Chapter Four

Verbal Communication

By words the mind winged. (Aristophanes)

The limits of my language are the limits of my world. (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is capable of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension. (Ezra Pound)

I. Warm-up: Read and Say

Read the following passage and see how powerful words can be. Try to offer some more examples indicating the power of words and then share them with your partner.

Fluorine in drinking water reduces tooth decay, especially in children. Certain fluorides are used in rat poisons. Newburgh, New York, voted to try fluoridation to improve the teeth of its children. The motion passed. Opposition to the project, despite a vigorous publicity campaign using the rat poison argument, was defeated. A day was announced when the chemical would be added to the water supply.

The day dawned, and before it was over, City Hall received hundreds of telephone calls complaining that the water causing dizziness, nausea, headaches, and general debility. City Hall replied that, owing to technical problems, no fluoride had yet been added—it was the same old water.

II. Understanding Language

The power of words is illustrated by the story above. You will find more of such incidents from media or people around you. Our life experiences alone can tell us that language is what we cannot do without for our survival. But language does not exist in isolation. It has a soil to be born and nurtured. That is what we call culture. In this chapter we will develop an understanding and appreciation of verbal language as it functions in intercultural communication. We will deal with the functions of language, its relationship with culture, communication styles in different cultures and thought patterns which exert great impact on communication.

What is language? Language, in its most basic sense, is a set of symbols and the rules for combining those symbols that are used and understood by a large community of people. In the following activities, you will learn more about language.

Activity 1

Study in pairs the following two pictures and try to list at least two functions of language.
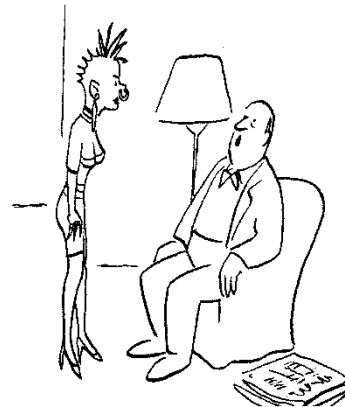
"Your mum and I are worried, and we wish you wouldn't chew so much gum."

Discussion

The pictures show us that people transmit information，exchange ideas and feelings with language. In other words, language is what makes communication possible.

Communication theorists, linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists all agree that language has many functions. The basic one is for people to communicate with each other. Besides, language gives meaning to otherwise random experiences. It makes rational thought possible. It enables us to reason, to draw logical conclusions from the evidence of our senses, to generalize from one event to another, and to predict, create, and understand. It also enables us to exchange feelings, and then a certain relationship may be established between or among people concerned. It is the means of cognitive development for children and conceptual development for adults. It records, stores and disseminates knowledge.

Human beings are called "culture-bearing animals" because they have the capacity for symbolic communication, or language. Compared with human beings, other animals can communicate only in crude and limited ways. Dogs bark in warning, and birds sing to attract prospective mates. Bees and some other kinds of insects communicate only with body movements. More intelligent animals can also learn to respond to verbal signals like "sit" and "suppertime", but humankind has the unique ability to assign meanings to those sounds. Only people can invent words like "happy", "rain," "God," and "next week" and agree that they are symbols for certain thoughts and feelings. A human being can make almost any number of sentences including sentences he has never heard of before. The human ability to use words is indeed a remarkable gift.

Also from the pictures we see that there are more ways or "languages" other than verbal language that people use to send messages. The girl in the picture on the right, for instance, gives us a message about her through the way she dresses. This concerns non-verbal communication that we will address in Chapter 5. Moreover, there are other codes like painting and architecture that people use for communication. In this chapter our focus is the language, the most important symbolic system of communication.

Activity 2

Study in pairs the short passage and the picture, and see what you can infer about language.

Two Japanese who knew some Chinese were one day at a Beijing subway station. They saw a warning sign which read: 小心地滑！ They were very much surprised to see that nobody around them was skating, though the floor was flat and somewhat slippery.

Discussion

As Chinese we know perfectly what "小心地滑" means. The interpretation of the Japanese is amusing but not unreasonable. The humor of the laundry picture is easy to be enjoyed. From these examples we see that language is ambiguous. People may have different interpretations to the same words. Better understanding of the meaning of words requires us to take into consideration the context in which a certain word or group of words are used. Otherwise miscommunication may occur. Take the word "good". G.K. Chesterton (British author, 1874—1936) used it twice in one sentence, each with a different meaning in different context: "If a man were to shoot his grandmother at a range of five hundred yards, I should call him a good shot, but not necessarily a good man."

In fact, language and context co-constitute one another: language contextualizes and is contextualized, such that language does not just function "in" context, language also forms and provides context. When context is involved, more often than not culture becomes indispensable.

III. Language and Culture

The relationship between language and culture may be better born out by some metaphors. One compares language and culture to a living organism—language is flesh, and culture is blood. Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape. Another takes communication into consideration. Communication is the swimming motion, language is the swimming skill, and culture is water. Without language, communication would remain to a very limited degree (in very shallow water); without culture, there would be no communication at all.

These metaphors point to the idea that language is part of culture and plays a distinct role in it. Some social scientists consider it the keystone of culture. Without language, they maintain, culture would not be possible. On the other hand, language is influenced and shaped by culture; it reflects culture. In the broadest sense, language is the symbolic representation of a people, and it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds as well as their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking. It provides a window to the culture in which it is used. To sum up, language is both a means of communication and a channel of culture.

It is obvious that to communicate with people from different backgrounds we have to use a language, native or foreign. But we may not be quite aware that language alone does not ensure effective communication. To reach that end, cultural competence is necessary, because, as the above metaphors indicate, language and culture are inseparable. As a result, we cannot understand a language outside the culture in which it is used, and similarly, we cannot understand a culture without taking into account its carrier: its language.

The importance of cultural competence requires much more of our attention because it has not been adequately recognized. Please look at two kinds of errors in intercultural communication: linguistic and pragmatic errors. As the term indicates, linguistic errors refer to grammatical errors such as "He come yesterday." Pragmatic failure refers to the failure of communication caused by utterances made in an unsuitable manner or at an unsuitable time, by failing to keep close to the native speaker's expressive manner, and by lacking knowledge of the custom—lack of cultural competence. For example, years ago, a Chinese visiting scholar in America reacted to the compliment about her dress by saying: "No, no, it's just a very ordinary dress." This response, though appropriate in the Chinese context, would imply to the American that she doubted the speaker's ability to appreciate the style of dress. These two types of errors result in different consequences. Linguistic errors may at worst reflect upon the speaker as a less than adequate user of the language, while pragmatic failures may be taken in a more personal way and reflect poorly on the speaker as a person. It may lead to the judgment that the speaker is behaving badly—uncooperative, dishonest, impolite or even deceitful. It is obvious that the negative consequence caused by pragmatic failure is to some degree much more serious than that caused by linguistic errors.

But how are language and culture mutually affected? This is what we are going to deal with in the following section.

The Influence of Language on Culture

It is in the very nature of language to be overlooked and disregarded. Language goes unnoticed because it's impossible for a culture to separate the sound-image and concept of something. A culture can't separate the entity and the name that they give that entity-it goes unseen. We don't think "that's the name we give that thing", instead we say "that's what it is". A tree is a tree to most humans, when it's actually just a representation.

Language isn't a system of naming things- it is, instead, a way to make our world possible for us to understand, by being able to differentiate between different concepts. There's more than just one way of looking at a concept and that we make assumptions by accepting what we're told and what we hear, hardly ever questioning or researching for ourselves. Each culture sees and understands things differently, and with that, each culture categorizes entities differently, having their own set of boundaries and spectrum,

creating their own system of language. This is why language is difficult to translate.

Language is necessary for a culture, whereas it allows individuals to understand the world and communicate effectively. Languages don't work interdependently; instead they work dependently because each language relates terms in its own way.

Everyone interprets language differently. In any communication between two people, each person is going to interpret any linguistic message in a certain way- in accordance to their own experience, memory, environment, learning and the way they perceive stimuli. It's important to understand the origins of language, because language and culture are what forms the belief systems of the world. Donald's third stage of cognitive evolution, mythic intelligence, is based on the development of symbols and language which permits imitated cultural elements to be incorporated into verbal metaphors and stories.

Language acts as a way to represent culture.Outdated language, or meanings, becomes unused and as a society has more technological innovation and growth, new, updated language becomes necessary in order to articulate. For this reason, language is considered social because that's how it's constructed. It's similar to animals adapting to their surroundings. We adapt language to what's significant in our culture at that time, along with our experiences at a specific time period. Language therefore becomes a representation of a culture by representing our conditions at a specific time; this is where a culture's ideology comes into a language.

