

East-Asian  
and Central-European Encounters  
in Discourse Analysis and Translation

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MULTILINGUAL APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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## East-West intercultural encounters: A Central European perspective

The guiding idea behind this volume – which has been in preparation for some time – has been to bridge an existing gap in research on communication between East Asia and Central Europe. We originally intended to concentrate on two areas: values viewed in terms of culture, language and discourse, as well as practices defined as ‘doing’ language across genres and cultures. Such was the outline of the issues proposed almost three years ago by Professor Anna Duszak, who passed away in 2015.

Several unexpected events have accompanied, or rather slowed the process of compiling this volume; in consequence, both its publication date and its editorial staff underwent change. The original idea, however, has not been altered. During the editing process we have attempted to preserve the underlying concept of the collection: the intercultural encounter, viewed both as abstract contact between heterogeneous cultures and civilizations and within actual challenges faced by virtually any act of departure from the well-known reality of one’s own culture, perceived as homogeneous.

*Encounter* is probably the most unbiased term one can apply to acts of communication at the edges of cultures. With the implementation of this term, it should be possible to cover both the conscious and active communication acts, requiring advanced skills in language and culture, as well as almost unintentional instances of abandoning one’s native linguistic and cultural competence in the act of interpreting heterogeneous messages and reality. There is no doubt that the ability to face and manage both types of activities is among those features peculiar to intelligent beings. Research into intercultural communication phenomena, also covered at their most basic level by the term *encounter*, may enable one to better understand one’s own cultural reality. In the set of

papers we provide within the volume, this point of view may be regarded as universally present.

The idea of cross-cultural encounter has been selected as a tentative proposition, with an intention to solve – or at least avoid – multiple and complex terminological dilemmas. At the same time, this notion is connected in an inherent and inevitable manner to numerous concepts and approaches undertaken in the area of applied linguistics and cross-cultural studies, which, for the sake of brevity, shall only be alluded to in the following several paragraphs, without detailed reference to their sources and authors.

Cross-cultural studies cover a varied range of issues related to linguistic studies, in their constant efforts towards achieving a scientific understanding – as defined in optimistic late-20<sup>th</sup>-century terms – of how people communicate. In the simplest terms, it may be proposed that difficulties in researching and systematizing actual instances of communication, also in terms of homogeneous code(s) and environment(s), originate from the inherent clash between abstract ideas and their concrete encodings, going far beyond the classic dichotomy of *langue* vs. *parole*. In other words, what may be viewed as the post-Babel status quo for purposes of comparison between codes and environments perceived as heterogeneous is also inevitably demonstrated in acts of communication taking place in allegedly homogeneous circumstances. This requires virtually any act of interaction to be viewed as understanding via translation. The scientific purpose of cross-cultural studies is hence, in the first place, to delineate clear-cut categories designed for further analysis. They strive to fulfil this task by defining the range of phenomena related to actual human communication. Accordingly, their purpose is to provide and verify adequate tools of description in action, when approaching actual cross-cultural phenomena.

The formal implementation of logical mapping onto the human communication process can probably be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers, who revealed interest in the rhetorical aspects of communication. In their methodological propositions, this perspective was not intended for use in relation to the languages of barbarians, the later not being perceived as potential communication partners. The echoes of thus-implied homogeneous (one language = one culture) context of reference are present in the medieval quest of post-classic language universals and in the modern dichotomy of *signum* vs. *designatum* (symbol vs. referent). The act of expanding the classical dyad of sign and meaning with the notion of reference, embodied in the semiotic triangle of



symbol, referent and reference, may hence be recognized as a significant step towards an advanced theory and pragmatics of communication, one no longer biased due to claims of its alleged universality.

Another sign of progress towards the theory of non-universality was the emergence of sociolinguistics, with its identification of borders existing within the range of competences in supposedly one homogeneous code. Where acquiring competence in a universal code is not possible, actual performance must differ, as well. However, should peculiar aspects of linguistic competence among communication participants be described as displaying significant differences, their actual conversational performance must be based on certain common grounds. The revisited homogeneity of code competence resulting from this statement sheds new light on aspects of internal translation as essential factors which underlie any act of communication.

Where no universal rules exist, systematic properties of communication phenomena are also present, though they are not always visible or consciously used by the participants of a communication exchange. Effective social activities require more than consecutive encoding and decoding of messages, which are accordingly based on predictable patterns of behavior and conversational routines. The fact that it may not always be useful to view them in terms of pure logic and conversational implicatures was alluded to considerably earlier in the notion of phatic communion, which actually preceded the delineation of conversational implicatures. More advanced theories may be related to the emic and etic approach to the phenomena in question, present also in the contemporary studies on artificial intelligence, relying on fuzzy sets and on holistic interpretation of extralinguistic objects as well as their actual features.

Furthermore, the lack of universal rules and the application of fuzzy sets should not be excuses for the practice of describing actual communication events in terms of indefinite sets of exceptions. Fuzzy sets are by no means random. Rules are more important than exceptions. There are no rules without exceptions, though at the same time there are no exceptions without rules. From the pragmatics-related point of view, the conventional character of grammatical rules has to be juxtaposed with the goal-oriented decisions of communication participants. A logical and systematic approach is still useful when researching phenomena of language usage, although the ranges of their applications differ. It is most often an issue of adequate qualifiers and trustworthy evidence to distinguish between the phenomena related to locution, illocution and perlocution,

the last being related to actual changes in the parameters of the external world, achieved only partly through the internally-controlled communication activity undertaken by the speaker. A substantial effort is required in the process of devising effective tools that would enable linking random exceptions to general rules, defined precisely with the use of elaborate metalanguages.

Differences may emerge on the level of codes and the schemes of their usage as well as on the level of speech genres. The latter, consequently, may be altered or switched according to an actual social and individual assignment of a dynamic situation of conversational exchange. Also, on the level of particular genres of speech application, the initiation and execution procedures – as well as their perlocutionary results – may (and do) differ. The labels traditionally and intuitively used for the purposes of classification of speech genres may thus prove deceptive. To put it in the original structural terms, cultural pleremes do not consist in an algebraic manner of respective cenemes. The recognition of this fact is valid in the area of cross-cultural competence as well as in the study and actual application of allegedly homogeneous acts of communication exchange.

Numerous attempts at the formulation of semantic metalanguages seem to prove that a non-biased interpretation of actual cross-cultural events is still one of the most important goals in pragmatic studies. At its present level of development, however, the role of cross-cultural pragmatics in envisioning actual issues related to acts of communication across cultural borders is no less important than constant effort towards defining actual communication issues. As Professor Duszak used to put it, cross-cultural communication, constituting a “field of increased risk” (discussed also in Jabłoński, this volume) of miscommunication, may be considered extremely demanding.

The idea of a cross-cultural encounter may be viewed in generic and tangible metalinguistic terms and parameters of frames, nodes, networks and relations, as well as an outcome of individual competence and expectations. This dichotomy may not be overcome easily. There are linguistic tools and approximations that can serve to neutralize at least selected incompatibilities and miscommunication risks in this sensitive area of extra-linguistic reality. As such, the phenomenon of encounter is inevitably present in the contemporary communication activity of the superficially-globalized world, in which the process of shrinking geographical distance is still faster than the process of fostering mutual understanding.

The term *encounter* alludes in an obvious manner to the idea of an unexpected and new challenge, traditionally present in the idea of cross-cultural studies. As modern descriptions of the idea of cross-cultural studies state, one must abandon the area of one's own culture in order to be able to study another. Such an attitude has long been scarce in multiple narrations on different languages and cultures. It is a fairly new product of recent attempts at a neutral approach to the idea of a cultural stranger. Its orientation is descriptive, not normative. This constitutes another reason to distinguish this point of view, so defined, from the traditionally unilateral accounts on distant and inexplicable cultures, viewed as unpredictable and barbarian. The long tradition of cross-cultural contacts stipulates that the theory and practice of the lay approach to the so-defined cross-cultural experiences may be constructive, although more often it tends to be destructive and discriminatory. In a consistent and hopeful manner, the quest for unity and universality may be linked to universal human properties. Still, also in the history of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century approaches to different cultures, the traces of orientalism, xenophobia and the colonial/post-colonial attitude towards cultural environments, viewed by their very definition as primitive and inferior, are by no means rare. The reasons for a xenophobic approach to cross-cultural facts have always been present in the background of multi-cultural relations. Having taken for granted what linguistics (and the cross-cultural studies emerging from it) owes the ancient Greeks, it is necessary to discard the notion of 'uncouth barbarians' from the theoretical range of an up-to-date approach.

Last but not least, it is no coincidence that this volume, edited and published in Warsaw, Poland, Central Europe – due to purely political reasons erroneously viewed as Eastern Europe for the larger part of 20<sup>th</sup> century – is devoted to encounters between East Asia and Central Europe. Although it would probably not be justified to generalize that Central Europe has experienced more drastic political, historic and economic changes than the proverbial "rest of the world", the Central European point of view is by no means popular in the contemporary discourse on cross-cultural communication. In addition, common generalizations related to the notions of *us* vs. *them*, coined in the English and American terms, surprisingly often tend to miss the point when it comes to East Asian culture compared to the seemingly heterogeneous cultural events and customs of the so-called Western part of the world. Just as the world is not bipolar, nor tripolar, it is not reasonable to view it in terms of universal and 'obvious' values. The nature of relations is multi-layered, which makes it possible to search for comparisons and analogies on further levels of sophistication.

Multiple points of view do not make the analyses and generalizations easier, though they may serve to achieve conclusions of a better quality. A set of images generated by this approach to cross-cultural facts, partial by definition, though at the same time placed in carefully designed frames, open to further discussion and potential amendments, is what we would like to offer to the reader of the volume.

Although it goes beyond the scope of the objectives for this small volume, it may be good to mention that cultural labels are deeply rooted in the practice of intuitional classification, performed probably by all intelligent beings. As such, they rely on subsequent mapping of objects onto categories, the latter not necessarily revealing linguistic properties in an immediate and easily accessible manner. Also the geographically-supported concept of Asia, and the politically-justified notions of China and Japan, referring to the region and countries represented throughout the papers included in this volume, are no more than labels. We are not going to analyze in detail, for example, the languages and cultures of China or the linguistic and cultural entities classified in more thorough approaches as Japonic. Nor are we going to provide detailed documentation to undermine the popular view asserting the relations of mother vs. child between the geographical and political units of higher and lower order.

Modern synchronic studies may be based on the theories and artifacts already affected by complex diachronic changes, impossible to be rendered with contemporary categorization techniques. It should be clear, however, for a careful reader of this volume, that the very act of implementation of labels such as Asia, China or Japan is another simplification, which may be objected to by those whose existence is thereby denied or diminished. Cross-cultural studies, similarly as other acts of classification, inevitably rely on simplifications. Whenever simplifications cannot be avoided, they should at least be clear. This is what probably happens due to successful and stimulating acts of encounter, whether located in homogeneous or heterogeneous cultural settings. We agree with the assumption made elsewhere that things should be as simple as possible, though never simpler than that.

The volume consists of seven papers, each focusing on a selected aspect of East-Asian and Central-European – or more generally Western – encounters, either in more general terms of contact between heterogeneous cultural and linguistic codes or in specific communicative situations. Six of the seven papers were authored by researchers with predominantly Central European – and

more specifically Polish – background. The issues discussed by the authors embark on the problems undertaken by Discourse Analysis, and Translation Studies. Even if these topics pertain to encounters broader than those on the lines between Poland and East-Asia, it can be argued that the interpretations of these encounters are influenced by the authors' Central European perspective stemming from their local experiences. The volume has been divided into three sections, each approaching the topic of encounter from a different perspective.

The first part of the volume, entitled **Frameworks**, aims at laying theoretical foundations for the subsequent analyses of contact between languages and cultures tackled in the remaining papers of this collection. It consists of two papers by Leszek Korporowicz and Arkadiusz Jabłoński; both articles look at the challenges of intercultural and multi-modal communication, whose growing prevalence only seemingly closes the gap between the East and the West.

**Leszek Korporowicz** raises the idea of extended cultures in search of a discursive theory of hybrid space. The concept of intercultural encounter is viewed in terms of different ontological status of spaces in which communication occurs. The author analyses macro-structural factors of creating the hybrid space, including such issues as mobility of cultures, deterritorialisation of space and multiplication of space. The review of subsequent convergences and interactions, as well as metamorphoses of space, leads to a visualisation of a hybrid space, in which interaction is viewed as revitalization of cultural values. Intercultural relations are perceived as a process of mutual development and learning. Hybrid spaces created by such relations, with their potential and challenges, foster the necessity of adaptation, revaluation and re-composition of the old pattern of thinking and acting. Dynamically changing relationships between the regions of the world, as the author points out in the conclusion, require the creation of new anthropology with a major component of the studies on intercultural discourse, for the description of a new reality emerging as a consequence of the changes, making it possible to interact, exchange values and mutually learn in the new hybrid space of coexistence.

The paper by **Arkadiusz Jabłoński** embodies an attempt to unite several concepts related to the patterns of intercultural encounter, defined in terms of courtesy, adequacy and procedure, as viewed within the frameworks of intercultural translatability/interpretability and intercultural honorifics. The author analyses the notions of translatability/interpretability and presents numerous dilemmas related to the up-to-date concepts of metalanguages applied in the

analysis of actual intercultural communication events. As the author asserts, it may be stimulating to think of the process of explaining intercultural meanings in terms of the effectiveness of the metalanguages. The examples presented throughout the paper focus on Japanese-Polish and Polish-Japanese communication instances and sequences, but the general framework is intended for use in any communication environment. The author also presents his own set of postulates and a proposal that metalanguage be used to interpret interaction events viewed as typical of the Polish-Japanese communication environment.

The focus of the second part of the volume, entitled **Angles**, pertains to analyses of concrete instances of culturally-determined concepts. Such concepts are very difficult to render in another language, which is accompanied by its own pattern of social behaviors and which shapes – at least to a certain extent – its users' perceptions of objective reality. The two papers in this section by Paweł Kornacki and by Yiqing Liao and Rong Xiao approach this issue from the cultural/ethnopragmatic and psycholinguistic/cognitive perspectives, respectively.

**Paweł Kornacki's** paper can be classified as belonging to the field of ethnopragmatics, with its analysis of the Chinese notion of *rènao*, related to 'having a good time'. By means of an original and stimulating enquiry, based on the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), the concept of *rènao* is presented as a cultural keyword. Cultural keywords have tended to be overestimated in the relatively short history of this idea, also to serve as complete descriptions of cultural setting – that is, to fulfil a function that probably no wordlist is capable of achieving. Still, comparing simple dictionary definitions and complex usage of cultural concepts requires advanced methodology, bringing about multi-layered explanations on phenomena deeply rooted in a cultural setting – and this is precisely what has been attempted in this paper. Starting with several definitions of the concept quoted from Chinese sources, the author proceeds to examine two actual Chinese scenes with the use of the concept, supplemented by a comprehensive analysis of original Chinese expressions utilizing the concept and necessary comments. The projected reader's successful and stimulating encounter with the concept of *rènao* is facilitated by an expert explanation of its multi-layered contexts, including also immediate physical interaction of the referents involved, as can be concluded at least from the comments on the practices of drinking and eating, such as communal meals. The analysis is concluded by a six-factor NSM definition of the *rènao* concept, which refers in a clear-cut manner both to the physical requirements for its implementation, and to the

broader notion of the mood generated by the 'rènao atmosphere', the feeling of 'togetherness' and a certain loosening of social behavioural norms.

In their paper on spatio-temporal association in Mandarin and English, **Yiqing Liao and Rong Xiao** provide a critical review of research by Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues, which focuses on fairly technical details of spacio-temporal association and mental conceptualization of space and time in both languages. The idea of cross-cultural encounter is present already in the idea of linguistic determinism in its initial version attributed traditionally to Sapir and Whorf. However, more important than asking whether language shapes thought or vice versa is the fact that mental conceptualizations differ to the extent that it may not be possible to render them, even in a series of approximations. In the paper, the first (2001), the second (2010), the third (2011) and the fourth (2014) attempts at generalizing on the perception of time and space in Mandarin and English by Boroditsky and her team are carefully reviewed. It is worth noting that the methodology they adopted is a strict scientific tool, enabling the researchers to analyse tangible physical parameters of perception, such as participants' response time or binary values assigned to their decisions (such as vertical or horizontal concept of time). Accordingly, the issue of inevitable bias related to the fact that at least in some aspects the applied tests might be English-oriented seems to require further insight. The final conclusion points to continuing methodological improvements in examining the temporal-spatial association in the reviewed studies. At the same time, the authors point to several methodological weaknesses of the present research in this area and highlight the need for further exemplification of the proposition that language has an immediate effect on temporal perception.

The three papers comprising the third and last part of the volume – by Katarzyna Sonnenberg, Maciej Stanaszek and Elżbieta Gajek – analyse instances of actual **Encounters** between the West and East. These encounters occur both in the more prominent realm of literary translations as well as in a more particular context of communication between students participating in a project whose aim is to raise their intercultural awareness. Such contacts inevitably give rise to problems in conveying intended meanings, but at the same time create opportunities for learning about another culture, reflection on one's own culture, and the mutual infiltration of cultural elements.

The paper by **Katarzyna Sonnenberg** presents an example of a distant but interesting encounter of Japanese novelists with foreign works of fiction in

the Meiji period (1868-1912). The reader is offered a glimpse of the process of modernization that Japan underwent in the late 19th century along with changes in Japanese literature. The author focuses mainly on the changes occurring in the language and the techniques of Japanese novels from the viewpoint of the dynamics between the written and the spoken styles. Sonnenberg explores whether it is possible to trace in the analyzed texts a “sense of discontinuity” or a “sense of dislocation” resulting from attempts to grasp the meaning of modernity and respond to its demands. The novelists of the Meiji era were under pressure to develop a new style of literary expression, which included both attempts to render properly foreign fiction translated to Japanese, and to overcome the limitations of the old literary style, viewed as unsuitable for the new literary challenges. The contemporary reader may indeed be impressed by the swiftness and the diversity of the changes. As such, the picture of the already-complete process of invention of the new Japanese literary style of expression may reveal actuality of social and ideological tensions comparable with the contemporary processes of cultural encounter which are still in progress.

The paper by **Maciej Stanaszek** is devoted to the subject of numerous existing translations into several languages of books by one author, the 2012 Nobel Prize Winner Mo Yan. Stanaszek focuses on the translations of titles, considered the most representative fragments of texts from the point of view of their future reader. In his review, the author meticulously outlines his methodology and defines in a very precise manner the corpus of titles to be examined and compared further. Even though Stanaszek remains aware that analysis of the text titles cannot answer questions regarding the nature of the translation process, the reader is presented with valuable information regarding intercultural dilemmas faced by translators of literature. The list of projected motivations governing translators’ choices, while disputable, may be interesting to a reader who may not have had insight into intricacies of the intercultural translation process and its multi-layered structure. Title-based contact with a piece of literature does not have to be a superficial encounter with foreign – and one’s own – culture.

In her paper on foreign language education with the implementation of Internet-based communication in Polish-Chinese tandems, **Elżbieta Gajek** raises the issues of distant (online) interactions within the process of language learning. While only limited conclusions can be drawn from the data collected during a 10-week project and based solely on the content of students’ reports and evaluation, the analyses of the compiled corpora make it possible to generalize



on more general issues, such as the broader social context of interaction, tandem work between participants and new information gained in the encounter with members of a different culture. The author observes that the Polish students had a chance to revise their opinions about China, viewed thus far mainly as a supplier of popular goods. They also had an opportunity to rethink stereotypes about the Chinese and Chinese culture which they might have had encountered and acquired earlier. Although it would certainly be too much to generalize that the use of English – the *lingua franca* in contemporary intercultural contacts – makes it easy to overcome any difficulties in communication and any cultural differences, the study demonstrates that satisfactory communication does not have to involve immediate contact between interlocutors. The project also contributes to the study of discourse phenomena in the broadly defined European-Asian perspective and the hybrid space introduced and defined in the first chapter of this book.

The seven papers allude to the main idea of cross-cultural encounter in various ways, though in a fairly consistent manner. As editors, we hope that this collection of texts makes a modest contribution by providing a snapshot of the status quo of research in communication between East Asia and Central Europe. We would also like to pay tribute to Professor Anna Duszak, who actively attended to the earliest stage of compilation of this volume, but could not see its completion.



## Extended cultures: Towards a discursive theory of hybrid space

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### Abstract

In the contemporary world, individuals and communities from different cultures communicate with their local and international partners through virtual space nearly as often as they speak across their desktops, thereby creating a hybrid communicative space. Discursive theories allow us to capture at least some of these relationships; we may understand the processes of openings and closings, or the transfer and reconfiguration of specific cultural patterns, even those occurring within the same culture. Critical discourse studies allow us to question the specificity of an interaction in a space with a differing ontological status. They reveal the deep structures of this discourse in spheres of reality and hybrid space; they may also inspire multidisciplinary research and the formulation of fundamental issues in the study of hybrid reality and help explicate transgressive features of the hybrid and intercultural spaces.

