same nature or shape, so do the analytic categories proposed here. Moreover, the components represented by those categories are interconnected and organised in different ways across different cultural discourses. Therefore, they are to be appropriated in ways that are subject to readjustment and reconfiguration according as the specifics of the particular discourses under investigation. It may be noted, too, that the all-encompassing notion of communication as cultural discourses is different from the classic idea proposed by Lasswell (1948) in terms of the 5W questions in that the latter does not pay attention to historical and (inter)cultural dimensions and relations of communication nor to interrelations of different communication categories.

Profoundly concerned with cultural diversity, dynamic and division of contemporary discourses which have hitherto been much neglected, obscured or explained away in the mainstream scholarship, CDS, as alternative paradigm, aims to enhance cultural innovation and transformation in CS scholarship on the one hand and to facilitate cultural development, harmony and prosperity in society on the other hand. It does by following two broad methodological principles: Performing locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical research. Locally-grounded means drawing on local native perspectives and resources, while globally-minded taking in account of human and long-term interests and the world's wisdom. 'Culturally conscious' means to be attentive to cultural identities and diversity whereas 'culturally critical' is to be supportive of cultural unity and oppositional to cultural hegemony. It is in these senses that CDS is *culturalist* in stance. It is an intellectual form of cultural politics.

To achieve the goals of CDS, practitioners can and should take up a number of interrelated tasks, which may be carried out separately, in tandem, in parallel, or as an ensemble. These are, to name but a few general ones, (a) to expose and deconstruct ethnocentric discourses of domination, prejudice and exclusion, whether global or local, societal or scholarly; (b) to reconstruct locally-grounded and globally-minded frameworks of unfamiliar, mystified or otherwise marginalised cultural discourses; (c) to discover and highlight discourses of cultural cooperation, mutual learning and shared benefit, as well as repressed cultural experiences; (d) to craft action strategies for disadvantaged communities to reclaim cultural identity, authenticity and freedom and (e) to invent ways for Western and other communities of CS to work together in order to confront the most urgent crises facing humanity. These tasks may be accomplished through researching a large variety of specific questions, such as

- (1) How does the field of CS constitute ethnocentrism (i.e. cultural domination, prejudice and exclusion), e.g. who are the dominant speakers/gate-keepers and who are excluded? Specifically, whose cultural scholarship (theory, concepts, values, methods, topics, questions, etc.) is being universalised, whose marginalised? What is the current order of information flow like? What does scholarly ethnocentrism imply for academic innovation and societal development? How are we to transform the current unbalanced order of CS discourse in favour of cultural-intellectual diversity and creativity for CS?
- (2) How are we to (re)construct culturally conscious and critical frameworks of cultural discourses, such as the Asian, African, Latin American or of the developing world as a whole, which have hitherto been under-theorised and understudied? What should be the agenda for their scholarship in CS? What are the philosophical, theoretical, methodological and topical assumptions for researching their discourses?

- (3) What are the properties, problems and potentials, not just of the culturally dominant discourses, but especially of those that have hitherto been misunderstood, misrepresented, or else silenced? How have the disadvantaged discourses been evolving? How are they related and compared with their historical past? Similarly, how are they related and compared with their cultural others? How are discourses of cultural cooperation, mutual learning and shared benefit constructed?
- (4) How can marginalised communities, hence their discourses, be reinvented and empowered, so strategically reorganised, in order to reclaim their identities, reassert their voices, rebuild their images, and regain their positions in the global order of communication?
- (5) How can the culturally diverse communities of CS start to engage in egalitarian and sustainable dialogue and debate with a view to enlivening, enriching and enhancing CS? In particular, how can we work together to reorient CS toward solutions to the most urgent existential problems facing humanity, say poverty, climate change and nuclear threats?

Recognition of cultural properties, aspects or factors of communication has led cultural, cross-cultural and intercultural communication studies to devise a myriad of methods of analysis. And yet owing to differences in views and goals, there exists a myriad of methods of analysis which, if at all explicit, are more often than not incompatible, or even at odds, with one another. To answer the research questions and to achieve the objectives as set out earlier, dissolving the extant methodological fragmentation thereby, CDS formulates a comprehensive and integrated, though still evolving, system of explicit methods to come to terms with the cultural complexity of communication, as follows.

Intracultural Analysis: To search for identity, distinction, particularity or peculiarity of a cultural discourse through description and explanation of the relevant discursive components and their relations in the data at hand (e.g. self image, concepts, values, major themes, strategies of meaning-making); because there is no parallel comparative analysis, the results do not guarantee any cultural uniqueness.

Transcultural Analysis: To search for incursion by, influence from or fusion with aspects of relevant other cultural discourses by discovering borrowings, transfusions or recreations of concepts and ideas, norms and values, topics and expressions or else responses and reactions of some sort in the discourse under study.

Cross-Cultural Analysis: To search for differences, variations, contrasts and contradictions as well as ambivalence between cultural discourses in question through comparison of relevant discursive components or aspects so as to discover differential representations of the ‘same’ reality, variable attitudes towards the ‘same’ issue, contrary actions, unique features, etc.

Pancultural Analysis: To search for commonalities, similarities, equivalences and interconnections between different cultural discourses in question by analysing all relevant discursive components or aspects (e.g. types of communicators, ways of thinking, conceptions, values, objectives, shared experiences).

Intercultural Analysis: To search for and make sense of self and other representations by and processes of interaction between different cultural discourses in question and so also the resultant identities, actions performed, penetrations, relations of power (e.g. domination, exclusion, marginalisation, resistance, cooperation, synergy) and changes of situation.

Axiocultural Analysis: To offer cultural-political critique over the properties or aspects of cultural discourse(s) in question, including proposals of new norms and new ways of communication, all for the sake of continued cultural development, unity and prosperity. In this regard, CDS

proceeds from the position that no cultural discourse (community), shaped by internal and external conditions, is perfect and therefore should be open to critique and ready for mutual learning; and yet that no cultural discourse (community) is superior to others and therefore should treat another with respect and compassion. On that basis, CDS adopts twofold criteria for cultural-political evaluation: global and local. Namely, while the global criterion, subject to continuing dialogue within our discipline, is whether and to what extent a discourse is in favour of human flourishing—the world's development, unity, prosperity—the local standard is whether and to what extent that discourse is congenial to the needs, aspirations and traditions of the discourse community concerned. In other words, both are designed to help identify, characterise and adjudicate practices of cultural deprivation, ethnocentrism, imperialism or otherwise cultural inclusion, cooperation and empowerment.

It should be added that these methods, distinct yet mutually complementary, may be employed selectively or in combination, depending on the goals of research and characteristics of data at hand.

To ensure full attainment of its ideal, proper observation of its principles and satisfactory accomplishment of its tasks, CDS applies a set of specific rules to its practice. These are (a) not to neglect local context (e.g. norms, rules, values, habits, questions and issues of the community under study), (b) not to ignore or exclude native scholarship, (c) not to lose sight of international, intercultural, global and long-term human interests (e.g. to be considerate about the needs and well-being of the wider world community), (d) not to overlook techno-societal change and progress (e.g. to be on alert about technological advancements such as digitalisation, new media, AI, ChatGPT), (e) not to universalise one's own culture and degrade culturally others and (f) not to be blind to inequality and repression.

By now, it may be realised that CDS as a paradigm is not just a metatheory providing guidelines and tactics for theorising cultural discourses, but also constituted by and sustained through the very practice of those prescriptions. To illustrate the practical workings of that system, especially in terms of the sorts of issues it deals with and the ways it does, let us turn to the discourses of national military strategies (NMS) of China and the United States.

An exemplar of doing CDS

The “China threat” theory, and discourse, is well-known from Western academia as well as Western media, where the Chinese defence policy is continuously accused of being “ambitious”, “aggressive” and “opaque” (Hameiri & Jones, 2018, p. 573). And yet this issue has not been looked at from a cultural discursive perspective, in particular, from a cultural discourse studies viewpoint; a systematic-comparative, discourse based, locally-grounded and globally-minded and culture-centred approach is needed in order to shed new light on international security.

That means, first of all, that China's defence policy must not be seen as isolated or detached but as relational and interactive, internationally and interculturally, not least with that of the United States. For one thing, the world is increasingly globalising, for another, defence policy is partly utilised by countries concerned with managing their international and global security relations in general and military diplomacy in particular. In that connection, it may be pointed out that China and the United States should be examined not just as two nations but more importantly as presumably two distinct cultures in the globalising world because of the differences in power as well as language, beliefs, wishes, norms, values and other forms of traditions, etc. In that case, a cross-cultural, intercultural as well as pancultural analysis, as outlined earlier, will come in handy.

Secondly, national defence policy is not just a military or security affair in its material and political sense, but at the same time it is also a communicative, cultural-discursive, phenomenon. A certain authoritative institution must formulate and express the policy; certain topics and themes, as well as ways of expressing them, etc., will be involved thereby. Furthermore, certain channels and certain platforms will be employed to announce the policy as national and international statements; certain international and intercultural actions, interaction and relations will then emerge as a result. On account of all this, an analytic and comparative framework based on the shared, common features of the Chinese and US national NMS discourse will be created—in terms of its aspects and properties, viz. (a) the conceptual constituents of the NMS discourse, (b) actions and relations resulting from the NMS discourse and (c) medium use for disseminating NMS.

Thirdly, national defence policy (discourse) in general and that of China and the United States in particular cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the culturally relevant perspectives and traditions. This means on the one side that as default rule of CDS, trust—in place of bias, stereotypes and prejudice—is given to the party’s discourse under study and on the other side cultural traits such as worldviews, ways of thinking and ethics in communication and action will be considered as inalienable context. In this regard, it is particularly useful and important to note that China is a nation with a strong tradition that has lasted over two thousand years (Shi-xu, 2012, 2014; Shi-xu & Feng-Bing, 2013; 施旭, 2022 [in Chinese]) and that so it would be a mistake to read the Chinese discourse at its face value and to ignore its deeper and wider cultural baggage. By the same token, it would be equally important to look beyond the ‘words’ and recall the ‘deeds’, e.g. the military operations and indeed the wars that the nations in question have carried out. In this case, intracultural analysis will be needed in each case.

Finally, a synthetic and critical assessment will be called for, which provides a comprehensive, ethical judgement drawing on the prior partial analyses. At this stage, the researcher should play a prominent role. For, in CDS, whatever other identities and stances the practitioner may have, s/he is supposed to proceed from the culturalist position, as defined earlier, in the study of local, global or glocal issues of communication, as in the current case. And for this case of national and international security, that comes down to the specific moral stance of supporting sovereignty, peace and mutual respect, even though that stance may still be open to cultural contest and negotiation. In other words, the researcher of CDS takes an in-between, cultural-political position—locally-grounded and globally-minded (Shi-xu, 2005).

Thus, to illuminate the nature and characteristics of the defence policy of China and the United States, two distinct sets of material are chosen as data for analysis. On the one side is the Chinese white paper entitled *China’s Military Strategy* published by the Information Office of the State Council on June 26, 2015, as well as the rest of the serial documents and related media activities (from 1998 to 2019 China published ten defence white papers, but the one in 2015 marks the first time that it officially and globally publicises its national military strategy). On the other side is the US counterpart, the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015: The United States Military’s Contribution to National Security*, published on July 1, 2015, as well as the others in its serial dossiers (from 1992 to date the United States has published six documents in its series, but in 2018 its suspension was announced). National military strategy can be seen as epitome of national defence policy, which in turn may be seen as that of national security policy.

To start with, at the conceptual level, attention may be drawn to the locus and nature of national security (NS) in the documents which is central and basic to national defence (ND) policies in general and to NMS in particular. This is a significant point of the investigation because whether NS is independent and detached or interlinked between nations will have grave implications for the attitudes and actions that a nation’s military takes to ND and NS more generally. Compare

(the numbers at the end of each of the following examples indicate the paragraph of the document in which it appears):

China: China's destiny is vitally interrelated with that of the world as a whole. A prosperous and stable world would provide China with opportunities, while China's peaceful development also offers an opportunity for the whole world. (2)

Countries are increasingly bound together in a community of shared destiny. (4)

America: As detailed in the 2015 National Security Strategy, our enduring national interests are: the security of the United States, its citizens, and US allies and partners; a strong, innovative, and growing US economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; respect for universal values at home and around the world; and a rules-based international order advanced by US leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges. (25)

Here China conceptualises and constructs its NS as not separable from that of the rest of the world, but rather as inter-meshed with it and, moreover, as potentially mutually beneficial. Therefore, its conception is inclusive, mutual and cooperative in nature. This notion, it may be argued, is consistent with the Chinese traditional worldview of holism: The universe is a whole in which everything is connected with everything else.

The US conception of NS, in contrast, is marked as bound and independent of the rest of the world. Moreover, the United States defines a number of world dimensions and qualities as part of its own defense strategy. Therefore, its conception of NS is, comparatively speaking, exclusionary, divisive and hegemonic.

Next, let us move to the level of actions of the NMS discourses, viz. what they do to each other as well as to the rest of the international community, paying special attention to the speech acts deployed:

China: In their endeavor to realize the Chinese Dream of great national rejuvenation, the Chinese people aspire to join hands with the rest of the world to maintain peace, pursue development and share prosperity. (1)

America: We will press forward with the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, placing our most advanced capabilities and greater capacity in that vital theater. We will strengthen our alliances with Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. We also will deepen our security relationship with India and build upon our partnerships with New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. (41)

Here, as in much of the other serial dossiers, China pronounces and declares willingness to collaborate with the rest of the world for the sake of common good. In this way it shows a cooperative spirit and presents a friendly gesture on the global stage. This act, it could be recalled, is a reflection of China's traditional value of harmony, as well as being consistent with the nation's contemporary socialist system.

The US statements perform, however, quite a different sort of acts: A show of power and force to a given theatre in the world and a declaration and promise of alliances with certain select states—whom they are with and against is then as clear as day. From this perspective, these acts could be read as bloc-minded, world-divisive, confrontational and repressive in international military posture in particular and military diplomacy more generally.

Apart from the conceptual and performative dimensions of the NMS discourses, the media use therein provides still another vantage point from which to understand the NMS of the two countries. The ways in which the media are employed reflect the degree of importance that each attach to the matter at hand and the level of concern that each has with respect to the relevant audiences. Thus, a range of media facts is worthy of note. First, the Chinese NMS document of 2015 is the first of its kind in modern history; it is published amid charges of a lack of transparency from the West. Second, to publicise this MNS as widely as possible, China mobilises all its military's official and authoritative organs of communication, such as National Defence Ministry Press, National Defence Ministry Foreign Office, People's Liberation Army Paper and a diversity of media portals and outlets, such as Weibo, WeChat, People's Net and New Beijing Paper. In addition, the document is published online in both Chinese and English. Third, to explicate this new document for the public, it utilises a variety of semiotic means such as diagrams and enumeration, and it commissions military experts to speak in the media. Given that the United States, by contrast, only publishes the document on the internet, it may be suggested that China particularly wishes to make the publication of its NMS an important global as well as local event and, further, that it is keen to let the public know and understand its NMS.

Finally, a critical synthesis is in order. Here we shall see that when all those findings are taken together then a new image emerges and a culturalist critique is on a firmer ground. To start with, it may be asserted that, given the change from earlier brief and general statements to exclusive and systematic publications of NMS on the one hand and widespread and multifarious use of media on the other hand, China is becoming more open and transparent than ever before on its defence policy. Next, the Chinese NMS in particular and ND policy in general is relatively stable and predictable because all ten documents consistently declare its "defensive policy of national defence" and "active-defensive military strategy", but the United States, in contrast, changes NMS in name and in nature throughout its six documents (by the way, the US defence department announced in 2018 that it would stop the publication). Moreover, the Chinese underlying and controlling conception of NS is broader than that of the United States, or to be more precise, holistic, and therefore world-inclusive, whereas that of the United States is bloc-minded and so world-divisive. Last but not least, the US NMS in particular and its discourse more generally is relatively belligerent and confrontational rather than peaceful and cooperative, in contrast to those of China. Discourse is not everything of NMS or of ND and NS policy and yet it constitutes the latter as an integral and important part, as explained in the beginning. But the nature of the two distinct NMS discourses becomes even clearer if one looked across the globe through the past century to see how many wars have been waged by the United States (Kaldor, 2005; Sharp, 2019). So from a CDS perspective, nations' discourses of NMS, ND and NS need to be systematically studied and critiqued with a view to reforming them in favour of national and international peace and security. This should involve questions about the concept of NS, standards of evaluation (e.g. of transparency), norms of communication and action, techniques of media use and a host of others.

Conclusion: CDS's agenda

For a decade and half or so, CDS has been firming up as distinct paradigm in CS which theoretically provides for the construction of local cultural frameworks on the one hand and practically engages in empirical and strategic research into cultural discourses on the other hand. Furthermore, it may be said that CDS is now more than a dialectic, organic system which both prescribes and practices a mode of research. It also features a community of students and scholars with heightened awareness of cultural diversity and division in both the developed and (under)developing worlds

and an assortment of supporting international platforms such as the International Association of Multicultural Discourses, the biannual International Conference on Multicultural Discourses, the Routledge Cultural Discourse Studies book series and the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* that house them.

In the next decade, CDS ought to strive as its goals for the consolidation of the existing global network of CDS whose model of research continues to guide and sustain collaboration and innovation, the expansion of a sizeable and influential body of work to change the existing order of CS (by advancement of current projects and creation of new projects on still other cultural discourses the world over and in different socio-economic domains) and the rejuvenation and elevation of the non-Western community of CDS.

To achieve those goals, culturally conscious and critical scholars across the globe, especially from the non-Western world, must make efforts to increase international and intercultural communication, mutual learning and collaboration (e.g. between Asian, African, Latin American and any other culturally conscious communities); to explore and develop cultural systems of research by tapping into native realities, experiences and traditions; to search for ways of empowering discourses of especially marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged communities and to continue to confront and undermine discourses of cultural domination or of any kind threatening human survival.

Fortunately, we now have easy access to the internet and new media, an association (International Association of Multicultural Discourses), a biannual forum (international Conference on Multicultural Discourses), a periodical (*Journal of Multicultural Discourses*), a book series (Routledge Cultural Discourse Studies Series) and a website (shixu.hznu.edu.cn) at our disposal, as well as a guidebook (*The Handbook of Cultural Discourse Studies*) in the making. These platforms and channels of communication make continued international dialogue and cooperation possible (Shi-xu, 2016).

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of the chapter was published in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* edited by Michael Handford and James Paul Gee (Routledge, 2023).
- 2 www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview, accessed March 26, 2023.
- 3 www.credit-suisse.com/media/assets/corporate/docs/about-us/research/publications/global-wealth-report-2022-en.pdf, accessed March 26, 2023.
- 4 www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1, accessed March 26, 2023.
- 5 <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>, accessed March 26, 2023.

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2

REPRESENTING DISCOURSE STUDIES

The unequal actors of an international and multidisciplinary field

Johannes Angermuller

Introduction: representing discourse studies as a field

Discourse studies is an example for a still rather new field, a field which still needs to come to terms with its own dilemmas of representation.¹

For one thing, discourse studies still lacks established representations of itself. There are few systematic overviews, and its history has remained underexplored. A number of textbooks and monographs have come out in French (Maingueneau, 1976, 1991, 2014; Mazière, 2005; Grinschpoun, 2016), Spanish (Herzog and Ruiz, 2019; Londoño Zapata, 2016) and Portuguese (Ruiz 2021), which have dealt with developments in some areas, especially in linguistics. The German-language *Handbuch* (Angermuller et al., 2014) and the *Wörterbuch* [dictionary] (Wrana et al., 2014) constitute the most comprehensive attempt at representing the many debates, problems and tendencies in discourse studies. While pioneers (such as Michel Foucault) have become canonical references, discourse researchers are some way off from agreeing on a shared idea of the contours and history of their field. Most accounts of the field take the angle of a single discipline, school, region or language. Discourse studies, in other words, doesn't have an established story yet.

For another thing, discourse research has always insisted on representation as a problem in its own right. From a discourse-theoretical perspective, the world has no inherent meaning: it needs to be represented through material practices of using language.

Against this background, it is time to interrogate the ways discourse studies can be represented as a field. While standard textbooks typically focus on currents, references, concepts and theories, they often fail to reflect on how ideas are made legitimate, dominant and “true” in the discourse of discourse studies itself. From the point of view of discourse research, texts and talk are opaque as they resist spontaneous understanding. Discourse researchers don't expect to glean pure ideas off the linguistic surface.

Therefore, idea-centred of the field should be problematised. It is time to deconstruct the knowledge the field has of itself and ask how discourse analytical knowledge is entangled with relations of power between discourse researchers. Power should not only be an object of discourse research but also refer to a problem *within* discourse research (Shi-xu, Prah, and Pardo, 2019).

To respond to the demand for reflexive research, the following chapter proposes an empirical account of discourse studies as a population of unequal actors. In order to tackle the deficit of

reflexive and methodological inquiry in discourse research (Zienkowski, 2017), I will adopt perspectives from social research and focus on the actors that constitute the field.

This chapter deals with the dilemmas of representing the field in two steps. The first part approaches discourse studies as a field of knowledge. It starts out with a historical account of its major ideas and tendencies. By reflecting on the limits of idea-based approaches, it then invites us to deconstruct representations of the field based on dominant ideas and canonical authors. The second part discusses discourse studies as a field of power. From an actor-centred point of view, the question is how to capture the relationships between all actors who constitute the field, and I focus on the unequal visibilities of the actors. Based on surveys with over 1000 discourse analysts and a citation analysis of the most senior ones, I sketch the contours of the community of highly unequal discourse researchers. Given the field's focus on a few visible centres, I conclude by asking how we can identify and fix patterns of misrecognition in academic discourse and help achieve a more equitable distribution of the field's resources and rewards.

For a reflexive approach

If discourse is knowledge and power, discourse studies, too, must be seen as a discourse, i.e. as a field constructed in linguistic and social practices of using language in context. By applying discourse-theoretical insights to itself, discourse research achieves reflexivity (Consoli and Ganassin, 2023). Reflexivity is an important benchmark in research since research that makes itself an object of analysis promises to have a higher level of theoretical consistency than research that doesn't (Angermuller, 2018). Following the turn toward reflexivity in macrosociological theory (for example, Foucault, 2004; Bourdieu, 2001; Spivak, 1988; Luhmann, 1996), discourse studies faces an increasing demand for a reflexive consideration of its own structures of power.

Many discourse theorists stress the importance of power in discourse. Yet discursive and non-discursive power structures remain empirically underinvestigated. In a great deal of discourse research it is unclear who has power and who doesn't, how some actors are empowered rather than others. The problem is both methodological and theoretical.

For critical discourse analysts, the task of the discourse analyst is to describe “the enactment of power by the use of specific discourse structures” (van Dijk, 2016, p. 261). Power is perceived as a property of discourse, as something that discourse “has”. This tendency to qualify discourses rather than actors as “powerful” is also characteristic of the late Foucault, for whom “Each society has its régime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true” (Foucault, 1994a, p. 112).² Foucault’s definition of power puts emphasis on the productive effects of power: “In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1975, p. 227).³ By insisting on power as a ubiquitous force of constituting free subjects, he takes issue with approaches to power understood as an asymmetric relation between actors.

Most critical discourse analysts do not subscribe to the constructivist, anti-humanist lines proposed by Foucault and other poststructuralist discourse theorists. Yet in their analytical practice, critical discourse analysts tend to abstract from the actors, too. For this reason, discourse research is rarely prepared to investigate the actors and their unequal social relationships. They have a propensity for referring to abstract but fuzzy power structures (with such concepts as “neoliberalism”, “globalisation” or “capitalism”) without investigating the unequal relationships between real actors or classes. The lack of empirical specificity often goes hand in hand with a tendency to moralise discourse; qualifying discourses as “powerful” often entails taking a negative stance on

the object. The problem with such critical analysis is that it tells us much about the values of the analyst but little about power as an empirical phenomenon.

It is against this background that I suggest going back to theorisations of power as an asymmetrical relationship between actors or groups. Following Max Weber's seminal definition, "Power is the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others" (Weber. 1921, p. 28).⁴ While theorists from the Weberian tradition are interested in the dynamics of power in which (some) actors gain agency against others (Lukes, 2005; Crozier and Friedberg, 1977; Gaventa, 2021), more structurally minded theorists after Karl Marx place emphasis on the unequal distribution of resources at the disposal of the actors. Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, conceptualises the power of actors in terms of their position in the social space, which is an unequally structured macrocosmos comprising all actors. Some actors compete in a more specific arena, e.g. academics in the academic field, which is a microcosmos following the rules of the academic game (Bourdieu, 1984). Discourse studies is an example for such a field, where ideas are established as a result of more or less powerful actors competing against each other.

Knowledge in discourse studies: there is no such thing as a pure idea

A short history of concepts, problems and strands

Discourse studies is still a recent multidisciplinary field, and its contours have been emerging since around 2000. Fed by growing numbers of academics worldwide, it designates a space of exchange that draws on theoretical and methodological advances across the social sciences and humanities (Angermuller 2015). Discourse studies has grown out of discourse analysis, which has been established as a subfield of linguistics since the 1970s. Discourse analysis deals with language as a social practice, the uses of texts in contexts or talk as an institutional activity. Discourse studies, by contrast, designates the wider area of studying meaning making as a social practice across the disciplines. It mobilises the many theories, approaches and tools from the social sciences and humanities.

Discourse studies has resulted from the productive encounters between discourse theories and the more methodological and analytical approaches of discourse analysis.

Discourse theorists typically discuss epistemological dimensions of social meaning making and the role of communication in contemporary society. Discourse theory is often equated with "French theory" or poststructuralism, which has prolonged Marxist and psychoanalytical interrogations of the subject in its intricate relationship with knowledge and power. Yet discourse theory also comprises a range of references from outside France which represent a range of semiotic, pragmatic and hermeneutic tendencies (such as Mikhail Bakhtin, John L. Austin, Jürgen Habermas or Thomas Luckmann).

Discourse theory, which is stronger in the social and cultural field than in linguistics, must be distinguished from discourse analysis, which designates the methodological and empirical endeavours that one can see among many linguists and other social researchers. Discourse analysts deal with linguistic or other semiotic material and follow a systematic procedure in order to come up with empirically founded claims about a discourse, taken as a socio-historical object of study. Discourse analysis in this sense does not designate a specific method. Instead, it is an umbrella for many analytical tools, methodological procedures and research strategies available for research on the social production of meaning, including interactive and hermeneutic approaches, structuralist, pragmatic and cognitive models; qualitative and quantitative (corpus) procedures and many more.

Discourse theory and discourse analysis are not natural allies, and for long periods there was little exchange. The encounters between discourse theorists and discourse analysts have turned out

to be particularly productive moments in the history of discourse studies. Such an encounter took place between the intellectuals of the Freudo-Marxian-structuralist movement of the late 1960s in France and the linguists working with corpus analytical, distributionalist and pragmatic models, which led to what has sometimes been called “French discourse analysis” or the “French school” (FDA) (Angermuller, 2014). Another example of such an encounter was between Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics and realist or dialectical social theory, such as the one represented by Bernstein, which prefigured critical discourse analysis in the United Kingdom and some of its former colonies. If those first encounters involved a few dozen academics and a few hundred students, discourse studies today comprises hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world who enter the field to read and hear about discourse analysis and discourse theory in publications, classes and conferences.

As small groups have grown beyond their local bounds, connections have been developing across countries and disciplines. Research traditions with distinct theoretical orientations such as FDA or CDA have integrated theoretical orientations from elsewhere. As discourse theory becomes more hybrid (or, rather, as it is becoming aware of its hybridity), one can also observe the labelling of discourse research as following a perceived “national” tradition. Essex hegemony and discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) strongly engages with theoretical impulses from France whereas “Anglo-American” interactionism entered France decades ago (e.g. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1998).

One may distinguish four or five such labels on discourse, which carry a “national” flavour. It would be an illusion to think they can be traced back to an original state of epistemological purity and in no way do they reflect the state of discourse research in a given region. These labels usually convey orientations which have been established by the most distinctive and visible research clusters in certain geographical regions. They are an effect of the globalisation of discourse studies where geographical labels have helped practitioners to cope with the epistemological superdiversity of their field.

The “French” label evokes the idea of discourse as communication of large communities on a societal level (Maingueneau and Angermuller, 2007). Discourse points to an underlying epistemological framework or mechanism which organises the ideological choices made by citizens. Discourse tends to turn around an irreconcilable antagonism or “interdiscourse”. Because of its constitutive split, discourse always fails to reach a state of original unity. Therefore, texts never betray what was originally meant or intended by a “speaking subject”, which is an ideological construction. Rather, they are an opaque surface for meaning that needs to be conquered and imposed.

Following the “British” label, one considers language as a resource for meaning making activities of speakers. Meaning making is constrained by linguistic rules. Yet text and talk are open to various meaning potentials that are realised depending on how people use language in specific contexts. If language organises the way humans engage practically with their world, discourse is a practice of doing things under conditions of power and inequality. People enjoy certain degrees of freedom when they engage in discursive practice, but they are constrained by socio-historical structures.

Language in the “North American” sense designates the cues, devices and symbols that allow participants to actively negotiate and create relationships with each other. Discourse is a symbolically mediated practice of participants addressing each other and creating a shared situation. Social order emerges as an interactive achievement of the actors. It is done and undone in the practices of those who constitute a community.

“German” perspectives (Angermuller, 2011) place emphasis on the meanings, knowledges and worldviews which subjects produce and share with other members of their culture and community. Accordingly, discourse is understood as the co-creation of explicit or implicit knowledge among

subjects. As a member of a community, the subject creates a world imbued with meaning which is organically shared with other members. Texts carry the meaning structures brought forth and shared in a community which can be reconstructed through hermeneutic empathy.

As a label, *discourse* goes back to Zellig Harris (1952), who understood discourse as the distribution of linguistic elements beyond the sentence level. Harris became an important reference for the first corpus and discourse analysts that entered the scene in France in the 1960s. Yet by the 1980s, Harris's equation of discourse with text turned out too narrow for a field that deals with meaning making in society more generally. Therefore, the first researchers who used the label *discourse* came from linguistics, and they still constitute the most important disciplinary group. Since the late 1960s, linguistics has seen the emergence of a subfield of discourse analysis that studies language as an empirical object of the social world. Two pioneering branches of (linguistic) discourse analysis can be identified: a French (or "continental") one that investigates discourse as public communication in the societal space, and an Anglo-American one, which concentrates on discourse as an interactive practice of participants. The former has been promoted by well-known "continental" theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas and Ernesto Laclau/Chantal Mouffe, whereas the latter had currency in American sociolinguistics in the 1970s and continues to inform interactionist strands in linguistics, especially in the United Kingdom. In qualitative social research and interactive linguistics in North America, *discourse* was used interchangeably with *conversation* until the 1990s (Brown and Yule, 1983; Gumperz, 1982; Schiffrin, 1994, who would be called pragmaticians rather than discourse analysts today). However, this changed by the late 1990s, when pioneers of conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis fell out over the question of context (Schegloff, 1997; Billig, 1999). As a result, *discourse* nowadays generally designates social meaning making in larger groups and communities, and it is distinguished from *conversation* defined as an observable interaction between individuals. Theoretically, the aim of discourse analysis is to account for the uses of texts in their (socio-historical) contexts while conversation analysis refrains from referring to contexts that are not flagged up by the interactants themselves.

Discourse has since become a key notion across the entire social sciences and humanities especially in Europe, whereas in the United States, where there has been a strong division between the social sciences and the humanities, *discourse* is associated with theoretical debates in the literary and cultural field. This conception of discourse is associated with Michel Foucault's seminal work of the late 1960s (1994b) and 1970s (1980). Even though Foucault has never been a central reference within linguistics, he has become a proponent of the linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities and inspired many researchers from across the disciplines to become interested in language, discourse and communication (Carter, 2013).

It is not unusual for American linguists to be grounded in the social sciences if one thinks of Franz Boas's linguistic anthropology at the turn of the 20th century and Erving Goffman's qualitative sociology in the 1960s. Whereas European linguists are often indebted to philological models, American linguists have always had strong social currents. Unlike their European counterparts, the latter have developed little interest in questions of power and inequality and rarely engage in the exchange with theoretical discourses from the humanities, which has been intellectually highly productive in Europe. In the United States, *discourse* has not become a foundational term for a field of research yet, whereas the French notion of discourse found fertile ground in Canada as early as in the 1970s.

Discourse studies today encompasses many researchers who don't apply linguistic tools, and sometimes they don't even deal with linguistic material. In this broader sense of discourse as meaning making, the problem of discourse goes back to the 19th century. No longer understood as the expression of a universal philosophical or theological order, meaning (*Sinn*) was discovered

to be as a historical meaning order constructed by humans. In Germany, holistic research on culture emerged that led to hermeneutic and, later, phenomenological strands of research. The debates around the social production of meaning are particularly rich in strands, perspectives and traditions even though discourse didn't become a common referent until around the 2000s (Angermuller, 2011).

Discourse studies is still too young to offer an established narrative of itself. Existing textbooks, anthologies and readers often don't present an integrated view of discourse studies as an interdisciplinary and international field. They usually betray the specific angle of a disciplinary or subdisciplinary field or school, such as sociolinguistics (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999), Foucauldian sociology (Bublitz et al., 1999), Essex-style discourse theory (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) or critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer, 2004), to cite some early examples. Discourse studies doesn't converge in one disciplinary project or theoretical identity. Rather, following the examples of cultural studies, gender studies or science and technology studies, discourse studies designates a space of exchanges for researchers from many disciplinary backgrounds (see Angermuller, Maingueneau, and Wodak, 2014).

In France, Germany and the United Kingdom, linguists managed to carve out the subfield of discourse analysis as early as the 1970s, which also meant the creation of journals and a fledgling job market for discourse specialists. Other countries followed later on. Since the 1980s, *discourse* has often been used as a fashionable term and buzzword in the wake of highly publicised discourse theorists. Yet in some other cases, *discourse* has become a reference for a disciplinary school or a subdisciplinary tendency. Hence, a number of discourse-theoretical schools can be registered in the disciplines, e.g. discourse ethics in philosophy (Habermas, 1990), discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), critical discursive psychology (Parker, 2015), Foucauldian historiography (Sarasin, 2001), governmentality studies in sociology (Rose, 1999; Bröckling, Krasmann, and Lemke, 2000) and discourse and hegemony analysis in political theory. In linguistics, a great deal of subfields cite discourse, including critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), corpus linguistics (Baker, 2005) and many strands of pragmatics. Most of the leading journals have been dominated by linguists such as *Discourse Studies*, *Discourse & Society*, *Journal of Language and Politics*, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *Mots, Langage et société* and *Kulturrevolution. Zeitschrift für Diskurstheorie*, some exceptions notwithstanding (such as *Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung*). Over time, discourse specialists from various disciplines have been clustering in transdisciplinary events such as the CADAAD conferences (Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines) or the Conferences of Multicultural Discourses. International associations have emerged such as DiscourseNet, the International Association of Discourse Studies, EDiSo (*Asociación de Estudios sobre Discurso y Sociedad*) for the Iberian Peninsula or ALED (*Asociación LatinoAmericana de Estudios del Discurso*) in Latin America.

Since Harris's time, linguistic discourse analysis has moved from discourse as textual order towards the contextualisation of texts broadly understood. Nowadays, therefore, discourse is often conceptualised in a broadly social, pragmatic or cognitive framework, i.e. in terms of language use, which comprises a wide spectrum from interactionist approaches to corpus analysis. According to linguistic models, texts have certain meaning potentials that are realised according to the circumstances in which they are put to practice. The analytical focus is on how texts constrain interpretative activity with contexts often seen as a residual. While interactive approaches tend to be cautious about making assumptions about the context, cognitive theories seek to model the cognitive operations triggered by texts which allow humans to construct certain ideas about the context.

If linguists often understand discourse in terms of text used in contexts, sociologists and other social scientists like to see discourse as an aspect of what actors do vis-à-vis other actors. Thus, in

a social sciences view, *discourse* points to the role of socially constructed meaning, knowledge and communication in social practices of producing and reproducing a social or political order. Social scientists are normally interested in *discourse* as constitutive of the social order. In this constructivist view, language and text do not simply express social realities. Nor can agency be seen as a natural property of individuals. Rather, by representing social realities, discourse also contributes to constituting these realities.

The gulf between linguistic approaches and approaches from the other social sciences is not easily bridged. (European) linguists often stick to realist conceptions of power as something before and outside texts, especially in critical discourse analysis. Sociologists who get interested in discourse, by contrast, subscribe to constructivist notions of social order and subjectivity. The exchange across this epistemic divide is complicated by the fact that, at least in many European countries, linguistics and other social sciences are often in different departments and faculties.

From idea-based to actor-centred accounts of the field

The history of discourse-theoretical ideas which I presented in the previous section is not without problems. Like many textbooks it turns around the most visible, recognised and cited figures who can benefit from a self-reinforcing discursive dynamic in the field: he that hath to him shall be given (Merton, 1996). The spontaneous hermeneutics that is applied to map the field normally focus on the few figures that are cited by the many in the field. Yet how can we bring in the contribution of the many who constitute the field without being heard and cited?

Idea-based approaches have a long tradition. Indeed, for intellectual historians, a field designates an epistemic space around a given area of specialised knowledge. Theirs is an idea-based view that considers disciplines as communities of academics sharing a specific expertise. Idea-based conceptions of disciplinarity have had a long tradition in the philosophy of science, from Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory (Kuhn, 1968) to Gaston Bachelard's epistemology (1987), from Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history (1979) to Quentin Skinner's intellectual history (1988), which consider scientific fields as historical systems of ideas. And discourse theorists refer to Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), which traces the development of proto-scientific thought systems since the 16th century.

Historians of science have long been aware that fields and disciplines are about more than just a stock of shared ideas. Social, cultural, political, historical and psychological aspects are all important in the constitution of disciplinary fields. Academic discourse is organised by boundaries (Gieryn, 1999) which not only reflect what members know but also how they group together; they are subject to "tribal" dynamics (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Others have conceptualised science as a social micropractice (Ashmore, 1989; Knorr Cetina, 1981; Latour, 1987). Accordingly, academics navigate in a socially demarcated arena where membership is defined and checked by diplomas, peer review practices, events, networks etc.

A well-known actor-centred account is given by Pierre Bourdieu, who insists on the unequal distribution of economic and non-economic resources ("capital") among the members of a field (1984). Bourdieu asks how such resources underpin the production of "symbolic goods" (such as publications) that have currency in the academic field. There is a tendency for those endowed with capital from their families to be more likely to respond to a demand for symbolic goods in the field, to get recognition as their originators and to occupy positions of power and prestige. In Bourdieu's view, texts are not primarily seen as the expression of a meaning or idea; they enact the unequal distribution of resources which academics need to build up their profile.

Bourdieu's approach is not without problems; first of all, he considers only those who have a status in the French academic system and says little about academics from elsewhere. Moreover, he gives little consideration to those whose academic status is unclear, to the peripheral zones of the field and to its fuzzy boundaries. So Bourdieu studies the academic *corps* of the French academic system rather than a disciplinary field, which cuts through many academic systems and is constituted by academics from many academic systems. What is missing is an account of the global organisation of disciplinary fields.

Idea-based and actor-oriented perspectives on disciplinary fields are not mutually exclusive, and discursive perspectives on academia have integrated both. In the field of academic discourse analysis, we can distinguish between structure- and practice-oriented approaches:

- Foucault is an example for the former. In his early work, Foucault was committed to an idea-based approach to disciplines as historical thought systems (1966). Yet in the course of the 1970s, he moved towards a more social understanding of disciplinary knowledge as an institutional practice (1975). And in his lectures on governmentality (2004), Foucault seizes discourse as a stock of specialised knowledges that help monitor populations and channel their behaviour in certain ways. He is especially interested in the political uses of nascent fields such as demography and economics, epidemiology and urban planning, applied mathematics and political science.
- Unlike Foucault, who asks how discourse constitutes social structures, discourse analysts from the Anglo-American world often perceive academic discourse in terms of what people do with language in their communities (Mulkey, Potter, and Yearley, 1983; Hicks and Potter, 1991). Hence, the field of academic discourse analysis includes investigations of academic genres (Swales, 1990) and the metapragmatics of academic discourse (Hyland, 2011). Corpus analysis has been applied to distinguish the vocabularies of disciplinary fields. And other strands have been interested in the way knowledge claims are negotiated and established through text and talk in disciplinary communities (Myers, 1985).

How does one represent the many actors that make up a specialised field such as discourse studies where thousands of texts are written and read every year? University library catalogues can give us one idea if we consider the thousands of hits of search words like *discourse*, *discourse analysis* or *discourse studies*. Yet those who write publications in discourse studies are just the tip of the iceberg of a much larger community of people who read rather than write. Academia.edu counts around 400000 followers for the group discourse analysis (as of early 2022), most of whom probably became interested in the field while writing their assignments and theses. And there will be many more reading discourse-related publications. The silent presence of such populations is key if we want to understand how the field works as a whole. In disciplinary fields, publishing members depend on non-publishing members buying, downloading and disseminating their works, and highly cited authors depend on the many citing members who are not always cited themselves. Therefore, if we want to account for discourse studies empirically, I suggest investigating the asymmetries between the actors of the field more systematically.

Power in discourse studies: all researchers are not equal

Disciplines are not only epistemic but also social spaces, and their epistemic organisation is intertwined with their social organisation. To perceive a field such as discourse studies in social terms is to ask who is and who isn't in the field, how the actors relate to each other and how some are

empowered. Such perspectives on the field, which put the actors centre stage, have remained underexplored in discourse studies.

One reason is a lack of a systematic empirical investigation of the social world among linguists trained in theoretical schools (such as in systemic functional grammar) and with little methodological interests in social research. Another reason is the dominance of discourse theories that have been articulated in distinction from subject-centred, humanist approaches to meaning making such as hermeneutics and phenomenology. The theoretical identity of many discourse researchers has been crucially shaped by theoretical paradigms (poststructuralism, critical discourse analysis) which abstract from the actors. They insist on the undeniable fact that we are all caught up in power relationships in the many situations of social life, but they often do not tell us how these relationships are organised in specific social arenas. Therefore, for many discourse analysts, power is an all-pervasive phenomenon in society whose specific relationships are in no need of empirical analysis.

Therefore, in the following, the question will be how to account for the many actors who constitute a disciplinary field, to make out the different groups and to get an idea of their different backgrounds and resources. Disciplinary fields are typically organised around small groups of highly visible actors, who are easy to identify: they occupy the finite number of prestigious positions, and every member of the field is aware of their publications. Yet the vast majority of academics have little visibility, and these actors are difficult to catch because disciplinary membership is often fuzzy; many academics have precarious academic jobs or none at all. And if they have a disciplinary identity, they enjoy little or no institutional recognition.

In the following, I will rely on various methodological instruments to account for the population of those who play a role in discourse research. I will investigate the global population of discourse researchers in two steps: firstly, through a sample ($N > 1000$, in 2019 and 2021) of self-declared discourse researchers from all over the world, and, secondly through a complete list of all professors specialised in discourse ($N = 99$, as of 2015) in Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

The population of discourse researchers

The field is still too young for discourse researchers to be formally recognised as such with diplomas, jobs or classes. Most researchers enter the field of discourse studies by simply reading and writing in the area. Many have registered on the homepage of the International Discourse Studies Association DiscourseNet, www.discourseanalysis.net, which has been live since 2008. DiscourseNet is a network of discourse researchers which became the International Association of Discourse Studies in 2019. Open and free for anybody who wants to circulate discourse-related news and calls, the DiscourseNet webpage is widely known by discourse researchers around the world and provides by far the largest forum for anybody who sees herself as a discourse researcher. In autumn 2019 and in autumn 2021, I used the mailing list of 7500–8000 users who were registered at the time to send around two surveys which invited them to give information about their biographical backgrounds, their work and interests. While the survey invitation was written in seven languages, the survey questions were in English. I thus received more than 1000 responses from self-declared discourse researchers for each of the two rounds. The way the responses were collected does not allow us to make representative claims about the population of all discourse researchers. However, the surveys give us an impression of some of the most motivated discourse researchers who have taken an interest in the field and the association. Both surveys largely

concurred in their results, which testifies to the rather stable core of researchers who identify with the field.

In the following, I will summarise, firstly, the institutional status and the disciplinary backgrounds of the respondents and, secondly, their countries of work and the languages of work.

The institutional status of discourse researchers

The vast majority of respondents (>90%) are members of academic institutions and about half of the non-affiliated discourse researchers self-classify as ‘independents’, which likely includes those who have a postgraduate diploma but no academic position yet. We recorded a small number of emeriti professors and a handful of BA- and MA-students. A large junior group (40%) were either doctoral students or postdocs. While these new entrants won’t be fully recognised until a decade later, they are crucial for the field’s life and energy base. In their dissertations and first publications, they engage in debates and refer to other members of the field. Around half of the respondents have a more established, mostly permanent institutional status with a quarter enjoying full institutional recognition as professors or in other senior roles. See Figure 2.1. What we don’t see in this data is how recognised these senior figures are as members of the global field.

The disciplinary backgrounds of discourse researchers

Fourty-five percent of all respondents consider linguistics as their discipline. However, given the possibility of multiple responses, many more situate themselves in one of the social sciences (such as sociology, education, political science, communication science, anthropology, psychology, business, economics, geography) or the humanities (media studies, cultural studies, philosophy, history, art, religion/divinity). Multiple disciplinary affiliations are not exceptional with more than a third choosing two or more established disciplines. Therefore, it is common for discourse researchers to cover and negotiate complex disciplinary spaces in their research. See Figure 2.2.

The countries of work of discourse researchers

The respondents work in as many as 85 countries. Germany still constitutes the biggest country, which is hardly surprising given that DiscourseNet started with a group based in Germany

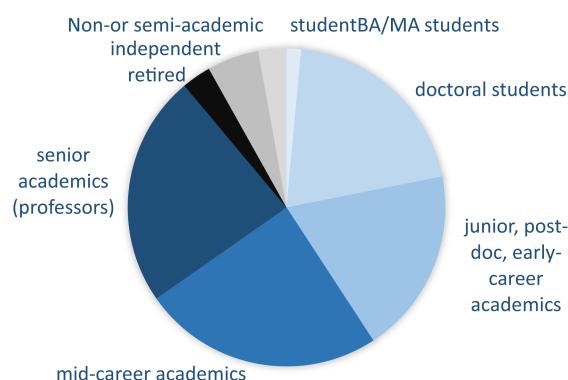


Figure 2.1 Institutional status of respondents, DiscourseNet survey, August 2021, N = 1200

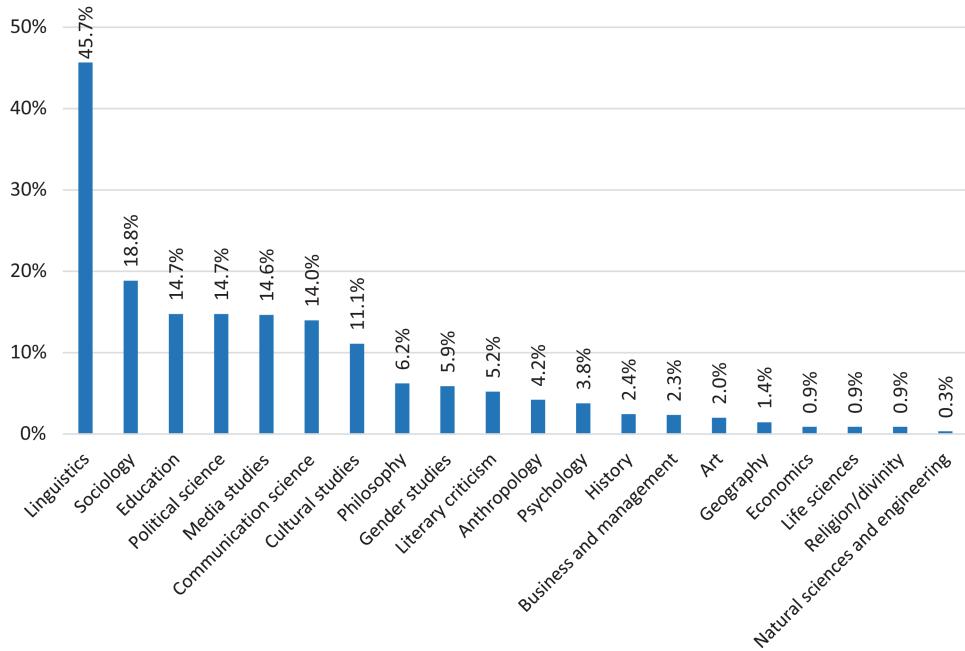


Figure 2.2 The disciplines in which discourse researchers are based (more than one response allowed), DiscourseNet survey, autumn 2019, N = 1060

in the mid-2000s. It also needs to be said that DiscourseNet events have been taking place all over Europe, which may explain why a majority (60%) of the respondents declare having their base in Europe. Considering population size and economic power, discourse research is perhaps especially well established in Romania, Austria and Greece. The same can be said about some countries in Latin America (Argentina, Mexico, Brazil) and Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Egypt). Relatively many more respondents came from Hong Kong SAR than from mainland China, where discourse research may be less established or discourse researchers may be less willing to register with DiscourseNet.

The survey is not based on a representative sample across the world. Yet it reinforces the idea that Europe remains a major base for discourse research. There is also a strong community in Latin America, where ALED, the first discourse research association, has been active since the 1990s. Significantly, discourse studies does not seem to have found its place in the United States, where discourse studies is not established as a transdisciplinary field. See Figure 2.3.

Languages of work for discourse researchers

Respondents reflected the variety of languages they use in their work. From a list of the world's 100 biggest languages, they chose 39 languages. Twenty languages are spoken by four or fewer speakers, including a dozen which are used by only one speaker, including such languages as Kazakh, Zulu or Vietnamese. Almost three quarters of the respondents (665) declared English to be a language of work. This confirms English as the *lingua franca* of discourse studies even though it must be kept in mind that the questionnaire's language was English. Some languages—especially

Countries of work

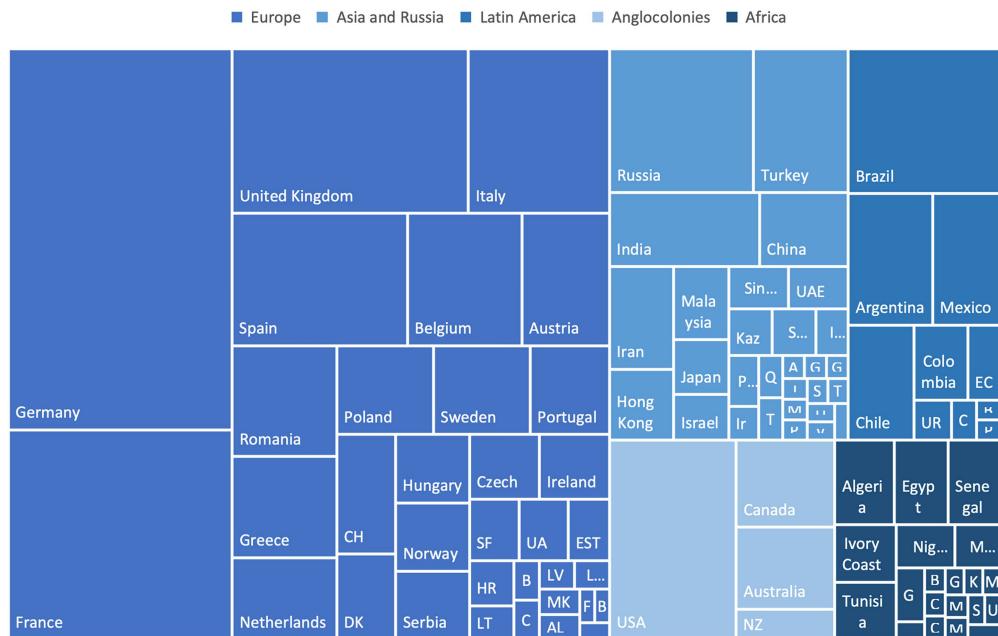


Figure 2.3 Countries where discourse researchers work, DiscourseNet survey, autumn 2021, N = 1200

French (189), Spanish (134), perhaps Arabic in its varieties—are used across countries, too, but they are not used in all regions of the world. And then there are 16 bigger national languages dominating in one or a few countries: German (189), Russian (43), Portuguese (40), Italian (33), Rumanian (19), Polish (17), Greek (16), Chinese (15), Dutch (13), Serbo-Croatian (11), Japanese (9), Turkish (8), Swedish (8), Czech (6), Ukrainian (5) and Hungarian (5).

While English is spoken by many respondents, it is rarely the only language that discourse researchers use for work and in private life. The survey testifies to the multilingual reality of discourse researchers. While just under a half of anglophone discourse researchers use nothing but English in their work, around a third of speakers of Portuguese, French, German and Spanish say they are monolinguals in their work. If around 15% of all respondents pursue careers in anglophone countries (the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and some others), a significant number of them are likely multilingual immigrants. Conversely, most of the other 85% (from non-anglophone countries) will know at least one other language (which may not be mentioned in the list) while English is used for international exchange. Similar observations can be made for other “imperial” languages such as French, Spanish, Russian and Mandarin Chinese, albeit on a smaller scale. See Figure 2.4.

We may also distinguish between academics coming from systems which not only train but also recruit a significant number of academics (e.g. larger and wealthy European countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany) and those whose careers are more dependent on international training and recruitment opportunities, e.g. in many countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa (Medina 2014). European, oil-rich countries and China have made considerable

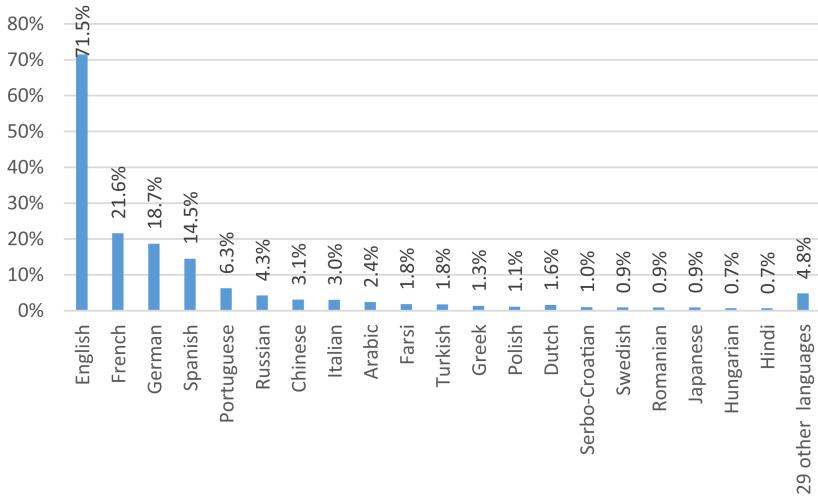


Figure 2.4 The languages that discourse researchers use for work, DiscourseNet questionnaire, autumn 2021, N = 1200

investments into the international circulation of their students, many of whom come back to be recruited nationally later.

Discourse studies is a superdiverse field which is criss-crossed by linguistic boundaries, which forces many members to use a lingua franca such as English or communicate in one-way directions (from small to large language communities). English is a widely used language of work even though for many non-natives it will remain a challenge to talk and write to academic standards. These linguistic and institutional boundaries are a major constraint on and filter for who and what can become visible and relevant (Blommaert, 2005).

The unequal distribution of citation visibility

Surveys can bring to light the institutional, disciplinary and geographical backgrounds of members of the field. Yet they cannot measure the reputation academics enjoy in their communities. Citations reflect their standing in academic controversies in the sector. Citation visibility is not a perfect indicator since citation numbers often do not mechanically reflect reputation. Nor do they do justice to the complex geometry of disciplinary communities. However, they can tell us about the unequal distribution of visibility within a given group of institutionally recognised academics.

With my team,⁵ I identified the full professors (or equivalent) in linguistics who were in post in the first half of 2015 in the United Kingdom, Germany and France. There are no complete up-to-date lists of professors of these countries, and in order to make sure we identified all active professors, we went through the homepages in departments where linguists work. Most academics are listed on university pages, especially the most established ones. However, we encountered some where it was difficult to assess the precise nature of the appointment and a few older individuals have little presence on the web, especially in France. From the 705 professors we found, I manually identified the 99 professors who present themselves with an expertise in discourse on their personal homepages. For each of these 99 professors, I then estimated the number of citations of their publications in Google Scholar (as of 2017). Following this staggered approach, I reveal structures of (in)visibility within the group of institutionally recognised academics in discourse linguistics.

Google Scholar is not a neutral instrument. Yet among the many tools available nowadays, it is among the most inclusive and transparent ones. Unlike, for instance, the well-known Web of Science figures, which is limited to a corpus of journals, Google Scholar includes a vastly greater collection of journals and many millions of books. One can assume that Google Scholar also has a significant bias towards the global centres of academic knowledge production where the major academic publishing houses can be found and English and some other larger European languages (French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian) are used. Google Scholar likely over-represents publications in English, which is the most important lingua franca of science. English also provides the standard character used by the IT world, which discriminates against accents and “special” characters from other European languages as well as languages that use entirely different character sets such as Russian, Chinese or Thai. Finally, not all academics have registered on Google Scholar, and we had to estimate the number of citations of those with no profile.

With these methodological limits in mind, we can observe significant inequalities of citation visibility among the 99 professors in discourse. According to the 2017 data, the two most cited professors in the United Kingdom were cited more than 15000 times whereas six full professors in France and two in Germany attracted less than 50 citations. Such counts translate considerable differences in terms of community size. I therefore accounted for the preferred language of work of these individuals and calculated distributions of citation visibility according to the language medium, i.e. among English-, French- and German-medium professors.

Figure 2.5 shows how the 170000 citations are distributed among the 99 discourse professors in terms of preferred language of work.

In each group, around 10% of the most cited professors (i.e. three for French and German each and four English) got as many as 40% to 66% of the citations of all professors. The concentration of citation visibility is most pronounced among French-language professors of discourse: a single professor from Paris 4-Sorbonne totalled as many as 15000 citations out of the 25000 citations given to all French-medium professors. Following a Pareto distribution, citation visibility is monopolised by a small group of academics. Such extreme concentrations of citation visibility

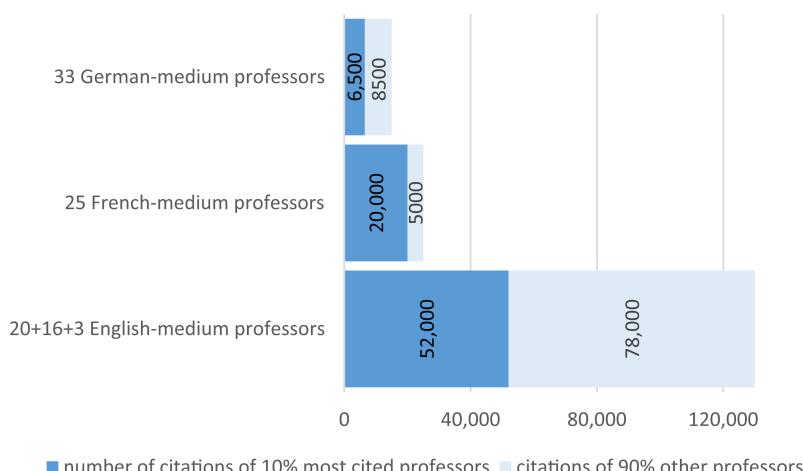


Figure 2.5 The distribution of all 170000 citations from the 99 active full professors specialised in discourse in the United Kingdom, France and Germany

Source: Based on Google Scholar data as of 2017

cannot be explained by individual performance alone. All of them regularly use English and the large majority exclusively so. They are all based in large and international research universities such as Paris 4-Sorbonne, Lancaster and Oxford.

Special consideration needs to be taken of the language as the medium of communication. While language barriers prevent ideas from flowing freely across countries, the size and economic power of a language community has an important impact on the way academic exchanges are structured. Differences of size translate into unequal chances of being heard across language communities. On average, the English-medium professor is cited around ten times as much as her or his German- or French-language counterpart. Academics from large language communities may find it easier to meet with resonance in smaller communities since translation costs are reduced.

The data also shows the double function of English as both a national language and an international lingua franca. Publishing in English is not the same as in German or French. Working in German or French typically entails dealing with German- and French-language references which not only demarcate a geographical space to discuss certain ideas in a given language but also convey certain cultural expectations and scholarly traditions as well as knowledge about social relationships among actors of the field. English, by contrast, is used more easily without presupposing a particular geographical or socio-cultural background; while an article for a North American journal will likely mobilise the established references and the theoretical knowledge of a geographically-centred community of North American academics, the English used by a Kenyan to talk to a Portuguese colleague at a conference in Moscow will not come along with such presupposed knowledge. In many cases, English is ambivalent concerning its double function as an international lingua franca and the more local traditions it transports. Both functions typically blend into each other, e.g. when the Fairclough version of CDA is cited within a British-Australian SFL context and when it is received as a global critical brand. This is an inbuilt ambivalence of the word “English”, which signifies both the language and the cultural group.

Yet the local embeddings of English continue to be important, and they may explain why English-medium professors in Germany and France are cited around six times less than their colleagues in the United Kingdom. This curious fact could hardly be accounted for if English was just a medium of exchange. Professors in those countries seem to have more difficulty being seen as fully legitimate references with an English-language public. For them to become citable, it is not sufficient, it seems, to speak proper English, know the references and respond to the problems of the community. If you want to enjoy full legitimacy in English-language research, you’d better be placed in a “properly English” institution and come from a “properly anglophone” country. Future work should reveal that such hierarchies of legitimacy crucially inform the relationships between colonising and colonised countries.

To a lesser degree, the functional ambivalence of the academic language can also be observed in French. Taken together, the 25 French-medium professors attract 65% more citations than the 33 German-medium professors (see Figure 2.6), which should reflect the international resonance French discourse analysts enjoy in countries of Romance languages, such as Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Italy and Romania.

Across the three countries, the ten most cited professors total 62% of the 1700000 citations given to all 99 professors. The scholar from France is at the top, and he is followed by English-medium scholars with eight being based in the United Kingdom and one in Germany. Therefore, not only is there a massive concentration of citation visibility within academic disciplines, but, given the size effect, important asymmetries can be observed between representatives of certain academic languages.

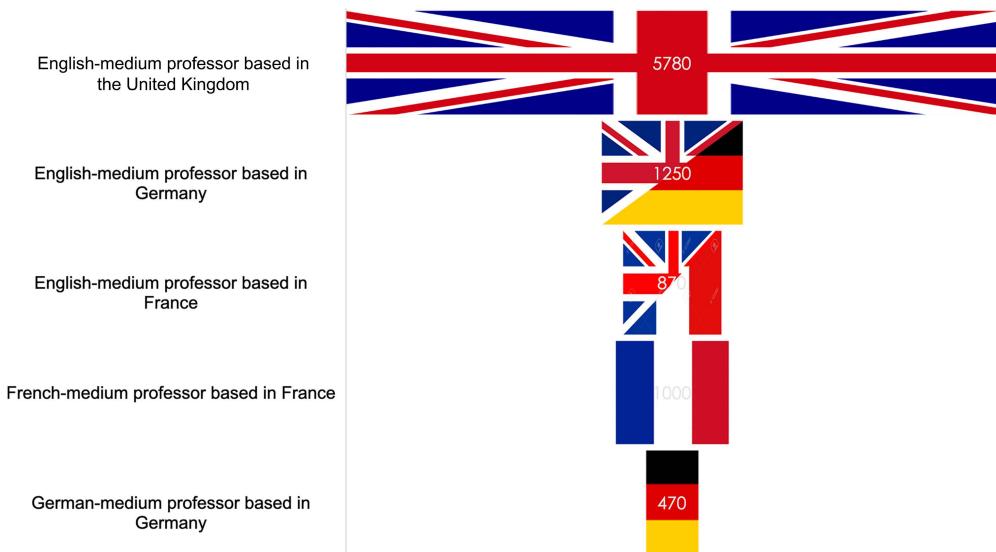


Figure 2.6 Average citation numbers of all 99 professors specialised in discourse in the United Kingdom, France and Germany

Source: Based on Google Scholar data as of 2017

If the underlying data also reflected citation distributions among less senior academics from less prosperous European countries, the hierarchies would be many times more extreme. Despite the fiction of free, egalitarian academic debate, it is next to impossible for colleagues from most countries around the world to become visible beyond their local or national institutions.

Sociologists are well aware of the unequal distribution of various types of resources (one can think of Bourdieu's distinction between economic, social, cultural etc. types of capital Bourdieu, 1979), citation visibility is a resource, too, and academic actors can use it to achieve certain social goals, such as gaining recognition and moving up the career ladder. But visibility is also a result of the discursive dynamics among many participants of academic discourse. Visibility is the discursive "capital" that academics gain through text (publications) and talk (interactions). It often correlates with other types of capital and can sometimes be transformed into them as well (from coveted jobs to positions of influence). Even though visibility is a product of the discursive activity of all symbolic producers of a field, it is often monopolised among a small academic elite, who also tend to be concentrated in a few metropolitan centres of the world. The extreme concentration of citations and visibility can probably be observed in many other disciplinary fields (Angermüller and Hamann, 2019). The Pareto distribution of citations is fundamental to academic discourse; it creates the disciplinary space as a highly unequal one with a small centre and a large periphery. Disciplinary fields form around highly visible centres while the periphery remains unknown territory.

Discussion: discourse studies as a global field

Structured by linguistic, social and other filters, the academic space of communication is not a transparent one. Region, language and discipline are important qualifiers that can create proximity

as well as distance between the actors and that crucially structure the flows of academic discourse. Thus, discourse studies is a tiered space of academics criss-crossed by hierarchies that reflect an unequal distribution of visibility and other resources. Three types of language communities can be distinguished. See Figure 2.7.

The large English-language and the smaller French-language community constitute a first group. It is here that international brands and canonical references are often made with anglophone discourse researchers from rich countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong SAR) having higher chances of being considered as citable references internationally, even in non-anglophone debates. A second group comprises languages which allow for the emergence of ongoing debates and of developed epistemic traditions (e.g. Germany, Russia). These communities are large enough to have a critical mass of participants, and they also have a schooling system that can train and recruit academics in these traditions. The third group includes hundreds and thousands of languages which typically lack the size to sustain longer specialised debates. These languages often lack legitimacy as a medium of academic exchange, and many of these languages lack the backing of a strong state and economy, especially outside Europe. The speakers of these languages have often recourse to a lingua franca such as English. While some of the languages across the three groups are contained within one or few countries (e.g. Italian) others are shared across many countries with no one centre (e.g. English and Spanish). It is in this structured space that a small number of discourse researchers, mostly from metropolitan centres, can establish highly visible positions.

New disciplinary fields such as discourse studies are kicked off in controversies that revolve around figures from a large language community. They often come from the academic centres even though distinctive and innovative interventions from the periphery also have a chance. While disciplines represent areas of specialised knowledge that are institutionalised in universities around

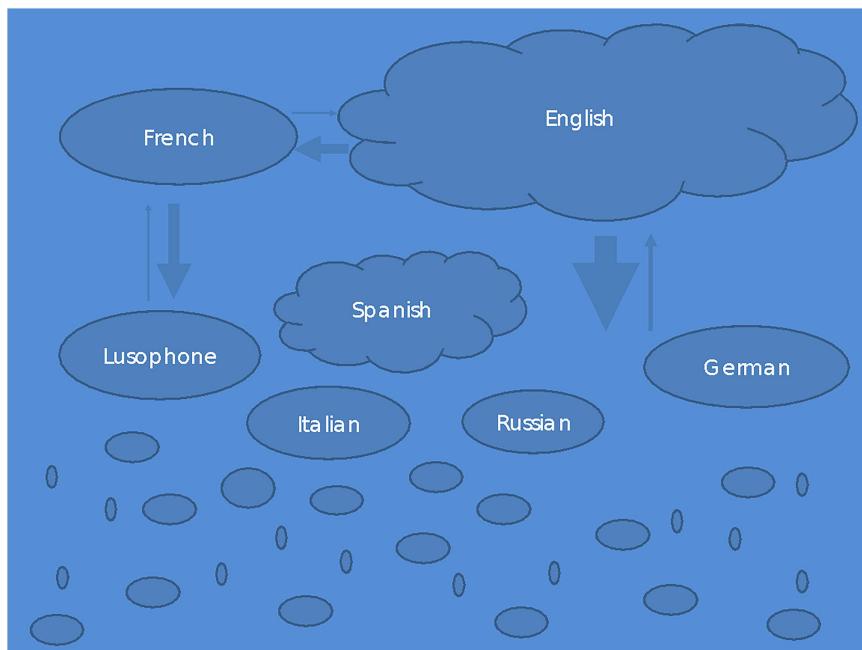


Figure 2.7 The multilingual space of the global field of discourse studies

the world, they translate an implicit bias towards the values, experiences and epistemic orientations dominating in the politically leading and economically prosperous regions of the world. With its focus on Western European traditions and references, discourse studies is an example for such a field that often turns around European references cited by many academics who remain mostly uncited themselves.

Conclusion: towards a critique of discursive inequality

When discourse theory entered the intellectual scene a few decades ago, it was indeed liberating to discover that power was a pervasive feature of discourse, especially for linguists, philosophers of language and literary critics, who long struggled to broaden their scope and include issues of power within their respective disciplines. Discourse theory has since made us aware that discourse is not driven by strategic actors. On the contrary, the actors themselves must be seen as a product of power in discourse, including the discourse of discourse researchers. Yet the deconstruction of the strategic, intentional actor doesn't invalidate the systemic analysis of who is involved in the dynamics of power. If discourse research wants to make empirically grounded claims about power, it needs to engage in the analysis of the configurations among the actors of a field. Discourse analysts, in other words, would do well to develop an interest in the theoretical and methodological challenges of doing social research on actors.

In this contribution, we dealt with discourse studies in terms of a population of unequal actors. Structured around small and highly visible centres and a large but fuzzy periphery, discourse studies is a tiered space of communication where a small group of actors based in the academic centres monopolise the attention of the many scholars both in the central systems and in the peripheries who mostly cite without being cited. These structures of discursive inequality are typical for most disciplinary fields, which are a product of discursive dynamics among the many who allow few actors to dominate the academic debate.

Textbook representations of our field often give an insufficient image of the concentration of discursive resources (such as visibility) and non-discursive resources (economic, institutional power etc.). Yet it is important to critically reflect on how such hierarchical structures impact on our representation of academic fields and disciplines. The discursive oligarchy that dominates in most fields is not deliberately planned by any actor or institution. It is the unintended product of the spontaneous, hermeneutic activity of researchers reading and writing texts. That's why the intellectual historians of our field should be especially mindful of the exclusionary mechanisms in their own activity.

Yet how can we do justice to the many who constitute the field? All too often, we are complicit in the discursive hierarchies that structure our field. Yet nothing stops us from understanding and analysing the social mechanisms that create discursive and non-discursive inequalities in our discourse. If we understand how we participate in the academic game, what stops us from changing how we play it?

Notes

- 1 I want to thank Shi-xu and Jaspal Singh for their comments on the initial version of this contribution.
- 2 “chaque société a son régime de vérité, sa « politique générale » de la vérité: c'est-à-dire les types de discours qu'elle accueille et fait fonctionner comme vrais” (all translations mine).
- 3 “en fait le pouvoir produit; il produit le réel; il produit des domaines d'objets et des rituels de vérité”.
- 4 “jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel worauf diese Chance beruht”.

- 5 Angermuller and colleagues at Warwick (Coventry, UK) and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris, UK) collected the data used here within the ERC project “DISCONEX. The discursive construction of academic excellence” (ERC project no. 313172). The data collection was led by Françoise Dufour and carried out together with Aurore Zelazny. Ali Asadipour created the database. They were actively assisted by Nawel Aït Ali, Johannes Beetz, Sixian Hah, Eduardo Chávez Herrera and Marta Wróblewska.

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3

ASIACENTRICITY AND THE FIELD OF ASIAN COMMUNICATION THEORY

Today and tomorrow

Yoshitaka Miike

Introduction

Paul Wong, Meera Manvi and Takeo Hirota Wong are the first group of scholars who outlined valuable lessons that Asian (American) Studies can learn from Molefi Kete Asante's metatheory of Afrocentricity and discussed the possibility of constructing an "Asiacentric" paradigm. When they published their thought-provoking article, "Asiacentrism and Asian American Studies", in the special issue of *Amerasia Journal* on "Thinking Theory in Asian American Studies" in 1995, the word *Asiacentric* was hardly used in scholarly publications and media outlets. In September 2021, "Asiacentric", "Asiacentrism" and "Asiacentrist" appeared as new headword entries in *The Oxford English Dictionary*. "Asiacentric" is defined in the dictionary as "centred or focusing on Asia, or on cultures of Asian origin". Likewise, according to the dictionary, "Asiacentrism" refers to "Asiacentric ideas, attitudes, or emphasis; a focus on Asia, or on cultures of Asian origin". Although these additions signal more acceptance of the terms, their definitions do not aptly capture the meaning of Asiatic centrality as a paradigmatic and pragmatic concept. Neither do they adequately differentiate ethnorelative Asiatic centrality from ethnocentric Asiatic centrism.

The purpose of this chapter is to define and explicate Asiatic centrality as a synthetic metatheory and as an important impetus for the future growth of Asian communication theory. First, the chapter provides a brief history of Asian communication theory as an academic field. Second, the chapter offers a new definition of Asiatic centrality and highlights its four conceptual components (i.e. centreing as thought and practice, Asians as subjects and agents, Asian cultures as reflective resources and seeing and shaping the Asian world) for the sake of clarifying its metatheoretical visions and methodological implications. Finally, through the overarching framework of Asiatic centrality, the chapter assesses the past accomplishments of the field of Asian communication theory in terms of its areas of investigation, geographical scope and comparative focus and suggests four directions for the future of the field: (a) cross-cultural nonverbal communication; (b) family and intergenerational communication; (c) Whiteness, English and critical rhetoric and (d) spiritual-environmental communication ethics. The overall thesis of the chapter is that the application of Asiatic centrality will help the field open up productive lines of theoretical inquiry and integrate communication research in different Asian regions and nations.

A brief history of Asian communication theory

The decade of the 1980s was the age of paradigm dialogue in the communication discipline. Communication studies in the United States and Europe was in a state of ferment. The so-called empirical and critical schools of communication research were preoccupied with metatheoretical debates and discussions within the Western paradigm (see Dissanayake, 2022; Mowlana, 2022; Reinhard, 2022). Although Satoshi Ishii (1975a) and Kogil S. Sitaram and Ray T. Cogdell (1976) already constructed Asian theoretical models in the 1970s, organised efforts to pursue Eastern theories of rhetoric and communication had not been made until the 1980s. Thus, the field of Asian communication theory began to take off as a joint venture in the early 1980s. It was during the decade of the 1980s that the groundbreaking works of Asian communication pioneers such as Roichi Okabe (1983), June Ock Yum (1988) and Hamid Mowlana (1989) flourished notwithstanding some pessimistic views on indigenous theoretical approaches (e.g. Ito, 1989). They laid an intellectual foundation for the emergence and evolution of Asian communication theory as a legitimate field of study. Perhaps Wimal Dissanayake (1989), then Assistant Director of the Institute of Culture and Communication (formerly, the East-West Communication Institute) in the East-West Center (EWC) in Hawai‘i, most eloquently articulated the prevailing sentiment at that time:

If we were to widen the field of communication studies productively and secure greater insights, it is imperative that we turn to the great intellectual and cultural traditions of Asia, such as those of China, Japan, and India. These countries have produced great works of art, scholarship, and religious thought. Such great civilizations could not have been produced if questions of practical communication and communication metatheory were ignored. Hence, as we promote paradigm dialogues in the field of communication, we must learn to pay more attention to Asian approaches to communication as well. Such a course of action would ensure the productivity and usefulness of the dialogues.

(p. 168)

Four international conferences in the 1980s played key roles in establishing and developing the field of Asian communication theory. D. Lawrence Kincaid, then Research Associate at the East-West Communication Institute, organised the first EWC seminar on “Communication Theory from Eastern and Western Perspectives”, in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, December 15–23, 1980. He actually coordinated a special panel session under the same title at the 30th Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA) in Acapulco, Mexico, May 18–23, 1980, before this EWC seminar was held. The ICA panellists were Joseph Woelfel, Chung-Ying Cheng and Tulsi B. Saral (1928–2010) in addition to Kincaid and Dissanayake (see East-West Center, 20th Annual Report, October 1, 1979–September 30, 1980, p. 125). Akira Tsujimura (1926–2010), Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Tokyo, organised the second EWC seminar in Yokohama, Japan, July 20–23, 1982. The Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center (AMIC) also coordinated a three-day symposium, “Mass Communication Theory: The Asian Perspective”, which was hosted at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand, October 15–17, 1985 (see *Asian Mass Communication Bulletin*, Vol. 15, No. 6, 1985, p. 16).

Out of these three conferences as well as the 1980 ICA panel, Dissanayake (1988), Dissanayake and Said (1983), Kincaid (1987), Nordstrom (1983) and Tsujimura and Kincaid (1990) were published (see Gunaratne [1991] for an excellent summary of Dissanayake [1988] and Kincaid [1987]). These edited volumes were collections of selected papers presented at the EWC seminars, the ICA panel and the AMIC symposium. *Media Asia* (Vol. 13, No. 1, 1986) and *Media*

Development (Vol. 30, No. 1, 1983) also contained some of the papers. Dissanayake's piece (1982) appeared in the special issue of *Semiotica* on "Semiotics and Phenomenology", and Wilbur Schramm's essay (1980) was translated into Japanese and included as Prologue in Tsujimura and Kincaid (1990). In passing, distinguished scholars such as Lawrence Grossberg (1982), Klaus Krippendorff (1985) and Richard L. Lanigan (1982) participated in the EWC conferences as the East-West paradigm dialogue was the conference theme. It is important to note, however, that no African, Latin American and even Native Hawaiian scholars were invited to these conventions as plenary speakers.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, then G. B. Dealey Regents Professor of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin, organised another conference on "Rhetoric: East and West" at the EWC in Honolulu, Hawai'i, June 12–18, 1988. The participants were renowned rhetoricians from both sides of the Pacific including Robert T. Oliver (1909–2000) and Helen F. North (1922–2012). Papers presented at this National Endowment for the Humanities conference were published in various outlets (see Cua, 1998; Garrett, 1993; Jensen, 1992; Kirkwood, 1989; Scott, 1993; Sharma, 1992). They offered additional insights into theorising communication from East-West comparative perspectives. According to Okabe (1988), some main topics of discussion were *Wen Xin Diao Long* [*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*] and *Wen Xuan* [*Selections of Refined Literature*] as classical sources of the Chinese rhetorical tradition, rhetoric as a discrete or submerged field of study, silence and speaking as acts of revealing and concealing and the water and fire metaphors of oratory. In retrospect, Jamieson opined: "I thought the scholars from the West had a lot to learn from the scholars from the East. An alternative tradition enables you to see things differently about your own tradition" (see *East-West Center: Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 2010, p. 25).

These well-planned meetings in 1980, 1982, 1985 and 1988 represented the unified intellectual move to search for Asian theoretical models and modules of communication among four groups of scholars working in different fields in different regions: (a) US and European rhetorical communication theorists who were interested in Asian classical traditions of thought and international diplomacy; (b) South and Southeast Asian development communication researchers who were dealing with issues of cultural continuity and social change (see Wang & Dissanayake, 1984); (c) Northeast Asian intercultural communication experts who were building bridges across the Pacific for international business and understanding and (d) West Asian international communication specialists who were critical of the politics and policies of global information flows and cultural representations (Miike, 2016a). Nevertheless, this earnest search for indigenous approaches to communication theory was somewhat undermined in the 1990s due to the ascendency of the postpositivist paradigm and its empirical and methodological emphasis.

In the early 2000s, as the poignant critique of Eurocentrism and Whiteness and the passionate advocacy of multiculturalism (see Chesebro, 2022) became widespread in the US academic landscape, Chinese communication studies (e.g. Heisey, 2000; Jia, Lu, & Heisey, 2002; Lu, Jia, & Heisey, 2002) was on the rise. Communication researchers from the mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan collaborated to engage in indigenous theorising endeavours from the common Chinese heritage. Furthermore, in an attempt to revitalise the EWC and AMIC projects in the 1980s, Guo-Ming Chen and Yoshitaka Miike (co)edited journal special issues and themed section on Asian communication theory (see Chen, 2002; Chen & Miike, 2003; Miike, 2009b; Miike & Chen, 2007, 2010). The term *de-Westernisation* was rarely used as the primary focus of these theoretical investigations was on the exploration of indigenous concepts, principles and models based on Asian cumulative wisdom. In these evolving efforts, many questions were asked, many suggestions were made and many calls were issued (e.g. Chen, 2006; Chen & Miike, 2006; Gordon,

2007; Gunaratne, 2009; Ishii, 2001; Lee, 2005; Miike, 2004a, 2007; Miyahara, 2004; Sitaram, 2004; Wang & Shen, 2000; Yin, 2009; Zhang, 2012).

All in all, as Crispin C. Maslog (1983), the current chair of the AMIC Board of Directors, tersely stated, the lingering feeling shared among Asian communication scholars during the 1980s and the 1990s was that “communication research in Asia today can perhaps be described in a nutshell as an adolescent, born of a Western father and an Asian mother, now in search of [their] own identity and direction” (p. 24). But, until the early 2000s, a clear outline of an Asian paradigm with its unifying cardinal tenets had not been proposed. A new Asiatic metatheoretical architecture had not been built yet. Murphrey (1988) quipped in his presidential address at the 40th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies that “the fruitfulness of the tree of learning is a function both of the number of branches and of their organic unity and interaction” (p. 754). My dispassionate assessment of the field of Asian communication theory then was that, while different Asian trees grew, there was no Asian metatheoretical unity and Asian theoretical interactions.

Asiacentricity: A definition and elaboration

In 2002, situated in the aforementioned context of the field’s historical trajectory, I first propounded Asiaticentricity as a paradigmatic and pragmatic concept with a view to further advancing Asian communication theory. Since then, I have developed an Asiaticcentric metatheory of human communication (see Miike, 2002, 2003, 2004b, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2018, 2019b, 2022a, 2022b). Asiaticcentricity owes its intellectual debt to Molefi Kete Asante’s (1998, 2013, 2014, 2022) Afrocentric metatheory, Maulana Karenga’s (1997, 2005, 2006, 2014) *Kawaida* philosophy and Robert Shuter’s (2000, 2014) intracultural imperative. Virgilio G. Enriquez’s (1990, 1992) cross-indigenous methods also informed the methodological dimensions of Asiaticcentricity. I borrowed the term *Asiaticcentric* from Wong, Manvi, and Wong (1995) in honour of their pioneering metatheoretical inquiry. However, I do not employ the term *Asiaticcentrism* because I want to make the conceptual distinction between ethnorelative Eurocentricity and ethnocentric Eurocentrism (see Miike, 2010, 2014, 2019b, 2022a).

What is, then, Asiaticcentricity? *Asiaticcentricity is the thought and practice of centreing Asians as subjects and agents and Asian cultures as reflective resources in seeing and shaping the Asian world.* This new definition highlights four interrelated components that underlie the Asiaticcentric idea: (a) centreing as thought and practice (how to centre), (b) Asians as subjects and agents (who to centre); (c) Asian cultures as reflective resources (what to centre) and (d) seeing and shaping the Asian world (why to centre).

Centreing as thought and practice

First and foremost, *Asiaticcentricity is the idea and act of centreing for a theoretical and practical quality of Asian communication.* It is a metatheoretical principle in that it suggests how to theorise Asian thinking and behaviour through self-conscious and active centreing. It is a communicative practice in that it suggests how to actually communicate Asian ideas and insights based on the principle of centreing. Centreing here refers to allowing our own people and culture to become central, not marginal, in our narratives. *The act of centreing is not fixed and frozen but dynamic and dialogical.* It is dynamic and dialogical because how to centre culture depends on the listener, the situation and the purpose (Miike, 2014). Centredness as a result of centreing, therefore, should be taken as ground, location and orientation instead of reaction, opposition and isolation. In Asante’s (2013) pithy words, “to be centered is to stand some place and to come from some place” (p. 47).

The vision of Asiacentricity inherits the conceptualisation of centreing from the legacy of Afrocentricity. In proposing his Afrocentric idea, Asante (1998, 2014, 2015) persuasively and passionately argued for the compelling need to reposition African people and phenomena from the margins of European experiences to a centred place within their own heritage and history as they have been moved off from their cultural terms by physical enslavement and mental colonisation for the past 500 years. In Afrocentric formulations, he postulated, Africa is no longer a footnote to Europe. Africans are not objects, spectators and pupils without agency, but they are subjects, actors and teachers without marginality. Asante (2006) expounded on the significance of actively centreing our own culture in advancing multiculturalism without hierarchy:

I contend that it is necessary for radically new intellectuals to speak of centeredness as a way people own or assume agency within their own contexts. Such an idea is fundamentally more about humanity than materialism, winning, and domination. It is more about a culture's own sense of centering, that is, not marginalizing one's own culture, but claiming it as a valuable part of humanity. Only in the sharing of cultures can we have multicultural discourses.

(p. 153)

It is not trite to emphasise here that *centreing* in the Afrocentric and Asiacentirc paradigms should not be confused with the meaning of *center* in the center-peripheral model of Johan Galting's structural imperialism theory and Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory. As Yin (2022) clarified, "the center-peripheral model assumes that there is a single unitary system in which one group (the center) dominates the rest (the peripheral)" (p. 199). Centreing has nothing to do with dominating. Furthermore, centreing should not be equated with dichotomising. It does not allude to one centre diametrically opposed to another. Asian cultures can be centred so as to highlight similarities at one time and differences at another because Asiacentricity is not based on the presumption of the incommensurability of Asianness and non-Asianness.

Asiacentricity is sometimes misconstrued as ethnocentrism and essentialism (Miike, 2022b). Asiacentricity is not ethnocentric because it does not impose an Asian worldview as the only and best frame of reference on non-Asians and take an Asian-centred standpoint to look at non-Asian cultures and communication. Asiacentrists do not present Asian cultures as if they were universal and superior. Asiacentricity is not essentialist because what constitutes Asianness is still debatable and negotiable within the Asiacentric paradigm. *Asiacentricity prescribes how we theorise rather than what we theorise*. The question of Asianness is central to the Asiacentric terrain of inquiry, but Asiacentricity is not a closed system for delimiting and determining Asianness. Cultural centredness in Asiacentric discourse hence does not designate the pure essence of culture. *The self-conscious act of dynamic cultural centreing is not the same as the uncritical practice of fixed cultural essentialising* (Miike, 2017a). Nevertheless, Asiacentricity is against the marginalisation and peripherisation of Asian views and values within Asian cultural contexts. It is against the ignorance and invisibility of Asian peoples from all walks of life and their enduring legacies in Asian cross-cultural comparisons and intercultural encounters.

To be clear, this non-ethnocentric and non-essentialist act of centreing is not tantamount to isolating and secluding ourselves from the rest of the world or completely ignoring other cultural perspectives on our culture because we can be rooted in our culture and, at the same time, open to other cultures by reciprocating the principle of centreing and listening to other perspectives through mutual dialogue. There is a way to embrace our culture in theory and practice without suppressing others. In fact, Europeans have never marginalised their own cultural traditions in

addressing *European* thought and action. And yet no one has chastised them for perpetuating ethnocentrism, divisiveness and separatism (Miike, 2019b).

Asiaticity is not the same as Asianness itself. Asian ways of living can be self-consciously centred through Asiaticity for meaningful intracultural and intercultural conversations. There is a difference between actively centreing cultures and merely practicing cultures. Asante (2013) elaborated on this crucial difference:

One can be born in Africa, follow African styles, modes of living, and practice African religion and not be Afrocentric; to be Afrocentric one has to have a self-conscious awareness of the need for centering. Thus, those individuals who live in Africa and recognize the decentering of their minds because of European colonization may self-consciously choose to be demonstratively in tune with their own agency. If so, this becomes a revolutionary act of will that merely wearing African clothes or having an African name cannot achieve.

(pp. 31–32)

Asante (1998) repeatedly stressed that Afrocentricity leads to African cultural practices, but African cultural practices do not necessarily lead to Afrocentricity. In the same vein, Asianness without Asiaticity is possible but not vice versa. Subject-focused and agency-oriented self-reflection on our cultural heritage comes only from our culture-centric consciousness. Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), the first president of Ghana, elegantly remarked about his Afrocentric consciousness: “I am an African, not because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me”. Likewise, to be Asian is one thing, whereas to be Asiatic is another. People from non-Asian cultures can be Asiatic if they develop their Asiatic consciousness through cultural and historical grounding. On the other hand, the fact that you are biologically born as a person of Asian descent does not guarantee that you are Asiatic. No Asiaticist presupposes the direct link between biology and ideology. It may be the case, however, that an Asian identity and cultural familiarity can foster the Asiatic consciousness (Miike, 2010).

Based on the foregoing discussion, the methodological imperative of this Asiatic paradigm exhorts us (a) to look for Asians and their knowledge related to a subject within Asian continental and diasporan histories, (b) to carefully consider how to centre their insights and develop a conceptual framework and (c) to articulate a theoretical perspective according to a target audience and a specific objective. Those Asian individuals and ideas that are selected for Asiatic centreing should have some historical significance and contemporary relevance within Asian contexts or communities. The target audience and the research objective need to be clearly explained as a rationale for a particular way of centreing. The practical application of a theoretical perspective must be possible for Asian peoples and societies (see also Enriquez’s [1992] cross-indigenous methods and Shuter’s [2000] intracultural theoretical approach).

Asians as subjects and agents

Second, *Asiaticity is a perspectivist approach from the standpoint of Asians as subjects and agents in their historical evolution*. Centreing Asians as subjects and agents means that this perspectivist approach focuses not on what happen to Asians and what is done to Asians but on what Asians think and how Asians act. Asiaticity demands that we make a methodological decision to explore and extract the ideas and insights of Asians, not as spectators and targets, but as actors and sources. What did Asians think and say about the Asian world? How did they act, rather than how they were acted upon, in their own contexts? How did they see the Asian world instead of

how they were seen by non-Asians? What were their views, values and visions? What were their knowledge and experience? How did they cope with their life challenges and solve their problems? How did they discuss and debate their personal and social issues? These are fundamental and foundational questions in the Asiatic pursuit of knowledge.

Asiacentrists as active agents, therefore, rejects any perspective on Asians as passive participants who merely exist in the fringes of someone else's world and who do not have the capacity to make significant contributions to Asia and the world in the making. If we can see ourselves only through someone else's eyes, we will not have any agency. If we always speak in the voices of others, no one will hear our voices. Smith (2021) described such a silenced situation where we become voiceless objects in research:

The objects of research do not have a voice and do not contribute to research or science. In fact, the logic of the argument would suggest that it is simply impossible, ridiculous even, to suggest that the object of research can contribute to anything. An object has no life force, no humanity, no spirit of its own, so therefore "it" cannot make an active contribution.

(p. 70)

Similarly, Asante (2013) illustrated the historical context of Eurocentrism, in which Africans were peripheral objects, and its implications for intercultural relations and interactions:

If Africans are not subjects in their own situations, not amply recognized for making their own monuments on their continents, then the old matters of marginality adhere and consequently the interpretations cannot be authentic; consequently all communication can only be subject-to-object, but never subject-to-subject communication because Europe has defined Africa as the inferior other. This can occur whether the opinion maker, researcher or historian is European, African, or Asian so long as he operates from a Eurocentric base.

(p. 28)

Asante (1998, 2014, 2022) steadfastly maintained that Afrocentrity is a metatheory of cultural agency and human liberation where Africans must be viewed and view themselves as agents and actors in their historical process. The thrust of his impeccable argument is that to be fully human is not to forsake our cultural heritage as cultural baggage but to claim it as cultural agency so as to reaffirm our humanity. Accordingly, an overriding question in the Afrocentric quest for emancipation and empowerment is how we should communicate out of our own cultural agency in global and local settings (Asante & Miike, 2013). The Asiatic paradigm builds on this Afrocentric understanding of cultural agency and human communication. Asiaticity hence must spring from liberating consciousness, not from tortured consciousness. Some Asian Americans seem to hate being called "Asians" and being lumped into the category of "Asians". They desire to be treated just like a White individual. Understandably, they are unable to embrace their Asian collective identities and common heritages because they want to distance themselves from other Asians, especially those from Asia. They are trapped in the mental prison that White Orientalists constructed. Such tortured consciousness deters them from seeing the power of cultural agency.

The Asiatic paradigm also draws from the second *Kujichagulia* [self-determination] principle of Kwanzaa's *Nguzo Saba* ("seven principles" in Swahili) and specifies the meaning of agency as the self-determination to "define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for and spoken for by others" (Karenga, 1997, p. 60). Informed by the Akan concept of *sankofa* [to return to and retrieve the source] and

the Kemetic notion of *serudj ta* [to repair and restore the world], both Afrocentricity and Kawaida underline the idea of communicative agency based on ethical obligations as well as cultural traditions. Agency in the Afrocentric and Kawaida sense is cultural and moral agency. When we assert cultural agency, therefore, we must do so with moral reflection and moral sensitivity. Exercising agency as Africans is to realise themselves in their African and human fullness in ethical ways so that they can be becoming or transforming in the context of cultural recovery, cultural reconstruction and re-humanisation. *It is through the act of centreing that cultural traditions, ethical visions and communicative agency come together.* Asiaticentricity adopts this position of ethically cultural and fully human agency in and for communication.

Methodologically speaking, then, Asiaticentrist illuminate Asians as cultural subjects and moral agents for Asian collective and humanistic interests and ruminate on their views and values for intracultural and intercultural dialogue. Asante (2015) averred that “power dictates the conditions for the interpretation of reality” (p. 12) and avowed that “to study African culture it becomes absolutely necessary to accept the subject position of Africans within the context of historical realities if progress is to be made in interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or (re)construction” (p. 7). We are reminded here of Karenga’s (1997) submission that the hegemonic power is the symbolic power to define a reality and make others accept it even when it is to their disadvantage. Asante (2013) held that “it is consciousness, not biology, that decides how one is to apprehend the intellectual data because the key to the Afrocentric idea is the orientation to data, not the data themselves. Where do you stand when you seek to locate a text, phenomenon or person” (p. 40)? Suffice it to say that Asiaticentric empirical research findings must also be subject to Asiaticentric cultural and ethical interpretations that emerge from the self-conscious and active centreing of Asians as subjects and agents. Such an Asiaticentric perspectivist approach requires Asian conceptual frameworks from Asian cultural heritages to be used for data analysis.

Asian cultures as reflective resources

Third, *Asiaticentricity is a dialogical engagement with the culturally grounded views, values and visions of Asians.* Centreing culturally rooted Asian ideas and ideals at the centre of inquiry is vital to the process of shedding light on the past, present and future of Asians as subjects and agents in their own cultural contexts. *There is a mutually enhancing relationship between centreing Asians as subjects and agents and centreing Asian cultures as reflective resources.* By centreing Asian cultures as reflective resources, we can capture and envision Asians as subjects and agents. By centreing Asians as subjects and agents, we can treat Asian cultures as reflective resources for epistemological and ethical objectives. In the Asiaticentric systematics, culture is a living tradition, a treasure trove of knowledge, a path to historical grounding and a key for the future.

Asiaticentricity, like Afrocentricity, is undergirded by the conceptualisation of culture in the Kawaida paradigm. Karenga (1997) defined Kawaida (“tradition” in Swahili) as “an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world” (p. 21). In the Kawaida archaeology of knowledge, culture is a uniquely human way of being in the world and the ground of self-understanding, self-assertion and self-realisation. Tradition is a lived history, a source of position and a form of authority. It is regarded as a cultural core that is neither completely static nor totally unitary (see Karenga, 2005, 2014). Karenga (2006) emphatically asserted that “despite claims of multiculturalism. . . , if one’s culture is never or insufficiently used as a source of reflective problematics—the hub around which both the philosophical and educational enterprises revolve—the claims have little or no validity” (p. 247). It is his assertion that *culture must be used as a resource rather than a reference.* Thus, one of the most important Afrocentric

questions is: “What do Africa—its people, its culture—have to offer to the ongoing historical project of improving the human condition and enhancing the human future” (Karenga, 2006, p. 246)? Karenga (1997) further contended:

To truly dialogue with African culture means, first of all, using it as a *resource* rather than a mere reference. This is the meaning of posing questions and seeking answers within African culture concerning central issues of life and the world. To simply use African culture as a reference is to name things considered important, but never use it to answer questions, solve problems or extract and shape paradigms of excellence in thought and practice. To dialogue with African culture, then, is to constantly engage its texts—oral and—written—, its paradigms, its worldviews and values, its understanding of itself and the world, in an ongoing search for better answers and even better ways to pose our questions.

(p. 90)

In accord with this Kawaida contention, Asiacentrists presume tradition as a “living tradition” that is always invented and reinvented and proactively blending the old and the new. In the Asiacentric enterprise, therefore, tradition is not understood as the cultural essence in an ancient, pure and fixed sense. The Asiacentric project is not past-oriented in that it does not insist on bringing Asian cultures back to the pristine past. Rather, Asiacentricity conceives Asian cultural traditions as open and transformative systems and recast them in their full complexity as the lived and the living (continuity and change), the indigenous and the interactive (unity and diversity) and the liberating and the oppressive (pros and cons). Nevertheless, ideas and ideals rooted in Asian cultural traditions must be centred as sources of reflective insights and initiatives for Asiacentric theory and practice.

Chuan-tong in Chinese (*den-tō* in Japanese and *jeon-tong* in Korean) literally signifies communicated continuities. Etymologically, this Chinese-language word emanates from the silk-reeling metaphor and symbolises the unity of various developmental threads (e.g. language, religion, philosophy, history, art, dance and music) that have been passed down to us through the generations and provide us with cultural continuities. Although it is always debatable how and why certain cultural continuities have been constructed and communicated, it is well worth our while to trace back to each of these threads to understand and appreciate who we are as collective, communal and cultural beings (Miike, 2014).

As a metatheory of human communication, Asiacentricity posits that Asian cultural traditions should be located and mined as theoretical resources for Asian voices and visions and that more theories should be constructed out of Asian cultural specificities and particularities. In Asiacentric scholarship, therefore, Asian cultures are treated not as peripheral targets of data analysis and rhetorical criticism, but as central resources of theoretical insight and humanistic inspiration. *Theory building in an Asiacentric sense is the self-conscious process of actively centreing diverse and distinct traditions of Asia as essential intellectual resources and developing concepts, comparisons, postulates and principles in order to capture and envision Asians as subjects and agents of their own realities rather than objects and spectators in the lived experiences of others.*

There are four content dimensions of the Asiacentric paradigm, that is, four aspects of Asian cultures that can be proactively centred in describing, interpreting, evaluating and envisioning the profiles of Asian communicators and the pictures of Asian communication: (a) the linguistic dimension; (b) the religious-philosophical dimension; (c) the historical dimension and (d) the aesthetic dimension. All cultures use language as a common code of communication and a symbolic vehicle of indigenous epistemologies. Cultural values and communication ethics have been largely shaped

by religious-philosophical underpinnings. No culture exists without its own history, from which its members learn important lessons about relational communication, environmental communication and spiritual communication. Every culture performs communication in rituals and ceremonies that give a sense of bonding and belonging to its members and appeal to their ethos and aesthetics.

For the purpose of elucidating the psychology of Asian communicators and enunciating the dynamics of Asian communication, therefore, Asiacentrists ought to revivify, revalorise and revitalise (a) Asian words as key concepts and their etymologies as cultural outlooks and instructive insights, (b) Asian religious-philosophical teachings as behavioural principles and codes of ethics, (c) Asian histories as multiple layers of contextualisation and recurrent patterns of continuity and change and (d) Asian aesthetics as analytical frameworks for space-time arrangement, nonverbal performance and emotional pleasure (Miike, 2008, 2010; Miike & Yin, 2015). By using these four elements of Asian cultures as theoretical resources, it is possible for Asiacentrists to theorise as Asians speak in Asian languages, as Asians are influenced by Asian religious-philosophical world-views, as Asians struggle to live in Asian historical experiences and as Asians feel ethically good and aesthetically beautiful.

This way of relating culture as theory for knowledge reconstruction, not as text for knowledge deconstruction, allows us to rediscover and recover Asian cultural locations and cultural agency and improve the self-understanding and self-assertion of Asian communicators in global and local contexts. The metatheoretical distinction between “culture as text and culture as theory” is of methodological significance because it differentiates Asiacentric studies of Asian communication from other studies *about* Asian communication (Miike, 2010). When they are centred within Asian cultures as reflective resources, Asians as the makers of their own histories have valuable insights to offer not only for present issues, but also for future prospects from their cumulative wisdom.

Seeing and shaping the Asian world

Fourth and finally, *Asiacentricity is an Asian epistemological and ethical project based on the twin pillar of rootedness and openness*. To say that Asiacentricity is a way of seeing and shaping the Asian world is to say that it is descriptive and prescriptive, reaffirming and renewing and deconstructive and reconstructive at the same time. On the one hand, Asiacentricity serves as an epistemological framework for interpreting Asian people and phenomena. On the other hand, it serves as an ethical imperative for critiquing and correcting anti-Asian dislocations and Asian negative practices and for reconstructing a better and brighter Asia in constant exchange with the rest of the world. *This ongoing project is predicated on the reciprocal principle and practice of being rooted in one's own culture and open to other cultures*. In short, to use Daisetsu Suzuki's felicitous phrase, Asiacentricity is the idea and act of being “inwardly deep and outwardly open” (Miike, 2013).

On the basis of the assumption that, “as there are lessons for humanity in African particularity, there are lessons for Africans in human commonality” (Karenga, 2003, p. 77), Karenga (2005, 2014) stipulated five ethical concerns and commitments in the Kawaida pursuit of knowledge: (a) profound appreciation for the transcendent and scared; (b) the dignity and rights of the human person; (c) the well-being and flourishing of family and community; (d) the integrity and value of the environment and (e) the reciprocal solidarity and cooperation of humanity for mutual benefit. Karenga (1997) made the following suggestion on how to proceed in this Afrocentric ethical quest for humanity and dignity:

The dialogue with African culture must transform itself into a comparative project linking parts into a meaningful and instructive whole. It must do this within the culture and then

expand to exchange outside the culture. The search here is for a comparative knowledge of African and human reality. . . . [Kawaida], of necessity, searches *in the world* for comparative models of human thought and practice which can enhance the African understanding of the world and our approach to it. We learn from the world while we teach it. But we absorb without being absorbed.

(p. 95)

Inspired by this philosophical vision of Kawaida, Asiacentrists also advance their epistemological and ethical project through intracultural and intercultural dialogue. To put it another way, there is always a comparative and communicative focus within the Asiacentric enterprise (Miike, 2003, 2006, 2022b). Asiacentricity, so conceived, is a cross-cultural philosophy and practice of human communication. *Although Asiacentricity is primarily about the Asian world and prioritise Asiacentric comparisons as starting points, the scope of comparative focus is not limited to Asia.* Methodologically, Asians must dialogue with their own Asian culture. An Asian culture must dialogue within itself. An Asian culture must dialogue with other Asian cultures. Asian cultures must dialogue with other non-Asian cultures. All these types of intracultural and intercultural dialogues are essential to the articulation of lessons for humanity in Asian particularity and lessons for Asians in human commonality.

Cultural ecology and sustainability are part and parcel of the Asiacentric project. There are five competing and complementary ethical values that both the local community and the global society are struggling to balance: (a) individual liberty, (b) social equality, (c) civil order, (d) benevolent community and (e) sacred earth. No cultural system keeps a perfect balance among these perennial concerns and intractable issues. Thus, mutual referencing and learning across cultures is a key to cultural ecology and sustainability (Miike, 2017a, 2019a). For this reason, Asiacentrists need more and more broad and depthful intracultural studies for intercultural interactions so that Asians can explain to the global community Asian cultural systems in the local milieu from their own linguistic, religious-philosophical, historical and aesthetic perspectives. At the same time, Asiacentrists need more and more careful and critical intercultural studies for intracultural interactions so that Asians can broaden and deepen the understanding of themselves and their societies in the global context for a sustainable future.

As an epistemological and ethical frame of reference, Asiacentricity has different practical implications for people of Asian heritage and people of non-Asian descent. For Asians, Asiacentricity can encourage their careful and critical engagements in their own cultural traditions for self-understanding, self-expression, communal development and cross-cultural dialogue. Intraculturally, it helps Asians embrace the positive elements of their cultural heritage and transform negative practices according to their ethical ideals. Interculturally, it helps Asians find “a place to stand”, so to speak, and provides the basis of equality and mutuality in the global community. For non-Asians, Asiacentricity can stimulate their cross-cultural reflections on human ways of life through their non-ethnocentric exposure to Asian versions and visions of humanity (Miike, 2018).

There is no reason to believe that Asiacentricity cannot be methodologically applied to critique and correct negative and unethical practices in contemporary Asia. *Asiacentricity is neither uncritical particularism nor blind exceptionalism.* Asiacentrists can construct Asiacentric critical theories of communication because there have always and already been critical communication discourse in Asia (Miike, 2014, 2022a). Asiacentrists can participate in theory building activities that are in consonance with those critical voices and vocabularies in order to reconstruct open-minded Asianness by deconstructing closed-minded Asianness. Moreover, it is possible for

Asiacentric critical inquiries rooted in Asian traditional ideals to facilitate ethical and humane communication so as to posit the Asian positive and negate the Asian negative.

In summary, the Asiacentric enterprise is committed to generating self-defining ideas and taking self-determined actions that underscore ethical visions for human freedom, fulfillment and flourishing. The Asiacentric project strives to bring forth the best of what it means to be ethically Asian and fully human and helps continental and diasporan Asia to make conscious and independent choices for cultural preservation and integration. In this vein, Asiacentrists are in agreement with Ngūgī wa Thiong'o (2012) who intimated that each community's culture is a cumulative gift from the past and a renewed guide for the future:

Culture reflects a community in motion. Culture is to the community, what the flower is to a plant. A flower is very beautiful to behold. But it is the result of the roots, the trunk, the branches and the leaves. But the flower is special because it contains the seeds which are the tomorrow of that plant. A product of a dynamic past, it is pregnant with a tomorrow.

Current status and future directions

Seen through the paradigmatic and pragmatic lens of Asiacentricity, how does the current status of Asian communication theory as an academic field look like? What are future tasks that lie ahead for the field to move further and forward? Looking back over the past several decades of Asian communication scholarship, we witness that considerable progress has been made in this specialty field. Elsewhere (Miike, 2017b), I provided an overview of 11 Asian communication theories: (a) the Taoist *I-Ching* paradigm and the Chinese harmony theory of communication competence, (b) the Buddhist dependent co-arising paradigm and the eight-wind theory of relational communication, (c) the Indian theory of silence and communication, (d) the double-swing theory of intercultural communication, (e) the Hindu theory of six ways of knowing in communication, (f) the Buddhist consciousness-only theory of intrapersonal communication, (g) the Japanese *enryō-sasshi* theory of interpersonal communication; (h) Buddhist and Confucian theories of language and communication, (i) the Hindu *sadharanikaran* theory of communication, (j) the Gandhian theory of persuasion and social change and (k) the Islamic theories of ethical and ecological communication. For the past 20 years, I have compiled four bibliographies of the English-language literature on Asian cultures and communication (Miike, 2009a, 2011, 2016c; Miike & Chen, 2006). They contained a total of 1000 items.

The general areas of Asian communication theory have so far concentrated on interpersonal communication, organisational communication, rhetorical communication, mediated communication and communication ethics. Asiacentric rhetoricians and communicologists have probed cultural concepts in Asian languages, formulated presuppositions and principles from Asian religious-philosophical traditions and adumbrated the communication styles and strategies of Asian historical figures (e.g. Cheng, 2022; Kumar, 2022; Merican, 2022; Yum, 2022). However, there have not been many indigenous theorising endeavours from the historical and aesthetic dimensions of Asian cultures. By and large, Asiacentric theory building activities must be encouraged especially in South and Southeast Asian nations such as Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. The mass-interpersonal divide continues to characterise Asian communication studies as a whole, even though rhetorical and intercultural communication experts and media and development communication specialists can have fruitful conversations so as to take stock of cultural continuity and social change in the broader context of contemporary Asia.

Comparative Eurocentrism has been consistently predominant in the entire history of Asian communication scholarship (see Miike [2010, 2016a] and Miike and Yin [2015] for alternative non-Eurocentric comparisons). More and more intracultural and intercultural Asiacentric comparisons are desirable in an increasingly multipolar world. Intraculturally, synchronic comparisons have been made from the standpoints of gender, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minorities (e.g. Chao & Ha, 2019; Sueda, 2022; Tomoike, 2020; Yin, 2022) but not so often from other social locations based on age, class, language/dialect, religion and mental/physical abilities. Diachronic comparisons (e.g. Tsujimura, 1992) are still few and far between. Interculturally, the focus of comparison has been confined largely to the linguistic and religious-philosophical dimensions. The historical and aesthetic dimensions (e.g. Tehrani, 1984) were rarely compared across Asian cultures. Although some groundbreaking explorations foregrounded African-Asian comparisons (e.g. Metz, 2020; Yin, 2017, 2018; Yum, 2007), what is strikingly missing is interregional comparisons between Asian and Pacific Island cultures, including Native Hawaiian and Micronesian cultures.

Recently, there have been innovative metatheoretical syntheses (Hamada, 2022; Li, 2020; Miyahara, 2023; Shi-xu, 2014, 2017; Tian, 2021; Tian & Yu, 2022) that are extremely conducive to theoretical advances in Asian communication research. Furthermore, Craig's and Xiong's (2022) latest attempt to apply the constitutive model for multicultural dialogue is instructive to Asiacentrists (see also Miike, 2022c; Miike & Yin, 2022). In this last section, with the current status in mind, I wish to suggest four avenues of future Asiacentric theoretical inquiry: (a) cross-cultural nonverbal communication; (b) family and intergenerational communication; (c) race, Whiteness and critical rhetoric and (d) spiritual-environmental communication ethics.

Cross-cultural nonverbal communication

It is often said that implicit nonverbal messages play a more important role in Asian social interactions than explicit verbal messages. In spite of this obvious importance, one of the most undertheorised fields in Asian communication research for the past three decades has been nonverbal communication. There are 12 general areas of nonverbal communication inquiry: (a) acoustics (nonvocal sounds), (b) vocalics (paralanguage), (c) kinesics (body movements), (d) haptics (touch), (e) proxemics (space), (f) objectics, (g) oculistics (eye movements), (h) olfactics (smell), (i) gustics (taste), (j) chromatics (colour), (k) chronemics (time) and (l) silence and stillness. No systematic Asian study exists in some of these areas, not to mention cross-cultural comparisons, with the aim of facilitating intercultural interactions across different regions and nations of Asia. Ishii (1975b, 1988), for instance, conducted a preliminary survey to see to what extent and which Japanese hand gesture was understood in intercultural contexts. Similar research can be undertaken for comparative theories of Asian nonverbal behaviours and their transcultural communicability. McDaniel (2015) demonstrated that theme analysis can be adopted to unfold the underlying worldviews and values that have structured nonverbal communication systems in a given culture.

Asiacentric historical studies of nonverbal communication are scarce. There is a dearth of research on the origin and development of a particular Asian nonverbal code of communication (e.g. wearing *sari* in different South Asian cultures and the *hijab* in different Muslim countries). Classical treatises can be reread for such Asiacentric nonverbal theoretical investigations. Fairus, Kholil, and Arifin (2018) recently examined the Quran's instructions on kinesic behaviours in the Islamic context. Surprisingly, there have been few studies that relate Asian cultural concepts (e.g. the Filipino concept of *pahiwatig* and the Malay concept of *budi*) to specific nonverbal behaviours. While there are a number of textual analyses of Korean TV dramas, the Korean concept of *cheong/jeong* (see Choi & Choi, 2001) is rarely employed to account for Korean patterns and practices

of nonverbal affective communication. In Confucianism-influenced cultures, as Yum (2015) pointed, “listening is not only necessary from the instrumental aspect of communication (comprehension) but, more importantly, for the affect aspect (satisfaction of being listened to)” (p. 118). What are nonverbal behavioural characteristics of such empathic listening toward emotional convergence in those *ren*-oriented cultures?

Nonverbal communication is intricately intertwined with the aesthetic dimensions of culture and the performative aspects of communication including space-time arrangement, clothing and the use of colour. Donald Keene (1989) isolated four salient features of Japanese beauty: (a) suggestion, (b) irregularity, (c) simplicity and (d) perishability. It would be commendable for theorists and researchers in communication and performance studies to explore how these aesthetic dimensions manifest in Japanese nonverbal expressions (see also Chiba & Loveday, 1984). The Japanese preference for *senkō hanabi* (incense-stick firework), for example, can be lucidly illustrated through his fourfold axiological frame of reference. Asian cultures possess explicitly nonverbal conceptual schemes that go beyond Western categories (e.g. the Chinese concept of *feng shui*, the Indian concept of *rasa* and the Japanese concept of *ma*). They can be unearthed as Asiatic analytical frameworks for Asian aesthetics, nonverbal performance and emotional pleasure.

Family and intergenerational communication

Many Asian nations are becoming ageing societies. According to Kohli, Sharma, and Sood (2011), it is estimated that 860 million Asians in Asia will be 65 years or older in 2050. The “graying” of Asia, starting from Japan, South Korea and China, is real in all of its consequences including shrinking working age population, uncertain income security and limited health care. Due to the decline of birth rate or the result of population control such as China’s one-child policy, family structures are fundamentally changing in the Asian milieu. There is an urgent need for Asian intergenerational communication research especially in family contexts. Moreover, the role of communication technology is becoming more and more central to the process of intergenerational communication within the family and the organisation.

Age is a significant communication marker in almost all Asian communities, but its impact varies from one culture to another. Ota, McCann, and Honeycutt (2012), for example, reported that the Thais were more respectful to younger adults in interpersonal interactions than the Japanese, while the Japanese were more avoidant in communication with middle-aged adults than the Thais. The Thais with their *kreng jai* (concerned and considerate heart) displayed politeness and deference norms not only to older adults, but also to same-age and younger adults. Age consciousness and age stereotypes as they relate to “social clocks” and communication behaviours merit close and sustained analysis for Asiatic theorisation. It is equally imperative for Asiatic theorists to formulate theoretical perspectives on the generation gaps as to the influence of Asian traditional values on communication in organisational and healthcare contexts. The increasing recognition of diversity (e.g. ethnicity, nationality, class, sexual orientation, religion and disability) will change the nature and process of family and intergenerational communication as well.

Asiatic theory construction in family and intergenerational communication studies is critically important not only for domestic intracultural contexts, but also for diasporic intercultural contexts. As more and more Asians migrate to another (non-)Asian country, they will encounter different kinds of family and intergenerational communication problems. For instance, the loss of young children’s first language is a common source of family conflict, miscommunication and discommunication. Under the assimilation pressure in a new country, many Asian adolescents

lose their mother tongue. They can no longer communicate substantially with their parents and grandparents who do not become fluent in the second language. In some cases, the only mode of family communication is brief text messaging. What kind of Asiacentric theoretical and practical interventions are possible in this situation? Asiacentrists are also urged to investigate to what extent Asian values and ethics are internalised in foreign-born Asians in the diaspora (e.g. Miura, 1986). Those Asians may not understand specific Asian words, but they may display behaviours that correspond to them. The point here is that culturally rooted concepts in Asian languages can be deployed to assess the continuities and discontinuities between continental and diasporan Asians for Asiacentric family and intergenerational communication research.

Whiteness, English and critical rhetoric

Most, if not all, Asian nations were, albeit in varying degrees, compelled to Westernise themselves for survival. China's May Fourth Movement and Japan's Meiji Restoration are cases in point. Westernisation in Asia has been promulgated under the wholesale slogans of "modernization" in the 19th century, "internationalization" in the 20th century and "globalisation" in the 21st century. Therefore, serious confusion exists about something Western and something modern, international and global in the Asian context (Asante & Miike, 2013). In fact, what is "international" and "global" in the minds of many Asians is neither truly international nor substantially global. What is "modern" in their imagination designates more than science and technology. As Marimba Ani (1980) shrewdly pointed out in her penetrative analysis of the European ideology of "progress", Western rhetorical strategies for heralding its global dominance have been to deliberately create and circulate inherently ambiguous buzzwords that are *implicitly Eurocentric* in substance, but *explicitly neutral and universal* in appearance. Indeed, critical rhetorical studies of Asian discourse on "developed countries", "modern societies", "international education", "cosmopolitan culture", "global standards", "universal values" and "English as an international language" would contribute significantly to building an Asiacentric theory of rhetorical criticism on Eurocentrism in Asia.

"English-language education" has a far more influence on the self-understanding and self-assertion of Asians than we think. Even though two-thirds of the world's population actually have no proficiency in English outside elite circles and tourist sites (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2022), some Asians continue to believe that English is a *lingua franca* or even "a language of freedom and liberation". They never realize that English is either replacing or displacing other languages all over the world (Phillipson, 1992). In effect, English often becomes a powerful mode of mental colonisation; fosters racial, cultural and international hierarchies and closes a door to the non-English-speaking world and to multilingual information (Asante & Miike, 2013). A number of Asian critical views (e.g. Tsuda, 1994) were expressed to challenge problematic discursive formations with reference to Whiteness and English (e.g. the deep-seated myth that those White monolinguals who speak "perfect English without an accent" are superior to those non-White bilinguals who speak "broken English with a foreign accent"). This Asian critical discourse can be reconceptualised as Asiacentric frameworks for delving into race, rhetoric and identity.

The study of the imagined West and how it limits the understanding of both European and non-European worlds is another important area of Asiacentric rhetorical studies. Such a study holds great promise for constructing Asiacentric critical theories of anti-racist communication. On the one hand, many Asians have ambivalent attitudes toward the West. Their imagination of "Westerners" reflects such ambivalence (see Tsuruta, 1989). On the other hand, they idealise the West and assume that the West has more than what Asians have. They see the West only as sources for a better or "higher" way of life. In their Occidentalist imagination, the West always offers additions not

replacements. They never think that what is missing in the West may be what is taken for granted in Asia. They are sometimes not aware that Asian traditions may be providing them with humanistic foundations of life for meaningful relationships. We ought to critically appraise how the racist sense of human hierarchy is instilled in the minds of Asians and how they came to imagine the West as the ideal form of humanity and Whites as the desirable human norm from a historical point of view. Paradoxically, the Asian “international” or “global” mindset simplifies Europe and European America and ignores the rest of the world.

Ideological analysis of hegemonic discourse on the superiority of Whiteness and English that *makes Asians anti-Asian* is indispensable to the development of Asiacentric critical rhetorical theories (see Shi-xu’s [2012] “Cultural Discourse Studies” approach for such analysis). It behoves Asiacentric rhetorical critics to interrogate anti-Asian statements like the following: “The Japanese are copycats. They can’t be creative”. “The Chinese language isn’t scientific because it lacks accuracy”. As a matter of fact, it is Toshiba that invented the first laptop computer (Rogers, 2003), and it is Seiko that invented the first quartz wristwatch together with jewellery makers. The first bullet train was created with the innovative application of the “wind tunnel” concept in aircraft engineering technology to eliminate spontaneous resonant vibration (Maruyama, 1994). In Chu’s (2022) considered opinion, the Chinese ideographic writing system is easily understood, highly self-generating, semantically rich and communicatively economic. Chu (2022) cautioned that “one must not use the attributes of foreign inventions to deny the value of indigenous inventions without careful examination of these inventions first” and advised that “discussion of their advantages should be accompanied by discussion of their disadvantages” (p. 132).

Spiritual-environmental communication ethics

In recent years, due to alarming climate changes and natural disasters, environmental communication research and education have garnered increasing attention (see Milstein & Mocatta, 2022). Asiacentric theoretical inquiries would make enlivening contributions to this evolving field as well. In the monotheistic worldview such as Islam, Judaism and Christianity, there is one almighty God, which is placed above human beings (in the middle) and natural beings (at the bottom). There is no overlap among them. In the polytheistic worldview such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Shinto and Taoism, there are many supernatural beings (e.g. Buddhas, deities, gods, goddesses and spirits). No clear-cut boundaries are drawn among spiritual, human and natural beings. There is no absolute hierarchy among them (Ishii, 2001; Ishii, Klopf, & Cooke, 2012). A Buddhism-inspired popular saying of “*sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu*” (“All mountains, rivers, grasses, and trees can attain Buddhahood”) in Japan represents such a worldview. It is a matter of debate whether or not Hinduism is strictly polytheistic or a combination of monotheism and polytheism given its core belief in *Brahman*. Nonetheless, impacted by animism as well as polytheism, many traditional non-Western cultures do not differentiate spiritual and environmental communication. Communicating with nature means communicating with the divine and ancestral spirits. Environmental communication is spiritual communication. Enhanced spiritual consciousness leads to enhanced ecological consciousness. That is not the case in the monotheistic worldview, although nature can be not only overcome and exploited, but also managed and protected, by humans.

Eurocentric theories of environmental communication ethics are based explicitly and implicitly on the monotheistic worldview. Many Asian cultures are significantly influenced by the polytheistic worldview. Here there is an immense possibility of constructing Asiacentric ethical theories of spiritual-ecological communication (see Callicott, 1987; Miike, 2015, 2017a, 2019a). What is theoretically fascinating and practically instructive is an Asian philosophical perspective on

harmony from the cosmic level to the interpersonal level. In the Asian milieu, as Miura (1986) noticed, harmony is not a condition that can be “created” or “achieved” through communication. It symbolises a state that already exists. In other words, it is simply there as long as we do not do anything wrong. Hence, the role of communication is to either “preserve” or “restore” harmony, and the key to the preservation and restoration of harmony is reciprocity. Intriguingly enough, indigenous spirituality in other non-Western cultures including traditional African religions shares this cosmological viewpoint. Wangari Muta Maathai (1940–2011), the Kenyan founder of the Green Belt Movement and an avid supporter of the *mottainai* campaign toward *kyōsei* (co-living), once said: “We cannot create life. It is there, but we must sustain it. If we let it go, we are killing ourselves gradually” (NHK BS Special Program Interview, March 21, 2005). Well-informed Asians can easily find resonance with Ani (1980) who deftly portrayed the traditional African worldview:

The traditional African view of the universe is a spiritual whole in which all beings are organically interrelated and interdependent. The cosmos is sacred and cannot be objectified. Nature is spirit, not to be exploited, and there is no obsession with changing the natural order for the sake of change. Use without replenishment is sacrilegious because all beings exist in reciprocal relationship to one another; we cannot take without giving, and that is what the ritual of sacrifice symbolizes. Only profane or ordinary time is viewed in terms of simplistic lineal relationships, but within sacred, cyclical time the past, present, and future became one. This conception allows us to draw strength from our origins (and ancestors) in order to build, survive, and create. The mode of harmony (rather than control) which prevails does not preclude the ability to struggle when necessary. Spirit is primary, yet manifested in material being. This world view allows for depth of spirituality, belief, and humanism.

(pp. 76–77)

The preceding discussion amply suggests that non-Eurocentric comparisons of spiritual-environmental communication ethics will be very promising and productive. Such comparisons can also tap into semantic convergence and divergence among non-Western ecological concepts such as the Chinese concepts of *dao* and *qi* (Cheng, 2022), the Hawaiian concepts of *aloha ‘āina* and *mana* (Meyer, 2018), the Lakota concept of *mitakuye oyasin* (Modaff, 2019), the African concepts of *maat* and *ubuntu* (Karenga, 2022; Sesanti, 2022) and the Andean concept of *buen vivir* (González Tanco & Arcila Calderón, 2022). It is important to remember that just because environmental pollution as a result of “modernization” and “development” is rampant in contemporary Asia, that fact should not adamantly deny that Asian cultural traditions have cherished harmonious ways of life with nature for centuries.

Before I close this section, I would venture to say a few words about basic scholarly attitudes toward academic excellence in Asian communication theory. While a nurturing and supportive climate for initial conceptual generation and formation is of absolute necessity, Asian scholars and students need to be modest and diligent enough to consistently work on a given topic for a substantial period of time. They must be well-disciplined to produce refined original work beyond mere description. While the obsession with the new from the West and the disregard for the old from Asia is detrimental to the field, they ought to have an adequate understanding of Western communication theory and proffer persuasive critiques of its shortcomings. The difficulty of constructing an Asiacentric theory of communication lies in reading a vast array of scholarly literature in different disciplines, extracting communicative ideas and insights on a specific topic and synthesising them into a coherent theoretical framework. Asiacentrists as active producers, not passive consumers, of theoretical knowledge should identify and propose a concept, give a clear definition to it and suggest

its practical application while capitalising on local resources in local languages. Only then will they stand on their own ground and enrich their theories on an equal footing in constant exchange with the world. Only then will they be prepared to examine human commonalities within cultural particularities and to establish commensurable conceptual links with other theories from elsewhere without being absorbed into, or taken over by, the dominant side. Above all, the breadth and depth of knowledge generate heuristic insights. Microwave scholarship is destined to disappear soon.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the beginnings of Asian communication theory as a distinct and discrete field of study, provided a definition and elaboration of Asiacentricity as a paradigmatic and pragmatic concept, assessed the state of the art of the field and mapped out future directions for the field in the age of “communication theory in human diversity” (Miike & Yin, 2022). There is no need to be apologetic to the West in the Asiacentric quest for home-grown theories. But it should be kept in mind that the quality, not quantity, of scholarship ultimately matters for theoretical origination and development. Asiacentric theoretical investigations must be rigorous, cumulative and sophisticated. Asiacentrists must strive to be well versed in a wide range of existing communication theory for comparative perspectives. Their reputation will inevitably and eventually suffer if they produce sloppy writings without careful documentation, offer shallow and superficial literature reviews without thorough (inter)disciplinary synthesis and make bold claims without historical evidence. They should neither underestimate the racist intellectual climate of Whiteness nor naively presume that increased exposure guarantees more recognition. After all, the structure of classical and contemporary knowledge in the human sciences is still very much Eurocentric worldwide. The academic powerhouse of the communication discipline remains the United States.

Carlos P. Romulo (1898–1985), the first Asian president of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the 11th president of the University of Philippines, proclaimed that “the elements and factors that make for Asian diversity in no way propose a situation of conflict, and that the actual differences in culture, creed, political philosophies among nations in the region do not justify the politics of fear” (Romulo, 1965, p. 222). As Wallerstein (2006) keenly observed, “global universal values are not given to us, they are created by us” (p. 28). In his observation, “it is not that there may not be global universal values. It is rather that we are far from knowing what these values are” (p. 28). Likewise, Asian values are not given to Asians, but they must be created by Asians. I remain hopeful that Asia will learn to live in harmony with differences as well as similarities through human communication as the art and act of reciprocating trust. But, for such unity in diversity, Asia must be born in the minds of Asians, and Asiacentricity is a *sine qua non* for intracultural and intercultural dialogue. The field of Asian communication theory will play an amalgamating role in harmonising and humanising Asia today and tomorrow if the heart and soul of each Asian culture are truly liberated, not unduly suppressed, in Asian theoretical metadiscourse. Let me end this chapter with Romulo’s (1965) words about the Asian civilisation:

Asian civilization must be reflective of the diversity of our cultures and ourselves; it would not be Asian if it would not be various, if it would not manifest the very variety of Oriental culture itself—a culture which has mystified the West for centuries and which has been the source of wisdom and the informing strength that had enabled us to survive, to endure, during the era of Western colonialism.

(p. 223)

Author's Note: This chapter was presented, in an earlier form, at the 18th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies on the theme, "Cultural Convergence and Conflict in Global Context: Rethinking the Phenomenon of Glocalization", Yuan Ze University, Taoyuan, Taiwan, June 8–11, 2012.

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4

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTIONS

A history and critique

Hamid Mowlana

Culture: Its history and archaeology

When does culture begin? The roots of culture lie in the human past. Communication and interactions between human cultures have generally been more important than the confrontation between them, and I believe this pattern is likely to continue in the future. To understand history is to understand how peoples and individuals interact with each other. Culture is the one subject where we cannot begin at the beginning.

Social historical knowledge about the development of a field of study, such as intercultural communication, is hard to preserve since it was crossed-fertilised by visitors from several disciplinary domains such as history, anthropology and communication (Mowlana and Wang, 2018). As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the history of anthropology and international communication studies is much longer and more extensive than the current literature indicates. The essentials of the phenomenological method in the study of culture and society were known to and carefully observed by the Iranian scientist, Abu Rayhan Biruni (973–1048 AD) in his classic study of Indian culture (Mowlana, 2021). The methodological principles he established were continued in a long tradition of comparative studies and learnings for cultures. In Europe the phenomenological method was first introduced into Western philosophy by Edmund Husserl and into the study of ethics and religion by Max Scheler.

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people. It is a shared pattern of life and behaviour and interactions. It fosters individual and group identity. The term culture has been used by Biruni as “the way of life”. In Greek it means “politismas”, in Turkish “medeniyyet”, in Chinese “wenhua”, in Arabic “hidaruh” or “althaqafa” and in Persian “farhang”. In the Western tradition, the word “culture” derives from a French term, which in turn comes from the Latin “colere”, which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and culture. Intercultural communication and interactions refers to the behaviour, including but not limited to, verbal and nonverbal communication, that occurs when members of different cultural groups engage in joint activities (Mowlana, 1997).

Written history began sometime around 5000 BC by the Chinese and not by the Greeks in the 400 BCs as it sometimes claimed. An Egyptian scribe used the papyrus, a building material in an

Egyptian house to record the events. It was used as a simple way for communication of ideas and bureaucratic records between widely separated communities of north and south of the Nile River Valley. Hieroglyphs continued to be used on the stone walls to record history. Sumerians, Phoenicians and Persians used their alphabets to record their history on clay tablets, which later came to be known as cuneiform writing. The first political and war chronicles were written by scribes who were paid by kings whose achievements they recorded. In Sumer by 2,600 BC, Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, conquers his neighbours and became a legend hero, producing the oldest epic tale in history.

What is so unique about the human species is not its possession of certain faculties or physical characteristics, but what it has done with them. Until very recently climate and food determined where and how humans lived. Language—of whose origins we as yet know little—sharpened human culture by a new kind of group intercourse. Over about 100,000 years we slowly developed the means that would propel us to become the dominant species. At the beginning humanity was more uniform than ever, but as the time passed culturally it was diversifying as it grappled with different problems and appropriated different resources. The replacement of hunter-gatherers by farmers did not have to be a violent process, but it was one of the biggest cultural transformations in human history. Civilisation now was to bring conscious attempts on a quiet new scale to control and organise people and their environment.

Civilisation is the name we give to communication and interactions of human beings in a very creative way, and this is the start of what builds up as a critical mass of cultural potential in our history. This happened in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley and China. The Chinese knew how to cast iron nearly 1,500 years before Europeans. Iranians, Arabs and Turks manufactured paper and used it in book making almost 1,000 years before it reached Europe. The world population in about 4,000 BC has been estimated only at between 80 and 90 million. The most obvious intercultural communication and interactions in human history continued to be great migrations, followed by religions in the hands of the prophets, and continued later centuries by trade and commerce.

The assimilating Mesopotamian identity or culture was intermingled by the Arabian and the Persian migrants. There were broad interactions between cultures of the migrants and that of the Sumerians: but in the resultant culture, the Arabian and the Persian elements were predominant. At the same time the Aryan tribes fertilised ancient Greece and Anatolia to the northwest, as well as Armenia and Persia to the northeast. The people who had inhabited the geographic theatre of Arabia belonged to one race of humans, the Caucasian, or the West Asian, otherwise known as “Semite” or “Semitic”, the term invented by the Old Testament scholars of the 18th century.

This internal population movement in the region included people from settled farming to desert nomadism. The external populations movements included invasions from the outside. Mesopotamia, all historians agree, had been a giving multicultural civilisation. The essence of religious experience characteristics of Mesopotamia and Persia through their three millennia history may be described as consisting of a number of core principles, among them were the perception or reality, the divine imperatives, human responsibility and the organic unity. They could be summarised under the heading of ontological dualism, the ontological disparity between Creator and creatures forming their world view in general.

The first and oldest controversy with the West grew from the Semitic background of Jews. The first view of Christianity travelled with the Jews throughout the Roman Empire where it won converts among the Jews as well as others. It was a remarkable example of intercultural communication and interactions. Similarly six centuries later Eastern Christians who converted to Islam brought with them their ideas, crafts and customs which would later enrich Islamic civilisation. However, Western writers often accuse the Eastern religions of backwardness. For example, to reduce the impact of Islamic culture they describe those religions and Byzantium itself as inept

and ready to fall when Islam arrived on the scene. Revolution, or the communication of God's will to human beings, has a long history and has taken various forms. Moses saw God as speaking to him directly in a message containing the essential of the laws, not unlike Hammurabi. Culturally it was a revolutionary act. Jesus too came in the midst of this degeneration of the phenomenon of prophecy. Hebrew scripture had already been canonised and Jews involved it on every occasion. It had profound impact on the cultural level both in Persian territories as well as the ancient Greece.