A culture decides upon a common viewpoint of the way things are- the way they see it and viewpoints change over time, which is why language adapts to the changes in time- changes in the way we see things and our perception. A society may even challenge language use because of the changing perceptions, corresponding to a change in language. This helps to support Sausseur's ideas, showing that because these concepts weren't pre-existing, that neither were these terms; we see that language is changeable. People see past language as a way to differentiate and comprehend and it's not viewed as something socially constructed based on what's socially signified.

Language varies. Like language, common sense also is dependent upon separate cultures- the time period, what's significant to that society and common perceptions/ beliefs. The reason for this is that language and a culture's way of thinking goes hand-in-hand; since that way of thinking shifts over time, not only is language flexible and changeable, so is 'common sense', if you could call it that. Thought, which makes up common sense, is the ability to create representations and symbols; it's the power to determine the signifier and signified.

Our thought is reflected in our language because it can be seen how we classify things and what's significant to us. People often believe they are superior to one another and are ethnocentric. People mistake that their culture is the "right" way of thinking. People believe that an idea is true because that's how they see it; if we were capable of understanding how others' can view ideas and customs, wed realize just how much we don't understand. How could we understand when we don't even know what else is out there or fully understand it? The problem lies within the fact we see and we believe; each person's perception is relative to their individual knowledge. A large part of seeing depends on habit and assumption.

Activity 3

Read the following fictitious story and see what you can infer about the relationship between language, culture and thought. Discuss in small groups; the ideas of others may inspire you.

> When an old English lady hears some foreign words (meaning water) for the first time, she feels that foreign languages are odd and quite unreasonable. She says this is just plain water, but how strange that the Chinese call it shui (水), the French call it de l'eau. Only we English give it the right name water, because it is nothing else but water.

Discussion

One possible interpretation is that we are usually ethnocentric and judge the behavior of people from other cultures against the background of our own cultural and language rules. One more interpretation may be that language not only gives us freedom to express ourselves, but also tends to confine our thoughts to a certain area. Out of what our language provides us, we feel confused. What we can safely say is that the difference does not lie in languages alone. German linguist von Humboldt (1767—1835) answered this when he wrote that "The difference in languages is not a difference in sounds and signs, but a difference in world views". The most well known theory relating to this is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

● Sapir[1] -Whorf[2] Hypothesis (SWH)

This hypothesis was formulated by Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf. It deals with the relationship between thought and language. Sapir believed that language and thoughts are somehow interwoven, and that all people are equally being affected by the confines of their language. In short, he made all people out to be mental prisoners; unable to think freely because of the restrictions of their vocabularies. This is the foundation of the so-called linguistic determinism. It is informative to include the following quote from Sapir:

> Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. … The real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.

Whorf developed this idea of Sapir's. He stated:

> … that the linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the

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[1] Edward Sapir (1884—1939), anthropologist, born in Germany, emigrated to the US in 1889 and lived in NY.
[2] Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897—1941), American linguist and anthropologist.

individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade… We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds through our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees.

Two principles can be inferred from the passages above: ==linguistic determinism== that what one thinks is fully determined by their language; and linguistic relativity which states that the differences in languages reflect the different views of different people. The following is an example of this hypothesis:

If my language has only one term—brother-in-law—that is applied to my sister's husband, my husband's brother, and my husband's sisters' husbands, I am led by my language to perceive all of these relatives in a similar way. Vocabulary, through what it groups together under one label and what it differentiates with different labels, is one way in which language shapes our perception of the world.

This hypothesis can be summed up this way that different languages determine or shape the ways in which their users view the world. Do you agree with this hypothesis? You may have read the Chinese classic The Red Chamber Dream. How did 林黛玉 and 贾宝玉 relate to Grandma Jia? Did the old lady love both of them? Did she treat them as if they were equally important to her? If differently, why? Can you find the English equivalents for 孙 and 外孙? The answer is of course "no". Do you think that language plays a role here?

In addition, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s remark about the connotations of the color whiteness and blackness may serve as another example. In his speech *Where Do We Go from Here*, he said:

In *Roget's Thesaurus* there are some 120 synonyms for blackness and at least sixty of them are offensive, such words as blot, grim, devil and foul. And there are some 134 synonyms for whiteness and all are favorable, expressed in such words as purity, cleanliness, chastity and innocence. A white lie is better than a black lie. The most degenerate member of a family is the "black sheep". Ossie Davis has suggested that maybe the English language has to be reconstructed so that teachers will not be forced to teach the Negro child sixty ways to despise himself, and thereby perpetuate his false sense of inferiority and the white child 134 ways to adore himself, and thereby perpetuate his false sense of superiority.

Dr. King talked about racial segregation and discrimination, and in order to do away with this inequality he suggested reconstructing the language his people use. This suggestion of Dr. King's may be based on the assumption that language affects thoughts.

The impact of language on culture can also be found in the verb tenses of some languages. For instance, English has tenses built into their verb forms, so native speakers automatically think in terms of time (being "punctual," "time is money," "make

the time," etc.). But Algonquian Indian languages do not have tenses (not that they cannot express time if they wish), but rather have "animate" and "inanimate" verb forms, so they automatically think in terms of whether things around them have a life essence or not. So when Chippewa Indians do not show up for a medical appointment, Anglo health care workers may explain this as being "present oriented," since English native speakers normally cannot think except in terms of time frames.

But up to now there has not been enough evidence to show that language actually determines a culture's pattern of thought. Some scholars question that if the world view and behavior of people are affected so severely by the structure of their language, and languages have radically different structures, then how can cross-cultural communication and understanding be a realistic goal for the modern world?

Although few modern sociologists fully accept the notion that people's view of reality is entirely constructed by the language they speak, they do generally agree there are differences in the way languages represent experience, and these differences influence how people perceive the world, and then how they behave. Therefore, we can safely say this hypothesis does contain some useful insights. It suggests that language is more than a way of communicating, and it offers hints to cultural differences and similarities among people.

The Influence of Culture on Language

Now we should turn to the other side of the issue: how culture affects language. This impact works at various levels. In verbal communication there are differences at phonemic, lexical, syntactical, and discourse levels. In this part we examine those aspects where, we think, more confusion may appear when it comes to communication with people from other cultures. The aspects concern the word meanings and the use of language, especially the differences in the ways people express themselves in spoken and written forms.

It is widely believed that culture is created but language is partly innate and to a certain extent, instinctive. They are both developed through the journey of life and have different and open areas of study. Cultural differences and language variations also play a significant role in bringing about other meanings of the same word or expression. That is the reason why our understanding of them may contradict or coincide.

There are certain aspects of life that require a socially appropriate use of language and that tell us that the impact of society on language cannot be ignored. Language does not constrain people's ability to think although sometimes people claim they cannot express what they feel or think. It rather reflects personal perceptions and cultural preoccupations.

If thought is controlled through cultural taboos, there would be fewer words in the language to express an action or event. Cultural inhibitors, concerning what is proper and improper to talk about, can serve to narrow the range of thought. As a result, when a Kurdish talks about sex, they refer to the action indirectly; for example, "they are/were in bed together". Needless to say, this sentence deals with association, and does not

quite match with sex, a term which is established in English culture.

   Some words will fade away with the passing of time and others will be replaced. Kurdish people expect to be greeted with a handshake and a warm reception, while Americans may be satisfied with a smile. In face-to-face greetings, a Kurd mostly asks questions and tends to forget the answer. Consider the following:

A: How are you?

B: How are you? How is your family? How is your health?

A: How is everyone? How are your parents? How are your wife and children?

After asking each other many questions, they will then come to answer the questions. When asking an American "How are you?" s/he would normally say, "I am fine. Thank you. How are you?" Such language use is influenced by culture and could bear many interpretations. Kurdish people generally may be described as people-centered, friendly and truly want to engage into the conversation and appeal to the listener's emotions. By contrast, they may be described as chatty by a foreigner. An American might be accused of being unsociable or insensitive by a Kurd. Nevertheless, the same American may be described as direct and to the point by a Kurd who has information about American culture. Culture and cultural knowledge here determines the way our language is observed and used.

After all, humans are endowed with the ability to speak but they learn cultural conventions through imitation and cultural rules. To address sensitive subjects, there seems to be a need to use several words to represent one action or concept. But that does not necessarily impose curbs on the proliferation and growth of vocabulary, dictionary, and language.

   To conclude, language is not free of its cultural influence but with the current technological revolution and the expansion of media, the language will surely adopt, embrace, and has the flexibility to absorb new words and there seems to be no cultural frontier when it comes to the Internet.

● Word Meanings: Source

Activity 4

We all know that words have meanings. But where do their meanings come from? Read the following movie story *The Gods Must Be Crazy* and think about this question.
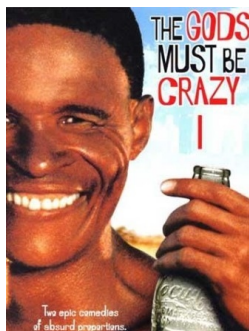
In a desert somewhere in Africa, Jingo, a tribesman, picked up an object dropped from a passing plane. What was it? Jingo and his fellow tribesmen activated their world knowledge and reached an interpretation of the object, namely it must be something from their God. Since kids all tried hard to own it and started fighting, which never occurred before, the tribal head thought that their God had sent a message of some sort to warn them that something bad was going to befall them. A decision was made that Jingo must go to the edge of the earth and throw the object away. In fact, it was only an empty Coca-Cola bottle.

