# Negotiating Intercultural Relations

## Insights from Linguistics, Psychology, and Intercultural Education

Edited by
Troy McConachy and Perry R. Hinton

BLOOMSBURY

# NEGOTIATING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS

Also Available from Bloomsbury

*Identity, Culture and Belonging*, Tony Eaude
*Intercultural Contact, Language Learning and Migration*, edited by Barbara Geraghty and Jean Conacher
*Transformation, Embodiment, and Wellbeing in Foreign Language Pedagogy*, edited by Joseph Shaules and Troy McConachy
*Intercultural Crisis Communication*, edited by Christophe Declercq and Federico M. Federici

# NEGOTIATING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS

## Insights from Linguistics, Psychology, and Intercultural Education

Edited by
Troy McConachy and Perry R. Hinton

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain 2023



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

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3502-7693-2
ePDF: 978-1-3502-7694-9
eBook: 978-1-3502-7695-6

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

*For Professor Helen Spencer-Oatey*

# CONTENTS

# FIGURES

# Tables

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Wei-Lin Melody Chang** is Lecturer in Chinese in the School of Languages and Cultures, University of Queensland, Australia. Her research focuses on pragmatics, intercultural communication and business negotiation, especially studying face, (im)politeness and humour. She is the author of *Face and Face Practices in Chinese Talk-in-Interactions: An Empirical Analysis of Business Interactions in Taiwan* (2016), as well as a number of papers in edited volumes and journals, including the *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *Journal of Politeness Research*, *Pragmatics*, *Multilingua*, *Lingua* and *East Asian Pragmatics*.

**Carolin Debray** is Researcher and Lecturer in English Linguistics at the University of Basel, Switzerland, with a special interest in (interpersonal) pragmatics, discourse analysis and intercultural communication. She holds a PhD in applied linguistics from the University of Warwick, UK, where she has also worked as a lecturer. Carolin has published on various aspects of work communication, including team conflict, marginalization in interactions and troubles talk at work. Her recent work also includes the construction of positive relationships between interlocutors, gendered discourses and communication in large virtual communities.

**Willis Edmondson** was Professor of Applied Linguistics at Hamburg University and a prolific researcher in the areas of discourse analysis, pragmatics, language learning and teaching and ritual interaction. He was a scholar of high individual integrity and originality. Chapter 9 of this volume is heavily informed by a posthumous publication of his and the work of Juliane House and Dániel Kádár.

**Ronald Fischer** is Professor in Psychology at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and Researcher at D'Or Institute for Research and Education, Brazil. His work focuses on cultural and evolutionary dynamics, with a special interest in cultural dynamics of values, beliefs, prosociality and well-being. He is a fellow of the Royal Society NZ Te Aparangi and fellow of the Association for Psychological Science.

**Professor Peter Franklin** focuses on intercultural communication, competence and management in his teaching, writing and research at Hochschule Konstanz University of Applied Sciences, Germany. There, in China and in Switzerland, he works on Asia-/Europe-oriented bachelor, master's and MBA programmes. With Helen Spencer-Oatey he co-authored *Intercultural Interaction* and with Christoph Barmeyer he co-edited *Intercultural Management* (both imprints of Bloomsbury).

Since 1989 he has also advised dozens of organizations working across cultures and trained and coached their employees to better understand, handle and leverage culturally complex contexts.

**Michael Haugh** is Professor of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Queensland, Australia. His research interests include pragmatics, conversation analysis, intercultural communication and humour studies, with a particular focus on the role of language in social interaction. His more than 120 papers and books include *Action Ascription in Interaction* (2022, with Arnulf Deppermann), *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics* (2021, with Dániel Z. Kádár and Marina Terkourafi) and *Doing Pragmatics Interculturally* (2017, with Rachel Giora).

**Perry R. Hinton** is Professor in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK. He is a cultural psychologist, with a background in social cognition, and has a research focus on stereotypes and intercultural communication. He has published a number of papers on Western media interpretation of modern Japanese culture. His books include *Stereotypes and the Construction of the Social World* (2020), *The Perception of People: Integrating Cognition and Culture* (2016) and *Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture* (2000). He is also the author of *Statistics Explained* (2014) and has co-authored two other books on statistical methods.

**Janet Holmes** is Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and Associate Director of the Language in the Workplace Project (www.victoria.ac.nz/lwp/). She has published on many aspects of sociopragmatics including language and gender, pragmatic particles and aspects of workplace discourse. Her most recent books are *Gendered Talk at Work*, *Leadership, Discourse, and Ethnicity* and the sixth edition of *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. With her research team, she is currently investigating mobile and digital workplaces.

**Juliane House** is Professor Emerita, Hamburg University, Distinguished University Professor, Hellenic American University, Athens, Honorary Visiting Professor at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, at Dalian University of Foreign Languages and at Beijing University of Science and Technology, as well as Past President of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies. Her research interests include translation, contrastive pragmatics, discourse analysis, politeness and English as a global language. She has published widely in all these areas. Her latest books include *Translation as Communication across Languages and Cultures* (2016), *Translation: The Basics* (2018) and *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* (2021, with D. Kádár).

**Dániel Z. Kádár** is Member of Academia Europaea, has a higher doctorate (D. Litt) in pragmatics and PhD in linguistics. He is Chair Professor, Director at Dalian University of Foreign Languages, China, and Research Professor at the

Hungarian Research Institute for Linguistics. His areas of research involve cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, linguistic politeness and interactional ritual theory, the pragmatics of East Asian languages and applied linguistics. He is the author of *Relational Politeness, Impoliteness and Ritual* (2017) and co-author of *Understanding Politeness* (2013, with M. Haugh), *Intercultural Politeness* (2021, with H. Spencer-Oatey) and *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* (2021, with J. House).

**Dr Katharina Lefringhausen** is a cross-cultural social psychologist, working as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University, Scotland. Her research focuses on how majority members acculturate towards ethnic minorities in a shared society and its consequences for both majority and minority members across contexts and time. Moreover, Katharina functions as a board member at SIETAR UK as well as the director of Community Development. In this role she leads a team of trainers and academics in the creation and delivery of a project to support volunteers who work with refugees and people who seek asylum in the UK.

**Troy McConachy** is Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK. His research spans a range of topics in language education and intercultural communication, including intercultural learning, metapragmatic awareness, classroom discourse, learner and teacher identity, and interpersonal perception. He is the author of *Developing Intercultural Perspectives on Language Use: Exploring Pragmatics and Culture in Foreign Language Learning* and co-editor of *Teaching and Learning Second Language Pragmatics for Intercultural Understanding* (with A. J. Liddicoat) and *Intercultural Learning in Language Education and Beyond: Evolving Concepts, Perspectives and Practices* (with I. Golubeva and M. Wagner).

**Sophie Reissner-Roubicek** is Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK. She teaches and researches in professional communication and intercultural interaction, and develops intercultural training materials for business and higher education. The critical nature of ‘people-centred’ questions in her research on graduate job interviews first prompted her interest in how teamwork is interactionally achieved and subsequently in building this into research-based training.

**Jiayi Wang**, an associate professor at De Montfort University, UK, has conducted research on pragmatics, intercultural communication, language education and translation/interpreting. Her recent publications include the article ‘Culture, Context, and Concerns about Face: Synergistic Insights from Pragmatics and Social Psychology’ (2020, with Spencer-Oatey) and a forthcoming co-edited volume on English-language learning with Cambridge University Press. Jiayi obtained her PhD in applied linguistics from the University of Warwick, UK, specializing in professional intercultural communication. She served as an international project manager at the Ministry of Justice and as a high-level conference interpreter/translator for such organizations as the Supreme Court and AstraZeneca.

**Vladimir Žegarac** obtained a PhD in linguistics from the University College London, UK, and worked as a research fellow in communication studies at Middlesex University, UK. His subsequent academic affiliation was with the University of Bedfordshire, from which he retired in 2016 as a reader in language and communication. Between 2016 and 2019 he was employed at the University of Madeira on an invited professorship basis. His main research interests are in general linguistics, relevance-theoretic pragmatics, social aspects of human communication and general linguistics. He has published chapters in books and articles in academic journals, including *Lingua*, *Journal of Linguistics*, *Intercultural Pragmatics*.

# Introduction

Troy McConachy and Perry R. Hinton

The importance of fostering positive relationships between individuals from different cultural backgrounds has come to be recognized by an increasingly broad range of societal and educational institutions around the world, including NGOs, businesses and higher education institutions. This has led to a growing demand for education and training that focuses on how language, culture and psychological dynamics influence processes of communication and rapport management. While such educational provision should ideally reflect contemporary theoretical perspectives and recent empirical research on intercultural relations, this is not always the case. In fact, intercultural education and training are often reliant on models of culture that underplay the role of language in the negotiation of meaning and overemphasize taxonomies of national cultural differences (Dervin and Liddicoat 2013). This volume takes as its starting point the need for research and practice in intercultural education to be informed by multidisciplinary insights into intercultural relations that shed light on how individuals negotiate perceptions of self and other, construct common ground and build rapport. This entails a dynamic view of communication that recognizes both the centrality of linguistic interaction and the role of culturally constructed expectations and interpersonal perceptions in the negotiation of intercultural relations.

The volume is inspired by and is dedicated to Professor Helen Spencer-Oatey, whose work on linguistic politeness and rapport management has highlighted the theoretical and practical importance of integrating linguistic perspectives on intercultural interaction with social psychological theories of interpersonal relations. Spencer-Oatey has convincingly argued that understanding the role of language in intercultural relations requires close attention to how people perceive their relationships, how they interpret the significance of behaviours based on contextual expectations and how they evaluate each other as social and moral beings. While it is axiomatic in the field of pragmatics that context influences linguistic choices, Spencer-Oatey's work has contributed significant insights into the question of how 'people use information about interpersonal relations in the production and interpretation of language' (Spencer-Oatey 1993: 27). How exactly do assumptions about interpersonal relations come into play in (intercultural) interaction? How does the cultural conceptualization of social roles, such as 'teacher', 'student', 'boss', 'subordinate', shape expectations as to how people should behave and what interpersonal rights and obligations should be attended to? And when individuals come to interactions with divergent contextual expectations, what consequences does this have for how relations are managed? Moreover, how do social categorizations of the other affect the way that communicative episodes are perceived?

Whereas much work on the topic of politeness in the field of pragmatics had focused on speaker intentionality and how individuals consider the context when making linguistic decisions, Spencer-Oatey argued for more attention to how interactants interpret and evaluate language use. Much of her early work, inspired by her many years living in China and her vast international project experience, compared British and Chinese perceptions of interactional episodes and specifically probed the conceptualization of roles such as 'tutor' and 'student' in a university context, including her PhD thesis completed in 1992 at Lancaster University. In this and subsequent publications (e.g. Spencer-Oatey 1996), Spencer-Oatey challenged pragmatics researchers to recognize the potential for cultural variability in how role relations and dimensions of interpersonal relations are conceptualized. She argued that terms used to conceptualize the vertical and horizontal dimensions of interpersonal relations such as 'power', 'distance', 'authority' and 'solidarity' are subject to cultural interpretation, and therefore much care is needed when attempting to operationalize them in intercultural research. This is an issue that is also highly relevant to Jiayi Wang's chapter in this volume, which looks at how Chinese postgraduate students studying in the UK perceive their relationships with academic staff and how they attempt to manage these relationships through email communications.

The key insight that contextual expectations and evaluations of behaviour are intertwined with cultural understandings of role relations strengthened Spencer-Oatey's conviction concerning the value of triangulating context-sensitive linguistic analysis with social perception data to understand how participants themselves view their interactions and relationships (see Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2003). At a theoretical level, it also signalled the need to further connect linguistic theories with social psychological perspectives on interpersonal relations. Spencer-Oatey's subsequent studies on intercultural interaction demonstrated that the interpersonal sensitivities that impact on (intercultural) interaction go beyond the 'face threatening acts' discussed within Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. She therefore argued for the need to look at linguistic interaction within the broader framework of 'rapport management' and to further probe the interpersonal sensitivities that shape how rapport is established, maintained and threatened (Spencer-Oatey 2000). Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009: 102) define rapport in terms of 'people's subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations'. In this sense, rapport depends on the perceived quality of relationships and how these are dynamically shaped and negotiated on the basis of mutual interpretation and evaluation of (linguistic) behaviour in context. The approach to intercultural relations in this volume resonates strongly with this perspective.

As explained in a number of chapters in this volume, Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) proposed that rapport is influenced by the potential for (linguistic) actions not only to be 'face threatening' but also to infringe on interactants' sense of sociality rights or challenge their interactional goals. Contra Brown and Levinson (1987), face threats relate to both individuals' perceptions of their personal qualities and their social affiliations and identities. Sociality rights relate to how individuals perceive social entitlements related to equity (cost-benefit; autonomy-imposition) and association (interactional involvement-detachment; affective involvement-detachment). Interactional goals relate to potential clashes in when and how individuals orient towards task or relationship in their interactions, as well as when individuals seek to prioritize different tasks or different relational characteristics. In terms of looking at the 'quality' of relationships, rapport management theory (e.g. Spencer-Oatey 2008) highlights two subtly distinctive dimensions: *smoothness-turbulence* and *warmth-antagonism*. These dimensions of rapport are not to be understood as dichotomies but rather as continua, as all relationships experience smoothness, turbulence, warmth and antagonism to varying degrees at different times. Considering relational smoothness-turbulence alone would clearly be insufficient, as one could envisage communicative encounters and relationships that show no overt signs of problems but nevertheless involve one or more parties feeling powerless to resist manipulation or oppressive conditions imposed by the other. It is useful, therefore, that the definition of rapport above incorporates a focus on warmth-antagonism which helps capture situations in which one party is perceived to be acting in a hostile or otherwise detrimental way towards the other. This is illustrated in Holmes's chapter in this volume, which applies rapport management theory to the analysis of microaggressions in workplace interaction.

Recently, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) have argued that the potential for relations to be enhanced or harmed is largely dependent on the evaluative judgements that are generated when (communicative) behaviours breach an individual's normalcy threshold (see also Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019). That is, when behaviours challenge individuals' assumptions about appropriate behaviour shaped by their cultural experiences, there is greater likelihood that evaluations of behaviours will be converted into negative interpersonal evaluations of individuals or even entire cultural groups. This does not mean that all behaviour that deviates from expectations will necessarily be viewed negatively but that it is likely to initiate an evaluation process in which the relevant behaviour and the individual involved are subject to evaluation. As discussed in Wang and McConachy's respective chapters in this volume, this perspective on evaluation connects linguistic theories of context and politeness with work on norms, values and moral reasoning in social psychology and moral psychology.

One crucial issue in Spencer-Oatey's work is how culture influences the bases of rapport. Spencer-Oatey's approach to culture has emphasized the coexistence of both regularity and variation in terms of the norms, values and communicative patterns that are salient within social groups. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021: 5) explain that '[s]ocial group memberships and socialization lead to cultural identities and cultural patterning, which in turn influence or frame the bases on which participants make evaluative judgments of other individuals and their behavior'. Thus, the position here is not that all individuals from the same (national) cultural background will necessarily have exactly the same contextual expectations and notions of normative behaviour but that the interpretative strategies brought to bear on situations will inevitably be informed by broad frameworks of meaning (referred to as 'cultural patterning' by Spencer-Oatey and Kádár) derived from socialization as a cultural being. Many of the chapters in this book also align with the position that the influence of culture on intercultural interaction is highly dependent on the context of communication, the social identities that are perceived to be relevant and how individuals themselves position themselves vis-à-vis the other as cultural beings. This underscores the necessity of understanding how cultural norms and perceptions of social and cultural identities (including linguistic and interactional norms) are negotiated both in the micro context of interpersonal interaction and in the macro sociocultural context. As will be explained further, Parts I and II address these respective foci.

## *Aims and organization of the volume*

Mirroring Helen Spencer-Oatey's multidisciplinary intercultural research and her commitment to intercultural education, this volume aims to provide researchers, educational practitioners and advanced students in the fields of intercultural communication and intercultural education with insights into the dynamic and negotiated nature of intercultural relations informed by current theoretical perspectives and empirical research in linguistics, psychology and intercultural education.

Chapters in Part I, 'Linguistic and Interactional Insights into Intercultural Relations', represent recent perspectives on intercultural relations within sociolinguistics, cross-cultural pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics. Over the last ten years, there has been a surge of interest in these fields concerning the role that language plays in the negotiation of interpersonal and intercultural relationships, particularly in terms of how and why individuals perceive linguistic actions as (im)polite, (in)appropriate and so on (e.g. Culpeper, Haugh and Kádár 2017; Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2019). Chapters in this part address different ways in which intercultural relations are established, negotiated or threatened through the use of linguistic patterns and interactional behaviours anchored in assumptions about social relationships and contextual expectations. All chapters demonstrate the central role of contextual expectations in how linguistic acts are perceived and explore the implications of potential mismatches in expectations for the evaluation of others and their effective participation in the workplace, university and broader societal contexts. These chapters also highlight the close interplay between linguistic interaction and social perceptions both in the sense that linguistic choices reflect how social affiliations are perceived and in the sense that linguistic choices themselves have a significant impact on how individuals come to be positioned with respect to individual and group identities in the course of interaction. Each chapter concludes with implications that can inform the work of those who seek to support intercultural relations and social integration in different contexts.

Chapter 1, by Michael Haugh and Wei-Lin Melody Chang, looks at the phenomenon of '(dis)agreeability' in initial interactions between local Australian students and Taiwanese international students at a university in Australia. While there has been much research on speech acts and interactional routines in the field of pragmatics, it has been only relatively recently that attention has turned towards initial intercultural interactions. In this chapter, the authors look at the expression of disagreement in relation to prior assessments of situations or persons within initial interactions, noting apparent divergence in interactional strategies between the two nationality groups. The analysis shows that within their dataset, Australian students tended to back down from their initial assessments when these were followed by disagreement from the interlocutor, whereas Taiwanese participants did not. The authors argue that these patterns reflect different orientations towards the need for agreeability in getting acquainted. The chapter contributes to the relative lack of research on the linguistic and interactional processes by which new interpersonal relationships are established in internationalized educational environments and how initial interactions in particular function as a gateway to relationship formation and social integration.

Connecting with Spencer-Oatey's notion of a 'rapport-challenge orientation', Chapter 2, authored by Janet Holmes, applies rapport management theory to the analysis of microaggression in the New Zealand workplace. The concept of microaggression has attracted increasing attention in critical approaches to intercultural relations. In this chapter, Holmes argues that the analysis of microaggressions has the potential to expose taken-for-granted presuppositions about normative behaviour and how majority group members can (inadvertently) position individuals from minority backgrounds as deficient with respect to hegemonic cultural and gender norms (the culture order and the gender order). Utilizing an interactional sociolinguistics approach within a social constructionist framework, the chapter analyses a number of extracts drawn from the Language in the Workplace Project corpus, particularly examining instances of 'othering' humour and their relevance to the notion of 'belonging'. Holmes argues that rapport management theory offers valuable insights into the potential effects of microaggression on individuals in the workplace, particularly in terms of how comments from co-workers and superiors can threaten migrant workers' quality face and social identity face, thereby making it more difficult for them to establish themselves as competent workers in a new society. The chapter concludes with consideration of implications for employers, colleagues and those supporting new migrants.

Chapter 3, by Carolin Debray, addresses the importance and difficulty of negotiating common ground in establishing rapport in work relations by examining interactions and relationships of a multinational student team completing an MBA from an ethnographic and linguistic perspective. Although the topic of common ground has been well researched in (cognitive) pragmatics from the viewpoint of how individuals create grounds for mutual understanding, the focus here is on the affiliative side of common ground. This chapter looks at interactions within the team where narratives of belonging and common ground became salient. It shows that the positioning of the group as a 'diverse' one actually worked against the deepening of relations, as it led team members to assume lack of common ground. This manifested in different ways during team meeting discussions. Common ground was mostly negotiated and enacted around their shared work but only rarely around any aspect of their lives, interests and experiences beyond their immediate context, thus limiting the amount of additional common ground constructed in the team and their sense of having something in common. Even more, the successful negotiation of emergent common ground in interactions (Kecskes 2014) did not lead to an increased perception of common ground more broadly. The chapter argues that institutional framings of diversity and the common discourse of 'culture-as-difference' can make individuals blind to the commonalities that they share and therefore constitute a barrier to intercultural relations.

In Chapter 4, Jiayi Wang looks at the management of intercultural relations from the viewpoint of email communications between students and staff in a British university context. Following on from previous research which has suggested that university staff can find student request emails to be impolite, this chapter examines how Chinese students build interpersonal relationships with professors through email. It reports on a study which utilized Spencer-Oatey's rapport management and evaluation framework to compare Chinese students' request emails with those of British students collected over a year and analysed the email writers' reflections as well as the ways that British and Chinese respondents' evaluated 345 authentic emails in focus group interviews. The results suggest some differences in rapport-building strategies between the two groups and contrasting perceptions of intercultural rapport and rapport-building strategies. Specifically, when making requests to academic staff, Chinese students appeared to make more frequent use of small talk, greetings and formal address terms than the British students. This was linked to the view that building rapport was an important interactional goal and that longer emails are more polite than shorter emails. However, the lengthiness of emails tended to be perceived in negative terms by British respondents, who also commented that use of formal address terms was awkward and unnecessary. This chapter ends with a call for academic staff members and faculty administrators to be aware that seemingly unconventional email strategies may be international students' best attempts to build positive rapport rather than indicating a lack of English-language proficiency or cultural fluency.

Chapters in Part II, 'Examining Key Psychological Concepts in Intercultural Relations', present recent theoretical perspectives in social psychology and cross-cultural psychology that challenge long-standing assumptions about key elements in intercultural relations, including stereotypes, national values and processes of acculturation. These chapters consider psychological processes within a sociocultural and relational perspective and thus offer insights into the psychological dynamics that influence how individuals form and maintain meaningful relational connections. Western academic psychology has traditionally sought explanations of social behaviour in terms of individual psychology rather than culture. It has examined consistency of behaviour across different contexts

– typically using experimental methods – in its focus on internal determinants of behaviour, such as personality. Inconsistency across contexts has tended to be problematic for such an approach. However, the contributors in this section – all psychologists – have sought to examine the different ways in which culture impacts on aspects of cognition and behaviour. Thus, for example, a person's actions in a particular situation can be influenced by their learnt expectations of appropriate behaviour in terms of the norms of their culture. These cultural expectations can lead to stereotypical views of other cultures (Chapter 5), the essentialization of other cultures (Chapter 6) or the assumption that acculturation primarily concerns the minority group (Chapter 7). This cultural approach to psychology resonates with Spencer-Oatey's work on intercultural communication, which has demonstrated the importance of cultural factors, such as norms and moral values, in the way in which people make sense of the behaviour of others in intercultural contexts (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019).

In Chapter 5, Perry Hinton challenges the traditional view of stereotypes as cognitive errors and argues that stereotypes emerge from the social structure of a society, with members of a culture learning the generalizations related to the social position and normative behaviour of the different social groups within it. He argues that to explain the formation (and use of) a stereotype we need to ask the following question: Why do the members of one group employ this generalization (stereotype) about the members of another group? Hinton's model proposes that a stereotype is a cultural representation that arises from the culture of the group of people who use it and is employed for an ideological purpose. When people from one cultural group encounter people from another culture, with different norms and values, they may interpret them in stereotypical terms. In Hinton's model this is not due to mental error but is an interpretation of another culture through the lens of one's own cultural expectations and belief systems. Thus, in intercultural encounters, differences in norms and values can lead to both the misunderstanding and negative stereotyping of members of another culture. Consequently, in order to overcome these issues, when negotiating intercultural encounters, it is important to be aware of the cultural expectations of the other culture, in terms of their norms and stereotypes, to understand their framework of interpretation of the encounter. At the same time, it is important not to impose one's own cultural expectations of normative behaviour (stereotypes) on to members of another culture, with different norms and expectations.

In Chapter 6, Ron Fischer examines, in a number of studies, the perception of differences in values of different cultures by people in New Zealand. Previous research has shown that people tend to overestimate the differences in values between cultures – with behavioural differences between cultures often attributed to underlying value differences. This can lead to an essentializing of cultural differences that ignores the cultural – that is normative – influences on behaviour, in a focus on psychological qualities (values). Fischer's research examines the overestimation of cultural values by his participants, who were asked to estimate the differences in values between people of different countries on fifteen key values, shown to be relevant in previous studies. In support of his hypothesis, the participants overestimated the differences in values compared to a large-scale survey of cultural values. However, there was a tendency for the overestimation to be lower for participants with greater intercultural experience, indicating a more accurate perception of differences in values. Fischer argues that developing essentialist beliefs about other cultures reduces uncertainty and provides expectations about the members of those cultures. In support of this view, an experimental manipulation evoking uncertainty did result in greater levels of cultural essentialism compared to a control condition. In a final study examining participants' interpretation of a number of intercultural scenarios, the uncertainty hypothesis was supported by behaviour being interpreted in terms of the culture of the actor. Fischer suggests that the overestimation of differences in cultural values may result from cultural essentialism, as an uncertainty reduction mechanism, in interpreting behaviour in intercultural contexts.

Chapter 7, by Katharina Lefringhausen, challenges dominant trends in acculturation research by arguing for the importance of recognizing a two-way acculturation process. The traditional view of the acculturation processes has focused exclusively on the members of a minority group adapting to the majority group. For example, previous research has argued that an integration strategy, of adopting aspects of the majority culture while maintaining one's own cultural heritage, does result in successful acculturation for minority group members in a society where cultural diversity is supported (Berry 2017). Lefringhausen argues that this focus has created an imbalance in intercultural education. Integration by minority group members has been encouraged by professionals and educators, with a more generalized promotion of tolerance and openness to majority group members, to produce intercultural competence. This approach is challenged by Lefringhausen, who argues for a shift in focus towards a two-way acculturation process. Based on her globalization-based proximal-acculturation approach, Lefringhausen critiques the traditional view and presents her own research findings that demonstrate – in the examination of acculturation as a two-way process – that majority group members can benefit (in terms of intercultural relations) by adopting aspects of the minority culture. However, and crucially, Lefringhausen introduces power relations into intercultural adaptation, a factor that is often ignored in studies of acculturation. Finally, by employing her two-way acculturation model, she examines different acculturation strategies, and their consequences, which provides a clear direction for intercultural educators.

Part III of this volume, 'Learning to Negotiate Intercultural Relations in a Pedagogic Context', takes inspiration from Spencer-Oatey's commitment to designing and implementing innovative intercultural training and consultancy for business and academia built upon relevant research insights from a wide range of areas including but not limited to linguistic pragmatics, social psychology, intercultural business communication, intercultural management studies and internationalization of higher education. Chapters in this part consider different approaches to integrating linguistic and relational insights into the theory and practice of intercultural education, specifically in contexts such as intercultural training and language education so as to enhance learners' capacity for reflecting on and evaluating intercultural encounters. The chapters are united in their consideration of the role of linguistic action in intercultural relationships and how educators can meaningfully engage learners in exploration of the contextual expectations surrounding language use and how these shape processes of meaning-making and interpersonal evaluation.

In Chapter 8, Sophie Reissner-Roubicek considers how intercultural training course design and intercultural training materials can incorporate insights from linguistic-pragmatic studies that address core linguistic and interactional dimensions of relating across cultures. While there has been much interest in promoting effective teamwork in business and education, attempts to understand the role of culture in teamwork dynamics have tended to rely on perception studies involving international team members rather than to linguistic-pragmatic studies. This chapter first presents an up-to-date review of research that helps delineate the links between small talk, turn-taking, rapport and trust to explain how these concepts are intertwined in intercultural relations. In line with calls for non-essentialist approaches to intercultural training design and implementation, the chapter then discusses a number of intercultural training activities which take an inductive approach to dismantling assumptions about cultural differences. The activities are geared towards giving training participants relevant tools and concepts to unpack the interactional challenges of intercultural teamworking and, importantly, promote understanding of the reciprocal impact of their own and others' communication.

Chapter 9, authored by Willis Edmondson, Juliane House and Dániel Kádár, focuses on culturally variable linguistic expressions called ritual frame indicating expressions (RFIEs) that can give rise to intercultural misunderstandings and also be difficult for language learners to grapple with. RFIEs tend to have a conventionalized relationship with common speech acts such as requesting or apologizing and can take the form of seemingly simple words such as 'please' or 'sorry'. Despite their seeming simplicity, the authors argue that the interpretation and use of RFIEs depend on the ability to recognize the 'standard situations' associated with their use, which can differ across linguacultures. Drawing on their own corpus-based research, the authors identify a number of important differences in RFIEs used to Request and Apologize between English and Chinese. They then introduce two procedures through which researchers and teachers can identify difficulties that certain groups of learners of English may face due to cross-linguistic differences in RFIEs. The authors conclude by underscoring the importance of more classroom-based research, which investigates learners' awareness of RFIEs and the need for more pedagogical development around these subtle linguistic features which can help learners build and maintain intercultural relations.

The final chapter, authored by Troy McConachy, takes as its starting point the need for a stronger emphasis on learners' own subjective evaluations of linguistic behaviours in the theory and practice of pragmatics teaching and intercultural education more broadly. The author argues that both of these fields have tended to adopt a deficit perspective on intercultural relations in which deviation from the norms of particular communities of speakers is likely to bring about misunderstandings and other negative relational outcomes. This gives rise to forms of education and training, which overemphasize static linguistic/pragmatic norms and taxonomies of cultural difference. The author calls for a shift in the 'evaluative lens' in these fields which entails a shift away from focusing on 'behaviours' as the cause of problems and instead involves a focus on how individuals react at an emotional level to behaviours which contravene their expectations. In practical terms, this means moving away from the view that other people 'cause' us to have particular reactions and instead means zooming in on the nature of our reactions to others so that these can be mindfully explored. The chapter discusses work on interpersonal evaluation in the field of pragmatics and moral psychology, paying particular attention to Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) evaluation model. It then presents some potential pedagogical applications of this model which could be used in language and intercultural education to develop learners' awareness of the role of moral emotions in the negative assessment of interpersonal behaviours.

The volume finishes with personal reflections by Vladimir Žegarac and Peter Franklin, who have both collaborated with Helen Spencer-Oatey over many years.

As a whole, the chapters in this volume present a dynamic view of intercultural relations which emphasizes the centrality of the interactive negotiation of meaning and the psychological dynamics which shape perceptions of others. They challenge intercultural researchers and educators to move beyond taxonomies of cultural difference to recognize the context-sensitivity of behaviour and how culturally shaped perceptions of self and other are instrumental in how relationships are established, maintained and threatened. Such a view resonates strongly with Helen Spencer-Oatey's own approach to intercultural research and her approach to promoting intercultural understanding throughout her career.

## *References*

Berry, John W. (2017), 'Theories and Models of Acculturation', in Seth J. Schwartz and Jennifer Unger (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Acculturation and Health*, 15–28, Oxford University Press.

Brown, Steven and Levinson, Penelope (1987), *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper, Jonathan, Haugh, Michael and Kádár, Daniel Z (eds) (2017), *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)politeness*, Palgrave.

Dervin, Fred and Liddicoat, Anthony J. (2013), *Linguistics for Intercultural Education*. John Benjamins.

Kecskes, Istvan (2014), *Intercultural Pragmatics*, Oxford University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (1992), *Cross-Cultural Politeness: British and Chinese Conceptions of the Tutor-Student Relationship*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (1993), 'Conceptions of Social Relations and Pragmatics Research', *Journal of Pragmatics* 20(1): 27–47.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (1996), 'Reconsidering Power and Distance', *Journal of Pragmatics* 26(1): 1–24.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2000), 'Rapport Management: A Framework for Analysis', in Helen Spencer-Oatey (ed.), *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport Through Talk*, 11–46. Continuum.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2008), 'Face, Impoliteness and Rapport', in Helen Spencer-Oatey (ed.), *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness*. Continuum.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Franklin, Peter (2009), *Intercultural Interaction: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Intercultural Communication*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Daniel Z (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (2003), 'Managing Rapport in Intercultural Business Interactions', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 24(1): 33–46.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (2019), 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Evaluation Process: Culture, Norms, and the Moral Order', *Journal of Pragmatics* 151: 141–54.

# Part I

## Linguistic and interactional insights into intercultural relations

## Chapter 1

# (DIS)AGREEABILITY IN INTERCULTURAL FIRST CONVERSATIONS AMONG AUSTRALIAN AND TAIWANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Michael Haugh and Wei-Lin Melody Chang

### *Introduction*

The rapid increase in the number of students studying abroad over the past decade is often framed as an opportunity to internationalize the educational experiences of local – otherwise known as home or domestic – students. However, studies of interactions between local and international students, both inside and outside formal classes, indicate that the benefits of internationalization are yet to be fully realized (Spencer-Oatey and Dauber 2019a, b). Research indicates that local and international students do not appear to mix together easily (Dunne 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Dauber 2017; Wright and Schartner 2013), and this tendency does not appear to significantly improve over time (Groeppel-Klein, Germelmann and Glaum 2010; Rienties and Nolan 2014). The perceived barriers to more free-flowing interaction between local and international students are usually traced to difficulties with language and communication (on the part of international students), and to a lack of common background or interests (between local and international students) (Gareis 2012; Sovic 2009).

Overcoming such barriers is not, however, straightforward. International students need to not only navigate the challenges of familiarizing themselves with local norms of interaction both inside and outside the classroom (Arkoudis et al. 2013; Haugh 2016), but at the same time negotiate complex hybrid identities for themselves vis-à-vis other (local and international) students, staff in universities, and members of the local community more broadly (Haugh 2008; Marginson 2014). A clear understanding of these dynamics is hampered, in turn, by the fact that there is very little research, as Spencer-Oatey (2018) points out, which focuses on social integration itself in intercultural settings, that is, the 'process through which individuals develop and increasingly exercise capacities for interpersonal connectedness and citizenship' (p. 302). This is arguably due, in part, to the way in which research on intercultural communication has tended to focus on misunderstanding, offence and conflict, and largely neglected the processes by which interpersonal and professional relationships are initiated and established in intercultural settings (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2020).

Studies of social integration in intercultural settings which have been undertaken demonstrate that initial interactions act as a key gateway, and thus a potential barrier, to the subsequent development of intercultural relationships (Spencer-Oatey and Xing 1998, 2019; Li, Zhu and Li 2001; Zhu 2011). Greetings, for instance, while appearing at first glance to involve simple everyday routines, have been highlighted as posing significant challenges for international students (Spencer-Oatey 2018). Notably, in Spencer-Oatey's (2018) study, international students also reported they had difficulties continuing these initial conversations with local students.

Studies of initial interactions reveal that they involve assemblages of recurrent sequential practices (Haugh and Carbaugh 2015; Svennevig 1999). However, there have been few studies that examine them in intercultural settings (Haugh and Sinkeviciute 2021). Heeding Spencer-Oatey's (2011, 2013) call for a greater focus on relational dimensions of intercultural communication, and the various norms that underpin those interactions (Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019), in the current study we report on an analysis of initial interactions (in English) between Australian (local) students and Taiwanese (international) students. We focus, in particular, on instances in which participants disagree with prior assessments (i.e. valenced evaluations of other people, actions, situations or events). This focus on disagreement is motivated by prior studies of initial interactions among (Australian and British) speakers of English that have found participants orient to a preference for agreeability in such settings (Flint, Haugh and Merrison 2019; Haugh 2015). A focus on disagreements in first conversations between Australian and Taiwanese students thus enables us to explore the role of the claimed preference for agreeability in intercultural settings.

We begin, in the following section, with a brief overview of research to date on first conversations in intercultural settings and the role of sociopragmatic norms in those initial encounters. We then introduce our data and method, in the third section, before reporting, in the next section, on our analysis of how the Australian and Taiwanese participants respond to disagreements with prior assessments in first conversations. In the fifth section, we discuss the implications of our study for the analysis of intercultural encounters. We conclude by considering the implications of our analysis for the study of social integration in international education more broadly.

## *Intercultural first conversations and sociopragmatic norms*

Initial interactions, which involve talking with people we have not previously met before, occur in various different settings. These range from fleeting encounters with strangers in public settings, to brief introductions in social or professional settings, through to more extended first conversations between previously unacquainted persons. While there have been a limited number of studies of introductions in fleeting first encounters in professional and social settings (Kretzenbacher et al. 2020; Rehbein and Fienemann 2004), studies of initial interactions in intercultural settings have largely focused to date on analysing more extended focused encounters between two or more previously unacquainted participants, or what are also known as first conversations (Svennevig 2014).[1]

Studies of intercultural first conversations have examined openings (Haugh 2022; Haugh and Chang 2022; Jenks 2009; Kecskes 2019), self-disclosures (Strambi and Tudini 2020), topic talk (Nao 2015) and laughter (Bushnell 2020), in L1–L2 and L2–L2 interactions in English, Japanese and Italian, across a range of different modalities, including face-to-face and video-mediated interactions, as well as text-based settings. A key finding across these studies is that participants draw from recurrent sets of practices for opening and progressing first conversations, and hold other participants accountable for (perceived) deviations from the expected formats and sequential patterns that constitute these practices (Haugh 2022).

In recent work, for instance, Kecskes (2019) examines the openings of intercultural first conversations between speakers of English as a lingua franca. He argues that while participants in intracultural first encounters draw on 'prefabricated routines that are recalled automatically, subconsciously in the given frame' (Kecskes 2019: 118–19), in intercultural first conversations, openings are 'co-constructed by the interlocutors based on their prior experience with their own L1 culture, limited experience with the target language and culture (any inner circle varieties of English) and the assessment of the actual situational context' (p. 114). In other words, while there are recurrent practices which participants can draw on in opening and progressing first conversations, in intercultural settings participants also sometimes face marked choices – conscious, subconscious or otherwise – about whether they orient to L1 or L2 norms, or in some cases localized norms that are co-constructed on the fly by those participants (Haugh and Chang 2022; Jenks 2009; Kecskes 2019). Notably, whether these choices are implicitly negotiated (Haugh and Chang 2022) or explicitly contested by those participants (Jenks 2009), they invariably draw on (perceived) norms of interaction. The question in the case of intercultural interaction, then, is whose norms of interaction are we talking about?

The role of norms in intercultural interactions has long been debated, but in recent years the focus has shifted from claims about broad cultural norms to a more nuanced examination of how cultural norms are realized across different contexts (Lefringhausen, Spencer-Oatey and Debray 2019; Spencer-Oatey, Lefringhausen and Debray 2019; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2020). These activity- or situation-specific cultural norms have generally been studied through the lens of sociopragmatic norms (McConachy 2019; McConachy and Spencer-Oatey 2021). While a distinction between what people think should be done (prescriptive or injunctive norms) and what is typically done (descriptive or empirical norms) has long been drawn across a range of disciplines (e.g. Burgoon and Ebesu Hubbard 2005; Cialdini, Reno and Kallgren 1990; Deutsch and Gerard 1955), what distinguishes sociopragmatic norms is that they explicitly link the two. As Culpeper and Haugh (2021) suggest, 'sociopragmatic norms of language use are grounded in the presumption that what is usually or typically done is what should be regarded as good or proper' (p. 326). In other words, sociopragmatic norms link situationally specific ways of behaving with ways of thinking about and evaluating that conduct (Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019).

First conversations are arguably a particularly fruitful site for examining sociopragmatic norms, as they are accomplished in recognizably recurrent ways, and participants orient to deviations from these practices or routines as accountable matters (Haugh 2022). In addition, the entire record of interaction between the parties involved in first conversations is on-record, and thus open to inspection by analysts (Haugh and Carbaugh 2015), in contrast to other types of interaction in which prior relational history of participants can remain somewhat opaque.

Prior research in conversation analysis (CA) and sociopragmatics on first conversations in intracultural settings, for instance, has found that participants recurrently orient to a preference for 'comity' (Schneider 1988) or 'agreeability' in those initial interactions (Flint, Haugh and Merrison 2019; Haugh 2015).[2] Agreeability is accomplished not simply through agreement and positive evaluations of others (Schneider 1988), but also through seeking safe topics (Svennevig 1999), deploying pre-topical sequences to establish category memberships of their co-participants before offering any negative evaluations of any categories (Maynard and Zimmerman 1984), treating the taking of offence as a delicate social action (Haugh 2015), and avoiding or mitigating potential or emergent disagreements by subsequently accomplishing (at least partial) agreement on some aspect of a prior disagreeable via extended justificatory accounts (Flint, Haugh and Merrison 2019).

As Pomerantz and Heritage (2013) note, however, preference principles are both culturally and situationally specific. The question, then, is whether the observed preference for agreeability in initial interactions among speakers of English can be observed in intercultural first conversations as well. In the remainder of this chapter, we report on a case study examining the accomplishment of (dis) agreeability in first conversations between Australian speakers of English and Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin Chinese.

## *Data and method*

The primary data set examined in this study consists of recordings of twelve first conversations between Australian and Taiwanese undergraduate students enrolled at an Australian university who had not previously met.[3] The students were recruited from a range of degree programmes through a snowball sampling technique, with Taiwanese (international) students enrolled in courses in International English and Australian (local) students enrolled in courses in Chinese, invited to recruit further participants by the first and second author, respectively. All of the participants consented to taking part in the research and having their conversations recorded. The participants were given a broad brief that the study was about communication, and they were not given any specific instructions beyond being told that they were free to talk about whatever they wished for around fifteen minutes. The actual interactions varied in length from 13 and a half minutes to 18 minutes in length, with a total of 186 minutes of interaction recorded and then transcribed in full (approximately 36,000 words). Seven Australian students (four female; three male) and seven Taiwanese students (three female; four male) between the age of eighteen and twenty-two participated in the interactions, with six of those students participating in more than one first conversation. Eight of the first conversations involved same-gender pairings (three female–female; five male–male), while four involved mixed-gender pairings (i.e. female–male).

The focus of the analysis reported in this chapter is on exploring the extent to which participants in these intercultural first conversations can be observed to be orienting to the preference for agreeability that has been identified in previous studies (Flint, Haugh and Merrison 2019; Haugh 2015; Schneider 1988). We thus began by first identifying instances of assessments (Pomerantz 1984) in the data set, that is, instances in which participants explicitly evaluated persons, objects, states of affairs or situations on some kind of valenced scale (e.g. good–bad, like–hate, easy–difficult, interesting–boring). In prior conversation-analytic studies of assessments in English, it has been claimed assessments prefer agreement and that disagreement is dispreferred (Pomerantz 1984). However, in recent work on interactions among Chinese speakers of English (Zhu 2014a) and Mandarin (Zhu 2014b), it has been suggested that strong disagreements are not in fact dispreferred.[4] We were thus particularly interested to find cases in these first conversations in which participants disagreed or disaffiliated with a prior assessment.

In the following example, for instance, Joshua (an Australian local student) is describing the courses he studies to Peter (a Taiwanese international student).[5]

(1) AusTaiw011: 1:08

J: business statistics which I- which is<br>
-> °**really hard**° hhhe<br>
(0.6)<br>
P: -> **it's alright** Hhhhe

In this excerpt, we can observe that when Joshua describes business statistics as 'really hard' (line 2), Peter disagrees by claiming, 'it's alright' (line 4).

This example of disagreement with a prior assessment appears, at first glance, to deviate from the preference for agreeability. Our initial noticing when we more closely examined such examples, however, was not that Australian or Taiwanese participants are more (or less) likely to disagree with prior assessments, but rather that they appear to respond differently to such instances of disaffiliation. Building on an interactional pragmatics approach (Arundale 2010; Haugh 2012), which places emphasis on analysing pragmatic phenomena in their sequential context, we therefore assembled a collection of assessments which were followed by disagreeing or disaffiliative assessments. We then carefully examined what subsequently happened following those disagreements. In other words, our analytical focus here is on carefully examining how Australian and Taiwanese participants *respond* to disagreements with assessments in first conversations.

### *Disaffiliative responses to assessments in intercultural first conversations*

Assessments have been observed (in English) to invite agreement from co-participants, and disagreements with prior assessments are therefore treated as dispreferred (Pomerantz 1984; Stivers and Rossano 2010). How participants respond to instances in which disagreements do arise, then, is arguably relationally sensitive. In this section, we discuss instances in which participants disagree with a prior assessment by their co-participant, focusing, in particular, on the subsequent responses of both participants to that (potentially) disaffiliative moment.

One distinct sequential pattern that emerged in the course of our analysis was that Australian participants invariably back down from their original first assessment in subsequent talk when their Taiwanese co-participants disagree or disaffiliate with their initial assessment. This recurrently unfolds over the course of three actions:

1. Assessment: a valenced evaluation of a person/party, object or situation
2. Disagreement: a counter-assessment or disaffiliative response to that initial assessment
3. Backdown: downgrading of, or disaffiliation from, that initial assessment

In the following excerpt, for instance, which is a continuation of the example we saw in the previous section, Joshua (an Australian student) is telling Peter (a Taiwanese student) about the courses he is studying, following a question from Peter about Joshua's major. At the point the excerpt begins, Joshua is listing the final two subjects he is taking that semester (lines 1–2). He then adds that the last subject he has mentioned, business statistics, is something that he finds 'really hard' (line 3), followed by a laugh particle, which frames this assessment as troubles-talk incipient (Jefferson 1984).

(2) AusTaiw011: 1:08

```
J:     °yeah (.) international business° that
       and also business statistics which I- which is
 ->    °really hard° hhhe
       (0.6)
P: ->  it's alright Hhhhe=
```

```
06   J: -> =yea:h I mean (.) it's- it's- if you know it
07          then you know it (.) there's no there's [n:o]
08   P:     [yea]h
09   J:     ifs or buts about it you just have to know the stuff
10          (1.5)
11   P:     you just gotta do tutorial work=
12   J:     =yeah and quizzes and stuff=
13   P:     =yeah
14          (2.1)
15   P: -> it's not hard if you go to classes
16   J: -> =true (.) very true.
```

However, rather than treating this assessment as troubles-talk implicative through a display of empathy (Jefferson 1988), Peter disagrees, in line 5, with a counter-assessment that business statistics is 'alright', followed by a breathy laugh particle that orients to the potential delicacy of this disagreement (Shaw, Hepburn and Potter 2013).

Joshua initially responds, in line 6, with agreement (Sacks 1987), followed by a generalized acknowledgement that 'you just have to know the stuff' (lines 6–9) in pursuit of affiliation with Peter. Notably, this acknowledgement by Joshua is 'I-mean'-prefaced, thereby casting it as a clarification of his prior assessment (Maynard 2013). In this way, then, Joshua both steps back from his prior assessment and proffers an opportunity for agreement. Peter subsequently takes up this opportunity through an advice-implicative assertion that one just has to do the 'tutorial work' (line 11), which occasions joint agreement on the part of both about the need to do the work set in tutorials (lines 12–13). Yet despite reaching joint agreement, Peter subsequently reiterates his disagreement with Joshua's prior assessment of business statistics by claiming 'it's not hard' (line 15). Joshua responds with strong agreement (line 16), thereby backing down from his prior claim (line 3) that it is 'really hard'.

In sum, while Joshua initially expresses a negative assessment of business statistics as 'really hard' (move 1), following disagreement with his stance by Peter (move 2), he subsequently backs down from his initial negative assessment (move 3) and by the end of the sequence explicitly agrees with Peter's counter-assessment that 'it's not hard'. We can see here, then, that while the Australian student, Joshua, is pursuing agreement with his co-participant by backing down from his own prior assessment, Peter, the Taiwanese student, reiterates his disagreement with Joshua's initial assessment and does not appear to be stepping back from that initial disagreement.

A similar pattern is also evident in the following excerpt from a first conversation between Mary (an Australian student) and Kevin (a Taiwanese student), although this time the three key actions in question are spread out over a longer sequence of talk. The excerpt begins at the point Mary is telling Kevin what subjects she is taking in her business degree that semester (lines 1–3). She then adds that she doesn't like the last subject she has mentioned, namely, economics (line 5). Notably, this assessment is prefaced with a 'disgust marker' (Wiggins 2013).

(3) AusTaiw06: 5:51

```
01  M:        ma:rketing
02  K:        uh huh.
03  M:        a::nd (2.1) economics
04  K:        o[::h]
05  M:   ->    [eu:]:gh I don't ↓li:ke economics.
06  K:        ↑why
05  M:        ↑a:h .h just it's all new to me like everything
06            and [so] it's just a very steep learning curve
07  K:            [mm]
08  M:        that's all.
09  K:        °mm°
10  M:        .hh I'm sure [I'll get it]
11  K:                     [yes I- diff]eren-
12  K:        different people have different mi:nd
13  M:        [ye:ah]
14  K:   ->   [li:ke] (.) for me I like (.) economic
15            more than accounting? (.) cos economic for me
16            is like- like flexible?
17  M:        [yeah]
18  K:        [and ] like (.) more (0.4) you feel like you're
19            like in your life- (.) surround your (.) your life
20            you like when you live here is [like] so many peop-
21  M:                                       [yeah]
22  K:        so: many things like about economic (0.3) .h yeah
23  M:   ->   yeah I don't um (.) I do find it interesting.
24            I'm just having a little bit of trouble with it.
25  K:        hahaha[haha]
26  M:              [that]'s a(h)ll I'm I'm trying
```

Kevin responds to this negative assessment of economics by Mary with a *why*-interrogative (line 6). As assessments invite agreement (Pomerantz 1984), soliciting an account as to why Mary doesn't like economics in this sequential position implies a (mildly) challenging stance, as well projecting incipient disagreement with that stance (Bolden and Robinson 2011). Following Mary's account (lines 5–10), Kevin responds with a generalized claim that 'different people have different mind[s]' (lines 11–12), before going to proffer a disaffiliative counter-assessment that he likes economics (line 14). He then goes on to volunteer an account of why he likes economics (lines 15–22). Notably, Mary then backs down from her prior assessment (i.e. that she doesn't like economics) with a positive assessment of it as 'interesting' (line 23) and an account for her first assessment, namely she is having 'trouble with it' (line 24).

In sum, while Mary initially expresses a strong negative assessment of economics (move 1), following disagreement with that stance by Kevin (move 2), she subsequently downgrades her initial negative assessment through a positive assessment of the subject in question (move 3). Once again, we can see the Australian student here, Mary, is pursuing agreement with her co-participant by disaffiliating with her own prior assessment.

In the next example, the Australian student's initial resistance to disagreement with her first assessment by the Taiwanese student subsequently gives way to agreement. In this excerpt, Katherine (an Australian student), who has learned both Mandarin Chinese and Japanese, and Amy (a Taiwanese student), who speaks Mandarin Chinese and has also learned Japanese, have been talking about going to Japan. Following Amy's assessment that it's a really interesting culture (line 1), Katherine appears to further this positive orientation to Japan by assessing Japanese as easier (to learn) than Mandarin Chinese (lines 2–3).

(4) AusTaiw012: 1:44

```
01   A:       it's a really interesting [°culture°]
02   K: ->                              [Japanese ] is so
03            much easier than Mandarin¿ heh=
04   A:       =is: it?
05   K:       o(h)h I [th](h)in(h)k [so]
06   A: ->            [ah]          [↑I] think the ↑gramma::r
07            is much difficul' than Mandarin.
08   K:       you reckon=
09   A:       =yeah I recko:n because the grammar is really .hh
10            when it gets to the higher level it's really
11            diff- difficult I think
12   K:       ye[:ah]
13   A:         [yea]h but .hh Mandarin difficult part is
14            the <character>
15   K:       o(h)h [y(h)es go(h)d y](h)es [he yeah he he]
16   A:             [I I thin(h)k so]      [he yeah yeah ]
17            I but like for Japanese you have three <writings:>
19            (.) three different types of #writing# [ so ]
20   K:                                              [yeah]
21   A:       both Japanese <#and#> foreign, #languages# <and> (.)
22   A:       Chinese characters: so you [some]times you have to
23   K:                                  [yeah]
24   A:       mix them together?
25   K:       <yeah?>
26   A:       °yeah° but when you goes to the gramma::r °it's
27            really difficult°
28   K: ->    yeah heh he heh .hhh £as [I'm as] I'm£ finding .hh
29   A:                                [°yeah°]
```

Amy, however, questions that assessment through a confirmation-seeking question that projects disagreement (line 4). Katherine's subsequent confirmation, in line 5, is interspersed with laugh particles, thereby casting her prior assessment as potentially disaffiliative (Greer et al. 2005; Potter and Hepburn 2010).

Amy then goes on to explicitly disagree with Katherine's assessment of Japanese as easier to learn by asserting that Japanese grammar is much more difficult (lines 6–7). Katherine initially mirrors Amy's expression of doubt through a confirmation-seeking question that also projects disagreement (line 8), but Amy responds with emphatic confirmation that does not orient to her counter-assessment as disaffiliative (line 9). Amy then goes on to offer an explanatory account, namely, Japanese grammar is more difficult at higher levels of study (lines 9–11). Katherine (nominally) agrees with this account (line 12), although Amy then goes on to concede that Chinese characters are more difficult to learn (lines 13–14), which occasions emphatic agreement from Katherine in line 15. Notably, this agreement is delivered with both interpolated and turn-final laughter which orients to the learning of these characters as a source of troubles for her (Jefferson 1984), a stance with which Amy affiliates through overlapping agreement and laughter (line 16). Amy then goes on to describe the complexity of the Japanese writing system (lines 17–24), before reiterating her counter-assessment that Japanese grammar is more difficult to learn than Chinese grammar (lines 26–27). This time this counter-assessment occasions emphatic agreement by Katherine (line 28). This agreement is interpolated with laugh particles, thereby once again orienting to the challenges of learning of Japanese as a form of troubles talk.

In sum, while Katherine initially assesses Japanese as easier to learn than Mandarin Chinese (move 1), following disagreement with that stance by Amy (move 2), she subsequently backs down from her initial assessment by agreeing with Amy's claim that Japanese grammar is harder (move 3). Notably, then, while Amy concedes that Chinese characters are difficult to learn, she goes on to claim that the Japanese writing system is also complex (and thus difficult to learn) and subsequently reiterates her disagreeing counter-assessment.

A second distinct sequential pattern that emerged in the course of our analysis is that Taiwanese participants do not back down from first assessments in subsequent talk when their Australian co-participant disagrees or disaffiliates with their initial assessment. This pattern recurrently unfolds over the course of three actions:

1. Assessment: a valenced evaluation of a person/party, object or situation
2. Disagreement: a counter-assessment to, or disaffiliation with, that initial assessment
3. Reassertion of initial assessment

In the following excerpt, for instance, Kevin (a Taiwanese student) tells Joshua (an Australian student) that his friend is also studying international business (line 3), following a question about Joshua's major (line 1). Kevin then offers an assessment of studying that major as being 'pretty hard work', based on what his friend has said about it (line 5).

(5) AusTaiw05: 0:32

```
01   K:       what’s your major anyway
02   J:       I’m doing (.) International Business.
03   K:       ↑o::h oka:y yeah same one as my friend. (.) yeah=
04   J:       =oh yeah?
05   K: ->    he’s doing that and seem- sounds like it’s pretty
06            ha:rd (.) work
07   J: ->    i:t’s (.) ↑yeah it’s (0.2) it’s not so hard as it is-
08            there’s no real (0.2) like imaginations,
09   K:       yeah?
10   J:       °you know°
11            (0.2)
12   K:       o::[h
13   J:          [which is (.) but it’s okay because it’s
14            °what I want to do.°=
15   K:       =yeah lots of theory, that’s what I think=
16   J:       =yeah
17   K:       ye(h)ah °hheh°
18   J:       th[ere’s only one answer] for this=
19   K: ->      [that’s pretty hard   ]         =yeah
```

While Joshua initially starts to respond with ostensible agreement, he then goes on to offer a counter-assessment of it as ‘not so hard’ (line 7). Notably, this disagreement is delayed by a ‘yes’-like preface (Sacks 1987) and is followed, in line 8, by an account (Pomerantz 1984), thereby orienting to this disagreement as dispreferred. Kevin, however, withholds agreement with Joshua’s disagreeing counter-assertion by responding with a continuer (line 9), and then an prosodically elongated change of state marker (‘oh’), in line 12, which receipts this as new information for him (Heritage 1984). Kevin then goes on to claim that international business involves ‘lots of theory’ (line 15) and reiterates his initial assessment that it’s ‘pretty hard’ (line 19).

In sum, Kevin initially assesses international business as ‘pretty hard’ (move 1), and despite James subsequently disagreeing with that assessment (move 2) does not back down and persists in repeating that assessment (move 3). In contrast, then, to the previous pattern we observed among the Australian students in responding to disagreements, there is no backdown by Kevin in response to Joshua’s disagreement with his initial assessment. Instead, the Taiwanese student reiterates his view that it is difficult and does not appear to treat this emergent disagreement as interactionally problematic.

The way in which the Australian and Taiwanese students systematically differ in their responses to disagreements with prior assessments is illustrated in another excerpt from a first conversation between Mary (an Australian student) and Kevin (a Taiwanese student) (cf. example 3). Following a question about what Kevin studies (line 1), Kevin subsequently reciprocates the question (line 4). Upon hearing that Mary studies accounting, he offers a negative assessment of that subject (line 10).

(6) AusTaiw06: 4:36 (Mary and Kevin)

```
01    M:       what do you study?
02    K:       finance.
03    M:       finance.
04    K:       how about you?
05    M:       u:m (.) international business [and] accounting=
06    K:                                      [o:h]
07    K:       =accounting.
08    M:       ye:ah.
09             (0.4)
10    K: ->    I don't like (.) okay (.) maybe for (.) I don't know
11             for accounting just like you have to stay
               the:re a:nd
12    M:       yeah
13    K:       and look at the numbers (.) calculate and put
               in like
14             the credits and things [like] that [no]
15    M: ->                           [m:m ]      [mm] I know a
16             lot of people find it boring I think
17             (.)
18    K: ->    >yeah yeah yeah< for me for me it's bo:ring
19    M:       yeah well that's what most people think (.) I mean,
20             (0.2)
21    K:       ha ha hah
22    M:       that's oka:y.
23    K:       how- how about you you think
24    M: ->    I- I like it
25             (0.2)
26    K:       okay
27    M: ->    I mean li:ke I'm still learning I'm not very far
28             through my degree(.)
29    K:       oh mm m:m mm [so you  ]
30    M:                    [you know] I suppose I could change
31             my mind
32             (.)
33    K:       he he he
34    M:       I haven't like actually committed to the major
35             yet (.) [so]
36    K:               [so] at the first year what (.) subject (.)
37             you (.) take
```

Kevin then goes on to offer an account for his negative assessment (lines 11, 13–14). Notably, Mary avoids disagreeing with Kevin and instead claims that 'a lot of people' think that accounting is 'boring' (lines 15–16). Kevin latches on to this and expresses emphatic agreement with this negative assessment of accounting but reiterates that this is what he thinks, rather than something others generally think (line 18).

The formulation of Mary's subsequent utterances, however, indicates an implicit orientation to troubles in affiliating with Kevin. While she maintains the appearance of upgrading her agreement with Kevin in claiming not just a lot but 'most people' think accounting is boring (line 19), the fact that this ostensible agreement with Kevin is 'well'-prefaced creates interactional incongruence. 'Well'-prefacing when expressing agreement is typically associated with 'actions that are supportive and solidary with the previous speaker' (Heritage 2015: 99) and to alert the recipient to a forthcoming 'my side' perspective (Heritage 2015: 98). However, Mary isn't expressing a 'my side' perspective (i.e. what she thinks), but rather what 'most people' think. Mary then goes on to offer absolution for a possible offence (Drew and Hepburn 2016) in claiming 'that's okay' (line 22). In other words, she seemingly offers 'reassurance that *possible* offence was not taken as *actual* offence' (Robinson 2004: 305, original emphasis). This absolution is 'I mean'-prefaced (Maynard 2013), thereby framing her absolution as pursuing an affiliative response from Kevin that this possible offence is not being treated as an actual offence.

Kevin, however, does not appear to orient to these possible inferences. Instead, he goes on to ask Mary what she thinks of accounting (line 23). Mary responds, in turn, by expressing a positive affective stance about accounting (line 24), a stance with which Kevin does not affiliate but simply receipts with an 'okay' (line 26). Once again it is Mary who works to mitigate these troubles in affiliating by offering an extended account in which she claims she may not continue liking accounting as she has only just started (lines 27–35), and she may even drop the major. Kevin subsequently asks what she studied in first year (lines 36–37), thereby once again showing no orientation to what has transpired here in this sequence as involving any kind of interactional trouble. There is evidence here, then, that while Mary is here orienting to the preference for agreeability, Kevin is not.

## *Discussion*

In the course of examining instances in which participants disagree with prior assessments in intercultural first conversations, it has become evident that while Australian participants appear to engage in interactional work to find some point of agreement in response to that disagreement (whether or not they were the one to have disagreed in the first place), the Taiwanese participants do not appear to do so. Our overall claim is that this provides not only further evidence of a systematic orientation to the preference for agreeability among the Australian speakers of English (Flint, Haugh and Merrison 2019; Haugh 2015) but also evidence that the Taiwanese participants do not appear to be orienting to the preference for agreeability in first conversations. We would hasten to add that there is no evidence that the Australian participants took offence or considered their Taiwanese co-participants to be insensitive or impolite either in the interactions themselves or in the follow-up interviews with those students. However, it is clear upon close examination of these intercultural first conversations that the Australian and Taiwanese students respond in systematically different ways to instances of disagreement with prior assessments. It might be concluded from this that although these Taiwanese students are clearly able to engage in first conversations with their Australian counterparts, they are apparently not aware of, or choose not to orient to, sociopragmatic norms in first conversations in (Australian) English that promote affiliation or positive rapport through the accomplishment of agreeability.