The interest in the study of intercultural communication and interaction studies in Europe and the United States began during the early decades of the 20th century, especially immediately after the end of World War I and II. These studies had political, economic, commercial, ideological and military bases (Mowlana, 1971, 1973, 1974).

The major channels or means of intercultural communication and interaction during the 19th and 20th centuries (see Figure 4.1) were

- (1) commercial and trade activities;
- (2) war, conquests and colonialism;

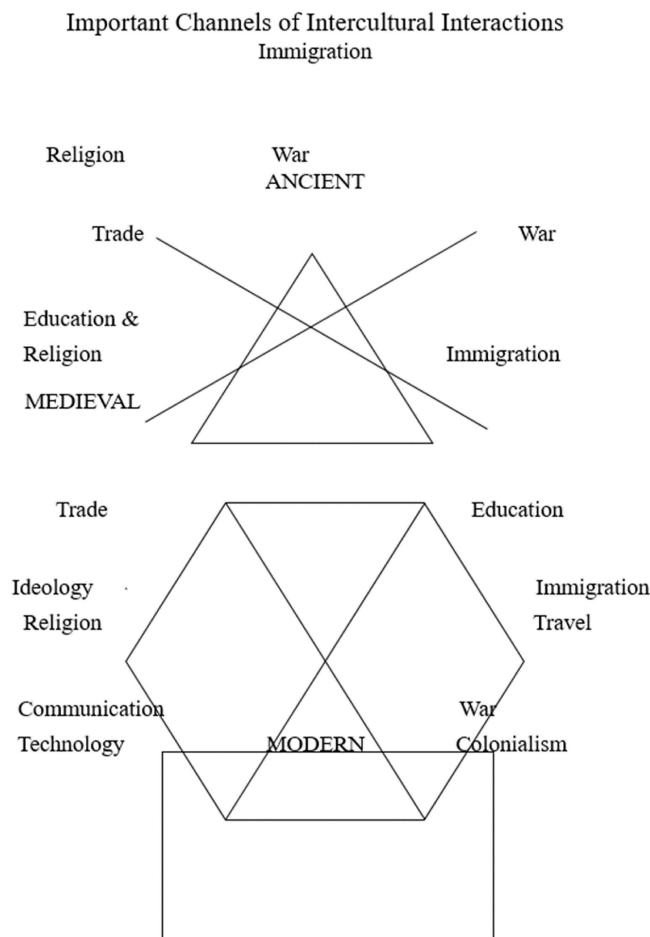


Figure 4.1 Important channels of intercultural interactions

- (3) proselytism/missionaries;
- (4) adventurism and expeditions;
- (5) slavery and slave trade;
- (6) education and knowledge;
- (7) diplomacy and international organisations;
- (8) travel;
- (9) immigration;
- (10) communication and transportation technologies.

During this period, cultural anthropology with its ethnometodological case studies led to a great understanding between cultures and cultural differences and their impact on intercultural interactions. Ruth Benedict's organisational typology for understanding different cultural systems; Levi-Strauss's research for a universal, deep structure of language and Wittgenstein's relativistic, subjectivistically pluralistic language games or between the ideographic and emphasis of intercultural studies have found a reconciliation in the middle range theories. Some of these typologies were in line with Ibn Khaldūn's notion of group feelings and with Toennies differentiation between Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft as well as Sorokin's idealist and Sensate's and Toynbee's agricultural and industrial social patterns.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, with the writings of such anthropologists and culturalists as Edward Hall and Peter Adler, the field was becoming more aware of transcending cultural horizons. The effect of culture on individual identity becomes much like Freud's metaphor of the iceberg. While a part of our cultural heritage is at a conscience level, most of the culture remains at the unconscious level, ingrained in verbal and body language, action chains and the very base of our social institutions, as well as our images of space, time, self and relationship. One of the more recent focuses of intercultural studies, in line with the search for the multicultural person is the study of the process of becoming schizophrenic. Here, enlightenment is often accompanied, as the outcome, of a type of schizophrenic withdrawal, in which all ego preconditions are shattered.

One of the major channels of intercultural communication and interactions throughout history has been the phenomenon known as colonisation or colonialism (in the modern time). Human influences were as important as environmental ones in shaping the new America. America prided itself on the multiplicity of people in its past and present makeup. Europeans became Americans, and Americans became difference from Europeans. The new society that grew out of interactions of people in early America were amalgams, combining Indian as well as European and African influence, building a new society and taking on a new identity. However, both the colonisation of America and later the colonisation of major parts of Asia and Africa by the Europeans had disastrous impact on the local and native cultures. Indian population in North America stood as somewhere between three and ten million in 1492. By 1800, the figure had fallen to around 600,000. The clash of Indians and Europeans was a conflict between two ways of life and cultures. Indian people and their culture were wrenched from their homes, and missionaries exploited their labour and stole their lands. Christianity was a weapon of conquest, not a path to salvation. Centuries later the same process was happening by British, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Italy and other European countries in Asia, Africa, the Pacific regions and in such countries as India, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, the Congo, South Africa and many other lands. In short, the cultural dimensions of colonisation and colonialism was a major factor in the European hegemony for almost 500 years. Cultural invasion or cultural imperialism has a long history, but unfortunately it has been neglected in the contemporary literature dealing with intercultural communication.

Identity: Stepping away from parochialism

What about the intercultural communication in the ancient world? It seems that in the study and evaluation of intercultural communication and interactions three factors are crucial in determining the impact of this process: (a) the world view and cosmology of the individual and groups of participants, (b) the motivation and the perceived purpose for communication and (c) the elements of identity of the actors. Let us take the factor of identity first. George Rawlinson, the imminent British historian of the ancient history, was puzzled and confused about the possibility of an instructive cultural history without exact chronology when he wrote in 1882 that “it is a patent fact, and one that is beginning to obtain general recognition, that the chronological element in the early Egyptian history is in a state of almost hopeless obscurity”. He cites the European historians of the ancient Egyptian culture and civilisation who give the supposed first Egyptian king different dates ranging from the year 5702 BC to 2691 BC and in between 4455 BC (Rawlinson, 1882). How can we explain such conflicting and divergent dates that are most extreme, to the extent of above 3,000 years!

The Egyptians had no eras, and the Egyptian monumental lists are, generally speaking not chronological at all. Rawlinson explains it this way:

The chronological value of these various sources of information is, however, in every case slight. The great defect of the monuments is their incompleteness. . . . They recorded carefully the length of the life of each Apis bull, and the length of the reign of each king; but they neglected to take note of intervals between one Apis bull and another, and omitted to distinguish the sole reign of a monarch from his joint reigns with others. A monarch might occupy the throne ten years in conjunction with his father, 32 years alone, and 2 years with conjunction with his son—in an Egyptian royal list he will be credited with forty-five years, although his first ten years will be assigned also to his father, and his last three to be his son.

(Rawlinson, 1882)

The growing sense of a cultural identity is most prominent at the time of the empire's great peril and downfall. No one calls himself a barbarian—only the enemy. It was Herodotus, the so-called Father of History, who wrote that the Egyptian monarchy has lasted between 11 and 12 thousand years before its destruction by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, the Great Persian King in the 500 BC. He divides out this time among 317 kings, but he only lists 19 only by name (Herodotus, 1954). Somewhat like the United States, the civilisation of Egyptians had grown up under geographical circumstances which completely isolated the country. But as the time passed, commerce with Greece and with Asia unsettled all the Egyptians opinions and introduced a thousand novelties of belief, dress and behaviour. There is not a prophet or human name which stands in the history of Egyptian opinion when the name of Zoroaster stands in Persia or that of Moses in the history of the Jews. Yet Egypt was one of the most religious societies in the ancient history, and the priests were at the top of aristocracy. Herodotus is not likely to have obtained an exactly authentic account of the Great Pyramid, but his estimate of 30 years for the time consumed in constructing the pyramid itself, together with its 100,000 labourers, is accepted.

The strength of Egypt had, from the first period of its history, consisted in its isolation and its unity. A simple homogenous people were spread along the valley of the Nile from the tower of Syene to the shores of the Mediterranean. The people were almost without neighbours because the Nile Valley was short and on either side by arid tracts very sparsely inhabited. United by the ties of a common religion, a common language, common ideas and customs, the people were

empathetically one, had a strong cultural and national sentiment, despised foreigners and held itself infinitely superior to all the other nations of the earth. However, all this changed suddenly in about 500 BC when Memphis was surrounded by Cambyses, the King of Persia, and its strong army and navy. Egypt was conquered, and the war altered the cultural settings of the land for centuries to come.

It was in the second half of the 6th-century BC (550–501) that the concept of culture as a “Way of Life” was born, conceptualised and to some extent articulated by the Iranians, the Indians and the Chinese and can be seen in the writings of their thinkers, prophets and scholars. During these years, from Zoroastrianism to Taoism, a new philosophy based on cultural tradition was developed. We see this, for example, very clearly in writing as the *Tao-the-Ching* (*tao*: the way). The Taoist believed that the way to peace lay in acceptance of the way things are. In Iran the culture of cosmology is namely that of Ahura-Muzda of Zoroaster. Meanwhile in Greece, Sparta and Athens tried to eliminate their cultural sin. The Greeks had gone back to quarrelling with each other; they had not managed to get far in rebuilding of their shattered peace with each other. The Athenians had convicted the philosopher Socrates of vague anti-Athenian, anti-religious and anti-democratic wrong doings. Socrates scorned flight, rejected popular culture of democracy and instead drank down hemlock. His thoughts had to be recorded by one of his students, Plato. The culture of democracy was bankrupt; it proved incompatible with dialogue, human dignity and cultural identity.

We do not know the extent of either Herodotus’s or Thucydides’s polemical historiographical structures on the methods of historical research and their actual knowledge of the Persian culture and way of life (Herodotus, 1954; Thucydides, 1876). Did either or both of these writers assemble their observations in different parts rather than as the full text books we have today? There are no references to any sources, and their writing style shows personal and rhetorical patterns. Economic conditions were not an interest to them, and we do not know if they ever read Zoroaster’s writings in Avesta. The ancient Greeks believed not in historical cyclical but in patterns of human behaviour, mainly military. Their lack of attention to knowledge, fine arts, literature and architecture of ancient Iran was indeed irritating. “The glory that was Greece” for both Herodotus and Thucydides, nevertheless was military power and political control. No one maintains that the speeches and quotations of their works were actually spoken and authentic. Impartiality and objectivity are always relative to opportunities, and Spartans betrayed the Ionian Greek allies to their Persian paymasters. Above all, translating Attic Greek or Indo-European Sanskrit and their culture into contemporary comprehensive English for today’s generation is no easy task.

Few people think of Herodotus as a Persian or Iranian. Herodotus himself states that he was born in Halicarnassus, a town in the southwest corner of Asia Minor, the western coast of modern Türkiye; nevertheless he had a strong pro-Athenian feelings in his writing. Halicarnassus was a Persian province, which made Herodotus a Persian subject. He saw himself writing for a pan-Hellenic audience. He lived in an oral society, and the form in which he communicated his findings and observation was the recital or public performance.

Herodotus focuses on human actions in describing the Persian political system, ignoring the religious ceremonies and divine matters. However, when he takes the Athenian side in the Persian war, he allows an active role to gods and heroes. On one occasion, when a storm destroyed many Persian ships, Herodotus commented that “God was indeed doing everything possible to reduce the superiority of the Persian fleet”. Herodotus follows the legacy of Homer, imitating him when reporting actions. In most cases his writing is fiction rather than history.

By far the richest speech of ancient Europe was Greek, just as Sanskrit was among the Asian languages. Greek is also one of that great groups of languages known as Aryan or Indo-European.

Can you consider the tradition of Western and European civilisation and culture without taking into account the Greek literature, arts, dramas and tragedies? But to me, an even more important and interesting question is: What would have been the state of the Greek literature in the ancient world without the Persian culture, civilisation and empire? My thesis is that it was the ancient Persian or Iranian culture and civilisation that stimulated and formed much of the Greek literature, drama and tragedies and thus provided Europe with its ancient heritage.

Motivation and purpose for communication

The second factor in intercultural communication of the motivation and the perceived purpose for communication cited earlier becomes clear when we examine the Greek literature, tragedies and oratories. Here are a few examples. On the very confines of the cloudy horizon of Greek history stands the sublime figure of Homer (1972a, 1972b). Myth or man—who knows? At any rate, he was a figure, and the beginning of Greek epic poetry. Thus were wrought the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Homeric poems have not reached us in their original forms since the art of writing was employed mainly for the brief and business affairs of life than for literary composition. This elegy, like the epic, took its expansion among the Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor then under the influence of the Persian Empire. At the time it was the Iranian geopolitical hegemony of the world's greatest power, and its Zoroastrian culture and religion, that impressed the Greeks most. The Roman Empire was still in its infancy. As the German philosopher George Hegel reminds us in *The Philosophy of History*, the

Chinese and the Indian Empire asserted a place in the historical series only on their own account. But here in Persia first arises that light which shines itself. . . . With the Persian Empire we first enter on continuous history. The Persians are the first historical people; Persia was the first empire that passed away.

Hegel saw in the Persian world

a pure exulted unity, as the essence which leaves the special existence that inhere in it, free; as the light, which only manifests what bodies are in themselves; a unity which individuals only to excite them to become powerful for themselves . . . to develop and assert their individuality.
(Hegel, 1956)

The main point here is the doctrine of Zoroaster in contrast with the “wretched hebetude of spirit” which Hegel sees in the Hindus and other civilisations at the time. In short, the Universal Being became objective, and their spirit became the consciousness. The Persian religion was not idle-worship like the Greeks, Indians or Romans.

Greek tragedy begins with the name of Aeschylus. Born in 523 BC, he participated in his youth in the battle of Marathon, the first battle between the Iranians and the Greeks. He supported the old aristocracy—the ancient regime—rather than within the growing democratic principles of the Greek commonwealth. His subjects are lofty if not pathetic. Their dark destiny of men is the underplay in his work of the gods and of faith. One of the three “trilogies” Aeschylus produced, called “The Persians”, is about the wars of the Greeks and Persians, explained by the European writers, always as the struggle between Europe and Asia. Out of this triad the central piece representing the lamentations in the palace of the Iranian king Xerxes, at Susa, has been preserved (Aeschylus, 2009).

Then came the great Herodotus, the Father of History. He stored his mind with the record of Persia and the East. He selected the theme of the great struggle between Greece and Iran. Persia, Persians and the Persian wars are recurrent events in his history without which there would have been probably no Herodotus. Herodotus was followed by Xenophon, the charming and popular storyteller of the Athenians. As one of the leaders of a band of mercenary soldiers, he accepted pay from the great Persian King Cyrus the younger and went with the ambitious prince against Darius. He wrote the famous *Retreat of the Ten Thousand* and *The Persian Expedition* and afterwards the *Memorabilia* of Socrates. Not until the time just preceding the Persian wars was there the dawn of the true day of the arts of the Greeks.

Marathon (490 BC) was to Greeks what Bunker Hill is to Americans. The day became historic. Poetry brought her magic song and imagination to the Greek literature and drama. The episode of the battle of Salamis (480 BC) occurred when Artemesia, Queen of Caria, who had tried to dissuade the Persian king from risking all in the straits of Salamis, performed prodigies of valour in the fight. “My men are women today, and my women men”, said Xerxes as he beheld her bravery.

Plato had more than once made it his business to extol the battle of Marathon. He considered this as the source and original cause of all the victories that deprived the Persian power of the terror which had rendered them so formidable and made them stoop. It was this victory that taught the Greeks to know their own strength and not to be intimidated by the Persians. Intercultural contacts and interactions through wars have always reinforced myths and promoted ethnocentrism and nationalism.

Both ancient and modern scholars of international relations believe that it was the Persian-Greek wars that solidified the ascendancy of the Athenians and the Spartans nationalism and finally lead to the Peloponnesian War among the Greeks themselves with the Persians playing a decisive role in its outcome. Here was another giant of the Greek writers, the historian Thucydides, who selected for his theme the then famous Peloponnesian War.

Then came oratory—a necessary concomitant of the political freedom of the Greek, especially after the two great wars with the Iranians and the sacking of Athens. From the time of the Persian wars regular structures of stone took the place of the wooden buildings hitherto used for spectacles, and the form of the amphitheatre was adopted. The experience with Iran and the defence of their homeland helped the Greeks to achieve individuality of their character. The language of the Aeschylus was in some measure substituted with the language of common life. We know that the Greek population from its beginning had elements of Asian, Phoenician and African culture. But it was always “Greece for Greeks”.

The world view: The East vs. West dichotomy

The third factor in intercultural communication is that of the world view and cosmology of individuals and groups and is illustrated here by the East-West dichotomy. In 2008, when a writer of *National Geographic* magazine visited the ruins of Persepolis in southern Iran, an ancient capital of the Persian Empire that was burned down after being conquered by Alexander the Great, she was amazed by “the absence of violent imagery on what’s left of its stone walls”. “Among the carvings there are soldiers, but they’re not fighting; there are weapons but they are not drawn”, she wrote. “Mainly you see emblems suggesting that something went on here instead—people of different nations gathering peacefully, bearing gifts, dropping their hands amiably on one another’s shoulders” (Del Giudice 2008). In 500 BC, Persepolis was a cosmopolitan place, and the Persian

Empire consisted of at least two dozen different nationalities and many diverse cultures and languages. It showed a cultural elasticity that was at the heart of Persian identity. This is quite a different picture than the one we read in Herodotus's book about the famous battle at Thermopylae between Spartans of Greece and the so-called Persian Immortals. Herodotus portrays the Greeks "as heroic, innocent, and civilized". The Persians are shown as "ugly, savages with a method fighting that was unfair".

The Greek historians, Herodotus most of all, are our most complete source of information for intercultural communication and interactions between the East and the West and for the many assumptions we make today regarding the Western civilisation in the ancient times. This Greek account of history is of course supplemented with other accounts coming mainly from inscriptions, coins and other administrative documents from the Persian sources.

Between 550 and 501 BC in Europe, Celts and Carthaginians enter the scene, while Rome throws out its kings. However, still it is the Iranian lands and culture to the east that fascinates the minds of the Greeks. While the Greeks retreated and Carthaginians and others expanded their influence in the Mediterranean, Rome was growing in both size and power. As the Greeks borrowed culturally from the Iranians so did the Romans for the Greeks in the early days. It is interesting to note that the word "Celt" given to the tribes of Europe by the Greeks and Romans, came from an Indo-European root meaning "to strike". Europe was primitive both culturally and politically. The invasion, which began around 505 BC in Europe, was part of a larger movement in which Celtic culture played an important role. This is the beginning of the Roman Republic (509 BC) and the first Roman dictator but not yet the Roman Empire.

Here, the world's cultural activities were in the East and not the West. Between 560 and 500 BC India divides into kingdoms and alliances, and the kingdom of Magadha begins its rise. In China both Confucius and Sun-Tzu offer a philosophy of order for a way of dealing with this unity of human beings.

Empire-building and co-opting religious and cultural position for political gain, Iran, India and China had joined the world to the West. The Indian River had been reached by Persian soldiers and traders. The king of Persia had ordered the canal built from the Nile to the Red Sea. He had conquered the Indians. In short, Persia had become a bridge between Greece and India and China and people farther East.

The United Nations pinpoints the origin of human rights to year 539 BC. The Cyrus cylinder, a clay tablet containing his statements, is the first human right declaration in history (<https://www.humanrights.com/what-are-human-rights/brief-history/>). Today, Cyrus's edict of restoration, permitting the Hebrews to return and rebuild Jerusalem, fall on little more than deaf ears. Between 527 and 479 BC Cyrus's successor Darius fails to defeat Athens, and the cities of Greece unite against his son Xerxes. The first pontoon bridge in history was built by the Iranians to cross the Bosphorus Straight to the Greek coast. Thousands of Persian foot soldiers and cavalry marched across this bridge headed for a narrow place in Danube and then on toward Athens. Soon Macedonia was taken over by the Iranian army. They demanded "earth and water" for King Darius, Herodotus tell us, a Persian custom symbolising hegemony and dominance over the land and sea of a captured country.

The size of the Persian army is inflated to show the heroic resistance of the Greeks, at the same time emphasising the notion of the "Eastern Enemy". Herodotus gives us also a particular account of the different armour of all the nations that contributed to this army. The land-army which Xeroxes brought out of Asia, according to Herodotus, consisted of 1,700,000 foot soldiers, and 80,000 cavalries with 20,000 men that were absolutely necessary at least for conducting and taking care of the carriages and the camels, which made in all 1,800,000 men. When Xeroxes had

passed the Hellespont, the nations that submitted to him made an addition to his army of 300,000 men which made all of his land forces together amount to 2,100,610 men. The European nations augmented his fleet with 120 vessels, each of which carried 300 men, which totaled 24,000; these added to the other men amounted to 301,610 men. Besides this first fleet, which consisted of all large vessels, the unit of 30 and 50 oars, transport ships, the vessels that carried the provisions and that were employed in other uses, amounted to 3,000. If we account for 80 men in each of these vessels, that makes it a whole of 240,000 men. Thus when Xerxes arrived at Thermopylae his land and sea forces together made up the number of 2,641,611, without including servants, women and other accompanied family people. In short, the whole number of those that followed Xerxes in this expedition amounted to 5,283,220. This is the computation which Herodotus makes of them, and in which later historians such as Plutarch agree with him. There were also 10,000 Persians who were called The Immortal Band (Church, 1882).

An almost hostile attitude has long existed in Europe, together with a fascination about the Greek-Persian relations and the ancient military confrontations. In the opening decade of the 21st century as the racial tensions increased in Europe and the United States, so did popular books with provocative titles such as *Thermopylae: The Battle for the West, How Europeans Were Saved from the Persian Invasion*, *Thermopylae: The Battle that Changed the World*, *The First Clash: The Miraculous Greek Victory at Marathon and its Impact on Western Civilization* and *Athens Burning: The Persian Invasion of Greece and Evacuation of Attica*.

The picture of the universe: Persia and Greece

The history of Greece is divided into the Dark Age (1150–750 BC), the Archaic period (750–490 BC), the Classic period (490–329 BC) and the Hellenistic period (323–330 BC). Almost all the intercultural communication and interactions between Greece and Iran took place during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, with the Classic period being the most important era.

The Persian Empire during the Classical period of the Greek history opened the minds of Greeks to other cultures. From the time of Homer until the expansion of the Hellenic civilisation into Iran and India during Alexander, human nature was binary to the Greeks; you were either a Greek or a non-Greek barbarian. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Greeks had no political unity, no common aim and not much in the way of shared life with each other and foreigners. It is in the *Iliad* that for the first time we observe the phrase “barbaro-phonoi”, strange speakers, outside the Greek circle. It was a simple division of humanity into two: those who spoke a dialect of Greek and those who did not. This was completely opposite to what was going on in neighbouring Iran. The Persian Empire stretched from the Oral Sea in the north to the Indian Ocean and Africa in the south and from the Ionian coastlines all the way to India. Ecbatan, the capital city of the Achaemenid Empire of Cyrus and Darius, was a cosmopolitan city with over two dozen major nationalities, ethnic groups, cultures and languages.

Here Is how one historian describes the general life in Sparta, Greece:

But the real power in Sparta was neither king, nor priest, nor even the council of Twenty-Eight. The Spartan state was ruled by a strict and unwritten code of laws that governed every aspect of Spartan existence. . . . Children did not belong to their families but to the City of Sparta. . . . Any husband could choose to impregnate another women, or to hand his wife over to another man, as long as the decision was made for the good of the master race. . . . The Spartans had most of their meals, by law, in common messes in order to prevent greed. . . .

Girls, who were the future mother of Spartan warriors were required to dance naked in front of crowds of young men: this gave them additional motivation to stay slim.

(Bauer, 2007)

Plutarch's vivid description of Spartan and Athenian lives is indeed instructive.

The Delphic oracle was hardly unbiased. In contrast to the great cosmology of Zoroaster in Persia, "the Greek Delphic oracle was a priestess who sat on a three-legged stool next to sizable crack on top of Sibylline rock, a good-sized boulder on an outcropping of Mount Parnassus" kilometres away from Athens.

Worshippers climbed to the rock and put a question to the priestess, who then asked the earth-goddess Gaia for an answer and received it by way of crack. She then delivered the answer in a trance to a set of attendant priests, who cast it into hexameter verse and delivered it back to the questioner. The crack, the trance, and the hexameters combined to produce generally puzzling answers, open to interpretation which also made it very difficult to prove the oracle wrong.

(Bauer, 2007, p. 425)

Between 404–336 BC 10,000 Greek mercenaries escaped from Persia, and Macedonian took on the task of creating Greek unity. In 334 BC, Alexander marched over into the Iranian territories. The Persians were defeated, and for the first time the Hellenic culture spread over the Iranian lands. However, it was Alexander who was fascinated with the Persian culture, wearing Persian dress, following Persian customs and becoming less and less Macedonian. He married the beautiful Roxane, a princess of the Iranian province of Sogdiana. He intended to conquer India. He had typhoid, grew ill and died in 323 BC at the age of 33. Between 285–202 BC Alexander's successors passed their kingdoms, and Hannibal headed for the Alps in 218 BC. A few years later between 209–110 BC, the Hun Dynasty opened the Silk Road. China, unlike the civilisations to the West, did not face the constant encroachment of their cultures. In a matter of decades, these "Indo-Greeks" and "Persian-Greeks" became much more Indian and Iranian than Greek.

After some 500 years, the Parthian Empire, the reminiscent of the Greek culture had ended in the Iranian land, and once again Persian culture under the Sassanid Dynasty had flourished. To the Greeks, the resurrection of the Persian culture must have seemed like the return of a giant from an old dream. Zoroastrianism, the state religion of the new empire, was the core of the Persian cosmology again (Olmstead, 1939).

Methodology of cultural studies

The basic and essential methodologies in the study of culture have been historicism, functionalism, cultural materialism, structuralism, semiotics, humanism and several other schools of thought. There are mainly inspired by culturalists and anthropologists from the European-American tradition of social sciences. The fragmentation of knowledge into pursuits that use the scientific method and those that do not is a modern and European phenomenon. The social sciences disassociated themselves from the humanities and called themselves "sciences" because they adopted the scientific method and thereby guaranteed for themselves a portion of the truth alongside the sciences of nature. This division is not common in many cultures.

It may seem like an obvious point today, but it was not so clear to anthropology from the earlier times until World War II when "primitive" and non-Western cultures frequently were

characterised as conservative and stable rather than innovative and dynamic. For example, the anthropologist Edward Taylor could view non-Western society and cultures as fossilised representations of earlier stages of human progress, and his contemporary Radcliffe-Brown could see social structures as expressions of the stabilising forces that maintain society. For years ethnographic data and kinship systems dominated cultural studies. By combining field observations with extensive cross-cultural data the European-American anthropologists produced massive amounts of ethnographic data.

However, the essential questions remained: How can humanity's prehistoric, ancient and unpublished history be known. None of the early Western anthropologists and culturalists made any references to the pioneering works of Abu Reyhan Biruni (973–1048 AD) and Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406 AD), now recognised as the two founders of anthropology and sociology respectfully. Progress in terms of "modernization" is the backbone of the Western cultural studies, and the kinship system marks the distinction between "uncivilized" and "civilized". Savagery in one culture, barbarism in another and civilisation in a third were not the result of different races being genetically condemned to backwardness or underdevelopment; they were simply societies perceived at different levels of progress called modernisation. Methodological controversies in the European-American cultural studies often circled around material variables.

Biruni's work on culture is one of the most astonishing scholarships of the Middle Ages and for the modern reader, one of the most challenging, covering in detail the chronicles of all cultures and religions. He treated his sources with a sceptical ego, arguing that people everywhere are prone to falsify their histories by shortening or lengthening time to suit their prejudices. His book on Indian culture, *Al-Hind*, stands as one of the greatest achievements of all time in the area of interdisciplinary social science, communication, international relations, intellectual history and the history of science. Biruni's resources and database includes Egyptians, Greeks, Latins, Persians, Muslim, pre-Muslim Arabs and Zoroastrians.

With reading in ancient and modern texts the polymath Biruni clearly welcomed the opportunity to spend years travelling and conducting research in India and throughout Central Asia. As one American archaeologist recently observed, the Islamic age of enlightenment in Central Asia during the medieval period

was five times longer than the life of Periclean Athens; a century longer than the entire history of the intellectual center of Alexandria from its foundation to the destruction of its library; only slightly shorter than the entire life span of the Roman Republic; longer than the Ming or Qing dynasties in China and the same length as the Han; about the same length as the history of Japan from the founding of the Tokugawa dynasty to the present; and of England from the age of Shakespeare to our own day.

(Starr, 2013)

Modern methodological tools in communication science such as aggregate data, survey research, public opinion polls, content analysis, marketing research and motivational techniques, though useful, cannot be a substitute to the qualitative methods of research developed by various cultural traditions throughout history. Familiarity with these methodologies is indispensable in intercultural communication.

We must realise that during the scientific revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries, many so-called breakthroughs were achieved by Europeans who simply followed to its conclusion the logic

of earlier research carried out by Asians and others. Central Asia and Muslim Spain were at the forefront of intellectual life and culture globally for about a thousand years after the collapse of the Greek and the Roman empires, partially because of an openness to the outside world and a healthy social organisation that could revolve and adopt the new methods rather than absorb them. The cultures of these regions were able to deal thoughtfully with even the most inconvenient new information and insights in either secular or religious sphere.

There is a term in the Islamic culture and language called *Adab* that has acquired two methodological meanings: one refers to whoever specialises in any branches of science and perfects his knowledge of it, and the other is whoever familiarises himself or herself with every branch of knowledge and takes the best part of it and digests it. To be a person of *Adab* is to know all fields of learning enough to realise their fundamental principles, methods, problems, objectives, achievements and hopes and to relate them meaningfully to the process of human thought and life.

Using the methodological term *Adab*, I recommend the following essential ingredients for understanding the process of intercultural communication and interactions:

- (1) knowledge of language and lexicology;
- (2) skills of interpretation and hermeneutics;
- (3) knowledge of one's own history as well as the history of the people under study;
- (4) ability and respect for tradition and traditional texts;
- (5) knowledge of philosophy and such questions as metaphysics, epistemology of science of nature and that of axiology and ethics;
- (6) knowledge of literature, arts and poetry;
- (7) knowledge of religions;
- (8) experience of living with people of the culture under study;
- (9) knowledge of geography and natural resources;
- (10) having open-mindedness, appreciation and respect for human dignity and cultural identity.

My research experience using different methodologies from the 1950s to the present has convinced me that the fragmented nature of the state of the art in intercultural and international communication research is not necessarily negative. However, we should seek to promote the multi perspective diagnosis of eclecticism rather than making an excuse for it. We should move beyond the rather simplistic dualism of criticism vs. empiricism. In contrast to the ethnomethodological identification of the ferment in the field of communication and culture, I have suggested that we provide through the monistic-emancipatory paradigm, an alternative path to current communication research. This attempt to open up communicative space is crucial to political and intellectual experimentations necessitated by the bifurcation from the national to global level of complexity (Mowlana, 2022).

Summary and conclusion

The commitment of many Western writers and researchers to epistemological ethnocentrism, or the perception of reality by ethnicity, commits them to territoriality in understanding the culture and communication patterns of the non-Western world. In addition to this the millennial legacy of enmity and confrontation between Islam and the West of which the past and the current students of culture are heirs constitute another barrier to objectivity in dealing with the data and conceptualisation of intercultural communication and interactions.

Greek civilisation developed a strong humanism which the West has taken as a model since the European Renaissance. It is based upon an exaggerated naturalism, and this is why the Greeks

were not offended in the ancient world by representing their gods as cheating and plotting against one another. Greek culture exaggerated its pursuit of the world by asserting that whatever is in nature is unconditionally good and therefore, worthy of pursuit and recognition, not realising that nature often contradicts itself. Since the European Enlightenment, modern Western culture has paid high regard for such tragedy. Since the struggle of Europeans has been against the Church and all that it represents, the progress in science was conceived as a liberation from its clutches. There is no church in Islam and many other religions, and the experience of the Westerners was unique to European culture and history.

Most Western scholars who have written on the culture and civilisation of non-Western societies have treated their subjects territorially and geographically. Territorial arrangements of cultural studies is the favourite method of European and American authors who divide the relevant date according to countries and various regions, emphasising the particular features of the culture and communication patterns of a given area. This geographical arrangement misses that element which unites the regions and makes them an integrated whole. The answer to these shortcomings lies in the phenomenological and morphological methods which require that the observer let the phenomena speak for themselves rather than for them in any predetermined ideational framework.

The study of human communication often focusses on one-dimensional human to human interaction through messages. Elsewhere, I have presented a five-dimensional theory of human communication arguing that human communication can be understood best if we take into account the multidimensionality and the integrated nature of this process as a whole which includes one's communication with Divine, self, nature, technology and another human being (Mowlana, 2018, 2019). In the study of intercultural communication, I would suggest that it is possible through this five-dimensional model to assess some relevant aspects of the individual and societies cultural variations as well as interactions.

There are philosophers and culturalists who think that the classic Aristotelian definition of the human being as a rational animal is incomplete and that we should think of ourselves as symbolic animals engaged in art, myth and language. The idea that the human mind creates its own world through the use of symbols can be helpful for those who are interested in the study of intercultural communication. We construct reality by understanding it through our own complex culture. The study of human history is the first step toward the understanding of intercultural interactions. Years ago when I first read Herodotus's history, I was struck by one sentence where he says, "my business is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it—and that maybe taken to apply to this book as a whole" (Herodotus 1954, 468).

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5

ENTANGLING THE DISCURSIVE AND THE MATERIAL

Nico Carpentier

Developing a theory of discursive-material entanglement¹

Discourse studies is characterised by a wide diversity of approaches, with very different meanings attached to the concept of discourse itself. Foucault's (1972, p. 80) slightly ironising statement, written from a discourse-theoretical perspective, gives a first glimpse of this diversity:

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word “discourse”, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.

One way to capture this diversity is to distinguish between micro-textual and macro-textual approaches in discourse studies (see Carpentier, 2017; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, for an earlier version of this argument). In the micro-textual approaches of discourse, the concept's close affiliation with language is emphasised, an approach we can also label, following Philips and Jørgensen (2002, p. 62), discourse-as-language. van Dijk's (1997, p. 3) definition of discourse provides us with a helpful illustration: “Although many discourse analysts specifically focus on spoken language or talk, it is . . . useful to include also written texts in the concept of discourse”. Macro-textual approaches use a broader definition of text, much in congruence with Barthes (1975), seeing texts as materialisations of meaning and/or ideology. In this macro-textual approach, where discourse becomes discourse-as-representation or discourse-as-ideology, the focus is placed on the meanings, representations or ideologies embedded in the text and not so much on the language used.

A second distinction that enables us to map the different meanings of the concept of discourse is that between micro- and macro-contextual approaches. Micro-contextual approaches confine the context to specific social settings (such as a speech act or a conversation). But it would be unfair to claim that micro-contextual approaches remain exclusively focused on the micro-context, even if that is where they are rooted. Nevertheless, the role of context in macro-contextual approaches is structurally different, as these approaches look at how discourses circulate within the social, paying much less attention to more localised settings (or micro-contexts). This leads to much broader

analyses, for instance, how democratic discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) or gender identity (Butler, 1990) are articulated within the social. Again, the emphasis on the macro-context of the social does not imply a complete disregard of the micro-contexts of language, social settings or social practices, although the starting point of these approaches remains firmly embedded in the macro-levels.

Interestingly, all these different approaches in discourse studies are faced, in one way or another, with a particular complexity, which is their relation to the material, the realm of all materials, ranging from simple objects to complex structures. In most cases, there is considerable prudence not to erase the material world through an exclusive focus on the discursive—the realm of discourses and meaning—but inadvertently, the material tends to shift into the background in discourse studies. In addition to the risk of an erasure of the material by the discursive, there is also the risk of privileging one component over the other, where the discursive (or the material) becomes articulated as the realm which holds the ultimate control over the material (or the discursive) and which becomes seen as the realm where agency resides. In the case where this centrality is ascribed to the discursive, the argument is that the discursive is responsible for allocating meaning to the material, which generates a position of privilege. When the material becomes attributed to the centre position, the argument becomes that the material sets the conditions that determine discursive formations.

In the present chapter, this binary position is transcended by arguing that the relationship between the material and the discursive needs to be positioned as an entanglement,² or a discursive-material knot, with the material and the discursive incessantly engaged in intensive interactions, without one generating a dominant position over the other. To construct this non-hierarchical theory of entanglement, two particular academic (sub)fields are used. The first, discourse theory, is clearly embedded in the field of discourse studies, while the second, new materialism, is (as its name indicates) a materialist approach (or a cluster of approaches). Given their structural similarities—for instance, because of the importance attached to contingency—but also the fact that they both reach out to the ‘other’ field, these two subfields are highly suited as building blocks for a theory of entanglement that integrates both.

Arguably, through the intersection of academic fields and their concepts, a theory of entanglement can be developed. In this chapter, the discussion on the ontological relation between the discursive and the material forms the starting point of this text, leading up to the development of a theory of entanglement. Then, this ontological concept will be translated into a more ontic version, the assemblage. In the last part of this chapter, the workings of the discursive-material knot will be illustrated through two small case studies: one on how a discourse-theoretical approach can enrich the dominant focus on the materiality of death, and one on how the materiality of the environment exercises a permanent invitation to be discursified. In the concluding part, the challenges of ways ahead for this and other theories of entanglement are discussed.

Tracking the traces of the material in discourse theory and the discursive in new materialism

It would not do justice to both theoretical fields if we would see them as isolated from each other. For instance, in Laclau’s and Mouffe’s (1985) work, we find a clear acknowledgement of the importance of the material dimension of social reality, which is combined with the position that discourses are necessary to generate meaning for the material. This—what Howarth (1998, p. 289) called Laclau’s and Mouffe’s—“radical materialism” opposes the “classical dichotomy between an objective field constituted outside of any discursive intervention, and a discourse consisting

of the pure expression of thought” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 108). Their position is defended through a series of examples that refer to materiality, as this one:

An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of “natural phenomena” or “expressions of the wrath of God” depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertions that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence.

(Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 108)

There are also more specific traces of the material in Laclau’s and Mouffe’s discourse theory. A first trace can be found in Laclau’s use of the notion of dislocation. Although this concept already featured in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), it took a more prominent role in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, where Laclau (1990b) used it to further theorise the limits of discursive structures. In most cases, dislocation gains its meaning in relation to the discursive; for instance, when Laclau (1990a, p. 39) claimed that “every identity is dislocated insofar as it depends on an outside which denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at the same time”. In this meaning, dislocation supports the notion of contingency but is also seen as its “very form of possibility” (Laclau, 1990a, p. 42), as dislocations show that the structure (before the dislocation) is only one of the possible articulatory ensembles (Laclau, 1990a, p. 43). It thus becomes “the very form of temporality, possibility and freedom” (Laclau, 1990a, p. 41–43, summarised by Torfing, 1999, p. 149).

At the same time, there is also a more material use of the dislocation, highlighting the capacity of material events to disrupt discourses; for instance, when Laclau (1990a, p. 39) talked about the “dislocatory effects of emerging capitalism on the lives of workers”: “They are well known: the destruction of traditional communities, the brutal and exhausting discipline of the factory, low wages and insecurity of work”. The idea that also material events can be dislocatory becomes even clearer in Torfing’s (1999, p. 148 [my emphasis]) description of the dislocation, which, according to him, “refers to the emergence of an event, or a set of events, that cannot be represented, symbolised, or in other ways domesticated by the discursive structure—which is therefore disrupted”. Similarly, Marchart (2007, pp. 139–140 [emphasis in original]) referred to the dislocation as event when writing about the “constitutive outside of space” as

something which cannot be explained from the inner logic of the system itself, or which has never had any prescribed place in the topography. Yet it occurs *within* such topography as its dislocation, disturbance, or interruption: *as event*.

There are other traces to the material in discourse theory. Laclau’s and Mouffe’s emphasis on the performative links up with the material, but, as Biglieri and Perelló (2011) have argued, it is particularly in Laclau’s (2005) *On Populist Reason* that the material is introduced through the concept of social heterogeneity. Laclau defined this concept as a particular exteriority: “the kind of exteriority we are referring to now presupposes not only an exteriority to something within a space of representation, but to the space of representation as such. I will call this type of exteriority social heterogeneity” (Laclau, 2005, p. 140). Biglieri and Perelló (2011, p. 60) labelled it “a structure with a beyond”. It is through the invocation of Lacan, for instance, when Laclau wrote that “the

field of representation is a broken and murky mirror, constantly interrupted by a heterogeneous ‘Real’ which it cannot symbolically master” (Laclau, 2005, p. 140), that the material regains more prominence in discourse theory.

Even if these traces of the material have a very clear presence—(mainly) in Laclau’s work—Laclau’s and Mouffe’s strong orientation towards the analysis of the discursive components of reality, and, more specifically, towards the analysis of signifiers as democracy, socialism and populism, remain. Practically speaking, this means that in their specific analyses, they will pay considerably less attention to material components of reality (as, for example, bodies, objects, organisations, technologies or human interactions).

This is where the field of new materialism, with its (re)validation of matter (see Gamble et al., 2019) comes in, with its ambition to give to the representational and linguisticality “its proper place, that is, a more modest one” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 98). New materialism aims to “radically [rethink] the dualisms so central to our (post-)modern thinking and always starts its analysis from how these oppositions (between nature and culture, matter and mind, the human and the inhuman) are produced in action itself” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 93). But in doing so, for new materialists, the material has to take a more central role. As Latour (2005, p. 73) put it: “objects are nowhere to be said and everywhere to be felt”; new materialism aims to change this imbalance.

In this approach (or set of approaches), the material is seen as “agential matter” (Barad, 2007, p. 246) or “generative matter”, a concept that Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012, p. 93) attributed to DeLanda (1996). As Horton and Kraftl (2014, p. 215 [emphasis removed]) remarked: “things other than human beings do stuff”, sometimes by breaking down, malfunctioning or transforming: “A malfunctioning material thing (perhaps a broken phone, a lost toy, a gritty contact lens) can have an effect, prompt activity, and transform spaces too” (Horton & Kraftl, 2014, pp. 216, 218). Heidegger’s (1996, p. 73ff) discussion of conspicuousness, obtrusiveness and obstinacy, where a thing becomes un-useful because it is respectively damaged, incomplete or a hindrance, can be understood in a similar vein. Even though it is sometimes—depending on the definition of agency—“hard to see how a hammer, a basket, a door closer, a cat, a rug, a mug, a list, or a tag could act”, these objects can “make a difference in the course of some other agent’s action” and have agency, at least in this sense (Latour, 2005, p. 71). One example Latour (1991, p. 105) gave is the weighted hotel door key, which inhibits hotel clients from taking the key with them:

Customers no longer leave their room keys: instead, they get rid of an unwieldy object that deforms their pockets. If they conform to the manager’s wishes, it is not because they read the sign, nor because they are particularly well-mannered. It is because they cannot do otherwise.

But here too, it is important to emphasise that the new materialist approaches are often aimed at avoiding being locked in the dualism of “matter-of-opposed-to-signification”. Instead, new materialism “captures mattering as simultaneously material and representational” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 93), a crucial position that prevents either the role of the discursive in producing meaning, or the agentic role of the material, being ignored. A similar position can be found with Rahman and Witz (2003, p. 256), when they wrote

The social constructionism being worked at here is not one that is limited by physical matter, but rather one that is able to incorporate body matters as an indivisible part of lived, gendered experience and action. Thus the scope of the social or the cultural evoked . . . confronts

the limits of constructionism, whether sociological or discursive, by sometimes admitting, sometimes asserting the body as a problematic yet inescapable component of a social ontology of gender and sexuality.

This new materialist agenda is translated in a focus on a “material-semiotic actor” (Haraway, 1988, p. 595), or the use of a “material-discursive” (Barad, 2007) approach, which aligns well with the discursive-material knot approach advocated here.

A non-hierarchical approach to the discursive-material knot

These reconciliatory intentions are important, but at the same time, their ambition to defend the discursive and the material respectively, limits their capacity to speak from the perspective of the ‘other’ realm, and to do justice to this ‘other’ realm. Moreover, these approaches tend to ignore the dynamics of the discursive-material interactions. In other words, they lack a theory of entanglement. This chapter argues for the acknowledgement of a discursive-material knot, as a non-hierarchical ontology that theorises the knotted interactions of the discursive and the material as restless and contingent, sometimes incessantly changing shapes and sometimes deeply sedimented. But this relation of interdependence will never result in one component becoming more important than the other. In this sense, the metaphor of the knot is important to express this intense and inseparable entanglement, but we should also acknowledge the limits of this metaphor and keep in mind that the knot can never be unravelled or disentangled.

Some concepts developed and deployed in discourse theory and new materialism are highly suitable to support this non-hierarchical approach. First, an example is the notion of articulation, defined by Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 105) as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice”. Here, broadening the concept of the ‘element’ beyond the signifier, to also include the material, is straightforward to do. Second, as will be argued later in this chapter, the notion of the assemblage is highly useful. Third, the notion of the dislocation, where material events are seen to disrupt the discursive, is well worth preserving. At the same time, there is a need to expand the conceptual vocabulary in order to better theorise the entanglement of the discursive and the material.

One expansion deals with the aforementioned notion of the dislocation, as, arguably, there is a need for a more positive version of the dislocation.³ Here, the notion of the invitation has been proposed as dislocation’s conceptual pendant (Carpentier, 2017, p. 45). Discourse is indeed needed to provide meaning to objects, at the level of their production and their consumption (or use). Simultaneously objects have a materiality that invites for particular meanings to be attributed to them and that dissuades other particular meanings from becoming attributed to them. Materials extend an invitation to be discursified, or to be integrated in discourses, always in particular ways, grounded in their material nature. These invitations, originating from the material, do not fix or determine meanings, but their material characteristics still privilege and facilitate the attribution of particular meanings through the invitation. This does not imply that the logic of the invitation functions outside the discursive-material knot. Materials like objects and technologies, but also bodies, consist of an endless and restless combination of the material and the discursive, where the material invites for particular discourses to become part of the assemblage, frustrating other discourses and assisting in other discourses (and materials) to be produced.

Even if the material has the capacity to invite for particular meanings, it is also always invested with meaning, which brings us to the second concept to be proposed, namely investment. Hegemonic orders provide contextual frameworks of intelligibility that intervene—in this sense, there is no need

to give up on the basic discourse-theoretical position. This also implies that discourses impact the production of materials, not only to give meaning to them, but also to co-determine their materiality. To use a deceivingly simple object, made famous by Heidegger (1996), as an example: a hammer is made to be a hammer, partially because of all sorts of material characteristics that facilitate hammering and that give the hammer its handiness (to use one of Heidegger's terms), but also because of a series of discourses related to construction work, manual labour and carpentry, efficiency, creation and aesthetics. There is, in other words, interaction between materials and the cultural codes engrained in them, and between the material invitation towards the discursive and the discursive investment into the material. To capture this engraining of meaning into the material, the concept of investment can be used, inspired by how, for instance, Marres (2012, p. 113) used it, even if she is only mentioning it *en passant*, when she discussed the deployment of empirical devices in demonstrational homes, and remarked: "it facilitates the investment of material entities with normative capacities".

In Figure 5.1, a brief overview of the discursive-material knot can be found, where the discursive realm remains crucial as a provider of significations, which also become invested in the material. Materials—through their agency—have the capacity to invite and dislocate particular discourses, but they also structure human beings, who have the capacity to produce (new) materials and recombine old ones, to handle these materials. The human-discourse relationship is equally complex—and not a mirror image of the human-material relationship—where humans are seen to identify with particular discourses (and not with others). As these discourses are the building blocks of human subjectivity, they also have a structuring capacity in relation to human beings, including their bodies (see Carpentier, 2017, p. 47ff). Finally, the process of discursive production—a social process, not an individual one—requires the material, as signifying practices require materials to

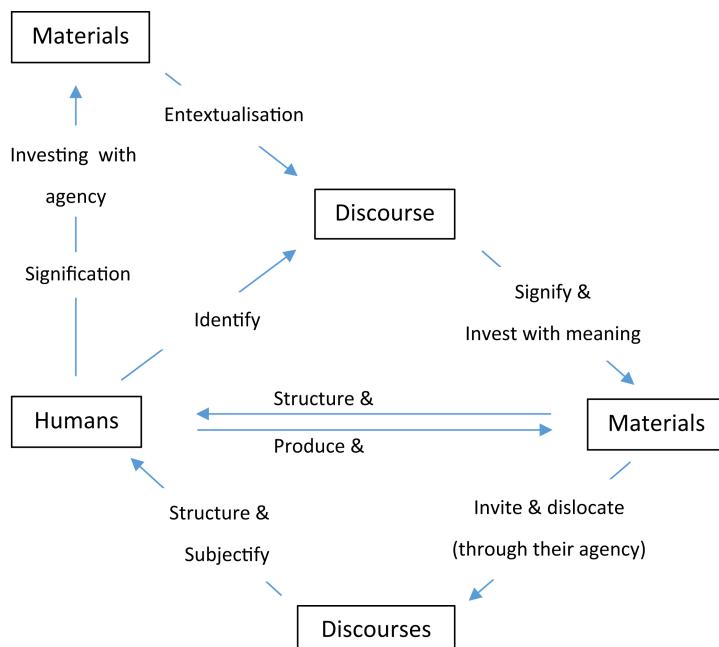


Figure 5.1 The discursive-material knot model in a nutshell

Source: Carpentier, 2021, p. 119

condense or entextualise the meanings, whether they are the vibrations of sound waves, or the electric circuits of the internet, without which communication would not be possible.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the ontology of the discursive-material knot operates at all levels of the social. Here, Foucault's (1977) "micro-physics of power" offers a good parallel to the multi-level nature of the discursive-material knot. Foucault argued in *Discipline and Punish* that the workings of power enter the micro-processes of the social, structuring all our social relations. A similar argument can be made for the discursive-material knot. The knotted interaction of the discursive and the material—in always particular and contingent ways—structures large-scale entities, such as state apparatuses, armies or markets, but it also enters into the micro-processes of the everyday without these different levels ever becoming disconnected.

The assemblage as a concept to theorise the ontic level of entanglements

In order to capture the translation of the discursive-material knot into social practice, the concept of the assemblage is used. While the discursive-material knot is located at the ontological level, the assemblage is positioned (in this chapter) at the ontic level, in order to theorise how the flows that characterise the social, with their endless range of possibilities to become fixated and to fixate, are arrested and channelled into particular combinations of the discursive and the material. It is the assemblage that enables us to think of the social as a tapestry, characterised by assemblages with their increased densities, surrounded by ever-moving flows.

In order to theorise and clarify the role of the assemblage in the discursive-material knot, we can turn to Guattari's work on the machine. In his chapter 'Machinic heterogenesis', Guattari (1993, p. 14) referred to the "first type of machine that comes to mind", which is that of "material assemblages . . . put together artificially by the human hand and by the intermediary of other machines, according to the diagrammatic schemas whose end is the production of effects, of products, or of particular services". In the next sentence, Guattari immediately pointed to the need to go beyond the "delimitation of machines in the strict sense to include the functional ensemble that associates them with humankind to multiple components". This list of components is lengthy and includes material and energy components, semiotic components that are diagrammatic and algorithmic, social components, components related to the human body, representational components, investments by what he called desiring machines and abstract machines. Guattari (1993, p. 14) termed this functional ensemble the machinic assemblage, in which the basic material components are called proto-machines: "the utensils, the instruments, the simplest tools and, . . . the least structured pieces of a machinery will acquire the status of a proto-machine". Still, Guattari's approach to the machinic assemblage includes more than matter. DeLanda's (2006, p. 12) work on assemblage theory uses a similar idea, as he distinguishes between the material and the expressive roles of the components of assemblages, although he is quick to add—and rightfully so—that "expressivity cannot be reduced to language and symbols". In explaining the meaning of the assemblage, DeLanda (2016, p. 1) cites Deleuze's words: "The assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a sympathy". He also explains the workings (and broad range) of assemblages in the following terms:

Being wholes whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts, can be used to model any of these intermediate entities: interpersonal networks and institutional organizations are assemblages of people; social justice movements are assemblages of several networked communities.

(DeLanda, 2006, pp. 5–6)

If we cross-fertilise these ideas with the discourse-theoretical approach used here as starting point, then we can only repeat that the discursive dimension and signifying practices should also be considered of fundamental importance in assemblages. At the same time, these always particular signifying practices that tap into many different discourses become articulated in assemblages together with an equally vast diversity of materials, ranging from bodies, over proto-machines, to architectures and spaces. The concept of the assemblage thus allows us to acknowledge how—at the level of social practices, not only at the ontological level—how discourses, signifying practices and materials are intimately combined and how they incessantly impact on each other.

There are two important additions to make. First, assemblages function at many different levels, and they establish equilibria between the discursive and the material in always unique ways. The starting point of the non-hierarchical nature of the discursive-material knot does not imply that every assemblage has exactly equal proportions of the discursive and the material. Some assemblages can be highly discursive, while others can have a very strong presence of material. Also at the level of scale, many differences exist—which depends on the analytical gaze. DeLanda (2010, p. 35) uses the concepts of micro-entities and macro-entities—one could also say micro-assemblages and macro-assemblages (Hondros, 2021)—to indicate this difference, immediately stressing the relative nature of this classification: “Persons are micro-entities if one is dealing with the community of which they form a part, but macro-entities if one is studying the sub-personal sensations and feelings, beliefs and desires, from which persons crystallize”. This classification also allows DeLanda to argue for the existence of “assemblages of assemblages” (DeLanda, 2010, p. 132; DeLanda, 2016, p. 70), with “each level of scale needing its own map” (DeLanda, 2010, p. 132). He illustrates this “nested set of assemblages” (DeLanda, 2006, p. 71) with an analysis of the nomad army, where the articulation of “a human being, a fast riding horse, and a missile-throwing weapon like the bow is the best-known example of an assemblage of heterogeneous elements” (DeLanda, 2006, p. 68), even though one might want to add a range of discursive elements here. At the same time, the cavalry unity and the entire army is also an assemblage, with “a nomad army is composed of many interacting cavalry teams, each composed of human—horse—bow assemblages” (DeLanda, 2006, p. 70).

Second, also contingency remains present in the discursive-material knot (and in ‘its’ assemblages). Contingency can originate from the interaction between both components of the discursive-material knot or from changes over time. Again, the discursive-material knot functions without necessary hierarchy between its constituent components. The introduction of more agencies, also in relationship to technologies, proto-machines and other materials, shows a richer landscape of forces that can destabilise existing sedimentations and create more contingency. If we combine the logics of the assemblage and articulation, then the constitution of an assemblage can be altered through any re-articulation or disarticulation, whether this is discursive or material. For instance, Massey’s (2005, p. 94) words—“about the truly productive characteristics of material spatiality”—show the contingency brought about by the material:

Its potential for the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories, that business of walking round a corner and bumping into alterity, of having (somehow, and well or badly) to get on with neighbours who have got “here” (this block of flats, this neighbourhood, this country—this meeting-up) by different routes from you; your being here together is, in that sense, quite uncoordinated.

Two illustrations of discursive-material knots

As space is limited, two brief examples—with distinct entry points—will be discussed here. One is the discourse-theoretical research on death (Carpentier & Van Brussel, 2011, 2012; Van Brussel & Carpentier, 2012, 2014, 2017; Van Brussel, 2014, 2017), which deals with a phenomenon that is often restricted to its material component. Death is seen as the ultimate materiality, impossible to escape, which comes at the expense of the recognition that death is also socially constructed. Also the material nature of its many assemblages, including death beds, funeral rituals, mourning practices and cemeteries, is often emphasised. Of course, this is not to imply that there was no attention for the study of the cultures of death, which is a related, but still a distinct approach with insufficient attention for the social construction of death itself. Interestingly, it has now become fashionable to point out that representational and/or culturalist approaches were dominant—as, for instance, Fahlander and Oestigaard (2008, p. 4) do in their introductory chapter of *The Materiality of Death: Bodies, Burials, Beliefs*, when they write that “during the 1990s it was almost impossible to find a paper that not contained terms like ‘meaning’, ‘text’ or ‘context’”.

Nevertheless, radically constructionist perspectives remain rare, as the literature review for/of *The Social Construction of Death* (Van Brussel & Carpentier, 2014) book illustrated. In particular, discourse theory’s—arguably even more—radical emphasis on contingency allowed for pinpointing the many internal contradictions in the discourses on death (Carpentier & Van Brussel, 2012), where, for instance, death is articulated as undesirable but becomes desired in (some) cases of suicide, euthanasia and martyrdom. Moreover, death is articulated as unavoidable, but there is a remarkable series of survival strategies in operation, ranging from religious beliefs in an afterlife, over medical-technical fantasies of ultimate cures (leading to the practice of cryonics) and the articulation of procreation as gene-survival, to practices of memorialisation and commemoration. Arguably, the strength of these studies is to be found in the rejection of the exclusive focus on death as material and the shift towards the other, neglected component, namely the discursive construction of death, in order to complement the dominant focus on the materiality of death, without ignoring it.

A second example, the social construction of the environment, is different, as this is a topic where discourse theory could have played a significant role but has not often done so. Of course, the broader field of discourse studies has generated a considerable number of publications (e.g. Sharp & Richardson, 2001; Dingler, 2005; Hager & Versteeg, 2005; Alexander, 2009) to analyse the construction of the environment—one, by Hager (2005), was published in the edited volume *Discourse Theory in European Politics* (Howarth & Torfing, 2005), marking the link with the discourse-theoretical approach. There is also an equally considerable number of materialist analyses that point to the agency of the environment (e.g. Mellor, 2000; Latour, 2017; Conty, 2018). Moreover, even if the discourse-theoretical jargon is not often used, there is a long history of trying to capture the dislocations generated by the material environment that disrupt capitalist discourses on progress, infinite growth and safety, as the “The Limits to Growth” (Meadows et al., 1972) report illustrates. The same applies to the analysis of the political struggles about giving meaning to the environment and climate change (Irwin, 2001; Hannigan, 2014), even if—again—discourse-theoretical contributions are mostly lacking, while discourse theory’s focus on the contingency-hegemony dimension could offer relevant insights (as some of the notable exceptions, for instance, Griggs’s and Howarth’s [2019] work on airport expansions, and Carpentier et al.’s [2021] work on the Swedish mining town of Kiruna demonstrate). Moreover, more sustained attention for the invitations generated by the material environment would also open up new avenues for research

focusing on how the material-as-material produces these invitations to discursify our world in particular ways—sometimes in a quite demanding tone of voice—to overdo the reification for a second.

For instance, climate change, with its rising sea levels triggered by thermal expansion and melting glaciers and ice sheets, has intensely affected (parts of) countries such as Bangladesh, which already “have long been dealing with their vulnerabilities to extreme weather events” (Momtaz & Shameem, 2016, p. v). In these places, waterlogging and salinisation processes make land unfit for deploying agricultural assemblages—and sometimes simply inaccessible—and limit access to other vital resources, such as fresh water (Momtaz & Shameem, 2016, pp. 50–51). These material events impact on the lives of a considerable number of people who are facing temporary or permanent displacement. These events produce strong invitations to provide meaning to them and to activate discursive frameworks. Even if very different discourses have been produced in response, ranging from the scientific future impact estimation discourse (focused on developing future scenarios) to the neocolonial discourse of irrelevance (not caring about what happens to Bangladesh in the first place), the argument is here that—to use Stengers’s words (2015, p. 42)—“Gaia intrudes”. As Haraway explains (2016, p. 43): “Gaia’s intrusion into our affairs is a radically materialist event”, which—I would add—is also a strong, almost irresistible, invitation to discursify it. But this intrusion, with its material nature, also impacts on our discursifications. It “intrudes on our categories of thought”, and it “intrudes on thinking itself”. (Haraway, 2016, p. 43) And it is exactly here where discourse-theoretical and discursive-material positions can contribute.

Challenges to theories of entanglement and ways ahead

Although promising, the development of theoretical frameworks that engage more thoroughly with the entanglement of the discursive and the material is still very much ongoing, and there are many territories still to be covered. Arguably, moving outside the comfort zone of discourse studies is both desirable and frightening, and the necessity of this transgressive move is sometimes questioned, as the current outreach to the material in discourse studies (and to the discursive in materialist studies) is deemed sufficient. This belief that the current theoretical models in discourse studies (and in materialist studies) are providing all the answers that are needed comes at a cost, as this results in the underdevelopment of the theorisation of the *interactions* between the discursive and the material, which is precious in its own right, but which can also contribute to the deepening of discourse studies and materialist studies alike.

In this chapter, only discourse theory and new materialism were used to develop a theory of entanglement, which is only a modest contribution to this discussion, as the fields of discourse studies and materialist studies are much broader, and many more combinations and cross-fertilisations can be attempted. Moreover, also related fields, such as, for instance, cultural studies and political economy (critique) can become activated in these discussions. But also the combination of discourse theory and new materialism can be deepened further, in a variety of ways. For instance, the role of non-human animals, who have their own languages and signifying practices, their own agencies and their own bodies, offers a significant theme for a theory of entanglement to deal with. Also the role of affect opens up fruitful and relevant questions, for instance, whether the affective needs to be seen as the third component of the discursive-material knot, or—as I would like to suggest—whether the cognitive-affective dimension is a sub-dimension of the discursive-material knot (similar to the structure-agency sub-dimension, see Carpentier, 2017).

Finally, developing theories of entanglement is a highly complicated process, and maintaining a non-hierarchical position produces—in practice—considerable difficulties. We (have to) move on thin ice when trying to figure out which theoretical concepts that originate from one tradition can be shared with the ‘other’ tradition. There is, for instance, the question whether the concept of discourse can be used to theorise the material. Or to turn this into a set of mildly provocative questions: Can nature produce discourses, or can only humans do so? And can non-human animals produce discourses, or can they only produce signifying practices? If we reserve a particular concept (e.g. discourse) for the human world—which I would prefer—how do we then legitimate this anthropocentric position? A second element of this complicatedness is the issue of how, when analysing assemblages (of assemblages), to narrate these analyses, without giving the appearance of being merely descriptive and without producing mere lists of articulated elements, that only further contribute to the appearance of pure descriptiveness. A third issue is the avoidance of the creation of an imperial(ist) theory, or a black hole theory, that positions itself as an obligatory passage point (to use one of Callon’s [1986] concepts) and that absorbs everything. Here, despite the necessary sensitivity for the existence of a discursive-material knot, modesty is equally important, respecting and actively welcoming discourse analyses that only focus on the discursive, and (new) materialist analyses that only focus on the material.

Acknowledgement

This research has been supported by Mistra, the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, through the research programme Mistra Environmental Communication.

Notes

- 1 This chapter draws on texts from Carpentier (2017) and Carpentier (2021).
- 2 Entanglement, as a concept, has a long history in quantum physics, but new materialist authors, such as Barad (2007), have consciously sought to broaden its meaning and field(s) of application.
- 3 This and the next paragraph were published before in Carpentier (2021).

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PART II

Theoretical developments



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6

SITUATING AND UNWINDING “INTERCULTURAL STRUGGLES” IN CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Rona Tamiko Halualani

Intercultural struggles abound . . .

- In 2021, with regard to an award-winning public high school, Lowell High School, in San Francisco, California, USA, four racial/ethnic communities (Black/African Americans, Latinx/a/o/e members, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and whites) clash in response to a newly announced school board ruling that changed its “merit-based” admissions (as determined by grades and test scores) to a lottery system in the name of diversity, equity and inclusion. (One year later, after much controversy and outcry as well as a school board recall, such a ruling was subsequently reversed back to the merit-based admission system by a newly constituted school board.)
- In 2015, the leadership and PTA association of an elementary school that is named after an Indigenous tribe sought permission from the specific Indigenous community to retain its Indigenous school name, all the while occupying Indigenous land. A group of parents and residents (whites, South Asians, and Asian Americans) push back against such an effort stating that the Indigenous name has been used by the school for over 50 years and should continue to do so in the name of the school’s legacy and identity.

Introduction

These examples allude to and implicate the notion of *intercultural struggle* or a contest of power between and among cultural group members and their situated power interests. In the first instance, racial/ethnic communities are hierarchically and differently positioned in relation to one another in an educational system and around the constructions of “access,” “diversity,” and “education.” The struggle to claim Indigeneity (by way of name, land and identity) (as a coloniser entitlement or process of permission) by cultural groups, comprises the second instance. Both instances—at their core—speak to struggles of power to actuate, gain, name and be. This notion of *struggle* has been an identified hallmark of focus for critical intercultural communication or an area of study within the larger field of intercultural communication that closely examines the ways in which

intercultural encounters and relations are shaped and constituted by legacies, systems, structures, ideologies and practices of power. Key critical intercultural communication scholars Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama (2022) specifically highlight the framing of culture as a “site of power struggles” in their explication of the critical approach to intercultural communication (p. 52). Critical intercultural communication works (Halualani, Drzewiecka, & Mendoza, 2003; Halualani, Mendoza, & Drzewiecka, 2009; Moon, 1996; Nakayama & Halualani, in 2024) have followed suit with its paradigmatic and theoretical reliance on culture as struggle of power as a means to immediately and unquestionably separate and distinguish themselves from social scientific and interpretive approaches to intercultural communication. Defining acts such as these, while essential, have often served as proclamations that are not fully laid out and articulated. In doing so, critical intercultural communication studies has risked relegating itself to participating in drawn out stages of declaration against reigning paradigmatic perspectives but without fully engaging the next stage: explicating key concepts and methodological practices for pursuing such concepts. One such concept is “intercultural struggle”.

In this chapter, I highlight and unwind a key concept—“intercultural struggle” or “struggle of power interests”—of critical intercultural communication studies in analysing intercultural communication relations. Here I break down the notion of “intercultural struggle” in terms of two key aspects—status quo normative order and differentiated power interests—to consider when analysing intercultural encounters, relations and contexts and how this bears out theoretically and methodologically. By identifying what we mean when we examine “intercultural struggles”, critical intercultural communication can better analyse the complex operations and assemblages of power that are “struggles” and how these reconfigure intercultural relations in thorny and sophisticated ways.

Culture as struggle of power

The notion of “intercultural struggle” requires a specific framing of culture as “struggle of power.” In this vein, culture can be understood as an assemblage of meanings and representations that are vested with or are reified and spoken via different power interests, most notably by dominant/prevailing structures (for example, nation-state and colonial systems of governance; law, governance and policy; institutional agencies, education, the economy and marketplace and the media [popular culture, digital platforms, AI]) and cultural groups themselves (Hall, 1985). Thus, to say that culture is “a site of struggle” is to point to the process whereby competing interests (dominant structures and systems and cultural communities and individuals) shape and enact different formations of culture from different positionalities of power (Hall, 1980, 1985). A view then of culture as a set of socially created/shared meanings and practices must always go hand in hand with attention to the structures of power (government, law and policy, economy and modes of production, education and the media) that attended its constitution.

In reconceptualising culture as “struggle of power” and away from “nation”, “variable” or “uniformly shared meaning/community”, critical intercultural communication scholars demarcated a boundary of differentiation in terms of what would make an intercultural communication study or perspective a “critical” one (Martin & Nakayama, 2022; Moon, 1996; Nakayama & Halualani, 2024; Ono, 1998). Moreover, several scholars have previously argued that it is important to turn to conceptualising culture through power and “contest the notion of ‘culture’ as unproblematically shared” (Moon, 1996, p. 75). In their dialectical explication of intercultural communication, Martin and Nakayama (1999) explain that “culture . . . is not just a variable, nor benignly socially

constructed but a site of struggle where various communication meanings are constructed” (p. 8). In other words, they argue that cultures are differentially positioned in relationship to one another within societal structures, material conditions and power relations, and as such, culture becomes a field of forces where competing interests vie for dominance and control. In a revision of the objectivist ideal of social scientific research, Martin and Nakayama (2022) redefine the goal of critical scholarship as that of uncovering, evaluating and changing the conditions and power relations that frame intercultural relations.

Towards this end, Halualani (2022) attempts to unpack intercultural communication in terms of contexts of power that emanate in “struggles”:

A context of power revolves around an ongoing struggle for power between dominant and subordinate parties/interests. In this hierarchy, dominant and subordinate parties compete with one another to gain societal power. Dominant parties (large structures, such as governmental administrations, court system, corporations, and educational institutions, among others) work hard to establish and maintain the power they have over smaller communities and cultural groups. . . . The moves by dominant parties are not always guaranteed in exacting power over others with less power resources; instead, subordinate parties/interests also participate in this feud for power by creatively and strategically using their resources at bay. . . . Thus, this struggle of power is characterized by an unpredictable fight for, on one hand, in terms of dominant parties, domination and control, and, on the other, in terms of socially marginalized groups, freedom, resistance, and transgression. No one side is guaranteed of always winning the fight, which is ongoing with new challenges and obstacles. Of course, dominant interests have more wide-reaching resources and capacities of power to make and enforce laws, policies, and taxes, but this does not mean that individuals and groups naturally succumb to such forces.

(p. 42)

Defining the outer edges and contours of culture as a “struggle of power” helps to distinguish a critical intercultural perspective from other paradigmatic approaches to culture and intercultural communication. But a larger question still looms: How do we truly analyse intercultural struggles in all of their power complexities? One way is to dispel the notion that in a struggle, all cultural groups are on equal footing. Indeed, the field of intercultural communication has traditionally framed intercultural communication as a one-to-one exchange of equivalence between two groups and/or across three or more.

Theoretically outlaying the notion of struggle, while important work, still leaves questions about what specifically constitutes an intercultural struggle. Such questions include: What are the main aspects of an intercultural struggle? How do we begin to extract elements of an intercultural struggle for analysis? Can this be done with such an interlocked and multilayered concept? How might we analyse intercultural struggles as entangled sets of meanings and power interests and positionalities?

Key aspects of intercultural struggles

Two key aspects that should be considered when unpacking an intercultural struggle are (a) the status quo or normative order surrounding the intercultural struggle of focus and (b) the power interests of each involved group in the struggle.

Status quo normative order

When examining a specific intercultural struggle, it is paramount to identify and tease out the status quo normative order of power. Intercultural struggles emanate and live within a prevailing state of power. This normative state or order reflects the reigning systems, structures and ideologies that drive and are reinforced by law and governance, the media and education and larger society in terms of knowledge production, idea circulation and upheld values. What system of power is in place and by which controlling parties or interests? This should take into account the national, regional, state and city legal statutes, policies and processes as well as the larger societal attitudes.

The status quo normative order stands as the default, starting state of power arrangements; the presumed “way it is”. Questions to consider when examining an intercultural struggle and analysing a status quo normative order are

- What is the default status quo governmental system and corresponding national sentiment?
- What are the current governmental and legal policies that impact the focus of the intercultural struggle?
- How does the governmental system “frame” each cultural group in the struggle of focus?
- What is the history of the governmental and legal system’s treatment of the cultural groups in the struggle of focus?
- How has the state legislated the cultural groups of focus?
- What is the current economic positioning in the socio-political hierarchy of the nation/state/province/region/community?
- What is the current governmental status quo? The current legal status quo? The current economic status quo?
- What are the larger demographic attributes of the cultural groups at hand? How have these changed (or not) over the last 10 to 30 years?
- Is there more than one structure or context of power that contains or represses the cultural groups of focus? How many? What is the collective effect of this?

Engaging these questions therefore requires a critical intercultural communication scholar to reach beyond the immediate struggle of focus (or the immediately discursive arena) and locate the status quo normative order. This means taking stock of the past and recent governmental and legal construction of cultural groups through policy analysis and legal case precedent analysis. In addition, it is also necessary to investigate large-scale demographic and economic attributes of groups in terms of aspects of the intercultural struggle (educational access, wage disparities, housing, income, political participation). We will need to learn about and employ additional methods (policy analysis, legal case analysis, economic analysis, demographic indicator analysis) with regard to more incisively analysing intercultural struggles. The phenomena we study requires new means of unpacking them.

In the first aforementioned example, the intercultural struggle over access to a high-quality public education at Lowell High School takes place in a status quo normative order that has historically segregated racial/ethnic groups and those with disability statuses. Since that time, such an order boasts a more fair and equitable system of access and opportunity for racial/ethnic groups and those across intersectionalities in the name of diversity, equity and inclusion while also privileging neighbourhood boundaries of access (tied to home and property values and the hierarchy of home ownership). Thus, in the region (San Francisco) of this intercultural struggle, the racial/ethnic groups live in different areas and are positioned differently in terms of socio-economic status, with some groups living in more affluent areas (whites, Asian Americans) and some in racially

marked and economically neglected parts (Blacks/African Americans, Latinx/a/os, Pacific Islanders, Asian Americans [Chinese, Korean], Southeast Asians). All demographic indicators point to the growing wage, income and housing gaps amongst these groups. The ideologies of fairness and racelessness (the new colorblindness) still ring loudly. The notion of diversity (ala in pulled “random” lotteries) is also used to make the numerical participation of groups “equal” in a programme while not fully acknowledging historical access barriers experienced differently by various racial/ethnic groups in terms of education and housing.

The second aforementioned example—the school leadership and PTA asking an indigenous community for permission to continue to use its name as its school name—represents an intercultural struggle with a status quo normative order historically based in Western settler colonialism. The US government has historically seized and stolen Indigenous land while also socio-culturally laying claim to Native images and names as their own property to be used, licensed and commodified. The status quo normative order has amassed Indigenous land and identity with significant physical and symbolic violence. The economic devastation of Indigenous communities by stealing their land (and thus their self-determination) has built up a status quo normative order that tips the scales significantly against Indigenous groups and can be overwhelming. Thus, the intercultural struggle over a school name (one already taken without permission and/or participation of the Indigenous community while on its own native land) must be broken down in terms of the larger normative order which reveals (a) the massive entitlement the settler colonial public (many of whom are of identity-marginalised and displaced people themselves) feels towards an indigenous name; (b) the ironic burden placed on an indigenous group to either extend a settler colonial act of appropriation (granting permission to use its name) and thereby absolving the sins of settler colonialism under the guise of “land acknowledgements and going back to the community” without any intention of giving the land back (repatriation) or (c) the refusal by the Indigenous group to use its name which, in effect, makes itself look ungrateful for a seemingly progressive gesture that is strangely meant to interrupt settler colonialism while also clearly reinforcing it but with express Indigenous permission (and without any real gesture of significance like land repatriation or giving back a part of the land). Locating the status quo normative order in this example will help the critical intercultural scholar tease out an intercultural struggle that is heavily lopsided in power against the Indigenous community and yet also can frame the next iteration of settler colonialism (permission to lay claim). An intercultural struggle may be prominently uneven in terms of one party/power interest (or more) possessing the historical, material, and contemporary leverage over a cultural group. By situating the status quo normative order, we can discern and specify such unevenness and the costs brought by it as well as the creative ways a cultural group grates against this power.

Differentiated power interests

Another key aspect of an intercultural struggle is a cultural group’s power interests. This refers to the vested stakes of what a group is positioned to lose, gain and/or experience in a specific intercultural struggle. The stakes can be in terms of the governmental, legal, economic and socio-political consequences that are embedded in a cultural group’s position in a struggle.

These stakes are brought into the struggle by virtue of the identity positionailities and framings of the specific groups in the said intercultural struggle. Other stakes are dynamically created in relation to the specific combination of cultural groups involved in the intercultural struggle—with the specific stakes taking different shape depending on the groups involved and the relations amongst those groups in the context surrounding the struggle.

Questions to consider when ferreting out a cultural group's power interests in an intercultural struggle are

- What does each cultural group bear and or bring into the struggle with regard to their identity positionalities and backgrounds?
- What are the historical, economic, legal, governmental and socio-political dimensions of these identity positionalities and backgrounds?
- How do these identity positionalities and backgrounds (along with their dimensions) steer and or position the cultural groups in relation to one another in the intercultural struggle?
- What are the vested interests of each cultural group in the specific intercultural struggle?
- What can be lost or gained by each group in the struggle?
- When one or two groups gain and or benefit in the struggle, which groups lose and or miss out or are placed at a disadvantage? Are there contradictions here? To what extent do the power interests intersect, collide and compete with one another?
- What is the basis for said gain? What is the basis for said loss? How is loss and gain even constructed and for whom?

In the Lowell High School access example, several of the cultural groups involved bring to bear disadvantaged power interests. For instance, Black/African Americans, Latinx, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians have historically been excluded from equal educational access in the US educational system via segregation and naturalisation statutes. This has also worked hand in hand with economic subjugation in terms of access to housing and homeownership (with resourced neighbourhood schools), fair wages and economic opportunity. Immigrant groups have also experienced xenophobia and discrimination while Blacks/African Americans continually experience racism, racial discrimination and systemic and interpersonal racial violence and marginalisation. The power interests of these groups are historically, economically and legally bound to restrictions, containment, suppression and marginalisation. Whites and wealthy Asian Americans, however, have typically garnered advantaged power interests in terms of educational access to Lowell High School by virtue of socio-economic status (whites and Asian Americans) with Asian Americans potentially still experiencing the social and cultural experiences of racism, xenophobia and suppression. However, several East Asian (namely Chinese American) groups navigate a complex assemblage of power interests in that while confronting and wrestling with discrimination and socio-economic hardship (and immigrant labour in establishing businesses and home ownership for their families over a long period of time) as well as waves of brutal anti-Asian violence, their children present high test scores and academic marks that have led to gained educational access to the once "merit-based" Lowell High School. Thus, they specifically gain from the notion of meritocracy and a seemingly "merit-based" system while also simultaneously experiencing the brunt of racism and xenophobia.

Given these complex and non-linear differentiated power interests, a "lottery" in the name of "diversity" (random and pulled assignment) over "merit" (academic performance, test scores, "achievement") positions Black/African Americans, Latinx, Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians with a greater chance of access than ever before in the history of the Lowell High School and in that school district. That is deemed a "gain" for these groups in light of their imbued power interests and past access barriers due to not possessing marks of "merit". These merit marks should be problematised here. Merit is not a pure or neutral space devoid of power. Merit is already constituted by power and in line with racial constructs (that cultural groups who earn high academic

marks due so on their own volition, performance capacities and degrees of hard work—thereby deeming academic achievement, merit and educational access to a prestigious school as raceless or without any consideration or involvement of race). What is left out is the a priori and historical access of specific groups to well-resourced schools (with buildings, books, materials, teachers, activities, AP or advanced courses, honours programmes, field trips, food security, teacher professional development) that shapes how one can perform and actualise an optimal academic performance potential. If a group has historically been delimited to a set classification of labour and wages which then determines housing and the location of such housing, then access to well-resourced schools from childhood through adolescence will paint a far messier and complicated picture of “merit” and obfuscate a pathway to “meritorious” academic achievement. Education, for many groups, is getting by and through what has been proffered through a pathway often delineated by the status quo normative order and a group’s power interests.

Each of the cultural groups involved possess differentiated power interests around “merit”. When that previously upheld system of merit is dismantled, these power interests around merit suddenly shift. Black/African Americans, Latinx, Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians can now have more access to Lowell High School in the name of diversity while whites and East Asians now face limited to no access given the irrelevance of merit marks. These latter groups (as well as past alumni) balk at the erasure of “merit” and the lost “exclusivity” and prestige of the high school (logic read as: with wider and more inclusive access, how good could the school be?). What helps historically disadvantaged groups gain record levels of access then limits and or suppresses two other groups (one of whom is also historically disadvantaged by dominant systems in US society) who have maximised an advantage through “merit”. The Chinese American community’s denouncement of this lottery and wider educational access (and reinstatement of a meritocratic system) exacerbates non-white groups’ push for lottery admission systems and their claims that educational systems are geared for whites and the well off. This intercultural struggle represents a thorny and contradictory set of power interests and reconstitutes intercultural relations between/among these groups. We will need to employ differentiating methods (identity and economic mappings, intersectional lenses, decolonising approaches, native research methods, culturally contextual methods) as ways to dissect and locate specific power interests that cultural groups bring and ones that emerge in the struggles at play.

In terms of the second example, getting permission to use an indigenous tribe’s name for a school on Indigenous land involves a set of power interests in direct opposition to one another. All resident community members and families gain an authorisation of the status quo for the long haul. The school leadership gains cultural approval of the status quo, thwarting off any accusations of settler colonialism. On the other side of that, the Indigenous community is recognised with authority to a name but not to the repatriation of land. Thus, the Indigenous community is called upon and requested to approve (give clearance for) the continued poaching of its identity (something historically done across the world and in every arena of power) but to nothing else (land sharing, land use, educational involvement, immediate access for all Native children in the area). Native power interests—shaped by legacies of oppression—therefore become more contained in that a sliver of agency is provided through the recognition of Indigenous land and its name but then tasked to provide authorisation to extend settler colonialism. The gain here could be in recognising Nativeness but that is then relinquished by pressuring an indigenous group to “sign off” on settler colonialism. This represents a different configuration of an intercultural struggle for critical intercultural communication scholars and one that may be more frequent in today’s age.

Conclusion

An untapped element for our critical intercultural work could be the analysis of intercultural struggles and entangled intercultural relations as constituted and shaped through power. In order to realise this analytical urgency, we need to parse out key aspects of intercultural struggles and to do through context-driven and informed frameworks and considerations. Moreover, similar to critical studies and cultural studies areas, theorising a struggle of power is context-driven; thus, theory becomes “theorizing” in critical intercultural communication research. A critical intercultural communication scholar scrutinises a setting with the goal of examining culture and power, and thus, must delve into the surrounding and constitutive “context” of such a setting.

By analysing intercultural struggles, the critical intercultural communication scholar needs to delve into such a context and analyse its specific material conditions and history. From this critical exploration, the critical intercultural scholar can propose a type of theoretical framework based on examined specificities (e.g. histories, experiences, economics, social relations) about the field of forces in that context. This theoretical framework and resulting critical analysis would then seep back into and inform the analysed setting by uncovering its underlying cultural practices. As a result, critical and cultural studies work recognises that there is no theory in advance (Hall, 1992). Thus, the notion of intercultural struggle is only meaningful within that framework and setting. Indeed, intercultural struggles of power are dynamic and ever-shifting, and by examining two key aspects of such struggles (the status quo normative order and differentiated power interests) in context, critical intercultural communication scholarship can truly fulfil its promise in interrogating the role of power in shaping culture and intercultural communication.

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7

TRANSCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Will Baker

Introduction

Many of our contemporary social spaces are highly multicultural and multilingual. This includes superdiverse urban environments, digital social networking sites, multinational workplaces and businesses, international higher education (HE) institutions and international tourism. Increased migration of people for economic and social causes (including war and political instability) is a much-debated aspect of many societies. Although the COVID-19 pandemic may have temporarily slowed physical movements across borders, it also served to underscore how globally connected all societies are. At the same time, global connections were frequently maintained or even increased during the pandemic through digital communication. Furthermore, at the time of writing this chapter, as much of the world enters a ‘post-pandemic’ phase, physical movements across borders are rapidly returning to pre-pandemic levels. These diverse social spaces result in a correspondingly diverse range of communicative practices. This diversity raises challenging questions about how we understand concepts such as culture, language, discourse and communication. In this chapter, transcultural communication is offered as an approach that aids researchers of communication (whether that is related to cultural discourse studies, applied linguistics or intercultural communication) in dealing with the linguistic and cultural complexity that is apparent in many of the interactions we observe. Transcultural communication can be defined as communication, “where interactants move through and across, rather than in-between, cultural and linguistic boundaries, thus, ‘named’ languages and cultures can no longer be taken for granted and in the process borders become blurred, transgressed and transcended” (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019, p. 472). At the same time, it is important to recognise that transcultural communication is not something exotic or strange, but for many of us is a mundane part of our daily lives. The following example demonstrates some of these points.

Example 1: Mooncake

North

1. My lovely daughter
2. Thank you for your moon cake

3. It's really delicious
4. I gave P'Sa and P'Yui already
5. and I'll give P'Beau on this Sat

Ling

6. U r welcome, and the mid-autumn festival is this Sunday, enjoy~
7. Can u tell P'Sa, she can get her bag back now~

(Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019, p. 481)

Two international students in the United Kingdom (North from Thailand and Ling from China) are messaging each other through Facebook Messenger. The topic of the conversation is nothing more remarkable than a thank you for a cake and arrangements to return a borrowed bag. At first sight the language may appear to be English, but a closer look reveals more multilingual complexity. On lines 4, 5 and 7 we have the use of the term “P”, which is a transliteration of the Thai term ‘ໝ’ meaning older sibling and used in informal situations to show respect and intimacy to an older person. On line 1 North refers to Ling as her “daughter”, here translating the Thai term of address for a much younger close friend. So we see a fluid mix of communicative practices from English and Thai with the boundaries between the two not easily discerned (i.e. the use of “P”). Furthermore, the conversation makes reference to the mid-autumn festival (line 6) which is originally associated with China but is also a pan-Asian festival, as shown by North’s familiarity with it. The global spread of the festival is illustrated through the fact that these students are based in the United Kingdom at the time of the conversation. Additionally, the exchange occurs in the virtual space of Facebook. In sum, there are multiple cultural levels or scales simultaneously present, both physical and virtual, and from the local to the national and the global. This is combined with a fluid use of linguistic and other semiotic resources (note the emoticons on line 6 and 7). Such communication does not neatly fit into traditional a priori cultural or linguistic categories such as national languages and cultures.¹

The chapter will begin by clarifying some key concepts in transcultural communication through a discussion of how culture and language, and the links between them, are conceptualised, drawing on discourse approaches to culture. This will be followed by a brief overview of a number of foundational research fields which transcultural communication builds on, involving critical intercultural communication research, transculturality, translanguaging and transmodality. A more detailed characterisation of transcultural communication will then be presented. Finally, the implications for researching and teaching language, discourse, culture and communication will be discussed. Before outlining transcultural communication, its development and implications in detail, it is important to make clear my own position in this discussion. Firstly, is my position as a white, male, cisgendered, native speaker of English educated in and currently based in an ‘elite’ anglophone university. I am also a researcher of global Englishes, specifically English as a lingua franca (ELF), and intercultural communication. Thus, my background and the origins of my research interests place me in the Global North and in a position of privilege. At the same time, much of my research has been motivated by attempts to decentre the dominance of the anglophone world in English-language research (both applied linguistics and ELT), and I have worked in institutions based in the Global South and continue to collaborate with colleagues and research participants from the Global South. Moreover, the fields of global Englishes and ELF have large numbers of researchers based in the Global South and from their inception they have challenged, and still

seek to challenge, the dominant discourses of linguistics and language pedagogy (e.g. Kachru, 1990; Canagarajah, 2007; Menezes Jordao, 2019). Nonetheless, my background, current position and research interests will unavoidably result in blind spots in my sources of knowledge and perspectives.

Language, discourse and culture

In order to explicate the relationships between language, discourse and culture it is necessary to first clarify how culture, discourse and language are understood. A single definition of culture that is applicable in all fields and for all purposes is not possible; however, there are core features of culture which can be outlined. Firstly, culture can be characterised as shared ‘systems’ of discourses, practices and ideologies among groups of people (Holliday, 2011; Kramsch, 2009; Shi-xu this volume). These systems are not fixed and static though; rather they are systems in the sense of emergent complex adaptive systems (CAS) that are constantly in process and never finalised (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). The discourse systems that form culture are multiple and intersecting, including discourse communities such as nation, region, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, religion, profession and generation (Scollon et al., 2012). Secondly, these systems of discourses, practices and ideologies are shared in the sense of either self-ascription or other-ascription (Zhu, 2019) and so are contestable. Finally, cultural systems are constantly in process with no fixed boundaries and hence can never be fully described (Baker, 2015). Moreover, from complexity theory perspectives cultural systems emerge from the aggregate interactions of individuals but are not reducible to those individuals. Thus, in contrast to essentialist approaches to culture, individuals are not synonymous with the cultural systems they identify or are identified with (Baker, 2015).

Discourse is here positioned, as Risager explains, “as an intermediary concept between the concepts of language/languaculture and the more general concept of culture” (2007, p. 173). Discourse, language and culture are thus linked but are not synonymous. We can interpret discourse in the broader sense, as presented earlier, in terms of discourses of gender, profession and ethnicity (Scollon et al., 2012) and in topics such as “the discourse of globalisation” or the “discourse of migration” (Risager, 2007). All of these discourses can be expressed in different languages and occur in different cultural settings with participants from different cultural backgrounds. From a CAS perspective through individual communicative interactions, discourses are constantly interacting, influencing and changing and are never fixed.

In keeping with an emergentist perspective, language can be seen as a central cultural practice and also a CAS (Everett, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2018; Tomasello, 2008). Furthermore, as will be explained in more detail when discussing translanguaging, the boundaries between one language and another are not fixed. Although traditional, deterministic and essentialist accounts, such as Wierzbicka, (2006), view languages and cultures as synonymous at the national scale (e.g. the English-language and anglophone cultures), a CAS perspective approaches the relationship between the two categories differently. While recognising that language is never culturally neutral, from an emergentist and CAS approach the links between languages and cultures are fluid and complex. The relationship between a particular use of language and the cultural practices it constructs and represents is determined in each instance of communication (Baker, 2015; Risager, 2006). As shown in the “mooncake” example, languages (or rather linguistic resources), cultural practices and references come together in a myriad of ways that are not fixed and cannot be established *a priori*. This is particularly true in intercultural and transcultural communication when participants may have limited shared experiences with using language and will need to construct

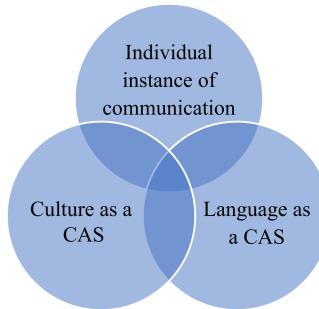


Figure 7.1 Language, culture and communication as complex adaptive systems

Source: Adapted from Baker & Ishikawa, 2021

norms and understanding in the interaction. The relationship between language, culture and communication from this perspective is summarised in Figure 7.1.

Intercultural communication

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, transcultural communication is viewed as an extension of current intercultural communication theory. It is, therefore, important to outline how intercultural communication is understood. Intercultural communication at its most basic can be defined as communication in which linguistic and cultural differences are perceived as relevant to the interaction by participants and/or researchers (Baker, 2015; Zhu, 2019). In taking a critical approach to intercultural communication it is necessary to avoid essentialising intercultural interactions and equating participants with stereotyped national cultures and languages (as in earlier cross-cultural communication research, e.g. Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, as Scollon and Scollon wrote over 20 years ago, we need to continue to ask, “who has introduced culture as a relevant category, for what purposes and with what consequences?” (2001, p. 545) and interrogate the categories we employ rather than making a priori assumptions. Interculturality is an especially relevant perspective in intercultural communication research in that it is concerned with how cultural practices and identities are constructed and negotiated within the interaction (e.g. Zhu, 2019). Cultural identities are seen as something that we *do*, rather than something fixed and pre-given. Furthermore, we are not free to construct any identity we wish, and power and negotiation are a significant feature of interculturality research with participants self-orientating to or being ascribed cultural identities (Zhu, 2019). The constructed and negotiated nature of cultural identities results in varying degrees of alignment or misalignment in identities underpinned by issues of nationality, ethnicity, race and othering (Zhu & Li, 2016).

Hybridity and third spaces/places have been other core ideas of relevance in intercultural communication research and have been used to explore hybridised identities and practices that operate between different cultures (Kramsch, 2009; MacDonald, 2019). In these liminal spaces between cultures, participants are free to adapt linguistic and cultural practices in a manner that is not fixed to either a first language and culture or a target language and culture. Nonetheless, notions of hybridity and third space have also been critiqued for maintaining a methodological nationalism. Despite attempts to go beyond cross-cultural and essentialist approaches to

communication, the borders between languages and cultures are retained since these still form the point of reference for being “in-between” (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019; Baker, 2015; Holliday, 2011). Moreover, participants in intercultural communication can orientate to multiple cultural scales simultaneously without having to be “between” any of them (Baker, 2015; Holliday, 2011). Furthermore, the complexity and diversity of cultural references and practices in intercultural, and especially transcultural, communication means that it may not be possible or appropriate to trace their “origins” or identify which specific cultures participants are in-between (Baker, 2015, 2022a; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Lastly, it is important to recognise that power structures may limit the extent to which participants can adopt or adapt particular cultural practices or identities (MacDonald, 2019).

To summarise, intercultural communication research has been invaluable in highlighting the constructed and negotiated nature of cultural practices and identities in intercultural interactions and the liminal spaces participants can create between cultures. However, the complexity of cultural and linguistic practices revealed in current research questions the possibility and utility of identifying specific named cultures which participants are “in-between”, and hence the “inter” of intercultural communication becomes problematic (Baker, 2022a). Therefore, the “trans” metaphor and prefix is proposed here as an alternative to “inter” in conceptualising communication through and across rather than in between cultural and linguistic borders.

Transculturality

It should be made clear that the use of a trans metaphor and transculturality is not a new idea. Although use of the term transculturation can be traced back to the 1940s in anthropology (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019), it is perhaps most well-known through postcolonial studies and the work of Mary Louise Pratt (1990, 2008). Transculturation is connected to the notion of “contact zones” which are described as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination. . . . Transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone” (Pratt, 2008, p. 7). Transculturation is similar to the ideas of third space/place (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993), discussed earlier, and the notion of occupying a hybrid liminal space “in-between” cultures. However, Pratt also emphasises the role of power and resistance in social relations with new cultural forms emerging which can transcend their cultural “origins”. Nonetheless, as with third spaces, the focus on hybridity “between” identifiable cultures limits its relevance to transcultural communication scenarios.

Welsch (1999), in outlining a theory of transculturality, is critical of perspectives which retain the idea of separate cultures interacting with each other. Welsch argues that “[c]ultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called transcultural insofar that it passes through classical cultural boundaries” (1999, p. 4). Welsch’s account contains some of the core features of transcultural perspectives as adopted here such as networks of cultural connections and communities which transcend traditional geographical and national cultural boundaries. Monceri, (2019) offers a more recent discussion of transculturality from a philosophical perspective. Like Welsch she agrees that transculturality goes beyond intercultural connections between different identifiable cultures. However, she further suggests that the trans prefix should encourage us to go further and “transgress the borders of the very notion of culture” (Monceri, 2019, p. 88). Such questioning is, Monceri argues, essential to enable us to decolonise and move away from Western-centric thinking about culture which creates a false dichotomy between the ‘West’ and the ‘other’.

These ideas are further expanded through ‘transcultural flows’, which is a perspective that pushes beyond hybridity in conceiving of culture and its network of relationships through globalisation. Appadurai introduces the idea of a “circulation of forms and the forms of circulation” (2010, p. 9) to understand how cultural practices and ideologies flow and circulate through complex global social networks. Appadurai argues that postcolonial approaches were limited in their focus on hybridity and did not fully account for new cultural practices and contexts emerging from multiple scales being simultaneously present. In explaining the circulation of forms, he writes:

We need to move decisively beyond existing models of creolization, hybridity, fusion, syncretism, and the like, which have largely been about mixture at the level of content. Instead, we need to probe the cohabitation of forms, . . . because they actually produce new contexts through their peculiar inflection of each other.

(Appadurai, 2010, p. 10)

From an applied linguistics perspective Pennycook (2007) puts forward similar notions in discussing transcultural flows of languages and culture and the complex relationships between the local and global. Pennycook does not regard the local as subservient to the global but instead proposes that cultural practices do not just spread around the global, but rather, they are taken up locally through “borrowing, blending, remaking and returning, to processes of alternative cultural production” (2007, p. 6), thus, challenging hegemonic interpretations of culture and language. Similarly, Risager (2006, 2007) discusses how languages, discourses and other cultural practices are part of transnational and transcultural flows that come together in diverse configurations in different settings. In specific relation to language and discourse she believes that “every communicative event may be seen as a confluence of two flows: a linguistic flow in a specific language, and a discursive flow within a specific topic area” (2007, p. 174). However, these categories are not synonymous so languages, discourses and cultures can flow through and across each other. For instance, the same discourse topic, e.g. immigration, can be expressed through different languages and may be interpreted differently by individuals with different cultural backgrounds and in different cultural contexts, again resisting a single interpretation. This perspective on discourse and transculturality aligns with cultural discourse studies (CDS) which also views cultural discourse as “interactive”, “relational” and “constantly changing” (Shi-xu, this volume). Furthermore, CDS links research into cultural discourse back to earlier concerns in transculturality through challenging cultural hegemony and exposing the power relationships which “saturate” cultural discourses (*ibid*).

Most recently, Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) have outlined an approach to transculturality that fits well with the perspective taken here in similarly adopting the trans metaphor to signify the transgression and transcendence of borders as part of transcultural processes. Under this perspective cultures are seen as always relational, complex and dynamic “entanglement, exchange, porosity and hybridization have always been an instrumental part of the ongoing definition and development of cultures” (2019, p. xxvi). Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) draw attention to an important paradox in transcultural perspectives; transcending cultural borders presupposes the existence of such borders in the first place (see also Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Mori & Sanuth, 2018). To address this, they suggest that cultural construction should be viewed as a process which can be approached from multiple perspectives in which both the creation of borders and differences and transcending those borders and differences are simultaneous ongoing processes. Furthermore, while the importance of nations and borders is not denied, to avoid methodological nationalism, the nation is viewed as one scale among many that is neither hierarchical nor a priori to transcultural processes.

Finally, a transcultural methodology entails a transdisciplinary approach to research that comprises multiple perspectives and scales of culture in which cultural practices and connections are seen as operating across multiple sites, times and speeds.

Translanguaging and transmodality

The final foundation for transcultural communication comes from applied linguistics and its incorporation of trans theories. Linking back to the earlier discussion of the emergent and fluid nature of culture and language Lønsmann et al. write in relation to transience that,

[o]ur objects of study are not treated as given, but as in a state of flux, emergent, in a state of being negotiated and shaped, of becoming stabilised (or not) or of losing traction and giving way to subsequent constitutions of social orderliness.

(2017, p. 3)

Similarly, and taking a parallel stance to current conceptions of transculturality, Hawkins and Mori suggest that “this move toward a ‘trans-’ disposition signals the need to transcend the named and bounded categories that have historically shaped our thinking about the world and its inhabitants, the nature of knowledge, and communicative resources” (2018, p. 1).

The most extensive use of trans theories in applied linguistics is through translanguaging theory (e.g. García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018), and there are a number of strands that are directly relevant to intercultural communication research (Holliday & MacDonald, 2020) and transcultural communication (Baker, 2022a). Firstly, Li’s (2018) three strands of a translanguaging approach—transcendent, transformative, and transdisciplinary perspectives—on language and meaning making align well with the perspectives on language, culture and communication previously outlined in this chapter. Moreover, in defining translanguaging as a theory of language, Li proposes that “[t]ranslanguaging Instinct drives humans to go beyond narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication” (2018, pp. 24–25), highlighting the need for researchers to also transcend linguistic and cultural borders. Additionally, Li underscores the importance of the multimodal nature of communication, writing that “[h]uman communication has always been multimodal; people use textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources, or modes, to construct and interpret messages” (2018, p. 21). Of particular relevance is a transmodal perspective in which a holistic approach to communication is adopted with a range of modes, such as texts, photos and videos, and the links between them, simultaneously investigated to understand meaning making. In transmodality the boundaries between each mode become blurred and transcended with meaning emerging from complex chains of connected multimodal resources in a “transmodal moment” (Newfield, 2017, p. 103). Thirdly, translanguaging space is explained as “a space where language users break down the ideologically laden dichotomies between the macro and the micro, the societal and the individual, and the social and the psychological through interaction” (Li, 2018, p. 23). This is commensurable with transculturality and transcultural communication, as already explained, in which multiple scales are simultaneously present and participants transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries rather than hybridising or being positioned in between. In sum, the use of the trans prefix in translanguaging theories matches closely with its use in transcultural communication and provides further impetus for a move beyond the inter prefix of intercultural communication.

Transcultural communication

With the foundations of transcultural communication outlined, it is now possible to provide a more detailed explanation of how transcultural communication is characterised.

- Transcultural communication as a research field studies communicative practices where cultural and linguistic differences are relevant to participants or researchers but not necessarily linked to any one ‘named’ culture or particular group.
- From a transcultural communication perspective, cultures are heterogeneous, and cultural characterisations are contestable; they are influenced by previous characterisations, limitations and power structures but also open to the emergence of new social spaces, practices and identities.
- In transcultural communication participants move through and across scales rather than in-between; multiple scales may be simultaneously present, and national cultures are one of many potential scales, ranging from the local to the global, alongside variable temporal scales and speeds from transient interactions and connections to long-term historical processes and influences.
- In transcultural communication cultural practices and references can be constructed *in situ* and emergent; participants are not necessarily in between any named cultures.
- In transcultural communication cultural and linguistic boundaries can thus be transcended, transgressed and transformed.

(adapted from Baker, 2022a, p. 289)

It is important to emphasise again that transcultural communication builds on, rather than replaces, earlier critical intercultural communication theory and research. While the focus is on the processes of transgressing, transcending and transforming boundaries and how this opens up new social spaces and identifications, this does not dismiss the national scale or ideas of hybridity and third spaces. The nation is still a powerful ideology in many participants’ understanding and discourses of language, culture and communication. However, to avoid essentialism and methodological nationalism we should not assume that the national scale is always of relevance or that participants in intercultural and transcultural communication are necessarily in between different national scales. Yet it is important to acknowledge that in transcending borders we are presupposing their existence and that previous structures, limitations and asymmetries may continue to exert an influence in transcultural communication. Similarly, hybridity and third spaces are likely to remain a feature of intercultural and transcultural communication, but these ideas should be critically examined with the inevitable pull of the national scale in hybridity recognised. Most importantly, the relevance of all these characterisations and links between them needs to emerge from careful study of interactions and not be assumed *a priori*. Furthermore, transcultural communication turns its focus to interactions “where participants transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, rather than mix them, and crucially where the complexity of the interaction means boundaries themselves cannot easily be discerned” (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019, p. 473). From transcultural perspectives transgressive and transformative approaches form the starting point of the investigation and aim to open new directions and spaces in our understanding of language, culture, identity, discourse and communication.

Implications for research and pedagogy

When researching the cultural dimensions to interactions from a transcultural perspective, the complex and dynamic links between cultural practices and other communicative resources need

to be explored. Central to this is viewing cultural references, communities, identities and practices as fluid and contestable and operating at multiple scales, as well as being emergent and constructed *in situ* during interactions. Baker and Sangiamchit (2019) and Baker and Ishikawa (2021) provide two examples of research that holistically examines how cultural meanings, references and identities are constructed through the process of transculturality, translanguaging and transmodality. Importantly, these studies illustrate multiple cultural scales simultaneously present and participants moving through and across these scales in a manner that transcends fixed cultural and linguistic boundaries. Mortensen (2017) and Pitzl (2018) explore how community and ‘common ground’ are constructed in the transient communities that are frequent in intercultural and transcultural communication, where participants often meet briefly with little familiarity to each other. Their research illustrates how shared understandings and conviviality are constructed in these linguistically and culturally diverse transient communities and the varied use of semiotic repertoires and timescales needed to establish common ground where shared norms cannot be taken for granted. Such research has significant implications for how we understand core concepts in communication and linguistics such as culture and community.

When researching the linguistic dimensions to transcultural communication, translanguaging is clearly a very relevant approach due to its view of language use as transcending the ideological categories of named national languages and cultures. Furthermore, the integration of the full range of linguistic resources alongside other multimodal resources through transmodal processes also fits well with a transcultural perspective. For example, Li (2016) employs a translanguaging framework to show how ‘English’¹² users in China make use of their multilingual and multimodal repertoires to create meaning and affect. Similarly, Dovchin et al. (2016, 2018) use a transtextual, translanguaging, transmodal and transcultural framework to investigate the linguistic and cultural practices of young adults in Bangladesh and Mongolia. Their studies illustrate both creativity and freedom in young people’s transcultural and translanguaging practices but also restrictions and unequal opportunities as a result of pre-existing social structures and ideologies. In much research English is featured since it is by far the most commonly used global language for intercultural and transcultural communication (as in the example at the beginning of this chapter). However, it is important to recognise that ‘English’ functions alongside other ‘languages’ and is used as a multilingua franca (Jenkins, 2015). Therefore, ‘English’ use must be approached as part of a repertoire of wider multilingual, multimodal and multicultural resources, embedded in translanguaging, transmodal and transcultural processes (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Ishikawa, 2020).

In taking a trans perspective it is necessary to also be transdisciplinary in the widest sense; transcending boundaries between disciplines and including diverse epistemologies. As Abu-Er-Rub et al. argue “[t]ransculturality forms a transdisciplinary understanding that could underlie any (at least) humanities or social-sciences approach. To uncover even segments of the rhizome will call for multidisciplinary and often multilingual expertise” (2019, p. xl). This includes challenging the dominance of epistemologies and ontologies from the Global North and opening up space for alternative perspectives and knowledge from the Global South and postcolonial settings (R’boul, 2020; Santos, 2014; Shi-xu, this volume). For example, in the field of intercultural communication Miike (2019; see also this volume) proposes that an “Asiacentric metatheory” is needed so that the experiences of Asian are reported “as subjects and actors of their own realities rather than objects and spectators in the lived experiences of others” (2019, p. 164). This involves research that builds on Asian traditions and knowledge, while at the same time acknowledging that what constitutes Asianness is debatable and negotiable. Similarly, Zhou (2022) discusses the potentially productive ways intercultural communication and Buddhism can enter into inter-epistemic dialogue. In particular, she suggests that Buddhism can help in elucidating more nuanced perspectives on

overcoming essentialism in both theory and practice. In an educational context, Álvarez Valencia and Wagner (2021) discuss the barriers that indigenous students face in their journey of ‘intercultural mobility;’ to and through HE. They believe that the underlying hegemonic and colonial structures of HE result in a sense of deterritorialisation and deculturation for indigenous students. However, they also outline ways in which universities can provide new spaces of belonging allowing re-contextualisation and re-territorialisation. Nonetheless, Álvarez Valencia and Wagner (2021) argue that at present intercultural transformation is typically a one-way process in HE. Indigenous students are expected to assimilate to dominant academic practices and knowledge, and this needs to change to a two-way process of equal change from all.

Transcultural communication also has important implications for language teaching. Approaches to teaching language and culture are still typically essentialist with national scales of language and culture dominating. Indeed, the focus on the national level can be seen as a form of neocolonialism in that language learners are always compared to an unattainable and often irrelevant ‘native speaker’³ ideal (Baker, 2022b). This is particularly the case with English used as a global lingua franca where the majority of communication does not involve native speakers or the anglophone world, despite this often forming the reference point for cultural and communicative ‘norms’ in teaching (Jenkins et al., 2018). As such it can be argued that English-language teaching is in need of decolonising to better reflect the uses to which the language is put by the majority of its learners and users (Baker, 2022b; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Macedo, 2019). Moreover, this does not just apply to English but is equally relevant to any language used for intercultural and transcultural communication in which the notions of ‘correct’ and ‘standard’ uses of language may be of dubious significance (Blommaert, 2010). In contrast to the disempowering national scale and standard language, native-speaker perspective, a transcultural language education approach is based on the multilingual, multimodal and multicultural resources and translanguaging, transmodal and transcultural processes that second or additional language learning and use entails.

In practice this means moving away from national scales and norms and instead taking a critical approach to language, culture, and identity that challenges dominant established discourses and recognises the dynamic use of language and other semiotic resources for transcultural communication across and through borders (Baker, 2022b, p. 63). A transculturally informed language pedagogy should focus on the processes of communication and adaptable use of communication resources rather than ‘acquiring’ a fixed set of linguistic products (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation). Competence in communication is moved away from the inappropriate native-speaker ideal to a dynamic contextual competence and awareness based on processes of translanguaging and transcultural communication (Baker, 2022b). Teaching approaches, goals and materials shift from endonormative methodologies to teaching based on local contexts and cultures (Baker, 2022b, p. 63). In keeping with this final point, it is important to stress that local stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students, administrators) are best placed to decide how and what elements of a transcultural teaching approach to adopt. Furthermore, transcultural language teaching is not proposed as a methodology to be followed but rather as a set of broad principles that teachers can orientate more, or less, towards depending on circumstances and opportunities. While preparing learners for the reality of intercultural and transcultural communication will necessitate taking a transcultural perspective, teachers also have to prepare learners for assessment and curriculum goals which are often much more restrictive and normative in their orientation. Moreover, like transcultural communication as a theory, the pedagogic applications build on current research in other areas of language teaching. This includes theoretical and empirical work in intercultural and transcultural awareness, intercultural citizenship education, global Englishes and ELF aware teaching, incorporating a range of diversities and intersectionality (e.g. gender, sexuality, race,

ethnicity, class) into pedagogy and decolonial teaching approaches (e.g. Baker, 2015; Banegas et al., 2021; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Ishikawa, 2020; Kubota, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Macedo, 2019; Porto et al., 2018).

Conclusion

In sum, transcultural communication is characterised as communication in which multiple cultural and linguistic scales are simultaneously present ranging from the local to the national and the global. This occurs alongside equally dynamic temporal scales and speeds ranging from transient interactions and connections to long-term historical processes and influences. In transcultural communication participants move through and across, rather than in-between, cultural and linguistic borders and in the process transgress and transcend those boundaries resulting in a transformation of the boundaries themselves (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Baker, 2022a). We might question, given the plethora of terminology in linguistics and discourse studies, why a new term is needed. However, in this chapter I have argued that transcultural communication has come about as a response to the types of communication frequently observed in research where participants make use of multiple cultural scales simultaneously and when the links between languages and cultures are complex and fluid. In such scenarios it becomes difficult, and perhaps even inappropriate, to attribute cultural and linguistic practices to one ‘named’ culture or to position participants as ‘in-between’ specific cultures; thus, challenging the ‘inter’ of intercultural communication. We therefore need new metaphors to help us understand such interactions and to adequately account for the practices we observe. The trans metaphor and transcultural communication are offered as such. What does this mean for our research practices? As made clear in this chapter, transcultural communication is not revolutionary but is rather an evolution of current thinking and empirical studies from a range of fields including critical intercultural communication, transculturality theories and trans theories in applied linguistics. Furthermore, to fully follow through on a trans perspective we also need to transcend disciplinary and epistemological boundaries and incorporate a range of sources of knowledge including from the Global South and postcolonial settings. As such this approach is commensurable with CDS which also takes a perspective on cultural discourse that resists essentialism, views culture as interactive and fluid and emphasises the importance of uncovering power structures in cultural discourses and challenging hegemonic characterisations. It is hoped that transcultural communication will provide an alternative to the methodological nationalism and colonialism that remains deeply embedded in much of our thinking about language, culture and discourse and open new directions in how we research and teach these subjects.

Notes

- 1 For a more detailed discussion see Baker and Sangiamchit (2019).
- 2 The use of ‘ ’ here is to indicate that in research categories of analysis such as language, and especially named languages such as ‘English’, need to be critically interrogated since they may not match the trans-modal and translanguaging process of communication being observed.
- 3 The term ‘native speaker’ is notoriously difficult to define, and its relevance to intercultural and transcultural communication is questionable; for further discussion see Baker and Ishikawa (2021, pp. 119–130).

Recommended readings

Abu-Er-Rub, L., Brosius, C., Meurer, S., Panagiotopoulos, D., & Richter, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Engaging transculturality: Concepts, key terms, case studies*. Abingdon: Routledge.—This substantial edited volume

- contains an introduction that gives a thorough overview of the development of transculturality. The highly varied chapters within the text demonstrate the transdisciplinary nature of transcultural research.
- Baker, W., & Ishikawa, T. (2021). *Transcultural communication through global Englishes*. Abingdon: Routledge.— This textbook provides an accessible introduction to transcultural communication with plenty of examples to illustrate transcultural communication in practice, drawn from both research and the authors' experiences.
- Hawkins, M. R., & Mori, J. (2018). Considering 'trans-' perspectives in language theories and practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 1–8. Doi:10.1093/applin/amx056—A useful overview of trans perspectives in applied linguistics and a helpful introduction to the journal special issue on this topic.
- Moncri, F. (2019). Beyond universality: Rethinking transculturality and the transcultural self. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 14(1), 78–91. Doi:10.1080/17447143.2019.1604715—A challenging but insightful philosophical discussion of transculturality from a range of different perspectives.

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8

BICULTURALISM AND BICULTURAL IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Shuang Liu and Cindy Gallois

Introduction

The concept of biculturalism has attracted increasing attention in research in the field of social sciences, including cross-cultural psychology, linguistics, communication, anthropology, human geography and sociology. Bicultural and bilingual individuals can be international students, expatriates, business people and children growing up in interracial families. Like the concepts of culture and communication, biculturalism and bilingualism have been defined in different ways, ranging from general definitions based on demographic characteristics to psychological definition derived from membership in social groups and sociological conceptualisation of identity mainly based on roles and people's sense of who they are in relation to the world around them. Generally, individuals are considered bicultural and bilingual if they speak two languages and endorse the cultural practices of both cultures. Self-categorisation is commonly used to define who is bicultural or bilingual. Examples include "I am a German Australian because my mother is German, and my father is Australian; I speak German and English". Such self-categorisation reflects the person's dual cultural group membership and bicultural identity. Although the two concepts are often used together, a bicultural individual may not necessarily be bilingual. For example, many second or third generation migrants, who were born and raised in the settlement country of their parents or grandparents might not speak the language of their ethnic culture. The same is true with individuals growing up in interracial families. They self-identify as bicultural and observe the cultural practices of the heritage culture of both parents but may speak one common language (e.g. English) even at home.

This chapter explores biculturalism and bilingualism through the identity experiences of migrants, including descendants of migrant families that have resided in the settlement country for multiple generations. Due to this focus on migrants, acculturation theories and research underpin much of the discussion in this chapter. Despite the prevalence of bicultural and bilingual individuals worldwide, existing scholarship does not offer a consensus of what defines biculturalism and bilingualism, when they are beneficial and how bicultural and bilingual individuals negotiate identities. Some researchers believe that being bicultural merely implies the presence of two cultures within the same individual but do not indicate the level of competency expected to be achieved in either or both cultures (Garcia, 2020). Other researchers propose that biculturalism

and bilingualism go beyond the coexistence of two cultures and languages within one person but involve integrating and synthesising two cultures into a new, unique bicultural identity that is not directly reducible to either original culture (Cheng et al., 2006). This chapter first provides a critical review of scholarly debates surrounding biculturalism and bilingualism. Next, it elucidates the process through which biculturalism and bilingualism are played out in diverse contexts, drawing on identity negotiation experiences of migrants and their children. The chapter concludes by suggesting some possible directions for future research. Existing literature has documented that cultural identity is fluid and constantly negotiated in response to change in context (e.g. LaFromboise et al., 1993). What we lack is a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic processes through which individuals negotiate bicultural identities in specific individual, social and cultural contexts.

Scholarly debates on bilingualism and biculturalism

Bilingualism has been defined in different ways. Some researchers define bilinguals as individuals who possess native-speaker proficiency in two languages (Peal & Lambert, 1962). Other scholars consider bilinguals to be individuals with two or more language repertoires, regardless of the degree of fluency in both languages (Chen & Padilla, 2019). Likewise, biculturalism has been defined in several ways; most generally, bicultural individuals are considered to possess competence in two cultures, knowledge of cultural beliefs and values in each culture and positive attitudes towards both cultural groups and can communicate with people from both cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Biculturalism is rooted in acculturation research, which examines change in individuals because of contact between cultures. The acculturation literature defines biculturalism primarily according to cultural behaviours such as language use, choice of friends and media consumption (Berry, 1997). However, biculturalism involves more than just cultural behaviours. Acculturation encompasses cultural practices and identifications. Cultural identification is at the core of biculturalism.

While integration or biculturalism can occur at various levels, at its most basic level, it is about identity and belonging—who we are and how we relate to others (Ward, 2008). Much of the acculturation literature relies on Berry's (1997) bidimensional model that delineates possible acculturation strategies that migrants adopt, based on the strength of their identification with their old ethnic or new host cultures. These are: willingness to identify with the ethnic culture only (separation), host culture only (assimilation), both (integration or bilingualism) or neither (marginalization). While Berry's model works well in explaining ethnic vs. host cultural identification and the intersection of both, its universal perspective of acculturation has been criticized by researchers because acculturation is neither a linear nor a universal process (Ward & Lin, 2010). For migrants, acculturation involves physical, psychological, cultural and social changes as they adjust to their new culture, such as learning a new language, establishing new social networks and shifting old cultural expectations (Ward, 2008). These experiences can vary as a function of a person's demographic characteristics, ethnic cultural backgrounds, reasons for migration and acculturation contexts in the host country.

Acculturation literature consistently identifies integration (biculturalism), which characterizes a migrant's simultaneous maintenance of the ethnic culture and adoption of the new culture, as most beneficial (see Ward, 2008). The argument is that integrating two cultures within oneself allows the migrant to move between cultures without feeling disoriented. For example, in a review of different models of biculturalism, LaFromboise et al. (1993) argue that acquiring bicultural competence could be a way to be bicultural without suffering negative psychological outcomes.

Along the same line, migrants who identify with both ethnic and host cultures have been found to demonstrate more creativity and to enjoy greater professional success than their monocultural counterparts (Tadmor et al., 2012). In a more recent study, Preusche and Goböl (2022) examined the relationship between bicultural identification and minority students' school engagement in Germany. Paper and pencil questionnaires were administered to 457 secondary school students who identify with at least one other culture in addition to German. The findings show that students with a stronger bicultural identity have a significantly higher emotional (positive feelings towards school and learning), cognitive (willingness to invest in complex academic tasks) and behavioural (active participation in class and other school-related activities) school engagement than their peers with a weaker bicultural identity. In addition, exposure to more than one culture can be conducive to the development of intercultural competence, which refers to the ability to function effectively and appropriately in mixed cultural contexts (Adler, 1977).

However, previous research has yielded inconsistent findings regarding the subjective experiences involved in acquiring two or more languages and cultures. An ongoing debate is about the costs and benefits of exposure to more than one culture on identity development for children who moved to another culture before they were socialized into one culture. Some researchers believe that people who were exposed to more than one culture at an early age are more likely to display advanced reasoning (e.g. seeing both sides of an argument and understanding multiple perspectives on complex social issues), and hence bilingualism and biculturalism have a positive impact on intellectual development and well-being (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Other researchers argue that the process of dealing with more than one culture and acquiring more than one behavioural repertoire can cause stress, isolation and identity confusion (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Some of the early work in this area considered bilingualism and biculturalism to be psychologically handicapping and stressful. The belief is that being socialized into more than one culture hindered children's cognitive development and academic achievement. Even within a single study on multi-racial children, there are inconsistent findings: some children with mixed cultural backgrounds reported that they were able to alternate between cultural identities to adapt to the situational requirement, but others expressed cultural confusion as they were unable to reconcile the different cultural expectations (Moore & Barker, 2012). Those mixed results suggest the need to further identify the contextual factors that contribute to bicultural identity development.

In relation to migrants, empirical studies have produced mixed findings. Some scholars have shown that simply identifying with both the ethnic and host cultures can result in identity conflict in migrants (Berry & Sabatier, 2011). The reason is that the process of dealing with more than one culture and acquiring more than one behavioural repertoire can cause stress, isolation and identity confusion, all of which can undermine well-being (Chen et al., 2008). Further, a meta-analysis based on 83 studies and over 23,000 participants also revealed inconsistent findings in terms of the direction and magnitude of the association between integration (biculturalism) and cross-cultural adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). These mixed findings highlight the complexities of integration processes. Clearly, understanding individuals' acculturation strategies based on their willingness to identify with the old ethnic and new host cultures may not be sufficient to capture the complexities in bicultural identity and identification.

More recent acculturation research points to the importance of examining the processes through which bicultural individuals negotiate their cultural identities, rather than treating the dual cultures as orthogonal entities because simply acknowledging that a bicultural individual holds two cultural identities does not sufficiently account for their cultural adjustment outcomes (Ward, 2008). In addition, past research on biculturalism conceptualized bicultural experiences as simply the sum of the influence of their dual cultures. Yet the way through which bicultural individuals negotiate

their cultural identities may lead to the development of a new cultural identity that goes beyond the additive contributions of either culture. To address this issue, West et al. (2017) propose a transformative theory of biculturalism, which explains how bicultural individuals' negotiation of their cultures result in the development of a cultural identity that transcends the influence of either of their original culture. The fundamental assumption is that acculturation is a process that involves change in an individual's "cultural patterns" including identities, values and practices within family, community, societal and institutional contexts (Ward & Geeraert, 2016, p. 98). Hence, research on the development of biculturalism should be process-oriented and context-based.

In the past decade, we began to see more qualitative approaches to exploring acculturation processes through the perspectives of migrants themselves: how they integrate or separate the old and new cultures in their sense of identity and belonging. For example, using interviews and focus groups with young Muslims in New Zealand, Stuart and Ward (2011) explored how Muslim youths achieved balance in identity by incorporating different aspects of the self (social, religious, ethnic and national) in various contexts, through pictorial descriptions of their identities. Further, Moffitt et al. (2018) analyzed narratives of integration among German ethnic and Turkish German young adults to understand the experience of being both German and Other. Along the same line, Gsir (2017) explored the socio-cultural aspects of integration during immigrants' settlement in Europe through the lens of social interactions between migrants and the host cultural group in different social contexts, such as intermarriages, interethnic friendships and encounters in the neighbourhood. The study concluded that socio-cultural integration can occur in migrants' interactions with the larger society and emphasized the importance of examining socio-cultural interactions to understand identity negotiation. These studies highlight the bicultural experiences through narratives.

Identity negotiation in bicultural and bilingual individuals

Navigating through two cultures, and sometimes incompatible cultural identities, can be challenging for migrants, particularly for those who made their migration journey at a relatively older age. In general, overseas-born older immigrants were socialized into their heritage culture before moving to a settlement country. For these migrants, the development of a sense of belonging cannot be achieved simply by meeting the normative expectations of learning the language and adopting the cultural practices of the settlement country because these practices address only the social element of belonging and not necessarily its subjective feeling of belonging (Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). This is because belonging can be influenced by the perceived level of acceptance in the host country (Liu et al., 2019). As a result, many older migrants often feel that they belong to neither where they came from, nor where they are residing (Park et al., 2019). Although such feelings may be experienced by migrants in all age groups, previous studies have found that the impact tends to be stronger on older migrants, due in part to their increasing dependence on other people in their late years and cultural differences experienced at home with younger members of their families.

A study conducted on older migrants in Australia highlights the importance of context in understanding how people expressed and enacted their cultural identities (Liu et al., 2020). The findings from interviews with 34 overseas-born migrants aged 65 and over show that irrespective of how participants self-defined (bicultural identity or a cultural identity primarily by old ethnic or new Australian culture), their life in the host country was always influenced by both cultures, depending on the context. Even those participants whose ethnic cultural identity was dominant expressed attachment to the Australian way of life and Australian culture more generally in the context of interactions with Australians. The same was apparent for participants who made strong claims

about the dominance of their Australian identity over ethnic cultural identity. Their ethnic identity is still salient when they engage in shared cultural activities, speak the language, or provide support when it is needed. For example, in the context of playing mah-jong (a tile-based Chinese game commonly played by four players) with Chinese friends, a Chinese Australian's ethnic culture is more likely to be salient, but when taking part in an Australia Day picnic with other Australians, their Australian cultural identity may have greater influence. Similarly, a Vietnamese Australian's Vietnamese identity is more likely to be salient when attending an ethnic cultural event, and in this context, they will be more open to and willing to act in accordance with the norms and practices of the Vietnamese group to speak Vietnamese with members of the group or offer support to members of the group when it is needed. These findings show that ethnic and host cultures can coexist (although this may not be true for everyone) for an individual and remain distinct.

Further support for the fluid nature of cultural identity came from research on younger bicultural and bilingual individuals. For example, a study conducted by Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) surveyed a sample of Hispanic young adults in Miami and assessed cultural practices, values and identifications, along with other culturally salient variables such as familial ethnic socialization, acculturative stress and perceived discrimination. Although Miami is a highly bicultural and bilingual environment, with business and social transactions occurring in both English and Spanish, a sizable number of respondents in this study rated themselves as assimilated (mostly American) or separated (mostly Hispanic). Interestingly, the most fully bicultural (those who were above 75% of the range of scores on both heritage and American cultural practices) self-reported that they integrated their Hispanic and American cultural streams; but at the same time they also reported the highest levels of familial ethnic socialization. Findings from this study confirmed the independence of ethnic and host cultural dimensions, as shown in that parents who socialized their children strongly toward the family's heritage culture (Hispanic) did not necessarily create a separate and "un-American" outlook in their children. Therefore, while a bicultural context plays a significant role in paving the ground for biculturalism to emerge, active and intentional efforts by parents to socialize their children into more than one culture form an integral part of the development of bicultural and bilingual individuals.

Intercultural researchers have made attempts to understand bicultural identity processes. However, previous research has not elucidated what factors influence identity salience and when one acts in accordance with a self-defined identity and when not. Addressing this question, we need to explore how identity dynamics are enacted by the same individual across various contexts. Bicultural individuals may select various methods of integrating their two cultures, including mixing two cultures in their behaviours (blended biculturalism) or shifting their behaviours to be consistent with a specific cultural context (shifted biculturalism) (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). For example, Barker's (2015) study of Americans in Sweden and Swedes in the United States revealed that both the American and Swedish participants described change in their behaviour to incorporate the norms of the other culture (e.g., American open communication style vs. Swedish reserved communication style) when engaging in intercultural interactions. This example illustrates that the salience of social context is key in understanding the dynamics of social behaviour.

One influential theoretical concept in this field is bicultural identity integration (BII), developed by Benet-Martínez and colleagues. The concept of BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) seeks to capture the extent to which bicultural individuals perceive their ethnic and host cultural identities (e.g., a Chinese and American) as compatible and integrated (high BII) vs. oppositional and separate (low BII). The BII measure has two components: distance (vs. overlap) and conflict (vs. harmony) between one's two cultural identities or orientations. A high BII person is one who identifies with both ethnic and host cultures, sees them as compatible and complementary and

considers themselves as part of a combined, blended cultural being (e.g., I keep Chinese and American culture together and feel good about it). A low BII person, on the other hand, is more likely to feel caught between two cultures and prefers to keep them separate (e.g., I feel conflicted between the Chinese and American ways of doing thing). The level of BII influences bicultural individuals' ability to switch between cultures according to situational requirement (Garcia, 2020).

A study conducted by Cheng et al. (2006) to examine how the valence of cultural primes affects cultural frame switching of individuals with high and low levels of BII, using a sample of 179 first-generation and 41 second-generation Asian American bicultural individuals. They used an implicit word-priming task that included one of four types of words: (a) positive words associated with Asians (e.g., hardworking, loyal), (b) negative words associated with Asians (e.g., reserved, materialistic), (c) positive words associated with Americans (e.g., independent, confident) and (d) negative words associated with Americans (e.g., boastful, arrogant). The findings indicated that when exposed to positive cultural cues, bicultural individuals who perceived their cultural identities as compatible (high BII) responded in culturally congruent ways, whereas bicultural individuals who perceived their cultural identities as conflicting (low BII) responded in culturally incongruent ways. The opposite was true for negative cultural cues. These results have confirmed that the cultural frame switching process is different depending on one's level of bicultural identity integration and that both high and low BIIs can exhibit culturally congruent or incongruent behaviours under different situations. Therefore, psychological research supports the view that cultural cues, such as language, can activate the cultural knowledge systems of bicultural individuals to affect behaviour.

An important issue is how bicultural individuals experience and organize their different, sometimes opposing, cultural affiliations. LaFromboise et al. (1993) described alternation and fusion modes. Alternating bicultural individuals switch their behaviours in response to situational demands, and they are seen to move between their two cultural groups, which do not overlap. In the fused or blended model, individuals adopt a new identity as a combination of both cultures, thereby bringing together two cultures that are still seen to be different, though possibly overlapping, such as Chicano culture. It is argued that blended or fused bicultural individuals do not feel conflicted with the two cultures, whereas alternating bicultural individuals are more likely to experience conflict between the two cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). However, other studies reported that shifting bicultural individuals did not experience identity conflict (e.g. Liu, 2015b). Researchers supporting this view argue that bicultural individuals do not necessarily experience identity confusion and conflict, rather involvement and contact with two cultures can be beneficial if bicultural persons do not internalize the potential conflict between the two intersecting cultures (Cheng et al., 2006).

However, although extensive research has investigated the differences between cultural groups in terms of the identified strategies to negotiate cultural identities, relatively less is known about the processes of how strategies are processed within bicultural individuals. For example, how bicultural individuals organize and move between their various cultural orientations without feeling disoriented. Some evidence of cultural frame switching came from studies on long-term Chinese migrants in Australia. Liu (2015a) interviewed Chinese immigrants of first, second and 1.5 generation (those who moved to Australia at a young age). The findings showed that participants described their bicultural identity integration in mainly two ways: shifting between cultures according to situational characteristics or blending cultures to form a third cultural identity. A typical example of "shifters" came from a gift shop owner who described his bicultural identity integration as being a cultural chameleon: "If you are in a flock of sheep, you need to look like a sheep; if you are among a pack of ducks, you need to look like a duck" (p. 32). "Blenders", on the other

hand, believed that bicultural identity integration is a process of creating a new cultural identity that has aspects atypical of either home or host culture but larger than the sum of its parts. A take-away shop owner compared her blended identity to the rice sandwich in her shop, which combined Chinese stir-fry with Western sandwich—a new product that could not be found in either authentic Chinese cuisine or a typical Western food outlet. Both shifters and blenders in this study believed that they had been integrated into two cultures. It is possible that since bicultural identity refers to a unique, created identity that is rooted in the culture of origin as well as in the culture of the receiving society, migrants' bicultural identity tends to be adding a new identity of the receiving culture to that of the ethnic culture.

The development of bicultural identity involves individualization and universalization of one's self-other orientation (Kim, 2008). According to Kim (2008), individualization involves a solidified sense of self—an authenticity, a feeling of certainty about one's place in the world and a differentiated and particularized definition of others as singular individuals rather than as members of conventional social categories such as culture and ethnicity. Accompanying individualization is a parallel development of the universalization of one's mental outlook—a synergistic cognition of a new consciousness, born out of an awareness of the relative nature of values and of the universal aspects of human nature. Together, these two interrelated processes of cultural identity development define the nature of the psychological movement toward an identity orientation that is no longer bound by conventional cultural categories. Through individualization and universalization, individuals who undergo the process of cultural transformation cultivate a mindset that integrates, rather than separates, cultural differences. As such, bicultural identity entails synthesizing cultural norms from two groups and incorporating them into one behavioural repertoire or the ability to switch between cultural schemas, norms and behaviours in response to cultural cues (Cheng et al., 2006).

Developing bicultural identities has become an option for migrants and their children, as these individuals can switch between different cognitive and behavioural frames associated with their ethnic and host cultural identities. A plethora of studies on biculturalism and bilingualism have been directed to understanding the identity experience of locally born children of migrant families to understand the dynamics of bicultural identification. For example, locally born children of Chinese migrants in Australia are socialized into Western values, beliefs and worldviews through peers, teachers and mainstream media; at the same time, they learn the values and ideals of the heritage culture through their parents and other members of the migrant community. They are usually under pressure to identify with two cultural frameworks simultaneously, although they may experience some degree of personal conflict as they attempt to reconcile potentially incompatible norms and values. The pressure to identify with both groups could lead to stress and isolation because bicultural individuals constantly experience pressures to be more like one or the other culture (Gunasekara et al., 2021). The fear of not being "representative enough" of both groups has been an ongoing challenge facing bicultural and bilingual individuals. It needs to be noted, though, that bicultural individuals do not necessarily equally identify with the two cultures they are exposed to. In the context of migrants, biculturalism is not a mid-point on a linear continuum with monoculturalism in heritage culture at one end and monoculturalism in host culture at the other. The development of biculturalism, either shifted identity or blended identity or a mixture of both, is believed to be primarily facilitated by contextual conditions.