Discussion

This story may be a joke. But it tells us that what a word or an object means to us is actually an interpretation we give it, and that our interpretation relies on our knowledge about the language and the world. Two points about word meanings may be arrived at here. One is that words do not mean anything by themselves; people attribute meaning to them. The other concerns the process by which people generate a meaning: we look at the word, activate the knowledge about the word in our mind and reach an interpretation or meaning for that word.

A question may follow. If a word meaning is our interpretation, can we say that no word has a steady and fixed meaning, since different people may have different interpretations? What we have to know is that the meanings of words are usually conventionalized (约定俗成). For example, you may know the story about the kangaroo, a well-known Australian animal. Many years ago a Western explorer saw an animal in Australia. He asked an aboriginal there what it was. The answer sounded like kangaroo. Although the aboriginal meant in his mind "I don't know", the explorer took it to be the name of that animal and recorded it. Within a short time people accepted that the term kangaroo refers to any of various herbivorous marsupials of Australia and adjacent islands, having short forelimbs, large hind limbs adapted for leaping, and a long, tapered tail. This meaning is thus conventionalized.

● Word Meanings: Types

Activity 5

Conventional meaning has at least two kinds of interpretation. Study the case about 终身大事 and try to identify this term's two kinds of meanings. In a CCTV quiz program

hosted by Wang Xiaoya（王小丫）, an American guest who could speak some Chinese was to choose the correct meaning of 终身大事 from the following four choices: 工作事业婚姻，生死. Although he fully understood the literary meaning of this term (the most important thing in one's life), he didn't work out the meaning we Chinese attach to it until the host gave him some hint. Why did he have difficulty figuring out the implied meaning?

Discussion

The problem the American met is that he knew the term's denotation (the primary, surface meaning, or explicit meaning, or conceptual meaning), but not its connotation (the socio-cultural and "personal" association, or the implicit meaning, the implication of a word). For many words there are both denotations and connotations. Another example is the English term politician, whose denotation is "a person whose business is politics", but its connotation is "a person who doesn't usually keep his promises, often cheats for his own selfish purpose", which is derogative. What determines the connotations of words? Culture does.

It is inevitable that one will encounter misunderstanding and misinterpretation even within the same culture, however much interlocutors share, for one word may mean different things to different people. But in general, when communicating with someone from one's own culture, the process of using words to   represent their experiences is much easier because within a culture people share many similar experiences. The process is more problematic when communication is performed between people from distinct cultures, because their experiences, beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and the like are different. Part of the problem concerns the associative meaning of words. So in intercultural communication, we have to be careful about the connotations words may have. We may hurt our partners' feelings without knowing how we did that.

● **Word Meanings: Equivalence in Different Languages**

Activity 6

In the 1990s, the return of Hong Kong to China was a heated topic in many media. But the Chinese term 香港回归 has two versions in English. The term which was used in English newspapers published in China was "return", while in the West the chosen term was "revert". For example:

    1) The report was divided into several parts…ensuring

       the smooth return   of Hong Kong and promoting the reunification of the motherland.
       (Beijing Review. Mar. 17—23. 1997. p.7)

    2) He will officially take office on July 1, 1997, the day Hong Kong reverts

      to China. (Times. Dec. 23, 1996. p.47)

    How do you account for the difference in the choice of words?

Discussion

Besides their denotations, both "return" and "revert" have political implications. According to Oxford English Dictionary(1998), one of the definitions of "return" is the recovery of something taken by others, especially illegally. "Revert", however, can be a legal term that refers to the return (of property) to (the original owner) by reversion[3].

Therefore, in the special context of Hong Kong in 1997, "revert" has a specific political implication that Britain's occupation of Hong Kong and its return to China was based on the "agreement" between the British government and the Chinese government (Qing Dynasty), and so Britain has been law-abiding.

This activity just reminds us that we have to be very careful about the associative meanings or connotations of words when we engage in communication, especially when we use a foreign language.

Activity 7

Whether expressing ourselves in the foreign language or translating, we have to find appropriate words. We naturally hope to find words whose meanings are equivalent in both our native language and the target one. But pitfalls often result when we are doing so, because many words are culturally loaded. Exact equivalent terms in any two languages are rare.

In order to see the differences of words in distinct languages, some researchers identify five categories of words based on the degree of equivalence. This study also contributes to our linguistic competence and cultural competence.

Now study the following categories and try to give more examples to each category. Team work is recommended.

1) Terms in one language that have equivalents (or near equivalents) in the other language. Comparatively there are fewer such words. Fox, for example, is one of them. In both languages its denotation is an animal, and its connotation cunning. One more example is dove and gezi (鸽子), both of which are often related to peace. In addition, many terms for natural substances as well as scientific and technological terms are of this kind: water, rain, snow, computer, clone, etc.

2) Terms in one language that find no counterparts in the other language. For example, in Chinese there are 三伏 and 三九，for which you find no equivalents in English. And the other way round is also true. English words like democracy, science, tank, privacy, brunch, car pool, commuter, splashdown etc. don't have any equivalents in Chinese.

3) Terms in two different languages that appear to refer to the same objects or concepts on the surface, but may actually refer to quite different things or have different connotations. Words in this category demand our special attention. For they appear to refer to the same things on the surface, we are likely to overlook their connotations. For example, 爱人 and Lover are not at all the same. We know what 爱人 means. But if a Chinese man introduced his wife as my lover, English people would stare in surprise. How could Chinese, who are known to be so circumspect（谨慎的）in such matters, be so

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[3] reversion: The return of an estate to the grantor or to the grantor's heirs or successors after the grant has expired. 在赠予期满后，将财产返回给赠予者或赠予者的继承者。

open about having a lover? The word for a person's spouse in English is simply: husband, wife, fiancé or fiancée, not "lover" which refers to a man in love with or having a sexual relationship with a woman outside of marriage.

4) Terms in one language that seem to have equivalents in the other, but these so-called equivalents are only partly equivalent. Let's look at family and 家庭 whose meanings are similar when referring to people connected by blood or marriage, but the following example tells us that there is some difference between them.

An American (A) attended her Chinese friend's (B) wedding. Two years later, the two met again.

A: Have you started a family?

B: Oh, yes. You attended my wedding, remember?

A: I mean if you've had children.

Here we see that family means more than 家庭, though they seem to be equivalents.

5) Things or concepts that are represented by one or perhaps two terms in one language, but by many more terms in the other language; that is, finer distinctions exist in the other language. The proportionately high number of terms in a particular domain is an important index to the focus of a culture. In other words, this analysis helps us see to what extent a particular culture attaches significance. Take the word "Grandmother" as an example. In Chinese there are two sets of names zumu/nainai(祖母/奶奶), wai zumu/waipo(外祖母/外婆) for one English word "grandmother". Here each Chinese name contains the meaning of the precise relationship between the user and the person addressed. This reflects the emphasis of kinships in China, but not in English speaking countries. Wan(湾) can be another example. As the UK is an island country, there are a lot of words describing different wan: bay (in the shape of a half circle), gulf (deep and long), bight (small and shallow), cove (small with rocks on both sides of the entrance), creek (narrow), fiord (long and narrow with cliff on both sides), etc. In Chinese, some explanation has to be added to the word wan when a specific wan is to be rendered into Chinese.

Discussion

Here are some more examples of the second category: culturally unique terms or terms in one language that find no counterparts in the other. In Chinese there are 阴，阳 The explanation is "two forces/principles through whose essences, according to Taoist cosmology, the universe was produced and cosmic harmony is maintained. Yin is dark, female and negative, and yang is light, male and positive.",气功,武术,大字报,纸老虎,气节,节气，中医的经络,肾虚,肝火,湿症,热症,etc.; in English there are parent, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, wake-up call[4], etc.

Try to render this simple sentence into English: Linda's brother married Michael's sister. Is it easy or difficult? Why?

The following are more examples of the third category: terms in two languages that seem to be equivalent but in fact not. 干部 and 单位 are two interesting terms. 干部 is

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[4] Wake-up call: hotel service to wake the client by phone at the required time.

most commonly rendered in English as cadre. But a cadre is not the same as a 干部. Furthermore, cadre is not a common word. Many English speaking people don't know what it means; those who do know pronounce it in different ways—it has three or four common pronunciations. Other terms have been suggested as substitutes: official, functionary, administrator, etc. But none of these is exactly the same as 干部.

In English there is no such general term as 单位 to refer to a place where one works. If you translate it as a school, a company, a factory or any other institution, it doesn't mean the same as a 单位 which in China takes care of almost everything we are to encounter in our life and work. None of the organizations in America or other Western European countries do the same. As changes are universal, the meaning of 单位 in China has changed in recent years.