**Keywords:** hybrid space, intercultural communication, mobility of cultures, multiplication of space, cultural interactions, virtualization of cultures, discursive theory

### 1. Introduction

Technological, market and cultural globalization processes have shown themselves to be as differentiating as unifying, thus revealing cultural differences to an extent never before manifested, recognized, or experienced. More importantly, differences have been revealed among groups with a recognized cultural status, such as nations or ethnicities, though this issue also applies to religious, local and even environmental communities, which interact on a relatively small scale (Korporowicz, 2012a; Kapciak, Korporowicz & Tyszka, 1996). There are many factors that raise questions about the rules for their coexistence and cooperation, the boundaries of their dominance or submission, and, above all, the rules allowing them to maintain their own system of values – or ways of redefining

them. This problem also applies to the constantly growing scope of relationships among individuals, as well as entire groups of migrants from Asian countries, who have found a permanent place in a variety of industries, institutions and organizations – stimulating the creation of whole branches of science or management. Among these, for example, are “intercultural management” or “mediations in multicultural work environments”. In the era of the civilization of the media, these interactions are also transferred to virtual space, causing a radical expansion of the culture spectrum in each of them, as well as the sphere of mutual interactions. As a result, multiplying relationships give rise to numerous hybrid spaces, each composed of real and virtual elements and with dynamic configurations in their own content, metamorphosis and flow channels. However, the elements of this sphere are being transferred more and more freely among the outermost regions of the world, while engaging participants from culturally diverse communities. Managers from China, Japan or Korea communicate with their local and international partners, both across desktops, but also equally often through virtual spaces, creating a hybrid space of communication. Discursive theories allow us to capture at least some of these relationships and to understand the processes of both closing and opening, and the transfer and reconfiguration of specific cultural patterns, even within the same culture (Duszak & Fairclough, 2008). Critical discourse studies also allow us to:

- a) question the specificity of the interaction in the space with a different ontological status, in which meanings relevant to the objects of actual realities become separated from it, and begin to create their own world of discourse in a virtual space, or in intersecting hybrid environments,
- b) reveal the deep structures of this discourse, which are not readily perceived in everyday life, though they are manifested in many spheres of reality and hybrid spaces,
- c) inspire the search for a new methodology and conceptualization of the fundamental issues in the study of the hybrid reality,
- d) help to understand the transgressive and synergic elements in the process of cross-hybridization of intercultural space.

## **2. Macro-structural factors of creating hybrid space**

Although the relationships between people (as individuals and as communities) can have a highly subjective, contextual and changing character in hybrid reality, there are objective factors that give rise to these relationships. These factors include:

### **2.1 Mobility of cultures**

In addition to new production technologies, instrumentalisation of values and a remodelled social order, a technical civilization has created completely new forms of commerce, transport and information flow, thus bringing about unprecedented mobility in parts of cultural spaces, which are in turn embedded in their own specific framework. The configurations of these parts, which comprise spaces appropriate to them, are in a state of continual flux (Urry, 2009).

The mobility of cultures causes a clear contravention in their geographical, administrative or ethnic boundaries, especially in the area of products of a symbolic culture (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The conventional relationship among places, people and their creations has been freed and can now be constructed in other places; however, above all, it has been transferred and changed. The movement, not only within a space but *of* entire spaces, necessitates a change in the methods used to define them. In this way they are freed from their conventional place as a kind of anchor or rooting, and from conventional relationships with other components and their meanings. Space and culture are not defined by place but with respect to the configuration of their meanings: this is especially true when they become the subject of real human experiences. In this way, we may transfer the tradition of art schools by following its creators and audience, the created space of ethnic groups, and the dispersed space of recipients of all cultural content, educational programs and information. The mobility of cultural content concerns movement both in terms of physical space and a mental space; it may occur in the structure of cultural patterns, the digital network of modern information societies and the structure of the value systems associated with them (Paleczny, 2007). The cultural boundaries are, then, crossed differently, though that does not mean they cease to exist or that new ones are not being created. It is the ability to cross these boundaries, however, which is becoming more important than ever in the modern history of man and cultures (Dyczewski, 2001).

## 2.2 Deterritorialization of space

Deterritorialization is a direct consequence of the mobility of cultures and relies on breaking away from the place of its creation, existence and development. It initially causes an increase in the differentiation of cultural spaces and their multicomponentiality, because of their content and disparate nature. The symbolic space equipped with modern means of transfer can be reconstructed in multiple configurations. More importantly, a lot of cultural content may exist in virtual space. By its very nature, it is highly deterritorialized, and access to it is regulated by the rules of web access. Such a space crosses many barriers, which greatly affects the principles of formation of cultural identity. This is set in the realities of the modern world in terms of its content more than its territorial location. We can say that in the era of the deterritorialization of cultures, the “axis of crystallization” of one’s identity is more abstract and increasingly less “mechanical”, thoughtless or routine. There is no ready “mechanism” of assigning and giving identity through a stable place in a hierarchy and social structure. This raises the need for activation, not only of the ego and the creative aspects of the personality at an individual level, but also for new ways of searching for new forms of group bonds. This happens as a result of the exchange of experiences and configuration of identity in relation to other “monads” of cultures that exist in the extraterritorial universe of symbolic culture.

In the process of deterritorialization, the rights to participation in this universe do not disappear, but instead gain a new meaning. Due to their mobile and extraterritorial nature, these rights relate to complex beings, and not to goods, territories and possessions, because of cultural content (Diamandaki, 2003). This requires the ability to recognize these rights and to define our own approach to them, through the development of cultural competences. In the conditions of increased mobility, this recognition is of a very interactive nature. Out of necessity, comparisons, references, the reconfiguration of features of a specific model and the negotiation of meanings are all indispensable in the processes of cultural hybridization.

## 2.3 Multiplication of space

The development of the means of gathering, processing and transmission of information by the media have directly brought about unprecedented possibilities for duplication and reproduction of cultural content, which after separation

from their place of origin may be replicated in a multitude of distant geographic locations and in many distinct communities of “networking” civilizations. This phenomenon gives rise to another equally important process of continuous expansion, and even something of an explosion of space, which brings about the problem of filling and utilising new and expanding domains. The scale of multiplication is so vast that it does not escape extremely aggressive techniques of annexation, possessiveness and competitive fighting between warring sub-spaces.

The multiplication of cultural spaces has had the incidental – although logically inevitable – consequence of cultural saturation; certain types of spaces are overlapping and constantly “thickening” in terms of information. Cultural identity is in a state of decay, having been subjected to a massive attack by processes of transferring, uprooting and multiplication. The abilities of cultures to select, construct and design are being put to the test. Paradoxically, overproduction of content leads to cultural impoverishment. This is based on the previously-mentioned process of “sinking” and overloading integrative abilities: these include being forced to reconfigure frequently and re-evaluate cultural canons. Identity is in a state of technological siege, and needs support through the defence of human dignity and values, which are treated almost like a bio-component of technical civilization. On the other hand, the skills for connecting, moving and flowing between different types of spaces with a different ontological, social and mental status remain necessary. This situation creates a need to understand the discursive nature of the spaces of continuous flow and re-composition.

## **2.4 Convergences and interactions**

Overlapping in intensively-multiplied spaces has to lead to intense interactions among them. This happens both “horizontally” – in the space with a strong physical correlation, which has geographical origins of place – but also “vertically”, in the cultural, symbolic and virtual space, which exists in a quasi-physical manner that remains difficult to describe, measure or study. Interactions and the continuing need to include new elements in real and virtual space constitute hybrid space; it draws on resources from every available source, constantly expanding the scope of its “building blocks,” though not without symptoms of chaos and confusion, contradictions and exclusions (Hermans & Kempen, 2003). The penetration of such different spaces requires parallel participation

in the worlds which are barely touching, and in the worlds between which it is difficult to move. This ability will lead to key competences at present, and – probably even to a greater extent – in the future. Internal differentiation of cultures leads to their hybridization and the recognition of plurality of their potential. They may complement one another, but they do not have to mutually exclude each other.

To recognize the potential of the hybrid reality, the so-called *logo-making dynamisms of culture* are essential, i.e. the processes of making sense that are the essence of every encounter between cultures in their basic anthropological dimension (Korporowicz, 2011). This fundamental orientation – “towards something”, “towards goals” and “towards values” – through design, modelling and selection of self, communities and activities, is what determines the creative potential of the space of discourse, understanding and respect for the values of other cultures (Castells, 2008). These values are fundamental but also interactive competences, which create new potential for social reintegration and revitalization of old and new “vectors of sense”. The participants of these processes have the right to discover these vectors and use them to create their own ontological and cultural security, in many congruent, although different realities (Dyczewski, 2012).

## 2.5 Metamorphoses of space

The social space in the modern civilization of the media no longer has such precisely-set boundaries, as it is more extensive and dispersed, with inner areas of crystallization. The same applies to the symbolic space, and even more to virtual space. The transformation of these spaces, the passing of one into the other, and various forms of parallel existence are the phenomena of the modern world. We are experiencing a different kind of discourse in disparate spaces, in which building bridges is particularly important. New spaces are building signs of their individuality, and a specific language for inter-space communication. Therefore, the spaces, and specifically their individual types, have started to represent a new kind of culture. Chinese and Polish IT specialists will certainly understand each other better in a virtual space rather than on the basis of their ethnic cultures, which forms a new kind of communication code. This code may gain increasing importance, but only in the area of technology, and not in the axiology of communication. It is evidenced by serious problems in cultural



adaptation of Asian students in Europe, and also of European students in Asia; it is also similar to those faced by workers migrating between the two continents (Golka, 2008). Transitions from one space to another, after all, will not be indifferent to the existence of a company, the competences and organizational identity of its employees, the teams created by them, and their contact networks and relationships. Identifications which are generated at this time will provide building blocks for identities which are created, changed, and often reconfigured, as well as methods of communication associated with them (Kobierzycki, 2001). Moving between these two types of space – real and virtual – will cause volatility in cultural and personal references, but conversely, it is identity built through participation in new types of spaces that generates new communities for exchange in the environments of specific organizations. (Giddens, 2007).

## **2.6 Virtualization of hybrid space**

Penetrating the secrets of participation in the virtual space and other areas of convergence constitutes the ability to recognize the types of reality to which we refer during the communication process (van Dijk, 2006). Determining the significance of meanings has an impact on the nature and content of discourse between cultures, in a world subjected to virtualization. The reality of objects and values in the new space is not absolute: it is regulated by one's relationship to the medium. A human being immersed in the virtual world may have a traumatic experience when he encounters a power cut and the system logs out of the network while he is wearing glasses, headphones, and gloves filled with neurological sensors. Everything which was an object of his experience loses a specific form of existence; it does not lose realism, however, because the experience was a fact. Perhaps it is re-playable and repeatable, but not without the use of the media. The role of the latter has grown dramatically, and a question must be asked as to the limits of long-term dependency. In such a situation, the reality of human experience would depend on the effectiveness of the flow of electromagnetic stimuli, without which this experience is not possible at all. The ontological security of culture and actual opportunities for dialogue are becoming a serious problem, and require absolute reference to fundamental human values – those which integrate the hybrid reality into the realities of the contemporary civilization of the media (Poster, 2006). Thus, virtualization of reality generates completely new forms of reality (Wilson & Peterson, 2002). However, this is a reality with a high level of relativity, which will require new

means for both its definition and protection. This leads one to questions about protecting reality itself, as well as protecting the people participating in it, so that a “flickering of meanings” is not transformed to a flickering of their identities and personalities, while taking advantage of the full potential of the hybrid experiment (Boellstorf, 2012).

## 2.7 Interaction as a revitalization

A glance at the interactive nature of hybrid space reveals its key feature, containing both threats and culture-creating opportunities. It is experienced by communities which reconstruct and revitalize cultural communities in specific areas of old or modern frontiers; it may affect the content and patterns of culture of a forgotten cultural heritage as much as members of the “network society.” These communities are detached from any territory; they exist in virtual reality in the form of internet communities. These communities restore or generate social activity (which has disappeared, for various reasons), and subsequently revitalize it as a result of communicative interactions. The communication becomes, in this situation, a stimulus for the regeneration of resources and the hidden potential of exchange, mutual learning, completion and enrichment (Korporowicz, 2012b). Such processes have always existed in multicultural regions with highly intercultural activity, and there are many indications that they will characterize an open space of virtual reality (Goban-Klas, 2005). A good example is the European Association of Taiwan Studies, which managed to create a community of researchers effectively communicating via a periodical published for this purpose, existing in virtual space. Its role as the forum for interaction, but also for integration, has been fulfilled very well. It also builds new forms of social bonds. At the same time, these bonds fulfil their trans-cultural functions, both within Europe and in relations with representatives of Taiwanese culture, who are spread throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> An example of an even more expanded system of mutual complementation of activities in the field of real and virtual reality is the cooperation of 53 countries in the ASEM Partners program (Asia-Europe Meeting), which has functioned since 1996. Its contemporary forms contain very complex systems of virtual interaction, without which its current updates would be impossible.

<sup>1</sup> [https://academia.edu/27406190/EATS\\_News\\_issue\\_8](https://academia.edu/27406190/EATS_News_issue_8)

(The ASEM process emphasising equal partnership, favouring the general process of dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect and mutual benefit.)

Highlighting the importance of communication and the creation of entirely new types of interactive communities, the new communicative environment is becoming the “area” for the transfer of change and values; the virtual world facilitates processes of cultural interactions, and the hybrid nature of these created realities is becoming a norm in everyday life. A good example of such communities are contemporary Lemkos (Sobieraj, 2012). Every year, they organize a congress of members of their communities in their native area of southern Poland, but all the effort they put into preparations is done through communication in virtual space, which becomes a functional component of the hybrid reality, and of very serious interactive consequences. They simultaneously carry out the first and the second type of cultural and social revival, as described above. They consciously conceptualize and use their cultural rights through intensification of relations with the environment and neighbouring cultures; they also integrate and facilitate contacts between individuals, families and communities scattered throughout the world, using a well-organized community portal, i.e. a virtual communication space created for this purpose.

Reality and hybrid space, as clearly illustrated by the example of the Lemkos community, are not only a postulate but an actual environment and form of activity. In order to see and manifest the possibilities for development it entails, we should pay attention to the characteristics of the discourse it contains.

### **2.7.1 Interaction as a value**

Relationships which are created in hybrid space do not have a uniform and functionally-defined form. When these relationships are instrumental in nature, they convert all elements of the process to externally controlled “objects,” depriving them of elementary subjectivity; thus the entire discourse dynamic becomes social engineering, involving influence and impact. For these reasons, hybrid space is not able to revive any experience of development and to revitalize the content which requires incorporation into live and conscious actions. However, this is not the only face of its discursive character. An indication that the interaction may constitute not so much a “tool” but a value marked by autotelism in a communication process, represents an obligation in the era of intensifying globalization processes (Lusting & Koester, 2006).

### **2.7.2 The right and the need to respect the community of discourse in its identity and uniqueness**

A simple rule of identifying differences, for the creation of individual and community identity, is something more than preserving distinctness. It is not the sum of the differences that makes people recognizable in their identities, or creates the identity itself. It is created by the choice and the conscious design of a principle, which integrates and directs differentiation activities. The principle of integration defines the process of development in the structure of an individual's personality and the culture of a community, complementing the attribute of dignity. Only then do discursive processes form the actual content of the interaction within the sphere of encounters, and give them a recognizable sense. This allows a way of learning the values through the effort of recognizing them in intercultural exchanges (Golka, 2008). Effective implementation of this effort is not just building, but also rebuilding of communities of intercultural contact (Nikitorowicz, 2009). Both of these activities can support each other, accompany each other and create truly creative perspectives in both real and virtual spaces, as well as synergies between them. Despite many dangers stemming from the randomness of interactions in hybrid space and reality, it is still a chance for redefinition and revival of the social and cultural wealth that has been destroyed as a result of atomization and the functional reduction in many cultures and communities.

### **2.7.3 Respecting the principle of reciprocity and justice**

Discovering the principle of reciprocity is one of the fundamental values in the process of restoring culture-making functions to communication activities. Neither the impact of technology mentioned above nor transfer procedures can create what appropriate communication processes do – the *communicare* of “doing things together” – in response to the actions, thoughts and experiences of another individual. For many reasons, it is the principle of reciprocity that gives us the right to participate and generates a field of agency, and subjectivity – eliminating domination, subordination, and consequently the loss of the cultural presence of one of the participants. For these reasons, the attribute of reciprocity reveals the ethical dimension of the discourse that asks questions about responsibility, credibility and the intentions behind interaction. Interactive qualities of a discourse can, then, restore its most important values, weakened by the

instrumentality and routine of everyday situations. With respect to the ethics of discourse, we must ask a question about the actual goals of intercultural meetings or events. We do not need to be fully aware of them, while being subjected to social patterns and rituals, or conventions of communication “behaviour” with varying levels of external pressure. If we recognize that communication activities and discursive processes in themselves constitute an important type of reality, and not just its setting, addition, or functional supplement, then they truly comprise an important part of human reality.

#### **2.7.4 Intercultural relations as a process of development and learning**

The revitalization of relations in the discursive process arises from the opportunity for discovering, experiencing and enlarging understanding of the values of participants; this is generated by progressive interaction. Hybrid space abounds in ever-increasing innovations that enter into everyday life, but it also brings surprises in the form of new integrations of elements as it virtualizes the real world. It makes artefacts and objects of conceptual society – i.e. of a modern networking society – real. It makes actual and potential development available to anyone who becomes involved in the process. Although these possibilities are conditioned by many personal, social, technological, situational and contextual factors, they represent a real value which is worth seeking in personal and group relationships. It is hybrid space that represents existing and potential intercultural wealth, which can be used in a real-life situation and which can determine directions of cooperation, creativity or design of further actions (Jaskuła & Korporowicz, 2013). Hybrid space poses constant challenges, sometimes shocking in the degree of adaptation, re-evaluation and re-composition of old patterns of thinking and acting that they require. Europeans and a mass of “Westerners” are open to the spiritual values they have found and still find in traditional societies and cultures of Asia; Asian communities, which despite their colonial past and strong liberation movements, have been able to transpose typical western values to their own. Intercultural communication and the hybrid spaces which accompany it exist contrary to numerous conflicts and tensions in the relations of their already-established areas; they have enabled the discovery of points of exchange, sometimes even synergy, both in the instrumentally-oriented fields of technology, commerce and broadly-defined business, and in education, science and diplomacy. One can even put forward a claim that a revitalization and exploration of creative potentials, both inherent to the discursive process,

demand a multi-dimensional account of the functioning of hybrid space. What is needed is a multi-level integrated theory of discourse, which will manage to connect the phenomena in the interaction of cultures to reality, and capture the discursive processes in the virtual space, allowing an simple transition between them in a structure of a bounded, penetrating, ontologically and functionally-heterogenous nature.

### **3. Towards an integrated theory of hybrid space**

The creation of an integrated theory of space, especially hybrid space, which for many reasons will constitute the basis of an integrated theory of intercultural space, one must start with the identification of its fundamental components, which exist in the most “real” way, ending at the level of virtual space. The weight of the physical component of space disappears, in favour of the absolute domination of axiological-semiosis processes. A theory so constructed illustrates the growing complication of relations among space elements at each possible level, and between the levels, as well. Such a theory should satisfy diagnostic, explanatory, and heuristic functions. It should inspire adequate understanding and analysis of the contemporary hybrid space in the entirety of its various manifestations and transformations.

In order to gain at least an approximate insight into the manner of the existence of hybrid space, with its tendency to complicate internally along with its growing importance in the diffusion and interaction of cultures, we must separate several of its levels; within each of them there are three basic groups of attributes. These attributes relate to the different features of space. Accordingly, they only symbolically constitute analogical “ingredients” in an attempt to build a model. In the proposed theory they are interlinked, and this feature indicates a high degree of synergy and mutual inclusions, redefinitions and specific inclusions. We can speak of their autonomy only at the first level – out of at least three such levels – which has the classic features of physical space. One may say that the second level is superimposed on the first one, through attaching meanings and values to physical objects; by these means, a semiotic nature of space is created, supplemented by entirely symbolic creations. This level has exceptionally numerous stratifications with varying degrees of semiotisation and “dis-embodiment,” up to the third level, where they reach entirely symbolic

representation, technologically incorporated in virtual reality, capable of communication in a digital and roundabout manner.

In order to characterize these complementary and mutually defining attributes we must list three of their types:

#### A. Objects

At the elementary level, they have the character of ordinary physical objects, to which we attach useful meanings and which form material correlates of culture. The elements of geographical space are the specific objects of nature; the elements of urban space are specific building structures, streets and squares, which transform themselves into the social space through given meanings. They form a new level of semiotic space, having varying degrees of association with physical reality. The second level essentially separates itself from physical reality by creating abstract themes and contents of intellectual, artistic or religious culture, accumulated in the world of symbolic culture. The third level in an integrated theory of space, formed only by objects that are purely semiotic in nature, which have entered the world of virtual reality and function as signs and representations of physical reality. All these levels meet at many points of interaction, creating more or less coherent creations of hybrid reality. The latter is already developed to such an extent that it is able to create its own institutions, organizations, and communication systems, as well as strong types of social ties, and its own types of identity in its collective or individual subjects. Moving from the first level to the third one, we encounter, in fact, a continuum of different types of reality, which in their different components show a very different type of combination of physical and semiotic elements, as well as their particular variant – which is incorporated into reality, conventionally called virtual. In spite of its “disembodiment”, deterritorialization and departure from the linear conception of time, it frequently reassumes the social and physical forms of reality, thus creating countless forms of hybrid space.

#### B. Relationships

They make the inalienable attributes of space, defining ways of linking, impacting and infiltrating objects, channels and bridges of content flow. This is a particular fragment of the application of discourse theory in the analysis of hybrid space: types of interactions. In the case of space understood in its physical sense, there are distances which can be defined parametrically, but also relative positions, which gain many meanings at secondary levels, while creating and expressing a socially-assigned sense. In virtual space, relationships assume, in fact, only

an informative and symbolic meaning; they are systematically disembodied, transforming into the space of semiotic and an axiological, mental, emotional, cognitive and communicative nature. Most importantly, owing to the metamorphosis of relationships, they lead to changes in the ontological status of objects, which are frequently an artefact of relationships and do not exist outside them (Duszak, 2004). These include, for example, folk festivals, scientific conferences, sports events, or international pilgrimages; each has a common denominator which leads to the meeting of very diverse ethnic cultures, often supported by activities of the media. Accordingly, there are relationships between individuals, groups and cultures that create “meeting places” both in the material and social worlds, and often in the virtual world. This is also the way in which cross-cultural space is created. Hence, completely new objects are created, which are the result of these relationships (including internet communities); experience and content bring important substance to hybrid space.