The issue of whether biculturalism is adaptive is dependent on the level of bicultural competence of the individual. The bicultural competence model (LaFromboise et al., 1993) proposes several factors important in maintaining psychological adjustment while negotiating two cultural identities. This model suggests that the foundation of bicultural competence is a well-developed and

integrated sense of both personal identity and cultural identity. Personal identity involves a degree of individuation from the influence of the social organization as well as a sense of self-awareness and personal integration. From this strong sense of personal and cultural identity, LaFromboise et al. (1993) present six dimensions that they deem necessary for the development of bicultural competence: (a) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, (b) a positive attitude toward both cultures, (c) bicultural efficacy (belief and confidence that one is able to function effectively within both cultures), (d) communication ability (ability to communicate within both cultures), (e) role repertoire (ability to behave appropriately in both cultures) and (f) a sense of being grounded (a secure social network within each culture). This bicultural competence model suggests that being bicultural and recognizing differences in the values and behaviours of the two cultures need not produce psychological conflict if the individual is able to move flexibly between them (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). A sound form of biculturalism or bicultural competence can be developed through integration into two societies, whereby migrants combine cultural maintenance with constructive contacts with both their host culture and their ethnic culture.

There are many symbolic resources for the cultural production of identity, among which language is the most crucial, as it is a vital component of any ethnic group's identity. Since language is one of the most clear-cut and immediate ways by which groups are identified, it is quite understandable to see the flourishing of ethnic-language schools in migrant receiving countries, as well as the emergence of ethnic media products. Biculturalism and bilingualism are intertwined. Bilingualism involves much more than linguistic competency in two languages; it suggests intercultural contact between people of different cultural backgrounds. Contact between host nationals and ethnic minorities leads to the incorporation of both languages in their identity as a response to the social context. As language is a vital aspect of any cultural group's identity, migrant groups often maintain their cultural heritage and identity by using their native language in their new cultural environment and teaching it to their children. Identity based on ethnic language also hinges on the assumption that one's linguistic community is acceptable in several ways. The degree of prestige, acceptability and importance attached to a group's language is largely determined by the ethnic group's ethnolinguistic vitality, which refers to the societal characteristics that promote the survival of a language community; and it is often measured by the demographic representation of a group, its social status and institutional support. The quality and effects of intergroup contact can vary based on the ethnolinguistic vitality of the group.

In the case of migrants and their descendants, bilingualism has implications for heritage cultural identity maintenance and continuity in the host cultural context, as language is an integral part of culture. Language maintenance refers to the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially powerful or numerically stronger language. Heritage language maintenance is different from either second-language acquisition or first-language acquisition. It is usually presented as the reverse side of language shift, which refers to change from the habitual use of one's ethnic language (e.g., Chinese) to that of the mainstream language (e.g., English) under pressures of assimilation or integration. The concepts of language maintenance and language shift not only convey an intergroup contact situation but also a power differential between members of two cultural groups because it is usually speakers of the ethnic (minority) language who shift away from or maintain the use of their own language vis-à-vis the mainstream (majority) language. Being bilingual, therefore, implies a socio-cultural process through which individuals choose to use one language over the other according to situational characteristics. An affiliation with both languages is a manifestation of being bicultural.

Cultural identity represents one's internalization of the culture's worldview or framework, and it includes one's interpretation of the values, norms and goals that are normative in that culture

(Cheng et al., 2006). These internalized cultural frameworks will implicitly or explicitly shape much of the individual's behaviour. The development of bicultural identity is a product of cultural and contextual forces. However, these forces are not constant but rather change over time; they vary across local and national contexts and may operate differently depending on the ethnic group and the mainstream cultural context in question. But cultural identity has value and salience content. Take a Chinese immigrant in the United States, for example. It is possible for the person to engage in American cultural behaviours without adopting mainstream American values or identify as an American; in the same vein it is possible for an individual not to engage in Chinese cultural behaviours but still identify as Chinese and retain its values.

A recent study on older Chinese, Vietnamese and European migrants in Australia (Liu et al., 2020) highlighted the importance of context in understanding how people express and enact their bicultural identities. The findings showed that irrespective of how participants self-defined their cultural identity by ethnic culture or by both cultures, their life in the settlement country was always influenced by both cultures, depending on the context. These findings provided further support to previous research which proposed different pathways to navigate identity negotiation in response to situational characteristics. As research on bicultural individuals is becoming increasingly interested in how culture is negotiated within individuals, in addition to documenting cultural differences between groups, there has been an increase in process-oriented studies that acknowledge the complex interplay among identity, language and contextual factors.

Directions for future research on biculturalism and bilingualism

The issue of whether biculturalism is beneficial is often theoretically and empirically debated. Previous research findings have been inconsistent regarding the subjective experiences involved in acquiring and negotiating two or more languages and cultures. While many researchers contend that biculturalism leads to greater benefits in all areas of life, others argue that it is maladaptive, leading to stress because bicultural individuals constantly experience pressures to be like the dominant or their ethnic culture. The question that needs to be addressed is whether biculturalism means the progressive fading of the ethnic cultural identity, language and culture, or the strengthening of the ethnic culture but not host cultural identity, or the strengthening (weakening) of identification with both cultures (Liu, 2015b). Current literature on bicultural identity has predominantly focused on the extent to which two original cultures or identities are viewed as compatible or conflicting. Future research may focus more on explaining how potentially incompatible identities are reconciled in individuals. Understanding the identity processes within bicultural individuals is important, as it helps us to account for the range of outcomes shown to be associated with biculturalism.

The concept of bicultural individuals is based on the idea that a person can successfully hold two or more cultural identities, speak two or more languages and function effectively in two or more cultures (bicultural or multicultural). Bicultural individuals assimilate to cultural cues, shifting toward cultural norms that are situationally salient. The question is when bicultural identity is adaptive. Adler (1977) described the multicultural man as a person whose identity is adaptive, temporary and open to change, rather than based on belonging to a particular culture. Such a person lives on the boundary, is fluid and mobile and is committed to people's essential similarities as well as their differences. The question of how contextual factors influence cultural switching and when biculturalism is adaptive is certainly worthy of further research.

Although bicultural individuals, often bilingual as well, are categorized by their cultural group membership, membership in a cultural group does not necessarily always translate into

identification. Skin colour, for example, does not automatically guarantee cultural identification. Tensions might exist between a person's physical attributes or ethnic origin and their psychological feeling of belonging to the ethnic group, together with the values they cherish. Many scholars agree that cultural identity is more of a subjective classification than an objective one; it is the extent to which group members feel emotionally bonded by a common set of values, beliefs, traditions and heritage (Ting-Toomey, 2005). For example, second- or third-generation immigrants are less likely to feel as close a bond to their heritage cultural traditions as first-generation migrants, even though they share the same physical attributes and may even use the ethnic language at home. The dynamics and relationships between cultural group membership and identification may be a possible direction for future research.

In addition, when an individual is exposed to the bicultural environment (e.g., interracial children; second-generation migrants), it is likely that the individual will develop bicultural identity because the context requires the person to function as a bicultural individual. However, this does not necessarily mean that everyone in the bicultural environment will develop a bicultural identity just because the environment is such. This is because cultural identity has a value and salience component. A strong sense of belonging manifests high cultural identity salience, whereas a weak sense of belonging reflects low cultural identity salience. Therefore, people can be exposed to multiple cultures but still act as a monocultural individual. This argument is supported by models of acculturation orientations: within the same bicultural context, some migrants adopt integration strategy (identifying with both ethnic and host cultures) while others adopt assimilation (identifying with host culture only), separation (identifying with ethnic culture only) or marginalization strategies (identifying with neither ethnic nor host culture). While a bicultural or multicultural context plays a significant role in paving the ground for bicultural identity to emerge, active and intentional efforts to socialize into more than one culture form an integral part of the development of bicultural identities. Further research may explore the process through which bicultural identities are developed and under what conditions the strength of identification may change.

In attempting to understand acculturation processes to address what defines biculturalism, when it is beneficial and adaptive and how bicultural identities are negotiated, the present chapter argues that acculturation strategies themselves are experienced differently by different people in the same context and the same individuals in different contexts. The pathways to achieve biculturalism vary across people and context. Exactly how people engage in these pathways, and the implications for the evolution of both the old ethnic culture and the new host culture, is a key question for future research (Fuligni, 2010). In addition, cultural identity is both individual and collective. The question of how migrants develop a collective sense of identity is certainly an important area for further research, which would extend our work presented here. Further, it needs to be noted that biculturalism and bilingualism, though often used together, can each have a unique contribution in people's life (Chen & Padilla, 2019). More research is needed to identify the extent to which different combinations of bilingualism and biculturalism are linked, for example, high bilingualism linked with lower bicultural identity or vice versa. A deeper understanding of the separate and joint effects of bilingualism and biculturalism can inform the development of strategies to enhance intercultural communication competence.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed theories and debates surrounding biculturalism and bicultural identity negotiation, particularly in relation to acculturation experiences of migrants and their children. Theorizing and research on biculturalism has received increasing attention in the literature (Benet-Martínez &

Haritatos, 2005). In the past decades, most research in this area focused on assessing attitudes and outcomes of bicultural identities of migrants and ethnic minorities, mostly in Western cultural contexts. Less is known about the process through which biculturalism develops and bicultural identities become integrated (Liu, 2015b). Furthermore, we have comparatively limited knowledge of when biculturalism is adaptive (or otherwise), and scholarly debates are still ongoing regarding the collective and separate effects of bilingualism and biculturalism in people's lives.

Through various examples of identity negotiation in different contexts, this chapter shows that cultural identity represents one's internalization of the values, norms and goals that are normative in that culture (Cheng et al., 2006). These internalized cultural frameworks will implicitly or explicitly shape much of the individual's behaviour in response to contexts. Bicultural individuals assimilate to cultural cues, shifting toward cultural norms that are situationally salient. In relation to migrants, it is possible to engage in host cultural behaviours without identifying with the host culture; in the same vein it is possible not to engage in ethnic culture behaviours but still identify with the ethnic culture and retain its values. For example, people who do not self-identify strongly with their ethnic culture may display behaviours showing attachment to their ethnic culture, such as speaking the ethnic language and interacting with people from the same ethnic culture. Taking this further, bicultural identities can coexist in an individual and yet remain distinct from one another.

We find ourselves living in a world of increasing cultural mobility. An individual can successfully hold two or more cultural identities, speak two or more languages and function effectively in two or more cultures. Identity involves choice (who I am and how I want to be seen), ascription (how others perceive who I am) and situation (who I am in public and who I am in private). Hence, bicultural identity negotiation entails reconciling potential incompatibilities between two cultures and performing to the expectations of both cultural groups. As acculturation research is becoming increasingly interested in how culture is negotiated within individuals, there has been an increase in process-oriented studies that acknowledge the complex interplay among identity, language, personality and contextual variables. Understanding biculturalism in context will advance understanding of how cultural and contextual factors influence the ways biculturalism unfolds and the extent to which it can be adaptive.

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9

GENDER, CULTURE AND EMANCIPATION

A paradigmatic outline of Asiatic womanism

Jing Yin

Gender equality is an ongoing, constant and central human quest of our time in every society. Feminism developed in Europe and the United States, however, has proclaimed exclusive rights and monopolistic control over issues and values related to women's rights and freedom. Feminism is essentially Eurocentric feminism as it is rooted in the experiences of European and European-American women and is relevant to the understanding of only such experiences. Eurocentric feminism is by no means monolithic or homogenous. There are different types of Western¹ feminism, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, postmodern feminism and postcolonial feminism.² Regardless of the internal diversity of Eurocentric feminism, its definitions of womanhood are grounded exclusively in European philosophy and thought.

Just as Eurocentric humanist discourse masquerades as universal humanism (Shi-xu, 2005, 2014), the Eurocentric feminist vision of womanhood is projected as the universal or natural definition for women of all cultures and classes (Yin, 2006, 2009, 2022). Even with its recent acceptance of the notion of intersectionality,³ Eurocentric feminism today still sustains and reproduces White supremacy and racial hierarchy by erasing and silencing women of colour (Moon & Holling, 2020). Eurocentric feminism remains the invisible and incontestable centre against which experiences of non-Western women are judged, analysed and interrogated (Watkin, 2016).

In the same vein as the Eurocentric notion of modernisation, Eurocentric feminism is a form of colonisation that codifies non-Western cultures as Others (Mohanty, 2002). Eurocentric feminists consider that African, Asian and Latin American women are at a lower stage of development compared to European and European-American women (Steady, 1981; Yin, 2006). Eurocentric feminism is in effect accepted as an integral part of modernisation and development (e.g. Fung, 2000; Wang, 1999).

Eurocentric feminists often regard non-Western cultures as the primary source of women's oppression. Attention is often paid to particular cultural practices that are deemed unusually brutal and inhumane, such as *sati* (widow cremation) in India, veiling in the Arab world and foot-binding in feudal China. Although there is no denying that those practices are repressive, the equation of gender oppression in non-Western cultures with those cultures per se is problematic. Babbili (2008) argues that, in modern India, *sati* was sporadic and confined mainly to one region in one northern state. But the British appropriation of Indian history emphasises *sati* as a widespread practice to justify its own oppression of the heathens (Babbili, 2008). Majid (1998) contends that

writings of Eurocentric feminists reflect “an unmistakable bias against Islam” (p. 323). Wadud (1999) asserts that veiling is in fact a manifestation of the Qur’anic moral principle of modesty. Until the 19th century, veiled Arab women were known as socially, economically and legally freer than their Western counterparts (Majid, 1998). However, Eurocentric feminists claim that Arab women can be liberated only through dissociating themselves from or even destroying their own cultures. In 2001, feminist and non-feminist women in the United States accepted the military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as a necessary means to secure Afghan women’s liberation (Ali, 2020).

Eurocentric feminists hence often compel non-Western women to choose between forging alliances with White women to challenge their own cultural traditions and standing with their men to resist racist and colonialist domination (hooks, 1981). According to Eurocentric feminists, non-Western women’s participation, alongside non-Western men, in anti-colonialist struggles sustains patriarchy because it sacrifices the independence of women’s movements (e.g. Wang, 1999). However, aligning themselves with Eurocentric feminism demands that non-Western women discard their own cultural traditions, abandon a significant part of who they are and accept a definition of themselves that is imposed by others.

Yet conditions confronting non-Western women are largely ignored and dismissed by Eurocentric feminists. Ntiri (2020) argues that African women are more concerned with fundamental and disastrous environmental and living predicaments than with the struggle between men and women. Steady (1981) contends “what we have then is not a simple issue of sex or class differences but a situation which, because of the racial factor, is caste-like in character on both a national and global scale” (pp. 18–19). bell hooks (1981) asserts that women of colour are marginalised because Eurocentric feminists reject racial and class oppression as valid women’s issues.

Many non-Western women, conversely, maintain that gender inequality cannot be tackled independently from other social disparities as they are inextricably connected. Rather than treating gender inequity as the one and only issue for women, non-Western women strive to explore comprehensive solutions to a variety of interrelated social injustice, including gender oppression.

This chapter aims to expand the horizon of gender studies in the discipline of communication by exploring non-Western conceptualisations of womanhood and gender relations as important and valuable alternatives to Eurocentric feminism. I will thus elucidate Asiatic womanism as an alternative theoretical framework in affirming women’s dignity and rights, improving the human condition and enhancing the human prospect for gender equality within and without Asia. More specifically, I will outline the development of womanism as an alternative paradigm for non-Western women to define their own emancipation and to resist the hegemony of Eurocentric feminism. I contend that the philosophical foundation of Eurocentric feminism is the primary source of alienating and disenfranchising non-Western women. I will then expound on Asiatic womanism grounded on Asiaticity metatheory as a conceptual framework for Asian women to theorise collective human efforts required for expanding and enhancing gender equity. Finally, I will offer a reading of the *Ballad of Mulan* as an example of Asiatic womanist discourse.

Womanism as a paradigm for gender egalitarianism

Asante (2005) notes that challenging gender oppression in non-Western cultures does not mean accepting Eurocentric feminism as the only right way. Hudson-Weems (2020) contends that Eurocentric feminism is premised on the claim of proprietary rights and monopolistic control over issues and values that pertain to women’s rights and equality. Feminist approaches subject experiences of non-Western women to analysis based on Eurocentric definitions of womanhood. Watkin

(2016) maintains that non-Western women should reject the Eurocentric construction of gender as the foundation for their own studies and “clear the intellectual space necessary for a range of other equally progressive female voices, non-Feminist in orientation, to emerge and co-exist side by side rather than subordinated to feminist voices” (p. 399).

Although the term womanist is often associated with Alice Walker’s (1983) claim of “a Black feminist or feminist of color” as a darker shade of feminism, it is theorists of Africana womanism (Hudson-Weems, 1993, 2020), African womanism (Dove, 1998, 2003) and *Kawaida* womanism (Karenga, 2012; Karenga & Tembo, 2012) who unfalteringly reject the subordination of non-Western women’s struggles to Eurocentric feminism.

Black feminists, such as Patricia Hill Collins (1996), emphasise placing Black women at the centre of analysis. However, even as the centre of research, even with sensitivity to their everyday conditions, without alternative conceptual and theoretical frameworks, Black women’s experiences are only included merely as an “additive” to the Eurocentric norm. This approach essentially affirms and adheres to Eurocentric feminists’ claim of exclusive control over gender issues (Watkin, 2016). Collins (1996) indeed argues that only by aligning with Eurocentric feminism can Black women participate in the struggle of “global women’s issues” (p. 15).

Womanism, in contrast, is propounded as an independent and alternative paradigm, rather than a derivative of feminism. Inspired by Molefi Kete Asante’s notion of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980, 1998, 2003, 2005), which demands that the displaced people, knowledge and history of Africa be centred, Hudson-Weems (2020) defines Africana womanism as grounded in African cultures, focusing on the experiences, needs, struggles and desires of Africana women. She stresses in particular the importance of self-naming, i.e. womanism as opposed to feminism. Hudson-Weems characterises the Africana woman as male-compatible and family-centred. Africana womanism prioritises race over gender, which sets itself apart from feminism, including Black feminism. Hudson-Weems (2020) argues that the emancipation of the Africana woman is impossible without “the liberation of her entire race” (p. 33).

Based on Cheikh Anta Diop’s (1990) cradle theory, Nah Dove (1998, 2003) affirms the relatively egalitarian social and gender composition in Kemet (ancient Egypt) and asserts that the current racist and sexist structure was a consequence of the domination of the Southern cradle (African culture) by the Northern cradle (Indo-Aryan culture) and the resultant subjugation of matriarchy by patriarchy. Dove (2003) argues that experiences of African American mothers need to be understood as a continuation of African culture and Black people’s resistance to racism.

Tiamoyo Karenga and Chimbuko Tembo (2012) proposed *Kawaida* womanism rooted in *Kawaida* philosophy. *Kawaida* philosophy is defined by Maulana Karenga (2014) as “an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world and is directed toward the enduring historical project of maximum human freedom and human flourishing” (p. 212). Similar to Africana womanism, *Kawaida* womanism accentuates the importance of self-definition, cultural groundedness, complementary gender relations and family and community orientation. *Kawaida* womanism also insists that the liberation of Black people as a whole is indispensable for the emancipation of Black women (Karenga & Tembo, 2012).

Unlike Black feminism, multicultural feminism⁴ and other forms of womanism, *Kawaida* womanism does not assume that Black women’s common experience per se would guarantee the critical consciousness or agency necessary for collective struggle and social change. Rather, it requires a conscious search in African cultural traditions (ancient and contemporary) for answers to current problems and proposals for future prospects. Following the *sankofa* principle in *Kawaida* philosophy, *Kawaida* womanism underscores a self-conscious return to African cultural source to (re)discover knowledge through “rigorous research, critical comprehension, and culturally centered

interpretation” (Karenga, 1999, p. 37). Tapping into past and present African cultural traditions, Kawaida womanism offers concrete intellectual and ethical grounding for affirming the spiritual and social significance of women, mutually respectful and reciprocal female-male relations and collective endeavours required for improving the human condition and enhancing gender equality (Karenga, 2012; Karenga & Tembo, 2012).

Eurocentric feminism and its philosophical foundation

Black feminists (e.g. hooks, 1981) and Africana womanist theorist (e.g. Hudson-Weems, 2020) rightfully assert that Eurocentric feminist discourses and practices function as a mechanism of excluding and marginalising non-Western women. It is my contention that the philosophical assumptions of Eurocentric feminism, which have little resonance in the non-Western world, fundamentally alienate and disenfranchise non-Western women.

The individualist ontology, dualist epistemology and rights-conscious axiology of Eurocentric feminism render it unable to conceive a notion of rights that is emancipating and empowering beyond individual liberty, to theorise a vision of gender relations that respects the dignity of difference and to cultivate a code of ethics that entails and encourages egalitarianism.

Individualist ontology

Eurocentric feminist discourses and practices are predicated on ontological individualism. Eisenstein (1981) maintains that feminism in North America is rooted in “the competitive, atomistic ideology of liberal individualism”. Indeed, not only liberal feminism but also other forms of Eurocentric feminism—such as radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and postmodern and postcolonial feminism—conceptualise women’s rights and freedom within the realm of individualism.

Social relations are typically viewed as opposition to individual autonomy. They are seen as external forces that would constrict the independence of the experiencing self and the active mind. Individuation, the realisation of the unique and independent self, can be achieved through separating oneself from all “constraining” social relations (Bradshaw, 1990; Hsu, 1981, 1983; Yin, 2014b, 2017, 2018). Akin to their male counterparts, Eurocentric feminists view women as individuals endowed with inalienable rights against competing claims of different social relations (Woo, 1994). The Eurocentric feminist demand for women’s independence is essentially the insistence on the very same individual autonomy—freeing the female individual from oppressive social claims (e.g. men, family).

The notion of women’s rights in Eurocentric feminism is no different from John Locke’s (1967) conception that privileges White men. Rights are defined as natural, absolute and inalienable to the autonomous individual (Rosemont, 1998). From this perspective, rights are conceived as “negative” liberties, i.e. free from external oppressive forces (Twiss, 1998). Eurocentric feminists further stipulate women’s rights primarily as civil and political rights, in terms of individual choice of employment, political participation, recognition and representation. Those Eurocentric feminists who advocate social equality call for the establishment of either a gender-blind society with equal opportunities for both men and women as individuals or a mode of production that does not exploit or discriminate against individuals based on class or gender (Campbell, 2002). Those Eurocentric feminists who champion representational egalitarianism demand a new cultural formation that provides female individuals with opportunities to be heard with the same respect as their male counterparts.

Even with their challenge to modern Western epistemology, postmodern and postcolonial feminist theories and discourses are a continuation, rather than a rupture, of ontological individualism. Their Marxist and psychoanalytical roots, anti-essentialist tenet and perpetual search for difference further reinforce the individual-social binary as they indiscriminately deconstruct any form of collective identity. Mouffe (2000) contends that the modern West is faced with an eternal paradox: the doctrine of individual autonomy negates principles of equity and justice because it does not have much concern for communal participation.

The individualist understanding of rights as negative liberties, or freedom from oppressive social relations, does not allow a conceptualisation of positive enablement and empowerment that is necessary for engendering human flourishing. Although radical feminists have broadened the narrowly defined civil-political rights by incorporating social and economic components, the fundamental Eurocentric theoretical framework of rights makes it impossible to conceive rights as collective good that requires different kinds of rights and restrictions of individual freedom for greater social good such as harmony, peace and ecological sustainability (Parekh, 2002). The individualist ontology further prevents a non-anthropocentric conception of rights in which the individual is not the centre of the world and in which human beings embrace interdependent relationships with other beings and nature (Miike, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2015, 2016, 2019b).

Dualist epistemology

The Eurocentric feminist assumption of female-male relations as adversarial and antagonistic is rooted in epistemological dualism. In Western philosophy, since Plato, there has been a tendency of separating the form (the formal patterns of things) from the matter (the material elements of things), the mind from the body. This dualist ontology leads to the epistemological bifurcation through creating a series of dichotomies, such as good/evil, universal/particular, men/women and culture/nature (Cheng, 2022). In the dualist view, the two sides are seen as respectively autonomous and mutually exclusive. Dichotomous conceptions further hold one set of values to be antithetical to the other, and one set superior while the other inferior. Values that are deemed feminine, such as compassion and nurturance, are considered as incompatible with rational instrumentality, efficiency and other organising principles of the modern West. Eurocentric feminists argue that the classification of people into two universal categories based on biology is a dichotomy produced by the Western Enlightenment project (Rakow, 1986). However, their claim of irreconcilable and oppositional female-male relations ironically legitimises and perpetuates gender dualism (Lebra, 2007).

Maruyama (1984) contends that in European and North American cultures, difference or heterogeneity is often considered to be a source of conflict. Said (1978) maintains that negatively projecting difference is the basic mechanism of perpetuating Otherness. This Western approach in effect assumes that difference needs to be overcome—through conversion, assimilation, subordination, or suppression—in order to sustain the conventionally constructed “normalcy” (Sacks, 2002). The Western dualist view thus paradoxically demands conformity (Hsu, 1983).

In the modern West, difference is allowed only at the individual level, in the name of individual uniqueness. The dualist view firmly associates difference with Otherness when it is based on collective identity. Consideration for according equal rights in the Western individualist tradition, however, demands some sense of equivalence or sameness (Hall, 2007; Harootunian, 1999). One example is the assimilationist “melting-pot” cultural policy that requires immigrants to shed their cultural heritage (difference) in order to participate in the benefit of the United States (Martin & Nakayama, 2017).

Pursuing women's rights within the dualist framework, Eurocentric feminists attempt to get rid of the image of Otherness (difference) and create a sense of sameness simultaneously. They try to eliminate or evade gender difference so as to establish commonness with White males. In so doing, Eurocentric feminism, in effect, expects women to discard gender difference and behave, function and achieve like men. Hudson-Weems (2020) argues that Eurocentric feminists aspire to androgenise women to certain extent. Eurocentric feminism paradoxically reaffirms, reproduces and reinforces the very patriarchal idea of male normalcy that it intends to dismantle.

The dualist view underlying Eurocentric feminism dichotomises human affairs into mutually opposing public and private spheres. The Eurocentric feminist aspiration for equal participation in the public sphere (e.g. career choice, political participation and cultural representation) assumes that human activities in the private sphere are inherently not as productive, valuable and meaningful as those in the public sphere. Spivak (1998) maintains that the notions of production and productive relationships, defined by Western feminists and non-feminists alike, exclude one of the most fundamental aspects of human relations: childbirth. The activities and productivity of the private sphere are unexamined and devalued. The Eurocentric feminist claim of liberating women through separating, literally and figuratively, them from the domestic reveals not only an individualist cultural bias but also a class bias. After all, hiring domestic helpers is simply not a possible option for the majority of women in the world.

The dualist tradition thus precludes Eurocentric feminists from envisaging a notion of gender relations that accepts and respects the dignity of difference as the very foundation for social equality. It is the complementary female-male relations predicated on the recognition and appreciation of gender difference that allow women and men to work alongside each other and together toward gender equity (e.g. Karenga, 2012; Karenga & Tembo, 2012; Smith, 2012; Wadud, 1999; Yin, 2006, 2009, 2022).

Rights-conscious axiology

The principal practice of Eurocentric feminism, demanding rights for women, is rooted in rights-consciousness. Rights-consciousness is a form of ethics that emphasises the idea of a freely choosing and rights bearing individual without any concern for obligation (Tu, 2014). In Western traditions, rights are absolutely central for many theorists, especially for Kantian scholars (Rosemont, 1998; Tu, 2001). "Rights talk" is particularly ubiquitous in moral or political discourse of the United States. Eurocentric feminists' inversion of androcentrism places an exclusive emphasis on individual rights of women, though in a limited sense. In this respect, Eurocentric feminism is no different from the Eurocentric humanist project dominated by White males.

Rights-consciousness obscures inequality, discrimination and other injustice in society. While accusing men of oppressing women, Eurocentric feminists often refuse to confront their own privilege and prejudice. They often assume that nurturing and peace-loving women are morally superior to competitive and militaristic men, and they would exercise power differently (Fraser, 1997). In reality, however, women in power do not necessarily work toward the end of gender inequality or other forms of oppression (Ntiri, 2020). hooks (2000), hence, maintains that by identifying themselves as "victims" of gender oppression, White feminists "could abdicate responsibility for their role in the maintenance and perpetuation of sexism, racism, and classism, which they did by insisting that only men were the enemy" (p. 46).

Rights-consciousness breeds rivalry mentality, i.e. individuals view others as rival rights claimants. In competition for resources and opportunities, one person's gain is viewed as another person's loss (Hsu, 1971). In the case of affirmative action, White men often feel that their rights

are “trumped” by the rights of women and minorities (Rosemont, 1998). The rivalry mentality also results in indifference to other people’s suffering. Rights-consciousness coupled with the idea of people as freely choosing and autonomous individuals further enables the established order to attack the oppressed and social welfare programmes. From the perspective of rights-consciousness, one has to give up one’s own rights and privileges for the sake of one’s rivals. This makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to seek social remedies through redistribution, reformation or transformation.

Hsu (1971) asserts that the isolation tendency of individualism denies the importance of other human beings in one’s life and creates many contradictions which engender personal insecurity. The control of material wealth, however, is viewed as the individual’s principal investment in emotional security, which prevents privileged individuals (class, racial, gender, etc.) from surrendering their advantages for the betterment of the disadvantaged. Many Eurocentric feminists are, indeed, often not willing to give up their class and racial privileges for the needs and rights of other oppressed groups (Hudson-Weems, 2020; Moon & Hollin, 2020; Ntiri, 2020).

The rivalry mentality is also reflected in humans’ relations with nature and other beings. In the individualist tradition, the sense of entitlement and disrespect for the rights of others justify and naturalise the overexploitation of nature. Rights-conscious ethics hinder genuine concern for environmental issues, which means giving up one’s rights for nature.

What is missing in Eurocentric feminist theory and discourse is the notion of responsibility. Responsibility is a key component of ethics and the backbone for community building. However, responsibility has been ostracised and marginalised in the Western axiology informed by individualism (Rosemont, 1998). Without the notion of responsibility and communal consciousness, it is impossible to envision women’s rights not only as individual liberty but also as empowerment or enablement for women to function as truly equal participating members in a society.

As we are faced with challenges of ecological destruction, economic disruption and political and social instability, harmful impacts of excessive individualism have become more obvious than ever (Tu, 2014). Consequently, there is an urgent need for remedies stemming from other cultural traditions (Ching, 1998; Fingarette, 1991). Non-Western women, therefore, should turn to their own cultural traditions and wisdom for sources and insights for their own freedom and flourishing.

Asiacentric womanism as a theoretical framework

The growing need for self-definition and self-assertion, the desire to reclaim the historical past, the search for a stronger sense of belongingness, a greater call for cultural rootedness and the aspiration to affirm entirely different social and gender relations compelled non-Western scholars and activists to pursue womanism as an important and valuable alternative to Eurocentric feminism in their struggle for women’s emancipation and empowerment.

Indeed, notions of womanhood and female-male relations in non-Western societies are predicated on ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions that are fundamentally different from individualism, dualism and rights-consciousness undergirding Eurocentric feminism. It is necessary for non-Western women to go beyond Eurocentric feminism and to search in their cultural traditions for responses to gender oppression that are at once ecumenical in spirit and indigenous in roots.

Asian women have been routinely stereotyped and objectified in the West and have experienced similar alienation and exclusion by Eurocentric feminist discourses and practices. They can easily find common themes of visions and versions of selfhood and womanhood among diverse and culturally specific non-Western cultures. Indeed, the Asian holistic understanding of interconnected

human and gender relations resonates with African cultures and indigenous peoples of the Americas and Oceania (Asante, 2011, 2018; de la Garza, 2014, 2018, 2022; Gyekye, 1995; Kamwanga-malu, 2014; Karenga, 2012; Little Bear, 2000; Ntiri, 2020; Smith, 2012; Solofa, 1992; Yin, 2017, 2018, 2022). Therefore, it would be more productive and fruitful to conceptualise Asian women's struggle for gender equality in the womanist paradigm.

Asiacentric womanism is defined as *a self-conscious and self-determined intellectual, social and ethical project for women's empowerment through critical engagement in Asian living cultural traditions, from which to extract ideas and ideals for productive reflection and to transform and enrich those traditions for a broader vision of gender egalitarianism.*

Asiacentric womanism is grounded in the Asiacentric paradigm proposed and developed by Yoshitaka Miike (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2014, 2022a). Inspired and informed by Molefi Kete Asante's (1980, 1998, 2003) Afrocentricity metatheory and Maulana Karenga's (1997, 2006, 2014) Kawaida philosophy, Miike (2019b) defines Asiacentricity as "the self-conscious act of placing Asian ideas and ideals at the center of any inquiry into Asian peoples and phenomena" (p. 51). The notion of "centering" in the Asiacentric tradition is the idea of self-consciously placing or positioning Asians as the centre of their cultural realities in speaking, acting and interacting with others within and without their cultures (Miike, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2022b). Asiacentric womanism strives to assert a location where Asian women's experiences are examined and analysed from their own perspectives, and Asian women are viewed subjects, as opposed to objects of Eurocentric feminists' analysis.

"Centering" in the Asiacentric paradigm further insists on using our own culture as theoretical resources and grounding for asserting our identities, affirming our human dignity, improving the human condition and enhancing the human prospect (Miike, 2003, 2007, 2017a, 2019b, 2022a). Asiacentric womanism posits that it is vitally important and necessary for non-Western women to return to their own cultural traditions for paradigmatic and pragmatic resources in order to articulate and (re)construct emancipatory projects in accordance with their fundamental and enduring concerns in their own cultural realities, without subordinating to the Eurocentric framework.

Returning to one's own cultural tradition does not mean (re)building a cultural fortress through isolationist strategies or going back to the "authentic" or secluded past, a point prior to contact with other cultures and/or Western encroachment. Rather, it entails the recovery of a cultural grounding through critical engagement and dialogue with one's cultural tradition in constant interaction with other cultures for an ongoing project of human flourishing. This approach is essentially a contemporary and enduring intervention into historical cultural discourses in continuous exchange with other peoples, other cultures and the world for the purpose of articulating new forms of philosophy or ethics that enable and encourage us to form solidarity, address current problematics and enhance future prospects in a concrete sense. Seeking answers to gender issues within Asian cultural traditions consequently does not prescribe the wholesale acceptance of one's own culture uncritically; rather, it enables and empowers non-Western people to "embrace the positive elements of their cultural heritage and transform negative practices according to their ethical ideals" (Miike & Yin, 2015, p. 452).

The notion of "centering" in Asiacentricity should not be confused with the concept of "center" in the "center-periphery" formulation of the dependency theory (e.g. Amin, 1997; Frank, 1984) or world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974). The "center-periphery" model assumes that there is a single unitary system in which one group (the center) dominates the rest (the peripheral). Eurocentric feminists' attempt to invert patriarchy reflects the same dualist assumption of antagonistically dichotomous social relations, gender relations in this case, within a single unitary system. Asiacentricity, however, propounds that, rather than the subordinated peripheral in the unitary

system produced and perpetuated by the West, non-Western cultures should be viewed as equally valid systems in their own right, which exist alongside and strive for equivalent exchange with the West (Miike, 2015, 2019b). This idea parallels the notion of multiculturalism championed by Shixu (2005, 2014). Non-Western women should not be subjugated by the Eurocentric framework as margins. Instead, they should assert their identity, dignity and rights through using their own cultures as resources for answers and solutions to fundamental questions and ongoing problems of gender disparity (Asante, 1998; Karenga, 1997; Miike, 2017b).

Concurring with non-Western scholars and activists of women's rights (e.g. Dove, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 2020; Karenga & Tembo, 2012; Ntiri, 2020; Smith, 2012; Wadud, 1999; Watkin, 2007, 2016), Asiatic womanism contends that Eurocentric feminism is neither the only legitimate nor indispensable approach to gender equality. Asiatic womanism, conversely, strives to establish itself as an equally valid and valuable alternative to Eurocentric feminism in affirming women's dignity and rights and in creating conditions necessary for women's well-being and flourishing. Rather than an isolationist practice as misconstrued by Eurocentric feminists and internalised by some non-Western feminists (e.g. Collins, 1996), Asiatic womanism is in solidarity with various womanist theorists and non-Western scholars and activists of women's rights and in constant exchange and dialogue with non-Western and Western women and men, including Eurocentric feminists, and is directed toward the ongoing project of improving the human condition and enhancing the human prospect for women in a more inclusive and expansive manner inconceivable to Eurocentric feminism.

Asiatic womanism submits that gender equality in Asia must be sought in the context of the Asian preference for the rights of humanity (including humanity of the individual) and the Asian conviction in rights with responsibility. More specifically, Asiatic womanism is rooted in the ontology of interrelatedness and collectivity, the epistemology of complementarity and harmony and the axiology of duty-consciousness and shared responsibility, in stark contrast to Eurocentric feminism which is based on individualism, dualism and rights-consciousness.

Interrelatedness and collectivity

Asiatic womanism is premised on the Asian ontology of interrelatedness and unity of beings as well as the understanding of the self as the person-in-relations or person-in-community (Ho, 1995; Hsu, 1981, 1983; Hwang, 2000; Miike, 2002, 2019a). Whereas Eurocentric feminism views the woman as the autonomous and atomistic female individual, Asiatic womanism considers womanhood as the female person embedded in collectivity. Whereas Eurocentric feminism regards social relations as oppressive constraints on women's rights and freedom, Asiatic womanism embraces community as desirable, beneficial and indispensable to women's well-being and flourishing. Whereas Eurocentric feminism conceives women's rights as negative liberties, Asiatic womanism conceptualises rights as positive enablement and empowerment.

From the Asian perspective, relationship between self and community is considered as reciprocal and harmonious. The distinctiveness or uniqueness of the self is constituted by the balanced blending of personal and social claims (Yin, 2018). In the Confucian tradition, the self is regarded as a centre of relationships (Tu, 1985, 2001). Rather than inherently constraining, social relations are crucial for the development of a person. For the person, self-realisation is essentially the recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings in the universe. It is a way for a person to make herself/himself available to the society—to contribute to the human relations that make the development of others possible (Cheng, 2022).

The principle of *tawhid* in Islam stipulates unity, coherence and harmony among human beings and all other parts of the universe (Mowlana, 2014; Wadud, 1999). *Ummah* (community) emphasises communality and collectivity based on the will of Allah. The primary function of the ummah is to provide exemplars and set the highest standards of performance for all its members (Mowlana, 2014). In this view, the woman and the man are bestowed with equal rights, capacities and potentials for spiritual growth and development within and supported by the ummah (Wadud, 1999).

The Hindu sacred text *Upanishads* instructs that the highest spiritual aspiration for the person is to blend the *Atman* (individual soul) with the *Brahman* (universal-ultimate reality) to create *Brahman-Atman* (Babbili, 2008). The Buddhist doctrine *pratitya samutpāda* (interdependent co-arising) teaches that “every being co-origines and co-arises within the multilayered contexts of its predestined relationships with all other beings” (Miike, 2019a, p. 173). The *amae* (mutual dependence) psychology reflects the interdependence of the Japanese social structure and the Zen Buddhist spirituality where there is indivisibility of subject from object, self from other (Bradshaw, 1990). In both Hinduism and Buddhism, the self is identified not only with other human beings but also with natural beings and spiritual beings, with an immense emphasis on ecological sensitivity (Babbili, 2008; Miike, 2003).

In all these Asian traditions, the self is open to change and development for it can be viewed as both the recipient and the agent for change and development (Cheng, 2022). This interpenetrated and reciprocal self-other relationship in Asian cultures is accurately captured by Tu Weiming (2001):

The self cultivates roots in the family, village, nation, and the world. The feeling of belonging is predicated on a ceaseless spiritual exercise to transcend egotism, nepotism, parochialism, ethnocentrism, and anthropocentrism. The reciprocal interplay between self as center and self for others enables the self to become a center of relationships. As a center, personal dignity can never be marginalized and, as relationships, the spirit of consideration is never suppressed.

(p. 26)

To define our selfhood in terms of our relations with others does not emasculate our individuality or sense of agency. It is precisely through social relations that persons become cultural subjects and gain a sense of agency. Moreover, human beings, in the Confucian tradition, are seen as potential participants or co-creators of the creation process which is never completed or finished and can always be refined and transformed by communal human efforts (Tu, 1985; Yin, 2018). Only through the keen awareness of the interconnectedness of self and community can Asiatic womanism theorise women’s rights as positive empowerment that enables women’s flourishing through communication and interaction with other members in the community (Miike, 2017a; Tu, 1985). This resonates with Kawaida womanism that is rooted in the *Ifa* ethical teaching: the fundamental mission and meaning in human life is to bring good into the world (Karenga, 2012; Karenga & Tembo, 2012).

Apathy toward women’s rights can be addressed by Asian thought as well. Miike (2007, 2008) argues that from the Asiatic perspective, communication “is the process from which we feel the joy and suffering of all sentient beings”. The cardinal principle of *ren* (仁, [humanness]) in Confucianism insists that to be humane or to be human is to *ai ren* (爱人, [love all human beings]) (Chang, 1998; Ching, 1998). *Ren* can be achieved only through self-cultivation that transforms the private ego into the all-encompassing self which has the ability to feel the suffering of others—or

to put in the often seen negative form, the inability to endure others' suffering (Tu, 1985). Buddhism and Hinduism place paramount value on the virtue of compassion (universal kindness to all beings) (Babbili, 2008). Compassion is the sense of urgency of wanting to reduce the suffering of other beings. The Islamic notion of ummah (community) maintains that the social system should be based on equity, justice and ownership of the people (Mowlana, 2014).

Through the principles of ren, compassion and ummah, Asiacentric womanism advocates a consciousness that is predicated on genuine concern and care for women (indeed for all human beings) at personal, communal and societal levels. The interhuman regard associated with these concepts not only invokes empathy and compassion for the suffering of women (or the inability to endure their suffering), but also propels a social order to eliminate such agony. The Asian ontology of interrelatedness and collectivity thus makes it possible to envisage social transformations necessary for women's betterment and other aspects of social justice.

Complementarity and harmony

Eurocentric feminist discourses and practices perpetuate gender dualism that demands the gender other to covert or assimilate into the norm. Asiacentric womanism, in contrast, is embedded in the holistic Asian epistemology of complementarity of opposites and the certitude of harmony without uniformity (Cheng, 1998; Miike, 2015). In Asian cultures, despite apparently distinctive gender roles, the two sexes are perceived as complementary and harmonious in a holistic way. In Confucian and Daoist (Taoist) philosophies, everything in reality is regarded as a unity of various stages of interaction of two opposite and yet complementary creative forces, *yin* (阴) and *yang* (阳) (Cheng, 2022). And everything, including gendered human beings, is composed of both *yin* and *yang* principles, although *yin* is generally associated with female principles, while *yang* male principles.

The idea of complementarity of opposites in Daoism (Taoism) stipulates that the two opposite genders accept and recognise each other's integrity without attempting to alter one another's character and that they reciprocate and respond to each other through mutual learning and self-reflection (Cua, 1981). In this view, each gender is incomplete in itself, and they can mutually complete each other. Gender difference does not need to be eliminated as it is necessary and indispensable for the completion of each gender and for the development of each person.

The original Islamic canons advocate a harmonious unity of all beings in the universe (Mowlana, 2014). Unlike the Biblical account that the woman was created from and for the man, the Qur'anic interpretation maintains that the male and female were created as a pair that was "made of two co-existing forms of a single reality, with some distinctions in nature, characteristics and functions, but two congruent parts formed to fit together as a whole" (Wadud, 1999, p. 21). Rather than effacing difference between men and women, the Qur'an aspires the compatible and mutually supportive gender relationship as part of the goals of the society (Wadud, 1999). Majid (1998) contends that pre-contact Islam had an ethical vision of egalitarianism, including gender equity, and that it was through the contact with non-Arab cultures that prejudice against women was added to Islamic law.

Indeed, the vision of female-male relations as complementary and mutually completing is prevalent in the non-Western world. In the Kemet (Egyptian) theology, the Creator Ra, who symbolises completeness and perfection, contains both male and female aspects without being either (Karenga, 2012). In the Ifa moral anthropology of Yoruba, women are venerated as co-creator, mothers and sustainers of the world with complementary and consummative power (Karenga, 2012; Karenga & Tembo, 2012).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) problematised the Western misinterpretation of the Māori creation myth as a Judeo-Christian story of “Adam and Eve”. In the Māori cosmology, human beings, animals, natural beings and other animate and inanimate objects (according to Western classifications) are believed to have a *mauri* (life force) which contains both male and female “essence” (Smith, 2012, p. 173). In fact, women across many indigenous cultures argue that their traditional roles do not prevent them from participating in many aspects of political decision making and that gender separations are “complementary in order to maintain harmony and stability” (Smith, 2012, p. 153).

In Asian cultural traditions, harmony is a shared orientation and a pivotal and persistent way of understanding and engaging the world. The notion of “harmony without uniformity” epitomises the ideal, goal and organising principle of Confucian humanism. The exemplar person strives for *he* (和, [harmony]) as opposed to *tong* (同, [sameness]). Harmony is predicated on diversity and difference. Without difference, harmony is impossible (e.g. without different sounds, there is no music). Thus, harmony does not demand conformity or homogeneity.

The traditional Japanese garden design avoids repetition of similar elements and creates harmony of dissimilar elements. When constructing a wall, traditional Japanese craftsmen piece together natural stones of varied forms and sizes immaculately rather than cutting them into uniformed shapes. In a Japanese worker’s group, members appreciate each individual’s characteristics and spontaneously combine the diversity in a mutually beneficial way (Maruyama, 1984). In Mandenka of West Africa, heterogeneity is considered as a mutually beneficial, positive-sum, “win-win” cooperation, while homogeneity is regarded as a source of competition and conflict, diametrically opposed to the understanding in the West (Maruyama, 1984).

The concepts of complementarity and harmony allow Asiacentric womanism to affirm women’s spiritual and social significance without eradicating gender distinctiveness. In the Confucian tradition, although the distinction between the public and domestic domains is sharp, domestic virtues are given precedence as the foundation for acquiring public virtues (Cho, 1998; Tanaka, 1981). Women are revered as “moral custodians” of the household, who are responsible for leading all members of the family to improve their characters and acquire virtues (Nyitray, 2004). In Confucian cultures, patriarchy thus can be offset by family-oriented values, such as filial piety (Cho, 1998). Furthermore, traditional gender roles can be transformed through the cooperation of all members for harmony of the collective. Lebra (2007) argues that functional complementarity permits Japanese women to participate in male dominated spheres. Women are freed from the domestic domain with the support of extended family and other kin.

Rather than the helpless private sphere in the Eurocentric feminist conception, the domestic realm can function as sources of power for Asian women. Contrary to the exoticised Western imagination, the premodern harem was a female society that allowed Muslim women to express their uncensored stories and experiences without the repressive values associated with modernity. Prior to Western colonisation, the harem also enabled Egyptian women to engage in international business within the Islamic society (Majid, 1998).

Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam embody the notion of equality in terms of equal potentiality for enlightenment and fulfillment (Cheng, 2022; Wadud, 1999). Persons in a society may differ in terms of gender, social and economic status, but they have the same potential to enrich themselves in order to reach enlightenment, to fulfil their obligations to society and to live their lives fullest. The worth of the person is essentially tied to whether one can live up to one’s potential in relation to others in the society and the universe (Tu, 1985; Wadud, 1999). Similarly, in the Kemet (Egyptian) tradition, women and men are endowed with equal dignity, divinity and capacity to preserve, restore and enrich *maat* (rightness) in community, society, nature and divinity (Karenga, 2006).

The holistic and communalist worldviews in Asian cultures enable Asiatic womanism to recognise and respect women and their enduring relevance and indispensable role in all things of collective importance and common good. This appreciation makes it possible for Asian societies to realise the urgency of improving conditions for their valuable and important female members through collective human efforts and social transformations.

Asiatic womanism further contends that the concept of women's rights should not be limited to what Eurocentric feminists have prescribed, namely employment choice and political participation. Privileging only civil and political rights undermines the significance of many other activities that women also engage in, such as childbirth, child-rearing, care-giving and domestic work.

Asiatic womanism posits that men's participation in women's empowerment is desirable and necessary because securing women's rights depends on the involvement and coordination of the majority of members of a society. Asiatic womanism also insists that women's liberation cannot be achieved through replacing one kind of oppression with another. Affluent women's freedom should not be brought by dumping housework on economically and oftentimes racially/culturally less-privileged maids.

From an Islamic perspective, Amina Wadud (1999) aptly captures the Asiatic womanist vision of gender equality:

With regard to social justice, it becomes necessary to challenge patriarchy—not for matriarchy, but for an efficient co-operative and egalitarian system which allows and encourages the maximum participation of each member of the society. This society would truly respect each gender in its contributions, and all tasks that are contributed. This would allow for the growth and expansion of the individual and consequently for society at large. As such, women would have full access to economic, intellectual, and political participation, and men would value and therefore participate fully in home and child care for a more balanced and fair society.

(p. 103)

Duty-consciousness and shared responsibility

Asiatic womanism embraces duty-conscious ethics and emphasises shared responsibility. One of the crucial impediments of Eurocentric feminist movements is rights-consciousness (Yin, 2006, 2009, 2022). Tu (2001) contends that "rights without responsibility may lead to a form of self-indulgence, indicative of egocentrism at the expense of harmonious social relationships" (p. 90). Aggressive assertion of rights without a sense of responsibility divides individuals and groups and thus makes it impossible to envision women's rights as social parity beyond individual liberty.

Asian thought and philosophy, however, promote a deep sense of duty-consciousness. In Confucian teaching, people are viewed as persons located within social networks and as having specific duties or moral obligations (Yum, 1987, 2022). As sons and daughters of Heaven and Earth, humans are receivers and therefore embodiments of the creative forces of the cosmos in its highest excellence (Tu, 1985). Inherent in the very existence of the human person is the infinite potential for moral and spiritual growth and self-development. Therefore, the main concern of Confucian learning is the process through which we realise ourselves by transforming and perfecting what we were born with. Self-realisation is thus not only the right to enrich one's humanity but also the moral responsibility to partake in the communal project of enhancing, transforming or restoring the harmonious social order (Yin, 2014a, 2014b, 2018).

In African cultures, similarly, all humans are considered as divinely created with a lifetime mission: to bring good into the world (Karenga, 2006). The Kemetic concept of *serudi ta* means the obligation for humans to “constantly repair and restore the world, to make it more beautiful and beneficial than it was when they inherited it” (Karenga, 2006, p. 257).

Although relationships in Confucianism are often hierarchical, obligations are mutual, reciprocal and required for all parties concerned (Ching, 1998; Yum, 1987, 2022). Indeed, rights associated with a position are often defined as duties. For Confucians, Heaven endowment is inevitably linked to and expressed in terms of duty or responsibility (Cheng, 1998). For example, a ruler is mandated by Heaven precisely because she or he is given more responsibilities than the governed. Social remedy for injustice often takes more than the struggle of the oppressed and marginalised. Those of power and privilege need to share the responsibility to alleviate the agony and suffering of their fellow members of the community and society. Essentially, one’s right is others’ duty to respect that right.

Former US President Jimmy Carter also invoked the notion of responsibility in a statement after the brutal killings of George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks by police in June 2020:

People of power, privilege, and moral conscience must stand up and say “no more” to a racially discriminatory police and justice system, immoral economic disparities between whites and blacks, and government actions that undermine our unified democracy. We are responsible for creating a world of peace and equality for ourselves and future generations.

(LeBlanc, 2020)

Buddhism underscores the obligation to repay the *on* (the debt of gratitude) that people have received from other beings throughout the course of their lives (Miike, 2007, 2019a). Hindu philosophy prescribes duty to all human beings and insists that one should sacrifice for the community and serve the common good as we are indebted to all beings in the universe (Babbili, 2008). In Islam, people are given equal responsibility and capacity to follow the principle of *taqwa* (piety), “a pious manner of behavior which observes constraints appropriate to a social-moral system; and ‘consciousness of Allah’” (Wadud, 1999, p. 37). The Islamic doctrine of *amr bi al-ma’ruf wa nahi’an al munkar* (commanding to the right and prohibiting from the wrong) designates individuals and groups the responsibility to guide each other to learn and do what is good and ethical (Mowlana, 2014).

Duty-consciousness in these Asian teachings accentuates reciprocity between self and community. On the one hand, a person’s self-realisation is encouraged and nurtured by the community. On the other hand, self-actualisation is to contribute to human relations necessary and desirable for the development of others. Thus, a person’s moral development is both a duty of the self to the community and a duty of the community to the self. Duty-consciousness is the reciprocal responsiveness that “comes from a vision of the perfect union or unity of self and community in which both their needs are realized” (Cheng, 1998, p. 148).

The relationship between individual members and the community defined by duty-consciousness can engender the ethos championing women’s rights and well-being. From this perspective, women’s rights can be articulated as both members’ duty to the community and the community’s duty to women.

Unlike rights-consciousness that emphasises individuals’ claim to rights, duty-consciousness stresses the responsibility of individual members and the community to make the claimed rights possible (Chang, 1998). Duty-consciousness delegates the responsibility for gender equality to all members of the society. In consequence, not only women but also men are obligated to work

toward the interests of female members of the community. Only through duty-consciousness can women's rights be conceptualised as the shared common good afforded to women upon social agreement. As a result, it will not leave men or other social groups feeling that their rights are taken away by women. Indeed, if the competitive mentality rooted in rights-consciousness segregates different social groups as rival claimants to rights, duty-consciousness unites women and men through defining gender equality as a moral imperative and common goal that requires joint efforts of both parties. The Asian certitude of the human responsibility to transform the social order through communal self-efforts can contribute fruitfully to the formulation and articulation of "a new and expanded public philosophy and discourse on a just and good society and a good and sustainable world" (Karenga, 2003, p. 161).

To illustrate the application and practicality of the Asiatic womanist theoretical framework, I will offer a reading of the *Ballad of Mulan* in the following section.

The *Ballad of Mulan* as Asiatic womanist discourse

The *Ballad of Mulan*⁵ is a Chinese poem that recounts a remarkable story of a filial daughter, Mulan, masquerading as a man to serve in the army in place of her aged father. She fights countless battles for her country over years without exposing her gender. After the war, Mulan declines the emperor's offer for a high-ranking position and returns home to resume her role as a dutiful daughter.

Disney produced an animated film (1998) and a live-action remake (2020) based on the *Ballad of Mulan*. Disney's appropriation extracts the story of Mulan from its Chinese cultural contexts and injects it into a Western frame. In so doing, the Chinese cultural heroine Mulan is transformed into a Eurocentric feminist.⁶ The Disney films reflect Eurocentric feminist tenets that are ingrained in individualism, gender dualism and rights-consciousness. The *Ballad* embodies Asiatic womanist principles that are embedded in interrelatedness, complementary gender relations and duty-consciousness.

Self as a centre of relationships

In sharp contrast to the tomboyish image in the Disney films, the *Ballad* portrays Mulan as an apt, able and dutiful daughter. The *Ballad* opens with the scene of Mulan waving in the room, suggesting that Mulan is fully capable of domestic work, which is traditionally assigned to women in China. Upon learning about her father's enlistment, Mulan is contemplating a solution.

Tsieh tsiek and again tsiek tsiek,
Mulan weaves, facing the door.
You don't hear the shuttle's sound,
You only hear Daughter's sighs.
They ask Daughter who's in her heart,
They ask Daughter who's on her mind.
"No one is on Daughter's heart,
No one is on Daughter's mind.
Last night I saw the draft posters,
The Khan is calling many troops,
The army list is in twelve scrolls,
On every scroll there's Father's name.

Father has no grown-up son,
Mulan has no elder brother.
I want to buy a saddle and horse,
And serve in the army in Father's place".
(Frankel, 1976, p. 68)

There is no indication in the *Ballad* that Mulan cannot fit in traditional Chinese gender roles. There is no failed matchmaker interview as in the films. In fact, such an interview did not exist in ancient China (Sun, 2003). Mulan does not experience the psychological struggle that impels her to validate her worth and to search for her individual identity. Her decision to join the army is to fulfil her filial duty as a daughter. Her father is too old to serve, while her younger brother, who is absent in the Disney films, is too young. When summoned by her country, Mulan feels obligated to serve in her father's place.

As a literary creation, Mulan's name is significant in understanding the character's personality. Chinese names are ideographical and hence more descriptive and defining than European names. Mulan means magnolia. The *Ballad* never refers to Mulan's family name. In *Xingyuan (Records of Surnames)*, He Chengtian (370–447) of the Song of Southern Dynasties documents the name Mulan with the surname Hua (or Fa in Cantonese), which means flower. Xu Wei (1521–1593), a writer of the Ming Dynasty, adopts this family name in his story of *Mulan*. The elegant and delicate flower symbolises an apt, composed and graceful girl.

Selfhood constructed in Disney's *Mulan* is an expression of Western individualism. In this tradition, the quest for "the true self" or individuality is to liberate oneself from any external constraining forces, such as social roles. The feminist theme is indeed a very similar idea of freeing the female individual from oppressive social claims (e.g. men, family).

The *Ballad*, conversely, reflects the Chinese notion of self as a centre of relationships (Tu, 1985). The Chinese ontology assumes a totality (or cosmos) in which diverse and distinct human, natural and spiritual beings are interconnected and interrelated (Cheng, 2022; Tu, 2014). The person defines herself/himself in a network of relations in the totality (Yum, 1987, 2022). Unlike the individualistic self in Disney's *Mulan*, the Chinese self is not constantly at war with the community in which it is embedded (Yin, 2017, 2018, 2022).

Therefore, rather than freeing herself from social demands for being a girl properly, in the *Ballad*, Mulan acts out of the principle of *xiao* (孝, [filial piety]), the fundamental value of the Chinese moral system (Cho, 1998; Tu, 2007). The traditional parent-child relationship prescribes kindness or affection on the part of parents and filial duty on the part of children. Filial piety demands sincere respect and moral obedience of children to parents (Hwang, 1999). Whereas the family is seen as the extension of the self, the country is viewed as the extension of the family in traditional Chinese culture (Tu, 1985). The notion of filial piety is expanded to one's relationship with the county as *zhong* (忠, [loyalty]). The *Ballad* represents the idea of extending our bonds with our parents and immediate family to larger networks of human relationships—from respecting our parents to respecting all elderly, from caring for our children to caring for all children in the world. This is essentially the Confucian notion of self-realisation as the process of transforming the private ego into the all-encompassing self (Tu, 1985).

Self-actualisation in this sense is not a solitary quest for the inner self. Rather than inherently constraining as viewed in the Western individualistic tradition, human relations are seen as not only absolutely necessary but also highly desirable for personal growth in Confucianism (Tu, 1985). Confucius states in the *Analects of Confucius*: "In order to establish oneself, one has to establish others. In order to enhance oneself, one has to enhance others" (6:30). The Chinese

heroine's/hero's journey is, thus, never a solitary one. Tu (1985) eloquently argues, "For as centers of relationships, we do not travel alone to our final destiny; we are always in the company of family and friends, be they remembered, imagined, or physically present" (p. 247).

Complementary gender relations

The Disney films of *Mulan* exemplify the Eurocentric feminist thrust that perpetuates gender dualism while reinforcing masculine values. The films demean and ridicule women other than Mulan to elevate conventional masculine values (e.g. honour, courage, strength and martial arts skills) (Chaw, 2020). Challenging gender roles is hence for women to act, speak and compete just like men. In this sense, self-realisation for the female is the same process as that of the male: detaching the ego from social relations and the natural context to "achieve patriarchal or masculine consciousness" (Neumann, 1995).

Rather than androgenising women, the *Ballad* symbolises the Asiatic womanist thesis that affirms complementary gender relations while respecting gender difference. The famous image of rabbits highlights loyalty and solidarity formed between genders on the battleground, a Chinese notion of gender equality premised on the belief that all human beings, regardless of gender, have equal potentiality to fulfil their obligations.

The he-hare's feet go hop and skip,
The she-hare's eyes are muddled and fuddled.
Two hares running side by side close to the ground,
How can they tell if I am he or she?

(Frankel, 1976, p. 70)

Diametrically opposed to the static notion of selfhood in modern Western thought, the Confucian self is capable of improving and expanding itself through self-conscious effort. Confucian ontology presumes that the human person inherently has infinite potential for moral and spiritual growth. The Confucian notion of self-realisation does not require a process of ontological conversion such as redemption or salvation (Yin, 2018). Thus, the integrity of each gender is respected. In the *Ballad*, war experience does not fundamentally change Mulan's character and nature, and she is able to seamlessly transition back to her feminine life afterwards. Upon arriving home after serving in the army for many years, the *Ballad* vividly depicts Mulan's eagerness and joy to return to her female identity.

"I open the door to my east chamber,
I sit on my couch in the west room,
I take off my wartime gown
And put on my old-time clothes".
Facing the window she fixes her cloudlike hair,
Hanging up a mirror she dabs on yellow flower powder.
She goes out the door and sees her comrades.
Her comrades are all amazed and perplexed.
Traveling together for twelve years
They didn't know Mulan was a girl.

(Frankel, 1976, p. 70)

Mulan's peers are "amazed and perplexed" as they are compelled to comprehend Mulan's extraordinary feat. Here, gender parity entails the Asiatic womanist notion of mutual responsiveness, i.e. demanding both genders to expand their horizon and vision of life through mutual learning and self-reflection.

Disney claims that Mulan would be killed or disciplined if she were found out a woman in the army. This cannot be more wrong. In Chinese history, there were other renowned female generals, such as Princess Ping Yang (?–623), She Taijun (Saihua) (934–1010) and Liang Hongyu (1102–1135), who commanded troops and fought wars without masquerade. Women's service in the army was sanctioned and highly acclaimed in Chinese culture.

In the Disney films, Mulan redeems her shame at home (the private sphere) through her victory and glory in the military (the public sphere). The *Ballad*, however, does not define Mulan's worth as a person and as a woman primarily in the public sphere. In comparison to Disney's dramatised and glamorised representation of Mulan's action on the battlefield, the *Ballad* paints a realistic and gloomy picture of war in six succinct lines.

She goes ten thousand miles on the business of war,
She crosses passes and mountains like flying.
Northern gusts carry the rattle of army pots,
Chilly light shines on iron armor.
Generals die in a hundred battles,
Stout soldiers return after ten years.

(Frankel, 1976, p. 70)

War, in the *Ballad*, is not depicted as the location and opportunity for Mulan to seek for self-validation or gender recognition through competing with (and outperforming) men. It is rather the ordeal that Mulan has to endure to fulfil her obligations. The *Ballad* actually offers a more detailed account of Mulan's activities at home before and after the war. In this sense, the *Ballad* resonates with the Asiatic womanist proposal to equally value and respect each gender in its contributions and all tasks contributed in both the private and public spheres.

Gender equality as shared responsibility

The impulsive, disobedient and defiant female figure in the Disney films that captures the hearts of Western audiences runs counter to values espoused by the *Ballad*. Rather than the desire to assert her individuality or to challenge gender roles, Mulan's action is predicated on a sense of duty.

In Confucian cultures, to learn to be human or a humane person is to strive to fulfil relational obligations through self-cultivation. The primary concern of self-cultivation is *de* (德, [virtue]), the ability to achieve harmony both within oneself and with others (Cheng, 1998). Mulan's decision to join the army is to fulfil her obligations to her father and her country as well as to herself for her own self-cultivation. Self-cultivation allows the person to realise the unique self within and alongside, not outside or against, the community.

In Disney's portrayal, Mulan's action is an impulsive individual decision: donning her father's armour and taking the horse to the military camp. In the *Ballad*, it is a collective decision fully acknowledged and supported by her parents. Missing from home without a word would have caused her parents great grief, which is not something that a filial child would do. The *Ballad*

describes the careful preparation that Mulan makes: purchasing a spirited horse, a saddle, a bridle and a long whip.

In the East Market she buys a spirited horse,
In the West Market she buys a saddle,
In the South Market she buys a bridle,
In the North Market she buys a long whip.
At dawn she takes leave of Father and Mother,
In the evening [she] camps on the Yellow River's bank.

(Frankel, 1976, p. 68)

Given the economic situation in ancient China, those purchases would not have been financially possible without the support of the whole family. Also, without the collaboration of Mulan's siblings, her aged parents would not have been provided for during her prolonged absence. The *Ballad* mentions Mulan's older sister and younger brother. Her older sister remains at her parents' home while Mulan is away. She might have given up marriage to take care of her parents. It is precisely the cooperation of the entire family that makes it possible for Mulan to serve in the army. Women are released from the domestic domain with the support of their family members.

Conclusions

The quest for gender equality is a social and moral imperative in every society. Rooted in the experiences of European and European-American women, Eurocentric feminism challenges patriarchy within the Eurocentric philosophical framework. It is thus detrimental for non-Western women to uncritically accept Eurocentric feminism as the norm or panacea for gender issues everywhere in the world. We need to keep in mind that Western feminisms themselves are struggles in process. Many fundamental problems are yet to be addressed and resolved even in Western cultures.

Alienated by Eurocentric feminist discourses and practices, non-Western women have explored their own liberation through the womanist paradigm. In solidarity with non-Western scholars and activists of women's rights, this chapter propounded Asiacentric womanism as an intellectual, social and ethical project for human flourishing with deep sensitivity to women's conditions in Asian cultures.

Grounded on Asiaticity (Miike, 2002, 2007, 2019b), Asiacentric womanism embodies the interrelated and collective nature of beings, complementary and harmonious female-male relations and duty-conscious ethics. The holistic perspective of Asiacentric womanism makes it possible to conceptualise women's rights as positive empowerment and enablement for women's freedom and flourishing, to equally value and respect each gender's contributions in both the private and public spheres and to articulate public discourse on gender egalitarianism through shared responsibility and communal human efforts.

Asiacentric womanism offers a culturally grounded framework to understand female voices expressed in Asian discourses and texts as it insists on placing Asian women as the centre of their cultural realities in speaking, acting and interacting with others within and without their cultures. The example of the *Ballad of Mulan* illustrates that Asian women's experiences should be examined and analysed from their own perspectives, as opposed to mere objects of Eurocentric feminist analysis and criticism.

Notes

- 1 The term “Western” in this chapter refers to cultural traditions, values and practices that are rooted in European and European-American experiences and philosophies. This term does not refer to indigenous cultures such as Inuit, Native Hawaiian and Native American cultures, nor to African American, Asian American and Latino/a cultures that are geographically located in the Western Hemisphere. Those cultures are subordinated, marginalized or excluded by European and European-American cultures. Indeed they are non-Western peoples in the West. Just like cultures and peoples in the non-West, they are also struggling to (re)claim their identities and (re)assert their self-determination (Laenui, 2000; Little Bear, 2000).
- 2 Even though postcolonial feminist scholars are often originally from non-Western cultures, many of them reside in the United States and West Europe. Some of the leading postcolonial theorists are from Britain’s former South Asian colonies and have been trained principally, or at least initially, in English studies (Harootunian, 1999). Postcolonial theories are in fact premised on uniquely Western values and derived from the methodology of the very tradition that they are trying to deconstruct (Radhakrishnan, 2003). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) contends that postcolonialism has become “a strategy for reinscribing and reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics” which sustains the Eurocentric structure of knowledge production by excluding indigenous people and their endeavors for self-understanding, self-expression and self-determination (p. 25).
- 3 The concept of intersectionality in critical race theory (Crenshaw, 1989) and the notion of interlocking structure of oppressions in Black feminism (e.g. Collins, 1996; hooks, 2000) treat gender, race and class equally and concurrently. They have been accepted, to different extents, by Eurocentric feminist communication scholars. Although these notions were instrumental in expanding the exclusive focus on gender in feminism, the current academic tendency of covering everything with an ever-expanding list of oppressions reduces and diminishes their critical and analytical usefulness and potency, i.e. rendering them into a mere list without deeper meaning. When combined with the postmodernist and postcolonialist celebration of difference and deconstruction, intersectionality becomes a divisive thrust that prioritizes the uniqueness of individual experience and expression over the possibility for alliance or unification which requires the formation of collectives. Intersectionality, in its debased form, encourages what Elizabeth Martinez (1998) calls “oppression Olympics”.
- 4 Multicultural feminist scholars (e.g. Martinez, 1998; Shohat, 1998) advocate forging alliances and solidarity among women of color based on their common experience with the intersecting oppressions of race, gender and class and their common objective of improving their socioeconomic conditions. Pearson’s (2007) ethnographic study, nevertheless, suggests that the assumed common experience and common objective in multicultural feminism are not naturally shared by women of color activists in the United States. Pearson (2007) attributes the lack of solidarity among women of color to their emphasis on identity and difference and to their internalization of the dominant ideology and racial hierarchy. Multicultural feminism thus assumes a direct link between experience and consciousness in the case women of color, very much similar to the classical Marxist theory of class-based consciousness. As Stuart Hall (1996) reminds us, the critical consciousness necessary for social change is not guaranteed by shared experience and oppression. Rather, it needs to be articulated and communicated through conscious and constant efforts. Furthermore, as progressive as the goal of multicultural feminism is, its proposal to build bridges and solidarity by minimizing difference follows the same Eurocentric (feminist) dualist approach to difference. As a result, the stress on commonality at the expense of difference will only lead to conformity or subordination.
- 5 There are different versions of the legend of Mulan in Chinese literature. Mulan’s story was first recorded as *Mulan Shi* or *Ballad of Mulan* (*Ode of Mulan*) in Chen Zhijiang’s (approximately 568 AD) *Gujin Yuelu* (*Musical Records Old and New*), which no longer exists. The current available text of the poem is from the anthology *Yuefu Shiji* (*Collection of Music-Bureau Poems*), compiled by Guo Maoqian during the 12th century in the Song Dynasty (Feng, 2003). According to Guo, this poem was written by an anonymous author in the Northern Wei during the 5th century. Later writers such as Wei Yuanfu (?–771) and Xu Wei (1521–1593) composed different stories of Mulan. Disney’s films mainly drew upon the oldest available version of the *Ballad*.
- 6 To be sure, treatments of feminism in Disney’s animated film and live-action remake are different. Whereas the animated film is a typical story of a hero’s journey to self-discovery that entertains some feminist ideas, the live-action remake explicitly advocates feminist ideology. Niki Caro, the director of the film, is known for her feminist orientation in films such as *Whale Rider* (2002). The live-action film accentuates female power by changing some of the male characters to female ones—Mushu, a male dragon, to a female phoenix and Hayabusa, a male hawk, to Xianniang, a female witch. The live-action film also makes Mulan’s love interests her equal by replacing Li Shang, a clichéd masculine character, with Chen Honghui and Commander Tung.

Recommended readings

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10

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE DISCOURSE IN TIMES OF GLOBAL TURBULENCE

Reconstructing cultural capacity and crafting international strategy

Shi-xu

Problems and aims

The world has never been so unstable and uncertain since 9-11, as the world's order is as shifting as it is polarising. In the post COVID-19 era, the olden human problems of poverty, climate change and nuclear rivalry are not getting better but only going from bad to worse. Many a scholar is asking, from various angles, what kind of role China, now an emerging global power, is playing, how and why, in the face of the trying times (Beeson & Li, 2016, p. 491; Kahler, 2018, p. 239; Öniş & Kutlay, 2020, p. 123; Stephen, 2021, p. 807). It should be added that more often than not they proceed from an American-Westcentric perspective and paint a gloomy, or otherwise ambivalent, picture of the rise of China vis-à-vis the incumbent powers and the wider world more generally (e.g. Babones, Aberg & Hodzi, 2020, p. 326; Chin, 2021, p. 91; Glasser, 2011, p. 80; Hameiri & Jones, 2018, p. 573; Hopewell, 2021, p. 634).

However, much less attention has been paid to the tool of communication that China possesses in relation to the sorry state of the world (Liu, 2020, p. 469; cf. Yang, 2020, p. 299). For example, rarely is it asked what China is capable of communicating, especially from the vantage point of its unique cultural heritage (cf. Husain & Bloom, 2020, p. 39; Schnell, 1999). This is a significant deficiency because communication, local and global, reflects par excellence a cultural community's mentality, capacity and willpower, and insufficient or inadequate understanding thereof will lead to misperception and misinterpretation of its action and potential.

Scant as it is, extant research into Chinese discourse, whether in terms of mass media, social media, public diplomacy or information agencies, has often been rendered from stereotypical or otherwise biased perspectives. As a consequence, images of abnormality, deviance or menace emerge: at home the Chinese Communist state "manipulates" the media in order to "legitimize" its authority and so to "control" its people (see Chang & Ren, 2018; Esarey & Xiao, 2011; Gleiss, 2016; Gong, 2012; Han, 2015; Hinck et al., 2016; Li & Rune, 2018; Lin, 2015; Nordin & Richaud, 2014; Sun, 2010; Wang, 2017; Zhang, 2013) and abroad it "exploits" communication to achieve regional and global "dominance" (see Gong, 2012; Hinck et al., 2016; Lee, 2016; Zhang, 2013).

Such representations are biased, stereotypical and reminiscent of the Orientalist discourse (Said, 1978, 1993), as well as George Orwell's *1984*, because China's vast societal changes are denied, deeper cultural traditions ignored and unique international context left out of the picture. As has long been observed, Western concepts, models and theories of communication masquerade as "universal" and, when applied to non-Western realities, only lead to misunderstanding, misrepresentation and stigmatisation (Asante, 1998; McQuail, 2005; Xiao & Chen, 2009).

The present chapter then sets out to achieve two, interrelated aims. First, it will argue that it behoves us to take a locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical approach to present-day Chinese discourse. This will involve drawing on local intellectual wisdom and global scholarly achievements on the one hand and paying attention to cultural distinction and interaction on the other hand. Second, accordingly, it will reframe contemporary Chinese discourse in terms of a number of hitherto neglected or ignored but crucially important properties and principles: viz. its world view, way of thinking, norm of acting and canon of meaning making. As a result, a rather different image of the Chinese discourse will emerge; it has a holistic vision, dialectic pattern of thinking, balanced-harmony ethics and making-meaning-beyond-form rule. On that basis, it will be suggested that these properties of the contemporary Chinese discourse system be appropriated as possible inspiration and potential resource for confronting the common challenges and crises facing humanity.

Adopting a locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical approach to contemporary Chinese discourse will constitute a form of cultural resistance to the hitherto hegemonic communication scholarship on China. Further, the Chinese cultural account thus attained will offer broader, deeper and so more precise insights into the identity, nature and potentiality of the present-day Chinese discourse (including its sub-branches), enlivening and enriching international communication research thereby. Moreover, this new framework may possibly serve as shared assets of human communication because any cultural discourse (community) may contain useful resources and tools that may contribute to the solution of world problems.

Cultural discourse studies: A culturalist approach to communication studies

The present chapter adopts a culturalist approach to communication studies (CS), termed cultural discourse studies (CDS) (Shi-xu, 2005, 2009, 2014, 2015, Chapter 1 this volume). It has several basic features. First, CDS proceeds from a notion of communication as a global system of social practice in which speech actors interact with one another purposefully and consequentially by linguistic and other semiotic means and increasingly through technological channels in particular historical and cultural contexts. As such communication constructs reality, performs actions and exercises power. In terms of definition, CDS is parallel to mainstream CS. Second, in terms of conception, however, it is different in that it views communication, not as universal, but as composed of at once culturally diversified and competing discourses of historically evolved and ethnically characterised communities (e.g. the Chinese/Asian/Developing World), hence cultural discourses. Here communication is global in that there are aspects of commonality and degrees of interconnection between the composite discourses, but at the same time it is cultural in that, on the one hand, each such discourse as communication sub-system has its own distinctive and even unique ways of communication, including the context of communication, and that, on the other hand, the world's diverse discourses are more often than not in an equal relation with one another but in dynamic relations of domination, repression, exclusion, competition, resistance, cooperation, etc. In parenthesis, within a cultural discourse there may be sub-systems in terms of particular domains of social

interaction (e.g. social, political, economic, scientific, artistic and diplomatic) and in terms of different levels of abstraction (e.g. Chinese discourse/Chinese political discourse/Chinese political discourse of human rights). Third, the goal of CDS is to bring about intellectual-cultural diversity in CS, accomplishing scholarly transformation and research innovation thereby, on the one hand, and to reclaim marginalised cultural-discursive identities and rebalance cultural-power relations, enhancing cultural harmony and prosperity thereby, on the other hand. To that end, fourth, CDS practitioners are required to take up a variety of specific tasks ranging from deconstructing cultural hegemony in the field of CS; (re)constructing research frameworks of especially under/misrepresented cultural discourses; illuminating the cultural diversity and distinctions of human discourses; uncovering the relations, whether of domination or otherwise, in the interaction between different discourses and (re)inventing new discourses of cultural freedom, development and cooperation (Shi-xu, 2005, 2014, 2015; cf. Curran & Park, 2000; Farmer, 1994). Fifth, to ensure the success of performing these tasks, CDS methodologically adopts a locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical approach. Being locally-grounded means that the researcher needs to be informed about the situated specifics of the discourse in question and to draw upon relevant native knowledge and wisdom, while being globally-minded means that the investigator should take into account common human conditions and interests and tap into appropriate scholarly achievements wherever they come from. Being culturally conscious requires one to pay special attention to the identities and distinctions of the discourse under investigation and to ascertain and critique power relations that emerge out of the interaction between different cultural discourses.

For the present task of carving out the contemporary Chinese discourse as a cultural system, the locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical approach means that we must no longer rely on acultural, ahistorical, Westcentric or otherwise ethnocentric lenses and perspectives. Specifically, we need, first of all, to view the Chinese discourse in terms of its place and interaction in the global context and order of communication (“the wholeness principle”). Second, we should see it from a developmental perspective and be attentive to its agency and change (“the history principle”). In relation to that, third, it is vitally important that we pay special attention to its native traditions of the world view, ways of thinking, norms and values, rules of speaking, etc. (“the aboriginal principle”) Fourth, we must render our theorising reflective of the local currents and trends of communication (“development principle”). Finally, we must keep an open mind and be inclusive in disciplines and disciplines across cultures (“the receptiveness principle”).

Here it may be mentioned in particular that the following portrayal draws on the Chinese and Asian lineages of communication studies that began in the late 1980s and whose objective is to project Chinese-culture-based theory on the one side and to undermine Westcentrism couched in universalism on the other side (e.g. Chen, 2001; Chu, 1988; Heisey, 2000; Huang, 2003; Jia, Lu & Heisey, 2002; Lu, 2000; Ma, 2000; Miike, 2007, 2009; Xiao & Chen, 2009). The image to be painted as follows is, emphatically, not meant as monolithic facts or homogeneous features of the diverse Chinese communities, representative evenly across all social domains and settings. Nor is the depiction exhaustive of the Chinese discourse system. Rather, in place of the familiar, stereotypical perspectives and positions in the literature, this account serves as a suggestive and heuristic framework for explicating and for guiding the practice of contemporary Chinese discourse. As such it is subject to modification and renewing whenever new insights are obtained.

The emerging Chinese discourse in a turbulent world

We argued at the outset that Chinese discourse is largely misperceived and misrepresented in mainstream CS. As a matter of fact, we are far from having a universally valid framework of

analysis yet, and we won't until all cultural discourses have been properly discovered and compared and on that basis some kind of cultural inclusive consensus reached (Shi-xu, 2005, 2009). This means that any proposal for studying cultural discourses, whether in terms of their systems or practices, ought to be at once culturally appropriate and intentionally dialogical with regard to other cultural alternatives. It is in this spirit that we shall set out in the following to consider contemporary Chinese discourse and to contemplate its potential contribution to global governance.

In this chapter, contemporary Chinese discourse refers to the emerging communication of China Mainland, as both cultural system and practice, situated in the rapidly changing and increasingly turbulent world, since China joined WTO in 2001 and since 9-11 of the same year shook the world. That time was a turning point because wide and deep change has taken place in the nation, ranging from economic, political, diplomatic, military, technological to social spheres (施旭, 2022). The objective of this chapter is to delineate the Chinese communication as a discourse system. By that is meant the configuration of a set of *communicative mechanisms* (e.g. groups, institutions, facilities, technologies—"the motor system") on the one hand and of a set of *communicative principles* (e.g. worldview, key concepts, values, ways of thinking, principles of acting and rules of meaning—"the nervous system") on the other that a speech community has access to and makes use of in their social interaction. This system determines to a greater or lesser extent the success or failure of their discourse by guiding, enabling and sustaining it. As such it is relatively stable and durable. To increase communicative effectiveness then is to consolidate and coordinate this system.

Local and global context of contemporary Chinese discourse

To characterise contemporary Chinese discourse as a cultural system and so also to appreciate fully its possible global value and use, it will be necessary to consider its local and global context and its relation to it. As argued earlier, a cultural discourse is not isolated from or independent of local and global context but in dialogic and dialectic relation to it, especially given the expected and unexpected winds of the globalising world. This means that the creation and transformation in form and function of the discourse in question will arise and develop in answer to its surrounding shifting circumstances and that the meanings of the Chinese discourse cannot be understood without taking into account its specific and largely unique context. Here several points are particularly worthy of note.

After over 40 years of reform and opening up that started in 1978, China has undergone tremendous change ranging from economic, political, social, and technological to security spheres. As a result, it has assumed a new international status as well. China has moved from a closed society of class struggle (1949–1978) to one that is increasingly open and confident. Since the end of 2021, it has eliminated dire poverty across the nation. With a market-oriented system with Chinese characteristics, since 2010 it has become the world's second largest economy after the United States. In the face of the long-standing global order of division and hegemony, China has repeatedly called for building "a human community of shared future"—a proposal that has been taken up in various UN documents.¹ In that connection China has succeeded in initiating a range of regional and international networks: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (started in 2017), BRICS (started in 2010), AIIB (started in 2013) and LMC (the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation started in 2016). To crown it all, the China-spearheaded Belt and Road Initiative interconnects the Eurasian and African continents through South East Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, which accounts for 55% of the world's GDP, 70% of the world's population and 75% of the world's known energy reserves (Casarini, 2016, p. 96). Now China has embarked on the second-centennial journey of realising the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation, namely, "to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious".²

However, this rise of China as an emerging global player has not engendered universal welcome or acceptance. On the contrary, the incumbent powers, especially the leading Superpower, feel worried about the dominant position they have been enjoying and are anxious to retain that global hegemony. While continuously promulgating the “China threat” theory, the United States has launched a host of programmes and forged myriad alliances directed at China, ranging from political, economic, diplomatic, legal, scientific, technological, informational and territorial arenas: the Indo-Pacific Strategy, China Task Force, the Five Eye Alliance, the boycott of Huawei, to name but a few.

Apart from those anti-China projects, there are even larger, longer and deeper crises of poverty, climate change, nuclear proliferation and the COVID-19 pandemic, now only confounded by the protracted war in Ukraine. And yet, over such human fundamental issues, the majority of the peoples of the world are silenced. The world’s 20% population from the developed countries possess 80% of world information whereas the world’s 80% population from the developing countries do the rest 20% of world information. On the internet, 90% of the content is in English and 5% in French, with the rest of world languages accounting for the remaining 5% (less than 1% in Chinese). The world’s Rest, as a consequence, has fewer rights, opportunities and resources to speak on the world stage; it is less listened to, and to make matters worse, more often than not misrepresented, repressed and exploited (Curran & Park, 2000; Said, 1993; Shi-xu, Prah & Pardo, 2016; Shi-xu, Kienpointner & Servaes, 2005; Shi-xu, 2014).

With a ‘background’ like this in mind, it would be easier to appreciate the precise meanings of the Chinese discourse, including the whys and wherefores. Now let us turn to the ‘internal’ properties of the discourse in question.

The Oneness worldview of contemporary Chinese discourse

Contemporary Chinese discourse is characterised by an image-based worldview which is holistic in nature (Chen, 2004; 秦亚青, 2012). That is, for the Chinese discourse community, the universe is a unified whole, the One, in which all peoples, things and events are parts of a whole and nothing is separable from it. This Chinese cosmological vision can be traced to the *Book of Yijing* 6000–7000 years ago and is reflected in the classical term 天下 (under-the-Heaven). Laozi (ca BC571–471) says, “道生一，一生二，三生万物 (the Way bears one, one bears two, e.g. ying and yang, and two bears three, e.g. ying and yang combined; 道德经)”. Zhuangzi (ca BC369–286) says, “天地与我并生，而万物与我为一(co-exist with Heaven and Earth, and be united with everything, 庄子)”. Thus, unlike the Westerners whose nuclear-oriented worldview prizes them to focus on individual entities, the Chinese tend to pay attention to the entirety of, and the interrelations between, things and affairs of the world and, for that matter, of the lives of people (Cheng, 1987, 1988; 汪风炎, 郑红, 2005).

Today, the most typical re-articulation of this worldview in China’s global political discourse is 人类命运共同体 (human community of shared future). Since its first introduction at the CCP’s 18th National Congress in 2012, the term has become a common and frequent occurrence in China’s international, as well as national, political speeches and documents, at a time when the world is becoming increasingly divided, confrontational and exclusionary and when China heads towards the world’s centre stage while being barricaded by the American-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (cf. Yang, 2020, p. 8). The same concept has been applied to a wide variety of socio-cultural domains but all to remind and foster the ideals of collectivity and sharedness. Take for example such derivatives as 中非命运共同体 (a China-African community of a shared future), 亚太命运共同体 (an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future), 海洋命运共同体 (a maritime community

with a shared future), 网络空间命运共同体 (a community of shared future in cyberspace), 人与自然生命共同体 (a community of life for man and nature), 地球生命共同体 (a community of all life on earth) and most recently 人类卫生健康共同体 (a community of common health for mankind) since the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic.³ Chinese President Xi says, “宽广的太平洋有足够的空间容纳中美” (The huge Pacific Ocean is big enough to include China and America). Arguably, China's trans-continental and trans-ocean initiative, 一带一路 (One Belt and One Road), launched in 2013, is inspired at least in part by the holistic notion. As such, the international programme now involves 65 countries and 4 billion people across Asia, Africa and Europe in myriad ways, effectively offsetting the isolationist and containment strategies of TPP and Asia-pivot. In that connection, one may think of the global institutions of AIIB and BRICS which China has spearheaded. Still another example may be China's continued support of the Paris Agreement on climate change. It is noteworthy, too, that China has initiated a host of regional and international networks, which are open and inclusive, such as Xiangshan Forum, Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (CACF) and China-CELAC Forum, whereby it actively engages large groups of countries, especially those from the Developing World, and emerging economies for discussion and consultation, while participating more and more in international and global dialogues such as the Climate Change Forum and the Shangri-La Dialogue. So despite varied interpretations thereof (e.g. Bujak, 2016; Fallon, 2015; Krukowska, 2016; Misiagiewicz & Misiagiewicz, 2016), the plethora of China's recent international projects of this magnitude cannot be adequately understood or appreciated, perhaps not even imagined (by some nuclear-minded, egocentric culture), unless the Chinese worldview of Oneness is brought into view.

From those expressions and activities, it may be inferred that the Chinese holism and the relations involved are not just spacial but also temporal, social, cultural, technological, etc. Further, the discursive use of the concept rhetorically calls for inclusiveness, unity and cooperation, thereby diffusing or neutralising the current trends of anti-globalization, neoliberalism, populism, protectionism, separatism and so on and so forth.

For discourse research then, efforts may be made to discover whether a holistic conception is appropriated, how the concept is constructed, for what purposes and with what effect. Here in particular, special attention may be paid to the role played by the Chinese tradition of viewing the world. For global communicative practice, the importance and value of this worldview cannot be over-emphasised, given the current international order of worsening polarisation, confrontation, domination and exclusion. It will be useful especially for the policy makers to internalise, promote and practice the holistic and comprehensive view as new and effective guide, resource and tool to tackle the global division and disorder.

The dialectic way of thinking of contemporary Chinese discourse

The Chinese discourse is guided by a dialectic way of thinking, which is often embodied in intuition and imagery. That is, the Chinese speech community tends to view the world in terms of entities, elements or forces that are interrelated and interact with one another, resulting in complex interrelations and constant change. It is therefore a relational, antithetical and dynamic mode of reasoning. From another perspective, it may be said that the Chinese are inclined to heed multifacetedness, multidimensionality and the possibility of change of things and affairs. Functionally, it serves to neutralise adversaries, overcome difficulties or resolve problems or diffuse crises. In this sense, it is a wisdom that is optimistic in attitude.

Laozi says, “有无相生，难易相成，长短相形，高下相倾，音声相和，前后相随” (For “to be” and “not to be” coexist, There cannot be one without the other: without “difficult”, there

cannot be “easy”; without “long”, there cannot be “short”; without “high”, there cannot be “low”; without sound, there can be no voice; without “before”, there cannot be “after”); “祸兮福之所倚，福兮祸之所伏” Good fortune follows upon disaster; disaster lurks within good fortune (老子). Many classical Chinese sayings also bear witness to this kind of dialectic thinking: 你中有我，我中有你 (I am part of you and you are part of me), 以柔克刚 (use tenderness to break the hard), 良言逆耳 (good advice is unpleasant to the ear) and 塞翁失马，焉知祸福 (misfortune may turn out to be a blessing) (cf. 汪风炎, 郑红, 2005). The ancient concepts and practices of 阴阳 (ying yang), 五行 (five elements) and 八卦 (eight diagrams), too, are reflections of this way of seeing, acting and meaning.

Today, in communication to dissolve crises, conflicts, complications, faux pas or other difficulties, the Chinese would point to possible interconnections, interpenetration, complications, oppositions or transformations (Shi-xu & Feng-Being, 2013). Thus, for example, they may speak of interrelation, interconnection, interpenetration, interchange, interdependence, opposition, etc. between or among things or people; mutual complementation between legal and moral governance, dynamics between planned economy and socialism on the one side and between market economy and capitalism on the other side; and coordination between domestic circulation and international circulation. CPC’s proposals for formulating the *14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035* points to the relations of Chinese and foreign, short-term and long-term, part and whole, trunk and branch, construction and demolition.⁴ As the world is too long trapped in the old order of division and domination but beginning to see multi-polarisation, China puts forward the new concept of “profound changes unseen in a century”, and the new initiative of “One Belt and One Road”.

In studying present-day Chinese discourse, it will be imperative then to examine whether, which and how possible complex, multiple and dynamic relations are discursively sought, constructed and used. This also implies that attention should be paid to the social change that such uses of dialectic discourse may bring about. For empirical research, this means specifically that researchers should direct their attention to the ways in which the dialectic strategy operates in contemporary Chinese discourse: how it is constructed and formulated, under what circumstances, in what type of social domain (e.g. politics, business, science, conversation), for what, and by whom.

In global communication, we may apply this dynamic way of thinking to the tackling of such world problems as poverty, climate change, racism, neoliberalism, protectionism, populism, hegemony, anti-globalization and the Cold War mentality. Similarly, practitioners of global communication can also initiate multilateral dialogue and encourage society to embrace polarisation, multiculturalism, win-win-for-all and so on and so forth.

The principle of balanced harmony of contemporary Chinese discourse

In Western culture in general and in mainstream communication theory (including that of rhetoric and media) in particular, the communicator is taken to be autonomous and to communicate is to achieve one’s own goal and get the interlocutor under control. Consequently, learning, teaching and evaluation of communicative practice revolve round the realisation of the speaker’s interests and intentions, through manipulation of audience and expression, or in professional parlance, persuasion. The majority of published analyses of text/discourse/communication/rhetoric focus on the functions, intentions, ideologies or ‘meanings’ of utterances produced by the speaking/writing agent (Miike, 2007).

For the Chinese, in contrast, the overarching concern of action and communication is to seek, create or maintain harmony (cf. Chen, 2001; Wang & Chen, 2010) or, more precisely, balanced

harmony or equilibrium (Shi-xu, 2014, pp. 83–89). That is, to engage in discourse today is to achieve peaceful, amicable and egalitarian social relationship between interlocutors. More specifically, Chinese discourse may be seen as tending to take great store by the Other, the relational and the collective. This would also imply the moral obligation to exercise mutual respect, politeness and rapport and so also to practice opposition or resistance to hierarchy and hegemony. This kind of Chinese communicative ethics may be traced back to the Confucian teachings more than two thousand years ago: 礼之用, 和为贵 (harmony is the most important in the use of rites), 和而不同 (unity in diversity), 中庸 (the mean, or avoiding going to extremes) and 仁 (benevolence) (cf. Zhang, 2002).

This communicative norm can be observed in a slew of contemporary Chinese discursive practices. At home, there has emerged a sustained discourse of building harmonious society (和谐社会). Thus, the mainstream media have continuously drawn attention to disadvantaged groups and increased discussion over the poverty, social inequality, etc.; more recently, they embark on a campaign for common prosperity (共同富裕) as a way to combat economic disparity. Abroad, the Chinese official discourse has repeatedly proclaimed peaceful development (和平发展) as national strategy on the one hand and called for building a harmonious world (和谐世界) on the other hand.

It should be cautioned, however, that the use of the principle is not absolute but may be layered so to speak, that is, when a conflict of fundamental interest arises, counter measures may be taken in order to reach harmony ultimately. One such measure for example is 先礼后兵 (to be courteous first before becoming adversarial) (Chen, 2004).

For research, one may study whether and how equilibrium is sought after, achieved, consolidated, maintained, etc.; similarly, one can look at how cooperation, peace or reconciliation between individuals, groups, communities or countries are brought about, maintained or deepened; likewise, one may examine how distance, differences or disparities are avoided, diverted or abridged. By the same token, one can examine how harmony is reduced, jeopardised, damaged or any way the principle is flaunted; similarly, one can investigate into the ways that friction, conflicts, contradictions and the like are created, enlarged, intensified or prolonged. All such questions are particularly important, not just in relation to the “China threat” theory, but also to the global hegemony that the world powers are striving to retain.

For practice in global communication, one should actively advocate and resolutely uphold the principle of peace, harmony and cooperation. This means that one should on the one hand try to deconstruct, diffuse or divert conflict and domination and on the other hand construct, support and encourage words and deeds of rapport, harmony and collaboration. In the process, one ought to learn to be tolerant, modest and moderate.

The meaning-beyond-form rule of contemporary Chinese discourse

Mainstream Western scholarship has been guided by a weaker or stronger version of the conduit-metaphor of expression and meaning, viz. meaning is contained in the semiotic forms in some implicit or explicit, direct or indirect way; the implicitness or indirectness of meaning may therefore be inferred from the observable forms (i.e. structures and contents). Consequently, the researcher's task and method are to discover meanings from those forms.

To the Chinese, this is over-simplistic. They take communication and meaning, not as bounded by semiotic forms, but as creative processes of social interaction in which communicators are responsive, creative and imaginative. So they do not wholly depend on observable language or other ostensible symbols to convey and consume meaning; besides, they expect interlocutors to be imaginative and creative. In this particular cultural milieu, (meaning of) discourse is taken to

be fluid, open and dialogical, i.e. subject to reconstruction and transformation. Since meaning is not carried in ‘transparent’ vehicles, the recipient or respondent’s interpretation becomes critically important (as well as the researcher’s perspective). Consequently the Chinese have a profound wariness with regard to language. Functionally, they practise this fashion of communication as an artistic way to overcome the tension between the form and meaning, and this art is often realised through imageries, proverbs, fables, poetic lines and even brevity and silence (cf. Medubi, 2010).

In fact the Chinese have been making, and making sense of, meaning by what might be called the rule of meaning-beyond-form, or form-meaning discrepancy, since antiquity. The Daoist philosophy, as represented by Laozi and Zhuangzi, is arguably the foundation of the Chinese cultural conception, experience and practice of the relation between meaning and communication. *The Book of Changes* says, “书不尽言，言不尽意” (Text does not exhaust speech, speech does not exhaust meaning), which exposes the insurmountable chasm between text/talk and meaning. Similarly, Laozi says, “道可道，非常道；名可名，非常名” (The Way that can be spoken of is not the eternal Way; the Name that can be given is not the eternal Name). Zhuangzi advises, “言者所以在意，得意而忘言” (Language is to mean, but forget it once you have attained the meaning). Liu Xie writes in *Dragon-Carving and the Literary Mind*, “文外之重旨者也” (meaning as arising outside of the text and 思接千载 meaning as thousands of miles away from the text). This view of language and meaning is also crystallised in a host of Chinese proverbial sayings: 言有尽而意无穷 (words are finite, meaning is infinite), 弦外之音 (sounds off the cords), 沉默是金 (silence is gold) and 微言大义 (to say little to mean much). Because of this ‘mismatch’ between forms and meaning, many tactics have been created to overcome the difficulty: 依象尽意 (to mean by imagery) and 听其言而察其行 (listen to his/her words and watch his/her deeds) (曹顺庆, 2001).

All that is not to say that the meaning-form discrepancy rule applies invariably across all domains and situations. Scientific or legal settings, for example, may require different ways of applying this rule. But the point is still that it remains a law-like rule underlying discursive practice at a fundamental level.

For empirical research, then, students of contemporary Chinese discourse will have to forsake the conventional, mechanical, restricted, biased and simplistic approaches to meaning and discourse and adopt instead a multi-perspectival methodology in the study of contemporary Chinese discourse. For instance, they may have to extend the analytic focus from the forms of text/talk to the entire communicative event, where all relevant components (whether the hearers/readers, their social statuses, mediums of communication or consequences of communication), their relations and the totality of the event, if relevant, are looked into. It would also mean that the goal of research must not be to monopolise truth and ethics, but to produce tentative, suggestive and dialogical interpretations and evaluations. This implies, too, that research conclusions are temporary and that researchers should continue searching for new meanings.

For global communication, then, one of the crucial tasks is to explicate the Chinese way of meaning-making and more broadly the cultural diversity of speaking, acting and meaning. Beyond that, practitioners must continue to recreate this culturally special way of seeing and speaking that should not only help exert Chinese voice and identity but also engender the need for reflection and conversation. More particularly, they should exploit this technique to neutralise tensions, stimulate imaginations and press for continued dialogue.

There are still many other cultural characteristics in contemporary Chinese communication, which manifest in different social domains and at different levels of specificity, if one takes an intracultural, intercultural or multicultural perspective (Barnett, 1979; De Burgh, 2000; Lee, 2000; Jia, Lu & Heisey, 2002). In and through communication Chinese people are relatively more

patriotic, face-oriented and authority-minded, for example. Love of the motherland would play a major role in communication when, for example, a Chinese scientist has made a discovery, whereas the situation would be different for a Western counterpart. A Chinese would be prepared to endure any hardships for the sake of saving face (死要面子活受罪), whereas a Westerner would try to maintain a positive face but not at the expense of one's well-being. A Chinese with an important social position would be taken as an authority on knowledge and truths, whereas in the Western tradition of Enlightenment logic and facts would be the sole criteria. Chinese expressions often contain parallel structures, rhythmic speech, melodious sounds and rich imagery, not only in formal settings but in everyday settings as well.

Conclusion

We started this chapter by observing that the world is under severe turbulence, and while the old crises of degeneration, division and domination continue to threaten humanity new catastrophes come in tandem to shock the world. In times of such instability and uncertainty, we asked the overlooked and obscured questions of whether and how the contemporary Chinese discourse might possibly serve as a positive and constructive response. They are obscured and overlooked because, as is argued, mainstream communication studies has been Westcentric and consequently fails to appreciate the underlying cultural potentials of the present-day Chinese discourse.

We then suggested that a cultural discourse studies perspective be adopted for a more comprehensive and culturally more appropriate study of the contemporary Chinese discourse system. Parallel to mainstream communication studies, it defines human communication as social interaction in which actors use language and other semiotic means purposefully and consequentially through technological or other channels in particular historical and cultural context. But beyond the mainstream's Westcentrism, it views human communication as a conglomeration of diversified and competing cultural discourses and so advocates the deconstruction of hegemonic discourses on the one hand and the reconstruction of especially unfamiliar or otherwise disadvantaged discourses on the other hand by taking a locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical approach. Ultimately, it aims at enhancing cultural harmony and prosperity.

Accordingly, we showed, first of all, that the contemporary Chinese community has a holistic vision of the universe and tends to take into account all aspects and all dimensions of things in communication, unlike the nuclear view characteristic of Western culture, for example. Second, today's China as a cultural speech community has a dialectic way of thinking, as opposed to Westerners' habit of binary thinking. Third, the emerging Chinese community is guided by the principle of achieving unity in diversity, in contradistinction to egocentrism and dominance seen in the incumbent global powers. Finally, the historically evolved ethnic society of present-day China generally follows the rule of making meaning beyond symbolic forms, in contrast to the formal, explicit, meaning construction as required by Western communication.

With regard to each of these Chinese communication properties, strategies for both empirical research and practical action were also suggested. Thus, given the holism of Chinese discourse, the researcher may look into how and why comprehensiveness and interconnections are achieved in and through communication; the policy-maker as global power may make use of this inclusive view to attend to the interests and concerns of all parties in the global village, whether in the domains of the environment, security or socio-economic development. With regard to the dialectic way of thinking, the researcher may examine and evaluate how and why relations of linkage, interpenetration, interdependence, transformation and oppositions, as well as possibilities of change, are communicated; in global communication practice, one may encourage visionary, balanced and sanguine

ways of thinking, acting and meaning, which are badly needed today especially when neoliberalism, populism, nationalism, racism and the Cold War mentality divide the world. As to the Chinese communication norm of creating or consolidating harmonious-but-independent relation with the Other, the researcher may investigate into how relations of harmony as well as independence are accomplished or harmed or otherwise compromised discursively; the global communication practitioner should attempt to reach the goal of international rapprochement and equilibrium while keeping cultural identity. Regarding the rule of meaning-beyond-form, the researcher may pay attention to what and how meanings are rendered present in and through communication and how they are received and responded to; in and for global communication efforts should be made to exploit this rule in appropriate contexts in order to prevent conflict and achieve maximum win-win outcome.

Notes

- 1 See: Xinhua www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/20/c_136142216.htm; the Chinese concept of building “a human community with shared destiny” was on incorporated into a U.N. Security Council resolution for the first time. Accessed March 3, 2018.
- 2 www.cctb.net/bygz/zywxsy/201504/t20150427_321849.htm. Accessed July 30, 2018.
- 3 <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0423/c164113-31045369.html>; www.xinhuanet.com/mrnx/2021-04/24/c_139902211.htm; http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzA4OTIyMjUyOQ==&mid=2654668919&idx=1&sn=03d9c7c8693b466fcc21e42c3737d559&chksm=8bd19499bca61d8f8f8057ae64bfeef6a1c9e8ef4cd6d2e3828cd45372ab00c6764339f8b3&mpshare=1&scene=23&srcid=0413jZg6xHiz422zLjt3rsGX&sharer_sharetime=1649820024751&sharer_shareid=597f3af7baace1c2d4331665b326020d#rd; http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5NzI3NDg4MA==&mid=2658742921&idx=1&sn=cca72a9786f8bf5a5239ee78fb7d8790&chksm=bd51e6e68a266ff08a72c0872a5fad463dc680b0fb9bee145e30ef20572738ac1eed5b2113a2&mpshare=1&scene=23&srcid=0413LXCVoHd7wfwWrGhfMHKq&sharer_sharetime=1649820487736&sharer_shareid=597f3af7baace1c2d4331665b326020d#rd; www.xinhuanet.com/mrnx/2020-11/21/c_139532066.htm; www.xinhuanet.com/mrnx/2020-11/21/c_139532066.htm; <https://baike.so.com/doc/24249021-25191505.html>. Accessed April 14, 2022.
- 4 <http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/1103/c90000-9776034.html>.

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11

ETHNIC MEDIA IN MULTICULTURAL RUSSIAN SOCIETY

A cultural discourse studies approach¹

Anna Gladkova and Elena Vartanova

Introduction

In recent years, scholarly attention to ethnic media and ethnic journalism has increased. Attempts have been made to draw a line between ethnic, local, diaspora and community media (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011); to study ethnic news media in a broad digitalisation context (Jamil, 2020) and to track current development trends of ethnic media in specific regions of the world, including the Global South (Gladkova, & Jamil, 2021). However, in a large number of cases academic attention has been so far centred primarily around ethnic journalism in Europe (Arnold, & Schneider, 2007) or North America (Yu, 2018). Russia so far remains relatively underexplored when it comes to the analysis of ethnic journalism and ethnic media, with several studies outlining the current state of play in the Russian ethnic media (Gladkova, & Vartanova, 2021) or digging deeper into ethnic journalists' professional practices and routines (Gladkova, & Mkrtchyan, 2021).

The chapter fills in this gap by providing an overview of Russian society as a pluralistic/diverse society in terms of the number of ethnic groups and the number of languages in public use. Thus, it serves to identify different cultural forms of communication of ethnically characterized communities, widely represented in the Russian Federation. This chapter also goes on to highlight one of the major issues of CDS paradigm by focusing specifically on the barriers to establishing cultural harmony and prosperity within a complex multicultural context. It shows that in big multi-ethnic societies providing equal opportunities for cultural representation and engagement through media channels for all minor ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups can be a serious challenge. Different languages, cultures, religions and contexts in which these languages and cultures coexist create different identities in multicultural societies; different uses of languages lead to differences in meanings these languages transmit. In this context, we approach cultural discourse studies (Shixu, 2015, 2016) as an essential and important framework for understanding cultures, languages and identities of ethnic groups in Russia and their representations through ethnic media channels. The aim of this chapter is therefore to discuss how cultural discourse studies can be applied to the study of ethnic media in Russia, and why this should be done in the context of the multicultural and multi-ethnic character of the Russian society. We consider this topic to be of high importance both for Russian academic discourse on multiculturalism and pluralism in media space and for cultural

discourse studies discourse in general, given the fact that ethnic media—in Russia or elsewhere—have not been earlier approached through CDS theoretical lens. We think it is an important and promising area that can hopefully be developed in other works too.

In this chapter, we rely on fundamental principles of cultural discourse studies suggested by Shi-xu (2014), including the very first principle, that is “to study human communication holistically and dialectically” (Shi-xu, 2014, p. 28). In multi-ethnic contexts such as the Russian context, cultural discourse studies allows for a holistic approach to communication between and also across ethnic communities, relying to a large extent on transdisciplinary and multicultural perspectives in research work (Shi-xu, 2015). When it comes to ethnic media, cultural discourse studies brings together media, languages, historical paths, religions and cultures of ethnic groups approached and understood as closely related and, in many ways, inseparable parts of ethnic groups’ identities, rather than focusing just on one specific aspect. Thus, to fully implement the holistic approach espoused by cultural discourse studies, culturally diversified, competing and interpenetrating discourses within the Russian society are viewed as a unity of interconnecting elements, both on an intracultural and intercultural levels. The aforementioned approach allows for a better understanding of ethnic media and their mission: identity-building, strengthening cultural diversity and pluralism in media space, improving interethnic relations and contributing to human cultural coexistence, peace and prosperity.

In our study, we also use a broader theoretical lens of the cultural discourse studies theoretical paradigm, showing that culture is an integral part of the life practice of a social community in relation to others, complex and dynamic, rather than fixed to people, place or time (Shi-xu, 2016, p. 2). Last but not least, we show in this chapter that the cultural discourse studies approach currently remains understudied in the Russian context, arguing that the important role of this approach in a multi-ethnic and multicultural Russian setting should be further closely examined in other works. In centring our research attention on a rather unchartered area of ethnic journalism in a non-Western country, we attempt to deconstruct ethnocentrism in society and scholarship, hoping to contribute to this crucial mission outlined by CDS paradigm.

Multicultural Russian society: Background

Russia is one of the most multi-ethnic states in the world, and its vast territory has always been a patchwork of different ethnic groups. According to the Russian census of 2010, there are over 190 ethnic groups in the territory of the Russian Federation speaking more than 170 languages. Among the biggest ethnic groups, except for ethnic Russians, according to the data of 2010, are Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash and Chechens. For 138 million out of 142.9 million people living in the territory of Russia, Russian is their mother tongue. Other widespread languages are Tatar, Chechen, Bashkir, Ukrainian and Chuvash. Oftentimes people speaking these languages, and other ones, which are less frequently used, speak Russian too, thus being bi- or even trilingual.²

Peoples living in Russia can be roughly divided into three groups: ethnic groups mostly residing on the territory of the country (Russians, Chuvash, Bashkir, Tatars, Komi, etc.), peoples of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Kazakhs, etc.) and small units of ethnic groups mostly residing outside the territory of the Russian Federation (Romanians, Hungarians, Abkhazians, Chinese, etc.). While all three groups constitute important elements of the Russian population, the first group is particularly well-represented in Russia by numbers.

A detailed overview of challenges faced by ethnic media in their attempt to regain position as a full-fledged participant of egalitarian and sustainable dialogue is needed to propose new strategies

of enhancing cultural prosperity. Preservation and revitalisation of the multiculturalism of the Russian society implies addressing certain challenges, such as formation of a harmonic intercultural environment. This problem seems even more relevant in the light of the tense socio-political situation. The increasing number of ethnic conflicts in Russia stems from different problems, such as lack of intercultural communication, inadequate media representation of ethnic groups as a result of low level of mass media responsibility and other factors. Open interethnic clashes oftentimes result from the stereotypic perception of people belonging to other cultural, ethnic and linguistic communities. Numerous researches of ethnologists, psychologists, sociologists, media and culture scholars—both domestic (Verevkin, 2009; Minyar-Belorucheva, & Pokrovskaya 2012; Mishlanova, & Sirotkina 2013; Gladkova, 2013; Petrova et al., 2014; Vartanova, 2018) and international (Contini, 2013; Elchardus, & Spruyt 2014; Loennqvist et al., 2014; Ivanic, Bates, & Somasundaram, 2014) analyse stereotypes about ethnic groups, provide the insight into their nature and highlight possible consequences of ethnic clashes for the society. Scholars discuss the role of negative stereotypes in increasing the number of conflict situations, which in turn can provoke open confrontation between representatives of different ethnic groups (Ufkess et al., 2012).

In this context, the problem of increasing the level of trust in other ethnic communities—the phenomenon, which is referred to as “out-group trust” (Gundelach, 2014)—seems to be essential, specifically for big multi-ethnic societies such as the Russian society. The phenomenon itself has received extensive coverage in many research papers so far. Alesina and La Ferrara (2002), for example, presented a detailed analysis of different factors, which influence the degree of trust in the representatives of other communities, including the ethnic ones. Among such factors the authors named so-called personal factors (level of education, income, etc.) and belonging to the groups, which were traditionally exposed to harassment of different kinds (here we can talk about ethnic minorities), as well as typological characteristics of the society. Gladkova and Korobeynikova (2016) showed in their study that internet users in Russia tend to lack information about ethnicities in mainstream media and demonstrate a certain interest in learning more about other ethnic groups in Russia through media channels. Ethnic media in this vein can be a valuable platform for making ethnic cultures, languages and historical backgrounds known to a broader audience, contributing to cultural diversity and pluralism.

In CDS paradigm, this line of research coincides with the principles of intercultural analysis, which studies interactions between cultural discourses in terms of both cooperation and resistance. Moreover, if we look at the phenomenon of out-group trust from a cultural discourse studies perspective, we may note that its role in fostering intercultural-intellectual dialogue and debate, all with a view to enhancing human cultural coexistence, harmony and prosperity, is essential (Shi-xu, 2015). In a situation when representatives of different ethnic groups generally trust each other; perceive each other positively rather than negatively and know about the culture, way of living and traditions of other ethnic communities, conflicts on ethnic grounds occur more rarely, and the intercultural dialogue between people belonging to different ethnic and cultural communities becomes more productive and beneficial.

Development of ethnic media, targeted primarily at specific ethnic groups and at the same time making their cultures, languages, historical backgrounds, views, standpoints, needs, etc. known to a broader audience—in the case of Russia this would be a Russian-speaking audience—may positively influence the level of out-group trust, such as the audience’s interest in and knowledge about other ethnic groups. This turns out to be exceedingly important for building interethnic and intercultural dialogue. In this vein, ethnic media can contribute to creating and promoting a shared set of global, international and multicultural standards of cultural discourse studies. Among them Shi-xu (2014, p. 30) names cultural coexistence, equality and prosperity. They can help identify,

characterize and adjudicate, for example, practices of cultural deprivation, imperialism and ethno-centrism, or else cultural inclusion, diversification, reinvention, advancement and harmony (*ibid*). Closer attention to ethnic media in multi-ethnic Russian context is therefore very important in a broad theoretical sense, both for ethnic media's ultimate mission of identity-building and culture/language preservation, as well as for implementation of cultural discourse studies' fundamental principle "to use cultural harmony and prosperity as basic criteria" (Shi-xu, 2014, p. 28), which is specifically relevant for big multi-ethnic and multicultural societies around the world.

Ethnic media as means for communication across cultures and ethnicities in Russia

In previous sections, we have been approaching the mission of ethnic media through cultural discourse studies broad theoretical paradigm, discussing the issues of identity-building, support for pluralism and diversity, a need for harmonizing interethnic relations and much more. However, these key issues can be in many ways applied to ethnic media in general, regardless of where they are produced, registered or disseminated. This is proved by recent studies on ethnic media in different regions of the world, including countries of the Global South (Elmaghraby, 2021; Mat-silele, & Maunganidze, 2021).

At the same time, we think it is essential to illustrate our broad theoretical points with some concrete examples from ethnic media practices in Russia. In this section therefore, we will provide some insights into ethnic media landscape in the country, showing that Russian ethnic media are not homogeneous. There is cultural diversity within ethnic media, as well as differences in measurable criteria such as audience numbers, circulation rates and others. This is in line with general vision of human communication being both global system and a culturally organized system that includes "diverse and competing discourses of ethnic communities (hence cultural discourses)" (Shi-xu, 2022, p. 11). We will show that there are also common challenges most ethnic media experience today; still, ethnic media in Russia are very different from each other and should be approached holistically as Shi-xu (2014) suggests, with respect to their individual features and cultural specifics which make them unique.

As we have been stressing earlier in this chapter, mass media are widely considered to have the capacity to influence interethnic relations. They are believed to contribute greatly to the formation of public attitude towards different ethnic groups, which lays an additional responsibility on journalists, who must be particularly sensitive and subtle while touching upon such matters. Besides, mass media serve as a certain guarantee of ethno-cultural pluralism in the society and provide a unique platform for indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities to make themselves seen and heard by a larger public. In this regard, a particularly essential role in safeguarding ethno-cultural pluralism of Russian society is played by ethnic media.

The definition of ethnic journalism proposed by Blokhin (2008) points to its significance for the future of the multicultural Russian society: "Ethnic journalism facilitates self-understanding, consolidation and integration of peoples' ethnicity and serves as means of preservation and promotion of their cultural identity". Although a number of Russian scholars studied the role of journalism in regulating interethnic conflicts, ethnic journalism remains a rather under-researched area in Russian academic discourse. While outlining the dynamics of ethnic media in Russia, we will refer to the comprehensive overview of the Russian ethnic media conducted by Lomonosov Moscow State University research team (Gladkova, Kulchitskaya, Cherevko, & Lazutova, 2016), as well as to different studies by other Russian scholars, such as Garifullin (2018), Magadeeva (2018), Potapov (2018) and others.

A closer look at different types of media allows us to get a more in-depth perspective on the distinctive features of ethnic media. The dominance of state-owned media holds especially true for print and electronic media outlets, while audio-visual media, though also predominantly state-owned, are characterized by the presence of the private sector. The state is a clear leader on the republican print market; in the Republic of Tatarstan, for example, among the 65 Tatar language newspapers and 17 Tatar language magazines, 47 and 13 are owned by the state. The situation with TV and radio stations in Tatarstan is quite opposite—the majority of Tatar language TV and radio stations are in private hands. Among them are TV stations Maidan and TMTV, radio stations Tatar Radiosy and Kurai, online Gong-TV and others. At the same time, regional authorities own the republican branch of the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK)—GTRK Tatarstan, which broadcasts TV and radio programmes in both Russian and Tatar. Tatarstan–Novyi Vek, a large regional media holding, is partially controlled by the state as well.

All state-owned media outlets in Tatarstan are grouped together under Tatmedia—the biggest regional media holding in Russia, which owns 98 newspapers, 14 magazines, 17 TV stations, 10 radio stations and 80 electronic media, as well as the information agency Tatar-inform.³ Among them 43 newspapers are published in Russian, 49 in Tatar, 5 in Chuvash and one in the Udmurt language. Total circulation of newspapers owned by Tatmedia in January 2020 was 230,570 copies. However, regardless of the dominant position of Tatmedia on the republican media market, the number of private media outlets (newspapers *Irek Meidany*, *Akcharlak*, *Beznen Gezhit* and others) in the last few years has been growing.⁴

A notable feature of audio-visual ethnic media is its bilingualism, with the programmes presented in Russian along with the ethnic language. There is a very small number of ethnic media functioning only in minority languages. The dominant functions performed by ethnic audio-visual media outlets are those of entertainment, information and education.

Print media outlets are characterized by thematic diversity; however, this is rather attributable to magazines, while the scope of newspapers is mostly social and political. A notable characteristic of ethnic print media is that an outlet can be available in several ethnic languages spoken in the region, and the circulation varies accordingly. In the Republic of Bashkortostan, for example, the publishing house Republic of Bashkortostan was established in 2015 to optimise the budget funding allocated for state print media in the republic. It currently consists of 68 branches, which produce 153 newspapers and magazines in total (86 of them are published in languages other than Russian). The publishing house advocates for the support of ethnic media, which is reflected in the proportion of Russian and non-Russian print media outlets it produces: out of 11 all-republican newspapers, for example, three are in the Bashkir language, two in Tatar, one in Chuvash, one in Mari and one in Udmurt, while only three are in Russian (Khakimova, 2017, 2018).

The registered online media in ethnic languages constitute less than 10% of the total number of internet media. Notably, electronic media follow the trend of multilingualism, and websites often provide at least two versions. Normally, the content is presented in Russian and dubbed into the minority language, though sometimes an ethnic-language version is developed rather poorly or, in some republics such as Mordovia, Udmurtia, Crimea and Dagestan, is not present at all. No monolingual websites in ethnic languages have been identified. The fact that the Russian language is prevalent in online ethnic media could be partially explained by the logic of the internet space. Internet search engine mechanisms are adjusted to the Russian-language content, which leads to the better indexation of Russian-language websites. Thus, ethnic-language online media have lower commercial potential and require additional commitment of effort and finances without attracting new audiences and bringing actual profit.

Though each type of ethnic media is marked by its own characteristic features, the general observation is that such media are often rather underdeveloped and need systematic support from the government, since low amount of advertising in ethnic media systems of advertising makes ad-based business model almost unavailable for ethnic media (Vartanova, 2013; Gladkova, & Vartanova, 2021).

This is further emphasized by many findings. For instance, regional editorial offices experience severe lack of experts speaking minority languages, and Russian language remains dominant for the print media addressing ethnic issues. Among other problems the scholars identified extreme instability and low viability of local media businesses, negative dynamics of the minority language use, archaic working principles of editorial offices, management inefficiency, absence of well-devised marketing strategies, thematic imbalance and irrelevance, audience erosion and lack of education among local journalists (Kravchenko, & Abrosimova, 2017). Uneven development of ethnic media in different regions is another shortcoming that should be addressed. For instance, media in ethnic languages are rather well-developed in Tatarstan,^{5,6} Bashkortostan, Dagestan and Chuvashia.^{7,8} These regions are characterized by a substantial number of publications in minority languages, which in some cases exceed or equal the number of the material published in Russian (Gladkova, Kulchitskaya, Cherevko, & Lazutova, 2016). They are also more successful in adapting to the new digital realities: expanding the use of new technologies, adopting multimedia formats, exploring online space and modernizing the work of editorial offices. This is not the case for many other regions. However, the challenges outlined earlier are still being faced even by the most successful regions. It should be added here also that even aforementioned republics, despite being homes for many different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, are different from each other. While Tatarstan, Chuvashia and Bashkortostan have their own titular nations that constitute the majority in the republics (Tatar, Bashkir and Chuvash), Dagestan is more polyethnic, multicultural and multilingualistic.

Another serious issue that should be mentioned here is lack of digital skills among ethnic journalists in Russia, which are getting more important as all media are gradually shifting to online. For ethnic media, this trend is specifically important due to a number of advantages online can bring. This includes among other things broadening the audience by reaching out to young people who are active online media users, trying out new platforms for communication, using visualization and multimedia instruments in content production and much more. Still, as current research shows (Gladkova, & Ragnedda, 2020), the digital divide, not only at the first access-determined level, but also at the second skills-oriented level, remains a serious problem in the Russian regions. Many people working for ethnic newsrooms and editorial offices, particularly elderly people, are not able to use digital technologies and are not confident internet users either. This area of research is of particular importance for CDS paradigm, which, among other action rules, is committed to sensitizing global scholarship for crucial issues of societal-technological advancements.

The scholars may point out different development paths of ethnic media in the regions, however all experts come to the general consensus that ethnic journalism aims to preserve national culture, form ethnic identity and help peoples reflect on their position in the world. Besides, it facilitates dialogue between different peoples of the region, contributing immensely to interethnic harmony and stability. The content analysis of such media outlets concludes that one of the most popular functions is promotion of the indigenous language, as well as history and culture of the ethnic groups historically settled in the region. For instance, the Bashkir media aim to educate the population and cultivate love for the local culture, with the key thematic areas being the history, traditions and modern culture of the Bashkirs (Magadeeva, 2018). Komi-Permyak media promote

language and other elements of the ethnic identity of this ethnic group and introduce local culture to other ethnic groups of the region (Kulichkina, 2018). Tatar media aim to foster all-round development of the region, still revolving around such topics as local traditions and customs, patriotism and religion, while also touching upon agricultural and political issues. The scholars also outlined the significance of Tatar print and electronic resources dedicated specifically to the issues of education, which play an important role in developing the educational environment for the peoples of the Russian Federation (Garifullin, 2018). The thematic scope of Mordovian ethnic media is consistent with the outlined trends, with many media outlets focused on the local art and being of crucial importance for the cultural development of the region (Potapov, 2018). The same holds true for many other regions and ethnicities.

We may conclude by saying that in multi-ethnic and multicultural Russian society ethnic media contribute to linguistic and cultural pluralism in the media sphere and foster mutual understanding across ethnicities. In this context, ethnic journalism and media/communication fields in general should be approached not only through their industrial structures and professional practices but also—in a broader sense—through the social mission they perform. Multiple ethnic groups residing in the territory of the Russian Federation have their unique cultures, traditions, values and beliefs, which need to be protected in the modern globalized world. Following cultural discourse studies' approach here, we believe that the support of ethnic and cultural diversity contributes to intercultural-intellectual dialogue and debate, enhancing human cultural coexistence, harmony and prosperity (Shi-xu, 2006). In a situation when representatives of different ethnicities know about the cultures, ways of living, traditions of other ethnic communities, misunderstandings and clashes on ethnic grounds occur more rarely, and the intercultural dialogue between people belonging to different ethnic and cultural communities becomes easier.

In this and the preceding section, we have resorted to a range of explicit approaches formulated within an integrated system of cultural discourse studies. Within the framework of intracultural analysis, we have outlined the peculiarities of different ethnic discourses, both in terms of communicative institutions and communicative values and principles that jointly uphold a sustainable communicative practice of each ethnic group. Following the same principles, we have reiterated the importance of concepts and strategies of meaning-making specific to and inherent in each particular ethnic group. Through cross-cultural and pancultural analysis, we explored both variations and commonalities between different cultural discourses. In particular, general observations of common trends and challenges lying ahead of ethnic media in Russia are coupled together with a rich palette of specific examples that aim to provide a much needed nuancing in the area. As part of intercultural analysis, we have defined the power relations between different discourses, while axiocultural analysis allowed to draw practical recommendations for future development strategies. This multi-level analysis framework proposed by CDS paradigm proved to be an apt way to explore the rich and complex multi-ethnic discourse system of the Russian Federation.

As far as the six interlocking components of CDS are concerned, we have attempted to briefly outline each facet, however, a substantial portion of the section explores the purpose-related aspect, which is closely linked to the goals and missions, along with the effects and consequences of the discursive activities. A specific focus on the mission goes in line with one of the key tasks of CDS paradigm, which ultimately aims to create new discursive strategies in order to ensure continued, egalitarian and sustainable communication of different cultural groups. Moreover, by studying the development paths of disadvantaged cultural discourses and looking specifically at their problems and potentials, we hope to eventually empower those communities with new tools of reclaiming their identities and making them visible in the public space.

Conclusion and ideas for future research

In conclusion, let us reiterate a few important issues and draw possible lines for future research on ethnic media in Russia or elsewhere in the world. First of all, we fully agree with Shi-xu, arguing that human discourse is today re-conceptualised as a multi-faced but integrated communicative event in which people accomplish social interaction through linguistic and other symbolic means and mediums in particular historical and cultural relations (2016, p. 3). While looking at ethnic media in Russia through their broad mission, we think an important question in cultural discourse studies should be addressed, that is the interrelation of linguistic means (spoken or written texts) and contextual meanings that lie behind texts/talks in human communication. What Shi-xu (2009, p. 35) calls “meaning-in-language vs meaning-beyond-language” is a reflection of cultural differences contributing and shaping differences across historical and cultural contexts. By contexts here we mean diverse manifestations of social and cultural reality, affecting and in a way creating media and communication environment we live in—“media life” (Deuze, 2012) and our “life in media”.

We believe that linguistic means and communication through media channels should be studied in close connection with contexts in which they appeared rather than stand-alone forms and representations. In this chapter, by showing a diversity among ethnic languages and ethnic cultures in Russia, we discussed the diversity of contexts, identities, meanings and representations these languages and cultures create and transfer in polyethnic Russian society. The role of languages in constructing people’s identities, preserving ethnic cultures and transferring unique meanings to a broader audience can therefore substantially vary. In this vein, we expect our chapter on Russia to contribute to a broader discussion about the role of context in language, discourse and communication studies and the way minor ethnic cultures and languages are represented through spoken and written texts, including new forms of communication in online space.

While speaking about the interplay of textual forms and contexts, another important aspect should be considered, that is a need for less Westcentric approach to cultural and cultural discourse studies analysis. Scholars note that “Eastern wisdoms in understanding the universe can also be mobilized for the paradigmatic reconstruction, for identity, creativity and authenticity” (Shi-xu, 2009, p. 38), which is particularly true when it comes to cultural and discourse studies. The choice of Russian context for this study was therefore determined by this need for shifting academic focus from Western paradigms to the currently understudied Eastern part of the world, including ‘Emerging States’ and other countries (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2020).

Finally, given the multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual character of the Russian society, more studies on ethnic media and ethnic journalism in this region are needed today, as well as a closer examination of the interplay between textual forms and contexts in ethnic media environment. It is important to discuss the role of ethnic media in protecting cultures, languages, history and identities of ethnic groups in Russia and in other non-Western contexts; to examine professional, economic, technological and other challenges ethnic media experience today and to foster their work in securing ethno-cultural diversity in public space. What is more, research on the role of context in language, discourse and communication studies, and the way minor ethnic cultures and languages are represented through spoken and written texts, including new forms of communication in online space and social networks, is certainly needed today.

Notes

- 1 This work was done with the support of MSU Program of Development, Project № 23-SCH02-16
- 2 Chislennost i razmeshchenie naseleniya [Number and Location of the Population]. (2010). Retrieved from www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm.

- 3 Tatarstan: reiting SMI za 1 kvartal 2018 [Tatarstan: Media Ranking for Quarter 1, 2018]. (2018). Retrieved from www.mlg.ru/ratings/media/regional/6082/.
- 4 Lidery podpiski na gazety i zhurnaly 2018/1 [Newspaper and Magazine Subscription Leaders in 2018/1]. (2018). Retrieved from <http://sj-rt.ru/lidery-podpiski-na-gazety-i-zhurnaly-2018-1/>.
- 5 V Tatarstane za 2017 god zaregistrirovano 96 novykh SMI [96 New Media Outlets were Registered in Tatarstan in 2017]. (2018). Retrieved from www.tatar-inform.ru/news/2018/01/29/595147/.
- 6 Tatarstan potratit na podderzhku gosudarsvennykh SMI v 2016 godu pochti 1,2 mlrd. rublei [Tatarstan will Spend Almost 1,2 bln. Rubles on the Support of the State Media in 2016]. (2015). Retrieved from <http://prokazan.ru/business/view/71991>.
- 7 SMI Chuvashii [Chuvash Mass Media]. (2018). Retrieved from http://gov.cap.ru/SiteMap.aspx?gov_id=243&id=1257750&title=Sredstva_massovoj_informacii.
- 8 Podvedenyi itogi respublikanskogo konkursa sotsialno znachimykh proektor SMI 2018 goda [Results of the Republican Contest for Socially Important Media Projects 2018 Have Been Announced]. (2018). Retrieved from <http://info.cap.ru/news/2018/02/27/podvedeni-itogi-respublikanskogo-konkursa-socialjn>.

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12

A CULTURAL DISCOURSE CALLED SCIENCE

Ringo Ossewaarde

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present science as a cultural discourse, whereby the focus is on science in Europe. In the European historical context, “science”—understood as the academic and passionate quest for knowledge as a distinctive “calling” (Weber, 1958)—historically evolved in communities of intellectuals. In Europe, this first took place in ancient Athens, where the legislator Solon had the Delphic maxim “Know Yourself” inscribed in all public places. Solon established an intimate connection between political community and intellectual community development. Athens came to attract all sorts of intellectuals—sophists, philosophers, mathematicians, historians, etc.—from all over the Greek world; hence Athenian science became a multi-Greek phenomenon. When communities of intellectuals became more institutionalised and formalised—starting with Plato’s Academy—they became “discourse systems”. Organisations, facilities, procedures, platforms, publications, etc. and a particular academic vocabularies, intellectual styles and constructions of reality came to sustain intellectuals’ discursive practices, often in relation to the discourses of other communities (cf. Carbaugh, 2007; Shi-xu, 2014, 2016). With Plato’s Academy, science becomes a textually mediated construction of reality. Through Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws*, 35 Socratic dialogues and 13 epistles or letters (traditionally identified as authentic), an academic culture is produced as a bastion of civilisation against the decline of the Athenian politico-intellectual complex that had been designed by Solon—a decline that is illustrated by the trial and death of Socrates. After Plato, European intellectual culture throughout the ages is reproduced and transformed, typically in response to events like the Macedonian conquest of Athens, the founding of the Carolingian Empire, the Reconquista of Toledo, the fall of Constantinople and the rediscovery of ancient texts, the discovery of the New World, the reformation wars in Western Europe or the rise of totalitarian ideologies.

Understanding science as a cultural discourse comes with a vision of science that is not so much specified by scientific achievements as by the discursive manner in which it is conducted. All sorts of scientists, living through different historical epochs, attempt, in different ways, to create some sort of an intelligible world of arranged conceptual expressions in an attempt to achieve an intellectually satisfying conceptual world. In Europe, intellectuals that follow the Platonic academic trajectory present truth as the highest object of desire; knowledge is the best healing power; the

mind, intellect or *nous* is the highest human faculty that makes everything intelligible and Socrates, for most of European history, is the wise or truthful intellectual who lives “the examined life”. In the European context, science conceived as a cultural discourse is a site of intellectual contestation (like the contest between Socrates and the poets in ancient Athens or the clash between contrasting intellectual currents like classicism, enlightenment and romanticism in Western Europe), cooperation between scientists (for instance, in Socratic dialogues or the formation of discourse systems like Plato’s Academy) and transformation of academic culture via clashes between intellectual currents and scientific responses to events. Until the 17th century, scientific responses to events in Europe always assumed the form of a quest for a renaissance. The founding of the Carolingian Empire or the Reconquista of Toledo, for instance, always came with the urge to return to the original, Athenian, intellectual world and to intellectually follow in the footsteps of the great minds of ancient Greece that were typically deemed to be superior in wisdom and style. The scientific response to the West European reformation wars and their aftermath (post-war reconstruction) establishes a radical break with this renaissance pattern, igniting an altogether new, modern definition of science and a new intellectual construction of reality that informs enlightenment science. In the past two and a half centuries, enlightenment science has become predominant and dominating science in Europe—and has typically been the preferred discourse system for the rulers of modern European (typically imperial) states—yet this post-classical reconstruction of science is not without contestation. In modern Europe, science—particularly human science—has developed through the dialectical clashes between hegemonic enlightenment science and its classicist and romanticist rivals. By reconstructing science as a cultural discourse that is marked by intellectual diversity, it becomes possible to uncover hegemonic intellectual imperialism (expressed in ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism) and marginalisation of other communities of intellectuals, with a view to making intellectual culture flourish and shape a political sphere according to reason or intellectual insight (rather than according to mere intellectual domination) (cf. Shi-xu, 2014).