农民 and peasant. Among the definitions of peasant we find "a usually uneducated person of low social status", "a countryman; rustic", "an ill-bred person". Imagine how English-speaking people would react to this sentence: The poor peasants talked about their happy life today.

政治 and politics. 政治, an often used term in China, is hard to render into proper English. In most cases, politics would not convey the proper meaning, for one of its English connotations is "…political activities characterized by artful and often dishonest practices".

宣传 and propaganda. 宣传 is a neutral term in China, meaning to explain to the people in order to convince them, and then ask them to take actions accordingly. But in Western countries, propaganda is seen as quite a biased term, meaning to influence decisions by way of over stating or exaggerating facts and circumstances in a self interest way.

唯物主义者 and materialist. The following quote tells the meaning of materialist: "Quite frankly, I'm a materialist. I've got a good-paying job and I want to keep it. I've bought a home near Westlake, and my wife and I want to enjoy the comforts of life. I had a hard time when I was a kid and I don't want to go through all that again." And 唯物主义, being fearless, dauntless in the Marxist sense commonly used in China today, denotes something quite different from what is implied in the quote above.The following examples belong to the fourth category: terms in two languages that are only partly equivalent.

知识分子 and intellectual. In China, the term 知识分子 generally includes college teachers, college students, and such people as medical doctors, engineers, interpreters —people who have had a college education—and middle school teachers. In many Chinese rural areas, even middle school students are considered 知识分子. In English speaking countries, however, intellectuals would include only people of high academic status such as college professors, but not ordinary college students. So the term covers a much smaller range of people. Another difference is that intellectual is not always a complimentary term in English. It is sometimes used in a derogatory sense.

社会科学 and social science. They are not completely equal. The Chinese term covers all the fields not in the natural and applied sciences. This would include what are called the humanities in English: language, literature, philosophy, etc., the branches of learning dealing mainly with the cultural aspects of civilization. The English term,

however, covers a smaller area of learning—political science, economics, history (which is often classified under the humanities), sociology, etc., branches of learning that study human society, especially its organization and relationship of individual members to it.

玩 and Play. An American teacher was stunned when more than one male student said to her: "I played with my girl friend yesterday." According to the American teacher, play here means sex relationship. It doesn't have the same meaning as in "play football, basketball" etc.

同事 and colleague. In China 同事 is used to refer to those who work together in an office, in a company, in a school or in a factory. But colleague in English includes those who are in the same profession whether they work for the same organization or other organizations inside or outside the country. In this sense, colleague should contain the meanings of the two Chinese terms: 同事 and 同行. The following are more examples of the fifth category: things or concepts in one language that have fewer or more terms in the other. In the sense of a teacher, Chinese has many more synonyms: 教师，老师，教员，导师，师长，先生等□

骆驼：In Chinese this is the only term for the animal; in English there is camel. But in Arabic, it's said that there are more than 400 words for the animal. The camel is of far greater importance as a means of travel with most Arabic-speaking people.

雪：In English and Chinese, there is only one word to describe all of the possible kinds of snow. But Eskimos have as many as thirty-two different words for snow. They have different words for falling snow, snow on the ground, snow packed as hard as ice, wind-driven snow, and so on. In contrast, cultures that rarely experience cold weather and snow have only one word to express several concepts that are differentiated in English or Chinese. For example, the ancient Aztec language of Mexico used only one word to mean snow, cold and ice.

副：In Chinese there is only one term expressing this meaning, while in English there are more terms showing the position below the highest rank, such as vice, associate, assistant, deputy, lieutenant, and under[5].

Activity 8

Colors have both similar and different meanings in different languages. For example, black is the color of mourning; red symbolizes danger, violence, or bloodshed; if you're afraid of something, you're yellow. But none of these sayings is true outside the English-speaking world. In China and other Eastern Asian countries white is the color of mourning. In Russia red stands for beauty and life. In Italy and Germany you're yellow with anger, not with fear.

Work in small groups and discuss what connotations red, white and yellow have in Chinese and English cultures respectively.

Discussion

RED is usually associated with celebrations and joyful occasions in both cultures. So

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[5] Instances of these words: vice chairman, vice president, vice chancellor; associate professor, associate director: assistant manager, assistant secretary; deputy director, deputy chief of staff; lieutenant governor, lieutenant general; undersecretary (of State, US) .

in English we find, for example, red-letter days—holidays such as Christmas and other special days. "To paint the town red" means to celebrate, to go out to drink and have a good time. "Roll out the red carpet for someone" means to give a lavish welcome, as in: He was the first European head of state to visit their country, and they rolled out the red carpet for him. In Chinese we have 红双喜，开门红，红利，红运，红榜，红娘，红火，又红又专 etc.（But 红眼病 in English is green eyed, because green has the connotation of jealousy or envy.） However，in English RED also has some negative connotations. For example, the thief was caught red-handed. Other examples are "get or go into the red (be in debt)", "see red (lose control of oneself through anger or indignation)", and "red-light district" (a part of a town where one can hire prostitutes, so the modern Chinese Beijing opera The Red Lantern Story was often misunderstood by native English speakers).

WHITE has certain similar connotations in both languages: purity, innocence, 洁白无瑕，清白无辜. But there are differences. For example, in English there are white lies that refer to trivial, harmless, or well-intentioned untruths. In Chinese we have a lot of terms containing the color white. The following are just a few of them that may be confusing when we attempt to express them in English. One is 红白喜事. Its proper translation would be "weddings and funerals". This is because white is the traditional color for brides at Western weddings. To have white at funerals would be offensive; and to have funerals described as happy occasions would be absolutely shocking to Westerners, although the expression reflects a certain philosophic attitude of the Chinese towards death. Another is 皮肤白/黑. In English neither white nor black is used to describe one's complexion. Fair/dark may be the choice.

YELLOW appears in such Chinese expressions as 黄色书刊，黄色电影，黄色音乐，黄色网站. Originally in China yellowness was the symbol of nobility and authority. This obscene meaning derives from the English terms: yellow press, yellow covered literature, and yellow journals etc. which are vulgar and sensational publishing, not something obscene. 黄色 in the above sense should be translated into English as pornographic, trashy, obscene, filthy, or vulgar, as in pornographic pictures, obscene movies, filthy books, or vulgar music. In English yellow carries the connotation of caution and cowardice.

Activity 9

Words for animals and plants usually have the same denotations in different languages, but very often have distinct connotations. One of the authors of this book went to Canada on a study tour in 1999. On the departure, one Canadian friend gave each member of the group a gift: a sculpture of an animal. One member was quite

puzzled when she received an owl. She didn't feel happy until she got the explanation. Why was she unhappy about the gift? Did the Canadian mean to hurt her? Discuss the questions in groups.

Discussion

This is because Chinese and English native speakers assign different associative meanings to the same bird—owl. Owl in China is the sign of bad luck. The mere sight of an owl or the sound of the

creature's hooting is enough to cause people to draw back in fear. But in English it is associated with wisdom. In children's books and cartoons, whenever there is a dispute among birds or beasts, it is the owl that acts as judge. In moments of crisis, it is the owl that they go for advice. The above mentioned Chinese lady who got the "strange" gift felt quite satisfied when she got the explanation. Other animals have different connotations too.

The term *dog* elicits different feelings in these two cultures. In China gou (dog) often has derogative meanings, such as 狗急跳墙，狗仗人势，狼心狗肺，狗腿子 etc. But the animal "dog" in the West is considered the best friend of man, which is well established in their cultures. So they feel disgusted at eating dog meat. In most cases dog is positive in its connotations. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said when interviewedTop Talk, program of CCTV Channel 1, broadcasted on Jan. 7, 2007. by Mr. Shui Junyi (水均益) that the function of IAEA is a watchdog that barks when it senses some danger. Other examples include: "You lucky dog." "Every dog has its day." "Love me, love my dog." "He worked like a dog." "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Long（龙)is a symbol of the emperor in ancient China. It has been almighty to us Chinese. Today long is often identified with China or Chinese. For example, we compare China to a massive dragon soaring high. We often refer to ourselves as the descendant of the long. Many Chinese parents 望子成龙—longing to see their sons become longs, that is, be successful. The Chinese long has been rendered in English as "dragon". This translation is inappropriate, because to the English-speaking people, dragon is a fire-spitting monster, cruel and fierce that destroys and therefore must be destroyed. That is why the English version of 亚洲四小龙 is "The Four Tigers of Asia" instead of "The Four Dragons of Asia".