### C. Range

The integrated theory of cultural and hybrid space should allow a multiple approach regarding the problem of “boundaries”, showing multiple variations and transformations, as well as areas of overlap, and even disappearance. In the case of virtual space, which is determined by the scope of a network, the problem of boundaries does not disappear, but changes in character. Aside from the technological dimension of the “boundary” of scope, there may be limits to the ability to use the network, i.e. varying informative and communicative competences, which in consequence define many other boundaries delineating effective access to information. The third group of the intercultural space attributes designates a real sense of participation through the opportunity to update its resources. These attributes in the form of a “range” or something like “field access”, but also changes to the nature of the relationships mentioned above.. Field access is also a range of communication and intercultural skills. The potential of what can be used, generated and made an object of cultural experience is in the “range” of our participation.

Just as it is difficult to describe the symbolic objects of space beyond the “grammar” of relationships and the type of interactions creating them, it is equally hard to describe the space attributes of the third group, in isolation from the other two. The range, which is an attribute of availability in hybrid space, is defined as the ability to understand meanings that are present in it, as well as its realistically achievable experiences. The attributes of “coverage



of space” or its “range”, determine – in addition to the physical parameters which characterize the relationship of physical objects in space – the skills of perception, decoding and living through the meaning of objects marked symbolically. Physical objects may be significant carriers of meanings – examples of this being monuments or the symbolically-marked space of sacred objects. These have permanently entered the space of symbolic culture and function more as meanings than the physical space objects. For these reasons, the transition from the physical to the purely symbolic space objects presents a challenge, but also the rationale for an integrated theory of hybrid space, due to the gradational and gradual nature of the process of “disembodiment” of space – understood in physical and parametrical terms. The third group of attributes of space, especially when generated at the level of semiosis, exhibits a very strong bond with the anthropological factor, rendering them impossible to describe, define and understand outside of human mental abilities. Human competences determine what types of space objects will be noticed and what relationships will be recognized, understood and used.

The discursive theory of communication and intercultural space can reveal dynamics of the formation of hybrid space, which is created in Asian-European relations, practically in all areas of life. In globalizing space of cultural and economic relations, it builds a new kind of reality, which needs to be taken into account when building a strategy for cooperation, and also in recognizing areas of tension and possible conflicts. The vitality of developmental potential, however, allows for effective identification of new forms of implementation and specific “bridges of hope” that are formed in hybrid space and its anthropological reflection. It is fully possible – a fact which was demonstrated by the massive participation of young people from Asian countries in the World Youth Days, which took place in July of 2016, in Cracow. The organization of this truly intercultural meeting involved many months of preparation in advance, using all the attributes of hybrid space in its most integrated model (Korporowicz, 2016). The workshops, prayer meetings and activities in the local communities which were undertaken by young people from all national groups participating in the WYD were discussed through intense contacts in virtual space, by means of the latest technological achievements. Owing to the realization of many teleconferences, preparation and sharing educational, organizational and religious materials became possible on a scale which certainly would not have been possible outside of the contemporary standards of functioning of information societies. Young people from the most remote countries in Asia were able to participate

on an equal footing in this space, joining in such diverse mutual activity, presence and cultural experience, while at the same time being part of a united community at this intercultural event.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Hybrid space in the reality of intensified processes of mobility, deterritorialization, developments in information and communication technologies, and the development of virtual space poses a great practical and theoretical challenge in the system of modern cultural studies. This may also support understanding of the dynamically changing relationships between Europe and Asia. This situation requires the creation of a new anthropology with a major component of intercultural discourse studies, which will assist the description and analysis of advanced forms of reciprocity and exchange, as well as those of collision, conflicts and destruction, which find old and new manifestations in these relations. Many disciplines will certainly take active part in the assessment and the description. Inadequate concepts, which used to treat culture and human being instrumentally must also be overcome, in attempts to find practical solutions to many emerging challenges. Certainly, the classic stereotype of the individualistic model of values held by members of European cultures and collectivist model of values held by members of Asian cultures needs redefining, as well. Many simplifications, and even misunderstandings, have accumulated around these divisions. Virtual space alters the types of social ties, and reduces direct pressure and control regarding the behaviour of individuals; many opportunities for individualized activities in reality emerge, while many new forms of surveillance, especially in the world of team activities, are also created. More and more frequently, the modern work culture requires continuous joining, interaction and complementation of activities, both in real and virtual realities, at the junction of many ethnic groups and cultures; these often occur in completely unique combinations, with their own characteristics. Hybrid reality may constitute a new factor of change and individualization of Asian mentality, leading to the socialization of Western cultures towards activities at a high level of synchronization, according to the requirements of collective communities. It is exactly this corporate personality, the result of pressure from work standards with a high level of subordination, which is accused of excessive conformity, destruction of creativity, and instrumental treatment of people, rendering them a functionary in organizations focused on effectiveness, efficiency

and rationality. In this sense, Asian cultures can build their own manner for using virtual reality, towards supporting traditional ways of socialization and even social control. It is interesting, however, that it is the Asian organizations that have become famous for many forms of innovative activities, using virtual reality in the modernization of contemporary organizational culture. Discourse analysis is one of ways to identify as-yet-unknown secrets of the process of increasing hybridization of cultures, including the personality, identity and consciousness of their participants. This reveals both the negative, but also stimulating properties that require reflexivity, advanced self-perception, innovative solutions and dialogicality in the treatment of various content and values which are the parts of cultural heritage and planned paths of development. The integrated theory of hybrid space may inspire a dynamic and relative perception of boundaries and competence of the individual fields of studies, arranging the interaction of contemporary studies of culture, without which understanding of the present and the future in the relations of Europe and Asia will not be possible. The interaction, exchange of values and mutual learning in new hybrid space of coexistence seems to be a modern form of building “bridges of hope”, for a better understanding, and toward real cooperation.

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## Courtesy, adequacy, procedure: A brief account of the intercultural communication background

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### Abstract

The term *intercultural communication* (ICC, not explicitly distinguished in this paper from the concept of cross-cultural communication) is commonly used to refer to the instances of actual communication acts performed in and/or between heterogeneous communication environments. While the instances of intercultural encounters are usually viewed in terms of heterogeneous codes (languages), different communication environments require diverse linguistic competences and different patterns for their use. The codes, as such, may be regarded translatable and interpretable *in abstracto*. The patterns, however, usually require specific conditions for their evocation and complete (as well as effective) execution: the latter also requires the (prior) projection of actual goals and subsequent verification of actual changes in the communication environment, which result from a certain act of communication.

The subject of the usage patterns of actual codes will be described in this paper in terms of intercultural honorifics, with special emphasis placed on situations of communication and miscommunication typical of a Polish-Japanese communication/translation/interpretation environment, as well as the metalanguages used in the processes of their explanation. The selected instances of communication and miscommunication will be analyzed with respect to the gains and losses in the environment in which the communication acts are performed, including intricate issues of intercultural translatability/interpretability.

**Keywords:** (un)translatability, adequacy, honorifics

### 1. Introductory remarks

For the purposes of this paper, no specific distinction is made below between the notions of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication.

In other words, the ICC acronym is consciously used to refer to both terms. This is mainly because most phenomena described below apply to any kind of communication taking place across inter/cross-cultural boundaries. The author remains aware of this simplification, convinced that it does not significantly alter the content of the examples and the analysis provided. Moreover, in the context of translation/interpretation processes and (un)translatability, it may be more effective to view some phenomena as having emerged from the collision of two heterogeneous communication environments, whether they are perceived in the inter- or cross-cultural perspective. This claim will be demonstrated in examples of some basic and simplified oppositions between the Japanese (JP) and Polish (PL) general convictions and schemes of behavior, analyzed below.

## 2. Basic terms and dilemmas

The titles of the works that have been published and discussed since the emergence of the field of applied linguistics show that the contemporary study of language has overcome the already classical postulate of the autonomous character of language and linguistics, raised by de Saussure. At the same time, deeper inquiry into the details of applied linguistic research reveals that numerous approaches appear to be based on an assumption that the use of language involves merely saying or expressing something, which is quite independent of the actual interaction context.

A good example of a phenomenon that should probably be explained on the basis of extra-linguistic facts is the intra- and intercultural research on honorifics that often seems to focus on ambiguous notions such as *respect*, *courtesy*, *face* or *politeness*. In a very similar manner, the researchers of the intercultural phenomena do not refrain from centering explanations around such unclear and inevitably-biased ideas as *expressing oneself* or *displaying one's feelings*. It is this author's conviction that these two trends in the applied approach to the study of communication pragmatics may be effectively reviewed, for the sake of emphasizing factors which are present, though often invisible, in the background of any instance of actual communication.

First of all, the implementation of a metalanguage does not automatically explain and solve the intricate multi-layered communication issues that lie behind any context of communication. Furthermore, the analysis of misunderstandings emerging in the process of communication on the borders of



heterogeneous cultures may deliver substantial evidence that the acts of ICC do not differ substantially in many aspects from communication in a nominally heterogeneous environment. Ineffective definitions and postulated solutions surrounding ICC may fail because intercultural properties are erroneously valued higher than properties related to communication universals – and not necessarily because those communication processes take place in an intercultural environment (whether intra- or intercultural (IC)). They will be reviewed in this paper with respect to IC honorifics.

## 2.1 Social deixis

Probably the most useful, universal definition of honorifics is provided by Levinson, described in a fairly unbiased manner as “socially deictic information” (1983: 89). The same author, along with a detailed classification of honorifics (not the primary subject of this paper), made the following remark on their nature:

[...] in many languages (notably the S. E. Asian languages, including Korean, Japanese and Javanese) it is possible to say some sentence glossing as *The soup is hot* and by the choice of a linguistic alternate (e.g. for *soup*) encode respect to the addressee without referring to him, in which case we have an addressee honorific system. In general, in such languages it is almost impossible to say anything at all which is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate for certain kinds of addressees only (Levinson 1983: 90).

As can be seen, the definition of honorifics in terms of social deixis may be useful in a universal perspective, since it does not exclude any aspect of honorific modification from the scope of potential research. In fact, both in the intra- and intercultural studies of honorifics, as well as in the inherently intercultural studies of communication and translation/interpretation, the only universally valid premise may be that nothing (neither the relevant dimensions nor their actual parameters) can be taken for granted in a heterogeneous communication environment.

Whether or not it is the *respect to the addressee* (which is an inherently biased notion and should be excluded from the scope of linguistic research) that must be encoded in Japanese, one may also interpret the above fragment as based on an implicit conviction that in the languages other than Asian

(among them most likely English), to paraphrase the above statement by Levinson, it is possible to say almost anything as long as it is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate to only certain kinds of addressees. Levinson was probably aware that the perspective of English (apparently considered unmarked in some aspects, as can be read above) may seriously limit the scope of linguistic research, which may be seen in the following fragment of his work:

A [...] reason why grammarians should not simply ignore social deixis is that, while the study of English may suffer no obvious penalties from such neglect, there is scarcely a single sentence of [...] Japanese, Javanese or Korean, that can be properly described from a strictly linguistic point of view without an analysis of social deixis (Levinson, 1983: 93-94).

While the above seems to prove that social deixis may be invisible (transparent) in some languages rather than claiming that it does not exist in English, the perspective of intercultural communication research based on this concept may be viewed as promising. The basic prerequisite for such application of social deixis should be the neutral character of description, not contaminated by cultural bias. In this aspect, the idea is close to the concept of honorific modification (HM), proposed by this author elsewhere as a universal dimension of managing communication activities in an effective manner, and described in more detail below.

## 2.2 Honorific modification and the actual communication phenomena

Grice (1989), having commented on conversational implicatures and related maxims, includes the following passage on politeness: “There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as ‘Be polite’, that are also normally observed by participants in exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures” (p. 28), but it is only in order to conclude soon that: “The conversational maxims, however, and the conversational implicatures connected with them, are specially connected (I hope) with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve” (ibid.).

It is no wonder that also according to Leech (1983) the maxims of politeness are defined in terms of *tact*, *generosity*, *approbation*, *modesty*, *agreement* and *sympathy* (pp. 104-151). All of the labels may be culturally biased, and as such

should instead be defined as far from the concept of social deixis. Although they may be understood in the context of interpersonal rhetoric defined by Leech, it is still necessary to ponder on numerous and intricate details that a researcher concentrated on a 'strictly linguistic' point of view may fail to observe. Among them one can enumerate phatic properties of HM (cf. Jakobson, 1960: 350-377), which have been portrayed in the distinction between procedure and protocol by this author (cf. Jabłoński, 2012). The phatic background of HM, quite contrary to the classical concepts based on the labels of *courtesy* or *respect*, traditionally though misleadingly attributed to the phenomena, ensures the transparency of HM in any actual exchange, which does not negate dependency on context.

As Hymes (1974: 51) briefly and rightly pointed out, speech communities are based on common codes as well as shared patterns of their use. In other words, certain patterns are used under particular circumstances. For example, one needs a substantial social (not only linguistic) competence to say *Thank you*. But does this mean that *thanking* has only one pattern across different cultures? What comes prior to it and along with it during an actual communication event? How should children, who have not socialized (yet?) and their position in (homogeneous?) social reality be defined? These questions apply also to the notion of cultural strangers and their position in heterogeneous social reality.

Procedures may be defined in terms of gains and losses in actual (even homogeneous) communication. Below, the shape of the outside world before and after the message is generated and interpreted will be emphasized, instead of the exchange of messages itself. A simple example by Yngve (1975) focuses on situations and persons which are subject to change due to a simple (not to say trivial) act of inviting a person for the evening:

He decides to accept and knows how to do that. He does so. He is now a different person. His situational properties have changed again. He is a person who has been invited over for the evening and has accepted. I can predict with some degree of certainty that he will show up on my doorstep. And I am a different person, too. My situational properties are different. I now expect him to show up (Yngve, 1975: 61).

Since the slightly extended version of Yngve's statements may cover the actual acts of communication, pre-communication and after-communication, there is much more to the above short quotation that should be of interest for the ICC researchers. And, as Austin (1962) noticed before Yngve: "It was for too long

the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely" (p. 1).

Austin defined the performative sentences (p. 6) and pointed out that: "A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something" (p. 5). He further proposed to use the notion of procedures: fixed interaction entities with fixed effect, to be performed by certain persons (roles) in certain circumstances (context), to be evoked according to certain conditions and to be executed correctly and completely (p. 14).

At this point, despite Austin's statement that a performative sentence "indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (pp. 6-7), it seems justified to assume that in fact all actual utterances are more or less performative, since the very act of uttering them, based on the description by Yngve, leads to a change of communication environment. The fact that a communication activity may be viewed in the first place as a social activity is further confirmed by the fact that Austin mentions the infelicities, as well: "things that can be and go wrong" (p. 14). This makes procedures convenient tools to judge the projected and actual communication flow and results. They may and should be extended beyond verbal acts, as can be postulated on the basis of the following insightful remark made by Geis:

Austin (1962) seems to be responsible for the view that illocutionary acts are necessarily verbal acts. [...] However, it does not follow from the fact that one might have to use language to perform some action that what is most important about it is that it is performed verbally. One cannot kiss another person without closing one's lips together, drawing air into one's lungs, thereby creating a partial vacuum, and then releasing the bilabial constriction, but if we follow the suggested line of reasoning of Austin we will have to conclude that kissing is primarily, and most importantly, a bilabial, ingressive pulmonary act. It is a bilabial, ingressive pulmonary act, but it is also, and more importantly, a social action, ranging in significance from signaling sexual interest to showing affection, to communicating a greeting (the kissing that is done between celebrities on television shows), to communicating respect (as when someone kisses the hand of some royal woman). Kissing is, in short, a social action, even if it necessarily requires performance of a physical action. Precisely the same is true of requesting, offering, making threats, giving warnings, conveying information,

requesting information, or uttering verdictives and expositives, etc. And, once one has recognized that communicative actions are social actions and that many types of communicative actions can be performed non-verbally, the temptation to associate these actions with particular linguistic forms diminishes greatly (Geis, 1995, p. 14-15).

### 2.3 Between the procedure and protocol

The metalanguages used in the study of context-embedded events should be culturally unbiased. This is especially valid for their crucial elements functioning as key words. It has long been pointed out, for example, that the labels of *courtesy*, *respect* and *politeness* are not compatible with a coherent description of HM phenomena (cf., among others, Eelen, 2001). In other words, it may not always be enough to *be polite*, which may be explained on a trivial but potentially instructive example of an MMMP (Machine for Making Messages Polite, which is designed as useful only to make the messages “more polite”, independently of context) (cf. Jabłoński, 2007).

A more specific critique of the concept of *politeness* may be found in the threefold division of *politeness* into situation-based (some situations are considered *polite* while the others are not, which is far from satisfactory) (Jabłoński, 2007: 52-54), static (*politeness* is automatically opposed to *impoliteness*) (pp. 54-58) and semantic (*politeness* is encoded into the dictionary meanings of the allegedly *polite* phrase elements) (pp. 58-65). The definition of HM which could make it possible to abstract from the biased labels of *politeness* and *respect* should thus be focused on the situational properties of a message, which may not require explicit linguistic marking (Jabłoński, 2012: 79).

In other words, any communication act in any language ought to be validated in accordance with the HM requirements applicable to a given code, marked or not. While HM is not an informative phenomenon, it significantly changes the nature and results of actual communication acts (Jabłoński, 2012: 79). The actual HM parameters should be related both to the protocol properties of a code (the honorific paradigms specific to it) and to the predictable and repeatable activity patterns, recognized as procedural (Jabłoński, 2012: 113-115).

As can be concluded at this stage, the use of language is far more complicated than “saying something” or “expressing oneself”, and still even more complicated than “making messages polite”. Consequently, the intercultural

honorifics should probably be viewed more as effective ICC tools than means of smoothing intercultural tension, through *courtesy*, *respect* or *politeness*.

### 3. Inter/Cross-Cultural Communication

As a term, the ICC does not simply stand for any act of communication in a heterogeneous environment (below: mainly in the Polish-Japanese environment). This would be too broad, since past and contemporary phenomena of ICC do not need to include wars, crusades, conquest, colonialism, slavery, terrorism or the like. ICC equals achieving communication goals through equal(ly engaged) parties.

Accordingly, current trends in ICC, also in an environment of increasingly improved transport and communication (not to mention virtual communication), globalization, international co-operation and tourism, do not automatically foster better or more effective ICC processes and results. The increasing quantity of ICC acts does not necessarily imply their better quality in a direct and immediate manner. In other words, recent dynamically-rising trends in the quantity of ICC acts do not seem to undermine one of the most up-to-date Polish sources on ICC, claiming that “an intercultural communication is possible, while not indispensable” (Zaporowski, 2006: 153) and that it “does not take place [...] in all instances when different cultures cross” (p. 27).

#### 3.1 Methodology: language code and beyond

ICC may and should be viewed as an effective extension of communication skills used in a “homogeneous” (a non-ICC) environment. It is an act enabling one to cross one’s native culture boundaries (cf. Hida, 1990: 3-24). ICC is therefore a communicative challenge, which requires the employment of advanced problem solving methodology. In terms of effective mapping of the source and target cultural values in the process of understanding heterogeneous cultures, the conscious preparation for acts of ICC should be viewed as an important element of translation/interpretation training, not to mention the other participants of ICC acts. It is especially valid, given that ICC (similarly as non-ICC) is not only related to the language code, which means a definition based solely on communication across code boundaries is too narrow.

Let us review several factors (linguistic and non-linguistic) present in the background of any communication act, with special emphasis on Polish-Japanese (PL-JP) ICC acts:

1. not every tangible fact and parameter of the environment is always mentioned (i.e. there is no need to know the exchange partner's age and position in PL, contrary to JP);
2. some information must always be mentioned in some circumstances (i.e. in JP it is obligatory to mark both the starting and closing time of a meeting/banquet, contrary to PL);
3. certain heterogeneous objects may reveal unexpected properties (i.e. in JP it is self-evident that different slippers are used in the toilet, contrary to PL);
4. certain linear properties of objects may be important and not require further explanations (i.e. in PL soup is served before main dish, contrary to JP);
5. certain secondary object properties may be preferred over their primary properties (i.e. it is possible to eat almost every PL meal with a spoon, but it is not practiced).

Most of the above properties of an ICC act are not related to the use of language code. On the other hand, many of them may be misunderstood, considered unnecessary, or consciously neglected, with easily imaginable and immediate effects on the actual communication processes between the heterogeneous communication environments.

Communication environments differ and so do their communication patterns. Differences may be related to different conversational (or behavioral) conventions. According to the approach to pragmatics by Leech (1983): "the rules of grammar are fundamentally conventional; the principles of pragmatics are fundamentally non-conventional, *i.e.* motivated in terms of conversational goals" (pp. 24-30). The rules of ICC, however, cover both the former and the latter, with all possible consequences.

Concerning the above points, several interesting overstatements may be highlighted, relating to the fictional notion of an universal comprehensibility of communication acts. Pieńkos (2003) states that "translation practice since at least two thousand years has proven that translation not only exists, but also develops and is getting more and more important. [...] translatability

is a rule and the untranslatability – an exception. [...] the more exact analysis of the critique towards translation may make it clear that it applies to bad translations and bad translators” (p. 181). Hejwowski (2004) points out that “regardless of language differences, the human cognitive potential is very similar” (18), and Dąbmska-Prokop (2000) concludes that “Translatability depends on the (creative) decision of a translator” (p. 196). The quotations were selected purposely from Polish sources on the subject. In numerous other works and throughout even more numerous actual ICC acts, the universal comprehensibility of communication acts may function as a default tacit assumption.

As postulated below, the universal translatability may be assumed with no difficulty *in abstracto*; however, in the act of actual communication it may be more convenient to depend on a much more cautious statement, such as that made by Steiner (1975): “[...] [A] human being performs an act of translation, in the full sense of the word, when receiving a speech-message from any other human being. Time, distance, disparities in outlook or assumed reference, make this act more or less difficult” (p. 47).

### 3.2 On the transparency of keys and scaffoldings

One needs a certain “cultural key”, as mentioned by Sapir (1978: 151) to understand social events, be they of intercultural character or not. Accordingly, as Garfinkel (1972) puts it, it may be the usual practice to consider many situational properties invisible and trivial constituents of “commonplace scenes”; this approach may make their mere recognition difficult, not to mention the process of subjecting them to conscious reflection.