However, such an account presumes a deficit view of the Taiwanese students that is decidedly one-sided. In other words, the assumption that apparent interactional troubles have arisen in each of the examples we have examined is grounded in the perspective of the Australian students. A sociopragmatic approach that recognizes the indexical value or evaluation of actions is necessarily grounded in the emic perspectives of all participants challenges this assumption (Haugh and Chang 2019, 2022; Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2020). Rather than seeing these different ways of responding to disagreement as indicating a lack of pragmatic competence on the part of these Taiwanese speakers of English, a sociopragmatic approach pushes us to consider the interaction in its own right, on its own terms, rather than through the prism of L1 sociopragmatic norms. To analyse an intercultural interaction on its own terms means to analyse it with respect to the footings of all speakers. In this case, it appears that the Taiwanese participants place a different indexical value on (dis)agreeability. Recent research indicates that explicit or strong disagreement with a co-participant is not viewed as problematic among speakers of Mandarin Chinese (Zhu 2014a, 2014b). It follows, then, that there is not necessarily a clear preference for agreeability in first conversations in Chinese, as we have seen in this analysis.[6]

In the following section, we suggest that empirical work of the sort we have described here, which emerges in the course of carefully analysing intercultural interactions, raises questions about how we might better support or enable social integration in the context of international education.

## *Concluding remarks*

While international education is often touted as an opportunity to foster global perspectives and intercultural competence among students, local and international alike, it has become evident in much of the research on interactions between local and international students that these often do not go smoothly, and international students can struggle to develop meaningful relationships with their local counterparts. As Spencer-Oatey (2018) points out, despite these evident challenges, we still know little about the process of social integration in the higher education context. This lacuna reflects, in turn, the considerable gap that remains in our understanding of how relationships are initiated and established in intercultural settings (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2020). However, without detailed empirical studies of how international students navigate the challenges of initiating and establishing relationships with local students, it is difficult to provide practical support. We remain stuck in repeatedly observing that international students face difficulties with language and communication or in finding common or shared interests with local students. Our contention here is that those so-called difficulties with language and communication involve, in some cases at least, sequentially grounded expectations or norms. Notably, these norms remain opaque to both international and local students without careful sequential analysis by researchers.

There remain questions about the extent to which international students can be sensitized to these kinds of normative preferences and whether, even if they are made aware of them, they would choose to orient to them (Chang and Haugh 2017; Haugh and Chang 2015; McConachy 2019). Our view is that because these kinds of norms are immanent to our very ways of interacting, they may not be as amenable to sociopragmatic awareness-raising tasks, as it can be to draw attention to overt behaviours, such as shaking hands versus bowing, or to draw attention to particular linguistic formats, such as the role of pleasantries like 'how-are-yous' in greeting routines. However, this does not mean we should not try to do so. Instead, our view is that programmes designed to support intercultural education could benefit from greater engagement with ongoing research in linguistics on intercultural interaction, as Helen Spencer-Oatey has so convincingly demonstrated through her groundbreaking research programme on intercultural communication and education.

## *Appendix: Transcription conventions (following Jefferson 2004)*

| | |
|---|---|
| [ ] | Overlapping speech |
| (0.5) | Gap (in tenths of a second) |
| (.) | Micropause |
| . | Falling or final intonation |
| , | 'Continuing' intonation |
| = | Latched utterances |
| ? | Rising intonation |
| ↓ ↑ | Sharply falling/rising intonation |
| <u>underlining</u> | Contrastive stress or emphasis |
| : | Elongation of vowel or consonant sound |
| - | Word cut-off |
| CAPS | Markedly louder |
| ° ° | Markedly soft |
| .hhh | In-breathing |
| (hh) | Interpolated laughter/aspiration |
| # # | Creaky voice |
| £ £ | Smile voice |
| > < | Talk is compressed or rushed |
| < > | Talk is markedly slowed or drawn out |

## Notes

1 There have also been a limited number of studies of small talk (Barron and Black 2015) and storytelling (Barraja-Rohan 2015) in early interactions in intercultural settings, that is, in second or third encounters in which participants are still getting to know each other.
2 Preference refers to the ways in which 'people systematically design their actions to either promote or undermine social solidarity' (Pillet-Shore 2017: 1). Broadly speaking, preference refers to either systematically (dis)preferred formats for delivering actions (e.g. delayed and hedged refusals of invitations) (Pomerantz 1984) or systematically (dis) preferred actions (e.g. the preference for agreement) (Sacks 1987). In our analysis we are focusing on the latter type of preference, that is, preferred actions – more specifically, (dis)preferred sequence-responding actions (Pomerantz and Heritage 2013).
3 These recordings form part of a larger ongoing project about getting acquainted across cultures. Our analysis of the intercultural first conversations between Australian and Taiwanese students is thus informed by our analysis of 'intracultural' Australian–Australian and Taiwanese–Taiwanese first conversations. Further consideration of this larger data set, however, lies outside the scope of this chapter.
4 Strong disagreement in Zhu's (2014a, 2014b) study refers to disagreements that are delivered with preferred formats (Pillet-Shore 2017), that is, directly (with no hedging or other forms of mitigation) and without delay. It follows that disagreements are *not* being treated by speakers of Mandarin Chinese as dispreferred actions (cf. Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987), at least in the everyday conversational contexts that were examined by Zhu (2014a, 2014b).
5 CA transcription conventions used in this excerpt, and those that follow, are listed in the appendix to this chapter.
6 This raises the question, of course, what preference(s) Taiwanese participants are orienting to in first conversations. However, further consideration of this lies outside the scope of this chapter.

## References


Arkoudis, Sophie, Watty, Kim, Baik, Chi, Yu, Xin, Borland, Helen, Chang, Shanton, Lang, Ian, Lang, Josephine and Pearce, Amanda (2013), 'Finding Common Ground: Enhancing Interaction between Domestic and International Students in Higher Education', *Teaching in Higher Education* 18(3): 222–35.

Arundale, Robert (2010), 'Constituting Face in Conversation: Face, Facework, and Interactional Achievement', *Journal of Pragmatics* 42(10): 2078–105.

Barraja-Rohan, Anne-Marie (2015), '"I Told You": Storytelling Development of a Japanese Learning English as a Second Language', in Teresa Cadierno and Søren Wind Eskildsen (eds), *Usage-Based Perspectives on Second Language Learning*, 271–304, Mouton de Gruyter.

Barron, Anne and Black, Emily (2015), 'Constructing Small Talk in Learner-Native Speaker Voice-based Telecollaboration: A Focus on Topic Management and Backchannelling', *System* 48: 112–28.

Bolden, Galina and Robinson, Jeffrey (2011), 'Soliciting Accounts with *Why*-Interrogatives in Conversation', *Journal of Communication* 61: 94–119.

Burgoon, Judee, Hubbard, Ebesu and Sachiko, Amy (2005), 'Cross-cultural and Intercultural Applications of Expectancy Violations Theory and Interaction Adaptation Theory', in William Gudykunst (ed.), *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*, 149–71, Sage.
Bushnell, Cade (2020), 'Micro-bonding Moments: Laughter in the Joint Construction of Mutual Affiliation in Initial-Encounter Interactions by First and Second Language Speakers of Japanese', in Risako Ide and Kaori Hata (eds), *Bonding through Context. Language and Interactional Alignment in Japanese Situated Discourse*, 171–94, John Benjamins.
Chang, Wei-Lin Melody and Haugh, Michael (2017), 'Intercultural Communicative Competence and Emotion amongst Second Language Learners of Chinese', in Istvan Kecskes and Chaofen Sun (eds), *Key Issues in Chinese as a Second Language Research*, 269–86, Routledge.
Cialdini, Robert, Reno, Raymond and Kallgren, Carl (1990), 'A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: Recycling the Concept of Norms to Reduce Littering in Public Places', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58(6): 1015–26.
Culpeper, Jonathan and Haugh, Michael (2021), '(Im)politeness and Sociopragmatics', in Michael Haugh, Dániel Kádár and Marina Terkourafi (eds), *Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*, 315–39, Cambridge University Press.
Deutsch, Morton and Gerard, Harold (1955), 'A Study of Normative and Informational Social Influences upon Individual Judgment', *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 51(3): 629–36.
Drew, Paul and Hepburn, Alexa (2016), 'Absent Apologies', *Discourse Processes* 53: 114–31.
Dunne, Ciarán (2009), 'Host Students' Perspectives of Intercultural Contact in an Irish University', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13(2): 222–39.
Flint, Natalie, Haugh, Michael and Merrison, Andrew John (2019), 'Modulating Troubles Affiliating in Initial Interactions. The Role of Remedial Accounts', *Pragmatics* 29: 384–409.
Gareis, Elisabeth (2012), 'Intercultural Friendship: Effects of Home and Host Region', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 5(4): 309–28.
Greer, Tim, Usui, Yoshiko, Kato, Toki, Taniguchi, Hitomi and Andrade, Vivian (2005), 'Suppressing Laughter in the Display of (Dis)affiliation', *Kobe Daigakui Kokusai Komyunikeeshon Sentaa Ronshuu* (Kobe University International Communication Centre Bulletin) 2: 27–42.
Groeppel-Klein, Andrea, Germelmann, Class and Glaum, Martin (2010), 'Intercultural Interaction Needs More than Mere Exposure: Searching for Drivers of Student Interaction at Border Universities', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34: 263–7.
Haugh, Michael (2008), 'The Discursive Negotiation of International Student Identities', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 29: 207–22.
Haugh, Michael (2012), 'Conversational Interaction', in Keith Allan and Kasia Jaszczolt (eds), *Cambridge Handbook of Pragmatics*, 251–73, Cambridge University Press.
Haugh, Michael (2015), 'Impoliteness and the Taking of Offence in Initial Interactions', *Journal of Pragmatics* 86: 36–42.
Haugh, Michael (2016), 'Complaints and Troubles Talk about the English Language Skills of International Students in Australian Universities', *Higher Education Research & Development* 35: 727–40.
Haugh, Michael (2022), '(Im)politeness in Video-mediated First Conversations amongst Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca', in Ian Walkinshaw (ed.), *Pragmatics of English as a Lingua Franca*, 81–103, Mouton de Gruyter.

Haugh, Michael and Carbaugh, Donal (2015), 'Self-disclosure in Initial Interactions amongst Speakers of American and Australian English', *Multilingua* 34: 461–93.

Haugh, Michael and Chang, Wei-Lin Melody (2015), 'Understanding Im/politeness across Cultures: An Interactional Approach to Raising Sociopragmatic Awareness', *IRAL: International Review of Applied Linguistics* 53: 389–414.

Haugh, Michael and Chang, Wei-Lin Melody (2019), 'Indexical and Sequential Properties of Criticisms in Initial Interactions: Implications for Examining (Im)politeness across Cultures', *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 23(4): 904–29.

Haugh, Michael and Chang, Wei-Lin Melody (2022), 'Sociopragmatics and Intercultural Interaction', in Istvan Kecskes (ed.), *Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Pragmatics*, 420–44, Cambridge University Press.

Haugh, Michael and Sinkeviciute, Valeria (2021), 'The Pragmatics of Initial Interactions: Cross-cultural and Intercultural Perspectives', *Journal of Pragmatics* 185: 35–9.

Heritage, John (1984), 'A Change of State Token and Aspects of Its Sequential Placement', in J. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds), *Structures of Social Action*, 299–345, Cambridge University Press.

Heritage, John (2015), '*Well*-prefaced Turns in English Conversation: A Conversation Analytic Perspective', *Journal of Pragmatics* 88: 88–104.

Jefferson, Gail (1984), 'On the Organization of Laughter in Talk about Troubles', in J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (eds), *Structures of Social Action*, 346–69, Cambridge University Press.

Jefferson, Gail (1988), 'On the Sequential Organization of Troubles Talk in Ordinary Conversation', *Social Problems* 35: 418–41.

Jefferson, Gail (2004), 'Glossary of Transcript Symbols with an Introduction', in Gene Lerner (ed.), *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*, 13–23, John Benjamins.

Jenks, Christopher (2009), 'Getting Acquainted in Skypecasts: Aspects of Social Organisation in Online Chat Rooms', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 19: 26–46.

Kecskes, Istvan (2019), 'The Interplay of Prior Experience and Actual Situational Context in Intercultural First Encounters', *Pragmatics and Cognition* 26: 112–34.

Kretzenbacher, Heinz, Hajek, John, Norrby, Catrin and Schüpbach, Doris (2020), 'Social Deixis at International Conferences: Austrian German Speakers' Introduction and Address Behaviour in German and English', *Journal of Pragmatics* 169: 100–19.

Lefringhausen, Katharina, Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Debray, Carolin (2019), 'Culture, Norms, and the Assessment of Communication Contexts: Multidisciplinary Perspectives', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 50(10): 1098–111.

Li, Wei, Zhu, Hua and Li, Yue (2001), 'Conversational Management and Involvement in Chinese-English Business Talk', *Language and Intercultural Communication* 1(2): 135–50.

Marginson, Simon (2014), 'Student Self-formation in International Education', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 18(1): 6–22.

Maynard, Douglas (2013), 'Defensive Mechanisms: *I-mean*-prefaced Utterances in Complaint and Other Conversational Sequences', in Makoto Hayashi, Geoffrey Raymond and Jack Sidnell (eds), *Conversational Repair and Human Understanding*, 198–233, Cambridge University Press.

Maynard, Douglas and Zimmerman, Don (1984), 'Topical Talk, Ritual and the Social Organization of Relationships', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 47: 301–16.

McConachy, Troy (2019), 'L2 Pragmatics as "Intercultural Pragmatics": Probing Sociopragmatic Aspects of Pragmatic Awareness', *Journal of Pragmatics* 151: 167–76.

McConachy, Troy and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2021), 'Cross-cultural and Intercultural Pragmatics', in Michael Haugh, Dániel Kádár and Marina Terkourafi (eds), *Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*, 733–57, Cambridge University Press.

Nao, Marion (2015), '"So You Are From England": Categorization and Cultural Reduction in First-time Conversation Lounge Encounters between Foreign Teachers and Japanese Students of EFL', *Applied Linguistics* 36: 194–214.

Pillet-Shore, Danielle (2017), 'Preference Organisation', in Howard Giles and Jake Harwood (eds), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press.

Pomerantz, Anita (1984), 'Agreeing and Disagreeing with Assessments: Some Features of Preferred/Dispreferred Turn Shapes', in J. Maxell Atkinson and John Heritage (eds), *Structures of Social Action*, 57–101, Cambridge University Press.

Pomerantz, Anita and Heritage, John (2013), 'Preference', in Jack Sidnell and Tanya Stivers (eds), *Handbook of Conversation Analysis*, 210–28, Wiley-Blackwell.

Potter, Jonathan and Hepburn, Alexa (2010), 'Putting Aspiration into Words: Laugh Particles, Managing Descriptive Trouble and Modulating Action', *Journal of Pragmatics* 42: 1543–55.

Rehbein, Jochen and Fienemann, Jutta (2004), 'Introductions: Being Polite in Multilingual Settings', in Juliane House and Jochen Rehbein (eds), *Multilingual Communication*, 223–78, John Benjamins.

Rienties, Bart and Nolan, Eimear-Marie (2014), 'Understanding Friendship and Learning Networks of International and Host Students using Longitudinal Social Network Analysis', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 41: 165–80.

Robinson, Jeffrey (2004), 'The Sequential Organisation of "Explicit" Apologies in Naturally Occurring English', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 37: 291–330.

Sacks, Harvey (1987), 'On the Preferences for Agreement and Contiguity in Sequences in Conversation' in Graham Button and John R. E. Lee (eds), *Talk and Social Organisation*, 54–69, Multilingual Matters.

Schneider, Klaus P. (1988), *Small Talk: Analysing Phatic Discourse*, Hitzeroth.

Shaw, Chloe, Hepburn, Alexa and Potter, Jonathan (2013), 'Having the Last Laugh: On Post-completion Laughter Particles', in Phillip Glenn and Elizabeth Holt (eds), *Studies of Laughter in Interaction*, 91–106, Bloomsbury.

Sovic, Silvia (2009), 'Hi-bye Friends and the Herd Instinct: International and Home Students in the Creative Arts', *Higher Education* 58(6): 747–61.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2011), 'Conceptualising the "Relational" in Pragmatics: Insights from Metapragmatic Emotion and (Im)politeness Comments', *Journal of Pragmatics* 43(14): 3565–78.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2013), 'Relating at Work: Facets, Dialectics and Face', *Journal of Pragmatics* 58: 121–37.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2018), 'Transformative Learning for Social Integration: Overcoming the Challenge of Greetings', *Intercultural Education* 29(2): 301–15.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Dauber, Daniel (2017), 'The Gains and Pains of Mixed National Group Work at University', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38(3): 219–36.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Dauber, Daniel (2019a), 'What Is Integration and Why Is It Important for Internationalisation? A Multidisciplinary Review', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 29(5): 515–34.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Dauber, Daniel (2019b), 'Internationalisation and Student Diversity: Opportunities for Personal Growth or Numbers-only Targets?', *Higher Education* 78: 1035–58.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Dániel (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*. Cambridge University Press.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Wang, Jiayi (2020), 'Establishing Professional Intercultural Relations: Chinese Perceptions of Behavioural Success in a Sino-American Exchange Visit', *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 49(6): 499–519.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (1998), 'Relational Management in Chinese-British Business Meetings', in Susan Hunston (ed.), *Language at Work*, 31–46, Multilingual Matters.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (2019), 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Interpersonal Relations and the Evaluation Process: Culture, Norms, and the Moral Order', *Journal of Pragmatics* 151: 141–54.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen, Dauber, Daniel, Jing, Jing and Wang, Lifei (2017), 'Chinese Students' Social Integration into the University Community: Hearing the Students' Voices', *Higher Education* 74(5): 739–56.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen, Lefringhausen, Katharina and Debray, Carolin (2019), 'Culture, Norms, and the Assessment of Communication Contexts: Discussion and Pointers for the Future', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 50(10): 1216–20.
Stivers, Tanya and Rossano, Fredrico (2010), 'Mobilising Response', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 43: 3–31.
Strambi, Antonella and Tudini, Vincenza (2020), '"I'll Say Something about Myself": Questions and Self-disclosures in Italian L1-L2 Online Initial Interactions', *Journal of Pragmatics* 170: 82–95.
Svennevig, Jan (1999), *Getting Acquainted in Conversation*, John Benjamins.
Svennevig, Jan (2014), 'Direct and Indirect Self-presentation in First Conversations', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 33: 302–27.
Wiggins, Sally (2013), 'The Social Life of "Eugh": Disgust as Assessment in Family Mealtimes', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 52: 489–509.
Wright, Claire and Schartner, Alina (2013), '"I Can't . . . I Won't?": International Students at the Threshold of Social Interaction', *Journal of Research in International Education* 12(2): 113–28.
Zhu, Weihua (2014a), 'Rapport Management in Strong Disagreement: An Investigation of a Community of Chinese Speakers of English', *Text & Talk* 34: 641–64.
Zhu, Weihua (2014b), 'Managing Relationships in Everyday Practice: The Case of Strong Disagreement in Mandarin', *Journal of Pragmatics* 64: 85–101.
Zhu, Yunxia (2011), 'Building Intercultural Alliances: A Study of Moves and Strategies in Initial Business Negotiation Meetings', *Text and Talk* 31(1): 101–25.

# Chapter 2

## Rapport management and microaggression in workplace interaction

Janet Holmes

### *Introduction*

Many workplace interactions between majority and minority group members proceed smoothly, with all participants appropriately attending to rapport building or maintenance. Small talk and humour, for example, are well-documented means by which rapport is managed in New Zealand workplace relationships (e.g. Holmes and Marra 2004; Holmes and Riddiford 2009; Holmes and Stubbe 2015). However, interactions where it appears that established rapport is challenged are particularly interesting since they can provide insight into different sensitivities to violations of societal norms, as well as different ways of responding to behaviour which breaches an individual's sociocultural norms. The concept of microaggression provides a useful starting place in such exploration. Microaggressions have been defined as 'brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or community' (Sue et al. 2007: 273).[1] The concept of microaggression directs attention to the taken-for-granted presuppositions about appropriate cultural behaviours which impact interaction as illustrated in Excerpt 1.

*Excerpt 1 [Transcription conventions can be found at the end of the chapter.]*
In this excerpt a workplace advisor (WA) is discussing her internship with Sophie. The internship is a component of a course for migrants who have not yet succeeded in finding work. Sophie is a Chinese information systems analyst who has been in New Zealand looking for work for about three years. Sophie says she sometimes meets a Chinese friend at lunchtime for a chat. And of course they use Mandarin. The workplace advisor comments:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | WA: | I know you can't I know |
| 2. | | the problem is it's a bit weird for people around you |
| 3. | Sophie: | aha mm |
| 4. | WA: | sometimes |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5. | Sophie: | oh oh I see yeah |
| 6. | WA: | it's just a bit s- sometimes people especially New Zealanders |
| 7. | | they feel a bit uncomfortable cos they don't know what's going on |
| 8. | | you know but I mean if you're if you're aware |
| 9. | | maybe keep your voice down a bit so that it doesn't…… |

The workplace advisor states plainly the widespread expectation that migrants should conform to New Zealand interactional norms – albeit with a very large amount of hedging (*just, sometimes* (x2), *a bit* (x3), *you know*, *I mean*, *maybe*), which strongly suggests that she does not condone such attitudes. Hedging or attenuation of the force of an utterance is a common pragmatic strategy for indicating sensitivity to the face needs of the addressee. Regrettably, this is sound advice in relation to the attitudes of many New Zealanders in a range of contexts; it makes explicit the widespread assumption that Mandarin is inappropriate in the New Zealand workplace, even in a private conversation between friends. The excerpt highlights the need for attitude change and greater appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity, one of the arguments presented in this chapter. Typically it is minority-cultural group members who are most aware of the impact of the culture order (see Holmes 2018; Holmes, Vine and Marra 2020). Majority group members simply assume that their ways of behaving are normal (Holmes 2018: 34), and such assumptions are often experienced as microaggression (whether intended or not) by their targets. Excerpt 1 is a particularly stark example of the kind of ethnocentric microaggressions that New Zealand immigrants face regularly and which constitute the focus of the analysis in this chapter.

The chapter draws on a database of workplace interactions from the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) to examine instances in which a speaker intended a contribution to build rapport but where there is potential for the addressee or hearer to experience it as a microaggression or insult. The first section of this chapter outlines the broad theoretical framework used in the analysis and in particular the rich raft of useful concepts provided by Helen Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2005) rapport management model (RMM). The methodology used to collect the data is then described, followed by analysis and discussion of the examples using the RMM to illuminate the material. The final section discusses the implications of the analysis and considers what lessons can be learned by using this analytical lens.

## *Theoretical approach and concepts*

The RMM offers relevant analytical concepts for the analysis of microaggression and usefully complements the interactional sociolinguistics and social constructionist approaches which characterize the work of the LWP team (described in detail in Holmes, Marra and Vine 2011: 19–20). Building on classic politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987), RMM develops the notions of face sensitivity and sociality rights (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005). *Face* includes both *quality face*, the desire to be appreciated and approved of, and *social identity face*, the value we claim in society. *Sociality rights* include *equity rights*, the want to be unimpeded and treated fairly, as well as the entitlement to associate with others, that is, the right to fair treatment, social inclusion and respect, the expression of which will differ in different sociocultural contexts. The third component, *interactional goals*, encompasses both transactional and relational goals, two crucial dimensions of workplace interaction. The approach emphasizes the dynamic character of interaction and examines how we use language to maintain, enhance, neglect or challenge harmonious social relationships in different contexts. The model also takes account of how rapport is managed within different domains: illocutionary, discourse, participation, stylistic and non-verbal.

My focus in this chapter is on the illocutionary domain – examining speech acts in interaction in workplace contexts. Importantly, RMM pays careful attention to both speaker's intention and hearer(s)' interpretation in context, including social and discourse contexts, and assumes that every utterance impacts in some way on interpersonal rapport, whether to enhance, maintain, neglect or damage it. A good deal of attention has been paid in earlier research using the RMM to sociopragmatic strategies for rapport building (e.g. Ryoo 2005; Lazzaro-Salazar 2013; Hui 2014), as well as the consequences of failure to take account of cultural differences in ways of building rapport and acknowledging sociality rights (e.g. Kuśmierczyk 2014; Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2003; Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). This chapter further develops this work with attention to 'microaggressions' in interactions involving minority group members in New Zealand workplaces.

## *Microaggression*

The term 'microaggression' was first used by the psychologist Chester Pierce in an article on 'offensive mechanisms, the small, continuous bombardments of micro-aggression' (1970: 282). It has been developed more recently by Sue and his colleagues (2007, 2010), who were especially concerned with racial microaggressions in the United States, but the concept can apply to any targeted group, including women, trans individuals, minority ethnic individuals and older people. Examples include being constantly interrupted in a meeting, being misgendered (e.g. assigning 'she/her' pronouns when the preferred pronouns are 'they/them'), being complimented for speaking 'good English' as a Chinese New Zealander or Korean American (even when the person was born in the country) and addressing an older, unfamiliar woman as 'dear' (Holmes and Marra 2023).

Microaggressions can lie anywhere between conscious/deliberate and unconscious/unintentional, as implied in the previous definition (see footnote 1). Consequently, they may be intended in some cases to cause offence and challenge rapport, and perceived as such or not, while in other cases they could be intended to create or maintain rapport and perceived as such or not. So, for instance, Baugh (2018) demonstrated that US telephone callers with African American or Mexican

American accents were often excluded as potential renters of accommodation or failed to secure a job interview, examples, he argued, of which constituted deliberate microaggression or hidden prejudice which were impossible for the victims to challenge.

In other cases, when racial or ethnic minorities are involved, microaggressions may be perceived as offensive but were unintended and based on ignorance. Such instances can be described as 'soft racism'[2] (Jones 2020) or 'benevolent racism' (Lipinoga 2008: 47, Villenas 2002). Interestingly, there is evidence that such unconscious and unintentional aggressions have greater detrimental impact on minority groups (e.g. Sue 2010), though the reasons require further research. It is even possible for an outsider to (mis)identify an action or utterance as a microaggression while neither of the participants (apparently) perceive it that way.

The most interesting categories for my purposes in this chapter are cases where despite the speaker's positive intentions, there is potential for an addressee to experience their words as a microaggression at best or an insult at worst. Examples include native speakers who look ethnically different from the majority group and who are asked where they come from, older people who are patronized or talked down to, permanent residents of a country who are assumed to be ignorant of culturally appropriate ways of doing things and English as a second language speakers who are subjected to slow deliberate speech. Greenbank (2020) provides telling examples of the latter in her analysis of the interaction between a carer, Nina (a refugee from Columbia), and the elderly Pākehā[3] residents in her care (see also Tawalbeh 2017). And interacting with me, Katja, a 44-year-old woman of German origin who had lived in New Zealand for more than twenty years, commented: '*I am tired of ALWAYS being asked where I'm from as soon as I open my mouth. The question isn't really, where are you from, but it's a comment: "you sound odd, why is that? am I right in picking up you're not born here*"' (personal communication).

Such examples draw attention to another important dimension of such interactions which is how the addressee responds to the perceived microaggression. In cases where an addressee decides to say nothing we have no explicit evidence that they perceived it as offensive. But in some interesting instances, the addressee responds by challenging the speaker and thus provides useful confirmation that the utterance was perceived as a microaggression – regardless of how it was intended. The following analysis discusses instances of such responses. I turn now to a description of the source of the examples analysed in this chapter.

## *Methodology and data*

The Language in the Workplace Project team has been recording and analysing workplace interactions since 1996, with material ranging from white-collar corporate environments and government departments to factory floor and building site interactions (see Holmes and Stubbe 2015, wgtn.ac.nz/lwp). Our database comprises more than two million words and 2,000 interactions (ranging from brief telephone conversations to long strategy meetings), involving around 700 participants from more than 30 workplaces.

We have also collected data involving intercultural interaction in the workplace between New Zealanders and migrants from professional backgrounds. The workplace interactions analysed here were collected by migrant volunteers during the six-week internship component of a twelve-week communications skills course. The course is offered to professionals whose first language is not English and who have experienced difficulty finding suitable employment. The participants all have relevant expertise in their chosen profession but lack New Zealand cultural knowledge and experience which, because of employers' attitudes, tends to limit their employment opportunities. The cohorts include accountants, lawyers, judges, doctors, financial analysts and engineers, and participants originate from a wide range of countries, including China, India, Germany, Russia, Malaysia and Japan. After five weeks of intensive classroom teaching and learning focused on developing awareness of sociopragmatic aspects of communication in the New Zealand workplace, the participants spend six weeks in supported internships in a New Zealand organization matched to their area of interest.

The twelve volunteers (five women and seven men) who agreed, along with their workplace mentors and colleagues, to record their everyday workplace interactions during their internships came from a wide range of professional backgrounds and countries. Using the standard methodology of the LWP team, the volunteers carried small devices which recorded their normal workplace interactions during the first two weeks and the last two weeks of their internship. They were in control of what was recorded, and they provided a range of material from one-to-one sessions with their mentors to morning tea and social interactions with a wide array of workplace colleagues. They also recorded reflective interviews at two points during their internship with their mentors and a workplace consultant or advisor. The advisor's role was to support the migrant interns, advise them about any sociocultural issues that puzzled them and ensure that they made the most of the opportunity provided by the internship. This material provides the basis for the analysis of possible instances of microaggression. The eight excerpts analysed in the next section represent typical examples, and it is noteworthy that they occurred in interactions where New Zealanders were offering advice to the interns, rather than in the extensive sections of the recordings where the focus was on the transactional aspects of the interaction: that is, the task at hand or job to be accomplished.

A caveat is in order at this point. As analysts we cannot always be confident that we have interpreted our data as the speaker intended or as the addressee interpreted. Even during post-recording interviews focused on checking our interpretations, participants do not always indicate a negative response to a potential microaggression since they may wish to be perceived as compliant and non-aggressive. Hence, we can often only identify *potential* microaggressions and discuss their possible effects. This qualification should be borne in mind in relation to the analysis which follows. Finally, it is also important to note that the analysis focuses on examples where the targets of the possible microaggressions were typically in a position of dependence, lacking power and status, and where the well-meaning perpetrators' intentions were undoubtedly positive.

## *Analysis*

### *Overview of the analysis*

The illocutionary domain in the RMM focuses on speech acts in interaction in context and is thus the relevant domain for analysing potential instances of microaggression in workplace interaction. The excerpts analysed in this section provide a representative array of potential instances of microaggression in our data. There are more similar instances of every example discussed here. The excerpts are divided into three groups. The first group involves instances of culturally different discourse rules and interaction norms, especially involving higher status addressees. The second group focuses on different expectations regarding social interaction at work, while the third group involves instances where the mentors' comments patronize the interns, failing to respect their professional expertise and experience.

The first group involves instances of culturally different norms regarding appropriate ways of interacting with those of higher status. The participants are New Zealand mentors who have volunteered to work with interns from China. The interns discourse rules and participation norms differ from those of New Zealanders in that they entail explicitly conveying respect for those of higher status (Holmes 2015). Excerpt 2 illustrates a common theme: skilled migrants from Asia are regularly encouraged by their mentors to speak up and engage with others (see Holmes 2015).

*Excerpt 2*[4]
Isaac is a Chinese accountant and an intern in Leo's organization; Leo is his workplace mentor.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Leo: | you're learning to put yourself out there and go |
| 2. | | hey I don't know what this is please help me |
| 3. | | and then you're learning |
| 4. | | how you get help from people |
| 5. | Isaac: | sometimes I I'm afraid I er that maybe |
| 6. | | I disturb other people's working |
| 7. | | so I just wait er for the right time to go //to [laughs]\ |
| 8. | Leo: | /no what\\ they're doing is they're working away |
| 9. | | saying Isaac's happy he hasn't seen me |
| 10. | | so he must be okay ... so you got to try |
| 11. | Isaac: | okay thank you yes |

In this excerpt Leo uses direct speech to encourage Isaac to engage enthusiastically with others and ask for help (lines 1–4). He energetically models how Isaac should approach people, *hey I don't know what this is please help me* (line 2). The advice is clearly intended to be helpful and could be regarded as rapport building. Interestingly, however, Isaac's response gives a clue to the ways in which such well-intentioned advice cuts across cultural norms and equity rights. Rather than passively accepting the advice offered, Isaac provides a justification for his behaviour – namely respect for the rights of others not to be interrupted (lines 5–7). He expresses this tentatively with hesitations, *er*, *I I*, and hedges, *sometimes, I'm afraid* (line 5), *just, er* (line 7). Leo goes on to elaborate and repeat his advice until finally Isaac accepts it (see Vine, Holmes and Marra 2012). Hence this could be regarded as an instance of microaggression: majority group interactional norms are asserted and those of the Chinese intern dismissed as irrelevant. Isaac's cultural norms are implicitly treated as inappropriate with the effect of emphasizing social exclusion.

This is a typical instance of advice which recurs in other interactions between interns and their mentors. So, Mary, a Chinese intern, is advised *we help people that come and ask us questions*, *we help the ones that talk the loudest* (see Excerpt 7). And in Excerpt 3 Henry is given similarly explicit instruction regarding speaking up.

*Excerpt 3a*

Henry is a Chinese accountant and an intern in Simon's organization; Simon is his workplace mentor.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Simon: | it doesn't work that way in New Zealand… |
| 2. | | you need to say things with energy |
| 3. | | that's a New Zealand thing very much |
| 4. | | that we like en- energy we like enthusiasm |
| 5. | | we like keen people… |
| 6. | | when you want to say something |
| 7. | | you have to say it with a bit of energy ... |
| 8. | | really really important that when you speak to people |
| 9. | | that you get your voice level up |

In this excerpt Simon explicitly asserts the need for Henry to conform to what he presents as New Zealand interactional norms regarding saying things with *energy* (lines 2, 4, 7) and *enthusiasm* (line 4) as well as loudly, *get your voice level up* (line 9). Simon here speaks on behalf of all New Zealanders. As noted in Vine et al. (2012), this excerpt illustrates a number of features which characterize talk to the skilled migrant interns throughout our data, such as repetition (lines 4, 7), the use of syntactically simple clauses with parallel structures, for example, *we like energy, we like enthusiasm, we like keen people* (lines 4–5) and paraphrase: for example, *say it with a bit of energy*, *get your voice level up* (lines 7, 9).

The specific message that Simon conveys here further illustrates the theme noted earlier: Asian skilled migrants are exhorted to speak up, to speak louder and clearer and more confidently. For instance, Jeff's mentor Milly says to him *you've got t- you've got to speak clearly*, while during a reflective interview, Mary, an intern learning document management in a government department, is asked by her mentor *how loudly do you speak at home?* (See Excerpt 7.) By contrast in a reflective interview with Andrei, a Russian intern, his mentor points out that he is regarded as too direct and implies that his self-promoting narratives do not sit well with the egalitarian New Zealand cultural norms (Holmes, Marra and Vine 2012; Holmes 2015).

The basis for regarding such advice as constituting potential microaggression is the fact that it disregards the addressees' quality face needs, their need to be approved of and valued, and instead patronizes them, implicitly dismissing alternative cultural norms as irrelevant. This is made explicit by Henry in a challenge to Simon's advice.

*Excerpt 3b*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Hen: | I think maybe it's a culture difference |
| 2. | | because your status is higher than me |
| 3. | | because you are my mentor also ... |
| 4. | | so usually the Chinese with a lower status will speak like ... |
| 5. | | not very loud because you are not the have the right |
| 6. | | have the authority to speak as loud as you might |

Henry here states clearly but respectfully – for example, attenuated by I *think*, *maybe* (line 1) – that he comes from a culture with different interactional norms, where people of lower status *usually* speak *not very loud* (lines 4–5) out of respect for those with greater status and authority. Such challenges are rare in our data, but they can be regarded as indications that the interns consider their face needs and sociality rights are being insufficiently attended to by their colleagues.

It is worth noting that not only the content of the advice from Leo and Simon but also its directness and explicitness contrast with advice-giving sequences between native-speaking New Zealanders. Advice sequences involving New Zealanders never focused on speaking style but rather on aspects of the job at hand, and they tended to be indirect and attenuated with repetition very rare (see Vine 2004; Holmes 2015; Vine et al. 2012).

The second group of excerpts has some similarities with the first group in that they involve direct advice-giving to the interns, but they focus on a different aspect of their behaviour – namely, the importance of them engaging in social interaction at work.

*Excerpt 4*

Salvador is Filipino and an intern in Suzanne's organization; Suzanne is his mentor. This excerpt is taken from an interview with Suzanne and the workplace advisor after Salvador has spent two weeks in the organization.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Suzanne: | Alan he makes you go to tea |
| 2. | Salvador: | yeah |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3. | Suzanne: | [laughs] |
| 4. | Salvador: | he keeps on fetching me every tea break |
| 5. | Suzanne: | //yeah |
| 6. | WA: | /good\\ |
| 7. | Salvador: | yeah [laughs] |
| 8. | WA: | cos there's that's part of the work ethic //of\ |
| 9. | Salvador: | /yeah\\ |
| 10. | WA: | taking breaks and having lunch ….. |
| 11. | | it's what is important |
| 12. | | to keep you sustaining //some work\ |
| 13. | Salvador: | /ah most\\ of the times ah that what made |
| 14. | | Suzanne's keep on telling me to take me break |
| 15. | | most of the times I tend to forget what the time |

*Later in same interview*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 16. | WA: | it's good too that you are going you go to level five with Alan |
| 17. | | and you talk to other people |
| 18. | Salvador: | oh yes yeah |
| 19. | WA: | and that's really good….. |
| 20. | Salvador: | mhm |
| 21. | WA: | good for you to meet people in other areas + yeah |
| 22. | Salvador: | it's good opportunity for me + yeah |
| 23. | | meeting other people in the different areas |
| 24. | | ah yes that's true |

Suzanne, Salvador's mentor, makes the point that another colleague, Alan, ensures Salvador takes his tea breaks, and Salvador concurs saying Alan fetches him. Suzanne and the workplace advisor agree, and the workplace advisor elaborates *taking breaks and having lunch* (line 10) are components of the New Zealand *work ethic* (line 8) or workplace culture. She goes on to provide two further reasons why taking breaks is important: first a transactional reason *to keep you sustaining some work* (line 13) and later in the interview a social reason *good for you to meet people in other areas* (line 22). This interaction can be regarded as rapport building, and Salvador certainly responds positively, agreeing that he tends to forget the time (because he enjoys the work and gets absorbed in it – not included here to save space) and later confirming that the tea breaks are good opportunities to meet people from different areas (lines 23–25).

Despite Suzanne's undoubted good intentions, and Salvador's positive response, I suggest that this advice could be regarded as somewhat patronizing. Drawing on a valuable distinction (McConachy and Spencer-Oatey 2021: 747), we can say that Suzanne asserts the injunctive norm, that is, what is approved of (lines 10–12). This despite the fact that many New Zealanders do not take the breaks they are entitled to (i.e. the descriptive norm or what is typically done), which she acknowledges is *a bit naughty* (section not included for space reasons). And though this explicit instruction about when and how to socialize at work is undoubtedly useful, especially for an intern keen to make contacts, it could nonetheless be regarded as infringing Salvador's sociality rights and threatening his quality face by treating him as sociolinguistically ignorant or incompetent.

This interpretation gains support from a number of such instances throughout the data, some of which have been discussed in previous articles (e.g. Vine, Holmes and Marra 2012; Holmes 2015). Chinese interns appear to be especially subject to pressure to socialize and interact with more people than just their mentor. So Leo strongly advises Isaac (participants in Excerpt 2) to join in the small talk at lunch time, to *listen to the jokes*, *participate* and *try and integrate yourself more with everyone* (Holmes 2015: 9). That this is a challenge is clear from the feedback that Chinese interns gave to their course coordinator, pointing out that in their former overseas workplaces they were expected to go straight to their desks on arrival at work and to work hard; social talk was regarded as wasting time. Even in New Zealand one of the interns says, *if I use too much [small talk] maybe they'll think I'm not I'm I don't focus on my work*. Sophie, for instance, a Chinese information systems analyst, comments *I didn't know anyone I feel so [tut] strange to say good morning to everyone in the first few days.... I just go [laughs]: straight away: to my to my seat*, but her workplace advisor responds with *just get over that ... it's it's just a matter of just saying hi or good morning or hello you know ... it's kind of necessary.* Sophie's cultural norms are thus rejected as inappropriate; there appears to be no opportunity for negotiation or compromise.

The next excerpt again addresses sociability issues, but also serves as a bridge to the third group of excerpts where the mentors' advice can be regarded not only as patronizing but also as disrespecting the interns' professional status, treating them like children to be taught good manners or protected from bad language.

*Excerpt 5*[5]
Isaac is a Chinese accountant and an intern in Leo's organization; Leo is his workplace mentor.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Leo: | and you came to lunch and yeah I know |
| 2. | | they didn't have chopsticks but er //[laughs]\ |
| 3. | Isaac: | /[laughs]\\... |
| 4. | Leo: | do you n-so you um do you do you use |
| 5. | | knife and fork at all knives and forks at all |
| 6. | Isaac: | er ++ just a – a just a few times |
| 7. | Leo: | just a //few times\ |
| 8. | Isaac: | /a a a\\ few //times yeah\ |
| 9. | Leo: | /oh right\\ so that would have been quite challenging …….. |
| 10. | | so you might you know you might want to work on that |

Despite Leo's humour, *I know they didn't have chopsticks* (lines 2–3), which Isaac responds to (line 3), it is difficult to regard Leo's question, *do you use knife and fork* (lines 4–5), as anything but a microaggression from Isaac's perspective, however well intended by his mentor. Isaac is treated as ignorant of New Zealand ways of eating and spoken to as if he were a child needing to be taught proper table manners: *do you do you use knife and fork at all* (lines 4–5), and *you might want to work on that* (line 10). The question and the advice threaten Isaac's quality face and social identity face as well as his equity right to do things his own way, and his association rights are also involved since he is being explicitly 'othered' for ignorance of local sociocultural norms.

In Excerpt 6 the workplace team treat Mary, an intelligent, competent professional (a lecturer in mechanical engineering in China before coming to New Zealand), as needing protection from 'bad language'.

*Excerpt 6*
Mary, the Chinese intern, is participating in an update meeting with her mentor, Pearl, and four other members of their workplace team.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Gina: | um we've decided since you've come on board Mary |
| 2. | | //and that\ you're still learning English |
| 3. | Mary: | /[laughs]\\ laughs |
| 4. | Gina: | we have a terrible habit of swearing |
| 5. | Mary: | [laughs] |
| 6. | Gina: | so we've decided that we're not going to swear |
| 7. | | and we've started up a swear collection jar |
| 8. | | so every time we swear |
| 9. | | we're going to put fifty cents into the box um |
| 10. | | so if you see us throwing money into a box |
| 11. | | that's what we're doing |
| 12. | | we're trying to stop ourselves from swearing |
| 13. | | and at the end of the week the money will be spent on breakfast |
| 14. | Mary: | [laughs] |
| 15. | Pearl: | because English is your second language |
| 16. | | we don't w- want you to think |
| 17. | | we don't want you to end up |
| 18. | | using our appalling language as being normal |
| 19. | | [laughter – Mary joins in] |

In addition to the content – explaining what they have decided in relation to swearing – the very explicit way in which this information is conveyed also has overtones of condescension: *so if you see us throwing money into a box that's what we're doing* (lines 10–11). Mary laughs throughout this excerpt and joins in the laughter at the end so we have little evidence of whether she regards this treatment as condescending or not, but the competence and professionalism demonstrated in her workplace interactions and interviews strongly suggest she might well regard her colleagues' decision as unnecessary and even laughable. Thus, it is possible that this excerpt illustrates a threat to Mary's association rights in that she is being 'othered', her quality face since she is being patronized and defined as in need of protection, and her social identity face in suggesting she lacks the sociolinguistic competence in English to decide when swearing is appropriate and when not.

Swearing is perfectly normal in many New Zealand workplaces (Daly et al. 2004; Holmes, Marra and Vine 2011), and we have recorded mentors in other workplaces swearing when things go wrong. Nerissa, for example, Carl's Pākehā mentor in an organization where he is doing data entry, swears when the form they are filling in turns out to be problematic (*um bugger I'll have to look at them*). In another organization, Luke, a Chinese intern, swears quietly to himself (*shit*) when things do not go smoothly with his work. So, although infrequent in the intern interactions, swearing does occur and no other organization explicitly decides to avoid it to protect the intern from *appalling language* (line 18).

The final excerpt illustrates how rapport may be constructed between different participants with potentially negative effects on those who are excluded. It begins as mentioned earlier with a comment on how quietly Mary speaks from the perspective of her mentors.

*Excerpt 7*

Mary, a Chinese intern in an interview with her mentors, Jess, Gina, Gloria and Pearl, and workplace advisor.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Jess: | I do have one question for you |
| 2. | | how loudly do you speak at home? |
| 3. | Mary: | [laughs] ++ not loudly [laughs]… mm I speak quietly….. |
| 4. | Jess: | cos as you've picked up we're just very loud |
| 5. | | [laughter] |
| 6. | Jess: | I would almost say that we are louder than most in the office + |
| 7. | Mary: | mm |
| 8. | Gina: | I would say that you're louder than most in the office |
| 9. | | [laughs] |
| 10. | Mary: | yes I I like it …… |
| 11. | | but yeah sorry I will try to speak loudly yeah [laughter]…. |
| 12. | Jess: | yeah yeah cos cos my concern is um + |
| 13. | | the way we react to people |
| 14. | | we help people that come and ask us questions |
| 15. | | we help the ones that talk the loudest [laughs]…. |
| 16. | Gina: | you think? |
| 17. | Jess: | yeah we do we do |
| 18. | Gina: | [drawls]: oh: we help the whisperers as well |
| 19. | Jess: | I know but if you were gonna start prioritising things |
| 20. | | it's (oh) get rid of the loudest one first [laughs] |
| | *Prolonged discussion between the mentors Jess and Gina about who they prioritise when people want their attention* | |
| 21. | Jess: | so the flip side then perhaps the point that I'm getting to is |
| 22. | | I wouldn't want to fall into the habit |
| 23. | | of potentially ignoring you…. |

24. I I I wouldn't want to take you for granted because you didn't
25. Gina: [dramatic voice]: the way that she takes //us: [laughs]\
26. /[laughter]\\ //[laughter]\
27. Jess: /oh yeah but you know you get rid of the noisy
28. and the impatient ones [laughs]\\

There is a great deal that could be said about this interaction, but my focus here is on the rapport constructed between Gina and Jess and its conceivable effect of marginalizing the other participants and especially Mary. The excerpt begins by contrasting Mary's quietness (lines 1–2) (a common focus of criticism as noted earlier) with the loudness of the two mentors which is robustly and almost belligerently asserted (lines 4, 6) provoking laughter from all those present. This is followed by a challenging and joshing assertion by Gina that Jess *is louder than most in the office* (line 8) which elicits more laughter and suggests the two mentors have a close, friendly relationship. Mary then says *I I like it* (line 10) and promises to try to speak loudly (line 11), an obvious attempt to join in with the mentors' interaction. However, the two mentors then initiate what turns into in a very prolonged discussion of the reasons why Mary should speak up. They begin this by arguing with each other about whether those who ask questions and speak loudest get help first (lines 12–20). Gina questions *you think?* (line 16) and then challenges (line 17) Jess's claims. Jess argues back *if you were gonna start prioritising things it's (oh) get rid of the loudest* first (lines 19–20). This argumentative pattern then continues as the two thrust and parry, leaving the others as audience (Bell 1984) or 'bystanders' (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). The final section of the excerpt illustrates Gina once again making fun of or mocking Jess. In response to Jess's claims that she wouldn't want to ignore Mary or take her for granted because she didn't speak loudly (lines 22–24), Gina retorts, using a dramatic tone of voice, *the way that she takes us* (line 25) which generates another burst of laughter from all present. My interpretation of this exchange is that it functions quite clearly to emphasize and reinforce the rapport between Gina and Jess, while it marginalizes the others and especially Mary. Both her quality face and social identity face are threatened by the implicit criticism of her quiet style, her equity rights are impugned by the criticism and her association rights are challenged by the marginalization and othering implicit in the indications that she does not fit in or belong. The jointly constructed humour and jocular abuse also disregard her association rights, as does the argument from which, although she is the topic with her behaviour as the trigger, she is clearly excluded.

## *Discussion*

The analyses in the preceding section have focused on how RMM can provide a valuable framework for gaining a deeper understanding of how microaggressions subtly exclude and 'other' those who for various reasons are regarded as not belonging or fitting in at work. The first group of examples illustrate the widespread tendency for mentors to recommend interns to seek advice even if it involves interrupting others and generally to speak more loudly. The message, expressed perhaps most explicit in Excerpt 3a, conveys the unmistakable assumption (invoking the culture order) that local ways of interacting are the norm and alternatives are not conceived of. Isaac and Henry both refer to the fact that their cultural norms are different and based on respect for status, but in both cases their mentors dismiss these as irrelevant and reassert the importance of what they claim are New Zealand interactional norms.

Interestingly, we have evidence that the Chinese interns who are the main target of this advice do not speak quietly all the time. In class, for example, and talking to their peers, they speak more loudly than in the workplace. Henry's response (Excerpt 3b) suggests a reason for this volume modification according to the context; in Chinese culture, being respectful to those of higher status involves speaking quietly. Further, somewhat less support comes from the fact that in a reflective interview, Sophie, a very competent Chinese information systems analyst, comments *I find people always talk softly …. I keep voice down*, and later in the same interview *I feel the office is so quiet so I I keep my voice down.* Sophie is an especially confident and expert professional in her area and thus perhaps feels able to speak to her colleagues and mentors at the same volume level as she speaks to her peers in other contexts.

Nevertheless, the point remains that these examples illustrate possible microaggressions. The mentors and workplace advisor advising the interns threaten their face needs and their sociality rights, even though their intentions are positive. Rapport management theory points to the importance of context and status differences in discussions of intercultural communication (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021: 102, 189, 246; Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009: 102), and it is clear that these factors are crucial in evaluating the 'othering' effects of even well-meaning advice.

Excerpts 4 and 5 focus on the advice that interns repeatedly receive about how to be sociable in the workplace. The workplace advisors, as well as the mentors, uniformly encourage the interns to greet their colleagues whenever they meet them and to socialize at tea breaks and lunchtime. Excerpt 4 illustrates how Salvador is explicitly given this advice, and there are many more such instances in our data. While the motivation is undeniably positive, this advice could be experienced as microaggression from an intern's perspective since it implicitly criticizes the commitment to work above socialization and the tendency to express respect by avoiding imposing on others' space. The instructions also suggest that the interns are sociolinguistically incompetent, thus infringing their quality face. Again, the effect is to emphasize the fact that the interns are not 'one of us' since they need to learn New Zealand ways of doing things. The mentors and advisors appear to invoke an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) of New Zealanders who behave similarly and share common values and beliefs, effectively othering the interns as 'foreigners' who do not belong.

Excerpt 6 takes this one step further in treating Mary as in need of protection from exposure to 'bad language'. Again, the example illustrates ways in which the intern's social identity face is threatened, and her competence impugned, with the undoubted effect of 'othering' her. The patronizing attitudes illustrated are also evident in Excerpt 7, where the intern is advised about the need to talk more loudly (as in the first group of excerpts discussed). However, she is also excluded from the humour which is jointly constructed between the two mentors who emphasize their shared experience and through their jocular abuse highlight their well-established friendly relationship, othering and excluding the other participants, and especially the intern Mary in the process.

## *Conclusion and implications*

So, to quote a question often asked by my friend Howard Giles, 'What does this approach buy us?', or what are the affordances of using the RMM to analyse microaggression. I have aimed to demonstrate in this chapter that this approach provides deeper insights into how microaggressions may be experienced by their victims and a fuller understanding of why they have this potential. The RMM offers a variety of insights into the potential effects of microaggression on individuals who are its targets. It enables us to dig a bit deeper into the issue of how participants may experience microaggressions as well as possible bases for the offence they give. Workplace microaggressions threaten people's face needs, both personal (quality face) and professional (social identity face), and they are especially powerful when directed from a mentor or workplace advisor to a relatively inexperienced intern. Similarly, the threats to an intern's freedom of action and right to be treated in the same way as others (equity rights) as well as their entitlement to associate with others, to be included rather than 'othered' (association rights), are almost certainly experienced as powerful instances of microaggression by the vulnerable interns when enacted by superiors.

So, turning to the implications for employers, colleagues and those supporting new migrants, what can be done to ameliorate their experience of workplace microaggression? According to Sue (2010), microaggressions are potentially more harmful than one-off experiences of blatant racism because they are invisible, insidious and can happen many times every day. They undoubtedly deserve attention. As this chapter demonstrates, metapragmatic analysis is crucial to assist in developing awareness of and respect for diverse interactional norms. Interactional style, like good manners, is not generally a focus of comment (Holmes 2015), but as sociolinguists and applied linguists we have a responsibility to draw cultural differences in this area to the attention of the employers and colleagues of those new to New Zealand workplaces.

It is also clear that we need to be much more aware of the impact of higher status and power, as well as thoughtless exclusionary in-group chat, including othering humour, on those to whom well-meaning advice is directed. Given the evidence in this chapter of a patronizing attitude towards new migrants (what I have earlier labelled 'benevolent patronage') (Holmes 2015), more reflection is required on the effect of both explicitly and implicitly criticizing different preferences in ways of doing things (such as volume of talk, willingness to interrupt others at work or ways of spending breaks). It is important, for instance, to develop awareness that speaking quietly to a superior and avoiding interrupting others are signs of respect, and that socializing at work is not regarded positively in some cultures. Ibram X. Kendi asserted that 'there is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity' (2019: 18). Similarly, many workplace interactions can be regarded as confirming or challenging majority group norms – the culture order – making the implicit point that the targets of advice don't belong. This is made explicit in most of the excerpts analysed which involve advice from mentors and workplace advisors on how the interns can better 'fit in', but it is also implicit in many other interactions where the behaviour of colleagues 'others' the interns, as illustrated in Excerpt 6.

Finally, we need to recognize and respect the courage and confidence required to challenge the norms which are being asserted and counter or resist them with alternative cultural norms where relevant, as did Isaac and Henry in Excerpts 2 and 3.[6] While the mentors fulfil their roles well as advisors and guides on sociocultural issues (as well as transactional work matters), greater openness to learning about the cultural norms of others would support the interns' willingness to explain alternatives. In Excerpt 7, Jess asks *how loudly do you speak at home*, expressing interest in Mary's norms; and in Excerpt 1 the workplace advisor notes that *sometimes people especially New Zealanders* are likely to react negatively when they hear people using a language other than English. She is right to warn Sophie about such attitudes, but surely it is time for us to develop more tolerance for multilingualism and greater interest in cultural diversity. Recent work on unconscious bias recommends a focus on fostering openness to others and working in collaborative groups to engage positively with out-group members as a way forward (Blank et al. 2016). A willingness to heed and respond constructively to challenges from minority group members and to work with them in developing more diverse styles of interaction are valuable steps on the journey to developing a truly multicultural working environment for all.

## *Acknowledgements*

I thank the interns, mentors and workplace advisors who generously recorded the material analysed in this chapter and Nicky Riddiford who provided access to the interns and the workplaces. I also thank Bernadette Vine and Meredith Marra, members of the core LWP team, who have read and commented very helpfully on a draft of this chapter. Matilda Neyland provided superb support checking and formatting references, and the Discourse Analysis Group provided a willing forum for discussion and warranting of my analyses. Finally, my thanks to Troy McConachy and the anonymous reviewer who made very helpful suggestions.

## *Appendix*

All names are pseudonyms. WA is always female.

| | |
|---|---|
| [laughs] : : | Paralinguistic features and editorial information in square brackets, colons indicate start/finish where relevant |
| + | Pause of up to one second |
| # | Indicates clause end when it is potentially ambiguous |
| ... //......\ ...<br>... /.......\\ ... | Simultaneous speech |
| (   ) | Unclear utterance |
| (hello) | Transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance |
| yes- | Utterance cut off |
| … | Section of transcript omitted |

## *Notes*

1 While this definition refers to microaggressions directed at specific racial groups, they may be directed at any social group, including those based on age, gender or ethnicity. De Bres and Holmes (forthcoming: 8) adopt a broader definition of microaggressions as 'subtle actions/words that (intentionally or not) other the addressee(s) or overhearer(s) and can be plausibly denied if challenged'.

2 https://Jess.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/05/planet-virus-seven-novelists-from-around-the-world-on-living-with-the-pandemic.

3 Pākehā is a widely used identification label for non-Māori New Zealanders, most typically those with British/European ancestry.

4 Excerpts 2 and 3 have been discussed in some detail elsewhere from a different perspective (Holmes 2015; Vine, Holmes and Marra 2012). More detail on the interns and the data set from which these excerpts are taken is also included in the Vine, Holmes and Marra (2012).

5 A more extended version of this excerpt is discussed in Holmes, Marra and King (2013) but is analysed here from a different perspective.

6 See also Chapter 9 of Greenbank (2020) for a detailed discussion of how Nina, a Columbian carer, resists being 'othered' by the residents she cares for.

## *References*

Anderson, Benedict (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso.

Baugh, John (2018), *Linguistics in Pursuit of Justice*, Cambridge University Press.

Bell, Allan (1984), 'Language Style as Audience Design', *Language in Society*, 13(2): 145–204.

Blank, Anton, Houkamau, Carla and Kingi, Hautahi (2016), *Unconscious Bias and Education: A Comparative Study of Māori and African American Students*, Oranui. http://www.oranui.co.nz/images/oranui_reports/unconscious-bias-and-education.pdf.

Brown, Penelope and Levinson, Stephen (1987), *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge University Press.
Daly, Nicola, Holmes, Janet, Newton, Jonathan and Stubbe, Maria (2004), 'Expletives as Solidarity Signals in FTAs on the Factory Floor', *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 945–64.
De Bres, Julia and Holmes, Janet (forthcoming), 'Ethnicity and Humour in the Workplace', in James Paul Gee and Mike Handford (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 2nd edn, Routledge.
Greenbank, Emily (2020), *Discursive Navigation of Employable Identities in the Narratives of Former Refugees*, John Benjamins.
Holmes, Janet (2015), 'Joining a New Community of Workplace Practice: Inferring Attitudes from Discourse', in Elke Stracke (ed.), *Intersections: Applied Linguistics as a Meeting Place*, 2–21, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Holmes, Janet (2018), 'Negotiating the Culture Order in New Zealand Workplaces', *Language in Society* 47(1): 33–56.
Holmes, Janet and Marra, Meredith (2004), 'Leadership and Managing Conflict in Meetings', *Pragmatics* 14(4): 439–62.
Holmes, Janet and Marra, Meredith (2023), 'The Battle Heads Underground: Unrecognised Bias in Everyday Workplace Talk', in Louise Mullany and Stephanie Schnurr (eds), *Globalisation, Geopolitics and Gender: Professional Communication at Work*, Routledge.
Holmes, Janet and Riddiford, Nicky (2009), 'Talk at Work: Interactional Challenges for Immigrants', in Vijay K. Bhatia, Winnie Cheng, Bertha Du-Babcock and Jane Lung (eds), *Language for Professional Communication: Research, Practice and Training*, 217–34, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
Holmes, Janet and Stubbe, Maria (2015), *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*, 2nd edn, Routledge.
Holmes, Janet, Marra, Meredith and Vine, Bernadette (2011), *Leadership, Discourse and Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press.
Holmes, Janet, Marra, Meredith and Vine, Bernadette (2012), 'Politeness and Impoliteness in New Zealand English Workplace Discourse', *Journal of Pragmatics* 44, 1063–76.
Holmes, Janet, Marra, Meredith and King, Brian W. (2013), 'How Permeable Is the Formal-Informal Boundary at Work? An Ethnographic Account of the Role of Food in Workplace Discourse', in Cornelia Gerhardt, Maximiliane Frobenius and Susanne Ley (eds), *Culinary Linguistics: The Chef's Special*, 191–210, John Benjamins.
Holmes, Janet, Vine, Bernadette and Marra, Meredith (2020), 'Contesting the Culture Order: Contrastive Pragmatics in Action', *Contrastive Pragmatics*, 1: 1–27.
Hui, Jon S. Y. (2014), *Analysing Interpersonal Relations in Call-centre Discourse*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington.
Jones, Tayari (2020), 'Planet Virus: Seven Novelists from Around the World on Living with the Pandemic', *The Guardian*, 5 July. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/05/planet-virus-seven-novelists-from-around-the-world-on-living-with-the-pandemic.
Kendi, Ibram X. (2019), *How to Be an Antiracist*, Penguin.
Kuśmierczyk, Ewa (2014), 'Trust in Action: Building Trust through Embodied Negotiation of Mutual Understanding in Job Interviews', in Geert Jacobs, Katja Pelsmaekers and Craig Rollo (eds), *Trust and Discourse: Organisational Perspectives*, 11–44, John Benjamins.
Lazzaro-Salazar, Mariana (2013), *Investigating Nurses' Professional Identity Construction in Two Health Settings in New Zealand*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington.