Phoenix, in Western mythology, is associated with rebirth and resurrection. According to Greek legend, the phoenix lives a certain number of years—500 by one account. At the end of the period, it makes a nest, sings a death song, then sets fire to its nest by flapping its wings. The phoenix is burned to ashes, but from these ashes emerges a new bird. Thus, when a town, a place, or the headquarters building of an organization is destroyed by fire or other form of disaster, well-wishers may express the hope that it will, like the legendary phoenix, rise from the ashes in new splendor. In Chinese mythology, the phoenix was regarded as the king of birds. The male was called feng（凤), the female Huang（凰）. It is considered by Chinese as a creature of good omen.

The bat is usually associated with negative qualities in the West. "As blind as a bat", "crazy as a bat", "he's a bit batty", "have bats in the belfry" are typical expressions of negative associations. Mention of the word bat often evokes the image of an ugly,

sinister, blood-sucking creature. The emotions aroused in English speaking people are similar to those that the dreaded owl arouses among Chinese: fright and revulsion. To Chinese, however, the bat is a symbol of good fortune, well-being, and happiness — all positive qualities. The reason for such associations is probably because the name of the creature is pronounced the same as the word 福 (happiness), thus the popularity of the traditional design that shows the bat and the deer together, 蝠鹿，pronounced as 福禄 —good fortune, happiness, wealth and position.

The peacock in China is the symbol of luck. But in English it has the connotation of being proud of oneself and showy, as in the phrase: as proud as a peacock.

"'You chicken!' he cried, looking at Tom with contempt." Here chicken means a coward, a person without courage. In Chinese timidity is associated with the rat. Sometimes this is also true in English.

The beaver is chiefly a North American animal. Its constant activity, its habit of gnawing down trees and building complex "homes", and its skill and ingenuity in doing this have earned for the animal the name "eager beaver". In metaphor, an eager beaver is a person who is anxious to get things done, works hard, and is somewhat impatient.


To most Westerners, "the king of the beasts" is the lion. The lion enjoys high prestige, as can be seen from such expressions as "regal as a lion"，"majestic as a lion". In his poem, Shelley calls on the oppressed to "rise like lions". But to Chinese, it is the tiger that more likely evokes such associations, which can be seen in phrases like 虎将，虎虎生威，虎老雄心在，etc.

In Chinese there are many metaphors with the ox: 执牛耳，初生牛犊不怕虎，牛刀小试，老黄牛，牛鬼蛇神，钻牛角尖 etc. In English, the horse, instead, is used in a lot of metaphors: a dark horse (unexpected winner), a willing horse (a helpful person who often gets all the work to do), put the cart before the horse, you may take a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink (don't ask others to do what they find difficult or what they don't want to), horse sense (common sense), talk horse (boast), etc.

In Chinese there is a phrase 力大如牛, meaning "as strong as an ox". But in English the similar meaning is expressed by "as strong as a horse".

The same ordinary insect cricket is in English a happy insect, as in the phrase "as merry as a cricket", but in Chinese it signifies the coming of autumn, so there is always a feeling of sadness attached to it.
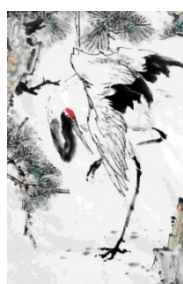
In Chinese, 松，柏，鹤，桃 stand for longevity. In Chinese paintings and art designs, 松 and 鹤 often appear together with the motto 松鹤延年. But their equivalents in English pine, cypress, crane and peach do not have such connotations. Pine, bamboo and plum blossom (松，竹，梅，岁寒三友) are admired in China because they are believed to possess a quality that is highly valued—resisting coldness (wickedness). In English they are just plants.

Daffodil in English signifies spring time and merriment as can be found in some

English poems. But in Chinese, it is just a flower with no associative meaning attached to it.

Styles of Discourse

Discourse is a term with many definitions. Within linguistics, discourse is used to refer to language and linguistic structure above the sentence level. In spite of the variety in understanding discourse, one thing is clear: there is a concern with extended texts and the use of language and structures above the level of the sentence. Examples of discourse forms include letters, jokes, stories, chapters, sermons, speeches, arguments, interviews, business dealings, instruction, and conversations. Some of them are spoken, some are written. A spoken discourse represents the joint product of all the participants in the situation, while a written discourse represents the one-sided product of a discourse by the participants who compose the text. Discourses are conditioned by cultural factors.

Chinese and English are quite different languages used in quite different cultures. So we naturally expect different styles of discourse. Our concern here is not the grammatically correct use of language, but the cultural differences that affect the getting across of meaning. Neglect of this aspect may result in unexpected, even shocking, responses from the listener or reader, while the response to mere grammatical errors is usually that of understanding.

Activity 10

The following is taken from a handout (in both Chinese and English) about a Dragon Boat Festival held in a Chinese city. Compare the Chinese original with its English version, and then tell whether you think the versions are acceptable in either language.
中华大地，江河纵横；华夏文化，源远流长……轻快的龙舟如银河流星，瑰丽的彩船似海市蜃楼，两岸那金碧辉煌的彩楼连成一片水晶宫，是仙境？是梦境？仰视彩鸽翩飞，低眸漂灯流霓，焰火怒放火树银花，灯舞回旋千姿百态，气垫船腾起一江春潮，射击手点破满天彩球，跳伞健儿绽空中花蕾，抢鸭勇士谱水上凯歌……啊，××城是不夜城，龙舟会是群英会！

The divine land of China has its rivers flowing across; the brilliant culture of China has its root tracing back long…　　The lightsome dragon-boats appear on the river as though the stars twinkle in the milk-way. The richly decorated pleasure boats look like a scene of mirage. The splendid awnings in green and gold chain into a palace of crystal. Is this a fairyland or a mere dream? Looking above, you can see the doves flying about; looking below, you can see the sailing lamps glittering. Crackling are the fireworks, which present you with a picture of fiery trees and silver flowers. Circling are the lantern-dancers, who present you with a variation of exquisite manner. Over there, the motorboats are plowing the water, thus a wash stirs up. Over there, the marksmen are shooting at their targets, thus colorful beads whirl around, …all claim a strong appeal to you. Therefore, we should say: XXX is a city of no night; its Dragon-Boat Festival a gathering of heroes.

Discussion

Professor Duan Liancheng said something to the effect that the Chinese version seems acceptable, but the English translation produces quite different effect. The

American journalist, who Professor Duan invited to read the English version and give his comments and sentiments, wrote:

My first reaction was unfortunately laughter because it is so full of mistakes. It omits some necessary information about the Dragon-Boat Festival, including its historical origins and when it actually takes place. These things are important … The copy seems to try to "snow" the reader with fanciful, overblown assertions about how terrific it all is, but in unintentionally hilarious language that leaves the reader laughing out uninformed … The brochure also suffers from lack of background material, the taking-it-for-granted that the reader already is familiar with many aspects of Chinese history and culture… It doesn't tell you where to go, how to get there, when things are open and closed, how much they cost, and so forth. All these are things people visiting an area want to know.

Why is it that many Chinese travel guides read basically the same, no matter what region is being written about, and are so packed with indiscriminate hyperbole? Less exaggeration would actually be more convincing.

This reaction may indicate that there is some difference in the discourse style. According to some researchers, this difference is that there are more adjectives, proverbs and allusions in Chinese writing than in English writing. This is at least partly true, considering that the wide use of well-known "four-character expressions" is usually approved, and even encouraged by Chinese. Some Western scholars name this style "flowery", stating that its aim is to give a more fanciful impression than information, and the impression is usually of beauty, fragrance, happiness, and any other "goodness" aspects so as to attract people. We think that this style does appear in some Chinese discourses, but of course not in all!

This feature seems confusing to Westerners. Why? One interpretation could be that Westerners are generally low-context communicators who tend to lay emphasis on information instead of on impression. So their discourse pattern is different in that it is more direct with objective information. To them, much-repeated words may mean less after a while. Clichés are an example. A cliché is an expression that loses its punch through overuse. Used sparingly, "That's really great!" may get a listener's special attention. If it's used too often, however, it does not mean much to most listeners. Common expressions of courtesy often lose meaning. Chances are that a casual acquaintance who asks "How are you?" doesn't really want to know. Therefore, a native English speaker would frown on this sentence: He slept like a dog and woke up at the crack of dawn, fresh as a daisy, as it contains three clichés: "slept like a dog", "at the crack of dawn", and "fresh as a daisy". In order to make this difference clearer, we may term the two styles as impression-oriented and information-oriented.

Another case in point is the difference in the use of proverbs. While English proverbs are part of the oral culture in the United States, they are not used in writing as often as those in Chinese. Good writers in Chinese often begin an essay with a Chinese proverb. It shows knowledge of the past, an important Chinese value. But Americans do not value the past as much as the Chinese do. They think it is more important to think of something new and original. So a good writer in English will try to explain ideas in a new way and not use proverbs if possible.

To conclude, what we should remember is that adjectives are necessary in good writing. But if overused, they can have an opposite effect—quickly kill interest and

produce boredom. This is true of both Chinese and English. But one problem remains: how many adjectives in one piece of writing are thought to be too many? The appropriateness varies from language to language. Therefore, the remark by the American journalist about the English version of the handout is just made from the perspective of his own home culture. It tells us something about the English communication style. And it alerts us to the fact that we have to take culture into consideration when we use a language other than our own.