Science as a discourse system

As a cultural discourse, science is marked by its own discourse system—its organisations (like the academy or university), facilities, vocabularies, styles, ways of thinking, foundational concepts, scientific values, rules of action, etc.—that sustains intellectuals’ discursive practices, including publications of intellectual texts (cf. Carbaugh, 2007; Shi-xu, 2014, 2016). Originally in Europe, science, in the ancient Greek sense, is born from wonder, astonishment or awe, as intellectuals ponder on the mysteries of reality. At the same time, as Socrates understood the pursuit of truth, knowledge and the examined life, science also presumes the care of the soul or mind (the *nous*) since only the wholesome, unified soul that has overcome its internal conflicts can catch a glimpse of the ultimate truth. The Socratic care of the soul or mind expresses itself in the formation of our inner life, for instance, through the development of our consciousness and attentiveness, openness and receptiveness, which in turn enables us to come closer to the truth. It is for the sake of the soul and the truth that the intellectual is committed to a lifelong process of questioning public opinions, accepted truths and consensuses. By living such an examined life, a more humane world of truth, justice and freedom—the best life for human beings and society—could be politically founded on reason (as opposed to a foundation on unquestioned traditions, which may include dehumanising beliefs and practices, the illegitimate use of power and the oppression of particular classes of people).

In Europe, Solon’s design of the Athenian city-state was defined by an intimate connection between Athenian political and intellectual development, which prepared Athens’ Golden Age

(480–404 BCE)—an epoch marked by a flourishing political and intellectual culture in which the most important (that is, religious, political and moral) dimensions of human life were discussed by a wide diversity of intellectuals. Yet when Athens lost the Peloponnesian War (404 BCE), and thereby lost its political dominance to Sparta, the Athenian city-state disintegrated, and the persecution of intellectuals and silencing became common practice. Hence, the persecution or silencing of intellectuals, whenever their intellectual pursuits (like uncovering inconvenient facts or secrets) come to be seen as destabilising the political establishment (Strauss, 2001). The poet Miletus initiated prosecution against Socrates, the most important intellectual of Athens and the teacher of Plato. Socrates was found guilty of impiety (not believing in the gods of the city-state was typically perceived as a reason for having lost the war) and of corrupting young Athenians with his intellectual teachings. In 399 BCE Socrates was sentenced to death by the Athenian state court. In Europe, the trial and death of Socrates is the original trauma for intellectuals—a trauma that is at the heart of science as a discourse system. After the Golden Age, however, intellectual endeavours like those of Socrates could no longer be orally transmitted on the streets of Athens. Science became textualised, books were written and libraries were organised. Plato founded the Academy in 387 BCE. Later, in 335 BCE, Plato's pupil, Aristotle, founded the Lyceum (also called the Peripatetic school); a few decades later, in 307 BCE, Epicurus founded the Garden, while Zeno of Citium taught at the Stoa Poikile in Athens from around 300 BCE onwards. All these schools set out to pursue the “examined life” in their own Socratic ways. (The Cynics, including Antisthenes (a pupil of Socrates) and his famous pupil Diogenes the Hound, provocatively resisted the institutionalisation of science that begins with Plato's Academy. Like Socrates, they taught on the streets.)

As the quest for knowledge became institutionalised, different schools of intellectuals developed, each having its own distinctive conceptual repertoire, vocabularies, style of teachings, conventions and particular intellectual commitments. Such schools, starting with Plato's Academy, set out to *conserve* the Socratic legacy in texts—thereby establishing and transmitting what Kuhn (1957, p. 100) calls the “the ancient learning tradition”. This ancient learning tradition is constituted by particular values and visions of the human and world, and it communicates these same values and visions. In this tradition, science is born from wonder or awe, igniting a passion for truth and justice. Political rulers frequently take an interest in preserving the ancient learning tradition and thereby shape a vibrant intellectual culture as it had once existed in Athens' Golden Age. Ptolemy I Soter was the first ruler who, after the Macedonian conquest of Athens in 338 BCE, sought by every means to shape a Hellenistic renaissance in Alexandria, which was to become “a second Athens”. During his reign (323–285 BCE), Ptolemy created a magnificent community of intellectuals, the Alexandrian school, around the Museum and Library, luring the greatest Greek minds, such as Demetrius of Phaleron, to Alexandria (Parsons, 1967). In “Christian Europe”, rulers like Charlemagne and Otto I followed similar trajectories. The Carolingian renaissance of the 8th and 9th centuries as well as the Ottonian renaissance of the 10th and 11th centuries are attempts to establish a community of intellectuals and shape a flourishing intellectual culture. Charlemagne instituted cathedral schools and attracted scholars from all over Western Europe, like Alcuin of York, to organise the Academia Palatina in the palace of Aachen. Otto I, the first holy Roman emperor, also attracted court intellectuals and founded libraries and schools that would eventually pave the way for the first medieval universities in Europe. Ptolemy I, Charlemagne, and Otto I, like Solon and Pericles before them, established an intimate connection between political and intellectual development. There have also been rulers who destroyed entire communities of intellectuals. Nero, Vespasian and Domitian, for instance, banished, murdered or exiled all intellectuals from Rome, to crush the “Stoic opposition” that had dared to criticise their tyrannical rule.

It is precisely because science is a cultural discourse that it can stand in tension with prevailing political discourses. Historically, in Europe, rulers have tended to consider science and intellectuals as dangerous because the latter are, like Socrates, perceived as undermining the status quo.

The development of the first medieval universities in “Christian Europe”, from the (late) 11th century onwards, helped to institutionalise science as a discourse system more firmly. Increased contact with the Byzantine world and the Muslim world paved the way for the renaissance of the 12th century. When Toledo (one of the leading centres of learning in the Almoravid Empire in Spain) was captured in 1085, the city’s impressive library was preserved, and hitherto unknown texts became available for European scholars (Ede, 2019). And when Constantinople was sacked by crusaders in 1204, many Greek manuscripts were brought to Italy and translated into Latin by translators like James of Venice and William of Moerbeke. The texts of major Persian scholars associated with Baghdad’s House of Wisdom, including the works of Al-Khwarizmi (*Algoritmi*), Al-Fārābī (*Alpharabius*) and Ibn Sina (*Avicenna*), were all translated in Latin and studied in the newly established medieval universities, while the Arabic numeral system was gradually adopted in Europe. Newly discovered works of Plato and Euclid were translated from Arabic and Greek into Latin. Yet it was particularly the texts of Aristotle that had hitherto been unknown in Latin Europe that provided a new academic vocabulary in the 12th century. Indeed, the first medieval universities in places like Bologna, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge and Salamanca became Aristotelian discourse systems facilitated by the Roman Catholic Church (Kuhn, 1957). At the heart of the Aristotelian worldview is the metaphysical belief that all realities (nature, human nature, society) are invested with potentialities to realise pre-given, natural purposes of life. Human beings, for instance, are in this classical cultural discourse naturally endowed with a political nature, which means that, if cultivated properly, they may come to realise their potential political nature in acts of citizenship. In the renaissance of the 12th century, the medieval universities, mainly consisting of Christian monks, normalised the Aristotelian cultural discourse—particularly, Aristotelian logic and Aristotelian metaphysics.

In Europe, the renaissance humanism of the 14th, 15th and 16th century, beginning with Petrarch’s denunciation of the Middle Ages as “the Dark Ages” (characterised by a dull, spiritless, dogmatised intellectual sphere), eventually superseded the hegemonic Aristotelian discourse of the medieval universities. Renaissance humanists replaced the scholastic disputations and contentions with a playful, less ordered, essayistic and more poetic scientific style, typically embracing ancient intellectuals other than Aristotle (Cicero was widely admired among renaissance humanists). Renaissance humanists criticised the Aristotelian discourse system, which according to them, had been stifled by metaphysical systems, logic and dogmas. Scholastic learning failed to ignite the Socratic sense of awe, the art of irony and academic style found in Cicero (who had, of course, as a Roman citizen, studied in the Academy in Athens, in the 1st century BCE). The Aristotelian discourse system, however, was powerfully institutionalised in the medieval universities. The renaissance humanist counter-discourse was mainly developed by intellectuals who were usually not associated with the university (instead they typically occupied political offices). Yet the renaissance humanist discourse system eventually did penetrate the medieval university, to the point that the Aristotelian discourse system disintegrated (Kuhn, 1957). That decisive break came in the 16th century, with Copernicus’s heliocentric model of the universe in which the sun was presented as the center of the solar system. In the Aristotelian discourse system, the universe—the most valued concept for ancient or classical intellectuals—is the example of order and the cause of all order in particular communities and in the soul or mind. With the Copernican Revolution the universe becomes an accident; hence human existence becomes a contingency, so that cultural values and the meaning of human existence is no longer cosmologically supported. As Hans Jonas (1992, p. 323) puts it, with

the Copernican Revolution, “values are no longer beheld in the vision of objective reality, but are posited as feats of valuation”. After the Copernican demolition of the Aristotelian discourse system, the renaissance humanist discourse system science as a cultural discourse evolved as a quest for the construction of a new understanding of reality (nature, human nature, society). This is an effort that begins with Francis Bacon’s experimental approach to science in the early 17th century and comes to an end with the construction of the Newtonian worldview in the early 18th century.

The advent of the enlightenment discourse system and its rivals

In Europe, the era of renaissance humanism is the last period in which intellectuals, frequently supported by rulers and eventually (albeit very late) also by the Roman Catholic Church, sought a wholesome revival of the classical learning tradition. In the 17th century, the break with the classical learning tradition becomes the new foundation for a new discourse system that is marked by a strong belief in, and commitment to, mathematical and technical knowledge and a certain failure to recognise other, non-technical, knowledge. In this new discourse system, the care of the soul is no longer a primary concern, and it is no longer deemed to be the precondition for the quest for knowledge and the examined life. The notion that the soul is related to the ultimate truth in a mysterious manner gets lost as the very idea of mystery becomes incoherent in a Western Europe that is marked by the reformation wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. What is called “mystery” now becomes ignorance. Since knowledge and truth are now no longer conceived to belong to an extra-human realm, there is the increasing belief that the right “scientific method” can determine the laws of human life. In other words, there is a shift from the classical, Socratic quest for existentially relevant knowledge and the yearning to grow in wisdom to the desire for methodical certainty and to possess the truth. The distinction between the subject (the scientist) and the object that is studied is of crucial importance in the new cultural discourse of enlightenment science.

René Descartes is arguably a good personification of the new cultural discourse, which develops in the context of the West European reformation wars and the rise of West European colonialism (Toulmin, 1990). Descartes is one of the first intellectuals who searches for universal, scientific truths that transcend political and religious differences. Such a quest for universalism gives rise to a new discourse system (a new scientific vocabulary, new concepts, a new method, etc.). Ideas no longer belong to a realm independent of human minds, but they are instead *in* human minds. His dualism between mind and matter (body) is a way of reconciling his physicalism and his belief that the human mind can know the truth. In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes replaces Socratic scepticism (anti-dogmatism) with his method of systematic doubt. The Cartesian method seeks to surpass the Socratic dialogue with its uncertain outcomes to arrive at certain knowledge, articulated in monologue, mathematical exactitude, logical rigour and uncontested proof (Toulmin, 1990; Taylor, 2016). *Cogito, ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”) is the only truth claim that survives the Cartesian method of systematic doubt as an indubitable statement. Both Descartes’s political context (wars and the breakdown of communities) and his predilection for the physical sciences have consequences for his discourse system. In contrast with the ancient thinkers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, etc.), his point of departure is no longer the political community of citizens but is instead the isolated individual whose thoughts are apparently unrelated to his bodily existence. The human body thus becomes a complex machine composed of repairable or replaceable parts (Marx, 2008). In the new discourse system, the world becomes an objectifiable whole constituted by parts that can be isolated and studied. The mechanistic worldview is presumed and embraced in the early 18th century by Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who enthroned calculus as an “exact science”, the great achievement of enlightenment science.

Enlightenment intellectuals like Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Baruch Spinoza, Newton and Leibniz seek the emancipation of their discourse system from what they consider to be restrictions imposed by the ancient learning tradition. These restrictions, they claim, are based on ancient prejudices, biases and dogmas—they are rather aristocratic and catholic. According to the new cultural discourse, everyone has the responsibility and capacity to think for themselves; everyone must have the courage to use his or her own intelligence and common sense without the extensive study of ancient texts. The blind reliance on the teachings of the purportedly great minds (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, etc.) is condemned by Immanuel Kant as a manifestation of immaturity and lack of autonomy. A well-known and oft-cited fragment from Kant's "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" is his definition of "Enlightenment":

*Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is *self-incurred* if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: *Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding!*

(Kant, 1991, p. 54)

Kant's advice captures in a nutshell the new cultural discourse. As Foucault emphasises in his comment on Kant's famous dictum, enlightenment science refers first of all to

an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.

(Foucault, 1984, p. 50)

The dominance of enlightenment science, however, does not mean that there is one single discourse system. The coexistence of different cultural discourses does not end with the advent of enlightenment science. Particularly after the French Revolution, and in the context of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of a technological civilisation, classicist intellectuals who are committed to the Platonic, Aristotelian and renaissance humanist traditions point out the limitations and flawed assumptions of the popular enlightenment discourse. Classicists like Alexis de Tocqueville mainly criticise enlightenment intellectuals for their Newtonian, physicalist worldview; contempt for the past and zeal for a rationalist reconstruction of society, without concern for historical context or established traditions; habits; past achievements; etc. (Tocqueville, 1998). The enlightenment conceptualisation of social reality according to mechanistic principles—manifest in the works of the French physiocrat economists (such as François Quesnay and Richard Cantillon)—Tocqueville emphasises, fails to do justice to the complexities of historical contexts and the inherent ambiguities of human reality. The classicist intellectual is dumbfounded by the enlightenment obsession with the right methods, the reduction of science to naturalist science and the prejudice that industrial revolution or technological achievements are the crown of intellectual endeavour. From a classicist perspective, the enlightenment discourse system leads to the mastery of society, via centralisation, standardisation, massification, automation, etc., which frequently has violent political implications (like the bloodshed of the French Revolution) (de Tocqueville, 1998) or the horrific cruelty of totalitarian statehood and the Shoah (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972).

Romanticist science is yet another counter-enlightenment science that emerges in the late 18th century. Romanticist intellectuals conceive the theoretical rift between nature and the scientist

presupposed by enlightenment science as conceptually untenable, intellectually impoverishing and existentially unbearable. One of the most eloquent critiques of the enlightenment discourse system is articulated by Rousseau in his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*. Romanticist intellectuals revolt against what Stephen Toulmin (1990, p. 7) calls “the mechanistic ‘inhumanity’ of Newtonian Science”. The Newtonian picture of the stable system of matter, movement and laws does not confine itself to the so-called “natural sciences” but instead determines the enlightenment discourse system. In this enlightenment understanding, nature is thought of as a “natural resource” to be exploited for purposes of self-preservation and civilisational development labelled, in the enlightenment discourse system, as “progress” (Marx, 2008). Social scientists committed to the romanticist discourse system therefore reject the enlightenment picture of social reality as some sort of mechanical clockwork and instead conceive reality as a dynamic cultural complex of multiple, historical realities. In his proto-romanticist *Scienza Nuova*, Giambattista Vico emphasises that the “scientific method” endorsed by Descartes and Newton is a human invention, created to explain certain phenomena. Given the fact that the method identifies and isolates correlates from total reality, it necessarily overlooks other possible perceptions and explanations. It is based on choices and typically ignores non-mechanical processes. Mathematical methods, Vico explains, are handy instruments to simplify the complexity of reality (which is sometimes useful), but they must not be confused with truth claims. The practical usefulness of the “scientific method” cannot replace the unique value of folk languages, for instance, which, unlike the former, express unique historical realities (Berlin, 1979). While romanticist intellectuals share certain intellectual and moral commitments with classicist science—and are particularly inspired by the intellectual creativity, style and playfulness of renaissance humanists—they do not endorse the classicist discourse system (Ossewaarde, 2007). A romanticist scientist such as Max Weber, for instance, abhors what he considers to be the inferiority complex vis-à-vis the great minds of classical antiquity. Rather than shaping a new renaissance, romanticists seek to create a new, modern culture marked by imagination, intuition, creativity, expression, love of nature, uniqueness, spontaneity, etc. (Lovejoy, 1960). Of course, it does not mean that there are no sediments of the ancient past in the romanticist discourse system.

The persistence of scientific discourse systems

With the development of enlightenment science, science comes to mutate more than ever through dialectical clashes between enlightenment, classicist and romanticist discourse systems that respond in different ways to historical events and transforming societal contexts. In the early 20th century, with the Russian Revolution, the collapse of the Habsburg Empire and the rise of totalitarian ideologies (communism, fascism) in an emerging industrial-technological civilisation, science once again finds itself in a problematic relationship with the state. Once again, Europe disintegrates. Totalitarianism rises in Europe, which promises persecution and the political spreading of falsehood and conspiracy theories, politically backed up by dubious pseudo-scientific claims. In contrast with the West European reformation wars, the 20th century disintegration of Europe does not ignite a new scientific discourse system. Instead, enlightenment, classicist and romanticist discourse systems persist, each responding to totalitarianism in different ways.

In the context of the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, enlightenment science manifests itself in the logical empiricism of the Vienna Circle. These Vienna Circle scientists, such as Kurt Gödel and Karl Menger, and associated intellectuals like Ludwig Wittgenstein and Karl Popper, believe that the “scientific conception of the world” could oppose the totalitarian and ideological conceptions of the world. The Vienna Circle seeks to counter the instrumentalisation of science into a political

genocidal tool. The prevailing totalitarian ideologies of that era, including fascism and communism, draw on science (for instance, racial theories or theories of class conflict) to legitimise totalitarian rule. The intellectuals of the Vienna Circle blame metaphysics for such a political abuse of science and therefore strive to establish a naturalist science free from vague or ambivalent language (like the vague classicist language of the Socratic “care of the soul” or the vague romanticist language of “mind” or “*Geist*”) that is so vulnerable to perversion. These early 20th century enlightenment scientists, quite in line with Descartes, believe that formalism, methodical procedure and logical analysis represent the true and “pure” science that would be able to resist ideological falsehoods. They thereby presuppose the sharp separation between the scientific discourse system and reality, the former mapping reality in a mathematical (typically Newtonian) model of the world. Conceptualisations of reality that do not obey the law of logic are thus devoid of scientific legitimacy. The cultural discourse of the Vienna Circle exempts scientists from the duty of being concerned about the most important—typically political, religious and moral—things in human life since these cannot be captured in unambiguous or logical statements (Kolakowski, 1972).

Just as romanticist discourse systems emerges as a critique of enlightenment science, phenomenological discourse systems emerge as a critique of the naturalism—the description of reality in terms of physical things (like atoms, mass, molecules, utility, IQ, DNA, etc.)—that is endorsed by the Vienna Circle. Like the Vienna Circle, phenomenological intellectuals, such as Edmund Husserl and Jan Patočka, respond intellectually to the totalitarian threat to science (and to culture as such) in Europe, but they do so by endorsing different elements of the classicist and romanticist discourse systems. Phenomenology tries to reconvey the classicist and romanticist idea and intuition that the scientific mind and the studied or researched reality are intrinsically connected and thus are never completely independent of each other. According to phenomenologists, the mind is an embodied entity, and accordingly, the human body is the medium of perception and experience of reality—and this reality is not an abstract, ahistorical, decontextualised reality described in formula or mathematical language or codes but is some concrete, lived reality that is historically unique. Husserl blames enlightenment science for the rise of totalitarian ideologies. He identifies enlightenment science—its naturalism (Newtonianism, Darwinianism, etc.) in particular—as a “misguided rationalism” (Husserl, 1970, p. 290). The rationalism of enlightenment science, Husserl points out, is abstract, with reality captured in logical statements from which no cultural direction at all can be elicited. In the absence of science, these are the questions that ideologies and mythologies answer—hence the rise of irrationalism (the irrationalism of the fraudulent myth of the Aryan race or the coming victory of the proletariat)—amid a highly rationalised technological civilisation. According to phenomenologists, totalitarianism cannot be defeated by naturalism or logic that fails to address the most important existential questions of life. To defeat the totalitarian ideologies, science must address the most important existential questions of life, just as Socrates did. In other words, it is not logic but a revitalised intellectual (that is, phenomenological) culture—which for phenomenologists have both classicist and romanticist ingredients—that is endorsed as the intellectual pathway for overcoming totalitarianism (Husserl, 1970; Patočka, 2002).

The conceptualisation of science as a cultural discourse or, more precisely, as a constellation of clashing scientific discourse systems, is corroborated by the fact that postcolonial scientists accuse mainstream enlightenment scientists of being committed to a Eurocentric or “Westcentric” (Shi-xu, 2016) science. The purported universal, “neutral” or non-ideological nature of enlightenment science, including the naturalism embraced by the Vienna Circle, is thereby disputed. Instead, postcolonial intellectuals point out that since enlightenment science emerged, developed and flourished in the context of West European imperialism, it necessarily bears the mark of a (post-) reformation culture geared to mastery and domination. In many ways, the political possibility of

pacifying the reformation wars and the post-reformation reconstruction of Western Europe was facilitated by slavery, the plundering of resources from the colonies and the shipping of fanatics and extremists to the colonies (Schmitt, 2003). The enlightenment science of the 17th century tended to legitimise sovereign state-building, colonialism and race-based slavery based on the alleged ignorance and “immaturity” (to borrow Kant’s concept) of the mastered indigenous peoples in the colonies who allegedly lived in a pre-political “state of nature”. After the disintegration of the European empires, postcolonial science—born in the political context of the independence struggles of the colonies—emerges as a critique of enlightenment science, which it identifies as Eurocentrically biased and corrupted by imperialist interests. Postcolonial scientists like Edward Said, and forerunners like Franz Fanon, have unveiled the extent to which these enlightenment intellectuals succumbed to racist prejudices by portraying “other” peoples as underdeveloped, irrational, barbarians, natural slaves or “inferiors” (Toulmin, 1990, p. 134). Kant, for instance, who never left Königsberg in his entire life and had no concrete experience of “other” peoples, claims that the “negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the ridiculous”, while native Americans are a “race, which is too weak for hard labor, too indifferent for industry and incapable of any culture” (Kant cited in Allais, 2016, pp. 3–4).

The postcolonialist critique of Eurocentrism or Westcentrism can be understood as a specific romanticist critique of enlightenment science. The postcolonialist discourse system is romanticist in the sense that it endorses the intellectual focus on unique historical realities and embraces cultural newness, strangeness and cultural ambiguity as the typical cultural and political manifestations of concrete and emergent realities. In his *Orientalism*, Said criticises enlightenment science precisely for conceptually crushing such historical uniqueness and cultural diversity, by making non-Western or (formerly) colonial realities peripheral or irrelevant—or marginalised as “unenlightened”, “occidental”, “underdeveloped”, “irrational”, “eccentric” or “barbarous” (cf. Shi-xu, 2016). Given its Eurocentric bias, enlightenment science reduces diverse cultural realities to the reality or paradigms of the West European world (Asante, 2006), describing and judging non-European or non-Western worlds from a culturally one-sided, stereotypical and ethnocentric—and typically culturally racist—West European angle through which it imperialistically reiterates “European superiority over Oriental backwardness” (Said, 2003, p. 7). De Sousa Santos (2014) explains that the enlightenment discourse system is a manifestation of a “cognitive empire” that conquers the discourse systems of non-Western worlds, thereby committing an “epistemicide”. Sousa Santos points out that the West European empires are not only genocidal in their silencing of indigenous peoples and their histories in the past 500 years up to today but that a West European imperialist discourse system—cognitive empire—also marginalises indigenous knowledges of reality. In their attempt to negate the epistemicide committed by Eurocentric scientists, postcolonialist scientists seek to enact “epistemologies of the South”. Thereby, postcolonialist romanticism endorses epistemic diversity and intercultural dialogue, based on a fundamental equality of knowledges and appreciation of non-Western, particularly indigenous, cultures (de Sousa Santos, 2014).

The influx of people from (former) colonies, political refugees, guest workers and other types of non-European migrants into Western Europe since the 1950s is yet another event to which enlightenment and romanticist discourse systems have responded differently. Such migration affects the cultural character of West European nations in the sense that such nations become more culturally diverse, even amounting to “superdiversity” of cultural minorities (cf. Ossewaarde, 2014). In the enlightenment discourse system, multicultural diversity is considered problematic, as potentially upsetting post-reformation civil peace. For instance, in the 17th century, Locke (1991), the father of liberalism, would not extend toleration to the Catholic minority in England, on the grounds that as Catholics allegedly owed allegiance to a papal authority they could not be trusted in their

submission to the sovereign state. In predominantly protestant nations like the Netherlands, Catholics and Jews were tolerated yet systematically and officially discriminated until the second half of the 19th century. In the enlightenment discourse system, the nation is typically presented as a given monocultural (typically national) unity that is marked by a certain cultural homogeneity, a *Leitkultur* of the nation's core values and a canon of the nation's key cultural achievements (Ossewaarde, 2014). The enactment of the monocultural unity in the enlightenment discourse system does not necessarily imply hostility to the influx of non-Western migrants; yet in the monoculturalist discourse system migrants are expected to compromise their own cultural identity and assimilate into the nation. For monoculturalist scientists, the reality of such a nation is naturalised as an uncontested entity.

In contrast with the enlightenment discourse system, romanticism endorses multicultural diversity and cultural encounter as a breeding ground for new imagination and creativity and reinvention of nationhood. In the context of migration, romanticist intellectuals criticise the cultural bias of enlightenment science. Multiculturalist romanticist discourse systems are designed for opening up the nation and accommodate for cultural diversity amongst citizens, thereby negating the West European nation as a typically white, male, middle class and protestant enterprise (Verdi and Eisenstein Ebsworth, 2009). Multiculturalist scientists typically endorse the romanticist worldview of the nation as an emerging artwork, a dynamic mosaic to which people with diverse cultural backgrounds come to add new imagination, creativity, reinterpretation and reinvention (Ossewaarde, 2014). As multicultural strangeness enriches national culture, it is to be accommodated, facilitated and represented, rather than marginalised in a monoculturalist reification of nationhood (Shi-xu, 2016). In multiculturalist romanticist discourse systems, science itself is a multiculturalist enterprise—just as the Golden Age of Athens has been a multi-Greek phenomenon. Multiculturalist scientists seek to shape multicultural scientific communities, marked by inclusive multicultural universities, multicultural diversity on university campuses, multiculturalist curricula and linguistic diversity, beyond the current monoculturalist hegemony in Western universities and scientific publications (cf. Luchtenberg, 2019). In the multiculturalist discourse system, science ought to be a manifestation of heterogeneous knowledges of a diversity of voices engaged in a dialogue and mutual learning, giving recognition and credit to diverse intellectual legacies (Demeter, 2021).

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, a few faces of science have been portrayed, thereby correcting the misconception of science as an acultural, universal, indisputable and unbiased method or set of knowledge and truths. As a cultural discourse that is constructed by intellectuals, science is thoroughly cultural and reflects the variety of human cultures throughout history and in different contexts. Throughout European history two contrary intellectual orientations that prevail in different scientific discourse systems seem to inform the quest for scientific knowledge: one is characterised by the high priority accorded to certainty, order and mathematical precision; the other one reflects the awareness that reality can never be fully objectified and that ambiguity and uncertainty are inherent to science. The first orientation is especially visible in what in West European modernity has come to be dubbed the “life” or “exact” sciences, while the second one is especially discernible in the so-called “human” sciences. However, both orientations can be present in every branch of science. In European history, the most dominant form of orientation that has driven the quest for knowledge has tended to be the one informed by the love of certainty, precision and order—it is an orientation that can be found in the medieval Aristotelian discourse system as well as in the enlightenment discourse system. This cultural domination of one intellectual orientation has in turn incited

counter-discourses. In Europe, both the dominant cultural discourse and counter-discourses take different forms in different historical contexts and develop in response to different historical events. It remains to be seen whether the scientific discourse systems that will develop in the context of the current grand societal challenges—the challenge of the ecological crisis in particular—will be powerful enough to address the imminent danger of total annihilation. A West European enlightenment discourse system that favours precision and objectification has been blamed for the ecological crisis since it conceives nature as a “natural resource” to be exploited for civilisational purposes (Marx, 2008). This discourse system is still dominant and popular despite the delegitimisation of its premises (Gehlen, 1980, Ossewaarde, 2015). Conceived of as an existential threat in the face of an ecological crisis, it still informs insalubrious knowledge-power relationships that drive new industrial revolutions that governments seek to rule (Ossewaarde, 2019; Ossewaarde and Gülenç, 2020). The big question, therefore, is whether and when the mastery drive and the domination of enlightenment science will give way to classicist and romanticist discourse systems that may be more open to the igniting of awe and wonder—and celebrate awareness of other, more profound, understandings of reality. The first step to change is perhaps the awareness that science is essentially a cultural discourse subject to intellectual clashes and changes.

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13

FREEDOM DISCOURSE

Manfred Kienpointner

Introduction

There is no doubt that “freedom” is one of the most fundamental and most controversial concepts in the history of human thought. Some abstract concepts can even belong to the so-called “essentially contested concepts”, that is, concepts which are “inherently subject to multiple interpretations, depending on your values, concerns, experiences, goals, and beliefs” (cf. Lakoff, 2006, p. 23; the term “essentially contested concepts” was introduced by W.B. Gallie in 1956). Examples for essentially contested concepts are “democracy”, “capitalism” and “communism”. The concept of “freedom” certainly belongs to these essentially contested concepts.

But Lakoff is right in pointing out that even “a contested concept has an uncontested core” (2006, p. 23f). This conceptual core can be defined on the basis of the distinction between positive and negative freedom. Positive freedom is the freedom of giving one’s actions and activities an aim, a self-selected direction (“freedom to”); negative freedom is that state of not being inhibited in one’s potential of actions and activities by some external force (“freedom from”). In philosophy, “positive freedom” vs. “negative freedom” have been distinguished, for example, by Isaiah Berlin. He defines them in the following way (1969, p. 169; cf. also Fromm, 1980, p. 30):

- (1) “I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others” (negative freedom).
- (2) “I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men’s acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside” (positive freedom; cf. Berlin, 1969, p. 178).

Negative and positive freedom can be seen as universal building stones of the concept of “freedom”. More specific concepts of “freedom” can vary widely across languages and cultures, and they can be inclined more towards negative or more towards positive freedom, respectively. But somehow anyone of these more specific, highly controversial concepts of “freedom” involves some degree of negative and positive freedom.

Language-specific aspects of “freedom”

I now turn to the language-specific semantic properties of lexical items referring to the concept of “freedom”, which I would like to call “freedom words”. These freedom words certainly are cultural “key words” in the sense of Wierzbicka (1997, p. 15ff): “‘Key words’ are words which are particularly important and revealing in a given culture”. Key words are also very frequent, as can be shown by taking a look at computer corpora. In order to describe language-specific semantic nuances which distinguish the meaning of freedom words, the notion of “core meaning” has to be introduced. However, the very existence of “core meaning” has been questioned in philosophy and linguistics. Therefore, before I try to describe the core meaning of freedom words, I have to justify the need for, and the usefulness of, the concept of “core meaning”. In order to do this, I follow Coseriu (1988, p. 266ff) in distinguishing three dimensions of semantics:

- (1) Meaning (“Bedeutung”) in the narrow sense is the language-specific core meaning, exclusively based on the relationship between the “signifiant” and the “signifié” of a sign. More specifically, it is the position of the meaning of a sign within a paradigm of semantic oppositions in a given language. Core meaning is what is taken for granted by the members of a speech community, a kind of cultural common ground.
- (2) Reference (“Bezeichnung”) is the relation between a sign and the extra-linguistic object to which it refers. At the sentence level, reference deals with the truth conditions of declarative sentences. The reference of a word can be highly controversial, especially as far as essentially contested concepts such as “freedom” are concerned.
- (3) Sense (“Sinn”) is the relation between a sign and the context, namely, the infinite contextual variants of the core meaning in relation to a certain speech situation, a verbal context and a social, institutional and cultural context. Senses are created in texts and discourse. These are the levels of language where competing concepts of “freedom” are brought forwards by individuals belonging to differing subgroups of a speech community. Discursive genres such as political speeches and parliamentary debates are the “battleground” where more or less powerful groups within a culture try to make their own use of “freedom” the dominant one (cf. e.g. the fierce debate between Republicans and Democrats in the United States concerning the “correct” use of freedom; see Lakoff [2006, p. 73ff] on “conservative” and “progressive” freedom).

How can this semantic trichotomy be justified? This question has to be answered specifically for the concept of core meaning because prominent logical and philosophical approaches have tried to demonstrate its lack of clarity, precision and insufficiency (cf. Quine, 1971, p. 20ff; Putnam, 1975, p. 269). Similarly, text linguists and language philosophers have argued that core meaning does not exist because we can approach language only via the analysis of text/discourse. Therefore, all that we can empirically observe is an unlimited number of senses which are contextually given and constantly changed in text and discourse (cf. Weinrich, 1993, p. 17; Deppermann, 1999, p. 125; Recanati, 2004, p. 146).

These are important arguments against the assumption of the existence and usefulness of the concept of core meaning. However, core meaning cannot be replaced by reference or sense, as the following four main arguments plausibly show (for a more detailed discussion cf. Kienpointner, 2008, 2021):

- (1) First of all, only initially does reference look like the better alternative to core meaning. This is especially the case when only well-defined concrete entities such as cats, water,

or bachelors are given as an example for the reference of words. However, very often the reference of abstract concepts is unclear, vague and the subject of controversial debates or it even belongs to the “essentially contested concepts” such as “democracy”, “justice” and, most importantly for this contribution, “freedom”. In these cases, the core meaning of freedom words is a better alternative to their highly controversial reference and can be established, for example, by looking at empirical data such as definitions given in large dictionaries.

In the case of the English lexical unit *freedom*, this core meaning is reflected by definitions such as in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE), where *freedom* is defined as follows (Longman, 2003, p. 641):

- (1) *freedom*: 1 . . . the right to do what you want without being controlled or restricted by anyone . . .
2 . . . the state of being free and allowed to do what you want.

Of course, core meanings are not Platonic ideas and have to be justified on the basis of empirical data (cf. Kienpointner, 2008, p. 92). This can be done by systematically looking at the use of lexemes in texts. If the core meaning underlies all contextually enriched senses of the lexeme, this is a plausible empirical argument for the adequacy of the assumed core meaning. For example, many context-specific uses of *freedom* can be subsumed under the general definitions given earlier, for example, *freedom from slavery*, *freedom from torture*, *freedom of expression*, *freedom of thought*, *freedom of religion*, *equal freedom of property*, *equal freedom to vote*. At this contextual level, there are endless controversies about how “freedom” can be precisely defined. However, the same examples also show that many senses, that is, contextual variants of core meaning, can be subsumed under the much more general and abstract core meaning of *freedom*, as given in the LDOCE (cf. Coseriu, 1988, p. 188; Recanati’s [2004, p. 24] term is “enrichment” for this phenomenon).

- (2) At this point, text linguists and discourse analysts could bring forward another argument against core meaning, namely, that there are also contextual variants of meaning which cannot be subsumed under the core meaning, for instance, metaphorical, metonymic, ironic, hyperbolic contextual variants (cf. Recanati’s [2004, p. 26] term “transfer” for this phenomenon). This is true, but there is an asymmetry between figurative uses of *freedom* and the core meaning of *freedom*. The former can be derived from the latter via Gricean conversational maxims as conversational implicatures (cf. Grice 1975) but not the other way around. This has to do with the fact that abstract concepts as the target domain of metaphorical mappings “are abstract, diffuse, and lack clear delineation” (Kövecses, 2002, p. 24), while concrete concepts are relatively much easier to process.

Therefore, we metaphorically understand “love” as a “journey”, “argument” as a “building” and “time” as “money”, but the reverse does not apply. Similarly, we do not infer the core meaning of *liberty* from a contextually given metaphorical meaning, for example, a divine woman moving forward holding a torch in her right hand (cf. the Statue of Liberty).

- (3) Furthermore, from a cognitive perspective, the concept of core meaning has come under attack because the theory of prototype semantics (cf. Kleiber, 1998) has been used to refute the possibility of assigning necessary and sufficient properties to each member of a category. The empirical results of psycholinguistic experiments have led Rosch/Mervis (1975, p. 574ff) to the conclusion that there is no property which is necessarily shared by all members of a category (referring to Wittgenstein’s [1975, p. 57] term “family resemblances”). Moreover, they

claim that there are fuzzy borders between any two categories, referring to examples such as the “meaning” of *night* and *day*, *hot* and *cold*, *green* and *blue*.

This is true as far as the reference of these lexemes is concerned, because you can indeed find many fuzzy borderlines between empirical phenomena such as night and day or the colour green and the colour blue, etc. However, this observation is not true as far as language-specific core meaning is concerned where you have a clear antonymic opposition between English *night* and *day* or *green* and *blue* etc.

- (4) Finally, dynamic approaches to semantics (cf. Kindt, 2021, p. 203ff) have stressed that the semantic aspects of words are constantly changing in context, a fact which cannot be taken into account by a synchronically fixed concept of core meaning. But one does not need to hold such an inflexible view of semantics. Coseriu has developed a fully dynamic view of semantics, and also claims that language is a creative dialogical activity (1958, p. 40). Therefore, the semantic system of a language is not a static structure, but the result of the continuous dialogical realisation of this structure by its speakers. In this view, the semantic system of a language exists because “it is constantly done” by the speakers and listeners of a speech community (“el sistema existe porque se hace”; Coseriu, 1958, p. 154). The relative stability of the structures of the language system is due to the fact that most of the time we do not change but reproduce the system, with only small modifications.

Having this theoretical background in mind, one can take a closer look at the subtle semantic differences which distinguish the core meaning of freedom words in different languages. Here we first have to distinguish between languages having only one basic freedom word (where “basic freedom word” is understood as being very frequent, morphologically relatively simple and semantically very general), such as Latin *libertas*, German *Freiheit* or French *liberté*, and languages having two freedom words, such as English *freedom* and *liberty*, Russian *svoboda* and *volja* (cf. Wierzbicka 1997, p. 145) and Turkish *özgürlik* and *hürriyet*.

Beginning with English *freedom* and German *Freiheit*, their high frequencies in computer corpora and the equally high frequency of the two collocations *freedom from* and *freedom to*, for example, *freedom from fear*, *freedom from oppression*, *freedom to speak*, *freedom to move*), and similarly *Freiheit von Angst* (“freedom from fear”) and *Freiheit zu reisen* (“freedom to travel”) not only show that they are cultural key words, but also confirm that *freedom* and *Freiheit* are flexible as far as their context-specific use for negative and positive freedom is concerned.

For example, in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA; with more than 1,000,000,000 words), there are 81,822 instances of *freedom*; in DEREKO (*Das Deutsche Referenzkorpus*: “The German Reference Corpus”; ca. 50,000,000,000 words) there are 595,374 tokens of *Freiheit*. Moreover, in COCA there are 2,515 instances of *freedom from* and 6,773 instances of *freedom to*. Similarly, instances of negative freedom such as the collocation *Freiheit von Angst* “freedom from fear” can easily be found in DEREKO (112 instances). On the other hand, highly frequent German compounds such as *Pressefreiheit* (“freedom of the press”; 44,023 tokens in DEREKO), *Gedankenfreiheit* (“freedom of thought”; 1,683 tokens in DEREKO) are instances of “positive freedom”. Of course, the two collocations *freedom from/freedom to* and *Freiheit von/Freiheit zu* are ambiguous in English and German and to not always refer to negative and positive freedom, but the high number of instances does show that *freedom* and *Freiheit* are very general freedom words, which can be equally used for the expression of negative and positive freedom.

This is not the case with other freedom words. For example, English *liberty*, a loanword from French *liberté*, has a strong tendency to be used for positive freedom. In COCA, the collocation *liberty*

to occurs 1,365 times, whereas *liberty from* has only 85 occurrences (note again that not all these instances are referring to positive or negative freedom, but the proportional difference is striking).

This tendency is even stronger in the case of Italian *libertà*. The highly frequent collocation *libertà di* (“freedom to/liberty to”) is dominant (cf. *libertà di pensiero* [“freedom of thought”], *libertà di parola* [“freedom of speech”], *libertà di stampa* [“freedom of press”]), and there seem to be only peripheral uses of *libertà* in collocations such as *libertà da X*, which focus on negative freedom. According to di Mauro (1999, p. 961), who always also provides information about the frequency of words and expressions and the register to which they can be assigned in contemporary Italian, phrases such as *libertà dalla paura* (“freedom from fear”) belong to the less used, rather old-fashioned expressions in the Italian language. This is also confirmed by a search in the computer-based corpus *CORIS* (a corpus of written contemporary Italian; 156,000,000 words). Here the collocation *libertà da* occurs only 54 times, whereas *libertà di* is much more frequent with 3,951 occurrences.

This tendency towards positive freedom seems to be strongest in the case of French *liberté*. This is maintained by Wierzbicka (1997, p. 146) and can be confirmed by a look at the empirical data. As in Italian, there are many collocations in French which refer to positive freedom, such as *liberté de penser*, *liberté de parole*, *liberté de conscience*, which correspond to *freedom of thought*, *freedom of speech* and *freedom of consciousness* in English.

Furthermore, these collocations are well attested in the French Mixed Corpus *fra_mixed_2012* (which contains approximately 1,470,000,000 words). For example, the numbers for sentence-initial occurrences of some of these collocations are *Liberté d'opinion* (“freedom of opinion”), 337 tokens and *Liberté d'expression* (“freedom of speech”), 285 tokens.

Moreover, English collocations such as *freedom from oppression*, *freedom from fear* and *freedom from torture*, which express negative freedom, cannot easily be translated literally into French. Instead, they tend to be translated by morphologically complex, marked French prepositional phrases; for example, *the right to live in freedom from fear* can be translated by *le droit de vivre à l'abri de la peur* (“the right to live protected from fear”), or with the help of free, non-literal translations: *freedom from oppression* can be translated with *l'absence d'oppression* (“the absence of oppression”).

Other languages display still other semantic nuances of their freedom words. For example, Turkish *özgürlik* (appearing in this form 3,702 times in the Turkish National Corpus (*TNC*), which contains ca. 50,000,000 words), too, seems to be a rather general “freedom” word, with a variety of uses which either imply positive or negative freedom, not much different from English *freedom* and German *Freiheit*. The other Turkish freedom word, *hürriyet* (1,870 instances in *TNC*), however, seems to be a more formal term, which typically is used in formal, written texts and has a conservative connotation.

The semantic differences of the core meaning of freedom words in English, German, French and Italian can be summarised in Figure 13.1, where English *freedom*, German *Freiheit* and Turkish *özgürlik* are very general freedom words, equally usable for positive and negative freedom, while English *liberty*, Italian *libertà* and French *liberté* are increasingly focused on positive freedom. All the freedom words mentioned so far belong to everyday language, while Turkish *hürriyet* belongs to formal language.

Conceptual aspects: The reference of “freedom”

Only a few selected positions and traditions from the huge philosophical and scientific literature on “freedom” will be discussed here, with determinist and non-determinist (libertarian) perspectives

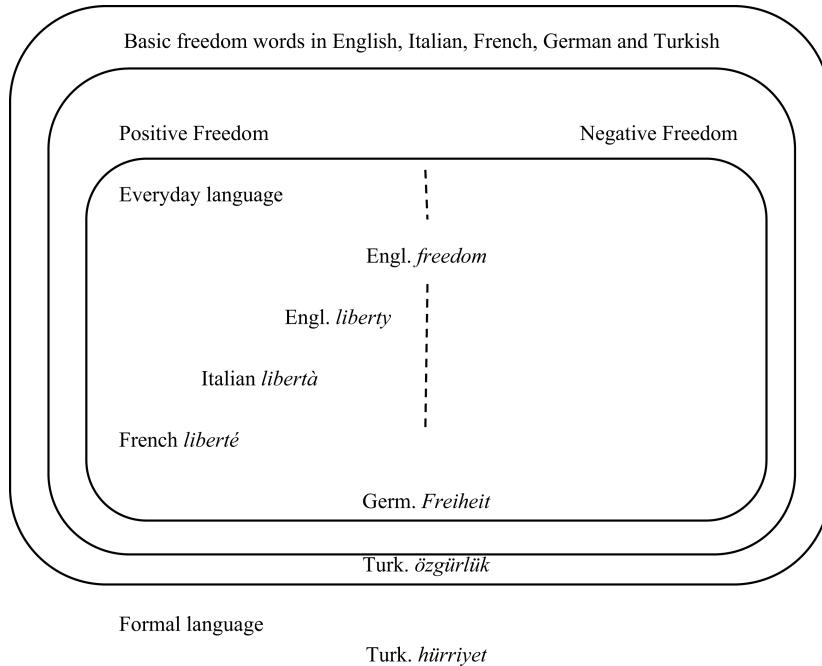


Figure 13.1 The core meaning of selected freedom words

on “freedom” as the most important points of view in philosophy, theology, psychology, neurolgy, law and other disciplines. The culture-specific and ideological background of these “freedom” perspectives will be made explicit.

The problem of defining the concept of “freedom” is intimately connected with the philosophical discussion of the (in)existence of “free will”. The notion “free will” presupposes strong notions of “freedom”. “Free will” has been the central issue of a long-standing, highly controversial debate in philosophy and theology. Some of the most important positions in this debate are summarised by van Inwagen (2008, p. 330; cf. similarly Lewis, 1981, p. 113) as follows:

- Determinism is the thesis that the past and the laws of nature together determine, at every moment, a unique future (The denial of determinism is indeterminism).
- Compatibilism is the thesis that determinism and the free-will thesis could both be true (And incompatibilism is the denial of compatibilism).
- Libertarianism is the conjunction of the free-will thesis and incompatibilism (Libertarianism thus entails indeterminism).
- Hard determinism is the conjunction of determinism and incompatibilism (Hard determinism thus entails the denial of the free-will thesis).
- Soft determinism is the conjunction of determinism and the free-will thesis (Soft determinism thus entails compatibilism).

The most important philosophical and theological positions and traditions in this debate can be categorised as follows in Table 13.1 (for more elaborate distinctions cf. Jäger, 2019, p. 47ff).

Table 13.1 Determinism and Libertarianism

	<i>Human actions are determined</i>	<i>Free will exists</i>
Hard determinism	+	-
Soft determinism	+	+
Libertarianism	-	+

As a linguist, I cannot do justice to all these positions and traditions in philosophy and other disciplines by carefully discussing their strengths and weaknesses (cf. Jäger [2019, p. 33ff] for such an in-depth discussion). But I would like to point out a few advantages and disadvantages of the respective positions, and I would like to argue for a new “linguistic” solution to some of these problems.

Hard determinism has a sort of *prima facie* attractivity because there is no doubt that natural macrocosmic processes (at least most of the time) are determined by laws of nature. The great French mathematician and astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749–1827), however, went farther than that and defended a version of hard determinism which held that everything in the universe is strictly causally determined (“nomological determinism”, cf. Jäger 42ff). A similarly all-encompassing determinism was defended already by the great rationalist philosopher Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677). A tendency towards hard determinism can also be found in Marx’s theory of the historical development, which poses serious problems for the reconciliation of the possibility of (individual) free decisions and the inevitability of historical processes. Even Eagleton (2011, p. 44), who is sympathetic to Marx’s theory, concludes: “One of the obvious flaws of that model is its determinism”.

Here are two arguments which undermine hard determinism: (1) One can plausibly argue that free will, decision-making and free action are possible, which means that hard determinism cannot hold for the realms of culture and human action in the same way as it holds for nature. And we can indeed break social and cultural rules and norms, while any normal human being cannot simply “break” the laws of nature (cf. Lewis, 1981, p. 115). (2) Quantum mechanics has shown the existence of indeterminist processes at the microcosmic level. More than that, increasingly indeterminist natural phenomena have been shown to exist in some areas of the macrocosmic level, too, which poses serious problems for hard determinism (cf. Jäger, 2019, p. 45ff).

A prominent representative of soft determinism is David Hume (1711–1776). Hume assumes that all actions are determined by causes. Nevertheless, Hume claims that free will is possible, as long as the causes which determine human actions are internal and a person is not prevented by external factors to be able to do either *p* or *not-p*. A prominent contemporary representative of soft determinism is Daniel C. Dennett (*1942). Although I would like to argue for a libertarian position concerning free will (cf. farther in this chapter), Dennett’s view of our decision-making process, which ultimately, but only after careful reflection, determines our actions, comes close to the creative, individualised way of thinking and acting, the existence of which I would like to defend as sufficient support for a libertarian position. This means that Hume’s and Dennett’s soft determinism can be made more plausible by adding the criterion that only if somebody has “worked” on these internal constraints in order to “creatively individualize” them, this person can be said to dispose of free will.

I now would like to turn to recent discussions of free will in psychology, neurology and law. This discussion began with the much-discussed experiments of physiologist Benjamin Libet

(1916–2007; cf. e.g. Libet, 1985). In his most famous experiment, Libet found evidence which arguably shows that the unconscious electrical processes in the brain (called “readiness potential”) precede conscious decisions to perform volitional spontaneous acts, such as pressing a button with a finger, by approximately 350–400 milliseconds. In this context, however, it is interesting to note that Libet at least conceded the possibility of a “veto” decision made by the conscious human mind. According to Libet, subjects actually can “veto” their motor performance during a 100–200 milliseconds period before a prearranged time to act.

Some neurologists have drawn more radical conclusions from their empirical evidence than Libet. The existence of free will has been denied by those neurologists, such as the distinguished German neurologists Gerhard Roth (1942–2023) and Wolf Singer (*1943), who believe that human action is determined by external factors, more specifically, by subconscious neurological processes within the human brain (vgl. Roth, 2004, p. 171ff; Singer, 2004; Thimm/Traufetter, 2004). This leads toward the epistemic position of “incompatibilism”.

Against this kind of determinism, the Swiss philosopher Peter Bieri (2001; cf. also 2005) plausibly argues that processes within neurological networks and concepts such as “will”, “freedom”, “human values” and “actions and goals” have to be interpreted at clearly different levels, which can only be interchanged at the high cost of a category mistake (cf. Aristotle, *Anal. Post.*, 1.7, 75a 38).

In this context, it’s also interesting to look back at Aristotle’s (384–322 BC) treatment of the concept of “free action” and “free will” in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (cf. Aristotle, 1972). For Aristotle, those actions which are performed according to free will have their origin in the acting person, insofar this person knows all specific circumstances relevant for the action and does not act because of being forced to do so or out of ignorance (*Nic.Eth.* 3.3, 1111a 22–23). Moreover, Aristotle assumes that free actions are performed after conscious deliberation and as the result of rational choice (*Nic.Eth.* 3.4, 1111b 8–10). Note that pressing a button, as in Libet’s original experiment, is a highly routinised act, which cannot be compared with a decision after long and careful deliberation (cf. Damasio, 2012, p. 271).

Therefore, the price for the reduction of this action/deliberation-based terminology to chains of neurological causes and effects is high because “goals” and “intentions” are ultimately cultural concepts, which are “final causes” in the sense of Aristotle (cf. *Phys.* 2.3, 194b 32–35; cf. also von Wright, 1974, pp. 81, 93). On the one hand, eliminating such final causes as elements of a theory of action could be called a theoretically problematic reductionism. On the other hand, it would be very strange to assume that natural objects such as the brain or neurological networks, which initiate causal chains determined by the laws of nature, for example, neurological processes, have intentions or aims or goals. Furthermore, if all human actions are caused by brain activities, well-established concepts of ethics or criminal law such as “guilt”, “diminished responsibility”, “aggravating circumstances” and “unintended acts” lose their broadly accepted common sense and/or their technical meaning. Law experts such as Hirsch (2010, p. 65) underline the fact that apart from the deplorable consequences for law systems and crime management, neurological determinism also contradicts the everyday self-concept of human beings, who experience themselves as subjects (“first person perspective”), not as objects (“third person perspective”; cf. similarly Tugendhat 2007).

In order to counter these objections, neurologist Wolf Singer (2004) acknowledges that the determining neurological processes cannot be described as linear causal processes. The “decisions” made by the human brain are the result of emergent structures in neurological networks, which include creative aspects. However, this point of view cannot escape the rather implausible assumption of a “determined creativity”, which comes close to a paradox. Moreover, in order to avoid unacceptable social consequences, Singer argues for the right to sanction persons culpable

of serious crimes and to put them into prison, although in his view they can no longer be seen as responsible for their crimes. This, however, contradicts our strong intuition that some people are fully responsible for their acts, others less so, and some cannot be seen responsible at all. The fact that it is very difficult to distinguish and to demarcate these categories of persons does not mean that these distinctions make no sense or could all be dropped.

Different from Singer, the prominent neurologist Antonio Damasio (*1944) takes a compatibilist position. Damasio considers free, not neurologically determined action as possible, because the neurological processes create an emergent independent controlling entity (analogically spoken: “a conductor”). Damasio’s conductor’s analogy is based on his three layered model of consciousness (“Protoself”, “Core Consciousness” and “Extended Consciousness”; cf. Damasio, 2012, pp. 23ff; 181):

The ultimate consciousness product occurs *from* those numerous brain sites at the same time and not in one site in particular, much as the performance of a symphonic piece does not come from the work of a single musician or even from a whole section of an orchestra. The oddest thing about the upper reaches of a consciousness is the conspicuous absence of a conductor *before* the performance begins, although, as the performance unfolds, a conductor comes into being. For all intents and purposes, a conductor is now leading orchestra, although the performance has created the conductor—the self—not the other way round. The conductor is cobbled together by feelings and by a narrative brain device, although this fact does not make the conductor any less real. The conductor undeniably exists in our minds, and nothing is gained by dismissing him as an illusion.

As far as subconscious processes are concerned, Damasio does not see them as proof that our mind is determined by neurological processes. On the contrary, according to Damasio, subconscious processes are an extension of the activity areas of consciousness because subconscious processes normally are routine actions carried out without the necessity of conscious monitoring (Damasio, 2012, p. 270):

Consciousness is not devalued by the presence of nonconscious processes. Instead, the reach of consciousness is amplified. And, assuming the presence of a normally functioning brain, the degree of one’s responsibility for an action is not necessarily diminished by the presence of healthy and robust nonconscious execution of some actions.

Other kinds of determinism, which are biologically and/or psychologically founded, come from psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud’s [1856–1939] “live instinct” [Eros] and “death instinct” [Thanatos; cf. Freud 1972 [1930, p. 12]), ethology (Konrad Lorenz’ [1903–1989] “aggressive instinct”; cf. Lorenz, 1983) and behaviourism (Burrhus Skinner’s [1904–1990] proposal of a utopia [“Walden II”] based on the social control of human behaviour by operant conditioning; cf. Skinner, 1948, 1971).

In an impressively interdisciplinary study, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), psychoanalyst and philosopher Erich Fromm (1900–1980) tried to refute all such attempts to reduce human beings’ capability of free action by focusing on their status as biologically or psychologically/sociologically determined organisms. In fact, Fromm’s detailed comparisons with our close or not so close relatives within the animal species, his ample use of historical, archaeological and anthropological evidence show, first of all, that there is a difference between evolutionary developed defensive aggressiveness and specifically human destructiveness, and, secondly, that human beings are not (fully) controlled by instincts but relatively (that is, to a certain degree) free in the

choice of following or not following “existential passions”, which can be positive (love, solidarity, cooperativeness) or negative (hate, selfishness, destructiveness). Therefore, Fromm concludes that both biological and psychological/sociological versions of determinism fail.

Of course, there are important differences between the biological and/or psychological determinist theories criticised by Fromm. But in spite of these differences, both instinct theories and behaviourist theories share a basic perspective, which excludes the (individual) person, his or her responsibility and potential for individual acts and decisions from their scientific focus of consideration. Ultimately, this is much in the same way a radical form of reductionist thinking as the determinism within neurophysiological studies discussed earlier (Fromm, 1973, p. 70ff; Fromm’s emphasis):

In spite of the great differences between instinctivistic and behavioristic theory, they have a common basic orientation. They both exclude the *person*, the behaving man, from their field of vision. Whether man is the product of conditioning, or the product of animal evolution, he is exclusively determined by conditions outside himself; he has no part in his own life, no responsibility, and not even a trace of freedom. Man is a puppet, controlled by strings—instinct or conditioning.

The implausibility of a determinist explanation of human behaviour is demonstrated by Fromm by the ever-decreasing determination of behaviour during the biological evolution, from a maximum of determination with simple organisms via a reduced instinctive determination reached by mammals to a minimum of instinctive determination with primates, including *Homo sapiens* (Fromm, 1973, p. 251). The neurological correlate of this gradual development is the growth and maximal sophistication of different parts of the brain, especially the neo-cortex, as far as primates and *Homo sapiens* are concerned. No longer guided by instincts, *Homo sapiens* had to find another system of orientation in the world. According to Fromm (1973, p. 226), the existential passions, which taken together are a relatively permanent system of non-instinctive strivings, are such as system (Fromm’s emphasis):

Character is the relatively permanent system of all noninstinctual strivings through which man relates himself to the human and natural world. One may understand character as the human substitute for the missing animal instincts; it is man’s second nature.

Against the assumption of the great ethologist Konrad Lorenz (1983, p. 228) that destructive aggression can be explained as an evolutionary process based on the natural selection of particularly destructive ancestors of *Homo sapiens*, Fromm adduces rich empirical evidence for the relatively peaceful character of prehistoric and surviving nomadic cultures (Fromm, 1973, p. 129ff). To this evidence earlier insights by Pjotr Kropotkin (1842–1922; cf. Kropotkin, 1902, p. 5ff) can be added, who has shown that “mutual aid”, that is, mutually supportive cooperation, has played at least as important a role as a factor of biological and cultural evolution as mutual struggle.

As far as Skinner’s behaviourism is concerned, Fromm tries to show that human beings share a specific character which cannot be manipulated beyond any limit. And psychological experiments which tried to prove just this, namely, that human beings can be conditioned to commit even the most repulsive acts if the conditioning circumstances are well chosen, have to be interpreted carefully. In this respect, the famous Milgram experiment, first conducted at the University of Yale by psychologist Stanley Milgram (1933–1984; cf. Milgram, 1963; Fromm, 1973, p. 45ff) is especially significant. The remarkable fact that many lay persons involved in the experiment could be

manipulated by authorities to behave aggressively does not allow the conclusion that all human beings can be manipulated without limits.

For example, only 5 out of 40 persons in the Milgram experiment refused to administer electric shocks beyond 300 volts to “learners” who apparently failed to solve an experimental problem. However, they did not know the true purpose of the experiment; they were told that the “learners” would not be hurt seriously, and they were strongly controlled by a “scientific authority” in the experiment.

Moreover, they showed strong signs of nervousness and discomfort. They were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips and groan. Nine more subjects (all in all 35% of 40 subjects) stopped at the 330, 345, 360 and 375 volt level in spite of the authority telling them to go on with still higher volt levels (cf. Milgram, 1963, p. 375). This is hardly proof that operational conditioning can achieve everything with human beings.

To this experimental evidence Fromm adds the horrible real life “experiment” of the concentration camps of the Nazis, where different groups of prisoners behaved very differently from each other, some of them even acting heroically, in spite of the equally cruel and inhuman conditions all prisoners suffered (Fromm, 1973, p. 60ff).

All this evidence allows the conclusion that (aggressive) human actions neither are determined by inherited instincts nor by social conditioning. Human beings can perform the most horrible, but also the most admirable actions, but not because of biological or social factors, which would fully determine their actions beforehand.

Coming back to the Swiss philosopher Bieri (2001), it has to be noted that he also argues against a perspective which assumes the possibility of “absolute freedom”. Such a radical view, assuming the total freedom of will of human beings, was defended in 1486 by the brilliant Renaissance philosopher Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) in his famous speech *De hominis dignitate* (cf. Pico della Mirandola, 1997).

But this position is self-defeating. If human actions were not constrained by anything, their behaviour would become totally arbitrary, and as such, would become uncontrollable by the individual (Bieri, 2001, p. 232).

The intuition of control, however, is deeply rooted in our everyday concept of “freedom”. Without control of one’s actions, positive freedom would be hardly possible. So freedom can only be conceived of as a partially achieved ability, which is limited relative to physical and psychological constraints which direct our actions to a certain degree, without determining them totally. Freedom is a gradual concept; that is, we can work on our external and internal constraints, thus eventually arriving at a higher degree of control over our actions and decisions. In this way, at the same time our actions become more and more individualised (cf. Bieri, 2001, p. 382ff, 2005). This process has been elegantly summarised by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980; cf. Sartre, 1966, p. 95):

L’essentiel n’est pas ce qu’on fait de l’homme, mais *ce qu’il fait de ce qu’on a fait de lui*.

[“The essential is not what one has made out of man, but *what he makes out of what one has made out of him*”; generic masculine and italics by Sartre.]

Moreover, this “freedom work” is never easy. It requires discipline (cf. Camus, 1965, p. 796f; Strenger, 2017, p. 107ff). It can even become painful because when we try to take control over our actions, we lose traditional certainties and have to take personal and political risks. This is one reason why so many people are eager to give up to work on their capacity of acquiring potential liberties and prefer to follow old or new authoritarian political and religious traditions and ideologies, devote themselves to consumerism or uncritically submit their political destiny to new charismatic leaders (cf. Berlin, 1969, p. 207; Strenger, 2017, p. 95ff).

The changeability of our initial constraints, which freedom work takes as its starting point, also provides a solution to the somewhat paradoxical aspects of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative (Kant, 2012, p. 50):

Handle so, daß die Maxime deines Willens jederzeit zugleich als Prinzip einer allgemeinen Gesetzgebung gelten könnte

[“Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation”; quoted after www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5683/pg5683.html; viewed on March 16, 2022]

Although Kant argues that human beings are free because of that part of their intellectual nature which is able to follow only reason in questions of good and evil, thus not being constrained by any aspects of the physical and mental world (physical desires, emotions, personal interests etc.), he often characterises the necessity of following the categorical imperative in a way which makes it hardly conceivable to accept this imperative without being enforced to do so in a slave-like manner (cf. e.g. “Unterwerfung” (“submission”); “Zwang” (“coercion”); “Joch” (“yoke”); Kant, 2012, pp. 120ff, 127).

It is, therefore, more plausible to follow those who, like Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) (cf. von Humboldt, 1960, p. 64), Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) (1953, p. 359) and Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) insist on the ability of human beings to creatively and playfully establish an individual basis for their actions (cf. also Mill, 1946). More specifically, Steiner assumes that human beings can become free to the degree that they are able to reasonably individualise the preconditions of their actions. In his treatise “Philosophie der Freiheit” (“Philosophy of Freedom”), Steiner writes (1962, p. 123):

An action is experienced as free, insofar as its reason originates from the ideational part of my individuality; every other component of an action, regardless of whether it is performed because of the coercion of nature or necessitated by an ethical norm, is experienced as unfree. Human beings are free insofar they are able to follow themselves in every moment of their lives.

This essential connection of freedom with creativity and the process of individualisation (as the result of “freedom work”) also leads to the insight that different levels of creative action and degrees of enhancing one's individual potential of free action have to be distinguished. Being a linguist, I would like to connect human creativity very closely with language and the use of language. And it can be argued that the human capability of free action is indeed intimately connected with (the use of) language. Noam Chomsky, the distinguished contemporary linguist, philosopher, political activist and anarchist, makes the following remark in this context (1988, p. 195; cf. similarly already Chomsky, 1974, p. 130):

It could be that there's a connection between the creative aspect of language use, which is part of the human essence, part of what Marx called the species character of the human being (the character of the species); there may be a connection between that and the idea of a distinctively human need for productive and creative work (including intellectual work) under one's own control, that is, control of producers over production.

But as far as the use of language is concerned, different levels of creative verbal action have to be distinguished. First of all, only a minimum of freedom/creativity is required as long as we follow fully conventionalised rules or patterns of linguistic action, where all we have to do is to choose one of several well-known alternatives of action according to these rules/patterns. Still, we

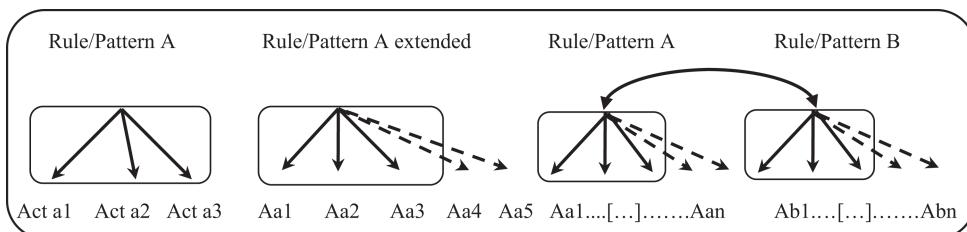
have to bear in mind that already the use of rules of a language system is a free activity because the language system is not “imposed” on us but offers itself to us as a means to be constantly enacted, with alternatives of expression to be selected by us (cf. Coseriu, 1958, p. 39):

La lengua, pues, *no se impone* al hablante, sino que se le ofrece: el hablante *dispone* de ella para realizar su libertad expresiva

[“Language does not impose itself on the speaker, but offers itself to him: the speaker disposes of it in order to implement his or her expressive freedom”].

Within this process, we can reproduce the linguistic system as it is but also modify it and transform it (cf. Coseriu, 1958, p. 160; “La lengua se hace mediante el cambio” [“Language is enacted through linguistic change”]).

Secondly, we can still follow these well-established linguistic patterns but increase the “space of possibilities” (and, indirectly, our political “freedom space”) by adding and implementing new, so far not realised alternatives of action (“rule-governed creativity”). Thirdly, and finally, we can change the rule/the pattern of action itself and thus open a completely new “space of possibilities” (“rule-changing creativity”) (on these two types of creativity, cf. Chomsky, 1964, p. 22; cf. similarly already von Humboldt, 1963, p. 436; Coseriu, 1958, p. 26). The following figures illustrate these three levels of creativity:



Abbreviations: Aa1, Aa2, ...Aan: Alternative acts 1, 2, etc., according to Rule/Pattern A/B; Rule/Pattern A, Rule/Pattern B: Rules/Patterns, according to which acts are performed.

Figure 13.2 Rule-following and rule-changing creativity

Maybe the linguistic phenomenon which is most suitable to illustrate rule-following and rule-changing creativity is metaphor. Certain metaphors, such as instances of personification, can be considered as “rule-governed creativity” because they extend conventional semantic and syntactic patterns by creating metaphorical utterances, for example, by substituting human beings with animals. In the German advertisement slogan

(2) *Kälber würden Heumilch kaufen* (“Calves would buy pasture milk”),

human beings, who are able to buy something, are replaced as subjects of an active sentence with an action verb by animals such as calves, which in reality are not able to buy anything. In this way, the “authority” of calves as consumers of pasture milk is used persuasively to appeal to human consumers, who should follow the example of the “calves-as-experts” and should buy pasture milk.

This metaphor is a conventional form of personification because it follows takes a well-known, already established personification rule. See, for example, the already existing German slogan,

(3) *Katzen würden Whiskas kaufen* (“Cats would buy Whiskas”,

which is an advertisement for a cat food brand). The rule underlying this personification could be formulated as follows:

In a verbal and situational context dealing with human acts and activities, take an expression denoting human beings and replace it by an expression which denotes animals which buy things they like

and extend it to the context of buying agricultural products (rule-governed creativity, cf. Rule/Pattern A extended, in Figure 13.2). However, this rule-governed creativity operates within the historical and political constraints of neoliberal capitalism, which is presupposed as an unquestioned framework by this slogan. So its creativity is restricted by certain ideological and political presuppositions. These presuppositions could be challenged by a yet unknown qualitative change of the personification rule and yield radically different slogans, for example:

(4) *Kälber würden die Massentierhaltung abschaffen* (“Calves would abolish large scale animal husbandry”).

In this way, a rule-changing type of creativity is enacted which overcomes the constraints of consumerism and the unquestioned acceptance of factory farming by a qualitatively new type of personification, which then can be used to perform alternative acts according to this new rule/pattern (Rule/Pattern B).

Similarly, the Austrian supermarket chain *Billa* has been using slogans such as,

(5) *Billa sagt der Hausverstand* (“Billa, says common sense”)

for some years, where “common sense” is personified by a male adult in the accompanying photos and videos. Note that the noun *Hausverstand* (“common sense”) is masculine in German. This type of personification is rule-governed creativity insofar it extends a personification rule such as

In a verbal and situational context dealing with human acts and activities, take an expression denoting positive abstract concepts such as “common sense” and replace it by an expression denoting a male person who gives advice as to choosing the most adequate supermarket

to the connection between common sense and a male adult buying products in Billa supermarkets. However, this slogan evidently presupposes an androcentric perspective; from such a perspective, something as rational as common sense must be personified by a male person. Again, this ideological constraint can be abolished by qualitatively changing the rule, as has indeed been done by the advertising agency working for Billa after some years, changing the slogan to

(6) *Billa, sagt mein Hausverstand* (“Billa, says **my** common sense”),

where “common sense” is personified by a woman in the accompanying photos/video clips. Here, the androcentric rule governing the old personification has been creatively replaced by a “feminist” perspective (Rule/Pattern B). No doubt, however, that capitalist constraints have again

remained unchallenged even in this new version. But they could be challenged by still new reformulations (Rule/Pattern C, Rule/Pattern D) and so on. Rule-changing creativity has no absolute boundaries and can be applied recursively, again and again.

The appeal to freedom in discourse: descriptive and evaluative analysis of freedom speeches

For the following analyses of five freedom speeches I would like to use and integrate insights from several frameworks. They include Aristotle's *Topics* and *Rhetoric* (cf. Aristotle, 2002, 2004), especially his threefold distinction of means of persuasion such as *logos* (the use of arguments), *ethos* (the speaker's character) and *pathos* (the emotions of the audience), and his concept and classification of *topoi*, here interpreted both as search formulas for the selection of pertinent arguments and as semantic relations guaranteeing the step from premises to conclusion (cf. de Pater, 1965; Kienpointner, 2017a).

Moreover, modern rhetoric, especially Perelman's/Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1983) monumental typology of argument schemes, which continues and elaborates on Aristotelian *Topics*, will be used for the categorisation of argumentative moves within freedom discourse (cf. also Kienpointner, 1992). Furthermore, concepts developed within critical discourse analysis, especially the Viennese school (cf. Reisigl/Wodak, 2001, Wodak, 2009; but cf. also Fairclough/Fairclough, 2012) will be used for the empirical description and the critical analysis of the ideological background of freedom discourse.

Finally, insights taken from pragma-dialectics will be amply used, for example, van Eemeren's/Grootendorst's (2004, p. 136ff) catalogue of rules for rational discussants or more recent concepts such as van Eemeren's (2010, p. 93ff) concept of strategic manoeuvring with its threefold distinction between strategies concerning topical potential (e.g. the selection of arguments), audience demand (e.g. the selection of starting points suitable for a specific audience) and verbal presentation (e.g. the selection of figurative formulations).

In addition, even more recent pragma-dialectical concepts such as "argumentative patterns" as developed by van Eemeren (2018, p. 149ff) will be taken into account, that is, prototypical constellations of argument schemes, some of which typically occur in freedom speeches.

Case studies

In this section, freedom speeches delivered by four men and two women who lived at different times (1st century BC, 19th and 20th century, respectively) and on different continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) and spoke different languages (Latin, French, English). These outstanding speakers are Cicero, Louise Michel, Emmeline Pankhurst, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Their speeches will serve as empirical input of the analysis (cf. Kienpointner, 2014b, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b).

The speeches selected will be contextualised as to the culture-specific concept of "freedom" which they put to rhetorical use, and a few biographical remarks about the speakers. Then a few central passages of these speeches will be analysed in some detail. The descriptive part will be accompanied by a critical evaluation.

In spite of all the biographical, cultural and political differences between the five speakers, they were all so committed to the cause of political freedom that they were willing to offer their life for the protection of freedom. This is the reason why one particular argument scheme figures prominently within the prototypical argumentative patterns which are characteristic for their speeches: the argument from alternatives (cf. Kienpointner, 2014a, p. 606).

The version of the argument from alternatives which, with small variations, occurs typically within the six freedom speeches can be reconstructed as an instance of the logically valid disjunctive syllogism as follows ($((p \vee q) \wedge \neg p) \rightarrow q$; “V” stands for an exclusive “or”):

Disjunctive Syllogism:	Argument from Alternativew:
$p \vee q$	Either a (safe) life without freedom or a (possible) death in the fight for freedom is acceptable.
$\neg p$	A (safe) life without freedom isn't acceptable.
Therefore: q .	Therefore: A (possible) death in the fight for freedom is acceptable.

Figure 13.3 The structure of the argument from alternatives

As can be seen in Figure 13.3, arguments from alternatives have a logically valid structure. However, logical validity is not sufficient for the soundness of argumentation. Therefore, the tenability and the relevance of the premises have to be taken into account and critically evaluated according to lists of critical questions (on critical questions as a tool of argument evaluation cf. Eemeren, 2018, p. 140f), such as

- CQ1: Are there really only two alternatives?
- CQ2: Are the factual propositions mentioned in the premises true or at least probable?
- CQ3: Are the normative propositions mentioned in the premises morally justified or at least justifiable?

I would now like to describe the biographical background of the five speakers and briefly characterise their specific concept of freedom. Marcus Tullius Cicero probably was the greatest Roman speaker. From a rhetorical perspective, Cicero's life (106–43 BC) can be divided into periods of time, especially his youth and in his old age, when courage and ethical commitment dominated in his practice as a lawyer and politician. But in between he anxiously adapted to power structures, especially the First Triumvirate (60–53 BC, established by Caesar, Pompey and Crassus) and put his personal interests and his vanity first.

After the assassination of Caesar on March 15, 44 BC, Cicero again courageously took part in Roman politics. He held his 14 *Philippic Speeches* against Caesar's follower Marc Anthony (83–30 BC), a powerful Roman politician and able military commander, who had the ambition and the resources to overthrow the Roman Republic. These speeches are called “Philippic speeches” because of their model, the *Philippic speeches* of Demosthenes, the greatest Greek speaker. Marc Anthony can be identified with King Philip of Macedonia, and Cicero, as a defender of the Roman republic, with Demosthenes, the defender of Athenian democracy.

Cicero managed to forge a broad political coalition against Marc Anthony, which consisted of such heterogeneous elements as the murderers of Caesar, the Roman consuls and the senate and Octavianus, the adopted son of Caesar (cf. Halfmann, 2011, p. 82; Göttert, 2015, p. 178ff). Finally, however, Cicero failed in spite of all his efforts. Octavianus left the coalition and joined Marc Anthony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus to form the Second Triumvirate in 43 BC. With his merciless verbal attacks at Marc Anthony in his *Philippic speeches*, Cicero had created a mortal enemy. When the triumvirs proscribed approximately 2,300 Roman citizens, Marc Anthony vehemently insisted that Cicero should be on this list. Now the death of Cicero was only a question of time. On September 7, 43 BC, Cicero was cruelly assassinated. His head and his hands were cut off and fixed at the Forum Romanum, the place where Cicero had celebrated so many rhetorical triumphs.

Evidently, Cicero's *libertas* did not correspond to a concept of "liberty" in the sense of a modern democracy (cf. Schmidt, 2010, p. 370ff). Cicero was a member of a society of slave owners, with a dominant aristocratic elite, where women, even free women, did not have the right to vote. *Libertas*, therefore, was limited to a minority of the Roman society, the free male citizens. And in the late Roman Republic, free male citizens did not have any real political influence if they were not at the same time rich and part of the nobility (cf. Wirszubski, 1967, p. 48).

However, this does not say that the Roman Republic was nothing but an aristocracy. There was the right to appeal to the people to protect simple citizens against the injustice of the powerful elite. Apart from that, the citizens (the *plebs*) could also ask for the help of the tribunes (cf. Fantham, 2005, p. 214). The *tribunus plebis* had the right to block any abuse of power by the consuls and the senate (Wirszubski, 1967, p. 63ff). Therefore, if Cicero did not defend liberty in the modern sense, he at least risked his life for a restricted but nevertheless real kind of liberty constrained by the laws and the huge differences of power and social status in the Roman Republic. However, it would be too harsh a criticism to accuse Cicero of not having a universal and radical concept of liberty. We have to judge his arguments within the context of the restricted kind of liberty which was typical of his culture and his period of time.

As far as Cicero's (2013) use of the argument from alternatives is concerned, I here quote the decisive passage with this argument in the 2nd Philippic speech (Cic. *Phil.* 2.119), together with an explicit reconstruction. The implicit passages of the original Latin formulation of this argument are put into brackets in the reconstruction:

(7) *Quin etiam corpus libenter optulerim, si repraesentari morte mea libertas civitatis potest.*

[“I will rather cheerfully expose my own person, if the liberty of the city can be restored by my death”]

[Aut] libenter moriam (= corpus libenter optulerim) si repraesentari morte mea libertas civitatis potest [aut vivam sine libertate civitatis].

[“I will either willingly die if the liberty of the city can be restored by my death, or I will live without the liberty of the city”]

Quin etiam corpus libenter optulerim si repraesentari morte mea libertas civitatis potest.

[“I will rather cheerfully expose my own person, if the liberty of the city can be restored by my death”]

Ergo: [Non vivam sine libertas civitatis]

[“Therefore: I will not live without the liberty of the city”]

In the *Philippic speeches*, there are numerous other passages where Cicero uses the same argument scheme (cf. Cic. *Phil.* 3.29, 3.36, 6.19, 8.29). Frequently selecting instances of this argument scheme so often, Cicero achieves several goals of strategic manoeuvring; as far as the topical potential (*logos*) is concerned, choosing the dramatic alternative of either remaining free or dying makes his plea for a coalition against Marcus Antonius much more dramatic. As to audience demand, his argument is suitable to arouse patriotic feelings and emotions such as anger, pride, patriotism and defiance in his Roman audience (*pathos*). As to his *ethos* as a speaker, the dramatic alternative effectively portrays Cicero as a speaker who is willing to die for the cause of liberty.

Of course, Cicero's argumentation also has a weak point: it is always risky and dangerously close to the black-white fallacy if a speaker pretends that there are only two alternatives of political action (cf. CQ1 earlier). In order to prevent a refutation of his arguments from alternatives as

fallacious moves, Cicero introduces other argument schemes which are used to support the premises his arguments from alternatives and together with them (and still other argument schemes) constitute a prototypical argumentative pattern. One of these schemes relies on a comparison *a minore*. Here is an example (Cic., *Phil.* 2.118):

- (8) *Defendi rem publicam adulescens, non deseram senex: contempti Catilinae gladios, non pertimescam tuos.*

[“I defended the republic as a young man, I will not abandon it now that I am old. I scorned the sword of Catiline, I will not quail before yours.”]

In this passage, Cicero refers to his success as Roman consul in defeating the conspiracy of the reckless revolutionary Lucius Sergius Catilina (108–63 BC), 20 years earlier. At the same time, he shows his mastery of strategies of verbal presentation. The antitheses (*adulescens* (“young man”)—*senex* (“old man”); *Catilinae gladios* (“the swords of Catiline”—*tuos* “your [sc. swords]”) and the metonymy *gladios* (the arms instead of the soldiers of Cicero’s enemy Marc Anthony) underline dramatically that the two historical situations are identical as far as the enormous danger for Cicero is concerned, with the age as the only difference: an old man has less to lose. Now the *Argumentum a minore* structure can be applied: if even a young man did not fear certain political dangers, an old man should fear them even less. In this way, apart from excluding the possibility of a third (or fourth etc.) alternative, Cicero creates the image of a courageous man. Manoeuvring strategically as far as the audience is concerned, a favourable image of the character of the speaker (*ethos*) is created, and the respect and the admiration of the audience is won.

Not only a huge temporal distance, but also a huge difference of their opinions concerning freedom separate Louise Michel from Cicero. Louise Michel (1830–1905) was born the daughter of Marianne Michel, a serving maid, and (probably) Laurent Demahis, the son of Charlotte and Charles-Étienne Demahis. Her grandparents took on responsibility for Louise and provided her with a good education, including a libertarian perspective concerning politics, at their Château Vroncourt-la-Côte in northeastern France. Michel began to work as a primary school teacher, first in little villages in the east of France, later (1856ff) in Paris, where she opened her own school in 1865. As a teacher, she used remarkably modern methods of teaching and encouraged her pupils to critical thinking (Maclellan, 2004, p. 3).

In these years, Michel also began to write and publish poetry and became involved in radical political groups, which included leftist protagonists such as Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881) and Théophile Ferré (1846–1871), with whom she fell in love (cf. Gauthier, 2013, pp. 71ff, 154ff; Mullaney, 1990, p. 317ff).

After Napoleon III (1808–1873) was crushingly defeated at Sedan during the Franco-Prussian war (1870–1871), the Third Republic was proclaimed. The republican government at first continued the fight against Prussia; but after 4 months of the siege of Paris, the government agreed an armistice with the Prussians. This fact, the disappointment about the financial pressure put upon Paris as part of the indemnity payments made to the Prussians and the conservative character of the new government led to the short-term revolution by the Paris Commune (from March 18 to May 28, 1871; cf. Michel, 1898/1999; Maclellan, 2004, p. 7ff).

After promising achievements of decentralised social, cultural and economic reorganisation, the Paris Commune had to defend itself against republican government troops, which were superior in number and weapons. Finally, the Paris Commune was totally defeated during the “Bloody Week” (*La semaine sanglante*, May 21–28, 1871), when approximately 20,000 people were killed, many of them not members of the Commune (cf. Maclellan, 2004, p. 12). Some leaders and members of the Commune were subjected to unfair trials and executed, among them Théophile Ferré.

During the short life of the Commune, Louise Michel was indefatigable. She was active both as a nurse, as a member of committees and last, but not least, as a soldier in combat, where she became famous because of her courage, efficiency and defiance (Kilian, 2008, p. 151ff; Gauthier, 2013, p. 110ff). She surrendered to the government troops only when her mother was arrested in order to blackmail Michel.

During her trial (December 16, 1871), she did not try to avoid a death sentence, but on the contrary, she vehemently attacked the government and even asked for her execution (Michel, 1871/1999; Maclellan, 2004, p. 12; Gauthier, 2013, p. 174). However, Michel was not sentenced to death, but after 2 years in prison was exiled to New Caledonia (in 1873), together with other Communards. During this period of her life, Michel began to develop an anarchist view of politics (cf. Michel, 1890/2010, 1896).

After a general amnesty, Michel could return to France, where she relentlessly engaged in revolutionary activities and became a celebrated political speaker. Throughout her life, she possessed next to nothing, always giving away her own small material and financial resources to needy people in her surroundings. Her funeral in Paris turned into a major political demonstration, with more than 100,000 people (Maclellan, 2004, p. 23; Chastre, 2011, p. 126) participating in the funeral procession. Ever since, Michel has been an icon of courage, mental strength and extreme altruism (hence her epithets *la bonne louise* [“good Louise”] and *la vierge rouge* [“the red virgin”]).

Therefore, her concept of liberty was very much different from Cicero’s political thought and based on her radical version of revolutionary anarchism, which urged freedom for all socio-economic classes, men and women, including indigenous people.

This is the passage from her defence speech at the martial court where she used the meanwhile familiar argument from alternatives, which focuses on the dichotomy “freedom or death” (further examples for the use of the argument from alternatives occur in Michel, 1871/1999, p. 374):

(9) *Ce que je réclame de vous, . . . c'est le champ de Satory où sont déjà tombés nos frères! Il faut me retrancher de la société. On vous dit de le faire. Eh bien, le commissaire de la république a raison. Puisqu'il semble que tout cœur qui bat pour la liberté n'a droit qu'à un peu de plomb, j'en réclame une part, moi! Si vous me laissez vivre, je ne cesserai de crier vengeance.*

[“What I urge you, . . . is the field of Satory [the place where thousands of communards died, due to horrible conditions of detention as well as mass executions], where our brothers already fell! You have to eliminate me from society. You have been told to do that. Well, the commissary of the republic is right. As it appears to me that every heart which beats for freedom has no right other than a piece of lead, as far as I am concerned, I claim a part of it! If you let me live, I will not stop crying for revenge”] (Michel, 1871/1999, p. 373f; Gauthier, 2013, p. 174).

Given the relevant verbal and situational context, the argument from alternatives presented by Michel can be reconstructed as follows:

For a freedom fighter (a heart which beats for freedom), either radical political freedom or death (a piece of lead) are the chosen options.

After the devastating defeat of the Paris Commune in May 1871, radical political freedom is no longer possible.

Therefore: Death is the only option (I claim a part of the lead used to execute freedom fighters).

This argument from alternatives, too, can be criticised for offering only two alternatives. In fact, thousands of Communards fled to Belgium or to England, after the Paris Commune had been crushed. Different from normal institutional behaviour within the context of political or forensic rhetoric, Michel does not strategically adapt to audience demand in order to create “the broadest possible zone of agreement between the relevant views and preferences of the arguer and the audience” (van Eemeren/Garssen, 2012, p. 51).

However, one could argue that her heroic *ethos* did not leave further options to her, beyond the dilemma of liberty or death. Consequently, she chose this dramatic verbal presentation of her argument from alternatives and used two metonymies (more specifically, two synecdoches, that is, part-whole relationships) to further strengthen the impact of her argument: every heart beating for freedom (*tout cœur qui bat pour la liberté*) stands for the Communards, and a piece of lead (*un peu de plomb*), that is, a bullet, stands for the execution.

Still another type of freedom rhetoric is present in the speeches of Emmeline Pankhurst. Pankhurst (1858–1928) was born in Manchester as the daughter of a politically progressive family. In 1879, she married the left-liberal barrister Richard Pankhurst (1835–1898). In the following 10 years, Pankhurst gave birth to five children. Her three daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adela later played decisive roles in Pankhurst’s fight for women’s suffrage.

Emmeline Pankhurst began early to become involved in several organisations which actively fought for women’s suffrage. In 1903, she founded the “Women’s Social and Political Union” (WSPU), which accepted only women as members and distanced itself from political parties (cf. Purvis, 2003, p. 65). After initially following strictly non-violent methods, the WSPU faced continuous resistance by the male establishment and began to turn to increasingly radical methods, such as damaging property, arson attacks and assaults on policemen. The consequences were repeated prison terms for Pankhurst and her fellow campaigners. As a protest against these incarcerations the women of the WSPU went on hunger strike. As a result, the repressive methods of the government included force feeding (cf. Purvis, 2003, p. 217).

Pankhurst, who had become a celebrated speaker, gave a speech in Hartford, Connecticut (USA) on November 13, 1913 (cf. Purvis, 2003, p. 236). In this speech she famously confronted the British government with the alternative of either conceding to women’s suffrage or killing the women’s rights campaigners with their repressive methods (cf. Pankhurst, 1913, p. 3; two other instances of the arguments from alternatives are Pankhurst occur a bit earlier in the same speech):

- (10) Human life for us is sacred, but we say if any life is to be sacrificed it shall be ours; we won’t do it ourselves, but we will put the enemy in the position where they will have to choose between giving us freedom or giving us death.

This argument from alternatives can be reconstructed as follows:

Either the British authorities should kill the British suffragettes fighting for their right to vote or they have to give the freedom to vote to the suffragettes/the British women.

It is ethically unacceptable that the British authorities kill the British suffragettes fighting for their right to vote.

Therefore: The British authorities have to give the British women the freedom to vote.

Pankhurst skilfully enhances the persuasive power of her argument by using metaphors from the religious sphere (*life for us is sacred; if any life is to be sacrificed*), blaming the British government with a kind of religious guilt and at the same time appealing to Christian believers in her audience.

Another strategy concerning audience demand also shows her strategic ability. She appeals to her male US audience by using a fictitious argument: if male US citizens were to believe that they are treated unjustly by their government, they would surely not tolerate this and would vote against this government at the next general election (Pankhurst, 1913, p. 1):

(11) Suppose the men of Hartford had a grievance, and they laid that grievance before their legislature, and the legislature obstinately refused to listen to them, or to remove their grievance, what would be the proper and the constitutional and the practical way of getting their grievance removed? Well, it is perfectly obvious at the next general election the men of Hartford would turn out that legislature and elect a new one.

And although it can be argued again that Pankhurst's argument with only two alternatives comes close to the black-white fallacy (cf. Cicero's and Michel's arguments from alternatives) because there were other suffragist groups and movements who tried more peaceful means of political action than the WSPU, I tend to assume that these more peaceful means would not have proven successful, given the ignorance and the brutality of the exclusively male British politicians at the time as far as women's rights were concerned.

As far as Pankhurst's concept of freedom is concerned, she was politically much more conservative than, for example, Louise Michel. While the outstanding courage, determination and ethical position of Pankhurst's fight for women's freedom to vote were surely admirable, her style of leading the WSPU increasingly became rigid and authoritarian. Because of this, some prominent members of the WSPU left the movement, among them Pankhurst's daughters Sylvia and Adela. Especially Sylvia Pankhurst alienated her mother and her sister Christabel because, differently from her mother, she continued to support the left wing Independent Labour Party.

The next freedom speaker I am going to deal with is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), called “Mahatma” by his followers. He was born in Porbandar, a town in the west of India. Due to his relatively wealthy social background, he received a good education, including a study of law in Great Britain.

After having studied law in Great Britain, he returned to India in the year 1891. After having successfully fought for the rights of the Indian minority in British South Africa (1893–1915) by developing his method of non-violent disobedience (*satyagraha*: “insistence on truth”, Gandhi, 1993, p. 315), shortly after his return to India in 1915, he was already an accomplished public speaker who did not hesitate to provoke the powerful elite.

For example, in presence of the British viceroy, Lord Charles Hardinge (1858–1944), as well as many extremely rich Indian maharajas and a crowd of young students at the occasion of the inauguration ceremony of the Benares Hindu University in 1916, Gandhi delivered a legendary speech, exposing the extreme poverty and other social problems of colonial India. In this speech, Gandhi called himself an anarchist, although not a prototypical one (“I myself am an anarchist but of another type”; cf. Gandhi, 1969, p. 9).

Maybe his most notable speeches were the three public addresses to the All Indian Congress Committee (AICC) in Bombay, on August 7–8, 1942, when the *Quit India Resolution* of the Indian Congress was suggested by Gandhi and passed by the AICC. In these speeches, Gandhi urged the

British to end their colonial rule in India peacefully and to admit India's freedom. Two of these speeches were originally delivered in Hindi, only the third one in English. The following analysis relies on the English translation of the first two speeches (Gandhi, 1960). Whenever there is a difference, I follow the version in Gandhi's *Collected Works* (1961).

A first global look at Gandhi's *Quit India* speeches shows that an essential part of Gandhi's persuasive strength was his rhetorical *ethos*. He practiced what he preached. Throughout his political career in India, he engaged in daily physical work; lived on a very strict diet; wore self-spun, simple clothes (*khadi*); tried to ease poverty; fought for the rights of the "untouchables" (*Dalits*, called *Harijans*, "Vishnu-born", by Gandhi), tried to expand women's rights and spent years in jail solely for propagating his ideas with the basic method of non-violence (*ahimsa*). Gandhi's concept of freedom has been a fusion of what he considered the positive core of Hindu thought and libertarian ideas from Western thought, among them Lev Tolstoy's pacifist Christian anarchism (cf. "In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all"; *Quit India Speeches*; Gandhi, 1960, p. 205).

His political enemies of the time and his critics today accuse(d) him of maintaining implausible standpoints on some important issues (for example, when he refused modern technology). However, so far no one could provide substantial evidence for hypocrisy or other sorts of discrepancy between Gandhi's words and his deeds, as Lal (2008) and Trivedi (2011) argue in favour of Gandhi. Moreover, his emphasis on living like his poor followers seems to constitute a universally characteristic property of the rhetoric of charismatic leaders. This has been shown by cross-cultural research (cf. Bligh/Robinson, 2010).

Gandhi uses the argument from alternatives as a central element of his argumentation in the *Quit India* speeches. He establishes a dilemma between freedom and death, which is a central theme in all freedom discourse, as we have seen (Gandhi, 1960, p. 216), and argues that there is no third alternative:

- (12) *The mantra is: 'Do or Die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.*

The Indian Congress movement will either free India or will die in the attempt or will live to see the perpetuation of its slavery.

It is not acceptable for the Indian Congress movement to live to see the perpetuation of its slavery.

Therefore: The Indian Congress movement will either free India or will die in the attempt.

Of course, the critical question "Are there really only two alternatives of action?" can be applied also to this variant of the argument from alternatives. But in spite of the danger to become a black-and-white fallacy, Gandhi's *ethos* and his willingness to die for his ideals adds considerable weight to this argument. His *ethos* is also reflected in his strategies of verbal presentation. Gandhi uses rhetorical figures relatively rarely and tends to speak in simple, short sentences (cf. also the alliteration in the short clause *Do or die*), which makes his occasional use of metaphor even more impressive, for example, when he calls the status of the Indian people under British colonial rule *our slavery*.

The last speaker I am going to treat here is Nelson Rohlilala Mandela (1918–2013). He was born in 1918 in the province of Transkei, South Africa. His father belonged to the royal house of

the Tembu people. The Tembu are a part of the much larger Xhosa people. When his father died early, the regent of the Tembu people took care of the boy and ensured a good education. After finishing high school, Mandela began to study at Fort Hare, the only Black university in South Africa. Mandela was elected to the Students' Representative Council. Due to his loyalty to a students' protest, he was expelled from Fort Hare and went to Johannesburg in 1941.

After a short period of working as a nightwatchman, Mandela was introduced to Walter Sisulu, who was to become one of his closest friends and co-activists. As Mandela's ambition was to become a lawyer, in 1942 Sisulu introduced him to a white attorney without racial prejudices, who gave Mandela a job. In 1943 he managed to finish his BA study and returned to Fort Hare for the promotion. In the same year, he became involved in politics, participating in a bus boycott and getting introduced to the African National Congress (ANC). In 1944, Mandela, Sisulu and others founded the ANC Youth League. Although Mandela had several communist friends, he first favoured a rather nationalist point of view. Mandela's "African nationalism" was changed by his getting close to representatives of the Indian minority, who also initiated his interest in Mahatma Gandhi (Sampson, 2000, p. 46).

In 1948, the Afrikaner National Party won the election. The racist principle of apartheid became the hegemonic ideology. The British colonialists and the following governments of the South African Union had deprived the Black majority (and the coloured and Indian minorities) from political rights, but the policy of segregation and the further reduction of political rights during apartheid (1948–1990) were unprecedented.

In December 1951, the ANC moved towards mass action with the so-called "Defiance Campaign", a peaceful violation of five racist apartheid laws. Mandela became a major figure in the organisation of the Defiance Campaign, which was a success, boosting the ANC's membership to tens of thousands and proving that the ANC was capable of forming coalitions with the communists and the Indians. In the meantime, Mandela passed his qualification exams to become a full-fledged attorney. In 1952 he opened the first African-run law firm in Johannesburg, which he successfully ran together with his friend Oliver Tambo.

In December 1956, 156 members of the ANC, the South African Communist Party and the South African Indian Congress were arrested and charged with treason. The number of defendants was then reduced to 30 defendants, one of them being Mandela. This 5-year trial (the Treason Trial) destroyed Mandela's career as an attorney. But finally, all defendants were acquitted. Mandela considered his perfectly controlled and rational testimony in this trial as "the strongest speech he had ever made" (Sampson, 2000, p. 135).

In 1960, as peaceful protesters began to move towards the police station of Sharpeville, the police opened fire, and 69 protesters were killed. The Sharpeville Massacre ended the era of peaceful protests. After riots throughout South Africa, the regime banned the ANC and declared martial law. The ANC in 1961 adopted Mandela's and Sisulu's suggestion to form a military organisation, called *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK; "Spear of the Nation").

Mandela decided to go underground to organise the armed battle against the government. The first sabotage acts were performed by MK with little success. Mandela was finally found and arrested by the police in 1962. On July 11, 1962, the police arrested a great many ANC leaders while they were planning guerrilla warfare. The Rivonia Trial was a much more serious challenge than the Treason Trial, with the death sentence as the ultimate threat.

Mandela carefully prepared a statement from the dock. His lawyers "were worried by its defiant candour, which might provoke the judge to hang Mandela" (Sampson, 2000, p. 192). Nevertheless,

Mandela delivered this speech on Monday, April 20, 1964. As Mandela remarks in his autobiography, at the end of the 4-hour speech he placed his notes on the defence table and turned to face the judge and spoke the final words from memory, while the courtroom was very quiet (Mandela, 1995, p. 438):

(13) I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

On June 11, 1964, the judge, visibly nervous, sentenced eight of the defendants to life imprisonment, including Mandela (Sampson, 2000, p. 197). The rest is history; after 27 years of imprisonment, Mandela was released in 1990, awarded the Peace Nobel Prize in 1993 and elected as president of South Africa in 1994.

Mandela's famous final words can be reconstructed as follows:

Either I will live for and achieve this ideal (the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities), or, if necessary, I am prepared to die for this ideal.

Let's assume I cannot live for and achieve this ideal (if I am sentenced to death).

Therefore: I am prepared to die for this ideal.

As can be seen from the reconstruction, different from the earlier variants of the argument from alternatives presented earlier, Mandela somehow escapes the challenge of the criticism to have formulated an instance of the black-white fallacy because he accepts the alternative of death for the cause of freedom only *if necessary*. In his long statement, Mandela had given ample evidence that the ANC had tried every possible peaceful means of political activism before MK turned to violence.

More specifically, Mandela showed that the repeated acts of violence committed by the police (including mistreatment, beatings and multiple killings) left but one alternative of action, namely, violent forms of political struggle (Mandela, 1964 [part I], p. 5):

(14) It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form Umkhonto we Sizwe. We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the government had left us with no other choice.

In this way, Mandela effectively blamed the South African government for having caused the violent acts which could justify the threatening death sentence. Moreover, the discrepancy between the two alternatives is skillfully and dramatically highlighted by its verbal presentation as an antithesis (cf. the parallelism of *It is an ideal which I... it is an ideal for which I*). Needless to say, this presentation is also in line with his *ethos* as a political activist who is willing to die for his political ideals.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to support the following three main conclusions.

- (1) The core meaning of the lexical items designating “freedom” (freedom words) can be successfully established by using dictionaries and computer corpora. This core meaning can be seen as common ground for all speakers of a speech community. It is language-specific, that is, freedom words differ (slightly) as to their language-specific meaning, as has been shown.
- (2) Dealing with the highly controversial issue of defining the reference of the concept of “freedom”, I have defended a libertarian position and thus tried to meet the challenges of deterministic theories from philosophy and science, which ultimately deny the very existence of “freedom”. While it cannot be denied that human behaviour is strongly constrained by biological, psychological, social and political factors, individual persons can work on these constraints and thus gradually enlarge their freedom space. For example, they can try to protest against and eventually reduce the huge power concentrations in modern industrial states and big international corporations by working together within NGOs such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace or Friday for Future. Activists can also take into account the rich indigenous heritage of a more egalitarian regulation of social life, which often grants individuals more basic freedom rights than modern industrial societies. They can also try to influence public opinion by organising peaceful demonstrations and media campaigns.

Moreover, persons can try to individualise their style of action. They thus can partially emancipate themselves from these constraints. Most importantly, human beings can work creatively on the discursive basis of their thought (cf. also Reisigl/Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2009). As language can be seen as a creative activity, and rules governing this verbal activity can be recursively changed (“rule-changing creativity”), as Humboldt, Coseriu and Chomsky have correctly remarked, *Homo sapiens* as an animal symbolicum (cf. Cassirer, 1990, p. 51) can also be characterised as a potentially free animal.

- (3) At the discourse level, in their struggle for freedom, great speakers of all times have tried to promote their context-specific concepts of freedom. Not all these historically shaped concepts of freedom fulfil the highest contemporary standards of political freedom (according to universal principles such as the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” of the UN).

However, it would be historically inadequate to apply modern standards to all earlier concepts of “freedom”. Moreover, the courage of these men and women, who risked and sometimes lost their lives for their freedom struggle, remains truly impressive. The five freedom speeches I have chosen for an empirical analysis (delivered by Cicero, Louise Michel, Emmeline Pankhurst, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela) share one discursive means of persuasion, namely the argument from alternatives. Facing the alternative of freedom or death, these speakers unanimously argued for the risk of their life for an ideal of freedom.

Of course, all these arguments from alternatives can be critically questioned because any dichotomy of action with only two exclusive alternatives runs the risk to become a fallacious (false) dilemma. However, the political circumstances and the *ethos* of these speakers often made it difficult to even imagine further alternatives of action. Moreover, they all show their mastery of strategies of argumentation and verbal presentation when they try to justify their having the choice between only two alternatives.

As far as their fundamental commitment to freedom as a central value is concerned, all five speakers share the crucial conviction that political freedom should be preserved and/or enhanced.

Table 13.2 Varieties of freedom rhetoric

	<i>Freedom: central value</i>	<i>Use of violent means</i>	<i>Ideological background</i>
Cicero	+	+(promotion of a civil war against Marcus Antonius in order to protect the Roman Republic)	conservative
Louise Michel	+	+(political agitation for a militant revolution)	socialist anarchist
Emmeline Pankhurst	+	+(use of violence only against things)	mixed: progressive feminist and conservative politician
Mahatma Gandhi	+	- (absolute principle of non-violence: <i>ahimsa</i>)	mixed: pacifist anarchist and progressive Hindu
Nelson Mandela	+	+/- (after a long period of peaceful activism, change to violent guerrilla tactics)	left-liberal

However, they clearly differ as far as they consider the use of violent political means to achieve their ideal of freedom to be acceptable or not. They also clearly differ as far as their ideological (political and religious) background is concerned, which clearly affects their concept of freedom. All in all, they can be roughly categorised in Table 13.2.

Recommended readings

- Ilie, Cornelia (2013): Which Freedom? The Challenges of Key Word Conceptualisations in a Cross-Linguistics Perspective. In: S. Caruana/L. Coposescu/S. Scaglione (eds.): *Migration, Multilingualism and Schooling in Southern Europe*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 18–34.
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PART III

Methodological considerations



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14

INFUSING “SPIRIT” INTO THE “POWER/OTHER” DIALECTIC AND DIALOGUE

Ronald D. Gordon

Introduction

The inclusion of the notion of “Spirit” within our CDS mindsets could have at least three major benefits as we attend to the ongoing “Power/Other” dialectic and dialogue: (a) drawing upon a narrative of the *Spirit of Renewal* can be of value in helping us revitalise our personal energies as CDS scholars, bringing hope, optimism, grit, resilience and integrative self-care to our lives and work and thereby bode well for the health of CDS itself; (b) a narrative of the *Spirit of Play* (a facet of the *Spirit of Inquiry*) can stimulate an upgrade of imagination, creativity, spontaneity, feeling and intuition and well-serve our CDS projects; and (c) a narrative conception of the *Spirit of Dialogue* when facilitating Power/Other dialogue can strengthen our capacity for leaning into the core practices that help foster authentic dialogue. These narrative frames are suggestive of potential roles for Spirit in CDS and are certainly not exhaustive.

Treatments of Spirit in Hawaiian culture, in the *Upanishads* and in Taoism and neo-Confucianism are briefly sampled to inspire personal reflection on dimensions of Spirit as experienced across time and place. Outflows from such contemplation on Spirit are especially worthwhile if they assist us in revitalising ourselves as scholars, enhancing our breadth and depth of conceptual inquiry and reconfiguring discourse structures by means of higher quality human dialogue.

Spirit is not necessarily advocated as a term to be explicitly employed within our scholarly discourse, nor as a structured methodology, but as a cognitive-affective prompt to potentially stimulate inner movement of attitude and orientation, enlargement of narrative frame and an expansion of scholarly parameters into wider horizons of sensing, feeling, thinking, creating and facilitating.

The word “Spirit” emerges from the Latin “*inspiritus*”, which has to do with being filled with “the breath of life”, “the vital power” and “the life principle” (Oxford, 1985). Spirit is a “cultural fact”, serving a long and important role in cultures around the world for tens of thousands of years. As Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 601) have noted, “all countries have a concept of an ultimate, transcendent, sacred, and divine force”. The celebration of Spirit has been at the heart of the *philosophia perennis* (Huxley, 1945) across the millennia, and more recently recognition of Spirit has come from within the sciences, as Einstein himself has succinctly expressed,

everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that some spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe, one that is vastly superior to that of man. In this

way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is surely quite different from the religiosity of someone more naïve.

(Calaprice, 2011, pp. 127–129; also see Jammer, 1999, pp. 92–93).

As Rifkin (2009, p. 171) has observed, in the modern age spirituality has evolved beyond the more doctrinal and dogmatic forms of orthodox establishment religiosity.

The word “spirit” regularly enters our discourse as we hear of the human spirit, the creative spirit, the spirit of exploration and discovery, the raising of someone’s spirits, the Divine Spirit and more. German existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers (1971) was among those who steadfastly refused empirical definition of the word “spirit” on the grounds that any such formulation is reductionistic and that metaphysical phenomena of this magnitude are best not formally defined but pointed toward (Gordon, 2021b, 2000). Jaspers maintained that scholars could best spend their time becoming receptive to Spirit, rather than worrying about strictly defining it. Insisting upon such a definition, Jaspers held, was a form of nihilism, “attempting to grasp the truth by too short a reach” (Ehrlich, 1975, p. 150). What further pointer did Jaspers offer? Jaspers suggested that “Spirit Is the will to become *whole*” (Jaspers, 1957/1935, p. 62). Spirit seeks “an alteration of our consciousness of Being, and of our inner attitude toward things” (Jaspers, p. 75).

Carl Jung (1974, pp. 254–271) theorised that behind empirical reality exists an ineffable transcendental background that includes Spirit, and

it freely chooses the person who proclaims it and in whom it lives. This living spirit is eternally renewed and pursues its goal in manifest and inconceivable ways . . . It is not derived from any other instinct, as psychologists of instinct would have us believe, but is a principle *sui generis*, a specific and necessary form of instinctual power.

Spirit endures, and when we choose to, we can grant essential voice to Spirit and bring it to life.

The purpose of this chapter is neither to conceptually elucidate Spirit nor to empirically validate its existence, for these would be ambitious burdens to bear (even with the supportive testimony of the founding father of scientific psychology (James, 1902, pp. 370–420; 475–516). Rather it is to more modestly propose that at times Spirit be invoked by cultural discourse studies (CDS) scholars via imaginative metaphor as an energising narrative frame in a tripartite mythic story structure of Power, Other and Spirit (Rushing, 1993; Rushing & Frentz, 1995; Goodall, Jr., 1996). We do not have to “prove” the absolute existence and substance of Spirit to know that its use as generative metaphor can be powerful. We need no religious conversion or spiritual transformation to begin to include the notion of Spirit in our working mindsets and approaches, should we so choose.

Therefore this chapter is not to advance any particular spiritual belief system but to suggest the timeliness of a narrative infusion of Spirit into the hearts and minds of even more of our new breed of CDS scholars to further bolster our scholarly efforts to help make our future world a safer and more harmonious place in which to live (Shi-xu, 2017). Could working from a narrative of Spirit have beneficial implications for engaging such CDS themes as discursive identity construction, ethnocentrism, ethnic and religious conflict, multicultural dialogue, global ethics, global community-building and other CDS issues? I believe the answer is in the affirmative.

Meyer (2014), from a Hawaiian indigenous epistemological perspective, argues that on our way to greater meaning we benefit from the three sites of Body, Mind, and Spirit, with the latter especially having to do with awareness, creative intelligence, intuition, emancipatory rationality, realisation and liberation. Meyer (2014, p. 147) advises, “Do not fear what is inevitable: that we are all part of birthing a new culture”. The present chapter as well holds that it is time to become

more fearless in our scholarly contributions, and welcome Spirit as an ally in overcoming dire difficulty against all odds, the birthing of a more humane and just global culture, a call that Shi-xu (2017) energetically extends. As noted, Harvard and Peking University scholar Tu Weiming (2014, p. 513) has warned, “we cannot afford to cut ourselves off from the spiritual resources that make our life meaningful”. To this we might add, from feelingful inner resources that could also conceivably make our scholarly work more meaningful and useful. Campbell (1949, p. 29) has said of the “hero’s journey” that “fundamentally it is inward, into depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost forgotten powers are revivified, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world”. From within rhetorical studies, Smith (1993) long ago argued that “we cannot deepen our theory nor advance our understanding of the art of rhetoric without investigating the spiritual dimension” (p. 268), and one might wonder if this is not also the case for CDS. Smith went on to suggest that there are limitations to the grammar/logic of ordinary mind (GLOOM), and that “associating with spirit always expands consciousness, and does so exponentially” (Smith, 1993, pp. 268–270).

British cognitive psychologist J. Teasdale (2022) conceptualises two major types of knowing: conceptual knowing and holistic-intuitive knowing. The former is dominant and competes with the latter to maintain control. It is the operating assumption of this chapter that it would invigorate CDS inquiry if we relied less exclusively on our dominant mental mode in our scholarship and activated greater holistic-intuitive knowing. For as Jung (1974, p. 254) came to see it, Spirit is higher than intellect, “a guiding principle of life that strives toward superhuman, shining heights”. It may well be that scholarly inquiry in CDS would benefit from rotating patterns of “contraction-expansion” in alternating sequence and that within the “expansion” phase a given scholar’s imagination would be freed from as many encumbrances as reasonably possible (Gordon, 1986).

Mythos of spirit

Fisher (1989, Ch. 1–3) is among those who early advocated for a narrative paradigm in human communication studies, arguing that we are *Homo narrans*, and that our worldviews are constituted by sets of stories that we have been trained, or have chosen, to live within:

I contend further that human communication in all of its forms is imbued with mythos—ideas that cannot be verified or proved in any absolute way. Such ideas arise in metaphor . . . the most compelling, persuasive stories are mythic in form.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, Ch. 25) early addressed the “myth” of objectivism: “according to the objectivist myth, myths and metaphors cannot be taken seriously because they are not objectively true. As we shall see, the myth of objectivism itself is not objectively true” (p. 186; also see Jung, 1974, pp. 183–208). Lakoff and Johnson argued that although both objectivity and subjectivity make one another the enemy, they are interdependent. Objectivism aligns with rationality, impartiality, precision, proof and science; subjectivism entails feelings, imagination, intuition, humanness, metaphor, art and “higher” truths: “Each is a master in its own realm, and views its realm as the better of the two. They coexist, but in separate domains” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 189). Metaphor is essential for its ability to unite reason and imagination into “imaginative rationality”, to help us comprehend partially what we cannot understand totally, including aesthetic and moral experiences, feelings and spiritual awareness. The use of multiple and varying metaphors (lenses) can enable more robust understandings of, and possibilities for, the “foundational transformational process” that is human communication (Gordon, 2021a; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 123, 221).

In this chapter, then, we will suggest that Spirit as narrative be triangulated into the ongoing dialectic and dialogue between Power and Other with which CDS is so centrally involved. By not being socially constructed into the symbolic universe of academic scholarship in general, Spirit is denied discourse existence, and epistemicide is committed (Santos, 2014). Academic culture wields Power much like Science, and as Foucault (1988) observed, “it is, literally, a power that forces you to say certain things if you are not to be disqualified not only as being wrong, but, more seriously than that, as being a charlatan”. Spirit has been largely excluded from scholarly discourse (Gordon, 2007a, 2007b, 2020b). As Gergen (1999, p. 27) has expressed it, “the entire world-view of the materialist rests on a suppression of the spirit”. At best, Spirit has been left homeless, and therefore vulnerable to those who subscribe to fundamentalist dogma; banished to the fortress of extreme religious doctrine, Spirit can become unhealthily contorted and downright dangerous (Rushing & Frentz, 1995, Ch. 2 & 3; Jung, 1974, pp. 254–271).

Triangulation of Power/Other and Spirit

The communicative narrative of Power/Other and Spirit positions Power and Other in an endless array of specific forms, locked in ongoing struggle in this world in a spiral of dialectical confrontations (Goodall, Jr., 1996, pp. 1–24; 245–278). What is Power? Power is the sovereign rational subject, Power is exclusionary in-group privilege and Power dominates, oppresses, suppresses and powers its way into keeping things in order, the order it commands (Rushing, 1993, pp. 20–47; 203–220). Power leads to narratives of exceptionalism, self-serving impulsivity and deficits of empathy and respect for Other (Keltner, 2016, pp. 99–136). The Other (e.g. the working classes, the dark-skinned races, the feminine, the unconscious) is marginalised and becomes the adversary of Power. Other resists and opposes Power, and attempts to subvert it. This Power/Other struggle persists across time and place, each part taking its dialectical role and with endless tensions, breakdowns, and rebellions ensuing.

Spirit has been mostly crowded out of this alternating monologue between Power and Other, and Spirit can then become a slave of Power and loses its ability to check Power’s abuses (Rushing & Frentz, 1995, pp. 31–43). Spirit has been co-opted by modernist Power and postmodern Other, and both can utilise the animating force of Spirit to suit their own purposes. But while Spirit can be demoted and displaced, like other forms of energy it cannot be destroyed (Rushing, 1993, p. 162). Spirit may have gone underground, yet Spirit remains omnipresent in purer ineffable form and awaits being rallied and raised into more complete Presence (Jung, 1974, pp. 254–271). Spirit is reluctant to aggressively take sides within the Power/Other dialectic, yet at opportune moments can find its way to work toward expanded awareness of the panoramic Whole. Upon recognition by both Power and Other of their reliance upon Spirit, at times this dialectic can be moved toward reconfiguration, harmonisation and healing. In her Power/Other and Spirit analysis of the classic film *Groundhog Day*, Daughton (1996) shows how the lead character Phil Connors (played by Bill Murray) awakens from his recurring dreamlike stuckness as he “gradually comes to look to the Spirit inside himself for the wisdom he needs” (p. 151). An imaginative invocation of Spirit from within as an animating narrative can awaken, integrate and realign, not only in fiction but in real life (e.g. Kaur, 2020). Spirituality itself may be seen as entailing a greater settling into Spirit, a rotation of consciousness into another mode less restricted by material dimensionality.

Bringing healthy Spirit back within our consciousness and discourse could be an aim of at least some of the new breed of CDS scholars that Shi-xu (2017) is urging forth:

The new breed of scholars and students must utilise various platforms and channels to shape, consolidate and promulgate, far more than ever before, a collective vision of a future world

of shared human destiny and at the same time select, search and invent practical pathways to reach that goal.

Where does Spirit fit into this picture? Spirit can invigorate our shaping of a vision of a more just, peaceful and sustainable future and visions of how we might get there. Venturing, for example, into an unfolding narrative of a Spirit of Renewal, a Spirit of Play, and a Spirit of Dialogue, i.e. imaginatively and receptively surrounding ourselves within these narrative prompts, can be empowering and useful, for “wherever we want spirit, there it will be. Wherever we do not want spirit, there it will not be” (Chan, 1968, p. 191).

But first, to arouse our sense of Spirit, a trip to Hawai‘i, then a short visit to ancient India (via the *Upanishads*), then to ancient China (Taoism and neo-Confucianism) and then back to implications for CDS scholars.

Spirit of Indigenous Hawai‘i

For more than 95% of our human time here on earth our ancestors lived with spiritual beliefs, rituals and practices other than those of modern-day religious institutions and that pervaded daily existence. Nomadic hunters and gatherers “revere what is everywhere” (Campbell, 2003, Ch. 1), while settled “modern” people honour this “particular” man-made designated sacred symbol, in that exact building there, at a formally designated time. This differs from being in unitive embodiment with a magnificent skyscape, the warmth of the sun, cool breezes, huge clouds floating by, felt kinship with the Spirits of the land, the waters, the animals and in *I-Thou* encounter with the Spirit of the Whole (Buber, 1970; Frankfort, et al., 1971). Human-and-Spirit communication was once sought and ritualised (Abram, 2017), yet in less than three thousand years, and especially in the past few centuries, this long-standing organic human interconnectedness with the Spirits of Nature and the One has suffered major degradation, demoted to more of a commodified “I-It” relation (Orr, 2004, Ch. 7 & 9). Martin (1993, Ch. 4) quotes a Native American tribesman who pithily offers a symbolic summary: “The spirits do not come to help us now. The white men have driven them away”.

Yet some on our planet still do feel a close and intimate connection with their natural surroundings and intertwined with a larger and more elusive Spirit of the Whole, a “Something Beyond” that they cannot precisely articulate, nor do they need to, because they are satisfied to yield to their respectful awe, profound appreciation and sensuous receptivity to the natural and supernatural dimensions permeating them (Abram, 2010; Tornstam, 2005, p. 41). Up to and including modern times, the islands of Hawai‘i have been such a place, where ancient sensibilities, rituals, stories, mysteries, energies, ways and relationships with the land are recognised and honoured (Meyer, 2003; Dudley, 1990).

To provide personal context, I live in the Hawaiian archipelago, the most remote landmass on earth, on the Island of Hawai‘i (aka “the Big Island”), close to the centre of the Blue Pacific and surrounded by thousands of miles of ocean in all directions. This is an island of volcanic gods and goddesses: Madame Pele, Maui, Hina, Kane, Hi‘iaka and others. Madame Pele, the goddess of the most active volcano in the world, is said to dwell within the caves of the crater Halema‘uma‘u on Kilauea volcano, about 25 miles from where these words are being written in Hilo. Offerings are regularly left at the edge of Kilauea crater to honour the living Spirit of Madame Pele, and traditional ceremonies are performed. When the lava flows, it is not bemoaned; it is understood that this island is the land of Madame Pele; we live on her flanks, she was here first and is from long, long ago.

A half-mile from where I type these very words, *Hina*, the mother of the demigod *Maui*, is said to have dwelt in the cave behind Rainbow Falls and wove her kapa cloth there. She was, legend has it, set upon by a giant lizard-like creature (the dragon *Kuna*) and had to be rescued by her son *Maui*, who arrived from the next island over. *Maui* and *Kuna* are said to have battled in the *Wailuku* river less than a hundred yards from where I am now sitting.

On our university campus, the most culturally diverse liberal arts campus in America (US News & World Report, 2022), we learn to integrate scientific belief systems and traditional Hawaiian stories and practices. The Spirit of ancient narratives is kept alive on our island, and no one would be so insensitive as to scoff at them; they are respected mythologies holding meaning, value and purpose. Situated as I am in Polynesia, almost midway between America and East Asia, ancient mythologies run deep and current, and the Spirit of the earth and her elements are still honoured.

This chapter will briefly draw upon narrative treatments of Spirit from Hawaiian, East Indian and Chinese sources. It will be then suggested that Spirit is a useful heuristic generative metaphor, a rich narrative frame that we in CDS would do well to consider becoming even more receptive to, in our own ways, and letting this influence us, and our work, how it will.

Spirit of Aloha

Alo in Hawaiian translates as presence, and *Ha* in Hawaiian means the living breath, the life force, the sharing of life energy, the imparting of mystic powers (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1983, p. 43). In traditional Hawaiian ritual two people would touch foreheads together and breathe, sharing presence and Spirit (*ha*) together. To share the *Aloha* Spirit in this or any other way is to acknowledge each person as a sacred *Thou* and to mingle life energies. The *Aloha* Spirit entails the giving and receiving of unconditional acceptance and loving kindness without the Other having to “prove” they deserve this. To have the Spirit of *Aloha* is to be welcoming to all, to emanate sincere friendliness through one’s presence, warm feelings, honourable intentions and patience. The Spirit of *Aloha* offers a heartfelt warmth that strengthens human ties. Throughout the Islands, *Kama ‘aina* (people of this land) attempt to bring the *Aloha* Spirit into their *ohana* (families), workplaces and communities. To perpetuate this *Aloha* Spirit remains among the highest values among the people who live in these Hawaiian Islands. In fact, the *Aloha* Spirit value has been included since 1986 in Volume 1 of the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, Chapter 5–7.5, as officially a primary value within the state of Hawai‘i, and state administrators in performing their duties are invited “to contemplate and reside within the life force and give consideration to the ‘*Aloha* Spirit’” (Hawai‘i State Legislature, 2022). An emphasis upon human goodwill, multicultural integration and reaching for harmony, the Spirit of *Aloha*, is among Hawai‘i’s most treasured contributions to our world.

Spirit of the Aina

Traditional Hawaiian spirituality does not consist of written doctrine nor are there dogmatic religious principles (Meyer, 2003, pp. 92–97). Rather, it is about showing respect for all of the Spirits of the land (the *aina*) and welcoming embodied connection with the *aina* in its many forms. All things are seen to have Spirit (*akua*): tree has Spirit, mountain has Spirit, lava flow has Spirit, rock has Spirit, and we humans have Spirit, and this natural and supernatural environment of which we are part offers itself up for dialogue (Meyer, 2014, Ch. 2). Hawaiians treat the *aina* as ancestor and friend and enjoy being-one with the earth, mountains, sky, ocean, stream, river, forest, plants and animals. There is an attunement with the *aina*, a bond with the *aina* from infancy onward, an *Aloha*

aina, a love of the land. Spirit is immanent, and interconnection (not separation or alienation) is the phenomenological experience (Dudley, 1990).

In olden times, often within the *ohana* (family) there was a *haka* (mediator) who could communicate with the family *aumakua* (spiritual ancestors) or with other mystic entities (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1983, pp. 35–43; 115–118). It was believed that these spiritual ancestors could shapeshift and become a turtle, eel, owl, shark, plant, stone or any other form and give signs (p. 23). And at night, in the Hawaiian belief system, dreams (*moe’uhane*) were seen to create portals from which messages might come from the Spirits of the ancestors (p. 193).

With mortality comes eventual departure from this body, and a long dive into *Po*. Traditional Hawaiians believed our Spirit departs from this life by leaping from an ocean cliff (*leina*, a place of leaping) into *Po*. What is *Po*? It is timeless darkness, the measureless creative expanse of all space, the unfathomable eternal mystic sea of *Po* (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1983, p. 40; Dudley, 1990, pp. 11–12).

Na’au and the spirit of listening

The region around the navel, the gut area, is called the *na’au* in Hawaiian and is considered a core epistemological centre, the seat of emotion, intuition, intellect and wisdom (Meyer, 2003, pp. 122–27; 176–181). One who is wise (*an’auao*) is in deep contact with their *na’au*. In body-centric Indigenous Hawaiian philosophy, to “be prepared” (*maka’ala*) is to be following our *na’au*. Yet we need to listen not only to (and from) our *na’au* alone, our bodily centre-point, but with our Spirit as well: “To pay attention, to really listen (*ho’olono*) is to invoke a spirit. Listening, then, becomes a spiritual act” (Meyer, 2003, p. 163). This deep listening (*ho’olohe*) will come from our brain, from our *na’au*, and from Spirit. From this integrated holistic listening to self and others and all, wisdom can emerge. Nature, Humanity and Spirit, this is the Hawaiian triumvirate.

Mana, our spiritual power

Mana is spiritual power, a special power or energy originating in the supernatural or mystic realms (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1983, pp. 149–155). Everyone has at least some *mana*. One of our great tasks in this lifetime is to learn to skillfully use our *mana*.

In a group context, the pooling of each person’s *mana* can result in a unifying spiritual force, constructive and helpful in nature, called *kukulu kumuhana* (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1983, pp. 78–80). This entails the streaming together of peoples’ emotional, psychological and spiritual strengths for shared purpose. *Aloha*, sincerity, sensitivity, solidarity, empathy, compassion, positivity and warmth, all of these can lead us toward *kukulu kumuhana*. It is said in Hawai‘i (Meyer, 2003, p. 15) that we on earth are living in a time of *Ho’oulu*, an era of hope, growth and Spirit. The time is now at hand around our planet for creating *kukulu kumuhana*, the pooling of our Spirit of *Aloha* and *mana* for the well-being of all.

In this section we briefly touched upon the importance of regularly communicating with the ancestors and the *aina* (land and nature), of being centred in our *na’au* (psychologically, emotionally, physically, spiritually), of using our *mana* well when alone and with others, and the centrality of sharing the Spirit of *Aloha*.

The Upanishads

The *Upanishads* (meaning to be learning the “secret doctrines”) were written beginning in about 800 BC and continuing up until approximately the 15th century AD. Joseph Campbell (2003,

p. 20) called the *Upanishads* “the Platonic dialogues of the Indian tradition”, and, beyond this, “the most sublime religious writings in the world” (p. 23). Schopenhauer said the *Upanishads* “had been the consolation of my life, and will be of my death” (quoted in Mascaro, 1965, Introduction). What follows are about a dozen of my own favourite verses from the *Upanishads*, all selections taken from the Juan Mascaro (1965) translation from Sanskrit.

The core teaching from the *Mandukya Upanishad* is that the Ultimate Spirit and Our Spirit are not separate: “Brahman is all and Atman is Brahman” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 83).

From the *Katya Upanishad*:

Concealed in the heart of all beings is the Atman, the Spirit, the Self; smaller than the smallest atom, greater than the vast spaces . . . When the wise realize the omnipresent Spirit, who rests invisible in the visible and permanent in the impermanent, then they can go beyond all sorrow.

(Mascaro, 1965, pp. 59–61)

From the *Prasna Upanishad*: “Life comes from the Spirit” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 70), and “even as birds, O beloved, return to their trees for rest, thus all things find their rest in Atman, the Supreme Spirit” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 72). For the Supreme Spirit, it is the metaphor of a tree and returning to rest there.

From the *Chandogya Upanishad*: “An invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Truth. THOU ART THAT” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 118). “There is a bridge between time and Eternity; and this bridge is Atman, the Spirit of man” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 121).

As to Essential Knowledge: “It is because of the light of the Spirit that the human mind can see, and can think, and can enjoy the world . . . It is this Spirit that we must find and know” (Mascaro, 1965, pp. 126, 128).

Last, and certainly not least, from this same *Chandogya Upanishad*: “We should consider that in the inner world, Brahman is consciousness; and we should consider that in the outer world Brahman is space. These are the two meditations” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 115).

From the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*:

He who in the mystery of life has found the Atman, the Spirit, and has awakened to his light, to him as creator belongs the world of Spirit, for he is this world. While we are here in this life, we may reach the light of wisdom; and if we reach it not, how deep is the darkness

(Mascaro, 1965, p. 141).

Awakening to Spirit is to find wisdom and to no longer be afraid: “This is the Spirit of the universe, a refuge from all fear” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 143).

Our sleep and dreams, too, hold possibilities: “The Spirit of man has two dwellings: this world and the world beyond. There is also a third dwelling place: the land of sleep and dreams” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 134).

From the *Bhagavad Gita*: “When one sees Eternity in things that pass away and Infinity in finite things, then one has pure knowledge” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 19).

Briefly summarising these selections, Spirit is rendered as Omnipresent, Subtle, Timeless, Wise, Small and Vast, Within and Without, and Restorative. Each of these verses is, of course, traditionally considered holy ground, and worthy of gentle contemplation.

Taoism and neo-Confucianism

Taoism arose in approximately 600–500 BC in China, and its influence is still being felt (Grigg, 1999). The classic early Taoist collection, the *Tao-te Ching*, has Lao Tzu asking, “Can you keep the spirit and embrace the One without departing from them? . . . This is called profound and secret virtue” (Chan, 1963, p. 116).

Chuang Tzu speaks of listening with the Spirit:

The hearing that is only in the ears is one thing. The hearing of the understanding is another. But the hearing of the spirit is not limited to any one faculty, to the ear, or to the mind. Hence it demands emptiness of all the faculties. And when the faculties are empty, then the whole being listens.

(Merton, 1965, pp. 52–53)

And from the later Taoist classic *Secret of the Golden Flower* (about 800 AD):

Master Lu Tzu said: ‘. . . If, when there is quiet, the spirit has continuously and uninterruptedly a sense of great gaiety as if intoxicated or freshly bathed, it is a sign the Light principle in the whole body is harmonious; then the Golden Flower begins to bud . . . When the pupil keeps the crystalized spirit fixed within the cave of power (solar plexus), and, at the same time, lets greatest quietness hold sway, then out of the obscure darkness, a something develops out of nothingness, that is, the Golden Flower of the Great *One* appears.

(Wilhelm & Jung, 2014, pp. 54, 68)

While Confucius (551–479 BC) emphasised ethical guidelines for maintaining rational order, propriety, harmony and humanism within Chinese society, spirituality served only an implicit role in his teachings (Yum, 2007). In neo-Confucianism, however, Spirit has been at times treated more directly. A small sampling from the ancient teachings follows, drawing heavily from *A Sourcebook on Chinese Philosophy* by Wing-Tsit Chan (1963).

Shao Yung (1011–1077 AD) wrote *Supreme Principles Governing the World*, in which it is said that

Spirit is the master of Change . . . Spirit is nowhere and yet everywhere. The perfect person can penetrate the minds of others because he is based on the One. Spirit is perforce called the One and the Way. It is best to call it spirit.

(Chan, 1963, pp. 491–492)

Chang Tsai (1020–1077) speaks on the smoothness of Spirit:

Spirit moves smoothly, whereas a material object is obstructed . . . When spirit concentrates, it penetrates like the breeze going through the hole (of musical instruments), producing tones, carrying them to great distances. This is the evidence of clearness. As if arriving at the destination without the necessity of going there, penetration reaches the highest degree.

(Chan, 1963, p. 504)

Ch’eng Hao (1032–1085) comments on the relation between Spirit and transformation: “The most impressive aspect of things is their spirit of life . . . Spirit is the mystery of transformation” (Chan, 1963, p. 539).

Ch'eng I-ch'uan (1033–1107) teaches about naturalness and Spirit: “What is meant by being transformed (to goodness itself) is to enter into the spirit and be natural with it, so that one can apprehend without thinking, and hit upon what is right without effort” (Chan, 1963, p. 549).

Chu Hsi (1130–1200) speaks of breathing as Spirit: “In breathing, breath going out is the positive spiritual force, breath coming in is the negative spiritual force” (Chan, 1963, p. 644). And as for the dexterity of Spirit, “in the case of spirit which is so called because of the mysterious functioning, it happens all of a sudden and is unfathomable. It suddenly comes, suddenly goes; it is suddenly here, suddenly there” (Chan, 1963, p. 644).

Lu Hsiang-Shan (1139–1193): “Collect your spirit. Be your own master. ‘All things are already complete in oneself’” (Chan, 1963, p. 586).

These few quotations give a flavour of the recognition of Spirit in Taoism and neo-Confucianism: Spirit is Smooth, Spirit is Natural, Spirit is Breathable, Spirit is Elusive, Spirit Listens, Spirit Penetrates, Spirit Blossoms, Spirit can be Swift, Spirit is Change, Spirit Transforms and Spirit is Unfathomable. These ancient Asian conceptions of Spirit from Chinese sages a thousand and more years ago can continue to resonate within us as wisdom, soft power and gentle action even now if we choose to receive their echo with respect and appreciation.

The ancient Eastern spirit

Dr. Carl Jung, renowned Swiss psychiatrist and symbolist, received a draft manuscript copy of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* in 1928 sent to him by its translator Richard Wilhelm, who invited Jung to write an extensive commentary to be included within the book. This was Jung's most intimate introduction at that time to Chinese philosophy, and it was life-changing: “We have not remained merely admiring critical observers, but have become participants of the Eastern spirit” (Wilhelm & Jung, 2014, p. 142). As Jung saw it, Spirit especially began to degenerate into intellect in the West with the coming of the 19th century, and

intellect does, in fact, violate the soul when it tries to possess itself of the heritage of the spirit. Is in no way fitted to do this, for spirit is something higher than intellect, since it embraces the latter and includes the feelings as well. It is a principle of life that strives after superhuman, shining heights.

(Jung, 1974, p. 254)

Of Westerners' contact with Eastern philosophy, especially at that time, Jung (Wilhelm & Jung, 2014, p. 140) observed that “touching only the superficialities and externals of the foreign culture, they never eat its bread nor drink its wine, and so never enter into the *communio spiritus*, that most intense transfusion and interpenetration which prepares a new birth”. For Jung, ancient Chinese philosophy finally provided the Archimedean point for which he had been unconsciously yearning for years.

Famed mythologist Joseph Campbell as well had his life forever changed by his contact with Eastern narratives. He spent a year in Asia in 1955 and for three decades thereafter delighted in introducing to the West classic narratives emanating from Asian philosophies and religions (Campbell, 2004, 2003). Like Jung, Campbell claimed that “there is no spirituality in any aspect of our contemporary Western civilization. Our religious life is ethical, not mystical. The mystery has gone, and society is disintegrating as a result” (Campbell, 2003, Introduction). While the first sentence is overstated, it is difficult to quibble with Campbell's assertion that when it comes to authentically living a life in the fullness of Spirit rather than merely paying lip service to religious

creeds, the West has been adrift. Campbell was compelled to teach about Eastern myths because they “speak from and to the spirit” (Campbell, 2004, p. 21). The mind is placed on an altered plane of consciousness by certain significant spiritual symbols, and “the symbol which you are ready for evokes a response in you” (Campbell, 2004, p. 93).

Benefits of invoking narratives of Spirit

Becoming a CDS scholar who develops a feeling for Spirit in its multiple forms as an internal (and possibly external) narrative framework could include at least the following three benefits, and potentially others:

- (1) A narrative of a Spirit of Renewal can revitalise our personal energies as CDS scholars, bringing hope, optimism, grit, resilience and integrative self-care. This can sustain and nurture our capacity for bringing healing energies into the world through our scholarly contributions.