Lipinoga, Sarah (2008), 'Benevolent Racism in an Adult Educator's Talk', *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 23: 47–73.
McConachy, Troy and Helen Spencer-Oatey (2021), 'Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Pragmatics', in Michael Haugh, Daniel Z. Kádár and Maria Terkourafi (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*, 733–57, Cambridge University Press.
Pierce, Chester M. (1970), 'Offensive Mechanisms', in Floyd B. Barbour (ed.), *The Black Seventies*, 265–82, Porter Sargent.
Ryoo, Hye-Kyung (2005), 'Achieving Friendly Interactions: A Study of Service Encounters between Korean Shopkeepers and African-American Customers', *Discourse & Society* 16: 79–105.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2000), 'Face, (Im)politeness and Rapport', in Helen Spencer-Oatey (ed.), *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*, 11–47. Continuum.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2005), 'Rapport Management Theory and Culture', *Intercultural Pragmatics* 2–3: 335–46.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Franklin, Peter (2009), *Intercultural Interaction*, Palgrave Macmillan.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Daniel Z. (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (2003), 'Managing Rapport in Intercultural Business Interactions: A Comparison of Two Chinese-British Welcome Meetings', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 24(1): 33–46.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Daniel Zoltan (2021), *Intercultural Politeness*, Cambridge University Press.
Sue, Derald Wing (2010), *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, Wiley.
Sue, Derald Wing, Capodilupo, Christina M., Torino, Gina C., Bucceri, Jennifer M., Holder, Aisha M. B., Nadal, Kevin L. and Esquilin, Marta (2007), 'Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice', *American Psychologist* 62(4): 271–86.
Tawalbeh, Ayman (2017), *Pre and Post Migration: Identity, Language Use and Attitudes among the Wellington Iraqi Community*, PhD thesis. Victoria University of Wellington.
Villenas, Sofia (2002), 'Reinventing Educación in New Latino Communities: Pedagogies of Change and Continuity in North Carolina', in Stanton Wortham, Enrique G. Murillo and Edmund T. Hamann (eds), *Education in the New Latino Diaspora: Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 17–35, Greenwood Publishing Group.
Vine, Bernadette (2004), *Getting Things Done at Work: The Discourse of Power in Workplace Interaction*, John Benjamins.
Vine, Bernadette, Holmes, Janet and Marra, Meredith (2012), 'Mentoring Migrants: Facilitating the Transition to the New Zealand Workplace', in Miriam Locher and Holger Limburg (eds), *Advice in Discourse*, 145–65, John Benjamins.

## Chapter 3

# CREATING COMMON GROUND AND NEGOTIATING RELATIONSHIPS IN INTERCULTURAL TEAMWORK

Carolin Debray

### *Introduction*

Common ground, the 'sum of all the information that people assume they share' (Clark 2009: 116), plays a crucial role in any interaction both at a cognitive level, where it facilitates the exchange of information and is a necessary antecedent of language use (Levinson 2000), and at an affiliative level, where it facilitates the establishment of shared perspectives, trust and relational intimacy (Enfield 2008). While crucial for successful communication and for creating close relationships, common ground appears particularly precarious in intercultural relationships, where traditional markers of common ground, such as shared first language, accent, age, gender, nationality or ethnicity (Enfield 2008; Clark 1996), are more likely to be perceived as absent. This easily prompts conclusions (real or imagined) that common ground is limited and, therefore, that communicating and forming relationships will be challenging. This assumption of a lack of common group has implications for intercultural interactions. Clark, for example, argues that '[p]eople cannot take joint actions without assuming certain pieces of common ground' (1996: 129), thus where intercultural teams perceive little common ground, this may affect their ability to collaborate and take decisions, ultimately making it more difficult to establish rapport (Spencer-Oatey 2008).

At the same time, team members usually have to work with each other over prolonged periods of time and thus have plenty of opportunities to discover, create and enact common ground beyond initial perceptions. In addition, they have plenty of contextual common ground, through the organizational setting in which they operate and the tasks and goals they share as a team. Nonetheless, relational and task challenges are well documented in intercultural teams (Stahl et al. 2010; Tenzer and Pudelko 2017; Taras et al. 2019; Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014), thus raising the questions what common ground team members might perceive to have (or not) in common initially and how they then deal with the perceived common ground over time.

Taking inspiration from Spencer-Oatey's extensive work on rapport management (2008) and common ground (1998) in work contexts, this chapter investigates these questions through a case study of an MBA team in which cultural diversity was salient. After exploring the team's perception of common ground amid a 'culture-as-difference' discourse, it investigates the way the perceived lack of common ground impacted their interactions and their subsequent negotiations of common ground in the team, with the aim of showing that common ground is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon in which perception and interlocutor positionings play a major role in social affiliation and rapport management.

## *Common ground in intercultural interactions*

Common ground is central to individual's attempts to infer meaning and intention in a context-relevant way. Clark (1996) has suggested two major forms of common ground that individuals can infer and rely on: personal common ground and communal common ground. Personal common ground is built up incrementally between interlocutors and increases with each interaction, according to the degree to which information is shared. Communal common ground refers to the (assumed) shared knowledge among members of a cultural community or community of practice. This can include beliefs, procedures, norms or certain facts that are assumed to be shared (e.g. knowledge of the offside rule amid members of a football fan club and when to cheer and boo during a game). Clark (1996) emphasizes that each interlocutor is part of a large number of such communities including nations, professions, language communities, neighbourhoods, through hobbies or special interests. Interlocutors are often skilled at making these communities relevant in interaction, or through their physical appearance, in order to facilitate the inference of common ground.

It is important to note, though, that both types of common ground are matters of perception: even in personal common ground interlocutors do not know what information others store about themselves or the interaction, thus they can only make assumptions about the existing common ground, which may or may not be accurate. Similarly, no claim is made that the inferred common ground based on any community categories is actually shared; it rather constitutes a working assumption taken to inform communicative choices, which may or may not prove to be accurate over the course of an interaction.

While classic pragmatics has emphasized the importance of a certain amount of pre-existing common ground to carry through an interaction successfully, this has not been without criticism, especially from the intercultural field. In a detailed exploration of common ground in intercultural communication, Kecskes (2014) argued that common ground can be differentiated into an a priori core common ground and an a posteriori emergent common ground that interlocutors create during an interaction. He suggests that in intercultural interactions interlocutors rely much more heavily on emergent common ground. This means that they construct knowledge and frameworks of understanding together, establish a shared vocabulary and localized norms, which may differ from standard varieties, while relying less on, for example, formulaic language, to ensure meaning-making is successful. Kecskes (2014) concludes that the traditional approach of treating core common ground as a necessary precondition for communication overestimates its importance, and that a focus on emergent common ground and its construction can counterbalance this and add interesting insights to the management of meaning in intercultural interactions.

In an early study by Lindemann (2002), interlocutors with different L1s and different ethnic identities were asked to solve a collaborative map task while also assessing their attitudes towards the others' ethnicity. The task required interlocutors to construct common ground in regard to their maps to solve the task. The majority of participants managed to complete the task successfully, despite sometimes being faced with interactional turbulences. At the same time, several participants rated the interaction overall to be unsuccessful, despite having succeeded well with the task. Their perception thus was guided not by the emergent common ground that they had successfully constructed but by their (negative) attitudes towards the cultural other and their continued perception of difference and lack of affiliative common ground. While Lindemann's study has been conducted in an experimental setting and with relatively few participants, it raises an interesting possibility: on the one hand it seems to support Kecskes's assertion: the importance of core common ground indeed appears to be interactionally overestimated, as interlocutors managed to deal well with the tasks, despite lacking common ground in regard to the maps, their languages, vocabulary and so on. However, it also suggests that, if perceived to be absent, the actual interactional experience might not matter as much, as at least some interlocutors might still focus on the perceived differences and the perceived communication challenge, despite the potentially successful construction of emergent common ground.

While this deals with the unfolding interactions and their evaluations, the perception of a lack of common ground may also hinder intercultural interactions from occurring in the first place or may restrict interlocutors in their topic choice. Maynard and Zimmermann (1984) have shown early on that acquainted and unacquainted pairs usually started their interactions based on what they thought they had in common. For unacquainted pairs this was usually only the immediate setting in which they met, resulting in several turns of *setting-talk*. Upon making both third-party and self-introductions, interlocutors usually try to self-present the information that claims common ground between interlocutors (Pillet-Shore 2011), and interlocutors tend to engage in a lot of interactional work to establish the common ground they share when getting acquainted (Svennevig 2014). People might thus be more likely to engage in a conversation with those they think they have something in common, or they will stick to fairly superficial topics (such as the setting) if they do not perceive any additional common ground they could draw on.

Thus, while a lack of common ground might actually hinder interactions less than has traditionally been assumed at a conversational level, the perception of such a lack may still negatively affect interlocutor evaluations and perceptions of the interaction or keep them either fairly superficial or from occurring in the first place. Enfield's (2008) assertion that common ground is crucial at a relational level and influences the amount of trust, rapport and intimacy that interlocutors perceive to exist is also important here, as a perceived lack of common ground would likely lead to diminished trust, relational intimacy and solidarity among interlocutors.

The role that this perception plays thus needs to be investigated in more depth. What common ground do intercultural interlocutors perceive to be in place when they first meet? How does their perception affect their interactions and the evaluations of these interactions? How do they construct or enact common ground? Outside of a lab setting, these questions can only be investigated in a specific context, as the context and the progression over time in the creation/perception of common ground also need to be closely investigated.

For this purpose, this chapter will explore these questions through a case study of intercultural teamwork in the setting of an MBA degree. Teamwork is an interesting context to explore common ground as, institutionally, team members have to interact regularly over a longer period of time and have to establish some form of common ground to be successful. Common ground has also been discussed in the context of teamwork and clearly been attributed great importance while also being seen as problematic, as I will outline in the next section.

### *Common ground in teamwork*

Common ground is central to team interactions and collaborations in the workplace both at an affiliative and at a cognitive level: teams often need to work under time-pressure, self-manage responsibilities and be able to rely on each other's contributions. This requires common ground to facilitate interactions and generate trust, a fact well established in teamwork studies (see Reissner-Roubicek, this volume). Langley (2012), for example, not only maintains that finding common ground is essential for building positive relationships in workplaces but also stresses that this can be particularly challenging in diverse workplaces and teams. Pouthier (2017) points out that

> It is not enough for team members to share some common ground, it must be 'embraced through performances' (Fine and Hallett 2014: 1780), for the emotional charge carried by symbols decays if not revitalized through subsequent rituals (Collins 2004). (Pouthier 2017: 770)

As such common ground is not seen as something that is established once but that needs to be repeatedly performed, enacted and established in order for the team to reap its benefits.

Common ground may arise from different sources. Enfield (2013) makes a distinction between reciprocal and externally grounded relationships. Reciprocal relationships are defined as relationships where rights, obligations and status in the relationship are mutually defined (Enfield 2013), such as in a mother–daughter, waiter–customer or team member–team member relationship. Externally grounded relationships on the other hand are defined in relation to a third entity, that is, by how interlocutors stand towards a third party or an object. In a team, this means that all members have a reciprocal relationship that is grounded in the team but could also discover or add additional external grounders to their relationship, such as liking the same football club or similar music, or having common friends or enemies. By definition, having more grounders would then result in additional common ground. As such, team members ideally build sufficient time into their team meetings to allow for both the performance and renewal of already established common ground, as well as pay attention to identifying additional grounders they can further base their relationships on. The perception of how many potential commonalities exist and whether these can be drawn upon and established as common ground in the team seems crucial here and should also inform the strategies team members use to construct common ground in their interactions.

### *Strategies for constructing common ground*

Strategies for constructing common ground have received much research attention, although most of the research has focused on the more cognitive aspects of common ground, such as emergent common ground (Kecskes 2014) or the grounding of new information in delivery and receipt. In grounding, a number of micro-level strategies have been shown to play a role, including bare acknowledgements, non-verbal indications, repetitions, acknowledgement through indexicals and continuation (Clark 2015), and metapragmatic comments (Liu and Liu 2017). When looking at research on the affiliative aspects on common ground, the insights appear somewhat thinner.

Already in 1998, Spencer-Oatey and Xing pointed to the importance of actively establishing common ground in intercultural interactions and suggested that interlocutors with a rapport enhancement orientation engaged in strategic attempts to create common ground. Investigating the interactions in a meeting, they showed how participants pursued specific strategies, during their initial small talk, to create common ground between otherwise unfamiliar and culturally different others. The strategies they identified included: (1) displaying shared knowledge and shared experiences; (2) mentioning shared relationships; (3) stating assumptions and beliefs. It should be noted that in Spencer-Oatey and Xing's (1998) data these exchanges were often accompanied by humour and a lot of positivity in the remarks. Debray (2018) showed how troubles talk and joint complaining about shared obstacles also helped to construct and enact common ground in teams, while Enfield (2008) argues that both the amount of interaction and the kind of information traded play a role in the amount of common ground created. He has also shown that where one interlocutor assumes too little common ground the other will carefully correct this and carefully work out and demonstrate the perceived existing common ground, as it might otherwise harm rapport (Enfield 2008).

Further research on the affiliative aspects of common ground is thus needed. What has been little investigated overall, but which seems to potentially have an immense impact on intercultural interactions, are the perceptions and inferences of common ground that diverse interlocutors make initially. How these impact on social affiliation and how interlocutors then deal with common ground over time are relevant to educators and team leaders alike, as this perception might be influenced through team activities.

## Methodology

### *The data*

This study draws on data from a single case study of intercultural teamwork. The team was assembled as part of an MBA programme and needed to complete four separate, marked projects across a period of nine months. During this time, team meetings and team trainings were recorded, and fieldnotes were taken during social events and some of the initial team trainings, which included the whole MBA cohort.

The team was assembled by course coordinators with the goal to reflect as much diversity as possible. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the team composition in regard to different diversity categories. The data has been anonymized after collection and all names used are pseudonyms (Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger 2015). Ethical approval for the research was granted, and participant consent was initially obtained prior to the research project but was also a question of ongoing negotiation as recommended by Miller and Bell (2012), and this was especially important given the long period of data collection.

From the 100 hours of recorded team meetings, about 25 hours were selected for transcription and analysis. The selection included one project (10 h) in its entirety in order to have insights into all stages of a project. The rest of the selection was made to reflect a spread of interactions across time while prioritizing meetings in which all team members were present. After transcription the data was imported to the data analysis software MAXQDA and was then manually coded in several iterations.

In the first round, data was coded for the way interlocutors talked about common ground and what they thought they had or did not have in common overtly or indirectly. 'Culture' quickly emerged as an important category here in the team's narrative, thus any overt mention of the term 'culture' or 'cultural' was also coded for its use and context alongside any overt statements of similarity and difference.

In the second step, interactions were analysed and coded for the strategies the team used to construct affiliative common ground and highlight commonalities as opposed to differences interactionally. Here, it is important to note that while common ground is of course an ongoing issue and is subject to performance, negotiation and construction in any interaction, for the purpose of this chapter, the focus has been set on the affiliative dimension of common ground specifically, thus the way emergent common ground was constructed during meetings was not a focus of the analysis. Instead, interactions with overt displays and constructions of community and of having shared knowledge beyond the immediate content of the interaction were coded and analysed.

The single case study design allows for an in-depth exploration of the way common ground was perceived and constructed in a specific context, amid a specific group of people. This is useful as it provides a deep understanding of the way common ground is inferred and dealt with but of course has limitations with respect to generalizability (Yin 2014). The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to make any claims about teamwork in general but to point to some of the implications and consequences that narratives around cultural differences can have on the perceptions of common ground in a team and to point to some of the social consequences that stem from this.

## *Perceptions of common ground*

### *Cultural diversity as fundamental difference*

From the beginning of the teamwork, a narrative was developed by which the team members were perceived as fundamentally different and thus lacking common ground – a 'challenge' they would have to deal with and ideally, solve. One aspect that contributed to this was the team composition and the institutional discourse that surrounded the team's creation.

The team investigated here was part of a larger MBA cohort and worked alongside several other teams that had equally been assembled by facilitators. While the team in itself was very diverse (see Table 3.1), when looking across all teams, it was fairly obvious that all team compositions were very similar and that each team included two female and four to five male members, two South Asian members, one or two European or North American members, one or two East Asian members and one African member. In addition to these geographic and ethnic divisions, functional diversity had been taken into account, and where possible, one older member was included in the teams. How superficially similar all teams looked was fairly obvious to the student cohort and led to the following exchange on day 2 of class.

**Table 3.1** Overview of Team Members and Composition

| Name | Age | Gender | Country of Origin | Area of Expertise/Work |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Akshya** | 28 | Female | India | Marketing |
| **Alden** | 29 | Male | China | Accounting |
| **Bev** | 25 | Female | Nigeria | Oil and gas |
| **Bruno** | 39 | Male | Germany/Italy | Sales |
| **David** | 27 | Male | UK | Oil and gas |
| **Jay** | 25 | Male | India | Information Technology and Consultancy |

Extract 1: 2nd day of the teamwork: All teams are assembled in a lecture hall and facilitators have just asked if there are any questions left. (Interaction was recorded in fieldnotes, hence no close transcription is provided.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Student 1: | Have we been allocated into teams randomly? |
| 2 | Facilitator 1: | No |
| 3 | Student 2: | hh There are at least two Indians in every team hh |
| 4 | | [laughter and applause from the student cohort] |
| 5 | Facilitator 1: | That's right and there are two ladies in each team and then different functional backgrounds |
| 6 | Facilitator 2: | You were selected to reflect cultural diversity and that's great cause it will challenge you |

When given the opportunity in plenum, a student asks whether the team composition was random. When given the curt answer 'no', another student, who himself is Indian, laughingly comments that every team includes at least two Indians. This is received with loud laughter and applause by the room, which positions this utterance as both funny and brave: on the one hand it points to the fact that something might be verbalized here that all of them had thought, or discussed among themselves, but at the same time, the applause also constructs the utterance as brave and maybe a bit cheeky, that is, as something that ordinarily should not be mentioned explicitly. The utterance prompts an explicit confirmation that indeed diversity categories have been used in creating the team. Following on, another facilitator adds, 'You were selected to reflect cultural diversity and that's great cause it will challenge you.' This constructs cultural diversity in terms of fairly superficial categories and simultaneously constructs this diversity not as enriching, or an inherent feature of the cohort, but as a purposefully created problem and challenge that the teams need to learn to solve or live with.

This type of framing is taken on board almost immediately by the team, which drew on culture (usually in a definition of national culture) as a salient category to explain challenges, but also sometimes as an excuse for mistakes. Extract 2 gives a good example of this, occurring on the same day as the previous exchange.

Extract 2: The team has just completed a team training task successfully, in which deliberately little and confusing information was provided, so that the team had to work out the brief together. They are now sitting around a table with their facilitator, to debrief the training exercise.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Facilitator: | Other thoughts on the aim, on how you clarified the aim or didn't clarify the aim |
| 2 | David: | [gives a series of task-specific considerations first and then concludes] It is difficult cause communication is\ obviously quite (.) uh it's\it's hard with\ you know\ |

different cultures and backgrounds from everyone here\ I think we did enough this time to clarify and understood\ people were asking questions 'oh I don't understand or I still don't get this'\ we certainly had a much better idea

Despite the fact that the team successfully managed to solve the task, David points to the 'different cultures and backgrounds' as causing problems for communication. It seems likely that this is meant as a euphemism for the fact that not all language abilities are exactly at the same level in the team, which was a much discussed 'problem'. But it noticeably again uses a diffuse sense of 'different cultures' to explain communication breakdowns, even though those have not even occurred in the task that is being discussed but whose appearance is apparently seen and emphasized as a possibility.

Bruno verbalizes a similar statement the next day after having completed another shared task, this time unsuccessfully.

Extract 3: This utterance takes place during a debriefing session, where Bruno chips in to a discussion of what exactly has led to the team failing the task. The debrief takes place in a busy corridor and was recorded in form of fieldnotes.

Bruno: It's because we are all so different

Bruno personalizes the utterance more than David has, explicitly stating that 'we' are all so different and constructs a clear causality between their failure in the task and their cultural diversity. In none of these cases was this sense challenged by the present facilitators. Instead, they themselves contributed to establishing 'national culture equals difference and challenges' as the main frame through which diversity was approached (Piller 2017). At the same time, other framings would have been possible, such as 'diversity as making the team more creative and potentially better than less diverse teams' (DiStefano and Maznevski 2000; Adler and Gundersen 2008); or as a great opportunity for establishing international networks and links that might be drawn on in the future.

Team members of course also spoke appreciatively about the opportunity to engage and learn from each other, so in their exchanges other frames were present. However, 'culture as difference and problem' remained the dominant framing in the initial stages of their teamwork, and with that, assumptions of very little common ground were established. Ironically, then, the idea that the team was very diverse and that this diversity would negatively impact team communication and the teamwork was one of the first very obvious assumptions that the team shared. While this became common ground, it was hardly common ground that fulfilled an affiliative purpose. It could have potentially developed this effect, but a more positive identity construction around diversity would have been needed than was the case.

*Existing common ground at the beginning*

At the same time, some striking similarities also existed in the team, with all team members having decided (and were financially able) to leave their jobs, move to another country and begin an MBA with a clear goal to improve their positions and chances for a career in business. All had also worked abroad for at least some time and spoke more than one language and despite the fact that one team member was slightly older than the others this difference was minimized from the beginning and a sense of being of a similar age and at a similar career stage prevailed throughout the teamwork. Thus, there was scope for perceiving common ground. Team members could have created shared identities and with that communal common ground around the notion of being part of a young, global, highly mobile elite of future business leaders, or of being modern nomads, but this was not emphasized in the team. Instead, national identities and a sense of being different prevailed in a discourse focused on cultural differences instead of commonalities.

Aside from these – again structural and somewhat superficial – observations around commonalities, a number of shared assumptions were also evident from the beginning, such as that fundamentally democratic principles were to apply in the team and that all team members were required to actively participate. Participation was a huge topic initially as the team felt that not everyone was participating equally (see Debray and Spencer-Oatey 2019), thus many comments were made both in the interviews and in team meetings and closer analysis here shows that – while team members all cite different behaviours as 'contributing' or 'participating' – what is really seen as participation across team members is 'speaking a lot in meetings'. Thus, even at a deeper level, specific task-relevant beliefs were clearly part of common ground and facilitated the teamwork – yet it seems they were often not recognized as such, leading to a potential overestimation of diversity in the team.

There were also some remarkable shared assumptions specifically in regard to cultural understandings and assumptions that went unchallenged.

Extract 4: On day 2 of their teamwork training the team is standing with their facilitator in the corridor in front of a door behind which their next task will start. The following exchange occurs before the start of the task:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Facilitator: | So that's the brief and you got 25 minutes from now [puts the paper containing the brief on the floor] |
| 2 | Bruno: | Okay [picks up brief and hands it to David] I would say David/ can you read it/ because you |
| 3 | Akshya: | you can |
| 4 | David: | [reads] Stock take/ background/ your company warehouse is located nearby/ the warehouse contains products that are consecutively numbered but stored randomly= |
| 5 | Alden: | =Slow/slow down please |
| 6 | David: | Sorry [reads] The warehouse contains products that are consecutively numbered, but stored randomly |

Bruno nominates David to read out the brief and picks up the brief and directly hands the paper to him. Bruno starts to initiate an explanation stating 'because you' but does not complete the utterance. Akshya then also starts to initiate an explanation in line 3, backing up Bruno by picking up where he left of, but also ends up not committing to an explanation for choosing David.

Bruno in the debrief of this task eventually does give the explanation, which is the fact that David is a 'native speaker'. David will end up reading out all briefs to the team (giving him ample opportunity to explain and frame briefs and make summary statements about their tasks) for the entire rest of the teamwork. This is never challenged, neither directly nor indirectly. This is particularly notable, as – while David is indeed an L1 speaker of English – he is not the only L1 speaker of English in the team: Bev also speaks English as her L1, and Akshya and Jay both indicated their command of English as 'native' as they have received all their schooling in English, though they speak other languages at home. However, a culture order (Holmes 2018) in which white British English is constructed as more valued and an understanding that not all Englishes are equal (at least in the context of a UK education institution) becomes apparent here. This assumption is apparently shared as it is not negotiated nor contested in any way, and in the interaction Bruno and Akshya work together to make this apparent. Interestingly, the potential disadvantage of having the 'most fluent' speaker read out the brief becomes quickly apparent as Alden immediately interrupts David's reading flow in line 5 to ask David to slow down, an occurrence that is repeated almost every time a brief is read out. However, this does not prompt a re-evaluation of the assumption that David is the most suitable for the task. David is also called upon to proofread every assignment before submission as the linguistically 'most competent' member.

While a small example, this exemplifies how certain beliefs about power, cultural identities and diversities were shared by the team, from the moment of its inception, and required little negotiating to find common ground. Other examples could be given: beliefs about certain work practices and approaches, such as brainstorming and decision-making, required little explicit negotiation and knowledge, and ideas of certain work processes were quite obviously shared – however, these commonalities were taken as normal and obvious, instead of being seen as instances of commonalities, while differences were noticed and interpreted as a lack of common ground.

This raises the question of how the team has – or has not – constructed common ground from here. The next sections will trace some of the strategies team members have engaged in.

## *Strategies for creating common ground*

### *Identifying cultural commonalities*

From the recorded data there was a fairly large difference in the way common ground was created at the team level compared with between two individuals.

Given that their cultural diversity was seen as one of the reasons that little common ground existed, one would anticipate that finding cultural common ground would help to bridge this gap and allow the team to feel more in tune. Strikingly, conversations that seemed targeted at discovering and enacting communal common ground, that is, common ground that is inferred based on identities and group memberships almost exclusively happened between individual team members but not at the team level (i.e. with all team members present and as part of a team interaction with the joint attention focused on the interaction).

Between individual members such interactions occurred in varying frequencies. The next extract provides an example of such an overt creation of cultural common ground between the two female members of the team.

Extract 5: Before the start of a meeting, Bev and Akshya discuss the experience of being a woman in their respective home countries, India and Nigeria. This segment is part of a longer exchange about the topic.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Akshya: | In India (.) women are big/ uhm biggest enemies of women because THEY do a lot of moral policing (.) they‘re [like (.) why do you do that? |
| 2 | Bev: | [YEAH my mum called me the other day "»WHAT you doing Bev«/ you‘re still at scho::ol"= |
| 3 | Akshya: | =yeah. |
| 4 | Bev: | "»What is [your husband supposed to EAT?«" |
| 5 | Akshya: | [yeah/ my mum does that |
| 6 | Bev: | "Have you cooked for him?"= |
| 7 | Akshya: | =EXACTLY |

This exchange occurs about two months into the teamwork and appears to be their first exchange on the topic of women in their respective home societies – though the topic is later revisited many times, performing and enacting the common ground that is initially being constructed here. The interaction was brought on by a moment in class in which Akshya argued for advocating for women in India, which Bev compliments her on just before this exchange – the two then engage in a longer exchange in which they share their experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society and construct a lot of commonalities in the way women are treated in India and Nigeria – and importantly, the way they themselves experience gendered behaviour.

The turn-taking is fairly fast and a lot of overlap and latching exists between all turns; however, these remain collaborative throughout and we have clear indications of uptake of the other's utterances (i.e. in lines 2, 5 and 7) showing that they are carefully listening to the other's contribution, in spite of the overlaps and the fast pace. While the topic is not a particularly pleasant one, the interaction itself is very animated and features a lot of emphasis, variations in speed and pitch of delivered utterances, overall contributing to a sense of excitement that seems to run through the entire interaction and that seems present, because the other not just takes an interest in these experiences but actually shares them and reciprocally volunteers their experiences. Akshya and Bev thus construct communal common ground here by constructing 'their cultures' as similar, not different, and by simultaneously enacting this similarity in the interaction by way of overlap, supportive utterances and mirroring each other's contributions (i.e. line 3 'Yeah my mum called me the other day' and line 5: 'yeah my mum does that'). This constructs affiliative common ground in the sense that, through Bev's initial compliment to Akshya about her contribution in class and this excited discussion, a sense of solidarity and of sharing the same experiences is created, which seems to stretch beyond the immediate boundaries of this interaction. The fact that this topic is revisited repeatedly by Akshya and Bev over the course of the teamwork also suggests this transcendence of the immediate context, and the topic becomes the source of a shared performance of common ground.

However, such 'discoveries' of cultural common ground are very rare: in fact, over the course of the nine months of teamwork, only a few interactions that challenge the assumption that the team's respective cultures are fundamentally different take place at the team level. This is not just a question of uptake: very few topics seem to be brought up that would offer an opportunity for more personal exchanges or conversations about cultural matters. In some moments information seems to be almost deliberately withheld from the team, as Extract 6 shows.

Extract 6: The following exchange takes place in the team's messenger chat, after David has noticed Bruno's absence from their classes.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12.25 | David: | Hope your ok Bruno |
| 12.36 | Bruno: | Hi David, thx, I am fine. Will be back in {University} tomorrow evening. I am in {hometown} for private commitments. |

The exchange is posted in the team's shared messenger chat, thus all other team members have likely read it, but no further message is sent on this topic (or in fact on the same day), not even by David who initiates the exchange. Bruno's relative cryptic remark about 'private commitments' does not invite any further questions, but also does not offer much anyone could say in response; hence it is received only by silence. Enfield (2008) emphasizes that the amount and quality of information traded in interaction is crucial in constructing common ground and also marks relational closeness at different levels. Thus, sharing little information constructs the relationships as distant, and unsurprisingly sharing little information results in constructing little common ground. It should be noted that this is not an isolated incident, there are other moments where team members cite 'personal or private commitments or reasons', without revealing personal information, and the amount of personal information exchanged overall remains fairly limited.

That does not mean that no common ground is constructed at the team level. However, it means that the common ground that is constructed is related much more tightly to the team's shared experience in the here and now and less to their other identities and communities outside of the MBA experience. Extract 7 provides an example of such an enactment of common ground.

Extract 7: At the start of a team meeting, the meeting room's computer does not boot correctly, leading Jay to hit several keys on the keyboard, which subsequently freezes.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Akshya: | AH AH [AH A::::H |
| 2 | Jay: | [Ahhh= |
| 3 | Bruno: | = OH Oh oh. |
| 4 | Bev: | why is everybody singing something? |
| 5 | Bruno: | that's an asset (.) that's an |
| 6 | | ((laughter)) |
| 7 | David: | you just depreciated it hh |
| 8 | | ((prolongued laughter))= |
| 9 | Bruno: | =otherwise there is going to be a large depreciation hh |
| 10 | Akshya: | that keyboard is screwed now. |
| 11 | Bev: | how can a keyboard be screwed by that? |

The interaction and the humour might seem cryptic at first reading – a sure sign that common ground is at play that, as outsiders, we likely have no access to. In the first three lines the team members react to the supposedly broken keyboard, with exclamations that appear so exaggerated as to be humorous and thus not actually blame Jay for breaking it. Bev in line 4 appears not to understand the exclamations of her colleagues, but instead of answering her, in line 5 Bruno continues the jocular treatment of the incident by stating 'that's an asset that's an' which is immediately followed, and partially drowned out, by loud laughter from the entire team. Bruno's joke draws on common ground created through their joint participation in an accounting class, which already before has been the butt of jokes. The recipient laughter (line 6) makes it clear that all team members position themselves as having understood and being appreciative of the joke. David and Bruno then continue to build on the joke by making reference to another accounting category (depreciation), which again is received with communal and shared laughter. Common ground beyond the immediate team context is enacted here as Bruno's joke points to other commonalities they share. Through this exchange no new common ground is necessarily discovered: jokes about accounting classes have been made before, and all of them know that they are all taking the same accounting class, so this mostly represents an example in which their common ground is 'embraced through performance' (Pouthier 2017: 770). This is one of many such examples (see Debray 2018 for further examples) that undoubtedly form an important part of team interaction and overall help to construct a good mood in the team and help to establish solidarity; however, it does not add any new external grounders (Enfield 2013) to the relationships – something that remained fairly scarce in the team up until the very end.

## *Implications and conclusions*

The team had established very early on a perception that they did not have much in common. This was at least in part due to a discourse of a fairly narrowly defined form of cultural-diversity-as-challenge and different-cultures-as-fundamental-differences. This is not a surprising understanding, as even in contexts that endorse cultural diversity such a framing of culture is common (see Piller 2017 for the argument that this framing underpins virtually all intercultural communication and diversity discourses). As a case in point, all participants seemed familiar with and seemed to subscribe to such a framing, despite their different industries, educational and national backgrounds. This was further enforced by the institutional discourse represented through the facilitators.

This assumption seems to have had relatively little effect on their ability to create meaning. This is not to say that it did not have any impact – it likely did, but at least despite these perceived fundamental differences no big communication breakdowns were observed and usually team meetings often progressed quite smoothly. Of course, there are some instances of turbulences or conflict in the data (see Debray and Spencer-Oatey 2019; Debray 2020), but it is far from straightforward to attribute these simplistically to cultural factors. This might have been due to the fact that there was more common ground than assumed or to the fact that team members accommodated enough to each other because of the perceived lack of common ground, to make communication accessible and possible, as has also been demonstrated by Kecskes (2014).

The perception of lacking common ground seems to have had an immense effect, however, on their sense of social affiliation and the way they tried to construct common ground throughout their team's lifecycle. Since a narrative of difference prevailed, 'finding common ground' appears to have been less of an option and very few attempts to constructing deeper level common ground and social affiliation appear to have been made – with Akshya and Bev being the exception, rather than the rule. Incidentally, the two of them ended up being very close friends, thus developing a stronger sense of social affiliation and bridging the perception of cultural differences. The other team relations are, for the most part, certainly very friendly and team members clearly seem to want to get on well with each other and sometimes even spend time with each other outside of team meetings. They are rarely very deep, though, and usually do not seek to construct additional grounders or discover existing common ground (though note that this is potentially the case between individual team members. For this study mostly team interactions were observed).

Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021: 291ff) point to the importance of common ground for relationships and highlight that intercultural interactants may struggle to identify topics for conversation, hindering their ability to foster relations. This chapter adds empirical insights to this observation, showing the consequences of a perceived lack of common ground for relationships more broadly and demonstrating the crucial importance of (perceived) common ground for the construction of intercultural relations. The case study further illustrates the need to treat the affiliative side of common ground as its own important area of research alongside the cognitive side of common ground. More research is needed in this area, as the two sides do not necessarily appear to coincide and the conditions under which affiliative common ground is constructed, as well as the strategies used to construct it, need further exploration.

We have also seen how institutional discourses impact the perception of common ground and thus the relationships formed within the institution, which has important implications for educators and educational institutions as well as for intercultural practitioners, such as trainers and coaches. Higher education institutions as well as big companies often produce a narrative of being internationalized institutions and of hosting and bringing together people from all over the world. This, however, clashes with a discourse of culture-as-difference and challenge that was quite uncritically reproduced in one such internationalized institution in the data collected for this study. How culture is talked about in institutions and teams clearly has implications for the way people interact and collaborate and for the relationships people build with each other. A discourse of culture-as-difference can make the construction of profound relationships and the discovery of common ground harder than a potential positive discourse that emphasizes common ground and shared identities, which inevitably exist in an institutional context. While it might not be possible to completely alter such a discourse, institutions and educators could engage with this topic more deliberately and, for example, also introduce counter-discourses that emphasize commonalities and shared identities (i.e. members as global nomads), and challenge uncritical narratives around culture-as-difference when reproduced among team members or students.

This is not to argue that no real cultural differences may be encountered amid students, team members or co-workers, but in the case here, the discourse of cultural differences made people somewhat blind to the commonalities they shared. Helping intercultural teams and diverse classrooms to also recognize their commonalities, instead of just understanding and managing differences, constitutes a very important contribution that intercultural educators can make to improve intercultural communication and relationships.

## *Appendix*

*Transcription key*

| **Symbol** | **Meaning** |
|---|---|
| / | Intonation unit boundary |
| [ | Overlapping talk |
| . | Falling intonation |
| ? | High rising terminal |
| : | Lengthened sound |
| (.) | Short pause |
| = | Unit follows another with no discernible interval |

| | |
|---|---|
| [word] | Description of activity |
| CAPS | Louder voice |
| "utterance" | Reported speech |
| »utterance« | Noticeably faster delivery than adjacent talk |
| ((laughter)) | Several/all interlocutors laugh jointly |
| hh | Individual laughter |
| <u>word</u> | Emphasis |
| {word} | Anonymized term |

## *References*

Adler, Nancy J. and Gundersen, Allison (2008), *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, Thomson South-Western.

Clark, Eve V. (2015), 'Common Ground', in Brian MacWhinney and William O'Grady (eds), *The Handbook of Language Emergence*, 328–53, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Clark, Herbert H. (1996), *Using Language*, Cambridge University Press.

Clark, Herbert H. (2009), 'Context and Common Ground', in Jacob L. Mey (ed.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics*, 116–18. Elsevier.

Debray, Carolin (2018), 'Troubles Talk as a Relational Strategy in Intercultural Teamwork', PhD Thesis, University of Warwick. http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/111213/1/WRAP_Theses_Debray_2018.pdf.

Debray, Carolin (2020), 'Managing Rapport in Team Conflicts: Dealing with "the Elephant in the Room"', in Dawn Archer, Karen Grainger and Piotr Jagodziński (eds), *Politeness in Professional Contexts*, 129–50, John Benjamins.

Debray, Carolin and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2019), '"On the Same Page?' Marginalisation and Positioning Practices in Intercultural Teams', *Journal of Pragmatics* 144: 15–28.

DiStefano, Joseph J. and Maznevski, Martha L. (2000), 'Creating Value with Diverse Teams in Global Management', *Organizational Dynamics* 29(1): 45–63.

Enfield, Nicholas J. (2008), 'Common Ground as a Resource for Social Affiliation', in Istvan Kecskes and Jacob Mey (eds), *Intention, Common Ground and the Egocentric Speaker-Hearer*, 223–54, DeGruyter Mouton.

Enfield, Nicholas J. (2013), *Relationship Thinking: Agency, Enchrony, and Human Sociality*, Oxford University Press.

Hinds, Pamela J., Neeley, Tsedal B. and Cramton, Catherine Durnell (2014), 'Language as a Lightning Rod: Power Contests, Emotion Regulation, and Subgroup Dynamics in Global Teams', *Journal of International Business Studies* 45(5): 536–61.

Holmes, Janet (2018), 'Negotiating the Culture Order in New Zealand Workplaces', *Language in Society* 47: 33–56.

Kecskes, Istvan (2014), *Intercultural Pragmatics*, Oxford University Press.

Langley, Sue (2012), 'Positive Relationships at Work', in Sue Roffey (ed.), *Positive Relationships: Evidence Based Practice across the World*, 163–80, Springer.

Levinson, Stephen C. (2000), *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*, MIT Press.

Lindemann, Stephanie (2002), 'Listening with an Attitude: A Model of Native-Speaker Comprehension of Non-Native Speakers in the United States', *Language in Society* 31(3): 419–41.

Liu, Ping and Liu, Huiying (2017), 'Creating Common Ground: The Role of Metapragmatic Expressions in BELF Meeting Interactions', *Journal of Pragmatics* 107: 1–15.

Maynard, Douglas W. and Zimmerman, Don H. (1984), 'Topical Talk, Ritual and the Social Organization of Relationships', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 47(4): 301–16.

Miller, Tina and Bell, Linda (2012), 'Consenting to What? Issues of Access, Gate-Keeping and "Informed" Consent', in Tina Miller, Maxine Birch, Melanie Mauthner and Julie Jessop (eds), *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, 61–75, Sage Publications.

Piller, Ingrid (2017), *Intercultural Communication: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn, Edinburgh University Press.

Pillet-Shore, Danielle (2011), 'Doing Introductions: The Work Involved in Meeting Someone New', *Communication Monographs* 78(1): 73–95.

Pouthier, Vanessa (2017), 'Griping and Joking as Identification Rituals and Tools for Engagement in Cross-Boundary Team Meetings', *Organization Studies* 38(6): 753–74.

Saunders, Benjamin, Kitzinger, Jenny and Kitzinger, Celia (2015), 'Anonymising Interview Data: Challenges and Compromise in Practice', *Qualitative Research* 15(5): 616–32.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2008), 'Face, (Im)Politeness and Rapport', in Helen Spencer-Oatey (ed.), *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport through Talk across Cultures*, 2nd edn, 11–47, Continuum.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (1998), 'Relational Management in Chinese-British Business Meetings', in Susan Hunston (ed.), *Language at Work*, 31–55, British Association for Applied Linguistics in Association with Multilingual Matters Lt.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Daniel Zoltan (2021), *Intercultural Politeness*, Cambridge University Press.

Stahl, Günter K., Maznevski, Martha L., Voigt, Andreas and Jonsen, Karsten (2010), 'Unraveling the Effects of Cultural Diversity in Teams: A Meta-Analysis of Research on Multicultural Work Groups', *Journal of International Business Studies* 41(4): 690–709.

Svennevig, Jan (2014), 'Direct and Indirect Self-Presentation in First Conversations', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 33(3): 302–27.

Taras, Vas, Baack, Daniel, Caprar, Dan, Dow, Douglas, Froese, Fabian, Jimenez, Alfredo and Magnusson, Peter (2019), 'Diverse Effects of Diversity: Disaggregating Effects of Diversity in Global Virtual Teams', *Journal of International Management* 25(4): 100689.

Tenzer, Helene and Pudelko, Markus (2017), 'The Influence of Language Differences on Power Dynamics in Multinational Teams', *Journal of World Business* 52(1): 45–61.

Yin, Robert K. (2014), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage Publications.

## Chapter 4

# BUILDING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EMAILS

Jiayi Wang

### *Introduction*

Email communication is ubiquitous in today's globalized world, and managing intercultural relationships through email is increasingly imperative. A growing number of universities have published guidelines for students and staff on email etiquette (e.g. Cambridge University 2021; Yale University 2021). This signals that determining how to best construct messages that can achieve communication goals while appropriately reflecting the social status of the participants can be challenging for L1 and L2 speakers alike. While there is little research on L1 speakers, research in the field of L2 pragmatics has highlighted that L2 speakers – even highly proficient ones – may have difficulty constructing status-unequal emails, partly due to a lack of broadly accepted conventions for this hybrid form of oral and written communication and partly due to pragmatic and cultural differences (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011, 2018; Wang and Halenko 2022b). While a considerable number of studies have investigated L2 email discourse, intercultural rapport management and evaluation through email have rarely been examined.

This chapter addresses this gap in the research by examining Chinese L2 users' rapport-building strategies and British L1 and Chinese L2 English users' evaluations of these strategies. Specifically, it reports on a study that explored (1) how Chinese L2 English users build relationships in email communication compared to L1 users, (2) how L1 and L2 speakers evaluate these relationship-building strategies and (3) the rationale behind these perceptions. The study compared Chinese L2 users' request emails to faculty with those of British students collected over a year. Additionally, individual and focus group interviews were conducted to reflect on the email data, and the British L1 and Chinese L2 users' evaluations of the L2 users' relational strategies were analysed.

The next section reviews intercultural studies on rapport management and evaluation, as well as email requests from an L2 or English as a foreign language (EFL) user. The chapter then introduces the three data types employed by the study to analyse email practices, perceptions and evaluations. Next, it presents and summarizes the findings of the three research questions. Then, it explores the research and pedagogical implications of the results, and finally, it highlights suggestions for future research to extend the understanding of how to build and manage intercultural relationships successfully through email.

## Literature review

### *Conceptualizing intercultural interaction*

Intercultural interaction refers to interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds, involving linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours and their contextual interpretations. Some intercultural studies have employed the term 'intercultural' without defining it, automatically treating the interactions between members of different language, ethnic and/or national groups as intercultural and labelling those interactions as such (e.g. Wang and Spencer-Oatey 2014, 2015a, 2015b). However, if group membership determines culture, then all interactions could be intercultural, as individuals often simultaneously hold multiple identities, for example, racial, professional and organizational identities (Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2017). Nevertheless, since folk conceptualizations should be accommodated by broader theorization, understanding intercultural interactions as they are perceived in real life may serve as a good starting point for research. In other words, while the use of big labels, such as 'Chinese' and 'British', is controversial (Holliday 1999), awareness of how participants perceive and use these labels can provide empirical evidence for further abstraction. Moreover, there is an emerging call for intercultural researchers to prioritize the perceptions and interpretations of group members (Banks 2010; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021).

Therefore, this study used the perceptions of the email writers to define what was 'intercultural'. It focused on the participants' usage of these group membership terms and labels to interpret and manage relationships that culture was likely to affect. In this study, all Chinese L2 email users regarded their email communication with their British professors as an intercultural interaction; therefore, all the L2 email data were treated as intercultural email communications.

### *Managing relationships across cultures*

'Relationship' is a broad-ranging term in daily usage. The definition of the term is seemingly easy to grasp, but its folk conceptualizations can obscure different research perspectives. Within pragmatics, since the 'relational turn', various labels and terms have emerged, including 'relational work' (Locher and Watts 2005), 'relational practice' (Holmes et al. 2011) and 'rapport management' (Spencer-Oatey 2008).

First used by Locher and Watts (2005), 'relational work' refers to 'all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction, and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice' (p. 96). By concentrating primarily on the discursive struggle over politeness, relational work 'positions itself as a discursive approach to the management of relational meaning' (Langlotz and Locher 2013: 88), that is, how people negotiate the meaning of politeness in verbal interaction. Given its discursive starting point, research on relational work has largely been limited to analysing utterances.

Taking a somewhat different perspective, Holmes and colleagues (Holmes and Marra 2004; Holmes et al. 2011) focused on the manifestations of relational practice in workplace discourse. They adopted the term 'relational practice' (RP) from Fletcher (2001), who defined the term as a way of working that reflects relational logic regarding effectiveness and requires considerable relational skills – such as empathy, mutuality, reciprocity and a sensitivity to emotional context – to analyse intercultural workplace discourse. Using naturally occurring conversation data collected in New Zealand, Holmes and colleagues (Holmes and Marra 2004; Holmes et al. 2011) illustrated how RP is performed through, for example, humour and small talk in the workplace, and showed that RP is important in the running of departments and organizations.

In comparison, Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management theory seems to emphasize the reverse. Rapport was defined as 'people's subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony or smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations' (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009: 102). Rather than limiting her focus to discourse, Spencer-Oatey concentrated on the conceptualization of relationships and affective perceptions, particularly in intercultural settings (Spencer-Oatey 2011). Her framework defines three bases of rapport – face, interactional goals and sociality rights and obligations – and proposes that people can hold four main rapport orientations: enhancement, maintenance, neglect and challenge. Rapport enhancement orientation is the focus of this study. Spencer-Oatey's framework has been widely adopted to analyse intercultural encounters, such as university seminars (Nakane 2006), sales negotiations (Planken 2005) and American Chinese official interactions (Wang and Spencer-Oatey 2015a).

Although these studies have enabled consideration of relational management from different perspectives, most have focused primarily on face-to-face interactions (e.g. Wang and Spencer-Oatey 2015a), with a few exceptions (e.g. studies on email relationships; Bjørge 2007; Rau and Rau 2016). Thus, further study of intercultural email rapport is needed.

Spencer-Oatey recently extended her influential rapport management framework to rapport evaluation (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). In addition to interpersonal sensitivities around the bases of rapport, the framework now includes the socio-moral order as another level of evaluation warrant, which consists of social conventions and moral values and principles that participants draw on when making judgements. Individuals bring their expectations into interaction. If a behaviour falls within or only slightly outside their normalcy zones, it may pass unnoticed. If the deviation is greater and falls outside their normalcy zones, the behaviour will trigger politeness evaluation. The expansion of the rapport management framework was achieved by exploring theoretical frameworks and empirical work from other disciplines, notably cross-cultural psychology (e.g.

Schwartz 2011) and moral psychology (e.g. Haidt and Kesebir 2010). Given the increasing importance of building relationships through intercultural email communication, as well as the lack of research in this area, the present study applied this framework (Spencer-Oatey 2008; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021) to explore intercultural rapport management and evaluation through email.

*Email requests using English as a second or foreign language*

Research has shown that users of English as a second language can struggle with certain pragmatic aspects of composing status-congruent emails (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2018; Wang and Halenko 2022b). Common features have been found in L2 request emails to faculty, including inappropriate terms of address, weak reasons or justifications, preferences for directness and formality, insufficient mitigation and failure to acknowledge the imposition on staff (Chen 2015; Chen et al. 2016; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011; Li 2018; Wang 2011). Additionally, L2 requests may not give the faculty choice in complying with the request and may present a tight time frame (e.g. 'Please answer me as soon as possible'; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011).

Some of these features may be attributed to the influence of the users' language and culture. For example, regarding delayed requests and preferences for directness, prior research has found that an inductive approach is preferred over a deductive approach in Chinese status-unequal requests (Zhu 2017). This means that effort is spent on elaboration of background information before expression of the request itself. In Chinese language and culture, supportive moves are considered mandatory, and direct request strategies tend to be used in head acts (e.g. 'I want a reference letter'), because these acts do not necessarily play a key role in expressing politeness (Zhu 2017). However, in English-language interaction, such a requesting strategy could easily become face-threatening and evoke a negative response from the faculty. Reports of faculty feeling disturbed and irritated by inappropriate L2 emails abound (Biesenbach-Lucas 2007; Danielewicz-Betz 2013); however, only a few studies have investigated faculty perceptions and evaluations of L2 emails (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011, 2016; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig 1996; Hendriks 2010).

Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) study discussed the affective response (positive or negative) to sixty-five L2 and thirty-four L1 emails of the faculty recipient and non-recipient faculty member who were the authors of the study. Because students do not have the institutional status to issue directives to faculty (e.g. 'I would like to have my oral defense on the 25th of Aug . . . please tell me whether or not this date . . . is OK'; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig 1996: 59), the use of these forms put the emails seriously out of status. Furthermore, the authors found that L2 students used personal time needs (e.g. 'I . . . have to go back to Japan by the first week of Sept'; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig 1996: 66) more often than L1 speakers, who tended to appeal to institutional deadlines. Non-native speakers employed fewer downgraders and acknowledged the imposition of the request on the faculty less frequently than the native speakers did; these actions generally allowed less room for negotiation. The negative affect requests were deemed rude or inappropriate, producing some level of desire not to fulfil the request (Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig 1996). Similarly, Hendriks (2010) found that the underuse of request modifications by L2 Dutch speakers of English had a negative effect on the L1 speakers' perceptions of the sender's personality.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) investigated British lecturers' perceptions of Greek students' emails. A perception questionnaire was used to examine the extent to which the British lecturers perceived six unmodified and direct student emails as impolite and abrupt. The email stating 'Please note what changes should be made' was perceived as the least polite; the staff were irritated by the use of the imperative, the salutation, opening and closing were missing, and 'please' as a politeness marker was not a strong enough mitigator. Furthermore, the request was not status-congruent, revealing the student's misinterpretation of his/her rights and the faculty's obligations (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011). In Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2016) follow-up study, she used a similar approach to investigate perceptions by both students and staff. The findings revealed significant perceptual mismatches of what is appropriate between the two groups. Once again, it showed that emails had an impact on participants' evaluation of the personality of the sender. The British lecturers evaluated the personality of the sender significantly less favourably than the Greek students. All of these perceptions could affect the formation of successful interpersonal relationships.

The perception studies discussed earlier have shed light on the possible relational consequences. Nevertheless, research on rapport management in L2 emails has been lacking, with a few exceptions. Rau and Rau (2016) examined how a group of Taiwanese graduate students of STEM subjects negotiated personal relationships with an American writing instructor through email terms of address. They found that, despite the instruction, most students retained the same address terms throughout the course and that the perceived lack of need to negotiate personal relationships might impede their pragmatic development.

Bjørge (2007) investigated a wider range of L2 groups. Drawing on Hofstede's (2001) scores of power distance (PD), which refers to the extent to which hierarchical differences are accepted and expected in a culture, 344 English emails written by 110 international students in Norway (who were from over 30 countries) were analysed. The analysis found that uncertainty about what relationship was implied in the various forms of address and closing led L2 users to choose options that they perceived as safe. Students from relatively high PD cultures, including China, France, Belgium, Italy, Russia and Poland, were more likely to opt for formal terms of address, despite being taught in an informal atmosphere in Norway. Therefore, Bjørge (2007) stated:

> Native speakers of English should have their attention drawn to the fact that cultural differences influence English lingua franca communication, and that non-native speakers communicating in English do not necessarily share the rhetorical conventions of native speakers concerning issues of rapport management such as formality, directness and relationship-building. (p. 76)

Thus, L1 and L2 groups may have different conventions regarding rapport management. L2 email pragmatic competence regarding these conventions may develop slowly and separately from language proficiency, even in an L2 environment. Moreover, L2 pragmatic infelicities may be perceived rather negatively by L1 speakers and lead to serious relational consequences. To better promote intercultural awareness, intercultural rapport management through email warrants further research.

## *The study*

This research study aimed to address the following questions:

1. What are the email rapport-building strategies of Chinese L2 users compared to those of L1 users?
2. What are the L1 and L2 speakers' perceptions of these strategies?
3. What is the rationale behind these perceptions?

To answer the research questions, three types of data were employed. First, 345 naturally occurring L1 and L2 email requests to faculty were collected over a year. Second, two retrospective focus group interviews and five individual retrospective interviews were conducted with the L2 email writers to reflect on the development of their L2 email practices during study abroad, in addition to two focus groups with British and Chinese raters who rated the relational strategies. The third type of data comprised codings, ratings and evaluations of the emails by the Chinese and British raters, that is, five Chinese and five British speakers of English (three students and two lecturers from each group).

### *Naturally occurring email requests to faculty*

The email data set comprised 345 authentic emails to faculty: 170 sent by L2 English users during their year abroad in England and 175 sent by L1 English users at a British university. The two corpora were comparable, especially regarding the profile of the email users, corpus size and request type.

The L2 participants were fifteen L2 English users ranging from twenty-two to twenty-eight years old who were enrolled in a postgraduate programme in England. These students had completed a bachelor's degree in China, mostly in English/TESOL; eleven of them came from a partner university in Shanghai and had already completed one year of master's studies there. None of them had studied abroad before. The Chinese students' L2 English proficiency level was upper-intermediate to advanced (B2–C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), which was the English-language requirement for joining the programme. The L1 email writers were twenty-nine British speakers of English ranging from twenty-two to thirty-five years old who were in the same or similar postgraduate programmes at the same British university.

*Individual and focus group interviews*

Individual interviews averaging twenty minutes long were held with five L2 email writers at the end of their year abroad in England. During the interview, all the students' emails were presented to them in chronological order to help them reflect on the development of their email practices. Additionally, two focus groups (one at the end of each semester) were conducted with all the L2 email writers: one with an English and a Chinese moderator and one with the Chinese moderator. All the L2 emails were anonymized and shared with the participants. Subsequently, another two focus group interviews – one with five Chinese raters and one with five British raters – were conducted after the rating process, which will be described in detail further. Each focus group interview lasted about an hour, and the recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically in NVivo.

*Codings, ratings and evaluations of the emails*

Evaluation is particularly important in intercultural settings in which there is a sense of pragmatic uncertainty (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). To explore the variations in interpretation and evaluation, a group of five Chinese L2 users was asked individually to identify the relationship-building strategies from the anonymized L1 and L2 email data, which were mixed. The coding scheme used in this study (Appendix 1) was an adaptation of the methods used by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), Woodfield (2012) and Li (2018). The group of Chinese L2 raters was then asked to rate their perceptions of the strategies identified on a five-point Likert scale: 1 (very negative), 2 (negative), 3 (neutral), 4 (positive) and 5 (very positive). They provided comments to explain their rating. Next, a group of five British L1 speakers was given the same email data marked with the relationship-building strategies identified by their Chinese peers but without the scores and comments. They were asked to rate their perceptions of these strategies individually on the same Likert scale and to provide comments explaining their rationale for the score. After the rating process, a focus group interview was conducted with each rater group.

All participants consented to the use of each data type. All data were anonymized by giving each participant a code (CP1/BP1 = Chinese/British Participant 1 in the email data set; CR1/BR1 = Chinese/British Rater 1 in the coding, rating and evaluation data set). All names mentioned in the email and interview data were replaced with pseudonyms.

## *Findings*

The analyses of the three data types revealed markedly different patterns of (1) relationship-building strategies, (2) strategy perceptions and (3) rationale between the Chinese L2 users and the British L1 users.

**Table 4.1** Relationship-Building Strategies in the L2 and L1 Email Corpora

| Strategy | L2 Users | L1 Users | L2 Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Small talk | 101 (59.4%) * | 21 (12%) | *My classmates and I went to Liverpool during the weekend, and we all love Liverpool* . . . Can I send my draft to you later this week . . . |
| Formal terms of address | 30 (17.6%) | 1 (0.6%) | Professor Richardson |
| Greetings | 27 (15.9%) | 12 (6.9%) | How do you do? |
| Appreciators | 55 (32.4%) | 45 (25.7%) | Thank you. |

*The percentage refers to the percentage of emails in each email data set which contain this relational strategy.

*Relationship-building strategies*

The Chinese raters identified several relationship-building strategies in the 345 authentic emails, including small talk, formal terms of address, greetings and appreciators (Table 4.1).

Overall, the L2 emails (average, seventy-six words per email) were longer than the L1 emails (average, forty-two words per email), and the L2 users employed significantly more relationship-building strategies than the L1 English speakers, notably small talk, formal terms of address and greetings. First, the L2 email writers used about five times as many instances of small talk (101 instances) as the L1 group (21 instances). Small talk in this study was broadly defined as a non-greeting, pre-request utterance that has no explicit transactional focus and is intended to establish a positive atmosphere (Coupland 2014; Schauer 2006; Schneider 2008). The L2 group was more likely to engage in small talk, and when they did so, the small talk was often lengthier. For example,

> *I have received my marks, which I am very satisfied with, because I am a non-English major student, so I am weaker than others. You have always encouraged me patiently and have given me huge support. I am unable to make such huge progress without you.* I have finished the book I borrowed from you, and I want to return it to you. When are you in your office? (CP12, L2 email data set)

In this example, the Chinese student did not initiate the request until the end of the email, and the italicized section before the request seemed irrelevant. However, the long pre-request chit-chat was unanimously identified by the Chinese respondents as an important relationship-building strategy: 'having some phatic talk before saying "I want you to help me do something"' is prevalent in the Chinese language/culture and is essential in 'building rapport and expressing politeness' (CP1). The use of this small talk highlighted the importance of relationship-building to the Chinese participants (Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2019). These strategy perceptions are explored extensively in the next section.

Second, the Chinese respondents identified the use of formal terms of address as a relationship-building strategy, whereas the British respondents did not share this perception. Formal address terms were predominately used by the L2 speakers (thirty instances) rather than the L1 users (one instance), as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2** Formal Terms of Address in the L2 and L1 Email Corpora

| Formal Terms of Address | L2 Users | L1 Users | L2 Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professor [Surname] | 10 (5.9%) | 0 | Professor Richardson |
| Teacher [Surname] | 9 (5.3%) | 0 | Teacher Richardson |
| Dr./Dr [Surname] | 7 (4.1%) | 1 (0.6%) | Dr Richardson |
| Teacher [First name] | 4 (2.4%) | 0 | Teacher Jane |

**Table 4.3** Greetings in the L2 and L1 Email Corpora

| Greetings | L2 Users | L1 Users |
|---|---|---|
| (I) hope you are (doing) /you're /your family is well. | 18 (10.6%) | 5 (2.9%) |
| How are you? | 5 (2.9%) | 5 (2.9%) |
| How do you do? | 3 (1.8%) | 0 |
| Good morning/afternoon | 1 (0.6%) | 2 (1.1%) |

All the Chinese participants believed that no matter what their relationship with the faculty, addressing their teachers by professional titles rather than by their first name only (including those non-native instances like 'Teacher Jane') showed respect and built rapport. In contrast, British L1 users never used formal terms of address (with the exception of one case). The British focus group interviewees explicitly stated that 'British students call lecturers by their first name' regardless of their academic ranks and age and that 'there is nothing wrong with that'. These statements implied different cultural patterning (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021) regarding the norms of address terms.

The third relationship-building strategy that was more prevalent in the L2 data was greetings. The L2 users employed twice as many greetings (twenty-seven instances) as the L1 users (twelve instances) did. Table 4.3 illustrates the distribution of greetings across the two groups.

As seen in Table 4.3, the greeting 'How do you do?' was exclusive to the L2 data. The Chinese participants (CP9 and CP14) who used it in their emails explained in their interviews that they 'stopped using it' upon discovering that 'no one seemed to use it in the UK' (CP14). However, these participants were still unclear about when to use this greeting, which according to what they had learned in China was the most important English greeting. CP14 intentionally raised the question about when to use this greeting to the English moderator in the first focus group interview, when the group reflected on the email data they had produced in the first semester (see the following extract).