The adequacy of certain context parameters should thus be perceived as a feature of ICC acts which do not differ much from non-ICC. Some things are done in certain contexts. Not all things are done in all contexts. Some things are never done. Communication activity is therefore linked to social activity and repeatable (often trivial and transparent) patterns. Source and target contexts and activity patterns in the ICC environment may differ in virtually any conceivable way. It is mainly because of their transparency that fixed patterns, which may be treated as phatic scaffolding (i.e. not informative but crucial for the effective management of communication channel), require substantial effort by the parties involved in any exchange act.



### **3.3 Communication and miscommunication**

What is visible to an expert may not necessarily be the focus of attention among regular actors on the ICC stage. Accordingly, since even the target text of translation is not decoded solely on the basis of its internal structure or the selection of isolated word units (but is embedded in a broader cultural and contextual environment), translation and interpretation, viewed in their narrow sense, may only function as limited tools of ICC.

In a quantitative manner, communication in a homogeneous environment requires certain competence in (one) language code, a (more or less) fixed pattern of context element interpretation, a (more or less) predictable goal achievement strategy as well as (one) pattern of proper selection of the socially deictic information. In ICC, the participants are usually forced to deal with different languages, different (and often unexpected) communication contexts, goals and deictic information patterns.

Similarly to non-ICC, no inherent value in ICC appears independent of its context. Potential differences in context parameter interpretation may consequently be recognized as risks to ICC, and indeed ICC is quite often defined as a “field of increased risk”, causing “disorder in communication processes” with its impact on both “immediate communication effects” and “future contacts of whole social and ethnic groups” (Duszak, 1998: 332). Should miscommunication be defined as a phenomenon inevitably present in the background of any communication stage, it is even more visible in the background of ICC. One of the sources on ICC between Japanese and non-Japanese mentions “embarrassment”, “tension”, “anger, frustration”, “communication breakdown”, “negative stereotyping” among the factors that appear on the stage of communication (Hidasi, 1999).

Paradoxically, the most visible issues of miscommunication in ICC might be the least visible in an instance of non-ICC, undertaken in comparable circumstances. Lack of readiness to abandon one’s native interpretation schemes, one’s insufficient intercultural competence, uncertainty in intercultural contact, or even factors like negative stereotypes and xenophobia are potential phenomena which participants of ICC and translators/interpreters encounter on a regular basis. Unreasonable expectations towards communication partners, incompatible aims of communication, consequences of decisions and units of information exchange are also typical problems emerging on the stage of ICC.

### 3.4 Intercultural communication and translation/interpretation

In the light of the above statements, the scope of inherently intercultural and phatic activity of the translator/interpreter may be defined as multi-layered, and there is significant responsibility involved in proper ICC flow. At the same time, the translator/interpreter is unable to solve by default all possible communication problems. Moreover, the very presence of the translator/interpreter element (or, according to other communication models, hop or node) in communication models may bring about further incompatibilities between the communication parties, such as a longer path of information exchange (due to the increased number of nodes and and/or noise sources, a direct quantitative consequence).

Just as in non-ICC, on the level of each node the information is not only delivered and sent, but undergoes elaborate processes of interpretation. It is rational to ask how much can be achieved in the process of ICC in the presence of a translator/interpreter or, in other words, whether one hundred percent efficiency may be a rational estimate for an act of communication undertaken in a heterogeneous environment. Information loss (or its unauthorized gain) may also occur due to the insufficient qualifications of a translator/interpreter. However, since this issue has already been covered by numerous translation/interpretation theories, it seems reasonable to focus below on the problematic issues of translation/interpretation processes related to more advanced levels of communication.

It is mainly due to limitations of translation/interpretation processes that this author has postulated the research of these phenomena in terms of *homeostasis of a text* (cf. Jabłoński, 2013). Homeostasis in this specific meaning is understood as the process of generating a target text that should preserve as many relevant properties of a source text as possible. As this may be hard to achieve, the homeostatic activity of a translator/interpreter in actual communication circumstances is related to preserving the maximum amount of original content and supplying it with minimal additional information, in order for it to function in the target environment. This may also come down to the act of recognition of untranslatability of a certain text or its particular elements, should potentially incomprehensible elements emerge, or even to abandon the act of translation/interpretation of some or all elements of an exchange. The latter act is especially demanding for interpreters, for whom a decision to abandon the stage of interpretation or to interpret only selected messages may prove difficult, if even possible.

Along with recognition of translation/interpretation activities as significant efforts by the individuals professionally involved in them, their actual influence on the final result of a communication act in a heterogeneous environment should not be overestimated. It takes also effort from other participants of such acts to socialize towards ICC, which is again not much different from socializing towards non-ICC.

The most basic (IC)C prerequisites include, among others, the fundamental *conditio sine qua non*: recognition of common points of interest. Should this be observed, all parties will experience fewer emerging difficulties, while observing other important rules of interaction; these rules include viewing the heterogeneous culture as a system (not relying on meanings isolated from context), abandoning normative statements (ignoring isolated meanings for the sake of systematic rules, with emphasis on adequacy in a forest vs. trees approach), as well as not automatically linking homogeneous and heterogeneous contexts. This requires significant and constant effort which not every member of a given speech community is able and ready to undertake.

#### 4. Incompatibility gradients

Probably the least optimistic example of the fact that a certain “cultural key” is indispensable in order to understand social (and language) events may be found in Sapir’s birth place; according to traditional or contemporary place name traditions it may be named *Lauenburg* (German) or *Lębork* (Polish), according, at least, to various language versions of Wikipedia. Consequently, a question arises as to where Sapir was actually born: in the former or the latter? Or perhaps “in Germany”, as one of contemporary sources puts it in a fairly neutral manner (Sapir, 1978, inner front cover). The evidence that Sapir was (unfortunately?) right about the complex relations between the linguistic and extralinguistic reality may also be found in the complicated historical events taking place in his birthplace after his (Jewish) family had emigrated to the United States. It used to be a flourishing German town at the end of 19th century. During the World War 2, Lauenburg was invaded by Soviet troops, who, perhaps to take revenge on Germans, went as far as to steal the rail lines and transport them to the USSR, not to mention the random destruction of the town, although it was not a location of fighting at the time.

The contemporary place name is *Lębork*, located in Poland. The inhabitants are Polish people having once been resettled by force (another interesting

event related to ICC) from the Polish territories taken over by the Soviets after the war. They lost their former homes and identity and it may come as little surprise that they are not ready to advertise their town as Sapir's birthplace. While they probably have nothing against Sapir himself or the heritage of the former Jewish community in Lauenburg, they lack a cultural key to understanding why they should care for the history of the town, which is probably still not fully considered their own. As a result, while it is a common Polish practice to commemorate someone's birthplace, the lack of phatic scaffolding for the initiation of this pattern of behavior effectively impedes the evocation of such a procedure.

Trivial everyday activities may also reveal allegedly 'innocent' incompatibilities, based on the symmetry and asymmetry in the adaptation of source elements in a target context. Various source elements very often cannot be properly interpreted in their target usage without a cultural key. Simple phrases may be missing their complicated background, which is visible in the following three incompatible English borrowings (word-for-word Polish translations from English) currently present in Polish communication environment:

1. EN *Have a nice day!* vs. PL *Milego dnia!* (a PL phrase with exactly the same meaning as its EN counterpart has not existed so far);
2. EN *No problem!* vs. PL *Nie ma problemu!* (a previously existing PL phrase with analogous usage: *Nie ma sprawy!*) seems to be gradually displaced by this new EN import);
3. EN *I like it!* vs. PL *Lubię to!* (the phrase has for long existed in PL, although the circumstances of its usage were different; the new import has been implemented – and seems to be doing quite well, at least when it comes to the frequency of its usage – by new social electronic media, including Facebook, instead of its more appropriate version: *Podoba mi się [to].*)

In the Polish communication environment it is enough to say *do widzenia* 'good bye' to end virtually any social encounter, without a need to express wishes for a nice day ahead. It is not usual to mention *problems*, when no problems are present in the context of interaction. Similarly, *liking* (communicated with the Polish verb *lubić*) is more of a long-term process than a short-term, spontaneous act (communicated with the verb *podobać się*). As such, the incompatibility of the (rather thoughtless) usage of such phrases in Polish communication environment is related mostly to the lack of their relation to actual communication procedures.

#### 4.1 Procedures, labels and metalanguages

Based on the (valid) assumption that labels are not compatible across cultures, Wierzbicka (1991) once provided the following comparison of *thanking* in Japan and elsewhere, depicted in Table 1. below:

<i>thank</i>	<i>kansha suru</i>
(a) I know: you did something good for me	(a) I know: you did something good for me
(b) I feel something good towards you because of this	(b) I feel something good towards you because of this  (b') I know: I couldn't do something good like this for you  (b'') I feel something bad because of this
(c) I say this because I want you to feel something good	(c) I say this because I think I should say it

**Table 1.** A comparison of Japanese and non-Japanese *thanking* postulated by Wierzbicka (1991: 157)

Whether or not the elements of comparison quoted above have been selected properly from a purely semantic and pragmatic point of view, there are substantial differences in the ways the non-Japanese (English) and Japanese procedures of *thanking* are perceived and rooted in communication practice.

Surprisingly, there is no explanation by Wierzbicka on why the above differences emerge. Their relation to the widely alleged peculiarities of Japanese discourse properties has been mentioned, among others, by Martin (1964), who rather hastily described “the feeling that Japanese conversation is all formula, with no content” (p. 407) or Coulmas (1981), who apparently felt no objection to concluding that “in Japanese culture the need for original expressions is not strong” (p. 88).

It is hard to understand why the English “(b) I feel something good towards you because of this” given by Wierzbicka above is opposed both to the Japanese “(b) I feel something good towards you because of this” and “(b'') I feel something bad because of this”. At the same time, it is unclear why the English “(c) I say this because I want you to feel something good” is opposed to the Japanese “(c) I say this because I think I should say it.” Furthermore, the example in Table 1 above seems to be based on the notion of *expressing oneself*, used

by Goddard and Wierzbicka (1997) in other sources, and based on the rather biased statement that “Japanese culture is often characterized by its suppression or distrust of verbalism” (p. 237). The authors seem to be convinced that “The high sensitivity to other people’s feelings is linked with the often noted tendency for the Japanese to withhold explicit displays of feeling” (p. 238) and, as a consequence of reasoning based on this claim, they propose the following metalanguage definition of the act of *expressing oneself* as valid exclusively in Japanese culture:

often it is good not to say anything to other people  
 it is not good to say things like this to other people:  
 ‘I want this’, ‘I don’t want this’  
 ‘I think this’, ‘I don’t think this’  
 if I say things like this, someone could feel something bad  
 before I say something to someone  
 it is good to think something like this:  
 I can’t say all that I think  
 if I do, someone could feel something bad  
 (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1997: 238).

Again, quite apart from the fact whether *expressing oneself* is most important in communication, it is good to ponder on the levels of abstraction on which such labels as *distrust of verbalism* and *high sensitivity to other people’s feelings* actually function. How are these phenomena related? Are the English culture and structures of behavior natural and transparent, while Japanese culture is incoherent (one may feel something good and bad at the same time) and incomprehensible (one may feel “something bad” while thanking)? Is the suppression of verbalism exclusive to Japan and the Japanese? Last but not least, can the (non-Japanese=English?) culture in which one can *say anything* exist and function? To answer these questions, it is necessary to define not only procedures, but also the common convictions and schemes that lie behind them. For the sake of simplicity and reliability, this author will demonstrate below some basic and simplified oppositions between the Japanese (JP) and Polish (PL) general convictions and schemes of behavior he has himself encountered and verified as useful in translation/interpretation and ICC training activities.

## 4.2 JP and PL convictions

Common convictions are surely among the most difficult data to collect in any speech community. A fieldwork survey may not prove effective, since native informants (probably surveyed by Goddard and Wierzbicka in the course of their research) may not operate on the level of generalizations suitable for this purpose or be unable to recognize own convictions. Simple (albeit far-reaching) convictions gathered in the course of long-term ICC practice and training include the following presented in Table 2 below:

JP	PL
a. People are basically different (including especially stiff formal regulations, never to be neglected). Most relations are asymmetrical. Lower rank is no shame. In any case, it is better than indefinite rank.	a. People are basically equal (except stiff formal regulations, which in most cases can be neglected). Most relations are symmetrical. Lower rank is a shame. Higher rank may arouse envy.
b. Free exchange of views reveals rather undesirable individual differences.	b. Free exchange of views enables the interaction partners to know each other.
c. Group relations are more important.	c. The group is not that important.
d. It is better to hide one's personal views, especially towards one's vertical senior.	d. Hiding one's personal views makes communication difficult, regardless of ranks.
e. Sincere behavior depends on context. It may be allowed within one's own group.	e. Sincerity means that one always acts in the same manner, regardless of context.
f. Outside one's group only predictable role play enables effective interaction. Role standard violation is incomprehensible.	f. Should people like to play roles, they ought to be creative. Role standard violation is creative.

**Table 2.** A set of JP and PL convictions considered typical in a given communication environment (modified after Jabłoński, 2010 and Jabłoński, 2013: 219-220)

### 4.3 Behavior schemes

The notion of behavior schemes is postulated in this paper on the basis of patterns of Japanese predictable behavior proposed by Sugiyama-Lebra (1976: 112). There are basically two (not many) patterns in JP: RITUAL and INTIMATE, since it is not possible to act in a private manner on an official stage. Accordingly, the ANOMIC (*public + unofficial*) patterns are perceived by the same author as avoided and attributed in JP solely to the situations of open conflict or marked with a high level of uncertainty, as presented on Table 3 below:

JP	<i>official</i>	<i>unofficial</i>
<i>private</i>	- (non-existing)	INTIMATE
<i>public</i>	RITUAL	ANOMIC (no rules)

**Table 3.** JP behaviour schemes according to Sugiyama-Lebra (1976: 112)

Should the INTIMATE pattern be inapplicable, the RITUAL pattern is used. The RITUAL pattern is strongly preferred at the initial stages of interaction. With no pattern recognized, an instance of no communication or communication breakdown may arise.

On the contrary, in a Polish communication environment at least four (relatively many) schemes of behavior may be defined, according to the parameters quoted above after Sugiyama Lebra: SINCERE, INTIMATE, RITUAL and HONORABLE, as proposed in Table 4. below:

PL	<i>official</i>	<i>unofficial</i>
<i>private</i>	SINCERE	INTIMATE
<i>public</i>	RITUAL	HONORABLE

**Table 4.** PL behaviour schemes according to Jabłoński (2013: 217)

In PL, all situational properties (*private vs. public* and *official vs. unofficial*) may be combined, in a manner unthinkable in JP. Contrary to JP, the RITUAL pattern is avoided and whenever the INTIMATE pattern is not applicable, the SINCERE pattern (unknown in JP) is attempted (or even forced). Furthermore, the



HONORABLE pattern (= *do more or less than expected*, interpreted as offensive in JP) is often used in case of uncertainty in PL.

#### 4.4 Schemes and their immediate effects

In JP environment, the execution of RITUAL behavior scheme is in most cases obligatory. This may explain why one may behave as if they *felt something bad* (in terms of the English culture, not the Japanese, however) in situations of *thanking*, when the “*thanker*” is automatically granted the lower vertical rank to the favor beneficiary. He thus recognizes the trouble he makes to the “*thankee*” with the favor received. Quite apart from how big the favor actually is, on the level of verbal behavior it cannot be interpreted as easily returnable, since this would diminish the “*thankee’s*” higher vertical rank of benefactor. Should no ready RITUAL pattern be available, communication may simply be avoided.

In PL, quite similarly to an English environment, the lack of a RITUAL (= *observe ready schemes of behavior designed for fixed vertical ranks*) pattern may be creatively and relatively freely substituted with the SINCERE (= *be frank*) or even the INTIMATE (= *be friends*) pattern. When Poles thank someone for something, they usually prefer to think that they actually *mean it* in the SINCERE manner, quite apart from the RITUAL pattern of behavior and ranks. It is also why they do not perceive the procedure of thanking as based on the asymmetry of ranks – there is no reason to *feel something bad* because of it. Even some RITUAL activities may, at least in some cases, be perceived as avoidable in a SINCERE manner (not perceived as obligation) in PL.

In JP, the execution of RITUAL is viewed as the ultimate guarantee of safety. Much (including individual convenience and the alleged acts of *expressing oneself*) may be sacrificed for it (cf. the JP *Shikataga nai*. attitude, ‘Nothing can be done about it [but persevere].’) In PL, SINCERE pattern is governed purely by individual convenience. A threat to it may be explicitly perceived as oppressive (cf. *Ale ja nie lubię/nie chcę*. ‘But I do not fancy/want that [and I do not care].’) Such behavior is in most cases going to be perceived as childish in the JP environment.

As a consequence of the above, in JP much can be communicated in an almost automatic and thoughtless RITUAL manner, while in PL numerous activities may even be improvised, when no pattern is available (a method unknown

in JP). This further fosters the preference for ready patterns of behavior and rank recognition (or even the preference to avoid any communication-related behavior, should a pattern be unavailable) in the JP environment, while in PL the lack of pattern is viewed instead as a challenge, usually supplemented by individual creativity. Many RITUAL patterns of JP behavior are neglected by Poles, to the advantage of the PL SINCERE patterns, unknown in the JP environment. It is not hard to imagine problems related to this, which do indeed emerge frequently in actual JP-PL ICC situations.

A brief review of communication patterns proposed in this section reveals substantial differences in JP and PL attitudes, including the recognition and interpretation of certain social deixis patterns (virtual ranks). Also, the patterns known and implemented in a given environment may be subject to specific limitations, which are not obvious to a cultural intruder.

#### **4.5 Certain limitations**

Procedures are ready schemes, and are easy to use. As such, the procedure core, its evocation circumstances and goals are basically constant. While certain procedure details may be prone to changes or further interweaving and merging – as the exceptions from procedures may constitute further procedures, the basics may be defined easily, with simple labels.

At the same time, procedures are nothing more than schemes. Researching them does not equal predicting or automating human behavior. Not everything is communicable and not everything is predictable. In some instances, communication on the level of procedures may prove impossible, due to the lack of phatic scaffolding for interaction.

Furthermore, in some cases, the very context of ICC may foster unexpected procedure alterations (i.e. the very presence of heterogeneous elements on the scene of an exchange may influence its actual content). The actual instances of ICC may be further influenced by certain properties of context, also related to communication logistics through the idiosyncratic properties and attitudes of its parties.

## 5. (Instead of) conclusions

ICC does not differ from non-ICC in terms of being embedded in a specific context. They are both related to the (phatic) readiness and motivation of parties to communicate, as well as to the projected (intended) results and recognized schemes of social relations (social deixis). The research on ICC acts (intentionally described above in terms of intercultural honorifics) may be performed only on a suitable level of abstraction.

The acts of ICC cannot be translated/interpreted in an automatic manner outside a certain context frame. Although their linguistic content may probably be rendered (with necessary approximation), specific properties of communication context are usually multi-layered and difficult to process outside their primary source interpretation frame. Neither the actual presence of a translator/interpreter nor the process of globalization change this fact.

Procedures (not only those related to actual communication, but including the pre- and after-communication convictions and projection of potential results) are predictable entities in the first place. They are easy to label, which is convenient, although certain precautions should be observed: simple labels may also be subject to translation/interpretation, with all related consequences. The actual meanings of procedure constituents may be defined and the result of their implementation verified only in actual (IC)C contexts. Thus simple labels of *expressing oneself*, *displaying one's feelings* or *feeling something good/bad* may, quite unexpectedly, prove to be culturally biased. As such, they may be ineffective or even counter-effective in explaining context-embedded ICC patterns.

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## *Rènao*: What does it mean to have a good time the Chinese way? An ethnopragmatic exploration of a Chinese cultural keyword

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### Abstract

The paper examines the main uses and the symbolic significance of the Chinese cultural keyword *rènao*. Often rendered in English with its literal gloss of ‘hot and noisy’, it has been viewed by both Chinese and Western scholars as primary in making sense of Chinese social behaviour, across a variety of contexts. The present study analyses two Chinese cultural texts – a report from a local temple festival and a debate over two different styles of feasting, which frequently rely on this salient cultural notion. While the formula *crowds, events, noise* in the psychological literature dealing with this Chinese social value is often confirmed by the described cultural data, it is argued that close attention to the meaning and form of the descriptive language used by the cultural actors yields valuable insights into indigenous viewpoints. In particular, the notion of *rènao* turns out to be closely intertwined with other prominent Chinese cultural concerns, such as the idea of *rénqíngwèi* (‘flavour of human feelings’), Chinese cultural identity, Chinese language, and a particularly complex culinary culture as described in the anthropological literature.

**Keywords:** Chinese language and culture, ethnopragmatics, Chinese social interaction

*Rènao* is a Chinese word often translated as lively, bustling, or exciting, but none of these translations capture the meaning well (Warden & Chen, 2008: 217).

### 1. Introduction

Unlike the Chinese notions of ‘face’ or ‘shame’, which have attracted considerable attention and research by many scholars in cross-cultural studies, examples of language-specific elaboration of a hypothesized universal affective

‘conceptual theme’ of ‘I feel something good’ (cf. Wierzbicka 1999: 50) seem to have received relatively little attention, in the context of Chinese language and culture studies. To address this imbalance, this paper focuses on the culturally significant Mandarin Chinese word *rènao* (roughly ‘lively’, literal morphemic gloss: ‘hot:noisy’) – often described as essential to the understanding of the culture-specific notion of ‘having good time’, consumer behaviour, or a positive and sought out social atmosphere in the Chinese context (cf. Link et al., 1989). While Laing (1989: 160) characterized *rènao* as ‘the atmosphere of cheerful noisiness, regarded as a positive indication of the socially well ordered, happy Confucian family’, the word itself and the cultural practices associated with it have also drawn the attention of some participants of Chinese-Western cross-cultural encounters (cf. for example, Salzman, 1990: 123).