Sustained engagement with discourses of division, domination and dehumanisation can be demanding and demoralising. Reality-warping discourses of manipulation, deception, mockery, denial, projection, threat and more can overwhelm. Daily exposure to debased discourses of danger tends to trigger biological and emotional reactivity, and we ourselves can sour and weaken. Stress and cynicism are professional hazards for scholars within critical studies, conditions and temptations to which we had best not capitulate.

In a narrative of Spirit, our intention to experience mental, physical, emotional and spiritual centredness, and an influx of creative revitalisation, is foundational. We choose to listen to the ancient sages, hypothesising that they understood the significance of Spirit. We call upon universal reserves to calm, centre and restore ourselves; and when again fortified, we step again into the world of challenge. Spirit lightens the lowed; Spirit raises the head: we open to being healed and nurtured by a narrative of Spirit. As William James (1890) well-advised, “if you want a quality, act as if you already have it”. Trusting the narrative and embracing Spirit brings Spirit.

Beyond self-care, however, the health of any discipline or movement is at stake when critical deconstruction and argumentative repudiation becomes its predominant aim; ironically, we can become what we are fighting against (Jung, 1974, pp. 209–230). We ourselves risk becoming Power to Other. We do not want to unwittingly succumb to reproducing domination through our own elite, critical, distanced articulatory practices.

We humans are creators within the cosmos and mindful reconstruction of reality is within our hands; and these hands shape productively and ethically when guided by warm hearts of caring, and the rest of the best of the Human Spirit (Gordon, 2020b). By working within a multilayered but diffuse implicit narrative of Spirit, prospects for gentle action exist. We can turn to the ancients to raise our spirits, trying-on their messages and finding what fits. The *Maitri Upanishad* announces that what a person thinks, they become, and that “this is a mystery of Eternity” (Mascaro, 1965, p. 103). We can choose to advance past “fancy” and into the realm of High Imagination where Spirit calls, and emerge regenerated, waking from a “dream” in which we might have been trapped. This influx of Spirit can feed into and potentially rescue us, along with our CDS scholarship: “To vision profounder, human’s spirit must dive” (Emerson, 1965, p. 449).

- (2) A narrative of a Spirit of Play allows us to upgrade our imagination, creativity, spontaneity and intuition, all of which can aid us as CDS scholars within our various scholarly projects.

Spirit is an element that offers higher-order slipperiness, for Spirit by nature slides and glides. Spirit loves to play: stuck-ness eases, and Spirit finds a way. Spirit trance-ends and transforms. Spirit offers scope and hope; Spirit realigns, and redesigns; Spirit is a way out and in. Spirit, historically, has often saved the day. Spirit is the home of can-do, fountain of vitality and the haven of wisdom. Spirit is here to be turned to, felt and freed. Spirit rounds sharp edges, Spirit endears, opens and carries forward. We need to learn in muscle-memory that how we narratively conceptualise the world then creates what we know of it. We have been *used* by the symbols we have used; now it's time to subtly change it up.

Standing on the shoulders of who and what came prior, conceptual rearrangement and reapprehending occurs. A Spirit of Play lightens the load, off-road journeys can be taken and serendipity materialises. The great jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker advised well: “Don’t play the saxophone. Let it play you” (Jackson & Delehanty, 2014, p. 62). We let ourselves “get played” by a Spirit of Play, and in this way partner with “the spirit that has not yet entered this world but is ready to do so, and now becomes present to us” (Buber, 1970, p. 174). We learn what it means to surrender to a Spirit of Play (e.g. Gilbert, 2009).

The West has for hundreds of years valued the sovereign “rational” subject, while East Asia has additionally and traditionally held high the human being’s capacity for transcending the limits set by reason (Burtt, 1968, p. 678). Teasdale (2022) holds that conceptual knowledge and holistic-intuitive knowing are qualitatively different yet complementary and argues for reinstating and legitimising holistic-intuitive knowing so that yet additional higher-order processes already present in our minds can be allowed to flourish.

As an old Zen adage puts it, discursive logical analysis cannot catch every fish in its net; and as Rorty (1979) observed, “a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of culture change”.

- (3) A narrative of a Spirit of Dialogue can bring a deepened sense of the meaningfulness of dialectical communication and better ability to lean into authentic dialogue’s core practices.

What typically goes under the name “dialogue” (alternating monologues, strategic argumentation and threat-arousal in a zero-sum game format) will not suffice in the world going forward. Einstein was among those who said that problems cannot be addressed by consciousness functioning on the same level that produced those problems in the first place. By working with the Power of Spirit and the Spirit of the Other in a Spirit of Dialogue, consciousness-raising can occur.

As for the nature of dialectical discourse, Jung (Wilhelm & Jung, 2014, p. 96) came to learn that, “the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational affair, nor is it a matter of will, but a psychic process of development which expresses itself in symbols”. Similarly, William James (1902) offered the following personal account:

Looking back on my own experiences, they all converge toward a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all of our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity. Not only do they, as contrasted species, belong to one and the same genus, but *one of the species*, the nobler and better one, *is itself the genus, and so soaks up and absorbs its opposite into itself.*

(James, 1902, p. 379, italics in the original)

To hold authentic dialogue is to conduct it in a Spirit of Dialogue that recognises underlying dialogical principles such as those posited by 20th century dialogue theorist David Bohm (1996a, 1996b). First, the *principle of participation* recognises that “I am in the world, and the world is in me”, a realisation that there is less separation in life than is readily apparent. Secondly, the *principle of dynamic process* accepts that motion and change are facts of life, that everything is in a constant state of change. Thirdly, the *principle of wholeness* acknowledges that seeming puzzle pieces are in fact interconnected and part of a larger system. And fourthly, the *principle of suspension* entails relaxing our tight grip on our opinions, judgements and positions, rather than defending them. It is the disciplined practice of these core principles within a warm, empathic, supportive atmosphere that can take us toward generative and reflective dialogue (Gordon, 2020a).

The aforementioned four dialogue principles can be best practiced, and a supportive dialogue container best created, after one first makes a true commitment to a *Spirit of Dialogue*. “Debate” as commonly held in the world violates most of the aforementioned dialogue principles and has failed us. Asante, Miike and Yin (2014, p. 11) have boldly and correctly uttered that “the communication models of the past have brought us to the brink of chaos”. We have not advanced much in our ability to initiate, manage and sustain transformative human dialogue, nor to assist others in doing so.

Authentic dialogue is clearly the apt communication container for celebrating human unity amidst our valued diversity. As Majid Tehranian (2014) has concluded:

This unity cannot come but out of oneness of the human spirit. The world is discovering a new sense of oneness . . . a new solidarity, a new tribe, a new spirit. The new spiritualism has no name, no rituals, no pope, no ayatollah, and no creed. But it is certainly in the air . . . It calls for the unity of all races, nationalities, ethnic and religious groups in the struggle to navigate the blue Spaceship Earth safely through these turbulent times.

Majid is right. And yet there is of course a simultaneous divisive spirit acutely marking this third decade of our 21st century, making it even more important that we discover what it could mean to breathe in a Spirit of Becoming and a Spirit of Light and promote a Spirit of Dialogue on our Earth.

Conclusion

In the past 600 years we have made incredible scientific, technological, intellectual and civilisational advancements, but we have clearly not matched this progress with corresponding acceleration of other of our intelligences (Gordon, 2016). We are in need of yet further balance and development.

CDS is questing for an ever more comprehensive vision; within this vision quest we would do well to welcome a narrative of Spirit, to allow Spirit to have Voice. Each motivated CDS scholar might choose to assess their own current status as a practitioner of Spirit-infused scholarship and use their own creative intelligence and High Imagination to yet further find their way forward for the good of all. As Skolimowski (2010, p. 102) has noted, “it is through the change of consciousness that new filters can be constructed to render to us a new picture of reality”.

May we allow Spirit as an organising metaphor to assist us in gently softening Power and strengthening and healing Other. Not a small, ideologically-based, co-opted, particularistic Spirit, but a grander universal-level timeless narrative of ineffable Infinite Spirit, the sort to which Einstein alluded (Calaprice, 2002, pp. 128–129). Granted a seat at the table: Power and Other and

Spirit. In this era of endarkenment, may we come to know what Einstein knew, and imagine our way beyond: “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world” (Calaprice, 2011, p. 12; Viereck, 1929).

Let us learn what it could mean to become receptive to an inner narrative of Spirit, to welcome Spirit not as methodology but as mindset and heart-set, allowing Spirit to inform our discourse about discourse via a triangulation of Power, Other and Spirit.

Confining ourselves to standard academic models and doctrines further separates CDS scholars from the common peoples of the world; we in our disciplinary silos and nomenclatures, and “they” out there, far removed. Thirty-five years ago in an article titled “Communication Research and Social Responsibility” I included these words:

We can no longer afford to search only for ‘the truth,’ not in this day. What we need now are ‘useful truths,’ truths that make a difference. Today more than ever before an applicable communication theory is needed; the world in which we live demands it”

(Gordon, 1988, p. 99)

Even more in our current era, CDS scholars have a responsibility to themselves and the world to seek not only personal academic security and scholarly recognition but to help refocus a planet and its peoples. The infusion of Spirit into our lives and CDS scholarship could be timely in supporting this effort.

Spirit can allow us to regain heartfelt connection with our deepest intentions to make our planet Earth a sustainable and more equitable place going forward. By including the lens of Spirit within our set of interpretive lenses, we see what we otherwise would not; we notice meaningful absences and can then attend to these to enlarge our vision (Ott, Aoki, & Dickinson, 2011). Generative metaphor can open perception, inviting us to view the world afresh, stimulating innovative thinking and awareness as we “vibrate with multivocal meanings” (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990).

Much remains to be done in fleshing out and embodying unfolding narratives of Spirit. This is of great importance, since, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, ultimately the limits of our narratives are the limits of our world. The time is upon us to transcend to the next level: may the cultivation of an inner narrative of Spirit accelerate our evolution.

Recommended reading

- Abram, D. (2010). *Becoming animal: An earthly cosmology*. New York, NY: Vintage.
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15

ANALYSING MULTIMODAL CULTURAL DISCOURSE

Scope and method

Dezheng (William) Feng and Yilei Wang

Introduction

To understand the complexity of interacting cultures in discourse and communication in the globalised world, a growing number of scholars have adopted a cultural discourse studies (CDS) approach in their research (e.g. Pardo, 2010; Shi-xu, 2005, 2014; Zhou & Huang, 2017). Scholars working with CDS are committed to the development of “culturally conscious and critical frameworks and approaches through historical and intercultural dialogue” (Shi-xu, 2014, p. 25). They take up the task of helping marginalised and under-represented communities to re-establish cultural authenticity in response to Western-centrism (Shi-xu, this volume). Studies using CDS have explored a variety of social issues in recent years, such as Third World poverty reduction (e.g. Pooley, 2016), environmental protection (e.g. Zhou & Huang, 2017), the politicisation of migration (e.g. Tager & Ngwenya, 2011), human rights (Shi-xu, 2014) and racism in social media (Stokke, 2021). Most of these studies are concerned with the (re)construction of culturally conscious and critical frameworks of cultural discourses of the developing world (such as Asia, Africa and Latin America).

Although cultural discourse scholarship has to date predominantly focused on the analysis of language, CDS does take a holistic view of “discourse”, which includes other semiotic resources. For example, Shi-xu (this volume) defines discourse as “a global system of social interaction in which members use language and other media to achieve purposes in particular historical and cultural contexts”. As communication always involves multiple modes, a large part of meaning is carried by nonverbal semiotic resources. For example, spoken language involves paralinguistic features (e.g. pitch and volume) and is often accompanied by facial expressions, gestures and other nonverbal behaviours; print materials (e.g. advertisements, textbooks, posters) involve graphic choices like typography and colour and often (and increasingly) rely on pictures; social media posts usually combine text with pictures and videos. Consequently, the exclusive focus on language may lead to partial or incorrect interpretation of communicative effects, cultural values and ideology (Feng, 2019). As Kress (2003, p. 11) points out,

we cannot now hope to understand written texts by looking at the resources of writing alone. They must be looked at in the context of the choice of modes made, the modes which appear with writing, and even the context of which modes were not chosen.

It is therefore essential for CDS to take into account the role of multimodal resources, since it is, indeed, not only verbal or textual expression that conveys meanings in different cultural settings, but a whole array of culturally contextualised semiotic means.

Against this backdrop, the present chapter attempts to demonstrate how a social semiotics informed multimodal analysis can be conceptually and empirically integrated with cultural discourse studies, and how CDS can be advanced by a systematic analysis of multimodal semiotic resources. Specifically, we will introduce how a visual analysis method can be used for analysing multimodal cultural discourse in three ways, namely, (a) comparative analysis of multimodal discourse from different cultures (e.g. institutional/corporate discourse in different cultural contexts), (b) analysis of multimodal intercultural communication (e.g. face-to-face or online interactions between participants from different cultural backgrounds) and (c) analysis of transcultural communicative events in particular cultural contexts. After introducing the three types of analysis, we will provide a detailed case study of a *wanghong* (cyber celebrity) woman's identity construction as multimodal transcultural discourse. The chapter concludes by explaining how multimodal analysis can provide new understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of cultural identities.

Cultural discourse studies and multimodality

In this section, we start by arguing how it is both necessary and possible to incorporate multimodal analysis into CDS and then introduce a method of visual analysis for engaging with multimodal cultural discourse. It is important for CDS to take multimodal resources into consideration to enhance its robustness, particularly when considering the prevailing trend towards multimodality in linguistics, discourse studies, communication research and many other fields. Theories and approaches are beginning to shift from an exclusive focus on language to the study of discourse in which language is but one—albeit highly important—communicative mode (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009, p. 3). Bateman (2022) considers multimodality as a ‘stage’ or ‘phase’ of development in different fields, and many fields have entered a ‘multimodal phase’. CDS researchers are conscious of this need, as manifested in Shi-xu’s broadened definition of discourse from “linguistic communication in social, cultural, historical and political contexts” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 1) to “a historically and interculturally embedded communicative event, or activity (i.e. a class thereof), in which participants (real and potential) interact with particular purposes and consequences through particular mediums (e.g. language, facial expressions, the mobile phone, time and space)” (Shi-xu, 2014, p. 25). This is congruent with Blommaert’s (2005, p. 3) definition that discourse “comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use”. Similarly, Carbaugh (2007) suggests that people from different ethnic communities use various semiotic resources, such as language, clothing and actions, to express who they are, how they relate to each other, how they feel and what they are doing. Given these premises, it seems to be perfectly possible and indeed a logical next step for CDS to investigate multimodal resources. Analysing multimodal discourse is also essential for CDS to achieve its objectives, such as exposing and rectifying cultural domination, facilitating intercultural mutual learning and fostering the harmonious coexistence of different cultures (Shi-xu, this volume). As cultural domination is increasingly manifested in and realised through multimodal artefacts and events, such as television programmes, movies, video games and fashion items, the sole focus on linguistic communication would jeopardise the mission of CDS.

Multimodality studies the representation, communication and interaction in specific social and cultural contexts in multiple modes. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, p. 20) define multimodality as

“the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event”, and this “semiotic product or event” is called multimodal discourse. Congruent to the CDS approach, multimodal discourse analysis from a social semiotic approach considers human semiosis as “an inherently social phenomenon in its sources, functions, contexts, and effects” (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 261). It has several assumptions. First, communication is multimodal, involving the deployment of speech, writing, images, gestures and so on. Second, meaning is not something that is “encoded” but is “construed” through the choice of semiotic resources. Meaning is therefore explicable based on the systematic description of choices (Ravelli & McMurtrie, 2016, p. 3). Third, meaning is fluid, contingent and changing in relation to context, history and culture (Jewitt et al., 2016, p. 67). It follows that social and cultural contexts are constitutive in meaning creation, rather than being used to interpret meanings.

The question that follows from here is “how can we describe multimodal semiotic resources systematically for subsequent interpretation of their contextualised meaning and use”? This is not to dichotomise text and context but to make “the connection between technical details and sources of interpretation more explicit and reliable” (Bateman & Schmidt, 2011, p. 9), so that our analysis can be more systematic and robust. For this purpose, we argue for a more text-based analysis of (multimodal) discursive practices where visual image is central than what is proposed by Shi-xu (2014, this volume) for linguistic discourse. This is partly due to the holistic nature of visual meaning-making, where, without the guidance of an explicit analytical framework, analysis may not be rigorous enough to support the validity of subsequent interpretations. This is not to say those interpretations not guided by an explicit framework are not legitimate (for example, artists, designers and historians can make different interpretations of an artwork, offering insights from different perspectives). However, we need a more explicit treatment of specific textual details than, for example, art or literary criticism does to guarantee the reliability of our analysis. As Bateman and Schmidt (2011, p. 2) explain,

One important consequence of, and motivation for, such an approach is that it also becomes possible to rule out bad, or mistaken analyses more easily—that is, our method will constrain analysis so that the analysis is more reliable and trustworthy, giving us better criteria for the evaluation of proposals and competing hypotheses. This is one of the chief requirements for any approach that is to support empirical investigations, which in our view is itself an indispensable precondition for a more robust state of the art.

For a systematic description of semiotic resources in different modes of communication, researchers have developed frameworks for analysing visual images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006[1996]), building (Ravelli & McMurtrie, 2016), music (van Leeuwen, 1999) and films (Bateman & Schmidt, 2011), to name just a few. We argue that cultural discourses involve complex meaning-making practices that require powerful descriptive tools. Semiotically inspired frameworks have much to offer in this regard because of their complexity and explicitness. However, they cannot be applied rigidly but need to be applied at the appropriate level and contextualised for the specific purposes. As Shi-xu (this volume) argues, “the choice and use of methods are wide-ranging and eclectic, depending on the nature and conditions of the discourses under investigation and the specific research aims”. In this chapter, we are going to provide a brief introduction to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) social semiotic framework for a systematic description of visual images. In their seminal book *Reading Images: the grammar of visual design*, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 2) point out that

just as grammars of language describe how words combine in clauses, sentences and texts, so our visual ‘grammar’ will describe the way in which depicted elements—people, places and things—combine in visual ‘statements’ of greater or lesser complexity and extension.

In other words, what is expressed through different word or clause choices can also be expressed through visual resources (e.g. using different colours or compositional structures). Premised on this assumption, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) extend Halliday's (1994) three meta-functions of language and put forth the three types of meanings realised by visual images accordingly, that is, representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning.

Representational meaning is concerned with the participants (such as people, places or things) that are being depicted. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) distinguish two types of representation, that is, *narrative representation* and *conceptual representation*. The former is concerned with “unfolding actions and events, processes of change” (p. 59), and the latter represents “generalised, stable and timeless essence” (p. 79). In narrative representation, four types of process are identified, that is, actional process (which can be either transactional or non-transactional, depending on whether the process has a “Goal”), reactional process, mental process, and verbal process respectively. As noted by Jewitt and Oyama (2001, p. 143), the analysis of narrative representation in visual depictions can help “frame questions such as who are playing the active roles of doing and/or looking and who the passive roles of being acted upon and/or being looked at”. In terms of conceptual representation, the represented participants engage in three types of process, that is, classificational process, analytical process and symbolic process. Classificational process brings different participants together based on taxonomic relations. In an analytical process, the represented participants are related in a part-whole structure. Symbolic process is concerned with culturally endowed symbolic meaning of participants.

Interactive meaning is concerned with the symbolic relation between the audience and what is represented in the visual image. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify three dimensions, that is, contact, social distance and attitude. Contact is construed by the represented character’s gaze at the image viewer. When the represented character looks directly at the image viewer, the image is referred to as a “demand” image; when there is no direct gaze, the image is termed as an “offer” image. The second dimension is social distance, which is construed by the distance of camera shots. A long shot builds a distant image-viewer relation, whereas a close shot creates an intimate image-viewer relation. The third dimension, attitude, is concerned with subjectivity and objectivity, realised through camera positioning on the horizontal and vertical axes. For the horizontal axis, a symbolic relation of involvement is created by adopting a frontal angle, whereas a sense of detachment is created by using an oblique angle. For the vertical axis, symbolic power can be attributed to viewers in a low angle representation and to the represented participants in a high angle representation.

Compositional meaning works with the ways in which representational and interactive meanings cohere into a meaningful whole through three interrelated systems, namely, information value, salience and framing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 177). Information value is realised through the placement of visual elements in the visual space. “Left” and “right” can construe the value of “given” and “new”, while “top” and “bottom” the value of “ideal” and “real”. Salience is concerned with how certain elements can be made more prominent, drawing viewers’ attention through size, sharpness of focus, colour, tone, focus, etc. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 202). Framing deals with the use of framing devices to segregate, separate, connect and integrate different visual elements.

Two points need to be emphasised when using the framework to analyse visual images in non-Western contexts, based on the presumption that multimodal resources are cultural. First, visual resources do not have objectively fixed meanings; instead, they offer “signifying potential” and “need to be studied in the social context” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 18). That is, we cannot force “meanings” onto resources like camera angles and assume that they are “correct” readings of the

text. Instead, they should be considered as “likely interpretations given the prevailing cultural and social norms” (Ravelli & McMurtrie, 2016, p. 14). This allows the possibility of different meanings of the same visual choice in different cultural, social and situational contexts. For example, “left” is “given” information in contexts where people read and write from left to right, but in cultures where people write from right to left (as in ancient China and some Arabic countries), “right” is “given” (cf. Feng, 2011). In this regard, a CDS approach which analyses data from different cultural contexts can provide new understanding of non-Western semiosis, evaluate the validity of Kress’s and van Leeuwen’s (2006) interpretations and enrich the framework. Second, the framework only provides descriptive dimensions and does not, on its own, offer all that is needed for social and cultural explanations of the use of images (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 154). In a CDS approach, our interpretation and explanation need to break away from Western-centric theories and prejudices. That is, the descriptive framework only serves to provide an explicit basis for subsequent interpretations, which needs to be informed by various localised theories.

Aspects of multimodal cultural discourse studies

In this section, we briefly introduce how a multimodal approach can be adopted in cultural discourse studies, including comparative analysis of multimodal communicative events from different cultures, analysis of multimodal intercultural communication and analysis of transcultural communicative events in particular cultural contexts.

- (1) Cross-cultural comparison aims at understanding the diversity and divergence, as well as similarity of communicative systems and practices in different cultural regions by analysing various forms of multimodal discourse, such as video-recorded data of activities (e.g. dinner gatherings) and media discourse (e.g. advertising).
- (2) Intercultural communication is concerned with communicative practices and artefacts that “cross intercultural lines” (Holliday, 2013, p. 168), such as face-to-face interactions between participants from different cultural backgrounds and media discourse targeted at audiences from another culture.
- (3) Transcultural communication investigates the convergence, synergy, hybridisation, inner heterogeneity, etc. of cultures in the globalised world (Wang & Feng, 2021; Li & Wu, 2018), as manifested in various communicative and discursive practices.

It should be noted that the terms are not used to distinguish clear-cut areas of study but to serve as a convenient means to highlight different focuses of multimodal cultural discourse studies. Researchers working with different frameworks use the terms in different ways. Our discussion also takes into consideration different research paradigms to further distinguish possible approaches within the three broad aspects of study.

Multimodality and cross-cultural comparison

Cross-cultural comparison is premised on the assumption that there exist immense variations in social and communicative values, norms and practices between different cultural locations, which are manifested in and realised through multimodal discourse. Purposes of analysing multimodal discourse may include (a) measuring and comparing the effect of different cultural values and norms on discursive practices based on theories and claims about cultural differences (e.g. Hofstede, 2001) and (b) providing new understanding of nuanced and emergent cultural differences in

specific communicative contexts. We argue that it is important for CDS research to look beyond essentialist views of cultural differences, and multimodal analysis is key to that.

For the first line of research, researchers usually adopt a positivist understanding of culture as “solid, fixed, separate geographical blocks which confine the behaviour of the people who live within them” (Holliday, 2015, p. 23). Here cultural values and norms are considered external to discursive practices, which emphasises that dichotomous differences in beliefs, philosophies and ideologies between the East and the West can influence our ways of thinking and actions (see Gu, 1999; Matsumoto, 1988; Hofstede, 2001; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2016). For example, Li and Wu (2018, p. 41) argue in their comment on cultural differences that “evidence still exists for the orthodoxical conceptualisation of individualism-/independent-self-oriented vs. collectivism-/relational-self-oriented cultures in shaping differential types and acts of facework”. Content analysis and discourse analysis are the main approaches. Studies using content analysis usually start with the formulation of hypotheses based on a theory about culture. Discourse analysis conducts a more systematic analysis of multimodal features, but the result is usually explained by theories on cultural difference. For example, drawing on Hofstede’s national culture scores, Park et al. (2014) found that people from individualistic cultures tended to use horizontal and mouth-oriented emoticons like :), while those from collectivistic cultures preferred vertical and eye-oriented emoticons like ^_. Studies have also investigated how corporate websites are influenced by national cultures based on Hofstede’s (2001) cultural dimensions (Shi & Xu, 2020; Singh & Matsuo, 2004).

For the second line of research, which is more aligned with CDS, an interpretive constructivist view of culture is usually adopted. It considers culture as a fluid and socially constructed entity and cultural differences as constitutive of discursive practices. It follows that a systematic analysis of multimodal data must be deployed to explicate the rich, complex and nuanced cultural elements. As Holliday (2015, p. 25) suggests, “an interpretive constructivist approach invites a richness of variables through which the meanings implicit in this complexity can begin to emerge with a distinctively healthy uncertainty”. Scholars have used multimodal discourse analysis to investigate cultural differences in international corporations’ branding and advertising discourse (Wu & Chung, 2011; Li & Wu, 2018), national news images (Rafiee et al., 2021), institutional website presentations (Zhang & O’Halloran, 2012; Zhang et al., 2020) and so on. For example, Tomášková (2015) used Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) visual grammar to analyse homepages and webpages for prospective students of British, North American and Czech universities. The analysis revealed a wide array of differences in representational, interactive and compositional meanings in webpage images. For example, while the Anglo-American university websites preferred a hidden camera view (thus constructing an objective image of university life), the photos of the Czech university websites were characterised by students’ direct gaze. Also working with Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Zhang et al. (2020) compared six Australian and Chinese universities’ webpages for international students. The study showed that the Chinese universities’ webpages often represented students as standing around teachers, receiving instruction and guidance, whereas those of the Australian universities represented students as exploring and experiencing by themselves. The results were discussed in relation to different countries’ teaching philosophies and conceptions of transnational education, beyond traditional theorisations of cultural differences.

In a CDS approach, multimodal analysis of cross-cultural differences should avoid oversimplification, that is, attributing discursive differences to several cultural parameters. It considers cultural differences as emergent, specific, contextual, dynamic and relative, rather than absolute and permanent. Analysis should be bottom up, starting with a systematic analysis of multimodal discourse, rather than grand narratives of cultural differences (cf. Holliday, 2015, p. 28). CDS seeks to make better sense of culture by revealing the richness, complexity and nuance of cultural

realities beyond existing theorisations. This approach is particularly important for understanding “peripheral” cultures by analysing their communicative and discursive practices, rather than treating them as essentialised and homogenised “other”. Such an understanding can then facilitate cultural learning and intercultural communication, which are important objectives of CDS.

Multimodality and intercultural communication

Intercultural communication in our categorisation is concerned with the interaction between different cultural systems and communicative strategies, miscommunications, identity negotiation, bias, power relations, etc. Areas of intercultural communication where multimodal analysis is essential may include but not be limited to (a) face-to-face intercultural encounters, such as business meetings; (b) media communication targeted at audiences from a culture other than one’s own, such as overseas corporate branding and advertising; and (c) intercultural flows of cultural artefacts, such as fashion and films. We will focus on the latter two aspects in this chapter, but we acknowledge that investigating the deployment and negotiation of multimodal cultural resources in intercultural interactions is an important direction of CDS.

In terms of media communication, many scholars have investigated how the global-local binary (aka glocalisation) is managed by international corporations, institutions and governments. The fast development of digital technology has enabled corporations to communicate with their stakeholders through online platforms, such as websites and social media. A particular area of focus is on how Chinese companies and the Chinese government brand their image to an overseas audience. For example, Li and Wu (2018) analysed the glocalisation strategies adopted by global brands in their intercultural social media posts in China. Shi and Xu (2020) measured the extent of cultural adaptations manifested in Chinese companies’ overseas websites. Wan (2021) investigated how the Chinese technology company Huawei communicated with its overseas stakeholders by analysing its posts on X (in comparison with those of Cisco) based on Kress’s and van Leeuwen’s (2006) visual grammar, focusing specifically on the representational meaning of images in the posts, including choices of participants and processes. Liu and Liu (2019) analysed five Chinese publicity films using the interactive meaning framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The study discussed how the publicity films presented the Chinese story to the world and disseminated the voice of China through the careful selection and design of behaviour, social distance and attitude in images. It is somewhat unfortunate that the majority of the aforementioned studies use essentialist frameworks (e.g. Hofstede, 2001) to evaluate intercultural communication strategies, that is, whether particular multimodal design conforms to the cultural characteristics of the target audience (e.g. individualism). We argue that a multimodal CDS approach needs to go beyond the essentialist understanding of culture and engage with the complexity of media discourse, including communicative strategies, communication failure, identity negotiation, bias, power relations and so on.

The third aspect that is worth exploring is the intercultural flow of people, media content, technology, fashion, commerce, ideology and so on. In today’s world of accelerated globalisation, the intercultural flow has been widely recognised to be asymmetrical in favour of Western-based cultural values (Holliday, 2013). As noted by Parida et al. (2021, p. 1544), with a close association with “rationality, science, secularism and Judeo-Christian values”, Western cultural values and their associated cultural products have been dominant in global cultural production and consumption for the last 200 years. However, recent years have witnessed a reversed trend, where “the marginalised local cultures begin to contest, and the non-Western peripheral cultural realities have come to representation” (Hall, 1991, p. 53). Various forms of local culture, such as Chinese food documentaries and martial art films (see Hiramoto, 2012; Wu & Chan, 2007), Japanese cartoons

(see Hernández-Pérez et. al., 2017), Korean pop music and reality shows (see Lee, 2013) have all made impressive efforts in translating local cultural values, ethics and aesthetics to the global audience.

More recently, the low-maintenance nature of social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, TikTok, X, YouTube, WeChat) affords ordinary people the chance to interculturally circulate their products and quickly become micro-celebrities (Gill, 2016). By establishing new cultural products with global exposure (e.g. via tweets, online streaming, video-blogs), micro-celebrities have become active agents of interculturality. Their online self-representation can be viewed as a new form of decentred, individualised intercultural communication, challenging the cultural hegemony of corporate media (Holliday, 2013). A good case in point is how a popular Chinese micro-celebrity, Li Ziqi, expertly communicates the Chinese “pastoral ideal” in her YouTube channel to the global audience (see Wang & Feng, forthcoming, a). Drawing upon Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Wang and Feng (forthcoming, a) analysed how Li Ziqi leveraged visual resources such as clothing and actions to construct a “pastoral ideal” involving the sophistication of traditional cultural heritage, the aesthetics of Chinese cuisine and the connection between human and nature. From a multimodal CDS perspective, we may further explore how social media enables the reversed intercultural flow, whereby ordinary users can exert global influence. The globalisation of local cultures as a complex and dynamic multimodal process is worthy of our attention so as to achieve cultural understanding, equality and prosperity.

Multimodality and transcultural communication

In the globalised world, accelerated interactions between cultures have resulted in the so-called transculturality, where intercultural lines have become gradually blurred (Holliday, 2013). Cultural artefacts and practices have passed through classical cultural boundaries and resulted in the hybridisation, mixing, heterogeneity and complexity of cultures. The notion challenges the dichotomy between global and local forces by “allowing for and recognising the simultaneity and interdependence of convergence and divergence in the course of global processes” (Li & Wu, 2018, p. 34). As noted by Campaiola-Veen (2012, p. 90), transcultural communication “presupposes a certain openness to letting the ‘other’ in along with resistance to letting it in completely”. Various cultural products and media practices from local, institutional and national levels communicate, compete and influence each other, constructing new forms of cultural hybridisation. Consequently, “modern societies are multicultural in themselves, encompassing a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles” (Welsch, 1999, p. 2). In the analysis of transcultural communicative events in particular cultural contexts, researchers usually take a postmodern view of culture as a fluid, dynamic and socially constructed entity, rather than a fixed block. For example, Rao’s (2010) semiotic analysis of Bollywood films found a transcultural formula which combines an Indian touch (e.g. traditional music and familial emotions) with Western popular cultural style (e.g. international setting and Western clothing). Extensive research has explored how the interplay between the global/Western culture and the local/Chinese culture is projected in contemporary Chinese society. For example, Wu (2008) investigated various patterns of global-local fusion in transnational advertising in China. By developing a tripartite framework, the study examined value appeals, language appeals and visual appeals used in 110 automobile banner advertisements and summarised three possible scenarios of the cultural hybridisation between the global/Western and the local/Eastern elements, that is, “weak globalisation but strong localisation, strong globalisation but weak localisation, and a balanced correspondence between the global and local elements” (p. 68).

Our own previous studies which adopted a multimodal analysis approach to investigate transcultural discourse in contemporary China (e.g. Feng et al., 2021; Wang & Feng, 2021) are particularly relevant here. Wang and Feng (2021) developed a multimodal framework to explore how the Chinese city Xi'an mobilised linguistic and visual resources to rebrand its city-image on the social media platform of TikTok (the framework is elaborated in the following case study). The analysis of 294 videos showed that Xi'an highlighted its dual identity as an international modern metropolis (emphasising the attributes of stylishness, youthfulness and popularity) and a historical city (through recreating the Great Tang dynasty and revitalising local folk art). By resemiotising global and Chinese cultural symbols in various material artefacts, Xi'an's modern/international and historical/local urban imaginaries became a transcultural structured reality.

Wang and Feng (forthcoming, b) analysed a 2019 Chinese main melody film, *My People, My Country* from a multimodal perspective. They proposed a framework to analyse patriotic values in the film and how the values were constructed through linguistic and visual resources. The study illustrated how the film exemplified cultural hybridisation in terms of the mode of governance and techniques of film making. It revealed how the national and global forces interacted with each other to shape main melody films as a new cultural product. First, the use of popular culture and entertainment as a means of political communication reflected a neoliberalised mode of governance. As observed by Feng (2019), with the nation's economic reforms and participation in globalisation, there has been an evolutionary change in Chinese governmental communication practices. It adopts "modern government public relations measures to promote itself" (Chen, 2003, p. 99). Similarly, Brady (2009, p. 437) suggested that China's political communication "has deliberately absorbed the methodology of political public relations, mass communications, social psychology, and other modern methods of mass persuasion commonly used in Western democratic societies, adapting them to Chinese conditions and needs". "The use of culture and entertainment as a vehicle for political messages is one noticeable example of this" (Brady, 2009, p. 442). Second, the film used a Hollywoodised narrative to serve Chinese societal and ideological purposes, which was a manifestation of transculturality. The film abandoned traditional techniques such as an emphasis on protagonists' dialogues and theatrical qualities (e.g. a grand depiction, stationary camera work); rather, it adopted narrative techniques such as intensified suspense, last-minute rescue, structural twists and so on to engage viewers' interest and emotions.

In the last three subsections, we categorised the domain of multimodal cultural discourse studies as cross-, inter- and transcultural analysis. The three aspects can be considered as three stages of cultural contact, namely, from separation to interaction, then to hybridisation. In all stages, multimodal analysis is necessary for spelling out the nuances of cross-cultural differences, the complexity in the process of intercultural interaction and the prevalence of transcultural elements in contemporary communication and representation. The following section will provide a detailed case study of a Chinese *wanghong* (micro-celebrity) woman's identity construction as multimodal transcultural discourse. The analysis aims to provide new understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of cultural identity in contemporary China under the influences of traditional Chinese culture and Western postfeminist values.

Case study of transcultural multimodal Chinese discourse

Chinese society has been in a state of flux over the last century, transforming from a feudal society in the Qing dynasty to an increasingly modernised and globalised one, particularly after the reform-and-opening-up policy in 1978. With rapid economic development, significant socio-cultural changes have been taking place in China. In this context, "think global and act local"

not only serves as an axiom for contemporary Chinese marketing, but also becomes a guideline for Chinese discursive cultural practices (Shi-xu, 2014; Wu, 2008; Wang & Feng, 2021). Chinese discourse studies (CNDS) therefore “strives to be a culturally conscious and critical system of discourse and communication research, at once locally grounded and globally minded” (Shi-xu, 2014, p. 25). In this section, we focus on Chinese female identity as a transcultural phenomenon and demonstrate how a multimodal analysis approach can shed light on its complexity in the context of social media live streaming.

The identity and status of Chinese women have undergone drastic changes in the past century. Traditionally, according to the Confucian doctrine, women were inferior to men and were expected to obey their male family members. A proverb that captures the attributes of a traditional ideal Chinese woman is “Sancongsidé” (三从四德: three obediences, including obeying her father, husband and son, and four virtues, including, fidelity, physical charm, propriety in speech and efficiency in needlework). In the aftermath of the (Western-influenced) May Fourth Movement in 1919, the first wave of women’s liberation movements took place in China, and scholars began to fight against the oppression of women and advocate the freedom and independence of women. More recently, since the reform-and-opening-up policy in 1978 and the introduction of a market economy in the 1990s, women’s liberation movements have been increasingly influenced by Western originated postfeminism (Gill, 2016). Set against pop/consumer culture, this new and provocative “postfeminist” culture equates personal choices, consumption and even sexual pleasure with freedom, liberation and empowerment (Gill, 2016).

We are going to demonstrate an analysis of the multimodal construction of women’s virtual identities on DouYu (斗鱼), a popular live streaming platform. The data for this study is streaming videos of one of the most popular chat women on DouYu, named Feng Timo (Timo hereafter). As one of the most successful wanghong women, Timo is representative of chat women’s discursive performance, and her videos provide ideal data for our analysis of virtual identities. Our dataset consists of seven randomly selected streaming video clips aired in 2018, each 1.5 to 2 hours long.

Our multimodal CDS approach to identity analysis is premised on the assumption that identity is not a static state; rather, it is continuously constructed by an agent using multimodal resources, such as language, clothing and actions (Butler, 1990). It follows that the understanding of chat women’s identities should be based on a systematic analysis of multimodal resources in their streaming videos. The approach is operationalised as three aspects of analysis. First, identity is considered as semantic categories, more specifically, a set of evaluative attributes (e.g. beautiful, successful or weak). The first step of the analysis is to identify and classify the attributes Timo manifests in her streaming performance, which allows us to explicate the multidimensionality and complexity of identity. However, this does not mean that attributes are static labels; rather, they are the outcome of ongoing choices one makes about what one says, does, wears and so on. For this reason, the identification of evaluative attributes is carried out concurrently with the analysis of how the evaluative attributes are constructed using verbal and nonverbal resources in the videos, which is the second aspect of analysis. It should be emphasised that our approach is meaning-centred. That is, our starting point is not disparate semiotic resources, and we do not prioritise any mode of communication. Instead, we take into analytical consideration any resources that are drawn upon in meaning construction, and in this case, identity construction. In this way, different semiotic resources are united by the “meaning” in question.

At the second level of analysis, drawing upon Feng (2016), we propose a systematic framework to map out the multimodal realisation of Timo’s attributes, as illustrated in Figure 15.1. The framework first distinguishes between attributes constructed with verbal resources and those constructed with nonverbal resources. Verbal resources refer to language use in the videos, through which

Timo constructs her attributes in explicit or implicit ways. In explicit construction, evaluative lexical items, such as “kind”, “cute”, “professional”, “unique”, “sexy”, “humorous” and “funny”, are used. Implicit evaluations are realised through descriptions of facts or events that lead to a certain evaluation, such as what a person has done, what has happened to him/her, how he/she feels and so on. For example, one may say “I go skiing in the Alps every year” to construct his/her attributes of being rich, athletic and so on. In the case of Timo, rather than stating “I am a very successful streamer”, she may say “I have 18 million fans”. Evaluative attributes can also be constructed by nonverbal resources one deploys. Drawing upon Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) visual grammar, we distinguish between actional processes and analytical processes. Actional processes refer to what Timo does, which is further classified into transactional processes and non-transactional processes. The former refers to actions with goals or objects (e.g. playing basketball) while the latter refers to actions without goals (e.g. laughing, winking and dancing). Analytical processes refer to the parts that constitute a person as a whole, such as his/her facial features, height, clothing, accessories, cars and other things which he/she “possesses”. For our analysis, we focus on appearance, clothing and possessions, which may carry attributes like beauty, fashion sense, wealth and so on.

Third, in CDS, “discourse” is cultural, which entails that the interpretation of identity features cannot be separated from the discursively constituted context. Context enables, facilitates and affords identity performance, on the one hand, and determines and constrains it on the other hand. Therefore, Butler’s (1990) notion of performativity cannot be interpreted as volitional choice of an agent of his/her free will; rather, both immediate situational and broader socio-cultural contexts are constitutive of gender performance. It follows that the analysis of identity is a contextual one, rather than simply drawing upon context to explain results of text analysis.

Analysis of the video clips shows that Timo’s attributes fall into two major categories, namely, traditional/Chinese and modern/Western ones. The former further includes the four subcategories of filial piety, purity, inferiority and patriotism, all of which are underpinned by the Confucian doctrine, whereas the latter includes the subcategories of individuality, professionalism, beauty and cheerfulness, which are influenced by postfeminism. The identification of attributes is not based on the coders’ judgement, as is usually the case in content analysis, but on a systematic analysis of multimodal features in the videos. At the same time, the categorisation draws upon the contextual understanding of traditional Chinese values and postfeminist values. Here we just use two examples from Timo’s performance of filial piety, purity and individuality to demonstrate her transcultural identity.

Timo often talks about making money so that she can fulfil her filial duty to her grandfather, as shown in Excerpt 1. This is a hybrid of modern and traditional attributes. She frankly expresses her desire to make more money, which is no different from what other wanghong girls desire (e.g. Zhang & de Seta, 2018). However, this is justified by her intention to devote her money to her

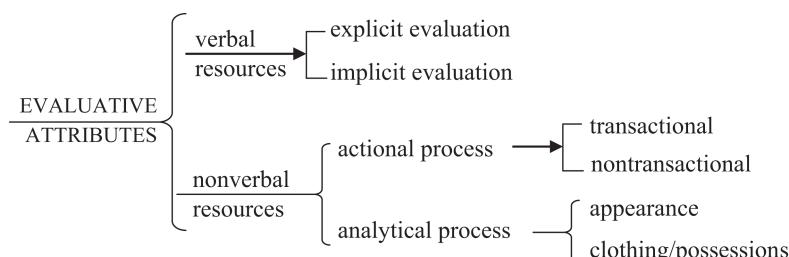


Figure 15.1 The multimodal construction of identity

grandfather, rather than for personal enjoyment. That is, the commissive speech act is a resultant action motivated by her filial attitude, which is a key virtue in traditional Chinese culture. For purity, Timo constructs herself as a very traditional woman who is shy and never flirts with men. As illustrated in Excerpt 2, she claims that she does not know how to wink flirtatiously and is ashamed of doing that. Interestingly, this is said while she is winking at the request of her male audience, manifesting inter-modal incongruity. Again, this reflects a hybridisation of modern and traditional values, where the seductive performance is mitigated by the assertion of traditional values.

Excerpt 1: 好好赚钱！孝敬爷爷！加油！冯提莫！

[Make more money and devote it to Grandpa! Keep going, Timo!]

Excerpt 2: 啊！好不要脸！好不要脸！真的是一点都不会抛媚眼！

[Oh, that is shameless, shameless! I really have no idea how to wink flirtatiously!]

In terms of the modern attribute of individuality, a prominent theme of Timo's streaming is her cosplay performance. In the modern subculturist context, this type of dressing-up activities affords players "a way of celebrating individuality" (Rahman et al., 2012, p. 318). An interesting case in point is Figure 15.2, in which she makes an innovative attempt to cosplay as the legendary Chinese figure of Chang'e on the Mid-Autumn Festival. Timo reconfigures the traditional image of Chang'e by modernising the traditional Chinese costume and hairstyle (e.g. using sequins as decoration, simplifying the overall costume style), Westernising her make-up style (with an emphasis on heavy mascara, a narrow nose with a straight bridge and white and spotless skin) and putting on a cute facial expression (i.e. pouting lips for the camera). Such overt self-expressive acts in her cosplay performance enable her to pursue a distinct fantasy and reflect her Western-influenced fashion choice (Rahman et al., 2012). Meanwhile, as shown in Excerpt 3, by stating that she is

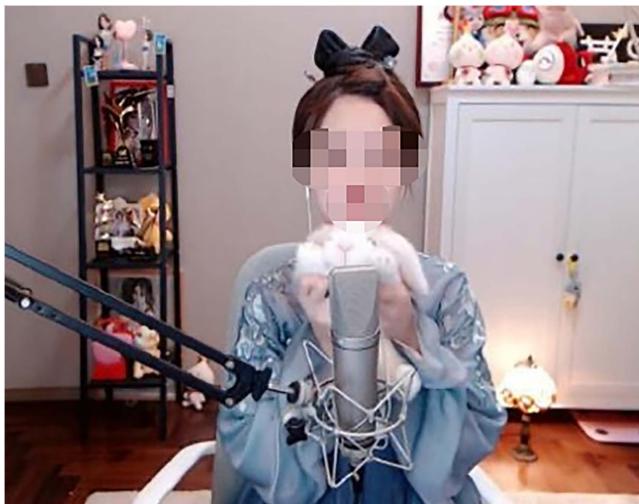


Figure 15.2 Timo's cosplay as the traditional Chinese character Chang'e

cuddling a rabbit on the traditional Chinese holiday of the Mid-Autumn Festival, Timo makes an explicit reference to Chinese culture.

Excerpt 3: 这是谁， 哈哈，我抱着一只兔子！你们看我cos 的谁？不好看么？对呀，中秋节，现在最应景的人是谁？是的！我在Cos嫦娥妹妹啦！

[Who I am? Haha, I am cuddling a rabbit! Can you see who I am cosplaying as? Am I not looking good? Yes, who is the most festive character on the occasion of the Mid-Autumn Festival? Yes! I am cosplaying as Sister Chang'e!]

This brief analysis includes the identification of attributes (filial piety, purity and individuality in this case), the examination of the multimodal construction of the attributes (verbal and visual) and the contextual interpretation of the attributes (in terms of tradition and modernity). It clearly shows that the discourse of Timo's performance is cultural, which requires a CDS perspective. Two modes of transculturality can be identified. One is the *coexistence* of Chinese/traditional and Western/modern attributes in her identity in different videos. The other is a deeper level of *entanglement* of different values in a single artefact or behaviour, as shown in the aforementioned three examples. Timo manages to blend the otherwise disparate images of a traditional Chinese woman and a modern postfeminist woman and create a hybridised identity for the audience. It also demonstrates the crucial role of multimodal analysis in revealing the complexity of culture, which is manifested in both verbal and nonverbal resources (see Feng, 2023 for a more detailed discussion).

Conclusion

This chapter has proposed multimodal cultural discourse studies as a new domain for investigation. We argued for an explicit analysis of multimodal resources based on relevant semiotic theories in order to enhance the robustness and reliability of interpretations. A framework for the systematic analysis of visual images was introduced given their key role in contemporary communication. We then proposed three aspects of multimodal cultural discourse studies where visual analysis is crucial, namely, (a) comparison of multimodal discourse from different cultures, (b) analysis of multimodal intercultural communication, and (c) analysis of transcultural communicative events in particular cultural contexts. Finally, in a case study of a Chinese wanghong woman's identity construction as multimodal transcultural discourse, we developed an analytical approach which considers identity as evaluative attributes that are continuously constructed through context-bound choices of multimodal resources.

We close by arguing that multimodal analysis can be conceptually integrated into CDS and can provide new understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of culture in various forms of contemporary communication. As communication in various socio-cultural contexts is drawing on an increasingly wide array of semiotic resources, this approach is important for future research in CDS, striving to "not merely analyse past and present discourses, but also, as an actively transformative mode of research, imagines and advocates possible future discourses in pursuit of cultural equality and emancipation" (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 6). Methodologically, by making the connection between textual details and the interpretation of such details more explicit as in our approach, analysts can spell out nuanced cultural meanings in a more systematic manner, which puts us in a stronger position to expose cultural domination and facilitate intercultural understanding. Our approach thus contributes to the objective of cultural discourse studies not only by providing new insights into culture as manifested in multimodal artefacts and practices, but also by offering tools

to make the analysis more rigorous and convincing. It is hoped that further studies on various forms of multimodal cultural discourse in different contexts can be conducted to provide a more localised understanding of different cultures, as well as their interaction and hybridisation in the globalised world.

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16

CULTURAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS A METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY OF INTERCULTURAL CONTACT AND CIRCULATION

David Boromisza-Habashi

Some communication practices—understood as patterns of situated, meaningful, accountable communicative action (Boromisza-Habashi & Parks, 2014)—refuse to stay in one place. Rather, they spill out beyond the socio-cultural boundaries within which they were conceived and cultivated and travel along complex networks of circulation. Such circulation is made possible by direct or indirect contact between speakers who self-identify as members of different cultural groups or speech communities but who share organisations, institutions, societies, academic disciplines, geographic or virtual locations, or the desire to learn the same circulating communication practices. As they circulate, practices undergo transformations: the patterns, meanings and modes of accountability that constitute practices are altered as they are acquired and put to use by a diverse array of speakers living in different parts of the world.

Take the example of what is known in China as English public speaking (EPS) (Lucas, 2013). Since the 1990s, many Chinese universities have been offering EPS courses where students can learn the means of English-language public expression from textbooks written by US American authors, TED talks and YouTube videos of famous speeches by the likes of Steve Jobs and Barack Obama. As a set of practices, EPS has historical roots in the Anglo-American speech genre known as public speaking (Boromisza-Habashi et al., 2016). Many of the practices that constitute EPS are present in the way public speaking is taught and practiced in the United States and in other countries of the world such as Kenya (Miller, 2002) or Japan (Dunn, 2014; Morooka, 2016). However, EPS also has some unique, local characteristics. For example, the ways Chinese students conceive of the value of learning EPS are in some ways similar to, in some ways different from, American students (Boromisza-Habashi & Fang, 2021). US and Chinese students agree that EPS makes them more competent communicators more likely to succeed not only in public expression but also in interpersonal relationships. However, when Chinese students talk about why they find learning EPS desirable they frequently use the symbolic term *duanlian* (“training”) to argue that being forced to give compelling speeches in English makes them tougher and more resilient toward the relentless demands of a market economy. By contrast, US students typically describe learning public speaking as a source of personal “growth”, growing awareness of their unique speaking

abilities and an opening up of themselves to audiences. While the patterns of public speaking in China and the United States are, by and large, the same, the local meanings associated with those patterns are partially different.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline how cultural discourse analysis (Carbaugh et al., 1997; Carbaugh, 2007; Scollo, 2011; Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2017) as a theory and methodology developed within the ethnography of communication, enables cultural analysts to study intercultural contact and the transcultural circulation of communication practices, resources and discourses. I regard CuDA as an ethnographic case study methodology particularly useful for identifying and analysing cases centred not only on particular social groups and their unique communication practices but also on observable contact between or among groups and the contexts (institutions, organisations, socio-political and economic arrangements, etc.) that facilitate contact. First, I describe how CuDA methodologically recalibrates the ethnography of the communication research approach by shifting the unit of analysis from the speech community to cultural discourses which opens up the approach to the study of cross-cultural contact and mobility. Second, I review why and how this recalibration prompts the researcher to pursue new lines of inquiry and to attend to particular kinds of communication theory. Third, I draw attention to some of CuDA's implications for data collection and analysis. Fourth, I discuss key limitations resulting from the unequal distribution of research resources and make an argument for a possible future extension of the approach by rethinking the nature and dynamics of speech economies.

Cultural discourse as the primary unit of analysis

Established in the early 1960s by linguists and anthropologists working at the University of California Berkeley and Stanford University, the ethnography of communication grew out of an interest in social explanations of variability in speech patterns (Murray, 1998). When early ethnographers were confronted with the fact of linguistic diversity across and within communities of multilingual speakers, they discovered that everyday speech was not random but rather patterned according to the social functions of language as used in context. Speakers were accomplishing social goals through the competent use of diverse linguistic resources their social groups made available to them. If acts of speaking were deemed functional and thus meaningful by other group members those acts could not be random.

This observation led Dell Hymes to claim that the unit of analysis for ethnographers of communication must not be languages or dialects as reconstructed by experts from actual speakers' daily use of linguistic means of communication. Ethnographers, Hymes argued, should focus their attention on "the ethnographic patterning of the uses of speech in a community" (Hymes, 1962, p. 16) and on documenting cultural variability in communication resulting from such patterning. The unit of analysis for ethnographers, he later claimed, must be the "community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (Hymes, 1972, p. 54), the social unit he called the speech community. The ethnographer's task, therefore, is to document linguistic means and repertoires of communication in a community to understand how that community socially coheres diverse ways of speaking.

This methodological orientation continued to shape the work of ethnographers of communication once this research approach entered the communication discipline in the 1970s through the work of Gerry Philipsen (Carbaugh, 1995). Typically, ethnographers sought to document the social patterning of speech observed in communities identified by the researcher. However, rather than attempting to describe all—or even most—social meaningful speech patterns in a speech

community, ethnographers gradually shifted their emphasis to the description of communication practices that appeared culturally distinctive to the researcher and carried special significance to community members. Ethnographic evidence of such special significance included, for example, explicit descriptions of the practice, or set of practices, as the community's own. These practices included those associated with speaking like a man in a working-class community on the south side of Chicago (Philipsen, 1992), a genre of direct speech called *dugri* in Israel (Katriel, 2004) and personal address, directives and narratives in interpersonal relationships in Colombia (Fitch, 1998). Ethnographers studied these practices as units of observation that allowed them to make claims about social arrangements within a focal community of speakers.

In methodological terms, ethnographies of communication have taken on the character of instrumental qualitative case studies (Stake, 2005) designed to learn about the social significance of communication in a particular social group and about the social life of communication across speech communities. Carbaugh and Hastings (1992) labelled these two types of insights as situated theories (community members' experiences and interpretation of communication in context) and theories of communication and communication activities (pancultural theories of what communication is and how it works in context). As case studies, individual ethnographies constitute an ongoing conversation among researchers (Chen & Pearce, 1995) about "communication [as] seen (and heard and felt) as a sociocultural system of coordinated action and meaning, that is, an interactional system that is individually applied, socially negotiated, symbolically constituted, and culturally distinct" (p. 159), about particular communication activity theories and about situated theories.

Ethnography of communication's growing concern with particular practices as "keyholes" (Hochschild, 2016) the ethnographer can peer through and catch a glimpse of larger systems of practices and meanings had two methodological upshots, both with critical methodological implications. First, as they foregrounded practices in their research ethnographers became increasingly invested in studying speech communities as themselves constituted through communication practices. In a landmark paper, Milburn (2004) held ethnographers accountable for providing *ethnographic* evidence that they were studying speech communities. "For example," she asked,

when an author refers to the *Chicano community* or the *homosexual community*, what communication patterns are present that help the author make the claim that these groups of people are in fact communities? Further, what unifies or binds a group to suggest a sense of community? Finally, whereas an author may make research claims about a group that suggests that it constitutes a community, is it also the case that members of such groups self-identify as a particular type of community?

(p. 413)

Milburn directed ethnographers' attention to a range of practices social groups use to communicatively constitute themselves as speech communities, including participants explicitly labelling themselves as a community, using geographic or container metaphors to describe boundary conditions of their communities and accounting for actions with reference to community and communal belonging. Second, the emergent practice focus also prompted some ethnographers to break with the tradition of studying practices synchronically for the sake of describing the characteristics of a speech community's cultural ways of speaking at a particular point of its history. Rather, they began adopting a diachronic view of practices and asking questions about the nature and extent of their transcultural movements, particularly how some made their way into the communicative repertoires of distinct groups of speakers. This shift in focus brought to the fore such communication

phenomena as Chinese Indonesian families giving Western names to their newborn to express political resistance (Lie & Bailey, 2017), an international NGO's limited success in bringing Western practices of participatory decision-making to Urumqi, China (Witteborn, 2010), or the dissemination of "English native speech" through international language training (Hart, 2016).

As a methodology, CuDA is particularly useful for ethnographers seeking to investigate the meanings and movements of communication practices. Donal Carbaugh and his associates designed CuDA for the purpose of investigating culturally distinctive communication practices and their meanings as those meanings take shape with reference to broader cultural discourses in particular socio-cultural scenes. CuDA regards as *discourse* any means of meaningful social interaction (including silence, nonverbal communication, writing and so on) and *communication practices* as patterns of situated, meaningful, accountable communicative action. A *cultural discourse* can be defined as "a set of communication practices—acts, events, and styles—which is treated as a historically transmitted expressive system of symbols, symbolic forms, norms, and their meanings" (Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2013, p. 10). Thus, for CuDA, *communication practices are the primary units of observation, and cultural discourses are the primary units of analysis*. This methodological orientation constitutes a break with the Hymesian tradition of regarding the speech community as the primary unit of analysis and invites ethnographic studies of discourse, practices and cultural discourses without assuming that the scope of their uses or meanings will be isomorphic with any particular speech community.

CuDA's analytic approach is discussed elsewhere in the present volume (see chapter by Carbaugh); here I will elaborate some of CuDA's other methodological foundations by discussing similarities and differences between it and other research approaches to discourse and cultural discourse. CuDA shares methods of data collection with other traditions of discourse analysis, including participant observation, interviewing and document analysis, but unlike those other traditions it adheres to an ethnographic epistemology that treats the researcher as the primary research instrument and thus sees the research process as fundamentally shaped by ever-evolving social relations between the researcher and group members, starting with asking and revising research questions all the way to soliciting confirmation of one's findings from group members. The length of the ethnographer's physical stay in a "field" is less important than a commitment to recovering the significance of communication practices to group members (Boromisza-Habashi et al., 2018).

To further clarify CuDA's methodological stance we can examine its relationship to another research approach designed for the purpose of investigating cultural discourses, Shi-xu's cultural discourse studies (CDS) (Scollo, 2011; Shi-xu, 2009, 2015, 2016). This approach is also discussed in detail in the present volume (see Chapters 1 and 10); here, I focus on four methodological differences between CuDA and CDS. First, CuDA is invested in developing a universally applicable analytic framework for capturing local, culturally distinct systems and theories of communication practices. CDS shares with CuDA the guiding assumption that communication, and its technologies are conceived, valued and used in locally distinctive ways (Carbaugh et al., 1997). However, CDS is deeply suspicious toward all purportedly universal analytic frameworks and instead prompts cultural analysts to examine how dominant theories of the relationship between discourse and culture—including ones developed in the ethnography of communication tradition—silence and erase non-Western research goals, concepts, theories and methodologies. As I explained earlier, as an instrumental case study approach CuDA regards research as an ongoing conversation where new evidence can, and should, lead to modifications to its pancultural analytic framework. A recent example of such a modification was adding "time" as a radiant of meaning to CuDA's analytic framework in the light of evidence from Israel (Carbaugh & Grimshaw, 2021). Nonetheless, CDS is politically and morally committed to elevating non-Western

cultural discourse approaches and calls on all discourse researchers to treat Western and non-Western approaches as compatible but *distinct* and *divided*. Second, because of its strategic denial of the universal analytic approaches CDS favours analytic eclecticism in its pursuit of unmasking cultural discourses that render global and local relations of inequality and inequity taken for granted, while CuDA's pancultural analytic framework is relatively more standardised. Third, CDS is more likely than CuDA to work with human language as data. CuDA prompts researchers to be prepared to discover unfamiliar local conceptions of communicative action and the full range of semiotic resources and agents group members regard as capable of accomplishing those actions. For example, silences often constitute communication practices whether they last a fraction of a second or years (Muñoz, 2014); humans enter into interactions with nature (Sawyer, 2004), a god (Molina-Markham, 2012) and cars (Molina-Markham et al., 2016). To be clear, CuDA relies on humans for verbal reports of what *counts as* communication in a given social group but does not restrict the locally recognised range of communication practices to verbal interaction or the range of communicative agents to humans. Fourth, while CDS treats cultural critique as central to the research enterprise, for CuDA it is only one possible element of that enterprise. Cultural critique is a constitutive feature of CDS which regards cultural discourses as "saturated with power relations and power contestation; discourse and communication in and through which culture is embodied, transmitted and transformed, are a primary site of power operation and use" (Shi-xu, 2016, p. 3). CuDA does not deny the possibility or value of cultural criticism—the researcher's evaluation of cultural discourses from a morally and politically informed vantage point—but it does not regard such criticism as the *sine qua non* of research. Cultural criticism is one type of critical voice in ethnography in addition to natural criticism (reporting members' criticism of their own practices) and academic criticism (evaluations of extant research in the light of one's findings) (Carbaugh, 1989/90). These three types of voices constitute the critical mode of analysis, a mode CuDA regards as less essential than the descriptive, interpretive and comparative modes (Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2017).

Despite these differences, CuDA and CDS share a key methodological feature: both regard cultural discourses as the primary units of analysis. This basic research orientation allows CDS to document interactions between dominant Western and less dominant Eastern cultural discourses and CuDA to capture how mobile communication practices interact with local cultural discourses.

Cultural discourse analysis and intercultural contact

By regarding cultural discourses as the primary unit of observation, CuDA breathes new life into the ethnography of communication's interest in context-bound, observable cultural contact, the interest that sparked the emergence of this research tradition. "The *social processes of language contact* in multilingual societies and the social patterning of individual variability [in speech patterns]—both either ignored or treated as random in earlier linguistic work—became the first foci of ethnographic inquiry about speech" (Murray, 1998, p. 98, emphasis mine). CuDA enables the cultural analyst of communication to provide nuanced accounts of communication practices as they enter into social situations featuring intercultural contact. Some forms of contact may feature co-present speakers interacting in real time; others may occur when speakers encounter practices or expressive forms they regard as originating in a different socio-cultural group or society.

For the purpose of clarifying CuDA's methodological approach, an important distinction must be made between studying communicative contact as a social process and performing cross-cultural comparison of communication practices. The latter is concerned with the comparison

of similar communication practices used in different cultural groups and identifying similarities and differences in their uses, forms and meanings. Sometimes this type of analysis foregrounds moments of intercultural contact when speakers from two or more groups fail or refuse to coordinate their interaction with one another as a result of different uses or interpretations of the same practice. Such encounters and participants' talk about them gives the analyst valuable evidence of cultural difference or incommensurability. For example, Carbaugh's (2005) comparative analyses of US and British self-introductions, US and Russian discursive strategies for initiating institutional collaboration, US and Finnish public lectures and Anglo-American and Blackfeet public speaking use the breakdown of coordinated interaction in intercultural encounters as their starting point. However, the primary research goal is to elucidate competing cultural discourses informing similar practices rather than the processes or dynamics of those encounters themselves.

By contrast, studies concerned with communicative contact as a social process, and thus an object of inquiry, are invested in describing and explaining how intercultural contact unfolds, and the contexts in which it unfolds. Here, I review some key concepts ethnographers have coined and used to identify features of that process.

Rich points

Social encounters take on the character of *intercultural* encounters in moments when speakers are at once confused and intrigued by another speaker's communicative conduct. These experiences are not purely cognitive, rather they are laced with feelings of disorientation, curiosity, self-doubt, embarrassment, amusement, frustration, fear and desire for reestablishing the smooth flow of interaction and "normal" social relations. In such moments—or series of encounters featuring such moments—a speaker open to cultural explanations of others' odd conduct gradually comes to accept that their cultural frame of reference is insufficient for inferring the meaning and propriety of what the other speaker is saying and begins to build a frame for rendering the unfamiliar conduct meaningful. Methodologically speaking, the rich points ethnographers experience upon encountering unfamiliar patterns of communicative conduct in the field provide points of entry into, and warrants for, cultural investigation. Drawing on the work of the anthropologist Michael Agar, Sandel (2015) lists

six situations or moments when rich points become apparent: (1) *incomprehension*, the classic moment in ethnographic research when something does not make sense to the researcher; (2) *contradiction*, a moment when the researcher thinks that something will happen but the opposite occurs; (3) *departures from expectations*, or times when the researcher thinks s/he has figured out the pattern and then something new happens that does not fit; (4) *repetition*, when people do the same thing repeatedly but the researcher cannot understand why; (5) repackaging *old forms* into something *new*, something that often happens with language use; and (6) *arousal*, when an action by the source group "arouses anger or anxiety in the researcher" while the source group is not similarly aroused.

(p. 1316)

The researcher can use any of these types of moments to pause, withdraw from the interaction if possible and begin to parse out which communication practices or interactional dynamics were the cause of the rich point, and if those practices and dynamics are indeed shaped by unfamiliar cultural discourses.

Coordinated interaction

Rich points occur when participants of social encounters fail to make shared sense of their conversational partners' actions for the purpose of working toward particular social goals. In such moments, social interaction becomes uncoordinated and, as a result, participants' sense of ontological security may be threatened (Boromisza-Habashi & Xiong, 2019). Note that not all instances of uncoordinated interaction warrant cultural explanations. Sometimes interaction becomes uncoordinated "due to differences in personality or power, or circumstances, or goals, not to differences in culture" (Agar, 1994, p. 235). Nonetheless, when restoring coordinated interaction for the purpose of completing a task (e.g. gathering information, presenting identities, managing relationships, holding others accountable, etc.) with others has a cultural basis the ethnographer is well-positioned to develop cultural explanations that elucidate important features of local speech culture. Such explanations are unlikely to provide the ethnographer or their audiences with a holistic account of an entire speech community's ways of speaking and worldview, but they are likely to be valid accounts of cultural communication practices and the systems of practices and meanings that render them meaningful to participants.

Communicative competence

The cultural researcher's efforts to coordinate their own interactions with cultural others increases the likelihood that they will be regarded as competent communicators. Such competence is radically grounded in local expectations about how speakers ought to participate in social encounters featuring communication (Witteborn, 2003). This view of competence is ethnographically grounded, in that it assumes that social groups with distinctive speech cultures draw on local systems of meanings as they communicate, use, interpret and evaluate language in shared, locally recognisable ways and are invested in systematically coordinating their communicative actions with others. In doing so, this approach to (inter)cultural competence diverges from skills-based approaches seeking to equip speakers with culture-general resources for avoiding misunderstanding and miscommunication. Skills-based approaches overlook the context-bound nature of communication, impose external conceptual frameworks on cultural members' interpretation of meaningful communicative conduct, locate competence in the individual rather than interactions, focus on the cultural sojourner and neglect members of host cultures and have minimal to no regard for intra-national diversity and differences in power. These features impede communication-focused cultural inquiry.

Inequality and inequity

One of the earliest insights of the ethnography of communication was that linguistic contact hardly ever occurs on a level playing field (Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010). From a descriptive perspective it is easy to argue that all languages, linguistic varieties and discursive resources have the same value, as all of them enable speakers to participate competently in the social lives of the groups that use them regularly. In moments of contact, however, four things may become apparent to both participants and ethnographers. First, some languages, varieties and resources have higher prestige or value than others. Second, those who can use relatively more valuable resources competently may gain social, political or economic advantages over those who cannot. Third, participants often have unequal access to high-prestige resources due to variable access to educational opportunities or the media used for the dissemination of those resources. Fourth, some groups of speakers have a greater say in what counts as "competent use" than others and are thus positioned

to reward users they deem competent and sanction users they deem incompetent. These forms of inequality (the lack of fair treatment for all) and inequity (the uneven distribution of resources) present a methodological warrant for pursuing questions such as who sets the terms of coordinated interaction and competent participation, who stands to benefit from those terms and at whose expense and what institutions sustain relationships of inequality and inequity.

Community of practice

Intercultural contact often unfolds in social situations designed by, and for, participants united by common tasks and a shared interest in (creatively) attending to those tasks. Such collectives, which ethnographers drawing on Lave's and Wenger's work have termed communities of practice (Hart & Milburn, 2019), are distinct from speech communities in that their social cohesion does not derive primarily from a shared investment in cultivating and passing on ways of speaking the group considers its own. While the existence of communities of practice is not grounded in a shared speech culture, the day-to-day relating and problem-solving of their members can give rise to locally recognised and meaningful communication practices or may install a dominant culture's communicative expectations as normative. The boundaries of communities of practice often stretch across speech communities—think about organisations, workplaces or interest groups uniting speakers socialised in a variety of speech communities. In such culturally diverse communities of practice intercultural contact is all but inevitable. Hart and Milburn point to the online social network LinkedIn as one such community of practice. They show that an Anglo-American cultural discourse of “professionalism” informs both how LinkedIn users perform the identity of the “professional” by networking, displaying their skills and providing one another constructive feedback, and the design of the user interface which in turn prevents users from communicating in ways that go against the cultural expectations of that discourse. Users and the communication infrastructure of this community of practice collaboratively enact and enforce cultural practices associated with the ideal of “professionalism”. This does not lead to uniform communication practices across all users from all speech communities. However, the set of practices with transcultural relevance LinkedIn makes available to all users function as a shared symbolic template for creative action (Boromisza-Habashi, 2013).

Interrhetorics and other hybrid forms

In intercultural communicative encounters, speakers engaged in the completion of a task often creatively combine elements of their own communicative repertoires with elements of the repertoires of their interlocutors whom, for practical purposes, they treat as cultural others. In a study of statements of purpose domestic and international applicants submitted to the graduate programme of a university in the United States, Saville-Troike (2003) set out to distinguish cultural strategies for the management of applicants' social face. Upon closer inspection she noticed that international applicants' facework was not entirely dissimilar from that of domestic applicants. As learners of the “game” of US graduate admissions, they produced hybrid communicative forms and structures as they practiced facework:

Multilinguals do not necessarily merely adopt the rhetorical structures and pragmatic interactive strategies used by native speakers of the linguistic code they select, any more than they necessarily merely transfer the structures and strategies of their own native language and culture, even if they are fully conscious and knowledgeable of the differences. Along the road to acquisition of cross-cultural communicative competence, learners develop not

merely an approximative interlanguage of linguistic forms and structures, but an *inter-rhetoric* of transferred, transmogrified, and partially adopted pragmatic strategies for self-presentation and management of “face” in interaction.

(p. 182, emphasis in original)

Arguably, such interrhetorics, or hybrid persuasive strategies, are but one example of discursive hybrids that allow speakers involved in intercultural contact to achieve coordinated interaction with cultural others.

Circulation

As speakers participate in transcultural communities of practice, or creatively conceive of and use discursive hybrids, they often facilitate the movement of communication practices, or at least some of their forms and meanings, across cultural boundaries. From an ethnographic perspective, communication practices and discursive resources circulate when they ‘leave’ what participants regard as a cultural point of origin and ‘arrive’ in what participants regard as their original or adopted form. Anglo-American public speaking is a prominent example of a set of circulating discursive resources with deep cultural ties to a speech community that thinks of it as its own. The adoption of these resources is variable across cultural groups and institutions. In some cases, public speaking maintains the generic form of US public speaking but is performed in the local language (Dunn, 2014). In other cases, public speaking is performed in English according to US expectations but the resource’s value to participants is transformed, either because participants wish to make the resource their own (Boromisza-Habashi & Fang, 2023) or precisely because they recognise it as American (Pan et al., 2002) or global (Miller, 2002) and therefore desirable. Studying the circulation of practices and discursive resources provide valuable insight into how they may shape—inspire, facilitate and impede—intercultural contact.

Encoding and materiality

Finally, the media of intercultural contact may also become objects of investigation to the ethnographer. As Katriel (2015) notes, rapidly changing social media platforms and other kinds of communication technologies offer a wildly variable set of communicative affordances to speakers, some of which are not obviously meaningful and useful to them, while the utility and meanings of others they have not yet been able to determine. To use Katriel’s terminology, features of new communication technologies sometimes exist in a pre-coded stage of use where their creators or their users are yet unaware how they may function as communicative affordances in the future. Prior to the conferral of communicative meaning onto technologies through emergent processes of use, that is, the process of their encoding, ethnographers are well-advised to investigate the materiality—the pre-coded, indexical and iconic characteristics and features—of those technologies and to trace how those features shape the process of their encoding and recoding. As a significant amount of intercultural contact takes place on social media, ethnographers can usefully direct their attention to how the material features of communication technologies are (unexpectedly) encoded as facilitators or impeders of coordinated interaction across cultural differences. For example, experts in second-language acquisition have come to re-code social media as a particularly effective means of teaching and learning cultural communicative competence. Social media,

they have come to realise, enhance learning because naturalistic interactions feel more authentic to learners than simulated interactions in a traditional classroom or textbook and because learners are empowered to develop hybrid norms of appropriate communicative conduct with native speakers (Kim & Brown, 2014).

Methodological implications

“In the special case of intercultural encounters”, Carbaugh (2007) wrote,

[CuDA] studies assume a kind of double burden, as what needs [to be] described, and interpreted, from the vantage of each discourse, can have its own unique cultural features. Attending to these, and their *interaction*, places special demands on such study and thus makes an explicit framework for their analysis indispensable.

(179, emphasis mine)

The distinction Carbaugh (2007) drew among five modes of inquiry—namely theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative and critical—helps us capture some important methodological implications of ethnographic engagement with cultural contact understood as a process in which cultural discourses have a role to play.

In the theoretical mode, where the ethnographer’s concern is fashioning a basic theoretical orientation to locally meaningful communicative conduct, foregrounding such concepts as communities of practice, circulation, hybridity, encoding and materiality can provide the cultural analyst with new insights.

In the descriptive mode, where the challenge is capturing communication as it unfolds in actual contexts, heightened attention to Hymes’s (1972) categories of Setting and Instruments is warranted. A focus on the spatial and temporal aspects of Setting aids the analyst in developing more nuanced accounts of the relationships, institutions and histories that facilitate intercultural contact, while a focus on Instruments cultivates careful attention to the material (pre-coded) and recoded significance of communication technologies as they facilitate contact. In addition, the challenge of describing contact creates a warrant for collaborative data collection among researchers with privileged access not only to different social groups and their cultural ways of speaking but also sites and moments where contact occurs.

In the interpretive mode, where the ethnographer reconstructs the local significance of communication practices and the cultural discourses they constitute, CuDA draws the analyst’s attention to cultural interpretations of contact, including local vocabularies and taxonomies of various types of contact, accounts of typical and non-typical cultural encounters and explanations for why some practices are more likely to ‘travel’ than others.

In the comparative mode, where the researcher’s primary focus is on cultural difference between practices and discourses, CuDA further prompts the ethnographer to answer questions about how cultural practices move across cultural boundaries and how cultural discourses may facilitate or impede that movement.

Finally, in the critical mode, where the analyst’s attention shifts to the evaluation of communication practices, ethnographers are well-advised to listen for evidence of inequality and inequity in indigenous accounts of intercultural contact and to examine whether and how the institutions that facilitate contact are set up to reproduce unequal or inequitable social, cultural, political and economic relationships.

Limitations and future directions

As is the case in the practice of most, if not all, ethnographic methodologies, the unequal distribution of research resources can make conducting a CuDA study difficult. Ethnography is a resource-intensive methodology. Ethnographers around the world have different degrees of access to such resources as funding, time and energy needed to conduct fieldwork and to develop working knowledge of an unfamiliar language, research networks needed to enter productive collaborations and institutional support for publishing one's findings or to design and carry out interventions into forms of cultural contact that demonstrably sustain abuses of power. Fortunately for researchers, the ethnography of communication tradition does not set rigid expectations for time in the field, the amount of data to be collected or the kinds of outcomes (books, articles, policy and consulting materials, etc.) the research process ought to yield. Transparency about the researcher's positional-ity research choices is more important, as it allows other ethnographers to regard each CuDA study as creating new opportunities for further contributions to the study of the relationship between culture and communication—as turns in an ongoing conversation, so to speak.

One possible direction for that ongoing conversation is revisiting the speech community construct in the light of CuDA's avowed interest in intercultural encounters. As I discussed earlier, CuDA precipitated a shift in the ethnography of communication within the Communication discipline from treating speech communities as the units of analysis toward the communication practices that invoke shared ways of speaking for the purpose of sustaining a social group's sense of community. I anticipate a similar type of shift taking place with reference to the circulation of discursive resources, communication practices and cultural discourses across cultural boundaries. Rather than taking transcultural circulation as a given or as a transparent phenomenon, CuDA analysts can approach circulation as an object of ethnographic inquiry, that is, as itself constituted, at least in part, through specific types of culturally variable communication practices. Studies of speech community and circulation along these lines could provide insights into which types of practices, resources and discourses are prone to, designed for, or facilitate, movement and which types tend to sustain community. In addition, studying the push and pull of community and circulation, of containment and mobility, promises insights into the dynamics of the differential, fluid and power-laden valuation of communication resources, a process ethnographers of communication call the speech economy. Although traditionally speech economies were thought of as isomorphic with speech communities (Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010), CuDA scholars' combined interest in community and circulation may explain why and how some speech economies transcend the boundaries of speech communities.

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17

CULTURAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse hubs as heuristic devices

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Cultural discourse analysis: Discourse hubs as heuristic devices

Ethnographers of communication and of discourse, like us, find that every community of people creates means for communicating from one person to another, but no two communities of people create the same means of expression with the same meanings. This is especially clear in the contrasting use of different languages as in Chinese and English; this is also clear in different versions of the same language as in the contrast between British and black vernacular Englishes. One objective of a cultural analysis of discourse is to investigate the differences in the means of expression which are available to people and to understand the meanings being created through the use of those means of expression.¹

Our approach to these matters asks about the distinctive means of communication in particular communities and the meanings participants in those communities hear as active in those means. Our investigative procedures include a system of discovery through which we describe specific practices of discourse in use, then interpret the meanings those practices can have for participants; our analyses also include placing the discourse practice in cross-cultural perspective as well as subjecting it to intensive critical assessment. We emphasise that this research process, only sketched here, is a rigorous design with exacting procedures for each of several stages of inquiry (see Scollo and Milburn, 2019). The analyses involve descriptive, interpretive, comparative and critical procedures, each with its own analytic objective; each being designed to make a distinctive claim, respectively, about instances of the discourse being investigated, its meanings to participants, how it compares/contrasts with others and the ways it dis/advantages its users.

Our studies have explored the discursive structuring of communication concerning human relationships (Scollo and Poutiainen, 2019), environmental matters (Hastings and Milburn, 2019), automotive vehicles (van Over et al., 2020), matters of security (Rudnick and Boromisza-Habashi, 2017) and online dynamics (Hart and Milburn, 2019), as well as many face-to-face interactions. Investigations have brought into focus discourses in popular culture as in Belarus (Dinerstein, 2019), Bulgaria (Sotirova, 2022), Germany (Winchitz, 2017), Hungary (Boromisza-Habashi, 2013), Israel (Dori-Hacohen, 2017; Kampf and Katriel, 2017), Finland and the United States (Scollo and Poutiainen, 2019; Carbaugh and Berry, 2017), as well as in very special groups within

larger national systems as among Muslim immigrants in Israel (Alyan, 2017) or Native Americans within the United States (Cerulli, 2017; Carbaugh and Grimshaw, 2021).

Over the course of these studies, we have found certain, specific types of features within cultural discourses to be especially rich and important to explore. As we have conducted and reviewed these, we develop knowledge of each as fundamental parts of discourse systems. We conceptualise each as setting the social stage for participants in the following ways: as a kind of place (dwelling together), with specific actors (being together), forceful actions (acting), particular relations or connections (relating), a range of emotions (feeling) and time (sequencing from timely to timeless). Our concept for elaborating these types of concerns—in dwelling, being, acting, relating, feeling and sequencing—is *discursive hub*, which we turn to next.

Discursive hub

We conceptualise a cultural discourse as an organic entity, as a living organism or an ecosystem. Depending upon its specific situated features, a cultural discourse can live and thrive or decay and die. Any living entity, as a discourse, has integral systems within it, as for example the human body has a circulatory, respiratory, skeletal and digestive system. Systems such as these work together in the life of a person, with each being intimately connected to the others. Each such system can be understood as having *central structures* like a heart (veins, arteries), lungs (brachia, trachea), backbone (skull, femur) and stomach (oesophagus, intestines); each also has a *central function*, respectively, as in pumping blood, breathing, support and processing food; each also operates through *central processes*, over time, as the heart pumps blood, through arteries, into veins, then back to the heart. In order to understand a cultural discourse as an integrated system, then, we can ask about its attendant structures, functions and processes. In this way, we find it fruitful—to begin—to explore a central, systemic feature of a cultural discourse, analogous to the heart or lungs. In so doing, we offer a way to initiate an exploration of a cultural discourse as composed of interconnected features, of discursive structures, functions and processes, with each involving central sites of activity; it is that central feature we conceptualise as a discursive hub.

In prior works, we have found that a cultural discourse provides important and basic systemic resources for people to conceive of and evaluate significant features of their lives. These resources involve the structuring of discourse about central aspects of social living. Since we may not know the specifics of these in advance, we need to discover them in each case. In that discovery process, we organise as follows around six discursive hubs, in **BOLD**, followed by basic questions about features in a discourse:

- Being:** How do we express: who I am; who you are; who we are?
- Acting:** How do we express: what we are doing; what is best/worst to do?
- Relating:** How do we express: that we are related to each other and connected in our social world(s)?
- Feeling:** How do we express: what we feel; about what; to what degree?
- Dwelling:** How do we express: where we are (place); how do we understand our natural world (or material environment)?
- Timing:** How do we express: the understanding of a sequence or process, of movement over time?

Inquiring about each discursive hub, one at a time, allows for the discovery of important expressions, cues or terms (words, images, sounds, etc.) which a cultural discourse provides for its users.

Our following exposition will detail each discursive hub. For each we will discuss the research questions each hub raises for analysts. We will identify specific bits of discourse, or discourse structures, which activate that “discourse hub”, or that attention to that hub makes relevant for investigation; this will anchor our chapter in concrete parts of discourse, close to the ground, so to speak, where people walk and talk. Each section will also present the socio-cultural functions of each hub or what that hub accomplishes for people when that systemic part of the discourse is in use. When possible, we will discuss a larger process in which that hub is involved.

We are building our exposition around two themes, the importance of exploring and discussing actual cases of cultural discourse, as well as the heuristic role of the hubs in the conduct of cultural discourse analysis. As we attend to each one, recall that to some degree each is organically related to the others; cultural discourses involve complex webs for the expression of cultural and social lives.

Being and identity

As ethnographers of communication who place great importance on the value of situated discourse and participant observation, we are often driven by very personal questions. Considering my own ethnic identity (Trudy Milburn) and its impact on my place in the academy led me to an early project working with others who explicitly promoted a sense of ethnic identity. The Puerto Rican Center’s vision statement described its purpose as,

enhanc[ing] pride and self-esteem within the Puerto Rican and other Spanish speaking communities by promoting, maintaining, and sharing our rich cultural heritage.

(Milburn, 2009, p. 63)

Volunteering at this centre over the course of nearly a year, I collected data, including organisational documents and audio recordings of talk during board meetings. The following example was taken from a centre planning meeting where three board members collaboratively built a list of items needed to produce a piña colada. See Table 17.1.

In this example, board members were considering whether or not they could produce a special drink for the summer festival. Although interest in drinking this beverage may provide an identity marker, it is the collaborative process that illustrates one way speakers enact being a member of this Puerto Rican community. Based on this type of example, and many other instances of overlapping turn taking, I learned that (a) identity may be a label applied to individuals, such as “Puerto Rican”, but (b) moreover, it involves broader communal practices, such as the construction of collaboratively built sentences.

Table 17.1 Transcript of board of directors conversation by line number

166	JG	the soft drinks, when you talk about Coca Cola,
167		it comes from, you know, a server, vs., a Piña Colada,
168		which is, which you need a, a, um [RM: blender]
169	JG	a blender, you need to blend the juices, you need to buy
170	RM	ice,
171	CR	Coco Lopez
172		a refrigerator
173	CR	it's much more complicated. It's a special drink.

(Milburn, 2002, p. 296; modified)

As this example shows, a sense of being is never, in this community, a singular declaration or accomplishment. Often, we know who we are by the conversations we have with people around us. Those to whom we account for our behaviour lend a particular salience to our own actions as we engage in practices deemed to be appropriate and normative or those that diverge from social norms. Often, the practices and norms for being can be found in discourses when our own identity may be contested. For instance, Sotirova (2022) describes the way Bulgarians complain to one another and may exclaim, “we are not normal people” (p. 62). However, this contestation is actually part of the act of *oplakvane* that forms a central part of a normatively sanctioned Bulgarian way.

Lie (2017) has described the importance of social roles and responsibilities in being a Chinese Indonesian Evangelical Christian, whereas Molina-Markham (2012) has described the individual stories that are recounted in describing one’s spiritual journey as a Quaker. Both researchers describe the way communicative practices form part of the participants’ religious identities. However, they are quite distinct. In the first example, social coordination is foregrounded as participants follow the preacher; in the second, personal experience is the most prominent feature of the identity, as participation emphasises internal and often silent experiences. There is a difference in the focal discursive site of consciousness each cultivates.

The hub of being thus provides a lens to examine cultural ontology in all of its various forms: racial, ethnic, national, religious, gender, sexual and many other permutations of identity as an individual and as a member of a group or groups. *By exploring this hub, a researcher can analyse how different identities are displayed in language, performed through actions or visual signs, as well as how they may intersect. It is important to keep in mind that displays of identity may not be done through only talk, but also through other communicative modalities.* Silence or nonverbal signs speak quite loudly sometimes.

Although communication researchers recognise the ways that identity is relationally constructed, individuals may express their identity in non-relational ways. Part of the challenge is to attend to the communicative practices that are part of each identity itself. Some of the issues that can be addressed through this hub may be answered by asking the following questions:

- Who am I? Who are we, collectively?
- How does what I do construct my sense of identity?
- How do I feel about my identity?
- How does my sense of identity change over time?
- How do my identities change based on my various relationships?
- Where am I most myself, or least myself? Or where do similar members gather to express who they are?

In addition, this hub may prompt the researchers themselves to ask how their own identity(ies) impact their ability to collect or interpret data. Paying particular attention to researcher displays, stance or positionality, and privileges can provide even more nuance and sophistication to our analyses as we seek to recount the various ways that identity is communicated into being.

Acting and practice

During 2003 through 2004, I (Michelle Scollo) collected data on media references in social interaction in the United States. The conversational extract is part of this corpus. See Table 17.2.

Media references come in a variety of types and forms. They may include allusions to mass media and popular culture, such as Josh’s, “How’s it comin Emeril?”, that temporarily casts Marc

Table 17.2 Transcript of media reference by line number^{1,2}

10	Josh:	Are these Maine blueberries?
11	Emily:	(1.0) I wish (.) m(hhh)
12	Marc:	(10.0) ((loud sizzling sound from food in saucepan))
13	Josh:	How's it comin Emeril?
14	Emily:	mh haha
15	Marc:	<u>BAM!</u>
16	Emily:	mh huh!

¹ Participant names have been changed for anonymity. All are in their late 20s and identify as Euro-American. All have a connection to Maine, USA, being born, living or having family there and a love of its natural beauty.

² See Scollo (2007) for the full transcript and further analysis of this excerpt as well as descriptive and interpretive analysis of media references in the United States. See Sierra (2021) for a recent treatment of media references.

as the celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse due to his gourmet cooking. They may also include lines of dialogue from mass media, such as when Marc plays the role of “Emeril”, quoting his signature catch phrase, “BAM!” (on lines 13–15).

With the acting hub, analysis may be anchored in (a) terms that identify specific types of communication or activity, (b) practices of the communication or activity itself, including all of its features, or both. In the case of media references, the term (i.e. “media reference”) is not often used, but participants engage in and recognise the practice by its shared, performative features. In the earlier example, they do so by Josh’s use of figurative and pop culture language—Marc is not “Emeril”, but these friends know who “Emeril” is and can likely make the link between Marc’s gourmet cooking and “Emeril”.² Marc cues his related reference prosodically, using mimicry as he quotes and enacts Emeril’s signature catch phrase, “BAM!”, typically as he is throwing spice on food.³

The acting hub may focus on communicative acts and events, and ways or styles of communicating. The hub invites us to ask if a way of communicating may be conceptualised as an event with a clear beginning, middle and end or follow a particular sequence. For example, I find that media references follow a three-part act sequence—trigger-reference-response. Something typically “triggers” a reference, e.g. Marc’s gourmet cooking sounds (line 12). This is then quickly linked with something from mass media or pop culture that the speaker presumes interlocutors’ have knowledge of in the form of a reference (lines 13, 15). I argue that most speakers produce references for the response, i.e. to make people laugh, have a good time and share things in common (lines 14, 16). Note the form-function-meaning interrelationships: the wit and humour of media references are produced by the quick and clever relation of something that just happened to an element of pop culture; the goal is achieved if participants show they understood and enjoyed the reference. Further, media references are engaged in for the valued feelings and relations they engender. To produce and understand a reference participants co-enact membership in a community of shared identity. Additionally, we see a model person whose positive face may be raised through an efficacious reference—a witty conversationalist that brings joy and communion to all.

Likewise, questions that may come into view with the acting hub include

- What terms identify verbal and nonverbal ways of communicating?
- What is the active form of the practice and its component parts or features? Does it follow a sequence?
- Who is being (dis)advantaged in this way of communicating?

- What roles do identity, relating, feeling and dwelling play in the way of communicating?
- How do ways of communicating change over time?

On the basis of extant research, Carbaugh (1989, 2017) formulated a multi-part framework for the description, interpretation and comparative analysis of cultural terms for action and their performance.⁴ For example, Carbaugh (1999) examined “listening” among the Blackfeet, a nonverbal form of communication in which they “sit down and listen” to the natural world to find an “answer” when they have a “problem” (pp. 254–255).

Cultural analyses of discourse (CuDA) have also focused on the way actions are generically shaped and what these forms tell us about the nature of communication through ritual, social drama and agonistic dynamics. Sotirova (2017) examined Bulgarian *oplakvane* (“complaining”), a ritual of deep emotion following a four-act sequence: (a) introductory statement, (b) sharing of problem often related to the national situation, (c) related example(s) of problem and (d) concluding statement (e.g. “this is how it is in Bulgaria”), which function together in “celebrating a common fate” (pp. 57–59, p. 63).⁵ Social drama is another processual unit, found in conflict situations structured by four phases: breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration or schism (Turner, 1974, pp. 37–41). Carbaugh (1996a) examined a land-use controversy in Western Massachusetts, USA, through a social drama lens, cycling through multiple phases making it difficult to reach resolution. Lastly, the agonistic form pits one cluster of terms and meanings against another, with one often being valued over the other, in a spiralling, dialectical form.⁶ Lie and Sandel (2020) found an agonistic pattern in comments on a Facebook post about ethnic Chinese in Indonesia with *pribumi* (native, non-Chinese Indonesians) being played against and valued over *tiong hoa* (Chinese), functioning to “solidify Chinese Indonesians’ position as non-native, and a scapegoat for problems in Indonesia” (p. 31).

Acting/relating

In 2018 Saila Poutiainen and I (Michelle Scollo) collected data on the communicative development of romantic relationships in Finland and the United States (Scollo and Poutiainen, 2019). One prominent term emerged in the US case, “talking”—used by participants to describe a nascent, amorphous relationship stage fraught with tension over its meaning, parameters and its complex relationship to the older term and stage of “dating”. Ostensibly, the term refers to an action, yet in our data we find its primary use is to characterise a kind of social relationship; this is a key part of its cultural power.

In an interview, Amber,⁷ a 28-year-old female from the United States, explained some of these terms and tensions in her romantic “situation”. See Table 17.3.⁸

“Talking” can be treated, here, as a hub of relating, bringing into view a constellation of related terms, associated practices, norms and radiants of meaning. In the previous excerpt, we see that Amber and her “friend” are persons who may choose to be romantically involved with someone. One may be “pursuing” the other, but if there is no reciprocal interest they may be in the “friend zone”. The other, though, may give “an inch” and begin “talking”, which is contrasted by Amber with the term, “dating”.

“Talking” is a recent relationship stage, emerging in concert with—or because of—new communication technologies that offer participants multiple means of “getting to know each other”. After meeting in person or online, participants may engage in “talking” by private messaging on dating apps or social media, texting, FaceTiming or talking on the phone. This may lead to “meeting up”, “hanging out”, going out on “dates” and sexual activity. “Talking” is light, playful

Table 17.3 Transcript of relationship conversation by line number

1	Amber:	We've been friends now for four years, but this whole time he's been
2		pursuing me. And recently I kind of gave him an inch, you know, like
3		we've been kind of talking now, so like the label that's been put on that
4		was friends, then friend zone for a couple years and then like ah maybe,
5		and now like there's potential and so it's like a positive situation
...		
6		I wouldn't say that we are dating, I wouldn't say that.
...		
7		I would say that he's my friend and now we're talking I guess.

and flirtatious with romantic “chemistry” being possibly located in fun times and interesting conversation. “Talking” is understood as not exclusive to only one other person, which is part of participants’ natural critique of this stage, that participants do not know where they stand relative to others, and it prolongs relationship development.

As briefly illustrated here, the hub of relating is anchored in words and other symbols that identify relationships and the ways of interacting that constitute them. With this hub we ask, how are people being related, or connected socially, one to the other? Through what forms and ways of communicating? Additional questions include

- What terms or symbols identify relationships and interactional processes of relating?
- Who is being (dis)advantaged in relational processes?
- What role does identity play in relating?
- What feelings are involved in relating?
- How is place or cyberspace involved in relating?
- How do relationships and processes of relating change over time?

CuDA studies may examine terms for and stages of relationships, associated actions and feelings. For example, Basso (1970) examined silence among Western Apache *zééde* (“sweethearts”) who talked little until after several months of *lígoláá* (“courting”) when they felt more comfortable. Sollo and Poutiainen (2019) examined several terms and stages in the communicative development of romantic relationships in Finland, including the stage of *tapaila* (“seeing someone”), finding a nuanced focus on nonverbal cues and developing feelings.

Address terms are another phenomenon rich with potential as discursive hubs of relating as they can reveal how people relate to each other, their feelings and identities. Address terms may include terms used to address people in specific types of relationships such as kinship terms (e.g. “Dad”) or titles (e.g. “Professor”). They may also include terms of endearment in personal relationships, for example, Covarrubias’s (2000) study of Mexican terms of endearment and address. Fitch Muñoz (1991) examined ten Colombian *madre* (“mother”) terms with a range of meanings and uses, from terms of endearment to insults. For proper names, Carbaugh (1996b, 1996c) found an increase in choices for women’s last names upon marriage in the United States, with their choices symbolising deeper meanings about their relationships and social identity.

Personal pronouns are another form of address rich with meaning. Covarrubias, Kvam, and Saito (2019) examined pronominal shifts in Spanish from *tú* (informal “you”) to *usted* (formal “you”) during conflict situations among managers and workers in a Mexican organisation, finding that they realigned relationships from closeness and informality to distance and formality (p. 187).⁹

Winchatsz (2001) examined uses of the German second-person pronoun *Sie* (formal “you”) among German native speakers, finding 25 different social meanings.

Lastly, some ways of communicating may presume certain kinds of relationships for their enactment and may develop, maintain or transform them. For example, Katriel and Philipsen (1981) found a form of problem talk engaged in by intimates in some scenes of the United States called “the communication ritual”. Fitch Muñoz (1998) found *palanca* (symbolically “connections”) narratives in Colombia, which concern “a personal contact who enables someone to obtain a desired objective” (p. 97). Taken together, terms for address, relationships and relational ways of communicating offer rich opportunities for examining the discursive hub of relating.

Feeling and emotion

Around 2010, I (Brion van Over) was engaged in the collection of data for a project on cultural discourses of the inexpressible—experiences people asserted in conversation that could not be put into words. As one can imagine these experiences were often characterised as highly emotional and challenging, both to have lived through and to express to others.

One primary source of data for this corpus was media interviews both reported in print and in a televised broadcast. Dominant news media preferences for highly dramatised content made this a rich source of public emotional expression or attempted expression. Centering analytical focus on the discursive hub of emotion provided a vantage point from which to engage the data. In the following example Alex Witt, a host on *Countdown* in 2003, interviewed Christy Hughes about finding her cat of 12 years, “Bugsy”, mutilated in the front yard. See Table 17.4.

In this instance, Witt invites Hughes to report about “what happened when your husband found ‘Bugsy’” (line 3). Hughes responds with a cohesive and linear chronological narrative about the immediate events leading up to the discovery of her cat. The story appears to constitute a complete telling, providing significant detail in an arc of dramatic tension that leads to the discovery that the apparent cat mutilation “was happening right at the intersection in which I live” (line 10). Hughes

Table 17.4 Transcript of news interview by line number

1	AW	First of all, I want to express my condolences for your loss. I'm a huge cat lover and
2		I also understand that your cat “Bugsy” had been with you for 12 years. Can you
3		tell us what happened when your husband found “Bugsy” in the front yard?
4	CH	Well, my husband went out to get the paper at about 6:15 and saw the cat laying in
5		the yard and actually, first thought he was sleeping and as he got closer to the cat,
6		he realized that our cat had been eviscerated. His organs had been spread out round
7		him, he came upstairs and got me. Originally, we thought perhaps it was an animal,
8		but I had remembered seeing a short article in the “Denver Post” that there were
9		some cat mutilations going on. So, I went through old papers, read it and
10		unfortunately it was happening right at the intersection in which I live. I feel very
11		guilty for that, because had I read that paper, my cat would not have been outside.
12		So, I called the animal control and the police and they came out and assured me,
13		unfortunately, that it was a human killing and not an animal killing.
14	AW	Christy, how did you feel though? This just tugged at your heart, I'd imagine.
15	CH	It's nightmarish. I—I just—I can't even describe it. You just see it over and over in
16		your head. You just can't get it out of your head and it—you know, it's your family
17		pet it's—I can't describe it. it's awful. Just—it's grotesque.

characterises this discovery with a term for her emotion, “guilty” (line 11), that she hadn’t been more vigilant about her awareness of the dangers her cat might have faced outside.

Witt, however, does not respond with thanks or implicit approval for Hughes’ candid response during what must have been a difficult time for her, instead pressing for a different kind of telling of the experience saying, “how did you feel though?” (line 14). That Witt asks this at all suggests that Hughes’s clear and careful narrative of the incident, coupled with her expression of “guilt”, is not a complete emotional expression for this news media context. Witt provides a candidate answer of what an appropriate expression might include saying “this just tugged at your heart, I’d imagine” (line 4).

Hughes’s response (on lines 15–17) is of a very different sort, reshaped in an apparent attempt to comply with Witt’s request for a more emotional telling. Here she employs a number of additional terms for emotion including “nightmarish”, “awful” and “grotesque”. Hughes in fact claims that even these upgraded terms “can’t even describe” the feelings she experienced.

A focus on the discursive hub of emotion allows us to draw to the foreground (a) the terms that interactants use to characterise their feelings, as well as (b) how these are performed sequentially to accomplish specific interactional ends (both goals and outcomes). Here, that is the co-accomplishment of a dramatic telling of personal loss as Hughes moves from “guilty” to “nightmarish” over the course of the interaction. It additionally draws our attention to the discursive hub of relation as Witt and Hughes work together to meet the demands of high drama active in this news media context, as Witt pushes Hughes toward an upgraded use of emotional terms.

We are further invited to reflect on the accomplishment of emotion as discursive action and performance, not in the sense that Hughes is manufacturing insincere expressions, but rather that Hughes’s experience can both be described as emotionally difficult using particular terms for emotion, but also performatively difficult—a public performance of internal difficulty—as Hughes moves from a smooth evolving chronological narrative to a disjointed expression filled with perturbations including hesitations, cut-offs and repetitions (lines 15–17). None of these perturbations occur in her initial telling but manifest as she performatively struggles to express her feelings at the behest of Witt. *Note that this sort of analysis involves a focus on (c) the discursive performance of emotion, not simply its lexicalisation.*

The discursive hub of emotion provides a distinct analytical engagement with the cultural discourse of emotion taking place in moments of interaction as interactants work to achieve their various ends. This shifts the loci of focus when examining emotion from its presumed location inside the experiencing body into the interactional realm of negotiated intersubjectivity, allowing for a more sensitive analysis of the cultural, rather than bio-psychological, nature of emotion as it is both experienced and expressed.

Research questions one might engage when considering a discursive hub of emotion may include

- What, if any, terms are employed to characterise emotions?
- How does the context structure the possibilities for emotional expression here?
- What interactional ends can be achieved/accomplished through the expression of emotion here?
- How do/ought people feel in particular places? With particular others? About particular things?
- What is the presumed relation between feelings and their expression here?

Studies of cultural discourses centering the discursive hub of emotion have been published on topics including “crying out” at funerals among African American community members (Graham and

Hastings, 2019), the public expression of suicidality (Alvarez, 2020; Flanigan and Alvarez, 2019), discourses of emotion among those diagnosed with Williams Syndrome (Mackenzie, 2007) and comparatively in Mexican and Japanese discourse (Covarrubias, Kvam and Saito, 2019).

Dwelling, place and nature

When the Gowanus Canal was designated an EPA Superfund site in 2010, I (Trudy Milburn) recorded conversations about how residents of the area talked about this place. In my data, the most frequently used term to characterise it was “neighborhood”. This hub explores the importance of place to the people speaking. It organises the radiants of meanings which are expressed when reference is made to place.

In the case of the Gowanus Canal, a discursive site of dwelling can be monitored in the following statements collected in a 2012 interview. See Table 17.5.

My interlocutor indicates the presence of physical parts of the scene: the visible “sky” (line 3) and “front gardens” (line 5). She contrasts this place to one nearby, “Manhattan” (line 3). The way that people interact with the place is described as “liveable” (line 4). Relationships are invoked when people feel “part of” a “neighborhood” (line 6) and “recognize” and “watch out for each other” (line 8).

Overall, *the hub of dwelling is anchored in words and symbols which reference a place while also serving to construct the meanings of that place through its specific features*. In this case, “neighborhood” operates as the key symbol for making sense of being there, of relating with others, about ways of acting, how feeling is structured about the place and experiencing time in this specific place in Brooklyn, NY.

The segment of aforementioned talk addresses some of these hub/radiant relationships. For instance, we begin to get a sense of how people *act* in this neighbourhood when CK says, “people recognize each other, people watch out for each other” (line 8). We also get a sense of how people in this neighbourhood do not *feel* anonymous, but they feel like part of the group. In this place, the actions and feelings speak to the *relationships* neighbours have to one another.

Other places that are called neighbourhoods may evoke different actions, such as talking on street corners, front porches or bars (Philipsen, 1976, 1997). In this neighbourhood, the Gowanus Canal can separate neighbours. The canal may also impose its stench upon residents who remark about the foul odour it emits (Hastings and Milburn, 2019). In this way, the place is not simply physical soil upon which one lives, but a social place that also acts upon its residents.

At the most basic level, dwelling includes the terms people use when they describe places. As researchers, we may be curious how these descriptions are generated within interaction. Our

Table 17.5 Transcript of Gowanus Canal interview by line number

1	TM:	What is the best thing about living here?
2	CK:	The sense of the neighborhood. Um The scale. The fact that you
3		can see the sky. You can be so close to Manhattan and yet when you
4		come back from Manhattan you really have a very livable
5		neighborhood and especially the scale the front gardens the sense
6		that uh um you know you're a you're part of a neighborhood and
7		There's no anonymity as other neighborhoods. People know each
8		other people ah recognize each other, people watch out for each other

curiosity can extend to questions about how the places reference the physical and material world but moreover how these terms construct actions, identities, feelings, values and related abstractions.

These research questions focus on the hub of dwelling:

- How do places, their terms and practices impact identity (personal or social)?
- What roles does place play in forming and maintaining relationships?
- How does place intersect with memories (memorials)? How does place change over time?
- Are the places settings for human action? Or do certain places act upon humans or the animals within the place?
- What range of emotions are associated with our sense of rootedness?
- How does our physical mobility within the world underlie our descriptions of it?

When data are examined in these ways, the hub of dwelling can be heard as expressing various radiances of meaning. For instance, through terms about place one can hear implicitly about action, such terms can *situate* action (see Carbaugh and Rudnick, 2006 for a description of the place-name “Glacier National Park”) and construct social relations, as in the way families or small groups are situated (see Rudnick’s 2001 “hygge” research about cosy settings).

The discursive hub of dwelling also draws to our attention descriptions of the external environment or verbal depictions of nature. Recently, Jay Leighter and his co-authors (2021) analysed conversations about the geographic region of Nebraska known as Sandhill. Much of their talk referred to winter storms that impacted their lives, homes and families. In the process, terms of dwelling radiate both identities and relations, as these place-names expressed the way that these families manage to coexist within a landscape outsiders might deem hostile.

This discursive hub can also foreground the built environment, such as Milltown, MT, (Gilbertz and Milburn, 2011) or the “natural” environment (Scollo, 2004). As earlier, this may radiate meanings about humans’ relationship to that place, to one another or to the relationship of other beings within the place, such as wolves and whales (Cerulli and Milstein, 2019). In sum, discourses of dwelling can reveal much about material and built places and the communal lives being lived there.

Sequencing and time

The hub of time can be approached in a number of ways, (a) as we find references to “past, present, future”; (b) as we discover a set of normative practices for the sequential organisation of ongoing activity, as in Hymes’ conceptualisation of act sequence; and/or (c) as discourse implicitly presumes conceptions of time in its ongoing activities—revealing cultural premises about time through moments of interaction. This is a suggestive not a comprehensive list!

In 2009, a popular TV show on the A&E network aired a show titled *Interventions*, where families and friends of purported “addicts” came together to confront an individual about their problematic use of addictive substances and to persuade them to seek treatment. The show followed the intervention event itself and also presented clips of interviews with other participants in the intervention both before and after the event. One episode featured a young man named Jacob who was to be the target of an intervention. Jacob is led into a room filled with family and friends, and the facilitator of the intervention begins, saying, “*a lot people love you and they’re losing you, wanna fight to get you back*”. Following the routine format of the intervention, each participant then shares their desires for Jacob to seek treatment as well as the impacts of Jacob’s alcohol consumption on their lives. After this period of sharing Jacob is asked if he is willing to seek treatment. He replies, “*yeah, if you’re waiting for an answer of course its yes*”.

Jacob's agreement to seek treatment could presumably be understood as a successful intervention, but in an interview with Jacob's father after the event his father shares a concern, "*I was surprised he gave in so quickly, I hope he's doing it for the right reasons not just to pacify people*". Here, Jacob's father discursively shapes the intervention as a process that takes a certain amount of time and effort in order to be effective in overcoming the target's presumed and expected resistance. His concern surrounds his perception that the speed with which Jacob agrees to treatment means the process may not have worked to affect Jacob's behaviour in the intended way—the proper time was not taken, the proper struggle relinquished. The intervention is presumed only to work if a proper dance is performed including acts of symbolic resistance and the cultural forms of persuasive speech designed to overcome this executed over time. As a result, Jacob's father treats time, process and discursive action as inexorably linked to proper outcome.

The hub of time, then, invites our attention to not only issues of ordered sequential action, but also a deeply felt cultural sense of the appropriate time over which these actions can and should occur, the meaning of achieving this, or not, and the discursive resources we create and deploy to shape and express this orientation. As analysts, we may hear this articulated in terms that indicate the speaker's orientation to time as "fast/slow" or "short/long". These terms may also be morally infused as in "rushed" or "lazy", which not only characterise the time taken but take up an orientation to that activity as righteous or impious.

Additionally, we find time infused into our terms for action. One cannot have a "night cap" in the morning, without the attendant meanings that some may bring to bear on doing so, nor can one have "breakfast" in the evening without the time transposing modification "breakfast for dinner"—a special category that explicitly denotes the movement of a practice from its proper location in time to another.

Milburn (2000) deftly draws connections between time and cultural identity in her work on "Puerto Rican time" characterised in her data as taking comparatively longer than "popular American" time and integral to the doing of being Puerto Rican.

Katriel and Livio (2019; followed by Carbaugh and Grimshaw, 2021) explicitly articulate a need for consideration of issues of "temporality" in their work on Israeli cultural discourse surrounding forward looking calls for change achieved through discursive action in Israeli "tent city" protests, as well as in Netanyahu's 2015 address to the US Congress wherein the appropriateness of the timing of the speech, only weeks before the Israeli election, stirs a greater political response than the rhetorical performance itself.

Research questions that attention to the hub of time may address include

- What terms for time are active in this discourse/practice?
- In what discourses/practices is time made relevant to its accomplishment?
- What are the morally infused messages about people, their feelings, relations or the activity itself on the basis of its performance over time?
- How does the discourse shape past and future action as such and to what ends?
- How is time shaped in culturally distinctive ways, or drawn into comparative discourses of other cultural ways of doing, being or dwelling in time?

Conclusion

Our cultural approach to discourse demonstrates that a focus on a discursive hub can reveal the deep ways people conceive of and evaluate their social and cultural lives. Each hub offers,

respectively, when analysed, knowledge about identity (who people take themselves and others to be), about actions (what is deemed important to do), about relations (how people can and should/not be socially connected), about emotion (how people should and do feel), about dwelling (how people construct their environments) and about time (how it is understood and enacted). Each discursive hub may offer a “rich” site for analysis as it radiates significant and important meanings in a cultural discourse. Analysing each can provide a deep “portal” into participants’ ways of thinking, about what is believed and what is valued, as well as what is unreflectively taken for granted.

One aspect of our exposition has included the concept “radian” of meaning. We want to clarify what this concept is: a radiant of meaning is an implicit socially shared understanding, a common inference of participants, speakers and hearers, which is attached to a discursive hub. For example, we described “talking” as a discursive hub of action and of relating. We found that “talking” refers to a kind of action, especially flirtatious interaction; it also carries meanings about a relationship as one that is potentially romantic, long-term and involving sexual activity; the term also conveys meanings about emotion as one presumes a feeling of attraction to the other; it furthermore carries an unspecified meaning about time which is unlike the presumed long-term meaning of “dating”. Note that the concept, discursive hub, draws attention to the analysts’ focal term, “talking”; the concept radiant of meaning characterises the implicit meanings which serve as possible interpretations of that discursive hub when it is being used. In this case the implicit meanings are about acting (flirting), relating (romance), feeling (attraction), and time (uncertain).

Our coupling of the concepts hub and radiant demonstrate how our analytic procedures investigate both explicit items in a cultural discourse (e.g. lexical terms) and their presumed, implicit meanings (e.g. common inferences), respectively. In this analytic process, once a discursive hub is fixed and focal for analysis, the others become candidate radiants so as to structure interpretive analyses of the meanings participants associate with the hub of concern.

We conclude here with a summary of the ways our cultural discourse analyses can be done. We find that a focus on one discursive hub and its radiants of meaning can be sufficient for a study. For example, examining terms and meanings for a national identity (as American or Chinese) can be sufficient. Adding more focal terms to a discourse study does not necessarily make it better. We find also that a focus on co-occurring hubs can prove analytically fruitful. This is evident in our explorations of agonistic forms of discourse as when national identities are played one against another (“American” vs. “Russian”; “male” vs. “female”; “blue collar” vs. “white collar”; Black vs. White; love vs. hate). Note that we are simply making the point that analyses do not need to explore all of the discursive hubs to produce rich and sophisticated findings. Our references supply detailed exemplification of the point.

Our chapter has essayed a dual point: a brief presentation of our approach to cultural discourse analysis and a discussion of the heuristic use of discursive hubs within it. The research enterprise includes several, distinct modes of analysis (i.e. descriptive, interpretive, comparative, critical and theoretical), each with its own analytical procedures and resulting claims (see Carbaugh, 2007). Exploring a discursive hub can offer a productive, heuristic focal concern in such study, that is, of how people socially create the deep, taken-for-granted cultural meanings by which they live.

Notes

- 1 For a detailed review of the ethnography of communication see Carbaugh and Boromisza-Habashi, 2015; for a detailed discussion of conceptualizations of community within this literature see Milburn, 2004; for a related program of work in cultural discourse studies see Shi-xu, 2005, 2014, 2015; for a discussion of both see Sollo, 2011.
- 2 The participants also have a history of this way of communicating, which facilitates its recognition. Note that the figurative and pop culture language also metacommunicatively cue a shift to performance and play frames (Goffman, 1974; Bauman, 1977; Sherzer, 2002). Emily and Marc maintain the frames with laughter and another reference, respectively.
- 3 Note that Marc metacommunicatively maintains and cues performance, play and quotation frames prosodically (McGregor, 1994; Goffman, 1974) as he quotes Emeril's well-known catch phrase "BAM!" by yelling it quickly like Emeril. Emily maintains the frames with laughter; they are terminated as the conversation changes to a more serious (non-play) topic.
- 4 Numerous studies have used this framework examining a number of terms for communicative action and the practices they label in a variety of speech communities. The practice is also central to speech codes theory (see Philipsen). See Carbaugh (2017) for a recent review.
- 5 Ritual is "a structured sequence of symbolic acts, the correct performance of which constitutes homage to a sacred object" (Philipsen, 1987, p. 250). See Philipsen (1987) for an overview.
- 6 See Philipsen (1986) for the introduction of the agonistic form in the ethnography of communication and Carbaugh (1988/89) for a multi-part conceptual framework on "deep agony".
- 7 The participant's name has been changed for anonymity.
- 8 See Sollo and Poutiainen (2019) for further analysis of this excerpt, the relationship stage of "talking" and romantic relationship development in the United States and Finland.
- 9 See also Covarrubias (2002).

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18

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION FROM A FREIREAN SOUTHERN DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

Nara Hiroko Takaki

Initial considerations

In Latin America, Quijano (2007), Lugones (2010), Grosfoguel (2013/2016), Maldonado-Torres et al. (2018), Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Menezes de Souza (2019, 2021) and Cucicanqui (2010/2020), to mention but a few examples, have stressed that the colonial histories in this part of the world were completely different from those that occurred in Africa and Asia. The *coloniality of power* (Quijano, 2007), which permeates daily life in Latin American countries, can be seen from situated specificities in historical processes. Central to the decolonial project is the recognition of (a) the invention of racialisation by the dominant Eurocentric colonisers, which privileged white men to the detriment of non-European peoples; (b) a patriarchal hierarchy, with gender and sexuality favouring men over women and over homosexual people; (c) the structure of social classes based on slavery; (d) a spiritual/religious hierarchy placing Christians above Others; (e) a linguistic hierarchy with separate, named languages and the subalternisation of non-European languages and (f) an epistemic hierarchy valuing European knowledge and cosmologies while erasing non-European knowledge, subjectivity and cosmologies (Grosfoguel, 2008). Hence, under the current Brazilian authoritarian government, which has intensified social inequities and violence, struggling for a resignification of Freire's literacy education seems paramount.

A growing area of concern in Brazil is social justice as an umbrella term. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, diverse inequities already demanded great attention from critical language education and research. In Freirean land, more than 56% of the population is said to be Black and *pardos* (mixed race). Access to meaningful foreign language learning for the great majority of Brazilians is rare, and it is even more so for Blacks, people with a disability, indigenous peoples, (i)migrants and sign language communities. Thus, working with the English language requires decolonising onto-epistemo-methodologies (Takaki, 2016) embedded in racist, patriarchal, homophobic, ableist and capitalist networks, which, in turn, end up redrawing the abyssal lines/thinking¹ (Santos, 2018).

Freire's own revision of his theory derives from critical *conscientização* (Freire, 2000, 2005), that is, awareness of one's own locus of enunciation and historical and ideological position. In

addition, such a stance “brings the body back”, as Menezes de Souza (2019) would put it, thus allowing a refutation of universalised epistemic world views that have been imposed on the aforementioned communities by European (ex)colonisers. Nowadays, the Brazilian white elite’s ontoepistemology continues to recolonise Brazilian indigenous peoples, Black people, sign language users, disabled people, landless people, homeless people, artisans and labour migrants, to name but a few examples, denying their languages, cultures, knowledge and rights. Strict structural, governmental and full control are inevitably ingrained in such inequities. Ironically, many private schools have inherited Freirean teachings in the country. Thus, teacher education supported by a critical Southern decolonial framework is definitely a timely issue that should be explored to build bridges between schools and current social demands.

As previously mentioned, this chapter is aimed at presenting my understanding of how two Brazilian professors and two undergraduate students² in higher language courses interpret issues related to social justice. It is part of a broader ongoing research project I have been carrying out involving more participants.³ I shall focus on some excerpts in the light of the aforementioned Freirean Southern decolonial theoretical framework.

Context of study

I have been undertaking a research project entitled *Cultural-linguistic Education, Language Teaching, Technologies and Productive Social Justice in Dilemmatic Times* at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul⁴ (UFMS), whose objective is to identify powerful discourses (or not so much) on social justice through the voices of professors, graduate and undergraduate language students and grasp their positioning and Freirean praxiologies (inseparability between theories and practices) aimed at minimising the impact of the social inequities in their contexts and in society at large. The group of participants comprises six language professors from public universities (two from the UFMS and others from different Brazilian universities), six graduate students doing research in language studies and six undergraduate students majoring in Portuguese and English. They are volunteers and were chosen according to the sequence of their affirmative responses to my invitation. The age group ranges from 18 to 60 years old.

The research project in question follows a qualitative and interpretive methodology, in which the participants provide answers to interviews and questionnaires with pre-established questions, fulfilling the requirements of the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) of each university involved in this investigation. For the beginning of the research (September 2019), I had asked questions to help me grasp how the participants understood social justice, and if they thought this issue was important for their life context. Moreover, I also inquired into the pedagogical activities that they had been applying in their work, and what they thought of their effects, especially on socially vulnerable groups. All in all, the participants seemed to see the need to include topics focused on social justice in their programmes and lesson plans and agreed that this issue is crucial to language policy and language teacher education. In this sense, as I see it, they had constructed meanings already engaged in critical language education, from particular perspectives, before my investigation, and they seemed to be entangled with their and others’ socio-historical contexts and the world around them.

Approach to addressing the problem

In the participants’ responses, I perceived ideas revolving mainly around economic aspects and shared meaningful experiences, which have allowed not only for further problematisations but

also for insights concerning critical language education. The notion of education adopted here draws on meaning-making in the light of onto-epistemolo-methodologies entangled in Freirean Southern decolonial perspectives. Accordingly, the relations with the radical/extreme paradigms of the Global North are acknowledged, as it would be a contradiction to claim to eliminate them, given their profound effects in our lives (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020). It seems ontoepistemology has been used as a concept most frequently in the literature concerning critical and decolonial underpinnings. This does not mean methodology is unimportant, for each factor feeds one another. Ontoepistemologies inform methodological approaches, which can help the researcher to understand crucial points in retrospect and change directions.

Further, such a perspective involves engagement in social reconstructions that can favour transcultural flows (Pennycook, 2006), difference/diversity and collective projects with a view to transforming the *abyssal thinking* (Santos, 2018)—which has produced binaries such as oppressor vs. oppressed, nature vs. culture, Whites vs. Blacks, men vs. women, indigenous knowledge vs. academic knowledge, the rich vs. the poor and so on. As I understand tensions are inherent to meaning-making and their renegotiations with people's diverse positioning are ongoing, I argue that, rather than consensus, the concept of *dissensus* (Rancière, 2010) may be more productive.

Bringing dissensus to the fore puts forward a possibility to build up understanding with and from the Other's⁵ locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2000). Drawing on their histories, experiences, knowledge, discourses and agency may move us away from the celebratory hubris of Westernised philosophy, language and society at large. Thus, education can assist us in this matter by changing the terms of the conversation, as Mignolo and Walsh (2018) suggest. This implies transforming the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007) in specific contexts, taking into account the dynamic and precarious projects aimed at the common good, without eliminating differences. This seems to be an inherent norm for Freirean Southern decolonial perspectives in participatory education, whenever there is a commitment to question and transform the current Brazilian status quo.

As Viveiros de Castro (2002) and Krenak (2020) point out, there have been many attempts to erase indigenous cosmologies and cosmovisions. Also, in colonial times, Africans and other (im)migrants were used as slaves. Nevertheless, the great majority of the Afro-Brazilians and indigenous communities have had no compensation whatsoever. Consequently, legitimising their discourses, cultures, knowledge and ways of coexisting with Others has been a challenge inside and outside academia. Through my research project, however, significant data have been generated, and this process has provided me with an opportunity to 'listen to' and understand them. To this end, I bring in responses⁶ of two professors and two undergraduate students to the following provocative question, asked by the researcher (author of this chapter), by means of a questionnaire:

How would Indigenous, black, deaf, migrant, and refugee communities, among others, be benefitted from the (pedagogical) theories and practices in the language student and teacher education and/or self-education that you have been providing?⁷

Posing questions as problematisations: Professor Keyla⁸

What body is enunciating as Keyla? She is white, middle-classed, middle-aged and cisgender, and she is working as a professor at a public university in the mid-West of Brazil.

Keyla: I think it is difficult to affirm that these communities can benefit from the critical and decolonial praxiologies with which I work, but I like to think that a dialogue might be possible between these praxiologies and those of representatives of such communities. It

is not easy to build up such a dialogue, since it depends on factors which go beyond the professor's will, such as: the group configuration, relations of power established among the learners, the perception of this space as a site of diverse knowledge construction, the establishment of a certain level of comfort and trust within the group, etc. My experience with English classrooms shows that they do not always become democratic spaces of knowledge construction, as the colonialities of power, being, and knowing are strongly present in this context, and they are often enacted by us, the professors. One example is the fact that students with more knowledge of the language occupy a prominent position, they are more respected, they take more turns, they can more easily express themselves, etc., intimidating learners who have less knowledge of the language. Of course, critical and decolonial discussions can promote important resignifications, but I don't think that professors can really build up this space of ecology of knowledges. I think it is up to the representatives of those communities the task to occupy such a space, benefit from it, and defend their praxiologies.⁹

Recognising that one cannot speak for the Other appears sensible and sensitive on the part of Keyla, who speaks from the position of a professor of English at a public university. More important is her conception of dialogue as an alternative in the encounter with Otherness. The professor mentions some challenging situations, such as dealing with groups in which there are students who are more fluent English-language speakers and those who may not have had the same opportunities to study English as the others. Not rarely, this is the case in most English classes in public education in Brazil.¹⁰ Unlike in sports, restricted to wheelchair users, for example, a professor cannot choose their students. This raises the issue that inclusion goes beyond the mere integration of students. Race, gender, class, (dis)ability, age, geographical origin, family's background, cultures and languages intersect and should be taken into consideration for the inclusion of the students.

A classroom is a political site of pluralities. Accordingly, the idea of total control over identity reconstruction, meaning-making, power and trust would be a romanticised view of dealing with differences. Keyla leaves some cues about the students' accountability concerning their initiative to build up a safe environment during the classes. For fluent students, being in small groups, in the company of classmates with a similar level of English, is much more comfortable. However, this places the others in uncomfortable and excluded conditions, "intimidating the learners with less knowledge of the language", as Keyla states. In many instances, fluent students may not perceive how they miss opportunities to learn with and from other classmates.

It is also implied in her discourse that democracy is linked to *the ecology of knowledges* (Santos, 2018). This is a concept that presupposes one's courage to cultivate inclusive relations. Keyla acknowledges that he/she also exerts power over his/her students, something I understand is part of the job. Whenever the most fluent students do not share their space with the less fluent peers to participate in the classes, her role is brought to the fore. As I see it, the less fluent students can/should understand that their social practices are as valid as the others', and the professor may choose to monitor them more closely, blend fluent with less fluent students to work in pairs or small groups and provide them with extra homework. This recognition of what they can do might lead them to put more effort into using English in the negotiations of meanings, be it with the professor or the more proficient peers.

In exposing the hegemony of the English language, Keyla underlines that a type of colonialism is present in his/her classes. This is an indication that the ongoing crises of discourses separating the native and the non-native speakers of English prevail. In other words, the continuity of the tenacious mechanisms only strengthens the power structure at work. In most situations in

English-language classrooms, fluent students usually participate more in class. Whatever the concept of fluency Keyla suggests, it may generate a feeling of superiority and elitism in the context of a public university. Overall, at public universities in Brazil, language courses are thought to be an option for those students who did not pass the pre-university exams for more elitist courses such as medicine, engineering, law, etc. Needless to say, this kind of stigma is also present in Portuguese classes. Studies have shown that the (re)colonisation of the Other may happen in so-called ‘mother tongues’. For the sake of illustration, in her studies concerning indigenous peoples, Cusicanqui (2020) states that *internal colonialism* prevailed inside the same community; one negated the humanity of the Other.

Concerning the English language, I understand the Enlightenment has heavily influenced language education, including issues such as (a) the notion of the superiority of standard English; (b) the fact that most students majoring in English language come from public schools, in which meaningful English teaching is not usually offered; (c) the dilemma between lack of opportunity and poverty; (d) the linear conception of foreign language teacher education; (e) lack of investment in teacher education; (f) the traditional ontoepistemology of the national, regional and local curricula; (g) teachers’ low salaries and (h) lack of autonomy and interest in updating their onto-epistemo-methodology in view of the actual needs.

It is suggested by Keyla’s discourse that such vulnerable students need to create opportunities via sites for English practice, organise study groups and look for free English course at the campus to enhance self-esteem and develop strategies to occupy spaces of power, which include their inter-subjectivities in the renegotiations of meanings. In this sense, by doing that, they would be able to see themselves as citizens who can resist modernity and reconnect with their broader world by using English as a tool for renegotiation of power (Foucault, 1979/1998), knowledge, discourses and actions. Nevertheless, the responsibility to change such a paradigm also lies with diverse groups of students in the same classroom, and they should be able to perceive this asymmetry and collaborate with each other’s learning process. An issue is whether such fluent students of English would have any interest in working with, for instance, Freirean Southern decolonial education to construct knowledge and significantly transform social realities that maintain and reinforce inequities (Krenak, 2020).

Veronelli (2015/2021) reminds us of the *coloniality of language*, that is, the linguistic/discursive violence inflicted upon us. Such an effect is constantly overlooked by families who support their children to learn English, which is seen as the language of social prestige and associated with the idea of a successful life. This has been historically upheld by the state, some curriculum designers and official exam evaluators who implement language policies that promote neoliberal trajectories.

English is often seen as the nexus or springboard to prosperity, and it comes at a high price for many families. They hire private teachers for their children and enrol them in courses at private institutions, including international ones, which are examples of actions that contribute to reproducing the prestige of this language. Westernised conceptions of identity, knowledge, culture, power and citizenship are usually all included in this package deal, which may also influence the old and new generations. Such people may end up recreating a structure of a “new” academic canon with programmes, in which the English language is a must. It has been observed that internationalisation is on the radar of many Brazilian institutions, with funds to the programmes that are more Global North-oriented.

Apparently, more knowledgeable speakers would be the most proficient students. As I understand it, a danger might arise from this very group, if there is intimidation against others. It can be said that this would be a type of *internal colonialism* (Cusicanqui, 2020), that is, a systematic

underestimation of the potential of other peers. In order to understand this notion, I establish an analogy between Keyla's English classroom and the racialised internal mechanisms that operate in discourses from the South that are underlain by worldviews from the North:

Cultural symbolic capital, thanks to the recognition and certification from the academic centers of the United States this [sic] new structure of academic power is realized in practices through a network of guest lectureships and visiting professorships between universities and also through the flow—from the South to the North—of students of Indigenous and African descent from Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, who are responsible for providing theoretical support for racialized and exoticized multiculturalism in the academies.

(Cusicanqui, 2020, pp. 59–60)

The fluent students' symbolic capital that Keyla describes establishes unequal relations with language and inequality and considerably influences the knowledge construction in his/her English classroom. From her words, we can see the professor's (self)critical reflexivity (Freire, 2000, 2005, 1993/2014, 1994/2015), which indicates the recognition of *internal colonialism* (Cusicanqui, 2010/2020). In other words, in reflecting on his/her attitude towards pedagogical events in his/her classroom, awareness of his/her complicity in power relations that emerge. One, then, might ask, "Should the role of the professor be to move beyond and pursue the creativity needed to redress" historical and ongoing injustices? Keyla appears to suggest the importance of weaving the fabrics of intercultural "creative dialogues in a process of exchanging knowledge, aesthetics and ethics" (Cusicanqui, 2020, p. 68).

Now I would like to consider Cusicanqui's (2020) notion of *ch'ixi*, that is, "the coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not extinguish but instead antagonise and complement each other. Each one reproduces itself from the depths of the past and relates to others in contentious way" (p. 67). In this sense, it is pivotal to work from and with the coexistence of the bonds between North-South, South-South and North-North, as Santos (2018) argues. By making this political gesture, through the use of English for knowledge co-construction, people might reclaim insurgent conditions that can promote significant decolonial discourses and actions to dismantle *internal colonialism*. Such a process counts on professors, students and institutions to undermine Westernised certainties and illuminate paths of renewed memories, i.e. narratives traversed by complex and transcultural discourses and relationships.

The global spread of English demands that we understand that teaching is always in motion but also situated. Accordingly, transcultural and transnational arguments may no longer be aligned with Freirean, Southern, decolonial projects. In this regard, I wonder, "Do we then need to change the way that language is conceptualized, used, and, at the same time, change individual, institutional, and structural ways of articulating and (co)living with differences in society?" I would say, "Possibly".

In this sense, competing and entangled versions of power, access, diversity and (re)design (Janks, 2010) call for intercultural translation (Santos, 2018; Walsh, 2018), that is to identify colonial, capitalist and patriarchal systems, resist and transform as ongoing (self)critical reflexive processes in society. How are people positioned and how do they position others in view of the locality of what (re)constitutes them (race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, religion, etc.)? In whose interests? Would denaturalising and combating stereotypes, hegemonic images, normative grammar and dominant discourses and redesigning them to benefit the marginalised human, non-human and even the inhuman¹¹ people (Braidotti, 2013) ever become the norm? If so, in which contexts? These and many other interrogations are needed to amplify the scope of problematisations. My ongoing research project moves towards this direction.

Table 18.1 Interdependent model for critical literacy (Janks, 2010, p. 170)

Power without design	The deconstruction of power, without reconstruction or design, removes human agency.
Access without design	This maintains and reifies powerful structures without considering how they can be transformed.
Diversity without design	Diversity provides the means, ideas and alternative perspectives for reconstruction and transformation. Without design, the potential that diversity offers is not realized.
Design without power	Design, without an understanding of how powerful discourses/practices are perpetuated, runs the risk of an unconscious reproduction of the hierarchy.
Design without access	This runs the risk of whatever is designed remains on the margins.
Design without diversity	This privileges powerful institutions and people and fails to use design resources provided by difference.

In relation to critical language education, Janks (2010, p. 170) proposes an *interdependent model for critical literacy*, which should be adapted subsequently, a proposal that resembles Southern decolonial principles. See Table 18.1.

Along with Keyla, I recognise the challenge for us, as professors, to create a space where less fluent students are able to feel safe and comfortable to reposition themselves, in a way they can construct knowledge and coexist otherwise. If these students become aware that they can/should play a role in destabilising hegemonic groups' power, working on access, diversity and design through their own agency (their actions, words and attitudes), they are likely “to occupy such a space, benefit from it, and defend their praxiologies” (Keyla), instead of remaining in social places imposed, for example, by the elite.

Moving on to another view: Professor Marion

In response to the same question of the research, Marion,¹² who is also a professor of English at a public university in a midwestern state of Brazil, claims

Marion: I am a professor because I believe in education and that the salvation of a country, a community, and an individual lies in education, knowledge. Around thirty, forty years ago, Brazilian education was restricted to a privileged social group. Education has become available to everyone. Schools have been really moving towards “education for all”, and not just for show. Deaf people, for example, have not accepted the fallacies embedded in official and false discourses, entitled “inclusive education”. They want to belong, for real. Deaf people have been fighting for their right to have bilingual schools, where Portuguese and the Brazilian Sign Language are used, which is their right. Where did this social group gain strength? Where have Indigenous, quilombolas,¹³ and refugees gained strength? I believe it has been mainly in university classrooms. I believe “micro actions” that we professors have carried out, in the sense of educating critical citizens, have been helping to disseminate knowledge, awareness, and a sense of power among our students, teachers to be.¹⁴

In fact, it has been noticed that Brazil is one of the few countries in the world where free education from preschool to a postdoctoral degree is offered. Education is compulsory between ages 7

and 14. For Brazilian Sign Language users, Portuguese is their mother tongue. In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, there has been resistance on the part of some users who, in Marion's words, "have been fighting for their right to have bilingual schools, where Portuguese and the Brazilian Sign Language are used, which is their right". Undergraduate programmes for the Deaf community, indigenous peoples and quilombolas are present in few Brazilian universities. Nevertheless, the same cannot yet be said about refugees. Many documented refugees attend universities, and this number has been increasing. Their conceptions of citizenship, their purposes and under what type of onto-epistemo-methodologies such undergraduate programmes have been functioning should be investigated, though.