*Excerpt from the first focus group interview*

CP14: When to use 'how do you do'?
(CP14 looks at the English moderator when she raises the question. The other Chinese participants also turn their heads to face the English moderator.)

English moderator: Probably when I meet the Queen!
(Everyone laughs.)

The interaction shown here demonstrates the difficulty of students acquiring the sociopragmatics of greeting forms during their year in England, even for those highly proficient ones like CP14, who had the highest IELTS score (overall score 8.0) among the Chinese participants. Sociopragmatics, which refers to knowledge of the sociocultural rules that govern linguistic resources needed for communication, may be slower to develop than pragmalinguistics (i.e. the knowledge of those linguistic resources) in an L2 (Hassall 2012). These findings were in agreement with the results of some prior studies (Hassall 2012; Halenko and Wang 2022; Wang and Halenko 2019b, 2022a, 2022b). The reasons for the slow sociopragmatic development could be multifold, with many influencing factors, including length of stay, exposure to the pragmatic target, individual differences and so on (Ishihara and Cohen 2010; Vidal and Shively 2019).

*Strategy perceptions*

To explore strategy perceptions, the Chinese and British raters were asked to rate the relationship-building instances identified in the email data sets on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very negative; 5 = very positive). They were also asked to provide comments explaining their rating. The Chinese raters appraised the L2 users' small talk and formal terms of address considerably more favourably than the L1 raters did. The L1 raters generally perceived the L2 users' small talk in email requests to faculty rather negatively and gave it an average score of 1.7 (between 'very negative' and 'negative'). In contrast, the L2 raters viewed the same strategies rather positively, and their average small-talk score was 4.6 (between 'positive' and 'very positive').

Regarding formal terms of address, contrasting patterns still existed, though with a smaller difference. The L1 raters interpreted the L2 users' formal address forms negatively and gave an average score of 2.3 (between 'negative' and 'neutral'). Conversely, the L2 raters perceived the same instances more positively, and their scores averaged 3.6 (between 'neutral' and 'positive').

*Rationales*

To explain the rationales behind the contrasting perceptions and interpretations, the present study further analysed the raters' comments, the individual reflective interviews with the email writers and the focus group interviews. These were analysed thematically using Spencer-Oatey's rapport management and evaluation framework (Spencer-Oatey 2008; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). The findings showed that the L1 and L2 speakers had significantly different rationales for their evaluations (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5), particularly concerning the rapport-building strategies of pre-request small talk and formal terms of address. At the interpersonal level, besides making a request, building relationships with the

**Table 4.4** Contrasting Evaluations of Lengthy Small Talk Prior to a Request by the British and Chinese Raters

| CLASSIFICATION | '(Very) negative' by British participants | CLASSIFICATION | '(Very) positive' by Chinese participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ASSESSMENT** | | **ASSESSMENT** | |
| • Irrelevant (to the request)<br>• Insincere<br>• Succinct emails are a lot better | 'This paragraph is not relevant . . . sounds ingenuine' (BR1)<br>'Keep emails short and sweet' (BR2) | • Warm<br>• Sincere<br>• Longer emails are more polite | 'Expresses warmth and sincerity' (CR5)<br>'The longer the lead-in, the more polite it becomes' (CP12) |
| **RATIONALE** | | **RATIONALE** | |
| 1. Unclear interactional goal<br>2. Imbalanced focus<br>3. A waste of faculty time | 'Unhelpful to put the request at the end . . . the purpose of the email is unclear' (BR5)<br>'The message is imbalanced . . . there's too much chit-chat' (BR1)<br>'Why should lecturers care about this' (BR4)<br>'A waste of professors' time' (BR2)<br>'Staff are too busy to read messages that are several pages long' (BR3) | 1. Served the relational goal well<br>2. Showed care and respect to the faculty<br>3. Expressed attitudinal warmth | 'A main purpose of the emails is to build rapport with faculty, so these small talks are necessary' (CP15)<br>'Showed care and respect to the professors . . . the desire to have a closer relationship with them' (CR4)<br>'Directly requesting teachers to do something without any sincere chit-chat as a lead-in . . . sounds cold and utilitarian' (CR5) |

faculty seemed to be a primary interactional goal for the L2 users, whereas this did not seem to be the case for L1 speakers.

Table 4.4 illustrates the contrasting evaluations of L2 users' lengthy small talk accompanying their requests. As can be seen further, the Chinese participants regarded small talk as (very) positive and thought that 'the longer' the small talk, 'the more polite' it was, because it showed 'warmth', 'sincerity' and care for the addressee, thereby serving the important interactional goal of 'building rapport with faculty'. The British participants, however, perceived the same instances of lengthy small talk as (very) negative, irrelevant and insincere, because regarding emails to faculty, 'the shorter, the better'. The L1 users also believed that lengthy small talk obscured the interactional goal of the email request and wasted the faculty member's time.

Clearly, different cultural patterning delineated the L1 and L2 groups, affecting the participants' normalcy zones and influencing their evaluations. Notably, the L2 users, who were inherently intercultural speakers, drew on various assumptions from the L1 and L2 and actively negotiated the boundaries of their normalcy zones during their year abroad in England. For example, soon after they started their study in England, all L2 users seemed to realize that L1 English emails were more

**Table 4.5** Contrasting Evaluations of Formal Address Terms by the British and Chinese Raters

| CLASSIFICATION | 'Negative' by British participants | CLASSIFICATION | 'Positive' by Chinese participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ASSESSMENT** | | **ASSESSMENT** | |
| • Awkward | 'Strange' (BR4) | • Respectful | 'Shows respect' (CP15) |
| • Unnecessary | 'Not necessary' (BR2) | • Necessary | 'Students must address teachers politely' (CP7) |
| **RATIONALE** | | **RATIONALE** | |
| 1. Violated student–staff equality<br>2. Broke the (British) norms | 'They are grown-ups' (BR1)<br>'Students and staff are equal' (BR5)<br>'Sounds too formal' (BR3)<br>'British students call lecturers by their first name' (BR5) | 1. Respect for staff authority<br>2. Conformed to the (Chinese) norms<br>3. Attended to rapport with faculty | 'In Chinese . . . you must respect the teachers' status and demonstrate this through using the titles like 'Professor' and 'Teacher' all the time . . . even though you're very close to them' (CP11)<br>'Not addressing properly . . . could damage relations' (CR2) |

concise, with requesters bypassing pre-request small talk and going straight to the request. Some participants (CP3, CP6, CP7) adjusted their email writing to align better with the target language norms, and they stated during the interviews that they were fine with making this adjustment.

However, some L2 users (CP5, CP12) initially aligned with these L2 norms but later intentionally returned to their L1 practices because, despite their awareness of the different norms, they still felt uncomfortable:

> Not long after I started my studies in the UK, I've noted that the English emails sent by my English classmates, friends, and professors are much shorter. . . . Initially, I did start to follow English habits, deleting a lot of the phatic talk before I raised my requests . . . but *I just felt very uncomfortable. I felt I was being cold and impolite to my British professors, so even though I knew it was not necessarily in line with the English habits, I must switch back to the way I feel comfortable with*. (CP12, individual interview)

The italics in the excerpt highlight the pragmatic resistance and the agency of the L2 user as an intercultural speaker who is making choices dynamically (Ishihara 2019). Arguably, their resistance and agency in this case acted as a barrier to L2 development. The relational strategies chosen by the email users reflected how they constructed their identity through the use of L2, as they consciously withdrew from L2 pragmatic norms because those behaviours conflicted with values from their L1 culture (Ishihara and Cohen 2010; Ren 2017; Vidal and Shively 2019; Yates 2010).

Second, the L2 users' relationship-building strategy of formal address terms also triggered contrasting evaluations between L1 and L2 speakers, though to a lesser extent than small talk (Table 4.5).

Clearly, the L1 respondents did not see the use of formal address terms in the L2 emails as a relational strategy. They felt the L2 email practices were awkward and unnecessary, especially when there was familiarity between the student and professor. The L1 raters based their negative perceptions on the British norm of addressing lecturers by first name. From the L1 perspective, 'students and staff are equal' (BR5), and students are 'grown-ups' (BR1). However, the Chinese participants interpreted the same L2 email practices differently. They seemed to base their positive perceptions on the Chinese norm that the use of formal titles shows respect to authority: 'You must respect the teachers' status and demonstrate this through using the titles like "Professor" and "Teacher" all the time . . . even though you are very close to them' (CP11). To the L2 users, improper terms of address could 'damage relations' (CR2). Two L2 email writers (CP3, CP11) who were aware that certain forms, such as 'Teacher . . .,' were not native terminology in English still chose to deploy these terms to achieve their relational goals in the early phase of their stay in England. Nevertheless, within the first few months, all of the L2 users seemed to adopt British norms of addressing lecturers by their first name. Interestingly, during the focus group interview, a British university lecturer (BR5) shared her experience of Chinese students' reluctance to drop formal titles, even when they were told to do so:

> I asked my students to call me by my first name 'Jane' . . . not 'Dr. Taylor'. But some of my Chinese students kept calling me 'Dr. Taylor'. I told them in the UK it's fine to call me Jane. Then they started to call me 'Dr. Jane', which is just weird. (BR5, focus group interview)

As suggested by the Chinese raters in their focus group interview, norms regarding terms of address were a psychological hurdle, because 'no Chinese student could address his/her teachers by their first name alone' (CR3). In the Chinese context, doing so would be regarded as 'a lack of common sense' (CR1) and 'a total lack of respect for teachers' (CR4). Once again, the contrasting evaluations between L1 and L2 drew upon different social and moral rationale.

### *Summary of findings*

The comparison of 345 authentic L1 and L2 request emails to faculty, combined with analysis of the evaluations and individual and focus group interviews, showed the distinctive features of the Chinese L2 users' relationship-building strategies. These students used small talk, greetings and formal address terms more frequently than L1 speakers. Furthermore, the L1 and L2 speakers held contrasting perceptions of the L2 users' relational strategies. The strategy of small talk was predominately used by the L2 group. Lengthy small talk prior to a request was exclusive to this group and received very positive evaluations from the L2 raters but very negative evaluations from the L1 raters. The formal address terms also constituted a relational strategy for the L2 speakers but did not do so for the L1 speakers.

The contrasting evaluations highlighted the different interpersonal sensitivities and socio-moral rationale behind the L1 and L2 evaluations. For instance, besides making a request to faculty, building rapport was an important interactional goal of the emails for the L2 speakers but not necessarily for the L1 speakers.

The rationale behind the very negative L1 perceptions of lengthy small talk was that such small talk before a request was unnecessary and insincere, obscured the request of the email, wasted faculty time and breached the English norms of keeping emails short and to the point. Conversely, the rationale of the positive L2 evaluations of the same email practices indicated small talk as warm and sincere, serving the relational goal well, showing care and respect to professors, and upholding the Chinese norms that longer emails are generally more polite than shorter emails.

Regarding the use of formal address terms, the rationale of the negative L1 evaluations was that they were awkward and unnecessary, violated student–staff equality and broke the British norms that British students call lecturers by their first name. In contrast, the rationale of the positive L2 evaluations of the same email practices was that the terms were respectful and necessary, showed respect for faculty's authority, attended to rapport with faculty and conformed to the Chinese norms of always addressing faculty by professional titles despite the relationship of the interlocutors. Thus, the results revealed distinctive cultural patterning underpinning the diverging email practices and evaluations.

## *Discussion and implications*

This study's findings regarding different email practices, including the extensive use of pre-request small talk in L2, supported those of previous studies (Chen 2015; Chen et al. 2016; Wang 2011; Wang and Halenko 2022b). However, this study revealed some complexities that underpinned the distinct features of L2 emails and helped explain the contrasting L1 and L2 evaluations of these features. Unpacking the rationale for such evaluations is important as it can help expose unconscious assumptions and enhance intercultural understanding (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021).

The different preferences for the length of emails between the Chinese and British participants conformed with the general observations and findings of prior research. For example, observations of Japanese (Lundquist and Kuwabara 2018) and Korean (Murphy and Levy 2008) perspectives found that a short email tends to be considered rude, similar to perspectives found in this study's Chinese participants. In contrast, native speakers of English prefer short emails (Murphy and Levy 2008). Furthermore, the Chinese L2 users of English, like their Korean and Japanese peers (Lundquist and Kuwabara, 2018), seemed to value the relational aspects of emails greatly compared to L1 speakers. The L2 group identified rapport building as an additional important goal of email requests and tended to favour different ways to build relationship through email. The motivations and evaluations of their relational strategies were more nuanced than a mere contrastive analysis of language use could enable.

This study's findings on the changing use of email address terms differed from those of Rau and Rau (2016), who found that most graduate students used the same address terms throughout the course without any changes. However, Rau and Rau (2016) tracked a group of graduate students in science and technology who emailed an American writing instructor in an at-home environment. In contrast, the present study evaluated graduate students of an English-related degree in a study abroad context who, by nature, seemed to have a sharper pragmatic awareness. Additionally, the results of the present study supported Rau and Rau's (2016) argument that the desire to negotiate relationships using terms of address in email writing can play a role in enhancing L2 acquisition. Furthermore, this study revealed that the resistance of L2 users to change terms can be explained by considering their interpersonal sensitivities and socio-moral order; these two aspects constitute the elements of their rationale, or 'evaluation warrant' in Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's terms (2021). Unpacking this rationale can allow for greater mutual understanding and different interpretations beyond what may be perceived by teachers as a lack of language proficiency or awkwardness.

Overall, during their year in England, the L2 users' evaluations evolved as they dynamically negotiated the boundaries of their normalcy zones, especially when the L1 and L2 norms conflicted. This was facilitated by increasing awareness of differences of their preferred interactional strategies in Chinese and those they came to observe during their time in the UK, which led to deeper consideration of what it means to communicate appropriately within a cross-lingual and intercultural frame (McConachy 2019).

The contrasting evaluations, especially the British lecturers' negative perceptions of some of the preferred L2 email practices, highlighted the importance of promoting interculturality, including ongoing criticality and reflexivity, both among students and teachers (e.g. Dervin 2016; McConachy 2019; Wang 2017; Wang and Guo 2017). As demonstrated by the results of this study, rapport management and evaluation across cultures are multi-layered and nuanced. Exposing, unpacking or even deconstructing the rationale for such behaviours can be helpful in recognizing and confronting unconscious assumptions and decentring from both students' and faculty members' cultural assumptions. It needs to be borne in mind that an L2 user is not just a person who uses another language; an L2 user is an inherently intercultural and multilingual agent. Therefore, it is imperative for faculty members in internationalized universities to be aware of the possibility that what might seem to be an unconventional email strategy may in fact reflect a student's best attempt to build or maintain rapport while achieving other goals.

## *Conclusion*

Building successful interpersonal relationships is imperative. In her main works, Spencer-Oatey has focused on the important and complex issue of managing rapport across cultures (Spencer-Oatey 2008; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2019, 2020), and her theoretical framework is influential. She has insightfully pointed out that the essence of intercultural relationships lies in the evaluation of the relationships (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). Inspired by this work, this study explored how Chinese L2 users of English learn to build and negotiate interpersonal relationships with lecturers through email in their new cultural environment. The comparisons of L1 and L2 English email requests and evaluations showed considerable variations in rapport management and evaluation. The Chinese L2 users of English exhibited distinctive features in their relationship-building strategies, including lengthy small talk before a request and the use of formal terms of address in emails. The British and Chinese respondents held contrasting perceptions of these relational strategies, and this divergence was explained by investigating their respective rationale. Different cultural patterning emerged regarding interpersonal sensitivities and the socio-moral order. Moreover, during their year abroad in England, the L2 email writers' email practices evolved, especially when a conflict in norms arose, revealing the flux of L1 and L2 systems and highlighting the inherent interculturality of L2 users.

As argued earlier, unearthing the rationale for certain behaviours could provide a powerful tool for uncovering underlying beliefs and emotions and advancing intercultural understanding. Therefore, there is a need for more research in the field of L2 pragmatics and the field of intercultural communication more broadly into how individuals evaluate concrete relational practices and those who engage in them. That is, research should help illuminate how language users' perceptions of role relations and other aspects of the relational context influence what (and who) they perceive as im/polite and how this impacts on their willingness to engage with them. Such research is needed to better understand intercultural relationships. In this new, turbulent world, intercultural dialogue is more than the absence of conflict; it is living together with differences and mutual understanding.

## *Appendix 1*

Taxonomy of Strategies for the L2 Email Requests

| **Head Acts** | **Directness Levels** | **Request Strategies** | **Examples** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Direct* | Imperatives | Please send me an electronic copy of the timetable. |
| | | Performatives | I am writing to ask for an extension. |
| | | Direct questions | What do I do next? |
| | | Want statements | I want one ticket for myself. |
| | | Need statements | I need your signature as the module leader. |
| | | Expectation statements | I hope to have a meeting with you next Thursday. |
| | *Conventional indirect* | Query preparatory (ability, willingness, permission) | Can I have a reference from you? |
| | *Nonconventional indirect* | Hints | I have got appointments with Barclays Bank to open an account, so it's better for me to have the tutorial next week. |

| Modifications | Type of Modifiers | Name | Devices/Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Internal modification* | Please | Please |
| | | Downtoners | Maybe |
| | | Understaters | A bit |
| | | Subjectivizers | I was wondering |
| | | Consultative devices | Would it be possible |
| | | Hedges | Some |
| | *External modification (supportive moves)* | Form of address<br>• Formal<br>• Informal | Professor |
| | | Greeting | How do you do? |
| | | Closing | Best regards |
| | | Self-introduction | *My name is . . . and I'm a master's student in . . .* |
| | | Grounder | *I am applying for a graduate job at Goldman Sachs.* |
| | | Disarmer | *I guess you must be busy with marking our essays.* But . . . |
| | | Getting a precommitment | *Could you do me a favour?* |
| | | Promise | *I will do my best to do as much as work as possible from now on.* |
| | | Imposition minimizer | *I hope you can understand.* Please delete me from your name list of the court visit. |
| | | Apology | *I want to apologize* that I have to postpone our meeting next week. |
| | | Discourse orientation move | *I have read about Nationwide Building Society in some news several times and I am quite interested in it.* What I want to know is that . . . |
| | | Small talk | *My classmates and I went to Liverpool during the weekend, and we all love Liverpool! Thank you for recommending the museums in Liverpool. We like them very much!.* . . Can I send my draft to you later this week . . . |
| | | Appreciator | *Thank you for considering my request.* |

## *References*

Banks, James A. (2010), 'Multicultural Education: Characteristics and Goals', in James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks (eds), *Multicultural Education. Issues and Perspectives*, 3–32, Wiley.

Biesenbach-Lucas, Sigrun (2007), 'Students Writing Emails to Faculty: An Examination of E-politeness among Native and Non-native Speakers of English', *Language Learning & Technology* 11(2): 59–81.

Bjørge, Anne Kari (2007), 'Power Distance in English Lingua Franca Email Communication', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 17(1): 60–80.

Cambridge University (2021), *Email Etiquette*, 4 July. https://www.mmll.cam.ac.uk/email-etiquette.

Chen, Yuan-Shan (2015), 'Developing Chinese EFL Learners' Email Literacy Through Requests to Faculty', *Journal of Pragmatics* 75: 131–49.

Chen, Yuan-shan, Der-Hwa Victoria, Rau and Rau, Gerald (2016), *Email Discourse among Chinese Using English as a Lingua Franca*, Springer.

Coupland, Justine (ed.) (2014), *Small Talk*, Routledge.

Danielewicz-Betz, Anna (2013), '(Mis)use of Email in Student-Faculty Interaction: Implications for University Instruction in Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Japan', *JALT CALL Journal* 9(1): 23–57.

Dervin, Fred (2016), *Interculturality in Education: A Theoretical and Methodological Toolbox*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, Maria (2011), '"Please Answer Me as Soon as Possible": Pragmatic Failure in Non-Native Speakers' E-mail Requests to Faculty', *Journal of Pragmatics* 43(13): 3193–215.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, Maria (2016), 'Variation in Evaluations of the (Im) Politeness of Emails from L2 Learners and Perceptions of the Personality of their Senders', *Journal of Pragmatics* 106: 1–19.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, Maria (2018), '"Mr Paul, Please Inform me Accordingly": Address Forms, Directness and Degree of Imposition in L2 Emails', *Pragmatics* 28(4): 489–516.

Fletcher, Joyce K. (2001), *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work*, The MIT Press.

Haidt, Jonathan and Kesebir, Selin (2010), 'Morality', In Fiske Susan, Gilbert Daniel and Lindzey Gardner (eds), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 5th edn, 797–852, John Wiley.

Halenko, Nicola and Wang, Jiayi (eds) (2022). *Pragmatics in English Language Learning*, Cambridge University Press.

Hartford, Beverly and Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen (1996), '"At Your Earliest Convenience": A Study of Written Student Requests to Faculty', in Lawrence F. Bouton (ed.), *Pragmatics and Language Learning Volume 7*, 55–69, DEIL.

Hassall, Tim (2012), 'Sociopragmatics Is Slower: A Reply to Chang', *Language Sciences* 34(3): 376–80.

Hendriks, Berna (2010), 'An Experimental Study of Native Speaker Perceptions of Non-native Request Modification in E-mails in English', *Intercultural Pragmatics* 7(2): 221–55.

Hofstede, Geert (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, Sage.

Holliday, Adrian (1999), 'Small Cultures', *Applied Linguistics* 20(2): 237–64.

Holmes, Janet and Marra, Meredith (2004), 'Relational Practice in the Workplace: Women's Talk or Gendered Discourse?', *Language in Society* 33(3): 377–98.

Holmes, Janet, Marra, Meredith and Vine, Bernadette (2011), *Leadership, Discourse, and Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press.

Ishihara, Noriko (2019), 'Understanding English Language Learners' Pragmatic Resistance', in Xuesong Gao (ed.), *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*, 621–41, Springer.

Ishihara, Noriko and Cohen Andrew, D. (2010), *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Language and Culture Meet*, London: Routledge.

Langlotz, Andreas and Locher, Miriam A. (2013), 'The Role of Emotions in Relational Work', *Journal of Pragmatics* 58: 87–107.

Li, Wei (2018), *Pragmatic Transfer and Development: Evidence from EFL Learners in China*, John Benjamins.

Locher, Miriam A. and Watts, Richard J. (2005), 'Politeness Theory and Relational Work', *Journal of Politeness Research* 1(1): 9–33.

Lundquist, Oliver and Kuwabara, Sayaka (2018), 'Why Are Japanese Business Mails So Long?', 26 Feburary. https://getworkjapan.com/2018/02/26/why-are-japanese-business-mails-so-long/.

McConachy, Troy (2019), 'L2 Pragmatics as "Intercultural Pragmatics": Probing Sociopragmatic Aspects of Pragmatic Awareness', *Journal of Pragmatics* 151: 167–76.

Murphy, Margaret and Levy, Mike (2008), 'Politeness in Intercultural E-mail Communication: Australian and Korean Perspectives', in Margaret Murphy and Cristina Poyatos Matas (eds), *Handbook of Research on E-Learning Methodologies for Language Acquisition*, 253–70, IGI Global.

Nakane, Ikuko (2006), 'Silence and Politeness in Intercultural Communication in University Seminars', *Journal of Pragmatics* 38(11): 1811–35.

Planken, Brigitte (2005), 'Managing Rapport in Lingua Franca Sales Negotiations: A Comparison of Professional and Aspiring Negotiators', *English for Specific Purposes* 24(4): 381–400.

Rau, Der-Hwa Victoria and Rau, Gerald (2016), 'Negotiating Personal Relationship through Email Terms of Address', in Chen Yuan-shan, Der-Hwa Victoria Rau and Gerald Rau (eds), *Email Discourse among Chinese Using English as a Lingua Franca*, 11–36, Springer.

Ren, Wei (2017), 'Pragmatics and Politeness in Chinese Graduate Students' Gratitude Emails in English', in Zhichang Xu, David Deterding and Deyuan He (eds), *Researching Chinese English: The State of the Art*, 109–24, Springer.

Schauer, Gila A. (2006), 'The Development of ESL Learners' Pragmatic Competence: A Longitudinal Investigation of Awareness and Production', in Bardovi-Harlig Kathleen, J. Cesar Felix-Brasdefer and Alwiya Saleh Omar (eds), *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 135–63, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center: University of Hawaii.

Schneider, Klaus P. (2008), 'Small Talk in England, Ireland, and the USA', in Klaus P. Schneider, and Anne Barron (eds), *Variational Pragmatics: A Focus on Regional Varieties in Pluricentric Languages*, 99–139, John Benjamins.

Schwartz, Shalom H. (2011), 'Values: Cultural and Individual', in Fons J. R. Van de Vijver, Athanasios Chasiotis and Seger M. Breugelmans (eds), *Fundamental Questions in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 463–93, Cambridge University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (ed.) (2008), *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*, 2nd edn, Continuum/Bloomsbury.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2011), 'Conceptualising "The Relational" in Pragmatics: Insights from Metapragmatic Emotion and (Im) Politeness Comments', *Journal of Pragmatics* 43(14): 3565–78.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Franklin, Peter (2009), *Intercultural Interaction: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Intercultural Communication*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Dániel Z. (2021), *Intercultural Politeness*, Cambridge University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Wang, Jiayi (2017), 'Intercultural Pragmatics', in Rintje Pieter Eelke Sybesma, et al. (eds), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, Brill. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-chinese-language-and-linguistics/intercultural-pragmatics-COM_000041.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Wang, Jiayi (2019), 'Culture, Context, and Concerns about Face: Synergistic Insights from Pragmatics and Social Psychology', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 38(4): 423–40.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Wang, Jiayi (2020), 'Establishing Professional Intercultural Relations: Chinese Perceptions of Behavioural Success in a Sino-American Exchange Visit', *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 49(6): 499–519.
Vidal, Carmen Pérez and Shively, Rachel L. (2019), 'L2 Pragmatic Development in Study Abroad Settings', in Naoko Taguchi (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Pragmatics*, 355–71. Routledge.
Wang, Jiayi (2017), 'Bringing Interculturality into the Chinese-as-a-Foreign-Language Classroom', in Tinghe Jin and Fred Dervin (eds), *Interculturality in Chinese Language Education*, 23–40, Palgrave Macmillan.
Wang, Jiayi and Guo, Zhiyan (2017), 'Developing Intercultural Competence Through Study Abroad Programmes in China: An Analysis of Student Experience at Two British Universities', in Tinghe Jin and Fred Dervin (eds), *Interculturality in Chinese Language Education*, 41–60, Palgrave Macmillan.
Wang, Jiayi and Halenko, Nicola (2019a), 'Second Language Pragmatics: Introduction', A special issue of *East Asian Pragmatics* 4(1): 1–9.
Wang, Jiayi and Halenko, Nicola (2019b), 'Longitudinal Benefits of Pre-departure Pragmatics Instruction for Study Abroad: Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language', *East Asian Pragmatics* 4(1): 87–111.
Wang, Jiayi and Halenko, Nicola (2022a), 'Developing the Use of Formulaic Language for Study Abroad: A Targeted Instructional Intervention', *The Language Learning Journal* 50(4): 409–26.
Wang, Jiayi and Halenko, Nicola (2022b). '"Mind Your Language": L2 English Email Requests during Study Abroad', in Nicola Halenko and Wang, Jiayi (eds), *Pragmatics in English Language Learning*, 29–56, Cambridge University Press.
Wang, Jiayi and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2014), 'Competence in Building Intercultural Relations: Case Study Insights into the Development Process', in Jo Angouri et al. (eds), *Learning, Working and Communicating in a Global Context*, 205–15, Scitsiugnil Press.
Wang, Jiayi and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2015a), 'The Gains and Losses of Face in Ongoing Intercultural Interaction: A Case Study of Chinese Participant Perspectives', *Journal of Pragmatics* 89: 50–65.
Wang, Jiayi and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2015b). 'The Challenge of Building Professional Relations across Cultures: Chinese Officials in America', in Elizabeth Christopher (ed.), *International Management and Intercultural Communication: A Collection of Case Studies*, Vol. 1, 90–107, Palgrave Macmillan.
Wang, Vincent X. (2011), *Making Requests by Chinese EFL Learners*, John Benjamins.
Woodfield, Helen (2012), '"I Think Maybe I Want to Lend the Notes from You": Development of Request Modification in Graduate Learners', in Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis and Helen Woodfield (eds), *Interlanguage Request Modification*, 9–49, John Benjamins.
Yale University (2021), *How to Write an Email to Your Instructor*, 4 July. https://advising.yalecollege.yale.edu/how-write-email-your-instructor.
Yates, Linda (2010), 'Pragmatic Challenges for Second Language Learners', in Anna Trosborg (ed.), *Pragmatics Across Languages and Cultures*, 287–308, De Gruyter Mouton.
Zhu, Wuhan (2017), 'A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Study of Rapport-Management Strategies in Chinese and English Academic Upward Request Emails', *Language and Intercultural Communication* 17(2): 210–28.

# Part II

## Examining key psychological concepts in intercultural relations

# Chapter 5

## Rethinking Stereotypes and Norms in Intercultural Relations

Perry R. Hinton

### *Introduction*

Textbooks on intercultural communication typically include a section on stereotypes, often in the context of a barrier to effective intercultural understanding (e.g. Jackson 2019). Hunston and Oakey (2010: 132) sum up a common viewpoint very clearly:

> If you have a stereotype of the people in another country you believe that all the people in that country have certain characteristics. For example, you may believe that British people are unfriendly – this would be a negative stereotype. Or you may believe that British people are polite – this would be a positive stereotype. Both positive and negative stereotypes are likely to be untrue. No doubt some British people are unfriendly, some are polite, and some are both, but many are only slightly unfriendly, or not polite at all, and so on. In fact, if you describe an opinion as a stereotype you mean that it is not true.

The theoretical basis for this position derives from the dominant position in academic psychology – Western psychological science – that is, the experimental study of human thought and behaviour. Within psychological science, theoretical explanation lies within the individual, often in terms of assumed consistent features of personality or cognition, rather than in the social or cultural context (Allport 1924; Schneider 2004). This has resulted in a highly specific construction of the 'stereotype', as a mental fault, a cognitive error or bias, sometimes portrayed as a 'mind bug' (Banaji and Greenwald 2013) or a feature of a 'cognitive monster' (Bargh 1999). However, as this chapter will argue, the methodology of psychological science has created this representation of the stereotype rather than discovering it (Hinton 2020a). Indeed, it is here argued that the points made in the quote by Hunston and Oakey, although widely circulated in the intercultural literature, are invalid conclusions from the psychological research into stereotypes.

In this chapter, I shall critically analyse the two main models of stereotypes constructed within psychological science, which have dominated the popular view of stereotypes in Western societies: the classical model of stereotypes in the twentieth century (Allport 1954) and the unconscious bias model of implicit stereotypes in the twenty-first century (Banaji and Greenwald 2013). American[1] social psychologists, within the framework of an individualistic and experimental tradition, have endeavoured to produce an exclusively psychological cause of stereotypes (specifically those related to the patterns of discrimination within American society). They have also claimed a universality for their models of stereotypes which, it is argued here, have cultural assumptions embedded within them (Hinton 2020b). Finally, I propose a cultural theory of stereotypes that is applicable across cultures (Hinton 2017; 2020a). This theory argues that stereotypes arise from the sociocultural history of a society, where norms of behaviour associated with social roles have predictive and political significance to the cultural group members. In conclusion, I recommend that intercultural theorists examine stereotypes in terms of their sociocultural significance and their relationship to different cultural norms in intercultural interactions (Hinton 2020a; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021).

## *The classical model of stereotypes*

The concept of a 'stereotype' as a fixed idea was introduced into the public domain by the journalist Walter Lippmann in his book, *Public Opinion*, in 1922 (co-opting a term used for a metal plate in the printing process). Lippmann argued that human perceivers draw on culturally constructed categories to simplify the complex social world. An unknown person, perceived as an agitator or a Harvard man (two of his examples), is then understood in terms of learnt cultural expectations about the social category. However, when stereotypes entered American social psychology, with its assumption of individual causation of behaviour, the focus became the personal causes of stereotyped perceptions, with culture rejected as merely descriptive rather than an explanatory factor (Allport 1924). In their seminal psychological experiment, Katz and Braly (1933) asked 100 Princeton University students to select, from a list of personality attributes, the characteristics associated with 10 nationalities, plus 'Black'[2] and Jew. While very few attributes were selected by 50 per cent or more of the participants for any category, the researchers asserted that the most popular attributes formed the stereotype of the group. Katz and Braly claimed that the individual participants were committing a group fallacy, a mental 'error', of associating personality characteristics to a social group, which a 'realist' knows to be false.

The faulty thinking idea of stereotypes was picked up by the most famous stereotype researcher Gordon W. Allport in his book *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), where he examined prejudice, exclusively racism and anti-Semitism, in American society. Allport defined stereotypes as fixed all-judgements about social groups. He claimed that there were two types of individuals, the rigid and simplistic-thinking prejudiced personality, who uses stereotypes, and the more complex-thinking tolerant personality, who does not. In what has been termed the classical model of stereotypes (Pickering 2001), he argued that *all* stereotypes, not just those of Black and Jewish Americans, were the result of faulty thinking individuals. As a consequence of this dominant model in psychology, Schneider (2004: 1) has pointed out that stereotypes 'wear the black hats in social science'.[3] As an outcome of his explanation, Allport offered a psychological solution to prejudice in American society, which was to change the conservative-minded stereotype-using prejudiced personalities into liberal-minded tolerant personalities[4] (Allport 1954). As a result of Allport's classical model, numerous educational programmes and media campaigns were set up to encourage individual Americans to stop using stereotypes (Brown 1965). This model has dominated the widespread popular view of stereotypes in Western societies, as shown in the Hunston and Oakey's quote cited earlier.

The problem is that the key features of the model are false. Stereotypes are not fixed ideas or a consequence of a mental fallacy. As Eysenck and Crown (1948) pointed out, Katz and Braly required the participants to select attributes for the groups, which may not have reflected their personal beliefs but commonly known media representations. In fact, in later replications of this study, some participants refused to do the task (Gilbert 1951). Also, replications of the Princeton study in 1950 and 1967 (Gilbert 1951; Karlins et al. 1969) showed that the stereotypes changed significantly with the changing context of intercultural relations between the United States and other countries. For example, the two most popular attributes for the Japanese in 1932, selected by over 40 per cent of the Princeton students, 'intelligent' and 'industrious', dropped to only around 10 per cent in 1951, with 'imitative' and 'sly' now the most popular attributes. In 1967 'industrious' (on 57 per cent) had risen back to the top, with 'ambitious' and 'efficient' the next most popular. Rather than being a cognitive error, or a fixed idea, these stereotypes reflected the changing American representation of the Japanese within an intercultural context, such as the impact of the Second World War (Hinton 2020a).

Also, stereotypes are not rigid 'all' judgements about a social group, as even extremely prejudiced individuals are willing to acknowledge exceptions to their stereotypical beliefs (Adorno et al. 1950; Billig 1985). As Billig pointed out, racists are racists; they may hold abhorrent views, but they do not have different minds to the rest of humanity. Also, in looking at the extremes of prejudice, Allport (1954) had excluded the majority of Americans, who did not fit into the two personality types. Indeed, research shows that a population cannot be divided into stereotype users and non-stereotype users: everyone uses stereotypes, although people of different political opinions will focus on different ones (Chambers et al. 2013). For example, stereotypes such as 'the rich are greedy' and 'the poor are lazy' do not indicate simplistic or faulty thinking but different political viewpoints, drawing on knowledge of the society concerning the government's social benefit or taxation systems (Hinton 2020a).

Finally, adding a context often removes the assumed irrationality of a stereotypical generalization. To state that the British are 'unfriendly' (Hunston and Oakey's quote) is a generalization which, for example, an American might make after an unhappy vacation in Britain. Similarly, another American tourist, finding the British to be charming and helpful might, on their return, claim that the British are polite. Neither visitor is making a rigid all-judgement that every single British person is unfriendly or polite (an overgeneralization). However, stripped of their context, these statements appear contradictory. Hence, the argument that a stereotype is always inaccurate or untrue ignores the context of the utterance, as in the previous examples, and its cultural meanings in intercultural interaction. For example, an American teacher might expect Japanese students to be quiet in a class, relative to the American students, and finds this to be the case in their experience (Jussim 2012). Furthermore, the model implies that psychologists can determine 'true' characteristics and 'false' characteristics of social groups, which itself is problematic as it assumes that the group is an objectively real, natural categorization. However, social categories are social and political constructions: as Bruner et al. (1956: 7) put it, 'They exist as inventions not discoveries.' Hence the attributes associated with a particular category have a cultural meaning within a context, not a scientific truth value.

### *The unconscious bias model of implicit stereotypes*

By the start of the twenty-first century, it did indeed appear that there had been a significant reduction in the public expression of stereotypes about discriminated-against groups in American society, with Fiske and Taylor (2008) claiming that less than 10 per cent of the population now used blatant stereotypes. However, it is important to note that major structural changes had taken place in the United States during the later twentieth century, as a result of the civil rights and women's liberation movements. Equality legislation, from the 1960s onwards, now resulted in legal penalties against expressing specific stereotypes in the American workplace. Yet, by the use of anecdotal examples, Fiske and Taylor highlighted the ongoing discrimination in American society. Their explanation for the latter was that this was due to 'subtle' stereotypes – that is, the unconscious effects of stereotypes on even liberal-minded and tolerant individuals. Now, it was argued, implicit stereotypes lurked unconsciously within everyone in the society, even tolerant individuals.

This assertion was allied with the invention of a reaction time technique called the implicit association test or IAT (Greenwald et al. 1998), which was claimed to access these subtle or implicit stereotypes 'hidden' in the minds of even 'good people' (using the terminology of Banaji and Greenwald 2013). In an IAT experiment, a participant rapidly classifies items (words or pictures) according to one of two criteria. For example, words (such as 'ant' or 'daisy') have to be classified as 'insect' or 'flower' interspersed with words (such as 'kind' and 'cruel') which have to classified as 'positive' or 'negative', using two response keys. It was found that reaction times were faster, in milliseconds, when 'flower' and 'positive' (and 'insect' and 'negative') required the same response key press compared to the alternate pairing (Greenwald et al. 1998). Rather than examining the wide range of these implicit preferences in terms of how and why they are learnt in a culture, the researcher focused on the 'unconscious bias' of individuals in relation to discriminated-against groups in American society. For example, results showed a reaction time positivity effect for 'White' over 'Black' (in terms of photographs or names, for example), with Banaji and Greenwald (2013: 208) posing the rhetorical question: 'Are Americans racist?', implying that *all* Americans have an unconscious racial bias (a 'cognitive monster', Bargh 1999) within them. As a consequence of these findings, an industry of psychological training was developed to remove these unconscious biases from the minds of individuals in the American workplace. However, evaluation studies showed that the typical psychology-based anti-bias training session was ineffective (Dobbin and Kalev 2016; Lai et al. 2016; Forscher et al. 2018).

The unconscious bias model, like the classical model, proposed an explanation of stereotypes involving cognitive 'failings' of individuals, rather than the social structure and intergroup relations. This created methodological and theoretical problems. For example, if all Americans have an unconscious racial bias, as argued by Banaji and Greenwald (2013), then it must mean that people who have devoted their lives to fighting racism in America, such as Jesse Jackson, a well-known political activist and companion of Martin Luther King, would 'fail' a racial IAT, with the unjustifiable conclusion of requiring psychological training (Arkes and Tetlock 2004). Also, if an unconscious racial bias is endemic in all Americans, then to what degree is any individual responsible for the unconscious influences on their behaviour that they cannot (consciously) control (Krieger and Fiske 2006)? A further problem was that the IAT might not actually be accessing an intergroup 'bias' at all. For example, van Ravenzwaaij et al. (2011) found, in the Netherlands, an IAT reaction time advantage for Dutch names over Muslim names. However, this was not an anti-Muslim bias, as the same effect was found when comparing Dutch and Finnish names. It was simply a familiarity effect.

In fact what was being termed 'unconscious bias' was in fact implicit cultural knowledge, so it was no surprise that it could not be trained out of people's minds. Axt et al. (2014) showed, in two online IAT studies with over a third of a million American citizens, that participants' reaction times reflected their learnt general knowledge of the social hierarchies in American society, regardless of their own ethnicity or religion. Similarly, Hinton (2017) argued that the IAT results were not revealing a 'cognitive monster' (a personal unconscious bias hidden in the minds of individuals) but shared cultural knowledge or 'culture in mind'. Knowing that, as a generalization, it is an advantage to be White rather than Black in American society does not mean that any specific individual agrees with it. Indeed, they might engage in political action (like Jesse Jackson) to bring about a change in society to undermine it. The key point about shared common knowledge is that it allows members of a culture to communicate with each other via shared meanings (Kashima et al. 2008). Hence, without this knowledge, a person could not engage in public political debates, such as those concerning racism in American society. As Hinton (2020b) has pointed out, a completely 'unbiased' person is not the ideal egalitarian American that is inferred by the unconscious bias theorists but a culturally naïve person, unaware of the structure of the society in which they live.

## *An alternative approach to stereotypes*

Perkins (1979) has argued that the research focus on a narrow set of very specific stereotypes (related to discrimination in American society) has led to a distortion in the view of stereotypes as a general concept, as there are a large number of other stereotypes, from aunts to yacht-owners, in any culture. Indeed, it has been argued that the psychologists have constructed a stereotype of the stereotype (Worchel and Rothberger 1997) by ignoring culture and claiming that stereotypes are rigidly held, erroneous ideas in the mind. Billig (1996) has criticized this 'bureaucratic' model of mind, which assumes that categories and attributes were fixed and either true group traits or false stereotypes (Allport 1954). As Billig (1996) argued, people, on both sides of a political debate, will flexibly use rhetorical techniques in their arguments. Categorization is a rhetorical tool which is employed, for example, in the debates about immigration in modern society, such as the invention of the term 'migrant', which is then attributed negative qualities by politicians seeking to restrict immigration. Billig (1996) also argued that a specific categorization can be undermined by a second rhetorical technique called particularization: for example, identifying a hospital consultant from abroad as a migrant to challenge the categorization of 'migrant' and its associated negative attributes (see Lefringhausen, this volume). Thus, stereotyped claims such as the poor are lazy or the rich are greedy are not evidence of faulty bureaucratic thinking but are rhetorical techniques employed for a political purpose.

In contrast to the bureaucratic model of mind, a cultural approach to stereotypes examines them as cultural representations of social groups, circulating within a society, related to the social structure, and changing as a result of social and political change (Hinton 2020a). In this approach, people learn the patterns of power and privilege in their culture. That is, members of a society will learn the cultural representations of social groups circulating within their community as part of their socialization. These are neither fixed nor unchanging but are responsive to social and political change. For example, Eagly et al. (2000), in their social role theory, argued that the behaviour of members of a social group is restricted by their role within the social structure of a culture. Therefore, rather than seeking to determine, for example, whether nurturance and passivity, the stereotypical qualities of women, are true or false, the social structure should be examined to reveal the social role and normative behaviour of women within it. If a discriminatory social structure has historically restricted women's roles to ones related to nurturance and passivity, then, in such a sexist society, women will be represented as normatively nurturant and passive. Stereotypical generalizations reveal the institutional structure of social groups within a culture. Indeed, the women's movement since the 1960s has sought to change the sexist structure of American society to bring about equality of opportunity for women. As Eagly et al. (2020) have shown, political action over the last seventy years has changed the position of women in American society, and this is reflected in the changing stereotypes of them. Hence, children in the United States do not learn the same cultural representations of women as their grandparents learnt in the 1950s. This does not mean that modern American society is free from discrimination; simply that it is not the same society as it was in the 1950s, and widespread cultural change has brought about stereotype change (Weber and Crocker 1983).

Why then is normative social behaviour, related to a social role within the structure of a culture, attributed to personality factors in the stereotyping research? An answer is provided by the fundamental attribution error (Ross 1977), an overemphasis in attributing internal (personal) causation at the expense of situational factors; an error predominantly in individualistic cultures, such as those of the United States or Western Europe. In collectivistic cultures, such as Japan or India, explanations of social behaviour are much more sensitive to the sociocultural context (Miller 1984). Ross claimed that the error was displayed not only by participants in psychology experiments but also by the psychologists themselves. He noted 'the heated response of many professionals' to research demonstrating low levels of cross situation consistency in behaviour 'making personality scales very poor predictors of behaviour' (Ross 1977: 186). Ross pondered why psychologists found such findings 'so controversial'. His answer was '[t]he deep conviction that personal dispositions control and are reflected in everyday social behaviour' (Ross 1977: 187). In consequence, Western cultural assumptions of personal causation are embedded within social psychology theory, such as the stereotype models.

This is problematic, as presenting Western cultural assumptions as universal features of the human mind can be considered as 'epistemic violence' when applied to other cultures (Held 2020; Hinton 2020b), as it makes a claim of cultural superiority masquerading as scientific evidence. Indeed, Henrich et al. (2010) showed that Western individualistic assumptions were distorting psychological theory, with over 90 per cent of psychological research undertaken in Western societies (and nearly 70 per cent exclusively with American undergraduate participants). As Henrich (2020) points out, WEIRD psychology, based on people in Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic societies, is not typical of the majority of the people alive or who have ever lived. This problem can be illustrated by the statement that 'the Japanese are reserved'. On the one hand, as logically not all Japanese people can be reserved, it is traditionally viewed as a stereotype (see Hunston and Oakey). Yet, on the other hand, psychologists, such as McCrae (2001) using a personality test, have shown that the Japanese are more introverted than Americans – indicating that it is not a stereotype. This apparent contradiction can be resolved by a cultural explanation that avoids the fundamental attribution error. Both results can be explained in terms of differences in politeness norms (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). While individual people in the United States and Japan will have a variety of personalities, as a group they typically follow social norms of behaviour. For example, culturally it is more acceptable to be blunt in a business meeting in the United States, and express disagreement with others, than in Japan. In the United States such bluntness may be interpreted as indicating honesty and authenticity, and an American who does not speak out may be interpreted by others in the meeting as being reserved (behaving non-normatively). However, in a Japanese business meeting, due to different politeness norms, disagreement is typically expressed indirectly, such as suggesting that a particular idea is 'difficult', which is understood as a negation by other Japanese people in the meeting (Miller 2008). This explains why in the context of an intercultural business meeting, the Japanese do appear reserved to Americans. The different norms of expression lead to different interpretations of behaviour. Hence Japanese 'reserve', as viewed by Americans, is not about actual Japanese personality but about an American cultural judgement based on learnt normative expectations. Crucially, it is the combination of cultural expectation and sociocultural context that leads to such stereotypical judgements, not the result of mental error, as the study of intercultural communication has revealed (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021).

## *A cultural model of stereotypes*

Unlike the traditional explanation of stereotypes that attributes their expression to either mental error or an underlying personality trait (such as anxiety or hostility), a cultural approach to stereotypes starts from the position that much of human behaviour is normative, that is, people follow cultural expectations of behaviour related to their role in a social context. Cialdini (2012) distinguished between two types of norms: descriptive norms, which concern what people typically do, and injunctive norms, concerning what people should do. For example, people may typically drop litter in a park picnic area (a descriptive norm) even though there are signs telling them to take their rubbish home (an injunctive norm). Cialdini argued that to change people's behaviour (such as not dropping litter in the park), the messaging should combine the injunctive norm (not to do it) with a claim of a descriptive norm that dropping litter is not typical behaviour. Learning that an injunctive norm and a descriptive norm are consistent leads to more conformity to the norm than with disjunctive norms (Cialdini 2012). This illustrates how social change leads to stereotype change. For example, as a result of the women's movement in the United States, the previous injunctive norm that women's roles should be in the home was undermined and a new injunctive norm of equality of opportunity emerged (with equality legislation and changes to workplace practice). As more women entered the workplace and took up professions from which they had been previously excluded, the descriptive norm of women's behaviour changed. Hence, over a period of seventy years, the stereotype of women in the United States changed (Eagly, et al. 2020).

Hinton (2020a) has proposed a cultural theory of stereotypes that both explains the psychology research findings and places stereotypes as cultural representations within the social and political structure of a society, in support of the work of Eagly et al. (2020). All societies contain hierarchies of social dominance (Sidanius and Pratto 2012). These hierarchies reflect the ideological construction of social categories (such as class or gender) and the attributes, entitlements and constraints associated with members of these groups in the society. Thus, the created social structure constructs group differences in terms of categories and attributes, such as the distinction between aristocrat and serf in medieval feudalism or the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in a Marxist analysis. A society might be influenced by religious ideologies or ideologies related to wealth and class. Crucially, these will impact of what the different groups of people normatively do (or are prohibited from doing) within the culture. For example, based on a religious ideology, women may be barred from the priesthood, as in medieval Europe. The justification for this was related to the construction of gender within the religious belief system, with the prescription that priests *should* be men and the proscription that women *should not* be priests. However, this does not mean that these beliefs operate universally or inflexibly, nor that an individual agrees with the beliefs even though they know them. However, the institutions of power will seek to maintain their social control through regulation (Foucault 1975) but social structures do change through political action (including revolution). Hence at any period of cultural history, members of a culture will learn the prescriptive generalizations about the different social groups within the society as part of their socialization – that is, what group members *should do*. The prescriptions form the injunctive norms of a culture. From this, members of the culture develop generalized expectations about different social groups in the society. Hinton (2020a) refers to these stereotyped generalizations as *prescriptive generalizations* as they are based on the ideological power structure of a society.

A second type of generalization is *predictive generalization* (Hinton 2020a). Members of a social group are not randomly distributed among other social groups in the culture (due to the structure of the society). For example, the majority of medical doctors have been women in Russia and men in the United States for different structural reasons (Ramakrishnan et al. 2014). Hence, the generalization (the stereotypical expectation) that an unknown doctor will be a woman is a statistically valid prediction in Russia or that a doctor will be a man in the United States. People are making predictive generalizations all the time, based on their knowledge of the structure of their culture, to make the social world predictable. Crucially, predictive generalizations are not prescriptive generalizations, as no claim is being that it should be the case or not. Simply, in this society, at this time, based on the current social norms, the generalization has statistical validity (there is a greater than chance probability that it will be the case). Traditional stereotype researchers have tended to confuse a person's knowledge of the culture (predictive generalization) with an ideological belief that this is how the world *should be* (prescriptive generalization). As noted earlier, it is only when people are aware of the structure of their society (they can make predictive generalizations) that members of a culture can seek to change it (by challenging prescriptive generalizations).

Finally, there is *normative generalization*, where a descriptive norm of behaviour associated with a social role is employed to make a typicality judgement (Hinton 2020a). For example, a person might claim that their father is a typical middle-class father based on his (descriptive) normative behaviour. Normative generalizations are often made with occupational roles. For example, inspecting spreadsheets and calculating figures (normative behaviour for an accountant) are, culturally, often viewed as dull activities in many Western societies. This may be exacerbated by the fundamental attribution error of assuming individual causation for behaviour (Hinton 2020a), leading to personality attributions for normative behaviour, resulting in the stereotype of the 'boring' accountant.

Stereotypes, whether prescriptive, predictive or normative generalizations, are related to the sociocultural history of a society. Stereotypes reflect the structure of a culture and form the cultural expectations of its members. Hence, rather than being mental errors, stereotypes in a culture form a folk psychology, a set of commonly known everyday understandings, about the social groups within it (Hinton 2020a). In many instances an underlying ideology will influence all three forms of generalization, which should not be viewed as independent of each other, as a change in ideology can result in changes to both the injunctive and descriptive norms of a social group. Successful political action will change the structure of society and the related prescriptive generalizations. As a consequence, changes will arise in the predicative and normative generalizations. Thus, cultures, social structures and also stereotypes are not fixed but are in a constant dynamic cycle of change. The changing content of stereotypes provides a window into this process. Hence, the stereotypical generalizations employed by cultural group members reveal their knowledge of the culture and, depending on whether they accept or challenge them, their ideological beliefs.

## *Stereotypes, norms and cultural patterning*

Cultures can be distinguished in terms of their 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1993: 5) or less poetically as their common ground of communication (Kashima et al. 2008, see also Debray, this volume). Two members of the same culture may not agree with each other, but they know what each other is talking about. For example, Hinton (2020a) gives the example of two celebrity interviews in the UK. In one the interviewee explains how, as a woman, she succeeded in the male-dominated music industry. Obviously very talented, however, she also answers that she is Glaswegian, evoking the stereotype of the tough and enduring Scot. In the second interview, a famous choreographer describes his parents wanting him to be an accountant but says that he rejected the idea to become a dancer. The audience needs no explanation of his choice, given the known stereotype of the boring accountant and artistic dancer. Thus, stereotypical generalizations form the common ground of understanding in a culture (Kashima et al. 2008).

Hence, growing up in a culture (socialization) creates expectations of 'normalcy' (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021): that is, the cultural expectations about normative behaviour in different contexts and by people in different social roles. Crucially, this 'cultural patterning' (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021) is not a fixed or uniform action on the members of the culture, allowing for individual differences and subcultures within it. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár argue that there are three components to cultural patterning: cultural perspectives, schemas and norms. Cultural perspectives concern the values, beliefs and attitudes underlying the cultural structure, sometimes referred to as 'deep culture' (Shaules 2007).

Spencer-Oatey and Kádár link this idea of cultural perspectives to cultural ideologies (Scollon, Scollon and Jones 2012). Cultural ideologies are the ideological values enshrined within a culture, such as individualism or the power relations underlying the structure of a society. Second, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár draw on the schema concept from Hogg and Vaughan (2002), which concerns the interrelationships between cultural knowledge that allows a perceiver to fill in the gaps when faced with an unknown person, such as a Western teacher expecting a Japanese student to be quiet in class, even when they know nothing about them except the student's nationality. Third, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) argue that cultural group members learn the normative behaviour associated with various social roles: the social norms of their culture.

These three aspects of cultural patterning can be linked to Hinton's three types of generalization (as another way of describing cultural patterning). Hinton's focus on the ideological construction of social categories reveals, in the prescriptive generalizations, what are the dominant values, beliefs and attitudes – the cultural perspectives – in a culture. Indeed, the ideological underpinning of normative behaviour is made more explicit in Hinton's model. Relationships between the occupants of social roles and their activities link the schemas and social norms of Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) with the predictive and normative generalizations of Hinton (2020a), as these establish the cultural expectations of who inhabits certain social roles and their expected attributes. For example, people will learn the doctor role, as established in their culture, and the normative behaviour associated with it. This comprises all the typical characteristics and behaviour of a doctor (the doctor schema). However, if in a culture the majority of doctors are men (see earlier discussion) then the schema for doctor will include the predictive generalization that a doctor will be a man (along with all the other expected attributes of a doctor). Hence, the rich diversity of stereotypes in a culture reveals the underlying cultural patterning of cultural group members and guides a person's expectations about others in their culture, and forms their shared meanings in within-culture communication. It is from this common knowledge that members of a culture can support or challenge the dominant ideologies within it.

## *Stereotypes and expectation in intercultural relations*

Different cultures will have different stereotypes, which reveal differences in the cultural patterning of the members of the culture. For example, Americans will know the stereotypes of New Yorkers or Texans but they are unlikely to know the Chinese stereotypes of people from Beijing or the province of Henan. Similarly, a Chinese person will know the stereotypes of the inhabitants of Beijing and Henan but might not know the stereotypes of New Yorkers or Texans (unless they have picked them up from the media). Even when the name of a social role is the same in the two cultures (such as teacher, nurse or police officer) the normative expectations and stereotypes will often be different. Consider one culture, where teachers are typically viewed with great respect, teaching students who would not contemplate disobeying them, and a second culture where teachers are viewed with less respect, with students who are often impertinent to them. In the first culture, a media representation of a school (in, say, a drama series) showing a student being impertinent to a teacher would be interpreted by the viewers as non-normative and hence quite shocking. It might symbolize a breakdown in school discipline or indicate a student having problems. However, in a media production in the second culture, a student being impertinent to a teacher might be viewed by the audience as typical student behaviour and simply portraying a familiar (stereotypical) representation of both teacher and student. Indeed, these differences in cultural patterning can be illustrated by examining the interpretation by members of one culture of television productions from a different culture. Research in this topic has demonstrated quite significant differences in the interpretation of a programme by the members of the two different cultures (Hinton 2020a). For example, a hugely popular American soap opera was not successful in Japan, where the viewers found it difficult to engage with it due to its characters' 'inconsistency' and 'incompatibility', exhibiting behaviour very atypical of characters in their own Japanese drama series (Katz, Liebes and Iwao 1991).

Stereotypes as learnt cultural representations (Hinton 2020a) provide an approach to understanding another culture through an awareness of its stereotypical generalizations and the consequent cultural expectations of normative behaviour in the culture. Expectation is fundamental to intercultural encounters (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). When someone from another culture behaves outside of the expected norms of behaviour of one's own culture, an evaluation process is required to make sense of it (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). Violations of an expectation can be positive or negative, but they are often coloured by affect; that is, there is an emotional component to the interpretation of the unexpected (such as surprise). For example, when a person, from a culture where teachers are typically respected, views a student behaving impertinently to a teacher, this is not just unexpected but potentially shocking if seen as violating their own cultural ideology (prescriptive generalization) that students should not behave in such a manner. In these instances, the members of the other culture may be negatively evaluated and negatively stereotyped (Shi-xu 1995).

In the 1960s, sociologist Garfinkel (1967) asked his students to undertake non-normative behaviour, violating social expectations in American society, such as acting as a guest in the family home or approaching a professor and addressing him[5] by his first name. The students found it almost impossible to do. On approaching the professor, the students reported a rising sense of anxiety which usually resulted in them withdrawing and not being able to address him. However, in modern English-speaking academia, such as Australia or the UK, it is becoming more typical for a student to address their professors by their first names (Formentelli and Hajek 2016). Bargiela et al. (2002: 1) argue that in such a context, the use of first names indicates 'an ease of communication with strangers'. Indeed, at the beginning of their studies in the UK students are encouraged to do so by the professors themselves. Yet, students from other cultures, unfamiliar with this aspect of British academic life, may be shocked at the apparent familiarity of

British students to their professors, which, from their own cultural patterning, may appear very disrespectful. They may also feel anxiety in being expected to behave in a similar manner when studying in Britain, which requires overcoming a deep-seated sense of inappropriateness in addressing the professors by their first names. In many cases, British cultural expectations are explained to international students, but it may also be culturally sensitive to allow them to refer to the professors by title, at least until they are comfortable in addressing their professors by their first names in a British context.

Encountering the unexpected creates uncertainty, as an observed person is not behaving in terms of a cultural norm. This is particularly the case in intercultural encounters, where uncertainty and anxiety may be closely allied for a person sojourning in an unfamiliar culture (Berry 2017). While travellers to other cultures may believe themselves to be open to other cultures, they are still potentially influenced by their own cultural ideological assumptions (such as Western individualism and egalitarianism) in their interpretation of unexpected behaviour. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) refer to such a basis of an evaluation as an 'evaluation warrant' with different warrants applied in different contexts. For example, Shi-xu (1995) examined the accounts of travellers to other countries (in travel books and radio programmes), many of whom saw themselves as highly positive towards the culture they described. But on encountering 'unreasonable behaviour', such as behaviour (in a marketplace or a hotel) which they interpreted as morally wrong, then they would attribute a moral inferiority to the members of the other culture and make a stereotyped generalization about them, such as claiming that they were rude.

Thus, aspects of an underlying ideological value system (an evaluation warrant, using the terminology of Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021) are applied to various contexts in an intercultural relationship. For example, employing a Western educational warrant, it may be argued that students *should* speak up in the classroom – a prescriptive generalization about behaviour. Hence, when a student does not talk in a class then a (Western) teacher might attribute this behaviour negatively to an internal factor such as a lack of engagement or in the case where the student is identifiably Japanese, and other Japanese students have behaved similarly, as Japanese 'reserve' (Murray and McConachy 2018). However, a cultural theory of stereotypes argues that cultural explanations should be sought before making personality attributions when a violation of the Western normative expectations occurs in an intercultural encounter. For example, in the multicultural classroom, new and more inclusive teaching methods could be developed to incorporate diverse cultural ways of participation in the class.

## *Conclusion*

Hinton's cultural theory of stereotypes argues that generalizations about the members of a social group (such as accountants are 'boring' or the Japanese are 'reserved') are not the result of faulty cognition but arise from the normative structure of a culture. Traditionally, Western academic psychology has sought to determine whether the characteristics attributed to a social group are accurate or inaccurate judgements of the personality of the group members. However, the cultural model argues that it is not a question whether a group of people do or do not have a common ('essential') personality characteristic, but one of how and why this social group is represented in this way in this culture. The answer lies in the social history of the culture. Stereotypes are cultural constructions, known by the members of a culture (regardless of whether they agree with them or not). Hence, it is the normative structure of a culture and the underlying dominant ideologies within it that should be examined to reveal the source of stereotypical generalizations about a social group. Ideologies of difference (Pickering 2001) in combination with a belief in individual psychological causes of behaviour (individualism) can result in normative behaviour being attributed to the personality of social group members rather than seeking an explanation in the cultural history. Furthermore, when people behave in unexpected ways, such as someone from another culture not following expected social norms, their behaviour may also be attributed to (often negative) personality characteristics.