Modern Standard Chinese (*Pǔtōnghuà*) textual examples and expressions described in this paper are presented in the commonly used *Hànyǔ Pīnyīn* system of romanization. Grammatical abbreviations used in the glosses and translations from Chinese follow the linguistic terminology of Li and Thompson (1989: xxiii). Unless otherwise acknowledged, the translations from Chinese are my own. Examples of Chinese phrases and expressions from other authors quoted in this paper retain their original mode of transliteration and spelling. For a succinct account of the sociolinguistic background to the emergence of the many systems of romanization of Modern Chinese, see Norman (1989: 257-263). A glossary of key Chinese cultural expressions (including Chinese characters and their *pīnyīn* romanization) appearing in this paper is appended at the end of the article.

As for its theoretical methodology, this paper relies on the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach to the study of meaning in culture, in particular on its subfield known as ethnopragmatics, characterized by Goddard (2006: 14-18) as specifically concerned with “culture internal accounts of speech practices”. Noting the issue of ‘terminological ethnocentrism’ plaguing much of the contemporary cultural description, Goddard (2006: 15) argues that “Ethnographic and sociological studies (...) often ‘re-code’ indigenous terms and viewpoints into those of the external observer, thereby losing touch with the indigenous view – point.” (see also Boski, 2012: 3-4 for a similar critique from a cross-cultural psychologist’s point of view)

Describing his arguments in favour of NSM-based approach to ethnopragmatics, Goddard maintains that unlike the analytical approaches which



directly rely on highly complex (technical) and language-specific (typically, English-specific) descriptive vocabulary, NSM offers some unique advantages to the scholars of language and culture which minimise the danger of ethnocentric bias creeping into the linguistic makeup of many forms of cultural description (Goddard, 2006: 15). Thus, while assessing the relative merits of various types of linguistic evidence employed in developing ethnopragmatic studies, Goddard mentions cultural keywords as one valuable source of insight into the communicative culture of a given society, in particular “terms for values, social categories, ethnopsychological constructs” are regarded by him as helpful in making sense of the cultural priorities of the languages in question.

Adopting an ethnopragmatic perspective elaborated in Goddard (2006, ed.), this study scrutinizes linguistic and symbolic evidence pertinent to the proposed cultural script intended to encapsulate the key affective and behavioural aspects of the analysed Chinese cultural concept of *rènao*. Such a cultural script would be aimed to “spell out different ‘local’ conventions of discourse using the metalanguage of universal semantic primes” (Goddard, 2006: 15). Given a generally acknowledged central role of festivals, feasting and food in Chinese culture (see for example, Simoons, 1990: 14-31), this paper examines two examples of Chinese media reports focusing, respectively, on the progress of a popular temple festival in a provincial city, and on the popular debate over relative merits and drawbacks of two different feasting styles, with different symbolic associations: the traditional Chinese way of *jùcānzhi* (collective style of taking meals, involving a lot of *rènao*) and the ‘modern’ *fēncānzhi* (individual style of taking meals, which tends to be perceived as ‘Western’ and lacking in *rènao*). In both cases, the issue of demonstrating versus not demonstrating a sufficient amount of *rènao* seems to be of primary relevance to the cultural actors of the reported events.

## 2. *Rènao* as a Chinese cultural keyword

Both Chinese and foreign scholars alike agree on the importance of the word *rènao* in Chinese culture (and across Chinese cultures) in their spatial and temporal differentiation. For example, Warden and Chen (2008: 216) claim that “the concept of *rènao* is common in all Chinese cultural settings”, while adding that what they highlight as the ‘the central concept of *rènao*’ (ibid.) is essential

in understanding consumers' behaviour in any Chinese cultural setting. Trying to clarify the complex nature of the cultural meaning of this word, they write:

The literal translation is hot and noisy which also is often literally true and leads Western visitors (...) to mistake *rènao* locations as chaotic and out-of-control – problems to be solved. For Chinese, however, *rènao* is so ordinary it is often cognitively taken for granted (Warden and Chen, 2008: 217).

In a similar vein, some scholars of early Chinese literary traditions describe *rènao* as “moments of merriment and cheerfulness” or “state of excitement” reproduced in many subtle psychological passages of Classical Chinese literature (see, for example, Santangelo, 2003, quoted in Warden and Chen, 2008).

Yu (2004: 132), in one of the anthropological studies touching upon the subject of popular culture in a Chinese context, singles out Chinese night markets as an example of a notable social institution of communal life, which has persisted through the upheavals of Chinese history. As with other culturally significant public spaces, it happens every evening that “customers visit night markets to consume food, purchase merchandise, and try their hands at games of chance – or simply to enjoy the ‘hot and noisy’ (*rènao*) atmosphere that is a distinctive feature of Taiwanese night markets” (p. 132). Thus, as Yu puts it,

to the Chinese people, *rènao* is a key concept and an important feature of any successful celebration. It is considered embarrassing or foreboding to hold a wedding, banquet, or in some cases, a funeral that lacks *rènao* – the emotion that transforms formal occasions into warm and interactive events (Yu, 2004: 138).

Social significance of this affect is present in that “*rènao* is also considered to be a manifestation of the human flavour (*renqing wei*) that is generated from enthusiastic human interactions” (Yu, 2004: 138). Yu's comments situating *rènao* within the larger field of the ‘flavor of human feelings (*renqingwei*)’ merit particular attention, given the acknowledged significance of the latter concept in the general art of social relationships in China (see, in particular, the descriptions presented in Yang, 1994: 119-126).

The attribute of *rènao*, viewed as an emerging feature of Chinese social space, imbues it with individually desirable qualities, which may result in a significant modification of a cultural actor's behaviour. According to Yu

(2004: 140), “being in a *rènao* place (like a night market) creates a subjective feeling of safety. (...) A physical and emotional sense of relaxation leads to what many informants believe is undisciplined behaviour.” Notable indications of this psychological stance are mentioned by the anthropologist – “Dressing down is perhaps more frequent than any other aspect of relaxed behaviour – wearing slippers instead of shoes and shorts instead of pants is part of what night market strolling is about”. Moreover, Yu draws attention to the likely psychological dynamics underlying such observed ways of acting by pointing out that other frequently-noted manifestations of relaxed behaviour involve “eating while walking along a street, eating food in an inappropriate manner, talking and laughing freely in public place, bargaining without considering one’s own status, rummaging through merchandise, and littering carelessly”. Significantly, as the Chinese scholar observes, “All of these are considered to be actions of people from lower social and economic classes – except when they are done in night markets.” Yu underscores the psychological significance of such activities, maintaining that while such behavioural transgressions are ‘both minor and specific’, they still serve an important function “as significant sources of pleasure in daily Taiwanese life” (ibid.).

### 3. Definitions of the lexical item *rènao* in Chinese sources – a preliminary semantic picture

From a descriptive linguistic point of view, the word *rènao* is an example of a parallel verb compound ( $V_1V_2$ PVC), where “both elements signal the same type of predicative notion” (Li & Thompson, 1989: 68-70). English dictionary glosses of the word’s two constituent *zì* (i.e. monosyllabic characters/words) include such words and expressions as ‘heat, hot, fever, craze, popular’ and ‘noisy, make a noise, give vent, go in for’, respectively (cf. *HYC, A Chinese-English Dictionary*, 1988: 570). From a semantic point of view, however, it can be noted that the matching glosses used in both monolingual Chinese and bilingual Chinese-English dictionaries are not just lexical units denoting unmediated, internal, psychological states, but instead tend to convey an external manifestation of the underlying psychological state. For example, the lexical description of the analysed word contained in the monolingual *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn (XHC, Dictionary of Modern Chinese*, 1988: 958) distinguishes the following three prominent points of the word’s usage: (1) *rènao* can be used to describe a ‘scene’ (*jǐngxiàng*) – where its meaning is rendered with a four-syllabic ‘elaborate

expression' (*chéngyǔ*) *fánshèng-húoyuè* (roughly, 'thriving and brisk') and the examples include *rènao de dàjīe* / 'rènao main street'; *guǎngchǎng shang rénsān-rénhāi, shífēn rènao* / 'the square is a sea of people, very rènao'; (2) the meaning is described as 'causing an occasion (*chǎngmiàn*) to be lively, the spirit happy and cheerful' (*yúkuài*), exemplified with the following two sentences: *wōmen zhǔnbèi zúzhì wényú húodòng, lái rènao yīxià* / 'we are preparing some recreational activities, come rènao a little! /, and *dào le jiérì dàjiā rènao-rènao ba!* / 'the holiday has arrived, let everybody rènao a bit!' (3) a scene rich in *rènao*, as in *tā zhǐ gùzhe qiáo rènao, wàng le huíjiā le* / 'he only cared for watching *rènao*, and forgot to return home'. This tripartite division is also identified in bilingual Chinese-English dictionaries, for example, *HYC, Chinese-English Dictionary* (1988: 571) distinguishes three relevant aspects of the word's use, and contains the following translation: '(1) lively, bustling with noise and excitement, (2) liven things up, have a jolly time, (3) a scene of bustle and excitement; a thrilling sight'. The dictionary adds a couple of relevant expressions which confirm the general lexical picture presented above, such as *rènao de cài shìchǎng* ('a food market bustling with activity, a busy food market'), *nà tiān tāmen jù zài yīqǐ le, rènao le yī fān* ('On that day they got together and had a jolly time'), and a common phrase *kàn rènao* ('watch the excitement; watch the fun').

Popular Chinese online dictionaries contain a similar set of identified meanings – for example, the *Báidù Bǎikē* encyclopedic dictionary lists five basic explanatory points of the word's meaning, originally prefaced with the supplied English expressions [in square brackets] enumerated as follows: (1) [bustling with activity] *jǐngxiàng fánshèng-húoyuè*; (2) [fun] *yǒuqù de rén* (*huò shìwù*); (3) [lively] *fēnfánshèngdà*; (4) [liven up] *shǐ húoyuè-qilai, shǐ yúkuài-qilai*; (5) [have a jolly time] *huānkuài, xìnggaōcǎiliè*. Chinese explanatory phrases used in this fragment consist of fixed phrasemes (typically four-syllabic expressions) whose figurative meanings yield insights into the semantic scope of the word *rènao*. Thus, the first four-syllabic expression conveys the positive meaning of 'greatly prosperous and lively', the third one means 'numerous and flourishing', the fourth one expresses the combined causative and inceptive meanings of 'to make (one) start being lively, make (one) start being happy and cheerful', while the fifth element conveys the meaning of 'happy and excited'. Only the second explanatory line lacks a similar verbal pattern, and relies on a key Anglo-American word *fun* (cf. Wierzbicka, 1999: 250) linked to the Chinese explanation roughly translatable as 'an interesting person (or thing)'. The same dictionary also enumerates the words *ānjìng* ('quiet') and *níngjìng* ('tranquil') as

the antonyms of *rènao*, and the words *xuānnào* ('noisy') and *xuānrǎng* ('clamour') as its synonyms.

Also helpful in a preliminary appreciation of the meaning of this Chinese word is a look at the scenes and circumstances tagged with the word *rènao* by Chinese Internet users on the major *Bǎidù* image search site (*Bǎidù Túpiàn*). A simple search for pictures tagged with this label yields a wealth of photos and visual depictions of Chinese festivals, busy streets, teeming disco floors, and crowds of spectators at daily street events. Celebration, food and loud festivities seem to be ever-present in the flow of uploaded images. Prominent related search terms linked on the website include: *rènao Chūnjié túpiàn* ('*rènao* Spring Festival picture'), *qúnli hǎo rènao* ('very *rènao* in a group'), *rènao de jìqū* ('*rènao* district'), and *Xīnjiāng bāzhā rènao chǎngjǐng* ('*rènao* scenes from a Xīnjiāng bazaar'). Following the linked pages brings more images of colourful, loud, and animated human interaction. On the other hand, a simple image search for the antonymic word *ānjìng* ('quiet, calm') results in a wealth of pictures of solitary women and children, as well as serene scenes of nature (trees and water in particular).

It has been noted that drumming (and more generally, percussive music) constitutes an integral part of festive Chinese atmosphere. For example, the definition of the word *rènao* in the *Bǎidù* Encyclopaedia (*Bǎidù Bǎikē*) is accompanied by a picture presenting drummers clad in red for the traditional celebration of the Lantern Festival (*Yuánxiāojié*). Percussive sounds (such as drumming) appear to be culturally rooted in the traditionally positive folk perceptions of noisiness as a force which could be used to drive away bad ghosts and other noxious forces. This cultural link between the traditional value of *rènao* and folk Chinese functions of music was aptly noted by an American classical musician living in modern China, who described one of his encounters with his Chinese hosts as follows:

He said that for the majority of Chinese who are peasants and laborers, music is enjoyed as a sort of background entertainment and is intended as an accompaniment to *rènao*, which means literally 'heat and noise'. *Rènao* is the Chinese word for good fun, the kind you might have at an amusement park in America, and noise and movement are essential to it (Salzman, 1990: 123).

However, the cultural prominence of the Chinese concept of *rènao* has been observed in other social settings as well. In a sociological paper devoted to the Chinese value of *rènao* and consumption metaphors, Warden and Chen

(2008: 228) regard it as both “a core traditional value” and “a metaphor for positive feelings”. The authors stress that the value of *rènao* is essential in making sense of Chinese consumer behaviour, as it induces people to refocus their activities from the traditional (communal) sphere to the modern commercial events and accompanying practices. As they explain, “If a consumer hears of a location with great price, lots of food and packed full of people, the immediate thought is of *rènao*” (Warden & Chen, 2008: 228). While observing that the traditional archetypal *rènao* locations, such as fresh food markets, night markets and temple fairs still remain popular, they note that some modern global retailers (e.g. McDonald’s restaurants) tend to co-opt certain design features of temple bazaars to attract more customers (Warden & Chen, 2008). Similarly to Yu’s anthropological study of Taiwanese night markets quoted above, Warden and Chen (2009: 218) single out three determining constituents of *rènao*, namely: events, crowds, and noise – noting that this particular combination allows an individual to gain “a feeling of social security through belonging to a social group.” Yet, they remark that the manifestations of the value of *rènao* observed in international contexts may result in a cultural clash, since their “emphasis on crowding and de-emphasis on organization, cleanliness and personal space are often antithetic to Western servicescape design values” (Warden & Chen, 2008: 228).

The following part of this paper probes the cultural significance of the descriptive language used in two Chinese media accounts of culturally significant popular events. The first text is a picture-set (*zǔtú*) report of a traditional temple fair in a Chinese town, where I focus on the key symbolic aspects of the depicted events and the cultural meaning of Chinese descriptive phrases which accompany them. The second one is a journalistic report (News.sina, 2004) of a popular debate about the advantages and disadvantages of two feasting styles emerging in the context of the Spring Festival (*Chūnjié*) celebrations, where the value of *rènao* is often mentioned in the reported voices of Chinese participants.

#### **4. *Rènao* in cultural context: two Chinese scenes**

As argued by the researchers quoted in the first part of this paper, the word *rènao* tends to evoke a number of popular, socially salient and ‘close-to-the-experience’ cultural practices, objects, activities and values. In the first part of this section, I am going to focus on the descriptive vocabulary of a Mainland Chinese

journalistic report from a local temple fair in the prefecture city of *Yāntái* in *Shāndōng* province (Jiaodong.net, 2011). Both the title of the report and the descriptive phrases accompanying the set of twenty-four pictures of festive scenes bring out the prominent aspects of cultural performance, and direct readers' attention to the salient elements of the reported scenes. The title of the report (below) uses the word *rènao* twice to praise the attractiveness of the local temple fair with the visiting public.

- (1) *Yāntái Yùhuángdǐng miàohuì rènao kāichǎng, hǎokàn hǎowán hǎo rènao*  
 ‘Temple festival at the Yùhuángdǐng temple in Yāntái begins with *rènao*, it's good to watch, good fun, and good *rènao*.’

The picture-set follows the temporal development of the festival, focusing on the culturally salient aspects of the unfolding events which are introduced with the following captions, reproduced in *pīnyīn* transliteration and translated in the Table 1 below:

Chinese caption	Free translation	Commentary
<i>Yāntái Yùhuángdǐng miàohuì rènao kāichǎng, hǎokàn hǎowán hǎo rènao</i>	‘Temple festival at the Yùhuángdǐng temple in Yāntái begins with <i>rènao</i> , it's good to watch, good fun, and very <i>rènao</i> ’	The word <i>rènao</i> occurs twice in the title, emphasizing the popular appeal of the event.
<i>zhòngduō mínsú biǎoyǎn liàngxiàng</i>	‘numerous folk performances appear onstage’	‘Folk performance’ is mentioned. The occurrence of the verb <i>biǎoyǎn</i> (‘to perform’) is worth noting.
<i>biǎoyǎn xīyǐn le shàngwàn yóukè rù yuán guānkàn</i>	‘artists’ performance attracted numerous tourists entering the area to watch’	‘Large numbers’ ( <i>shàngwàn</i> ) are mentioned.
<i>xiǎochī tān qián yóukè rúzhī</i>	‘tourists are crowding before the foodstalls’	‘Stalls with snacks’ ( <i>xiǎochī tān</i> ) are typical of such fairs.
<i>tánghúlu hé kǎoróuchuàn shì miàohuì bì chī měishí</i>	‘caramel apples and roast-meat skewers are the must-eat delicacies at the temple festival’	Traditional Chinese festive ‘snacks’ ( <i>xiǎochī</i> ) are mentioned as examples of food to try at the temple fair.

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<i>miàohuì shàng gāoqiāo biǎoyǎn</i>	‘performers walking on stilts at the temple festival’	Another visually salient type of performance is present.
<i>wànyú shìmín hé yóukè cānyù Yùhuángdǐng miàohuì</i>	‘great numbers of townspeople and tourists participate in the Yùhuángdǐng temple festival’	Another case where large numbers of different groups of people participating in the festival are mentioned
<i>gōngyuán nēi rénshānrénhǎi</i>	‘huge crowds in the park’	Emphasizing the large number of people with a set phrase glossed as ‘people-mountains-people-seas’ (i.e. huge crowds).
<i>huǒhóng de yāogǔ biǎoyǎn</i>	‘fiery performance with waist-drums’	Drumming performance as a prominent event at the fair (2 pictures).
<i>jīngcǎi biǎoyǎn xīyǐn le zhòngduó guānzhòng</i>	‘brilliant performance attracted crowds of spectators’	Attractiveness of the event to a very large number of spectators.
<i>gōngyuán nēi rén mǎnwéihuàn</i>	‘vast crowds in the park’	Using an emphasizing fixed expression <i>rén mǎnwéihuàn</i> (‘people-full-become-danger’) to stress the unusual popularity of the event.
<i>xìjù biǎoyǎn tóngyàng jīngcǎi</i>	‘dramatic performance is equally brilliant’	Praise for the folk opera performers.
<i>jīqíng yāngge duì</i>	‘enthusiastic <i>yāngge</i> team’	Yangko dance – one of the most popular and energetic folk Chinese dance forms
<i>guānzhòng bùduàn jiàohǎo</i>	‘spectators’ unceasing applause’	Stressing the unusual degree of praise expressed towards the performers
<i>liúxià měihǎo shùnjiān</i>	‘preserving beautiful moments’	Preserving the evidence of one’s participation in the event is valuable – the spectators are avid photographers

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<i>huájǐjù biǎoyǎn</i>	‘performance of a <i>huájǐjù</i> ’	Comic talk performance
<i>shòu guānzhòng xǐ’ài huájǐjù biǎoyǎn shòu</i>	‘performance of the comic talk receives the audience’s appreciation ( <i>xǐ’ài</i> )’	compound emotion word <i>xǐ’ài</i> (roughly, ‘love’) used to describe the audience’s reaction carries the connotation of ‘being keen’ – hence, willing to do things such as clapping, applauding and smiling
<i>píyǐngxì biǎoyǎn</i>	‘shadow play performance’	Shadow puppet show – full of bright colours and lively performance
<i>Jiǎnzhǐ yìshù zhǎnshì</i>	‘Paper-cutting exhibition’	Displaying one of the most popular Chinese handicrafts
<i>Méishí zhǎnmài</i>	‘Exhibition and sale of delicacies’	Exhibition and tasting of food – an indispensable element of such events.
<i>Yùhuángdǐng miào huì hǎokàn hǎowán hǎo rènao</i>	‘Temple festival at <i>Yùhuángdǐng</i> is good to watch, good fun, and very <i>rènao</i> ’	The last caption restates the title of the entire photoset

**Table 1.** Picture captions in a journalistic report from a local temple fair

Arguably, a number of meaning-related features of Chinese descriptive sentences and expressions which accompany the pictures highlight and emphasize the dynamic nature of the temple festival. The captions underscore and praise the enthusiasm of folk performers and positively describe the engaged spectatorship of the festival-goers. Below, I summarize the main verbal elements of the Chinese picture captions, used to convey the dynamic nature of a given cultural event:

- Perhaps the first element to be noted is the compound word *biǎoyǎn* (‘show:play’) often translated into English as ‘to perform, to act’ (V) or ‘performance, play’ (N). The word highlights the ongoing and active nature of the events, and it is used in such contexts as *mínsú biǎoyǎn* (‘folk performance’), *gāoqiāo biǎoyǎn* (‘walking on stilts performance’), *yāogǔ biǎoyǎn* (‘waist-drum performance’), *huájǐjù biǎoyǎn* (comic talk performance’), *píyǐngxì biǎoyǎn* (‘shadow play performance’).

The qualitative nature of *biǎoyǎn* ('performance') is conveyed with such compound modifiers as *huǒhóng* (lit. 'fire:red' – fiery, enthusiastic), *jīqíng* ('utmost:emotion' – passion), and *jīngcǎi* (lit. 'perfect:colour' – brilliant) aimed to convey both the commitment and spectacular virtuosity of the *yāogǔ* drummers and *yāngge* folk dance teams.