Over the last few decades, with the support of social movements and some universities, minorities have gotten empowered and consequently resisted top-down impositions. However, lack of proficiency in standard Portuguese constitutes a barrier to them when it comes to pursuing careers that depend exclusively on obtaining higher degrees and taking part in civil service examinations. If co-authorship in meaning-making is recognised in classrooms, this has not been enough to change language policies and curricula designs. Therefore, it can be said that monolingual and monocultural conceptions of language, instead of pluralized and situated notions (Volóshinov, 2017), and society have prevailed. Marion draws our attention to the importance of criticality in teacher education, as showcased in the following quote:

Marion: Teacher education with pedagogical theories and practices which promote criticality is essential for real social change. These are the teachers who will present such concepts to their students, who in turn will share this knowledge with their families, who will then share it with their communities. In my opinion, it is by means of education that we can change unfair social structures of power. It is through education, in this case, teacher education, that we can help minority groups, since we do not "give them a fish" but teach them, provide them with resources to go fishing and fight for their causes.¹⁵

It is not only "by means of education that we can change unfair social structures of power", as Marion affirms. Unless authorities, the state and the population mobilise forces to promote actual changes from the perspective of the marginalised people, the system may continue to treat them as mere workforce.¹⁶ Presumably, this vicious cycle will keep repeating itself if teaching cannot be translated into a (re)distribution of power, of "fish", as Marion puts it. In order to assist such people, it is important to "teach them, provide them with resources to go fishing and fight for their causes", and this calls for critical literacy as agency, according to Marion.

In this respect, Freire (1981/2003) sought to encourage popular mobilisation through the critical understanding of meaning-making. This involves the fact that

reading the world always precedes reading the word, and the reading of the latter implies the continuity of the former. . . . Reading the word is not only preceded by the reading of the world but by a certain way of "writing it" or "rewriting it", that is, transforming it through our conscious practice.¹⁷

(p. 20)

Under this premise, critical Southern decolonial teacher education assumes that, in different contexts, the task to reinvent society means the reconstruction of oneself (myself/ourselves/themselves). (Re)constructing a history with fewer social inequities is also a responsibility of the

universities, for Marion. In her vision, the classroom is formed of agents who can shape their acquaintances and communities' views of the world around them. This is a fundamental movement to raise the minorities' critical awareness of how they are positioned by society and how they can resist domination and change their own social conditions—a key tenet of critical literacies¹⁸ (Cervetti et al., 2001; Freire, 2000, 1981/2003, 2005, 1993/2014, 1994/2015; Freire & Macedo, 1987/2021; Gee, 2004; Janks, 2010; Luke, 2019; Menezes de Souza, 2011, 2019; Monte Mór, 2018; Monte Mór & Morgan, 2014; Muspratt et al., 1997; Takaki, 2021; Windle, 2017). Yet taking risks is part of the process of working with critical literacies. It is through social movements (their “fight for their causes”, as Pe maintains), the “reinvention of power” (Freire & Macedo, 1987/2021, p. 206) and teachers’ interrogations of who they work for/with and who they benefit that the political spirit of education can be understood.

Outside and inside the school environment, teachers’ and students’ thoughts, actions, dreams, desires and their teaching and learning processes, as well as institutional aspects, are all part of the game. Gee (2004) advises educators not to start with a plethora of information (the content per se) but rather to ask questions such as:

What experiences do I want the learners to have? What do I want them to be able to do?
What information, tools, and technologies do they need? . . . What games do I want these learners to be able to play?

(p. 118)

For the author, posing questions such as these might transform colonial cultural discourses and individual and collective attitudes to avoid the “content fetish” (p. 117). It relates to “the facts and principles germane to a given academic domain like biology, history, social studies, and so forth” (p. 117).

In line with Marion’s words, when she contends that “teacher education with pedagogical theories and practices which *promote criticality* is essential for real social change” (my emphasis), I argue in favour of updated teacher education projects sustained by the theoretical underpinning foregrounded here. In order to expand the relationship between teacher-student and amplify the room for contestations of Westernised ways of knowing, thinking, acting, being and living (Walsh, 2018), it might also be important to bring back some Freirean (self)critical reflexive questions, which have inspired many classical scholars who advocate for critical literacies, such as those already referenced here. A proposal for a lived redesign (far from being salvationist) is illustrated as follows with adaptations from the work of the aforesaid authors to help us rethink this re-coexistence. See Table 18.2.

This is a viable agenda for (self)critical, reflexive students, teachers, families, communities and authorities. In this sense, their classrooms can become sites of contestation of dominant ontoepistemologies. Posing problematisations appears to be the *modus operandi* to resignify world views and relations, for the reinvention of such peoples’ lives. Reflecting on, evaluating and reconfiguring our own assumptions and pedagogical actions in creative, critical and participatory manners are key for ethical movements of social justice.

Decolonising ways of being, as Maldonado-Torres et al. (2018) suggest, presupposes renegotiating meanings with the colonial ‘ghosts’ that inhabit us. For that, understanding the collective past that constitutes me-us-them, through discourses, permits us to assume other intersubjective positions. If human reconstitution is ongoing, we can then say that we participate in our own historical formation, which can in turn boost hope, in Freirean terms. *Esperançar* (hoping) is equivalent to hard and collaborative work, which includes the state, institutions, authorities, communities and

Table 18.2 Proposal for a reconstruction

Who are the learners in my classroom in terms of context, identity, knowledge, experiences, affection and abilities—in short, social practices present in this space?
How can my discourse and educational/pedagogical daily practice connect with my students' knowledge in the classroom in ways that can deconstruct the mainstream curriculum?
How can my discourse and educational choices be reconfigured to promote a space for an ontoepistemology methodology towards Freirean Southern decolonial literacies?
How do my claims contradict the positions for which I argue? How to deal with dissensus (Rancière, 2010) and/or ch'ixi (Cusicanqui, 2020) in the encounter with differences?
Whose interests does my onto-epistemo-methodology serve?
How can my own onto-epistemo-methodology towards (self)critical reflexive (Freire, 2005) projects of social justice be problematized?
As goals, critical educators seek to undermine capitalist, colonial and patriarchal structures (Santos, 2018). In order to do that, they also consider the internal colonialism (Cucicanqui, 2010/2020) in communities who struggle for access, power, rights and (re)design (Janks, 2010). In this regard, how can the previous arguments impact agency to transform society for the collective good?
Would a bit of cynicism, as a strategic instead of a narcissistic tool, be useful to resist authoritarian local-global coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007)?
What directions should I take, given I/we/they (non-native speakers of English, indigenous, Black, deaf, migrant, and refugee people and oppressors) live in and depend on the same planet, which has been under serious threat?
How do I and my students and institutions breathe in and out (de)coloniality every day and try to become otherwise within social justice (Braidotti, 2013; Levinas, 1981/1998; Takaki, 2021)?

individual agencies that affect and are affected by a Latin American racialised structure (Fanon, 1952/2008; Quijano, 2007). It is worth reiterating that racialisation is especially intersected by gender and class (Gonzalez, 2020; Lugones, 2010). Therefore, one's epistemic place can be destabilised in the encounter with other people's epistemic places, which are also complex and changeable, given their political interests. Conversely, being a poor, Black, transgender woman does not guarantee the production of non-white discourses, as she may act according to a dominant perspective.

Furthermore, in the Voloshinovian sense, language depends on us to resignify social, cultural, political, historical and economic aspects that structure the status quo. Producing meaning-making otherwise might push away colonial ghosts and reactivate the agency of vulnerable people. Neither the public school nor the state is outside of this realm. "It is through education, in this case, teacher education, that we can help minority groups, since we do not 'give them a fish' but teach them, provide them with resources to go fishing and fight for their causes", Marion points out. This implies counter-deterministic readings of discourses and the production of meaning-making otherwise to approach equity for minorities in linguistic, cultural, ethical, critical and political terms. Further, teacher education and the school should work towards listening to and legitimising the voices, knowledge, narratives, memories, experiences, abilities, needs, interests and aspirations that marginalised students bring with them to the classroom.

A revision of curricula, the addition of other repertoires and a change in onto-epistemo-methodologies of teachers (Takaki, 2016) may be helpful here. This involves understanding intersected questions of race, gender, class, age, geographical origin, religion and (dis)ability, to name but a few examples from the vantage point of those who exercise power against others and, at times, against themselves. Also, problematising the dominant white discourses and actions and not

generalising Afro-American women's economic conditions are important. For example, considering that "Afro-American women with postgraduate credentials earn substantially more than their white counterparts, while those without degrees earn less" (Luke, 2019, p. 213) seems pivotal. Further, it has been observed that both non-white men and women may also embody and show aggressive Westernised, patriarchal and racist behaviours towards themselves, regardless of their economic condition, religion, position, age and geographical origin.

An undergraduate student's view: Paula

Since I was the researcher that conducted the study with the professors and students, any answer given by them would be shaped by my own view and relations established with them. In keeping with this perception, I recognise that my question might have directly and indirectly conditioned the research participants' positions to meet my expectations. Apparently, Keyla identifies power relations in the classroom more explicitly than the other respondents, who may think that all communities are internally homogeneous, and thus that their members end up thinking, feeling and acting the same way. Paula pays heed to the specificities of each community, as the subsequent excerpt shows.

Paula: It is a little bit delicate because each one of these communities, indigenous, Black, migrants, has one specificity. It comes with culture, language, with traditions. So, generalizing . . . is complicated. It would also be important to think a bit of their contexts. Having empathy, giving them a hand, and also researching about their cultures, and thinking of new ways of teaching language, to embrace their realities . . . so that the students have this communication, this sharing of experience among themselves, in which they can discuss these cultures and these languages that students and such communities bring and promote this exchange. Because we live in a totally mixed country and with many people from diverse places . . . It is not simply about living together and accepting them. It is also to share, and also to understand them. To welcome them too.¹⁹

Following her reasoning, the members of a particular community share the same language, culture and traditions, which are different from the other members of other communities. "So, generalizing . . . is complicated . . . It would also be important to think a bit of their contexts, yes?" It is worth stressing that if teachers intend to implement new ways of teaching language to various communities, getting to know their contexts and realities presupposes engaging with further information on them, as in "researching about their cultures" and showing empathy and support. Yet it does not need to be necessarily academic. Paula also reinforces the need to promote a space for sharing experiences and discussing the plurality of cultures and languages in Brazil—a country which has been welcoming immigrants from all over the world for the last decades. For Paula, dealing with different communities requires language students and teachers to do more than only living together and accepting differences so that communication and multiple exchanges can be promoted at school.

Likewise, I interpret that showing empathy with others may not suffice if teachers do not prepare themselves and their students to change their attitude towards diversity, for example, by deconstructing stereotypes and preconceived ideas in relation to Others: "indigenous, black, migrants", as Paula mentions. Consequently, more sensibility and responsibility are necessary in the classroom so that students can listen to and engage with understanding each other. For that, drawing on the ecology of knowledges and intercultural translation, as Santos (2018) and Walsh

(2018) argue, would help destabilise dichotomies such as local vs. global, native speaker vs. non-native speaker and inside vs. outside the schoolroom. In line with these arguments, as educators, we should be able to offer better life chances that can favour members who are disenfranchised in particular communities, while assuming differences as a productive ongoing process and not an end.

As an inquirer, Freire (2005) brought to light the relationship between the self and the Other, as intricate historical collective beings, who can only think, feel and act otherwise in their encounters with difference. For the author, as what we usually see are hegemonic views, perspectives of marginalised people should have a special place within this process. Intercultural translation means identifying the oppressive conditions under which minoritised groups live and promoting agency to reduce the impacts of such dominations. In the second half of the 20th century, Freire (2005) designed a project to teach peasants, fishermen and artisans how to read the “world and the world”. In this vein, active readers should assume reading as a political and ideological act and look for dialogues with others as a social experience, in which “cultural discourses, political ideologies and economic interests are transmitted, transformed and can be contested” (Muspratt et al., 1997, p. 192). Hence, all discourses shape particular views of the world, which serve the interests of specific races, ethnicities, classes, genders, ages, religions, people with (dis)abilities and geographical origins. Freirean literacy education presupposes that, while teaching, the educator experiences intercultural unlearning and re-learning. This complex process occurs in encounters with their students’ socio-cultural and linguistic resources, which help to produce creative repertoires and co-construct curricula, classes and community projects.

Further, sharing, understanding and welcoming diversity, as Paula suggests, entail working with dissensus (Rancière, 2010). In this sense, we should be able to acknowledge that our logics should be questioned vis-à-vis our counterparts’ ontoepistemologies. Welcoming other(s) can be interpreted as embracing differences, in a way we can be ‘(re)embodied’ by them and (re)invent language education.

Another undergraduate student’s view: Gabi

The position presented, this time by an undergraduate student, Gabi, is particularly inspired by her background grounded in critical literacy. Gabi’s entanglement of meanings is greatly influenced by the notion of critique as a means rather than as an end.

Gabi: . . . bring, show, present, and expose everything that is rooted in society so that teacher education can be a meaningful experience, seeking plurality, diversity, and respect. Giving space for those silenced people not to silence anymore, because critical literacy permits an expansion of seeing. And, from critical literacy, we can approach many areas, question many things which are viciously structured in our society, and the best way is in the classroom, sure, to learn but also to contribute not only in classes with the teacher but also learn with our classmates, with the experiences of others . . . They are minorities because a small social group determined that such people should not be valued, because they do not fit into society’s standard. So, it is our role, as teachers, to question it. It is not just because they’re a certain group, heterosexual white, European that they have more value than the others . . . It’s been an issue since the discovery of Brazil, which wasn’t actually a discovery. There were people here, our culture was erased. They tried to impose one culture as better than the other. So, all that is different from this Eurocentric norm, all that is different from it is considered wrong. This is very problematic. So, it is

important that we, as teachers, question such a structure embedded in society, and this education we are going through is self-education, because we are transforming ourselves too. This is very important so that these systems do not continue reproducing themselves. We give people the opportunity to question these systems rooted in society. School has an important and significant role, and I believe that an education like this, which really questions our practices as future professionals, is very important. We are not there just to teach the content. So, creating a space for multiculturalism, pluralism, this diversity, questioning these deep-rooted structures that have been established for a long time. So, the teacher, I think he can, like, “plant a small seed” . . . We can present another perspective, right, so, I believe it is really about questioning, expanding the way we see things, thinking from other perspectives, putting ourselves in someone else’s place, it’s mainly treating the other with respect.²⁰

We can present another perspective, right? So, I believe it is really about questioning, expanding the way we see things, thinking from other perspectives, putting ourselves in someone else’s place. And specially treating the other with respect.²¹

In Gabi’s discourse, we can notice reverberations of education as a political and collective act. Yet reconstruction and ethical engagement of teachers, students and institutions to challenge Westernised ways of being and (re)existing with differences are constantly necessary. From Gabi’s claims, it is possible to suggest that she understands that the white, European and heterosexual man invented categories such as race, gender and class to hierarchise people according to his worldview. Hence, those who did not comply with such standards would be seen as subalterns in this relation. As a result, there have been countless attempts to eliminate ontoepistemologies of Brazilian minorities.

It is worth analysing Gabi’s response in the light of (self)critical literacy. For that end, I shall mention some of its historical foundations. Contesting universal ontoepistemology as effects of the Enlightenment, many transdisciplinary theorists have been engaging in struggles against social inequities, as an educational project of society (see Monte Mór, in this volume). A great exponent of this movement is, undoubtedly, Freire (2000, 1981/2003, 2005, 1993/2014, 1994/2015), whose philosophy promoted ethical ways of including marginalised communities as co-authors of meaning-making, recognising the importance of carrying out their agency in order to transform their own social conditions. Although this author did not use the word *literacy* in his praxiologies, he put forward essential principles, which inspired critical educators worldwide, such as the ones previously mentioned here. They advocate for free, secular, quality education for everyone, based on the following Freirean-inspired perspectives:

- (1) Addressing diversity; observing the specificities of students’ contexts, needs and dreams, regardless of their race, gender, class, age, religion, (dis)ability and geographical origin.
- (2) Seeing learners as active, creative and (self)critical co-participants in their learning process.
- (3) Assuming the Bakhtinian conception of language as heterogeneous, situated and changeable according to its users’ existing and emerging needs.
- (4) Creating a pluriversal space for teachers, students, parents, communities and institutions to collaboratively work from and with differences, promote public policies and implement projects to benefit the socially, culturally, economically vulnerable people. This implies a

Freirean exercise of (self)critical reflexivity, that is, listening to/reading the other(s) while listening to/reading oneself (Menezes de Souza, 2011).

- (5) Paying close attention to students' loci of enunciation and, together with them, co-construct knowledge based on their intersubjectivities and on intercultural translation (Santos, 2018; Walsh, 2018).
- (6) Proposing an idea of open and incomplete renegotiations of meanings and power with the Global North concerning colonial, capitalist and patriarchal ontoepistemologies, while recognising that all subjects' reconstitutions are traversed by discourses from other transcultural time-space scales in fluxes.
- (7) Considering that multiple and situated discourses traverse any person's locus of enunciation, something Eurocentric subjects have ignored, while dominating the Other. In this sense, as Gabi suggests, the colonial matrix of power (Quijano, 2007) should be identified, resisted and undermined.
- (8) "Bringing back the body" and "marking the unmarked" (Menezes de Souza, 2021), that is, combating oppressions, respecting marginalised communities and creating opportunities for them to have their basic rights guaranteed (such as education, housing, food, drinking water, basic sanitation, security) and access to positions of power at work, etc. All these actions are aimed at ensuring more representation and parity of participation (Fraser, 2000) in social environments.

Additionally, revising notions of and discourses on multiculturalism becomes crucial. Gabi does not clarify what she means by multiculturalism, though. The prefix *multi-* means the blending of languages, cultures and hybrid social practices. However, power/knowledge should be questioned in situated ways. Freedom, human rights and social justice should be thought in terms of possibilities within specific contexts, instead of assuming attitudes and actions *a priori*. As Todd (2007) contends:

I conclude that the real potential of human rights education lies in its capacity to provoke insights that help youth live with ambiguity and dilemma, where freedom, justice, and responsibility cannot be dictated to them, but rather involve tough decisions that must be made in everyday life.

(p. 2)

Accordingly, it is possible to comprehend from Gabi's claims that, for teacher education, Freirean (self)critical reflexivity plays a crucial role in the undergraduate's words—"I believe that an education like this, which really questions our practices as future professionals, is very important". This can be possible by reflecting on why we think and feel the way we do, why we do things the way we do and how such actions interfere in society. I stress that, despite the considerable amount of work published on Freirean education, self(critical) reflexivity is not a focus usually addressed in the field of language education.

In addition, in order to minimise the impacts of inequities, other fundamental elements are collaboration, empathy (the ability to identify and sense the Other's emotion) and ethical responsibility towards collective agency. Educational agency presupposes "an awareness of how, why, and in whose interests particular texts might work" (Muspratt et al., 1997, p. 218). These are aligned with the work of scholars who work with critical literacy and Southern decoloniality. In this vein, Keyla's, Marion's, Paula's and Gabi's critical ontoepistemologies are processes of ongoing becoming, and so are mine.

Final considerations

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that this work is part of a larger ongoing research project. This is a political spatiality, in which an arena of existing and emerging onto-epistemological methodologies get entangled with discourses criss-crossed by questions of language teaching, research, race, ethnicity, gender, class and age, to mention but a few examples. Situated narratives, memories and agency from the two professors and the two undergraduate students did provide me with key points to expand the interconnectivity among language, discourse, culture and society.

From my viewpoint, the discussion in this chapter is a timely response to current affairs that involve teachers, students, researchers and policy makers. I hope the reflections presented here can entail productive impacts on education, especially when it comes to reducing social inequities and promoting more creative forms of relationships and knowledge reconstruction. I say knowledge reconstruction drawing on Freire (2005), who highlights the importance of self-critique, which is an attitude I will adopt in the future to reflect on and assess what I have just written.

Notes

- 1 Western modernity established a historical form which divided the world into two sides: on one side, the monopoly of universal knowledge, identity and experience, and on the other side, “popular, lay, plebeian, peasant, or indigenous knowledges” (Santos, 2007, p. 4).
- 2 The fact that they work/study at a public university is a sign of privilege. However, if compared to some highly reputed universities, mainly in the southeast and south of Brazil, they are less privileged.
- 3 In the field of applied linguistics, especially in my particular context, more emphasis is placed on qualitative and interpretive research methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) rather than on quantitative aspects.
- 4 The state of Mato Grosso do Sul is bordered by Bolivia and Paraguay.
- 5 The Other(s) mean(s) the socially marginalized people here.
- 6 It is important to stress that I have kept the participants’ original excerpts with no corrections whatsoever, as a choice, which seems more congruent with decoloniality.
- 7 Translation of: “Como comunidades indígenas, quilombolas, surdas, de imigrantes e refugiados, dentre outras, seriam beneficiadas com as teorias e práticas (pedagógicas) na formação de alunos e professores de línguas e/ou autoformação que [você] vem exercitando?”
- 8 All the names of the participants are omitted to preserve anonymity.
- 9 Translation of: “Acho difícil afirmar que essas comunidades *podem ser beneficiadas* pelas praxiologias críticas e decoloniais com as quais trabalho, mas gosto de pensar que pode haver um diálogo entre estas e as praxiologias das/os representantes dessas comunidades. Esse diálogo não é fácil de ser construído, pois depende de fatores que vão além da vontade da/o docente, tais como: a configuração da turma, as relações de poder estabelecidas entre os aprendizes, a percepção desse espaço como um lugar de construção de saberes diversos, o estabelecimento de um certo nível de conforto e confiança entre a turma etc. Minha experiência com salas de aula de língua inglesa mostra que nem sempre elas se tornam espaços democráticos de construção de conhecimento, pois as colonialidades do poder, do ser e do saber estão fortemente presentes nesse contexto e muitas vezes são praticadas por nós, docentes. Exemplo disso é o fato de que alunas/os que têm mais conhecimento da língua ocupam lugar de destaque, são mais respeitadas/os, tomam mais o turno, têm mais capacidade de se posicionar etc., intimidando os aprendizes que têm menos conhecimento da língua. Claro que discussões críticas e decoloniais podem promover ressignificações importantes, mas acho difícil pensar que docentes são capazes de construir esse espaço de ecologia de saberes. Acho que cabe às/aos representantes dessas comunidades a tarefa de tomar esse espaço, se beneficiar deles e defender suas praxeologias”.
- 10 In public schools, learners are exposed to English for one or two hours weekly, and the grammar translation method seems to prevail, at least according to my student teachers.
- 11 Those who are not interested in solidarity and sustainability but instead contribute to disseminating violence, for example.
- 12 She is an upper middle-class woman, middle-aged, cisgender and Christian.

- 13 Quilombolas are descendants of black people, and there is also the presence of indigenous peoples in their communities, occupying different spaces, organized according to diverse communal ties and seasonal activities.
- 14 Translation of: "Sou professora por convicção e acredito que a salvação de um país, de uma comunidade e de um indivíduo está na educação, no conhecimento. Há uns 30, 40 anos, a educação brasileira era restrita a um grupo social privilegiado. A educação tem se popularizado. As escolas estão cada vez mais na direção do ‘para todos’ realmente, e não apenas na faixa. Os surdos, por exemplo, não estão mais aceitando as faláciaes embutidas nos discursos oficiais e mentirosos, intitulados ‘educação inclusiva’. Eles querem se sentir parte, de verdade. As pessoas surdas vêm lutando por escolas bilíngues, onde se fale a Língua Portuguesa e a Libras, que são suas duas línguas de direito. Onde esse grupo social ganhou força? Onde os indígenas, os quilombolas, os imigrantes e refugiados ganharam força? Acredito que tenha sido nas salas de aula das universidades. Acredito que esse ‘trabalho de formiga’ que nós, professores, temos feito, no sentido de formarmos cidadãos críticos, tem servido para disseminarmos conhecimento, consciência e senso de poder entre os nossos alunos, futuros professores".
- 15 Translation of: "A formação de professores com teorias e práticas pedagógicas que incitem a criticidade é essencial para a real mudança social. São esses professores que irão levar esses conceitos aos seus alunos, que, por sua vez, vão levar os conhecimentos aos seus familiares, que vão levar às suas comunidades. Na minha opinião, é por meio da educação que conseguimos mudar as estruturas sociais injustas de poder. É pela educação, no caso, formação de professores e alunos, que conseguimos beneficiar os grupos minoritários, porque não estaremos ‘dando peixe a ninguém’, mas ensinando-os e munindo-os de recursos para pescarem e lutarem por suas causas”.
- 16 A recent example would be the marginalized people mainly during the pandemic times. To make matters worse, more than half of the people aged 25 or over have not finished high school in Brazil.
- 17 Translation of: “[a] leitura do mundo precede sempre a leitura da palavra e a leitura desta implica a continuidade da leitura daquele . . . [A] leitura da palavra não é apenas precedida pela leitura do mundo, mas por uma certa forma de ‘escrevê-lo’ ou de ‘reescrevê-lo’, quer dizer, de transformá-lo através de nossa prática consciente”.
- 18 I prefer using literacies in the plural to highlight their many perspectives and challenge my own and others' postures and actions.
- 19 Translation of: É um pouco delicado porque cada uma dessas comunidades, comunidades indígenas, quilombolas, surdas, imigrantes, cada uma tem uma especificidade. Ela vem com uma cultura, vem com uma língua, vem com tradições, né? Então, generalizar, . . . é complicado. Seria também importante pensar um pouco no contexto dele. Ter a simpatia estender as mãos e também pesquisar sobre a cultura deles e pensar novas formas de dar aula de língua, abranger a realidade deles . . . para que os alunos tenham essa comunicação, esse compartilhamento de experiências entre si, na qual podem discutir essas culturas e essas línguas que os alunos desses povos trazem e promover troca porque nós vivemos num país totalmente miniscrigado e com muitas pessoas de vários lugares . . . Não é só uma coisa de conviver e aceitá-los. É também compartilhar, compreendê-los. Acolhê-los também.
- 20 Translation from: trazer, mostrar, apresentar e expor tudo o que tá enraizado na sociedade para que a formação de professor seja uma experiência significativa, buscando a pluralidade, a diversidade e o respeito. Dar espaço para que as pessoas silenciadas não se silenciem mais, porque o letramento crítico permite uma amplitude do olhar. E, a partir do letramento crítico, a gente pode abordar muitos campos, questionar muitas coisas que estão cruelmente estruturadas na nossa sociedade e o melhor caminho é na sala de aula, claro para aprender mas também para contribuir né não só nas aulas com o professor mas aprender com os colegas também, com as experiências do outro. Elas são minorias porque um pequeno grupo social denominou que essas pessoas não devem ser valorizadas porque elas fogem de um padrão. Então, é papel nosso, como professor, questionar esse padrão. Não é porque eles são um determinado grupo, hétero, europeu, branco que eles têm mais valor que esses outros grupos . . . É uma questão desde o descobrimento do Brasil que não foi bem um descobrimento. Existiam pessoas aqui, nossa cultura foi apagada. Tentaram impor uma cultura como melhor que a outra, Então tudo que é o oposto desse padrão eurocêntrico, tudo que foge disso é considerado errado. Então é muito importante que nós, como professores, questionemos essas estruturas instauradas na sociedade, e essa formação que a gente tá fazendo é uma auto-formação porque a gente vai se transformando também; Isso é muito importante para que esses sistemas não continuem se reproduzindo. A gente dá oportunidade para as pessoas questionar esses sistemas já instaurados na sociedade. A escola tem um papel muito importante e significativo, e eu acredito que uma formação que questione mesmo as nossas práticas como futuros profissionais, é muito importante.

Nós não estamos ali só para ensinar o conteúdo. Então, dar espaço para multiculturalismo, pluralismo, essa diversidade, questionar essas estruturas enraizadas, produzidas por muito tempo. Então, então o professor, eu acho que ele pode assim: plantar a sementinha” . . . A escola tem um papel muito importante e significativo, e eu acredito que uma formação que questione mesmo as nossas práticas como futuros profissionais, é muito importante. Nós não estamos ali só para ensinar o conteúdo. Então, dar espaço para multiculturalismo, pluralismo, essa diversidade, questionar essas estruturas enraizadas, produzidas por muito tempo. Então, então o professor, eu acho que ele pode assim: plantar a sementinha” . . . We can present another perspective, right, so, I believe it is really about questioning, expanding the way we see things, thinking from other perspectives, putting ourselves in someone else's place, it's mainly treating the other with respect.

- 21 Translation of: “trazer, mostrar, apresentar e expor tudo o que tá enraizado na sociedade pra que seja uma formação significativa, buscando a pluralidade, a diversidade e o respeito, né? Dar espaço para que as pessoas silenciadas não se silenciem mais, porque o letramento crítico, ele permite uma amplitude do olhar. E, a partir do letramento crítico a gente pode, consegue, abordar muitos campos, questionar muitas coisas que estão cruelmente estruturadas na nossa sociedade, e o melhor caminho é na sala de aula, claro, para aprender, mas também para contribuir [com a discussão], né? Não só nas aulas com [o] professor, mas com seus colegas, com as experiências do outro. Elas são minorias porque um pequeno grupo social denominou que essas pessoas não devem ser valorizadas, porque elas fogem de um padrão, né? Então, é papel nosso, é muito importante que a gente, como professor, questione esse padrão. Não é porque apenas esse determinado grupo aqui, o homem, hetero, europeu, branco, que ele tem mais valor que esses outros grupos, né? É uma questão que veio desde o descobrimento do Brasil, que não foi um descobrimento. Existiam pessoas aqui, nossa cultura . . . foi apagada. Tentaram impor uma cultura como melhor que a outra. Então, tudo que é o oposto desse padrão eurocêntrico, tudo que foge disso é considerado errado. Isso é muito problemático. Então, é muito importante que nós, como professores, questionemos essas estruturas instauradas na sociedade—autoformação, porque a gente vai se construindo. Isso é muito importante para que esses sistemas não continuem se reproduzindo. A gente dá essa oportunidade de questionar esses sistemas já instaurados. A escola tem um papel muito importante e significativo, e eu acredito que com uma formação assim, que questione mesmo as nossas práticas como futuros profissionais, é muito importante. Nós não estamos ali só para ensinar o conteúdo. Então, dar espaço para esse multiculturalismo, pluralismo, essa diversidade, questionar essas estruturas enraizadas, produzidas por muito tempo que tá instaurado tudo isso. Então, o professor eu acho que ele pode, assim, “plantar a sementinha”, sabe? A gente pode apresentar uma outra perspectiva, né? Então, eu acredito que é muito o questionar, é ampliar este olhar, pensar por outras perspectivas, é se colocar no lugar do outro, né? É tratar com respeito principalmente”.

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PART IV

Empirical explorations



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19

TRUST IN LANGUAGE

Exploring the speech-action nexus

Tamar Katriel

Language ideologies

Language ideology, in Michael Silverstein's influential formulation, is "any set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). Woolard's elaboration of this notion emphasises its role as a link between social forms and forms of talk, as "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (Woolard, 1998, p. 3). The centrality of the study of language ideologies lies in the fact that "ideas about language are implicated in the process by which *any* cultural ideas gain the discursive authority to become dominant" (Gal, 1998, p. 322). The dominance of such ideas lies not in the fact that they are produced or held by dominant groups but in the fact that they make up what Bourdieu (1991) has called the "linguistic habitus" in and through which the socially acquired linguistic practices and dispositions of particular groups become naturalised. In this chapter I wish to further elaborate the discussion of language ideology by foregrounding *trust in language* as a largely overlooked dimension of this concept.¹ This focus brings out what I call the *speech-action nexus*, i.e. speakers' trust in the performative power of language, in their ability as social actors to do things with words.

The study of language ideologies is central to the ethnography of speaking. Dell Hymes's (1974) notion of *ways of speaking* as the intersection of *forms of speaking* and *ways of life* encapsulates local communities' own theories of speech-ways as cultural practices. Indeed, the study of ways of speaking, alternatively referred to as cultural discourses, involves broad-ranging explorations of the socially-situated ways in which ideas about language are connected to other cultural domains. These include the cultural construction of social categories of belonging and division, notions of personhood, structures of feeling, moral and aesthetic values and more. Given the legitimising role played by ideologies in the conduct of human affairs, the focus on language ideologies brings out the processes of legitimisation associated with the dissemination of various speaking practices. This point is underscored in Pratt's (1986) discussion of the relations between ideologies and speech acts, where she says: ". . . it is the normalising and naturalising work of ideology that I'm looking at here, that is, its action of specifying within a discourse what is given or normal or natural, and what is problematic or abnormal or unnatural" (p. 60). The normalising work of ideology is closely related to the trust people put in language as a tool of social life. Yet as demonstrated

by the prevalence of slogans like “deeds not words” or calls to “stop talking and do something”, and so on, trust in language’s action-potential must often be established against the background of widespread language-scepticism. Therefore, I believe that theoretically-driven ethnographic studies of ways of speaking that both highlight and problematise the action-potential of speech through a focus on the speech-action nexus in variously situated cultural arenas—both within and across cultures—are called for.

A leading theoretical framework within which the speech-action nexus has been explored over the past several decades is that of speech-act theory as developed by Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and their followers. Focusing on “how to do things with words”, as the title of Austin’s seminal study goes, speech-act theory foregrounds the performativity of language and the conditions under which speech counts as particular action such as promising, questioning or describing. Given the centrality of speech-act theory to the scholarly exploration of the speech-action nexus, I briefly turn to this theory, which was developed within philosophy of language, and to an anthropological critique of its universalist assumptions. I join this scholarly conversation by addressing two Israeli ways of speaking that enact historically-rooted versions of a speech-as-action ideology. One, natively known as *dugri* speech (Katriel, 1986), refers to a localised version of speaking truth to power and is rooted in the Israeli nation-building ethos cultivated in the pre-state years (1930s and 1940s). The other, referred to as *communication*, is rooted in Western therapeutic culture and its popularisations (Cameron, 2000; Katriel & Philipsen, 1981). With the increasing influence of American culture (First & Avraham, 2009), this culturally-coded form of self-reflexive and supportive talk has become prevalent in Israel, too (Leshem, 2020). I end by exploring the potential significance of my analysis for a more nuanced understanding of the speech-action nexus.

Exploring the speech-action nexus

Inspired by Wittgenstein’s (1958) approach to the study of language games, whereby the meaning of words lies in their use, speech-act theorists—Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and their followers—foregrounded the performativity of language by exploring the speech-action nexus in culturally recognised and nameable speech acts. This line of research provides a framework for the study of language as a tool of social life. They thus carry particular *illocutionary forces*, such as promising, questioning or ordering, among many others. The analysis of speech acts addresses the constitutive and regulative rules that ground their performance as well as the material, social and epistemic conditions that must hold for them to be considered felicitous on given interactional occasions.

In Austin’s preliminary formulation, the name ‘performative’—as a short form for ‘performative utterance/sentence’—“is derived, of course, from ‘perform’, the usual verb with the noun ‘action’: it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (Austin, 1962, pp. 6–7). Notably, although the main thrust of Austin’s work is to ground the analysis of verbal performances in a language ideology that constructs *speech-as-action*, the aforementioned formulation explicitly draws a line between “performing an action” and “just saying something”. The use of “just” implies a language-scepticism grounded in a *speech vs. action* dualism, whereby saying something does not necessarily count as doing things with words. As I will argue in what follows, the view of speech as a form of action and the language-scepticism associated with the speech vs. action dualism represent language ideologies whose tensions and intersections are significant to our understanding of the speech-action nexus.

In focusing on the performative dimension of utterances, speech-act theorists make the illocutionary act, rather than the word or sentence, the basic unit of their analysis of linguistic communication. Their main interest lies not in language as an abstract system of signs but in “the production

of the sentence token under certain conditions" (Searle, 1969, p. 221). The analysis of speech acts thus holds analytic potential for ethnographic approaches to the study of language in particular settings as it brings together the exploration of speakers' intentions, the social conventions associated with the deployment of specific linguistic acts, and the contextual conditions in which they can be properly deployed. Linguistic anthropologists have applied insights derived from speech-act theory to the study of non-Western cultural settings. Apart from the considerable descriptive potential of this move, it also allowed them to make a special contribution to the study of speech acts by offering anthropological critiques of some of the universalist and individualist assumptions that are implicit in it. In some cases, they directly addressed the issue of the speech-action nexus discussed in this chapter.

Thus, Duranti (1997) pointed out the need for greater scholarly reflexivity when he claimed that speech-act theorists "start from the assumption that 'language is action' but do not question their own notion of 'action'. They assume that 'action' itself is a universal dimension of human existence that does not need further analysis" (p. 236). Indeed, speech-act theorists' non-problematisation of the notion of action is compounded by the unquestioning approach to their conceptualisation of speech-as-action that is part of the language ideology that underwrites speech-act theory. The dualism of speech vs. action that is implicit in Austin's aforementioned distinction between "just saying" and "doing" is nevertheless also part of the picture. This is acknowledged and further elaborated by Austin when he identifies a thought-speech-action triad that further complicates the speech-action nexus. He says

Certainly the ways we talk about "action" are liable here, as elsewhere, to be confusing. For example, we may contrast men of words with men of action, we may say they *did* nothing, only talked or *said* things: yet again, we may contrast *only* thinking something with *actually* saying it (out loud) in which context saying it *is* doing something.

(Austin, 1962, p. 62)

Austin describes a certain confusion in the way we address the relationship between speech, action and thought, pointing out that in some contexts speech counts as action while in others it does not. His analysis of speech-acts focuses on the former. Some context-sensitive ethnographic studies of the uses of language in natural settings have applied the insights of speech-act theory to the study of the uses of language in various cultural settings. A notable example of such a study is Rosaldo's (1982) analysis of the uses of commands as salient speech-acts among the Ilongot of the Philippines. This study highlights the role of local ideas about relational meanings and social constraints that form part of the interpersonal ideologies that inform the performance of Ilongot speech-acts. Rosaldo then uses her ethnographic insights to critique the universalist assumptions that underlie the Western focus on individual intentions and goals and that are implicit in speech-act theory, saying

Thus, if most Western linguists have been primarily impressed with language as a "resource" that can represent the world (and that the individual can then "use" as a tool to argue, promise, criticize or lie), the Ilongot case points toward a rather different view of speech and meaning. . . . For Ilongot, it is relations not intentions that come first!

(ibid., p. 210)

Rosaldo's analysis of Ilongot speech acts brings out the social dimensions of meaning-making processes. Her critique of the over-emphasis on the role of individual intentions in speech-act theory is taken a step further by Pratt (1986) who challenges the essentialist notion of subjectivity

this theorising involves. She argues that speech-act theory, “in at least some of its dominant versions supposes the existence behind every normal speech act of an authentic self, self-consistent, essential subject, a ‘true self’” (p. 62) and proposes an alternative, more fluid view of speech as anchored in a constructivist view of the speaking subject as well as the context of speech activities, so that “the context and the subject mutually determine each other ongoingly” (p. 63). In this view, the deployment of a cultural discourse “must be treated as simultaneously world-creating, world-describing, and world-changing undertakings” (p. 71). Pratt further challenges the rationalist approach implicit in Grice’s (1975) cooperative account of the logic of conversation, one that is also implicit in Searle’s speech-act theory, arguing that they fail to address affective relations, power relations, and the question of interlocutors’ shared goals (p. 67).

These anthropological critiques in fact suggest that the study of cultural ways of speaking is not reducible to the study of conventionalised speech acts and must be complemented by a broader consideration of cultural assumptions concerning conceptions of personhood, ideologies of language, moral sentiments and regimes of feeling. As exemplified by Rosaldo’s and Pratt’s discussions of the ideological underpinnings of speech-act theory, the philosophical exploration of the *speech-action nexus* needs to be complemented by ethnographic studies of the localised meanings that attach to doing things with words in particular cultural contexts. The next section presents an attempt to do so by delineating the contours of two cultural discourses (mentioned earlier) that currently play a significant role in the dynamics of Israeli speech culture—defiant discourse and communication.

Speech-as-action in Israeli culture

As cultural ways of speaking, both defiant discourse (Katriel, 2021) and communication (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Carbaugh, 1988) are grounded in a speech ideology that constructs speech as a form of action and harnesses the potency of speech for social ends. However, each finds its quintessential place in a distinct discursive field: (a) defiant discourse is a cultural discourse that enacts a speaking-truth-to-power scenario, playing the role of a key symbol (Ortner, 1973) in Israeli culture and involving public acts of verbal resistance such as protest or counter-hegemonic witnessing; and (b) *communication* as an interaction-based cultural way of speaking enacts a relational scenario in which informal, flexible and mutually considerate talk is mobilised in the service of solving interpersonal difficulties and bridging interpersonal differences. Over the past 50 or so years, the term communication has emerged as a central metapragmatic label designating a globalised scenario of relational problem-solving that affirms that “what we need is communication” (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981). In what follows, I discuss each of these cultural ways of speaking and its ways of affirming the power of language and its action-potential within the broader context of Israeli speech culture.

Defiant discourse

I have located my study of defiant discourse in the domain of grassroots activism, whose underlying language ideology constructs speech-as-action and promotes social actors’ trust in language (Livio & Katriel, 2014; Katriel & Livio, 2019). This language ideology gives shape to activist demands for voice and to activist projects designed to “change the discourse” through lexical battles and speaking out. I view defiant discourse as a discourse-centred form of activism that overcomes the language-scepticism encapsulated, for example, in the suffragist slogan “deeds not words”. As a form of verbal resistance it often goes hand in hand with and complements embodied acts of resistance that involve “putting one’s body on the line” (Katriel, 2021).

Operating within the political field of power relations, defiant discourse is an important aspect of modern democracies. As part of a participatory politics “from below”, the challenge posed by defiant discourse is grounded in a speech-as-action language ideology that inspires trust in language as an instrument in struggles over symbolic power. As Bourdieu (1991) argues, the efficacy of language in the struggle over symbolic power is socially constituted. Political speech rests as much on the institutional or social authority of the speaker as on his or her individual communicative intentions. He furthermore identifies the field-specific role of language use in politics with reference to the speech-action nexus, saying: “In politics, ‘to say is to do’, that is, it is to get people to believe that you can do what you say. . . . Political speech—and this is what defines its specificity—commits its author completely because it constitutes a commitment to action” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 190). In this view, political speech becomes “equivalent to an act” only when the speaker is recognised as representing a group that has the capacity and the will to bring about the verbal commitment articulated by his or her utterance. If the conditions of institutional authority, or collective will and capacity do not hold, political speech loses its performative force, and speaking does not amount to action.

Thus, countering verbal strategies that normalise the structural violence of dominant social institutions, political actors in the loosely organised social movements of modern democracies employ strategies that expose and de-normalise social arrangements of inequality and exploitation, undermining them “from below”. They use the power of agency (*power to*) and the power of solidarity (*power with*) to creatively enact acts of resistance that challenge the state’s and the market’s power of domination (*power over*). These strategies are usually derived from the open-ended activist repertoire that is part of a transnational legacy of verbal and embodied practices of resistance. Unlike the case of institutionally-based practices of power negotiation, the power of verbal resistance lies not in the structural arrangements in which it is embedded but in participants’ performative potential in speaking truth to power. This potential is underwritten by a language ideology that views speech as a potent form of action.

In Israeli speech culture, defiant discourse has deep ideological roots in the Israeli version of straight talk natively known as *dugri* speech (Katriel, 1986). As a cultural way of speaking associated with the image of the native-born Sabra, it is the emblem of the New Jew of national revival (Almog, 2000) who mobilises the power of speech to tell it like it is. In speaking truth to power, the *dugri* speaker defies widely accepted social constraints associated with hierarchical power relations, enacting his “courage of truth” (Foucault, 2011). As I have argued in my re-reading of *dugri* speech as a verbal performance (Katriel, 2021), it is animated by a defiant discourse scenario that harks back to the ancient Jewish tradition of the Old Testament prophets. Fearlessly confronting both the rulers and the populace of their time with their trenchant social critique of widespread immoral and abusive practices, these ancient prophets have been inscribed in Israeli collective memory as icons of defiance whose speaking out was a community-oriented, self-sacrificial act.

My 2021 study of contemporary discourses of dissent of Israeli soldiers builds on this localised cultural reading of defiant discourse while at the same time acknowledging its debt to the Western tradition of ‘frank speech’ whose roots, according to Foucault, go back to the ancient Greek notion of *parrhesia*, translatable as ‘fearless speech’ (Foucault, 2001). Foucault contrasts the use of *parrhesia* to flattery and the avoidance of unpleasant and unwelcome truths. Speaking truth-to-power is therefore a risk-taking enterprise that is often penalised or met with significant social sanctions. In the next section, I will demonstrate the use of witnessing as a form of defiant discourse in Israeli soldiers’ dissent over the Israeli assault on Gaza in the summer of 2014, known as Operation Protective Edge; but before I do so I turn to the second cultural way of speaking addressed in this

chapter that enacts a speech-as-action language ideology, encoding trust in language, the way of speaking known as ‘communication’.

Communication

The way of speaking known as communication (as contrasted with ‘just talk’) has emerged as a dominant cultural discourse in middle-class American culture around the last quarter of the 20th century and has by now come to mark a global trend identified as “communication culture” (Cameron, 2000). Like defiant discourse, it is grounded in a language-as-action ideology, yet it finds its quintessential home in the domain of interpersonal relationships in both domestic and work settings rather than in the public sphere of contentious politics. As a cultural discourse, it is grounded in a recognition of the uniqueness of individuals and their innermost interests and desires. This atomised social scene of real or potential disagreement and discord is interpersonally managed through collaborative acts of meaning-negotiations and mutual support. ‘Communication’ is the discursive work involved in the reconciliation of personal differences among individual ‘selves’. It is in and through successful communication that social order can be maintained (or restored) in a world in which individual ‘selves’ are charged with the production of personal meanings and the negotiation of social place. In an atomised society in which the individual ‘self’ is regarded as both a source of unique value and as a potential source of social disintegration, the maintenance of the fabric of social relations is an ever-vulnerable enterprise whose stability hangs on effective communication rather than on a pre-given social structure. In this view, offsetting the risk of social discord and disintegration among social equals requires that individual ‘selves’ have the capacity to coordinate their actions through ‘communication’. In communication culture, the vulnerability of the social order lies in interpersonal differences and not in structural differences or hierarchical power relations.

Indeed, given the centrality of the sentiment that “what we need is communication” when problems arise (punitive action or (not of) self-discipline), a wide range of pedagogical projects designed to cultivate individuals’ ‘communication skills’ have emerged, such as counseling, life coaching, professional development and so on. The dissemination of ‘communication culture’ has also involved the rise of ‘communication experts’ who reflexively formulate what counts as ‘communication’, develop pedagogies that cultivate individuals’ ability to communicate and provide models of effective communication practices through the performance of their professional role (Fialkoff & Pinchevski, 2021). Within ‘communication culture’, the metapragmatic term *communication* is a key cultural symbol that designates the interplay of individual *selves* and interpersonal *relations*. It combines a cultural focus on the individual ‘self’ with a problem-solving orientation that values communication as a form of pragmatic action.

Whereas defiant discourse, as I have conceptualised it, falls into the category of political speech and is explicitly about power and authority, communication, with its roots in Western therapeutic culture (Cameron, 2000) is about mutual acceptance, meaning-making and the bridging of interpersonal differences. In the context of Israeli culture, the term ‘communication’ (*tikshoret*) in the sense it has accrued in ‘communication culture’ as described here, and the discursive practices associated with it, began to circulate in the 1980s. Through the importation and adaptation of popular therapeutic radio and television formats that both thematised and modeled communication as a ‘glocalised’ way of speaking (Katriel, 2004; Leshem, 2020), Israelis, too, began to see their interpersonal difficulties and personal problems as the result of faulty or blocked communication and to see the improvement of communication as an interpersonal goal. Since the early 2000s, the call for communication has entered the public sphere intertwined with the discourse of trauma, particularly—but

not solely—as it pertains to trauma associated with security exigencies (Friedman-Peleg, 2016). The discursive values associated with communication culture have become part of a public emotional and de-politicised idiom of trauma and victimhood. This idiom lives side by side with defiant discourse as an idiom of resistance. At times, however, they rub against each other, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of soldierly responses to one of Israel's military assaults on Gaza in the summer of 2014, Operation Protective Edge, in the next two sections.

Defiant discourse in soldierly dissent

The witnessing organisation that goes under the name of Breaking the Silence was established in 2004, in the wake of the second Palestinian Intifada (uprising), by a group of veterans of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) with the goal of collecting and disseminating soldiers' testimonies concerning their experiences of military service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).² This grassroots witnessing project has grown to become an NGO whose activities are designed to counter formal military discourses and mainstream media coverage concerning the situation in the occupied territories. Propelled by their first-hand experience of the on-the-ground situation of the Palestinian civilian population under the occupation regime, these young veterans who had come to reject the occupier role and policing tasks they were required to fulfil during their mandatory military service, decided it was "time to speak out". They conducted one-on-one interviews with a wide range of soldiers and ex-soldiers who were disillusioned with their military role, building an edifice of counter-knowledge regarding Israel's military policies and practices of control over the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. To date, their organisational archive contains over 1300 soldiers' testimonies as well as thousands of photographs and videos (and the effort continues). These form the basis for a wide range of activities that seek to share this counter-knowledge with the Israeli public through talks in both public and domestic venues; guided tours to major points of conflict such as the West Bank city of Hebron and the region of the South Hebron Hills; the circulation of testimonies in booklets, public readings and documentaries; a well-curated website or social media outlets, and so on.

Rejecting hegemonic representations of the scene of occupation, these soldiers' detailed accounts of what they saw and did in upholding the occupation regime can be seen as enactments of defiant discourse. Speaking truth to power, they try to put the occupation on the public agenda by breaking the societal silence in which it has become shrouded, its deliberate marginalisation in public discourse. In so doing, they challenge both the agenda-setting power of state-sponsored or market-driven mainstream media and the public's desire to avoid confronting unpleasant realities and the responsibilities they entail. As reiterated in many of their booklets, in their talks, and on their website, their ultimate goal is to stimulate public debate about the moral price that Israeli society has been paying for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population and control its life. The identical, sombre-looking booklets of Breaking the Silence, with their black covers, include numerous testimonial segments extracted from soldiers' testimonies and edited along thematic lines, including accounts covering occupation-related events at a particular location (e.g. Hebron), narrated by a particular category of soldiers (e.g. women soldiers), dealing with a particular category of victims (e.g. children), addressing a particular aspect of the occupation regime (e.g. settler violence) or a particularly problematic, large-scale military intervention (e.g. one of a series of assaults on Gaza). Many of the booklets' titles specify the period to which the testimonies relate.

Two of the booklets address high points in Israel's military intervention in Gaza, which has been under siege since 2007, both of which were officially named by Israel as 'operations'—Operation

Cast Lead (Breaking the Silence, 2009) and Operation Protective Shield (Breaking the Silence, 2015). In both cases, testimonies include multiple accounts of military misconduct and disproportionate use of fire, which resulted in massive destruction of civilian neighbourhoods in the Gaza Strip, hundreds of Palestinian casualties and many more thousands injured. Soldiers testified to lax rules of engagement and to a highly militant atmosphere that led to indiscriminate shooting sprees as a regular military practice. These are narrated in a factual, measured tone from the perspective of eye-witnesses to the events. What renders them enactments of defiant discourse is the activist project in which they are embedded. As detailed in the editors' introduction to the 2009 collection, the Israeli public is kept deliberately ignorant of the ins-and-outs:

For lack of basic facts, we are forced to accept unconditionally the positions of the official bodies, which assure us that in spite of any doubts, the IDF conduct was faultless and public accountability is uncalled for . . . The testimonies of the soldiers in this collection expose that the massive and unprecedented blow to the infrastructure and civilians of the Gaza strip were a direct result of IDF policy, and especially of the rules of engagement, and a cultivation of the notion among soldiers that the reality of war requires them to shoot and not to ask questions.

(Breaking the Silence, 2009, p. 5)

This testimonial collection is designed to bring out the systemic conditions, such the vagueness of military goals, the permissiveness of rules of engagement and the callous social climate in military units, to which the dissident soldiers attribute the IDF's abuses of power during these operations. They thus reject the military's attribution of these moral faults to individual soldiers described as "rotten apples". Defying the military's control over the public memory of these military operations, the soldiers' accounts provide counter-knowledge in an attempt to generate a new type of public conversation in which they would have a place: "We believe that the existence of a moral society clearly requires a profound, honest discussion, of which the voice of soldiers on the ground is an inseparable part" (Breaking the Silence, 2009, p. 6). As I have discussed elsewhere (Katriel, 2021), opening up the public sphere to new discursive possibilities is precisely the role played by defiant discourse as a way of speaking that enacts a speech-as-action language ideology.

In 2014, Operation Protective Edge brought the Israeli army's militancy in its assaults on the Gaza Strip to new heights, and Breaking the Silence published another collection of soldiers' testimonies in its wake (Breaking the Silence, 2015). Again, the soldiers' defiant discourse was directed at the military establishment and the mainstream media and their reluctance to expose the Israeli public to the facts of military action as the soldier-witnesses had come to know them. Tormented by the climate of indifference and disregard that surrounded them, they decided to take action by speaking out and telling it like it is in the hope of triggering a public conversation that would eventually lead to systemic change.

Communication in soldiers' post-traumatic witnessing

In 2018, another group of military veterans published a book composed of journal entries, poems, reflections and transcribed group conversations in which they attempted to give voice and shape to their experiences as foot soldiers in Operation Protective Edge in 2014. The title of this book, *Si'ach Lochamim Tzuk Eitan (Soldiers' Talk Protective Edge)* harks back to the title of a volume of transcribed (and edited) soldiers' group conversations, *Si'ach Lochamim*, published in the wake of the 1967 War—also known as The Six Day War—between Israel and its neighboring Arab

states. The 1967 volume, published in English under the title of *The Seventh Day* (Shapira, 1971), became a cult book in Israeli culture as a text that gave a platform to alternative voices of reflection and critique in the midst of the national euphoria that swept the country following Israel's war victory and the capture of vast areas of land, including the West Bank and Gaza (Katriel, 2004). Published half a century later, the 2018 book (Ben Ari & Yoge, 2018) modelled itself in many ways on the earlier rounds of soldiers' post-war conversations, but this time they were held by a particular group of soldiers at their own initiative rather than organised by a group of educators and intellectuals at multiple *kibbutz* (collective settlements) locations.

Even though by 2018 the veteran organisation of Breaking the Silence was a well-established—as well as highly controversial—presence on the Israeli public scene, its testimonial project, which included the aforementioned booklet relating to Operation Protective Edge, was not mentioned even in passing. Indeed, the 2018 book represents the new generation of soldiers' embracement of the self-reflexive and expressive language that emerged as a new soldierly idiom 50 years earlier, when veterans of the 1967 War who participated in these circles of talk were encouraged not to tell about what they did but about what they went through. This is a language of inner-probing, emotional self-disclosure and meaning-making, not one designed to either flag heroic deeds, as in the case of official military parlance, or to expose and condemn martial abuses, as in the case of soldierly defiant discourse. Through their retrospective accounts of what they went through during and following their participation in martial action, these witnessing soldiers recounted Operation Protective Edge as a generational tale of personal vulnerability and emotional unease. Unlike the politicised witnessing of Breaking the Silence soldiers who constructed their talk as a form of activism, their witnessing was propelled by the need for self-expression in response to their participation in the scene of war. In the introduction to their book they recount their experience of the first group meeting that would launch the circles of talk documented in it, saying

We tried to raise the feelings and thoughts we were left with since the end of the war. We didn't know what the goal of this conversation was or where it would lead. It was a space where anything could be brought up—questions, doubts, forbidden thoughts, anger and confusion as well as laughter. After that meeting it was all clear—what we feel cannot be left only with our group, and we believe that we are not the only ones who feel that way.

(Ben Ari & Yoge, 2018, pp. 8–9)

This self-probing, emotionally-focused conversation among long-time friends helped them air a traumatic experience they had all shared in a way that convinced them of the healing power of speech as a form of action. They decided to widen the circle to other members of their company to so as “to give the stage to as wide a range of voices as possible”, admitting

When we collected the conversations, we did not know against or for whom we were aiming our project, we wanted to talk. The aim of the encounter was the very meeting of combatants who are human beings with questions and thoughts, who wanted to share their insights and feelings in the wake of the war.

(*ibid.*, p. 9)

This statement suggests that all they wanted was to talk, not for or against any particular position as an oblique reference to the dissident voice of Breaking the Silence witnesses' strategic witnessing, which was explicitly framed as an attempt to hasten the end of the occupation, one of Israel's most contentious political issues. Not that these soldiers are unaware of the political issues

involved. They note that the widespread sense of missed opportunity many felt following the war's indeterminate ending was mobilised by each of the opposing political camps in Israel for its own ends. The left saw it as further confirmation of the futility of war and the need to search for a diplomatic solution, and the right claimed it confirmed the need for greater use of force to settle the score once and for all. But they decided not to take sides, just to address those difficult questions among themselves and in wider circles within the Israeli public sphere, saying

We would like to read this collection not as a document that tries to raise flags, or take a side, but as one that seeks to enlarge the circle of participants in the discourse we are trying to bring about . . . We hope it can give expression to that which is mostly left unsaid and to as many varied voices as possible. It is our hope that the readers of this collection will see it first of all as an opportunity, an uneasy yet worthwhile arena for self and social exploration.
(*ibid.*, pp. 10–11)

This focus on open, self-expressive talk and relational sharing in ever-widening social circles in which participants can work through their shared traumatic experiences is the hallmark of communication culture. Soldiers share not only their fears, especially the fear of death, and their many frustrations at the conditions at the scene of battle, and the confusion and vagueness associated with the military orders they received; they also express the kinds of doubts and torments that are central to the dissident agenda of *Breaking the Silence* witnesses—whether the war is at all justified, whether the political leadership can be trusted and how to reconcile one's belief in universal human rights with one's participation in a war that targets a civilian population. Positions varied—one of the soldiers recounted that at one point in the battlefield he considered refusing an order and getting others to follow suit; another expressed the completely opposite view that “a good soldier is one who does not object to what he is told” (*ibid.*, p. 178), whereas many others expressed the general feeling that in battlefield situations one's personal attachment to and responsibility for one's fellow soldiers were paramount and any larger ideological or political issues must be pushed aside. Responding to the same battlefield reality that gave rise to *Breaking the Silence* defiant discourse in addressing the events of summer 2014, the soldiers who participated in this collection shared personal feelings of vulnerability and moral misgivings they successfully pushed aside in the heat of battle, drawing on the therapeutically-oriented ethos of communication that affirms the role of language as a healing, community-building force.

Conclusion

This study has sought to expand the scholarly conversation on the workings of cultural discourses by refocusing the study of language ideologies on the exploration of the speech-action nexus and the dilemmas associated with the trust in language as a social tool. Inspired by anthropological critiques of speech-act theory and its implicit universalist assumptions, I note that this theory is also underwritten by an implicit speech-as-action ideology that is deployed in such a way as to foreground the conventionalised and ceremonial dimensions of language use. Since the study of cultural ways of speaking is not restricted to conventional language usage, speech-act theory has limited purchase in its exploration. Elaborating on the analysis of the speech-action nexus within a broader ethnographically-based language ideology perspective allows us to both document the use of a variety of pertinent linguistic practices and to problematise the notions of action they encode. I have done so by juxtaposing Israeli defiant discourse and a ‘glocalised’ version of communication culture that is associated with post-trauma as alternative soldierly responses to Israel's

military operations in Gaza in recent years. In the context of political protest, the former re-enacts a military sacrificial ethos centred on confrontation, a sense of agency and a commitment to bring about social change. In a cultural idiom that harnesses emotional language to work through personal traumas, the latter enacts the therapeutic and relational possibilities of words to overcome personal and interpersonal difficulties and to create communities of shared experience. While defiant discourse mobilises speech as a form of discourse-centred moral activism in the service of social change, the Israeli version of communication culture addresses the same social reality through the lens of the discourse of post-trauma. These two cultural discourses have resonances far beyond Israeli speech culture, as suggested by the studies of *communication* and *parrhesia* mentioned earlier. Hopefully, further research can enrich our understanding of these discourses by tracing both their transnational trajectories, their ‘glocalised’ meanings and the ways they may come to rub against each other in given cultural contexts.

Notes

- 1 Trust in language tends to be discussed in referential terms as a ‘crisis of representation’. My analysis addresses (mis)trust in the power of language as action, foregrounding its performative dimension.
- 2 See the Breaking the Silence website at www.breakingthesilence.org.il/ (retrieved: February 17, 2022).

Recommended readings

- Cameron, D. (2000). *Good to talk? Living and working in a communication culture*. London: Sage Publications.
This is a seminal and wide-ranging study of ‘communication’ in Anglo-American culture.
- Foucault, M. (2001). *Fearless speech*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
This is an in-depth genealogical exploration of ancient Greek ‘parrhesia’ as the cultural root for the Western tradition of critique.
- Rosaldo, M. (1982). The things we do with words: Ilongot speech-acts and speech-act theory in philosophy. *Language in Society*, 11(2), 203–237.
This is a fine example of an anthropological critique of speech-act theory as a theoretical framework.

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20

HATE SPEECH WE LIVE BY^{1,2}

Maria Laura Pardo

Introduction

The world is currently witnessing a re-emergence of the right and the extreme right (Rodríguez Araujo, 2003; Giordano, 2016; Pelinka, 2013, 2017; Piovezani & Gentile, 2020) and with it the booming of hate speech (Kaufman, 2015, p. 140), especially in social media, including social media on the web. Argentina is not exempt from this phenomenon (López Segrera, 2016), and it is striking how rapidly these discourses are reproduced, especially in everyday life (Fischer et al., 2018). The aim of this chapter is to give an account of the hate speech that is produced, spread and reproduced by some social media in Argentina, based on the editorial pieces made by different journalists on television programmes, which are emitted and then remain uploaded on YouTube, and to which citizens respond with digital comments that recontextualise and reinforce the vicious circle of hate (Pardo, 2021; Noblía, 2015). The questions that guide this research are: (a) Why study hate speech? (b) What is hate speech? And (c) How do the Argentinean media construct and reproduce this speech? It will be maintained that hate speech consists of discursive forms that are easily reproduced due to their argumentation, which is based on extremely oppositional discursive paradigms, argumentatively very weak, and whose argumentative warrants sustain prejudices belonging to what is known as common sense in Argentinian media (Pardo, 2019, 2021). The theoretical frame is critical discourse analysis in its Latin American current (García da Silva, 2007; Pardo Abril, 2007; Montecino, 2010; Resende, 2018; Oteiza & Pinuer, 2019; Pardo, Marchese & Soich, 2020; Pardo & Soich, 2021) and also from a cultural and decolonial perspectives (Shi-xu, Prah & Pardo, 2016; Pardo, 2022b), and the methodology is qualitative. I understand that a cultural analysis necessarily entails a decolonial³ analysis of both the object of study and our own research practices. I will use the synchronic-diachronic method for the linguistic analysis of texts (Pardo, 2011) and the theory of argumentation (Toulmin, 1958; Pardo, 2011). The corpus consists of 12 YouTube videos and nine digital comments. Examples will be given from an editorial and two digital comments that proved to be the most relevant for this analysis.

Why study hate speech in Argentina?

For years, the contemporary world has been facing a strong process of globalisation. For some theorists, this is not a new phenomenon. There have always been empires that have colonised other

peoples not only through economy, but also through culture. Culture is spread mainly through speech (the so-called “*linguae francae*”) and thus the importance of studying all that discourse involves: its (social, historical, economical, etc.) context, without abandoning the knowledge of linguistic forms and their changes over time.

Some examples of globalising moments in history are Hellenism, the Roman Empire and the colonisation of America, among others (Robertson, 1992). However, other theorists consider that globalisation arose with modernity (Hobsbawm, 1992) and the coming of the First World War. Contemporary globalisation possesses a neoliberal economy and a postmodern philosophy that penetrates the culture of the different Western nations. These homogenising events correspond, as their consequence, to resistance movements (from the right and from the left).

The adhesion to neoliberal policies is a trait of current right and far right movements (Rodríguez Araujo, 2003; Pelinka, 2017). We could call them populisms, but the concept of populism has been more frequently associated with left positions, in Latin America, while in Europe it is associated with right positions (Wodak, 2015).

According to Mudde (2019, p. 169), we are going through the fourth wave of the extreme right (from 2000 to the present), whose main characteristic is its integration and normalisation. He also suggests that the business owners, the civil society, the economists, the media and the politicians are increasingly tolerant of, and even embrace, populist right parties.

In Latin America and Europe, we can identify right populisms that, with certain traits such as “frivolity in form, pose and style”, hide something very dangerous (Pels, 2012, p. 31). According to Pels, this frivolity has allowed them to gain a leadership position in current democracies. That is why, when analysing these populisms’ rhetoric, it is important to acknowledge that their propaganda takes place through different genres, in relevant social spaces, always combining form and content, aimed at specific audiences and adapting to specific contexts (see Wodak, 2015, p. 3). Some authors like Fieschi (2004) state that the populisms’ discourse resorts more to emotions than to reason.

Maybe the most relevant feature of the right populisms’ rhetoric is building fear. In Argentina, as in other countries in Latin America and throughout the world, this fear is a perfect match for the fears of the middle classes, associated with different socio-political issues such as the gap between the rich and the poor, insecurity, lack of employment and a special dread of a different “other”—different regarding race, social class, religion, gender or any other trait that may become a potential threat (Reis de Oliveira & Lopes Batista Júnior, 2022).

Other authors uphold that, together with fear, other emotions like anger (see Smith & Lazarus, 1991) appear when we examine how these populisms spread through what we call hate speech: “Arguably, fear and anger are the emotions most frequently connected to the spread of populism” (Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza, 2017, p. 444).

Hate speech becomes, then, a trait of the right populisms’ rhetoric. Hate speech consists not only of insults or deprecations aimed at the “others” that can be present in any kind of populism (see Bolívar, 2021). Hate speech has a deeper goal: discriminating everything that is different through the creation of fear, anger and rejection (among other emotions) and producing a sort of illusion of ideological right hegemony and of belonging in the citizens’ different social strata.

In Argentina in particular, hate speech is not a new phenomenon.⁴ It has occurred during different historical moments and almost always in connection with the media (from the press, radio and television to the use of social media and platforms).

For example, during what is known as the first modern globalisation (1879–1914), we find a similar discursive attitude in the politicians and the media. Both produced hate speech that caused fear in the citizens, in what was called the generation of the 80s. We are referring here to R.

Rivarola and R. Wilmart, who were the central figures in the *Revista de Ciencias Políticas (Journal of Political Sciences)* and whose stance was one of alignment with the United States and England (see Pardo, 2000).

Something similar happened during the decade of 1940, when Peronism⁵ governed the country for the first time. The First Lady, wife of General Perón, Eva Duarte, had cancer, and hate speech against what the opposition considered a “left populism” did not take long to arrive: graffiti like “Hurrah for cancer” could be read throughout Buenos Aires.

It would seem that hate speech appears when certain groups—still not publicly acknowledged as potential political rivals to those groups already settled as pro-government and opposition—look for a place within this kind of political configuration. They position themselves at the right of the right, with an extremely radicalised discourse that is the result of their own internal instability, since they are right in the middle of an identity creation process (see Pardo, 2000). In order to create their own identity, they need “an enemy” that defines them by negative contrast (“this is not who we are”). They seek the fissures and crevices whereby they can appeal more forcefully to those unsatisfied with any political system, advocating for supposed liberties.

We can then ask, what is hate speech?

What is hate speech?

According to Kaufman (2015, p. 140), an instance of hate speech is

a dogmatic, unjustified and destructive opinion regarding certain historically discriminated people or certain individuals as members of those groups, expressed with the aim of transmitting that destructive dogma to the interlocutor or reader and to make them participate in the task of marginalizing or excluding the hated persons.

Besides a speaker and a target for hate, the architecture of hate speech requires two other groups: those who share the speaker’s beliefs about the hated group and those who disagree with those beliefs (Silva et al., 2016). Within these groups, we can find important variations concerning the proximity (or lack thereof) to the manifested hatred. This violence does not have a unique perpetrating subject; it can be indirectly aimed at another group, seeking adherence, in turn, to yet another group (Fumagalli, 2019, p. 5).

From a psychological perspective, “when individuals experience hate, they typically perceive their hate target as having malicious intentions and being immoral, which is accompanied by feelings of lack of control or powerlessness” (Fischer et al., 2018, p. 311). Moreover, following the same perspective, hate speech corresponds to a neoliberal, postmodern era, characterised not by love of the other but by narcissism; a system that rejects the negativity of what is different and “develops self-destructive traits” (Byun-Chul, 2017, p. 10).

Concerning its features, hate speech creates archetypical figures like the Enemy.

The enemy becomes the focus of every destructive impulse and a social consensus on this figure is established; this consensus is negative but, at the same time, can produce social adherence. The effectiveness of the figure of the enemy is, precisely, in direct proportion to its capacity for producing that adherence and, at the same time, for dispelling deliberation and argumentation.

(Pardo, 2022b); (Pardo & Noblia, 2015)

“Shared hatred gives the illusion of unanimity and homogeneity

(Pardo, 2021, p. 132)

In turn, hate speech can be the object of analysis in discourse studies about emotions (Ekman, 1992; Solomon, 2008). Emotions are not irrational; they can be distinguished from the instinctive (hunger, thirst, physical pain), that is from sensations. Emotions are framed within rationality because they are intentionally oriented towards an object. For Charaudeau (2011, p. n/n)

Hate that is manifested in a subject is not the simple result of a drive; it is not measured only in relation with an inflammatory sensation due to an excess of adrenaline, but it is linked with a representation of an object the subject is oriented towards or seeks to combat.

Also,

hate feelings are often accompanied by other negative emotions, maybe especially because hate is such an intense feeling . . . hate is characterized by appraisals that imply a stable perception of a person or group and thus the incapability to change the extremely negative characteristics attributed to the target of hate.

(Fischer et al., 2018, pp. 310–311)

For this reason, hate has been considered from two perspectives in emotion studies: as a differentiated emotion or as a “family” (Ekman, 1992) that involves other emotions like “fear, anger, or [it can] arise from a very deep love bond, among others” (Rosemberg, 2019, p. 81). For the theory of affective intelligence (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000), emotional experiences with the same value tend to correlate, that is, negative feelings like rage, anger and fear seem to coexist when their levels are measured between individuals and situations (see Aumer-Ryan & Hatfield, 2007).

As Bolívar (2021, p. 53) points out, emotions “have strategic, rhetorical and argumentative functions (seducing, inducing, persuading, convincing) and can be described in different text types and interactive oral and written corpus”.

Under this definition, instances of hate speech would be expected to be true argumentative masterpieces, even if their chains of reasoning were very weak and easily refutable. In the case of the television editorial we will analyse, we will see how the argumentation is articulated and how this discourse becomes persuasive and even coercive. On the other hand, digital comments that qualify as hate speech entail a very poor and Manichaean argumentation (see Pardo, 2021, 2022a).

Hate speech and the media

We know that the current media are not mere transmitters of news; they are politically used to achieve certain goals. In Argentina, the media are monopolised to a very high degree. Air and cable channels, and the print and digital press, ideologically respond to powerful economic and political groups with a right ideology (Pagliarone & Quiroga, 2021). What 50 years ago could go unnoticed concerning each medium’s ideological affiliation, today responds to what is known as “militant media” or non-neutral journalism, with journalists who operate as political schemers. These days, one chooses a medium according to its ideology. The discourse of love, hope and trust elaborated during Cristina Kirchner’s government⁶ was opposed by an increasingly stronger and more intense discourse of hate created by the right-wing parties that later assumed the government

through Mauricio Macri. Both governments can be identified with two types of populism: Cristina Kirchner's, related to Peronism-Kirchnerism, with a centre-left orientation; and Macri's, related to right-wing populism, which is now further oriented to the far right.

According to Sengul (2020, p. 1), the interest in the populist phenomenon shown by academia and the media has its origins in the US election won by Donald Trump and in the United Kingdom's decision to exit the European Union; and, even though academia and the media tend to "exaggerate" populist successes, there is no doubt that populism is presenting significant challenges to contemporary liberal democracies.

One of these challenges, as pointed out by Wodak (2020), is that, in this fourth wave of the extreme right, there is a great change in the limits of what can be said, and thus content that was formally considered taboo has now been normalised. This possibility of saying anything—pushing the limits of that which, up to now, could not be said—is what enables the peak of hate speech in political propaganda. It is remarkable how political or news television programmes in these times display an overt ideological message. Although this is not something new, many journalists today are considered as political plotters rather than journalists. Their role is to disseminate a particular ideology. Digital platforms, as well as social media, also reproduce what takes place in television media; in this way, YouTube specially acts like a catalyst for those news or reports that television channels want to make available for a particular audience prone to debate (Pardo, 2022a).

One function of the media today, including television and social media, is to persuade the audience into a lifestyle (an ideology) that, in the case of right and extreme right populisms, is frivolous in its form, pose and style (as we mentioned previously). The Macrist⁷ political meetings, with their yellow balloons, urban music and dancing, are an excellent example of this. This demonstration combines the political and the media (propaganda).

The retransmission of these meetings on every channel akin to this right and extreme right ideology seeks to pervade and persuade the citizens into a view of life and a lifestyle, through a sweetened version of problems, with false solutions based more on individual than on collective action; without going deeper into conflictive issues such as human rights, feminisms and the situation of the indigenous people, among others. All these topics are belittled, negated and suspected of being "the progressive governments' businesses". The task of these instances of hate speech is to persuade on the basis of this terrain, conquered after many decades by means of the media.

At this point, it is worth clarifying what we understand by "persuasion": "Persuasion is a phenomenon approached ages ago by language-related studies. Its immediate antecedent was rhetoric, which has always been essentially linked to politics" (Pardo, 2000, p. 95).

The fact is *persuading* entails the essential idea that there is another who must be convinced. S/he who seeks to persuade others, talks or writes about his/hers ideals, convictions, tastes, etc. These need not necessarily have originated with him/her; s/he may be reproducing other people's value(s) to which s/he has adhered (through persuasion). Thus *a persuasive chain* is formed.

(Pardo, 2000, p. 96)

As Reardon (1983) would have put it, the Other is a potential threat, insofar as they do not belong to the same group that decides or wants to persuade them.

This is why, although (from a gradualist view of linguistic resources and strategies) persuasion is an exacerbation of argumentation; when it is linked to hate speech, it becomes an explosive cocktail. One persuades through hate and discrimination of different groups (regarding their gender, race, religion, etc.), and for that one must resort to different emotions (fear, anger, rage,

frustration) that go through television screens and the anonymity of social media and platforms (Mathew et al., 2019).

Social media and digital platforms like YouTube make way for a new genre: the digital comment. In general terms, we can define digital comments as

a-synchronous interactive exchanges that are organized in a time line, according to the order of arrival, and that are linked to a piece of news, in a marginal position, as a sort of footnote in the newspaper's page. Their organization and structure are similar to those of blogs: their point of departure is a text and a space where comments are allowed. Each incoming comment can be answered in general or specifically aimed at an interlocutor through a mechanism that consists in placing an at symbol followed by the user's name.

(Pardo & Noblia, 2015, p. 122)

Joining television to digital platforms like YouTube, and to digital comments in those platforms or in social media like Facebook, X and Instagram, among others, are excellent means for propaganda. Through these means, ideas or ideologies are spread; when canned in hate speech, they are easily reproduced because the chains of reasoning they use are very labile, repetitive and easily fit in the common sense; they are easy to memorise and emotionally motivating in terms of erecting a false identity on the basis of the discrimination of the “other” (that one who is not me).

Methodology and linguistic theories: How to analyse hate speech?

Before we begin with the analysis of the corpus, I would like to clarify some points. In the first place, the methodology I use is mainly qualitative because this is the only way to handle case studies. And I speak of case studies because each case involves countless historical, sociological, economic, political and cultural particularities. In the second place, this is the reason why each case, being unique, cannot be compared to any other. At best, they can be contrasted to gain some notions about what happens with apparently similar phenomena. In the third place, working with discourse⁸ (understood in its various definitions) does not mean forgetting the analysis of linguistic forms, i.e. the resources enabled by speech in order to form linguistic strategies that aim to communicate certain messages and, above all, the way socio-discursive representations take shape in a particular speech, at a precise moment. If there is a place where culture is constructed and reproduced, it is language and its uses. Ignoring this fact means disregarding the importance that different languages (acknowledged as such or dominated) have in the configuration of individuals' identities. In the fourth place, I am positive that every cultural movement necessarily entails decolonial thought and action (Pardo, 2022b). For countries such as those that make up Latin America, culture is necessarily tied to a counter-movement or, in other words, to a necessary deconstruction of knowledge and being.

In the fifth and last place, I have decided to use different theories and the method I have developed (synchronic-diachronic method for the linguistic analysis of texts; lexical fields and arguments, reformulated and adapted to the context, in this case, the Argentinean context) because they constitute a reflection based on a deep analysis of different genres, especially Argentinean and other Latin American genres. Undoubtedly, recognising the double hermeneutic process (my academic training and my training outside the academy) to which any researcher is subjected influences every choice I have made for the analysis. I am also aware of the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2017) that speaks to me as a Latina woman, with a European-Latin American instruction and a component of strong deconstruction and social work in my country and others. Having clarified

these points, I will now define and comment on the theories and the synchronic-diachronic method for the linguistic analysis of texts, through which the analysis will be made.

Synchronic-diachronic method for the linguistic analysis of texts

For the linguistic analysis I will employ the synchronic-diachronic method for the linguistic analysis of texts (henceforth SDMLAT) (Pardo, 2011). The SDMLAT is at the same time a basic theory and a method and has been applied to other languages like English (Pardo & Lorenzo-Dus, 2010; Prendergast, 2018) and Portuguese (Resende & Marchese, 2011; Santos, 2017). Through the SDMLAT, grammaticalised and semantic-discursive categories are obtained inductively. Both kinds of categories express the way in which social subjects know and order the world. *Categorising* is the process by which an individual assigns to another, to an object or a situation a series of properties that discursively construct that object, situation or other. This categorisation is intimately connected with the socio-discursive representations that we—in this case, in Argentina—share in our community. Many of them are also shared by some Latin American communities; we have observed similarities and differences among them, always considering each case and its particularities in the context of our collective work in the Latin American Network of Discourse Studies on Extreme Poverty (REDLAD).⁹

The SDMLAT is “relative to meaning” (Pardo, 2011, p. 69) because it is oriented to what discourse intends to communicate (rather than to an exclusively syntactic-grammatical view). The result of the categorising operation, that is, what is considered a completed categorisation, does not emerge from a linear process of analysis but from successive processes of revising and recategorising.

The nature of the discursive categories, as was mentioned, is *grammaticalised* or *semantic-discursive*. The *grammaticalised categories* are *pragmatic operator (PO)*, *speaker-protagonist (S-P)*, *actor/s*, *value nexus (VN)*, *time* and *space*. In language use, these categories are compulsory because a sender cannot do without them in the construction of discourse; therefore, they have a high frequency of appearance in different genres. Unlike grammaticalised categories, semantic-discursive categories concern the particular universe of meaning in each discourse and, therefore, express its more creative aspect. Also for this reason, they have a greater degree of variability. Both grammaticalised and semantic-discursive categories constitute the way in which people represent, in discourse, their vision of the world. Given this fact, I consider that applying the SDMLAT helps us to make visible the socio-discursive representations of an endogroup and, therefore, its culture.

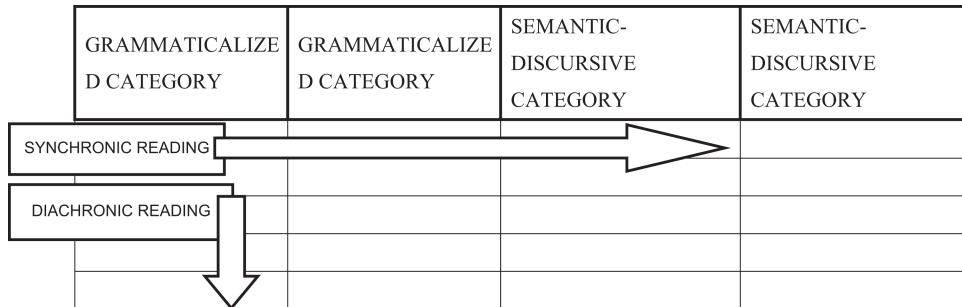
The grammaticalised categories are defined as follows:

Speaker-protagonist (S-P): any pronominal person or nominal referent that assumes the text’s central argument, from which other arguments are developed; instantiated in the actor category/ies.

Value nexus 1 (VN1): it manifests the actions and states related to the S-P category. It can correspond to finite or non-finite verbs, nominalisations or prepositional phrases expressing purpose, among other options.

Actor/s: any pronominal person or nominal referent that takes the opposite arguments to the one developed through the S-P category.

Value nexus 2, 3 . . . (VN2, VN3 . . .): they manifest the actions and states related to the actor category/ies. They can correspond to finite or non-finite verbs, nominalisations or prepositional phrases expressing purpose, among other options.



Argumentation

Figure 20.1 Synchronic and diachronic reading

Source: Pardo, Marchese & Soich, 2020

Time and Space: the time and space categories respond to the spatiotemporal orientation inherent to any text.

Pragmatic operator (PO): it has different functions, such as telling the listener or reader how to interpret an utterance,¹⁰ connecting utterances or challenging or questioning the listener or reader.

Negation (Neg.): it is a “floating” category, as it can appear negating a verb (“I do *not* want to”) or a word (“unnecessary”), and it does not have the same degree of compulsiveness as the other categories.

As the method’s name shows (*synchronic-diachronic* method), the result of its application makes it possible to examine the text synchronically (across the utterance) and diachronically (how categories are semantically charged in the unfolding of discourse). These two readings are illustrated by Figure 20.1.

Argumentation

In the theory developed in the SDMLAT, argumentation is a principle of language. Whenever we speak, we argue; though this argumentation varies along a continuum that goes from a lesser to a higher degree in a scale of “argumentativity”, in the terms of Lavandera (1992). It could be said, then, that all texts possess some degree of argumentativity, where the extreme with the highest frequency of use of argumentative resources and strategies corresponds to rhetoric (as a genre) (Pardo, 2011).

In the case that occupies us here, we will analyse the following arguments (I will only define those that appear in the analysed editorial):

- *Ad ignorantiam:* arguments that resort to ignorance, hence not displaying proofs or evidences.
- Authority: those arguments that intend to provide a frame of validity for what is asserted.
- Authoritarian or threatening: those arguments that intend to instil fear in the “them” group. They include order or deontic verbs and forms of intimidation aimed at others.
- *Ad hominem:* an argument is considered false on the basis of discrediting its emitter.

At the same time, we can identify argumentative paradigms that reveal the stance of the S-P, and also the stance of the voices (realised in the grammaticalised category/ies actor/s) that dialogue with it internally or externally, and which can support (or not) its wishes, goals, proposals, etc.

The analysis begins by identifying two large semantic fields—we define “semantic field” as a group of lexemes that share related meanings, also called semantic nodes (Halliday, 1978). Semantic fields give us a general idea about the themes that circulate in a certain situational, historical and cultural context, without having to resort to a priori ideas, intuitions based solely on content or general appreciations that have little to do with one of discourse’s main components: speech.

Corpus and ethnography

This work is part of the research project I direct, entitled *Violence and infringed rights: discourse in action*. The corpus comprises 12 television editorials reproduced in YouTube, from different right and extreme right journalists; among them is the editorial used as an example in this chapter. There are also an average of ten comments for each editorial, of which we will consider only two here.

The selected editorial belongs to the television channel América. Together with others like La Nación+, TN and Canal 26, this is a cable channel that chiefly broadcasts news. These channels’ owners make up huge monopolies as they own air channels and digital and print newspapers; some of their journalists have come into political offices. The ideology is clear: they are right channels that flirt, very frequently, with the extreme right.

This programme, *Viviane con vos*, was reproduced by different YouTube users. Its original date is 12/17/2021. This reproduction allows it to have digital comments.¹¹

It is important to highlight that this editorial’s title: “Argentina: ruleta rusa” (“Argentina: Russian roulette”) is an almost exact copy of the title from an editorial made by Tato Young on September 7, 2020, on channel La Nación+: “La ruleta rusa es Argentina” (“The Russian roulette is Argentina”).¹²

This mechanism of repeating themes, titles, hashtags, etc. between news programmes or programmes with similar ideologies characterises the way the right media reproduce, over and over, values, ideas and topics they seek to position among the citizens.

The person in charge of this editorial is Viviana Canosa, a panellist who has also acted as a presenter and show business commentator and has hosted a political programme for some years now. She openly displays anti-vaccines, anti-feminist and anti-abortion positions and has supported Macri’s government (its hard wing)¹³ and other politicians like Milei.¹⁴

Linguistic analysis

The Canosa case

Viviana Canosa (henceforth VC) reads during her whole television editorial. Her discourse resorts to different emotions like rage, anger and fear, building a family of emotions that constitute an instance of hate speech. It should be noticed that hate speech has an argumentative quality and, in this case, that aspect is exacerbated, as it aims to be persuasive (Pardo, 2001). It intends to persuade the viewers about a series of topics that link VC’s discourse with an extreme neoliberal discourse, which is also anti-vaccine, anti-abortion and anti-feminist. Through persuasive hate speech, VC will try to instil fear in her audience.¹⁵

As we mentioned before, this discourse was titled by VC: “Argentina: Russian roulette”. She repeats the words “Russian roulette” 20 times during the 20 minutes and 56 seconds of her editorial, an average of once per minute. This repetition aims at dividing a series of topics that she will dissect throughout her editorial.

These topics are conjoined through VC’s use of two semantic fields: the threat produced by the fear of dying, and the emotional stimulation on the basis of rage, dissatisfaction and hate. To show the veracity of her account, she adds narratives as a way of presenting the so-called “evidence”, in terms of Labov and Waletzky (1967), for claiming the truth of what is being argued (arguments *ad ignorantiam*). She also includes as evidence videos showing disputes between different political candidates and a series of accounts with no specifications, again arguments *ad ignorantiam*: “I can’t tell you exactly how much because I don’t have the exact amount, but it’s many millions”; “I ask that you help me, in the social media, saying how much this manger cost, because even if you get it from the worst place in the planet it’s expensive, no matter how much you pay for it” (regarding the cost of a manger that was installed outside of the Government House). The narratives she includes are chiefly two, according to their order of exposition: (a) a case in the city of Buenos Aires, where a young man beat a car park keeper, putting him in a coma, because he had supposedly scratched or dented his car. This case is presented as an insecurity case, even if it is not, given that it was not a theft, a murder attempt or other crime; and (b) an event that took place in the province of Tucumán, where the COVID-19 vaccine is compulsory. There a 3-year-old girl was vaccinated and died some days later. This second narrative intends to prove that the covid vaccine should not be compulsory and that it is not effective but, on the contrary, dangerous; even though it was confirmed that the child suffered from cardiac and pulmonary issues way before getting the vaccine, as the autopsy revealed.

Semantic fields and argumentation

Moving further into the analysis, this editorial employs mainly two semantic fields, one connected with the fear of dying, the other with rage at different situations. With the first semantic field, the hearer feels threatened by situations that can lead to death, which frightens them. The second semantic field creates a state of dissatisfaction that leads to hatred. Her discourse constantly resorts to these two negative emotions.

Let us see now which phrases from the editorial make up each semantic field (see the Table 20.1) and what arguments are used.¹⁶

As can be seen, most of these are authoritarian (AU), authority (AA) or threatening (TA) arguments, as they are intended to instil fear, especially through the idea that any of our actions can lead us to death due to insecurity. We also find some *ad hominem* (AH) arguments that discredit the argument of an opposing speaker (for example: *the budget doodled by Zaraza*).

An argumentation that is so authoritarian (see authoritarian arguments), so intimidating (see threatening arguments) and full of emotional justifications about why Argentina is a Russian roulette, acts like a catalyst for common sense (in the worst sense of this term).

Insults aimed at those who are seen as enemies—in this case, the government—could only be expected: hence expressions like “shameless”, “hypocrites”, “Zaraza”, “my balls” and “in heat”. In the same way, in a transitive aggression, the manger is insulted as “pedorro” because it was installed by the government.

It is also important to point out that all the arguments presented there are difficult to prove (arguments *ad ignorantiam*). For example, questions like: “How are these wills bought?” referring

Table 20.1 Semantic fields

<i>Semantic field involving threat, in order to instil fear.</i>	<i>Semantic field involving rage, in order to produce a state of dissatisfaction and hatred.</i>
Authority arguments (AA), Authoritarian arguments (AU), Threatening arguments (TA) and <i>Ad ignorantiam</i> arguments (AI).	Authority arguments (AA), Authoritarian arguments (AU), Threatening arguments (TA), <i>Ad hominem</i> (AH) and <i>Ad ignorantiam</i> arguments (AI).
(AA/AU/TA/AI) You go out to work and you get killed.	(AA/AU) If you don't have money, you screw yourself (talking about education)
(AA/AU/TA/AI) The police kill you.	(AU/AI) How are these wills bought? (talking about Justice)
(AA/AU/TA/AI) Your life is worthless . . .	(AA/AU/AI) We have legalised corruption. We said so yesterday with Miguel Bosse, we said so with the Dipy ¹
(AA/AU/TA/AI) Every day of our lives we play Russian roulette . . .	(AH/AI) Anyway, it's the most contradictory government in the world.
(AA/AU/TA/AI) And every now and then we shoot ourselves.	(AA/AH/AI) Look at this pedorro ² manger in the government house, pedorro manger . . . (AA/AH/AI) and the . . . one can clearly tell that nobody loves baby Jesus. (AA/AH) The only thing they want to do is business. (AA/AH/AI) I'm telling Alberto Fernández, Fabiola or everyone, if baby Jesus had been around there, the manger would've preferred that the voice of abortion didn't get out. (AH) Shameless, hypocrites. (AA) Manger. (AA) Manger, baby Jesus, Christmas. (AA) I will never forget that the law was passed precisely at Christmas, at Christmas Eve. (AA/AI) And they put up a manger that, on top of that, cost millions. (AA/AI) I can't tell you exactly how much because I don't have the exact amount, but it's many millions.
(AA/TA/AI) We have a capacity for hurting ourselves, as Argentineans, which is astounding . . .	(AA/AI) There's not enough money, the people are hungry. (AA/AI) The children he cares so much about are not eating.
(AA/TA/AI) . . . they kill you over a cell phone . . .	(AA/AH/AI) Lying budget doodled by minister Zaraza ³
(AA/TA/AI) . . . they kill you because of your face . . .	(AA/AH/AI) Sanitary pass, my balls.
(AA/TA/AI) Why do we have to leave our houses and never know whether we'll get to our workplace on time?	(AA/AH/AI) A Deputy in heat [alzada], trying to pick up Massa, ⁴ a thing
	(AA/AH/AI) the budget doodled by Zaraza and the government

¹ She is using Miguel Bosse and the Dipy as authority arguments. The former is a Panamanian musician and actor, naturalized as Spanish and Italian. The Dipy is a *cumbia* singer, whose ideology is in alignment with VC's.

² An insult that indicates something is of little value.

³ In this case, *zaraza* is said of someone who argues with no evidence or certainties at all.

⁴ Massa is the current president of the Argentinean Honourable Chamber of Deputies and is contrary to VC's ideological stance.

to justice, imply acts of corruption that, due to their generalisation, are never susceptible to demonstration. The same happens with “We have legalized corruption”, “it’s the **most contradictory** government in the world” or “one can clearly tell that nobody loves baby Jesus”. Thus assertions that imply illicit acts or corrupt or morally dubious situations are chained to each other with no proof. This can be counted as yet another feature of hate speech. Argumentatively speaking, the claims (those assertions) do not have any grounds. Some videos and narratives are shared and presented as alleged “appraisal” or justification for some of the arguments. They are opinions turned into grounds for those theses; their function is only opposing the contrary ideological stance. Unlike other editorials that seek the opinion of renowned economists and scientists, display statistics, etc., in this case the arguments, and therefore the argumentation, do not strive for this kind of support but try to relate to what people supposedly experience emotionally (in this case hatred, rage, anger). It seeks, on the one hand, to establish empathy with the audience, and on the other, an argumentation of an emotional nature, which is discursively presented in a very weak way. Curiously, this also makes it easy to convey. One does not need proofs to accuse and to demean; so anyone, in their ignorance, can reproduce these arguments without worrying about whether or not they are true.

Thus this example—with its lexical field of fear, rage, anger and threat; with its arguments, almost all of which are *ad ignorantiam* (hence creating a logic of ignorance), together with other authority, threatening or authoritarian arguments, and with insults—fully represents what we can define as hate speech.

The analysis with the SDMLAT

A brief excerpt from the beginning of VC’s editorial is analysed as follows (see Table 20.2). This excerpt was selected because it displays many elements that characterise hate speech.

VC: u1[We play Russian roulette everyday with the security.] u2[You go out to work and they kill you over a cell phone.] u3[If you are poor or wear a cap and put on the clothes you can, the police kill you because they see your face as suspicious.] u4[Easy trigger, your life is worthless.]¹⁷

As we mentioned earlier, the editorial’s title is “Argentina: Russian roulette”. In it, VC unfolds different topics, supposedly connected with the reason why Argentina would be a Russian roulette. The first topic she develops is insecurity, an especially effective issue to instil fear in the citizens. Argumentation alludes to two different cases: (a) they kill you to steal a cell phone; (b) they kill you because they stigmatise you for being poor. Unspoken, these presuppositions are there in the text. The prejudice rooted in the text indicates that the person who steals a cell phone is poor, and the person who has no clothes, or wears clothes that stigmatise them, ends up dead by the hand of the police. In sum, this country’s state of insecurity and death is ever present.

In the SDMLAT, the text begins (u1) with the S-P and its VN1, “we play”, a majestic plural that includes VC, and then moves to other realisations of the VN1 (which can be observed in the diachronic reading) in the second person (therefore leaving VC out of these actions): “you go out to work”, “you are”, “[you] wear”, “[you] put on”, “you can” (u3), which point to another who receives the actions of insecurity. That “we play” is reinforced by the time category: “everyday”, and the game is “the security”. This first argument can already be defined as a threatening one. It puts up a scenario where the word “play” takes on a negative value, and it plays with the title of the editorial: we play “Russian roulette”. The “security” in u1 then becomes “insecurity”, and although this last word is not spoken, it is represented by an actor 2: the police—in the diachronic

Table 20.2 Application of the SDMLAT

RUSSIAN ROULETTE					
S-P	VNI	Time	Security/Police/ Actor 2	PO	VN2
u1[We u2[You you u3[If you poor or a cap the clothes you you your face as suspicious.] your life worthless.]	play Russian roulette go out to work are wear put on can, is	everyday	with the security. they over a cell phone. the police they u4[Easy trigger,	and and because	kill kill see

reading, “the security” (u1), “the police” (u3), “easy trigger”¹⁸ (u4)—who are used to killing, as can be seen in the VN2: they “kill” (u2) and “kill” (u3) when they “see” (u3) someone with a suspicious face.

The S-P is instantiated through the pronoun “you” (u2), which has a passive undertone, as it indicates the one who receives the action of killing from the ones who steal (cell phones) and from the police and also through a series of adjectives and nouns, observed in the diachronic reading in u3, which denote this S-P’s identity: they are “poor”, wear “a cap”, buy “the clothes” that they can and have a “suspicious face”. Again, there is a clear allusion to the poor.

This way, the argument in u2, “You go out to work and they kill you over a cell phone”, together with the argument in u3, “If you are poor or wear a cap and put on the clothes you can, the police kill you because they see your face as suspicious”, are threatening arguments because they set up two scenarios where the outcome is the same: death. This produces a “dead end” situation that increases the feeling of fear.

In the end, “your life is worthless”, these realisations in u4 act as a coda that ends the first topic, in some way resuming this argumentation’s filler, which is “Argentina: Russian roulette”.

Thus two argumentative paradigms (grey columns) are opposed, where the actor 2 represents insecurity and the S-P represents a poor person with stigmatising, suspicious traits. This opposition shows a very precarious argumentation, playing with opposites that outline prejudices firmly established in the common sense. These prejudices perfectly match a widespread fear in society: fear of the other, of the poor, of the one that bears a “suspicious face”, where the thief and the police are hard to discern, so that everyone can be a suspect and a possible target of death (by shooting), or of hate speech as a “defence mode”. By playing with these emotions—fear, insecurity, mistrust—the right cultivates hate speech.

Digital comments on the editorial

This editorial has 1079 views and only nine comments. We will now analyse two brief comments by way of example:

Guillermo Noya

3 months ago

Life sentence for the governor and all his henchmen and “masters”

<i>SENTENCE</i>	<i>S-P</i>
u1[Life sentence	for the governor and all his henchmen and “masters” . . .]

The person making this comment (Guillermo Noya) is responding in a general way, with anger, with stigmatising words like “henchmen” and “masters”, creating a piece of hate speech that in some way condenses the topics VC developed during her editorial. He uses *ad ignorantiam* and *ad hominem* arguments against the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, asking for “life sentence” for them, through an argument that represents a threat.

In the SDMLAT, the comment consists of only one utterance and two categories, one grammaticalised (S-P) and the other semantic-discursive, which we can call “Sentence”. The omission of the verb (which could be “I want”, “I wish” or their first person plural version) enables a direct connection between the sentence and the different government agents that are treated as corrupt. The comment does not justify with arguments the reason for that sentence; it just remains a sort of exhortative request, with the preconception that all governors are thieves or corrupt. The fact that there are so few semantic-discursive categories shows the text’s poverty and scant creativity.

Maricel Quiroga

3 months ago

My doctor told me “This is a lottery”



<i>S-P</i>	<i>ACTOR 1</i>	<i>VN2</i>	<i>VACCINE</i>	<i>VN3</i>
u1[My me	doctor	told	“This a lottery”] <doubt emojis>	is

Here Maricel Quiroga resumes VC’s argument about vaccines, adding an authority argument (she brings in her doctor’s voice) which indicates that getting vaccinated is “a lottery”. Then she places three emojis that indicate doubt, reasserting her stance on vaccines. Maricel’s comment reproduces part of what VC maintains via her anti-vaccine posture. The S-P does not display any action (it has no VN1); it is placed in a position that is only possessive (“my doctor”) or passive (“told me”). There are no oppositional argumentative paradigms in the comment because it acts as support for VC’s sayings.

In both comments, we observe that what is being resumed is hatred. There is no need to repeat VC’s arguments: reinforcing the motives to feel angry or disappointed is enough. In the first case, with the government’s supposed corruption; in the second case, with the inefficiency of vaccines. It is not necessary to incorporate any specific knowledge; expressing hatred is all it takes. As we

said earlier, this is what facilitates the reproduction of hate speech. What connects the editorial and the comments, and the comments between themselves, giving them a sense of belonging and of ideological homogeneity, is precisely sharing the emotion of hatred.

By way of a synthesis

In this work, I tried to answer the following questions: (a) Why study hate speech? (b) What is hate speech? (c) How is hate speech constructed?

We have observed that the construction of hate speech in Argentinean and probably in Latin American media, can require a lexical field connected with fear, dread, threats, rage, unhappiness and anger, exposing the emotions of the one who creates it. In argumentative terms, the following arguments are necessary: *ad ignorantiam*, authority, *ad hominem*, threatening and defensive, mainly for encouraging those emotions. The claims are presented through authoritarian (axiomatic) arguments, and different opinions or narratives about indemonstrable or untrustworthy facts are used. The communicative goal of these emotions, besides deepening the political rift between left and right populism already at work in our country, is making those aligned to the right fear the advance of left populisms currently taking place in Latin America (the triumphs of Boric in Chile, Petro in Colombia, Luis Arce in Bolivia and López Obrador in Mexico).

The argumentative paradigms in the example of an Argentinean television editorial show basic oppositions, such as the one observed in the editorial example, of the kind “insecurity = presence of the poor”. Stigmatisation of historically denigrated groups, such as the poor, is another characteristic of hate speech. Undoubtedly, the choice of these oppositions shows a relevant theme in Argentina, shared, with its particularities, by other Latin American countries. It is an oppositional construction that the right exploits profusely in order to get more votes.

In the digital comments, we can see that reproduction does not have as its object VC's arguments but the emotions conveyed by the editorial, like rage, fear and anger.

Behind the hate speech of the right, there is a supposed argumentative weakness that resorts to emotions in order to create empathy, without going into complex justifications, without delving deeper into an issue or having any knowledge about it; this is precisely the most powerful aspect of this speech because it facilitates its reproduction. Since it only involves barely rationalised emotions, this reproduction of hate does not require the citizens to do any kind of inspection, and thus viralises prejudices, fake news and the values that the monopolistic media of the Argentinean right seek to install, partly as agenda and partly with the aim of destabilising those governments that displease them.

This way, any person can create a piece of hate speech, as no knowledge is necessary. They are very simple theories about controversial problems of everyday life in Argentina, like vaccines, the Christmas manger, insecurity and corruption, connected with emotions like rage or anger against a group or person who are the objects of attempted denigration.

As Klempner (2001 [1975]) claims, fascism¹⁹ needs to keep the masses ignorant; for this goal, the same simplistic theories must be repeated so that they cannot be rebutted.

Notes

1 The title of this work plays with the wonderful 1980 book by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson: *Metaphors we live by*.

2 This research is supported by the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) through the PIP project directed by me: *Violence and infringed rights: discourse in action*.

- 3 In Latin America, we prefer to talk about “decolonial” instead of “cultural” analyses, since our primary task is deconstructing the cultures that have colonized our lives, experiences and knowledge.Godoy y Gómez, 2020; Pardo, 2022).
- 4 I cannot contrast my research with all the other cultures of the world, but we know that the characteristics of certain events are on the one hand typical of a culture and, on the other, more universal or Western, given the history of colonization of our countries.
- 5 Peronism is a political movement created by Lieutenant General Perón, who was president of Argentina for three periods: 1946–1952, 1952–1955 and 1973–1974. Although the ideology of Peronism has changed over the course of time, it is considered a populist government inclined to the left.
- 6 This was not the only political movement in Latin America that resorted to an almost poetic discourse of love. Subcommander Marcos, the leader of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Chiapas, Mexico), is notorious for his profoundly poetic discourse.
- 7 Mauricio Macri is an engineer and the former president of Argentina during the 2015–2019 period, representing *Juntos por el Cambio* (*Together for Change*), a coalition of center and right groups. His presidency was mainly characterized by the signing of the largest debt burden with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Argentinean history, as well as the largest loan given by that organization. This debt increased poverty and homelessness in Argentina, which lead to M. Macri not being reelected.
- 8 While I agree with Shi-xu's (in this handbook) definition of what discourse is, I believe that language is the core of any discursive definition. It is for this reason that a discursive analysis without the linguistic aspects lacks its fundamental aspect: speech.
- 9 The REDLAD was born in 2005 with the aim of analysing the poverty situation our countries (as well as the world in that moment) were subjected to, with a 54% of local and global poverty. The REDLAD is composed of research teams in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Dominican Republic.
- 10 An *utterance* is defined as a minimal unit of analysis that is delimited by the occurrence of a theme and a rheme, as well as by long pauses and intonation (in oral speech) or by the presence of different punctuation marks (in writing) (Pardo, 1996, 2011).
- 11 YouTube/Editorial Viviana Canosa Argentina: Ruleta Rusa Viviana con vos A24 (17/12/2021)—Bing video.
- 12 Tato Young: La ruleta rusa es Argentina—Editorial.
- 13 *Juntos por el Cambio* (a coalition of the PRO party with other groups) contains two postures: (a) the so called “doves”, more moderated within the right and more willing to engage in dialogue with the opposition, and (b) the so called “hawks”, with harder and more extreme postures, more willing to dialogue with other groups from the right and the far right.
- 14 Javier Milei has a degree in economy and is the candidate and leader of the coalition *Libertad avanza* (*Liberty advances*). Positioned to the right of PRO and *Juntos por el cambio*, he defines himself as a libertarian. He is the new President of Argentina.
- 15 By “audience” I mean both the television viewers and those who receive the editorial through the YouTube platform.
- 16 I recommend accompanying the reading of this chapter with watching the video.
- 17 The letter “u” is an abbreviation for “utterance”.
- 18 A way of indicating that the police shoot to kill in any circumstance, especially at people who may look suspicious to them.
- 19 Although it is difficult to define what fascism or neofascism are, and there are many contradicting opinions on the subject, many traits of fascist language can be found in the right's and the extreme right's discourses today.

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21

ANONYMITY AND RADICALISATION IN ARGENTINIAN SOCIAL MEDIA

Identity as a strategy for political dispute

Maria Valentina Noblía

Introduction

The emergence of the internet as an alternative space for human activity implied a profound cultural change for social relations. In the early days of the network, the most representative expression of this new sphere was positive and augured a communitarian, decentralised, democratic world: the “virtual community”. This metaphor failed to acknowledge that this community enabled the advent of radicalised groups and, with them, propaganda and hate speech (Zickmund, 1997). The successive spaces activated by the internet were alternative territories to public spheres, which allowed individuals or groups to openly express their affiliation to racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, sexist, homophobic and other ideologies. Under the protection of freedom of expression and hidden in anonymity or pseudonymity, the actions of these individuals and groups were consolidated.

In Argentina, the integration of social networks into the digital media system and the convergence with the mass media was vertiginous and dialectic. In the case of X¹, the characteristics of these messages, in particular their brevity, allowed for immediate insertion in the mass media as quotes or headlines, conditioning their agenda or operating as an archive (Gallardo Paúls and Enguix Oliver, 2016). On the other hand, the news circulating in the mass media found a privileged space for dissemination in this social network, generating a phenomenon of bidirectional metacommunication interdependence (Mangone and Warley, 2015; Aruguete, 2016). At present, social networks are the arena where the public agenda is debated. But they are also the domain for the circulation of radicalised discourse, which in other public spheres would be censored. The dynamics of the networks, punctuated by haters and heated debates, constitute a fertile space for these groups, linked with ideological lines associated with positions of alt-right (Hawley, 2017), where they debate about key topics such as work, ethnicities, education, immigration, security and human rights policies, like abortion or homosexual marriage. These groups are characterised by not having a clearly defined public political stance. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the coexistence of some right ideological formations linked, on the one hand, to conservative-liberal lines and, on the other hand, to anti-liberal nationalist lines. These positions argue and oppose each other, seeking to shape a new right alternative political-ideological position.

These groups are very active in social media, where they openly invoke right positions and align with European or American Alt-Right movements (Hawley, 2017), whose precepts they recontextualise, articulating new discursive orders (Fairclough, 2006), which combine new discourses, practices and identities with those of existing local right-wing groups, from which they begin to fight for a place in the political discussion.

This chapter aims to analyse the way these (mainly) anonymous groups present themselves as political alternatives, that challenge not only the Argentinian left and progressivism (Stefanoni, 2021), but mainly the other right positions, by strategically focusing on group identities. More specifically, we are interested in examining how the proponents of these groups calculatedly configure an identity and an authorial positioning in order to contest and legitimise a new leadership of the national right.

To do so, we will first present the historical context of the right-wing movements in Argentina, focusing on the current expressions of the alternative right, in particular the emergence of the libertarian movement, in order to offer a general overview of the subject. We will then present the theoretical and methodological approach and the corpus selected for this work, followed by the proposed analysis and the conclusions.

The (new) right-wing movements in Argentina

The right-wing political phenomenon in Argentina is complex and long standing. It emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, and continued throughout the century through various political and ideological formulations and personifications: from nationalism and the first dictatorship, which began with the coup d'état of José Félix Uriburu in 1930, the successive coups d'état, the right-wing terrorist organisations of the 1960s and 1970s (Tacuara and the Triple A), the coup that gave rise to the last military dictatorship in 1976 (Finchelstein, 2016, pp. 20–21) and the current expressions of libertarianism (Stefanoni, 2021, pp. 97–102).

They can be characterised, in a very general way, as those positions that

[react] to the egalitarian and liberating political tendencies of the moment—whatever these may be—and other factors [they] believe are undermining the socioeconomic order . . . and that weaken respect for authority, private property, cherished traditions and the particularities of family, locality, and nation.

(McGee Deutsch, 2005, p. 21)

They include positions that are not monolithic, ranging from conservative or moderate opponents of change, reactionaries seeking to restore the past and fascists or counterrevolutionaries, defined by their radicalism and violence (McGee Deutsch, 2005, pp. 22–23).

In our country two stages can be recognised, delimited by a particular historical event: the First World War. The old right is marked by its acceptance of representative government and some other liberal principles; the new right reacts against electoral politics and rejects the idea of the civil rights of the French Revolution, universal suffrage and the welfare state (McGee Deutsch, 2005, p. 22). Within this framework, the expressions of the extreme right were the most violently opposed to egalitarianism and were defined by a gender rhetoric (McGee Deutsch, 2005, p. 23) through which they identified themselves as “masculine” movements in terms of strength and in opposition to women, who were considered “weak”. It was this line that crucially influenced

Argentine governments from 1930 to 1980, associated with nationalism, the church and the upper class.

At present, the scenario has become even more complex with the emergence on the international stage of the new right or alternative right (alt-right) linked to white nationalism and with a clear philo-Nazi affiliation. Up until very recently, Argentina seemed to have remained on the fringes of the radical right-wing movements that are firmly rooted in Europe and the United States. However, these radical, authoritarian, nationalist, conservative, xenophobic and populist expressions (Traverso, 2018, pp. 11–12) have begun to grow in the country, acquiring an increasing presence in networks and media.

In Argentina, one of its most consolidated expressions is the libertarian movement, whose appeal enabled it to take part in the last elections, winning third place in the legislative seats of the city of Buenos Aires. Stefanoni (2021, p. 98) establishes the emergence of this movement in 2015, linked to the figure of the economist Javier Milei as the promoter of a “series of libertarian and even anarcho-capitalist topics, in a country with no such contempt for the state”.

This movement is characterised (Stefanoni, 2021, pp. 97–100) by groups of young people, including pre-adolescents, that

- present themselves as “rebels” against the status quo;
- support positions that combine libertarian and reactionary ideas;
- are engaged in a cultural war against feminism and, more broadly, progressivism;
- adhere to the “light blue” movement, i.e. they oppose the legalisation of abortion (“the green” movement);
- advocate for a pro-dictatorship revision of the 1970s;
- follow the ideas of John Locke, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek and Murray Rothbard.

This libertarian movement has been growing by expanding the discourses of the extreme right, gaining wide acceptance among young people who are dissatisfied with a political system that does not provide solutions for the constant crises. Along with these manifestations, in turn, other conservative right-wing positions have been converging, which share the “discomfort with democracy and imagine post-democratic forms capable of avoiding the demagogic of politicians” (Stefanoni, 2021, p. 102).

These groups or small radicalised nationalist networks, which are opponents of globalisation yet subject to its logics and instruments, which have no concrete leaders or defined programmes, are contesting the space of the alternative right. For them, the entire political spectrum ranging from the centre-left to the centre-right, including some of the more radical proponents, represent “the system”, “the established order” and what must be fought against. They are defined by a reactive gesture as the identity mark of a generation that must stand out and build an alternative leadership to fill this vacant space.

Methodology and analysis

The methodology used for the development of this work is qualitative (Strauss and Corbin, 2002): it aims to understand the action, interaction and representation of the participants as social actors, based on texts as instances of concrete discursive practices, in the framework of the situation defined by the social actor themselves and the meaning they attribute to their behaviour. We also consider identity as a social and cultural process that occurs in the framework of interaction, based on the cooperative work of the participants (Noblía, 2012, p. 154).

The research carried out involved the following steps:

- An ethnographic survey (Hine, 2000) on social networks, taking as a starting point the tracking of keywords linked to right-wing discourses. The first step was carried out on the social networks X, Reddit and 4Chan, where the exchanges of symbols, images and recurrent texts of right-wing positions were systematically traced.
- On the basis of this survey, taking Milroy and Milroy's (1985) concept of social network as a reference point, the participants and their contacts were identified. In this work, the analysis of pseudonyms was fundamental because through them it was possible to follow the trajectory of those who were censored (suspended) by the network itself, on the grounds of disseminating discriminatory and violent content (Noblía, Gershanik y Renato, 2022).
- The corpus of texts was obtained from this network of participants, between 2018–2021, selecting those with the greatest impact on opinion formation and reactions from other users: more than 500 short posts on X and 32 essayistic texts from blogs. As these were hypertextual publications, the links reposted or responded to were taken into account. From this analysis, some representative cases were chosen as examples.

The theoretical framework for this work consists of the historical approaches to critical discourse analysis (Wodak, 2003). This critical perspective allowed us to address the multiple, and at times contradictory, identities of today's right-wing movements, while proposing a multi-method approach to the texts, based on a diversity of empirical data and background information (Wodak, 2003). In this framework, we take the socio-pragmatic foundations of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) and interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman, 1994; Gumperz, 1982) as a reference.

The methodology used in this chapter is qualitative (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). The analytical tools used are the patterns of resource recurrences that structure the discursive strategies (Menéndez, 2012), which shape the identity representations of the actors involved, their political positionings and the intertextual and interdiscursive relations that they establish to consolidate them.

In other words, our work was carried out in different stages: the observation and ethnographic survey, as a participant observer, of discursive practices in social networks. From this analysis, a corpus of cases in social networks was formed. The selected texts were analysed to identify interactive and pragmatic-discursive patterns which allow the identification of strategies that define the identity of the participants. Finally, a critical and contextualised reading of the strategies observed in relation to the emergence of right-wing movements in Argentinean social networks is proposed.

How to create political leadership from the underground or become a right-wing influencer

In short, what I suggest is that we be smart. If we are facing the unique opportunity to see the Leviathan implode, why are we serving him on a platter, what is he looking for? Don't be a fascist and don't be a Nazi—or at least don't say so.

(Reaxionario, September 2018)

When we refer to small right-wing radicalised networks, not to specific groups, it is because it is difficult to define a uniform identity that allows us to recognise them clearly. In spite of their

differences, they share an ideological substratum that allows them to establish bonds and interact, thus creating an association that grows and actively participates in social media.

For this reason, we portray a case in particular—“Reaxionario”²—as the focus of this presentation, to which we add annotations taken from other references that permit us to indicate some similarities and differences, without aspiring to provide an exhaustive overview of this phenomenon.

To introduce this, it is important to make a brief description of his user profile. From his interventions, we were able to recover some data from his biography. He is a 30-year-old English teacher who is married and is currently studying computer engineering. He is an admirer of the extreme-right-wing North American blogger Curtis Yarvin, who writes under the pen name Mencius Moldburg; the Russian nationalist philosopher Alexander Dugin and the English philosopher Nick Land. The latter first coined the term Dark Enlightenment, related to the neoreactionary movement (NRx). His pen name Reaxionario definitely expresses his ideological alignment, which he profusely develops through constant textual production on social networks and blogs, media that he knows in depth and that he exploits to shape his role as a ‘leader of opinion’ or ‘influencer’ (Gómez Nieto, 2018). The different accounts that he maintains on different networks and media such as X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Gab, Wordpress, Blogspot and Amazon, among others, depict all this.

The way in which Reaxionario builds his identity and positions himself as a benchmark for neoreaction in Argentina is programmatic. He points both to his personal identity and to the contents of his political thought, although he himself rejects the idea of representative politics as an option. His discourse is articulated in this double anchorage in the discursive strategies described as (a) *building an image of a right-wing proponent* and (b) *shaping an alternative right-wing leadership in Argentina*.

Building an image of a right-wing proponent

Naming oneself after ideology: Pseudonyms as reference or bait

Anonymity has been one of the most relevant characteristics of interaction in social networks, motivated by technological mediation. It is important to clarify that we understand anonymity as the impossibility of assigning a referential identity external to the medium, a body that identifies that person and operates as a legally established civil or public identity resource and not because of the absence of a proper name (Noblía, 2012, p. 34). On the contrary, names (which can be the person’s real name or a pseudonym) are the only possible reference in these virtual spaces and constitute—as we shall see later—the main identity anchor of the participants. Their identity is condensed in the nicknames or proper names as well as in the texts that users exchange (Noblía, 2012, p. 196). The expressivity of the individual (Goffman, 1994) is reduced to what they manifest of themselves and what emanates from their discursive behaviour.

In the case of Reaxionario, throughout his history he has had different pseudonyms, namely “Reaxionario con características chinas”, “Altrightar”, “Elreaccionarioarg” and “Yurieldefector”³, all linked to the neoreactionary movement.⁴ The successive change of nicknames has been due—in most cases—to the social network’s censorship (not very strict, incidentally) of his hate speech,⁵ as is the case with most of his friends. This accounts for one of their routines, which we call “credential swapping” when they re-enter the social network:

reaxionario

Soy @altrightar y estoy en Buenos Aires.

[I am @altrightar and I'm in Buenos Aires.]

reaccionario con características chinas: @TangoPatriota

Cambiaste de cuenta? Pensé que te seguía
[Did you change accounts? I thought I followed you]

These nicknames operate as passwords that allow them to identify themselves and reactivate their network of contacts when they re-enter under another identity.

TangoPatriota

Bueno camaradas y compañeros, me suspendieron la cuenta hace unas semanas, después de un merecido descanso volvemos a escribir. Si me quieren dar una mano dándole RT a esto para encontrar a los amigos estaría muy agradecido.

[Well comrades and fellows, my account was suspended a few weeks ago, after a well deserved rest we are back to writing. If you want to give me a hand by retweeting this to find friends I would be very grateful.]

Moonman

Por esto todos ustedes van por la cuenta 15 y yo vengo zafando de la suspensión desde 2011 por ahora

[This is why for you all this is your 15th account and I have been dodging suspension since 2011 so far.]

In some cases, this key is added to the name or description of the user's profile:

El H0mbre Lvna (S*sp*ndido)

A Jesús también le banearon la cuenta por decir la verdad. Ex-Hombre Luna
[Jesus also got his account banned for telling the truth. Former Hombre Luna.]

Clandestinity, then, allows them to openly act out their virulent and hateful discourses, so the choice of the nickname is the key that

- serves as a lure, as a bait for adherents, because they are ideological condensations and, in that sense, they are evaluative (Martin and White, 2005): "Spenglerito" (in reference to Oswald Spengler); "Reaccionario"/"Neoreaccionario"/"altrightar" (in relation to the neoreactionary movement); "TangoNacional"/"TangoFascista"/"TACUARA_" (references to Argentine nationalist right-wing movements); "Falangista"/"IdealistaNazi" (references to fascism and Nazism);
- consists of a strategic use of regular patterns, thus shaping a discursive strategy, which comprises the regular combination of synonyms or related words, or the combination of both (i.e. Tango + attribute) or the repetition of the word with a different spelling or repetition with slight variations: Reaccionario, Reaccionarioarg, Reaccionario con características chinas [reactionary with Chinese features].

We refer to this discursive strategy as "naming" (Noblía, 2012). The compositional patterns of this strategy allow for the tracking and identification of the proponent when the network suspends

them and they must change their identity in order to re-enter. The name is a strategic resource because it operates as an index of ideological origin and a basis for the construction of an identity in the interaction, as we will see in the following.

To put on display their affiliation to right-wing thinking, based on the repertoire of clichés that characterise it

Reproducing the basic positions of the right, so as to show their degree of adherence, is one of the most basic identification procedures of these right-wing proponents, be they reactionaries, liberals or catholic conservatives. It allows them to order the hierarchy of values and the relevant conjuncture.

This strategy is also crucial because it explicitly defines their belonging to this ideological universe, which in many cases cannot be publicly expressed in other contexts, precisely because of the discriminatory, violent or anti-democratic nature of these ideologies.

The position can be established on the basis of the posting (or reply) of a visual resource such as a photo, an allegorical image, a symbol or even a meme; it may involve multiple textual forms (descriptive, poetic, narrative, argumentative, demonstrative) and pragmatic procedures, such as generating inferences or invoking one of these values, intertextually. Let us look at a very brief but illustrative example.

On March 28, 2021, the user “Reaxionario con características chinas” republished another user’s tweet (“Final Boss”):

Schoolteacher across America received their quarterly industry periodical. Its race, race, race and the big classroom action is to combat white nationalist forces and talking points. We start whit a personal essay by an activist about his journey. Entire career is race hustling.

The text from Final Boss is accompanied by the image of the cover of the mentioned publication. The design of said cover graphically presents a human profile, repeated in three different pastel tones (white, gray and beige), whose gazes are oriented from right to left and confronted with another replica of the same profile, whose gaze goes from left to right, in dark brown/black. The image, in turn, has the following title: “You’re my inspiration. How I Came to Understand Racism in America—And What We Can Do about It”. In turn, this retweet is framed and introduced by the message of Reaxionario.

The text of Reaxionario’s post “Cuando inexorablemente les den cabida a los de Identidad Marrón Caca” [When they inexorably give a say to those Poopy Brown Identity ones] refers to a thread by the user “Final Boss” in which a very clear denunciation is made against the educational policies of the United States to eradicate racial discrimination.

The confrontation of the black and white profiles in the image is key to understanding the content of the Reaxionario’s post because it operates as a referential anchor for the author’s warning to a multiple addressee, ambiguously defined as a second or third person plural.⁶ On the one hand, it could be addressed to a third person plural (“ellos den cabida”/“they inexorably give a say”), the future actors of the action, i.e. the politicians who promote racial integration, and, on the other hand, or in parallel, it could be addressing a second person plural (“ustedes den cabida”/“you give a say”), the readers of the tweet who support those measures.

“Reaxionario con características chinas” replicates through the retweeting of the linked textual sequence and photo the judgement of social sanction published by “Final Boss” but with greater

force (Martin and White, 2005). In doing so, he gives greater intensity to that sanction, polarising it. It is important to note how he does this.

On the one hand, he opts for a speech act (the warning) that implies an asymmetrical relationship because it marks social distance, moral authority and instils fear. The warning displays—by analogy to the US experience—the judgement that sanctions by anticipating the consequences of “giving a say” to the “poopy brown”. The degree of condemnation will be different depending on whether the addressee of this statement is considered to be the third person plural or the second person plural: the responsibility of those who implement policies that restrict white supremacy (they) will be direct; the responsibility of those who support them with their vote will be indirect. In both cases, the consequences will be equally reprehensible.

On the other hand, the reinforcement of the judgement is provided by the object of the controversy. To this end, appraisal (Martin and White, 2005) is used as a resource: “los de identidad marrón caca” (“Poopy Brown Identity ones”). This noun phrase clearly refers to people by the colour of their skin “marrón” (“brown”), but it does so from a denigratory attribution such as “caca” (“poopy”), which evokes, by synonymy, the phrase “negro de mierda”.⁷ The intertextuality is clear and the significance that enables this allusion is of another order because it goes beyond the merely denigratory. It reinstates a crystallised expression of Argentine culture, clearly stigmatising the “symbolic trashing” of the poor, referring to their physical, territorial and moral appearance, and which is functional to the social demarcations of the desired white imaginary (Vega, 2019).

The white supremacist bias is thus recontextualised to accommodate to the Argentine cultural and social matrix, in which this expression is used as a racist and pejorative adjective, an insult, referring disparagingly not only to the “non-European”, but also to the poor, the underprivileged, those who live in the slums.

In Argentina, saying “negro de mierda” is an injury (in the criminal sphere) that could be punishable under the discrimination laws in force (23.592 and 24.515), Article 16 of the National Constitution and the international covenants to which Argentina adheres (Vega, 2019). In this case, the legal aspect is not a problem because the networks admit this phrase even as a nickname and allow other aggressive and denigrating expressions to circulate. Reaxionario is using it as a key to affiliation, as an identity resource. The game of substitution by synonyms—“marrón” (“brown”) for “negro” (“black”) and “caca” (“poppy”) for “mierda” (“shit”)—involves appreciation at the service of judgement (Martin and White, 2005), which allows the objectification of the person, presenting them in their attributes as a thing that is evaluated according to negative aesthetic standards. In this way, it nods to some other who shares this stance, a gesture that reinforces their belonging to the same ideological universe.

These ways of invoking this common ground appear recurrently in the treatment of the different topics, creating a common ideological framework, not necessarily homogeneous (because it admits +/- religious, +/- liberal, +/- nationalist variants) but functional. In this positioning, one topic refers to another and depends on the conjuncture: racism, for example, almost inexorably leads to the problem of immigration or crime and, from there, to the demand for the autonomy of the security forces and an iron fist. For example, they go from “las villas son criaderos de depredadores que roban y matan a la gente inocente” (the slums are breeding grounds for predators who rob and kill innocent people) to “en resumen no importa por qué el chorro roba y mata. Se le da bala y en todo caso se averigua después” (In short, it doesn’t matter why a thug steals and kills. You just shoot him and find out afterwards).

The display of the universe of right-wing values is one of the guarantees that support the veracity of this person/referent. We can identify it in key issues such as the rejection of feminism, the

patriarchal vindication of the family, the traditional role of the man as provider and the woman as mother and wife and the dangers of the so-called “gender ideology”. Let us look at an example:

Pocas cosas ilustran mejor la decadencia de Occidente que el feminismo. Por las mujeres peleamos, nos esforzamos, construimos, creamos, matamos y morimos. Un hombre que no sabe lo que es llegar a casa y encontrar una esposa fiel y amorosa es un hombre pobre. Que nos las esté arrebatando de a miles el agujero negro de un culto de poder”

(Reaccionario, 2018)

[Few things illustrate the decline of the West better than feminism. For women we fight, we toil, we build, we create, we kill and we die. A man who does not know what it is like to come home to a faithful and loving wife is a poor man. That they are being snatched from us by the thousands by the black hole of a power cult].

It is interesting to analyse how feminism is represented in the value system of appreciation as a spatial, objectified phenomenon and a dangerous space that traps women: a “black hole”. Named as a “cult of power”, the actors who “snatch them” (“from us”) are obscured. Women are the object, never the subject or the mobilising force of this phenomenon; they seem to be passive or victims and never the origin or the force that originates and sustains it. The representation of patriarchal values is based on a hyperbolic lexicon marked by positive social esteem judgements (Martin and White, 2005), in which women are defined by attributes (not actions) related to expected passive behaviour (“faithful”, “loving”) and the active role is in the hands of a male “us” that sustains the household: “we fight”, “we toil”, “we create”, “we kill” and “we die” (for the woman/wife).

This representation of feminism is aligned with the concept of “gender ideology” used by catholic sectors. The concept of ideology is considered as falsehood in order to contrast it with the biological gender that would be natural because it would refer to the innate capacity of women to be mothers (Pérez y Torres, 2020):

Sólo el tema del género es absurdo. Igualdad de género, el concepto de género mismo, la idea de que el género disociado de la biología es algo real o importante—todos conceptos que tienen cero relación con la realidad y sirven para avanzar intereses concretos. Como una secta.

(Reaccionario con características chinas—X 2021)

[The issue of gender alone is absurd. Gender equality, the concept of gender itself, the idea that gender dissociated from biology is something real or important—all concepts that have zero bearing on reality and serve to promote specific interests. Like a cult.

(Reaccionario con características chinas—X 2021)]

This dialectical game of questioning social demands and right-wing stances on issues on the public agenda is recurrent, especially when other issues such as democracy, the role of the Church, abortion, public education, health, immigration, anti-Semitism and the role of the armed forces, among others, are raised. Social networks allow them to express themselves and put into circulation discourses that would be illegal in other public spheres, for example, the vindication of Nazism:

El Reaccionario

Excelentes palabras de esta compañera para acercar a la juventud a la causa del nacionalsocialismo, la verdad. Aplausos.

(Quote Tweet. AbriltheDuchess:

“Palabras finales de Eichmann, arquitecto del holocausto: “Larga vida a Alemania. Larga vida a Austria. Larga vida a Argentina”.)

[Excellent words from this fellow lady to bring the youth closer to the cause of National Socialism, indeed. Applause.

(Quote Tweet. AbriltheDuchess:

“Final words of Eichmann, architect of the holocaust: “Long live Germany. Long live Austria. Long live Argentina”.]

Or the open rejection of democracy and the proposal to eliminate it, as in the following example:

El Reaccionario

En resumen, la democracia es un cáncer, ¿para qué intentar conservarla, si los riesgos sobrepasan enormemente los beneficios? Al cáncer se lo extingue, no se lo contiene.

[In short, democracy is cancer; so why try to preserve it if the risks far outweigh the benefits? Cancer is to be extinguished, not contained.]

This mechanism of opposition and stancetaking allows them to define a clear profile of an undoubtedly right-wing opinion leader who supports their proposals to locally change the logic of what they call the global order.

Shaping an alternative right-wing leadership in Argentina

Assuring affiliation to right-wing thinking, however, is only the starting point for the creation of a new position. These proponents also need to make themselves stand out, to differentiate themselves from the political scene, even from the right-wing itself.

The construction of this difference is based on at least three sub-strategies: to present oneself as an influencer, to assume an evangelising role and to define oneself through virility (as a counterpart to feminine weakness).

The leader as influencer

Social media have enabled new forms of digital marketing, with new actors such as the influencer. As previously mentioned, the influencer is “the new version of the opinion leader applied to the online medium, taking advantage of the enormous potential demonstrated by social networks” (Gómez Nieto, 2018). They are anonymous characters whose interventions are truthful because—at first—they appear to be spontaneous and disinterested, motivated by experience in a subject, skill, knowledge or personal interest. They are usually people with clear knowledge of how networks work and, through them, they develop their own identity, becoming a brand themselves (Fernández Lerma, 2017).

These characteristics serve to provide an initial framework for the profile of Reaccionario and his friends: they are anonymous characters who display supposedly critical knowledge on political issues, who address an audience that needs to be made aware of them from the role of an expert. Over time, they begin to have followers who cascade their messages. Their influence is limited to a small circle of social networks, where they are recognised exclusively by their pseudonyms. In

some cases, they manage to transcend and be quoted in other media, also by their nicknames. For instance, Reaxionario presents his book on YouTube and participates in various events.

The evangelising leader

Como todo buen evangelista, mi trabajo es difundir la fe y ganar almas para la Church of Moldbug. He decidido empezar a publicar una serie de artículos explicativos, con el fin de facilitar al lector hispano los conceptos básicos del reactionary enlightenment—con un poco de suerte, al cabo de unos meses tu cerebro estará curado y podrás vos mismo salir a difundir las buenas nuevas.

(Reaxionario, 2018)

[Like any true evangelist, my job is to spread the faith and win souls for the Church of Moldbug. I have decided to start publishing a series of explanatory articles, in order to provide the Hispanic reader with the basics of reactionary enlightenment—hopefully, after a few months your brain will be healed and you will be able to go out and spread the good news yourself.]

In their discourses, these influencers assume a particular asymmetrical and authoritarian role, which we can define by its pragmatic-discursive characteristics as evangelising.

This interactional and discursive role is basically characterised by a clear asymmetry in the interpersonal relationship (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) that they establish with their followers. These influencers assume the position of an expert who must explain facts to their audience because the latter is unaware of or lacks the critical capacity to interpret the reality in which they are immersed.

At the textual level, one of the most exploited resources to mark this asymmetrical link are *metapragmatic markers* (Verschueren, 2000) and the *illocutionary force of speech acts* (Searle, 1990). These resources are used to make explicit to the reader the discursive process that the author is carrying out. Let us look at some procedures.

Rhetorical questions, followed by connective elements that precede the explanation

Pero ¿cómo puede ser que haya muerto, si parece más vivo que nunca? Bueno, veamos . . .

[But how can he be dead, when he seems more alive than ever? Well, let's see . . .]

¿Por qué estamos como estamos? Para responder esta pregunta vamos a remontarnos a los orígenes de esta aberración

[Why are we in this situation? To answer this question, let's go back to the origins of this aberration.]

Reformulation of concepts to adapt them to the cultural universe of the addressee

El comunismo es un producto, algo así como Halloween.

[Communism is a product, something like Halloween.]

Prosigamos con la historia, que vamos a llamar Lenta erosión de la autoridad española

[Let's continue with the story, which we will call Slow erosion of Spanish authority.]

The use of discourse markers and foci of relevance

Primero, porque . . . segundo, y más importante, . . .

[First, because . . . second, and more importantly, . . .]

Ayer vimos que el primer paso hacia la perdición de un gobierno es mostrar irresolución ante las presiones de la muchedumbre. El segundo paso es sentarse a negociar. Pero ¿por qué?

[Yesterday we saw that the first step towards a government's demise is to show lack of decision in the face of public pressure. The second step is to sit down and negotiate. But why?]

Nos vamos a adelantar un poco

[*Let's fast forward a little*]

Recapitulando, es posible armar una pequeña lista: 1. La prioridad ante todo es . . . 2. Jamás ceder . . . 3.