Consequently, Hinton's cultural model of stereotypes provides a number of key points for educators and intercultural trainers when they explore the effect of stereotypes in intercultural interactions. Stereotypes, as cultural representations, provide an insight into the underlying ideologies within a culture and the expectations of the members of that culture about the behaviour associated with the different social roles in their society. However, social groups and their associated stereotypes will differ across cultures, as stereotypes are related to the structure and ideologies of a culture. In any intercultural encounter, one should be aware that one's own learnt cultural representations and expectations of normative behaviour may negatively influence the effectiveness of the encounter. Also, knowledge of the normative expectations of members of the other culture can facilitate the effectiveness of the encounter. We can learn a lot about another culture by examining its stereotypes. However, stereotypes do present a barrier to effective intercultural communication when the generalized expectations about behaviour from one culture are applied to a different culture (with different expectations). And when a member of another culture behaves in an unexpected manner, the question of different cultural norms should be explored first, rather than making any essentialist attributions of their personality. Finally, this cultural theory of stereotypes (Hinton 2020a) provides a theoretical underpinning of the importance of cultural sensitivity in intercultural encounters – an awareness that the generalized expectations learnt from our own culture may not be applicable to members of another culture – as without it people tend to make unwarranted personality judgements. Also, stereotypes, rather than revealing the errors and biases of the human mind, reveal the complex social structure of a culture in terms of its dominant ideologies and the normative expectations of behaviour of the social groups within it. Consequently, stereotypes should be viewed not as fixed ideas in the human mind but as cultural representations that can change when the culture changes.

## Notes

1 In this context, American is used to refer to the people and culture of the United States, where the majority of stereotype research has taken place.
2 They used a term no longer deemed appropriate for this group.
3 An allusion to certain twentieth-century American cowboy dramas, where the bad guys wore black hats and the good guys wore white hats.
4 He himself identified with the liberal democratic viewpoint (Nicholson, 2003).
5 It was a male professor in the example.

## References

Adorno, Theodor, Frenkel-Brenswik, Else, Levinson, Daniel J. and Sanford, R. Nevitt (1950), *The Authoritarian Personality*, Harper.

Allport, Floyd H. (1924), 'The Group Fallacy in Relation to Social Science', *American Journal of Sociology* 29(6): 688–706.

Allport, Gordon W. (1954), *The Nature of Prejudice*, Addison-Wesley.

Arkes, Hal R. and Tetlock, Philip E. (2004), 'Attributions of Implicit Prejudice, or "Would Jesse Jackson 'Fail' the Implicit Association Test?"', *Psychological Inquiry* 15(4): 257–78.

Axt, Jordan R., Ebersole, Charles R. and Nosek, Brian A. (2014), 'The Rules of Implicit Evaluation by Race, Religion, and Age', *Psychological Science* 25(9): 1804–15.

Banaji, Mahzarin R. and Greenwald, Anthony G. (2013), *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*, Bantam.

Bargh, John A. (1999), 'The Cognitive Monster: The Case against Controllability of Automatic Stereotype Effects', in Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope (eds), *Dual Process Theories in Social Psychology*, 361–82, Guilford.

Bargiela, Francesca, Boz, Corinne, Gokzadze, Lily, Hamza, Abdurrahman, Mills, Sara and Rukhadze, Nino (2002), 'Ethnocentrism, Politeness and Naming Strategies', Working Papers on the Web 3, 1–17. http://extra.shu.ac.uk/wpw/politeness/bargiela.htm.

Berry, John W. (2017), 'Theories and Models of Acculturation', in Seth. J. Schwartz and Jennifer Unger (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Acculturation and Health*, 15–27, Oxford University Press.

Billig, Michael (1985), 'Prejudice, Categorization and Particularization: From a Perceptual to a Rhetorical Approach', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 15: 79–103.

Billig, Michael (1996), *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology*, 2nd edn, Cambridge University Press.

Brown, Roger (1965), *Social Psychology*, The Free Press.

Bruner, Jerome S., Goodnow, Jacqueline J. and Austin, George A. (1956), *A Study of Thinking*, Wiley.

Chambers, John R., Schlenker, Barry R. and Collisson, Brian (2013), 'Ideology and Prejudice: The Role of Value Conflicts', *Psychological Science* 24(2): 140–9.

Cialdini, Robert B. (2012), 'The Focus Theory of Normative Conduct', in Paul A. M. Van Lange, Arie W. Kruglanski and E. Tory Higgins (eds), *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, 295–312. Sage.

Dobbin, Frank and Kalev, Alexandra (2016), 'Why Diversity Programs Fail', *Harvard Business Review*, 94(7). https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail.

Eagly, Alice H., Wood, Wendy and Diekman, Amanda H. (2000), 'Social Role Theory of Sex Differences and Similarities: A Current Appraisal', in Thomas Eckes and Hanns M. Trautner (eds), *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*, 123–74, Erlbaum.

Eagly, Alice H., Nater, Christa, Miller, David I., Kaufmann, Michèle and Sczesny, Sabine (2020), 'Gender Stereotypes Have Changed: A Cross-temporal Meta-analysis of US Public Opinion Polls from 1946 to 2018', *American Psychologist* 75(3): 301.

Eysenck, Hans J. and Crown, Sidney (1948), 'National Stereotypes: An Experimental and Methodological Study', *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research* 2: 26–39.

Fiske, Susan and Taylor, Shelley (2008), *Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture*, Sage.

Formentelli, Maicol and Hajek, John (2016), 'Address Practices in Academic Interactions in a Pluricentric Language: Australian English, American English, and British English', *Pragmatics* 26(4): 631–52.

Forscher, Patrick S., Lai, Calvin K., Axt, Jordan R, Ebersole, Charles R., Herman, Michelle, Devine, Patricia G. and Nosek, Brian A. (2018), 'A Meta-analysis of Procedures to Change Implicit Measures', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 117: 522–59.

Foucault, Michel (1975), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Trans. Alan Sheridan, Vintage.

Garfinkel, Harold (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Prentice-Hall.

Geertz, Clifford (1993), *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

Gilbert, Gustave M. (1951), 'Stereotype Persistence and Change among College Students', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 46: 245–54.

Greenwald, Anthony G., McGhee, Debbie E. and Schwartz, Jordan L. K. (1998), 'Measuring Individual Differences in Implicit Cognition: The Implicit Association Test', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74(6): 1464–80.

Held, Barbara S. (2020), 'Epistemic Violence in Psychological Science: Can Knowledge of, from, and for the (Othered) People Solve the Problem?', *Theory and Psychology* 30(3): 349–70.

Henrich, Joseph (2020), *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*, Penguin UK.

Henrich, Joseph, Heine, Steven J. and Norenzayan, Ara (2010), 'The Weirdest People in the World?', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33(2–3): 61–83.

Hinton, Perry R. (2017), 'Implicit Stereotypes and the Predictive Brain: Cognition and Culture in "Biased" Person Perception', *Palgrave Communications* 3: 17086.

Hinton, Perry R. (2020a). *Stereotypes and the Construction of the Social World*, Routledge.

Hinton, Perry R. (2020b), 'The Dangerous Tendency to Essentialize Cultural Categories in Academic Psychology', *Theory and Psychology* 30(3): 383–8.

Hunston, Susan and Oakey, David (2010), *Introducing Applied Linguistics: Concepts and Skills*, Routledge.

Jackson, Jane (2019), *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*, 2nd edn, Routledge.

Jussim, Lee (2012), *Social Perception and Social Reality: Why Accuracy Dominates Bias and Self-fulfilling Prophecy*, Oxford University Press.

Karlins, Marvin, Coffman, Thomas L. and Walters, Gary (1969), 'On the Fading of Social Stereotypes: Studies in Three Generations of College Students', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 13: 1–16.

Kashima, Yoshihisa, Fiedler, Klaus and Freytag, Peter (eds) (2008), *Stereotype Dynamics: Language-based Approaches to the Formation, Maintenance, and Transformation of Stereotypes*, Taylor and Francis.

Katz, Daniel and Braly, Kenneth W. (1933), 'Racial Prejudice and Racial Stereotypes', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 30: 175–93.

Katz, Elihu, Liebes, Tamar and Iwao, Sumiko (1991), 'Neither Here Nor There: Why "Dallas" Failed in Japan', *Communication* 12: 99–110.

Krieger Linda H. and Fiske, Susan T. (2006), 'Behavioral Realism in Employment Discrimination Law: Implicit Bias and Disparate Treatment', *California Law Review* 94: 997–1062.

Lai, Calvin K., Skinner, Allison L., Cooley, Erin et al. (2016), 'Reducing Implicit Racial Preferences: II. Intervention Effectiveness across Time', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 145: 1001–16.

Lippmann, Walter (1922), *Public Opinion*, Harcourt-Brace.

McCrae, Robert R. (2001), 'Trait Psychology and Culture: Exploring Intercultural Comparisons', *Journal of Personality* 69(6): 819–46.

Miller, John G. (1984), 'Culture and the Development of Everyday Social Explanation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46(5): 961–78.

Miller, Laura (2008), 'Negative Assessments in Japanese-American Workplace Interaction', in Helen Spencer-Oatey (ed.), *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*, 227–40. Bloomsbury.

Murray, Neil and McConachy, Troy (2018), '"Participation" in the Internationalized Higher Education Classroom: An Academic Staff Perspective', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 11(3): 254–70.

Nicholson, Ian A. M. (2003), *Inventing Personality: Gordon Allport and the Science of Selfhood*, American Psychological Association.

Perkins, Tessa E. (1979), 'Rethinking Stereotypes', in Michele Barrett, Philip Corrigan, Annette Kuhn and Janet Wolff (eds), *Ideology and Cultural Production*, 135–59, Croom Helm.

Pickering, Michael (2001), *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*, Palgrave.

Ramakrishnan, Aditi, Sambuco, Dana and Jagsi, Reshma (2014), 'Women's Participation in the Medical Profession: Insights from Experiences in Japan, Scandinavia, Russia, and Eastern Europe', *Journal of Women's Health* 23(11): 927–34.

Ross, Lee (1977), 'The Intuitive Psychologist and His Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution Process', in Leonard Berkowitz (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 10, 173–220, Academic Press.

Schneider, David J. (2004), *The Psychology of Stereotyping*, Guilford Press.

Scollon, Ron, Scollon, Suzanne W. and Jones, Rodney H. (2012), *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*, 3rd edn, John Wiley and Sons.

Shaules, Joseph (2007), *Deep Culture: The Hidden Challenges of Global Living*, Multilingual Matters.

Shi-xu (1995), 'Cultural Perceptions: Exploiting the Unexpected of the Other', *Culture and Psychology* 1(3): 315–42.

Sidanius, Jim and Pratto, Felicia (2012), 'Social Dominance Theory', in Paul A. M. Van Lange, Arie W. Kruglanski and E. Tory Higgins (eds), *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, 418–38. Sage.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Dániel Z. (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.

van Ravenzwaaij, Don, van der Maas, Han L. and Wagenmakers, Eric-Jan (2011), 'Does the Name-Race Implicit Association Test Measure Racial Prejudice?', *Experimental Psychology* 58(4): 271–77.

Weber, Renee and Crocker, Jennifer (1983), 'Cognitive Processes in the Revision of Stereotypic Beliefs', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45: 961–77.

Worchel, Stephen and Rothgerber, Hank (1997), 'Changing the Stereotype of the Stereotype', in Russell Spears, Penelope J. Oakes, Naomi Ellemers and S. Alexander Haslam (eds), *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*, 72–93, Blackwell Publishing.

# Chapter 6

## Perceived Cultural Values, Essentialism and Intercultural Encounters

Ronald Fischer

### *Introduction*

Intercultural researchers often celebrate cultural diversity around values and norms, yet recent research suggests that value differences along national culture lines are often rather small in comparison to individual differences in values. This raises interesting questions. For example, to what extent do laypeople over- or underestimate value differences between individuals from different cultures? Can we correctly estimate whether some values (e.g. tradition values) vary more between cultures than other values (e.g. the value of friendship)? What cognitive mechanisms may contribute to any such biases and can we identify situations that amplify any cognitive biases? To answer these questions, I first report two studies in which members of the general public (Study 1) and students in a cultural psychology programme (Study 2) in New Zealand/Aotearoa were asked to estimate the relative influence of culture on value ratings. When comparing these ratings with empirical estimates of cultural differences (Fischer and Schwartz 2011), respondents consistently overestimated cultural differences. At the same time, people were relatively accurate in identifying those values that have been found to vary relatively more across nations. Furthermore, individuals who have lived in another culture tended to be somewhat more accurate (they showed less overestimation bias). These patterns seem to imply that our cognitive system is geared towards making possible distinctions between groups more salient. Such dynamics are well documented in basic perceptual and social group contexts but obviously have significant implications for intergroup relations.

Later in the chapter, I explore one possible mechanism that may contribute to these overestimated differences. Both scientific and lay conceptions of culture imply that cultures have underlying essences, that is, beliefs that social categories have underlying meanings which define all members and are used to quickly categorize individuals into in-groups and out-groups. These mechanisms may become particularly salient when individuals are faced with uncertainty as relying on essential categories may restore some sense of predictability. I test this uncertainty mechanism by exploring the role of uncertainty dynamics for making essentialist explanations of culture more salient overall and when cues indicate that an interaction partner may be an out-group member. Therefore, linking perceptual processes in intergroup interactions (overestimation of value differences) to motivational accounts of essentialism and uncertainty, I argue that we need to pay greater attention to evolutionary-derived cognitive mechanisms in order to improve intercultural relations.

Among anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists 'culture' is defined as a 'programming of the mind' (Hofstede 1980: 25), that is, a shared-meaning system of beliefs, values and norms that distinguishes one group of people from another and is passed on through socialization (Fischer and Schwartz 2011; Kuper 1999; Lehman et al. 2004). Most psychologists today would agree that culture affects and modulates a large number of psychological processes. Over the last forty years, cultural differences primarily along divisions of nation states have been noted for perception, cognitive styles and abilities, personality, emotion and social behaviour (for general reviews, see Berry et al. 2011; Nisbett et al. 2001; Smith et al. 2013). Hofstede's (1980) seminal work on values as the 'mental programs of culture' has provided a dimensional framework for mapping cultural differences of modern-day nation states[1] that has been used widely across the social and behavioural sciences. As a consequence, values (especially individualism-collectivism, Oyserman et al. 2002) have taken a central role in explaining cultural differences in attitudes and behaviours. This impressive body of research on cultural differences is matched by a relative lack of research on how people actually perceive cultural differences. How accurate are individuals in judging cultural differences and do individuals use cues from interactions that an individual is an out-group member to then essentialize and stereotype their interaction partner? Under what circumstances do people rely more or less on cultural information of actors?

To provide some overview of the current chapter which aims to address these questions, in the first two studies I examine to what extent individuals in New Zealand may overestimate cultural differences in values. I also test whether such estimates are indiscriminate or whether participants can distinguish which values may show larger or smaller differences across cultures. I then link these findings to recent theorizing about essentialism and the role of uncertainty in activating essentialist categories about culture. In the third study I test whether making uncertainty salient increases essentialist perceptions of culture. In the fourth and final study, I examine whether individuals are more likely to endorse cultural attributions of behaviour under uncertainty. Together, these studies contribute to our understanding on how individuals may process cultural information and under what conditions this information is being used more readily.

## *Culture and the perception of value differences*

I focus on perceptions of differences in values because values have emerged as a core construct of cultural research that has been used to describe and explain how societies and individuals differ around the world (Smith et al. 2013). The first question that interests me here is how accurate individuals might be in perceiving cultural differences in values. Previous research involving surveys with representative samples around the world has provided empirical estimates of variability in values measured using different instruments around the globe. On average, nation state as a proxy of national culture explains between 3 per cent and 30 per cent of the variance in responses to value questions in large multinational surveys, with the average amount due to national culture typically being 10 per cent or less (D'Andrade 2008; Fischer 2017, 2021; Fischer and Schwartz 2011; van Herk and Poortinga 2012). For other areas such as personality or norms, the estimates are of a similar magnitude (e.g. Bartram 2013; Fischer 2012; Van Hemert and Poortinga 2001). At the same time, laypeople may perceive much larger differences in values than are found in these representative surveys of values.

The eminent cognitive anthropologist Roy D'Andrade (2008) noted that students of culture often overestimate cultural differences in values and interpret any observed behavioural differences as reflections of underlying value differences. He argued that

> it is difficult for people to give up using the term *value* when actually referring to *behavioural* differences. . . . There seems to be a wish to essentialize when some behavioural difference signals something deep and important to the observer. Given the ease of making this essentializing move that can satisfy so many ideological proclivities, it is unlikely that it will ever be popularly understood that cultures do not vary much in personal values. We do not want to believe this. (p. 139)

This observation is of relevance for cross-cultural training and prejudice reduction efforts. Many training initiatives aim to increase the salience of culture as an attributional category, facilitating the ease with which unexpected behaviour could be explained by a simple heuristic. This emphasis on recognizing cultural differences may actually further accentuate or exaggerate value differences between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, leading to stereotyping or marginalization of others as being an 'alien other' when in fact individuals may share much common (value) ground that can be used to decrease stereotyping and prejudice.

*Essentialist beliefs and social categorization*

Such dynamics are even more important to consider when seen through different lines of research focused on essentialist beliefs about race (Chao et al. 2007), gender (Morton, Postmes, Haslam and Hornsey 2009), national identity (Zagefka, Pehrson, Mole and Chan 2010) and personality (Haslam, Bastian and Bissett 2004). The work on essentialism originated within philosophy, going back to Aristotelian notions of all things having some inherent properties called 'essences'. Allport (1954) introduced the idea of belief in essences into psychology and noted that it may lead to greater stigmatization and prejudice. Indeed, a number of studies have shown that essentializing group categories can lead to negative consequences, including stereotyping and prejudice (Haslam, Bastian, Bain and Kashima 2006; Morton et al. 2009; Prentice and Miller 2007).

Much of this work has focused on social categories such as race, gender or occupations. But it is also possible to think of 'culture' as an essentialist category (Chao et al. 2007, 2015). After all, as exemplified by Hofstede's famous claim, culture is supposed to be the product of a collective programming of the mind, making members of a culture more similar to each other and different from others. The origins of these cultural differences are thought to originate in socialization and social learning, which makes culturally learnt behaviours, beliefs and values characteristic of a group of people but certainly not immutable. Other behaviours or concepts could be learnt, leading to a weakening of the category essences. However, from a lay theory perspective, the essentializing of these differences has informative value which explains why individuals may use 'culture' as an essentialist category similar to race or gender (Chao and Kung 2015). Given what we know about essentialism of social categories, essentializing cultural differences may result in negative social consequences.

What may underlie this proposed overestimation bias? Cognitive approaches to group perception do provide some plausible mechanism for these patterns. Human perception and cognition are schema-driven and relies on prototype-based classifications of objects (Rumelhart 1980). Objects are perceived in terms of salient features and these are then assimilated to prototypical group categories that maximize similarity within categories and maximize differences between categories. The processing of categories in this manner is a basic cognitive mechanism that applies to any category and extends to social groupings (Fiske and Taylor 1991). Similar processes are now integrated in contemporary models of the brain using predictive coding models (Clark 2013). These various approaches across different disciplines suggest that information reduction and prototypical category formation that allows classifying environmental input against stored memory content are key mechanisms within the human brain. Extending and simplifying this in the context of intergroup classifications, for our brain it may be useful to quickly decide whether somebody is an in-group or out-group member when encountering a new interaction partner. To do this, information that may indicate group membership may be quickly encoded and contrasted to highlight boundaries with greatest efficiency (see Cosmides et al. 2003). As I will elaborate in the second section of this chapter, these mechanisms may become particularly important in conditions of uncertainty. When faced with situational or existential uncertainty, individuals may be particularly prone to make quick decisions on group membership of others and therefore are more likely to use essentialist categorization.

Returning to the question of the perceptions of value differences, we may ask how much of a problem are these claims by D'Andrade? Claims of overestimation of cultural differences have not been systematically tested and this is the first major contribution of the current chapter. Hence, the first question to be addressed here is whether laypeople over- or underestimate cross-national differences in values.

To provide an approximation of possible biases, I compare estimates of differences in values with empirically derived empirical estimates of differences in values in large representative samples.

Second, it needs to be examined whether any overestimation (or underestimation) is insensitive to the information (e.g. values) being judged or whether individuals are able to discriminate which values show larger or smaller differences across cultures. Our cognitive system may be able to distinguish group-distinguishing features relatively accurately, even though it may overestimate differences in general. For example, we may be better at guessing that tradition values differ across the world (e.g. in some nations, people value tradition a lot and in others not so much) compared to valuing friendship, which might be relatively important everywhere and therefore may show less variability across nations. Therefore, I test whether the relative ordering of the ratings of cross-cultural differences in values by laypeople corresponds to previously observed magnitudes of cross-national differences in these values.

## *Study 1 – A first estimation of the accuracy of cultural differences in value ratings*

A total of 136 participants were approached in public places in Wellington, New Zealand/Aotearoa, and agreed to participate in a study on perceptions of cultural differences around the world. The average age was 34.3 years and seventy-seven participants identified as female. In the sample, fifty-one participants were migrants (non-NZ born individuals) and have been in the country for 3.5 years at the median (minimum time was less than 1 year, maximum was 22 years). They were presented with fifteen values from the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz 1992). I selected those values that had shown the largest and smallest cross-national differences across the world and therefore largest individual difference effects within each nation (Fischer and Schwartz 2011). The largest differences across national populations were found for respect for tradition, ambitious, self-discipline, clean, honouring parents, obedient, politeness, preserving public image, devout and humble. The smallest differences across cultures were observed for: true friendship, forgiving, creativity, helpful and independent. In other words, in the previous study individuals within a nation state agreed with each other more and at the same time showed greater group differences between nations for the first set, whereas the second set of values showed greater individual differences and lower agreement about importance within nation states and rather weak cross-national differences in value importance. The important point here is to note that these target values were chosen a priori for the current study because the selected target values showed the largest and smallest differences across the world, respectively.

Participants were told that these values were included in a large international study involving teachers and students in sixty-nine countries (example countries listed were the United States, Japan, China, India, Thailand, Nigeria, Senegal, Jordan, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa and Fiji). The instruction for participants was to estimate the extent of differences between people from all these different countries on a scale from 0 (no differences between countries in general) to 100 (total differences between countries and no variation within countries between individuals). This scale was chosen to align with the rescaled percentage of explained variance from the previous global analysis of values (Fischer and Schwartz 2011; see also Fischer 2021 for similar estimates with nationally representative samples). It was emphasized that the focus is on estimating the general differences in values that are due to one's cultural background versus one's personal individual characteristics. These instructions were pretested with a group of ten members of the public and were judged to be understandable. All material was presented in English.

The average estimated difference across all fifteen values on a scale from 0 to 100 was 52.08 ($SD$ = 20.5), which is significantly larger than the observed empirical mean difference of 15.1 across the 69 countries: $t(135) = 20.99$, $p < .001$. This effect was still significant when comparing the perceived difference of 52.08 to the largest observed difference in religion-related values of 30.0 ( $t(135)=12.54$, $p < .001$). Therefore, in line with D'Andrade's observations, laypeople overestimate cultural differences in values.

I then estimated whether laypeople correctly identify those values that show larger and smaller differences in real-world value ratings. To estimate whether the estimation of perceived differences corresponds to relative empirical differences in values, I correlated the perceived difference estimates with the empirical value differences for values (derived from teacher data collected by Schwartz (1992) from fifty-four samples across all inhabited continents). The relative differences of cultural influences on values were judged fairly accurately: $r$ =.76, $p < .01$ (see Figure 6.1). Values with larger observed cultural differences (e.g. social and traditional values) were seen as more influenced by culture than values that vary more between individuals (e.g. true friendship, creativity).

Therefore, so far it appears that participants overestimated cultural differences in values quite dramatically but were relatively accurate in distinguishing those values that are more likely to vary across cultures from those that vary more between individuals and not between countries.

As an exploratory analysis, I examined whether some demographic variables covaried with the value difference ratings by individuals in the current sample. I compared the scores of those individuals who had lived in another culture for at least six months or more ($N = 63$) with those who have lived for less than six months in another culture. Comparing the two groups on each of the value ratings, only two comparisons were statistically reliable. People who have been abroad for longer periods perceived *smaller* cultural differences for obedience values ($F[1,119]=5.06$, $p < .05$, eta-squared = .041) and creativity values ($F[1,119]=5.02$, $p < .05$, eta-squared = .041). Even though not statistically significant, the trend was the same for all values: individuals who have been exposed to another cultural context perceived *fewer* cultural differences in values. The same pattern emerged when correlating the time lived in another culture with the individual value difference perceptions.

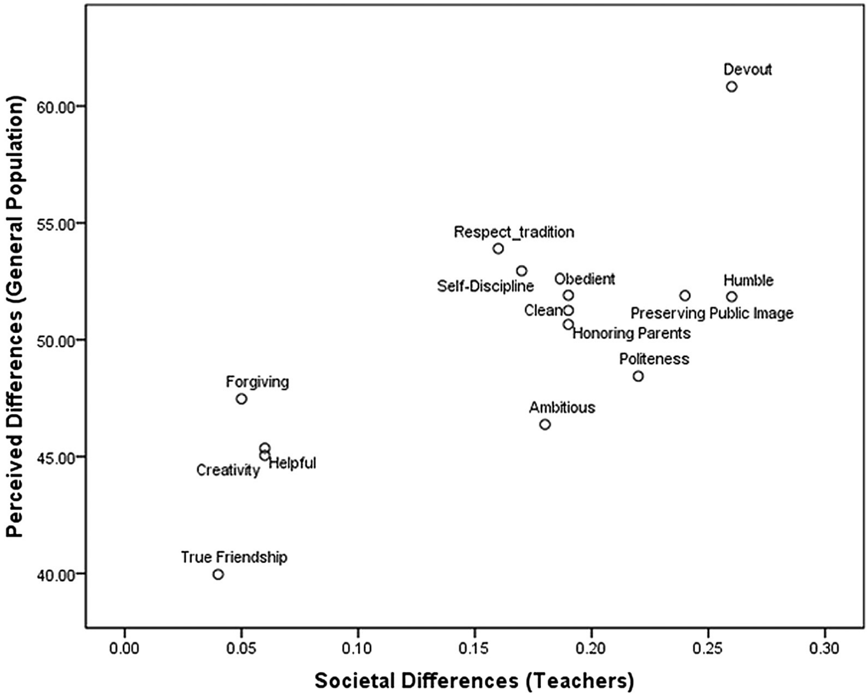


**Figure 6.1** Relationship between observed and perceived differences in values in Study 1.

All correlations were negative (average $r = -.12$, $p = .17$). Therefore, more cultural experience and knowledge decreased overestimation biases.

Bringing these patterns together, this study suggests that laypeople in New Zealand overestimate value differences from previous cross-national studies but are actually relatively accurate in identifying values that vary more between cultures. Drawing upon the original study by Fischer and Schwartz, it is interesting to observe that more person-oriented values showed smaller cultural differences and were also perceived as varying more between individuals rather than between nations. This may make sense as differences in individually focused values such as valuing creativity, being helpful or independent are informative for interpersonal interactions, relatively independent of the group membership of the interaction partner. Values important for regulating social group living such as obedience, tradition or preserving one's public image on the other hand provide information on group dynamics and may indicate membership in more or less conservative groups. Hence, such values may have greater informative value for detecting group membership and therefore our social perception may be sensitized to quickly differentiate individuals (and overemphasize differences). This is a speculation but may be plausible given what we know about evolutionary-derived social cognition mechanisms (Gil-White 2001).

Finally, individuals who had more cultural experience and knowledge as implied by their overseas experience were a bit more accurate in correctly estimating smaller cultural differences. This suggests that lay perceptions of culture overestimate cultural differences and therefore may contribute to stereotyping and marginalization of others that are deemed to not share one's values, but that greater exposure to cultural diversity may help to reduce these cognitive biases.

### *Study 2 – A replication with aspiring cultural experts*

The first study suggests that absolute cultural differences in values are overestimated, while relative values differences are perceived fairly accurately. One of the shortcomings of the study was that the instructions were relatively abstract and laypeople may not well be placed to evaluate these differences. Therefore, I selected aspiring cultural experts in New Zealand/Aotearoa as a second group of participants that should be better equipped to estimate these differences. Participants were graduate students in a dedicated cultural psychology programme at Victoria University of Wellington. These students are familiar with the concept of explained variance, that is, the statistical idea of how much variability in observations can be attributed to group membership. This concept is of central importance in modern statistics for understanding the magnitude of observed differences. The participants are also well familiar with the Schwartz theory of values and have advanced theoretical and practical knowledge in cultural psychology and anthropology. Therefore, using these future experts provides an independent and rather conservative test of the hypotheses.

A total of fifteen MSc and PhD students (eleven females, mean age = 30.8 years) in a cross-cultural psychology programme at Victoria University of Wellington agreed to participate. Of these fifteen students, fourteen students had lived and worked in other countries other than their country of birth (mean time overseas = 7.7 years). Therefore, these participants were highly knowledgeable of different cultural systems at both theoretical and practical levels. I presented them with a slightly extended list of nineteen values (adding successful, national security, mature love, privacy) that had shown the largest and smallest differences across societies (Fischer and Schwartz 2011). Again, these values were chosen on theoretical grounds because they had demonstrated largest and smallest cultural differences across a total of sixty-nine different cultural samples in previous research.

Because all participants had taken advanced statistics classes and were familiar with the statistical concept of explained variance, the instructions were modified and respondents were asked to estimate the amount of variance that was due to national differences in the original data reported by Schwartz (1992). They were reminded of the number of countries included in the Schwartz value study.

Again, the estimated mean difference of 47.38 across all nineteen values indicated that aspiring cultural experts overestimate value differences, replicating what was found in Study 1. This difference between perceptions and observations was highly significant, even when judged against the largest observed value difference in values related to religion: $t(14)=8.05$, $p < .0001$. I again tested whether values that show greater differences across cultural samples were distinguished from values that show more individual differences. I found the same pattern as in Study 1: the relative differences were judged fairly accurately: $r = .47$, $p < .05$. People ascribe larger differences to values that empirically show greater differences between cultures and attribute smaller cultural differences to values that show more individual variability.

Study 2 was smaller and more homogenous in cultural experiences, which makes a test of individual differences in overestimation biases in value difference ratings more challenging. I correlated the time that participants had spent in other cultures with their estimated cultural differences in values. Again, the same negative correlation emerged: $r = -.21$, $N = 15$, $p = .46$, but it was not statistically reliable. As in Study 1, greater intercultural experience is associated with a trend towards greater accuracy in perceiving the relative *absence* of cultural differences in underlying values.

### *Discussion*

People overestimate cultural differences in human values. The current pattern provides more systematic empirical support for D'Andrade's (2008) observations. It appears that our human perception is well attuned to quickly detect possible out-group members. Such a focus on overemphasizing differences between groups may be related to essentialism as a cognitive mechanism. In the social sphere, essentialism is the belief that social categories have underlying meanings (essences) or defining features (Chao et al. 2007; Haslam et al. 2000), including beliefs that categories are discrete, have an underlying meaning and reflect some deeper essences that affect most or all members of that category. Boundaries around national culture create one form of social category that is characterized by relative distinctiveness or inherence (you are born Japanese or Canadian which distinguishes you from people born elsewhere), is consistent across time and individuals, and has informative value about norms, relationships and customs (e.g. Haslam et al. 2000; Lickel et al. 2006). This theoretical assumption aligns with self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell 1987), which examines the cognitive mechanisms underlying how people draw boundaries between groups, including how situational relevant group boundaries make out-group members appear more homogenous and more dissimilar compared to one's own group. It is also consistent with cognitive theories of group membership encoding (Cosmides et al. 2003) and modern theories of the predictive brain (Clark 2013).

An interesting question is how such mechanisms may play out in relation to culture and cultural differences. This will be the focus of the next set of studies.

### *Cultural essentialism*

As noted in the introduction, culture is often defined in terms of communality of members of a group, as a 'programming of the mind' (Hofstede 1980: 25).

These definitions satisfy many of the attributes of essentialist beliefs (with the notable exception that inheritance and biological determinism are not part of the definitions of culture). Similarly, laypeople perceive cultures as shared-meaning systems that are stable and enduring (Fischer 2012, 2011; Verkuyten 2003) and are therefore likely to use essentialist categories (Verkuyten 2003).

Current research has often focused on essentialist beliefs about gender, race or nationality (e.g. Morton et al. 2009; Verkuyten 2003; Zagefka et al. 2010). A common assumption is that essentialist categories have negative consequences (Prentice and Miller 2007). In the case of culture, essentialism may be adaptive and functional when seen from an evolutionary cognitive perspective. When first introducing 'belief in essences', Allport (1954) noted that 'it is not necessary for all simplifications to be malign' (p. 169) and argued essentialism is a simplification that helps to make sense of the world and reduce complex social dynamics, enabling easier interpretation. Cultural encounters are threatening and highly ambiguous (Ward et al. 2001). Our sense of normality is challenged by interaction partners who do not conform to our social norm expectations or conventions, thereby increasing uneasiness and uncertainty (Mendes et al. 2007). Uncertainty can be described as situations in which one does not fully understand important characteristics of the situation or where insufficient information about relationships, norms and goals are available (Van den Bos and Lind 2002). Uncertainty in general is considered an unpleasant state and individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty (Mendes, et al. 2007; Van den Bos and Lind 2002). One activity that can help reduce uncertainty and therefore decrease the unpleasant states associated with it is the activation of cognitive heuristics that explain the world. Essential categories can fulfil exactly this uncertainty reduction goal because they are seen as providing assurances about the core characteristics – the essences – of social categories (e.g. groups in social interactions). Therefore, using an essentialist heuristic provides informational value and therefore restores a certain level of certainty. These heuristics provide a simple cognitive shortcut to help explain unexpected behaviour and re-establish meaning. Thus, essentialist beliefs can be utilized as fast and automatic heuristic process to reduce the uncertainty present in cultural encounters.

This proposed mechanism fits with some of the research in the social identity tradition. For example, Hogg (2000, 2007) developed uncertainty-identity theory as a motivational extension of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). He proposed that individuals show greater in-group bias and are more likely to identify with more homogenous in-groups when feeling uncertain. These propositions have been supported in laboratory research and with student-based samples (see Hogg 2007). This theory is compatible with the current proposition of sense-making when confronted with an uncertainty situation. However, uncertainty-identity theory is more focused on intergroup processes in general, that is, what motivates in-group identification and what types of groups have the highest identification potential under uncertainty. In contrast, the current predictions relate to how people think about culture (which applies to both in- and out-groups) and how this effects their attention to the cultural identity of interaction partners.

Bringing these ideas together, it could be expected that uncertainty increases salient essentialist beliefs in cultural categories. To test such an uncertainty reducing mechanism of essentialism, the third study is an experiment in which individuals were primed with uncertainty (van den Bos and Lind 2002) before answering a short cultural essentialism measure. The final study then examined the impact of uncertainty on attributional processes in intergroup contexts. These two studies together test whether essential beliefs can help to reduce the inherent uncertainty experienced in intercultural interactions.

### *Study 3 – Activating cultural essentialism via situational uncertainty*

Participants were 146 members of the general public in Wellington, New Zealand/ Aotearoa. The average age was thirty-two years, 50.7 per cent were male and 60.4 per cent had lived in another culture (4 per cent missing values). All material was presented in English, and all participants had sufficient English knowledge to respond to the questions.

Participants were approached in the central business district and asked to participate in a short study on perceptions of culture. Upon agreeing to participate, the priming task was administered. People were randomly assigned to an uncertainty or control condition. Following Van den Bos (2001), uncertainty was primed by responding to two open-ended questions about thoughts and feelings regarding being uncertain (e.g., 'please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your being uncertain arouses in you'). Participants in the control condition were asked two questions that did not invoke any feelings and thoughts about uncertainty (e.g. 'please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of you listening to music arouses in you').

Cultural essentialism (CES) was measured by adapting five items from Chao et al. (2007) and Haslam et al. (2004), which had been pretested by Fischer (2011). CES measures to what extent people see culture as a shared, defining and essential aspect of a person that deeply influences how they behave in social situations. An example item is 'Culture is a central aspect of a person's personality, it defines who you are'. Answers were recorded on a seven-point strongly disagree–strongly agree Likert-type scale (Cronbach's alpha was .69).

#### *Results and discussion*

A one-way ANOVA was performed. The effect of uncertainty salience was significant: $F(1,144) = 5.36$, $p < .05$, $d = .67$. Preliminary analyses had suggested gender differences. Therefore, a regression controlling for gender and having lived in another culture showed a significant effect of gender (standardized beta = .18, $p < .05$). The effect of uncertainty priming remained significant: standardized beta = .17, $p < .05$, $\Delta R^2 = .029$, supporting the hypothesis. Thus, uncertainty increased the salience of culture as an essential category. This provides a first support for the uncertainty mechanism of essential categories of culture. The final study explores this further.

### *Study 4 – Cultural essentialism and intergroup perceptions*

The previous study suggested that uncertainty increases the salience of cultural essentialism, explaining one important condition of why people may hold essentialist beliefs about culture. Essentialist beliefs help to make sense of one's world. Applying this to intercultural interactions, culture can be used as an attribution for unexpected or ambiguous behaviour in social interactions with out-group members. When interacting with people from one's in-group, we tend to follow certain scripts and norms that make interactions predictable (Gil-White 2001). If these expectations are violated, uncertainty is created and individuals are motivated to make sense of the interaction and search for cues that might explain the unexpected behaviours. Perceptible cues indicating out-group status (accent, clothing, symbols etc.) provide important information potentially explaining unexpected behaviour (Gil-White 2001).

Believing that cultures have essences should make individuals focus more on the cultural background of out-group members within interactions. Cues about a different cultural background become meaningful information that are used to make sense of the ambiguous situation. Unusual or unexpected behaviours should then be interpreted as being due to the cultural background of the interaction partner, a process that should be amplified when uncertainty is salient. This implies a three-way interaction: cultural attributions of unexpected behaviour are more likely if (1) people hold essentialist beliefs about culture, (2) the interaction partner is an out-group member and (3) uncertainty is high. To test this, the following study adapted a scenario approach borrowed from the intercultural training literature (e.g. Cushner and Brislin 1995).

A total of 125 members of the public (53 per cent male, four unspecified) participated. The mean age of participants was twenty-nine years. The majority of participants (74.4 per cent) were born in New Zealand/Aotearoa, followed by individuals from other English-speaking countries (United Kingdom, United States, Australia: 20.0 per cent). Less than half of the participants (45.8 per cent) reported having previously lived in another culture.

Members of the public were recruited in the central business district in Wellington, New Zealand/Aotearoa, to participate in a short study on social perception. Upon agreeing to participate, half of the participants were randomly assigned to the uncertainty condition; the other half completed the control condition (identical to Study 3). All material was presented in English, and all participants had sufficient English proficiency to participate in the study.

Then, participants were presented with five short scenarios describing a hypothetical interaction. These were adapted from existing intercultural training modules (Cushner and Brislin 1995) after discussions with five international postgraduate students who reflected on their experiences living in a different culture. The scenarios consisted of an interaction between two individuals, in which some problem or strange behaviour occurred: fast and reckless driving; being silent in a business meeting; throwing a lavish party for work colleagues; giving gifts to neighbours when moving into a new apartment; and not answering phone calls after a dinner out. Pretests with two samples of undergraduate students and members of the public had shown that these scenarios were judged as realistic, but that the behaviour was somewhat unusual for the local cultural context (Fischer 2011).

Cultural background was manipulated through information about the main protagonist. Half the participants completed the scenarios where the main person had an English name (in-group condition). For the other half, the main actor had a foreign name (e.g. Mr Singh, Tamika, Fatima, Mr Samenieh) and was described as having recently obtained a work visa. Manipulation checks were not included here since they would have been confounded with the dependent variable.

For each scenario, a number of potential explanations for the actor's behaviour were listed (e.g. situational, personality and cultural characteristics), chosen as the most likely explanations in pretests. The dependent variable was the same cultural explanation included in all scenarios: 'It is part of his/her culture to behave like this.' This item was rated on a seven-point Likert scale from 'very unlikely' to 'very likely'. Cronbach's alpha for the combined measure across the five scenarios was .62.

Finally, the respondents completed an expanded nine-item essentialism measure (Cronbach's alpha .79). Items were added to focus more specifically on the informational value provided by cultural essentialism (Haslam et al. 2000).

### *Results and discussion*

Moderated regression was used to test the hypothesis. Uncertainty and group information were entered as dummies and essentialism was entered as a mean-centred continuous variable, before entering all two and three-way interactions. None of the demographics had a significant effect; therefore, they were not included in the regression.

Essentialism had a significant positive effect in the regression ($\beta$= .45, $p$ = .001). Greater essentialism was associated with more cultural attributions of behaviour, suggesting that individuals with higher essentialism use a cultural lens to interpret any behaviours. Group information was also significant ($\beta$ = .33, $p$ = .047). Behaviour of individuals with foreign sounding names was more likely attributed to their cultural background than other characteristics. These effects were qualified by a significant three-way interaction ($\beta$ = .69, $p$ = .05, $\Delta R^2$ = .026). To explore the three-way interaction, the regression was rerun separately for the control and the uncertainty priming conditions. For the control condition, both essentialism and group information main effects were significant ($p$ < .05) but not the interaction ($p$ > .5). For the uncertainty priming condition, the two-way interaction was significant ($\beta$ = .48, $p$ = .03, explained variance 6.1 per cent). Figure 6.2 shows the interaction. Essentialism was more strongly associated with cultural attributions in the out-

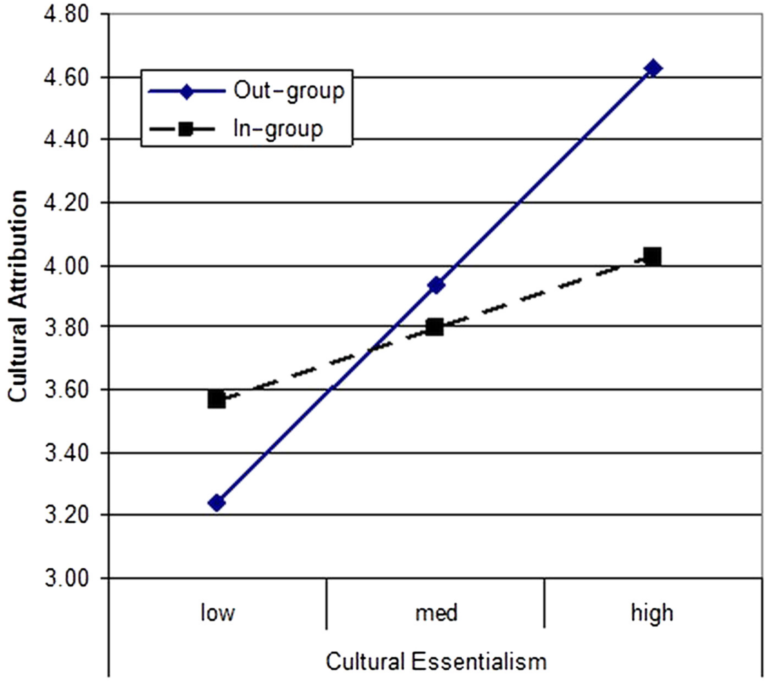


**Figure 6.2** Interaction between cultural essentialism and cultural group information on cultural attributions in the uncertainty salient condition.

group information condition (explained variance 31.9 per cent, $p < .001$) compared to the in-group information condition (explained variance 13.6 per cent, $p = .03$). Therefore, the uncertainty trigger hypothesis was supported.

## *Overall discussion*

This line of research was inspired by observations by a famous cognitive anthropologist stating that 'There seems to be a wish to essentialize when some behavioural difference signals something deep and important to the observer' (D'Andrade 2008: 139). By both confirming that individuals living in one Western society consistently overestimate absolute differences (while still largely correctly identifying which values may vary more or less across cultures) and then examining the essentialism component within D'Andrade's argument, I started to unpackage some possible mechanisms underlying this claim.

The overestimation of differences in social categories may have been an important evolutionary mechanism of discriminating in-group and out-group members. For group survival it is better to overestimate differences and classify ambiguous individuals as out-group members (e.g. potential enemies) (e.g. Gil-

White 2001). Hence, the overestimation of group differences, including cultural differences, may have had a functional utility in the development of humans as social animals. This functionality of discriminating in-group from out-group members may explain why people perceive larger differences in values between different cultural groups. In-group detection was a salient concern for living in social groups and overemphasizing group differences was functional to detect potential enemies in prehistoric times.

At the same time, the relative ordering of value differences matched between large surveys and the perceptions of both laypeople and aspiring experts. What may account for this relative accuracy? Cultural differences in large-scale value surveys are typically larger for social values related to conformity, traditions and social customs and are smaller for values related to person-oriented values, including values related to stimulation, caring about closely related others and achievement (Fischer 2012; Fischer and Schwartz 2011; van Hemert and Poortinga 2001). Given the noted functionality of overestimation biases, the biases appear to be not uniform but are rather influenced by the importance of each specific value for group functioning. In order to interact with other humans, our cognitive system needs to be fairly accurate and well calibrated to detect the intentions of individuals to avoid deception and potential exploitation (Lissek et al. 2008; Trivers 1971). This should lead to greater scrutiny of certain values, especially those values related to benevolence, competence and autonomy. As discussed in Study 1, person-oriented values may be perceived more in terms of individual differences because these values are informative for interpersonal exchanges, independent of the group membership of the interaction partner. In contrast, for social and group-focused values, people should judge individual interaction partners more in terms of their group affiliation, leading to attributions along group lines (resulting in overestimation of differences). Although this remains a speculation at this point, this reasoning is in line with the pattern that was found in the current study and is aligned with evolutionary account of social cognition (Cosmides et al. 2003; Gil-White 2001).

These essentializing mechanisms appear to be driven by uncertainty dynamics. The final two studies contribute to our understanding of psychological essentialism by outlining processes that lead to essentialist beliefs (Prentice and Miller 2007). Importantly, the pattern complements the overestimation findings by showing that individuals endorsing essentialist beliefs about culture are more likely to attribute unexpected behaviour to culture, especially when being in an uncertain state. This supports original arguments by Allport (1954) about essentialism being used as a meaning-making device and fits nicely with the observations by D'Andrade. Intercultural interactions are inherently anxiety and uncertainty provoking and essentialist beliefs can help to restore a sense of security and meaning.

## *Implications*

One implication is that situationally induced uncertainty influences how individuals process information about interaction partners and the information that they use for sense-making of the hypothetical interaction. Conceptually, this finding can contribute to dynamic cultural cognition theories (e.g. Chao et al. 2010; Chiu et al. 2000), demonstrating that an individual's need for closure increases reliance on implicit theories that are widely shared within the specific context of the individual. Chiu and colleagues' approach focuses on how people rely on cultural knowledge and how they use this cultural knowledge to make sense of their social world, whereas here I focused on how people think about culture as a social category itself.

The study was conducted in a modern multicultural society where 'culture' and its meaning are widely debated and probably more salient as an explanatory variable in people's minds. Therefore, 'culture' as a social category can be seen as an example of cultural knowledge that people draw on and that becomes salient in situations of uncertainty. Future research could examine how such essentialist intergroup processes operate in contexts where 'culture' is a less salient category to structure interpersonal and intergroup processes.

This chapter relied on survey-based studies with participants within one national context. This means that future research needs to carefully analyse whether these survey-based responses translate into behavioural responses in real-world interactions and also conduct comparable studies in other cultural contexts. A further limitation is that the current study did not differentiate between majority and minority perceptions of culture. As noted by Chao and Kung (2015), essentialism interacts in complex ways with power dynamics within modern societies, either being used to legitimize or challenge pre-existing social hierarchies. Therefore, these power dynamics need more attention. As a further avenue for future research, in the current project, individuals typically had limited information available. The task was to judge the average influence of culture on the endorsement of specific values (Study 1 and 2), responses to questions about cultural essentialism in general (Study 3) or a scenario in which limited information on the individual was available (Study 4). Previous work has suggested that the local context is important for encoding what information is relevant for distinguishing group membership (Chao and Kung 2015; Cosmides et al. 2003). Future studies could test some of these mechanisms using different scenarios that systematically vary the information that is available to individuals to examine how cultural group information influences cognition and behaviour vis-à-vis other information.

## *Conclusion*

Summarizing the core findings from the four studies and bringing the various arguments back together, the overestimation bias may be part and parcel of a cultural essentialism mechanism and related to meaning-making efforts in intercultural interactions. This meaning-making strategy is used when uncertainty is salient. Our study is directly relevant to intercultural training and education. The main outcome variable in the final study is widely used in the intercultural training and prejudice reduction environments. Many training initiatives aim to increase the salience of culture as an attributional category, facilitating the ease with which unexpected behaviour could be explained by a simple heuristic. It needs to be considered whether increasing the salience of such categorization is necessarily a positive element (Paluck et al. 2021). In this respect it is noteworthy that the overestimation bias decreased with intercultural experience in Studies 1 and 2. Individuals with longer experience in other cultures are actually more accurate in perceiving *smaller* differences in values. Working and living in other cultures for longer periods of time may increase the perception of a common humanity and shared values. Individuals in multicultural societies such as New Zealand/Aotearoa may also have opportunities to gain some insights and experiences when engaging at a deeper level with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Overall, overestimation of cultural differences may be driven by our human tendency to essentialize differences (D'Andrade 2008). This general tendency of our human cognitive system may also explain why there is such an overemphasis on cultural differences in psychological research (e.g. Brouwers et al. 2004). Research is always conducted in a state of uncertainty and findings need to be interpreted. Even when research evidence is relatively equivocal about cultural differences, there is a strong tendency among intercultural researchers to emphasize differences over communalities. The present research suggests that this may be partly due to basic cognitive biases. Obviously, these findings need replication in different samples. Yet, the overall pattern confirms previous work within anthropology (D'Andrade 2008) and may point towards a cognitive system that has been important in our evolutionary history (e.g. Gil-White 2001). Our scientific search to understand culture could simply be a more sophisticated mechanism that serves our innate categorization needs.

## *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank the editors, Ying-Yi Hong, Chi-Yue Chiu, Klaus Boehnke, Melody Chao, Charles Harb and an anonymous reviewer for invaluable comments. I am also grateful to the members of the Cross-Cultural Lab at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand/Aotearoa, for comments and help in collecting and conducting these studies.

## *Note*

1 In my discussion of these issues, I will focus on questions of national culture. In doing so, I follow research conventions across a number of different disciplines, but I explicitly acknowledge that behavioural variation may be more pronounced when focusing on locally relevant boundaries. The challenge of more narrowly defined geographical approaches is that environmental conditions are highly specific to behaviours.

## References

Allport, Gordon (1954), *The Nature of Prejudice*, Addison-Wesley.

Bartram, David (2013), 'Scalar Equivalence of OPQ32: Big Five Profiles of 31 Countries', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 44: 61–83.

Bastian, Brock and Haslam, Nick (2006), 'Psychological Essentialism and Stereotype Endorsement', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 42: 228–35.

Berry, John W., Poortinga, Ype, Breugelmans, Seger, Chasiotis, Atha and Sam, David. (2011), *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications*, Cambridge University Press.

Bhawuk, Dharm P. S. and Brislin, Richard W. (2000), 'Cross-Cultural Training: A Review', *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 49(1): 162–91.

Brouwers, S. A., Hemert, D. A. van, Breugelmans, S. M. and Vijver, F. J. R. van de (2004), 'A Historical Analysis of Empirical Studies Published in the Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 35(3): 251–62.

Chao, Meloby M., Chen, Jing, Roisman, Glen I. and Hong, Ying-Yi (2007), 'Essentializing Race: Implications for Bicultural Individuals' Cognition and Physiological Reactivity', *Psychological Science* 18: 341–8.

Chao, Melody M., Zhang, Zhi-Xue and Chiu, Chi-Yue (2010), 'Adherence to Perceived Norms across Cultural Boundaries: The Role of Need for Cognitive Closure and Ingroup Identification', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 13: 69–89.

Chao, Melody M. and Kung, Frank Y. H. (2015), 'An Essentialism Perspective on Intercultural Processes', *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 18(2): 91–100.

Chiu, Chi-Yue, Morris, Michael W., Hong, Ying-Yi and Menon, Tanya (2000), 'Motivated Cultural Cognition: The Impact of Implicit Cultural Theories on Dispositional Attribution Varies as a Function of Need for Closure', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78: 247–59.

Clark, Andrew (2013), 'Whatever Next? Predictive Brains, Situated Agents, and the Future of Cognitive Science', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36(3): 181–204.

Cosmides, Leda, Tooby, John and Kurzban, Robert (2003), 'Perceptions of Race', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7(4): 173–9.

Cushner, Ken and Brislin, Richard W. (1995), *Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide*, Sage.

D'Andrade, Roy (2008), *A Study of Personal and Cultural Values*, Palgrave MacMillan.

Fischer, Ronald (2011), 'Cross-Cultural Training Effects on Cultural Essentialism Beliefs and Cultural Intelligence', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 35: 767–75.

Fischer, Ronald (2012), 'Intersubjective Culture: Indeed Intersubjective or Yet Another Form of Subjective Assessment?', *Swiss Journal of Psychology (Special Issue: Personality and Culture)* 71: 13–20.

Fischer, Ronald (2017), *Personality, Values, Culture: An Evolutionary Perspective*, Cambridge University Press.

Fischer, Ronald (2021), 'Origins of Values Differences: A Two-level Analysis of Economic, Climatic and Parasite Stress Explanations in the Value Domain', *Cross-Cultural Research* 55(5): 438–73.

Fischer, Ronald and Schwartz, Shalom H. (2011), 'Whence Differences in Value Priorities? Individual, Cultural, or Artifactual Sources', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 42: 1127–44.

Fiske, Susan T. and Taylor, Shelley E. (1991), *Social Cognition*, 2nd edn, McGraw-Hill.

Gil-White, Francisco J. (2001), 'Are Ethnic Groups Biological "Species" to the Human Brain? Essentialism in Our Cognition of Some Social Categories', *Current Anthropology* 42: 515–54.
Haslam, Nick, Rothschild, Louis and Ernst, Donald (2000), 'Essentialist Beliefs about Social Categories', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39: 113–27.
Haslam, Nick, Bastian, Brock and Bissett, Melanie (2004), 'Essentialist Beliefs about Personality and Their Implications', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30: 1661–73.
Haslam, Nick, Bastian, Brock, Bain, Pau G. and Kashima, Yoshi (2006), 'Psychological Essentialism, Implicit Theories, and Intergroup Relations', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 9: 63–76.
Hofstede, Geert H. (1980), *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values*, Sage.
Hogg, Michael A. (2000), 'Subjective Uncertainty Reduction through Self-categorization: A Motivational Theory of Social Identity Processes', *European Review of Social Psychology*, 11: 223–55.
Hogg, Michael A. (2007), 'Uncertainty-identity Theory', in M. P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 39, 69–126, Academic Press.
Kuper, Adam (1999), *Culture – The Anthropologists' Account*, Harvard University Press.
Lehman, Darrin R., Chiu, Chi-Yue and Schaller, Mark (2004), 'Psychology and Culture', *Annual Review of Psychology* 55: 689–714.
Lickel, Brian, Rutchick, Abraham, Hamilton, David L. and Sherman, Steven L. (2006), 'Intuitive Theories of Group Types and Relational Principles', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 42: 28–39.
Lissek, Silke, Peters, Soeren, Fuchs, Nina, Witthaus, Henning, Nicolas, Volkmar et al. (2008), 'Cooperation and Deception Recruit Different Subsets of the Theory-of-Mind Network', *PLoS ONE* 3(4): e2023. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0002023
Mendes, Wendy B., Blascovich, Jim, Hunter, Sarah, Lickel, Brian and Jost, John T. (2007), 'Threatened by the Unexpected: Physiological Responses during Social Interactions with Expectancy-violating Partners', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92: 698–716.
Morton, Thomas A., Postmes, Tom, Haslam, S. Alexander and Hornsey, Matthew J. (2009), 'Theorizing Gender in the Face of Social Change: Is There Anything Essential about Essentialism?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96: 653–64.
Nisbett, Richard E., Peng, Kaiping, Choi, Incheol and Norenzayan, Ara (2001), 'Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic vs. Analytic Cognition', *Psychological Review* 108: 291–310.
Oyserman, Daphne, Coon, Heather M. and Kemmelmeier, Markus (2002), 'Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses', *Psychological Bulletin* 128: 3–72.
Paluck, Elizabeth L., Porat, Roni, Clark, Chelsey S. and Green, Donald P. (2021), 'Prejudice Reduction: Progress and Challenges', *Annual Review of Psychology* 72(1): 533–60. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-071620-030619.
Poortinga, Ype H. and Van Hemert, Dianne A. (2001), 'Personality and Culture: Demarcating between the Common and the Unique', *Journal of Personality* 69: 1033–60.
Prentice, Deborah A. and Miller, Dale T. (2007), 'Psychological Essentialism of Human Categories', *Current Directions in Psychology* 16: 202–4.
Rumelhart, David E. (1980), 'Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition', in R. J. Spiro et al.(eds), *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension*, 33–49, Lawrence Erlbaum.

Schwartz, Shalom H. (1992), 'Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries', in Mark P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 25, 1–65, Academic.

Smith, Peter B., Fischer, Ronald, Vignoles, Viv and Bond, Michael H. (2013), *Understanding Social Psychology across Cultures: Engaging with Others in a Changing World*, 2nd edn, Sage.

Tajfel, Henry and Turner, John C. (1979), 'An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict', in W. G. Austin and S. Worchel (eds), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 33–47, Brooks/Cole.

Trivers, Robert L. (1971), 'Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism', *Quarterly Review of Biology* 46: 35–57.

Turner, John C., Hogg, Michael A., Oakes, Penelope J., Reicher, Stephen and Wetherell, Margaret S. (1987), *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-categorization Theory*, Blackwell.

Van den Bos, Kes (2001), 'Uncertainty Management: The Influence of Uncertainty Salience on Reactions to Perceived Procedural Fairness', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80: 931–41.

Van den Bos, Kes and Lind, E. Allan (2002), 'Uncertainty Management by Means of Fairness Judgments', in M. P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 34, 1–60, Academic Press.

Van Herk, Hester and Poortinga, Ype (2012), 'Current and Historical Antecedents of Individual Value Differences across 195 regions in Europe', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 43: 1229–48.

Verkuyten, Michel (2003), 'Discourses about Ethnic Group (De-)essentialism: Oppressive and Progressive Aspects', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 42: 371–91.

Ward, Colleen, Bochner, Stephen and Furnham, Adrian (2001), *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, Routledge.

Zagefka, Hanna, Pehrson, Samuel, Mole, Richard C. M. and Chan, Eva (2010), 'The Effect of Essentialism in Settings of Historic Intergroup Atrocities', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 40(5): 718–32.

# Chapter 7

## Understanding Intercultural Relations with the Tri-Dimensional Acculturation Model for Majority Members

Katharina Lefringhausen

### *Introduction*

The world is facing a rapid increase in global immigration due to the globalization of business activities, internationalization of higher education and humanitarian crises, among other factors (United Nations 2020). In the context of a new society, it is worth noting that many migrants take on the status of minority group members due to their (perceived) ethnic, cultural and linguistic markers and, as such, experience lower power status in comparison to cultural majority group members (e.g. white English nationals in England; Giles et al. 1977). This power imbalance tends to give rise to increased pressure on minorities to adopt the majority culture rather than for majority members to accommodate towards minorities. Against such a background, research within the fields of cross-cultural psychology and intercultural communication has paid much attention to issues such as how minority members experience changes in their cultural identity, values and behaviours to better fit into the majority culture (e.g. Berry 1997; Luciak 2006). However, this focus has been rather one-sided, expecting cultural change to occur solely for minority group members (Spencer-Oatey and Dauber 2019). Moreover, approaches that claim to recognize the bidirectional process of cultural adoption between majority and minority members fail to actually do so (e.g. Deardorff 2006; Horenczyk et al. 2013). Yet, recent research suggests that bidirectional cultural adoption does indeed take place, with consequences for majority members' well-being, everyday functioning and intergroup relations (i.e. globalization-based proximal-acculturation; Haugen and Kunst 2017; Lefringhausen and Marshall 2016). Thus, ignoring a two-way perspective of cultural adoption does limit our theoretical understanding not only of cultural exchange but also of pedagogical practices within intercultural education that are based on these theoretical paradigms.

This chapter will argue that recognizing a two-way acculturation process is crucial to understanding intercultural relations within a world characterized by mobility and dynamic cultural flows. I will first critique the one-way perspective within the acculturation literature and intercultural competence literature. I will then discuss recent findings on majority members' proximal-acculturation and its implications followed by the introduction of a tri-dimensional acculturation model which respects the aspect of power. Lastly, I provide examples for intercultural educators and facilitators on how to apply such a model across contexts (e.g. workplace).