- Large numbers of participants, actors and events being present or presented at the site of the festival are important. The appearance of large numbers is conveyed linguistically in several ways, such as using emphasizing modifiers, e.g. *zhòngduō* (lit. 'heavy:many' – numerous), or *shàngwàn* (lit. 'over 10 thousand' – very numerous), using morphologically fixed (usually four-syllabic) expressions (*chéngyǔ*), to enhance rhetorical effectiveness of the text, e.g. *rénshānrénhǎi* (lit. 'people-mountains-people-seas' – huge crowds), *rénmǎnwéihuàn* (lit. 'people-full-become-danger' – people are so numerous that it can be dangerous). One can also note the phrase *yóukè rúzhī* (lit. 'tourists are as knitted, woven') i.e. very numerous.
- Appreciating and tasting food are prominent activities at the fair. As observed by some scholars quoted earlier in this paper, certain types of Chinese food appear to be strongly linked to the festive atmosphere of such events – and one caption identifies this type of popular appeal in a succinct way: *xiǎochī tān qián yóukè rúzhī* ('tourists are crowding before the stalls with snacks'). The important cultural category here is that of *xiǎochī* (lit. 'small:eat', usually rendered with the English noun 'snacks'). That this particular category of Chinese food appears to be virtually emblematic of truly *rènao* events has been amply documented by Yu (2004). Two examples of such dishes are identified in the captions: *tánghúlu* ('caramel-coated apples') and *kǎoróuchuàn* ('roast-meat skewers'). Unlike the 'proper' dishes of Chinese cuisine (i.e. *cài*, see Simoons, 1991: 15) both of these examples of *xiǎochī* are typically consumed when standing or walking (as opposed to sitting) and socializing with other people at the temple fair. Also, the exhibition and sale of various 'fine foods/culinary delicacies' (*méishi*) is identified as a notable feature of the temple fair in *Yāntái* city.
- Visual (or, perhaps, more broadly) sensory aspects of the event are prominent. Spectacular objects and activities constitute an indispensable element of the scenes qualified as *rènao* by Chinese cultural actors.

Thus, walking on stilts (*gāoqiāo*) is mentioned, as is Yangko folk dancing, well-known for its dynamic and colourful appeal. Notably, *two* pictures show virtuosic performances of a team of drummers (*yāogǔ*).

- The public, who are identified with such nominal expressions as: *yóukè* ('tourist, sightseer'), *shìmín* ('townspeople'), *guānzhòng* ('spectators') manifest their participation in the event by engaging in the following activities explicitly named in the captions: *guānkàn* ('watch, view'), *cānyù* ('participate'), but also by sharing their appreciation and interest which are conveyed by such linguistic expressions as: *bùduàn jiàohǎo* ('unceasing applause'), *xǐ'ài* ('love, be keen on') and taking pictures, described in one of the captions as *liúxià měihǎo shùnjiān* ('preserving beautiful moments'). The final caption of *Yùhuángdǐng miào huì hǎokàn hǎowán hǎo rènao* ('Temple fair of *Yùhuángdǐng* is spectacular, exciting and very *rènao*') was placed at the picture of a bespectacled boy leaving the temple fair area. While the text echoes the title of the whole photoset, it seems pertinent to observe that the first predicative directly preceding the word *rènao*, namely, *hǎokàn* ('good-looking, nice', but also 'interesting') – tends to suggest a more active dimension of the experienter's involvement with the subject, while the other predicative *hǎowán* ('amusing, interesting') carries a similar connotation of a potentially more active subjective engagement with the photographed scenes.

It has been frequently observed that food and cuisine possess a strikingly rich symbolic significance in Chinese culture. According to Simoons (1991: 14-15), "food plays such an important role in Chinese life as to lead many to characterize the Chinese as having a food-centred culture." While writing about the central social relevance of cuisine, Simoons rather clearly intended to aim at the concept of *rènao*, contrasting the overwhelming silence of "the typical bed-and-breakfast place in London" with "Chinese restaurants [which] are noisy places, for the Chinese like noise and dislike quiet, a perspective reflected in the Chinese word for a pleasant time, which, in translation means 'hot and noisy'" (ibid.).

In a similar way to the photo-story report described above, the following text is rather characteristic in that it, too, promotes the word *rènao* to a part of its title – as it explicates certain Chinese cultural practices and interactions where this value and its display are expected and highly appreciated, namely

feasting in a large family circle on the occasion of the most quintessential of Chinese celebrations – the Spring Festival (*Chūnjié*).

The festivities described in the news report (news.sina.com.cn, 2004) took place in the wake of a series of Beijing administrative authorities' decisions to reduce risks of SARS epidemic threatening parts of China at that time (i.e. 2004). One of the authorities' decisions involved promoting a certain change in feasting style arrangements, aimed at minimizing risks of contagion and strengthening the standards of hygiene in public places. In particular, the planned change involved encouraging restaurant-owners to furnish their clients with appropriate dining-table arrangements to consume their dishes strictly from their individual plates, rather than to pick their food from one common plate served to everyone. Called the 'separate system' (*fēncānzhī* – lit. 'separate meal system'), it was opposed to the traditional Chinese 'collective system' (called *jùcānzhī* – lit. 'together meal system') commonly practised in popular Chinese food establishments. However, the practice of having 'separate style' meals did not turn out to be particularly popular with the majority of Chinese customers. While the dictionary meaning of the compound *jùcān* reads 'dine together (usually on festive occasions; have a dinner party)' (*HYC, Chinese-English Dictionary*, 1988: 372), it seems that in the popular perception, eating in accordance with the traditional Chinese style of food consumption increases the sought-out social aspects of this activity and *rènao*, while the 'separate style' of *fēncānzhī* – officially praised as "hygienic", "scientific", and/or modern" is informally perceived as cold and unappealing.

Popular controversies regarding the two alternative styles of dining are the subject addressed in the following journalistic report. The place of the reported conversations is the famous *Quánjùdé* restaurant in Beijing where the author of the report was invited by the restaurant manager and some of his Chinese guests to participate in their family meal and listen to their views on the recently introduced dining policy and its social significance. In the following fragment of this paper I will quote from, translate and comment on some Chinese native speakers' opinions regarding different styles of taking meals, sociable behaviour at the table, and *rènao* atmosphere at the time of Spring Festival.

The essence of the problem is pinpointed in the title of the report, which explicitly identifies the Chinese cultural values pertinent to the issue of having culturally satisfying feasts:

- (2) *Chūnjié fēncānzhi jiàohǎo bù jiàozuò jiàngdī rènao qifēn réngíngwèi bùzú*  
 ‘Separate meal system at the Spring Festival is praised but unappealing: the atmosphere of *rènao* is lowered and *réngíngwèi* is insufficient.’

The phrasing of the sentence clearly conveys that restaurant meals served in accordance with the officially encouraged ‘separate meal system’ (*fēncānzhi*) are not popular with Chinese customers. Significantly, the key point of their complaint appears to be that while praiseworthy for some objective reasons, the ‘separate style’ is lacking in two respects, identified with two culturally significant words – *rènao* and *réngíngwèi* – the second one being another key Chinese social concept (cf. Yang, 1994), which refers to an important emotional bond expected to form in Chinese interpersonal relations, but found to be weakened here as well. The ‘separate style’ of consuming meals seems to be too cold and uninvolved to generate the expected warmth of human interaction. The journalist’s concerns are addressed in the following passage, where the restaurant manager describes the situation in their establishment during the last couple of days before the Spring Festival:

- (3) *Chūnjié zhīqián jīguān tuántǐ liánhuāncān, péngyou jùhuìcān shí céng yǒu kèrén yāoqiú fēncānzhi, qián jǐ tiān, yǒu sāngē lǎowài jiùshì yī rén diǎn yīgè cài, gèrén chī zìjǐ pánzi lǐ de cài, dàn zài Chūnjié héjiā tuányuán zhījī, fēncānzhi zìrán huì shǐ cānzhuō de rènao qifēn jiàngdī, réngíngwèi bùzú.*  
 ‘(He explained to the journalist that) as to the time before the Spring Festival the institutional group-meals, groups of friends getting together, formerly, there used to be guests requesting a separate-style meal, but in the last couple of days there were just three foreigners (*lǎowài*) requesting one meal per one person, where everyone would eat one’s dish from one’s own plate, but at the Spring Festival when the families reunite and get together, the separate eating style can only diminish the *rènao* atmosphere of the festive table, and create insufficient *réngíngwèi*.’

While the ‘separate style’ seems to have attracted only a few foreigners (*lǎowài*), the restaurant manager linked the unpopularity of the ‘separate style’ among their native guests to some distinctive Chinese cultural preferences, which he described in the following way:

- (4) *Zhōngguórénde yīnshí xíguàn zhōng, jùcān de jiǎngjiu kǒuwèi fēngfù, gè zhōng wèidào de cài zìjǐ dōu dǐ chángyīcháng, ǒu’ěr hái néng pèngdào kèrén bù ràng fúwùyuán wǎngxìà chē kōng pánzi, yīnwèi*

*zhuōzi shàng tài kōng xiǎnde méiyǒu qìfēn, fēncānzhì rénqíngwèi  
bùzú zhè yě shì jiātingcān, shēngrìcān, péngyoucān bìuyuàn jiēshòu  
fēncān de gēnběn yuányīn.*

‘As far as the Chinese customs of eating and drinking are concerned, communal meals pay particular attention to the richness of flavours, one should try out every kind of dish oneself, once in a while one can notice that guests don’t allow waiters to remove the emptied plates, because if the table looks empty, it seems that there is no ‘atmosphere’ (*qìfēn*), that’s why the separate eating style lacks *rénqíngwèi* and this is the basic reason why family meals, birthday meals, friends’ meals do not follow the separate feasting style arrangements.’

The manager concluded his explanation by enumerating the essential qualities of desirable atmosphere at a Chinese festive meal enjoyed by a large family. As the ‘separate meal’ (*fēncān*) manner of taking meals is likely to cause cultural discomfort to the Chinese customers, it is avoided on such festive occasions:

- (5) *Jīntiān lái de kèrén quán shì jiāyán, jīhū měiyī zhuō dōu yǒu lǎorén hé  
xiǎohái. Ànzhào zánmen Zhōngguó rén de chuántǒng, jiāyàn jiāngde  
shì fēngshèng, qìfēn he rènao, suǒyǐ méiyǒu kèrén yāoqiú fēncān.*

‘The guests who have come today all take family feasts, there are old people and children at almost every table. According to our Chinese tradition, family feasts should be sumptuous, (rich in) atmosphere and *rènao*, therefore there are no guests who demand ‘separate style’ meals.’

The manager emphasized the affective closeness of the *jùcān* feasting style by using the inclusive first person plural pronoun *zánmen* (as in *zánmen zhōngguó rén*, ‘we.INC Chinese people’) in the introductory phrase which could be literally translated as ‘According to the tradition of us, Chinese’ – which, perhaps, better conveys a somewhat normative tone of his speech. The key words of the sentence are *fēngshèng* (‘sumptuous’), *qìfēn* (‘atmosphere’), and *rènao* (‘lively’). They all highlight the positive, desirable qualities sought in a festive family meal. It can be also observed that the person quoted appears to use these phrases as a sufficient explanatory reason why there were simply no native guests who requested any ‘separate style’ meal. In the following passage, the journalist points to another pertinent aspect of Chinese festive meals, which is related to a particular way in which the native guests interact at the table, so as to increase their affective closeness:

- (6) *Jìzhě zhùyìdào, jùcān de kèrén dàduō shì yījiārén huò qīnpéng-hǎoyǒu wéizuò yī zhuō, qīnmì-wújiān, rèrènao de jùcān, jīhū méiyǒu shíxìng fēncānzhìde.*

‘The journalist has noticed that the majority of the consumers are people from one family, or close friends (*qīnpéng-hǎoyǒu* ‘close relatives and good friends’), sitting around the table (*wéizuò yī zhuō*), *qīnmì-wújiān* (‘very close and intimate’), *rèrènao* having the meal together (*jùcān*), they haven’t practiced the ‘separate system’ (*fēncānzhì*) at all.’

The fragment mentions an important aspect of the popular style of Chinese feasting, namely a considerable physical and affective closeness. Symbolic nature of such proximity is stressed with two culturally revealing Chinese multisyllabic expressions, namely:

- *qīnpéng-hǎoyǒu* – this expression refers collectively to one’s close friends and relatives, expressively elaborating a closely related collective compound *qīnyǒu* ‘relatives and friends; kith and kin’ by adding two quasi-synonymic modifiers: *qīn* ‘close, intimate’ and *hǎo* ‘good’, which emphasize the positive quality of the named relationship.
- *qīnmì-wújiān* – this four-syllabic expression contains a synonymic compound *qīnmì* (lit. ‘dear:close’ – ‘close, intimate’) and *wújiān* (lit. ‘NEG:between’ – ‘not keeping anything from each other’, which emphasizes the emotional closeness and lack of distance in an interpersonal relationship.

For the people who can be described with such expressions, the appropriate way to sit at the table is also mentioned in the sentence: it is *wéizuò yī zhuō* (‘to sit around the table’) – i.e. in a way which enhances the intensity of interpersonal interaction, while at the same time making the physical contact much easier. One can also observe here the expressive reduplicated form of the predicative *rènao*, used here to name the expected quality of such interaction.

This particular feature of Chinese festive interaction can be gleaned from the following fragment of the journalist’s interview during which he talked to some members of a large Chinese family, who came to celebrate the festive occasion. The text situates the scene of the interview with the following sentence:

- (7) *Zài gāi diàn èr lóu bāojiān nèi jùcān de yī dà jiāzǐ rén jiēshòu le jìzhě de cǎifǎng.*

‘In a private room on the second floor of the restaurant’s building members of one family (household) were interviewed by the journalist.’

As one of the quoted customers hastened to explain in some detail, the ‘separate meal system’ (*fēncānzhi*) is not really appropriate for such people as themselves, i.e. for the people that he classified with the Chinese word *shúrén* (friends, acquaintances, an important Chinese social category term, see Ye, 2004: 213), i.e. the kind of people who are quite well-known to one another, and who are the opposite of category termed *shēngrén* (‘strangers’). To be noted are the kinship terms used in the introduction of the family members:

- (8) *Hùzhǔ Kāng nǚshì shǒuzhǐ duìmiàn jièshào shuō: ‘Zhè shì qìngjia yī jiā rén, zhè shì wǒ gēge yījiāzi, zhè shì nǚér, nǚxū ... wǒmen yī dà jiāzi rén jīntiān guònián jùhuì.*

‘Head of the household, Mrs. Kang, pointing at the people sitting opposite said: they are the whole family of my relatives by marriage, this is my older brother’s whole family, this is my daughter, my son-in-law ... we are one household and we are celebrating the New Year today.’

While the hygienic advantages of the *fēncānzhi* (‘separate meal system’) are clear to one of the journalist’s interviewees (introduced as a medical doctor – *dàifu*), he is also aware that the ‘collective meal’ (i.e. *jùcān*) can be socially more appropriate on such festive occasions as this one:

- (9) *Wǒmen yī dà jiāzi rén jīntiān guònián jùhuì. ‘Kāng nǚshì de zhàngfu xìng Zhāng, shì yīwei dàifu. Tā shuō: ‘Zuòwéi yīmíng yīshēng, cóng jiāng wèishēng de jiāodù jiāng, fēncānzhi dāngrán hǎo, dàn shúrén zhījiān chīfàn yībān dōu bù fēncān. Xiāng jīntiān wǒmen qīnrén jùcān dōu shì zìgèr jiālǐ rén, hùxiāng yě liǎojiě, suǒyǐ jiù gēng bù huì fēncān le.*

‘We people from one household celebrate the New Year today. Mrs Kang’s husband’s surname is Zhang, he is a doctor. He said: ‘As a doctor, speaking from the point of view of respecting hygiene, the ‘separate meal system’ is clearly good, but among the *shúrén* one doesn’t normally go for the ‘separate system’. On the occasion like today, we, relatives (*qīnrén*) take our meal together (*jùcān*), we are all one family, we know one another well, therefore we can’t really eat ‘separate meals’ (*fēncān*).’

Characteristically, the doctor makes use of two important Chinese social category terms: *shúrén* (‘acquaintances’) and *qīnrén* (‘relatives’) – to identify the kinds of people who normally make use of the *jùcān* (‘collective meal’) style to cement their affective (and/or extended) kinship relationship. Thus, the official decision to promote the *fēncānzhi* in similar food establishments wasn’t favourably received by the customers, who would visit the restaurants in groups of



relatives and friends. As the journalist commented, out of several well-known Beijing restaurants which he contacted for information concerning their customers' requirements with respect to the officially promoted *fēncānzhì*, their reply was invariably as follows:

- (10) *Chúnjié qījiān jiāting tuányuáncān jīhū méi yǒu kèrén yāoqiú shíxíng fēncānzhì, suīrán zhèyàng, tāmen háishi gěi měiyī zhuō kēfàn dōu bǎishàng le gōngkuài gōngsháo.*

'Among the families and group meal consumers during the Spring Festival season there are almost no guests who request 'the separate meal system'. Even so, they supplied every set meal on the table with its set of chopsticks and spoons.'

Apparently, trying to conform to the official requirements 'to implement the separate meal system' (*shíxíng fēncānzhì*) some restaurant owners attempted set up their dining tables ahead of time, providing individual sets of chopsticks and spoons to go with every set meal (*kēfàn*).

While the controversies regarding the hygienic aspects of the two styles of consuming food seem likely to continue, one can sum up a number of the pertinent words and expressions surfacing in the cultural debate represented in the Chinese text in the form of the following table (Table 2):

key Chinese expressions	<i>jùcān</i> ('collective meal')	<i>fēncān</i> ('separate meal')
– referring to people	<i>Zhōngguó rén</i> (‘Chinese people’) <i>shú rén</i> (‘acquaintances’) <i>péngyou</i> (‘friends’) <i>qīnpéng-hǎoyǒu</i> (‘close relatives and good friends’) <i>yī dà jiāzǐ rén</i> (‘people from one big household’) <i>zìgèr jiālǐ rén</i> (‘one’s own family people’)	<i>lǎowài</i> (‘foreigners’)
– referring to social interaction	<i>rènao</i> <i>rèrènao</i> (expressive reduplication) <i>qìfēn</i> (‘atmosphere’) <i>qīnmì-wújiān</i> (‘close no borders’)	<i>gèrén chī zìjǐ pánzi lǐ de cài</i> (‘everyone eats the dish from their own plate’) – solitary and unappealing <i>rénqíngwèi bùzú</i> – <i>renqingwei</i> (lit. ‘flavour of human feelings’) is insufficient

**Table 2.** Pertinent words and expressions surfacing in the news report

As the restaurant manager insisted, their typical social meals – such as *jiātíngcān*, *shēngrìcān*, *péngyoucān* (‘family meals, birthday meals, friends’ meals’) were not even likely to be organized along the *fēncānzhi* pattern, as the meals organized along the lines described by him as ‘everyone eats the dish from their own plate’ sorely lack in the crucial values of *rènao* and *rénqíngwèi*.

However, it should be acknowledged that numerous administrative arguments put emphasis on the hygienic benefits of the ‘separate meal system’ (*fēncānzhi*), while a considerable number of visual representations available on Mainland Chinese Internet argue in favour of this way of feasting and, indeed, in favour of its ancient Chinese pedigree. For example, a webpage entitled *Fēncānzhi de túpiàn zhàopiàn zīliào* (‘Graphic and photographic resources on the separate meal system’, <http://www.putaotu.com>) collects various illustrations of of ‘separate style ways of serving and eating food’, including links to pictures and resources with such titles as the following:

- *wǒ jiā yě shì fēncānzhi* ‘my family eats separate meal system style, too’ – an educational webcomic for kids
- *fēncānzhi gèng yǒuyì jiànkāng bìmiǎn jiāochā gǎnrǎn* ‘separate meal system benefits health and stops transmission of infections’ – a report from a Chinese kindergarten
- *fēncānzhi gèng qīngjié gèng wèishēng* ‘separate meal system is cleaner and more hygienic’
- *xīcān shì fēncānzhi de, měi ge rén yīzhào zìjǐ de kǒuwèi* ‘Western cuisine follows the separate meal system, everyone follows their own taste’
- *Tiānjīn bùfēn fàndiàn tuīxíng fēncānzhi* ‘A part of restaurants in Tianjin carry out the separate meal system’
- *Zhōngguó gǔdài fēncānzhi* ‘Ancient Chinese separate meal system’ – with an appended image of a Tang Dynasty picture

On the other hand, *jùcān* style meals are more appropriate to strengthen the affective links with one’s fellow-university graduates, or friends, as expressed in the captions reproduced below:

(11) *Hěn gāoxìng cānjiā wǒ de yánjūshēng niánmò jùcān*

‘I am happy to take part in the end-of-the year *jùcān* of the graduate students’

Or with one's friends (*péngyou*), enjoying a casual visit at home, as in:

(12) *Péngyoumen línshí yuē jùcān, dàjiā dōu dào le qízhōng yīwèi péngyou chīfàn*

'Friends having a casual *jùcān*, everybody has arrived at the home of one of them to eat'

## 5. Conclusions: Towards a cultural script of 'rènao atmosphere' (*rènao qifēn*) in Chinese social interaction

As several empirical studies of everyday Chinese social practices have demonstrated, vivid manifestation of good (or even enthusiastic) feelings is by no means absent from Chinese culture, all too often credited with a blanket image of subdued affect. Warden and Chen (2009: 219), for example, note that "any location with lots of activity is positively described as *rènao*." Indeed, their tripartite formula aimed to capture the essential elements of *rènao* atmosphere, i.e. "crowds, events, noise" (ibid.) appears to work rather well in light of the linguistic evidence shown in this paper. Thus, visual representations of events and scenes marked by Chinese Internet users with the 'tag' (*bīāoqiān*) of *rènao* tend to conform to Warden and Chen's checklist, as described in the third section of this paper. It can be concluded that the notion of 'being in the same time and place with many other people' might constitute the first approximation of an important part of the relevant cultural script. However, another crucial semantic aspect of the word's meaning seems to be related to the type of activities pursued by the experiencer (i.e. things which a person does), and events (roughly, things that happen in the place where the experiencer is) enjoyed by this person. A number of scholars have pointed to the particularly significant symbolic role of food in Chinese culture (and across Chinese cultures). The enjoyment of a variety of Chinese dishes associated with festive occasions has been selected as one of the essential features of everyday Chinese culture (see e.g. Yu, 2004). Yet, it seems that it is not simply (or exclusively) the consumption of *xiǎochí* that constitutes the focus of an event characterized by *rènao* atmosphere. Arguably, events such as temple festivals, Chinese New Year celebrations, or meals with many friends offer the experiencer a considerable richness of visual and aural stimuli, not to be found in solitary contexts. Being together with others, as well as watching spectacular aspects of cultural performance, such walking on stilts (*gāoqiāo*), acrobatic folk dancing executed by teams of artists, or energizing

drumming, all communicate an empowering message to the cultural actors attending and responding to the ongoing events. Perhaps in this context one should again mention a common Chinese phraseme *kàn rènao* ('watch *rènao*'), describing the activity of watching a salient scene, and going where the crowds go (cf. Warden & Chen, 2009: 215-219). A prominent social role of sound-making (drumming, applauding, etc.) was also clear in the captions accompanying the photoset of a temple fair at *Yāntái* city described in the fourth section of this paper. It is probably this aspect of the meaning of the word *rènao* that is typically rendered with such English words as 'exciting' or 'bustling' – i.e. referring to subjective expectations tentatively incorporated in the script as 'many things are happening in this place now', and 'something good will happen'.