Cortar de raíz . . .

[*Recapping, it is possible to put together a short list: 1. The first priority is . . . 2. Never give in . . . 3.*

To nip in the bud . . .]

Other resources that mark this interpersonal relationship are speech acts (Searle, 1990). The contrast established by the author between the type of act and the modality used (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) highlights this asymmetry.

Acts addressed to the reader (a second person or first person plural), have to do with mental processes (“seeing”, “considering”, “reading”) to be performed by the addressees. The imperative modality determines the deontic and impositive nature of this action:

Observen también cómo el gobierno . . ./No pasemos de largo el agitado . . ./

[*Note also how the government . . ./Let's not overlook the agitated . . .]*

The acts that refer to the author are mostly verbal (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004)—such as advising, ordering, telling, demonstrating, explaining or clarifying. The ideational significance of these lexical choices poses an asymmetrical relationship because they imply the status of these actors as possessing some power, capacity or knowledge that differentiates them from their interlocutor:

Mi intención es demostrarles que individuos con poco talento pueden convertirse en relativamente exitosos críticos con poquísimo esfuerzo.

[*My intention is to show you that individuals with little talent can become relatively successful critics with very little effort.]*

Como hemos dicho antes . . .

[*As we have said before . . .]*

This awareness-raising role is reinforced when added to their position as influencers, from whom the audience demands answers, advice or information.

Si se me permite, me voy a tomar el atrevimiento de dar algunos consejos, teniendo en cuenta lo que he recibido hasta ahora.

[*If I may be so bold as to give some advice, taking into account what I have received so far.]*

This example allows us to appreciate his role as an influencer, in the sense that he is someone who has to respond to the constant demand of his followers.

The cultural asymmetry between the author and an addressee is also revealed in ironies (Grice, 1975), always followed by explanations that clarify them, thereby creating a reader who must be given tools to be able to make the inferences required to understand such discourse.

¿Han leído, muchachos y muchachas, sobre las famosas peleas entre comunistas y fascistas en la República de Weimar? Los fascismos surgieron en países en los que la cima del sistema político . . .

[*Have you read, boys and girls, about the famous fights between communists and fascists in the Weimar Republic? Fascisms arose in countries where the top of the political system was . . .]*

¿Qué es la Internacional liberal? Si tienen el ojo entrenado se van a dar cuenta . . .
[What is the Liberal International? If you have a trained eye you will see . . .]

Even when addressing right-wing advocates, in this case libertarians,⁸ he relies on irony, with clear critical intent:

Mi propósito ahora es enseñar, muy humildemente, a los buenos muchachos de Milei una de las formas de librarse una batalla cultural

[My purpose now is to teach, in all humility, Milei's good boys one of the ways to fight a cultural battle.]

The use of vocatives reinforces the differential status between one role and another, including age difference (“boys”):

Esto significa que la fuerza ya no está con ustedes, chicos. . . . Cuando ellos salen a la calle (“la violencia izquierdista”) es activismo; cuando y si es que salen ustedes (fascistas o nazis), es una amenaza para la democracia y la civilización.

[This means that the force is no longer with you guys. . . . When they take to the streets (“leftist violence”) it is activism; when and if you (fascists or Nazis) do so, it is a threat to democracy and civilisation.]

In the construction of this strategy (Menéndez, 2012) of creating an evangelising leader, the resources to mark irony are combined with another central procedure, referring to dialogism (Bajtín, 1990) and engagement (Martin and White, 2005), i.e. the degree of openness to other voices and the negotiation of intersubjective positions in the discourse.

Generally speaking, these discourses are built around statements that are presented as categorical, absolute and naturalised truths. However, in their formulation they point to degrees of openness/closure of other voices ranging from

- a justified monoglossia, i.e. the statement is justified on the basis of equally monoglossic statements that support the same position:

El objetivo de la Industria de la Diversidad es simple y directo: vivimos en una sociedad regulada por una superestructura patriarcal, heteronormativa, blanca y capitalista que opprime a las minorías en beneficio de la mayoría. Debemos hacer lo que esté a nuestro alcance para derribarla y así lograr la verdadera igualdad.

[The aim of the Diversity Industry is simple and straightforward: we live in a society regulated by a patriarchal, heteronormative, white, capitalist superstructure that oppresses minorities for the benefit of the majority. We must do what we can to overthrow it to achieve true equality.]

- to heteroglossic positions, by dialogical contraction, that is, alternative voices are allowed to enter, but in order to shut them down and give way to those positions that validate or support the author’s voice. For instance, in this case, the voice enters in order to be rejected:

“la consigna pasa de “trátanlos igual que al resto” a “dennos privilegios”—nace el entitlement State). Luego van por las quotas laborales y educativas. La Industria de la Diversidad no deja títere con cabeza y arrasa con todo lo que tiene delante.

[the slogan goes from “treat us the same as everyone else” to “give us privileges”—the entitlement state is born). Then they go for labour and education quotas. The Diversity Industry leaves no stone unturned and sweeps away everything in its path].

This intersubjective positioning reveals the conformation of clearly authoritarian discourses, in which argumentation gives way to demonstration as a rhetorical strategy. As Lavandera (1986) states, one of the characteristics of authoritarian discourses is the silencing of other voices, including that of the interlocutor.

Authoritarian discourses can be classified according to whether their issuers hold effective authority or whether this authority is self-assigned. These influencers are not institutionally invested with authority, except that which is assigned to them by the followers who regard them as such, in other words, it would be an authority that is self-managed in the constant interaction on the social network.

Taking this context into account, we could assimilate their discourses—with slight differences—to the mixed framework proposed by Lavandera (1986) in order to characterise authoritarian-demagogic discourse: the sender “has a power that s/he shares” with others and his/her discourse is directed against a third party, in opposition to which the alliance between him/her and his/her audience is accentuated. The caveat we would make with respect to the discourses we are analysing is that the sender maintains with their audience the asymmetry that establishes their leadership as a trained intellectual, as an evangelist whose mission is to win adherents to the new reactionary alternatives of the right.

What resources define these discourses: on the one hand, and as we have already observed, the asymmetrical interpersonal relationship and the hierarchical role of the sender as an intellectual leader, with an evangelising mission.

On the other hand, the creation of a single enemy against whom they direct all their arguments. Consider some examples:

El liberalismo no sólo mata a sus rivales, sino que los absorbe y los reutiliza.

[Liberalism not only kills its rivals, it absorbs and reuses them.]

El fascismo está muerto. Lejos de ser enterrado y dejado en paz, ha sido reutilizado por la ideología global dominante y otorgado el papel de bogeyman. . . . Hay otra teoría política que murió en el siglo XX, pero esta vez de vieja y cansada, -el comunismo.

[“Fascism is dead. Far from being buried and left alone, it has been reused by the dominant global ideology and given the role of bogeyman. . . . There is another political theory that died in the 20th century, but of old and tired, this time—communism”.]

The representation of a single global ideology, liberalism, which has “devoured the rest” of the ideologies, allows them to eliminate the differences that exist and build a single front to fight against.

One of the discursive strategies that enable this fusion to take place is to appeal to what we call here the “totalising mention”, that is, to use the name of the different positions as a condensation of an entire ideological universe and not their discourses (“fascism”, “national socialism”, “communism”), thus eliminating their history, their different political expressions and their nuances. In this way, the author can attribute fallacious content and positions to these movements, without falling into incoherence, by reinterpreting or recontextualising them in order to make them functional to his own position. Consider the following example:

El fascismo, el nacionalsocialismo y el comunismo son variantes extremas de la democracia. . . . Ambas cosas, claro está, van exactamente en la misma dirección que el progresismo humanista, mientras que los fenómenos reaccionarios van diametralmente en su contra.

[Fascism, national socialism and communism are extreme variants of democracy. . . . Both, of course, go in exactly the same direction as humanist progressivism, while reactionary phenomena go diametrically against it.]

This mention operates as a reference of asseverative relational statements (“x is y”), a modality that reinforces the monologic nature of a discourse which, despite mentioning other positions, does not allow them to participate on the basis of its statements, thus annulling the possible dialogue with the author’s voice.

This process of discursive homogenisation—a sort of mash-up or fusion that integrates different ideological positions into a single one—does not arise from an argumentative process, but from a demonstrative one. For instance:

El enemigo a vencer, el Leviatán, es el liberalismo, triunfador del siglo XX y única ideología del siglo XXI.

[The enemy to be defeated, the Leviathan, is liberalism, the victor of the 20th century and the only ideology of the 21st century.]

Thus, a seamless reality is defined, which seems to express a reasoning based on a supposed argumentation, but which only serves the purpose of sustaining an ideological position that is neither questioned nor subjected to dialogue with others. In this way, instead of arguing, they explain and demonstrate, in other words, a dialogical process is activated, the product of which is monological (Plantin, 2012). The structure of the reasoning is reformulative in nature and, at times, circular:

Progresismo: Lo que te dicen que es: ideología marxista. Lo que es: ideología liberal.

[Progressivism: What they tell you it is: Marxist ideology. What it is: liberal ideology.]
(Reaxonario, 2019)

In short, “everything is liberalism” and each of its supposed expressions (whatever its origin and nature) have the same consequences, feminism and fascism, Cristina Fernández, Mauricio Macri or Javier Milei.⁹

Con Cambiemos el cáncer¹⁰ ingresa por el lado del cosmopolitismo y la globalización. Con el gobierno Nacional y Popular entra con el disfraz de la lucha de clases, la justicia social y la igualdad. (Reaxonario con características chinas—X 2021)

[With Cambiemos cancer enters from the side of cosmopolitanism and globalisation. National and Popular government it enters under the guise of class struggle, social justice and equality. (Reaxonario con características chinas—X 2021)]

Fiel a la tibieza que caracteriza a nuestros queridos primos liberales, con un pie en el conservadurismo blando y otro en el Heaven on Earth neopuritano y obamista, *never reconociéndose como parte del mismo progresismo al que pretenden oponerse.* (Reaccionario, 2018)

[True to the dovishness that characterises our dear liberal cousins, standing between soft conservatism and neo-puritanical and Obamist Heaven on Earth, never acknowledging themselves as part of the very progressivism they pretend to oppose.]

This strategy of indifferentiation is also used by right-wing proponents who are not reactionary. Let us look at the following example of another user whose affiliation is nationalist-catholic.

TangoPatriota

A esta altura ya no se entiende muy bien la diferencia entre los macristas y los libertarios. Me da pena por cierto sector un poco inocente del palo nacional que lo apoya a este personaje por ser anticomunista.

[At this point the difference between Macri supporters and libertarians is no longer very clear. I feel sorry for a certain, somewhat naive sector of the nationalist movement that supports this character because he is anti-communist.]

In opposition to this alleged “global ideology”, the neoreactionary position is presented, which—paradoxically—other right-wing proponents, not aligned with this movement, are going to welcome. As can be seen in the following tweet.

Reaxionario @reaxionario

Voy a publicar el primer libro NRx en castellano o me equivoco? Por las dudas vayan prepárandose porque literalmente voy a hacer historia, amigos.

(Reaxionario: Am I going to publish the first NRx book in Spanish or am I wrong? Just in case, buckle up because I'll be literally making history, friends” “Tangofascista: Dugin would be proud, when it's out I'll buy a one.)

Goyeneche @Tangofascista

Dugin estaría orgulloso, cuadno lo tengas te compro un ejemplar.

(Thanks, buddy. I promise it'll be worth it. I'm not gonna publish any rubbish.)

The representation of neoreactionism as the only right-wing alternative to alleged global power is presented in a programmatic way, in terms of its foundations, values and programme, which is basically defined by the return to classical law; selective immigration; reconstruction and maintenance of the Armed Forces; total and absolute freedom of expression and association; abolition of anti-discrimination laws and, fundamentally, the abolition of the democratic system to replace it with “*a shareholders' meeting that will appoint a CEO in charge of the Executive Power, and the end of politics*”.

This last point of the programme establishes a clear intertextual relationship with the positions of Mencius Moldbug, in an evidently didactic (and demagogic-authoritarian) register (Halliday and Matthiesen 2004), which collaborates in the representation of their “evangelical” and proselytising mission, in this case, of those who have to “spread the faith and win souls for the Church of Modbug”.

Defining themselves through virility (as a counterpart to feminine weakness)

Thomas “Chad” Hobbes es mi ideología y mi religión.

[Thomas “Chad” Hobbes is my ideology and my religion.]

(Reaxionario, 2018)

To conclude, and in a very succinct manner we will address one last aspect of the construction of the identity of these new right-wing proponents, which has to do with the expression of the radicalisation of their stances, through non-local references and symbols of these ideological positions.

The categories of “Virgo” and “Chad” emerged in 2016 from the publication of a meme on the social network 4Chan. These names designate two stereotypical profiles of people or groups, based on the +/- virility trait: the Chad or alpha male, heterosexual, white, attractive and popular; and his counterpart the Virgo or beta male. Today, the use of these memes, like that of ‘Pepe the Frog’, are associated with the far right, since the contrast between these two stereotypes is the perfect combination for extremist, mostly racist, ideologies.

These stereotypes are widely spread among the profiles we have been analysing. In some cases, they are used as adjectives or nouns to valorise or belittle, as can be seen in the epigraph praising Hobbes or, pejoratively, in the following example:

Tango Nacional

Lo único que sé del tipo es que tiene una tropa de virgos para doxxear y acosar gente por acá.

[The only thing I know about the guy is that he has a troop of virgins to doxx and harass people around here.]

In others, these stereotypes are resources to confront other political groups. Let us look an example, in which the contrast is between the “Frente Patriota” (Patriot Front), a group led by Alejandro Biondini, a leader of the neo-Nazi and ultranationalist right in Argentina, and a group of the alternative extreme neo-Nazi right, which is represented only by its coat of arms. The tweet contrasts in an image the memes of ‘The virgin’ and ‘The Chad’, the first being associated with the “Frente Patriota” and the second with an unidentified group but clearly linked to a more radical opposition. See Table 21.1 that represent the content of the image.

The comparison between to each stereotype, the Frente Patriota supporter as “Virgo” and the neo-fascist as “Chad”, leads to a ridiculing of Biondini’s movement, which is presented as a weak, halfhearted and unmanly position, whether in physical terms (“they are obese”); sexual (“they fuck crossdressers”, “they accept faggots”), racial (“anything else but Europeans”, “they have Bolivians in their movement”); attitudinal (“they organize peaceful marches”, “they have never meditated”, “they pay their taxes on time”) and in terms of their degree of anti-Semitism and their relationship with Israel (“they were tamed by the Mossad”, “they larp (pretend to be) as National Socialists”). In contrast, the Chad represents the radicalised, vigorous and virile position, in all aspects: physical (“they work out every day”), racial (“people of European descent”, “they beat up Paraguayans outside the club every summer”); attitudinal (“they do not respect women’s opinions”) and with respect to their anti-Semitism, the polarisation is greater (“AFI and the Mossad are afraid of them”, “they recite a chapter of MEIN KAMPF every day”), etc.

The selection of categories linked to virility to mark the differences between the values that represent the most extreme right-wing in the country and those that embody the new alternatives is a new expression of what McGee Deutsch (2005) points out as a particular feature of these movements. Not only does it have to do with the ideological, but also with the discursive, to the extent that it operates as a resource of positive/negative graduation (Noblía, 2017). As we can see in this case, the discourse of sexuality (of virility) operates by semantic displacement, in which it does not appear to make direct mention of the subject of sex, but to refer to another dimension of the discourse, intensifying or diminishing its force.

In the example, in addition to the stereotypical +/- virile distinction posed by the categories of Virgins and Chads, heteronormative sexuality is imposed, being weak and unmanly, having sex with cross-dressers (“se cojen travas”) or accepting homosexuals in their movement. In this sense,

Table 21.1 Sexual stereotypes as resources of political and ideological identification

THE VIRGIN—Frente Patriota Pagan sus impuestos sin retraso (<i>They pay their taxes on time</i>) Nunca pelearon en su vida (<i>They never fought in their life</i>) Hacen podcast en YouTube (<i>They make a podcast on YouTube</i>) Hacen marchas pacíficas (<i>They organise peaceful marches</i>) Su líder es obeso (<i>Their leader is obese</i>) Tienen bolivianos en su movimiento (<i>They have Bolivians in their movement</i>) No se preparan para la Guerra racial sagrada (<i>They do not prepare for the sacred Race War</i>) Se cojen travas (<i>They fuck crossdressers</i>) Se fueron domados por el mossad (<i>They were tamed by the Mossad</i>) Larpean nacionalsocialistas (<i>They larp as National Socialists</i>) Nunca han meditado (<i>They have never meditated</i>) Aceptan putos en el movimiento (<i>They accept faggots</i>) De todo, menos europeos (<i>Anything else but Europeans</i>)	THE CHAD—Alternative neo-Nazi right No creen en la democracia (<i>They don't believe in democracy</i>) Forman su propia milicia local (<i>They create your own local militia</i>) Crean que los blancos deben establecer un LEBENSRAUM intergaláctico (<i>They believes that the whites should establish an intergalactic LEBENSRAUM</i>) Realiza ejercicios todos los días (<i>They work out every day</i>) Caga a palos a paraguayos todos los veranos a la salida del boliche (<i>They beat up Paraguayans outside the club every summer</i>) Se preparan para la Guerra racial (<i>They are getting ready for racial war</i>) No respetan la opinión de las mujeres (<i>They do not respect women's opinions</i>) La AFI y el Mossad le tienen miedo (<i>AFI and the Mossad are afraid of them</i>) Recitan un capítulo de MEIN KAMPF de memoria todos los días (<i>They recite a chapter of MEIN KAMPF every day</i>) Movimiento exclusivamente para gente de sangre europea (<i>Movement exclusively for people of European blood</i>)
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the contrast posed by this use of stereotypes essentially points to the degree of polarisation, of radicalisation that characterises the new neoreactionary or neo-fascist positions, which distinguishes them from any previous expression.

By way of conclusion

Many of these right-wing movements spread as online subcultures and present themselves as Christians who live, and worship, in caves due to the harassment they would be subjected to for expressing their ideas in a progressive world. This progressiveness is present in the media, schools and universities, as well as in multilateral organisations and most governments. Many of their followers believe they have taken the red pill (of the Matrix) that guarantees them to remain free in the midst of a dictatorship of “political correctness” where nothing can be said without being immediately sentenced to be burned at the stake.

(Stefanoni, 2021, pp. 23–24)

This chapter offers only a first approximation to a phenomenon which, although it currently seems isolated or marginal but in progressive growth, reveals the emergence of expressions of the alt-right in Argentina that we considered alien, typical of other realities such as those in Europe or North America (Stefanoni, 2021). In these countries, the new fascisms do not reappear in their historical forms because the context is different, and their brutality does not bear the mark of a

visionary faith in the future. However, some of the main features do reappear, such as supremacism, fuelled by a feeling of desperation and humiliation, by the impotent rage of older white people in the era of globalisation” (Berardi, 2021).

Until very recently in our country, the right-wing debate seemed different, associated with the historical agenda of conservative catholic nationalist and anti-nationalist liberal sectors, which re-emerged with the government of Mauricio Macri to discuss the recent past (the role of the Armed Forces during the last dictatorship, state terrorism and the number of disappeared people), human rights policy, immigration, security and education, among other issues. However, as Stefanoni (2021) rightly points out, this “turn to the right” embodied by the triumph of Cambiemos continues to be framed within centre-right, democratic and non-radicalised positions.

The emergence of these new right-wing positions in our country seems to be a borrowed phenomenon, an alignment with international trends, although the feeling of frustration with a political system that offers no way out of the succession of economic and social crises is a palpable reality in Argentine society. The ground seems fertile, as evidenced by the popularity of the libertarian movement led by Javier Milei, but still uncertain.

The discourses analysed in this chapter highlight the alignment with theories and intellectuals that set the pace for right-wing movements in different parts of the world (Mencius Moldbug, Nick Land and Alexander Dugin); the rhetorical and semiotic patterns that shape the subcultures of social networks; the context of the network as a cover to put forward an agenda that has no place in other spaces because it would violate basic human rights and local discontent, lack of expectations and disdain for democracy.

The discourses also allow us to reconstruct the profile of the leader proposed by these new positions: evangelising, authoritarian and radicalised, who weave their networks of contacts and relationships through their “nom de guerre”, in an apparent clandestinity that fades away as they have greater impact on the social media. These small intellectuals of the right or cult intellectuals (Stefanoni, 2021) understand the logics of the networks and exploit them to forge networks of sociability and fight tooth and nail for the interpretation of the world.

The starting point we adopted in this work, and which allowed us to outline a basic discursive pattern of these leaderships, consisted in analysing the different positions that allow the construction of an alternative right-wing identity: from the adherence to a common ground of the right-wing to the distancing and valorisation based on the contrast with the main historical figures of the Argentine right-wing.

The analysis of complementary phenomena to this initial outline, such as, for example, the metaphors that collaborate in these identity constructions, remains to be analysed and will be the subject of future work.

Notes

- 1 This research was conducted during the years 2018–2021, while the social network was Twitter and had not been acquired/privatized by Elon Musk. It is important to note this change in the business landscape, as it had significant consequences, including impacts on usage policy, message features, and access to the social network’s data.
- 2 Reaxionario is the person’s nickname.
- 3 By Yuri Alexandrovich Bezmenov (1939–1993), a former Soviet secret agent who defected to Canada in 1970.
- 4 Neoreaction, also called “Dark Enlightenment”, is an anti-democratic and reactionary current, pro-technology and anti-egalitarian. They promote a radical separation between freedom and democracy. Among his references are Mencius Moldbug (Curtis Yarvin), Peter Thiel and Nick Land (Stefanoni, 2021, pp. 201–202).

- 5 We take the definition of the LEDA Report, according to which hate speech is considered to be any type of speech delivered in the public sphere that seeks to promote, incite or legitimise discrimination, dehumanisation and/or violence towards a person or a group of people, based on their belonging to a religious, ethnic, national, political, racial, gender group or any other social identity. These discourses frequently generate a cultural climate of intolerance and hatred and, in certain contexts, can provoke aggressive, segregationist or genocidal practices in civil society (2021 LEDA Report).
- 6 The spelling of the second and third person plural of the present subjunctive of the verb “dar” (give) is the same (“den”).
- 7 “Negro de mierda” is an idiom, so it is difficult to establish an equivalence, but it could be similar to “black shit” or “fucking nigger”.
- 8 For further reference to the libertarios, see section “The (new) right wing movements in Argentina”.
- 9 All Argentine political referents from different parties.
- 10 One of the metaphors used to refer to the global order, to liberalism, is that of cancer. We will not dwell on the metaphors (of a clearly biologic nature) that these discourses bring into play due to a restriction on the length of the chapter.

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22

WHERE NEOLIBERAL AND CONFUCIAN DISCOURSES MEET

The case of female fitness influencers on Chinese social media

Gwen Bouvier

Introduction

In this chapter we analyse posts of Chinese female fitness influencers on Weibo. Along with many other Western lifestyle cultures, fitness has become one of the more recent trends that has taken off in China, especially amongst the emerging new middle class. Like many parts of the Western world, the fitness industry, with its gyms and fitness-related products, is one of the fastest growing markets in China (Li et al., 2019).

Studies of fitness culture in the West have pointed out that fitness and health culture must be understood in relation to body management (Markula, 1995), commodification (Crawford, 2006) and neoliberal ideologies (Ayo, 2012). Contemporary fitness culture reflects how we are encouraged to invest more time in managing our bodies, through an intensification process of commodification. We are also encouraged to take on the personal responsibility to treat our bodies and health as a management project where we must strive for success. The neoliberal colonisation of body and health has also brought about changes in women's body ideals. Power femininity (Toffoletti, 2014) celebrates a female body that is not only slim, but rather lean, strong and with defined muscles (Boepple et al., 2016). More importantly, such body ideals are fused with a discourse of the successful, achieving, go-getting modern woman (Walkerdine, 2003).

In this chapter, we look at how these new kinds of body ideals, body management and female empowerment are represented by Chinese female fitness influencers on Weibo. When Western ideas, values and identities are imported into new markets, they are given local inflections and configure with local culture (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2007; Aiello & Pauwels, 2014). We will show how this is done by Chinese female fitness influencers, who can be characterised as part of the newly emerged Chinese middle classes (Anagnost, 2008). These women take on what appear to be highly neoliberal ideas and values about the self and society, yet in a particular form, as they seek to challenge some of the more traditional Confucian ideas and values that are embedded in Chinese society, particularly in terms of the status and obligations of women. Ultimately, we argue their posts 'overdetermine' the sense of freedom in choice and self. In these posts, success and happiness become a kind of task. We discuss how this may come at a great risk and cost.

Neoliberal culture in China

To better understand the contemporary fitness culture, in the West and in China, there is a need to firstly look at the ideology that underpins it, which is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism can be understood as a political and economic system based on the marketisation of all things (Abramovitz, 2012). Within such a system, private organisations replace government in decision-making that was formerly done through powerful state institutions (Duggan, 2002). The withdrawal of state power leads to the decline of spending on social welfare issues (Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2010), and the takeover by profit-driven private organisations leads to a situation that is anti-democratic at its roots (Duggan, 2002). This system may have increased profits in the financial and corporate sector, but it has been criticised for resulting in a corresponding negative impact on health, life quality and job security of lower classes in society (Fine, 2012).

As the state withdraws its control over welfare, public services and infrastructure, the individual becomes more responsible for their own life, health, security and happiness (Brown, 2015; Binkley, 2011). Individuals become what is called ‘entrepreneurial selves’ or entrepreneurial agents, not only in terms of economic and employment issues, but in all parts of their lives (Hamann, 2009; Rabinow & Rose, 2006). For both businesses and individuals, free choice and the right to self-determine become core moral values (Wacquant, 2009). This morally sanctions hard work, commitment, productivity, wealth accumulation, self-reliance and go-getting and constitutes a discipline that is highly internalised (Ferrero, 2014; Foucault, 1979). Market and business logics such as efficiency, rational, cost-effective and value-added come to define the success and quality of our lives, our work, our health and our children (Abramovitz, 2012). Every aspect of our lives becomes a performance management task as we must demonstrate growth and improvement in the market (Ledin & Machin, 2018). There is a presumption that with free choice and a free market, we all have equal grounds to get ahead, discounting the fact that people do not have the same opportunities for success and happiness. The ideology of neoliberal selves conceals deep inequalities of opportunities in society, which means that many may simply not have the same kind of choices to make (Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2010). In a neoliberal system, failure is always attributed to the individual, who has the choice to strive hard to get ahead (Carr & Battle, 2015) even where their situation may be resulted by structural issues of neoliberalism itself (Teghtsoonian, 2009).

In China, the fundamental political and economic system is arguably not neoliberal, given the level of state control and it not being an entirely ‘free market’ (Nonini, 2008). The Chinese central state has however deployed clear neoliberal-type strategies, along with other more state driven policies, to facilitate economic growth and modernisation (Duckett, 2020). For example, breaking up former state and collective-based systems, privatisation of public services and welfare, encouraging business and reducing financial controls (Anagnos, 2004; Greenhalgh & Winckler, 2005).

China’s reforms have imported not only economic models from the West but also entertainment media content, formats and styles (Chen & Machin, 2014). With the arrival of Western media, scholars have observed a decrease in representation of traditional Chinese values that intertwine Confucianism, Marxism and Maoism (Lee & Song, 2012; Feng & Karan, 2011). On the other hand, there is an increase in Western type stories and scenarios representing new kinds of identities (Lee & Song, 2012), as well as promoting a global culture ideology of consumerism and neoliberalism (Wu, 2008; Feng & Karan, 2011). This also marks the presence of traits and themes that were not formerly found in Chinese media, namely individualism, self-fulfilment and hedonism (Chen & Machin, 2014).

The new Chinese middle class has been particularly oriented to this new Western culture and identities. Engineered by the state, this new Chinese middle class consists of a broad group whose

purpose is to help foster economic growth and modernisation (Goodman, 2013). While possessing a higher level of income can be a characteristic of the new Chinese middle class, they are also associated, broadly speaking, with other traits. They tend to hold certain patterns of norms and values (Dong, 2018). For example, they are individualistic, ambitious and highly invested in their children's education. They seek wealth and association with modern Western ideas (Guo, 2017; Goodman, 2013). They are associated with consumer culture (Zhang, 2020). For example, consumption of Western-style products—food, wine, clothing and cafes—and practice aspects of Western lifestyle—fitness, organic, natural and environmental activities. These become a matter of taste and social distinction (Peng, 2019; Henningsen, 2012; Brunner, 2019).

It has also been argued that there are fundamental ideological shifts among the new Chinese middle classes: from Confucian values of social responsibility, frugality and the Maoist idea that the state decides the needs of citizens (Zhang, 2020; Xu, 2007) to values and ideas that are more aligned with Western culture, such as neoliberalism, individualism and self-agency (Hamann, 2009). Neoliberalism, as has been observed in Western societies, is not just an economic model but comes with a form of governance that shapes how we know ourselves (Braidotti, 2013).

With high spending power, the new Chinese middle class is encouraged by the state to 'pursue new social norms of middle-class identity often defined around consumer practice' (Anagnos, 2008, pp. 498–499). As a result, this new middle-class identity is often exhibited through the ability to consume pricy Western products and cultural symbols (Zhang, 2020; Dong, 2018; Zhu & Zhu, 2017). Here, the foreign becomes a marker of taste and distinction (Goodman, 2013) and a synonym for being modern and fashionable (Dong, 2018). Whether it is drinking coffee or an expensive private Western-style education, Chinese new middle classes celebrate the value of free choice, the right to self-determine and personal hedonism in the consumption of elite products and the ambition to get ahead with a kind of moral autonomy (Yan, 2011). Confucian values of restraint, responsibility and observing ones' social position is making way for ideas and values associated with neoliberalism carried in Western media and products (Feng & Karan, 2011; Guo, 2017). As marketisation, commodification, privatisation and self-determination become more structurally embedded in Chinese society, the new Chinese middle class embodies the values that align with these concepts. The market model comes to pervade all things with individuals acting as entrepreneurial agents (Dardot & Laval, 2013).

Fitness lifestyle, body management and the Chinese middle class

Scholars have shown that the concept of the ideal body shifts over time (Bordo, 1993; Grogan, 2008). For Western women, being 'shapely, slender and softly curvy' was ideal in the 1970s (Markula, 1995, p. 431). In the 1980s, the ideal body altered to 'tone and trim' (*ibid*, p. 432). And more recently, the trend of 'power femininity' promotes 'strong is the new skinny' (Boepple et al., 2016; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018) and 'strong is the new sexy' (Washington & Economides, 2015). This leaves behind the notion that defined muscles are masculine and less desirable for the feminine body.

This 'power femininity' carries a sense of go-getting, assertiveness and being successful through the rhetoric of empowerment (Walkerine, 2003; Toffoletti, 2014). Scholars have observed that the Western modern body management culture, rather than being about health per se, is an ideological social practice (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Lupton, 2013). Being healthy is a question of individual choice (Crawford, 1980), a way to distinguish oneself from others (Crawford, 1994) and the responsibility of a good citizen (Ayo, 2012). Health is not something that comes to be all by itself, but rather something that one needs to work at to achieve, through a 'good' diet and physical

activities (Markula, 1995). Being healthy and being fit therefore, in neoliberal ideology, become a symbol of self-control, self-discipline, will power and morality (Crawford, 2006).

For a long time in Chinese culture, a larger body had positive connotations, symbolising power, prosperity and wealth (Wu et al., 2009). This is however also changing amongst the new Chinese middle class. With the influence of Western media and marketing, Chinese of higher socio-economic status, especially women, have internalised slimness and an indicator of not only beauty but also good health and self-discipline (Bennefond & Clement, 2014). In addition, there is an increasing demand for gyms and products related to efficient body management (Zhu & Zhu, 2017). Riding alongside these changes are, as in Western societies, content of day-to-day fitness life, achievements and progress on Weibo and WeChat, which are platforms that are used by middle classes who show off their taste and perform class distinction through photos and videos aimed at others who also aspire to a middle-class lifestyle (Peng, 2019). A large proportion of this content is posted by so-called influencers who share training, nutritional advice and product endorsements to their huge numbers of followers.

Confucian-neoliberal women

Before looking into the fitness posts on Weibo, it is necessary to consider the multiple facets that have shaped and are shaping Chinese women's identities and roles. To begin with, Confucianism has been a dominant influence (Hong, 1997; Leung, 2003). In Confucian philosophy, women operate in the domain of yin, as opposed to men who operate in the domain of yang (Hong, 1997). Yin is designated weak and is passive and submissive to yang (*ibid*). Based on this, Confucius's lecture of "Three Obedience[s]" instructs women to obey the father when at home, submit to the husband when married and listen to the son after the husband dies. This also has to be understood in relation to wider Confucian values: respect for hierarchy, for thrift and self-denial, value of community ties and perseverance (Child & Warner, 2003). Confucius's lessons remained a powerful trope in Chinese society (Chen, 2009) even after Maoist China when women's economic contribution was emphasised (Sun & Chen, 2015). Chinese women are still largely tied to caring and domestic roles and subjected to submission and self-sacrifice (*ibid*).

With the arrival of Western culture and state-endorsed consumerism, some developments have been observed in women's roles in terms of careers and of a greater level of individual freedom, at least among the middle class (Johansson, 2018). With this greater level of independency and autonomy, Chinese middle-class women are empowered economically and sexually (Chen, 2009). To some, women's new freedom is, however, seen as an excessively selfish hedonism. Such a view has led to a resurgence of some of the former pressures on women (Sun & Chen, 2015). Particularly, the cultural traditions that values only women's youth and dependence persist (Ji, 2015), as does the continuing power of patriarchal ideology (Yu, 2019). For example, the term 'leftover women' is used to refer to unmarried women beyond their early 20s (Gui, 2020; Yu, 2019). There is simply a lack of any positive concepts relating to women who do not fit into traditional domestic roles, seek independence or prioritise personal achievements (To, 2013). Chinese women's work and family life is now a negotiation between the neoliberal personal choice rhetoric and Confucian patriarchal tradition (Sun & Chen, 2015). A new identity for Chinese middle-class women is taking shape, according to what Ji and Wu (2018, p. 236) call "Confucian-neoliberalism". The reality of this dual system is that responsibilities and obligations of kinship ties still fall onto women (Leung, 2003). They are pushed to accept traditional gender norms in the private sphere as a justification to their career pursuits (Ji, 2015). The 'double-burden' of work and family is what many Confucian-neoliberal women face (Sun & Chan, 2014, p. 3).

Theory, methods and data

We adopt the theory and methods of social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Van Leeuwen, 2005) and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) (Ledin & Machin, 2018). They approach all forms of communication, which may combine language, images, sounds, videos, etc., as part of the functioning of social and political life. Of interest is how communication carries discourses that legitimise and maintain social inequalities and social injustices that support the interests of the powerful in society, for example gender inequality (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

In social semiotics, communication is never neutral but rather loaded with specific ideological interest (Kress, 2010). Communication is considered as motivated and accomplished by drawing on a repertoire of shared existing semiotic choices, which are combined for specific contexts of communication. These choices, for instance the words in language as well as the colours, fonts, iconography and composition etc. in images or visual design, have ‘meaning potential’, instead of having a fixed meaning. The use of these choices is driven by the interests of those communicating and can be used to communicate broader discourses. Discourses here, in line with Foucault (1978), are models that account for why things are the way they are and provide evaluations of what is good and bad in societies. MCDA provides a systematic analytical approach to reveal how the semiotic choices communicators make allow them to account for broader discourses.

We also apply the concept of three layers of understanding of the nature of communication: the macro, meso and micro (Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). The macro level considers the way semiotic choices have come to merge and develop in a culture. This could be colour distinctions, social media platforms, a cup of Starbucks coffee shown in a picture or gyms. The question here is what broader social-political processes and ideological priorities have loaded those choices with what meaning potential. So the macro level is all about ideology. The meso level looks at the discursive practices to which the specific instances of communication belong. This is a concern of ‘canons of use’, asking what typical configurations of semiotic choices and meanings are in that discursive practice. For example, a news text is not a schoolbook. If we see a picture in a news text, it ‘fits’ into the canon of journalism. The micro level analyses the actual communication found in a specific situation where semiotic choices have been made. Here, we consider how the boundaries, in which communication can take place, are set out—what can and cannot be done. This is then, to follow our example of a news text through, is what is in the text.

The literature we presented earlier allows us to prepare some of the ground for understanding fitness posts on Weibo at the macro and meso level. The analysis that is carried out in the following sections will be at the micro level. By looking closely at the actual semiotic choices and relating our findings back to the macro and meso level, we will show how female fitness influencers on Weibo combine some of the ideas and values of Confucianism embedded in Chinese culture with what appear to be highly neoliberal ideas and values about self and society.

The corpus of data consists of 5,473 fitness posts shared by women on Weibo. They were collected between 2021 to 2022. After the data was scraped and imported into NVivo, the main themes in the data were identified using semantic macro-analysis (van Dijk, 2009) and the sub-themes were uncovered through open coding and axial coding (Charmaz, 2006). The data we will show are representative posts that are drawn upon at this level of analysis. This will allow us to best provide more systematic qualitative details about the semiotic choices, forms of social practices and ideology found across the corpus.

In the analysis, we will first show how the world is represented visually. This is important for laying out the context in which female fitness influencers represent different elements and domains in their lives. Second, we discuss how taste, distinction and modernity are communicated. Lastly,

we look at what we can think of as ‘overdetermined’ neoliberal identities intertwined with Confucianism in these posts.

A visual representation of a successfully integrated and managed happy life

In this section, we look at the nature of the images to consider how exactly things are represented visually. This is important as the nature of the images sets the tone for what is communicated and what is not communicated. We will show how the images, alongside language, play an important part in conveying a positive world of agency, taste, success and optimism. Through these images, different aspects of life can be classified as the same and complexities are erased. We start by considering the nature of these images individually to then try to understand how this allows them to be used as part of a composition.

The visual world represented in these posts, at a basic level, is idealised, resembling those of advertisements. The photos we find are dissimilar to documentary and naturalistic styles that formerly characterised amateur pictures. On the contrary, photos posted by these fitness influencers employ a more symbolic style that has been associated with commercial and generic images (Machin, 2014). Relying on the meaning potential of the semiotic choices (such as settings, objects, persons and compositions) that were used, such generic images are designed to be able to be used in a wide range of contexts and to be easily incorporated into designs.

In these fitness posts, we see the settings depict a world that is stripped of context. These settings do not document actual places or moments but instead connote and symbolise. The communicative role of symbolic settings has been well established by scholarship on advertising (Ledin & Machin, 2020). For example, a nature setting has the meaning potential of innocence, simplicity and adventure; city glass skyscrapers can convey a sense of modernity, cosmopolitanism and success; and historical villages can imply authenticity, tradition and craft.

In our corpus we repeatedly see these kinds of symbolic settings. For example, in Figure 22.1, we see a water scene, but it is not clear where this is. In Figure 22.2, there are a range of different fragments of settings—a café where she dines, representing leisure and relaxation; some street views where she skates and looks focused and a glass building, communicating urban activity and go-getting. These places are not important in terms of where they really are, but significant for showing ideas associated with a fitness lifestyle.

Other settings are simply unidentifiable. For instance, in Figure 22.2, the middle right photo and the bottom left photos, we see uncharacterisable backgrounds, suffused with soft optimistic sunlight that shines on the woman. Similarly, in Figure 22.3 it is not clear what kind of space this is.

It is worth noting that clutter is never shown in these photos. There aren’t any dirty empty cups, worn clothes, random coloured children’s toys or scattered documents. Settings that are stripped back and relatively free of artifice, as Machin (2004) suggests, allow settings to better fulfil clear symbolic functions. In this case, its function being to symbolise the kind of world where modern, active, successful women live. If these photos showed cluttered, more realistic images of tense mothers in randomly improvised fitness clothing, taking care of children in messy rooms or work-spaces, then the world, the life and the identity of these women would look very different. Or if we see crowded streets with people in all sorts of clothing, with litter or bordering construction sites, in grey and gloomy lighting, then the world would feel less successfully managed and positive. The world we see here is highly managed, ordered and codified.

Filters and colour are applied carefully in these photos. This can idealise the world that is represented and bring vibrancy to it. We see this in the sky above the water in Figure 22.1 and the warm autumn colours in Figure 22.2, as well as the pure, saturated light in Figure 22.3. More



成33JANE

2021-1-31 来自 绿洲APP 已编辑

Fitness | 自由所以自在

浩瀚如它，
渺小如人，
既然我是渺小的，
那我的悲喜亦是渺小的，
意识到自我的渺小，
便会找到自在😊。

@绿洲运动

#我的运动生活#

♂ 绿洲 ⑤ 澳大利亚



Figure 22.1 Composition set in an undefined, idealized world

importantly, this allow images to be seamlessly incorporated within overall compositions and as a result, things coordinate and appear as integrated (Ledin & Machin, 2018). Chen and Machin (2014) found that these kinds of representations have become increasingly common in commercial media design in China from the 1990s onwards, but here we find it as part of everyday social media communication.

Colours are chosen and sometimes added or modified to create connections between things, achieving overall consistency and building coherent colour palettes. In Figure 22.1, we see how the colours of the landscape in between the sky and the water have been modified to partially carry the same colour as the sky and partially rhyme with the skin tone of the woman. The colour treatments integrate the sky, water, landscape and the woman as a coherent composition and create a sense of harmony. In Figure 22.2, we see autumn colour palettes run across all images in the woman's clothes, the wooden table, the skateboard wheels and the leaves. The colour palette creates links across images and brings different elements of life together. In Figure 22.3, we see a very limited colour palette: flat and pure whiteness contrasting with elements that carry black.

Colour, as Ledin and Machin (2018) have shown, along with other semiotic choices, can be used to signify classification and categorisation. This is a key characteristic of modern communication that they call “integrated design”. How things are similar or different is not clearly explained through running text, but rather symbolised and coded through semiotic choices such as colour, size, graphic shape and font style. The actual difference, complexities and contradictions are often glossed over. In these fitness posts, we see that colour is one resource that links images

Gwen Bouvier



YoYo孙佳祺 🌟

20-11-2 18:30 来自 微博 weibo.com

#Yo的购物车#

给大家推荐一款性价比极高的真无线蓝牙耳机 Anker安克家的声闻Soundcore liberty 2 pro

音质非常棒，亲测听音乐的时候重低音很震撼！在嘈杂的咖啡厅里戴着它看视频也很有沉浸感~大概是一千元级音质最好的TWS耳机了。

戴在耳朵里也很舒服，而且真的超稳！健身滑板的时候戴着完全不担心会掉~

耳机充满电可以续航8小时，充电盒可以给耳机充4次电，也就是说...使用32小时以后才需要充电。如果只是每天通勤路上用的话，大概可以一月一充吧😊

双十一价格很适合下手 🙏

原价999，双十一领券后到手价779元

[网页链接](#)

年底节日季送朋友当礼物也不错呀🌟



#Yo's shopping cart#

Recommending very cost-effective true wireless Bluetooth headphones Anker's Soundcore liberty 2 pro

The sound quality is very good, and the bass is really shocking when listening to music! It is also very immersive to wear and watch videos in a noisy café ~ Probably the best TWS headphones with the best sound quality at the thousand yuan price range . . .

Figure 22.2 Symbolic setting with warm autumn colours throughout

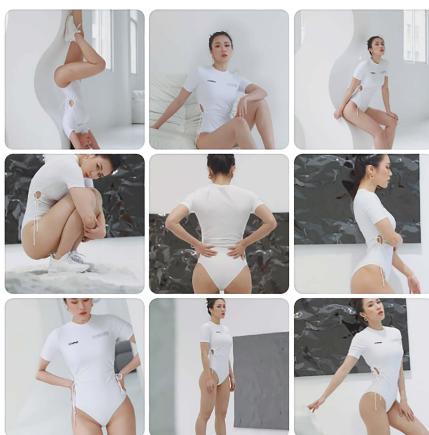


GiGi 🎉

22-2-28 11:16 来自 iPhone 12 Pro Max

#动能嗨翻计划##心动不打烊#

Hey,2月的最后一天了~你们今年的训练走起了吗?



#hyped kinetic energy plan# #heartbeat never stops#

Hey, it's the last day of February ~ have you started training this year?

Figure 22.3 Symbolic setting and rhyming of pure whiteness



Figure 22.4 Self-care through managing one's life

together and therefore classifies different domains such as fitness, work, consumption and leisure as being of the same order.

Such harmony created by colour coherence across images and domains creates a sense that different elements of life come together as a well-managed and balanced whole. It is also chic and feels good. What is silenced is the contradictions and tensions between them—between leisure, work and family obligations. Such a visual world resembles neoliberal ideology, where all parts of life are to be treated in the same way, as a business to be managed, where right decisions need to be taken, and where the results can be success and happiness.

It is also important to consider who is documented in these photos, what they are depicted as doing and what kind of interpersonal relationships they have. In these photos, we mostly see the women alone by themselves, conducting individual activities. We infrequently see social connections and social interactions. Friends are occasionally shown, or indicated, in one image of the photo collage as seen in Figure 22.4 for example, where most of the pictures are of individual women or products. Groups of people and co-workers are even rarer and there are never crowds. Those with children often show their small children as part of the successful management of different aspects of the life of a modern woman (e.g. Figure 22.5). Husbands, however, are seldom part of the visual world shared by these women, with exceptions when their husbands are also fitness influencers.

Mostly, we see these women engage in very little concrete activities. Again, the photos do not serve the function of documenting events as moments in time but are used to point to ideas and values. Here, poses are important for conveying these ideas and values (Ledin & Machin, 2020), as they would be in commercial stock images and advertising (Machin, 2004). For example, a person jumping with arms open on a beach can symbolise freedom, being free of worries and anxiety; a person who stares squarely out of the image with their arms folded across their front can symbolise confidence; a person in a meditation pose can symbolise spirituality and a peaceful mind.

In Figure 22.1, we see the woman stretching upwards by a water scene with a big blue sky. This gives a sense of freedom, growing and optimism, with the first line of the text saying “Fitness | Free and therefore at ease”. In the case of Figure 22.2, the middle photo shows focus and determination in the way of the woman staring into the camera; in the middle right photo we see a sense of purpose and knowing, shown by the looking slightly upwards into the distance;

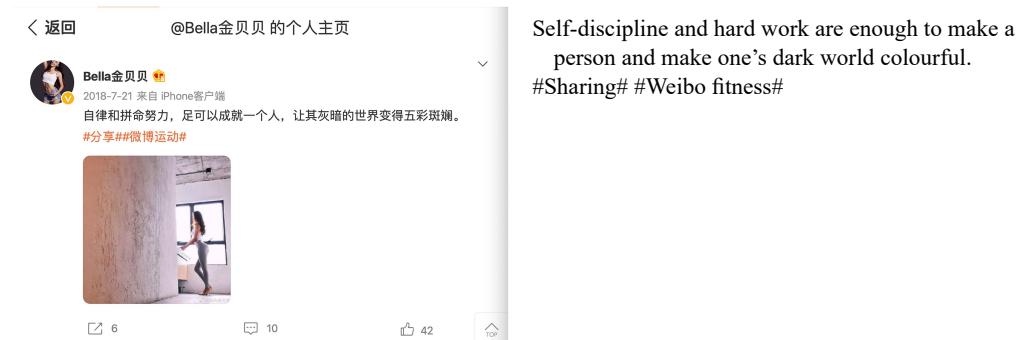


Figure 22.5 Success represented through managing different aspects of life

and in the middle-left photo we get a sense of being on-the-go and freedom as she is skating with her arms open in the street. We also see cute-and-chilled out in the top-left while she sits in a café smiling and casually listening to music. In Figure 22.5, in a jewellery and haute couture context, we see the woman sitting confidently while being styled and looking at her daughter with a smiling and caring expression. She goes to an exclusive place where she is pampered, appreciates expensive Western fashion design and has a good time with her daughter all at once. In these photo collages, the women can be all of those images and manage all different demands of life, being happy and successful as they make the right combination of choices in their lives.

We also see poses that are typical of fitness photography, showing the shape or muscle of (a particular part of) the body. For example, in Figure 22.6, the woman's upper body is leaning forward while the lower body is pushed back, to accentuate the s shape of the body and the roundness and fitness of her bottom. The photo is taken from a lower angle to create long-looking legs. The lighting is soft and slightly over-exposed, which is a typical way of creating idealised commercial images. The stripped back industrial setting is also typical of the cafés and chic stores now appearing for middle-class consumers, bringing connotations of authenticity and post-modernity.

In sum, the visual world is highly decontextualised to symbolise a clean, managed, feel good life. Morality of happiness, agency and success penetrate in different domains of life where all the differences are integrated as a coherent whole. On the surface, these posts are about fitness, but clearly they are about so much more than that. They are about the lifeworld of women who do fitness, in which we start to get a sense that broader discourses that involve women's identities are also being communicated. These women are not the demure, submissive and self-sacrificing Confucian women who restrict themselves in their place. They are active, independent, fun-loving women, who are busy in multiple domains that are infused with happiness and success. The nature of these images is essential for placing what is written by these women in context and for understanding the nature of what is communicated textually.

A lifestyle of taste and distinction

In the literature earlier we discussed that for the new Chinese middle classes, consumption, particularly of Western brands and Western style, constitutes cultural capital that marks one's distinction,



Did you watch the training video yesterday? Did you follow the training today!!

As a super lover of milk tea, due to work, I need to keep in shape, plus I have a high need for a healthy diet, I do not dare to try many delicious milk teas, but last weekend's 'Nayuki Tea' x 'Oatly' green field life planning camping event gave me #no cream Oat Snow Top tea experience#

Milk tea milk tea, it is milk + tea. Most of the time, our misunderstanding of milk tea is severe, because most of the milk tea on the market contains condensed milk or milk powder and sugar for enhancing the taste, which is not good for health and leads to weight gain. Nayuki's milk tea is made with high-quality fresh milk, but there are still some lactose intolerant people who cannot enjoy it. Plant-based dairy products are different from animal creams. In addition to being more environmentally friendly and sustainable in the production process at the macro level, they have a positive impact on the environment. They are also healthier and suitable for more people~

This is the first time I drink #oat coco treasure tea#, the first time to experience @Nayuki tea x @ OATLY's innovative Oat Snow Top, the taste is light, very silky and soft, there is no greasy feeling, 0 cholesterol, can smell and taste the aroma of oatmeal, and rich in dietary fibre, satisfies the appetite while putting a lot less burden on the body ~ No cream is added, but the taste is not reduced by that, this first experience is awesome!

Recommend lactose intolerant people to go and try out 'Nayuki tea'

Have you trained yet??

Today is also a day to remind you to love yourself well

Figure 22.6 Striking a pose to accentuate aspects of the body

identity and tastes. Women in particular have been observed to seek and express freedom, empowerment and status through consumer choices (Leung, 1998).

Across the posts in our corpus, these women talk about their activities that include reading Western literature, watching Western movies, a trip to Western countries and celebrating Western holidays such as Christmas and Halloween. In Figure 22.5, we see the women participating in a jewellery and haute couture activity of Dior, a high-end Western brand. We see her daughter playing around with an expensive-looking necklace. Using English words here and there is also common. For example, 'fitness' in Figure 22.1; 'Soundcore liberty 2 pro' in Figure 22.2; 'Hey'

in Figure 22.3; the daughter's nickname 'sa' in Figure 22.5; and 'Oatly' is mentioned in English rather than its Chinese brand name in Figure 22.4.

Figure 22.2 shows a glimpse of the coffee culture that saturates our data. Coffee has become a major symbol of class distinction and cosmopolitanism (Henningsen, 2012) and permeates different domains of life in our data. We see that coffee features as a marker of leisure, with women in cafés consuming it, as well as Western-style food, as in Figure 22.2. We see coffee being part of an active and busy life when women on-the-go carry a take-out coffee cup. We also see coffee as an essential boost for workouts, as women sip coffee in the gym with poses that show off their bodies.

Travel is another marker of modernity and class distinction (Guo, 2017; Goodman, 2013). The travel destinations found in our corpus reflect the changing attitudes to nature in China. The growing concerns over food integrity and environmental pollution have fostered a 'return to nature' trend among the middle class in China (Leggett, 2020; Tong et al., 2020). Rural life used to connote backwardness, a lack of education and stupidity. Now, the countryside is being idealised and commodified as a leisure destination (Su, 2010). New leisure patterns combine health and nature, as is manifested through hiking in the countryside, yoga sessions in the mountains and staying at eco farms in the urban outskirts where home cooked meals made of organic produce are served (Zhu & Zhu, 2017; Brunner, 2019). Figure 22.4 is one such example.

From the texts we know that she is in a green field, enjoying camping, where she enjoys Nayuki tea with Oatly. She says that due to work, she needs to keep in shape and needs to maintain a healthy diet but doesn't dare to try many delicious milk teas. She goes on to explain

Plant-based dairy products are different from animal creams. In addition to being more environmentally friendly and sustainable in the production process at the macro level, they have a positive impact on the environment. They are also healthier and suitable for more people.

In addition, it is "0 cholesterol, . . . and rich in dietary fibre, satisfying the appetite while putting a lot less burden on the body". Here, the combination of camping in a green field, having high standards in diet and drinking milk tea made of Oatly all become part of taste and distinction, and effectively make for good life planning. Thanks to good taste and good life choices, a leisure trip to the countryside has concrete, identifiable outcomes for not only one's health and body, but also for the environment. Importantly, through decontextualisation, colour, filters and alignment, photos of nature can be coordinated with images of other domains—leisure, workout, childcare and on-the-go while working. Nature, therefore, is integrated as one component of this world of right choices, good life management and achieving happiness.

Confucian-neoliberal women

So far, we have learned that these posts create a simplified, clean and well-managed world that is free of contradictions and complexities. This is also a world of tasteful modern Western products, design and lifestyle. It is a world that looks great and where you can always be glamorous and chic. The images portray busy activities, agency, determination, happiness and success. On top of this, all domains—whether fitness, leisure, childcare or work—are places where these ideas are realised. Based on these observations, we now look deeper at the ideologies that underpin these ideas.

'Overdetermination' (Kress, 1989) and the sense of freedom to choose is what stand out in these posts. The notion of individual freedom and choice lie at the centre of neoliberalism, which colonises such desires that have long been a foundation for Western culture (Foucault, 1979). We can



Many girls I met seem to believe that “love” is more important than “friendship” in their minds, and they expect to find a man who is also their own lover, best friend, closest one, and family . . . He will be All you have, and you will be willing to give everything for it.

In my opinion, perhaps as many women have been indoctrinated with the traditional female roles of “position” and “responsibility” since childhood, such as getting married and raising children, they see the “opposite sex” as the one to have intimate physical contact with; the one with whom to have a family life; the one who will provide financial support and a sense of security for herself. That’s why many women think this “love” is more important than “friendship”.

I used to think so too . . .

Now, I think when a woman understands her body, has enough connection with it and learns to control it, she knows how to be intimate with her own body, and how to please herself. The physical intimacy with her “lover” becomes not so sacred or important, whereas the spiritual intimacy become more valuable. This is what one’s own self and friendship can provide, apart from “romance”.

When a woman can live well by herself, she can also grow old with her good friends, becoming each other’s company;

When a woman has a job and an income, she can give herself the financial security;

If a woman can provide this sense of security for herself, then how can romance outshine friendship?

At this time, what can marriage bring a woman? So I cherish the like-minded friends I meet and the time I spend alone. I always hope that the power of women can be more cohesive, so that there will be more kindness and love between women.

Figure 22.7 Self-discipline and control as moral principles to live your life by

see this in Figure 22.5 where the woman makes it clear that she can make her own fashion choices, from wearing slippers and biking shorts to an haute couture gown. She is rejecting the expectations and confines of stereotypes. In Figure 22.4, the woman concludes the text with “Today is also a day to remind you to love yourself”. The choice of food, leisure destination, body management and care for the environment all tie back to loving yourself.

In Figure 22.7, we encounter texts that revolve around the idea of marriage and “the traditional female roles of ‘position’ and ‘responsibility’” and seeing the “the opposite sex” as a provider of

“financial support” and a “sense of security”. She encourages women to “understand her body”, connect with it and control it, so women can know how to “be intimate” with their own body and “how to please herself”. Here, the woman’s body becomes something one should understand and manage for one’s own empowerment, independence and enjoyment, rather than for pleasing others.

This sense of self, self-control and self-discipline are key themes across these posts. In Figure 22.6, the woman says, “self-discipline and hard work are enough to make a person and make one’s dark world colourful”. This emphasises a highly internalised discipline. This morally sanctions hard work, commitment, go-getting and being a productive citizen, which is at the core of neoliberalism (Ferrero, 2014). In addition, this is related to what is shown in the photo collages, where leisure, work, childcare, fitness and consumption are integrated and should be managed by the same principle.

The notion of knowing and understanding oneself also repeatedly occurs in these posts, as part of a discourse of self-reliance. But this is always represented as presuppositions or given things that are never explained or explored. Take Figure 22.7 for example: what it is about the body that should be understood? What does “connect with your body” exactly entail? And how does one achieve this? The very complexity of individual circumstances and differences that might relate to self-knowing is also suppressed in the decontextualised, all-encompassing world represented in the posts.

Knowing and understanding oneself is presented as the key to achieving all sorts of things and control over the body infers control over all domains of life:

This is what one’s own self and friendship can provide, apart from “romance”.

When a woman can live well by herself, she can also grow old with her good friends, becoming each other’s company;

When a woman has a job and an income, she can give herself the financial security;

If a woman can provide this sense of security for herself, then how can romance outshine friendship?

At this time, what can marriage bring a woman?

Again, there is no acknowledgement of actual personal differences and dispositions, such as family issues, practical matters, pressures brought about by martial relations, lack of actual choice and access to wealth or job opportunities. These are substituted by the abstract notion of knowing and controlling your body.

Similarly, we see the one-size-fits-all and decontextualisation in Figure 22.1. The text creates a collective, universal type of ‘human being’ whose joy and sorrow are equally ‘small’. It then advises that “when one realises how small one is, you will find yourself at ease”. Regardless the kind of sorrow or the reasons behind the sorrow, it should be dealt with in the same way, relying on such a realisation. Self-knowledge and actual situations are clearly excluded from this discursive universe. How realising one being small can lead to being at ease is never elaborated. The solution to all sorts of personal complexities and achieving freedom in all realms is down to the one abstract realisation of how small one is.

Here we see the deep inequality of opportunities in social being erased. This is similar to how the idea of the entrepreneurial self has been criticised (Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2010). There is zero acknowledgement that many simply do not have the same kind of choice to make or the same kind of resources to use. Meanwhile, nothing we see in the photos encourages us to consider this lack of context and deletion of personal situation.



Ashlee琳琳

2020-10-28 来自 iPhone客户端

前几天有个网友问我：

『我想减肥，但没有意志力，Ashlee我该怎么办？』

我的回覆是：『肥一辈子』

妳健身的目的是什么？

1. 变美/有自信
2. 健康/生活平衡
3. 增加力量/强壮

欢迎留言让我知道😊

也许网友觉得我很严厉 😅

但我总认为

付出后获得的是美好的 ... [展开](#)



A few days ago, a netizen asked me:
I want to lose weight but don't have the willpower,
Ashlee what should I do?

My reply is: be fat for a lifetime
What is your purpose in training?

1. Be beautiful/be confident

2. Health/life balance

3. Increase strength/strong

Please leave a comment to let me know

Maybe netizens will think I'm strict
but I always think

Wonderful things come from devotion

What you can get without effort is at best ordinary
If your fitness goals are as superficial as mine at first

Want to be beautiful/want to be in good shape

Sacrifice and devotion must be the way to go

I can understand that long-term willpower is not
simple

But if you want it enough ...

You are willing to put yourself in an environment of
low distraction and low temptation

You are willing to sacrifice for results

You are willing to put in the effort

You can definitely do it!

If you can't do it ...

Being fat for a lifetime is also cute

For your own life, you totally have the right to
choose.

Figure 22.8 The use of lists can efface complexity and appear to provide solutions without providing a clear roadmap of how to achieve these

The idea of self is highly linked to the idea of choice. In Figure 22.8, we once again see self-discipline and willpower being highlighted, while individual dispositions are being backgrounded:

Wonderful things come from devotion

What you can get without effort is at best ordinary

...

I can understand that long-term willpower is not simple

But if you want it enough ...

You are willing to put yourself in an environment of low distraction and low temptation

You are willing to sacrifice for results

You are willing to put in the effort

You can definitely do it!

If you can't do it ...

Being fat for a lifetime is also cute

For your own life, you totally have the right to choose.

“You are willing to” is repeated three times in a triadic structure, commonly used in speeches and advertising as a persuasive device. This gives a sense of agency and clear actions to take (Reisigl, 2008). These actions appear simple and straightforward and failing to take necessary actions is attributed to not “want[ing] it enough” because “for your own life, you totally have the right to choose”. This, however, is a complete detachment of choice from actual life decisions.

Self-discipline is a personal quality that is highly valued in Confucianism and is arguably the centre of Chinese work ethics (Low, 2012). However, the notion of self-discipline we find in these posts becomes colonised as a kind of freedom of choice and empowerment. This is detached from Confucian self-discipline, which is related to responsibilities and obligations to the wider society. Self-discipline in the form of neoliberalism focuses on looking after one’s own interest, with there being no sense of society nor wider collective well-being (Duggan, 2002).

In Figure 22.8, the purpose of training has been presented in a numbered list:

What is your purpose in training?

1. Be beautiful/be confident
2. Health/life balance
3. Increase strength/strong

Lists have the affordance to present things as a paradigm (Ledin & Machin, 2015). That is to say, a socially agreed upon categorisation of things that naturally belong together. For example, a shopping list or a list of dog breeds. Lists also have the affordance of communicating something formulaic, technically presented in a stripped back, core detail manner. In this case, relying on the affordances of lists, the three categories of purposes of training appear to include everything that needs to be considered. It comes across as uncomplicated. Different concepts are treated as if they are of the same order. There is no positive correlation between how beautiful and how confident one is. Health and life balance can be very different things. Is it mental strength or physical strength that we are dealing with? Ultimately, it appears that, regardless of the goals, they can all be achieved by training.

The abstractions presented in the language, which speaks of rules, principles and advice for dealing with all domains, sits with image configurations where we see women being active, confident, happy, chic and successful. Both the language and photos are decontextualised.

Conclusion

Since the reforms in China, and especially since the 1990s, Western ideas, values and identities have been brought into China with the arrival of Western media and products. The question of how such Western media and culture impacts on, and is adapted in, local contexts, has been raised by scholars (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2007; Aiello & Pauwels, 2014). Our findings here lay bare such cultural interactions in China, in regard to the rising Chinese middle classes.

On the one hand, observations about how women represent their bodies on Weibo align with what has been observed on Western social media platforms. Fitness is represented as a form of empowerment, self-betterment and go-getting. On the other hand, however, this seems somehow ‘overdetermined’. We showed how this can be understood in the context of changing roles and identities amongst Chinese middle-class women. Tensions arise as they move into more professional roles and as people around them embrace modernity, Western culture and a more Western lifestyle; yet they find themselves in a tension between more traditional expectations of duty and obligation to family.

In these posts, we see women celebrate their success, agency and independence. Pressures that may stem from relations with husbands or families, and conflicts that may occur between different domains of life are suppressed in the feel good and well-integrated visual world. This is a well-managed life full of possibilities where there is no sacrifice, but only gain: luxurious products, beauty, health, success, happiness and freedom, all in their place.

In one sense, we might interpret these posts as part of women negotiating, or even contesting, their roles and identities rooted in Confucianism. Arguably, more analysis would be needed to fully validate this. But here, a clear clue lies in the form of neoliberal identities. They advocate the idea that success, freedom and happiness are all there for those willing to strive for it. This discounts the fact that very real differences in personal disposition or personal circumstance may mean that many simply do not have such opportunities or resources. This leaves us wondering how this takes them a step away from actually knowing how to engage with real issues. While these middle-class women celebrate the chic and tasteful lifestyle of consumption, fashion, freedom and self-expression, the possibility for reflecting on their own circumstances is erased and denied. And it is a solution that celebrates the self and negates the very existence of society.

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23

RECONTEXTUALISING GLOBAL WARMING AS OPPORTUNITY

On not seeing the trees for the forest

Ian Roderick

Introduction

Voluntary carbon markets (VCMs) are exchanges where carbon credits can be bought and sold as offsets against one's own carbon footprint. Since their advent, a substantial literature has emerged that is critical of specific carbon offsetting projects as well as the practice in general. This chapter aims to augment that critical literature by demonstrating how cultural discourse analysis can expose what might on the surface seem like a programme for accomplishing intercultural progress, prosperity and harmony is in fact a reintensification of Western cultural-political priorities that sustain global inequality and discord. Accordingly, five VCM brokerage websites are analysed from a social semiotic approach to establish how carbon offsets are marketed to Western consumers using the semiotic resources of 'new writing' and recontextualisation. Of particular concern is the way in which the sites represent offsetting as a form of 'enlightened consumption' and make carbon offsets tangible as experiential commodities. Thus, the websites tend to select images that function to represent, if not fetishise, Western notions of nature as ideally separate and distinct from human culture. Accordingly, what we find is that panoramas and vistas are more likely to be used to symbolise a carbon offset project than the people directly connected to it. Given that the effects of global warming are already being experienced unequally along the Global South-North divide, it is galling to find that the promotion of carbon offsets as a remediating solution background if not obfuscate those peoples most vulnerable to climate change. While superficially, VCMs seem to affirm an ethical relationship between the advantaged and disadvantaged of global capitalism, examined more closely, they reveal yet another exercise in performing individual 'sovereignty' (and privilege) through consumer choice while also negating the very consequences of enjoying that privilege.

What are VCMs?

Voluntary carbon markets emerged in the late 1990s as exchanges where carbon credits could be bought and sold. Carbon credits represent a *certified* removal or reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to global warming and climate change. The process of certification is what makes the credit transferable and seemingly tangible as a commodity. Organisations as well as private individuals will turn to VCMs as buyers of carbon credits in order to offset their

own GHG producing activities or ‘carbon footprint’. As Watt (2021, p. 1070) notes, for many industries, particularly air travel, the acquisition of carbon offsets is central to their well-publicised climate change plans. The same holds true for some private individuals who wish to reduce their climate impact while still continuing to engage in activities that come with notable associated GHGs (McLennan et al., 2014).

VCMs are premised upon the idea that ‘nature’ has not adequately been factored into the costing of an economic activity and that this market failure can be corrected by further market expansion (Huff, 2021). By introducing exchangeable carbon credits, market actors can offset those ‘unavoidable’ emissions that their activities produce (Watt, 2021). However, this idea of being able to compensate for ineluctable GHGs is, as Huff (2021, p. 3) explains, based upon a fiction:

In spite of its prominence in climate policy, corporate social responsibility directives and public discourse around neutralising greenhouse gas emissions, offsetting can only “work” as a calculation on balance sheets because of a central fiction at the heart of the VCM—that one ton of tCO₂e—is always considered (1) commensurate, or equivalent and (2) fungible, or substitutable, with another no matter how or where in the world it is sequestered or emitted.

The seeming double exchangeability of carbon is therefore what makes the consumption of offsets possible. As with all fetishised commodities, it is the ability of the carbon offset to take on a ‘life’ of its own, independent of the material conditions of its own production, that obscures the exploitative relations that gave rise to it (see also Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2014).

Since their advent, a substantial literature has emerged that is critical of specific voluntary carbon offsetting projects as well as the practice in general. Cavanagh and Benjaminsen (2014), for example, detail how a Dutch NGO-sponsored reforestation scheme at Mount Elgon National Park in Uganda was a “spectacular failure” that resulted not only in forced evictions but resulted in “restricted local access to livelihood-supporting resources such as water, fuelwood, and non-timber forest products—all the while creating new sources of income for UWA [Uganda Wildlife Authority] and the FACE Foundation [the NGO]”. More broadly, Carton (2020, p. 1354) points to precisely the sort of ambiguities and contradictions that come to the fore in such ‘development’ projects:

Although offsetting potentially generates new revenue streams and opportunities for poor communities in the Global South, it often comes with trade-offs, injustices, unintended consequences, or obstacles to implementation that tend to be insufficiently acknowledged by proponents.

Indeed, what is alarming is how as a solution to the unevenly experienced environmental consequences of over-development in the north, the Global South is being re-subjected to dispossession through what Fairhead et al. (2012, p. 237) term “Green Grabbing”—“the appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends”.

As Miles (2021, p. 499) shows, such offsetting schemes are often subject to critical assessment by those directly affected:

Challenges with the invisibility of ‘carbon’ as a resource—both literally and figuratively—was a common theme as community members questioned the feasibility of carbon as a commodity and expressed concerns that if REDD+ did succeed, their land rights might be usurped by more powerful interests”.

However, as shall be discussed further, these local, critical discourses are, not surprisingly, excluded from the VCM brokering websites. So while REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) was adopted as Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, how it and other emissions mediating programmes have been implemented seem to again exemplify what Melkote (2018) terms the universal model for development. Thus, the promotion of VCMs depends upon once again imagining “the path to development and social change as an orderly step-by-step progression to development as exhibited by the rich Western countries” and succeeds at having “eroded viable alternatives to development and change and therefore may have crippled the capacity of developing countries to meet an increasingly different future with creative local responses” (2018, p. 79). Accordingly, a cultural discourse analysis of VCM promotion should highlight how local responses to global climate change are being reorganised through the lens of Western neoliberal free-market solutionism.

Cultural discourse studies

Culture is understood not as a homogenous, stable and cohesive *thing*, but instead “as a diversity of competing practices of meaning construction, or forms of life, of particular groups of people” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 1 emphasis added). Culture is always a plurality of processes through which human actors engage with each other and make sense of their worlds. As such, CDS presupposes that difference is intrinsic to culture and that this difference operates relationally such that culture is always realised in relations within itself as well as in relation to other cultures. Furthermore, these relationships are inherently contested and unstable. As Shi-xu (2005, p. 54, 2016, p. 2) explains, “cultures are seen as not merely ‘different’ from each other, but in *tension, competition* and *contestation*, both within and without, often along the borders of gender, race and class”. As an intersectional approach, CDS seeks to highlight how what is often presented as an ahistorical and harmonious tapestry of differences is in reality structured by “hierarchical and hegemonic relations and practices, both internally and externally” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 63). In this way, CDS takes us beyond matters of representation alone by analysing discourse as being intrinsic to the asymmetries of social praxis.

Because discourses are more than simply constructed representations of social reality, they cannot be analysed in abstraction from social action. Discourses are both constituted in social practice and simultaneously reconstitute practices such that they are always already both material and symbolic. Borrowing from Marx (1845), discourses are not simply born of peoples’ minds: “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life”. Accordingly, this understanding of discourse necessitates that CDS be critical in its analyses of discourse since claims to truth are invariably mediated through contestations and struggles between unevenly matched social groups. Furthermore, since discourses are only manifest in social action, this points to the performative facet of discourse which is in turn realised “through a number of, often interlocking, symbolic systems, for example speaking/writing, genre, gesture and posture, singing, the media” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 20). Thus rather than seeking to merely describe how the world is represented, CDS aspires to be transformative by attending to and prioritising specific problematic or contentious sites of cultural negotiation and struggle:

The present approach is not interested in just any sort of discourse or just any problem constituted through discourse, but particularly those discourses where urgent cultural issues, especially questions of cultural relationship in the contemporary world, for example domination, exclusion, rebuilding or transformation, are at stake.

(Shi-xu, 2005, p. 6)

In this way, as a contingent and interventionist practice, CDS espouses a cultural politics that foregrounds the contexts of specific inequalities that would otherwise be obscured.

The practice of doing CDS, then, is tied to a specific orientation towards the politics of culture. Ultimately, the aims of CDS are twofold: to document and to intercede in the discursive fields that mark out the possibilities (and therefore also the limits) of what can be accommodated within a given multicultural formation. CDS research always entails a conscientious and reflexive process of choice such that any topic of study is always “the product of the interaction between the individual researcher’s interventionist initiative and the relevant, diverse cultural discourses” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 67). The documentarian component thus entails giving critical attention to those dominating discourses that present particular viewpoints and interests as culturally universal and consensual. It is in highlighting how such discourses obscure or silence “diversity, power struggle and critical consciousness” that thus leads to the second, interventionist impetus of CDS practice: engaging with and giving space to those otherwise subordinated “non-Western, non-white and Third World concerns, materials, methods, theories and worldviews” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 51) that are unequally part of the multicultural formation in question. The long-term goal then is to not only disarticulate hegemonic discourses from their material entanglements but to displace inter and intracultural hegemonies by advocating, as Shi-xu (2005, p. 67) proposes, equitable counter-discourses of “cultural coexistence and common cultural prosperity”.

Theory and approach

The analysis offered here applies a social semiotic approach, which conceptualises communication as a process of resource selection in which communicators make use of available resources such as found in language, photography, document design, etc. in the process of accomplishing particular goals. Semiotic resources are drawn upon and articulated together based upon the meaning potentials that they can afford the user. At the same time, not all options are equally available to individual communicators as the kinds of texts we can produce are constrained by the cultural, social, political, economic and historical contexts in which we find ourselves. Consequently, social semiotics is not so much interested in studying sign-systems as it is analysing the material conditions and possibilities of communication as instantiated in “multimodal ensembles” (Ledin & Machin, 2016, p. 5). More specifically, this paper examines how carbon offsets are marketed on VCM brokerage websites using the semiotic resources of ‘New Writing’ (Ledin & Machin, 2018; van Leeuwen, 2008a) so as to represent offsetting as a form of ‘enlightened consumption’ and make carbon offsets tangible as experiential commodities.

Van Leeuwen (2008a, p. 132) uses the term “new writing” to label a shift in textual composition (often computer generated) that “integrates writing and image in new ways and increasingly blurs the distinction between the two, a distinction which only yesterday still seemed so clear-cut and obvious”. New writing entails more than simply combining images with verbal text. The relationship between writing and image is profoundly changed towards one of greater interdependency as they readily “now take on communicative roles formerly accomplished by the other” (Ledin & Machin, 2018, p. 29). Furthermore, the way images themselves are used has shifted from illustrative or documentary to more symbolic in function (Ledin & Machin, 2019). Thus, the compositions of new writing differ in their design such that there is less reliance upon passages of expository running text and linear structures and, correspondingly, causality, categorisations and cohesion are more apt to be established symbolically through the visual arrangement of verbal and image elements.

What the ensuing analysis will address is how articulations of the semiotic resources of new writing function to recontextualise social practices so as to represent them in a manner that serves the interests and expectations of particular social groups. Recontextualisation transforms social action and actors as they are semiotised so that they more closely align with informing discourses. Through processes of substitution, deletion, rearrangement and addition (van Leeuwen, 2008b), the actors and actions of social practices can be replaced, obscured, re-ordered and augmented in such a way that they are made knowable in accordance with the underwriting discursive ‘scripts’ (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999, p. 99). The aim then is to highlight how modulations in verbal and visual representation have the potential to evaluate as well as alter details of the represented practice and that this is done so increasingly through a ‘logic of appearance’ rather than a ‘logic of explanation’ (Fairclough & UK National Emergency Plan for Fuel, Lancaster University, 2003, p. 89).

Description and analysis

Five of the carbon offsetting websites identified in the Investopedia.com article “Best Carbon Offset Programs” (Martel, 2021) were chosen for analysis: 3Degreesinc.com, myclimate.org, native.eco, sustainabletravel.org and terrapass.com. The article also promotes a sixth site, but it was excluded because its operations are entirely business-to-business. Of the five, one focuses exclusively upon travel-related carbon offsets while the others promoted offsets for a wider range of activities. As an intervention into the way carbon offsets are promoted to privileged consumers in the Global North, the analysis that ensues inevitably attends more to the first, documentarian aim of CDS than to the second, as outlined earlier. Of particular interest is how the websites, as semiotics technologies (Kvåle & Poulsen, 2018), articulate visual and lexical elements so as to make carbon offsetting visible as an individual act of self-fulfilment while simultaneously obfuscating local discourses of diversity, power struggle and critical consciousness.

Document design

As designed artefacts, the websites order and arrange the presentation of visual and verbal elements using compositional resources like document orientation, line spacing and alignment and paradigm spatialisation. Despite representing five distinctly different organisations, the design of each site tends to be similar in layout and appearance. This is hardly surprising since the shift to new writing has meant that “[p]ublic discourse, today, must do more than inform, persuade, instruct, explain, it must also ‘look good’, and new technologies provide templates which uniformly focus on presentation, on visual style” (van Leeuwen in Kvåle & Poulsen, 2018, p. 211). As Kvåle and Poulsen (2018) argue, templates are technologies of social semiotic practice that function to regulate and regularise communication, in turn producing certain aesthetic norms. These norms, in turn, are reflective of a greater emphasis upon exercising choice rather than deferring to expert forms of authority, and so communication has

shifted from more traditional information styles where information was provided in an authoritative and more formal manner to one where they speak on an equal footing and need to address a reader who sees themselves as already well informed, who has strong opinions and wants to feel they are making choices.

(Zhang et al., 2015, pp. 238–239)

Accordingly, the ‘look’ of the VCM websites is consistent with this ideal visitor; one who seeks fulfillment in exercising their ‘sovereignty’ (and privilege) through consumer choice and, at the same time, seeks also to negate the very consequences of enjoying that privilege of choice.

Document orientation

All five sites employ vertical orientation so that the visitor needs only to scroll downwards to read the document. At the same time, while the webpages tend to be quite long vertically, the documents are divided, using background colours and banner graphics, into distinct horizontally oriented sections or ‘strips’. The layouts are designed to be read as ‘folds’, and rarely does an individual horizontal section need to be scrolled down in order to be viewed. In keeping with responsive web design convention, these sections alternate between syntagmatic and paradigmatic content. The syntagmatic sections contain short blocks of extended text such as motivational and ‘about us’ statements, call-to-actions, infographics and endorsements, while the paradigmatic sections typically use horizontally arranged grids of icon and text as indexical links to sub-pages with more detailed information or purchase options.

Text spacing and alignment

Consistent with the minimalist style of the webpage designs, the sites tend to employ larger levels of line spacing. Most pages use double or 1.5 line spacing and only one, MyClimate, uses single spacing. While close spacing can convey unity and coherence, greater spacing also has the potential to suggest clarity and room to think and reduced formality. Furthermore, the spacious blocks of text can also be interpreted as ‘bursts of thought’ to be taken up or not by the intelligent, reflective reader (see Ledin & Machin, 2018, pp. 79–80).

Formality is further reduced by the choices in text alignment. None of the five sites use full justification. Text is typically aligned to the left and ragged on the right making it less ‘blocky’ and ‘dense’. This can give the text a more relaxed and less regulated and contrived appearance. Centre alignment is also frequently used for call-to-actions in the syntagmatic sections. Additionally, on Native, Sustainable Travel, and Terrapass, the text in text-icon paradigms can be centrally aligned. Central justification can, as Ledin and Machin (2018, p. 75) suggest, afford more formality, but in this instance I would submit that it is more about impressions of being balanced and sincere. On a more practical level, centre alignment also clearly demarcates each paradigm from its neighbouring text/options. As examples of new writing, it is the experience and visibility of choice and selection that are crucial to the impression of functionality. In the past, the menu options were confined to the page header with possible hotlinks embedded in the body of the page, but these designs tend to make the page operate very much like a menu as a whole.

Paradigm spatialisation and information values

Paradigmatic sections highlight the attribution of user agency in the website designs. While the syntagmatic sections offer a sequence of elements that stand together as a coherent whole, such as a phrase or a snippet of text, the paradigmatic sections are comprised of discrete and discontinuous elements that index or point to denser and more detailed information on subordinate pages. They afford the visitor/user the experience of making choices and deciding for themselves if they need to “learn more” by going deeper into the website. These sections respond to the visitor whereas

the syntagms tend to be more static, and it is left to the visitor to respond in terms of acceptance (continue to scroll down) or refusal (close the page).

Each paradigm constitutes a culturally salient domain in which a choice can be made (see Ledin & Machin, 2018, p. 178; but also Barthes, 1977). For example, in the fourth row of its home page, SustainableTravel presents four paradigms collected under “Our Priorities” in four boxes coloured with increasingly darker shades of green. Aligned and spaced as they are, with a common colour palette, they are presented as belonging together and being of a like kind. Like a list of action items, each of these paradigms represents a different activity/goal: “Safeguard Nature”, “Combat Climate Change”, “Empower Communities” and “Tackle Waste and Pollution”. Each priority also includes a brief explanatory text, however, these are also expressions of goals, like “Conserve the fragile ecosystem that tourism depends on” for “Safeguard Nature” rather statements of fact. To know who will do the safeguarding and how the ecosystem will be conserved requires, on the part of the visitor, being inclined to click on the link and read details further into the website. The reader who feels themselves to be already well-informed may well decide to just scroll on.

The document design of the websites emphasises opportunity for choice-making by the site visitors. Consistent with user-centred design, the pages are uncluttered by content, and navigation links are kept highly visible. Information is available, but it requires the visitor to actively elect to ‘dig down’ in order to access it. Users can choose to learn more, choose to measure their carbon footprint, choose to offset that footprint, choose which project they will support as worthy to offset their own lifestyle, and so on. As such, the sites are very much designed towards communicating with visitors as veritable prosumers, ‘curating’ for the user who thinks of themselves as active and engaged in their consumption activities rather than ‘educating’ them up front. What the user finds then is the opportunity to preferentially select offset projects as they are presented on the basis of their impact. What is striking is the way offset projects are most typically discerned through images of personal aesthetic experience such that ‘impact’ is symbolised as a matter of user experience more so than consequences for local communities.

Photographic images

Machin (2004) has shown how images have come to be increasingly used to accomplish symbolic rather than documentary functions. Rather than being enlisted to support substantive explanations of what is purported to be taking place, images are instead called upon to symbolise people, processes and places. As such, photographic images are increasingly ‘stripped out’ and ‘decluttered’ of mundane, everyday objects so that culturally salient objects can be used to accomplish symbolic functions (Ledin & Machin, 2019, p. 168). This increased use of the symbolising potential of images in new writing, in turn, affords greater opportunities for recontextualising social action since participants and processes are abstracted and contexts and causal relations are obscured. This is particularly evident in the way that images are used in page banners and as links to carbon offsetting project pages on the VCM websites.

Settings

This tendency in new writing to increasingly use photographic images for their symbolic as much as their documentary potential (see Ledin & Machin, 2018, p. 51) is plainly evident in VCM websites. Both MyClimate and Terrapass use a mountain scene photograph at the top of their

homepage to symbolise ‘nature’ free from the deleterious effects of global warming. MyClimate uses a stock photograph of the Great Aletsch Glacier in Switzerland, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, while Terrapass uses a stock photograph of a mountain range in Slovakia which is described as “Mountain valley during sunrise. Natural summer landscape in Slovakia” (TTstudio, 2018). Though they are photos taken of natural scenes, the images themselves are not entirely naturalistic in modality. Instead, the articulation of lighting and colour in the images tends to evoke a quality of realism based upon sensory experience more than verisimilitude. In this respect, the two images call upon European Romantic notions of nature as a means to experience a ‘deeper’ sublime ideal truth rather than the ‘ugly’ realities of nature. Thus, the images function to symbolise, if not fetishise, Western notions of nature as ideally separate and distinct from human culture.

Interestingly, the image used on the 3Degrees website offers a blend of the natural and the cultural/technological. Rather than a setting free from evidence of human activity, the photograph instead depicts a sunrise/sunset with wind turbines on the skyline. Aside from the skyline, the image includes blue sky with fair-weather cirrus and cumulus clouds and an out-of-focus flowering bush in the foreground. The beams of light created by the flaring interaction between camera lens and the sun along with the overall yellow hue also gives the photograph a more sensory than naturalistic type of realism. Here the image seems to symbolise, rather than necessarily document, the effects of climate intervention.

SustainableTravel differs in using a dynamic set of five rolling images of touristic settings with all but the first being ‘natural’. The first image was taken at what appears to be the initial staging point for vehicles in a carnival parade in St. Kitts. The other four images have more typical settings: blue sky with fluffy, white cumulus clouds; an aerial shot of a lush tropical forest and clear, emerald water; a dense rainforest canopy viewed from above; and a trail with ferns and other verdure on either side. The home page also uses other photographs for section backgrounds, and all are also set in ideal, outdoor, picturesque tourist destinations.

The outlier is Native which, while servicing individual customers, seems to be primarily business-to-business in focus. Native’s site is more minimalist, with fewer horizontal strips, and does not incorporate a banner image. It does use three photographic images as paradigmatic links which are landscape in orientation and depict a North American plains landscape, a mountain landscape with a wind turbine in the foreground, and the interior of a cold frame greenhouse. The first two are picturesque but considerably more naturalistic in modality than the mountain photographs described earlier while the third seems more mundane and technological.

Settings do vary more on the project description pages but for the most part still tend to incorporate scenic natural settings on all five sites. This is most obvious on the projects page for Terrapass which includes not only panoramic vistas of mountains and forests but even a photograph of a landfill gas capture project that incorporates forests and rolling hills. Interior settings are used for the few projects involving either manufacturing process modification or the replacement of household appliances such as cookstoves, lighting or shower heads, such as on the project pages for 3Degrees and MyClimate. Interestingly, for appliance replacement projects, interior, domestic scenes tend to be used when the project is in the underdeveloped South and less so when it is in the overdeveloped north where just the appliance itself is apt to be depicted.

Represented actors

How social actors are represented or not in photographs is apt to tell us much about the motivations, interests and purposes of the image producers as well as those for whom the image was intended (see van Leeuwen, 2008b, p. 28). Participants can be represented as individuals or collectivised

as groups with varying degrees of individuality or homogeneity depending upon how they are depicted. The degree to which any collectivisation can be attributed to fitting into generic cultural or biological types is termed categorisation which can be positive or negative. Representations of individuals can also be subject to categorisation through the articulation of detail in the photograph. At the same time, social actors who could be represented as participants may not actually be present or be diminished in presence and such exclusions should also be assessed as potentially manifesting asymmetries in power relations.

Returning to the main banner images on the websites, what is striking is how few of the images actually include participants. As already mentioned, 3Degrees, MyClimate and Terrapass use panoramic images of landscapes, and the only evidence of human habitation are the silhouettes of the wind turbines in the 3Degrees banner. The three images on Native's main page also do not include any represented participants. Where actors are represented in the main banner image, not surprisingly, is on the SustainableTravel webpage. The site uses five rolling photographic images with the first image being that of two women facing the camera and smiling. In this instance, as a medium close-up, they are represented as individuals but unnamed and without any contextual information regarding the photo itself, they can easily be categorised as 'welcoming locals'. Two other photos also include actors, but they appear to be tourists with their backs turned to the camera. In those photos there is little to suggest distinct individuality and so as photographic subjects, they stand in as generic 'tourists' or placeholders for the viewer to use in imagining their own travels. The remaining two, the sky and the rainforest, have no represented actors. If as is declared on the website that travel "connects us with cultures around the globe" the general dearth of represented local peoples is definitely noteworthy.

It is on the project description pages that there is a greater representation of social actors, but even then, there are fewer than one might expect. 3Degrees lists 13 projects but only three of the image-links include social actors, two of which are for North American projects and includes people in side and back shots at work on the sites. The third project is for cook stove replacement in Uganda but instead shows three smiling boys holding up the stove box while walking down a wide dirt road. MyClimate lists 80 projects with 42 of those including representations of social actors. Of those, 22 of the photographs depict participants with a high degree of individuation and 16 of which are face-on images, potentially evoking a sense of involvement between participant and viewer. Of these, five local residents are identified by name as beneficiaries on the individual project pages, and another seven are identified by name as local project workers. Otherwise, depicted participants are apt to be labelled in generic terms such as 'girl milking yak'. Similarly, Native lists 55 projects of which 13 include representations of social actors and otherwise landscapes are used. Eight of the images provide some degree of individuation but only three depict the participant face forward and thus have the potential to suggest involvement with the viewer. The two images with the highest degree of individuation are of a school board superintendent speaking at a podium in Colorado, USA, and a farmer in Pennsylvania, USA, appearing to explain his operation. It should be noted, though, that there was no anchoring text (Barthes, 1977) accompanying either photograph. Terrapass also included an extensive list of 42 projects, and yet only one image included a human actor rather than landscape, and the actor was cropped in the linking image so that only the nose, mouth and chin are visible. The full image of the actor can be seen on the actual project page, but again there is no anchoring text to offer any specific contextual information to help understand the image. Finally, SustainableTravel again represents social actors more frequently but not as frequently as one might expect. Their main project page offers links to 17 carbon offset projects, but only seven of the linking-images include participants. Of that, only in three of them does the participant face forward and so appear to engage with the viewer. Of the seven populated images,

four have higher degrees individuation, but there is no explanatory anchor text or identification of the subjects on the individual project pages.

Overall, what we find is that panoramas and vistas are more likely to be used to symbolise a carbon offset project than the people directly connected to it. When actors are represented, their positioning in relation to the viewer tends to afford low degrees of engagement, and the lack of nominalisation tends to further background the represented participants so that their involvement both with the viewer and in the offset project itself is diminished. Involvement is more likely to be indexed when the participants are local community members and they can be represented as ‘beneficialised’ (van Leeuwen, 2008b, p. 33) by posing with crops or objects such as energy-efficient cook stoves or light bulbs. Furthermore, the represented participants overwhelmingly tend to be present as either isolated individuals or as disconnected nuclear families at best.

Represented actions

In addition to representing settings and actors, photographic images also depict the behaviours and actions of actors performed in those settings. In representing social actors, photographic images can convey, through facial expressions and bodily composure, a sense of their emotional state, suggestions of thinking or sensing, engagement in verbal exchange and their actions in a material world. The semiotisation of these four processes—emotional, mental, verbal and material—contributes to the degree of agency attributed to represented social actors such that they can be presented, to varying degrees, as active or passive participants in the image.

Since they are static images, photographs can only represent social actions indexically such that they infer processes rather than document them (Ledin and Machin, 2018, p. 57). This readily affords the symbolisation of processes and their recontextualisation since it is possible to reference social action without recourse to representing actual activities, agents and causal relations. Accordingly, the websites tend to represent carbon offset projects using images that depict the projects not in terms of the activities and efforts that local communities undertake to accomplish them but instead through highly salient (in Western cultures) objects such as rainforests, blue skies, rivers and mountains that are associated with ‘nature’ or wind turbines which are associated with technological innovation and sustainability.

All five of the websites demonstrate this pattern of primarily abstracting and symbolising the practices of carbon offsetting. In addition to the banner image of a wind turbine dotted skyline, ten of the 13 offset projects that 3Degrees offers use scenic images. Of the other three, two do index material processes but one depicts children holding up a box containing a cookstove and the other is of a factory worker being handed alloy metal to be moulded. In both cases, the actions are endemically linked to but not directly connected to the carbon reduction project as a whole. Similarly, only 26 of the 80 project images included material processes on the MyClimate site. Of those 26, just eight processes were activities directly connected to the projects themselves while the remainder depicted members of local communities holding crops, using stoves, and dispensing filtered water. The Native website lists 54 projects, and only three of the images present material processes, of which two depict project-related work. The other material process is a ribbon-cutting for a project opening. There are also two verbal processes where participants appear to be talking about their offset project, but this is unusual and the projects are located in the United States. On the SustainableTravel offset page, which uses a banner image of a woman looking up at a very large old growth tree, 17 projects are showcased and only three index material processes and just one of those depicts project work while the other two depict daily living benefits associated with the project. Finally, Terrapass uses a scenic banner image of cattle grazing in the raking light of

sunset and forested foothills in the distance for its project page. It lists 42 projects but only two depict material processes. One is of waste being dumped and bulldozed at the landfill site where a gas capture project is being developed. The other is for a reforestation project in Kenya and depicts a farmer carrying an armload of mangos.

What these examples demonstrate is how voluntary carbon offsets are promoted in a manner that privileges abstract conceptualisations of nature as something disconnected from human activity but also something that passively waits human intervention, for good or ill. When local community members are represented, their actions are usually represented as emotional and mental processes. When they do engage in material processes, they are rarely related to the actual operations of the offset project being offered, and instead their actions pertain more to what could be interpreted as demonstrations of appreciation and possibly gratitude.

Visitor positioning

Because photographs function as interactions as well as representations, the manner in which the viewer is positioned in relation to depicted participants also semiotises social relations. Analysing interactional meanings entails first describing the articulation of the semiotic resources of orientation and proximity and how they position the perspective of the viewer in relation to the represented participants.

Orientation

Orientation connotes interactional relations of involvement and power and is largely accomplished through the angles of vertical and horizontal perspective. Involvement is suggested through the degree to which the represented participant faces the viewer or not on the horizontal plane. At the same time, vertical perspective effects relations of subordination and privilege between viewer and who or what is being depicted in the photographic image. A higher vertical angle will tend to privilege the viewer in perspective whereas a low angle will tend to subordinate the viewer. It is important to remember, however, that in practice these two axes function together, rather than additively, to produce interactional meaning potentials (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 148).

When participants are represented, they tend to be represented in either high degrees of involvement (face on) or median (side shots). 3Degrees uses a high involvement for the group shot of Ugandan boys holding up the cookstove box but a side shot for a factory worker and a distant shot of workers' backs for two sites in the United States. Though MyClimate represents local participants in only 42 out of 80 images, high involvement shots (24) are more likely to be used than median (14) or low (4). Native also uses fewer participant shots (13) than not (41) and forward facing shots more frequently as well with seven forward facing, three side facing and three facing away. SustainableTravel replicates this pattern with either no representation or higher degrees of involvement with seven forward facing shots and one rear facing. Finally, Terrapass uses just one image with a represented participant but in a side shot so only a median degree of involvement is suggested. Overall, the tendency is to obscure local community members or when they do make them available to viewers, it is in a way that is suggestive of involvement, but as I shall explain later, this does not intrinsically mean as equals to the viewer.

The choice of vertical angle also likely tends to be the result of conscious decision-making. In keeping with more recent practices of development focused NGOs and children's charities, the use of high vertical angles to depict human photo subjects tends to be avoided. While images of landscapes vary in vertical angle (from upward looking to bird's eye view), the websites

overwhelmingly elect to use zero-degree angles when representing human participants. Zero-degree vertical angle shots are used for all three of 3Degrees' images with participants and for the only participant representation on the offset project page for Terrapass. Similarly, the project page for MyClimate uses zero-degree shots for 37 of the photographs of local community members and only four downward and one upward shot. On the project page for Native two upward, four downward and, noticeably, seven zero-degree vertical angles are used. Finally, SustainableTravel, consistent with the pattern, uses six zero-degree vertical angles, two upward, and no downward shots. Attention is obviously being paid to not overly privilege the viewer and to instead position the viewer and subject in a manner that is suggestive of equality between interactants. At the same time however, this could well be explained by suggesting that viewer privilege and, by extension, the privilege of the website visitors is a potential source of discomfort and so is being ameliorated visually while the structural causes of that obfuscated inequality are inadequately addressed by offset developments.

Proximity

The proximity to the depicted scene in a photograph is also associated with interactional meaning potentials. The representation of physical distance through the image-subject distance of the shot has metaphorical meaning in terms of the social relationship between viewer and the depicted participant(s). Close-up images tend to connote familiarity and intimacy whereas long shots tend to connote distant and impersonal social relations. Interactional meanings of closeness and distance are also accomplished through the construction of viewer-subject gaze in photographs. Depending upon whether or not the represented participant(s) appears to return the look of the viewer, the image is said to either demand (gaze returned) of the viewer or offer (gaze absent) to the viewer. A participant is depicted with a "demand" gaze suggests being in a position to interact with and require something on the part of the viewer. Conversely, a participant depicted with an "offer" gaze suggests that the participant is available to but does not oblige the viewer.

Generally, only images that depict a local community member posing with a personal benefit of the offset project will return gaze as a demand image. 3Degrees uses a socially distant long shot and a medium long shot for its two US photos, but the demand image in Uganda of the boys with the stove box is taken as a medium close-up suggesting much greater intimacy. Over half of the images depicting social actors (25 of 42) on the MyClimate project page can be said to be demand images. In all but two images where gaze is met, the represented participants are posing with something that demonstrates their direct benefit from the offset programme—typically a subsidised energy-efficient item that they have been able to purchase through the programme. Of the 17 offer images, these typically depict people engaged in an activity, but only five depict people engaged in activities directly connected to project implementation. The images collected on the Native project page are notable for the way distance is maintained. Six long shots and four medium long shots are used compared to only one medium and two medium close-up shots. Comparably, only four of the shots can be said to be demand while nine are offer, suggesting a higher degree of emotional distance between viewer and subjects. SustainableTravel has a fairly even distribution in terms of distance but with more offer images (5) than demand (2) thus tending to emphasise social distance and disengagement. Finally, the one populated image used on the Terrapass project page is a medium side shot, and the subject's mouth is open suggesting a possible verbal process however gaze is not met thus reducing the interactional meaning potential. Thus, what we find is that while gaze may suggest interaction between viewer and subject, it is typically mediated by distance and related to representations that beneficialise the depicted local community members.

Conclusion

Voluntary carbon markets have been promoted as a means to address carbon emissions that are otherwise ‘unavoidable’. By purchasing certified carbon credits, companies and individual consumers can claim to have offset the carbon and greenhouse gases that they generate. The websites that broker carbon offsetting projects represent offsetting as a choice that consumers can make to mitigate climate change by seemingly balancing their emissions against the emissions-reducing actions of others through subsidisation. This is represented as a “‘triple-win’ for biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and socioeconomic development” Cavanagh and Benjamin-sen (2014, p. 56) though in reality there is little to support the idea that everyone is a winner when it comes to VCMs.

The focus for this chapter has been how VCM websites address and orient their visitors and represent available offset projects and the local communities that play ‘host’ to them. Offsetting becomes a way of ‘enlightened consumption’ not only because it supposedly mitigates the GHGs we produce through our own actions but because it positions the offset consumer as already informed and enlightened. Visiting the VCM sites, the user must always choose to ‘learn more’. The websites do not waste time or clutter space with information about the processes of mitigation or certification up front. More information is available, but it is held back so as not to be seen to over-communicate. Instead, the representations of carbon offsets are “technologized, coded and stripped down to a number of symbols and indexical meanings which assemble easily into the requirements of the neoliberal order” (Ledin & Machin, 2019, p. 168).

The majority of offset projects are represented using landscapes and other images evocative of nature. These images are typically high in sensory modality and, with exception of the occasional wind farm, there is typically nothing to suggest a human activity. This reinforces reified notions of nature as being distinct and separate from human culture but also works to effectively ‘green rinse’ VCMs by offering positive, upbeat images of nature. Thus, even images of landfills and biogas plants demonstrate what de Freitas Netto et al. (2020, p. 10) term executional greenwashing by incorporating blue skylines, mountain backdrops and green trees to evoke “ecological inferences”. In this way, the images, as indexical links to carbon offsets, not only commodify nature but do so in a way that presents offsets as experiential commodities. Thus, it is the affective and anticipatory associations of ‘nature’ that help materialise the carbon credit as a ‘thing’ to be purchased.

At the same time, when members of local communities are represented, their presence is largely realised in a passivated form. Though rarely represented using a subordinated vertical angle, local community members tend to be represented as either beneficiaries, posing with an object that stands in for the project as a whole and happily looking to the viewer, or engaged in a daily activity but offered to the viewer at some distance with little to no subject-viewer involvement suggested. The result is that voluntarily purchasing carbon offsets is really something one does for oneself. Someone else might benefit from the act but it is done more for the experience and feelings of doing ‘the right thing’ since there is little attempt to actually foster connections between the website visitors and the local communities that take on these projects. Since much of the positive feelings are derived from ‘safeguarding nature’ more than from safeguarding one’s fellow human beings, it becomes clear that this is readily framed in notions of ‘enlightened self-interest’. Purchasing carbon offsets does not just salve one’s conscious, it is not even an act of indulgence or penance. At one level it is an opportunity to marketise the mitigation of global warming. More disturbingly, I think, voluntarily offsetting your carbon footprint is an opportunity to first and foremost, acquire a sensuous experience with a fetishised conception of nature for yourself. So while CDA works to highlight “diversity, power struggle and critical consciousness as the central characteristics of contemporary discourse”, this is exactly what the VCM websites manage to obfuscate.

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24

(RE)LOCATION OF DISCOURSES IN INSTITUTIONAL SPACE

Isolda E. Carranza

Introduction

The theoretical perspective this research builds on is a sociolinguistics of praxis, which focuses on social activity and privileges data from the everyday life of ordinary people; as a result, it is suitable to study discourse in socio-cultural practices. This chapter focuses on the relationship between place and discourses as well as on the practice of writing graffiti along with the social relationships and cultural meanings they reveal.

As expected, public urban settings are characterised by official signs and mainstream discourses, however, the case to be examined has become associated with certain ways of having fun. In a Spanish-speaking country, a public space close to the city centre and site of a state university is regularly transformed by the practices of roller-skating, skate-boarding and acrobatic cycling as well as by abundant graffiti expressing discourses of play and mischief. The semiotic assemblages comprise design, colour, non-standard spelling and grammar, distorted letters, stylised calligraphy and, most significantly, English words or phrases. This transgressive use of walls by groups of youngsters who move through the campus is connected to a globalised aesthetics and the consumption of cultural products such as video games.

The particular emplacement of graffiti contributes, in varying degrees, to its being perceived as vandalism or not, but the unofficial use of some walls is neither penalised nor socially condemned. Studying relocalised discourses in the semiotic landscape and their association to the young can enhance our understanding of local or global cultural trends.

Theoretical framework and antecedents

The theoretical outlook adopted here views discourse as a component of social practices. Instead of focusing on texts as free-standing objects of study, a praxis perspective on discourse focuses on social activity. This tenet brings about a conception of subjects as participants in interaction and as actors whose conduct may or may not reveal degrees of agency and creativity. The theoretical turn towards discursive practices, which has permeated the fields of discourse studies, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, was initially spurred by the sociology of practice (Bourdieu, 1990, in turn inspired by Wittgenstein's concept of "language games"), which views language as an instrument

of power and of action, and views action as connected to social structure and history. Such theory of practice does not make use of causes, reasons or intentions to explain practice; rather, it acknowledges the logic of the shared, acquired dispositions to act in a certain way. That is a way of incorporating history into an account of ways of using language. Routine practice includes social actors' experiences as well as the material and physical conditions for the particular practice.

The practice turn is present in the foundations of various contemporary lines of thought and analysis. For example, in an outstanding book in linguistic anthropology, Hanks (1996) identifies three advantages in Bourdieu's concept of "habitus": it captures regularity; it integrates both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of practice; and, in incorporating dispositions, it includes the social group's perspective (Hanks, 1996, p. 239). In Hanks's practice-oriented view, "collective socio-historical schemas are reconstituted within the flows and contingencies of situated activity" (Rampton, 2006, p. 344). In line with this emphasis on activity, some outstanding publications have reviewed and critiqued social theory sources in discourse studies (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Coupland, Sarangi and Candlin, 2001) and some have also provided illuminating applications (Eckert, 2000; Blommaert, 2005, 2010; Pennycook, 2010a).

While research has often targeted discourse by dominant, central actors in society, the approach applied here privileges data from the everyday life of ordinary people. As a result, it is apt to explore socio-cultural practices. Some typical examples of such practices are parenting, teaching, administering justice, providing health care, playing a sport and participating in a religious community, all of which take specific shapes within a given society.

The communicative practice we will examine here involves writing and drawing. As we know, writing is embedded in a myriad of social activities, and it yields a wide variety of textual products, from institutionally endorsed printed documents to messages in social media. It also can be examined as a relevant social practice in its own right since the kinds and degree of literacy skills as well as the exercise of the right to make an inscription can be significant indicators of social status (Lillis and McKinney, 2013). Considering writing as a social practice leads us beyond the functions it achieves as a situated act of communication towards the social meanings and social relationships it may reveal. Writing is very often carried out in a multimodal fashion which involves combinations of colour, calligraphy, shapes, drawings or images (Pütz and Mundt, 2019; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010). By incorporating such features into the research focus and acknowledging the importance of the materiality of written products, the research data is necessarily broadened and physically contextualised in relation to their location, other contiguous texts and nearby objects.

A substantial body of discourse analytical research attending to social practices is affiliated with discourse-centred linguistic anthropology, which, by definition, is concerned with *cultural meanings* expressed and reproduced in discourse (e.g. Silverstein, 1997; Duranti, 1997; Irvine, 2001; Mendoza-Denton, 2008). The present study, too, views any kind of discourse as amenable to cultural analysis. This chapter contributes to the exploration of cultural dimensions in discourse in that it sets out to investigate them in sets of shared communicative and interpretive practices, which are conceived as related to social histories and a particular historical moment. Observing practices in the public sphere is particularly revealing of cultural and macrosocial dimensions of discourse, therefore, institutional sites and public spaces tend to be research locations from which analysts can derive fruitful insights.

Place and semiotic landscape

Early work on the role of place in a theory of discourse (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) was already advocating the integration of discourse, place, people and their activities within the analytical

scrutiny. Such object of study was highlighted in the following suggested label: “Geosemiotics is the study of signs in place as indices of discourses constituting this web of pathways through the material environment” (Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 168).

Another vein of thought on space and place comes from theoretical work on place by human geographers. In this group, we find conceptualisations that are compatible with the perspective adopted here since it is argued that “places are performed on a daily basis through people living their everyday life” (Cresswell, 2015, p. 64). In the present chapter too, place is understood to be lived space, in other words, the way in which people inhabit space in their everyday life and turn it into places.

Among linguists, Jaworski and Wei (2020) build on the recent developments in the areas that connect these fields. A testimony of the borrowing of concepts can be assessed when they point out that “emplaced and displayed linguistic and other semiotic resources are central to our perception of space, especially to creating ‘a sense of place’ in urban environments” (Jaworski and Wei, 2020, p. 7). These authors, among others, connect the saturation of signs in urban centres with *the consumption of cultural commodities*.

The relationship between language and cities has been investigated by sociolinguists, applied linguists and discourse analysts. The last decade has seen the proliferation of studies of what came to be called “linguistic landscape”. That body of literature is concerned with written textual products on display in public spaces: for the most part, commercial signage (by both big businesses and small stores) and street names or other city-hall sponsored signs (Ben Rafael et al., 2006; Gorter and Cenoz, 2020; Leeman and Modan, 2010). In contrast, the analytical focus here is on non-official handwriting in a public physical setting which is of interest in itself because it belongs to a state institution, and it is engulfed by a large city. Studies which have opted for the concept of “semiotic landscape” are directly relevant to the topic of this chapter because that conceptual development widens the analytical lens to encompass co-occurring resources that are not linguistic.

With direct consequences on their semiotic landscapes, cosmopolitan urban centres have seen their linguistic diversity greatly expanded due to globalisation processes, particularly in developed countries which receive the influx of a wide variety of immigrant groups, transient foreign workers or tourists. This has meant that the relations between places and the use of mixed resources from different languages have been studied in contexts which are radically different from the location chosen for the present study, a provincial Argentine town which is relatively homogeneous, both ethnically and linguistically. As part of the increasing relevance of research on multilingualism in urban settings, Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) have coined the term “metrolingualism” to denote local language practices in cities. Although that work is mainly devoted to face-to-face oral communication, the analysis in the next sections is directly in line with these authors’ interest in how urban spaces are produced through activities. Contemporary research featuring multilingualism as intrinsically related to globalisation issues deals with it by applying multimodal approaches and appropriating the concept of semiotic landscapes. A case in point is a journal special issue on the topic of play and creativity on the basis of diverse data, from skinscapes to Instagrams (Moriarty and Järlehed, 2019). Despite some interpretations of the object of study in terms of intentions and identities instead of resorting to its cultural dimension, the papers in that special issue are a rare instance of the interest in play with recontextualised semiotic resources—an interest which at the core of the research reported here.

For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to underscore, as has been argued in work on multilingual neighbourhoods (for example, Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005; Collins and Slembrouck, 2007), that semiotic assemblages reach different audiences differently. Among

the texts from the corpus of the present study, the scribble “sky kru”, for example, contains challenges for readers who pass by university buildings and are not familiar with either lexical meaning or unconventional spellings of English words. Hence, the relevance of culturally acquired interpretive practices. In addition, texts operate on their location and contribute to defining places. For example, it will be argued here that the graffiti in the corpus (both murals and scribbles), along with roller-skating, skate-boarding and cycling, turn the campus into a playground as much as official signs and plaques with names of buildings define it as an institutional place. In sum, given the relationship between place and discourses, a place associated with mainstream discourses can be transformed by the unauthorised use of surfaces for drawing and making sketches as well as by relocated discourses of banter and idleness.

Graffiti

Data from officially sanctioned signs (street names, store names, advertising, etc.) have been by far the most predominant in linguistic landscape research. In a programmatic paper, Pennycook (2009) advocates for a reversal of the tendency. This author, among several others, also illuminates the relevance of readers' and writers' movement in space and travel: “Landscapes are not mere canvases or contexts but rather integrative and invented environments. The importance of movement, of interactive spaces, brings a focus on place as dynamic, on city landscapes as having been graffscaped” (Pennycook, 2010b, p. 148).

Instances of the genre graffiti are ubiquitous in some South American countries. Those with political content, especially, tend to be numerous, and in comparison with placards, they attempt to perpetuate the message beyond the duration of the writing/reading event.

Handwriting on external walls of governmental or other institutional buildings is typically a way of venting grievances for which it would be hard to find venues of expression. When the written messages either contest or resist a certain state of affairs backed by a powerful social actor, they are often part of street demonstrations or protest marches. Thus, researchers have studied protest graffiti in many cities and in relation to various issues with an interest in their semiotic and political components (Rubdy, 2015; Rodríguez Barcia and Ramallo, 2015; Serafis, Kitis and Archakis, 2018; Martín Rojo, 2022). That kind of graffiti, however, is associated to an event that disrupts the usual activities in a given space and the habitual rhythm of movement through that space (Li and Zhu, 2020). Protest events can be very brief (like drawing a silhouette on a sidewalk or defacing a building with a blotch of paint) or relatively long-lasting (like occupying a square or a secondary school for days or weeks), but, by definition, events have an onset and an end.

In contrast, the focus in this chapter is graffiti that are not related to extraordinary events, but to repeated, unremarkable activities that are sustained in time. In addition to being linked to macro-social or political trends, habitual discourse practices have considerable potential for revealing aspects of cultural assumptions, processes and changes. Most akin to the focus of this chapter on illegitimate writing for pleasure in a public space is Karlander's (2018) semiotic study of graffiti on trains in Stockholm. In light of the author's analysis of the ideas and city imageries in the city policy documents against graffiti and other forms of vandalism, it is also the most contrastive with the broader cultural background of the data from Córdoba, Argentina, to be analysed here.

The methodological approach and the site

Choosing ethnography as a methodological approach can be understood as basically involving fieldwork, observations and interactions for a substantial period of time so that the researcher

can explore the relations between the emergence of discourse with the meaningful manifestations in various semiotic channels and the conditioning effect of layers of context, including physical context. Beyond these epistemological advantages, it has been pointed out that, as a theoretical perspective, an “ethnographic orientation” is intrinsically connected to conceptualisations of the subject as an agent, and it reinforces the attention to ongoing social action and situated practice (Carranza, 2013). Given the origins of ethnography in anthropology, the humanist and functionalist view of language which is implied in ethnography leads necessarily to studying not just discourse but social structure and social relations as well (Blommaert, 2015). Furthermore, just as every act of communication is socially situated and assessed, so the process of data gathering is a situated process of understanding and knowledge construction. This has implications for the topic of this chapter by underscoring the value of the researcher’s long-lasting, interactive involvement with locally significant realities. Blommaert and Maly (2014) offer a full-fledged application of ethnography to the study of linguistic landscapes. They illustrate the significance of the analysis of carefully distinguished layers of commercial, religious and infrastructure signs in a neighbourhood for grasping the historicity of social life and its transformations.

The present study was carried out in Argentina, a large Spanish-speaking country in the south of South America where the efficacy of high school teaching of foreign languages can be considered uneven across schools. The research subjects and the researcher are residents of Córdoba, a large town of around 1.7 million habitants, where five universities (among them, three private ones) are located. The fieldwork site is the campus of a public, state-run university. This campus does not have physical fences on its borders. It is integrated into the urban development in such a way that people can drive through it from east to west and, if one walks north along one of the paths of the campus, in a straight line, into a busy street towards the city’s central square, just 11 blocks away from the campus.

Graffiti has proliferated in a very large area of the campus, particularly since 2019 and became more abundant with the interruption of in-person teaching and the intermittent use of offices and labs in 2020 and 2021. Despite the fact that the city’s main park is close by and the fact that it has a skating rink inaugurated a few years ago, the kind of texts that are abundant on the campus are not found in the park. This observation reinforces the significance of discourse practices in the constitution of a place.

The data have been photographed by the author in the course of over 2 years of weekly observations in the research site and some sporadic contact with text producers in the late afternoon. Unlike inscriptions on walls which may be associated with criminal offenders or simply gangs of teenagers in many cities of the world, the content of these graffiti does not consist of threats nor boasts of supremacy over other groups, but it is mostly names of groups and other rudimentary phrases. The letter types, the spelling of the words and the accompanying shapes or large drawings are particularly noteworthy. The interest in understanding such semiotic reality and its concomitant social phenomena lies in the fact that those graffiti display resources from the English language.

The research problem

The spatial dimension of textual products is a major theme of this chapter because that dimension contributes to the meanings that can be implied by a set of inscriptions. Some interpretive inferences by receivers and analysts come from a given inscription’s location in an area of a city which—regardless of the texts in question—is socially recognised as being an area of a certain type. In a given neighbourhood, for example, a text may be interpreted as a claim to domination

of a turf. In addition, its emplacement on a certain wall can be an integral part of the conditions which allow an inscription on the façade of a house to be interpreted as a threat, for example, or another on a government building to be read as the repudiation of a policy. A further spatial factor is its relation to other inscriptions that may be contiguous or underlying and covered by the newer inscription.

Nevertheless, any analysis inevitably deals with the temporal dimension of the production and the reception of texts. Crucially, it is admitted that landscape is constantly undergoing change. This focus on time can be spurred by locally pre-existing inscriptions as well as by an interest in the socio-historical and cultural factors which condition the meaning-making. In sum, time gets into the picture even when we scrutinise spatial relations.

Given the general concern of this book with culture, the thrust of the present inquiry is on cultural indices that can be found in the relation between semiotic assemblages and place. On the university campus in question, the external walls of the school buildings display sophisticated murals produced by members of the student centres in each school, but on the same or other walls, we find the graffiti that constitute the empirical object of interest here. The initiative to produce them lies in users of the physical space who are *not* members of the institution.

The corpus comprises two types of graffiti: major pictorial productions that take up large surfaces, which will here be called “murals”, and swiftly hand-written inscriptions, which will be called “scribbles”. The former normally contain complex, multicoloured graphic designs, which are indicative of the producers’ training in drawing, but will not be examined here in terms of street art nor are they commented upon by passers-by as being of any artistic value. The latter, the scribbles, have been known as “tags” (meaning “signatures”) since the linguistically oriented, pioneer work on gang graffiti: “the ‘tag’ or nickname of the writer often accompanied by the name of the group or ‘crew’ the writer belongs to” (Adams and Winter 1997, p. 340). The term has been adopted with that meaning in more recent work on, for example, hip hop graffiti: “attendant terminology such as tag (the most basic form of graffiti, a writer’s logo or stylized signature with marker or spray paint)” (Pennycook, 2009, p. 303). These authors indicate that they borrow terms from the graffiti writers themselves. However, “scribble” is preferred as a descriptive term in what follows because this study was carried out in a Spanish-language context and because the corpus shows that the content of this category of inscriptions is not restricted to signatures.

Just as the fingerprint on a letter by illiterate convicts contributes to the meaning of the letter (Carranza, 2016), so in graffiti, there is an interplay between its components. Therefore, the analysis will consider the assembled set of written language, design, colour and any type of marks that are perceived as an integral part of the set. The conceptual tools applied in the analysis will have to comprise this semiotic dimension within the overarching discourse analytical treatment of the corpus.

Both kinds of graffiti, murals and scribbles, are analysed with the purpose of understanding the use of English-language expressions in them. It is crucial to emphasise that we are not dealing with the use of the English language as a full-fledged system but with the incorporation of certain resources of that language into these visual and textual products. The research problem, then, consists in accounting for local, vernacular appropriations of English expressions and other semiotic resources. In view of such a research question, the unit of empirical analysis is the assemblage of graphic and linguistic elements, its emplacement and the activity of which it is a part. It will become clear that making use of an “available” public wall is a way of having fun and leaving a self-identifying mark.



Figure 24.1 SAVE YOUR SOUL

Source: The photograph is ©Carranza (The use of small or capital letters reflects the size of letters in the graffiti)

Murals

The inscriptions which will be called “murals” here consist of a drawing that takes up a large surface and has a somewhat artistic quality. The linguistic component in murals can be the producer’s initials, a group’s name or a slogan as it is illustrated by “save your soul” in Figure 24.1. Such a combination of three English words is not likely to involve a serious exhortation of a religious nature because the graffiti in the corpus are devoid of any indication of that kind. On the contrary, the interplay between the sketchy “smiley” and the elementary sentence makes it clear that the linguistic component is a playful slogan rather than an act performed in earnest.

In Figure 24.2 we can see the letters TSS and the phrase “writers evolution”, in which the standard spelling would prescribe an apostrophe to signal genitive case. The large-sized drawing represents a stylised head. Both the letters and the phrase are placed—with a signature function—in the bottom right corner of the inscription, a conventional location for signatures. The self-referring phrase would not have the same meaning effect if it was expressed in Spanish. It will later be argued that play and idleness are indexed in this genre by English resources.

As it is illustrated in these photographs, typical murals have elaborate, large-sized drawings in relation to which linguistic expressions are subordinated. The general tone of the linguistic text in murals is celebratory. In some cases, the words are an identifying slogan, for example, “Never gonna stop”, along with the year of the mural production.



Figure 24.2 WRITERS EVOLUTION

Source: The photograph is ©Carranza (The use of small or capital letters reflects the size of letters in the graffiti)

The mural in Figure 24.3 includes the English word “power” and what seems to be the name and last name of the painter. The wall is in the process of being pulled down, but a large number two can still be seen. That number is part of the name of a group who call themselves “Pesados” (“heavy”), a three-syllable word “pe-sa-dos”, but the last syllable of that name, “dos”, is homophonous with the number two in Spanish, so they spell their group’s denomination as PESA2. That is part of the play upon spellings that characterises the graphic rendition of words both in murals and in scribbles.

Omission of vowels as a shortened form of a word is not a habitual way of writing in Spanish-speaking communities. However, it is a common feature found in the words inside murals. This omission is applied to the English word “family” which is part of a group’s name made up of a Spanish word and the shortened English word, “Simios FMLY” (“apes family”). This group’s name is found in the bottom right corner of a large pictorial inscription. Vowel omission is also applied to the Spanish name of another group, TNCS, which stands for “Tenaces” (Spa.) (“tenacious”). It was possible to read TNCS as “Tenaces” because the corpus also contains instances of the fully formed word.

Scribbles

The most abundant graffiti on campus are scribbles of the name of a group. In such a case, a group’s name can consist in just one English element, for example, the word “Ghost” with



Figure 24.3 Bom—Deva Ruiz—Power

Source: The photograph is ©Carranza (The use of small or capital letters reflects the size of letters in the graffiti)

a circle on top. The name can be made up of two lexical items from English, for example, “Purple Wine” and “Nomads Crew” or the word “crew” in combination with another word or with an acronym. An instance of the former is “Pandilleras Crew” (“team of gangster girls”) and an instance of the latter is “PCC crew”, which is the name of a roller-skating group. According to their Instagram profile, the acronym stands for “Patín” (“roller-skate”) “Calle” (“street”) “Churro” (“handsome”). In Spanish, however, the combination “Patín Calle Churro” is odd and non-standard. It only makes sense as a borrowing from an international video games website with the same name, where the PCC stands for “professional coordinated criminality”. Unlike the characters in the video game, the PCC crew in Córdoba are young skaters who are not intimidating at all.

In Figure 24.4, the scribble in white paint, “FUCK COPS” in capital letters, is also made up by a sort of indecipherable signature which contains a diacritic commonly found in the design of scribbled letters: a small circle on top. A text painted in black in a different location shows the ungrammatical construction “fuck police” without the article “the” which is required before the collective noun “police”. The corpus shows that the police can occasionally be a target of verbal attacks in scribbles just as it is observed in the common scribble in local Spanish slang, “– yuta + amor” (“– police + love”) which includes the minus and the plus signs.



Figure 24.4 FUCK COPS

Source: The photograph is ©Carranza (The use of small or capital letters reflects the size of letters in the graffiti)

A large number of scribbles are single words like “style” (followed by an arrow), “money” (Figure 24.5) or “boom” (Figure 24.6). It is important to notice, in Figure 24.5, that the inversion of the letter “n” and the asterisks preceding and following the word “money” indicate that there is enjoyment in the playful design of the graffiti.

The affinity between writing and drawing is made manifest in that a circle, an arrow or a pair of asterisks normally accompany words and the graphic shape of letters is often not straightforward, clear or standard. Figure 24.6 shows an instance of the exploitation of letters as components in a simple drawing of a face.

Displaying instances of further play on letters, some inscriptions use balloon letters while others may have the letter “o” with two dots inside or the letters “s” and “k” facing backwards. This kind of simple formal elaboration raises the question of readability. Although a few shapes have become mainstream, for example, by getting into names of stores or brand names (that is the case of the backward “s” on a clothes brand), many readers of these graffiti may be unfamiliar with some shapes.

As a result, in general, the inscriptions seem to be addressing particularly other groups of young people. Unaddressed recipients, in turn, may decode the distorted spelling with difficulty. At the very least, it is inevitable to simply notice the profusely written walls in a defined area and perceive the visual change as a territory claimed by new users.



Figure 24.5 MONEY

Source: The photograph is ©Carranza (The use of small or capital letters reflects the size of letters in the graffiti)



Figure 24.6 BOOM

Source: The photograph is ©Carranza (The use of small or capital letters reflects the size of letters in the graffiti)

Discussion

This section deals with issues related to three main aspects of the data: (a) the location of the accumulated graffiti, (b) the component elements in the assemblages and (c) the genre graffiti as a vehicle for a particular discourse.

The cultural conception of public place

In many countries, seeing and reading graffiti is an integral part of the experience of living in cities. The connection between physically moving around a city and being exposed to semiotic landscapes that include graffiti results in imbuing graffiti with a meaning of “urbanness”. Furthermore, the abundance and concentration of graffiti may delineate areas within the city and may even differentiate some areas from others. This implies that in some areas there is the characteristic competition for surfaces of external walls. Such is the case in a pretty defined area of the observed university campus, particularly its most frequently used paths. It must be stressed that it is the entire set of coexisting graffiti that has an impact on the constitution of a place as one of a specific kind.

The public nature of the geographical area in question and the fact that the well-kept lawns remain open all week long for people to circulate freely have been favourable conditions for youngsters with skateboards, bicycles and rollers to adopt it as a playground. This started to be noticeable before the 2-year period when the campus was scarcely used by institutional members due to the extremely long lockout established in Argentina during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has remained a steady practice after that period. Consequently, such occupation of this space and the writing practices that come with it must be recognised as a substantial trend.

Transgression is a central part of the discursive practice we have examined because inscribing graffiti consists in defacing buildings, but this behaviour is neither penalised nor persecuted. It has a financial cost because covering up graffiti and repainting buildings is a burden on the university budget, but it does not have a social cost in terms of outrage or mild repudiation. Rather, receivers who see the hand-written walls tend to stop noticing the graffiti or seem to take them as a fact of life. There is leeway for both official and unofficial use of walls as a canvas.

Resources

The inscriptions on walls that make up the corpus tend to display linguistic resources recognisably drawn from the English language. It is possible to find noun phrases (e.g. “purple wine”), short sentences (e.g. “Mad’s rules bitches”, no comma included) and constructions with negation (e.g. “punk not death”). There is a fragmentary application of grammatical structures. Thus, when the denotational text is longer than a minimal phrase, the result may be grammatically defective, as in “Im house gangster” (with the omission of the apostrophe and the indefinite article).

Popular culture products (e.g. best-selling comics, films, songs, video games, virtual reality platforms, etc.) which circulate globally are a strong factor in the dissemination of consumers’ familiarity with the elementary English syntactic structures and lexicon. In the local context, this factor can be more influential than formal foreign language instruction in secondary school. By tracing some of these basic English-language resources, particularly the term “crew”, originally employed by gangs in English-speaking countries to mean “group, team, gang”, it is possible to identify their current association to groups of youngsters dedicated to roller-blading or acrobatic cycling as well as producing graffiti. In general, the semiotic resources and the writing on walls evoke youth-related cultural content.

As to the graphic representation of words, scribbles are characterised by an extremely basic play with shape and position of letters, for example, the letter “T” is upside down and writing “E” points backwards as in the inscription “blu3 dark” which is supposed to express the English phrase “dark blue”. Spelling is a relevant dimension because it can reveal an association with a community or a social group. An instance of this can be seen in the inscription which proliferates in the area: “SKY KRU” (in capital letters) found below a schematic drawing. Passers-by may or may not recognise the word “sky”, but readers who are unaware that the English word “crew” is now commonly used to name a cohesive group of graffiti producers would tend to think that “kru” is an acronym while, in fact, it stands for “crew” and the two-word phrase “sky kru” is the name of a group of youngsters. The choice of “kru”, no doubt, brings to mind other altered spellings (e.g. “thru” for “through”) which indicate disaffiliation from mainstream culture in English-speaking countries.

Multiple meaningful systems are involved in the analysed graffiti because part of what is expressed derives from non-linguistic elements in the assemblages. In much the same way that a smiley can be added to the end of an utterance written on paper or on a digital medium, it is common to find on these walls the letter “O” with two marks in its center which turn it into a face. Dots, circles and arrows typically co-occur with words, not randomly but systematically and with the same design for each instance of the same content. Thus, they act as both ornaments and signature features. This pervasive adornment of writing with spray paint evokes the idle scribbling on paper rather characteristic of adolescents. Beyond the meanings we can recognise in spellings and diacritics, there may be meanings in accompanying drawings such as an obscene representation of female or male genitalia, a flower or two leaves drawn on the extremes of the letter “V” in the word “vegan”. It is clear, then, that focusing on assemblages as a totality is the path to reaching more adequate interpretations (Pennycook, 2019).

Circulation

The ludic character of the assemblages under study indicates that there is enjoyment in producing them and, in view of the arguments in the previous subsections, it can be added that there is enjoyment in transgression and mischief. The ethnography and the analysis of the entire corpus found linguistic elements that allude to other forms of entertainment: cycling in the phrase “fixed gear” and skating (on rollers or boards) in the names of several “crews”. It must be pointed out that there is no ground to view writing, cycling and skating as necessarily produced by the same subjects because, as we know, there are individuals and groups of young people who skate but do not paint nor write. Nevertheless, the connection between these forms of outdoor entertainment emphasises their association with public urban settings and with the consumption of certain ways of having fun. There is a direct link between these graffiti and what might inadequately be called “youth culture” for short when, in fact, we are dealing with just some types of young people.

So far the discussion has accounted for the circulation of visual and linguistic resources in the specific place in which they are used, but at this point it must focus on the circulation of discourses of cultural consumption. The university campus displays expressions of its intrinsic discourses: official signs with names of buildings, plaques commemorating progressive political leaders, sculptures in memory of events in recent history, large pictorial productions in support of progressive, liberal political causes, etc. On this campus we can acknowledge the increasingly noticeable presence of a “misplaced” discourse of fun and transgression, consequently, it can be argued that such discourse has been “relocated” in an area fundamentally linked to work and mainstream discourses. The globalised overtones that we find in the discourse of these graffiti is directly related to

that on Instagram posts by groups with names such as “bladers”, “skullriders” and “Fsk Córdoba Rollers” (where “fsk” stands for “freeskating”).

Neither the official users of the university campus nor residents of nearby neighbourhoods who walk through the campus seem to specifically reject the “foreign” words or the evocation through aesthetic elements of globally fashionable forms of entertainment. It is useful to bear in mind the standpoint from which we look at these subjects’ discourse. Discourse analysis imbued with linguistic-anthropological and ethnographic legacy refrains from projecting putative standards of ideological or political correctness and, instead, it aims to find how language-in-use and socio-cultural patterns are related.

The physical and symbolic occupation of space described in this chapter has re-signified the area and has turned it into a recreational place in addition to the character that predominates during daytime on weekdays. Groups of youngsters, who are text producers and text receivers, interact, bike and skate in groups. Writing and reading, too, are essentially group activities here. It must be noted that these forms of recreation including graffiti-making are performed by youngsters who tend to be characterised by a lower-middle-class affiliation and typical aesthetic preferences such as abundant tattooing on their body. Although young university students and graffiti producers may concur in using and walking through the same area, both social types differ in the discourses they echo and reproduce: the sanctioned progressive politics of students’ centres and liberal academics, on the one hand, and on the other, the transgressive, playful vandalism peppered with English and global popular conventions.

Conclusions

The findings of the study partly reported here speak of a place where some young people spend their work time and others spend their idle time daily. The university students are ratified as users of the place with an official role in the social system of the institution, while the others take advantage of the campus streets, the external ramps and entrance stairs to skate, glade or bike as well as paint murals or spray scribbles. The latter seem to have the freedom to express new meanings in this unofficially occupied territory. (For a study of culture-specific concepts of freedom, see Kienpointner’s chapter in this volume.) Rather than expressing some sort of resistance to a centre of power, these youngsters from a low socio-educational stratum, by means of their visual and linguistic texts, are simply appropriating a discourse practice linked to translocal entertainment and aesthetics.

Repeated actions by ordinary people in the course of their everyday lives are a path to explore the meanings that tend to be directly expressed or implicitly indexed. Analysing discourse as part of a recognisable social practice, with the specific shared assumptions and values it may evoke in a local context, opens up a view of the cultural dimension of that practice. For that reason, such a study can be a sensitive gauge of locally occurring cultural change.

The treatment of the data has thrown light onto their multiple effects. We can see not just the expression of playful discourse which is a vehicle for non-local and non-national meanings, but also the symbolic occupation of space in competition with its official users and in dialogue with other groups of passers-by, skaters or bikers. Such occupation leads to the transformation of that space into a different place.

It is important to underscore the inadequacy of assuming that use of resources from a foreign language necessarily reinforces centre-periphery relations and is indicative of the same set of meanings across the board regardless of where, when and by whom the use of “exotic” resources takes place. (For a study of how the English language can be a barrier to academics’ visibility as

opposed to a common ground, see Angermuller's chapter in this volume.) The appropriation and re-accentuation of resources in specific social and cultural contexts point to the existence of room for new combinations and local transformations.

In addition to the unquestionable value of multilingual signs and protest graffiti, some new inescapable issues can be derived from the present exploration. Basically, future research must query to what extent agency in graffiti is individual or collective and how the diversity of audiences relates to a range of reactions and responses. Studies of performance in popular culture may have to expand the definition of performance to include writing inscriptions which are meant to be exhibited. Most importantly, sociologically informed research on specific contexts and specific historical conjunctures must tackle what semiotic landscape reveals about the social actors' degree of freedom of circulation in groups and their de facto entitlement to use parts of buildings and back walls as canvases for their expressive impulses.

Recommended reading

Blommaert, Jan. 2013. *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

This book fuses a sound semiotic basis with a recognition of the historicity of landscape and strong arguments in favour of ethnographic research. In addition to focusing on patterns of signs, the author advocates admitting that every sign points backwards to its origins and forward to its uptake, therefore, the patterns are historically ordered. We can follow in great detail the changes and transformations of the social order we can distinguish through the complex semiotic organisation of space. In cosmopolitan urban centres, for example, the abundance of signs reflects the contemporary complex order.

Pennycook, Alastair and Emi Osugi. 2015. *Metrolingualism: Language in the City*. Abingdon, UK/New York: Routledge.

The focus of this book is interactional language use to accomplish everyday mundane activities and how social space gets shaped by it. With data from Sidney and Tokyo, each chapter contains details of the authors' and their research group's ethnographic fieldwork in various multilingual worksites: markets, restaurants kitchens, barber shops, cafes, etc. On the basis of the generalised polyglossia and language mixing typical of large, multi-ethnic urban centres, the authors delve into the relationships between linguistic resources, multitasking and the urban setting. Some key concepts are the rhythms of city life, creativity, spatial repertoires and metrolingua francae. Each chapter offers methodological guidelines to students.