## *The one-way perspective within the acculturation literature*

The theory of acculturation describes how intercultural contact can result in ongoing changes at both individual (i.e. values, attitudes, beliefs and identities; Graves 1967) and group level (i.e. social and cultural systems; Redfield et al. 1936). Originally, acculturation was proposed to be a unidimensional process for minority members in which maintenance of one's heritage culture and acquisition of a new culture opposed each other, resulting in a zero-sum trade-off (Gordon 1964). Yet, as represented by Figure 7.1, research has supported the independence of two underlying dimensions: the degree to which minority members wish to maintain their original/heritage culture and the degree to which they desire to have contact with/adopt the majority culture (Berry 1997; Yoon et al. 2020).

When crossing these two orientations, minority members can follow four acculturation strategies which are 'not merely attitudinal preferences but consciously chosen in order to achieve a particular goal' (Berry 2019: 21): *assimilated* individuals reject their heritage culture while seeking interaction with the host culture; *separated* individuals maintain only their heritage culture; *marginalized* individuals have either little possibility to or interest in maintaining their heritage culture nor interacting with the host culture; while *integrated* or *bicultural* individuals maintain aspects of their heritage culture and engage in the host culture.

Notably, acculturation orientations (i.e. the two underlying dimensions) and strategies (e.g. integration) are not necessarily the same across life spheres/

| **Dimension 1** | **Dimension 2** | **Acculturation strategy** |
|---|---|---|
| Do you wish to maintain your majority culture? | Do you wish to adopt elements of minority group members' cultures? | |
| Yes | No | Separation |
| | Yes | Integration |
| No | No | Marginalization/Diffusion |
| | Yes | Assimilation |

**Figure 7.1** The two underlying dimensions of minority members' acculturation process and their resulting strategies.

contexts (e.g. at work or at home; e.g. Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver 2004) nor across domains (e.g. identity or values), with some changes happening quicker and more often than others (Yoon et al. 2020). For example, Berry (1997) combined the domains of cultural maintenance and contact-participation, whereas Bourhis et al. (1997) proposed to match maintenance with cultural adoption. Such domain variations strongly impact minority members' acculturation strategy preferences. Snauwart et al. (2003) reported that Moroccans and Turkish immigrants in Belgian were more likely to report good and regular relationships with Belgians (contact-participation) than adopting parts (values) of the Belgian culture and were even less likely to identify with the Belgian culture. The authors explained this finding by suggesting that going beyond developing good relationships with members of another culture is more 'psychologically demanding' (p. 237), and thus, slower or less likely to occur.

Over the last four decades, scholars have explored the implications of minority group members' acculturation orientations and strategies from the viewpoint of psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Drawing on the stress and coping literature (e.g. Lazarus and Folkman 1984), Ward and Kennedy (1999: 660) defined psychological adjustment as 'psychological well-being or satisfaction', with individuals who maintain their heritage culture being more likely to also report less psychological distress. Sociocultural adjustment, by contrast, describes 'the ability to "fit in", to acquire culturally appropriate skills and to negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment' (Ward and Kennedy 1999: 660). This kind of adjustment is based on social learning models and appears to be strongly related with majority culture adoption. On the whole, integration often results in the most adaptive strategy relating to better psychological (e.g. stress, anxiety, well-being) and sociocultural adjustment outcomes (e.g. adjusting to daily life; Berry et al. 2021).[11] This can also be explained via the integration hypothesis which proposes that belonging to more than one cultural group provides access to more social capital, which results in more adaptive success in plural societies (Putnam 2001). Thereby, integration at a more profound level – that is, by changing one's cultural identity/becoming bicultural – can encourage not only sociocultural and psychological adjustment but also creativity (e.g. Sharif 2019).

But what about majority group members? Early work on the theory of acculturation suggested that cultural changes mainly, if not exclusively, occur only for minority group members (Parsons 1936). This *power* imbalance between groups was picked up by Berry (1974) as a third dimension to consider in minority members' acculturation process: the power of minority members/groups to choose and pursue their preferred cultural orientation. We can understand power, for example, as a combination of status, demography and institutional support of a cultural group (Giles et al. 1977). Thus, due to their higher power status, research conceptualizes majority members' acculturation as gatekeeping by facilitating or hindering minority members' acculturation process (Horenczyk et al. 2013; Leong 2014). In so doing, the onus of responsibility to adopt elements of another culture theoretically remains with minority members, whereas majority members are expected to maintain their national culture at an individual level (Prilleltensky 2008).

There are two well-recognized approaches towards majority members' function as gatekeepers which address their intergroup ideologies and acculturation expectations. Berry and Kalin (1995) investigated majority members' endorsement of a multicultural ideology – that is, the degree to which they prefer to support the integration of minority members into the larger society (e.g. in education, health and labour). Yet because multiculturalism emphasizes respect for cultural differences, it is often perceived as a cultural threat (Morrison et al. 2010) or even as excluding, especially by white majority members (Plaut et al. 2011). An alternative approach is colour-blindness: the idea that because prejudice can derive from emphasizing cultural group memberships and thus one should ignore them and simply treat everyone as individuals (Wolsko et al. 2000). Such an approach may seem compatible with individualism. For example, Bourhis et al. (1997) and others (e.g. Piontkowski et al. 2000) have shown that majority members expecting individualism 'reject group ascriptions per se and prefer to treat others as individual persons rather than as members of categories such as language and cultural groups' (Bourhis 2017: 6). Yet, although colour-blindness does reduce prejudice, it is not as effective as a multicultural ideology (Whitley and Webster 2019). This is because to judge individuals from other cultures without automatically drawing on learnt references and assumptions about that person's cultural group requires extra cognitive effort which is unlikely to be sustainable (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). Also, downplaying cultural group memberships in societies with existing inequalities experienced by minorities can justify a discriminatory status quo (Rosenthal and Levy 2010: 219).

Taken together, the theoretical assumption of a predominantly one-way process of acculturation in the literature has positioned majority members primarily as gatekeepers of minority members' acculturation process, neglecting the possibility that majority members *themselves* may experience cultural changes. This one-way perspective is also salient in the intercultural competence literature, as outlined in the next section.

### *The one-way perspective within the intercultural competence literature*

While within the education literature, there is little explicit discussion of what constitutes mutual integration (Spencer-Oatey and Dauber 2019), within intercultural (communication) competence (ICC) research, many scholars understand cultural adoption as a process to gain 'the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes' (Deardorff 2004: 194). Within such a conception, appropriate communication relates to the avoidance of violating existing cultural expectations or rules (Spitzberg 1989). Yet, often these ICC models lack explicit recognition of a two-way acculturation process, being conceptualized mostly for students or employees who move abroad, suggesting that what is considered 'appropriate' behaviour/attitude/skills to ensure effective communication is defined by the majority group rather than mutually negotiated (see also Hoff 2020). Even when majority members' attitudes and skills are in focus of ICC models, these attitudes and skills tend to be limited to enabling effective communication within temporary intercultural contact at work/school/university, rather than considering potential trans-situational cultural changes in majority members per se.

For example, as of 2020, among the most cited research within the ICC field are the works by Deardorff as well as Milton Bennett (Peng et al. 2020), with their models being prominent within intercultural education. First, Deardorff (2004) proposed a Pyramid Model of ICC which emphasizes an internal shift in cultural frame of reference, especially attitudes of respect, openness and curiosity, which leads to the observable outcome of effective and appropriate communication. This key role for attitudinal change is further stressed in her Process Model of ICC.

While not denying the importance of ICC in establishing harmonious intergroup relationships, I argue that this model fails to sufficiently acknowledge the fact that both parties engage in reciprocal cultural learning which can result in cultural identity/behaviour/value changes. More specifically, in her pursuit to establish a consensus on the understanding of ICC among intercultural scholars for the HE context, Deardorff (2006) reported that agreed ICC elements included 'Adaptability and adjustment to new cultural environment' (p. 249) as well as 'Culture-specific knowledge and understanding host culture's traditions' (p. 250). Although ICC is here proposed to be relevant for both majority and minority members in a HE context (p. 242), these items demonstrate the implicit expectation of most interviewed scholars for minority rather than majority students to undergo cultural change.

Nevertheless, the trend towards addressing ICC for all – students with and without study-abroad experiences as well as staff – is growing (de Wit and Hunter 2015; Rawal and Deardorff 2021), often involving inclusive initiatives at organizational level. However, such initiatives do not necessarily envision cultural changes for majority members but rather aim to allow 'people of all identities . . . (to) be fully themselves while also contributing to the larger collective, as valued and full members' (Ferdman 2017: 235), implying attitudinal change towards respect and openness rather than cultural adoption per se. Indeed, Spencer-Oatey (2018: 302) suggests that if we want to better understand the potential benefits of cultural diversity for majority students, universities need to go beyond inclusion, 'which seems to suggest "including" one group of people (e.g. international students) into another group (e.g. home students)' and focus on integration.

Meanwhile, Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) aims to address minority and majority members' 'ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences' (i.e. intercultural sensitivity; Hammer et al. 2003: 422). In so doing, the DMIS expects a two-way process of change, however limited to intergroup interactions (life sphere specific), and again considers it to mainly serve a functional goal (effective communication). Specifically, there are six consecutive phases through which individuals move from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative world view. Ethnocentrism (including Denial, Defence and Minimization; Bennett 2017) relates to the rejection or unawareness of cultural differences where the individual regards their own cultural reality to be the centre of all reality. Thereby, Reversal, as the alternative stage to Defence, is described for individuals who work, study or live abroad (immigration-based acculturation) as 'going native' (Hammer et al. 2003: 424), which implies an assimilation strategy. Yet for individuals working with minority members in a context that their group culturally dominates, Reversal indicates being a '"false ally" . . . who takes on the cause of "oppression" without much experience or understanding' (Bennett 2017: 4), suggesting no individual cultural change but an intergroup ideology shift.

Ethnorelativism (including Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration), by contrast, describes individuals who accept the relativity of cultural values and regard other world views as equal. While Acceptance does not imply agreement with cultural differences or culturally changing oneself, adapted individuals have a strong sense of empathy which enables them to change frames of cultural reference to act and feel in a culturally appropriate manner in response to the other culture (Bennett 1993). Yet, the final stage of Integration, which indicates biculturalism, is expected to describe 'a growing number of people, including many members of non-dominant cultures, long-term expatriates, and "global nomads"' (Hammer et al. 2003: 425). Thus, although the DMIS does not deny the experience of biculturalism for majority members, it seems to regard this as a less likely phenomenon than for minority members. Taken together, although some of the ICC literature is coming to incorporate a stronger focus on majority members, cultural change is still implicitly expected to apply more to minority members rather than to majority members.

## *A two-way perspective: Majority members' acculturation*

Despite their higher power status than minority members, majority members may still experience cultural changes as a result of intercultural contact. This can result from some minority members being regarded as valued by majority members (e.g. Montreuil and Bourhis 2004) or that they have more demographic strength in certain contexts (e.g. neighbourhoods, industry or university programmes). Moreover, these days minority members can more easily stay connected with their heritage culture due to advanced communication technologies and improved transportation, making it more common that majority members can experience other cultural practices within a shared society (Oudenhoven and Ward 2013). Nevertheless, it is only recently that globalization- rather than immigration-based acculturation has come to be explored.

Globalization-based acculturation refers to individuals experiencing psychological acculturation (e.g. changes in their cultural identity/values/behaviours) without moving to another country but through experiencing globalization within their home country (e.g. economic, cultural and political exchange). Chen et al. (2016), for example, demonstrated that minority as well as majority members can embrace elements of different cultures, forming a global identity perceived to be shared with like-minded cultural hybrid individuals. Here, majority members' response to globalization is comprised of either a proactive cultural learning approach (i.e. multicultural acquisition) or an exclusionary reaction, experiencing other cultures as an intrusion and threat, especially when strongly identifying with the local culture (i.e. ethnic protection). Contrarily, Ferguson and Bornstein (2012) proposed that majority members' globalization-based acculturation allows majority members to maintain their national culture and simultaneously adopt elements of a geographically distant or remote culture via indirect and/or intermittent exposure to globalization mechanisms such as food and media (i.e. globalization-based remote-acculturation).

In contrast to the previous work outlined above, Lefringhausen and Marshall (2016; Lefringhausen 2015) found support for majority members' proximal-acculturation – that is, the extent to which they prefer to maintain their national culture and/or the extent to which they prefer to adopt elements of immigrants and self-identified ethnic minorities' cultures in a shared society. Indeed, recent research found five globalization-based proximal-acculturation strategies for majority members (Kunst et al. 2021): integration by endorsing both cultural orientations; separation by tending towards their national culture only; diffusion with scores around the midpoint on both cultural dimensions; as well as (although less often) marginalization by rejecting both cultural orientations and even assimilation by solely endorsing minority members' cultures. Moreover, majority members' acculturation seems to vary across domains and life spheres, with most reporting experiencing changes in behaviours (e.g. food and cultural activity) rather than values (e.g. tolerance and religion) and in their private spheres of life (i.e. areas with a degree of freedom of choice, e.g., food and friends) rather than public spheres (e.g. school/work and public spaces; Haugen and Kunst 2017). This seems to indicate that changes are more likely to happen within a peripheral domain (behaviours) as well as on a voluntary basis (private life sphere), potentially enabling only surface rather than deep cultural learning. Deep cultural learning relates to the

> *process of embodying complex knowledge and skills into our intuitive mind* – the mental 'autopilot' that we rely on to navigate everyday life . . . it results in deep forms of knowing – *mastery* of complex skills, *insight* into linguistic and cultural patterns, and *intuitive understanding* . . .. (Shaules 2019: 12)

By contrast, surface learning refers to the relatively conscious form of knowledge acquisition that goes along with conceptual forms of knowing (e.g. reducing culture to a set of facts or etiquette rules). This echoes the globalization literature in that due to majority members power status, they are less likely to experience pressures to adopt aspects of another culture but may freely choose to pick up certain elements of their liking (Chen et al. 2016; Ozer and Schwartz 2016).

However, other findings indicate that majority members' experience profound cultural changes and thus deeper cultural learning, too. For example, Lefringhausen and Marshall (2016) found that majority members who preferred to maintain their national culture were more likely to also report stronger commitment towards their national group, whereas no such relationship was found for immigrant culture adoption. In other words, those who adopted immigrants' cultures seemed to experience cultural identity changes (i.e. a decrease in commitment to one's national group). Indeed, with data from white English nationals, those who assimilated towards immigrant cultures were the least likely to identify with fellow English nationals (Lefringhausen et al. 2021).

Majority members' acculturation also relates to psychological and sociocultural outcomes as well as intergroup attitudes. Those who maintain their national culture are more likely to report high levels of satisfaction with life, while those who adopt elements of immigrant cultures show less acculturative stress (e.g. feeling culturally isolated) and greater intercultural sensitivity (Lefringhausen and Marshall 2016). Additionally, adopting minority members' cultures relates to higher organizational citizenship behaviour (Lefringhausen 2015) – that is, individuals are more willing to go beyond their formal job tasks for the benefit of their co-workers/organization (Williams and Anderson 1991). Separated individuals are more likely to experience identity and cultural threat as well as ethnic discrimination, but also higher self-esteem than those who follow other acculturation strategies (Kunst et al. 2021). Meanwhile, it is assimilated and integrated majority members who perceive immigrants' cultures as an enrichment and endorse more constructive marginalization, therefore being more likely to recognize cultural differences while experiencing oneself as not belonging to specific cultural groups and their reference frameworks (Lefringhausen et al. 2021).

In sum, majority members' acculturation can have implications for their well-being, ability to 'fit in' in a culturally plural society, as well as intergroup attitudes. However, to better understand the full potential of this two-way process, the current conceptualization has to incorporate a third dimension: *power*.

## *A tri-dimensional acculturation model for majority members*

In opposition to the power dimension for minority members' acculturation which asks to what extent they *can* choose their preferred strategy (Berry 1974), I propose that power for majority group members refers to the question of whether they prefer to maintain or share their dominant position or power with other cultural groups in a given society (Figure 7.2). Thus, the inclusion of such a dimension to create a tri-dimensional proximal-acculturation model for majority members

| Dimension 1 | Dimension 2 | Dimension 3 | Acculturation strategy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you wish to maintain your majority culture? | Do you wish to adopt elements of minority group members' cultures? | Do you wish to maintain your power status in this society? | | |
| Yes | No | Yes | Profound | Separation |
| | | No | Peripheral | |
| | Yes | No | Profound | Integration |
| | | Yes | Peripheral | |
| No | No | No | Profound | Marginalization/Diffusion |
| | | Yes | Peripheral | |
| | Yes | No | Profound | Assimilation |
| | | Yes | Peripheral | |

**Figure 7.2** The three underlying dimensions of majority members' proximal-acculturation process and their resulting strategies.

addresses the power imbalance between majority and minority members in the acculturation process. For example, in discussions about multiculturalism, majority members often emphasize the right to maintain their dominant cultural position, and thus the lack of need to culturally change, while expecting minority members – given their lower level of power – to change (e.g. Nortio et al. 2020; Rauchelle and Dandy 2015). Notably, majority members may not be conscious about their/their cultural groups' power status, and thus it remains to be investigated whether this third dimension should be operationalized as an explicit or implicit measure.

This tri-dimensional model results in eight nuanced acculturation strategies, which represent temporal positions along a spectrum of its underlying dimensions (Figure 7.3). A description of each nuanced strategy, its linkage to the stages of the DMIS and its potential implications will be outlined in the next sections.

**Separation.** Separated majority members prefer to maintain their national culture while not adopting elements of minority members' cultures. A *profound separation strategy* implies that majority members also wish to maintain their higher power status. Such majority members may not only strongly identify with their national culture but also interpret it from an ethnic perspective, where group membership cannot be gained but is rather acquired at birth by virtue of ethnic heritage (Brubaker 1990). This corresponds to the globalization-based acculturation response of ethnic protectionism as well as the DMIS stage of Defence, where individuals 'are anxious about losing their culture's borders and [are] unwilling to leave their comfort zone to embrace novelty' (Bennett 2017; Chen et al. 2016: 326). Thus, such individuals may be more likely to experience other cultures as a threat, with their well-being being compromised in intergroup situations (e.g. through higher intergroup anxiety and acculturative stress), yet not beyond. Indeed, their strong identification with their national group will likely be a source for high self-esteem across contexts (Tajfel and Turner 1986), which explains the results of higher self-esteem reported for separated Norwegians by Haugen and Kunst (2017). To strengthen this effect, majority members may stress their behavioural adherence to ideals of their national culture (Chen et al. 2016: 326). Profoundly separated majority members may further use their power status to justify their perceived right to request minority members to assimilate (Rauchelle and Dandy 2015), especially across life domains (e.g. at home/work; Grigoryev and van de Vijver 2018); they may even impose exclusionism as for them minority members can never achieve full national-group membership.

By contrast, individuals who follow a *peripheral separation strategy* are willing to share their power status. Such individuals may understand their national culture from a civic perspective, where national-group membership is defined as people who adhere to a set of basic principles that facilitate life as a community (e.g. respect for laws; Brubaker 1990). Consequently, these individuals may experience less distress in intercultural situations as well as be less likely to show national group-affirming behaviours. Indeed, they may adopt a 'laissez-faire' attitude if they perceive minority members to adhere to these principles of community life. However, these communal principles are still defined through a majority cultural perspective. This partially corresponds to the Minimization

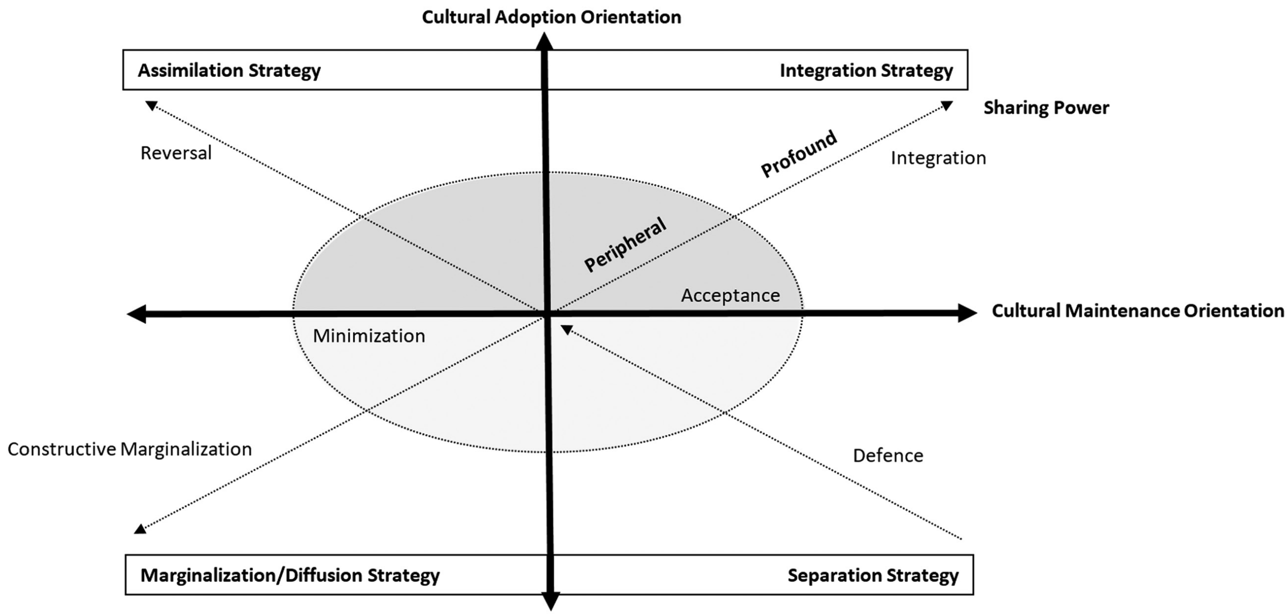


**Figure 7.3** Tri-dimensional proximal-acculturation model for majority members in combination with stages from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett 1993).

stage of the DMIS, an acculturation expectation of individualism and colour-blindness as an intergroup ideology, supporting equal status of minority members relative to majority members without majority members having to face any structural changes to the status quo that could ensure more intergroup equality. Indeed, these attitudes allow majority members to maintain a positive self-image by believing they are non-prejudiced but egalitarian (Apfelbaum et al. 2008). Thus, both profoundly and peripheral separated majority members may be likely to engage in cultural exploitation of minority members' cultures for their own groups' benefit (Rogers 2006), given that they either perceive themselves to have the 'right' to do so or because they are unaware that their actions benefit only their own group.

**Integration.** Integration describes majority members who wish to maintain their national culture while adopting elements of minority member's cultures. A *peripheral integration strategy* describes majority members who wish to maintain their higher power status. Thus, their cultural adoption may occur in form of behavioural changes such as choice of food, clothes, music or taking part in cultural events rather than experiencing value or identity changes (Haugen and Kunst 2017). This strategy may echo the Acceptance stage of the DMIS, where people want to be 'respectful of other cultures' without having to necessarily agree with other values and behaviours (Bennett 2017: 5). Yet individuals in this stage are often interested in other cultures with some motivation to learn about them. Although majority members following this strategy will likely experience more beneficial outcomes and positive intergroup attitudes than expected for separated majority members, their lack in deep cultural learning limits their experience of cognitive benefits. Moreover, this group may run the risk to engage in cultural exploitation, due to the lack of properly comprehending the cultural embeddedness of minority members' practices and products which they use or engage in.

By contrast, a *profound integration strategy* describes majority members who wish to engage in reciprocal cultural learning by sharing their power status with minority members. Because of their engagement in deep cultural learning we would expect them to be more likely to report cultural changes beyond the behavioural domain (e.g. cultural identity change; Lefringhausen et al. 2021), and thus may be more likely to experience trans-situational cognitive benefits usually reported for bi- or multicultural minority members (e.g. creativity and cognitive flexibility; Sharif 2019). For example, recalling learning about an underlying meaning or function of behaviours in a multicultural context enhances creativity, yet only for those who have lived abroad (Maddux and Galinsky 2009). As this indicates reflecting on a deep cultural learning experience, this may also be true for profoundly integrated majority members. Similarly, profoundly integrated majority members' are likely to become more cognitive flexible. I base this assumption on Crisp and Turner's (2011) cognitive growth model who proposed that intercultural encounters can cause the experience of counter-stereotypes – the experience of alternative attitudes and behaviours to the learnt generalizations from one's cultural environment (Hinton 2020). Then, if the individual is willing and has the cognitive resources, they will engage in inconsistency resolutions by suppressing stereotypical traits and reconstructing the target with individualized attributes (Crisp and Turner 2011: 249). Thus, the more someone engages in the questioning of their automatic reliance on learnt generalizations towards out-groups, the more this should train a complex cognitive style that goes beyond established ways of thinking (Hodson et al. 2018). I understand this process as a by-product of deep cultural learning which also implies the incorporation of culturally other schemata into the 'intuitive mind' (Shaules 2019; see also the Integration stage of the DMIS; Bennett 2017).

Additionally, profoundly integrated majority members may also be more likely to flourish – that is, having high levels of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Keyes 2002). Given that majority members who believe in polyculturalism experience higher flourishing (Virgona and Kashima 2021), their choice to adopt elements of minority cultures from an egalitarian power perspective may be an even more potent predictor. For example, humans' search for meaning in life is one building block of a flourishing individual (Seligman 2011). What constitutes meaning in life is guided by personal values (Seligman 2011), which through deep cultural learning may be more explored and reflected upon, heightening the chances to become more aware of what are important principles to guide one's life choices.

**Marginalization/diffusion.** Diffusion describes majority members who score among the midpoint of both cultural orientation scales, whereas marginalized majority members show an even lower endorsement of both orientations. Notably, diffusion is the most common and marginalization the least common acculturation strategy identified for majority members so far (Kunst et al. 2021). When majority members wish to maintain their level of power, indicating a *peripheral marginalization strategy*, such cultural independence may relate to a colour-blind ideology, an acculturation expectation of individualism and the Minimization stage of the DMIS. For example, diffuse and integrated English nationals scored significantly higher in individualism than separated participants (Lefringhausen 2018, 1–5 July). This linkage to a colour-blind ideology, which is often reported as the preferred ideology by majority members, may explain why also diffusion is such a common acculturation strategy for majority members (Kunst et al. 2021). Thus, such individuals' low scores in national culture maintenance may also be caused by the fact that there is no real need for it – that is, their cultural way of life dominates the domains of life in their society (Dandy et al. 2018).

In sum, such majority members do not experience other cultures as a threat but as an enrichment (Lefringhausen et al. 2021) and may therefore experience less intergroup anxiety than separated individuals. However, because they ignore cultural differences, they are less likely to engage in deep cultural learning while being more likely to engage in cultural exploitation.

Majority members who follow a *profound marginalization strategy* prefer to share their power status and thus may be more likely to enable reciprocal cultural learning or even cultural hybridity. Indeed, rather than ignoring cultural differences, such individuals may consciously choose to shift between and engage in different frames of cultural reference, thriving by living between such frames rather than within them (i.e. constructive marginalization; J. Bennett 1993). This also relates to Ward et al.'s (2018) understanding of hybridizing one's cultural identities by combining them into a new third culture that is independent from its sources. Such an interpretation would explain the positive relationship with cultural enrichment for diffuse individuals as reported by Lefringhausen et al. (2021), as well as the lack of differences in subjective well-being across acculturation strategies, including a diffused group, for Norwegian majority members (Haugen and Kunst 2017). Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) further proposed that individuals who de-centre themselves from their own cultural background may be cosmopolitans who view themselves as connected to human kind as a whole. Indeed, diffuse and integrated English majority members were significantly more likely to endorse a global identity than separated individuals (Lefringhausen 2018, 1–5 July). Consequently, we can assume that such majority members are less likely to experience intergroup anxiety and more likely to experience deep cultural learning, and its potential beneficial cognitive outcomes.

**Assimilation.** Assimilation describes the process of majority members rejecting their national culture while adopting elements of minority members' cultures. Majority members following a *profound assimilation strategy* may relate to Bennett's (1993) Reversal stage for minority members. Here, the adopted culture is experienced as superior to the culture of one's primary socialization. This may imply that such individuals experience less intergroup anxiety and perceive other cultures as an enrichment rather than a threat, as reported in Lefringhausen et al. (2021). However, living within a context dominated by a national culture one rejects may also have some negative psychological consequences. For example, in Lefringhausen et al. (2021), assimilated English majority members included significantly more Remain voters in comparison to the integrated and separated group. In other words, they may have been pushed towards immigrants' cultures to counter the assimilationist ideology they perceive to reign in the UK since the EU referendum in 2016. This may cause feelings of cultural alienation, resulting in more psychological distress.

By contrast, a *peripheral assimilation strategy* implies majority members' tendency to maintain their higher power status. This may hamper their level of deep cultural learning and its potential benefits due to not regarding other cultural world views and ways of thinking as equally valid to the ones they were originally socialized in. This somewhat relates back to the Acceptance stage of the DMIS where people are interested in other cultures, yet without having gained specific cultural knowledge (Bennett 1993). This may further encourage cultural exploitation, where cultural adoption serves only the personal need to be unique/different from the majority culture.

Notably, both the profound and peripheral assimilation strategy may be more accessible to majority members of a high socio-economic status (SES), as this gives them the luxury to be able to express their independence from the majority culture while living in cosmopolitan bubbles of like-minded people of similar

SES. If so, this could buffer potential negative psychological consequences of their disconnection to the national culture as found for separated high SES minority members (e.g. international assignees; Rudmin et al. 2017).

## *Applying the tri-dimensional model*

Here I outline examples of how the tri-dimensional model could be applied within intercultural education. First, here is a list of general recommendations depending on the acculturation strategy chosen by the respective majority member:

**Profound separation and assimilation.** Majority members may experience a form of cultural alienation or exclusion, which can have negative psychological consequences. Addressing separation, ICC facilitators could refrain from framing other cultures as a source for novelty and stimulation, as such a depiction opposes their likely belief in self-protection values (Lefringhausen et al. 2020). Instead, facilitators could present majority members' culture as part of the multiculturalism discourse and associated initiatives. For example, when universities run cultural festivals, they should ensure that the national culture is explicitly represented, too. For assimilation, ICC facilitators could use individuals' general interest in cultures to explore their national cultural background and thus a way to reconnect.

**Profound integration and marginalization.** Majority members face the challenge of how to combine their two or multiple cultural identities, especially for adolescents who in their identity search may get lost in the contradictory choices available through engaging with multiple cultures (Ozer 2019). ICC facilitators could engage majority members in activities that help to recognize and reconcile their cultural identities or even support them to create a new superordinate identity that helps combine potential dissonant identities (e.g. common in-group identity model; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000).

**Peripheral separation and marginalization.** Majority members minimize cultural differences while perceiving themselves to be egalitarian, running the risk to commit cultural exploitation. ICC facilitators could challenge majority members in why they follow this strategy, demonstrating (a) its potential negative implications to minority members (thereby carefully decomposing majority members' faulty egalitarian self-image) and (b) the potential benefits from deeper cultural learning experiences.

**Peripheral assimilation and integration**. Majority members lack in deep cultural understanding which can be gained through more intergroup interactions and reflections of these interactions. ICC facilitators could use tools such as Spencer-Oatey and Davidson's (2018) 3R Reflection Tool to enable individuals a step-by-step reflection process on cultural differences to deepen their learning and foster their skill for continuous cultural learning.

Second, I am outlining an exercise derived from my work as Director of Community Development at SIETAR UK (2020), where I lead a project that supports volunteers who work with refugees and persons who seek asylum in the UK. Notably, the wording can be changed to fit specific contexts (e.g.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Learning (Assimilation)**<br>Learning about and participating in aspects of [target culture] together with [member of target group].<br><br>**(Peripheral Assimilation)** For example, you may learn their language, behavioural etiquette (e.g. what is considered polite behaviour/communication for them) and embrace their cultural way of life (e.g. attending cultural festivals) by engaging with them or asking them for help to do so.<br>**(Profound Assimilation)** Or you may even reflect on and embrace their cultural values, feeling more comfortable within their cultural community than being part of your own cultural group. | **Individualizing (Peripheral Marginalization)**<br>Putting less emphasis on your own and [member of target group's] culture by focussing more on shared human communalities or personal uniqueness during your interactions. For example, you try to avoid using learnt assumptions about [member of target group]'s culture when engaging with them. This, however, may also mean that you are not necessarily learning about their culture nor exploring your own cultural practices or values with them.<br><br>**Creating (Profound Marginalization)**<br>Learning about and participating in elements of [member of target group's] culture as well as exploring your own culture – both together with [member of target group], resulting in your creation of an own multi-cultural identity. For example, you may select elements of your own culture and [member of target group's] cultural values or behavioural practices and may even no longer feel home in any specific cultural group but in moving between cultures. |
| **Combined Learning and Supporting (Integration)**<br>Learning about and participating in elements of [member of target group's culture] as well as exploring your own culture – both together with [member of target group].<br><br>**(Peripheral Integration**) For example, you may learn their language and behavioural etiquette (e.g. what is considered polite behaviour) by engaging with them or asking them for help to do so as well as explain to them how 'things are done here' .<br>**(Profound Integration**) Or you may even reflect on some of their cultural values/behavioural everyday practices and explore the origins and meanings behind your cultural values or behavioural practices together with [member of target group], resulting in you feeling comfortable within multiple cultural communities. | **Supporting (Peripheral Separation)**<br>Exploring the origins and meanings behind British cultural values or behavioural practices together with the [member of target group] who you are supporting. For example, you may explain how 'things are done in the UK' (e.g. what is considered polite behaviour or communication in the UK) or even explore together the origins of certain British practices.<br><br>**Ignoring (Profound Separation)**<br>You engage neither in learning about elements of [member of target group's] culture nor exploring your own culture together with [member of target group]. For example, you engage with [member of target group] only on the basis to 'get the job done'. You may even feel uncomfortable among [member of target group] because of their different cultural way of life. |

**Figure 7.4** Applying the tri-dimensional proximal-acculturation model for majority members in intercultural education (created in collaboration with: Polly Collingridge, Janina Neumann, Janice Prentice, Libby Small, John Twitchin, Eila Isotalus, Jaye Sundal, Caroline Lowish and Susan Trunk).

home students) and cultures. Trainees are shown descriptions of the different acculturation strategies using less academic terminology (Figure 7.4). Then trainees are asked to discuss the following three questions:

- Which of these strategies are you currently following?
- Is your strategy effective in creating good rapport with (member of target group) as well as supporting their integration to the UK culture?
- Is your strategy effective in 'growing' as a person?

Trainees who identify with the Combined Learning and Supporting strategy are expected to be most effective in creating rapport with their target group member, supporting their integration and to experience personal growth. In the debrief, this can be explained: (a) by exploring the own national culture, one becomes more aware of implicit cultural aspects (e.g. values); this knowledge can in turn support the target group members' adoption to the UK culture; (b) by exploring the target group members' culture, one shows interest in their background which can be a facilitator to create rapport; and (c) by exploring another culture in more depth, one can experience more sociocultural and psychological adjustment and potentially personal growth. Trainees who follow an Individualizing strategy are asked to what extent this strategy may be challenging (e.g. cognitively taxing) and potentially harmful for minority members. Finally, trainees are asked to discuss how they could follow the Combined Learning and Supporting strategy. Answers to these questions can then be shared with trainees as a follow-up list of resources and action plans.

## *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have argued for the importance of recognizing a two-way acculturation process. Thereby the proposed tri-dimensional proximal-acculturation model for majority members includes their preference for national culture maintenance, minority culture adoption and power. By combining these three dimensions, eight nuanced acculturation strategies can be identified, each with specific socio-psychological characteristics, psychological as well as sociocultural adjustment outcomes as well as intergroup relational outcomes. Additionally, a profound integration and marginalization strategy are proposed to result in cognitive benefits otherwise reported for bi- or multicultural minority members. Although these propositions remain to be further empirically explored, the model and example exercises offer a first step towards a more balanced intercultural education agenda.

## *Note*

1 However, recent research questions the beneficial role of integration (Bierwiaczonek and Kunst 2021).

## References


Apfelbaum, Evan P., Sommers, Samuel R. and Norton, Michael I. (2008), 'Seeing Race and Seeming Racist? Evaluating Strategic Colorblindness in Social Interaction', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95: 918–32. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0011990.

Arends-Tóth, Judit and van de Vijver, Fons J. R. (2004), 'Domains and Dimensions in Acculturation: Implicit Theories of Turkish–Dutch', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 28(1): 19–35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2003.09.001.

Bennett, Janet (1993), 'Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training', in R. Michael Paige (ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, 109–36, Intercultural Press.

Bennett, Milton (1993), 'Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity', in R. Michael Paige (ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, 21–71, Intercultural Press.

Bennett, Milton (2017), 'Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity', in Young Y. Kim (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication. Intercultural Communication. Core Theories, Issues, and Concepts*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0182.

Berry, John W. (1974), 'Psychological Aspects of Cultural Pluralism: Unity and Identity Reconsidered', *Topics in Culture Learning* 2: 17–22.

Berry, John W. (1997), 'Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation', *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46: 5–68.

Berry, John W. (2019), *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures (Elements in Psychology and Culture)*, Cambridge University Press.

Berry, John W. and Kalin, Rudolf (1995), 'Multicultural and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada: An Overview of the 1991 National Survey', *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 27: 301–20.

Berry, John W., Lepshokova, Zarina, MIRIPS Collaboration and Grigoryev, Dimitry (2021), 'How Shall We All Live Together?: Meta-analytical Review of the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies Project', *Applied Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12332.

Bierwiaczonek, Kinga and Kunst, Jonas R. (2021), 'Revisiting the Integration Hypothesis: Correlational and Longitudinal Meta-Analyses Demonstrate the Limited Role of Acculturation for Cross-Cultural Adaptation', *Psychological Science* 32(9): 1476–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976211006432.

Bourhis, Richard Y. (2017), 'Interactive Theory of Acculturation', in Young Y. Kim (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication. Intercultural Communication. Core Theories, Issues, and Concepts*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bourhis, Richard Y. Moise, Léna C., Perreault, Stéphane and Senécal, Sacha (1997), 'Towards an Interactive Acculturation Model: A Social Psychological Approach', *International Journal of Psychology* 32: 369–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/002075997400629.

Brubaker, William R. (1990), 'Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation State in France and Germany: A Comparative Historical Analysis', *International Sociology* 5(4): 379–407. https://doi.org/10.1177/026858090005004003.

Chen, Sylvia X., Lam, Ben C. P., Hui, Bryant P. H., Ng, Jacky C. K., Mak, Winnie W. S., Guan, Yanjun, Buchtel, Emma, Tang, Willie C. S. and Lau, Victor C. Y. (2016), 'Conceptualizing Psychological Processes in Response to Globalization: Components, Antecedents, and Consequences of Global Orientations', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 110(2): 302–31. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039647.

Crisp, Richard J. and Turner, Rhiannon N. (2011), 'Cognitive Adaptation to the Experience of Social and Cultural Diversity', *Psychological Bulletin* 137: 242–66. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021840.
Dandy, Justine, Ziaian, Tehereh and Moylan, Carolyn (2018), 'Team Australia?': Understanding Acculturation from Multiple Perspectives', in Minoru Karasawa, Masaki Yuki, Keiko Ishii, Yukiko Uchida, Kosuke Sato and Wolfgang Friedlmeier (eds), *Venture into Cross-cultural Psychology: Proceedings from the 23rd Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*.
Deardorff, Darla K. (2004), *The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of International Education at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States*, Unpublished dissertation, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.
Deardorff, Darla K. (2006), 'Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10(3): 241–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002.
de Wit, Hans and Hunter, Fiona (eds) (2015), *Internationalisation of Higher Education: A Study for the European Parliament*, European Parliament Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies.
Ferdman, Bernardo M. (2017), 'Paradoxes of Inclusion: Understanding and Managing the Tensions of Diversity and Multiculturalism', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 53(2): 235–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886317702608.
Ferguson, Gail M. and Bornstein, Marc H. (2012), 'Remote Acculturation: The "Americanization" of Jamaican Islanders', *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 36(3): 167–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025412437066.
Gaertner, Samuel L. and Dovidio, John F. (2000), *Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model*, Psychology Press.
Giles, Howard, Bourhis, Richard Y. and Taylor, Donald M. (1977), 'Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations', in Howard Giles (ed.), *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*, 307–48, Academic Press.
Gordon, Milton (1964), *Assimilation in American Life*, Oxford University Press.
Graves, Theodore (1967), 'Psychological Acculturation in a Tri-ethnic Community', *South-Western Journal of Anthropology* 23(4): 337–50.
Grigoryev, Dimitry and van de Vijver, Fons (2018), 'Acculturation Expectation Profiles of Russian Majority Group Members and Their Intergroup Attitudes', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 64: 90–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.03.001.
Hammer, Mitchell R., Bennett, Milton J. and Wiseman, Richard (2003), 'Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 27(4): 421–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00032-4.
Haugen, Ingvild and Kunst, Jonas R. (2017), 'A Two-Way Process? A Qualitative and Quantitative Investigation of Majority Members' Acculturation': Corrigendum', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 60: 67–82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2017.11.001.
Hinton, Perry R. (2020), *Stereotypes and the Construction of the Social World*, Routledge.
Hodson, Gordon, Crisp, Richard J., Meleady, Rose and Earle, Megan (2018), 'Intergroup Contact as an Agent of Cognitive Liberalization', *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 13(5): 523–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617752324.
Hoff, Hild (2020), 'The Evolution of Intercultural Communicative Competence: Conceptualisations, Critiques and Consequences for 21st Century Classroom

Practice', *Intercultural Communication Education* 3(2): 55–74. https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v3n2.264.
Horenczyk, Gabriel, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Inga, Sam, David L. and Vedder, Paul (2013), 'Mutuality in Acculturation: Toward an Integration', *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* 221(4): 205–13. https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000150.
Keyes, Corey L. (2002), 'The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43(2): 207–22.
Kunst, Jonas R., Lefringhausen, Katharina, Sam, David, Berry, John W. and Dovidio, John F. (2021), 'The Missing Side of Acculturation: How Majority-group Members Relate to Immigrant and Minority-group Cultures', *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 30(6): 485–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214211040771.
Lazarus, Richard S. and Folkman, Susan (1984), *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*, Springer.
Lefringhausen, Katharina (2015), *The Extended Acculturation Model for Locals: Validation, Outcomes, and Antecedents*, Doctoral dissertation, Brunel University London. http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/handle/2438/11434.
Lefringhausen, Katharina (2018), *Changing Perspectives: English Nationals' Acculturation Strategies Towards Immigrants' Cultures in a Post-Brexit Era*, 1–5 July, XXIV Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, Guelph, Canada.
Lefringhausen, Katharina and Marshall, Tara C. (2016), 'Locals' Bidimensional Acculturation Model: Validation and Associations with Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment Outcomes', *Cross-Cultural Research: The Journal of Comparative Social Science* 50(4): 356–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397116659048.
Lefringhausen, Katharina, Ferenczi, Nelli and Marshall, Tara C. (2020), 'Self-protection and Growth as the Motivational Force behind Majority Group Members' Cultural Adaptation and Discrimination: A Parallel Mediation Model via Intergroup Contact and Threat', *International Journal of Psychology* 55(4): 532–42. https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12620.
Lefringhausen, Katharina, Ferenczi, Nelli, Marshall, Tara C. and Kunst, Jonas R. (2021), 'New Route Towards More Harmonious Intergroup Relationships in England? Majority Members' Proximal-Acculturation', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 82: 56–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.03.006.
Leong, Chan-Hoong (2014), 'Social Markers of Acculturation: A New Research Framework on Intercultural Adaptation', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 38: 120–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.08.006.
Luciak, Mikael (2006), 'Minority Schooling and Intercultural Education: A Comparison of Recent Developments in the Old and New EU Member States', *Intercultural Education* 17(1): 73–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980500502370.
Maddux, William W. and Galinsky, Adam D. (2009), 'Cultural Borders and Mental Barriers: The Relationship Between Living Abroad and Creativity', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96: 1047–61. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014861.
Montreuil, Annie and Bourhis, Richard Y. (2004), 'Acculturation Orientations of Competing Host Communities Toward "Valued" and "Devalued" Immigrants', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 28: 507–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.01.002.
Nortio, Emma, Renvik, Tuuli A. and Jasinskaja-Lahti, Inga (2020), 'As a Native Person, Why Should I Adapt?': A Multimethod Approach to Majority Finns' Attitudes Towards Multiculturalism', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 10(2): 20–35. http://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.135.

Oudenhoven, Jan P. and Ward, Colleen (2013), 'Fading Majority Cultures: The Implications of Transnationalism and Demographic Changes for Immigrant Acculturation', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 23(2): 81–97.
Ozer, Simon (2019), 'Towards a Psychology of Cultural Globalisation: A Sense of Self in a Changing World', *Psychology and Developing Societies* 31(1): 162–86. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333618819279.
Ozer, Simon and Schwartz, Seth J. (2016), 'Measuring Globalization-based Acculturation in Ladakh: Investigating Possible Advantages of a Tridimensional Acculturation Scale', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 53: 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2016.05.002.
Parsons, Elsie C. (1936), *Mitla: Town of the Souls. University of Chicago Publications in Anthropology*, University of Chicago Press.
Peng, Ren-Zohn, Zhu, Chongguang and Wu, Wei-Ping (2020), 'Visualizing the Knowledge Domain of Intercultural Competence Research: A Bibliometric Analysis', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 74: 58–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.10.008.
Piontkowski, Ursula, Florack, Amd, Hölker, Paul and Obdrzálek, Peter (2000), 'Predicting Acculturation Attitudes of Dominant and Non-dominant Groups', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24: 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(99)00020-6.
Plaut, Victoria C., Garnett, Flannery G., Buffardi, Laura E. and Sanchez-Burks, Jeffrey (2011), '"What about Me?" Perceptions of Exclusion and Whites' Reactions to Multiculturalism', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101(2): 337–53. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022832.
Prilleltensky, Isaac (2008), 'Migrant Well-being Is a Multilevel, Dynamic, Value Dependent Phenomenon', *American Journal of Community Psychology* 42(3–4): 359–64. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9196-6.
Putnam, Robert D. (2001), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster.
Rauchelle, Kirra and Dandy, Justine (2015), 'How "Mutual" Is Acculturation?: Majority Australians' Acculturation Attitudes Toward Refugees', *The Australian Community Psychologist* 27(2): 5–19.
Rawal, Rajash and Deardorff, Darla K. (2021), 'Intercultural Competences for All', in Paul G. Nixon, Vanessa P. Dennen and Rajash Rawal (eds), *Reshaping International Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 46–59, Routledge.
Redfield, Robert, Linton, Ralph and Herskovits, Melville (1936), 'Memorandum for Acculturation', *American Anthropologist* 38: 149–52. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1936.38.1.02a00330.
Rogers, Richard A. (2006), 'From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation', *Communication Theory* 16: 474–503. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00277.x.
Rosenthal, Lisa and Levy, Sheri R. (2010), 'The Colorblind, Multicultural, and Polycultural Ideological Approaches to Improving Intergroup Attitudes and Relations', *Social Issues and Policy Review* 4(1): 215–46. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2010.01022.x.
Rudmin, Floyd W. and Ahmadzadeh, Vali (2001), 'Psychometric Critique of Acculturation Psychology: The Case of Iranian Migrants in Norway', *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 42(1): 41–56. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9450.00213.
Rudmin, F., Wang, B. and de Castro, J. (2017), 'Acculturation Research Critiques and Alternative Research Designs', in S. J. Schwartz and J. B. Unger (eds), *Oxford Library*

*of Psychology. The Oxford Handbook of Acculturation and Health*, 75–95, Oxford University Press.
Seligman, Martin (2011), *Flourish*, Free Press.
Sharif, Rukhsar (2019), 'The Relations Between Acculturation and Creativity and Innovation in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review', *Educational Research Review* 28: 100287. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100287.
Shaules, Joseph (2019), *Language, Culture, and the Embodied Mind. A Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning*, Springer.
SIETAR UK (2020), *Refugees and Asylum Seekers Project*. https://sietar.co.uk/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-project/.
Snauwaert, Boris, Soenens, Bart, Vanbeselaere, Norbert and Boen, Fillip (2003), 'When Integration Does Not Necessarily Imply Integration: Different Conceptualizations of Acculturation Orientations Lead to Different Classifications', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 34(2): 231–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022102250250.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2018), 'Transformative Learning for Social Integration: Overcoming the Challenge of Greetings', *Intercultural Education* 29(2): 301–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2018.1425828.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Dauber, Daniel (2019), 'What Is Integration and Why Is It Important for Internationalization? A Multidisciplinary Review', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 23(5): 515–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319842346.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Davidson, Andrew (2018), *The 3R Reflect Tool: Developing Evaluation Sensitivity in Intercultural Encounters*, V.2. www.warwick.ac.uk/globalknowledge.
Spitzberg, Brian H. (1989), 'Issues in the Development of a Theory of Interpersonal Competence in the Intercultural Context', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 13(3): 241–68.
Tajfel, Henri and Turner, John C. (1986), 'The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior', in William G. Austin and Stepehn Worchel (eds), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 7–24, Nelson-Hall.
United Nations (2020), *International Migration 2020*, Highlights. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2020_international_migration_highlights.pdf.
Virgona, Ariane and Kashima, Emiko (2021), 'Diversity Ideologies and Flourishing: An Australian Study Comparing Polyculturalism, Multiculturalism, and Colorblindness', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 81: 236–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.02.002.
Ward, Colleen and Kennedy, Antony (1999), 'The Measurement of Sociocultural Adaptation', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 23(4): 659–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(99)00014-0.
Ward, Colleen, Ng Tseung-Wong, Caroline, Szabo, Agnes, Qumseya, Tamara and Bhowon, Uma (2018), 'Hybrid and Alternating Identity Styles as Strategies for Managing Multicultural Identities', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49: 1402–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022118782641.
Whitley, Bernard E. and Webster, Gregory D. (2019), 'The Relationships of Intergroup Ideologies to Ethnic Prejudice: A Meta-Analysis', *Personality & Social Psychology Review* 23(3): 207–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868318761423.
Williams, Larry J. and Anderson, Stella E. (1991), 'Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment as Predictors of Organizational Citizenship and In-role Behaviors', *Journal of Management* 17: 601–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700305.

Wolsko, Christopher, Park, Bernadette, Judd, Charles M. and Wittenbrink, Bernd (2000), 'Framing Interethnic Ideology: Effects of Multicultural and Color-blind Perspectives on Judgments of Groups and Individuals', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78(4): 635–54. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.4.635.

Yoon, Eunju, Cabirou, Laifat, Galvin, Sarah, Hill, Lincoln, Daskalova, Plamena, Bhang, Cecile, Ahmad Mustaffa, Ezza, Dao, Angela, Thomas, Kathryn and Baltazar, Blake (2020), 'A Meta-analysis of Acculturation and Enculturation: Bilinear, Multidimensional, and Context-dependent Processes', *The Counseling Psychologist* 48(3): 342–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000019898583.

# Part III

## Learning to negotiate intercultural relations in a pedagogic context

# Chapter 8

## Rethinking Intercultural Training for Relating Across Cultures in Teamwork

Sophie Reissner-Roubicek

### *Introduction*

Many of the interactional challenges discussed in the intercultural communication literature are increasingly being recognized by communication practitioners in professional resources that target virtual teams. The enforced switch to online working in 2020 saw a spate of advice from business blogs recycling earlier sets of tips for virtual teamwork. It is worth noting that the majority of studies of remote communication on which the tips are based rely variously on perception data from surveys or interviews, including email experiments (e.g. Byron 2008), and pre-date the widespread access to video meeting platforms such as Zoom and Teams. Now, *everyone* has the opportunity to experience a disorienting turn-taking experience; to scan for hard-to-discern non-verbal cues to help them interpret meaning; to engage in enough but not too much small talk. These experiences have helped bring into focus the reality that many such interactional challenges that have been frequently associated with intercultural communication are in fact present in all communication. This provides an important opportunity for revisiting assumptions about cultural differences and how they are treated in intercultural training. More specifically, this makes it a good moment to restate the importance of an approach to intercultural training that doesn't so much focus on differences between groups as reveal differences within groups (and indeed similarities with 'other' individuals), and does so through activities in which trainees learn to observe, analyse and reflect on their own communication and understand its impact – as far as possible, through a linguistic lens. This chapter focuses on intercultural training for teamwork, aiming to illustrate how intercultural training activities can give trainees the tools and concepts to unpack and address the interactional challenges of working in diverse teams.[1] In this it incorporates a non-essentialist approach to culture which Van Maele and Messelink (2020) have shown to be possible while still drawing on essentialist concepts, that is, cultural dimensions (e.g. Hofstede 2001; Trompenaars 1993) and adaptations of these (e.g. Meyer 2015; Molinsky 2013).

My involvement in developing and delivering intercultural training dates back to 2011, when I started working with Helen Spencer-Oatey on developing a blended programme for professionals that included a module on working effectively in global teams. The interactional challenges we highlighted among other intercultural challenges in that resource have been addressed more explicitly in subsequent training resources developed with colleagues during the last ten years, some examples of which are discussed in this chapter. A major goal of these resources has been to demonstrate to trainees the impact of their own communication on any interaction as well as their interlocutors' contributions to that interaction. As a discourse analyst whose original area of research was job interviews (with a particular focus on teamwork), which I have variously analysed drawing on concepts in intercultural pragmatics and also from a social constructionist perspective, this reflects my interest in the nuts and bolts of communication at the micro-level and in discursive strategies as they fit within the bigger picture of intercultural interaction. It also acknowledges that notions of culture that categorize and compare national groups in terms of core values can 'conflict with empirical accounts of interactional "behavior"' (McConachy and Spencer-Oatey 2021: 13) and tries to bridge these for practical ends.

The rest of the chapter is divided into three main sections. The next section addresses the literature on diverse teams where it intersects with relating across cultures, focusing on issues to be highlighted in the examples presented later. The second section addresses approaches to intercultural training and where these are relevant for teamwork, and the third section presents selected examples to illustrate training design and materials development. The chapter conclusion incorporates an appreciation of Helen Spencer-Oatey's work in motivating and inspiring my ideas during our ten-year collaboration and a taste of future plans.

## *Relating 'across' cultures in teamwork*

Scholars and practitioners have typically approached culturally diverse teams in terms of the 'taxonomies of the cultural differences that affect intercultural interaction generally', according to Fontaine (2017: 2). He lists a series of differences that supposedly affect intercultural teams and which are recognizably derived from the different cultural dimensions theorized by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hall, namely: 'The individual and self or the collective as the primary unit of value . . . Honesty and directness or harmony and indirectness in communicating . . . Forming, maintaining, and dissolving relationships . . . High to low power distance . . . High to low work centrality . . . Monochronic or polychronic structuring of activities in time . . . Low-to high-context communication . . . Distribution of rewards and recognition' (pp. 3–5). He concludes this list with 'conflict resolution', which he frames as stemming from the other items on the list and also as inevitable in intercultural teams. Such dimensional framings of difference, and the taken-as-read outcome of conflict in intercultural teamwork, are prevalent in the management literature and moreover in practitioner resources. Research by Distefano and Masnevski (2000) comparing the performance of multicultural with monocultural teams has shown, however, that some multicultural teams are considerably more effective than any monocultural teams, although it is not clear whether this was through lack of conflict or in spite of it, and/or because the teams had good conflict-management skills – or in other words, intercultural skills. They dubbed teams as 'equalizers' who were too nice to each other to achieve much and as 'creators' those teams who were comfortable with disagreeing as part of decision-making, which is associated with a high-involvement style of interaction (Tannen 2012) characterized by overlapping and collaboratively completing each other's utterances.[2] Distefano and Masnevski (2000) highlight two kinds of positive relations in diverse teams, only one of which was fruitful, implying that conflict avoidance (in the case of the equalizers) is not a good indicator of effectiveness. In common with other studies from the management field, these findings do not come out of conversation-analytic or discursive approaches to workplace interaction, although the observational approach taken by the authors to some extent predicts the findings of such studies (e.g. Debray 2020).

*Relating and trust*

Closely associated with ideas about conflict in the managerial psychology literature on teamwork is the notion of trust, and its lack or otherwise in intercultural teams, especially in forming and maintaining relationships. Trust is a major theme in the literature on global teams and especially in global virtual teams (GVTs) (Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999; Gibson and Manuel 2003; Zakaria and Yusof 2020). This strand of research has extensively addressed culture in relation to trust orientation and so-called trust behaviours. Studies relying broadly on perception data have argued that reasons for trusting others are culture-specific and linked to underlying values, most usually the core values of nations. National culture has traditionally been argued to influence the trust-building process, for example by Doney et al. (1998) along Hofstede's dimensions of individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, power distance and uncertainty avoidance, inasmuch as these dimensions variously map on to relation to self, relation to authority and relation to risk (p. 609). In these respects, the positivist paradigm underpinning the body of trust research aligns comfortably with an essentialist perspective on culture, which assumes a high degree of similarity within cultural groups. In the intercultural teamwork literature, thus, culture-specific explanations for trust orientation place the emphasis again on cultural differences between team members and their international counterparts as a potential source of difficulty in relating. Some studies draw on survey findings from global/diverse teams to make communication recommendations that they advocate will promote trust (e.g. Ford et al. 2017; Zakaria and Yusof 2020), and others prescribe more general approaches. We can see this advice recontextualized in practitioner blogs. For example, Molinsky and Gundling (2016) give advice about building trust in a cross-cultural team that highlights relationship formation, in which they state that 'Naturally, different global cultures have different norms about relationship building' as a precursor to suggestions for fostering rapport through building personal bonds/individual connections.

*Relating and participation*

Turning now to intercultural pragmatics, relating has been explored through Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management theory in some empirical studies based on workplace data (e.g. most recently Holmes, this volume). The bases of rapport (face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligations, interactional goals) are jointly implicated across several interactional domains in which rapport is enhanced, maintained, neglected or harmed. The distinction between relational and transactional goals and, in turn, task-focused and relationship-focused communication has been important both in cross-cultural research, for example in Meyer's (2015) 'culture map' as the dimension along which trust is assessed, and in research on interaction in teams that takes a 'culture-as-construct' rather than a 'culture-as-given' approach (Schnurr and Zayts 2017).

Of the six interactional domains in rapport management theory, the participation domain encompasses turn-taking, explained by Clyne (1994) as a crucial aspect of intercultural teamwork communication. This is because different preferences for turn-taking constrain equal participation and hence perceptions of competence. Those who are used to, and need, a gap to come into a discussion may be deprived of this chance quite unintentionally by those for whom even a brief silence is uncomfortable, and ultimately considered unmotivated and lacking in ideas. Perceptions of competence are linked in turn to trust, as Debray and Spencer-Oatey (2019) among others have shown. Their nine-month longitudinal study of a diverse team uses conversation-analytic tools to demonstrate how, based on his turn-taking pattern in initial team meetings, a team member was increasingly marginalized, stereotyped, discouraged from speaking up and before long, positioned as not competent. In order to build rapport and relationships with team members and accordingly trust within an intercultural team, participation – simply getting a turn to speak – is a pre-requisite. Turn-taking patterns are generally considered to be culture-specific (Tannen 2012; DuBabcock 2006) but in egalitarian teamwork settings such as these they are also inextricably linked to issues of power. According to García and Cañado (2005), large power differences exist between members of equal teams, related to 'tone and other paralinguistic aspects' and not merely their level of fluency in the main working language, affording them 'a privileged position in discussions and debates, [e.g.] when participating in meetings' (p. 97).

Small talk is another recommendation often found in practitioner blogs (e.g. Thompson 2020) for rapport-, relationship- and trust-building in global/diverse teams. Practices around small talk are broadly understood to vary across cultures (Pullin 2010). Goettsch (2016) invokes this in discussing how leaders of GVTs can 'manage perceptions of inefficient use of time for small talk' (p. 21), which implies differences in interactional goals but also suggests a default orientation to task-focused over relationship-focused communication as well as to time

(Hall 1976). Whether too much or too little, unequal participation in small talk might already give rise to assumptions or 'hasty judgments' (Reissner-Roubicek and Spencer-Oatey 2020) that have a cumulative impact on team communication and so on.

*Relating and directness*

The most obvious way in which directness is relevant to teamwork communication is in how members give and receive feedback to and from each other during the working process. This is critical in the equitable take-up of ideas and decision-making about what should be done and how it needs to be improved (Reissner-Roubicek and Spencer-Oatey 2020). An intercultural team that has invested in relationship building sufficiently to build trust between them is not only likely to see and jointly promote more equal participation but will experience less turbulence as a result of giving negative, or 'developmental', feedback to each other when things go wrong, as Greenaway (2018) has demonstrated. Debray (2020) found that while team members who are friends don't hesitate to give each other negative feedback, they avoid giving it to those they have issues with. Direct versus indirect communication was identified by Behrfar et al. (2006) as one of four problem categories that can create barriers to a team's success.