However, some well-intentioned social policies may adversely affect culturally-based everyday practices, and, so to speak, drain them of the valuable quality of *rènao*, as exemplified in the popular Chinese debate over two styles of feasting – the officially promoted *fēncānzhi* (lit. 'separate meal system') and the popular way of *jùcānzhi* (lit. 'collective/together meal system'). As the analysis of a sample cultural text dealing with this problem has shown, the 'separate meal system', while normatively presented as superior, tends to be perceived as fit for the *lǎowai* (a somewhat patronizing Chinese label for a foreigner) and devoid of two salient Chinese cultural qualities, encapsulated in the words *rènao* and *rénqíngwèi* (lit. 'flavour of human feelings'). Rather paradoxically, the availability of arranging 'separate meal system' feasts, sometimes advertised as an asset of Chinese food establishments, turned out to be unappealing from the point of view of native consumers (insofar as it was expressed in the analysed text).

While 'crowds' are often mentioned as essential to the desirable 'atmosphere of *rènao*' (*rènao qífēn*) – and, indeed, it seems that a sheer multiplicity of people, artefacts and sensory stimuli appearing in one place at one time are very important, one can hardly afford to disregard the significance of Yu's (2004: 138, see above) comments about close links between the concepts of *rènao* and *rénqíngwèi* (lit. 'flavour of human feelings'), captured in the title of the second Chinese text analysed in this paper. Reduced possibilities of personal interaction enforced by the 'separate meal system' (*fēncānzhi*) were hardly acceptable to the Chinese customers of a popular Beijing restaurant at the Spring Festival family meal. Consequently, they opted for a traditional *jùcān* ('collective meal') which provided them with ample opportunities to display their affective closeness. On the linguistic side, one should acknowledge the appearance of such characteristic features of Chinese style of verbal interaction as the use of kinship

terms in their addressative function, weaving in the traditional multisyllabic expressions (*chéngyǔ*) to underscore important cultural meanings, and relying on Chinese social category terms (such as *shúrén* ‘acquaintances’, *qīnrén* ‘relatives’) as essential to the subjective accounts of the cultural actors. It could be observed that these linguistic elements, while only natural to the Chinese participants, appear to contribute to the sought-out *rènao* atmosphere (*rènao qìfēn*) of festive events, as well.

Given the above observations, one could argue for the following tentative semantic script aimed to capture the essential elements of ‘*rènao* atmosphere’ in Chinese social interaction, which would need to contain the following components (a) – (f), where the two initial sentences of the script spell out the situational background necessary for the applicability of *rènao*:

- (a) Many things are happening in this place now.
- (b) Many people are in this place now, because they want to see these things.

Arguably, a prominent conventionalized expression which seems to shed light on the motivation of people eager to join others in the crowd is the common phraseme *kàn rènao* (‘watch *rènao*’) which – if taken literally – is focused on the experiencer’s intention to see certain things. However, this desire turns out to be eminently social. While the elements (a) and (b) are intended to capture the often-mentioned idea of a place ‘bustling with activity’ which appears in several dictionary explanations mentioned in the third section of this paper, it should be emphasized that the typical locations where *rènao* becomes a salient feature of the observed events predominantly involve crowded areas teeming with human activity (such as temple festivals, streets, supermarkets, restaurants, etc.) It could, perhaps, be suggested that the typical cognitive stance of an individual involved in an event characterized by a *rènao qìfēn* (‘*rènao* atmosphere’) is that of an experiencer. For example, the subjective engagement of festival goers at the temple festival described in section 4 of this paper was conveyed with captions and vocabulary focusing on the visual perception (*hǎokàn* ‘good-looking’, *guānkàn* ‘watch’, etc.) – in a similar manner, social sounds (and sound-making) were shown to be traditionally relevant to the everyday Chinese perceptions of socially enjoyable events. This experiential part of the postulated script could be formulated as the following components:

- (c) People can see and hear many things in this place.
- (d) People feel something good because of this.

Finally, the postulated script should contain a reference to the characteristic social mood generated by the ‘*rènao* atmosphere’, the feeling of ‘togetherness’ and a certain loosening of social behavioural norms, so aptly characterized by Yu (2004: 140, see section 2 of this paper)

- (e) People feel something very good, because they are with other people like them at the same time and place.
- (f) People think they can do some things which they can’t (shouldn’t) do at other times and places.

### Glossary of Chinese cultural concepts and practices

- biǎoyǎn* 表演 performance  
*chéngyǔ* 成语 fixed formulaic expression  
*Chūnjié* 春节 Spring Festival  
*fēncānzhì* 分餐制 separate meal system  
*fēngshèng* 丰盛 sumptuous  
*jùcānzhì* 聚餐制 collective meal system  
*kàn rènao* 看热闹 watch the excitement  
*lǎowài* 老外 foreigner (patronizing)  
*méishí* 美食 fine foods  
*péngyou* 朋友 friend  
*qìfēn* 气氛 atmosphere  
*qīnmì-wújiàn* 亲密无间 close friends on very intimate terms  
*qīnpéng-hǎoyou* 亲朋好友 close relatives and good friends  
*qīnrén* 亲人 relative  
*rènao* 热闹 lively  
*rénqíngwèi* 人情味 flavour of human feelings  
*shēngrén* 生人 stranger  
*shúrén* 熟人 acquaintances and friends  
*wéizuò yī zhuō* 围坐一桌 to sit around the table

xiǎochī 小吃 snacks

Yuánxiāojié 元宵节 Lantern Festival

Zhōngguó rén 中国人 Chinese person/people

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## Boroditsky's empirical studies on spatio-temporal association in Mandarin and English: A critical review

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### Abstract

This paper provides a critical review of Boroditsky and her collaborators' cross-linguistic empirical research on spatio-temporal association in mental conceptualization, to see if it is possible to render the actual relations between language and reality in a systematic manner. It also discusses a small selection of relevant studies conducted by other scholars within this domain. The analysis conducted in this paper sheds light on the shortcomings of the current cross-linguistic research on the relationship between language and thought, and similar problems related to the research on artificial intelligence (AI). Suggestions are given for future empirical study in this area.

**Keywords:** spatio-temporal association, mental conceptualization, empirical studies, language and thought

### 1. Introduction

While the strong version of linguistic determinism (Whorf, 1956) has been controversial since it first appeared, the question of “does language shape thought?” has never ceased to raise the attention of a number of linguists. For example, Kousta, Vinsen and Vigliocco (2008) investigate the semantic effects of grammatical gender on English-Italian bilinguals' perception of gender; Pyers and Senghas (2009) draw on evidence from learners of an emerging sign language in Nicaragua to show that language promotes false-belief understanding; Tajima and Duffield (2012) demonstrate that different sentence structures in Japanese and Chinese predispose their speakers to different attentional patterns.

Among all the subcategories of research in language and thought, one direction that is of particular interest to many psycholinguists and cognitive linguists has been the influence of spatial expressions in a language on the temporal perception of people using that language. The topic of spatial construal of time is actually not a novel one in studies of the relationship between language and thought. In 1954, Piaget explored the connection between spatial and temporal reasoning in child development; however, it is Clark (1973) who was the first to bring the issue of temporal concepts to the semantic grounding in language development. He proposes that children acquire expressions of space and time by learning how to apply these expressions to their prior knowledge about these concepts. Following Clark and pushing his study further, a great many scholars of linguistics, psychology and cognitive sciences have worked on the spatial-temporal association of language and thought. For instance, Gentner (2001) proposes and tests three possibilities to establish the conceptual role of space-time mappings: *system-mapping*, *cognitive archaeology*, and *structural parallelism*, finding that people's representation of time is actually structured in part by online structural analogies with the more concrete experiential domain of space. Vallesi, Binns and Shallice (2008) investigate how the abstract concept of time is represented in our cognitive systems, and suggest that one way in which the amount of elapsed time is cognitively represented is through the use of a spatial coordinate reference frame, from left to right. And via investigating grammatically-prescribed prepositions, Kranjec et al. (2010: 114, 111-116) demonstrate that the semantics of particular locative prepositions do constrain how we think about paired temporal concepts. Much evidence has pointed to the conclusion that people's perceptions of the abstract domain of time are derived from a more experience-based conceptualization of space: people tend to talk about time by employing spatial expressions.

The above-mentioned studies are all based on monolingual data, and the existing research mostly takes English as the focus of study while leaving a great number of other languages unconsidered. This kind of language-specific studies has a grave effect on the exploration of the general relationship between language and thought, as they can only demonstrate the influence of a language on thinking in that particular language – the results of which cannot be safely generalized (Boroditsky, 2001; Kranjec, 2006). As Weist et al. (1999) have noted, languages have diverse temporal and spatial coding systems which definitely cannot be inferred from any single language. Even the temporal metaphors vary across languages. Members of different language communities develop

distinctive conceptual repertoires (Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2008: 579–593). As a result, in recent years, the importance of cross-linguistic studies on spatio-temporal association has been increasingly recognized by scholars working in this field (Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2008; Miles et al., 2011; Radden, 2004; Shinohara, 1999). Boroditsky could be considered the most influential yet controversial scholar who has published extensively – together with her collaborators – on the spatio-temporal association in order to demonstrate that language shapes thought.

The aim of this paper is to critically review Boroditsky and her colleagues' cross-linguistic empirical studies on spatio-temporal association in mental conceptualization. The paper will also discuss a few relevant studies conducted by other scholars. As people's perception of time is culturally specific (Radden, 2004; Lai & Boroditsky, 2013) and languages are developed in – and thus attached to – their corresponding cultures, Chen (2007) points out that cross-linguistic studies require competent knowledge on the part of the researcher about the languages under investigation. Accordingly, the authors of this paper, as mainland Chinese, acknowledge their sufficient understanding of the Chinese culture, and as English teachers at university, they have had long exposure to the cultures of English-speaking countries. Mandarin and English are their two most frequently used languages; considering this, the present paper will mainly review four empirical studies conducted by Boroditsky and her collaborators on the spatial construal of temporal perception in Mandarin and English, as these four studies share similar objectives and adopt comparable research methodology. In fact, each one of these studies is developed from the prior one(s), and could be taken as an extension or continuous refining of the previous studies.

A critical analysis of these four empirical investigations and other relevant studies demonstrates the general tendency of empirical research conducted to understand the relationship between language and thought. It will hopefully shed light on the shortcomings of existing cross-linguistic research in this domain, and similar problems related to the research on artificial intelligence (AI), as well as multiple theories of translation/interpretation. All seem to constitute a natural consequence of the fact that different languages as well as different metalanguages are used across diverse speech communities.

## 2. First Attempt (2001): language shapes thought

Boroditsky's "Does language shape thought? Mandarin and English speakers' conceptions of time" (Boroditsky, 2001) is among the first attempts to examine the relationship between language and thought in relation to spatio-temporal associations in a cross-linguistic context and is the first to specifically address Mandarin and English as testing languages. This work, although criticized by some scholars (Chen, 2007; January & Kako, 2007) and later even by Boroditsky herself (2010), is quite an influential study, as it laid the groundwork for empirical studies on cross-linguistic investigation of spatial and temporal mapping, partly due to this controversy.

In this study, three experiments are conducted concerning the spatio-temporal relationship in Mandarin and English to demonstrate that it is language and not other cultural factors that shapes people's habitual thoughts. A presupposition of this research is the different ways Mandarin and English refer to time: while Mandarin speakers tend to talk about time vertically, native English users are more likely to adopt horizontal temporal expressions. Based on this premise, Boroditsky finds that this difference between the two languages has a strong influence on the ways their speakers think about time.

The participants of the first experiment are 26 native English speakers and 20 native Mandarin speakers at Stanford University. The participants answer questions about time after being exposed to spatial scenarios that are either horizontal or vertical, accompanied by a sentence description. The testing language is English and the participants are tested with English instructions. Questions are presented on a computer screen one at a time and participants' response times are measured and recorded by the computer. It is found that English speakers and Mandarin speakers tend to think differently about time. Native English speakers answer time questions faster after horizontal scenarios than after vertical scenarios, and they are also found to react faster to temporal questions phrased in horizontal terms than in vertical terms. At the same time, native Mandarin speakers' response times to temporal questions after horizontal scenarios and after vertical scenarios are almost the same. However, when considering the vertically-phrased temporal questions, the native Mandarin speakers are found to react faster after vertical scenarios than after horizontal scenarios. This is contradictory to the native English speakers' results. In conclusion, Boroditsky proposes that people's experiences with a language can shape the way they think.

Adopting a similar design and procedure, the second experiment examines the performance of 25 Mandarin-English bilinguals to further test how learning a new language influences people's thinking patterns. It is found that the propensity to think about time vertically is related to the length of experience with Mandarin but not to the length of English experience. In the last experiment, 70 Stanford University undergraduates who are native English speakers are exposed to a set of 90 vertically phrased temporal questions to get used to this new way of talking about time, after which they are asked to go through the procedures in Experiment 1. The results show that these participants tend to act more like native Mandarin speakers in comparison with untrained English speakers. As such, the author argues that learning a new way to talk about a familiar domain can change the way people think about that domain and that it is language alone that led to the differences between English and Mandarin speakers' perceptions of time. Taking the findings of the three experiments together, Boroditsky then concludes that language indeed shapes people's habitual thoughts.

As mentioned above, Boroditsky's first attempt to demonstrate the relationship between language and thought through cross-linguistic empirical studies in Mandarin and English has received some criticism from other scholars. For instance, Chen, a Chinese scholar, replicated Boroditsky's research in Taiwan (Chen, 2007). He found that the presupposition in Boroditsky (2001) that Mandarin speakers tend to talk about time vertically is untenable, as Mandarin speakers actually tend to adopt horizontal spatial metaphors of time more frequently than vertical spatial metaphors. And when focusing on "month" as the time unit, Chen found that Mandarin speakers show both trends of vertical and horizontal bias in equal distribution, which was contradictory to Boroditsky's findings. In conclusion, Chen claims that Boroditsky's study fails to prove that Mandarin and English speakers differ in their spatial conceptualizations of time – and this provides no evidence for linguistic relativity.

Chen's findings are further supported by January and Kako (2007) who conducted six replications of Boroditsky's research, all of which provide contradictory evidence to Boroditsky's original study. Additionally, upon reviewing the third experiment in Boroditsky's paper, January and Kako found it untenable that 90 exposures to a new spatio-temporal metaphor can change native English speakers' perception of time. Thus, Boroditsky's (2001) results cannot be considered as evidence in support of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis. Finally, the authors point out that while westerners may indeed typically order

events in time horizontally from left to right when forced to do so (Tversky, Kugelmass, & Winter, 1991), this does not necessarily reveal that their internal conceptualization of time is horizontally organized, and cultural convention may not be the single factor that drives this effect.

The two studies are highlighted here in part because of their insightfulness as critical empirical replications of Boroditsky's initial research, and also because of their influence on Boroditsky's further attempts to examine the spatial conceptualization of time in Mandarin and English. Their doubts and critical remarks are clarified and rebutted in Boroditsky's later studies, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Besides the deficiencies pointed out by Chen (2007) and January and Kako (2007), there are other issues that need to be discussed critically in Boroditsky's initial attempt. First, the participants in the three experiments should have been selected more carefully. All the subjects in the three experiments were English speakers – even the native Mandarin participants in Experiments 1 and 2 had had at least 10 years of exposure to English. There is fair reason to believe that the native Mandarin speakers' modes of thinking were influenced by the English language they had acquired, at least to some extent – if it is really the case that language can shape thought. Thus, these “native” Mandarin participants could not be taken as pure Mandarin speakers. To be more exact, they could only be considered Mandarin speakers who had been influenced by the English language/thinking patterns or as Mandarin–English bilinguals. This indicates that Boroditsky's research findings based on the so-called “native” Chinese speakers are not valid.

Second, the testing place should have been seen as a factor that might have influenced the results. The circumstantial elements also might have had some effect on people's thinking modes. Staying in an English speaking context where all the communication was carried out in English, the participants might have inevitably thought according to the patterns characteristic of English (Lai & Boroditsky, 2013). This may partly explain why Chen (2007) failed to replicate Boroditsky's findings in Taiwan.

A third issue arises, in that all the three experiments were conducted in English with English instructions, and English was the testing language for describing the spatial scenarios and addressing the target questions. This was kept constant, even when testing the “native” Mandarin speakers' spatial

perception of time. In this case, it is not unreasonable to contend that the Mandarin speakers' temporal conceptions might have been affected by this exposure to the English language, if the effect demonstrated in Experiment 3 is true (that even a short-term exposure to a different spatio-temporal organisation can change people's perception of time). Moreover, people do not always speak their minds: answering temporal questions or learning a new way of speaking does not necessarily mean that the same process has actually occurred in people's minds. As January and Kako (2007) have noted, people are sometimes forced to speak in a certain way. To talk about time in horizontal/vertical terms in the experiments does not necessarily reveal that people's internal conceptualizations of time are horizontally/vertically structured. Boroditsky's study only gives evidence for the fact that the Mandarin and English languages adopt different spatio-temporal representations, thus leading to different ways of talking about time – but not thinking about time. All of these arguments imply that Boroditsky's initial research did not lend support for her conclusion that language shapes thought.

A lot of space has been devoted in this section to the discussion of Boroditsky's first paper, because that work laid the foundation for her further investigations on the relationship between language and thought in relation to spatio-temporal associations. The defects and shortcomings of this study (mentioned above) are later considered and improved in Boroditsky's and her collaborators' more recent works. The following three studies could be seen as continuations and refinements of Boroditsky's initial attempt.

### **3. Second Attempt (2010): Mandarin and English speakers think about time differently**

Boroditsky's second attempt at investigating spatio-temporal mapping in Mandarin and English can be seen as a modification of her first study. It rebuts the criticism voiced by other scholars that Boroditsky (2001) had only demonstrated that Mandarin and English speakers talk about time differently” but do not necessarily “have different lines of time conceptualization”. The article “Do English and Mandarin speakers think about time differently?”, published in 2010, was designed to specifically address the proposal that English and Mandarin speakers not only talk about but also think about time in different ways (Boroditsky, Fuhrman, & McCormick, 2010).

In this research, Boroditsky and her colleagues seemed more cautious when claiming that “Mandarin speakers tend to talk about time vertically while English speakers’ temporal expressions are horizontally structured” (2001: 22); as a result of more careful investigation, they rephrase it as “both English and Mandarin adopt horizontal spatial terms to talk about time. . . . Mandarin speakers also systematically and frequently use vertical metaphors. While in English, although vertical spatial terms can also be used to talk about time, these uses are rare” (2010: 123). Thus the original assumption of this research is refined to the statement that “vertical metaphors for time are more frequent in Mandarin than they are in English.” This study could be taken as a reply to Chen’s (2007) findings that Mandarin speakers actually adopt horizontal expressions to talk about time more frequently than vertical terms, and it moves one step further by emphasizing that the research domain is a comparison between English and Mandarin, and not Mandarin itself, thus laying a stronger and more reliable foundation for the study.

In this study, Boroditsky and her colleagues also point to some deficiencies in Chen’s (2007) and January and Kako’s (2007) replications of the original study. While Chen’s investigation was based on 73 Mandarin speakers and only 14 English speakers, the participants in January and Kako’s (2007) experiment are all native English speakers, which largely reduces the validity of their findings.

Boroditsky et al. acknowledge some shortcomings of the 2001 study; for example, the three-dimensional spatio-temporal association was reduced to two-dimensional mapping: with the front/back axis and left/right axis conflated into the horizontal dimension – although this problem seems to be still left unsolved in this study. They also admitted that the direction of time perception – which is an important aspect in the spatial conceptualization of time – was disregarded in the original research and that they had tried to compensate for this flaw.