Activity 11

Study the following two versions of the same spoken discourse presented at a business meeting between Hong Kong Chinese and Anglo-North American businessmen. Decide in small groups which one might have been given by a Chinese and which by an American, and what is the reasoning behind your decision.

A. Because most of our production is done in China now, and uh, it's not really certain how Hong Kong will be like after 1997, and since I think a certain amount of caution in committing to TV advertisement is necessary because of the expense. So, I suggest that we delay making our decision until after Legco makes its decision.

B. I suggest that we delay making our decision until after Legco makes its decision. That's because I think a certain amount of caution in committing to TV advertisement is necessary because of the expense. In addition to that, most of our production is done in China now, and it's not really certain how Hong Kong will be like after 1997.

Discussion

This concerns the way in which ideas are organized. The message of both versions is the same but the way it is expressed is different. The first version is the speech in English by a Chinese. There is little difficulty in understanding at the level of the words and sentences which are clear enough. Listening to it, however, English natives may have a feeling that it is not quite clear what the speaker's main point is. The second version is what the Westerner might expect. The reason lies in the different discourse patterns which Chinese (and other Asians) and native English speakers use respectively. The deductive (topic-first) pattern is prevalent in the West. Chinese and other Asians tend to favor the inductive (topic-delayed) pattern. Therefore, some people maintain that Westerners are in the habit of directly expressing themselves, while Chinese employ an indirect way when presenting their ideas.

This feature is also displayed in sentences. Linguist Zhao Yuanren suggested that half of Chinese discourses use a "topic-comment" structure. In a sentence with such a structure, the topic part lists person(s), object(s) or concept(s) and the comment part develops the topic part. That is to say, the conclusion usually comes in the end part. In English the "subject-predicate" structure is prevailing. The "topic-comment" and "subject-predicate" are two different terms. The former describes information structure, while the latter describes grammatical structure.

We find from the above that the way people organize their ideas is very important, and that native Chinese and English speakers differ greatly in this aspect. However, we are not usually aware of this important fact. So it is worthwhile to spend a little more time on this point. You will find different aspects of the same issue in Activities 11-14.

Activity 12

From Activity 11 we know that Chinese and Westerners have different spoken discourse patterns. Chinese favor the inductive or indirect way while Westerners prefer the deductive or direct style. Here are two examples of written discourse, one by a Chinese student and one by an American. Read them and decide whether the same difference in spoken discourse is also found in written discourse.

A.   **Why Is English Important to Scientists**

Today English has been the most wide-used language. When a scientist draws a conclusion after a long period of study, he wants to let other people know his discovery. How should he do? If he writes the paper in his native language, only some persons understand it. If he writes in English, then more people will know it. So other scientists may discuss it and draw different conclusions. It is good for the development of the science field. To other scientists, they can get news about their study. English, as a useful tool, it is helpful for the scientists to communicate the information. If every scientist knows about English, he can see other's opinions without difficulty. So English is important to scientists. (Sic.)

B.   **Synonyms**

Synonyms, words that have the same basic meaning, do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words "stingy" and "frugal" both mean "careful with money." However, to call a person stingy is an insult, while the word frugal has a much more positive connotation. Similarly, a person wants to be slender but not skinny, and aggressive, but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not really synonyms at all.

Discussion

Wang Moxi and Li Jin from Shanghai Science & Technology University conducted a survey on the writing pattern of Chinese students. One conclusion from the survey is that when doing narration Chinese students and English students have the similar thought pattern (problem-solution). But when it comes to exposition and argumentation, the difference is distinct.

In exposition and argumentation, writing in English has often been characterized as based almost entirely on a deductive thought pattern. In this pattern, one properly begins with a general topic sentence and then systematically restricts its meaning by presenting more specific details at several levels of generality. This pattern is also referred to as a direct or linear approach. The Chinese pattern, however, is the inductive format (moving from specific details to generalities). It is also thought of as the pattern of indirection. Its feature is that at the beginning, the author presents the relevant situation, with the topic in his mind. He develops around the hidden topic until the last when the topic finally appears. He may expect that the reader will infer the main idea from signals such as necessary, must, want, have to, if, difficulty, if not, etc.

Other Asians display the similar style of writing. Kyeongja Kim (1996), Professor Hu Wenzhong's graduate student in the USA, compared passages written by Korean students and American students. She found that Koreans students tended to place the main idea near the end, while American students tend to state their main idea at the beginning.

To sum up, native English speakers tend to be deductive (topic-first) in organizing ideas while Asian people seem to prefer the indirect (topic-delayed) way. Each is reasonable in its own cultural context.

Activity 13

Activities 11 and 12 suggest that Westerners prefer the deductive pattern of discourse while Chinese favor the inductive pattern of discourse. Do Chinese never use the deductive pattern or English native speakers never use the inductive pattern? When you talk with your friends, will you be direct or indirect? Explain.

Then read the letter written by a talented and promising American musician to his agent, and try to figure out what discourse pattern is employed and why.

Mr. David Bashaw

Beautiful Noise Industries

485 Wilcox Street

Los Angeles, CA 90087

Dear Mr. Bachaw,

I appreciated very much the work you've done on my behalf during the past four years. You have contacted most of the major recording studios, introduced me to some very influential people in the business, sent out dozens of demo tapes that I recorded, and widely publicized my music in other ways as well. I don't doubt that you have done your job quite thoroughly. However, after all this time, I still have not been able to get a recording contract. I will have a hard time paying my bills if I continue to try to make a living as a musician. Because I feel that it's time to move on with my life, I hereby notify you that I must terminate my association with your agency. Thank you for all of your help. I wish you better luck with your other clients.

Sincerely,

Chris Jenkins

Discussion

Our own experiences tell us that Chinese students usually feel entirely free to just call up a friend and say, "Let's go to a movie," or "Let's go play a game." when they come across a friend on campus. They are quite direct in introducing the topic. Another exception to this so-called Eastern inductive pattern is the situation such as calling a taxi, paying an electricity bill, or buying a bus ticket. In such cases, the pattern appears to be simply topic, without any preliminary communication. In other words, in the East where people are in a close relationship to each other and of relatively equal status, the normal pattern is the deductive pattern. This shows that the Chinese do use a deductive style of communication.

This letter above is obviously in the pattern of induction. It tells us that Westerners do not exclude the use of the inductive pattern. The letter writer may feel that he and the other party have been close, so he has to be polite by delaying the topic until much later. Let's consider the situation in which one is going to a friend with the intention of borrowing a large sum of money or asking for some big or embarrassing favor. In such a situation the person would understandably be reluctant to come out with his/her topic at the outset of the conversation. This is because the request carries too much "weight of imposition". In another situation where the superior and the subordinate are involved, the superior tends to be deductive while the subordinate person is more likely to be inductive in their spoken or written communication. To sum up, when communication is conducted between people of unequal status, the person in a higher status tends to use

the deductive pattern in introducing the topic, while the person in a lower status tends to use the inductive pattern in doing so. This is true of both east and west.

Therefore, we can conclude (from what has been discussed in the above activities) that both inductive and deductive patterns are used in Chinese (Asian) and Western communications, though it is also true that comparatively speaking the deductive pattern is more often used in the West while the inductive style is more prevalent in the East.

Activity 14

Read the following short essay and identify the respective characteristics of the written discourse in English, Arabic and Persian, Spanish and Asian languages.

Culture, Logic and Rhetoric

Logic, which is the basis of rhetoric, comes from culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, therefore, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture. The rhetorical system of one language is neither better nor worse than the rhetorical system of another language, but it is different.

English logic and English rhetoric, which are based on Anglo-European cultural patterns, are linear—that is, a good English paragraph begins with a general statement of its content and then carefully develops that statement with a series of specific illustrations. A good English paragraph may also use just the reverse sequence: it may state a whole series of examples and then summarize those examples in a single statement at the end of the paragraph. In either case, however, the flow of ideals occurs in a straight line from the opening sentence to the last sentence. Furthermore, a well-structured English paragraph is never digressive (wandering away from the main topic). There is nothing that does not belong to the paragraph, and nothing that does not support the topic sentence.

A type of construction found in Arabic and Persian writing is very different. Whereas English writers use a linear sequence, Arabic and Persian writers tend to construct a paragraph in a parallel sequence using many coordinators, such as and and but. In English, maturity of style is often judged by the degree of subordination rather than by the degree of coordination. Therefore, the Arabic and Persian styles of writing, with their emphasis on coordination, seem awkward and immature to an English reader.

Some Asian writers, on the other hand, use an indirect approach. In this kind of writing, the topic is viewed from a variety of angles. The topic is never analyzed directly; it is referred to only indirectly. Again, such a development in an English paragraph is awkward and unnecessarily vague to an English reader.