The breaching of pragmatic norms or expectations for directness in giving negative feedback carries a heavy penalty in intercultural teams, as teammates are more likely to mistake the person for the problem (Greenaway 2018). This kind of attribution error is typical of intercultural situations, most commonly when putting another's behaviour down to cultural differences (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). Comfort and Franklin (2010) note that along with different expectations about the directness of negative, or developmental feedback – as well as the context in which it is given, cultural differences have been found in responses to positive or affirmative feedback: it may be perceived as insincere and thus received with suspicion. To some extent 'directness' overlaps with low-context communication and 'indirectness' with high-context communication, but explicit is probably closer in meaning to low context in terms of communication style.[3] Directness/explicitness/a low-context style is framed in terms of transparency by Comfort and Franklin (2010) in their discussion of feedback as a critical category for international managers. Transparency is juxtaposed with (maintaining) harmony by them and with (maintaining) rapport by training developers Trickey and Ewington (2006). These are different ways of articulating the *reason* for high-context/indirect/implicit ways of giving negative feedback, which are extensively discussed in the intercultural literature in terms of 'face'.[4] An intriguing claim in one of the early pandemic practitioner blogs with tips for virtual team meetings consisted of a warning to the effect that 'people give each other harsher feedback online' (Thompson 2020). This turns out to be based on an earlier experimental study of interpretations of emotions conveyed in emails (Byron 2008), which signals the need for wider dissemination and understanding of linguistic research drawing on authentic interactional data from the workplace.

The communication issues discussed earlier all present important challenges for intercultural training, which will be addressed in the next section. A traditional preliminary goal of intercultural training is to promote intercultural sensitivity, starting with self-awareness, which includes awareness of participants' own expectations and assumptions, and should not rely on having them 'explain[. . .] the 'cause' of behaviours in terms of differences in values or communication styles' (Tian and McConachy 2021: 15). As will be elaborated in the examples part, helping them recognize what 'rules' they are unconsciously following can be achieved through the design of experiential learning activities. Reflecting on these experiences as an important part of their learning can also help participants become more conscious of their own evaluations of difference (McConachy 2018).

## *Intercultural training approaches*

Experiential methods are well established in intercultural training design, perhaps most notably in the form of simulations. Experiential learning involves 'active methods that are learner-centred and highly participatory', according to Fowler and Yamaguchi (2020: 195), whose recent review and analysis of trends in intercultural training highlight the role of reflection in this process. For example, structured reflection needs to follow a simulation in order to transform the intercultural experience into learning (Kolb 1984) and embed concepts in practice (Helyer 2015). In the context of teamwork, experiential learning through simulations and role-plays has been demonstrated by Kayes et al. (2005) to improve team effectiveness and mitigate issues such as groupthink, over-reliance on a dominant leader, diffusion of responsibility and social loafing. These are all issues that take on a particular significance when mediated by culture.

Fowler and Yamaguchi (2020) emphasize the importance of integrating experiential and didactic methods of delivery, both of which can be employed in either culture-specific or culture-general approaches to the content of training. Simulations and self-assessments are both experiential and culture-general (Gudykunst and Hammer 1983) inductive ways of learning that can be combined with more didactic methods. Along with case study analyses, discussions and role-play, and an inductive approach to dismantling assumptions, they promote experiential engagement, whereas brief accounts of underpinning research promote conceptual understanding (Reissner-Roubicek and Spencer-Oatey 2020). While culture-specific approaches are typically applied in pre-departure training for working or studying in a particular country, culture-general training 'sensitizes trainees to cross-cultural differences and intercultural problems in general' (Fowler and Yamaguchi 2020: 197), making them more relevant to intercultural teamwork. The way differences are associated with problems in this framing reflects the general premise of comparison and contrast in mainstream intercultural communication education and training.

Culture-general training has traditionally aimed to capture 'the essence of cultures (most often, countries) by categorizing and comparing groups in terms of cultural dimensions or core values' (Van Maele and Messelink 2019: 142). This essentialist perspective takes culture as a given. Such approaches have been challenged by Handford et al. (2019), among others, on the basis that describing the cultures of pre-defined groups is reductionist and can reinforce stereotyping. Moreover, in a professional context, 'collaboration and communication partners do not want to be treated as the average of a large category based on their nationality or ethnicity, or be reduced to some other perceived generic label that classifies them into the "other" category' (p. 172). In their review of the literature on intercultural education and training for engineers, a field which not incidentally places high importance on teamwork as an employment competency (Reissner-Roubicek 2017), Handford et al. (2019) call for 'culture-as-construct' approaches in place of 'culture-as-given' approaches, also known respectively as first-order and second-order notions of culture (Schnurr and Zayts 2017). Culture-as-construct reflects a social constructionist perspective that sees culture as dynamic and co-constructed in interaction, or 'talked into being' – for example, at team level in meetings (Schnurr and Zayts 2017), an area that can be fruitfully explored in intercultural training through a linguistic lens.

The question of whether intercultural training developers can or should completely eschew the dimensional framings of culture that are so firmly embedded in theory and practice is convincingly answered by Van Maele and Messelink (2019). They advocate for and model an integrated approach to culture-general training in their proposal for using essentialist concepts in a non-essentialist way, that is, 'as a heuristic device for articulating and jointly examining intercultural experiences' (p. 1). This includes exercises 'suited to highlight[ing] individual variation as opposed to cultural group regularity' in the experiences reported by trainees while still making them 'aware of different and unexpected ways in which other people might think, feel and act' (p. 7). In short, the same tools – knowledge about differences in core values or communication styles – can be used not simply to predict and solve misunderstandings (such as finding one correct answer to a culture assimilator or critical incident), they can also be used 'to discover and capitalise on similarities', mitigating reductionist views of the other (p. 8). Along with emphasizing variability over regularity and privileging understanding over 'problematic differences', Van Maele and Messelink emphasize the opportunity 'to reflect on the self in relation to the other' as the third characteristic of a non-essentialist approach (2019, p. 8).[5]

The design of training for intercultural teamwork discussed in the examples in the next section aligns with the above non-essentialist approach and also acknowledges techniques adapted from two classic works by the training companies WorldWork (Trickey and Ewington 2006)[6] and UGM Consulting (Byrne and Fitzgerald 1996). In terms of implications for rapport, that is, 'if harmonious relations are to be created or maintained' (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 21) in an intercultural team, the former pays useful attention to the illocutionary domain, which involves directness/indirectness, for example in giving feedback. The latter particularly attends to the participation domain and relevant elements of turn-taking, which also has implications for inclusion/exclusion. The experiential approach demonstrated here by Byrne and Fitzgerald (1996) is invaluable in raising self-awareness of unconscious preferences in this respect.

Their way of focusing on participation in an intercultural team in a training setting resonates with a very recent proposal by Olbertz-Siitonen (2021). In calling for the practical application of naturalistic inquiry, she looks at options for communication training drawn from Antaki's (2011) interventionist applied conversation analysis. She suggests that this would be useful to help students identify and analyse communication practices that tend to be attributed to culture, that is, avoid immediately pointing to culture as an explanatory variable (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). It would also encourage them to see 'culture-in-[inter]action' as a dynamic process and notably to reflect on their learning from authentic situations. Olbertz-Siitonen doesn't suggest any specific design for doing this in intercultural training, she instead invites us 'to consider and experiment with naturalistic approaches to support students in developing intercultural competences that correspond to the lived reality' (2021: 53). What follows in the next section is in part a response to that call.

## *Training examples*

The following examples aim to demonstrate some applications of the principles discussed earlier in different domains of interaction. Example 1 concerns the participation domain, in respect of turn-taking. Examples of responses offered by trainees during each debriefing step of this activity are provided to illustrate how it works. Selected examples of post-training reflections (Reissner-Roubicek and Spencer-Oatey 2020) are also included. Example 2 deals with the challenge of giving negative feedback. The focus on directness/indirectness involves the stylistic domain in relation to mitigation devices, the illocutionary domain in relation to strategies that are conventionally/unconventionally direct/indirect and the discourse domain in relation to deductive/inductive or bald-on-record rhetorical strategies. All of these can function as rapport-managing strategies in their respective domains. Example 2 uses dimensional framings in a non-essentialist way, as does Example 3, which explores understandings of trust. Like rapport, trust is a construct that cuts across all domains. Examples 4 and 5 specifically involve a naturalistic approach in which students observe, analyse (in this case as researchers) and reflect on their own and others' communication across interactional domains. Post-training reflections were collected in the former case and some representative examples are presented to illustrate how trainees responded to the activities.

### *Exploring participation, directness and trust*

#### *Example 1*

This example addresses the issue of unequal participation in team discussion. It has been used successfully with diverse teams of students in interdisciplinary settings such as international summer schools and across faculties such as engineering, medicine and business in HE, as well as with teams of professionals.

- *Contexts of use*: All in-person training settings, ideally in teams of five.
- *Learning approach*: Inductive. The experience itself and debriefing lay the groundwork for engaging with theoretical concepts after the activity.
- *Learning purpose*: Raise awareness and demonstrate the impact of unconscious turn-taking preferences on opportunities for participation (ultimately, promote more equal participation).
- *Learning design*: Turn-taking experiment (adapted from Byrne and Fitzgerald 1996).

Trainees are given a motivating topic for discussion that can be sustained for twenty minutes in total and told that they will be asked to experiment with different 'rules' for managing the talk (Reissner-Roubicek and Spencer-Oatey 2020). They begin in 'open house' mode (anyone can take a turn in any order). The trainer calls a halt to the discussion to give a simple instruction to implement a new turn-taking strategy, starting with 'round table' (everyone must take a turn, in order around the table). Next is the 'three-second rule' (anyone can take a turn in any order, but only after three seconds have elapsed since the previous speaker finished their turn) and finally 'reflect back' (active-listening style, acknowledging then building on the previous speaker's point or seeking clarification). The trainer monitors the observation of the rules as needed and is ready with one or two pre-prepared prompts to keep the discussion topic going.

Debriefing in plenary ideally happens in between each rule. (In the case of 'round table', it can be productive to halt the round before the last person in each team has spoken and elicit from them what they were feeling as their turn was coming closer.) 'Three-second rule' is an entertaining struggle for those whose unconscious preference is for overlapping turns and reveals how well embedded these patterns are. Whereas 'reflect back' can be usefully adopted in future discussions, it should be emphasized to trainees that the 'three-second rule' is an awareness-raising activity to demonstrate the impact of low tolerance for, and/or conversely, comfort with, gaps. The pitfalls of typical meeting management techniques such as 'open house' and 'round table' are also revealed through this activity.

*Trainee reflections during the activity*

- 'Open house': It was easy/It wasn't easy to get into the discussion; was interrupted before I finished my point; am used to being interrupted so didn't notice.
- 'Round table': Was trying to think of something that no one else has already said; felt under pressure; found it difficult to listen to others and think at the same time; forgot my point while I was waiting.
- 'Three-second rule': Really difficult to hold back; we had to look at each other more; it was easier to get in but we kept starting at the same time; felt safe that

no one could interrupt before I finished; some people just keep talking and you can't stop them (and privately after the event: That's the most they've ever said at one time – I didn't realize they had so much to say – it really helped us get to know each other better).

- 'Reflect back': Frustrating because I want to make my point as soon as I think of it; felt a bit artificial; had to concentrate on other people more; was useful to hear the previous point again to help me understand it; while restating their point I had more time to formulate my own point in English.

Diverse perspectives will reliably emerge, as discussed earlier, at each step of the experience; valuable learning points are generated by hearing how others feel and discovering commonalities as well as differences. Another insight that can be drawn out following debriefing is the mutual impact of turn-taking patterns, which can't be considered in isolation. The following post-training reflection particularly highlights this effect.

*Post-training reflections*

- The turn-taking exercise made me realize that I have a tendency to interrupt people but also that if I know that people will not interrupt me, I will not only talk more but also start formulating questions out loud and answering my own questions at the same time. This made me realize that I strive for other people's confirmation and a lack of 'backchannelling' or interruption made me feel like I had to keep occupying the talking floor because no one else was talking.
- I really enjoy giving my point of view, and criticizing other people's point of view, not in an aggressive way but now, I'm more aware of when I'm dominating a discussion.
- Next time I may take the active action to jump into the discussion, not waiting for others. Because it's not their responsibility to ask me to give my opinions. I think it's uncomfortable when some group members ask you, when you didn't give any opinions.

*Example 2*

The second example is a core training activity that explores the challenge of giving feedback to a team member. It has been used successfully with students and professionals in different countries, most recently multinational clients in a global training setting. It was originally developed on the fly to support a mixed cohort of pre-service and in-service engineers at the University of Warwick. The framing of the interactional element (i.e. what precedes it and contextualizes it) has been built up over various iterations to draw on the work of Andy Molinsky as elaborated here.

- *Contexts of use*: In-person and online training settings, in pairs.
- *Learning approach*: Self-assessment (inductive), followed by introduction of theoretical concepts and finally an experiential activity.

- *Learning purpose*: Raise awareness of challenges surrounding giving and receiving feedback in intercultural teams and promote the ability to adjust one's communication style.
- *Learning design*: Role-play using partner as a coach; swap roles and repeat.

The first step is a simple self-assessment tool in the form of a feedback quiz based on Molinsky's (2016) notion of 'reinventing the feedback sandwich', which aligns with contemporary ideas in management the feedback sandwich (i.e. two slices of positive feedback around the negative feedback) being an outdated premise. The quiz is useful because it focuses on how we like to be given feedback, which the trainer should suggest may impact our beliefs about how we should give it to others. Debriefing of the quiz at the start of a training session allows the evidence of similarities and differences to be explored immediately (i.e. between the weak feedback sandwich [larger amounts of positive feedback either side of the negative feedback], the traditional feedback sandwich [discussed earlier], the untraditional wrap [both kinds of feedback but elicited from the receiver], the open-faced sandwich [negative feedback followed by a little positive feedback] and the paleo diet sandwich [just negative feedback]). Assumptions such as the golden rule (i.e. treat others as you would like to be treated yourself) can be challenged in order to help emphasize that 'no one size fits all'.

Importantly, the individual results of the quiz in all training cohorts have consistently revealed that people with the same national cultural background have diverse preferences for how they like to be given feedback and that commonalities exist across cultures. It works well to establish this before introducing any dimensional framings of culture that might relate to feedback preferences, namely orientations to positive ('affirmative') and negative ('developmental') feedback (Comfort and Franklin 2010). These include tensions between harmony/transparency and task/relationship as well as directness/indirectness, one of Molinsky's (2013) set of six cultural dimensions. Framing these as underlying values and beliefs enables the necessary shift in focus to linguistic practices as the visible manifestation of culture, and from there to their role in constructing the culture of a company, within a team and so on. At this point, it can work well to elicit from trainees some examples of relatively direct or indirect utterances rather than present them with examples, which could be interpreted as prescriptive.

The design of the role-play itself depends on trainees to choose a situation in which they typically give feedback or alternatively a real situation where they previously gave negative feedback and where things might have gone better. They explain the scenario to their partner, before giving them the feedback, which itself should take no longer than one minute. The partner's role as coach is to suggest in which direction along the dimension of directness (i.e. more or less direct) they should adjust their style. The aim is for the partner to respond authentically according to how the negative feedback made them feel (but not in the interests of arriving at one correct way to do it, as no one's preferences can be predicted). In the case that it suited them perfectly the first time, they should still make an adjustment suggestion because the aim of the activity is to practise this, and preferably in small steps, in line with Molinsky's (2013) notion of comfort-zone stretching – just enough but no more than would be authentic for the feedback giver. The trainee then gives the feedback for a second time, and if needed, a third time. Partners swap roles and repeat the exercise.

Both partners reflect on what they learnt from the experience in plenary. Typical comments include that was useful to focus on *how* they communicate and learn how it could come over to others compared with their own perceptions, and sometimes that it made them more confident to give negative feedback in real life. This activity provides a safe space for practising cultural comfort-zone stretching, which may well be assisted by casting the partner in the support role of coach.

If trainees want to discuss giving upwards negative feedback to a manager (as happened recently in a workshop for professionals) then it is useful to explain the bases of rapport in respect of the interplay between sociality rights and obligations, face sensitivities and interactional goals. Debriefing can also make explicit how this exercise teaches them about some more fundamental communication preferences than just giving feedback.

*Example 3*

The third example is a training activity that makes a particularly effective warm-up at the start of a team project and can also be linked to other activities. For example, if the discussion topic chosen for the turn-taking experiment (Example 1) concerns trust, the below activity has been shown to offer a nice pay-off for that discussion.

- *Contexts of use*: In-person and online training settings in HE, teams of around five.
- *Learning approach*: Inductive/exploratory. Self-assessment, followed by sharing results and team discussion.
- *Learning purpose*: Demonstrate different orientations to trust, commonalities across cultures and differences within cultures, and understand the implications for starting out on a team project.
- *Learning design*: Ranking order 'trust criteria' activity adapted for students with permission from WorldWork (Trickey and Ewington 2006). The adaptation of the trust criteria for students was assisted by insights on the 'gains and pains' of intercultural groupwork reported by Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2017).

Trainees are asked to think about the questions 'What is trust? What makes you trust someone?' before completing the individual task, which is as follows.

> Explore your personal understanding of trust – rank the following criteria in order of priority from 1 (most important to me) to 5 (least important to me).

(a) Is there any evidence that they are good at teamwork in an academic situation? (In other words, I would trust them if I have seen them engage collaboratively with other students on a previous module.)

(b) Can I be sure that the consequences of non-co-operation are equal on both sides? (In other words, I would trust them if I could be sure that they would care as much about the mark that we receive for the project as I do.)
(c) Do they care about me or just about themselves? (In other words, I would trust them if they recognize and respect my needs, priorities and goals, not just their own.)
(d) Can I be certain of their skills and expertise to carry out their allocated tasks? (In other words, I would trust them if they have achieved marks that are comparable to or better than mine in relevant modules.)
(e) Have they been personally recommended by people who I trust? (In other words, I would trust them if my friends or people I already trust have worked successfully with them before.)

At your first meeting, compare your ranking order with your team members. How far did their rankings agree or disagree with your ranking? Discuss and consider the possible implications for your project.

As with the feedback quiz, this activity can be relied upon to generate diverse results among co-nationals/trainees with a shared cultural background. It is evidently engaging, because the instruction to compare and discuss answers always triggers a burst of highly animated talk, which evolves into lengthy student-centred discussion as they first discover for themselves that national culture can't explain the diverse priorities among their teammates for trusting each other and then consider what impact those might have on teamwork.

This makes it a particularly good rapport-building activity, suggestive of the instinct to find common ground, which may be facilitated through troubles talk about teamwork itself (Debray 2020). Notably, students report that they think about their previous experiences of teamwork when completing the task. We know from the extensive literature on mixed national groupwork how assumptions about the other are brought into new teams by 'home' and 'international' students (Cai 2017; Spencer-Oatey and Dauber 2017), which can prejudice trust formation (Zakaria and Yusof 2020).

*Exploring relating across cultures through interaction analysis*

The final examples, 4 and 5, both involve intercultural teams of students in analysing data from their own team interactions in two specific settings: postgraduate students studying intercultural communication (Reissner-Roubicek 2014) and undergraduate summer school students from mixed disciplines with no background in linguistics (Reissner-Roubicek and Debray 2018).

- *Contexts of use*: Students research their own teamwork interaction. Experiential activities in research-based teaching of academic courses and intensive summer school courses, teams of around five.
- *Learning approach*: Inductive. Hands-on engagement with discourse data from own team interaction, in line with proposal for naturalistic inquiry in intercultural education in HE (Olbertz-Siitonen 2021).

- *Learning purpose*: Understand mutual impact of own and others' communication through a linguistic lens, overcome assumptions and so on.

*Example 4 – Postgraduate students studying intercultural communication*

- *Learning design*: Individual written pre-task to elicit previous teamwork experiences. Post-project assessed write-up of team communication including linguistic analysis of audio-recorded meeting data.

At the start of the module (*Leadership and teamwork in intercultural contexts*), students submitted individual written reflections in answer to a prompt about their previous experiences of working in teams, adapted from Oakley et al. (2004). Culturally diverse teams were then allocated within the international cohort and they set to work on a marketing project with an intercultural theme and real-life applications. They agreed to record one meeting by consensus during the project and for their assessment provided an overview of the way their team communicated over a series of meetings and a closer analysis of segments of actual talk. They were asked to pay attention to features of the interaction they thought were significant in how, for example, ideas were volunteered, decisions were made and leaders emerged in interaction – in other words, how culture was co-constructed within the team. Some focused on humour and some on politeness and so on. They used a range of discourse- and conversation-analytical tools to explore their experiences at the interactional level. One student noticed the frequency of compliments ('I think I might be in an equalizer team') and scrutinized those. In the overview, some students chose to write about how relationships were built between team members from different backgrounds. All the members of one team separately wrote about opening each meeting by sharing a different sort of cake and the particular team humour that evolved accordingly, which was also evident in the segments chosen to analyse. Each person identified humour as a factor in the team's functioning effectively and enabling shared leadership.

Conflict among team members was also engaged with. One comment in the post-assignment reflection addresses how threats to rapport were negotiated: 'I enjoyed the fact that I learnt many aspects about face and managing conflict.' This refers to a turbulent incident which students from one team all chose to highlight in their separate analyses.

Here are some more examples of student reflections on their work.

*Post-assignment reflections*

- I think this is good that I can learn from what I have done on the project as a team player. This is more practical than just write an essay on the topic. . . . And the experience is real so it is more realistic.
- It's very interesting hearing yourself on a recording and it helps to highlight some areas of improvement for future meetings. Doing this was very enjoyable for me.
- It helps me make a good self-reflection on my interaction style [and] what I should do next, it's very useful.

- I came to think how I could contribute to make the group work go smoothly.
- Analysing the meetings was the most interesting part. I really liked reflecting on what we had done as a team and then writing about it.
- It's interesting to review what I have done and how I have done it, which may benefit me in the interaction in future.

*Example 5 – Undergraduates from interdisciplinary backgrounds on international summer schools*

- *Learning design*: Experiential activities focusing on team-building, interspersed with unpacking theoretical notions about culture through discussions that encouraged alternative interpretations and perspective-taking. A team research task involving transcribing and analysing interactional data audio-recorded during a decision-making activity. Assessment by a team presentation reporting the findings.

The distinction was introduced in the first week between positivist and interpretivist research paradigms and their application in studies that take culture-as-given and culture-as-construct approaches respectively. Students were familiarized with some transcripts of teamwork communication and discourse-analytical research that addresses interactional issues relating to participation.

Team-building activities were mainly conducted outdoors at first to help to get to know each other in a more relaxed setting. The focus shifted to decision-making activities of the type used in assessment centres such as the *Desert Survival* task (Lafferty and Pond 1989) or its *Lost at Sea* (Knox n.d.) variant. Discussion tasks are an important context in which the impact of certain linguistic and interactional strategies in empowering or disempowering participants has been exposed (e.g. Baxter 2002). They are widely used under competitive conditions with candidates applying for graduate roles, as well as in diverse training contexts. *Desert Survival* is given as an example of a 'more authentic' simulation for intercultural business communication research by DuBabcock and Chan (2019) on the basis that it 'requires participants' full engagement' (p. 6). It is a convergence task – in other words, it requires discussants to come to an agreement about the order of importance to their survival of fifteen items saved from the wreckage of a plane.

Students each transcribed a share of the recording and then combined their transcripts. They used Qualtrix to make annotations to their transcripts and learnt to apply an interaction-analytic coding method (see Aritz and Walker 2014) for categorizing discourse units according to the frequency and types of features. This was scaffolded by a simple framework of discourse elements (simultaneous speech, links between turns, topic shifts and use of questions) set out by Walker and Aritz (2014) in a work pitched at an interdisciplinary audience.

Each team member took responsibility for exploring a different aspect of what was going on in the interaction, after which they discussed and interpreted them together. They learnt to differentiate between competitive interruptions and supportive overlaps. In addition to turn-taking elements they looked at how they gave each other positive and negative feedback (and, importantly, who they gave it to) during the task, and how direct or indirect each kind of feedback was, where communication was more or less task-focused/relationship-focused and how all of this fed into discursive strategies for agreement and disagreement. Their own and others' use of different types of questions was particularly striking to some of the teams and raised their awareness of how these are linked to power, not just in the case of 'challenge' questions used to contest but also in the case of 'co-operative questions' intended to facilitate, because asking someone for their opinion can draw attention to the fact they haven't contributed. This recalls the comment made previously by the student who felt it might be preferable to jump in rather than be made uncomfortable this way.

The plenary presentations of findings provided a further learning opportunity to engage critically with the way culture is constructed in team interaction and drew attention to the mutual impact of each other's contributions. Similar patterns of unequal participation were made visible, but the overall mapping of how each team related to each other in decision-making was clearly unique to each team.

This example shows how students outside the discipline of linguistics can acquire analytical skills that go beyond assigning cultural dimensions and values, that is, using culture uncritically as an explanatory variable. They discovered for themselves that the evidence for national culture or indeed gender to explain communication style was lacking and discussed the impact of situational factors such as the task, the timing, and the previous experience of the people involved.

## *Conclusion*

Finding ways to help improve the experience of working in culturally diverse teams through intercultural training was originally motivated by what I learnt from my job interviews research. Not only did teamwork appear to be the make-or-break question, but teamwork stories are mostly alike in that they involve people-related problems, which make sense when you know that the interviewer has a mission to elicit these. As one recruiter advised a candidate, 'you've got to have a story of conflict up your sleeve!'. Conflict may not be inevitable in intercultural teams, but the vastness of the literature attempting to address it attests to a need for trainers to rethink the design of intercultural training, in ways such as the ones discussed earlier. The issue of unequal participation, which can lead to assumptions about competence and marginalization, is particularly important to get traction on. It has implications for relationships in terms of rapport and trust, which in turn are subject to erosion by mismatches of expectations and preferences for directness in giving and getting feedback.

The idea of 'rethinking' in this chapter has entailed the adoption of a non-essentialist approach that help trainees to discover and capitalize on similarities, which in turn mitigates reductionist views of the other. It also aligns with proposals for naturalistic inquiry. This, especially, makes use of linguistic insights in that it supports trainees to generate their own. A broadly inductive approach to intercultural training was modelled for me by Helen Spencer-Oatey in her treatment of critical incidents when we started to create e-learning resources together and is now embedded in all experiential activities. My understanding of intercultural skills as a complex of observation skills, analytical skills and reflection skills was inculcated by Helen along with so much else that has been crucial in my development as a researcher, materials designer and trainer. The number of Spencer-Oatey citations in the chapter are reflections of the light she shines on the pivotal role of social interaction in interculturality. These days, 'observe, analyse and reflect' has been superseded by 'notice, understand and grow' as a learning framework in our materials design for her new company GlobalPeople Consulting. This provides some apt words to conclude with: Thanks to you, Helen, I noticed, I understood and I grew.

## *Acknowledgements*

Special thanks are due to colleagues Domna Lazidou, Lynnette Richards, Xiaozhe Cai, Carolin Debray, Thomas Greenaway, Simon Brown, Duncan Lees, Zi Wang, Andrew Davidson and Emily Lim, and those in other faculties who have supported and promoted this work: Tony Hughes, Benoit Jones, Elke Thonnes, Claire O'Leary, Emma Barker, Victoria Jelicic, Paul Taylor.

## *Notes*

1 In reporting how diverse teams have been defined, Stahl et al. (2010) refer to a cross-national/intra-national distinction and include gender, age and function along with 'culture and ethnicity' as dimensions of diversity (p. 690). 'Diverse' and 'culturally diverse' are often used interchangeably in the literature about the membership of such teams, reflecting alternate conceptions of culture and the multiple identities of team members.

2 It is already possible to detect a Western bias here in the evaluation of these styles of interaction as more or less effective or indeed 'collaborative' (see also Walker and Aritz 2014, and their extension of Coates's (1996) binary opposition between 'cooperative' and 'competitive' styles).

3 Hall (1976) talked originally in terms of high- and low-context cultures, and this distinction persists in some fields, but other researcher-practitioners have always talked in terms of high- and low-context communication styles.

4 For discussions of the theoretical links to face (and politeness), see Spencer-Oatey (2008).

5 See Olbertz-Siitonen (2021) for an overview of the trends reflecting the general shift away from essentialist approaches and Van Maele and Messelink (2019) regarding how critical incidents can be used in a non-essentialist way.

6 'World of Difference' (Trickey and Ewington 2006) offers a three-day training package including a forty-minute film scripted around the communication challenges experienced by a multinational team whose increasingly exasperated British leader is an intercultural novice.

## References

Antaki, Charles (2011), 'Six Kinds of Applied Conversation Analysis', in Charles Antaki (ed.), *Applied Conversation Analysis: Intervention and Change in Institutional Talk*, 1–14, Palgrave Macmillan.

Aritz, Jolanta and Walker, Robyn C. (2014), 'Leadership Styles in Multicultural Groups: Americans and East Asians Working Together', *International Journal of Business Communication* 51(1): 72–92.

Baxter, Judith (2002), 'Competing Discourses in the Classroom: A Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis of Girls' and Boys' Speech in Public Contexts', *Discourse & Society (Special Issue: Gender, Language, Conversation Analysis and Feminism)* 13(6): 827–42.

Behfar, Kristin, Kern, Mary C. and Brett, Jeanne (2006), 'Managing Challenges in Multicultural Teams', in Ya-Ru Chen (ed.), *National Culture and Groups*: *Research on Managing Groups and Teams*, Vol. 9, 233–62, Elsevier.

Byrne, Margaret and Fitzgerald, Helen (1996), *What Makes You Say That? Cultural Diversity at Work*, SBS Publications.

Byron, Kristin (2008), 'Carrying Too Heavy a Load? The Communication and Miscommunication of Emotion by Email', *Academy of Management Review* 33: 309–27.

Cai, Xiaozhe (2017), *Managing Difference: Postgraduate Students' Experiences and Perspectives on Multicultural Group Work in an Internationalising University*, PhD thesis, University of Warwick.

Clyne, Michael (1994), *Inter-cultural Communication at Work: Discourse Structures across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.

Comfort, Jeremy and Franklin, Peter (2010), *The Mindful International Manager: How to Work Effectively across Cultures*, 1st edn, Kogan PageGelfand.

Debray, Carolin (2020), 'Managing Rapport in Team Conflicts: The Elephant in the Room', in Dawn Archer, Karen Grainger and Piotr Jagodziński (eds), *Politeness in Professional Contexts*, 129–50, John Benjamins.

Debray, Carolin and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2019), 'On the Same Page?' Marginalisation and Positioning Practices in Intercultural Teams', *Journal of Pragmatics* 144: 15–28.

DiStefano, Joseph J. and Maznevski, Martha L. (2000), 'Creating Value with Diverse Teams in Global Management', *Organizational Dynamics* 29(1): 45–63.

Doney, Patricia M., Cannon, Joseph P. and Mullen, Michael R. (1998), 'Understanding the Influence of National Culture on the Development of Trust', *The Academy of Management Review* 23(3): 601–20.

Du-Babcock, Bertha (2006), 'An Analysis of Topic Management Strategies and Turn-taking Behavior in the Hong Kong Bilingual Environment: The Impact of Culture and Language Use', *Journal of Business Communication* 43(1): 21–42.

Du-Babcock, Bertha and Chan, Angela C. K. (2019), 'A Commentary on the Use of Simulated Settings in Business Communication Research', *International Journal of Business Communication* 59 (4): 1–12.

Fontaine, Gary (2017), 'Intercultural Teams', in Young Yun Kim (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*, 1–10, John Wiley & Sons.

Ford, Robert C., Piccolo, Ronald F. and Ford, Loren R. (2017), 'Strategies for Building Effective Virtual Teams: Trust Is Key', *Business Horizons* 60(1): 25–34.

Fowler, Sandra and Yamaguchi, Masahisa (2020), 'An Analysis of Methods for Intercultural Training', in Dan Landis and Dharm Bhawuk (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Training* (4th edn), 192–257, Cambridge University Press.

García, Maria d. C. M. and Cañado, Maria L. P. (2005), 'Language and Power: Raising Awareness of the Role of Language in Multicultural Teams', *Language and Intercultural Communication* 5(1): 86–104.

Gibson, Christina B. and Manuel, Jennifer A. (2003), 'Building Trust: Effective Multicultural Communication Processes in Virtual Teams', in Christina B. Gibson and Susan G. Cohen (eds), *Virtual Teams that Work: Creating Conditions for Virtual Team Effectiveness*, 59–86, Jossey-Bass.

Goettsch, Karin (2016), *Working with Global Virtual Teams: A Case Study Reality Check on Intercultural Communication Best Practices*, Digitalcommons@EMU. http://commons.emich.edu/gabc/vol5/iss1/3.

Greenaway, Thomas H. (2018), *Creating Global Graduates: In What Ways Do Students Develop Intercultural Competencies through Teamwork Projects?*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick.

Gudykunst, William B. and Hammer, Mitchell R. (1983), 'Basic Training Design: Approaches to Intercultural Training', in Dan Landis and Richard W. Brislin (eds), *Handbook of Intercultural Training*, 118–54, Pergamon General Psychology Series.

Hall, Edward T. (1976), *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Books.

Handford, Michael, Van Maele, Jan, Matous, Petr and Maemura, Yu (2019), 'Which 'Culture'? A Critical Analysis of Intercultural Communication in Engineering Education', *Journal of Engineering Education* 108(2): 161–77.

Helyer, Ruth (2015), 'Learning through Reflection: The Critical Role of Reflection in Work-Based Learning (WBL)', *Journal of Work-Applied Management* 7(2): 15–27.

Hofstede, Geert (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*, 2nd edn, Sage.

Jarvenpaa, Sirkka L. and Leidner, Dorothy E. (1999), 'Communication and Trust in Global Virtual Teams', *Organization Science* 10(6): 791–815.

Kayes, D. Christopher, Kayes, Anna B. and Kolb, David A. (2005), 'Experiential Learning in Teams', *Simulation & Gaming* 36(3): 330–54.

Knox, Graeme (n.d.), 'Lost at Sea', *Insight*. https://insight.typepad.co.uk/lost_at_sea.pdf.

Kolb, David A. (1984), *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice-Hall.

Lafferty, Alonzo W. and Pond, J. Clayton (1989), *The Desert Survival Situation*, 4th edn, Human Synergistics-Verax.

Meyer, Erin (2015), *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done across Cultures*, Public Affairs.

McConachy, Troy (2018), *Developing Intercultural Perspectives on Language Use: Exploring Pragmatics and Culture in Foreign Language Learning*, Multilingual Matters.

McConachy, Troy and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2021), 'Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Pragmatics', in Michael Haugh, Daniel Kádár and Marina Terkourafi (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*, 733–57, Cambridge University Press.

Molinsky, Andy (2013), *Global Dexterity: How to Adapt Your Behavior across Cultures Without Losing Yourself in the Process*, Harvard Business Review Press.

Molinsky, Andy (2016), *Reinventing the Feedback Sandwich*, [Blog], 26 October. https://www.andymolinsky.com/reinventing-feedback-sandwich/.

Molinsky, Andy and Gundling, Ernest (2016), 'How to Build Trust on Your Cross-Cultural Team [Blog]', *Harvard Business Review*, 28 June. https://hbr.org/2016/06/how-to-build-trust-on-your-cross-cultural-team.

Oakley, Barbara, Felder, Richard M., Brent, Rebecca and Elhajj, Imad (2004), 'Turning Student Groups into Effective Teams', *Journal of Student Centered Learning* 2(1): 9–34.

Olbertz-Siitonen, Margarethe (2021), 'Practical Applications of Naturalistic Inquiry in Intercultural Education', *Journal of Praxis in Higher Education* 3(2): 52–76.

Pullin, Patricia (2010), 'Small Talk, Rapport, and International Communicative Competence: Lessons to Learn from BELF', *The Journal of Business Communication* 47(4): 455–76.

Reissner-Roubicek, Sophie (2014), 'Promoting Integration in Multicultural Teamwork [case study]', in Helen Spencer-Oatey, Daniel Dauber and Stephen Williams (eds), *Promoting Integration on Campus: Principles, Practice and Issues for Further Exploration.* Report commissioned by UK Council for Student Affairs (UKCISA).

Reissner-Roubicek, Sophie (2017), 'Teamwork and the "Global Graduate": Negotiating Core Skills and Competencies with Employers in Recruitment Interviews', in Janet Holmes, Meredith Marra and Jo Angouri (eds), *Negotiating Boundaries at Work*, 66–86, Edinburgh University Press.

Reissner-Roubicek, Sophie and Debray, Carolin (2018), 'Unpacking Unequal Participation through Developing Linguistic Awareness in Group Discussion Tasks', Paper presented at Symposium on Classroom Interaction at the Internationalised University, 10 December, University of Surrey.

Reissner-Roubicek, Sophie and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2020), 'Positive Interaction in Intercultural Group Work: Developmental Strategies for Success', in Zuocheng Zhang, Trevor Grimshaw and Xingsong Shi (eds), *International Student Education in Tertiary Settings: Interrogating Programmes and Processes in Diverse Contexts*, 82–103, Routledge.

Schnurr, Stephanie and Zayts, Olga (2017), *Language and Culture at Work*, Routledge.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2008), *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication, and Politeness Theory*, 2nd edn, Bloomsbury.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Dauber, Daniel (2017), 'The Gains and Pains of Mixed National Group Work at University', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38(3): 219–36.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Dániel Z. (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.

Stahl, Günter, Maznevski, Martha, Voigt, Andreas and Jonsen, Karsten (2010), 'Unraveling the Effects of Cultural Diversity in Teams: A Meta-analysis of Research on Multicultural Work Groups', *Journal of International Business Studies* 41: 690–709.

Tannen, Deborah (2012), 'Turn-taking and Intercultural Discourse and Communication', in Christina Bratt Paulston, Scott Kiesling and Elizabeth Rangel (eds), *The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication*, 135–57, Wiley & Sons.

Thompson, L. (2020), *How to Foster Positive Virtual Interactions Against All Odds*, April. https://hbrascend.org/topics/how-to-foster-positive-virtual-interactions-against-all-odds/.

Tian, Zhaohui and McConachy, Troy (2021), 'Relational Challenges in an Intercultural Volunteer Programme in Jordan: Views from Chinese Participants', *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 50(6): 588–609.

Trickey, David and Ewington, Nigel (2006), *A World of Difference: Working Successfully across Cultures*, WorldWork International Management Development.

Trompenaars, Fonz (1993), *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*, The Bath Press.

Van Maele, Jan and Messelink, Annelies (2019), 'Mobilizing Essentialist Frameworks in Non-essentialist Intercultural Training', in Piotr Romanowski and Ewa Bandura (eds), *Intercultural Foreign Language Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Contexts*, 141–61, IGI Global.

Zakaria, Norhayati and Yusof, S. A. Mohd (2020), 'Crossing Cultural Boundaries using the Internet: Toward Building a Model of Swift Trust Formation in Global Virtual Teams', *Journal of International Management* 26: 100654.

# Chapter 9

## Approaching English teaching in the global classroom through the lens of ritual frame indicating expressions

Willis Edmondson, Juliane House and Dániel Z. Kádár

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, we introduce a project dedicated to the teaching of English in global classrooms. Specifically, we explore difficulties with the acquisition and use of expressions associated with various speech acts such as Request and Apologize. We define such expressions as ritual frame indicating expressions (RFIEs) (Kádár and House 2020a; House and Kádár 2021). Although RFIEs can appear to be similar across languages, their use and pragmatic load can differ significantly. Our previous research has shown that differences in RFIEs has the potential to trigger intercultural interactional failures, misunderstanding and offence (see Kádár and House 2020b), and so we regard them as important elements to address in both language classroom and intercultural education more broadly.

We introduce two procedures through which one can tease out relevant linguacultural differences between Chinese and English. The chapter is informed by data drawn from an interactional grammar of English the authors of this chapter are currently working on (see Edmondson et al. 2023).

### *Background*

The learning of every foreign language – and English is not an exception – begins with the acquisition of words representing key expressions in everyday talk. Consider the following exchange:

(1)

Teacher: Repeat after me: Hello.
Learner: Hello.
Teacher: Good.

Words are of course always embedded in utterances, and after a short period learners begin to go beyond learning simple expressions like *hello*. Every language has conventionalized expressions associated with speech acts which are considered important for L1 and L2 acquisition alike. In fact, as in the following example, these expressions are often closely tied up with explicit language socialization and the learning of politeness.

(2)

Child: I want lollypop!
Adult: What is the magic word?

Both parents and teachers tend to make ample use of such questions because learners are expected to be able to use conventionalized expressions like *please* 'appropriately'. This expectancy explains why children, for example, are frequently reminded about pragmatic conventions governing the use of expressions – conversations such as the one in example (2) are expected to raise awareness of the necessity of such expressions in situations in which one needs to impose on the other with a potentially face-threatening act such as Request.

In this chapter we define conventional expressions associated with speech acts as 'ritual frame indicating expressions'. The acquisition and use of RIFEs is a core part of being able to enhance 'rapport' with others (Spencer-Oatey 2000): their use always closely interrelates with face and related rights and obligations, while failure in using them appropriately tends to trigger offence. In the recent surge of interest in causing and taking offence (see e.g. Haugh et al. 2022) little attention has been dedicated to the inappropriate use of such seemingly 'basic' expressions. This lack of attention is surprising because previous research has shown that linguacultural differences between the use of such expressions often triggers intercultural misunderstandings (see House 2006).

*Ritual frame indicating expressions*

The use of conventionalized expressions associated with speech acts can be idiosyncratic. Consider the following case:

(3)

Dániel: Can we move on and finish this chapter instead of waffling aimlessly?
Juliane: Could you *please* shut up? *Ruhe!* ['Silence' in German]!

While it is clear that *please* in this dialogue indicates the speech act Request, for spectators unaware that the interactants are close friends, a particular problem may emerge. That is, without having some contextual information, spectators may find it difficult to interpret why *please* is used in such a seemingly rude way. Such uses of expressions are therefore idiosyncratic because they cannot be identified with a standard situation in which rights and obligations and related pragmatic conventions are clearly defined. As opposed to such idiosyncrasy, in many other real-life scenarios, relationships are clear for the participants. Consider the following case:

(4)

Policeman: Move your car, please.
Car owner: Uh oh.

One does not need to be familiar with the participants, or even to see the actual scene itself, to realize that *please* here indicates the right of the policeman to make a Request (see House 1989). In fact, even without indicating the roles of the participants, it would have been clear to many that the first interactant is a person invested with authority, and *please* is somehow related to this authority. In other words, many situations are standard in nature, and in such situations everybody knows who and where they are and use conventionalized expressions accordingly. As House (1989: 108) argues,

> The notion of a standard situation involves participants' rather fixed expectations and perceptions of social role. Role relations are transparent and predetermined, the requester has a right, the requestee an obligation, the degree of imposition involved in the request is low, as is the perceived degree of difficulty in realizing it. In a nutshell, the participants know where and who they are. Clearly, the distinction between a standard and a nonstandard situation is not clear-cut.

Note that the concept of 'standard situation' does not only include what is commonly known as 'institutional discourse', but rather covers any situation where rights and obligations prevail. For instance, House (1989: 108) refers to the utterance 'Please clean up the kitchen' as a Request made between people sharing a flat. It is also important to note that a particular standard situation represents a cluster of contexts.

Due to the salience of rights and obligations in any standard situation, such situations tend to be ritual in nature (Kádár 2017). What this means is that the interactants recognize the standard situation they are involved in, and interaction thus unfolds within a cognitive 'ritual frame' (Turner 1979) in which rights and obligations prevail, and one is expected to follow these rights and obligations to maintain both his own face and the face of other interactants (cf. Goffman 1967). As Goffman pointed out, in ordinary interaction people engage in 'contact rituals' all the time (Goffman 1983). Such rituals are not necessarily 'ritual' in the ceremonial sense, but just like ceremonies they revolve around rights and obligations activated by contextual and linguistic triggers. This is why properly using expressions through which the ritual frame of an interaction and the related rights and obligations are indicated in standard situations is fundamental.

Considering the function of a conventionalized expression such as *please* in indicating standard situations and the broader underlying ritual frame in an interaction, we regard it as a typical example of an RFIE. What one needs to consider in intercultural contexts is the conventionalized relationship between

RFIEs and speech acts. Why may such a relationship trigger a problem? Consider the following case:

(5)

Teacher: Go on talking to your friends, please! [with a fake amiable smile]
Student: Sure, thanks! [goes on talking]
Teacher: [Glowers at the student]

The teacher's utterance in example (5) is clearly meant to be ironic, but the student misunderstands the expression *please* as being 'polite'. Such misunderstandings often revolve around the fact that in many languages – and practically all East Asian ones – the equivalents of expressions such as *please* tend to exclusively indicate the speech act Request (see also Kádár and House 2020a) – that is, they are 'speech act-anchored' – while their English counterparts are not. The tragedy of misunderstandings such as the one featured in example (5) is that none of the participants may understand exactly what is going on. The teacher may (rightly) think that the student is insolent, while the student may wonder about the inexplicable wrath of the teacher.

*Linguacultural variation in Requests*

It may be tempting for speakers of English to consider the pragmatic behaviour of members of typologically distant languages as 'exotic' and regard their own behaviour as 'normal' (see e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2021). This is clearly an ethnocentric view, and when it comes to pragmatic failures relating to RFIEs, it is important to understand the standard situations which comparable expressions in English and other languages indicate, and also to consider the relationship between such expressions and the speech acts popularly associated with them. In addressing RFIEs in the context of language teaching and other intercultural educational contexts, we suggest the following two interrelated phenomena be considered:

1. The relationship between RFIEs and speech acts in two or more languages.
2. Variation in the standard situations that comparable RFIEs indicate in different languages.

Such phenomena become intriguing in particular in the case of typologically distant languages such as Chinese and English. Our corpus-based research (Kádár and House 2020a) has revealed that Chinese and British English RFIEs through which the speech acts Apologize and Request are realized indicate very different standard situations. Here, we focus on Requests.

Let us consider the first utterance in example (5) in a somewhat altered form:

(6)

Teacher: Go on talking to your friends, please! (*with a fake amiable smile*)
Chinese student: Ah?
Teacher: (*Glowers at the student*)

In this constructed example, the student's exclamation indicates surprise which one can often witness in real-life scenarios involving intercultural misunderstanding triggered by an RFIE. While the Chinese student in this example recognizes that something is very wrong, from her point of view it may seem strange for a teacher to use the expression *please* in any request, not mentioning a context of mocking the student. Kádár and House (2020a) have shown that in Chinese corpora *qing* 请, which is the equivalent of *please*, is not used by teachers towards students.

This is not to say that RFIEs are always used to indicate strictly different standard situations across languages. For example, both *please* and *qing* are also used in similar standard situations such as workplaces. Thus, in studying the role of RFIEs in intercultural misunderstandings, we need to systematically consider which standard situations associated with a particular RFIE trigger problems in language learning and intercultural communication.

Another equally important question relates to the association between RFIEs and a particular speech act. In example (6), *please* loses its function as an indicator of a Request because the teacher wants the exact opposite to what he claims to want. Thus, *please* here indicates the speech act Complain rather than Request. Interestingly, the Chinese equivalent of *please* does not afford such an altered function: speakers of Chinese cannot normally realize a Complain using the expression *qing*.

Having discussed linguacultural variation in RFIEs, with Chinese and English as examples, we now turn to two procedures we have used to examine English-language learners' awareness of the use of such expressions.

## *Assessing learners' awareness of standard situations in English*

The first procedure for eliciting language learners' awareness of RFIEs is to examine whether they recognize the standard situations such expressions indicate. Here, we focus on RFIEs indicating two speech acts which are particularly relevant in daily interaction and which also have been very broadly studied in pragmatics starting with Blum-Kulka et al. (1989): Apologize and Request. We looked at whether foreign learners of English, in our case Chinese learners, are aware of the standard situations English conventionalized expressions associated with Apologize and Request normally indicate. Such an awareness is more complex than meets the eye if we consider what has been discussed in this chapter thus far.

We have found with the aid of large corpora that seemingly 'simple' Apologize and Request expressions in Chinese and English have different uses in terms of indicating standard situations (Kádár and House 2020a). We annotated such uses by employing general labels for the standard situations involved, in order to tease out linguacultural similarities and differences in our corpora. The idea in annotating standard situations is not so much to create 'scientific' labels which can be used for the descriptions of the functions of any other RFIE, but rather to empirically arrive at categories which help us to describe individual similarities and differences between pairs of expression we study.

We also need to make sure that we compare expressions of similar pragmatic characteristics. This is a thorny issue because one may easily think of translational equivalents in this context by considering issues such as whether expressions such as *please* in English and *qing* 请 in Chinese are somehow 'equals'. A problem with such a logic is that 'perfect' translation cannot be reached universally, exactly because of the aforementioned relatedness of such expressions to different contexts or standard situations – translation is clearly a phenomenon of recontextualizing the use of expressions and other linguistic units (House 2018). So, instead of chasing the *fata morgana* of 'similar meaning' of the RFIEs to be compared, it is more productive to consider whether the expressions are pragmatic equivalents of similar degree of conventionalizedness, that is, whether they are used with an equivalent degree of frequency in the relevant languages.

In order to capture conventionalizedness, we conducted interviews with panels of native speakers, hence identifying RFIE pairs to contrast in our research. The results of our research showed that the RFIE *duibuqi* is often deployed to indicate a 'Ceremonial' standard situation, while its English counterpart is completely absent from such a standard situation: apparently, the RFIE *sorry* (unlike e.g. *I am very sorry*) is rarely used in ceremonies, while it is frequently used to indicate the standard situation 'Classroom'. This latter use is conspicuously absent in Chinese classroom settings. These differences of use may be due to the fact that *duibuqi* is strongly associated with the speech act Apologize and, as such, is rarely used in interactions between students and their lecturers. The RFIE *qing* is also often deployed in formal 'Ceremonial' Requests, while it is not used in the standard situation 'Service encounters' in our corpus. The RFIE *please* is very different: it is used in 'Service encounters' and is absent from 'Ceremonial' situations, supposedly due to the fact that it has a loose relationship with the speech act Request. In sum, the Chinese RFIEs tend to be used in a more 'speech act-anchored' fashion than their English counterparts, and this difference is reflected by a variation in the standard situations that these RFIEs indicate.

*Assessing procedure*

In assessing our Chinese learners' awareness of the standard situations *sorry* and *please* indicate in English, we conducted a short questionnaire and follow-up interviews, involving a group of seven Chinese learners of English. All the respondents were females under the age of thirty. We first sent our Chinese learners a set of utterances in which the RFIEs investigated were deployed in English examples in both appropriate and inappropriate ways. At this stage, we only asked the respondents to evaluate the examples as either 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'. We then interviewed the respondents about their evaluation of the appropriacy of the examples.

Our respondents received a set of (in total four) examples from English, featuring two times two examples of each RFIE. Two of the four examples provided were real corpus occurrences, while we constructed the other two examples as 'quasi-back translations' (henceforth 'quasi-BT') of Chinese uses of corresponding RFIEs (cf. House 2018). By 'quasi-back translation' we mean cases in which we mirrored the Chinese linguacultural use of an RFIE in an English sentence. For instance, we provided the Chinese learners with a fictive example where the RFIE *please* is used in a similar ceremonial fashion to its Chinese counterpart, even though this RFIE is not normally used to indicate the 'Ceremonial' standard situation. Ultimately, 50 per cent of the examples in the questionnaire (followed by the interview) were set up as 'hidden traps' for the respondents.

The complete list of the four examples that we deployed is as follows:

(1)

The following utterance takes place during a public ceremony in Britain. A younger speaker addresses the head of the family in front of various other family members. The person apologizing expresses real regret, conveying the utterance in a highly emotive way and with excessive body language:

*Sorry for violating the interest of our family. (fictive example)*

[Quasi-BT of a Chinese example featuring the use of the RFIE *duibuqi*, shown to Chinese learners of English.]

This is a constructed example – which we have defined in our study as 'quasi-BT' – because it is an adaptation of the use of the Chinese expressions *duibuqi*. We have constructed this example with the intention of assessing the reaction of the respondents.

(2)

The following example takes place between a lecturer and a student (the utterance is spoken by the lecturer) in a classroom in England. The lecturer speaks in a regular tone, the student and his peers are attentive and the atmosphere in the class is friendly:

*How many tens in one hundred? Oh sorry, ten.*

[Authentic example]

This is an authentic example, taken from our British English corpus, in which the RFIE *sorry* is deployed to indicate the standard situation of 'Classroom'.

(3)

The following example takes place during a public ceremony in England. The speaker talks to a highly ranked person in a particularly emotive manner, and people around them are watching the event with reverence:

*Please, you really have to accept this honour.*

[Quasi-BT of a Chinese utterance shown to Chinese learners of English]

This is the quasi-BT of an utterance drawn from a Chinese corpus, which we constructed for our investigation to set up a hidden trap for our respondents.

(4)

The following example takes place in a British store (and is uttered by the vendor). The interaction is ordinary in style, and both the vendor and customer are satisfied with this instance of language use:

*That'll be five pounds, please.*

[Authentic example shown to Chinese learners of English]

This is an authentic example taken from our British English corpus, in which the RFIE *please* indicates the standard situation of 'Service encounter'.

*Results*

In our questionnaire, the following two points were presented to the respondents:

1. Read the four examples on the sheet below. Which of these examples do you find acceptable?
2. Why is a particular example acceptable/unacceptable to you? Please reflect on your evaluations and be prepared to be interviewed about them in an hour.

With regard to the first point, the respondents returned a short list detailing which examples were 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable' to them. The results of our research showed that the respondents' answers were not definitively demarcated along the lines of whether the examples were appropriate or inappropriate, but examples (2) (appropriate) and (3) (inappropriate) appear to have generated most mixed responses.

Our interpretation is that these ambiguous responses are most likely due to transfer from native interactional norms, as the extracts from the interviews will also illustrate. In other words, the Chinese students evaluated the examples in line with their own linguacultural norms.

Example (4) was interpreted appropriately by all respondents. In the interviews, they confirmed that this example was more or less in accordance with what they had learnt from their English-language textbooks, which included many examples of business transactions. In other words, respondents were pragmatically competent in this particular standard situation. For instance, Wei explained her evaluation as follows:

*I know many British students from my university, and I also played role games in class. While I've never been to Britain, this language you can see in all the textbooks. So, it must be appropriate.*

Na voiced a much more sophisticated view of what happens in buying–selling scenarios in the two cultures:

> *My cousin studied in Sussex and just returned home with a degree in literature. We talked a lot about life in the UK, and she told me that the British people in shops are very robotic and say the same things on many occasions. In China, if you know the people owning the shop, you will have a special and very friendly relationship with them. Nobody will speak like a robot. The English can be both very polite and friendly in their style, but my cousin felt that they don't really mean what they say. It's funny that this topic came up in this interview because my cousin actually mentioned* please. *For a Chinese person, using 'please' all the time is strange.*

We found Na's response insightful, as she provided a very detailed metapragmatic account on the use of the RFIE *please* in the British English standard situation under investigation.

Example (1) – which represents a quasi-back translation of a Chinese public Apologize – also triggered many appropriate evaluations. Meifang provided an insightful explanation as to why she thought this example was inappropriate:

> *In Chinese culture, apologising in public is needed sometimes. We are a polite nation. The Chinese is an ancient culture where sometimes you need to express your regret for having done something by saying sorry to someone else in front of others. This restores harmony between people. We even apologize to others in our families. Actually, in my family people would definitely apologize to each other in front of other family members if there was a need for this because family matters more than outside people. I have the impression that Westerners don't do this. When I spoke to Western people, I felt that they are less emotional than us Chinese and they don't care about their families as much as we do, and it would be difficult to imagine Westerners apologising in front of others because they mostly think of themselves.*

While Meifang's response is, of course, heavily loaded with cultural stereotypes, it clearly illustrates that public apologies are perceived differently in the two languages (cf. Kádár et al. 2017). Unlike Meifang, both Na and Wei failed to properly evaluate this example, although they evaluated all the other cases appropriately. Na provided the following explanation:

> *It doesn't matter where you are, people apologize everywhere. If you offend one of your family members badly, it is natural to apologize.*

The appropriate example (2) – which features a British classroom scenario – triggered a surprisingly large number of inappropriate evaluations. Almost all the respondents who provided an inappropriate evaluation voiced their opinion that a lecturer is not supposed to realize Apologize in a classroom, that is, they misinterpreted the use of the RFIE *sorry* as a real Apologize when it was simply a 'self-correction'. The reason for this could be that the RFIE *duibuqi* is used to indicate substantial transgressions in the Chinese language. For instance, Guimei told us the following:

> *Why would a teacher ever apologize if he hasn't done anything wrong? He has the authority, and apologising would destroy this authority. If a teacher apologized, it would make the students feel uncertain and nervous, and they would think that the teacher is not a good teacher. This is not good for the students, and also not for the teacher himself.*

Yang also appears to have misunderstood the situation. However, her explanation is slightly different from Guimei's, in that she related her misunderstanding of the pragmatic use of the RFIE to her personal life experience by stating the following:

> *I have never heard any teacher in China apologize in front of students. If there was something wrong and a teacher had to apologize, he would do this in private, maybe by involving the parents of the students. In Chinese culture, if an Apologise was made to a student, it would also concern the student's family because Chinese families are very close, and a school needs to communicate with the parents of a student.*

The inappropriate example (3) triggered an equal number of inappropriate evaluations as was triggered by example (2). Example (3) is not 'unusual' from a Chinese point of view. In Chinese it is perfectly acceptable to deploy the RFIE *qing* when speaking to a highly ranked person in a ceremony. The Chinese respondents might have found the similar use of the RFIE *please* acceptable in the fictive English example. Wenyi explained this by referring to customs in Chinese ceremonies:

> *While the example doesn't tell who the speaker is, he must be lower-ranking than the prince. So yes, using* please *is all right here. Respect is important in ceremonies all over the world, and to be honest we use a lot of such words in Chinese ceremonies. I think this also works in English.*

Unlike Wenyi, Na rightly evaluated the example as inappropriate, by saying the following:

> *I don't think that the English would say something like this. The sentence sounds like a translation of Chinese because* please *sounds so strange here. In English, people use* please *to ask for things, but I am not sure if this man asks for something at all. Is it not that he GIVES something to the prince?*

While Na was unable to form her response in the way that a pragmatician would, her response is important because it coincides with what our previous research on the RFIEs *please* and *qing* has revealed: while *qing* is frequently used to indicate

'Ceremonial' standard situations, *please* is not an expression that would indicate this standard situation in British English.

To sum up, the procedure presented here revealed that while *sorry* and *please* may seem to be 'simple' expressions, determining their appropriate use can be difficult. This is because these expressions are pragmatically loaded, and in many cases learners are unable to avoid falling back to pragmatic transfer in the use of these expressions. That is, relying on one's L1 pragmatic norms when attempting to understand these expressions will not necessarily solve the problem.

So far, we have focused on a particular problem relating to the use of RFIEs, that is, linguacultural differences between the standard situations such expressions may indicate. We now look into another aspect: the relationship between RFIEs and the speech acts they conventionally indicate.

### *Assessing learners' awareness of the speech act-anchor of RFIEs in English*

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, a problem which often triggers pragmatic transfer is that RFIEs in various (typologically distant) languages such as Chinese and English can have very different conventionalized relationship to speech acts. More specifically, English RFIEs can typically be associated with a wider range of speech acts than their Chinese counterparts. The fact that certain expressions can conventionally indicate more than one speech act is what we call 'altered speech act indication'. A typical example of altered speech act indication is when the expression *Hello* alerts the addressee about the speaker's presence, rather than realizing the speech act Greet conventionally associated with it. Our research suggests that 'altered speech act indication' is more diverse and complex in English than in languages like Chinese, where utterances appear to be more closely tied to a narrow range of speech acts.

As part of the procedure discussed in this section, we report on an investigation looking at whether advanced Chinese learners of English are able to recognize instances of altered speech act indication, by looking at RFIEs conventionally associated with the speech acts Thank and Greet.

The procedure we are presenting here builds on a previous corpus-based investigation of the use of expressions normally associated with these speech acts in Chinese and English (House and Kádár 2021). We identified comparable expressions in Chinese and English, with the aid of a panel of ten native speakers of these languages, and then engaged in a corpus study of these expressions. The respondents were asked to provide two times three expressions which in their view are frequently used to realize the speech acts Thank and Greet in their native tongues. The respondents were also asked to discuss reasons for their choice of expressions. We alerted the interviewees that we accept expressions used in both spoken language and other modes of interaction such as phone calls. As an outcome of the interview results, we decided to focus on the following pairs of most frequently mentioned expressions:

*Thank*

1. *Thank you (English)*
   *Xiexie[ni]* 谢谢[你[ *(Chinese)*
2. *Thank you very much (English)*
   *Feichang ganxie[ni]* 非常感谢[你] *(Chinese)*

*Greet*

1. *Hello/Hallo (English)*
   *Wei* 喂 *(Chinese)*
2. *Good morning/afternoon/evening (English)*
   *Ni hao* 你好 *(Chinese)*

This earlier work has shown that the relationship between expressions and speech acts should be approached through the following binary and non-binary pairs of analytic categories:

1. Default speech act-indicating use of expressions *versus* transformed speech act-indicating use of expressions (*binary pair*). This pair implies that certain expressions such as *Thank you* can either indicate the speech act Thank it is normally associated with, or indicate an entirely different speech act such as Complain.
2. Default speech act-indicating use of expressions *versus* non-speech act-anchored use of expressions (*binary pair*). This pair implies that certain expressions such as *Hello* in English and *Wei* in Chinese can either be used to indicate the speech act they are normally associated with – in this case Greet – or lose this function entirely and be used in non-speech act-anchored ways, such as an attention-getting Alerter.
3. Default speech act-indicating use of expressions plus modified speech act-indicating use of expressions (*non-binary pair*). This pair implies that a given expression may indicate various speech acts simultaneously. For example, both *Thank you* and *Xiexie* can mutually indicate the speech acts Thank and Leave-Take.