Wee, Lionel and Robbie B. H. Goh. 2020. *Language, Space and Cultural Play*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

By "affective regimes" the authors mean how the structuring of the environment is aimed at regulating or managing the public display or materialisation of affect. Different co-occurring regimes can be in conflict, have distinct circulation and can eventually be erased. Another argument in this book is that places other than home or work, what is known as "third places", are undergoing significant sociological and linguistic changes as a result of becoming commodified and the desire to cater to different kinds of clientele. For example, millions of followers of a certain social media influencer who shows tourist sites consume the experience and the affective texture provided by the pictures and the captions.

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25

THE NORMALISATION OF IMPOLITENESS IN POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Latin America, Spain and the United States

Adriana Bolívar

Introduction

The normalisation of impoliteness in political dialogue is an expanding practice that has already been observed with empirical evidence in Latin America, Spain and the United States, and there is now greater concern for the changes in public discourse that legitimate abusive and offensive language that was unacceptable a few years ago, particularly among presidents and/or political leaders (Thompson, 2017). Although it has been observed that Latin American heads of state have made use of impoliteness and cynicism in national and international relations (Bolívar, 2005a, 2012), impoliteness as a political strategy in political discourse was brought to the world's attention mainly after Donald Trump's electoral campaign in 2016 when his use of language astonished and shocked the American people who had never seen this behaviour in other presidents before. He was branded as rude, impolite, uncivil and intolerant (Baker & Rogers, 2018; Rossini, 2019) and was compared with Hugo Chávez from the start (Carroll, 2016) through expressions such as "the American Hugo Chávez" or "the American caudillo". His behaviour created great concern for the effects this would have on the democracy and international relations, and the question was how similar or different could heads of state be in their use of impoliteness.

Before Trump, the media had given world coverage to the threatening rhetoric and insults used by populist left wing Hugo Chávez who took office in 1999 and stayed in power until his death in 2013. He promoted the Bolivarian revolution or socialism of the 21st century in Venezuela, which contributed to a turn to the left in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador) that also extended to Europe where he had influence in Spain and Greece. He introduced a political and discursive rupture that initiated a new style of political communication through the use of an abrasive rhetoric that polarised the country and led to the establishment of an anti-dialogue authoritarian regime (Bolívar, 2019; Carrera Damas, 2011). While it is true that there are similarities between Trump and Chávez in their rhetorical antagonistic style, there are great historical and cultural differences that have shaped different political cultures, which is worth taking into account.

When Chávez entered Venezuela's political scenario in 1998 as a presidential candidate, academics from all disciplines got together to analyse the situation, aware that this was a critical

political juncture that initiated a major change in the democratic history of the country (Bolívar & Kohn, 1999; Bolívar & Erlich, 2007; Bolívar, 2018; Chumaceiro, 2003, 2004, 2010), as the classical populism or neopopulism dominating until then was turning authoritarian and militarist (Carrera Damas, 2011). Chávez imposed a new political communicative antagonistic style that Nicolás Maduro, his successor, has continued and intensified since 2014 to this day. As Chávez had political influence in Spain through Pablo Iglesias, leader of the Podemos party, the similarities between their styles were also noticed regarding their use of confrontational rhetoric and “newspeak” (Connett Aponte, 2021; Linares Rodríguez & Garcés Claros, 2018), but although Iglesias was very close to socialism of the 21st century and even used slogans such as “Chávez vive” (*jChávez is alive!*), there are historical and cultural differences that separate Latin America and Spain.

The parallelism between Chávez and Trump’s populism has been brought to attention because they use a similar logic to construct politics as “an antagonistic struggle between two camps” (de La Torre, 2017) with a “disruptive discourse”, defined as a kind of adversarial style that corrodes democracy from within the democracy (Block, 2022; de la Torre, 2017), but their ideological differences have not been ignored (Bolívar, 2018; Harris, 2018).

Except for Pablo Iglesias, who is a professional politician, Chávez and Trump were outsiders who displayed similar impoliteness strategies in order to reach power and govern. However, the cultural differences are enormous. Although there might be some similarities between Chávez and Iglesias as far as the ideological alignment, the historical differences are important. The differences are much greater in the comparison between Chávez and Trump and these are basically due to historical and cultural differences (see Shi-xu this volume and Shi-xu, 2014). In Chávez’s case we find a conjugation of socialism of the 21st century, a creole political culture called Bolivarianism, caudillism, messianism, the idea of permanent refoundation of the nation, populism of the Latin American left, the sacralisation of politics as a political religion, legitimization by a mythical divine character, a meta reality and love, affectivity in public spaces (Arteaga Mora, 2019) that cannot be compared with the American democratic tradition that did not allow for Trump’s reelection, in spite of his attempts at challenging the system and instigating the people to violence (“Fight like hell”, “And if you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore”, Kreuz & Winor, 2021). During the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, fustigation impoliteness together with physical violence have been more evident and intense to the point of seriously damaging democratic political dialogue and requiring external help for negotiations.

How to understand impoliteness in political discourse

Most of the existing studies on politeness derive mainly from Brown’s and Levinson’s seminal work (1987) in which impoliteness is seen as violations of the universal norms of politeness in social interaction. In their view, politeness is “responsible for the shaping of much everyday interaction, and in so shaping it, constitutes a potent form of social control” (p. 2). Chilton (1990) was one of the first to see the relevance of this theory for political discourse analysis and the advantages of a model that served to explain the exercise of power in political processes, but he extended this general framework to go beyond the dyadic and individualistic formulation in order to include communication between States (leaders addressing collectives) mediated by symbolic representatives. He also conceived the notions of common ground (for positive face) and the avoidance of intrusion in the other’s territory (for negative face) as inherent political values arguing that both may be considered social actions (p. 221). Most importantly, he advanced the idea that cooperative or conflictive politeness are not only a form of enacting power relations but a mechanism for change since social actions are oriented to aims.

As is well-known, Brown's and Levinson's theory has been subject to criticism for its eurocentred perspective and dichotomic view of positive and negative politeness (Bravo, 1999; Bravo & Briz, 2004; Eelen, 2001; Spencer-Oatey, 2008), with the result that the original proposal has been expanded to include "face flattering acts" or "self-politeness" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1996; Hernández Flores, 2013), but mainly to develop the study of intentional impoliteness and conflictive communication. In this respect, Culpeper's studies (1996, 2008, 2011), Bousfield (2008) and Culpeper and Hardaker (2017) have contributed to expand the theory towards the impolite side and the intentional use of impoliteness. Bousfield (2008, p. 72) defines impoliteness as "the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully delivered".

In the Spanish speaking world, types and degrees of impoliteness were proposed by Kaul de Marlangeon (1992/1995, 2005, 2008), who extended Brown's and Levinson's theory and proposed a typology of impolite acts on a scale of intensification that goes from the less aggressive to the most aggressive that she calls *fustigation impoliteness*. In her view, impoliteness happens when there is a disparity of power between interactants, and she focuses on impolite acts that have in common the impolite intention or its absence. She relies on the socio-cultural pragmatic categories of *affiliation* and *autonomy* proposed by Fant (1989) and Bravo (1999) so that her analysis of impoliteness is associated with *exacerbated affiliation* or *exacerbated refractoriness*. Kaul de Marlangeon analyses a wide variety of genres to show how this works in micro interactions using the methods and techniques of socio-cultural pragmatics, such as tests of social habits, the socio-logical interview, intersubjective tests, consultation tests and socio-pragmatic tests (see Bolívar & Flores, 2022).

The ideological function of impoliteness in political communication is evident in different types of interactions (Bolívar, 2009; Bolívar & Escudero, 2021; Locher & Bousfield, 2008; Medina López, 2014; Kienpointner & Stopfner, 2017) and also in the dynamics of political change where we can perceive how populism contributes to undermine democratic dialogue (Alvarez & Chumacero, 2011, 2013; Bolívar, 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2012, 2018). While in general terms, populism may be considered "as a political communicative style" (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) or a type of "performance and political style" (Moffitt, 2016), we cannot ignore the role of authoritarianism particularly in the case of populist military governments in which verbal and physical violence often combine (Bolívar, 2018).

What is understood by normalisation of impoliteness?

The study of impoliteness in political dialogue is complex in that, together with observing and describing impolite strategies between politicians and social actors in various genres and contexts from a linguistic, socio-linguistic or socio-pragmatic approach, there is also the challenge to examine its use from a critical social perspective. So for the purposes of examining the relationship between impoliteness and normalisation in political dialogue, we shall understand impoliteness in populist discourse as intentional, strategic, conflictive abusive behaviour, whose aim is to challenge or change the *status quo* and/or remain in control of power. We favour the view that the focus of attention in impolite political discourse must be the interaction of social actors in order to unveil how anti-dialogue and conflict rather than cooperation and unity dominate because "every cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action that has effects on the social structure in the sense of keeping it as is, verify some changes or transform it" (Freire, 2005, p. 235).¹

As for the concept of normalisation, we understand that it is in general a phenomenon that implies a transformation of social relations, norms and imaginaries of public expression as defined

by Krzyżanowski (2020) who explains it as “a set of simultaneous or subsequent discourse strategies which gradually introduce and/or perpetuate in public discourse some new—and in most cases often uncivil and untrue—patterns of representing social actors, processes and issues” (p. 432). What is fundamental in these strategies is that they are not only designed “to change the norms of social conduct but also to gain legitimacy” and to introduce a “new” normative order (p. 432).

Krzyżanowski (2020) distinguishes between a macro and a micro perspective to approach normalisation. In the first case Foucault’s influence (1991) is felt in that normalisation deals with social groups and relations of domination of hegemonic power, but in the second the attention is on individual linguistic and discursive behaviour as the normalisation of “deviance”, a concept developed by Vaughan (1996). The implications for impoliteness studies are that both views are relevant for a critical perspective. The term *shameless* normalisation is also used by Wodak et al. (2021) to refer to normalisation strategies of impoliteness with reference to right-wing populists (Trump and Berlusconi), and they unveil two major strategies in the context of press conferences: scandalisation and continuous provocation, realised through “particularly salient violations”. They also point that these strategies “appear to instrumentalise the fact that, as well as eliciting negative reactions, such incidents are positively evaluated by their supporters, and contribute to a polarization of societal and political attitudes which their style of leadership relies upon” (p. 3).

The aforementioned strategies easily apply to left wing Latin American leaders such as Chávez whose insults were simultaneously rejected and celebrated by opponents and followers (Bolívar 2008, 2009). Also, the concept of *shameless* normalisation used by Wodak (2018, 2021) was previously interpreted as *cynicism* (lack of shame) by Bolívar (2012) in a study on diplomatic conflicts between heads of state in Latin America in which insults and apologies were the main issue. While Wodak and others (Wodak & Krzyżanowski, 2017) seem to focus mainly on the normalisation of impoliteness as a move to the right, there is evidence in Latin American populist political discourse, and in Spain, that the normalisation of impoliteness has also taken place in the left (Sullet-Nylander et al., 2019).

A critical framework for the analysis of impoliteness in political dialogue

The approach suggested here conceives impoliteness as the intentional aggressive, violent or uncivil use of language by heads of state or political leaders and, simultaneously, as part of a process of social and political change in populist discourses that is intentionally designed or planned. We understand impoliteness as a political strategy used by right and left in a similar manner but with differences in content that have a cultural, historical and ideological explanation. We also assume that the impoliteness of political leaders is evaluated by other participants who respond in the political dialogue and take sides (the people, the media, political parties, institutions, etc.). The impoliteness by leaders may be socially or morally sanctioned, but it encourages more impoliteness because citizens get involved in the offensive interactions and this caters for a conflictive dialogue that leads to polarization and anti-dialogue. So impoliteness is associated with power abuse and authoritarianism of right and left and feeds the confrontation that eventually leads to physical violence and death. Because impoliteness contributes to undermining or eroding democratic dialogue from within the democracy, we assume that it has to be studied synchronically in micro interactions, where impolite acts and exchanges can be collected in particular moments and contexts, and also diachronically at a macro level in order to follow the historical development of impolite/conflictive action in the dynamics of political change where major social patterns of interaction are created (Bolívar, 2010, 2012, 2018). These social patterns can only be detected once the action has taken place in a sequence of interactions which provide the evidence for identifying

the initiators of conflict, responses and closures. The micro interactions may be given in different types of dialogue: those in which the participants are present in a particular place at a given time and take turns at talk and in others that do not follow these restrictions so there may be one participant and a collective (as in public speeches) or dialogues mediated by the press, radio, television and social media in general.

The types of impoliteness and the intensity of the offence at a micro level may be described following the scale proposed by Kaul de Marlangeon (2005, 2008) by observing *fustigation impoliteness* in one extreme and *involuntary impolite acts* in the other. Between the two extremes from the most intense, she includes *acts of overwhelming silence, deliberate lack of politeness expected by the hearer, formally polite acts with impolite purpose* and *self-politeness*, but others may emerge from the data examined. The political strategic functions at a micro and macro level may be scrutinised with attention to discourse strategies such as coercion, resistance, opposition, protest, dissimulation, legitimisation and deligitimation as proposed by Chilton and Schäffner (1997, pp. 212–213). In both levels, it is important to focus on the events linguistically realised in sequences of related texts in a linear progression, produced by social actors who are responsible for maintaining the topic and showing their political/moral position and ideological affiliation. The texts may belong to different genres, for example an insult to an opponent in a public speech may be followed by a reply by the insulted person through the media or social networks, until the macro exchange is closed with a major evaluation and another sequence starts. Following the interaction at the macro level is important because it brings to the surface the main social macro-functions: *construction, perpetuation or justification, transformation and demontage or dismantling* of the status quo (Wodak et al., 1999, p. 33).

The social patterns are created in interactions where it is possible to detect who initiates the conflict, who follow(s) the interaction and who closes major exchanges with an evaluation of the situation and therefore with a final decision that may intensify the confrontation. In all cases, the role of evaluation and emotions is fundamental as seen through the activation by the leaders of positive or negative affective bonding (PAB or NAB) with supporters and opponents. As the intensity of the impoliteness may reach very high levels, the impolite/conflictive action may be accompanied by physical violence (Bolívar, 2010, 2018). It is important to keep a record of the changes in the emotions expressed by the people as seen through the media because they have rhetorical and argumentative force (Bolívar, 2021; Kienpointner, 2006). For example, according to several studies by social psychologists and linguists who have followed the relation between emotions and political events in Venezuela since the year 2000, these changed from euphoria to astonishment, from hope to indignation, from indignation to anguish, from anguish to fear, from fear to sadness, from hope to hopelessness and emotional fatigue (Acosta, 2018; Bolívar, 2021; Montero, 2003).

Methodological considerations

There are several important categories to be considered in the analysis of conflictive impolite political dialogue so that comparisons can be made (other categories may emerge in the analysis).

The cultural dialogue: For historical references and traditions and for understanding the tensions in the dialogue, a knowledge of the cultural paradigms (Shi-xu, 2009) is basic for the interpretation of the degree of impoliteness accepted in a political culture.

The time: The moment when the impolite act takes place and whether it is only one occasion or a sequence of impolite acts is relevant. This may help in the assessment of the intensity of the impolite action.

The event: Where the interactions occur is basic, whether an electoral campaign, a debate between candidates, an interview, a press conference, the news or other genres, because each one creates expectations and restrictions on style.

The participants in the interaction: The actors that initiate the impolite act, those who respond and those who close impolite events must be noted.

The targets: Who the targets of the offense are and the political implications will help understand political strategies.

The responses: Who responds, who do not respond (silence is relevant), and whether directly or indirectly through the media, and how, brings out the degrees of impoliteness and political reactions.

The texts: The different types of texts used in the political dialogue. This is important for analyzing how genres change in the dynamics of confrontation. For example, the oath of office may change its structure, aim and legal value (Bolívar, 2018).

The social effects: These can be assessed through the offense itself and the degree of the offense that may lead to direct responses, mediated responses and/or protests and marches on the streets where repression is activated.

The emotions: Emotions that may be expressed, reported, provoked or invoked with strategic argumentative purposes by the leaders must be recorded (Bolívar, 2018; Kienpointner, 2006; Langlotz & Locher, 2017).

The affective bonding: This will allow for the study of how emotions are used by populist leaders in order to keep control of power with positive affective bonding (mainly love) for followers and negative affective bonding for opponents (mainly hate). In left-wing populist discourse, love for the leader is a legitimating strategy (Bolívar, 2018) that may open the way to the sacralisation of politics (Alvarez & Chumaceiro, 2013; Arteaga Mora, 2019). It may also indicate the degree of hate speech, which at the moment is showing to be very high in political discourse in social media (Solover & Pröllochs, 2022; see also Pardo, and Noblia in this volume).

The sequence of events (for the collection of data): Keeping track of what is going on is important to see who are responsible for the impolite acts and how they are intensified or minimized in the interaction.

The identification of social patterns: These patterns serve to measure the degree of impoliteness and how fustigation impoliteness transforms into physical violence. For example, patterns are formed by exchanges with impolite initiations, responses and closures, but those that start with fustigation insults may end up with physical violence in public spaces (confrontation between groups, repression by the police or the military).

Normalisation strategies by populist leaders: Chávez, Trump, Iglesias

While there may be similarities between these three leaders in that they have used impoliteness as a political strategy, there are also important cultural and political differences. Venezuela is a country where, as is often the case in Latin America, democracies are weak and are always in danger of becoming dictatorships. Venezuela had experienced 40 years of democracy when Chávez appeared in the political arena. Hugo Chávez governed during 14 years (1999–2013), dismantled the party system that had prevailed until then and transformed the representative democracy into a military-authoritarian one (Carrera Damas, 2011). In fact, the Socialist United Party has been the one dominating the political scenario for over 21 years. Donald Trump was elected in 2017 as

the 45th president of the United States and governed only for 4 years (2017–2020), although his uncivil style was noticed since his electoral campaign (Montgomery, 2017).

Pablo Iglesias was not a president, but he had an important role in changing the party system in Spain. Although the chronology is different, some have found similarities between the moment in which Chávez and Iglesias entered politics (Linares Rodríguez & Garcés Claros, 2018) because Venezuela initiated a democratic period in 1958 after a long dictatorship under the military regime of Marcos Pérez Jiménez. This change opened the way for a party system in which only two took turns at government every 5 years—AD (Acción Democrática), founded as a left wing party, and COPEI (Comité de Organización política electoral independiente o Democracia Cristiana)—until 1998 when Chávez was elected president. Spain was ruled by Francisco Franco under a dictatorship that started in 1939 and ended with his death in 1975. After this event the king of Spain was in charge of a transition period that lasted until 1985 and led to the initiation of a democracy in which two parties dominated (PSOE [Partido Socialista Obrero Español y] and PP [Partido Popular]) until 2014 when PODEMOS irrupted in the Spanish political panorama led by Pablo Iglesias. In theory, the prevailing parties in Venezuela and Spain represented left and right, but the new turn with Chávez and Iglesias was seen as a more radical move to the left.

There are important differences regarding these three leaders as far as their political experience because, while Chávez and Trump were outsiders, Iglesias was a politician and a doctor in political science. Chávez was a military man (a parachute lieutenant) of humble origin who, before becoming president through democratic elections in 1998, had participated in a coup attempt in 1992 for which he spent 2 years in jail. His ideological mentor was Fidel Castro and Cuba the main political reference. Chávez is the first Venezuelan president to have been studied by linguists, discourse analysts and social communicators with so much attention. He inaugurated a populist conversational/confrontational style that had never been seen before and that completely changed the style of political communication (Block, 2016, 2022; Block-Escalante, 2018; Block & Negrine, 2017). He became world famous for his insults as nobody escaped from them to the point of causing international concern and debate when the king of Spain, out of irritation for his continuous interruptions to another speaker in an international summit in Chile, ordered him to “shut up” (Bolívar, 2009).

Trump's use of offensive language and aggressive discourse called the attention of the world media but with the great difference that he was a billionaire that represented the extreme right and used racist and misogynous language, which created national and international reactions from the minute he participated in the electoral campaign. For those who have looked at the similarities between Chávez's and Trump's discourse as a potential threat to US democracy, some critical analysts such as Harris (2018) have expressed that

the most useful result of these comparisons, rather than assuming that the outcome of authoritarian leaders in Latin America will also happen here in the US, may be that they force us to confront the limits of our own democratic structures and consider the potential threats of a leader who reads more like a foreign strongman populist than a tame establishment politician as usual.

(Harris, 2018, p. 6)

The main issue then is to detect the mechanisms by which democracies are being eroded from within the democracies, and it is important to have in mind that there are limits to the degree of tolerance of anti-democratic and anti-dialogue authoritarianism.

Normalisation of impoliteness at a macro level

At a macro level, the three leaders referred to earlier wanted to change the *status quo*. Chávez wanted to end with the “cúpulas podridas” (rotten leaderships) and found inspiration in the “glorious past” of Simón Bolívar, the national hero who liberated several Latin American countries from the Spanish domination. Bolivarianism became the “replacement ideology” (Carrera Damas, 2011). Trump wanted to “make America great again” and go back to a past where the whites and conservative values dominated. He showed his racism against immigrants and a highly criticised sexist attitude. As a result, Chávez dismantled the *status quo*, and the representative democracy became an authoritarian revolution; Trump caused great damage to the democracy but this still remains almost intact (Harris, 2018). It may be asserted that Chávez and Trump used impoliteness as a political strategy to transform the *status quo* but in a different manner. Chávez disrespected the Constitution from the moment he took his first oath (he swore “on this moribund Constitution”), and Maduro after him led the country to an autocracy often referred to as dictatorship, as there is no separation of powers, total control of the media and two parallel National Assemblies (the legitimate and the illegitimate appointed by Maduro). Trump respected the Constitution, but his continuous insults and threats to the Democrats have affected what was one of the most solid democracies in the world (Block, 2022). Both Chávez and Trump had international conflicts in which insults were exchanged and both have been accused of instigating hate speech and physical violence among their followers (see Adrián Segovia & Jáimes Esteves, 2021 for Chávez; Cineas, 2021 for Trump).

According to Block (2022), the main indicators of democracy, pluralism, rule of law, electoral integrity, separation of powers, tolerance, accountability and the promotion of freedom and rights have been challenged by the antagonistic discourse of these leaders. But it is important not to ignore that in the political confrontation Chávez and Trump received responses that can also be characterised as fustigation impoliteness and hate. We cannot ignore either that in populist discourse there are general strategies such as direct contact with the people and a particular way to relate to or handle the media. Chávez aimed at communicational hegemony and control; he never lost contact with the people, and he used all available ways to show his permanent presence (radios, television, tweets). One of the most important strategies was his constant dialogue with the people through *Aló Presidente*, a television programme that lasted up to 7 hours every Sunday that he kept until a year before his death. Trump was also very much aware of the importance of the media and critical television channels were often the target of his fustigation impoliteness. Iglesias also wanted to modify and even dismantle the political system and give power “back to the people”. He positioned himself in the Republican left and criticised the traditional style of doing politics by blaming and accusing political and economic powers dominating until then. He was also very much aware of the political value of the media.

Normalisation of impoliteness at a micro level

We may distinguish at least seven types of impoliteness normalisation strategies at a micro level (Bolívar, 2018, pp. 111–112) on the basis of data on Chávez in his confrontation with his opponents between 1999 and 2013.

- (1) Intentional violation of conversational maxims. For example, not following the rules of democratic interaction in debates, not letting others speak, interrupting, imposing the topic, showing disrespect for others.

- (2) Intentional lack of politeness when it is obligatory (not giving condolences when expected, not apologising, considering politeness irrelevant, discarding “politeness” as ‘bourgeois’, insulting the dead, making fun of others’ suffering).
- (3) Challenge the criticism of being impolite with accusations (e.g. making fun of criticism, legitimate impoliteness as “radical language”, accusing others of being impolite).
- (4) Legitimise impolite and violent behaviour of friends and followers (supporting offensive behaviour).
- (5) Negative bonding with the “enemy” (expressing hate, despising or wishing the other got “pulverized”, ignoring their suffering).
- (6) Insult and curse the other with the aim of embarrassing, ridiculing, humiliating, showing contempt, destroying self-esteem (e.g. insulting people and nations, national and international political leaders, insulting them for their actions).
- (7) Ignore the other (not mentioning their name, not referencing their actions or ideas, giving nicknames).

More specific strategies related to the aforementioned were detected on how the new presidential antagonistic style was normalised through digressions to introduce personal and emotive narratives (Erlich, 2005a) and self-centred discourse (Erlich, 2005b). Also, socio-cognitive strategies that appeal to the feeling of patriotism and pride through coercion by using the figure of Simón Bolívar to divide between Bolivarians and anti-Bolivarians (Chumaceiro, 2003, 2010). The use of cognitive metaphors to normalise the change from a democracy to a revolution was crucial in his discourse (Duarte, 2013; Molero de Cabeza, 2009). Chávez’s metaphors changed through time, and while he started with “decay” (the system was rotten) he continued with war metaphors which stressed the ideological “battle” and division between “soldiers of the motherland” against “enemies of the motherland”. These metaphors are quite different from those used by Trump as we shall see later.

Chávez had great ideological influence in Spain through Pablo Iglesias, and although Iglesias used slogans such as “¡Chávez vive!” (“¡Chávez is alive!”), accompanied by the gesture of rising his left hand, and also insults, there were differences due to historical and cultural reasons. Connell (2021) compared Chávez’s and Iglesias’s discourses and points to the fact that, in the confrontation between US and THEM, Chávez’s aim was to build a new political identity through the socialist doctrine, while Iglesias aimed at changing the moral values of his society in a project whose aim was to rescue “decency”. This was noticed in the way they referred to “the people” that for Chávez meant the underprivileged, the poor, the exploited and “the brave people” (as in the national anthem), while for Iglesias it was “la gente” as individuals, as crowds. So for Iglesias the people (as citizens) were immoral, and he criticized the corruption of the big financial groups, of those who “bought” the people’s consciousness. Also, Iglesias was not as paternalistic as Chávez who presented himself as the people’s incarnation (“You are Chávez, we are all Chávez”).

In Connell’s study (2021), the impoliteness of these two leaders, although deliberate and open, is quite different although they both use an informal register. Chávez uses it to stigmatise the internal and the external enemy, the oligarchy, “la burguesía” (the bourgeois) and any one representing capitalism, “el capitalismo salvaje” (wild capitalism), but Iglesias uses it mainly for the internal enemy, those responsible for the discontent in Spain. There are also differences with respect to strategies such as personalisation, dramatisation and use of pronouns such as the use of third person to refer to himself in Chávez’s case. What is interesting and important to have in mind is that quantitatively Chávez received more insults than he gave, but those that the people remembered best were the ones that he pronounced (Bolívar, 2018). Iglesias also used insults when he interrupted

in the political arena, and he even tried to justify them, but there exist apparently more studies on the impoliteness towards him as a politician than on his use of offensive language (Alcaide Lara, 2019; Bernal, 2016, 2019).

Wodak (2021, p. 68), as reported by Wodak et al. (2021), distinguish basically six functions of shameless normalisation of impoliteness as practiced by Trump and Berlusconi:

- (1) *performing authenticity* for the violation of conventions for conversation or violations of political correctness;
- (2) *rejecting any content-related, rational dialogue*, simultaneously using political propaganda;
- (3) *challenging constitutive democratic principles*, for example attacking the freedom of the press and empirical facts;
- (4) *establishing identification*, with the party but offending the elites and establishment;
- (5) *providing and efficient distraction*, by scandalisation and provocation;
- (6) *facilitating the implementation of normalisation of “exclusionary and undemocratic policies and measures by mainstream political parties”*.

More specific strategies have been detected in Trump's discourse to normalise his new presidential style, such as his consistent use of Tweets as a new form of doing politics (Al-Shaikhli & Al-Santareesi, 2021) and conceptual metaphors to construct himself as a persona in his relationship with his audience (Pilyarchuk & Onysko, 2018), his “incivility” and “unethical behavior” (Yip et al., 2018) as well as his “incendiary language” (Winberg, 2017). The literature on Trump's impoliteness abounds and touches a wide variety of topics in books, articles, degree thesis, newspaper articles, reports, etc. (Bolívar & Escudero, 2021; Cahyono, 2018; Enli, 2017; Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2019, 2020; Hamnö, 2019; Muazzaro & Dewanti, 2020; Saad Bustan & Alakrash, 2020; Smith & Higgins, 2020; Sclafani, 2018).

Of all the impolite strategies used in political confrontations, insults are the ones that attract more attention from the media and the people. They are the words that have a greater impact in the processes of conceptualisation and construction of meanings, particularly in the process of metaphorical projections (Ilie, 2001). Trump's use of insults caused such an impact that they were registered and can be consulted with reference to the persons insulted and the insults themselves (Lee & Quealy, 2019). This was also done previously for Chávez² and several lists of insults can be consulted³ including his most memorable ones (Wittmeyer, 2013). However, Trump receives more attention as there is a turn to the right in international politics, and this is why he is compared with other right-wing leaders (Wodak et al., 2021). What appears most relevant for the strategic use of impoliteness is the cognitive frameworks that the leaders construct in the direct communication with their people. Conceptual and cognitive metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Charteris-Black, 2011) are quite productive and bring out the ideological differences between Chávez and Trump very clearly. When we go through studies on Chávez's strategic use of language, we find that war metaphors dominate. These include other sorts such as zoomorphic, pathological, historical, building, nature, machine and religious (Molero de Cabeza, 2009) in such a manner that, for example, enemies are “flies” or “illness” while the leader is “eagle” or “volcano”, and while the people are “Christ”, the leader is the “apostle”. Above all, socialism is “ideological battle” in a network of metaphors that include “identity”, “culture”, “plan”, “mandate” and “obligation” (Duarte, 2013). In this way the leader is the saviour of the motherland, a messiah that will guide the people who are suffering.

In Trump's discourse, the metaphors are quite different. An analysis of conventional metaphors in three key speeches delivered by Trump (Nomination, Victory and Inauguration) showed that he

used one metaphor per every 24.2 words (4.13%) mainly in four domains: person (the nation is a body experiencing pain, wound and mutilation as in “the nation is mourning”; “will always put America first”), object (“when I take the oath of office”), building (the nation is a building) and motion (change is motion, future is ahead) (Pilyarchuk & Onysko, 2018). However, for him, political context is “a boxing match” and military is a person (“our depleted military”). He also uses animal metaphors (immigrants are animals “roaming free”), suffering metaphors (taxes are pain, social division is a wound), force metaphors (patriotism is a force) and money metaphors (time is money, personal relations are money, gratitude is money). And while Chávez is a soldier that goes to war, Trump is a “warrior” in a competition metaphor as a salesman.

As Chilton (2017, p. 110) put it, “metaphors can contribute to populist discourse since they help to create emotions and to evoke value-laden associations in the audience” and can show how different conceptions of politics are represented. For this reason, emotion metaphors are particularly important because they serve to frame fear—the fear of the bourgeois that “may come back and destroy the revolution” in Chávez’s discourse or the fear of immigrants that “will kill us or take our jobs” in Trump’s words. Also they serve to create an identity for the leader; Chávez is the defender, the avenger, the teacher, the saviour of the motherland, the new Simón Bolívar and Christ; while Trump is the engineer, the repair man, the constructor and also the warrior, the saviour and healer (Pilyarchuk & Onysko, 2018).

Conclusions and tasks for the future

The normalisation of impoliteness in political dialogue is definitely a field of study that deserves more attention than ever while the world needs cooperation rather than conflict. The study of impoliteness and its normalisation with strategic purposes in populist political discourses of right and left proves useful to understand how democracies are undermined from within the democracies by social actors who, very successfully, use an antagonistic style to reach their political aims. Given the state of the democracies in the world and having in mind that populisms of the right and left are growing in different parts of the world (Moffitt, 2016; Ungureanu & Serrano, 2018), it is possible to advance the theory that the use of impoliteness by political leaders is evidence of the radical changes in communication and new styles of doing politics in Europe, Latin America and the United States because “it is not only a matter of right and left but of common features of populism today” (Gratius & Rivero, 2018) or rather a problem of civility and incivility (Jamieson et al., 2018).

While the historical and cultural differences exist, the similarities with respect to the normalisation of impoliteness are evident and these can be summarised as follows: (a) populist leaders of the right and left erode and/or dismantle democracy from within the democracy; (b) they use anti-dialogue rather than dialogue as the main strategy; (c) they polarise the people between those that are with the United States and those that are against the United States; (d) they encourage conflict rather than cooperation and union; (e) they are aware of the power of the media and social networks and use them to their benefit, either attacking them (Trump, Iglesias) or attacking and taking control of them (Chávez); (f) they use language that is “understood” by the people and that is close to their hearts; (f) they use emotions as a destabilising strategy, mainly love and hate (“I love you”, “they hate you”); (g) they tend to bypass (Trump) or change laws and institutions (Chávez) and (h) they concentrate power and become authoritarian (Chávez). These strategies are realised through language in which the positive affective bonding with the people and the negative affective bonding with the “enemies” is mainly built through the use of an abrasive rhetoric, insults and cognitive metaphors that provide a frame for interpreting and accepting the leader’s message and behaviour.

Some important tasks are left for future research. One of them is to examine more political cultures in order to confirm that we are talking about a new political communicative style that is global but with local characteristics. If so, we ought to call attention to the characteristics of this global style that corrodes democracies and undermines political dialogue.

Notes

- 1 My translation of “toda acción cultural es siempre una forma sistematizada y deliberada de acción que incide sobre la estructura social, en el sentido de mantenerla tal como está, de verificar en ella pequeños cambios o transformarla”, Freire 2005, p. 235).
- 2 Insultos de Chávez en www.eluniverso.com/2012/08/15/1/1361/apodos.insultos.tactica-campana-hugo-chavez.html.
- 3 <https://foreign policy.com/2013/03/06/the-bullyvarian-revolution-hugo-chavez-most-memorable-insults>.

Recommended readings

- Bravo, D. & Briz, A. (eds.) (2014). *Pragmática sociocultural: estudios sobre el discurso de cortesía en español*. Barcelona: Ariel.
This book contains a collection of chapters that give an overview of (im)politeness in the Spanish speaking world and is of interest mainly for researchers in Spain, Latin America and the USA. It served as a general reference for the proliferation of new publications.
- Flowerdew, J. & Richardson, J. E. (eds.) (2018). *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
This is a handbook that may be very useful for those interested in critical discourse studies. It includes several approaches that provide conceptual as well as methodological orientation to deal with the relation between language, ideologies and identities.
- Kádár, D. (2017). *Politeness, impoliteness and ritual. The moral order in interpersonal interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
This book focuses on the interface between ritual and politeness/impoliteness. It provides the first (im)politeness-focused interactional model of ritual from a multidisciplinary perspective covering many languages and cultures.
- Macaulay, M. (2019). *Populist discourse. International perspectives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
This book discusses populism and provides examples of how a wide range of international leaders construct their political reality (Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, Hugo Chávez, Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama and others).
- Moffitt, B. (2016). *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style and representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
This book is relevant for understanding what is common to different populist political cultures. The author sustains that populism today is a political style that runs across different cultures as different as the US, Europe and Latin America.

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26

DUALITY OF FACEWORK IN HOTEL RESPONSES OF SHANGHAI AND LONDON TO NEGATIVE ONLINE REVIEWS

A transculturality proposal

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Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that cultural values affect communicators' face-to-face interaction with others and decades of research on intercultural communication have attended to describing and explaining cultural differences between the East and the West (e.g. Hofstede, 1980/2001; Ting-Toomey, 1988, 2015). However, the rapid development of technology and new media has raised significant questions about the relevance of theories of intercultural communication that were primarily developed in the 20th century and based on a language or linguistic paradigm (Chen, 2015; Shuter, 2012, 2017). Therefore, the present study aims to revisit face negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) as it is applied to examine facework strategies used by hotels based in London vs. in Shanghai. A typology of facework strategies have been created to examine the types of strategies used by the hotels in responding to negative reviews by customers online, and furthermore, the notion of "transculturality" by Welsch (1999) will be introduced and further elaborated with a good discussion of its characteristic and importance for describing and explaining culture and communication in the age of increasing globalisation and digitalisation.

The following sections will first review and discuss the existing research concerning impression management and cross-cultural communication on social media, including hotels' responses to negative online reviews. To pave the way for presenting a transcultural approach at the conclusion of the chapter, the existing research will be reviewed and categorised in terms of whether it represents the cultural or local approach, the global approach or the glocal approach. After the review of the approaches of researching impression management and cross-cultural communication on social media, conceptualisations of face will be reviewed and justifications for a typology will be presented.

Impression management and cross-cultural communication on social media

The notion of impression management was first introduced by Goffman (1955, 1959) who points out face as the positive social value a person claims through self-presentation and interaction with

others. In order to save face, people often consciously or subconsciously organise and adjust the verbal and nonverbal acts in communication, the process of which is referred to as impression management by Goffman (1959). Following Goffman (1959), many earlier studies of impression management take place in the realm of individual social psychology in which impression management is widely acknowledged as a fundamental interpersonal process for the individuals as they attempt to control the impressions others have of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Nonetheless, later studies have given much attention to organisational impression management as well (e.g. Mohamed et al., 1999).

In recent years, with the popularisation of the internet and social media, a great deal of interpersonal and cross-cultural communication activities have been transferred from offline to online, which has led quite a number of researchers to attend to strategic presentation and impression management by both individuals and organisations on social media (e.g. Marwick & boyd, 2010; Zaharopoulos & Kwok, 2017). The existing research on impression management and cross-cultural communication on social media can be grouped into three categories: (a) the cultural or local approach, (b) the global approach, (c) the glocal or transcultural approach. The cultural or local approach focuses on cultural variations and explores how individuals or organisations use different tactics or means of presentation in different cultural contexts. For instance, Chu and Choi (2011) compared electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social network sites (SNSs) between China and the United States, by examining social relationship variables (social capital, tie strength, trust and interpersonal influence) as potential predictors of eWOM communication online. Chinese consumers are found to engage in a greater level of information giving, information seeking and pass-along behaviour on SNSs than do their American counterparts. The results have confirmed respective cultural orientations of collectivism vs. individualism, pointing to the significant influence of national culture on eWOM behaviour. Zhang et al. (2014) gauged communication styles and strategies by global brands on US-based X and China-based Sina Weibo and found that the global brands frequently used more socioemotional strategies on Weibo than on X but more task-oriented communication styles on X than on Weibo.

Different from the cultural or local approach, the global approach emphasises the notion of global citizenship with universal values (see also Valentini, 2007). According to Lee (2005), globalisation of the world economy and of other related cultural activities has led to the emergence of “a global public”, i.e. groups of people who share similar values, norms and consciousness as world citizens (Lee, 2005, p. 15). The global citizens must be able to transcend their own national or ethnic boundaries and have the same values and behaviour on important global issues. Researchers who endeavour to develop or find a global framework for describing and explaining human interactions on social media can be grouped under this global approach. For example, in order to define the profession along more normative lines, Solis (2011) identified some common effective means by brands to engage the public on social media, while Tashmin (2016) pointed out some common “art of impression management” on social media.

However, more scholarly attention in recent years has been paid to the glocal approach, which emphasises an integration of both the global and the local elements in international business communication (see also Wu, 2008). Men and Tsai (2012) compared how companies in China vs. in the United States use popular SNSs to facilitate dialogues with the publics, through a content analysis of 500 corporate posts and 500 user posts from each. It is found that the companies in both countries recognise the importance of SNSs in relationship building and employ appropriate online strategies such as disclosure, information dissemination and involvement, but specific tactics differ. Furthermore, Li and Wu (2018) examined impression management strategies by global brands across X (US-based) and Weibo (China-based) and found more commonalities than

differences in the strategic presentation by the brand corporations. They pointed to the emergence of a global culture on social media and concluded with a glocalisation perspective for further studies of corporate communication practice in the age of digitalisation.

In the era of Web 2.0, everyone can participate in the process of creating content and presenting information. As a result, electronic word-of-mouth is of great importance to both corporations and consumers. Social media are the media platforms that enable individuals, organisations and communities to share information and interact, communicate or collaborate (Zhong, 2021). Therefore, online reviews, a form of consumer-generated content, and their corresponding responses are of great value to those potential customers. Many recent studies have attended to exploring the response strategies or strategies of image restoration by the corporations in receiving negative comments on these corporate-consumer interaction platforms (e.g. Einwiller & Steilen, 2015; Lillqvist & Louhiala-Salminen, 2014). Regarding hotels' response strategies to negative online reviews by their customers, Zhang and Vásquez (2014) identified ten move types in hotel responses, which include acknowledgement, apologising, expressing gratitude, opening pleasantries, closing pleasantries, action proof, mentioning customer reviews, invitation for future visits, avoidance of reoccurrence and soliciting response. Nonetheless, using the framework of ethos, logos and pathos, Bonfanti et al. (2016) summarised the hotel responses into two parallelized communication styles, indicating that the hotel managers either adopted a company-focused or a customer-focused communication style. Furthermore, Sparks and Bradley (2017) identified a total of 23 possible strategies but grouped them under a "Triple A" typology—acknowledgement, account and action—suggesting that most hotel responses contain an acknowledgement of the issue, an account and a reference to the action. We can observe that most of the existing studies regarding responses to negative online reviews in the hotel and hospitality industry focus primarily on making a list of different possible strategies without much theoretical input, and consequently the impression management strategies identified can appear tedious and sporadic. The present study, therefore, attempts to incorporate insights from social psychology with a revisit of face negotiation theory in intercultural communication, hoping to provide a more elegant framework for describing and explaining impression management strategies by the hotel and hospitality industry in their responses to negative online reviews.

Conceptualisations of face and justification for typology

The notion and conceptualisations of face were introduced by both Chinese and Western scholars. Hu (1944) described two Chinese conceptualisations of face—*lien* and *mien-tzu*—with the former referring to the confidence of society in the moral character of ego and the latter referring to the reputation acquired in life. It was conjectured that Goffman (1959) was influenced by the Chinese conceptualisation of face (Hu, 1944) and defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [or herself] by the line others assume he [or she] has taken during a particular contact” (p. 213). Further to Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) developed a theory of facework which assumes that all members of a society have basic face wants which are classified as positive face and negative face and that such face wants need to be constantly attended to, maintained or enhanced by the people in interactions. While positive face refers to a person's desire for approval and recognition by others, negative face refers to a person's desire for independence, autonomy of action and freedom from imposition.

However, the theory of face by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) presented a claim of universality and encountered much criticism from both linguists and scholars in intercultural communication. While linguists such as Matsumoto (1989) and Gu (1990) argued for fundamental

differences in politeness behaviour between the East and the West, Ting-Toomey (1988) responded with a theory of facework for conflict negotiation with propositions detailing how self-face, other-face and mutual-face maintenance or negotiation tend to be enacted or governed by different cultures. Some major theoretical propositions by Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) include members of individualistic cultures tend to express a greater degree of self-face oriented messages than members of collectivistic cultures, and members of collectivistic cultures tend to express a greater degree of other-face or mutual-face oriented messages than members of individualistic cultures.

Over the years, many empirical studies (Cocroft & Ting-Toomey, 1994; Smith et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2022) have also been conducted by researchers to testify and extend the face negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998). Furthermore, some specific typologies of facework (e.g. Oetzel et al., 2000) have also been created to account for face communication in different contexts of human interactions. In light of the fact that further conceptual structures are often needed to link communication output strategies to an underlying theory or continuum, the authors of this chapter have undertaken to draw insights from Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) to build a continuum of facework strategies by hotels in responding to online negative comments so as to explore the characteristics of culture and corporate communication in the age of globalisation and digitalisation.

The methodology

Typology of facework strategies

The notion of facework by Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) is adopted for this study, which refers to clusters of communicative behaviours that are used to enact self-face and to uphold, challenge/threaten or support the other person's face. According to Ting-Toomey (2015, p. 4), self-face concern is the protective concern for one's own identity image when one's face is threatened in the conflict episode. Other-face concern is the concern for accommodating the other conflict party's identity image in the conflict situation. Mutual-face concern is the concern for both parties' images and the image of the relationship.

Based on the definitions by Ting-Toomey (2015) and on an examination of all the possible response strategies by both London and Shanghai hotels to the negative reviews by customers online, we have classified three types of facework strategies for this study: (a) self-face oriented strategies such as communicating complacency, denial and evading responsibility; (b) other-face oriented strategies such as apology, accepting responsibility and expressing concern and (c) mutual-face oriented strategies such as conventional politeness, providing solution, redirecting and seeking for more information. Table 26.1 presents the typology of these facework strategies with a detailed operational definition and example for each type of facework strategy.

Data collection and analysis

To revisit face negotiation theory by Ting Toomey and Kurogi (1998), i.e. to testify whether the propositions are still valid in describing and explaining culture and communication by corporations on social media, particularly the propositions that members of individualistic cultures tend to express a greater degree of self-face oriented messages than members of collectivistic cultures and that members of collectivistic cultures tend to express a greater degree of other-face or mutual-face oriented messages than members of individualistic cultures, we have selected hotels from

Table 26.1 Typology of facework strategies by hotels on social media

<i>Self-oriented facework</i>		
<i>Face strategy</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
Communicating complacency	Expressing self-satisfaction, promoting the hotel in spite of the complaint	We genuinely take much pride in the assurance of our guest security, and we believe that this is one of the reasons that many of our guests choose to stay with us.
Denial	An explicit negation to the complaint issue	Unfortunately, when our guests refuse to leave us a method of payment as guarantee for their incidentals, it is our policy to empty the minibar to ensure no additional costs.
Evading responsibility	Implicit denial to the issue, e.g. finding excuses, reframing, referring to superior goals	I am sorry that you were disturbed by the noise coming from the water pipes. This is a sporadic problem which is created from the pressure in the water pipes.

<i>Other-oriented facework</i>		
<i>Face strategy</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
Accepting responsibility	Taking ownership for the issue raised	It seems that we dropped the ball in a few areas during your visit.
Apology	Expressing sorry or regret	The music should certainly not disturb any of our guests, and I do apologise for this as well as the inconvenience of the phone issue you encountered.
Expressing concern	Showing sympathy for the events occurred	It was concerning to read about the service issues you encountered on your recent stay.

<i>Mutual-oriented facework</i>		
<i>Face strategy</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
Conventional politeness	Greetings and/or showing appreciations, opening and closing pleasantries, etc.	Dear Guest, thank you for taking the time to share your feedback about your stay at our hotel . . . We hope that you will visit us again soon. Many thanks.
Providing solution	Providing tangible solutions to the problem raised	We are currently changing the water pressure valves throughout the hotel to rectify this.
Redirecting	Referral to relevant staff or enhancing future staff training	I will be sharing your feedback with the staff member in question to ensure that everyone is greeting with warmth moving forward.
Seeking for more information	Seeking for further information via contacting the guest	Our Duty Manager has been in contact with you to further understand and acknowledge your experience.

Table 26.2 Overview of the data

	<i>Shanghai</i>	<i>London</i>
No. of hotels	72	56
Aver. score	8.585	8.866
No. of negative reviews	31	55
No. of responses to negative reviews	173	215
Response rate to negative reviews	45%	36%
Total words/characters of responses	26359	17712

* Negative reviews refer to reviews in “poor” and “very poor” category on Booking.com.

Shanghai (which are based in China) and hotels from London (which are based in the United Kingdom), as they represent the collectivistic and the individualistic cultures respectively. According to Hofstede (1980/2001), the average score for the dimension of individualism and collectivism is 43 among all countries, with China scoring 20 and the United Kingdom scoring 89, indicating that China emphasizes collectivism and the United Kingdom stresses individualism much more than the other countries.

All the data for this study, the hotel reviews and responses were extracted from the platform Booking.com. Booking.com is one of the largest travel e-commerce corporations which provides travellers with accommodation booking services in 228 regions and countries worldwide (Booking.com). Although the majority of current literature on hotel online reviews focus on the online travel platform TripAdvisor (Kwok et al., 2017), Booking.com offers more credible and authentic customers reviews as it directly partners with hotels for online booking, and only the customers who have successfully booked the particular hotel are allowed to write customer reviews. In contrast, TripAdvisor serves more like an agent that cooperates with online travel agencies. On TripAdvisor, everyone can be the content generator even without staying with the particular hotel, which will incur doubts on the authenticity of the data.

The data were extracted from Booking.com during the period of June 2018 to June 2019. To better understand the differences across language and culture, Chinese reviews and responses from Shanghai hotels and English reviews and responses from London hotels were selected. The sampling procedure involves (a) five-star hotels from Shanghai and London with a score of 8.0 or above were first selected, (b) the hotels were then checked whether they had online reviews that fall into the category “poor” and “very poor” and (c) a maximum of five conversations for each hotel’s reviews and responses were selected. Consequently, among a total of 124 hotels in Shanghai and of 130 hotels in London, 72 hotels from Shanghai and 56 hotels from London met the criteria. A total of 173 sets of conversations from 72 hotels in Shanghai and 210 sets of conversations from 56 hotels in London have been collected for further analysis. Table 26.2 gives an overview of the data and the hotel features.

Two trained coders were enlisted, who utilised the aforementioned framework and followed our coding guidelines, to identify and record the specific facework strategies each hotel response employed. More than one strategy could be coded for each hotel response. Both coders hold master’s degrees of linguistics and communication studies and are fluent English speakers. The coders discussed with each other if there were any discrepancies in the coding during a pilot run. The inter-coder reliability reached the value of 0.92, which indicates our coding result is reliable and trustworthy. The frequency and the proportion of each facework strategy were counted and

compared between Shanghai and London hotels. Chi-square tests were conducted for each type of facework, respectively, to calculate the statistical difference. Each type of facework was coded as a categorical variable (not adopted = 0, adopted = 1). After that, self-, other- and mutual-oriented facework strategies were recoded as continuous variables. An independent sample t-test was then conducted to compare whether there is a statistical difference in the frequency of each facework strategy employed by hotels in Shanghai and London.

Results

Overall distribution of facework

Table 26.3 shows the chi-square test results and the overall distribution and occurrences of facework strategies adopted by hotels in Shanghai and London. There is no statistical difference in the strategies of communicating complacency ($\chi^2 = 0.026, p > .05$), accepting responsibility ($\chi^2 = 1.764, p > .05$), apology ($\chi^2 = 0.579, p > .05$) and seeking for more information ($\chi^2 = 1.734, p > .05$). Nonetheless, the strategies of denial ($\chi^2 = 11.762, p = .001$), evading responsibility ($\chi^2 = 8.366, p < .01$), expressing concern ($\chi^2 = 5.829, p < .05$), providing tangible solutions ($\chi^2 = 257.299, p < .01$) and redirecting ($\chi^2 = 21.762, p < .001$) adopted by the hotels in the two cities show statistical difference. Therefore, hotels in London prefer to use the strategies of denial, evading responsibility and providing tangible solutions, while hotels in Shanghai more frequently employ the strategies of expressing concern and redirecting. Hotels in both cities employ the strategy of conventional politeness in all their responses to customers' negative comments.

Regarding the self-oriented, other-oriented and mutual-oriented facework strategy, The independent sample t-test results (see Table 26.4) show that a significant difference was found in the

Table 26.3 Comparison of types of facework adopted by hotels in Shanghai and London (chi-square test)

Strategy	Shanghai		London		<i>p</i> value
	Quantity	Proportion	Quantity	Proportion	
Self-oriented facework					
Communicating complacency	55	31.79%	70	32.56%	0.872
Denial	10	5.78%	37	17.21%	0.001**
Evading responsibility	25	14.45%	57	26.51%	0.004**
Other-oriented facework					
Accepting responsibility	54	31.21%	81	37.67%	0.184
Apology	126	72.83%	149	69.30%	0.447
Expressing concern	130	75.14%	137	63.72%	0.016*
Mutual-oriented facework					
Conventional politeness ^a	173	100.00%	215	100.00%	
Providing tangible solutions	38	21.97%	73	33.95%	0.009**
Redirecting	98	56.65%	71	33.02%	0.000***
Seeking for more information	25	14.45%	42	19.53%	0.188

^a The *p* value of conventional politeness cannot be calculated as it is a constant (i.e., both Shanghai and London hotels used this strategy in all responses).

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Table 26.4 Comparison of each facework strategy adopted by hotels in Shanghai and London (independent sample t-Test)

	<i>Shanghai</i>		<i>London</i>		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Self-oriented facework	0.52	0.759	0.76	0.856	386	-2.916	0.004**
Other-oriented facework	1.79	1.001	1.71	0.958	386	0.85	0.396
Mutual-oriented facework	1.93	0.752	1.87	0.765	386	0.845	0.398

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

self-oriented facework strategy adopted by the hotels in the two cities ($t(386) = -2.916, p < .01$). However, no significant cross-national differences were found in other-oriented ($t(386) = 0.85, p > .05$) and mutual-oriented facework strategies ($t(386) = 0.845, p > .05$). This indicated that the London hotel ($M = 0.76, SD = 0.856$) more frequently utilised self-oriented facework strategy than Shanghai hotels did ($M = 0.52, SD = 0.759$), while the hotels in the two cities equally employed other-oriented and mutual-oriented facework strategies.

Converging face strategies across Shanghai and London

In terms of other- and mutual-oriented strategies, the frequencies are similar across Shanghai and London hotels. The results show that five-star hotels in both regions focus more on customers' faces on social media in order to maintain harmonious customer relationship.

Regarding self-oriented face strategy, the use frequency of "communicating complacency" strategy is similar across Shanghai and London hotels. As five-star hotels situated in international metropolis such as Shanghai and London, the hotel itself also represents high class, nobility and identity. While hotel representatives deal with customers' complaints, they also seize this opportunity to promote themselves, highlight the property's characteristics and advantages and thank customers for their positive side of the review. "Communicating complacency" can be illustrated in three aspects: the hotel can either proactively mention the property's advantages (Extract 1), provide rebuttal to customer complaints (Extracts 2 and 3) or directly recognise and agree with customers' compliments (Extract 4).

【Extract 1】

“酒店是上海第六家万豪酒店，紧邻上海张江高科技园区与上海迪士尼度假区，酒店设有338间宽敞舒适的客房和套房，采用“Marriott Modern”设计美学，所有房间皆配备豪华床品、灵活的工作空间、高速无线网络、独立浴缸与淋浴。我们全体员工期待您的再次光临!”

Translation: “The hotel is the sixth Marriott Hotel in Shanghai, next to Shanghai Zhangjiang High-Tech Park and Shanghai Disney Resort. Our hotel has 338 spacious and comfortable guest rooms and suites with “Marriott Modern” design aesthetics. All rooms are equipped with luxury beds, flexible work space, high-speed wireless Internet and separate bathtubs and showers. We all look forward to seeing you again!”

【Extract 2】

“很抱歉给您带来一次不愉快的体验，pagoda的早餐其实还是挺丰盛的，250多个品种+定期的更新菜品，受到很多人的好评，您下次来，小君让总厨带您选择搭配下不一样的菜式吧，说不定您会有惊喜呢！”

Translation: “I’m sorry to bring you an unpleasant experience. Actually, pagoda’s breakfast has quite many varieties and is popular among people. We offer over 250 varieties and update our menus regularly. If you could come again, we will let our chief chef choose different dishes for you. Maybe you will receive a surprise!”

【Extract 3】

“I am already investigating on the pillows matter but in the meantime I am quite surprised you did not like room 304, it is definitely one of our most popular rooms!”

【Extract 4】

“The views are great and we are so glad you had time to enjoy them from your room. Our guests love that the hotel is located within walking distance to the sights you can see from up high, such as HMS Belfast, The Tower of London, The Tate Modern and Tower Bridge”.

In other-oriented face strategies, the strategies utilised across hotels in two cities with similar frequency are “accepting responsibility” and “apology”. In particular, over half of the responses used “apology” strategy, showing that hotels in both countries tend to acknowledge the problem and pay much attention to customer relationship management (such as Extracts 5 and 6).

【Extract 5】

“尊敬的宾客，感谢您下榻静安香格里拉大酒店并和我们反馈您的宝贵意见。我们明白对停车费的问题不甚满意。如果在您预订客房时我们没有将相关收费予以说明，我们向您道歉。酒店管理层将和相关部门进一步沟通以改善服务及设施，让您得到顺心满意的入住体验。期待能再次欢迎您的到来！”

Translation: “Dear guests, thank you for staying at Jing’an Shangri-La Hotel and giving us your valuable feedback. We understand that you are not satisfied with the parking fee. We apologise if we did not explain the relevant charges upon booking. Hotel management will further communicate with relevant departments to improve services and facilities so that you can have a satisfied stay. We look forward to welcoming you again!”

【Extract 6】

“Dear Samuele, Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your feedback following your recent stay. I am very sorry to hear your experience and I can assure you that this has been passed to the Head Housekeeper as well as to the Food and Beverage Manager. Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience or embarrassment caused. We really hope to have the opportunity to welcome you back in the near future. With apologies once more and assuring you of our best attention, I remain. Yours sincerely, Barbara Dusik Guest Relations Team”

When it comes to mutual-oriented facework, both Shanghai and London hotels offer “conventional politeness” in all their responses to customers’ replies. “Seeking for more information” was also employed with equal frequency between hotels in both cities. In the hospitality industry, building a rapport relationship with customers is crucial. Therefore, hotels will first treat customers

with kindness and courtesy by showing “conventional politeness” and then interact with them and seek their feedback (such as Extracts 7 and 8).

【Extract 7】

“尊敬的客人您好，感谢您光临并点评和平饭店，很遗憾您未能在酒店获得完美的体验。

我们非常重视每一位客人的评价，会不断提升我们的服务，使客人感到宾至如归。同时也希望您可以留下联系方式，我们的宾客关系总监将及时联系您了解详情便于我们改善。我们真诚期待您的再次光临，谢谢！”

Translation: Dear guest, thank you for staying at Peace Hotel and leaving your comment here.

We regret that you did not have a perfect experience at our hotel. We value every customer's comments and will continue to improve our services and make every guest feel at home. Could you please leave your contact information? So, our Customer Relations Director will contact you to learn more about the details. We sincerely look forward to seeing you again. Thank you!

【Extract 8】

Dear Ms. Colette, Namaskar! Warm greetings from The Lalit London. Please accept my apologies for any shortfall in service you had encountered during your stay. Rest assured I will share your comment to the senior management. We hope to have the chance of welcoming you back to us in the near future. Should I be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience. Kind Regards Naz Khan Hotel Duty Manager

Diverging face strategies across Shanghai and London

Although there is a converging trend of the other- and mutual-oriented facework employed by Shanghai and London hotels, the overall frequency of self-oriented facework is statistically different between hotels in the two cities. London hotels utilised more self-oriented facework than Shanghai hotels.

It can be observed that in self-oriented face strategies, hotels across Shanghai and London show discrepancy in using “evading responsibility” and “denial” strategies. The frequencies of using “evading responsibility” and “denial” strategies are 26.51% and 17.21% among responses in London, far beyond 14.45% and 5.78% for hotels in Shanghai. The chi-square test results also indicated statistical differences in these two strategies employed by hotels in Shanghai and London. “Evading responsibility” can be manifested in finding excuses and looking at things dialectically, coming up with justified explanations for incidents beyond control or understanding (e.g. Extracts 9, 10 and 11).

【Extract 9】

当日酒店的确因为一场重要的大型活动需要提前布置，我们也提前三天在客房内放置客信，并在泳池门口放置公告牌供客人知晓，为了让您与孩子有好的住宿体验，我们也临时对您与家人开放了泳池供你们使用。由于泳池工作人员英文有限，在与国外客人沟通时使用翻译器并用肢体语言交流，对方对工作人员非常友好客气，我们也报以友好态度，请相信本酒店从未对任何宾客有不平等的态度。

Translation: On that day, the hotel needed to be rearranged in advance because of an important large event. We placed guest letters in rooms three days in advance and also put a bulletin board at the entrance of the swimming pool to inform guests. To give you and your child a good accommodation experience, we also temporarily opened the swimming pool for you. Due to our staff's limited English knowledge, they used translators and body languages when

communicating with foreign guests who were very friendly and polite to the staff, and our staff also responded with a friendly attitude. Please believe that the hotel has never had an unequal attitude towards any guests.

【Extract 10】

We should have been more attentive on departure to noticing that, while your booking was paid in advance on one credit card, a different credit card was presented on departure which resulted in a charge to that card—as soon as we realised this human error, it was quickly corrected.

【Extract 11】

With regards to the Mars price, well . . . maybe you are not finding it reasonable but believe me, you would hardly find similar properties in London with lower minibar prices than ours! (I completely agree with you minibar prices in every hotel in the world are never reasonable but they “need” them to simply cover purchase costs and replacements for expired products.

The face strategy “denial” means that hotel manager disagrees with the occurrence of the incident. It can be manifested in either explicit denial or implicit denial. When denying part of the responsibility, it usually occurs with “evading responsibility” (see Extracts 9 and 11). Extracts 12 and 13 are the explicit denials of customer complaints. For example, the hotel manager denied customer’s complaint regarding the inconvenience of the location in Extract 12 and denied the customer’s accusation of the closure of all restaurants in Extract 13.

【Extract 12】

酒店位于世博园区，紧邻黄浦江，无敌江景一览无遗。酒店附近有世博源、梅赛德斯奔驰文化中心等，可满足娱乐、休闲、餐饮、购物等需求。如您需要前往浦西，打的前往也是非常便捷。

Translation: The hotel is located at the former Shanghai Expo site close to the Huangpu River and has a panoramic view of the river. There are “the River Mall” and Mercedes-Benz Arena near the hotel, which can meet the needs of entertainment, leisure, catering, shopping and so on. It is also very convenient to get to Puxi (west of Huangpu River) by taxi.

【Extract 13】

I am surprised with your comment as during the redesign of our hotel done phase by phase our restaurant has been relocated in our premises and we offer F&B 24/7.

In terms of other-oriented facework, hotels in Shanghai more frequently used the strategy of “expressing concern” (75.14%) than hotels in London did (63.72%). In order to build an image of hospitality and courtesy for hotels, it is of utmost importance for hotels to comfort their customers when confronting their complaints. The “expressing concern” strategy is adopted to ease customers’ annoyance and regain their trust and satisfaction (see Extract 14). However, despite this difference, the overall distribution of other-oriented face strategies shows a convergent trend.

【Extract 14】

尊敬的宇玉：十分感谢您花时间告诉我们有关您在 Pullman Shanghai Skyway 的体验。很遗憾未能达到您的期望，请允许我向您表达我最诚挚的歉意。在 Pullman，我们孜孜以求，不断改进，希望能向每一位客户提供高水准的体验，因此您的反馈对于我们的提高十分重要。请放心，我们正采取适当的措施来解决所存在的问题并预防将来再次

发生。非常感谢您向我们告知您的担忧，希望在不久的将来有机会为您奉上更好的服务。谨启 Florian Weissauer

Translation: Dear Yu Yu: Thank you very much for sharing your experience at Pullman Shanghai Skyway. I regret that your expectations were not met, and please allow me to express my sincerest apologies. At Pullman, we strive to improve our services and offer a high level of experience to every customer, so we value your feedback. Please be assured that we are taking the appropriate steps to address the issues and will prevent it in the future. Thank you very much for providing your feedbacks. We hope to have the opportunity to offer you better service next time. Sincerely, Florian Weissauer

For mutual-oriented facework, statistical differences can be observed for the strategies of “providing tangible solutions” and “redirecting”. The overall employment of mutual-oriented facework, nonetheless, show a similar frequency between hotels across the two regions.

In the actual coding process, we found that most hotels use two or more face strategies to enrich the content of communication, trying to reach more effective communication goals. Taking Shanghai hotels as an example, to respond to a customer’s complaint on an employee’s bad attitude in Extract 15, the hotel manager first thanked the customer for the review and restated the problem (“we noticed that some of our staff’s unprofessional service failed to meet your expectation and affected your accommodation experience”). Then the hotel manager expressed concern (“we pay much attention to this problem”) and made an apology immediately (“please accept our sincere apologies”). Afterwards, the hotel manager initiated an investigation (“I and our Front Office manager checked the camera and found the colleague you met in the lift”) to look for the cause of the problem and try to find solutions. Finally, the manager used “redirecting communication” strategy to promise the strengthening of staff training in the near future. Similarly, London hotels also combine different kinds of other-oriented face strategies to communicate with dissatisfied customers. In Extract 16, the hotel manager first greeted the customer and then acknowledged the matter and made an apology, stating that they would take action immediately to solve the problem. In these two examples, both hotels tend to use other-oriented face strategies, such as “accepting responsibility”, “apology”, “expressing concern”, “conventional politeness”, “providing tangible solutions”, “redirecting” and “seeking for more information”.

【Extract 15】

尊敬的Yue： 非常感谢您花时间告诉我们有关您在上海静安铂尔曼酒店的体验。感谢您一如既往对雅高的支持。 从您的点评中，我们得知我们个别服务人员未能提供专业的服务影响到您此次入住的整体体验，在此请允许我们向您致以最诚挚的歉意。对于您反映的情况我们非常重视，我与前厅部经理一起看过系统并且查看了探头，找到了当时为您办理入住以及您在电梯中遇到的同事。我们一定会在今后加强培训，为每一位宾客提供温馨舒适的入住环境，创造愉悦舒心的绝佳入住体验。 请您放心，我们一定会加强员工服务意识和专业素养的培训，不断提升和完善服务质量。我们真诚地希望在不久的将来，能够有机会继续为您服务，为您创造一次至善至美的入住体验，来弥补此次体验的不足。 再次感谢您与我们分享您的体验，铂尔曼全体员工期待您的下次光临。 谨启 宾客体验经理

Translation: Dear Yue: Thank you very much for telling us about your experience at Pullman Shanghai Jing'an. Thank you for your continuous support for Accor. From your review, we noticed that some of our staff’s unprofessional service failed to meet your expectation and affected your accommodation experience. Please accept our sincere apologies. We pay much attention to this problem, so I and our Front Office manager checked the camera and found the

colleague you met in the lift. We will improve our training in the future and strive to provide a warm and comfortable environment and create a pleasant and excellent stay experience for every guest. Please rest assured that we will consolidate our staff's sense of service and professionalism. Meanwhile we will continuously improve and perfect our service quality. We sincerely hope that in the near future, we will have the opportunity to serve you and create a great experience for you again, so that we can make up for the shortcomings of your experience this time. Thank you again for sharing your experience with us. We look forward to your next visit. Sincerely, Guest Experience Manager

【Extract 16】

Dear Oliva, Thank you for your review. While I am pleased by your positive comments regarding our hotel and décor, I am very sorry to read of the disappointment experienced with certain aspects of your stay. Please be assured that your comments have been noted and will be addressed with our teams as we pride ourselves on our high standards. Please do contact us directly at the hotel should you wish to discuss this further as we will be happy to address your concerns in greater detail. Best regards, Paul Walters General Manager

Discussion and conclusion

This chapter has undertaken to revisit face negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1985, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) as it is applied to examine facework strategies by corporations in the age of increasing globalisation and digitalisation. Integrating insights from socio-psychology and interactional linguistics, the chapter develops a framework of dual facework which classifies corporations' responses to negative online reviews into three types: corporation- (self-) oriented face strategies, customer- (other-) oriented face strategies and mutual (self + other) oriented face strategies. Further testing of the framework is conducted by examining face strategies used by five-star hotels in Shanghai (in Chinese) and those in London (in English) in responding to negative reviews by customers online. It is found that the response strategies of these hotels appear an overall converging trend despite some differences in certain face strategies. Similar face strategies include communicating complacency, accepting responsibility, apology, conventional politeness and seeking for more information. In addition, hotels in both places adopt other- and mutual-oriented face strategies in similar frequency, showing that these hotels pay much more attention to customers' face and the management of rapport customer relationships.

Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) argue that in collectivistic societies such as China and Japan, people pay more attention to other-face or mutual-face behaviour, whereas in individualistic societies such as the United Kingdom or the United States, people tend to pay more attention to self-face behaviour. However, findings from this study do not lend support to the hypotheses and findings from Ting-Toomey et al. Instead, this study discovers a converging trend rather than diverging characteristics of face strategies differentiated by geographical or national boundaries. Given the fact that hotels across both Shanghai and London have used similar frequency of other- and mutual-oriented face strategies in responding to negative reviews online, we would like to argue that in the age of increasing globalisation and digitalisation, industry culture rather than national culture is more the governing factor affecting the process of corporate communication.

Furthermore, we would like to extend the notion of "transculturality" by Welsch (1999) and present the tenets of "transculturality" for describing and explaining communication across cultures in the age of increasing globalisation and digitalisation. The concept of transculturality involves

cultural intermingling and interconnectedness transfusion and recreation of cultural norms (see also Shi-xu, 2022). It argues that through transcultural permeations, cultures today are hybridised and intermingled, with mode of diversity transformed and reshaped. In the context of this study, global brands often adhere to their standard execution across cultural boundaries (Taylor, 2018). The globalisation of hospitality industry, along with the power of digital communication and social media, facilitates the transformation of social values and moral characters within the hospitality industry, namely, a converging trend of face strategies adopted by hotels across the East and the West.

Apart from the industry factor, social media has become another important factor for transculturality. Social media is boosting and accelerating acculturation and hybridisation. Cultural learning, as part of social learning, enables users to respond to cultural setting changes more quickly in online sphere and further allows for cumulative cultural evolution (Zhong, 2021). On the other hand, in the context of global social media communication, corporate culture is fluid rather than static. When the process of hybridisation occurs, the boundary and differentiations of corporate culture have become blurred and reconstructed (Feng et al., 2021). This echoes with the findings of this study, which manifest that new patterns of corporate culture was being established during the process of globalisation of hospitality industry: the binary classification of the Western vs. the Eastern cultures are no longer applicable and people make use of multiple cultural scales simultaneously in communication (see also Baker, 2023).

In short, this chapter contends that “transcultural communication”, rather than “intercultural communication”, will be a major characteristic of culture and communication after years of globalisation and digitalisation. The notion of “intercultural communication” presumes that each culture exists in an isolated island and communication between cultures demands a large amount of cultural adaptation to the powerful participant in interaction. But as observed in the present investigation, in responding to negative online reviews, the hotels in London did not simply employ self-oriented face strategies which should be characteristic of individualist British culture according to Hofstede (1980/2001) and Ting-Toomey (1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998). Instead, the hotels in London also employed a great deal of mutual-oriented and other-oriented facework (which are characteristic collectivistic national culture according to the conjectures by Hofstede, 1980/2001; Ting-Toomey, 1988, 2015) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998). As for the hotels in Shanghai, China, besides employing mutual-oriented and other-oriented facework in responding to the negative comments (which are characteristic collectivistic national culture, they also employed self-oriented face strategies which are characteristic of individualistic national culture. The notion of “intercultural communication” presumes that each culture exists in an isolated island and has limited our attention to only the differences and divergences when communication has to take place between cultures. But the notion of “transcultural communication” expands our horizon and enables us to attend to the phenomena of fluidity, convergence, synergy and sameness-cum-variation in communication practices among different countries and cultures today. We hope more future endeavour will be made towards describing and explaining the processes and products of transcultural communication in our age.

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27

BEYOND THE “ONE-KEY-TO-THE-UNIVERSE VIEW”

Expanding critical perspectives in cultural discourse studies

Walkyria Monte Mór

Discussing cultural views in discourse studies

The idea in this chapter is to debate the naturalised justifications for generalised views of society, while hierarchical perspectives of language and culture are enunciated in the power relations between the global and the local-regional in the *meaning-making* of cultural discourses. The discussion focuses on the relationship between identity, language and culture and seeks to respond to “Why do I think the way I do?” (Freire, 1996) from a cultural-discursive perspective. Together with this theoretical analysis, I will discuss an educational proposal that aims to expand perspectives in the training/development of meaning-making, for undergraduate students in the areas that aim at language and culture, cultural discourse and critical applied linguistics. It focuses on the social, cultural and educational functions of language/culture learning. This proposal for the development of meaning-making according to the concept called *perspective expansion* (Monte Mór, 1999, 2007) occurs through reflective and critical activities and has been carried out with undergraduate students from the aforementioned areas, built according to theories that make it possible to rethink hegemonic cultural views of society. The relevance of this topic is to work on cultural discourse issues in a way to promote pluralist views and tolerance on social and cultural diversity matters.

It should be noted that Brazil has been classified as a developing country, after having been called a Third World place for a long time by the West. So far, it has followed the hegemonic European views—as well as North American values—in terms of language, culture and citizens. It has inherited the notion that is identified by the Colombian philosopher Castro-Gomez (2007) as “the hubris of the zero point”. With this term he depicts that “the colonial view on the world obeys an epistemic Eurocentric model deployed by Western modernity” (Castro-Gomez, 2007, p. 79). Such a perspective that has claimed Europe as the birth of knowledge and civilisation—and later on, North America as the model of progress and success—has naturalised superiority-inferiority feelings and assessments in the Western societies. This resembles what Freire identified as “oppressor-oppressed” (1987) relationships in the 60s and was titled “coloniality” a little later. It has surfaced the various kinds of discriminations as explained by Kumaravadivelu (2014):

because of the colonial “epistemic violence” perpetrated against “the margins” (Spivak, 1988, p. 283) . . . the method of intellectual discourse that is available to, and followed by,

the subaltern intellectuals have no choice but to conform to the Western ways of knowing and the Western ways of languaging. They may have access to Western knowledge systems, but they are unable to exercise their own subject position.

(p. 13)

The social, cultural and linguistic challenges in Brazil have been no exception. Such perspectives can connect with as well as respond to the aforementioned interrogations—“Why do I think the way I do?” (Freire, 1996)—and the subsequent ones “Why do I see and interpret the way I see and interpret?”; “Why do I see the other this way? Why do I see myself or why am I seen this way?” “How else can I understand the relationship between language and culture?” I have counted mainly on theoretical contributions, such as (a) Freire’s reflections (1996, 1987, 1967) on Brazilian popular groups and their ways of seeing the world; (b) Geertz’s theories (1973) regarding the impact of the Enlightenment principles of culture based on the concept of man, in addition to Geertz’s proposal for an interpretive concept of culture; (c) the theorisations by Hall (1992, 1997) that call attention to the identity diversity that is proper to each culture. The ideas of the three authors lead to a diversity built by history and by the social heterogeneity of cultural groups and communities, imbued with representations and values, often considered respectively as reality and truth, operated by power relations in which the phenomenon of globalisation is included, as it has been claimed by (d) Suarez-Orosco and Qin-Hilliard (2004). Here, some aspects are addressed: the plurality of views, the decentralisation of the Enlightenment view of society, man/identity, culture and language and the revision of hegemonic and hierarchical issues, colonial and global power in societies and communities, in identities, languages and cultures, which favour perspective expanding practices. The studies developed by Pennycook (1994, 2007), Canagarajah (2005) and Sousa Santos (2007)—shown along the text—add critical support to alternative interpretations, thus promoting reflections that reach the purposes of the perspective expansion already exposed.

Considering this proposal and its reflections and analyses, I will focus on two conceptions that have stood out in the way of seeing the world by the students who have participated in the investigation. One refers to the view from generalised formulations; the other refers to hierarchical—and also colonising—models that the global-local relationships might overvalue and make preponderant, when not critically reflected. With regard to generalisations in everyday communication, I speculate that they trivialise or reduce the social views of the people who use them in their speeches. I do not deny the value of generalisations, though, as a category of the scientific exercise of knowledge construction that points to the conclusions of an investigation, according to a positivist research perspective or methodology. And here I refer to the analysis and situations in certain areas in which generalisations are required in scientific investigations, aiming at the formulation of what are defined as scientific laws of knowledge. It is well-known that generalisations are part of this process in the construction of knowledge considered scientific, which involves steps such as (a) observing/experimenting: perceiving, collecting data about the phenomenon, product or process; (b) analysing: the phenomenon, product or process; (c) formulating hypotheses/the problem; (d) synthesising/modelling: when representing the obtained knowledge and, at last, (e) generalising: the results, validating them for future studies. In this logic, it is believed that the scientific method allows the conceptual construction of reality that is taken as true and impersonal, even if subjected to “falsifiability” tests. Generalisations are seen as a fundamental element of human logic and reasoning in much of the research in the social sciences and humanities. However, they have been put under stake by researchers who follow other knowledge views. To them, this human reasoning is developed following a scientific methodology, allegedly neutral, but imbued with cultural and ideological values. Anyway, as for me, I understand that generalising conclusions

can be seen as a useful parameter to understand certain views, as long as we do not have them as *unchangeable* scientific knowledge, scientific truths or proof of a reality in any field of knowledge.

Generalisations have been socially consolidated as “a written or spoken statement in which you say or write that something is true all of the time when it is only true some of the time” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/generalization>) as one may find in the Cambridge Dictionary, for example. Else, according to Wikipedia:

generalizations posit the existence of a domain or set of elements, as well as one or more common characteristics shared by those elements (thus creating a conceptual model). As such, they are the essential basis of all valid deductive inferences (particularly in logic, mathematics and science), where the process of verification is necessary to determine whether a generalization holds true for any given situation.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generalization>)

However, I believe that generalising about issues related to the human and social fields such as languages, cultures, identities, cultural or social characteristics, sexuality and educational orientation (also applicable to other areas?), and having them as truths, can be a misunderstanding factor that may generate prejudices or even limit people's critical and creative capacity, although this statement may also be seen as a generalisation that must be relativised. The problem with generalisations is that they are built on a statistical logic that, by giving reliability to 'most' of the occurrences of a phenomenon, contributes to the development of convergent reasoning, in which exceptions are relegated. That is, in the construction of 'scientific research', convergence is manifested in the eyes of researchers through a method of investigation that is guided by regularity, constancy, frequency or by the greater similarities of the phenomenon on which the specialists focus. In the relations of power and values, this very type of look carries the legitimate force of the specialists. But this process might ignore the signs of divergence and diversity that escape the majority convergence that produces generalisation.

Having this assertion in mind is very important in linguistic and cultural studies when one intends to discuss and deconstruct the generalising notions about languages and cultures in disciplines whose tradition reflects colonising concepts, especially when the focuses are—or used to be—'the English language' and 'cultures of English-speaking places'.

This discussion, in its turn, refers to the second issue that I intend to address in this chapter, an issue that is not very old, although its theme is, and concerns the 'global-local' debate. Guilherme (2014) is one of the theorists who refer to this topic as "glocal", a concept that, in my view, revisits the power relations in which, for a long time, the notion of the global was favoured over the local, as well as in the power relations deposited in generalisations when these are compared to the views about the minority, or even about the exceptions. That is, both 'generalizations' and 'global' convey the idea of "power", although from different sources. The former, from scientific methodologies; the latter, from economic geopolitics. Thus, regarding the term 'glocal', it proposes a soothing balance, or a dialogic relationship, between parties. Regarding the term 'glocal', I understand that this text dialogues with the concept of critical cultural awareness, developed by Guilherme (2002, 2014) when dealing with the aforementioned power relations.

Based on Byram's term (1997, 2008), Guilherme defends the importance of *critical cultural consciousness* which involves collective perspectives and political, pedagogical and philosophical attitudes towards culture. This is a notion in which generalising cultural forces are questioned and debated, in my view. And considering an even more updated dialogue with Guilherme (2017), the

concept slips through the author’s recent term. She expands her own first views of critical *cultural* awareness to critical *intercultural* awareness, taking the intensification of globalisation, mobility and hybridisation into account in this theme.

Exploring cultural pluralist views in discourse studies

How do I tackle the reflections and assertions which I mentioned in relation to the exploratory investigation about disciplinary views on language and culture, taught by me to undergraduate students of languages? In this section, I discuss further my reflections on (a) the generalisations that emerged in the research and (b) the global-local relationship in whose binarism a greater hierarchical value of the global over the local has been observed.

In the first of the activities, I made use of some of the annotated statements, collected from informal interpersonal conversations in the previous field research. The selected annotations were: (a) “the Germans have greater skills for mechanics; the Japanese are better at math”; (b) “this is a job for women, not men”; (c) “those born in São Paulo only think about work; the ones from Rio are beach lovers”; (d) “you should learn British English because it is more prestigious than other types of English”; (e) “In a conversation between mothers, one of them said: ‘I would never let my daughter date guys who have no culture’”. The discussion occurred first in small groups where students were asked to reflect and comment on the statements, then was extended to the whole class.

The comments and reflections registered in a field diary show that it is very common, indeed, to find these statements in everyday informal conversations and that many respondents tend to transform a few examples they have into “everything or everyone is like that; nothing can be done to change it” and that this tendency is due to the argumentative force that generalisations imprint in a conversation. The generalising concepts in them express cultural ideas associated with peoples (in continental, national or regional terms, as in assertions [a] and [c] previously cited); genders (what is considered appropriate to the feminine and the masculine, as in phrase [b]); a hierarchical view of language and culture *as possession* (in a naturalised view that there are superior-inferior languages and that culture is something external to people, something possible to have or not to have, like a *possession*, as in statements [d] and [e]); and also prejudice (which can be inferred in all the annotated sentences, but mainly in [b], [c], [d], [e]). After verifying what the respondents named as “generalizing tendencies”, two more questions were posed: (1) why does this type of perspective or logic predominate? (2) What other readings can be constructed for the situations described in (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e)?

Such an activity proved to be instigating for reflection and critique about the power relations ingrained in the argumentative force of generalisations and, in the discussion that took place afterwards, also about global-local values. Significant insights emerged, contributing to the intended expansion of perspectives in the training of undergraduates in the areas of language and culture, cultural discourse and critical applied linguistics. The proposal envisaged contemplating the exercise of *interpretive expansion* or *expansion of perspectives* (Monte Mór, 1999, 2007, 2018). This work, as the term enunciates, envisages a process that intends, through specific activities, to provide the interpretative expansion or views. It seeks to expand the way in which the learner sees and interprets the world, promoting reflections and theorisations of a philosophical, cultural and socio-political nature, in addition to generating alternative perspectives on their surroundings, on the social constructions of their environment and on power, in relationships between people. For these purposes, the proposal deals with the social, cultural and educational functions of learning the English language, based on theories that are mobilising in the review of hegemonic cultural

perspectives. Here I see the relationship of this work with the concepts ‘critical cultural awareness’ and ‘critical intercultural awareness’ (Guilherme, 2002, 2014, 2017), as previously mentioned.

The second of the activities was also designed for the purpose of investigating the way students make meanings. It made use of a PowerPoint presentation, of unknown authorship, widely disseminated in Brazilian social networks. That PowerPoint was assembled from a report published on the Brazilian website *Sempre Família*, in the section “Cultura, Educação dos Filhos” (See https://www.semprefamilia.com.br/cultura/fotografo-mostra-o-que-familias-de-todo-o-mundo-comem/?ref=busca&_gl=1*lynj17u*_ga*Mzc0MTQwMjU2LjE3MDQyNjk2MjE.*_ga_B7X3QY6Y1N*MTcwNDI2OTYyMC4xLjEuMTcwNDI2OTkxNi4yMS4wLjA.). The report covered a book that resulted from a project called “Hungry Planet: What the World Eats”,¹ authored by photographers Peter Menzel and Faith D’Aluisio who “went around the world and photographed 36 families from 24 different countries around their tables, with everything they usually eat within a week”, according to the book (Menzel, 2007). Therefore, three elements composed this observation and respective analysis: a PowerPoint presentation of unknown elaboration; a report on a website from which the PowerPoint was assembled and a book promoting a project entitled “Hungry Planet: What the World Eats”.

The students’ investigation into the relationship between the report on the website, the book and the montage published on a PowerPoint presentation was intended to provide what I call *perspective expansion* or *interpretive expansion*, as in Monte Mór (2018):

The experiences involve different processes, through activities that: interrupt or suspend a flow of reasoning from a perspective to understand/read an issue or a problem from a different perspective; to examine an issue/problem from multiple points of view (thinking about texts/discourse from the perspectives of different characters or perspectives not openly shown in a text under analysis); focus on socio-political aspects, thinking about power in relationships between people, in different cultures.

(p. 9)

In the PowerPoint assemblage and posting on the social networks, the unidentified author selected nine photos (that is, nine families out of 36 were represented in the presentation) and organised them according to the criterion of investments spent on food per week, starting from the highest to the lowest value. The exercise of expanding perspectives can generate/allow reconstructions/constructions of other meanings that are “not restricted to the students’ *interpretive habitus*, that is, to the *habitus* arising from learned perspectives, perspectives that had been frozen by institutions” (Monte Mór, 2018, p. 17). Thus, learners can assess the “congruence” of those readings and interpretations with their personal, cultural and social experiences.

The students’ analyses responded to the purposes outlined, as informed in the field records. Regarding the assemblage of the PowerPoint, they perceived that (a) there was a deliberate selection of nine out of the 36 families portrayed in the book, and they were presented in a hierarchical way, unlike the idea developed in the book; (b) the hierarchy seen in the PowerPoint sequence followed an economic criterion: the weekly amount spent by each of those families chosen for those slides presentation, from the highest to the lowest amount; (c) in the larger weekly amounts, there were many industrially processed products and in the smaller ones, more natural products, such as grains and vegetables, such a display could induce the viewers to interpret that those meant healthier (the former) or poorer (the latter) meals; (d) the family composition differed between the various countries, some were limited to parents and children, within a greater or lesser number; others included broader kinship, such as cousins, uncles, grandchildren, and grandparents. Those different family compositions denoted a greater or lesser idea of generosity, associated

respectively with the poorer and richer families. (e) The hierarchy seen in the sequence of photos was shown to be arbitrary, conveying the reading that families who spend more on food are more successful, building up the various degrees of wealth and poverty; (f) the food display seen in the aforementioned social hierarchy, however, was now subject to interrogation when referring to nutritional values, health, quality of life and longevity; (g) the values of globalisation imprinted in the images—in which the families of globalised countries were shown in an economically hierarchical sequence—lead to the reading that some families enjoy better economic conditions, having access to a greater variety of foods, especially industrialised ones; (h) the manipulation of the aforementioned sequence of images reinforces a view of society, culture and well-being which is very much ingrained in people’s imagination and in their interpretive habitus.

The confrontation between global and local values was strongly present in the debate in which, in the speeches of many of the students (73.8% of the respondents), “it became clear” that in Western societies there is a veiled process of social education that relates success with the dominant values of what is global to the detriment of what is local. There was a lot of discussion, and there was no consensus—this was not intended—among the students regarding the acceptance or rejection of this perspective. The expected expansion of perspective took place, being apprehended, notably, to a greater or lesser degree by the participants, as part of a process foreseen as such.

In response to the *why* question, “why do I view the world the way I do?”

In my account, the main challenge to be addressed in all of this research is the *one-key-to-the-universe view* of cultural discourses often privileged in Brazilian education which has raised intolerance and prejudice in social—as well as political—relationships. Within this focus, my main objective was and has been to promote the rethinking of such a view, under the hypothesis that a homogenous perspective does not prepare young citizens for a challenging and diversified society. For such, I will address the Freirean interrogation “Why do I think the way I do?” (1996) as a starting point of my reflective analysis.

In the 60s, Freire (1967) had advocated for the high relevance in understanding why certain reasonings or ways of thinking were built up among certain groups. He developed this reasoning by dealing with popular groups who, to his observation, needed to rethink what was found to be *an unchangeable singular reality*. While building up his pedagogy, he, then, expressed this thought:

There is a plurality in men’s relationships with the world, as they respond to the wide variety of the world’s challenges. Challenges that are not weary in a standardized type of response. Their plurality is not only due to the different challenges that come from different contexts, but because new responses are required to their same challenges. The constant play of responses changes itself in the very act of responding.

(Freire, 1967, pp. 39–40, my translation)

His idea is later supplemented in another publication when again Freire shows concern not only about the inadequate literacy programme developed in Brazil by that time, but also about those popular groups’ reading the world. He affirms:

As an educator, I need to “read” the reading of the world that the popular groups I work with make of their immediate context and of the larger context of which they are part. What I mean is: I cannot in any way, in my political-pedagogical relationships with popular groups, disregard their knowledge and experience. Their explanation of the world of

which their understanding of their own presence in the world is a part. And all this is made explicit or suggested or hidden in what I call “*reading the world*” which always precedes the “*reading the word*”. . . One of the disastrous mistakes made by political activists who have messianically practiced/worked in an authoritarian and hierarchical way is that they have always been totally unaware of the understanding of the world of popular groups. By seeing themselves as bearers of the saving truth, those activists’ task has not been to suggest or propose an idea but to impose it on popular groups.

(Freire, 1996, p. 49, my translation)

By claiming that he could not disregard the knowledge and experience of popular groups, and by identifying authoritarian and hierarchical attitudes in some political activists who had always been unaware of the understanding of the world of popular groups, Freire invoked the relevance of *reading the world*—of understanding why those who think differently do so.

In 2021, to celebrate Freire’s 100th birthday, several events were concentrated on (re)discussing Freire’s works. Much attention was paid to his concern on *reading the world* and *why people make meaning or think the way they do*, ideas that have been related with the studies on coloniality in Brazil.

I have identified similar concerns in Geertz’s theories (1973), those which emerged in his understanding or reflection of the impossibility of having a fixed concept of culture, added by the perception that a good part of the disseminated concepts conveys dominant views, disregarding the variants or even the local differences, thus neglecting the relevance of interpreting or reinterpreting cultures according to the values of their own environments. A discussion about the presence of globalisation in society also emerged, in the observation of the existence of an association between integration to the globalised world, access to the diversity of market products and the expression of success via the possibility of weekly spending on food. About globalisation, new texts were studied. The assumptions made by Suarez-Oroscó and Qin Hilliard (2004) brought interesting contributions to the dialogues and made it possible for undergraduates to perceive significant or even radical transformations in various social and study areas: in economics, anthropology, geopolitics, education, communication, ways of interaction and personal relationships, for example. The students’ writings enabled me to verify their perception that

culture itself as a phenomenon has many faces, translated, on the one hand, as social, economic and technological progress and, on the other hand, as threats to the secular traditions that sustain various cultures, religious identities, authority structures, social and moral values, worldviews and society.

(quoted by Monte Mór (2012, p. 25)

Such studies also made it possible to relate Suarez-Orozco’s and Qin-Hilliard’s assertions with those of Geertz’s in the criticism they all make of the design imprinted in the modernist Enlightenment-oriented project of society, which sought to consolidate a “harmonious conjunction between territory, language and identity”, now in Suárez Orozco’s and Qin-Hilliard’s words (*ibid.*, p. 3). To these both authors, the globalisation premises have been retailedored into other more plural but not fewer conflicting compositions.

In such retailing, resignifications have shown to be necessary. The diversities and pluralities in terms of languages, cultural models, genders and interests have become more apparent, making relationships implied by ethnicities, inequalities and colonialities more complex. In this social reorganisation, the two authors observe, the ideas entrenched by generalisations have been

relativised (in what is known as the “majority”), giving rise to paradigmatic revisions of ‘thinking as usual’ and ‘taken-for-granted understandings and worldviews’. It should be noted that a third theorisation emerged in this debate, the one concerning the view of *universal knowledge*. Some of the research respondents concluded that views of culture, society and the citizens are learned from one generation to another as if they were universal, not only in schools/universities, but also in families and other institutions. The discussion about secular assertions considered universal was then expanded to the current view of global knowledge. In this sense, Canagarajah’s (2005) studies on global and local knowledge shed new light on the dialogues.

This author deconstructs the concept of global knowledge, based on Hall (1997), to state that the global is the self-representation of a certain particular. That is, the premise of global knowledge or global value actually comes from local knowledge(s) or local value(s), being then promoted to a global level, through dominant social forces. However, the author warns of the symbolic violence that has occurred in this transition/transit. He explains that, when removed from its location, knowledge loses its cultural and social density to occupy the global space that is then assigned to it, dressing in a garment whose global/universal style comes from the colonialist movement and Enlightenment values. According to him, understanding this transition/transit involves the perception of “*low self-esteem*” propelled in local knowledge, seen, therefore, as naive and hierarchically inferior. Technological advances—primarily in the digital communication network, whose resources favour agility and reach between physical spaces—would have largely contributed to the strengthening of the consolidation and valorisation of global knowledge. Paradoxically, such advances would have made a very favourable contribution to local values, expanding their visibility and making their specificities and values “worldly” known. By associating aspects of these studies with reflections on generalisations and Enlightenment views of society and culture, the students identified the dominating and hegemonic character in the concepts of globalisation. Hence emerge the subsequent interrogations, to be discussed as follows.

Dealing with intolerance and prejudice in social discourses

“Why do I see the other this way? Why do I see myself or am I seen this way?” These questions refer directly to the cultural issues discussed earlier, that is, to the use of generalisations, to the Enlightenment view of society, to the globalising forces in the generation and dissemination of another social and cultural hegemony, transformed from the Enlightenment. They also refer to the contradictions and conflicts of global values, whose compositions and expansion culminate in revealing pluralities and diversities that escape the expectations of framing the dominant model. Consequently, the exercise of (re)interpretation—or meaning-making—represents an adequate procedure for understanding cultural variability and respective power relations. It leads to a movement—of perspective expansion—which concerns identities and the language-culture relationship. Hall’s theories (1992, 1997) have also provided the basis for discussions with students during the focused discipline, contributing to responding to the query “Why do I see the other in this way? Why do I see myself or am I seen this way?” In these, two of the very well-known identity construction concepts by this author were contrasted, in this case, those of the Enlightenment and postmodern subjects (Hall 1992).² In the first case, it is a concept of a centred, unique, safe and coherent person, endowed with innate and essential capacities of reason, conscience and action, capacities that develop/should develop and build up the subject/person throughout life. An identity that, according to the author, is nothing more than a fantasy, considering it portrays the expected model of citizenship for the Enlightenment society. The second conception, that of the postmodern subject, was recognised by the students

for portraying a subject who does not have a fixed or permanent identity, a description they often see in today's society, although they very often see it together with the Enlightened subject as well. Admittedly, Hall's description of the postmodern subject is not limited to the biological; but to a historically constructed being, who assumes different identities in different times and circumstances, without sticking to a single and coherent ego or self. To Hall (1992), this latter conception reflects the expansion of meanings and cultural representations, confronting a multiplicity of possible identities.

Finally, the activities and studies covered in this section have enabled the undergraduates to build theorised analyzes about the proposed reflections, especially regarding the ideas of unique and centred identities, non-fixed and non-permanent identities, social inclusions and exclusions. At the same time, responses, with greater or lesser maturity, to "Why do I see the other in this way? Why do I see myself or am I seen that way?", for which they resorted to the concepts of representation, stereotypes, generalisations and globalisation.

Expanding perspectives: Alternative ways of thinking and viewing?

"How else can I understand the relationship between language/culture and alternative ways of thinking and viewing?" This learning comes from one of Freire's reflections, during his research experience in Guinea-Bissau. In his *Cartas à Guiné-Bissau* (1978, free translation in English: *Letters to Guinea-Bissau*), he highlighted the colonialism experienced there:

By reproducing the colonialist ideology, the Guinea-Bissau school sought to instill in children and young people the profile that that ideology would expect from them. That of incapable human beings, whose only salvation from inferiority would be becoming "whites" or "blacks with white souls". That explained the overlook or despise the school showed towards everything connected to "national" or "natives". More than despise, they denied every authentic representation of those people: their history, their culture and their languages. The history of the colonized started with the arrival of the colonizers and their civilizing presence; the culture of the colonized was seen as a barbarian way to understand the world. Culture, only that of the colonizers.

(Freire, 1978, pp. 15–16, my translation).

In Freirean terms, oppression and colonialism represent curdling practices and may hinder alternative ways of thinking about or viewing the world or what has been later identified by Castro-Gomez (2007) as "coloniality of beings, power, and knowledge". Following such a reasoning, I believe that the aforementioned question is closely linked to the proposal for an interpretative expansion and perspective foreseen by critical literacies. Potentially, the previous questions bring answers to it, having been addressed in the issues: decentralisation or decolonisation of the Enlightenment view of society, of man/identity, of culture and of language and the revision of the hegemonic, hierarchical, colonial and global aspects in societies and communities, in identities, in languages and cultures, in favour of the critical development on the social, cultural and educational functions of the English-language learning. In English-language learning in Brazilian education, the focus on this perspective of language and culture is relatively recent. Pennycook (1994) critically claims that the spread of the English language in the West would have disclosed colonialist and, therefore, imperialist mental structures. In a more recent publication (2007), he adds globalisation to those structures, stating that the English language is "intrinsically linked to the processes of globalization", in a relationship of ambiguity that makes it "the language of threat, desire, destruction and

opportunity”. (p. 5). He understands that globalisation generates and spreads the plural model of English languages in the world (*world Englishes*) and highlights the complexity of this pluralisation strategy:

This view seeks to understand the role of English both critically—in new forms of power, control and destruction—and in its complexity—new forms of resistance, change, appropriation and identity. It suggests the need to go beyond arguments about homogeneity and heterogeneity, or imperialism and nation-state, focusing instead on transcultural and translocal flows. English is a translocal language, being, at the same time, a language of fluidity and fixity as it is rooted in the materiality of localities and social relations. It is inextricably linked with cross-cultural flows, a language of imagined communities and reformulated identities.

(Pennycook, 2007, pp. 5–6)

By understanding cross-cultural flows as “ways in which cultural forms move, change and are reused to build up—and legitimize—new identities in different contexts” (p. 6), the author points to the disadvantages of globalisation. Pennycook indicates ways to critically rethink the presence of the English language in the world within the global-local relationship. I believe it is important to say that this view has been shared by several Brazilian and foreign linguists, with a growing number of research and studies on this approach. In this critical rethinking and search for paths, there is a growing emphasis on studies on decoloniality and epistemologies of the South, an academic and social movement that proposes to restore pluralist values and diversified concepts suffocated by the hegemonic ideas of society, culture, knowledge, identity and language, as it has been discussed here. Sousa Santos, one of the representatives of this movement, articulates this proposal explaining:

In the last sixty years, the global lines have suffered two tectonic shakes. The first took place with the anti-colonial struggles and the independence processes of the former colonies. The other side of the line revolted against radical exclusion as peoples who had been subjected to the appropriation/violence paradigm organized and claimed as the right to be included in the regulation/emancipation paradigm.

(Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 11, my translation)

Today, it is no longer 60, but more than 70 years, according to the assertion by Sousa Santos, that the power relations imprinted in a modernist project of society have been undergoing revisions, sometimes more and sometimes less bold, responding to the social and political possibilities of manifestation of different historical times. This includes a critical review of the ideas underlying the concepts of language and culture, concepts built over centuries, pillars of support for a view of society whose pluralisation is evident and manifested and, thus, demands for other perspectives.

When cultural generalisations conflict with cultural pluralisations and diversities

I find an affinity between Geertz's (1973) and Freire's theorisations (1978) and the initial reflections proposed in this chapter: Geertz, when he asserts that the term “one-key-to-the-universe-view” denies cultural plurality as it searches for universality; Freire, when he raises the issues of cultural impositions and naturalised hierarchies in social oppressions and colonialisms. These

ideas resort to the problem of generalisations when they become a habit—or a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1996) or an *interpretive habitus* (Monte Mór, 1999, 2007)—in people's daily conversations. In Geertz's statements, however, he does not refer to popular forms of conversation. He refers to some scientific principles that have become very well-known, such as those of natural selection and those of the organisation of the means of production, both built from—and bearers of the categories of—positivist research methodologies. The researchers of this methodological line seek/have sought or preserve/have preserved the old ‘one-key-to-the-universe views’ which, for the anthropologist, can explain phenomena but cannot be understood as the principles that always consider generalised explanations as universal, without relativisations or without considering the cultural environments in which the phenomena and contexts of the observers occur.

Therefore, for the cited author, culture is not a concept to be understood in a generalised way or immutably. Both the interpretative analysis and the eyes of the interpreter—even if trained to carry out cultural descriptions—are subjective. Then, cultural discourse cannot be delineated by an objective process elaborated by global laws because it requires interpretation of local specificities.

Are pluralist views limited to humanistic areas? Final thoughts

This report of research activities—carried out with undergraduates in a discipline focused on cultural and linguistic studies in São Paulo—is aimed at discussing the social, cultural and educational functions of English-language learning from critical cultural perspectives drawing on the works of Geertz (1973), Hall (1997), Sousa Santos (2007), Castro-Gomez (2007), Monte Mór (1999, 2007, 2018, 2022). I started with reflections on generalisations in everyday conversations, through activities in the classroom, approaching theories that both explain and review this ‘social and cultural trend’, the way in which the respondents in the investigation identified it. Aiming at expanding cultural perspectives—an objective of critical development/critical literacy of the discipline—about ideas culturally and academically enrooted in the learning of languages and cultures, I discussed theoretical concepts that, in my view, could provide view-broadening on these topics: the Enlightenment vision of society, subject and culture; Enlightenment and postmodern identities, representation and stereotypes; globalisation; English language and culture in the global and local relationships.

Interestingly, the outcomes have shown that the predominant concept of culture in the academic programmes and projects stem from an only perspective, as if it were the only possible lens to see and interpret social-cultural-linguistic issues. Considering the Enlightenment and Modernity bases, most of the respondents realised that their first—and daily—analyses used to prioritise superiority-inferiority grading scales and excluding concepts when viewing the other(s) and their worldviews. Then they came to the perception that the Freirean-described oppression—or coloniarity of beings, power and knowledge, as depicted by Castro-Gomez (2007)—seemed to be very much alive in their own worldviews. Thus, they were able to revise their own worldviews through pluralistic lenses. Should my premise be confirmed that the learning about narrowly built ways to read the world must allow perspective expanding towards pluralistic lenses? Could this proposal, if widely implemented, resolve or reduce intolerance and inequity problems and change Brazilian and other societies?

I assess that this was a successful experience, considering the purposes outlined and achieved. From the results, I emphasise that the proposal leads to the valorisation of many of the assertions of the authors focused on here, such as those of Geertz (1973) whose term “one-key-to-the-universe-view” criticises the search for universality in culture, denying its plurality. This vision

is in tune with the ideas here posed, such as those of Suarez-Orosco and Qin Hilliard (2004) for whom it is necessary

to have multiple perspectives, reversing mental routines and articulating multiple hypotheses from a set of facts, investigating the logical and rational vectors that explain pre-existing facts . . . as a way of equipping young people with a theoretical framework that enables interpretations of social complexities and cultural experiences they experience.

(p. 5)

One relevant limitation to be addressed should refer to the application of such reflections to the discourse in social and academic areas which require other logics, such as the non-humanistic ones. In a text where the “one-key-to-the-universe view” is debated, I would not intend to sound contradictory but advocate that different knowledge fields demand different meaning-making practices. In relation to future directions, I believe more debate on the here focused perspective should occur.

Finally, I understand that the reflections and theorisations presented here through the description of field investigations carried out with the undergraduates have to do with the studies on the global and the local, or on the ‘glocal’. I approach this notion considering the concepts of (a) critical cultural awareness, expressing my concerns about power relations, and political-pedagogical-philosophical attitudes towards the culture of those involved in the pedagogical experience and (b) critical intercultural awareness, taking into account the intensification of globalisation, mobility and hybridisation in the field of language and culture. In these positions presented here, I have attempted to review the idea of the general, of the uniform, of the catalysing power of what is global, seeking to displace such consolidated perspectives in favour of other thoughts and visions about the relationships between the global and the local, coloniality and critical awareness, the universal and the pluralities in order to expand the negotiation of meanings and values in social relations in the field of linguistic and cultural studies.

Notes

- 1 Site: *Sempre Familia*. Culture, parenting. Photographer shows what families around the world eat. Peter Menzel and his wife Faith D’Aluisio photographed families from all continents revealing what they consume in a week. Available at: www.semperfamilia.com.br/fotografo-mostra-o-que-familias-de-todo-o-mundo-comem/. The dish of most Brazilian families always has beans and rice, but this is not the same option for families in Türkiye, Japan or Canada. Showing what families around the world eat is the goal of the “Hungry Planet: What the World Eats” project, promoted by photographer Peter Menzel and his wife Faith D’Aluisio. They traveled the world and photographed 36 families from different countries around their tables, with everything they usually eat in a week, including the cultural and social differences of these families, such as where they live, appearance, economic condition etc. The book that is the result of the project also mentions how much each family spends to have that on the table, converting all amounts into pounds. While a family of four in Germany, for example, spends US\$500 a week, 13 people in Bhutan spend US\$5.03 to buy food.
- 2 Hall still refers to a third identity, that of the *ideological subject*. This one built by the interaction between the self and society. But the center and essence, which characterize the Enlightenment subject, also make up the ideological subject. Although the subject changes in the dialogue with the external cultural world, its structure (center and essence) is preserved.

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28

THE HARMONISATION OF AFRICAN ORTHOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS

The CASAS experience

Kwesi Kwaa Prah

The context

In much of the postcolonial world, few problems exercise minds within state leadership and engage the aspirations of the larger populace as compulsively as the challenge of development. For African governments, it is a *cause célèbre* pursued with regularity and publicity, often with more declamatory constancy than discerning imagination, more alarms and din than pragmatism and palpable achievements. The object of development remains elusive. It means different things to different people. But, beyond the limitations of the social environment, the political weaknesses, the economic false starts and unfavourable international trade regimes, Africa more fundamentally needs to look at deeper socio-economic and cultural conditions which require consideration and change if the development endeavour is to have realisable meaning. A good part of the constraints to development can be described as neocolonial, in the sense that they are consequences of the structural features of inherited subordinateness, unequal economic relations, unfair trade rules, capital flight and generally colonial-type relations and modalities embedded in the structures of our relations with the developed world. Relatively little is said about the cultural indicators of development.

For most of the first two decades of the post-independence era, the search for workable paradigms for development was invariably directed towards economicistic conceptions. There was a preference for functionalist models of modernisation, which measured development in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), mortality rates etc. By the middle of the 1960s, it had become clear that the modernisation theories were not yielding to development expectations. The prominent development discourses and paradigms, which succeeded the modernisation theories, were the centre/periphery and neo-marxian theories. But these approaches produced little practice and results. Latin American scholars displayed a fertility of ideas in this mould.

In the 1960s, the Bretton Woods institutions advanced the idea of structural adjustment policies (SAPS). This formula reached an Africa, which was financially at the end of its tether. The SAPS were introduced to Africa in the 1960s and continued to be actively implemented throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The next decade and a half saw these International Monetary Fund (IMF)

and World Bank prescriptions continue to be peddled without fail as salvation for needy economies. They have proved to offer no credible palliative or effective antidote for the African development malaise. In one country after the other, these prescriptions have aggravated the fragility of social support systems. The poor get poorer, and the rich richer. Till today, structural adjustment policies continue to be prescribed by these Bretton Woods institutions.

The language component of culture

From the 1970s there were some who argued that culture, more specifically language, is the omitted factor in the African development equation. The conclusion was reached that without the use of African languages, the languages of mass society, there was little chance for African development. While language is not the only crucial factor in the development process, it is the matrix within which the process is socio-culturally negotiated. It is a system of vocalic utterances which can be written with significations which provide a basis for actions and interactions. It is a storage and transmission system for the production and reproduction of knowledge. Language, the main pillar of culture, is a shared and sharing facility. It is the defining cultural feature and instrument of *Homo sapiens*.

Languages have histories which define their speakers as cultural groups. Each language is represented by the shared histories of its speakers, the repositories and transferers of the culture the language captures. Language produces, reproduces, stores and transmits knowledge as patrimony of the speakers of the language. It was also realised that the use of African languages for education and development would instil a sense of collective cultural confidence emerging out of the fact that the production and reproduction of knowledge can be transacted in the languages which everybody knows. This viewpoint was treated with a great deal of cynicism in some circles, but in many others its validity registered.

This cultural argument has, over the years, found little practice and scant effort to translate these views into social practice. Most international organisations are agreed, together with African authorities, that language of instruction (LoI) policies in education should respect and use African languages in the early years of education. LoI policies that are premised on mother tongue usage in the early years of basic education result in improved, faster and more effective acquisition of knowledge by pupils. Furthermore, mother-tongue LoI is efficacious in promoting the acquisition of second-language proficiencies. Regarding cultural development and the strengthening of individual and collective identities, research shows that LoI policies based on the use of African *lingua franca* result in students developing integrative and tolerant attitudes across ethnic groups. These findings are contrary to the previously held idea that the use of African *lingua franca* as LoIs or as official languages would feed ethnic tensions and divisiveness (ADEA, 1997). Practically, all African governments agree with this view, but there are hardly any that are able or willing to provide the required resources to pursue the relevant policies.

Currently, it is generally accepted in scholarly and policy-making circles that literacy in the mother-tongue/home language is crucial for the development not only of individuals, but societies as a whole. World bodies like United Nations (UN) Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Asian Development Bank all agree about the inherent cultural, economic and educational value of literacy in the mother tongue. All societies which develop in a sustained fashion do so in their own languages/language.

However, the argument here goes beyond the use of African languages or mother-tongue education for the first two to four years. The point is that like the policy employed by all developmentally successful countries, African languages should be used throughout the various stages of the educational system. The reasoning goes further to suggest that African languages should be used in all areas and dimensions of social life. This is not a recommendation that English, French and Portuguese (the colonial languages of Africa) should not be taught in schools. Rather if and when they are taught, they should be taught as second, third or fourth languages in educational systems, which allows the acquisition and learning of foreign languages at the late primary and secondary levels. This is the approach used in most European and Asian countries. Our argument is that the neocolonial practice of colonial language usage inhibits the cultural empowerment of the broader sections of the population in their own languages. It stunts the development of a bracing societal democratic ethos. It is also useful to note that anywhere a minority or foreign language serves as the dominant language for education and societal development, there is either a colonial, neocolonial or an internal-colonial situation. In much of postcolonial Asia, local languages have become the main instruments for the development of Asian societies. In Europe, despite the wide knowledge and usage of English, practically each European country uses its own language or languages for education and wider social intercourse. This approach to language policy remains unresolved in neocolonial Africa. The Europhile elites in African countries remain intransigent to this universally acknowledged wisdom. Even where people are convinced about the value of African languages in education and development, they remain overwhelmed by the colonially bequeathed assumptions that there are too many different African languages, that there is no existing scientific literature of serious proportions, that there is widespread illiteracy, that the economic costs of a movement into African languages is overwhelming or that there is lack of political will at the decision-making levels of African societies.

The myth of Babel

One of the most rampant and persistent myths in the study of African society and languages is the idea that Africa is the prime example of the Tower of Babel, that linguistic diversity is of such proportions that Africans cannot share or work in their own languages. There are some of us who have concluded that this idea has become a useful tool in the hands of those who want to see Africans work in perpetuity in the colonial languages.

Indeed, of the commonly perceived constraints seen to stand in the way of the use of African languages as languages of instruction and education, the most ostensibly forbidding issue, it is assumed, is the argument that Africa is a Tower of Babel, and therefore even where there is the will and means to use African languages in education and social life, the requirements of a unitary postcolonial state will not allow the use of an assumed profusion of African languages within any existing state. Of course, this argument does not address the fact that even in those countries where 80–100% of the people speak one African language, the use of an African language in education is still openly or quietly resisted. Examples of these latter include Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Somalia. In much of East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Mozambique) Kiswahili serves as *lingua franca*. In the Central African Republic, Sango is a *lingua franca* understood by most of the people. The phenomenon of the rejection of these languages as languages of education and advancement suggests that the problem is not simply a question of the assumed plethora of languages within existing African states. It is a question of the inertia or hesitation of the authorities and elites to accede to the use of African languages. Indeed, an important part of the instrumental

qualities for elite status, power and influence is precisely the command of the erstwhile colonial languages.

Remarkably, there is no consistent count of African languages. Tallies range from a thousand to beyond two thousand. How distinct and separate are they as languages? How important are they to their constituencies? How much resource should be thrown behind the development of these languages? How equal are the indigenous African languages to the received varieties? These issues are tied to the larger questions of development in contemporary Africa. The confusion and reputed enormous numbers play into the hands of those who argue that because there is such a plethora of languages in Africa—since Africa is a Tower of Babel—it is not realistic to envisage the use of African languages. And so, the argument concludes that therefore the colonial languages should be used. The rejoinder we have made to this argument is that, in effect, in the absence of sound scientific bases, the myth of the African Tower of Babel is a justification for not using African languages for education, science and technological development.

There are even those, who have argued that a language like Setswana is “essentially good for poetry, singing and some kinds of conversation” (Mitchison, 1970, p. 52). Mitchison was of the view that Chinese ideographics where notions, ideas and concepts are represented in pictograms is bad for the study of science. She wrote that, “perhaps African languages will be modified . . . or perhaps they will be kept for speech, poetry, fiction and drama, while English or French is used as a useful written language of non-poetic communication” (*Ibid*). The search for the solution to African underdevelopment and socio-cultural backwardness using colonial languages has a logical terminus, which is ontologically flustering. If we are expectantly awaiting the day when all Africans will learn, read and write in colonial languages like the historical owners of these languages, that day will take forever to arrive, and even when that day arrived, we would discover that Africans have assimilated to imperial culture to the point that they cease to be culturally Africans and have become “Europeans”.

Thus, at the beginning of the 21st century, it is noteworthy that no clear and consensual picture exists with respect to either the number of languages on the African continent or how these languages can be usefully classified. Each researcher on African languages appears to put his or her own tally of numbers on them. Many observers misconstrue the labels for languages in Africa. Most of what in the literature and classificatory schemes on African languages are labelled and pass as separate languages are in an overwhelming number of cases merely dialectal variants of “core languages”. These supposed self-standing African languages are actually mutually intelligible variants within large clusters (core languages). By “core languages” we mean abstracted and projected historical language reconstructions based on current varieties of identifiable language forms which share high degrees of semantic cognancy, lexical and structural affinities. It is an orthographic representation which unites related variants of a language. This conceptualisation is based on clustered linguistic derivations and structural proximities drawn from common historical sources. Furthermore, almost all African languages are trans-border languages, and most of them cross more than one state border. The postcolonial state in Africa is not a nation in its origins as is the case with the post-Westphalian entities in Europe, today’s European “nation-states”. What we have in Africa are states not nations. Language and cultural boundaries in Africa have no relationship with the conceptualisation and historical origins of the colonial or postcolonial state.

What CASAS’s research has revealed is that over 80–85% of Africans, as first, second and third language speakers, speak no more than 15–17 “core languages”, based on our clustering on the rationale of mutual intelligibility. Africa, for its size is hardly a Tower of Babel. The argument is that if the total population of sub-Saharan Africa is in the region of a million, as first, second and third language speakers, the Fula, Pulaar, Peul, Tuculor, Fulful, Fulani cluster alone would

account for about 50 million. Hausa and its varieties bring up another 50 to 70 million. Oromo, Igbo, Mandeng, Amharic, KiSwahili, Yoruba and the Gbe would produce another 50 million in each instance; the Nguni varieties, the Sotho Tswana, the Akan, the Eastern and the Western inter-lacustrine Bantu (Kitara) languages, Luganda/Lusoga/Lugishu and Luo, Gur, Lingala, Kikongo are between 30 and 40 million per set. Other languages of much smaller size, but which enjoy preponderance within existing states include, Fang, Nyanja-Cewa, Wolof, Ovambo-Herero and Somali-Samburu.

In as far as African development is concerned, the upshot of these facts is that the harmonisation of African languages which show elevated levels of mutual intelligibility would greatly facilitate the economies of scale for the development of educational, media and cultural materials which could go a long way in strengthening the basis of society for the cultural and social development of Africa. Furthermore, it is the only way of culturally empowering the masses of African society. As the saying goes “lift the language and you lift the people”. It is the one way we can remove the cultural cleavage between the elite and mass society. It provides the key to the methodology of eradicating the stigma of inferiority, which the colonial experience has invested in African languages.

CASAS origins

The historical trail of the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) African languages project can institutionally be traced to the Deutsche Stiftung fur Entwicklung (DSE) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) supported workshop which took place in Addis Ababa in March 1990. The theme of the workshop was “The Cultural Prerequisites and the Role of Women in the Application and Development of Science and Technology in Africa”. The immediate objectives of the workshop were to create an awareness amongst policy makers and experts on the crucial need to consider cultural factors in the development and application of science and technology, to highlight the cultural role of women in the popularisation of science and technology, to promote the utilisation of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural media to propagate science and technology and to organise an African forum on the theme of culture, education, science and technology. The proceedings were published as *Culture, Gender, Science and Technology in Africa* (Prah, 1991).

In their foreword to *Culture, Gender, Science and Technology in Africa*, Soodursun Jugessur and Wolfgang Gmelin wrote that

multiple technological and industrial projects have failed in the recent past because cultural factors were not adequately considered during their conceptualisation and implementation phases. It is therefore necessary to highlight such cultural prerequisites so as to enable a greater degree of integration of modern science and technology into the daily lives of the African people. . . . There is need to create a scientific and technological culture that spreads right up to the village. There is need to demystify science and technology by bringing out the scientific basis of many traditional practices common in food habits, agricultural methods, ethno-medical systems, and healthy environmental adaptation practices, etc.

(Jugessur and Gmelin, 1991)

Because language is the central pillar of culture, the implications of this argument can be easily drawn. One of the most important lessons of this workshop was the assertion of the centrality of language issues to the whole discussion of development in Africa. We learned that Africa needs its

languages not only for primary education, but also for the general development of African society. In education, at all levels, Africa will achieve its developmental goals better and faster if the whole educational structure is linguistically indigenised. But what were the intellectual requirements and policy implications of this?

Between 1991 and 1993, a study was undertaken to deepen our understanding of the subject. This study was a discussion and attitudinal study of students, African academics, other experts and rural parents to the relevance of the mother tongue in science and technological education for development in Africa. The result of this study appeared as *Mother Tongue for Scientific and Technological Development in Africa* (Prah, 1993). This text asserted as a finding that, if Africa is to move forward educationally and developmentally, the culture of the masses would need to be recognised and re-centred in considerations of education and development. Education and the mass media must reach the urban and rural millions in ways which culturally speak to them, in forms which do not dismiss their historical and cultural heritage but rather, recognising these, constructs education, knowledge and the use of the media on the basis of what the people already know and the cultural institutions to which they primarily respond.

Another crucial factor in the African linguistic reality is the fact that because most African languages until recently (the past 150 years) have been purely oral expressions, with limited largely evangelical Christian literature, the spoken languages remain the main repositories of African culture. The aforementioned two texts outlined the rationale and scope of the envisaged work. A preliminary Africa-wide exercise on the clustering and identification of African languages which exhibit lexical and structural linguistic affinities was undertaken and published in the form of *Notes and Records* by CASAS. The third step was the beginning of work towards the harmonisation of orthographies for structurally and lexically proximate speech forms.

The CASAS Trust was formally established in 1997. Its mandate has been to lay the foundation for the development of African languages for education and development based on unified orthographic conventions for cognate and structurally related languages, which have to date been written differently.

The mandate further requires that literature emerging out of the work of CASAS should be available to African government ministries and departments of education as soon as they are available. CASAS's experience has been that, while African governments in principle welcome the work, their practice and implementation leaves much to be desired.

The harmonisation of African language orthographies

Over the past two decades and more CASAS has been harmonising the orthographies of the major language clusters in Africa, which enjoy mutual intelligibility of 85% or more. The rationale behind this is that at that level of structural and lexical affinities it is possible to revise and remove the orthographic differences which have emerged between these languages on account of the fact that different and often rival missionary groups produced orthographies without much cognisance or regard for profound structural similarities between these languages. Such orthographic revision has the clear advantage of economies of scale. So that, instead of producing educational literature or digital information for a million people it is possible to produce educational material and general literature accessible to 20 or 30 million. It has also the advantage of upgrading spelling systems and simplifying them for readers and writers. An intellectual by-product of this is that, if we are able to locate and chronologically measure the structural, morphological and lexical transformations, we will be better able to trace the historical movement of people, cultures and social transformations on the ground in African history.

In littoral West Africa, in the first decade of the work, CASAS cooperated with the International Gbe Laboratory to publish a harmonised orthography for Gbe (Ajá, Ewe, Fon, Gain, Phelé, Gun, Mina). The Fulfulde standard orthography for all the varieties of the language (Pulaar, Fulful, Fulfulde, Peul, Tuclour, Fula and Fulani) was done in 2012. This latter language in its various varieties is spoken by minorities in 17 countries in the Sahel and countries in the environs. Other work involved Mandenkan (Malinke, Bamanan, Bambara, Kassonke, Jula, Mande, Mandingo), Akan (Asante, Fanti, Brong, Akwapim, Kwahu, Baule, Agni) and Gur (Gurene, Kabyè, Kulango, Lokpa, Moore, nCam, Sénoufo and Tem) in West Africa. CASAS has completed work on the harmonisation of the major Nigerian languages, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw and Hausa. The Nigeria government has welcomed this work and planned to integrate it in the work of the Ministry of Education. This work was completed at the end of March 2011. CASAS agreed to conduct workshops for the harmonisation of the languages of Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo Brazzaville and Cameroon. The Bantu languages of East Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ruanda and Burundi) have been harmonised.

Work has been done in Uganda on Acholi, Alur, Lango, Luo; Ateso, Karimojong, Turkana, Nyangatom; Eastern Interlacustrine: Luganda, Lusoga, Lugishu; and Western Interlacustrine: Runyakitara (Toro, Nyoro, Kirwanda, Chiga, Ankole). Working in cooperation with staff of Makerere University and the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education, Uganda, CASAS has developed school primers and readers for all levels of primary school for the Uganda school system. The Kenyan Bantu languages and non-Bantu languages have also been harmonised. The Maa languages of Kenya and Tanzania that have been harmonised include Arusa, Ilchamus, Maasai/Kisongo, Parajuyu and Samburu. The Kenya Bantu languages were harmonised in 2012. These were Kipokomo, Mijikenda, Kikuria, Gikuyu, Luhya, Dawida, Ekegusii, Kiikamba Kiembu, Kimeru and Kiswahili. The Bantu languages of Tanzania which have been harmonised include Asu, Gogo, Gweno, Ha, Hangaza, Haya, Kahe, Kisi, Mashami, Mochi, Mwela, Ndendeule, Ngoni, Nyakyusa, Nyambo, Nyiha, Ruru, Sukuma, Sumbwa, Swahili, Yao and other. Many of the speech forms have subcategories.

In Central Africa most of the languages of Malawi, Zambia, and parts of Mozambique and Zimbabwe have been harmonised. Languages such as ciNyanja/ciCewa, ciNsenga/ciNgoni, eLomwe, eMakhuwa, ciYao, ciTumbuka/ciSenga, ciBemba, kiKaonde, Lunda and ciLuvale, and related dialects will now have a single spelling system, rather than three or more spelling systems within the same language, or even more systems across related Bantu languages. The Shona and related varieties have also been harmonised. These include Western Shona: Lilima/Kalanga, Nambya; Eastern Shona: Hwesa, Barwe, Manyika, Ndu, Nyai; and Central Shona: Karanga, Korekore, Zezuru. One major spinoff is that invariably second or third language speakers of African languages in the countries will not have to relearn their alphabets to be able to read material in another language as is currently the case. This in turn means materials will be accessible to wider audiences.

The languages of Southern Africa have been harmonised. The two major clusters are Nguni and Sotho/Tswana. Nguni consists of Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Swati, Kangwane, Ngoni, Tumbuka and Nsenga. These languages are spoken in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. Sotho/Tswana includes Pedi, Sotho, Tswana and Lozi. These languages are spoken in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Angola and Lesotho. CASAS has also harmonised the Mozambican languages. The Khoe-khoe and San languages in the region have also been harmonised. The Venda varieties of Southern Africa have been harmonised, so also have the Shangaan varieties (Tsonga, Ronga, Shangaan). In 2013 CASAS organised a workshop to mainstream the Afrikaans varieties in South Africa into the standard form.

In both Zimbabwe and Zambia school primers and readers in all the official languages have been produced for the school systems, based on the new orthographies. An important

consequence of CASAS's work has been the engagement with various African governments through their ministries of education in the production of school and out-of-school reading materials, up to the end of primary education. Unfortunately, these authorities have been more rhetorical than practical about their uptake. These governments include the governments of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Swaziland. Cooperation has also been partially forthcoming with the authorities in Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Uganda, Nigeria, Benin, Togo and South Sudan for the production of orthographies. In Namibia, early in 2010, Prime Minister Nahas Angula officiated at the launch of the new orthographies for the country in Windhoek. The orthographies are for the Bantu languages and the Khoe and San languages. The Bantu languages here include Oshiwambo, Rukwangali, Rumanyo, Timbukushu, Oshihherero, Diriku, Few, Kwambi, Kwanyama, Lozi, Mashi, Mbalanhu, Ndonga, Subiya, Totela, Tswana and Yeyi. The Khoe-khoe and San languages include Khoekhoegowab, Khwedam, Ju!hoansi and Damara. Subsequently, CASAS has been able to harmonise the orthographies for all the Khoe-khoe and San languages of Southern Africa, including South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Initial work has also been done on the two Khoe varieties in Eastern Africa—Hadza and Sandawe.

The Angolan Bantu languages were some of the last to be completed. They included Kikongo, Kimbundu, Umbundu, Cokwe, Mbunda and oshiKwanyama. Some of these languages, which are principal cross-border languages, have already been harmonised. For example, the languages to the South of Angola crossing into Namibia like Ovambo, Lozi, Ondongwa and Kwanyama have already been harmonised. Across the border in the east into Zambia, the languages have also been harmonised. It is in the north crossing into the Congo DRC that work is still outstanding and, of course, the principal languages like Mbundu and Ovimbundu need to be addressed. A representative of the vice-chancellor of the University of Lubumbashi opened the first CASAS/DRC Congo workshop. Most of the languages concerned in this part of the Congo DRC have already been harmonised on the Zambian side. The work that has already been done by CASAS on the Zambian side can be a basis for the envisaged work in the Southeastern Congo DRC. These languages are principally IciBemba, IciLamba, Luvale, CiLunda and KiKaonde.

The Cushitic languages of Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya and Tanzania have been completed. These include Afar, Borana, Burji, Gede'o, Hadiyya, Iraqw, Kambata, Konso, Oromo, Saaho, Sidaama and Somali. In December 2009, CASAS sponsored a workshop in Khartoum on, "Unity and Diversity of the Nubian Languages", as a preliminary step towards the harmonisation of these languages. In the South Sudan and neighbouring areas CASAS has completed harmonisation work in representative languages—Ti Alu cluster (Ma'di, Lugbara, Olu'bo, Avukaya, Moru, Kaliko, Logo); Bari cluster (Bari, Pajulu/Fajulu, Kuku, Kakwa, Nyangwara and Mundari); and Dinka/Nuer cluster and the Luo cluster (Acholi, Anywak, DhoLuo, Dhopadhola and Shilluk/Colo). Work has been planned for the languages of the Nuba Mountains of Southern Kordofan, Sudan. The key language families which will be dealt with are the Kadugli/Katcha/Miri, East-Sudanic Group (including Temein, Hill Nubas, Nyimang, Daju) and the Niger-Congo group (including Heiban, Rashad, Talodi, Katla).

Dictionaries, wordlists, glossaries and grammar books

CASAS has started producing wordlists, dictionaries and translations of scientific texts from French, English and Portuguese into African languages. Monolingual dictionaries have been produced in several languages. CASAS has already by 2022 published 132 books, 266 monographs, 82 occasional papers and 20 notes and records. (See website, www.casas.co.za).

Currently published monolingual dictionaries and grammar books are the following:

A General Introduction to Ndebele Grammar
Shekgalakari Grammar
Kalanga Grammar
Chiikhuanne Manual with Orthography
SeSotho Syntax
Linguistic Analysis of Cinsenga
Setswana Alliteration and Consonance Dictionary
Junior Akan Dictionary
SiLozi Dictionary
Dhopadohla Dictionary
Ateso/Karimojong Dictionary
Ciyao Dictionary
Etymological Dictionary for Fon
Luvale Dictionary
Luganda Dictionary (in process)
Kikaonde Dictionary
Siswati Dictionary

Educational materials and literature

A modest start has been made at preparing educational materials and literature. Over 160 graded readers have been produced for Southern Africa. They include languages in Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. As indicated earlier, significantly, some of the governments have already agreed to absorb these publications into the formal education system. One hundred and sixty readers have now been completed. Manuscripts for readers at primary school and local community-levels have been produced for also Swaziland.

Outside the Southern African region, in East Africa, analogous work has been completed in Uganda. Readers have been produced for the school system in Uganda in all the official languages. This has been done with the cooperation of the National Curriculum Development Centre/Ministry of Education, Uganda. Nothing in this form has been so far done in West Africa.

Broadcasting

A tentative start has to be made towards broadcasting on the air through readings of CASAS-generated literature. More concerted activities towards newspaper reporting and broadcasting as ways of disseminating educational material need to be pursued. This aspect of the work is to be done with the cooperation of local broadcasting organisations. In a study (Prah, 2005) done by CASAS in cooperation with UNESCO, Stella Hughes of the Communication Development Division of UNESCO pointed out that:

the study suggests that there are links between African language broadcasting and a deepening of the culture of democracy, the opening up of access to information, education and social participation for the illiterate, as well as a sensitisation of young people to their heritage. Not least, their presence on the airwaves may be fostering to the growth and development of the African languages themselves.

Adult literacy materials and classes

CASAS has in the past commissioned writers, teachers and authors who are familiar with the orthographies to produce reading materials appearing as monographs on subjects as diverse as democracy, human rights, gender issues, agricultural practices, health issues, etc. which are utilised in adult literacy classes and also as general reading material in rural and peri-urban communities.

These are the literature (monographs) that CASAS has produced and the thematic areas they cover: HIV/AIDS (5), Diarrhoea (1), Health Hazards and Hygienic Practices (4), Advise to Victims of Rape (2), Domestic Violence (2), Indigenous Knowledge (3), Malaria (1), Child Abuse and Child Protection (1), Sexual Offences (2), Women's Rights (3), Water-borne Diseases (3), Control of Veld Fires (1), Marriage Rites and Laws (2), Inheritance and Maintenance (2), Bird Flu (8).

The aforementioned thematic areas and topics cover issues that are of importance to existential problems that face broad sections of the populations in contemporary Africa. Initial indications regarding their uptake are that they are welcome, and therefore the scope of production of such literature needs to be expanded.

CASAS network

Across Africa, universities and research institutions have provided academic expertise for the work of CASAS. In total, almost 200 academics, mainly linguists and a larger number of informants, have been involved in CASAS's work over the past two decades. Without this network of competence and expertise presently available in Africa, what has so far been achieved would have been unrealizable. CASAS is increasingly recognised in the world for its work towards the intellectualisation of African languages across the continent. This network is steadily increasing as more and younger linguists/academics and writers are attracted to the work of CASAS.

KhoeSan language student scholarship scheme

Over the years, CASAS operated a KhoeSan language scholarship scheme (KLSSS) with the help of various donors to facilitate the training of Khoekhoe and San linguists. CASAS has successfully been able to produce the first mother-tongue KhoeSan linguist with strong competence in morphology, phonology and syntax at a PhD level. He is currently a professor in the Polytechnic University of Namibia.

It will be for the future profitable to continue this expertise training scheme, not only for the Khoekhoe and San languages, but for all the endangered languages. Humanity is made up of all these histories and cultures. The entire global community is enriched and benefits from this variegated tapestry of cultures and peoples. As cultures they are held intact and preserved by languages in literate expression. Much of the early history of humanity relates to these cultures.

Closing remarks

The continued use of colonial languages for education and development in Africa is a direct consequence of the colonial legacy. This hangover defines in a cultural sense the neocolonial character of African countries. It is preserved by a convergence of the interests of the dominant social classes in Africa and imperial interests. Neocolonialism limits the expansion and deepening of democracy. The cultures of the larger proportions of African societies need to be empowered to serve the masses. Without the empowerment of the masses, democracy cannot organically grow.

African development requires the use of African languages. It is these languages which from time immemorial have carried the cultural baggage of what is known and diurnally utilised by Africans. It is in these languages that African creativity and genius are embedded. It provides cultural identities for people.

The UNESCO-led Mondiacult process initiated in 1982 has globally been useful for its insistence on recognising culture as part of development (UNESCO, 2022). What requires emphasis is the shift and refocusing needed to go beyond the accentuation of the folkloristic and tangible artistic representations of culture at the expense of a wider meaning. The emphasis should belong to a larger and more scientifically accountable notion of culture as embracing all that has been and is the product of human fabrication, tangible and intangible, which enable humans as social animals to live, transfer and share experience. Language stands in the middle of this conceptualisation.

Over the years, CASAS'S work has been funded almost exclusively by international donor agencies, starting from the Deutsche Stiftung fur Entwicklung (DSE); The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Ford Foundation followed. After that, CASAS was able to receive assistance from the Kellogg Foundation, the Open Society Foundation and Norad. Indeed, Norad has been the most long-lasting in their assistance. Unfortunately, no African government has contributed to the work of CASAS, except some token support from Nigeria.

As from July 2018 CASAS became part of the Department of Linguistics, University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa. With this firm tertiary educational base in an established university, CASAS's work has acquired a strengthened institutional station for its Africa-wide work.

Recommended readings

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