Spanish rhetoric differs from English rhetoric in still another way. While the rules of English rhetoric require that every sentence in a paragraph relate directly to the central idea, a Spanish-speaking writer loves to fill a paragraph with interesting digressions. Although a Spanish paragraph may begin and end on the same topic, the writer often digresses into areas that are not directly related to the topic. Spanish rhetoric, therefore, does not follow the English rule of paragraph unity.

In summary, a student who has mastered the grammar of English may still write poor papers unless the rhetoric of English is also mastered. Also, the student may have difficulty reading an essay written by the rules of English rhetoric unless he/she

understands the "logical" differences from those of his/her own native tongue.

Discussion

Rhetoric, or the concept of organizing words, sentences, and paragraphs in a particular way in order to achieve a particular end affects how credible an audience will perceive a given oral or written discourse. Rhetoric could be worked as a Persuasive Tactic. Rhetoric is normally employed to convince people to think something in particular, or to take a certain side in a debate or discussion. The main value of rhetoric for an advertiser, for example, are to convince potential buyers that a certain product is superior to those of the competitors. Politicians also use rhetoric to convince the public that they are going to be better at running the country or state than their competitors.

A person in ordinary life can also use rhetoric to do things like convince friends and coworkers of certain thoughts, allegiances, or ideals. Newspaper column writers also use it to convince readers to take their view on a particular issue or event. The tactic is particularly common in the editorials section, for instance.

Specific uses of rhetoric can be partially determined by the rhetorical device itself. For example, metaphor is one commonly used form of rhetoric, in which two different things are compared by referring to one as if it were the other. Metaphor can be used by a politician to insinuate that his or her opponent shares characteristics with anything of their choosing. An example of this would be a politician who isn't currently in power referring to the White House as his opponent's "playground," to suggest that the incumbent is childlike and therefore unsuited to power. Likewise, an advertiser might use metaphor to insinuate that its product is superior or an opponent's is inferior by associating it with something else, ideally something with a commonly negative association.

But unfortunately, there is no single, universal rhetorical standard. Rather, human rhetorical expectations and preferences vary from group to group and culture to culture, as is indicated by the above passage. Moreover, these cultural rhetorical differences can occur on a variety of levels (from the choice of words, the sentence to the overall discourse). The point is that when reading or speaking in another language, the reader or speaker usually unconsciously prefers the rhetorical patterns of their native culture and even judges the effectiveness of other language discourses according to their own cultural rhetorical expectations. This is what we should be aware of.

Discourse Patterns and Thought Patterns
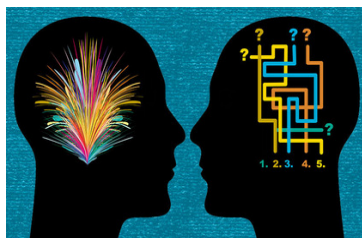
As the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests, language and thoughts are closely related. The reason why people have different discourse patterns is probably due to the differences in their modes of thinking. And the mode of thinking is connected with the worldview, which influences all aspects of our perception and consequently affects our belief and value systems, as well as how we think and act. Scholars like Humbold and Ji Xianlin（季羡林）maintain that the difference in languages is not just a difference in sounds and signs, but a difference in worldviews. (For detailed study of worldviews, see Chapter Two.)

From Chapter Two we know that generally speaking Westerners tend to be dualistic in their outlook while Chinese are inclined to believe in holism. Accordingly, with regards to modes of thinking, people nurtured in Western culture tend to dissect things into parts and analyze their relationships in order to understand them properly. Their emphasis is upon the parts rather than upon the whole of things. People brought up in Chinese culture are likely to synthesize elements into a unit, with the emphasis on the "whole", the systematic and synthetic perceptions of objects.

When it comes to problem solving, the Western mind is generally trained to think in terms of cause and effect, that is, in a linear line. If something is wrong, they find the cause and fix it. However, the Chinese tend to think in terms of webs of thoughts and relationships, or in a circular way. They usually make a comprehensive survey of the overall situation, and then think over details.

As analytical thinking prevails in the West, people in that culture tend to be good at classification and categorization and to pursue dichotomies such as good and bad, God and the devil, the individual and the whole, in a word, "A" or "not-A". This may lead to the fact that they prefer making use of concepts for logical judgment and reasoning. Another trait results: abstraction. Abstraction is synonymous with precision and clarity. This characteristic can be found in Western languages.

The Chinese synthetic mode of thinking has its own traits. It usually leads to the emphasis on gaining intuitive insight and thinking in terms of images. Precision and accuracy is not emphasized.

The following activities are on different modes of thinking.Synthetic Thinking and Analytic Thinking

Activity 15

Think about the layouts of a Western hospital and a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) clinic. How do a Western doctor and a TCM doctor treat patients respectively? What are the differences? Discuss in groups and try to offer some interpretations.

Discussion

The differences in the modes of thinking are clearly reflected in the unlikeness between Western medicine and TCM. Western medicine divides the human body into different parts and treats them accordingly. In a Western hospital, patients have to go to different departments to get treated. A doctor treats his patient by examining parts of the body through tests (detailed analysis) and X-rays before making a diagnosis. Chinese medicine, however, takes the patient as an organic whole, requiring the consideration of the connections of all parts of the body. A TCM doctor treats his patient by looking at his complexion and the coating on his tongue, feeling his pulse and eliciting his complaints in order to form a correct judgment of his general physical condition. He tries to get at the

root of the trouble and aims at a permanent cure rather than apply a palliative remedy. As a result, a patient suffering from severe headache may get some foot treatment, as some xuewei[6] . are believed to be connected with certain parts of the head. Although such xuewei are hard to prove by means of modern scientific instruments, the treatment has worked for thousands of years in China.

Activity 16

Study the following paintings. Discuss in groups and try to find some differences between the Chinese and Western paintings（Napoleon）.

Discussion

The differences in the modes of thinking can also be found in the art of painting. First, it can be seen from the pictures here that the Chinese painting is a synthesis of different art forms: calligraphy, painting, poetry and stamp. In the West, however, painting is painting and poetry is poetry. They are quite different and therefore are treated accordingly. Second, in Chinese painting the eye of the viewer is assumed to move across the surface of the painting, while in the Western painting there was only one focal point, one spot from which the viewer looks at the painting. Third, Western paintings seem to be more true to life, precision being obvious. But the Chinese painter seeks close resemblance in spirit instead of accurate likeness in appearance. In addition, landscapes are conventional themes in Chinese painting, through which artists express both inner harmony and harmony with the natural surroundings.

Even in cooking, differences in thought patterns can be seen. The Western style of

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[6] xuewei: 穴位, some invisible but crucial points in the body

Arlene Bunsen's Tasty Meat Loaf

Combine in a large mixing bowl:

1 lb. ground beef

1 chopped onion

1 chopped green pepper

1 egg

1/2 cup tomato catsup

1 tablespoon mustard

1 cup broken crackers

Place in a greased loaf pan and bake at 350° for 1 hour.

cooking is relatively more scientific: you are told exactly how much water, how many grams of salt, sugar and other ingredients are needed for a certain dish, how many minutes, how strong the heat, etc. the food takes to be cooked. But what a Chinese recipe tells you is roughly a little oil, a little salt, etc. You have no idea exactly how much each of the ingredients is. A Chinese cook usually senses how much by their experience and produces delicious dishes. An apprentice learns cooking not by following recipes with precise quantitative descriptions, but by intuitively acquiring his master's technique after repeated imitations.

● Concrete Thinking and Abstract Thinking

Activity 17

A. The ways of the ancient Chinese and Greeks to prove the theorem of triangle are different. One is found in the Zhou Bi Suan Jing [7]. The other is Euclid's[8] Proposition 47 next page. Compare them and see which one can be understood intuitively and more easily, and which one cannot be so understood and why.
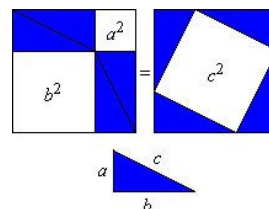
B.   Compare one Chinese idiom with its English translation. What differences can you find between them?

Chinese idiom: Zuo chi shan kong (坐吃山空，"Sit eat mountain empty")

 English translation: "If you only sit and eat and do nothing, even a fortune as big as a mountain will vanish."

Discussion

These examples to some degree illustrate the different modes of thinking between the Chinese and the Westerners. Case A tells us that the Chinese thinking tends to be concrete or intuitive. The relationship of the lines of a triangle is made clear by the diagram itself, thus no abstract reasoning is necessary. In contrast, the Euclid's Proposition is to be understood by abstract deduction. This example provides some evidence to show the preferred modes of thinking of Chinese and Westerners: concrete/intuitional thinking and abstract/rational thinking. Case B reflects the difference in thought patterns. It seems that Chinese thinking depends more on images, metaphors and analogies, while Western thinking tends to be more circumspect, depending more on concept, judgment and reasoning.