The transformed, non-speech act-anchored and modified speech act-indicating uses all represent parts of a broader category which we define here as 'altered speech act indication'. A key implication of the system presented here for learners of English is the following: Chinese and English expressions have different altered speech act-indicating capacities. The first binary pair of 'default versus transformed' functions can typically be found in English but definitely not in Chinese: the Chinese Thank expressions are invariably used to indicate the speech act Thank; that is, they do not permit transformed uses such as Complain. Regarding the second binary pair of 'speech act-anchored use of expressions *versus* non-speech act-anchored use of expressions', the previous study of Greet expressions has revealed that there is no major difference between such English and Chinese expressions. That is, both English and Chinese Greet expressions tend to be used in both speech act-anchored and non-speech act-anchored ways (e.g. as Alerters). As to the third non-binary pair of 'default speech act-indicating use of expressions plus modified speech act-indicating use of expressions', both English and Chinese expressions of Thank can simultaneously indicate the default speech act Thank and the speech act Leave-Take.

*Our procedure*

Our current procedure is based on a task sheet distributed to ten Chinese learners of English, which was followed up by interviews with these learners. All the respondents were advanced undergraduate students with an English major. The interviewees were provided with a set of utterances in which the Thank and Greet expressions investigated were deployed in various functions, involving both normal and altered speech act-indicating uses. All the examples were drawn from the British National Corpus. We did not reveal information to our respondents about the various normal and altered speech act-indicating functions of the expressions featured in the examples given in the sheet, and simply requested them to translate all the English examples to Chinese as their main task. In the current chapter, we only feature English transcripts from the interviews (originally in Chinese)

Our task sheet consisted of the following utterances:

*Examples of 'Thank you': According to our previous research, 'Thank you' fulfils three different functions including a) the normal speech act-indicating use, b) the transformed use, and c) the modified use of simultaneously indicating the speech acts of Thank and Leave-Take. Accordingly, we presented the following items in the task sheet:*

(5)

Thank you for your support, do come again.

[This example represents a normal speech act-indicating use of the expression *Thank you*, indicating the speech act Thank.]

(6)

Dear Professor, Thank you for your curt note.

[This example represents a transformed speech act-indicating use of the expressions *Thank you*, indicating the speech act Complain.]

(7)

Well, I'm afraid we won't be needing you, lovey, thank you. (looks at clipboard) Could we have the next candidate, please?

[This example represents a modified speech act-indicating use of the expression *Thank you*: here *Thank you* simultaneously indicating the speech acts of Thank and Leave-Take.]

*Examples of 'Thank you very much': According to our previous research 'Thank you very much' fulfils three different functions including a) the normal speech act-indicating use, b) the transformed speech act-indicating function, indicating a Complain, and c) the modified use of the simultaneous indication of the speech acts of Thank and Leave-Take:*

(8)

Thank you very much for sending us the samples of prints from the English In Focus video taken from the Sony UP 5000 video printer.

[This example represents a normal speech act-indicating use of the expression

*Thank you very much*, indicating the speech act Thank.]

(9)

That'll be quite enough of that, thank you very much.

[This example represents a transformed speech act-indicating use of the expression *Thank you very much*, realizing the speech act Complain.]

(10)

I've nothing further to add, thank you very much.

[This example represents a modified speech act-indicating use of the expression *Thank you very much*, simultaneously indicating the speech acts Thank and Leave-Take.]

*Examples of 'Hello': The expression 'Hello' (and its variant 'Hallo') can either indicate the speech act Greet or operate as an attention-getting Alerter. In this latter function 'Hello' loses its function as an indicator of Greet.*

(11)

Hello, Dr Streeter, how was your holiday?

[This example represents a normal speech act-indicating use of the expression *Hello*, indicating the speech act Greet.]

(12)

You are facing up to yourself in a very moving and powerful way – hello?

[This example represents the use of *Hello* as an Alerter. Here the speaker alerts the other, basically drawing attention to the fact that he is now talking.]

(13)

Oh, I wish – hello, what's that?

[This example represents the use of *Hello* as an Alerter. We included both example (12) and (13) in our task sheet because while *hello* in example (12) is other-directed, in example (13) it is self-directed.]

(14)

Good Morning. You're listening to Dial David Johnston on Max A M.

[This example represents the use of the expression *Good morning*, functioning as a Greet. As opposed to *hello*, the more formal cluster of Greet expressions *Good morning/afternoon/evening* can only be used in its normal function as a Greet according to our previous research, that is, these expressions never afford altered speech act indication as far as our corpus research was concerned. Because of this lack of altered speech act-indicating capacity, we only included the previous example featuring this expression in our task sheet.]

Along with the task sheets, our data consists of personal interviews conducted with the respondents of the task sheets about their translations, reflecting their comprehension of instances of altered speech act indication.

*Results*

The results of our research showed that the default speech act-indicating use of the expressions under investigation triggered minimal to no difficulties for students: the appropriacy rate of responses to examples (5), (8), (11) and (14) featuring such uses ranges between 90 per cent and 100 per cent. There is a much larger variation between examples featuring altered speech act indication, and here it is worth considering the following quantitative results:

- There is a very low appropriacy rate for (6) and (9): on average the appropriacy rate was only 15 per cent. These examples feature Thank expressions that fulfil the transformed function of indicating the speech act Complain. The respondents' failure to detect this transformed function accords with the fact that comparable Chinese expressions usually do not afford such transformed functions according to our previous research.
- (7) and (10) feature modified uses of *Thank you* and *Thank you very much*, simultaneously indicating the speech acts of Thank and Leave-Take. While the Chinese equivalents of these expressions (*Xiexie [ni]* and *Feichang ganxie [ni]*) can also fulfil this modified function, the appropriacy rate is nevertheless low: the students only captured the situated meaning of these expressions in 55 per cent of the cases on average.
- (12) and (13) include non-speech act-anchored uses of the expression *hello*. The students' evaluations of this expression had a relatively high appropriacy

rate of 70 per cent. Here, along with examining responses in the task sheet, we also investigated a particular issue regarding the translations the respondents provided: many students revealed metapragmatic awareness of the non-speech act-anchored use of the expression *hello*, by translating it in diverse ways, such as using *Wei* and *Hai* 嗨 instead of the more formal expression *Ni hao*.

Transformed speech act-indicating uses of the expressions *Thank you* and *Thank you very much*

As our research results showed, it is the transformed speech act-indicating use that posed the most difficult problem for the respondents. In the task sheet, we factored in the sociocultural variable of '+/– authority': example (6) features an utterance in which a professor is involved, while in (9) there is no such an authority figure. One could hypothesize that inappropriate student evaluations of *thank you* in (6) may have resulted from pragmatic transfer, considering that in East Asian cultures such as the Chinese talking to teachers who are generally figures of authority often triggers the use of honorifics and other forms of respect, as Ide (1989) has famously pointed out. However, interestingly, the response rate for example (9) in which the authority variable is missing had in fact an even lower appropriate response rate than (6). This shows that it is essentially the transformed speech act-indicating use itself – that is the use of Thank expressions as indicators of the speech act Complain and the related ironic meaning – which is rather 'alien' to the Chinese respondents.

In the following we present again the original examples in the task sheet, to facilitate easy reading, and then provide selected examples of appropriate and inappropriate student responses:

Example (6)

Dear Professor, <u>Thank you</u> for your curt note.

*Inappropriate responses:*

(Student 1)

This expression indicates thanking. Here it must show that the teacher had commented on the student's homework, so the student expresses his thank you to the teacher.

Student 1 clearly misinterpreted *Thank you* in example (6) as a 'proper' Thank expression.

(Student 3)

Here [*Thank you*] is an honorific expression and the speaker is only being polite because here the person addressed is a teacher who is the student's superior.

A noteworthy feature of Student 3's response is that she – unlike Student 1 and many other students – provides a metapragmatic definition for *Thank you*. Despite this technical description, the student's evaluation turned out to be equally inappropriate as that of Student 1.

*Appropriate responses:*
Only two students evaluated the example appropriately, and in the following we include excerpts from their comments made during the follow-up interviews:

(Student 4)

> I feel one needs to consider the semantics of 'curt note', which describes here an overtly simplistic feedback, so it has a somewhat ironic meaning. Because normally a professor's feedback is expected to be sufficiently detailed, arguing that it is 'curt' reveals that the expression does not realize a thank you.

Student 4 properly captured the transformed use of *Thank you* by arguing that it does not have a genuine Thank function in the utterance.

(Student 9)

> Because here 'curt note' occurred, so I think that the utterance here is bantering and does not express any thanking.

Again, Student 9 clearly recognized the transformed use of *Thank you* through its pragmatic effect. Note that while practically all respondents translated *curt note* in the example appropriately, it was only Students 4 and 9 who could properly interpret the irony of *thank you* stemming from *curt note*.

Example (9)

> That'll be quite enough of that, <u>thank you very much.</u>

*Inappropriate responses:*

(Student 3)

> When someone gives you something, you must say thanks to express your gratitude for this person's goodwill.

This is a straightforward misunderstanding of the use of the expression *Thank you very much.*

(Student 7)

> This excerpt may be from a restaurant. When a waiter pours you some wine, you may say, 'That'll be quite enough of that.' I think the utterance is an order and *Thank you* here is a politeness expression, softening the tone.

Although this student provided a detailed hypothetical scenario of the contextual use of *Thank you very much*, his interpretation is equally inappropriate as that of Student 3 as he failed to recognize the transformed use of *Thank you very much* in this example.

*Appropriate response:*
Since there was only one appropriate evaluation in our data, in the following we present an excerpt from the follow-up interview conducted with Student 9:

(Student 9)

> I feel that the speaker here is irritated and maybe he wants the other to stop talking, so the expression fulfils an ironic function.

Modified speech act-indicating uses of the expressions *Thank you* and *Thank you very much,* simultaneously involving the speech acts of Thank and Leave-Take

The general accuracy rate of evaluations of modified speech act indicating uses of *Thank you* and *Thank you very much*, featured in examples (7) and (10), was much higher than that of the transformed use, averaging 55 per cent. Yet, since Chinese Thank expressions also afford such modified uses, the inappropriacy rate of 55 per cent is remarkable. We assume that such errors are teaching-induced: altered speech act indication is rarely featured in standard Chinese textbooks of English.

In the following we present a single inappropriate and another appropriate interview interpretation of each example in the task sheet.

Example (7)

> Well, I'm afraid we won't be needing you, lovey, <u>thank you</u>. (looks at clipboard) Could we have the next candidate, please?

*Inappropriate response:*

(Student 10)

> Here a job interviewer isn't satisfied with the interviewee's performance, so he uses this expression to euphemistically reject the interviewee. It's a politeness expression. I think nowadays *thank you* doesn't represent a sincere thank you and people who utter it only use it to sound polite in a casual way. . . . No matter whether we talk about China or abroad, people always use euphemisms like this. It's a typical set phrase, being part of social etiquette.

Despite her detailed explanation, the student seems to have misunderstood the meaning of *Thank you* as an expression of finality. It is exactly this finality that precludes the use of *Thank you* as a 'casual' politeness expression here.

*Appropriate response:*

(Student 2)

> In this scenario, the interviewer uses thanking to euphemistically tell the interviewee to leave because the interviewee fails to pass the interview. The sentence also means 'thank you for participating in the interview but we won't hire you'.

Student 2's evaluation and subsequent explanation in the interview is correct because she grasped the simultaneous realizations of the speech acts of Leave-Take and Thank.

Example (10)

I've nothing further to add, <u>thank you very much</u>.

*Inappropriate response:*

(Student 8)

The speaker is just being polite. It's polite to say thanks, so here we have a politeness expression.

Student 8 did not grasp the Leave-Take function of *Thank you very much*.

*Appropriate response:*

(Student 2)

For example, when we prepare our presentation for our English class, we may type *Ganxie guankan* '感谢观看' ('Thanks for your watching') in Chinese, marking the end of the PPT. I think it is a type of politeness expression.

While Student 2 and Student 8 both argued that *Thank you very much* is a 'politeness expression', it is only Student 2 who correctly recognized the symbiosis between Thank and Leave-Take in the pragmatic use of this expression.

*Non-speech act-anchored uses of Hello*

As our research results showed, the non-speech act-anchored uses of the expression *Hello* – featured in examples (12) and (13) – had a high appropriacy rate, averaging 70 per cent, which accords with the fact that Chinese conventionalized expressions of Greet also often fulfil an Alerting function. The fact that in example (12) *Hello* is other-directed and in example (13) it is self-directed does not appear to have caused any major discrepancy between the appropriacy of the responses. The following are excerpts from an inappropriate and an appropriate interview feedback:

Example (13)

Oh, I wish – <u>hello</u>, what's that?

*Inappropriate response:*

(Student 6)

Judging from the utterance 'what's that?', I feel that 'hello' here has a tentative meaning. For example, when you go somewhere unknown, you may say 'hello' to make a tentative greet, in order to solicit a reply.

The student here misinterpreted the Alerting use of the expression *Hello* as a Greet. This is likely to be a teaching-induced error.

*Appropriate response:*

(Student 4)

The speaker here said 'Oh, I wish' and then something suddenly interrupted his train of thought, so he utters 'Hello' to change the topic and attract the listener's attention.

While Student 4's interpretation that there is a topic change here may be inappropriate, she correctly recognized that the expression *Hello* has an attention-getting function.

## *Conclusion*

In this chapter, we have discussed an issue relevant for both language learning and intercultural communication in global classrooms, that is, the relationship between conventionalized expressions and the speech acts associated with them. We proposed the concept of RFIEs and provided methodologies through which students' awareness of, and competence in, the appropriate use of RFIEs can be teased out. We introduced two interrelated methodologies through which one can identify reasons for pragmatic failures in the use of English RFIEs. The first of these procedures involves the study of 'speech act-anchor', that is, the investigation of the question whether there is a weak or strong relationship between a certain formulaic expression and a speech act associated with it. The second procedure involved the types of relationships, rather than relational strength, between an expression and certain speech acts.

The research we presented here is part of an evolving project (see a full version in Edmondson et al. 2023), and our primary goal has been to report on findings and related methodologies which are relevant to teaching English as a foreign language in the global classroom. An important future task will be to implement such research in actual pedagogic materials. Another more task for future research is to replicate these methodologies by studying other expressions associated with a larger variety of speech act categories.

## *References*


Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, House, Juliane and Kasper, Gabriele (eds) (1989), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, Ablex.

Edmondson, Willis, House, Juliane and Dániel Z. Kádár (2023), *Speech Acts, Discourse, and Interaction: An Interactional Pedagogic Grammar of English*, Cambridge University Press.

Goffman, Erving (1967), *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behaviour*, New Adeline.

Goffman, Erving (1983), 'The Interaction Order', *American Sociological Review* 48(1): 1–17.

Haugh, Michael, Kádár, Daniel Z. and Marquez-Reiter, Rosina (eds) (2022), *Taking Offence. Special Issue of Language and Communication* 87: 117–22.

House, Juliane (1989), 'Politeness in English and German: The Functions of Please and Bitte', in Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper (eds), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, 96–119, Ablex.

House, Juliane (2006), 'Communicative Styles in English and German', *European Journal of English Studies* 10(3): 249–67.

House, Juliane (2018), *Translation: The Basics*, Routledge.

House, Juliane and Kádár, Dániel Z. (2021), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics*, Cambridge University Press.

House, Juliane, Kádár, Dániel Z., Liu, Fengguang and Bi, Zhuo (2021), 'Altered Speech Act Indication: A Problem for Foreign Language Learners?', *System* 101: 102554.

Ide, Sachiko (1989), 'Formal Forms and Discernment: Two Neglected Aspects of Universals of Linguistic Politeness', *Multilingua* 8(2–3): 223–48.

Kádár, Dániel Z. (2017), *Politeness, Impoliteness and Ritual: Maintaining the Moral Order in Interpersonal Interaction*, Cambridge University Press.

Kádár, Dániel Z. and House, Juliane (2020a), 'Ritual Frames: A Contrastive Pragmatic Approach', *Pragmatics* 30(1): 142–68.

Kádár, Dániel Z. and House, Juliane (2020b), 'Revisiting the Duality of Convention and Ritual: A Contrastive Pragmatic Inquiry', *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 56(1): 83–111.

Kádár, Dániel Z., Ning, Puyu and Ran, Yongping (2017), 'Public Ritual Apology – A Case Study of Chinese', *Discourse, Context and Media* 26: 21–31.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen (ed.) (2000), *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport Through Talk across Cultures*, Continuum.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Dániel Z. Kádár (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.

Turner, Victor (1979), 'Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6(4): 465–99.

# Chapter 10

## Shifting the Evaluative Lens in Language and Intercultural Education

Troy McConachy

### *Introduction*

Within the field of language education and in intercultural education more broadly, there has been much interest in developing awareness of cross-linguistic differences in communicative norms and learners' ability to consider the consequences of such differences for intercultural relations (e.g. Dervin and Liddicoat 2013). In language education, such phenomena typically fall within the purview of pragmatics teaching, where learners are often encouraged to identify and compare the linguistic realization patterns and contextual norms for common speech acts, such as requests, apologies, compliments, in the target language and other languages (Koutlaki and Eslami 2018; McConachy and Spencer-Oatey 2020). Historically, cross-linguistic awareness of pragmatic differences has been considered useful for helping learners avoid unintentionally transferring pragmatic strategies from previously acquired languages, which could potentially lead to 'inappropriate' language use that offends native speakers of the target language. In this sense, as McConachy and Liddicoat (2022) have argued, rationales for developing pragmatic awareness are often closely associated with a 'discourse of risk' – the risk that learners will be subject to negative evaluation by native speakers due to deviating from their norms. This perpetual positioning as 'the evaluated' brings about problematic power relationships and is ultimately counterproductive to developing agentive L2 learners/users and reflective intercultural communicators (see also Lefringhausen, this volume).

Meanwhile, in other areas of intercultural education such as intercultural training, resources such as culture capsules, culture clusters and critical incidents are often used to provide information about cultural norms and engage learners in cross-cultural reflection and comparison (though there tends to be less attention to language). Critical incidents, in particular, enjoy much popularity among intercultural trainers and also frequently appear in language education materials designed for raising intercultural awareness (McConachy 2018a). These typically take the form of descriptions of communicative scenarios in which misunderstandings or rapport-related issues are assumed to have surfaced due to cultural differences in behavioural norms and/or values between participants (Fowler and Yamaguchi 2020). As discussed by Reissner-Roubicek (this volume), learners are frequently expected to engage with critical incidents by reflecting on the 'causes' of misunderstandings and other 'intercultural problems', often with reference to taxonomies of cultural difference drawn from the work of intercultural communication scholars, such as high context/low context (Hall 1976) and individualism/collectivism (Triandis 1988; Hofstede 2001). One issue here is that a predominant pedagogical focus on identifying and explaining the potential 'causes' of problems can feed into and reconstruct a deficit view of intercultural communication as inherently fraught with increased risk of negative relational outcomes. Thus, similar to pragmatics teaching, the threat of misunderstanding or relational breakdown is a main pedagogical driver.

This chapter takes as its starting point the idea that language and intercultural education can benefit from a stronger emphasis on learners' own subjective evaluations of (linguistic) behaviours. This means moving away from the idea that misunderstandings will inevitably occur unless people follow narrowly conceived communicative norms. It also means moving away from the view that other people 'cause' us to have particular reactions and instead requires learners to zoom in on the nature of their reactions to others so that these can be mindfully explored, particularly those emotional reactions that are likely to lead to negative interpersonal evaluations or stereotyping of whole groups. As critical intercultural scholars have highlighted, culture is frequently used as a sweeping excuse to cover up for individual failures or other kinds of systemic forms of discrimination (Dervin and Jacobssen 2021; Holmes this volume; Piller 2011). Therefore, there is a strong impetus for helping learners reflexively engage with their own emotional and cognitive reactions when confronted with behaviour that contravenes their contextual expectations or more fundamental assumptions about social relationships.

The chapter first presents an overview of recent perspectives on interpersonal evaluation that combine insights from linguistics and psychology, drawing in particular on the work of Helen Spencer-Oatey and collaborators. It discusses the cognitive and emotional bases of interpersonal evaluation and then proposes how these could be addressed in pragmatics teaching and intercultural education more generally.

## *Overview of language and interpersonal evaluation*

At a fundamental level, interpersonal evaluation relates to the evaluation of behaviours and people in positive or negative terms (Kádár and Haugh 2013). Within the field of pragmatics, interest in interpersonal evaluation has increased over the last five to ten years, particularly in the context of research that aims to understand the bases upon which individuals evaluate linguistic actions as (im)polite (e.g. Culpeper 2011; Davies 2018; Holmes 2018; Kádár and Haugh 2013; Sinkeviciute 2018; Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2019). Much of this work is inspired by the discursive turn in politeness research which places emphasis on how interactional participants themselves perceive and negotiate understandings of politeness. It is now widely acknowledged that although all languages have linguistic items (i.e. words, phrases, interactional routines) that are conventionally perceived to be inherently more polite than others, actual interpretations of (im) politeness in real-world interaction are highly dependent on how participants perceive and negotiate the norms of particular situational contexts, as well as their relationship with the interlocutor and other sociocultural variables such as age, gender and interactional history (Spencer-Oatey 2010). Thus, the perception that a particular (linguistic) behaviour is (im)polite is an *evaluative judgement* that is developed (often unconsciously) in context based on individuals' perceptions of the context and the intersubjective negotiation of meaning (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár 2016).

It is important to note here that the appraisal of behaviour as 'polite/impolite' is but one of the many evaluations of (linguistic) behaviour that individuals carry out on a daily basis. In fact, researchers have noted that the appraisal of our own and others' communicative behaviours in terms of morally valenced categories such as (im)polite, (in)appropriate, (in)sincere permeates social life (Kádár and Haugh 2013; Kádár 2020) and also plays an important role in learning how to communicate in other languages (McConachy 2018). The idea of 'morally valenced' here relates to the fact that evaluations are often articulated in linguistic terms that connote morally preferred or dispreferred states. For example, the evaluation of a behaviour (or even more a person) as 'polite' assigns a status to that behaviour that others from the same speech community or wider culture would recognize as positive in moral terms. As Turner and Stets (2006) explain, 'morality ultimately revolves around evaluative codes that specify what is right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable' (p. 544). In this sense, the deployment of adjectives such as 'polite', 'sincere', 'modest' helps signal the moral status of behaviours relative to established cultural codes. But on what basis do individuals make such attributions?

Turner and Stets (2006: 545) argue that moral content is embodied in cultural codes at different scales from the micro to the macro, including situational norms ('expectations guiding episodes of action or interaction'), corporate unit norms ('more specific expectations for how individuals occupying different positions within a division of labour are supposed to behave'), institutional norms ('general expectations of how individuals occupying positions within particular institutional domains are supposed to behave'), ideologies ('more specific conceptions of what is good–bad, right–wrong and proper–improper within an institutional domain') and values ('abstract and context-free conceptions of good–bad, right–wrong and proper–improper that members of a society are likely to hold'). In this sense, they regard values as containing the most moral content. They also suggest that they 'direct virtually all actions and self-evaluations of persons' (p. 545). This resonates with work in the pragmatics literature that has aimed to connect situational norms of language use with broader normative frameworks.

In the pragmatics literature, attempts to pin down the bases upon which individuals evaluate behaviour have increasingly invoked the notion of 'the moral order'. This is a fairly encompassing term that refers to the architecture of concepts/schemas, norms and values/ideologies that establish behavioural expectations and are thus invoked by individuals when needing to ground their evaluations of behaviour, particularly in the case of perceived norm violations (see Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Kádár 2021). Beyond the evaluation of behaviours in terms of morally laden adjectives, research has shown that when individuals are asked to justify their positive or negative evaluations of behaviour, they will frequently draw on further notions with moral overtones, such as 'dignity', 'care', 'respect', 'fairness' (see, e.g., Davies 2018; Kádár 2020; Sharifian and Tayebi 2017). Such notions are cited as things that people should value, and thus behaviour which contravenes them will be evaluated negatively. For example, Kádár's (2020) analysis of reactions to seemingly humiliating employment termination notifications demonstrated the widely held expectation that terminations be carried out in a way that preserves the 'dignity' of the person being fired. He showed that 'dignity' is firmly embedded not only in corporate HR frameworks and procedures but also in the perceptions of employees and the wider public. As such, the expectation that staff be treated with 'dignity' constitutes a norm in relation to which individuals evaluate the appropriateness of employee performance evaluations and terminations. Considering a different language, Sharifian (2017) argues that the evaluation of compliments and compliment responses in Persian is mediated by the cultural schema of *Shekasteh-nafsi* (modesty). He suggests that the receipt of a compliment normally requires the enactment of *Shekasteh-nafsi* via two main pragmatic strategies: (1) reassign the compliment to the complimenter or (2) reassign the compliment to God. Thus, here, pragmatic norms help actualize an underlying cultural schema, which is essentially functioning as a value.

In the context of pragmatics teaching, there has been some work which has argued for the need to develop learners' awareness of the normative basis of interpersonal evaluations, particularly with the goal of developing intercultural understanding (see Chang and Haugh 2017; McConachy and Spencer-Oatey 2020; chapters in McConachy and Liddicoat 2022). For example, McConachy's (2018b) notion of 'intercultural perspective on language use' places particular emphasis on a learner's 'capacity for paying close attention to how language is used in context, reflecting on the construction of meaning from multiple (and conflicting) perspectives, and developing insight into the impact of cultural assumptions and frames of understanding on communication' (p. 7). It is argued that as learners develop the ability to reflect on their own and other's contextual expectations, they will become more attuned to the ways that language use can trigger evaluations of people. This work has particular resonance with (and indeed derives insights from) Helen Spencer-Oatey's research on interpersonal evaluation in the context of intercultural relations, which is now coming to theorize the evaluation process from a distinct interdisciplinary perspective. Work on pragmatics teaching is yet to theorize the evaluation process, and thus it is useful to turn to a recent modelling of this process that can inform the teaching of pragmatics and practice of intercultural education.

## *Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) evaluation model*

Building on Spencer-Oatey's rapport management theory and interdisciplinary insights from pragmatics, social psychology and moral psychology, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) have recently put forward a model that suggests how evaluations of behaviour come to impact on rapport (see also Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2019, Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019). As outlined in Holmes's and Wang's respective chapters in this volume, rapport management theory places distinctive emphasis on how individuals interpret and evaluate communication and how potential divergences in subjective perceptions can impact on rapport. The theory posits three bases of rapport: face, sociality rights and interactional goals, and suggests that rapport can be threatened when individuals or groups diverge with respect to these three bases. In essence, the theory identifies the areas which lead to interpersonal sensitivity and positive or negative evaluations of others. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) evaluation expands rapport management theory primarily through its theorization of the socio-moral order underpinning evaluations of behaviour and its modelling of the evaluation process. Both of these elements will be explained further.

The model starts with *behaviour in context*, which recognizes that the evaluation of behaviour is inevitably shaped by the context in which it occurs. The model recognizes that individuals tend to come with schematic-type knowledge that helps them recognize the nature of communicative situations, the likely unfolding of communicative events and moves within these situations, and the rights and obligations that might pertain to personal or professional roles in a given context. While it cannot be said that individuals from the same cultural background will possess identical schematic knowledge, ways of reading context or expectations about what should happen, the model assumes that individuals will have been influenced by their particular trajectory of cultural socialization.

The second element of the model is the *acceptability threshold*, which the authors regard as the point beyond which behaviours will be 'noticed' due to diverging in some way from expectations. Whereas behaviour that deviates from expectations in a minor way might be ignored, the authors suggest that more significant deviations would then be likely to give rise to evaluations. For example, behaviour might be noticed and then evaluated in the mind as 'impolite'. Behaviours occurring within what the authors refer to as a 'normalcy zone' would be likely to be ignored and those falling outside the zone would then be processed further.

This brings us to the third element – *evaluation of behaviour and agent*. Within the evaluation model, the authors are careful to emphasize that when evaluation is triggered, there is potential for both the behaviour itself and the individual performing the behaviour to be subject to evaluation. This tendency for evaluations of behaviour to be extended to evaluations of people and for this to take the form of a snap judgement is well attested in the social psychology literature (see Hinton 2016).

The next element in the model is crucial, and it is in this area that there is significant theoretical expansion of the rapport management model. This element concerns the *evaluation warrant*, which refers to what underpins the evaluation of behaviour. The model posits that when individuals evaluate behaviour categorically, such as by interpreting it as 'impolite' in the mind, this is not an arbitrary reaction but is in fact informed by particular assumptions about relationships, the context in which communication occurs and the behaviour that is considered (un)desirable or normative. Thus, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, if individuals are asked to explain the grounds for perceiving a particular behaving as 'impolite', for example, they are likely to attempt to ground their explanation in notions of right behaviour that pertain to particular relationships or contextual expectations. In this sense, the evaluation warrant relates primarily to the 'cognitively based criteria' that underpin evaluations (Spencer-Oatey, personal communication).

The evaluation model specifies two broad evaluation warrants: interpersonal sensitivities and socio-moral warrants. The former notion relates to the constituents in Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model: namely, face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's notion of socio-moral warrant represents a distinctive take on the notion of 'the moral order' introduced earlier in that it aims to theorize a potential distinction between behavioural norms that are mostly based on convention (i.e. Culpeper's (2011) 'social oughts' or Cialdini's (2012) 'descriptive norms') and those that are more deeply rooted in people's sense of how things should be from a moral perspective (Culpeper's (2011) 'moral oughts' and Cialdini's (2012) 'injunctive norms'). It is important to note here that the 'socio-moral' domain is intended as a continuum rather than a strict categorical distinction. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021: 165 and 167) explain as below:

> Some behavioural conventions seem to be just a matter of convention – they are local protocols and simply facilitate social interaction through a shared understanding of group etiquette. There does not seem to be a strong moral underpinning to them. These are known as social rules. In contrast, moral rules seem to proscribe behaviour that is more wrong and more punishable, with the wrongness being more authority independent. . . . we propose that the foundation to the evaluation warrant is a continuum that stretches from a primarily social foundation to a primarily moral foundation.

The general distinction may become clear when faced with perceived violations of expected behaviours (i.e. when the *acceptability threshold* is crossed, in Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's terms), and it needs to be considered whether individuals are upset simply because a behaviour was unconventional or whether it violated a deeper sense of how things should be, according to norms, values or other communal conceptions of right behaviour. That is, it would be necessary to look at the evaluation warrant articulated by individuals to assess whether behaviour is being evaluated in morally laden terms and what normative notions are articulated in the process. For example, if a teacher receives an email from a student asking for an assignment grade to be raised, the teacher might argue that 'students shouldn't try to negotiate their grades because it shows disrespect to the teacher'. Such a formulation appears to be based on specific conceptions of teacher and student roles, notions of hierarchy and expectations relating to the attitudes expected to be displayed in the context of this hierarchy.

The final element in the model is *evaluation of behaviour and agent*. What this signifies is that individuals may come to a final judgement of behaviour and the individual performing the behaviour following consideration of the evaluation warrant, which could be positive or negative. In the model, it is this judgement which is considered to have a potentially significant impact on rapport, as individuals themselves might then be categorized as socially or morally problematic, depending on whether they've violated a descriptive or injunctive norm. Drawing on Malle et al.'s (2014) theory of blame, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) also suggest that the perception of intentionality plays an important role in whether individuals are blamed for their actions or not. If individuals are perceived to unintentionally cause offence or committed other norm violations, it is thought that it is less likely that they will be evaluated.

## *The role of emotion in evaluation*

As outlined earlier, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) place significant emphasis on the evaluation warrant within their evaluation model, which relates to the articulated basis upon which individuals carry out evaluative (moral) reasoning. They acknowledge, however, that evaluations of behaviours that cross the normalcy threshold tend to arise very quickly, often in the form of immediate emotional reactions rather than rational thinking. This insight derives from Haidt's (2012) social intuitionist model of moral judgement which suggests that rational processes of reasoning tend to be motivated by the need to justify one's own intuitive, emotional reactions. Graham et al. (2018) suggest that moral judgements are 'associative, automatic, relatively effortless, and rapid' (p. 212). This is in line with Kahneman (2011) who also emphasizes a distinction between intuitive, automatic forms of cognition (System 1) and more conscious, rational forms of cognition (System 2). In essence, emotions arise together with physiological reactions to provide a 'felt sense' that helps satisfy the human need for instant evaluation of relevant events or circumstances, particularly those that could be threatening (Myers 2004). Thus, when individuals initially experience another's behaviour as improper/wrong/inappropriate, it may take the form of a general aversive reaction and intuitive 'sense' rather than a rational judgement. According to Haidt's theory, the rational mind then tends to engage in reasoning that is supportive of the evaluative impulses that have been generated internally. Therefore, the evaluation warrant in Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) model is likely to be engaged following emotional reactions that guide the evaluation of situations and people.

When it comes to the evaluation of behaviour in moral terms, an important role is thought to be played by a particular sub-class of emotions called 'moral emotions'. Moral emotions are thought to help individuals internalize a sense of the community's moral norms and standards and discern the moral status of behaviour accordingly (i.e. whether it is generally acceptable or not) (Haidt 2003). In this sense, the assessment of right behaviour is aided by emotion rather than being completely reliant on rational processing. Haidt (2003) groups moral emotions into four main types as below.

- Self-conscious emotions: Negative feelings about the self that arise due to violating moral standards (e.g. shame, embarrassment, guilt).
- Other-condemning emotions: Negative feelings in relation to others who violate moral standards (e.g. contempt, anger, disgust).
- Other-suffering emotions: Feelings that occur when a person/victim is in a situation which violates moral standards (sympathy).
- Other-praising emotions: Positive feelings experienced when another person appears to enact or uphold moral standards (e.g. gratitude, elevation).

Turner and Stets (2006) argue that moral emotions have a hard-wired basis which has evolved with the seemingly universal human expectation for reciprocity in relationships. They suggest that these emotions are 'not only the product of socialization into a moral culture; they also represent elaboration of hard-wired propensities of humans for reciprocity, justice, shame, and guilt' (p. 547). This contrasts with constructionist theories of emotion which place much more emphasis on cultural conditioning and the situatedness of emotional arousal (e.g. Feldman Barrett 2017). Although there is currently little consensus on these matters, cultural socialization is likely to play a significant role in how individuals perceive the situations and actions that trigger arousal of moral emotions and also how individuals make sense of these emotions (Haidt 2003).

### *The nature of other-condemning emotions*

For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the category of 'other-condemning emotions' as these are the ones which are most likely to lead to the negative evaluation of different linguistic and cultural behaviour and can become a meaningful point of focus in language and intercultural education. Specifically, I will consider the role of contempt, anger and disgust.

In attempting to understand the nature of moral emotions, Haidt (2003) suggests that it is useful to look at them in terms of their 'elicitors' and 'action tendencies'. The former is what appears to trigger an emotion, and the latter relates to the kind of action that occurs in response. He explains that '[e]motions generally motivate some sort of action as a response to an eliciting event. The action is often not taken, but the emotion puts the person into a motivational and cognitive state in which there is increased tendency to engage in certain goal-related actions (e.g., revenge, affiliation, comforting, etc)' (p. 854).

In terms of elicitors, Rozin et al. (1999) associate other-condemning emotions with violations of Shweder et al.'s (1997) moral codes of community, autonomy and divinity. They suggest that contempt relates to violation of the moral code of community, which includes respecting hierarchy, deference to authority figures, loyalty to group members and honouring the community. Meanwhile, anger is associated with violation of the moral code of autonomy, which includes respect for individuals' rights, freedoms and choices. They explain that anger is likely to occur when actions are perceived to unjustly or unfairly infringe on these freedoms. They link disgust to the moral code of divinity, which relates to notions of purity and sacredness.

It is important to note that although anger is a common reaction to one's own goals being blocked, it is also frequently aroused in relation to acts that are perceived to violate normative conduct, particularly when actions that occur in relation to self or others are perceived to contain malevolence or unjustified negative outcomes for others (Turner and Stets 2006). Spencer-Oatey (forthcoming) has also noted that annoyance/anger can arise from expectancy breaches in relation to face sensitivities, beliefs about sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals. When anger is strongly aroused, it can generate 'a motivation to attack, humiliate, or otherwise get back at the person who is perceived as acting unfairly or immorally' (Haidt 2003: 856).

Turning now to disgust, Chapman (2018) explains that although the disgust system was originally designed to alert humans to environmental threats such as disease, this emotion now tends to be activated in relation to actions which constitute harm, unfairness or disloyalty. It is a strong aversive reaction elicited by behaviour that violates important moral notions or standards. This is distinct from contempt, which Turner and Stets (2006) suggest is a relatively 'cool' emotion in that it entails a psychological distancing from the object of this emotion. Thus, contempt often involves the sense of looking down on another person due to their perceived moral deficiencies. In this sense, it is useful to note that disgust and contempt are different from anger in the sense that they tend to involve avoidance rather than approach motivation (Hutcherson and Gross 2011). Moreover, psychological distance can also lead to the other being negatively stereotyped (Hinton 2016).

From a pragmatics perspective, there are many aspects of language use that could elicit the other-condemning emotions of anger, disgust and contempt and in turn give rise to negative evaluations of behaviours and other people. These could be pragmatic behaviours that threaten interpersonal sensitivities such as face, sociality rights or interactional goals, or acts that threaten individuals' deep assumptions relating to 'equality', 'hierarchy', 'order', 'humility' and other moralized notions. Some relevant examples would be forms of person reference which (unjustifiably) position one person as superior or inferior to another (e.g. personal pronouns, honorifics), lack of expected displays of humility (such as through compliment responses or use of thanking forms), egregious forms of verbal aggression (e.g. harsh criticism), failure to demonstrate sincerity (e.g. through apology strategies or responses to invitations) (see, for example, Chang and Haugh 2011; Tayebi 2016).

One issue that deserves comment here is the role of culture in the evaluation process. It cannot be assumed that individuals from the same national background will necessarily make the same evaluations of behaviour. Naturally, the ways in which learners interpret and evaluate such linguistic behaviours in particular contexts will depend not only on the linguistic and cultural context in which the interaction takes place but also on learners' own cultural assumptions, ideological beliefs, individual history and life experiences (McConachy 2018b). This is in line with Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) notion of 'cultural patterning', which refers to the macro-level ideologies, values, norms and schemas from which individuals craft their own individual cognitive frameworks for interpreting and evaluating behaviours. Therefore, as will be discussed further, when attempting to explore evaluative reactions and moral emotions in pedagogical contexts, the aim is not to arrive at static conceptions concerning the norms and values of people from a particular cultural background. Rather, what is important is allowing individuals to become aware of their own internal reactions.

In the next section of the chapter, I consider how insights from the discussion of evaluation can inform reflection tasks used in pragmatics teaching and intercultural education. Specifically, I provide pedagogical suggestions for engaging with short scenarios which have the possibility (but not the guarantee) of eliciting other-condemning moral emotions such as anger, disgust and contempt. The pedagogical suggestions utilize components of Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's evaluation model, and are premised on the idea that devoting attention to the role of emotion in interpersonal evaluation can help promote self-awareness and more mindful evaluations of others (McConachy and Spencer-Oatey 2020).

## *Applying the evaluation model in language and intercultural education*

Given the insight that emotional reactions – and particularly moral emotions – play a significant role in the negative evaluation of behaviour and people, it is important that reflection on communicative scenarios in the classroom not be reduced to 'analytical processes' whereby learners attempt to justify their own initial reactions. In line with Haidt (2012), this is because the analytical mind may tend to divert attention away from immediate emotional experience. In short, if aversive reactions to (linguistic) behaviours that contravene contextual expectations are emotional in nature, then it is necessary to bring emotion into focus. I suggest that taking a mindfulness approach is useful here, as it allows for an initial non-judgemental noticing of emotions that can be useful for exploring the ways that emotions and thoughts interface. Feldman and Kuyken (2019) explain mindfulness as a process by which '[b]odily sensations, feelings, mental states, and present-moment experience are perceived and held in awareness where they can be explored with attitudes of curiosity, patience, and kindness' (pp. 12–13). Such an attitude towards emotional experience is important because it has the potential to slow down the processes by which the experience of a negative emotion might lead to immediate condemnation of another person and negative stereotyping (Hinton 2016).

In the following, I first present a number of example scenarios and then present a procedure for scaffolding both mindfulness of emotions and more analytically focused reflection. The examples here are just indicative of those that could be constructed relatively simply by language teachers or intercultural trainers in accordance with their needs. They are designed to tap into learners' moral emotions and evaluative reasoning in relation to rights and obligations in interpersonal relationships and professional contexts.

*Scenario A*

A member of your office is congratulated by the section boss for achieving the best sales figures this year. Upon being congratulated, the individual comments, 'Thanks, I'm pretty sure I worked harder than anyone else this year.'

*Scenario B*

A student arrives late to class due to a train delay. Upon apologizing and explaining the circumstances to the teacher, the teacher says, 'A train delay is not really a good excuse for lateness. You always need to leave your house early in case such things happen.'

*Scenario C*

You confide in a friend about struggling to regain your confidence after failing to obtain a qualification you had been working hard towards. You rarely show your vulnerability to others. Your friend says, 'I wasn't surprised to hear that you failed, to be honest. I think you are just aiming too high.'

*Scenario D*

You are enjoying some time with a friend at a café until your lunch arrives at your table clearly burnt. After trying to eat it anyway, you call out to a waiter and explain the situation. The waiter says, 'Sorry about that, mate, the kitchen is really busy today. Hope you can enjoy it anyway.'

## *Scaffolding the reflection process*

Drawing on Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) theorization of elements involved in the evaluation of (linguistic) behaviour, it is possible to identify a number of key processes that can be facilitated through reflection. The scenarios provide some degree of context based on which the evaluative processes can be scaffolded. In presenting the suggestions, it is assumed that the teacher would seek to engage students in reflection either individually or in a collaborative arrangement such as small-group work. In the former case, learners might be encouraged to write down their responses to the questions, whereas these could be discussed in the latter case. The questioning strategies themselves derive from my own published work on pragmatic awareness (e.g. McConachy 2009, 2018) and experiences with encouraging this kind of reflection with pre-service and in-service language teachers at the University of Warwick.

*Identifying emotional reactions*

Given the insight that emotional arousal tends to occur in advance of cognitive appraisal of a situation, the pedagogical sequence begins with the identification of emotional reactions. One difficulty here is that learners may not be attentive to emotional reactions unless guided to pay attention to them first. One way to achieve this is to let learners know even before the scenarios have been presented that they should aim to monitor their own first reactions upon reading a scenario, whether that turns out to be an emotion, a thought or a physiological reaction. Although the aim here is to promote awareness of emotional arousal, it would be unnatural to insist that thoughts are ignored completely. Questions such as the following could be used to scaffold initial exploration.

1. What did you *feel* when you heard this scenario?
2. What thoughts accompanied this feeling?
3. When you heard/read the scenario, how long did it take you to have an emotional reaction to it?

It is likely that such questions would generate accounts of initial emotional reactions and judgements regarding the actions evident in a given scenario. It also helps learners notice the likely immediacy of emotional reactions, which might otherwise go unnoticed. The next stage involves attempting to take a more analytical view of the scenario from multiple perspectives.

*Evaluating context and generating an evaluation warrant*

Facilitating a more analytical view of a short scenario involves helping learners explicitly identify different elements of the context that have a bearing on the perceived 'in/appropriateness' of actions, such as the location of the interaction, speaker roles and identities, and the sequence of actions within the scenario (i.e. who said what and in what order). The following questions could be useful to facilitate evaluation of context.

1. Where are the speakers and what are they doing in this interaction?

2. Do any of the speakers' comments seem unexpected? How do you know?
3. What thoughts and feelings do you think the people had in this situation? Why?

While the first three questions encourage learners to focus primarily on what is happening in the situation, the final three questions encourage them to take a personal stance on what has happened. They are encouraged to explicitly evaluate actions or attitudes and to consider what they themselves would do in this situation. Thus, there is a transition from mindful observation of one's own reactions to more analytical and evaluative engagement. A final sequence of questioning might then encourage learners to explore the interface between their own immediate reactions and their evaluation of the scenarios.

1. What adjectives would you use to describe the people in this situation? Why?
2. What do you think about (character)'s reaction in this scenario? Do you think it is reasonable? Why? Why not? Where does this idea come from?
3. How would you react in this situation? Why?

These questions encourage the explicit formulation of evaluations as expressed in adjectives and ask learners to generate an evaluation warrant. During this process, the expression of the evaluation warrant will reveal many of learners' normative ideas concerning appropriate behaviour in context, and it is important for the teacher here to ask 'why' questions to probe the bases of evaluations and guide them to be articulated more fully. Important also here is that learners are prompted to consider the origin of their own ideas and assumptions, as it is here that they can recognize the role of their own cultural socialization and life experiences in shaping what they take for granted.

### *Coming to an evaluation*

The final stage of the evaluation process as scaffolded here requires learners to arrive at an assessment of behaviour, taking into account all of the reflective work that has just been done. The most systematic way to do this would be to encourage learners to develop a written account considering their own initial emotional reactions, the contextual elements they considered when looking at the situation more analytically and what they ultimately think about the behaviours within the situation. They could be encouraged to recount the situation from the respective viewpoint of different characters in the situation, in order to further facilitate multi-perspectival evaluations.

In presenting these pedagogical suggestions that aim to help learners mindfully engage with their own emotional reactions and then analytically and reflectively engage with short scenarios, the assumption is not that the work should necessarily stop here. The sequence of steps does not include questions that ask students to think explicitly about pragmatic strategies across languages and cultures, but it would be very meaningful to do this as an extension activity. The main aim is to help learners develop reflexive insight into the emotional and cognitive bases of their own reactions and thereby gradually shift away from the mindset that other's behaviour 'causes' our reactions. Rather, our reactions are conditioned by assumptions about social relationships and contextual behaviour that have been shaped by our cultural environment, social affiliations and life experiences. This is an important insight that is equally applicable to interactions with those from the 'same' culture and those from 'different' cultures.

## *Conclusion*

As Spencer-Oatey (forthcoming) has noted, there is a need for much more work on the role of emotions in evaluative judgements, particularly those that pertain to linguistic behaviours. This is an issue not just for scholars and practitioners working in fields such as pragmatics or intercultural communication but also for those working in language education. Although work on pragmatics teaching is beginning to look at interpersonal evaluation within the context of teaching from an intercultural perspective, very little attention has been paid to the role of learners' own emotional responses in learning (see Chang and Haugh 2017; McConachy 2018 for exceptions). It is for this reason that this chapter has aimed to derive multidisciplinary insights from research on interpersonal evaluation that can be useful for language educators and those working in other spheres of intercultural education to help their learners mindfully engage with their own emotional and cognitive reactions to potentially unexpected interpersonal behaviour. Beyond the short scenarios provided for illustrative purposes in this chapter, there is much scope for educators to creatively utilize a range of audio-visual materials that provide an opportunity for learners to closely observe interpersonal behaviour in context and explore their own and other's subjective evaluations. A key point here is that it is not necessary for scenarios to necessarily be 'intercultural' in order for reflection to be conducive to developing intercultural abilities. As argued earlier, what is important here is not that learners aim to understand a cultural norm per se but rather that they become attuned to how evaluative processes work and, importantly, how they themselves may be quick to judge others based on negative emotional reactions.

## *References*

Chang, Wei-Lin Melody and Haugh, Michael (2011), 'Evaluations of Im/Politeness of an Intercultural Apology', *Intercultural Pragmatics* 8(3): 411–42.

Chang, Wei-Lin Melody and Haugh, Michael (2017), 'Intercultural Communicative Competence and Emotions Amongst Second Language Learners of Chinese', in Istvan Kecskes and Chaofen Sun (eds), *Key Issues in Chinese as a Second Language Research*, 269–86, Routledge.

Chapman, Hanah A. (2018), 'A Component Process Model of Disgust, Anger, and Moral Judgment', in Kurt Gray and Jesse Graham (eds), *Atlas of Moral Psychology*, 70–80, The Guildford Press.
Cialdini, Robert (2012), 'The Focus Theory of Normative Conduct', in P. A. M Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski and E.T Higgins (eds), *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, 295–312. Sage.
Culpeper, Jonathan (2011), *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*, Cambridge University Press.
Davies, Bethan (2018), 'Evaluating Evaluations: What Different Types of Metapragmatic Behaviour Can Tell Us About Participants' Understandings of the Moral Order', *Journal of Politeness Research* 14(1): 121–51.
Dervin, Fred and Jacobssen, Andreas (2021), *Teacher Education for Critical and Reflexive Interculturality*, Springer.
Dervin, Fred and Liddicoat, Anthony J. (eds) (2013), *Linguistics for Intercultural Education*, John Benjamins.
Feldman, Christina and Kuyken, Willem (2019), *Mindfulness: Ancient Wisdom Meets Modern Psychology*, The Guildford Press.
Feldman Barrett, Lisa (2017), *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*, Pan Macmillan.
Fowler, Sandra M. and Yamaguchi, M. (2020), 'An Analysis of Methods for Intercultural Training', in Dan Landis and Dharm M. Bhawuk (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Training*, 4th edn, 192–257, Cambridge University Press.
Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, Pilar and Kádár, Daniel Z (2021), 'Morality in Sociopragmatics', in Michael Haugh, Daniel Z. Kádár and Marina Terkourafi (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*, 385–407. Cambridge University Press.
Graham, Jesse, Haidt, Jonathan, Motyl, Matt, Meindl, Peter, Iskiwitch, Carol and Mooijman, Marlon (2018), 'Moral Foundations Theory: On the Advantages of Moral Pluralism and Moral Monism', in Kurt Grey and Jesse Graham (eds), *Atlas of Moral Psychology*, 211–22. Guilford.
Haidt, Jonathan (2003), 'The Moral Emotions', in R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer and H. H. Goldsmith (eds), *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, 852–70, Oxford University Press.
Haidt, Jonathan (2012), *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Pantheon Books.
Hall, Edward T. (1976), *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Books/Doubleday.
Hinton, Perry (2016), *The Perception of People: Integrating Cognition and Culture*, Routledge.
Hofstede, Geert (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*, Sage.
Holmes, Janet (2018), 'Negotiating the Culture Order in New Zealand Workplaces', *Language in Society* 47(1): 33–56.
Hutcherson, Cendri A. and Gross, James J. (2011), 'The Moral Emotions: A Social-functionalist Account of Anger, Disgust, and Contempt', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100(4):719–37.
Kádár, Daniel Z. (2020), 'Capturing Injunctive Norm in Pragmatics: Meta-reflective Evaluations and the Moral Order', *Lingua* 237: 102814.
Kádár, Daniel Z. and Haugh, Michael (2013), *Understanding Politeness*, Cambridge University Press.
Koutlaki, Sofia A. and Eslami, Zohreh (2018), 'Critical Intercultural Communication Education: Cultural Analysis and Pedagogical Applications', *Intercultural Communication Education* 1(3): 100–9.

Malle, Bertram F., Giuglielmo, S. and Monroe, Andrew E. (2014), 'A Theory of Blame', *Psychological Inquiry* 25(2): 147–86.
McConachy, Troy (2009), 'Raising Sociocultural Awareness Through Contextual Analysis: Some Tools for Teachers', *ELT Journal* 63(2): 116–25.
McConachy, Troy (2018a), 'Critically Engaging with Cultural Representations in Foreign Language Textbooks', *Intercultural Education* 29(1): 77–88.
McConachy, Troy (2018b), *Developing Intercultural Perspectives on Language Use: Exploring Pragmatics and Culture in Foreign Language Learning*, Multilingual Matters.
McConachy, Troy and Liddicoat, Anthony (eds) (2022), *Teaching and Learning Second Language Pragmatics for Intercultural Understanding*, Routledge.
McConachy, Troy and Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2020), 'Developing Pragmatic Awareness', in Klaus P. Schneider and Elly Ifantidou (eds), *Clinical and Developmental Pragmatics*, 393–427, Mouton De Gruyter.
Myers, David G. (2004), *Theories of Emotion in Psychology*, 7th edn, Worth.
Piller, Ingrid (2011), *Intercultural Communication: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press.
Rozin, Paul, Laura Loweiy, Sumio Imada and Jonathan Haidt. (1999), 'The CAD Triad Hypothesis: A Mapping between Three Moral Emotions (Contempt, Anger, Disgust) and Three Moral Codes (Community, Autonomy, Divinity)', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 76: 574–86.
Sharifian, Farzad (2017), *Cultural Linguistics*, John Benjamins.
Sharifian, Farzad and Tayebi, Tahmineh (2017), 'Perceptions of Impoliteness from a Cultural Linguistics Perspective', in Farzad Sharifian (ed.), *Advances in Cultural Linguistics*, 389–409, Springer.
Shweder, Richard A., Much, Nancy C., Mahapatra, Manamohan and Park, Lawrence (1997), 'The "Big Three" of Morality (Autonomy, Community, Divinity) and the "Big Three" Explanations of Suffering', in Allan M. Brandt and Paul Rozin (eds), *Morality and Health*, 119–69. Routledge.
Sinkeviciute, Valeria (2018), '"Ya Bloody Drongo!!!": Impoliteness as Situated Moral Judgment on Facebook', *Internet Pragmatics* 1(2): 271–302.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2010), 'Intercultural Competence and Pragmatics Research: Examining the Interface Through Studies of Intercultural Business Discourse', in Anna Trosborg (ed.), *Pragmatics across Languages and Cultures*, 189–216, Mouton de Gruyter.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen (forthcoming), 'Culture, Emotion and (Im)politeness Evaluations', in Chaoqun Xie (ed.), *Advancing (Im)politeness Studies*, Springer.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Daniel Z. (2016), 'The Bases of (Im)politeness Evaluations: Culture, the Moral Order and the East-West Debate', *East Asian Pragmatics* 1(1): 73–106.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Kádár, Daniel Z (2021), *Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures*, Cambridge University Press.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Wang, Jiayi (2019), 'Culture, Context, and Concerns about Face: Synergistic Insights from Pragmatics and Social Psychology', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 38(4): 423–40.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen and Xing, Jianyu (2019), 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Interpersonal Relations and the Evaluation Process: Culture, Norms, and the Moral Order', *Journal of Pragmatics* 151: 141–54.
Tayebi, Tahmineh (2016), 'Why Do People Take Offence? Exploring the Underlying Expectations', *Journal of Pragmatics* 101: 1–17.

Triandis, Harry (1988), 'Collectivism vs. Individualism: A Reconceptualisation of a Basic Concept in Cross-cultural Social Psychology', in Gajendra K. Verma and Christopher Bagley (eds), *Cross-cultural Studies of Personality, Attitudes and Cognition*, 60–95, Palgrave Macmillan.

Turner, Jonathan H. and Stets, Jan E. (2006), 'Moral Emotions', in Jan E. Stets and Jonathan H. Turner (eds), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, 544–66, Springer.

WORKING WITH HELEN SPENCER-OATEY

# Helen Spencer-Oatey as intercultural pioneer, collaborator and inspiration

Vladimir Žegarac

The twenty-sixth of December 2015 was for me a Boxing Day like no other. In the early hours of the morning I received a message informing me that my two MA university course units would no longer be offered. The news was something of a shock. An important chapter of my professional life had come to an abrupt end. I had designed a module called *The Communication Process* some fifteen years earlier when Helen Spencer-Oatey was developing the MA Intercultural Communication (the first such programme of studies in the UK), and I had taken over *Language and Intercultural Relations* from Helen after she left the University of Bedfordshire (formerly, University of Luton).

While I was still mentally digesting the news I had just received, it dawned upon me that the collaboration Helen Spencer-Oatey and I had developed over the past twenty years had become a defining aspect of my professional identity. Soon after I joined the University of Bedfordshire in the mid-1990s, I realized that Helen was a colleague with remarkable leadership qualities. Perhaps the most striking among these was her natural ability to negotiate the balance between the conflicting pressures for efficiency and for creativity which permeate academics' professional lives. She regularly developed original plans for teaching and research, which she had the drive, the energy, the resourcefulness and the determination to see through to completion.

Helen was always keen to work closely with her colleagues. I remembered being initially sceptical about the prospects of our collaboration. In a way, we were unlikely allies. While I was looking at human communication from the perspective of cognitive pragmatics, Helen's work on rapport management theory was couched in terms of social pragmatics. The two approaches were seldom brought together, and I was somewhat surprised when she first asked me to contribute insights from relevance-theoretic pragmatics to some of the topics that would be covered in a book she was preparing for publication. Although we were looking at social interaction from different perspectives, we had soon found much common ground and we went on to co-author a number of articles and book chapters. I learnt a great deal from our joint work. In particular, Helen's probing questions during our discussions of work in progress often led me to develop my ideas and to articulate them more clearly.

For me, the experience of working with Helen was important, not only on a professional but also on a personal level. The way she went about getting things done made me more aware that it was possible to be open to new suggestions, views and criticisms without compromising one's principles and values. Whenever we were working on a paper, Helen always made me feel free to take the lead, but she was also prepared to take the lead herself, and she would always do so without making me feel imposed upon. If I do not carry on collaborating with Helen in the future, it will be because I see my retirement as an opportunity to take a break from professional work. I know that for Helen Spencer-Oatey retirement will be an opportunity to carry on with the good work with great drive and success for years to come.

# Working before breakfast

## A personal appreciation of Helen Spencer-Oatey on the occasion of her 'retirement'

Peter Franklin

'It's quite a problem for retired people, I do see. All of a sudden the evening starts starting after breakfast', muses one of the characters in Kingsley Amis's novel *The Old Devils*. This is a problem clearly foreign to Helen Spencer-Oatey, who for her retirement had something else in mind for after breakfast than the evening. Also not for her were the attractions of the academic conference circuit, the not-so-burdensome visiting professorship in some not-yet-visited part of the world or the all-expenses-paid role on some advisory board.

No. Even before Helen had left most of university life behind her, she had created the outline of the book to write – with the help of Domna Lazidou and myself – in her not-so-restful retirement. It was to be a professional development book to support people engaged in interaction in culturally diverse and communicatively challenging contexts. A publisher was found and Helen kick-started the project by writing drafts of her chapters, practically before her co-authors had properly digested what chapters were to be theirs.

And then came the second project: Helen spearheaded the founding of an HR development and training consultancy, which aims to make the insights she generated and the tools she helped to create in her pre-retirement working life available to practitioners. It was to be different from training organizations with similar goals in that it emphasizes as a unique selling proposition its strong research base in intercultural interaction, a base that Helen herself had helped to build up as an academic. During the process of setting up the company and responding to initial client inquiries, Helen even found time to work on the creation of three diagnostic tools to capture the development needs of those working interculturally and internationally.

Helen's record in groundbreaking research and development in the intercultural area is especially valuable, as the intercultural training and development scene has long been excessively influenced by unimaginative, one-size-fits-all approaches to developing people and organizations which often ignore interpersonal and contextual influences. The significance and complexity of managing relations across cultures – the subtitle of her recently published and co-authored book – and in particular Helen's *rapport management theory* – will thus find their rightful place in the range of content and tools available to organizations seeking to develop their people to handle the complexity of interaction in the increasingly frequent conditions of diversity in organizations of all kinds.

In these various post-retirement undertakings, in all of which I also find myself involved, I have come to know and appreciate again the Helen Spencer-Oatey I worked with from time to time and in various contexts over the previous almost twenty years: a research project for the European Commission, external examining at Warwick, conferences in Konstanz, visits to China (during which Helen generously shared her network with me) and, in particular and most intensively, co-authoring our book *Intercultural Interaction*.

And what are the reasons for my appreciation? First, I have come to know Helen as somebody from whom one can learn so much. Cooperating with Helen triggers a genuine learning curve, often a steep one, something I am sure her students have appreciated as well. Her razor-sharp analysis unerringly points out the weakness in what turns out to be a too hastily considered idea or a sloppily formulated argument. She inevitably recalls the forgotten fact, puts forward the contrasting view and recommends the right article at the crucial time, making the end result of the co-authorship much more than the sum of the individual contributions. Second, Helen, despite geographical distance, has been a very faithful colleague and friend to me. And finally, I appreciate Helen's apparently endless energy – it keeps those working around her (certainly me) inspired and makes them wish they could be as goal-focused and persistent as she is herself.

Quite definitely, Helen is not interested in the evening starting after breakfast; for Helen the interesting stuff starts immediately after breakfast – and sometimes, I suspect, even before.

# INDEX