In conclusion, Western thinking tends to be more analytical, statistical, rational, and circumspect, laying more emphasis on objectivity, specificity and

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[7] Zhou Bi Suan Jing:《周髀算经》，据认为成书于汉代，约公元前 100 年，提出了"勾三股四
astronomy and mathematics, assumed to be written in 100 BC.

[8] Euclid: a Greek mathematician, about 325 BC—265 BC.
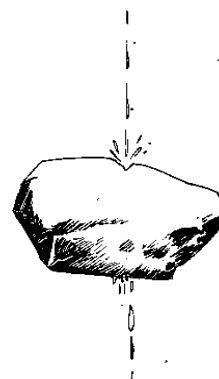
precision. Chinese thinking, however, is more likely to be synthetic, intuitive, and concrete, valuing subjectivity and wholeness. The Western thinking is characteristic of the Aristotelian modes of reasoning. It views man as a rational being capable of factual and sound reasoning. In the Taoist view, however, man is not a rational being, nor is truth to be conceived in terms of reason and logic. Taoist philosophy states that human life is conditional and not free, and only when man recognizes this limitation and makes himself dependent upon the harmonious and beneficent forces of the cosmos does he achieve success. Tao teaches the wisdom of being foolish, the success of failure, the strength of weakness, and the futility of contending for power—all of which might be seen as irrational by the traditional Western mind. The basic philosophy of Taoism is based on the need to achieve harmony with the cosmos. Thus this relationship is what it pursues. According to the Western way of thinking, something is generally either "A" or "not-A". But the Taoist easily combines these two by seeing a rational relationship between them. There are endless examples that can be observed from nature. A tree limb that is strong and does not bend eventually breaks under the increasing weight of winter snow, but the weak limb—the one that is limber and bends—gives way to the weight of the snow and lets it fall to the ground before enough can accumulate to break the limb. Weakness is perceived as strength; strength is seen as weakness. In terms of Tao, this is rational.

Sure enough, there is no absolute distinction between cultures. Exceptions are numerous and counter-evidence exists due to the extreme complexity of culture. In fact, the Chinese and the Western cultures do share quite a lot in spite of their differences. These observations are intended to facilitate a global understanding of the main historic trends in our home culture and the Western culture, the culture of English speaking countries in particular.

REVISION TASKS

I. Review this chapter with the help of the following questions.

1. How do you usually communicate with other people? Can you communicate with others without language? If yes, how much?

2. What does language mean to you?

3. How is language related to culture? How would the change of language over time reflect, facilitate, and perpetuate cultural change?

4. Do you sometimes experience the difficulty in finding the counterpart of a Chinese word in English and vice versa? If so, why?

5. Do you agree that most words in a language are culturally loaded?

6. How do you understand the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis?

7. What is thought to be the Chinese discourse pattern and the Western discourse pattern? How do you look at them?

8. How does the Chinese way of writing an address on the envelope differ from that of the English? Can you offer an interpretation for the difference?

9. Comment on the analysis of synthetic thinking vs analytic thinking and concrete thinking vs abstract thinking. Give some examples to further analyze your comments.

10. Can you offer your own interpretations for the Chinese and the Western modes of

thinking?

II.　Complete the tasks below.

1. Study the statement by Ralph Ellison. "If the word has the potency to revive and make us free, it has also the power to blind, imprison and destroy." What does it tell you about his view on the relationship between language and thought? Do you agree with him?

2. Read the paragraph about word meanings and see what conclusion you can draw from it on this point. Then compare the denotations and connotations of duty/责任 and family/家庭 and see how they are similar and different.

　　A strong belief in democracy unites us; … However, look beneath the surface of our collective faith in democracy, and you'll find that we understand it in very different ways. Some say that democracy means government by the people, or the right to vote, or equality under the law. Others say it's the freedom of choice, or unlimited economic opportunity. Still others argue that democracy means the active participation of all citizens in shaping public policy, or economic as well as political justice.

3. Read the quotation that follows and try to find out what language difference it reveals.

　　The author of an Arab-English dictionary said to Hall: "I have spent the entire afternoon trying to find the Arab equivalent of the English word 'rape.' There is no such word in Arabic. All my sources, both written and spoken, can come up with no more than an approximation, such as 'He took her against her will.' There is nothing in Arabic approaching your meaning as it is expressed in that one word."

4. How would you describe your mother or grandmother? Then study the remarks made by Linell Davis. Do you agree with them or not? Why? Give your detailed comments.

　Native English speakers teaching writing in China often comment that their students' writing is rich in visual and other sensory images, but at the same time they also say that it is too sentimental. What they mean is that Chinese students tend to idealize what they are writing about. The writer is presenting a person, memory, or situation as he or she thinks it should be rather than how it is observed to be. The writer may not intend to portray a realistic picture of the world. Foreign teachers cautioned one another, "Don't ask them to write an essay about their mothers or grandmothers. All you get is stereotypes about devotion and sacrifice. They will all sound alike."

5. Study the case and then try to answer the questions that follow.

　　Wu had just started working for a Swedish company that had extensive business commitments in China. A large part of his work concerned advising his expatriate colleagues on Chinese business practices. This involved both writing reports and recommendations and addressing meetings.

　　As he was very anxious to succeed, Wu always researched his topics thoroughly and tried to make his presentations as clear as possible. However, he gradually became aware that something was wrong. It often seemed that nobody listened to him and his advice was ignored. When he spoke at meetings, he felt that people were impatient and uninterested in what he had to say. He got more and more unhappy and began to feel that his colleagues were not interested in his opinions because he was Chinese. This, he thought, was racism.

　　The company had a policy of annual review, which meant that every staff member met with the managing director once a year to discuss his or her progress. When the time came for Wu's review, the managing director gave him a copy of the company's assessment of his performance. The assessment praised his hard work, but made the following, very serious criticisms: ①When speaking at meetings, arguments are often unfocused and speeches lack clear direction. ②Written reports contain too much irrelevant material. ③In both speaking and writing, material is poorly organized, with important

recommendations often appearing only at the end of the report. ④We often appears uncertain about the points he wants to make.

Wu was shocked by these criticisms. He could not understand why they had been made and he was not sure what to do about them.

Questions:

a)Why do you think the company criticized Wu in this way?

b)Do you think he is correct to conclude that the problem is racism?

c)What cultural expectations about presenting information orally and in writing may account for the negative evaluation of Wu's work?

d)Give advice to Wu on dealing with each of the specific criticisms the managing director made. □

6. In the traditional Chinese family, usually the wife's status is subordinate to her husband. The household is the wife's domain, and she actually manages the family business only when her husband is weak and incapable. Please discuss the following sayings that show the typical relationship between a husband and wife, and also a wife's subordinate status in the Chinese family of the feudal society .

"Follow the man you marry, be he a fool or a crook"

"The husband sings, the wife accompanies"

"In bed, husband and wife, out bed, guests"

" Follow her father before she marries; follow her husband after she marries, follow her son after her husband dies"

7. traditionally, Chinese parents have enjoyed the freedom to decide their children's future. The basic difference in the relationship between parents and children in Chinese and American families is that Chinese as what children should do for their parents, and Americans ask what parents should do for their children. The communication between Chinese parents and children is one-way-from parents to children. Please discuss the following sayings that show the typical relationship between parents and children.

" Have ears but no mouth", what if children tried to make an interruption in the adult's conversation?

" Filial piety is the chief of the hundred virtues"

"Parents are always right"

8. Positional role behaviour within the traditional Chinese family is decided by three factors: in order of priority, generation, age and sex. Three features characterize the family structure: (1) in the sex hierarchy, the maternal system is subordinate to the paternal line;(2) age is the locus of power; and (3) males are superior to females. Please discuss the following common expressions of these cultural values in the daily life。

"A boy is better than two girls "

" An elderly man at home is like jade in the hand"

" Men rear sons to provide for old age "

" A married daughter is like water bursting its banks"

" Daughters must not be kept at home unmarried, if they are forcibly kept in this condition, it is sure to breed enmity"

" A virtuous woman cannot marry two husbands"

" ignoring the old man's advice makes one stupid"

" A grown daughter cannot be kept unmarried for long"

" A girl will doll herself up for him who loves her"

" It is virtue for women to be without talent"

9. Ancestor Worship is one of the most distinctive features of the Chinese family system. It is one of the main components of Chinese family life. In the Chinese family, ancestor worship implies that the physical bodies of ancestors die, but their souls continue to live an watch over the life of their descendants with a supernatural power. In China, the function of ancestor worship is to reinforce the unity of the family and to enhance the generation-age-sex scheme of authority in the family.

Questions:

A. What are the common places do most of the Chinese worship their ancestors?

B. When do the Chinese worship their ancestors?

C. What do the Chinese do when they worship their ancestors? (the food offerings, the rituals and etc.)