Altogether, 181 participants in America took part in the 2010 study: 118 native English speakers and 63 Mandarin-English bilinguals. As we can see, this choice of subjects demonstrates the same problem as Chen’s (2007) study: too few Mandarin speakers compared to the large number of native English speakers. However, in this new study, Boroditsky et al. take the participants’ language proficiency into account, which is an improvement in comparison to the initial study. All 118 native English speakers had no prior exposure to Mandarin. This

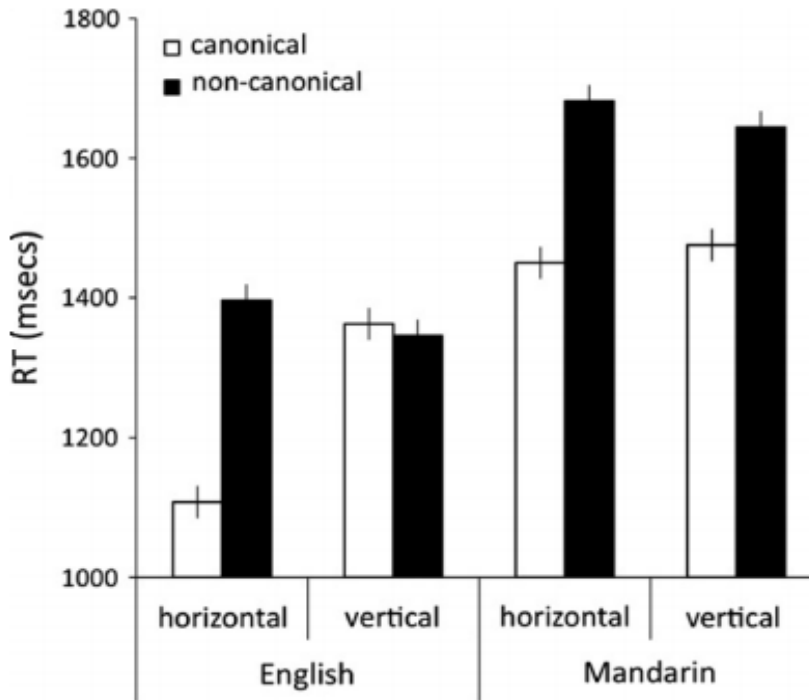


was to ensure that their thinking patterns had not been influenced by another language. The 63 bilinguals are reported to be highly proficient in Mandarin. However, similar to Boroditsky (2001), this experiment did not include any Mandarin monolinguals, so the comparison between Mandarin and English also seems untenable.

In the study, the participants were first asked to look at two pictures – one after another – in the same location on a computer screen, and then decide whether the second photo represented an earlier or later time by pressing one of two adjacent keys (either vertically or horizontally arranged) that were covered with black and white stickers which meant either ‘earlier’ or ‘later’ (with the left/upper key meaning “earlier” as the canonical situation and right/lower key “earlier” as the non-canonical situation). Thus, language was totally eliminated during the whole testing procedure.

Boroditsky et al. made a big step forward by employing nonlinguistic stimuli and responses. This responded well to January and Kako’s (2007) claim that talking about time using spatial words did not entail that time was spatially conceptualized in people’s minds. Nonlinguistic evidence helped elucidate the relationship between space and time in the human mind. However, both the English speakers and the bilinguals received English instructions before the test, which might suggest that this test is really English-oriented. In addition, the experiment was conducted in an English speaking environment, which might have had some influence on the Mandarin-English bilinguals’ perception of time during their tests. The results of this study are presented in Figure 1 (next page).

The figure revealed that both English and Mandarin speakers demonstrated a canonicity effect on the horizontal axis, which indicates that speakers of both languages conceptualize time horizontally from left to right. However, when considering the vertical condition, only Mandarin speakers (in this experiment, the bilinguals) reacted faster when the “earlier” response key was on top than when it was in a lower position. The vertical canonicity did not have any effect on native English speakers – they even responded faster when the “earlier” key was at the bottom (which indicates a slight bottom-up direction in their time perception). Therefore, the authors concluded that while native English speakers tend to think about time horizontally from left to right, native Mandarin speakers are equally good at both horizontal (from left to right) and vertical (from top to bottom) conceptualization of time. This was interpreted as evidence that Mandarin and English speakers think about time differently.



**Figure 1.** Native English and native Mandarin speakers' response times (adapted from Boroditsky et al., 2010: 125)

However, we also notice that the Responding Times (RT) for English speakers and Mandarin speakers were different, with the English speakers responding far faster in both the horizontal and the vertical tests. This is a question worth considering, yet left unexplained by the researchers – the authors did not present their interpretation of this finding. It might have been the case that the testing environment was biased in favor of the native English speakers, as this experiment was conducted with English instructions and in an English speaking context.

Considering the above limitations of Boroditsky et al.'s 2010 study, much more work still needed to be done in order to verify the proposition that Mandarin and English speakers indeed conceptualize time differently due to different spatial-temporal expressions in their respective native languages.

#### **4. Third Attempt (2011): both linguistic and cultural forces shape time perception**

Fuhrman, McCormick, Chen, Jiang, Shu, Mao & Boroditsky's paper entitled "How linguistic and cultural forces shape conceptions of time: English and Mandarin time in 3D" (2011) continues to investigate how English and Mandarin speakers conceptualize time. As the title suggests, a major development of this study compared with the previous ones is that the researchers stepped out of the circle of language per se, and took cultural elements into consideration when examining the factors influencing people's perception of time. This assumption contradicted Boroditsky's (2001) claim that it is language itself – and not other cultural factors – that shapes people's temporal conceptualizations. And as we can already see in the title, the authors of this study included both native English speakers and native Chinese speakers, who had sufficient knowledge of their respective native languages and cultural backgrounds. This lays a firm foundation for a cross-linguistic study, since, as Chen (2007) points out, adequate knowledge about the target languages and cultures is necessary to reach any objective and credible conclusions in cross-linguistic research.

The experiments in this study took place in both America (for the English tests) and China (for the Mandarin tests), the native countries of the testing languages, thus minimizing the effects of language context on people's thoughts. Therefore, this study has an advantage over the previous investigations by being carried out in a truly cross-linguistic context. Moreover, the participants of this research were more carefully selected. The first experiment included 59 Stanford students who were native English speakers and whose English proficiency was claimed to be 5 based on a 1-5 scale, and none of them had had any exposure to Mandarin. The Mandarin speakers were also claimed proficient in Mandarin (5 out of 5) and none of them reported a proficiency level in English of above 4 out of 5. The English and Mandarin levels of EM bilinguals were also taken into consideration in Experiment 2. This self-rated language proficiency provided additional information on whether the participants could be taken as "pure" native speakers of a language or if they were influenced by another language that might have exerted influence on their perceptions, thus adding weight to the objectivity and credibility of the experiments.

As the second attempt, this study also used non-linguistic stimuli, but unlike the previous investigation, the instructions were presented in the participants' native languages, thus reducing the short-term influence

of non-native languages on native speakers' perception of time. Additionally, this research expanded from the two-dimensional (horizontal-vertical) space examined in the two previous studies to include a three-dimensional (transverse-vertical-sagittal) space, an improvement already mentioned in the second study, but not applied until this investigation. The results of the first experiment are presented in Table 1 below.

	English	Mandarin
Left is earlier	* 936*	1675
Right is earlier	1045	1793
Near is earlier	1015	1745
Far is earlier	983	1666
Top is earlier	974	* 1609*
Bottom is earlier	993	1853

**Table 1.** English and Mandarin speakers' average response times (ms) in the 3D (adapted from Fuhrman et al., 2011: 1312)

This table shows the average response times of the English and Mandarin speakers along the three dimensions (both canonical and non-canonical). It shows that native English speakers gave the fastest responses when "left" represented "earlier", and the Mandarin speakers when "top" stood for "earlier". This demonstrates that Mandarin speakers tended to think about time vertically (with the direction from top to bottom) rather than transversely. This finding is actually in contrast with the results of Boroditsky et al.'s (2010) second study, presented in Figure 1, which indicated that Mandarin speakers had a tendency to think about time horizontally more than vertically, just as the English speakers did. Moreover, Table 1 reveals that English speakers also showed a slight tendency to think about time vertically, as they responded a bit faster when "top" represented "earlier" than when "bottom" represented "earlier". This was also contradictory to Boroditsky et al.'s results. We can reasonably attribute these contradictions to the different language proficiencies of the participants and the different experiment environments in the two investigations. Moreover, just as in the previous study, the English speakers in the present study also reacted much faster than the Mandarin speakers. The explanation for this observation offered by researchers this time was that the English speakers were more familiar with participating in psychological experiments.

The second experiment in this study was designed to explore the factors influencing people's internal conceptualizations of time. The findings are presented in the Figures 2 and 3.

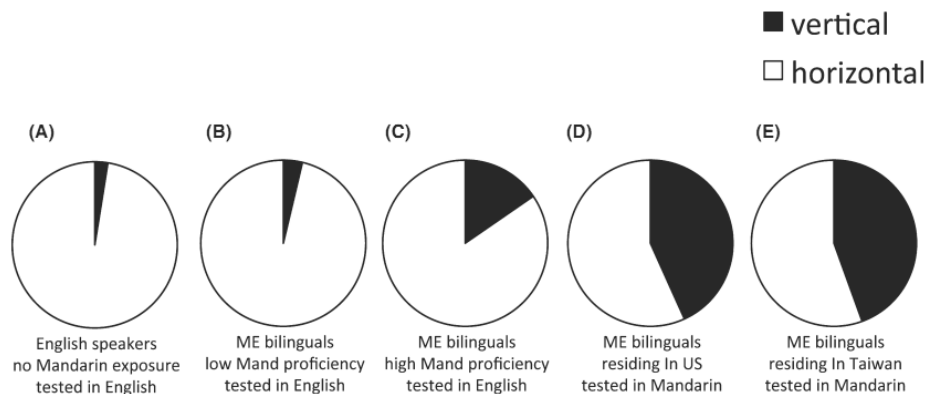


Figure 2. Different participant groups' tendencies in time perception. part1 (adapted from Fuhrman et al., 2011: 1319)

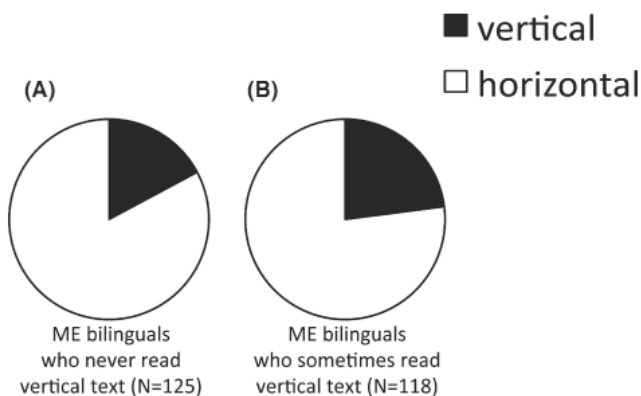


Figure 3. Different participant groups' tendency for time perception. part 2 (adapted from Fuhrman et al., 2011: 1319)

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, this study further proposes that English and Mandarin speakers' perceptions of time are influenced by five factors: proficiencies in Mandarin and in English, the language of the test, the country of the test and experience with a vertical text – instead of by language alone, as claimed in Boroditsky's (2001) first study.

Based on the findings presented in Figure 2, the authors further claimed that short-term language exposure plays a significant role in people's perceptions of time. However, the question which remained unanswered is whether

this difference really occurred due to the different testing languages. When taking a closer look at the participants in these groups, we find that this claim cannot be justified. In their paper, the authors report that the bilingual participants in groups D and E were native Mandarin speakers and thus were tested in Mandarin. And for group C, the authors do not mention whether the participants were native Mandarin speakers or not – and it seems unlikely, according to the arrangement of this experiment (otherwise the comparison between the first three groups would be untenable). Thus, it is quite reasonable to assume that the different levels of vertical tendency of different groups may not have been the result of short-term influence from the testing languages; instead they were more likely to result from the participants' long exposure to the language they were tested in. As well, the number of bilingual participants tested in English (170) was much larger than the group of native Mandarin bilingual participants who were tested in Mandarin (47). Given this questionable identity of the participants in group C and the biased distribution of participants among different groups, it is clear that this study fails to demonstrate the immediate influence of language on people's temporal conceptions.

Furthermore, although the participants in this research differ in their Mandarin proficiency levels from non – to highly proficient, their English language levels are from good to quite good (with the group lowest level equal to 3.53 on a five-point scale). It is hard to justify that the highly competent Mandarin speakers' inner conceptualization of time has not been influenced by their good to very good English proficiencies.

Thus far, we can see that although the third attempt improved the research methodology relative to the previous papers – in particular in the selection of participants, and although it expanded the scope of the previous studies, it is still insufficient to be taken as an evidence for different spatio-temporal mapping patterns in Mandarin and English. Further empirical studies remain to be carried out.

### **5. Fourth Attempt (2013): immediate and chronic influence of spatio-temporal metaphors on time perception**

This is one of the latest studies investigating the space-time relationship in English and Mandarin and is a continuation of Boroditsky and her colleagues' previous attempt (2010) to demonstrate that both immediate and chronic

factors exert influence on people's perception of time. Two experiments are conducted in this study to investigate the influence of spatio-temporal metaphors in a language on its speakers' conceptualization of time (Lai & Boroditsky, 2013).

The subjects of this investigation were even more carefully selected than in the three previous studies. They included both Mandarin and English monolinguals as well as bilinguals. In order to minimize possible adverse effects of any other languages on the subjects, the group of Mandarin monolinguals was comprised only of those whose English level was around 1 (on a five-point scale), and who did not know Cantonese. Likewise, all the English monolinguals had had no prior exposure to Chinese. The English monolinguals and the ME bilinguals were tested in America and the Mandarin monolinguals were tested in Taiwan.

The first study was divided into two questions. For the first question, the native English group and the ME-bilingual group were both tested in English, and the native Mandarin group was tested in Mandarin. The results from the two groups tested in English showed that unlike the English monolinguals who took an ego-moving perspective in temporal conceptualization, the ME bilinguals demonstrated a tendency to adopt a time-moving perspective, which was in line with the Mandarin monolinguals. Next, the same groups were tested on another question. This time, both the Mandarin monolinguals and ME bilinguals were tested in Mandarin, while the native English group was tested in English. A comparison between the first two groups revealed that the ME bilingual group conceptualized time from an ego-moving perspective which was similar to the English monolinguals' perception of time. In this study, the possibility of short-term influence of the testing language (by only comparing the groups tested in the same language) and testing location (as the bilinguals were only tested in America) was also considered and controlled.

The results from this study demonstrate clearly that bilinguals import temporal conceptual structures both from L1 (Chinese) to their perception of temporal metaphors in L2 (English), as in the first question, and from L2 to L1, as in the second question. This is an extension and fine-tuning of the more general conclusion that the spatio-temporal metaphors in a language shape their speakers' internal conceptualizations of time, which is a constant topic in Boroditsky and her colleagues' previous research.

However, as Lai and Boroditsky point out themselves, in this study the same bilingual group was tested on two different questions. It would be interesting to test this group on one and the same question in both Mandarin and English to see whether on-the-spot linguistic exposure could affect their perceptions of time. But again, in such a study, the bilinguals' native languages and the testing locations all need to be taken into consideration to ensure that the differences in the participants' temporal perceptions are indeed caused by the testing languages and not by their long-term exposure to a language or the general language environment of the test.

The second experiment of this study was specifically designed to test whether short-term exposure to different spatio-temporal metaphors can affect people's conceptualization of time. In this experiment, the ME bilinguals were tested both in America and Taiwan in Mandarin. The subjects were asked (front-back or up-down) temporal questions, and had to point to the space around them to locate these time points (3-D: up-down, left-right, front-back). The results showed that the subjects arranged time vertically when prompted with up-down metaphors and sagittally when prompted with front-back metaphors in Mandarin. The authors claimed that Mandarin speakers were more likely to conceptualize time along the front-back axis when understanding front-back metaphors and more likely to construct up-down representations of time when understanding up-down metaphors. Based on this finding, the authors further concluded that different spatio-temporal metaphors have in-the-moment influences on people's conceptualizations of time.

These results, however, can hardly be taken as evidence for immediate influence of spatio-temporal metaphors on time perception. Firstly, the results of this experiment seem to be self-evident: there would be no reason for language users to conceptualize time vertically when processing horizontal spatio-temporal metaphors. It is both a waste of energy and an abnormal way of thinking and communicating according to the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975) and Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) in conversational analysis. In other words, the findings of this study are universally applicable: the same might be true in other languages and cultures. The results of this study could only be taken as evidence for the fact that spatio-temporal metaphors are still psychologically alive in Mandarin and exist in line with people's perceptions of time and space, but provide no evidence for the linguistic relativity hypothesis.



Besides, a closer look at the sample questions reveals that the subjects' responses might have been premised by the questions, and did not necessarily entail the participants' thinking in that way. For example,

\*“假设这里是这个礼拜，你认为前一个礼拜在哪里？后一个礼拜在哪里？”

\* “suppose this here is this classifier-ge week, you think front one classifier-ge week locate where? Back one classifier week locate where?”

\* *translation*: “suppose here is this week, where do you think is last week? where do you think is next week? (adapted from the original study)

As thus, the concepts of “front” and “back” were used explicitly in the prompting questions, thus, it was easy for the subjects to adopt these concepts while responding to the questions. This does not necessarily mean that the subjects thought about time in that manner. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that to express “last week” and “next week”, in addition to “前一个礼拜 (front one classifier-ge week)” and “后一个礼拜 (back one classifier week)”, in Mandarin, people also say “上一个礼拜 (upper one classifier-ge week)” and “下一个礼拜 (lower one classifier-ge week)”. Therefore, it might be possible that the responses in this experiment did not truly reflect people's inner perception of time, but were simply conditioned responses to what they had heard and remembered a few seconds before.

Thirdly, even if the results are indeed reflections of bilinguals' perceptions of time, is this perception really caused by the immediate influence of the questions posed by the experimenters? This is another question which needs to be explored. As the authors claim, the prompting questions used in this study were “conventional metaphoric expressions in Mandarin, not novel constructions”, which means that the study adopted a conventional way of expressing spatio-temporal metaphors in Mandarin. As the participants were highly proficient in Mandarin (4.48 and 5 on a five-point scale), and those who were tested in Taiwan were native Mandarin speakers, it is reasonable to assume that all these subjects had indeed been affected by the Mandarin way of processing spatio-temporal metaphors for a long time, and to a great extent. The questions delivered to them were in line with their habitual ways of talking about time, thus, the effect of the questions on the participants' perception of time should rather be interpreted as a long-term influence than an on-the-spot influence during this experiment.

The authors noticed that subjects who were tested in America were more likely to use the left-right axis than those in Taiwan and less likely to use the front-back axis. They interpret this finding as the result of different testing locations. The testing locations of course, might be an influencing factor, but another factor is still missing here – the participants' English proficiency. As we can see from the original study, both groups had high proficiency in Mandarin, though the bilinguals in America had a mean English proficiency of 4.01 and the bilinguals in Taiwan only 2.71. As it has been proven that proficiency levels of a language may influence people's perception of time in another language (Fuhrman et al., 2011), due weight should be given to the different English levels of the participants when investigating and interpreting the participants' different patterns of temporal perception.

## **6. Conclusions and implications for further research**

The discussion presented in this paper illustrates the continuing improvement of Boroditsky's and her colleagues' attempts at examining the temporal-spatial association in Mandarin and English to support the linguistic relativity hypothesis. The process also reflects the kinds of problems that many researchers face when doing cross-linguistic and cross-cultural research in language and cognition. Boroditsky and her colleagues made significant progress from the initial attempts to test that language shapes thought in general, and then restricted it to the more specific conclusion about Mandarin and English; later these continued attempts were extended to include both language and culture as the influencing factors on Mandarin and English speakers' different modes of temporal perception; more recently, the linguistic influence on people's conceptualization of time was examined from both immediate and long term perspectives. As the research goes forward, the author(s) tend(s) to be more cautious in the selection of participants, testing materials and the design of testing procedures. These also reflect the general tendency in the study of the relationship between language and thought with respect to spatio-temporal mappings.

However, there are still certain flaws in the existing literature, as exemplified in the last two attempts by Boroditsky and her colleagues: although the English and Mandarin proficiency levels of the participants were considered and restricted, the selection was still based on the subjects' self-reported levels

of English and Mandarin. The participants' language proficiency was not tested in an objective way. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one level from another subjectively, even in one monolingual user, not to mention the situation where there are so many bilingual participants (in one study, around 200). The subjects' self-perception of their language levels, like their temporal perceptions, might have been affected by other internal or external factors, such as their personalities – some people just tend to be more cautious or modest while making estimations.

In the meantime, the claim that language has an immediate effect on temporal perception still needs further examination. Existing experiments are either designed to test different groups of participants on the same token (as in the second experiment of the third attempt, described above) or the same group tested on different tokens (as in the first experiment of the fourth attempt, above). The experiment specially designed to test in-the-moment effect of spatio-temporal metaphors on people's perceptions of time (the second experiment in the fourth study) falls into the loop of "people tend to think in A when talking about A". Actually, this loop is untenable unless alternative explanatory pathways (e.g., there could be a possibility for people to "think in B when talking about A") can be ruled out. There is still no sufficient evidence that immediate situational linguistic factors shape people's perceptions of time.

The existing research has demonstrated firmly that Mandarin and English speakers have different temporal conceptualization models and the reasons why this occurs: it is due to different spatio-temporal expressions in the two languages and other cultural factors, such as writing and reading directions. One domain which still needs further exploration is concerned with how the different time-perception models in the two languages occur. As already exemplified, English and Mandarin have different temporal perceptions because of their different spatio-temporal metaphors, but the ways in which English/Mandarin metaphors are mapped onto their respective speakers' perceptions of time is still an unexplored area. Cross-linguistic studies have found time and again that some, but not all spatial lexemes can be used in the temporal language (Shinohara, 1999), and different languages have different connotations of temporal cognition and spatial expression (Radden, 2004), which calls for further exploration is the situation in Mandarin and English.

Cross-linguistic studies which focus on the spatial and temporal systems in children have found that temporal and spatial systems emerge simultaneously

and have independent statuses in children's minds, thus rejecting the claim that temporal distinctions are derived from spatial differences (Weist, Atanassova, Wysocka & Pawlak, 1999). And in a more recent study on a Turkish sign language, Arik (2012) notices mismatches between the participants' temporal expressions and the deictic use of the front-back axis, suggesting that temporal and spatial language may not be derived from each other but might only share some properties at the lexical level. Thus, more empirical studies with carefully considered methodology need to be conducted in order to provide support for the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity hypothesis, through the spatio-temporal mapping of language and cognition.

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## A sense of (dis)continuity: Searching for novelistic expression in Meiji fiction

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### Abstract

The article focuses on new developments in Meiji literature in response to the tension existing between the spoken and the written narrative styles. It points to the tradition of *gesaku bungku* popular fiction, the influence of foreign novels and the practice of translating literary texts into Japanese as important factors shaping novelistic language and narrative strategies. The analysis includes the texts of San'yūtei Enchō's *Kaidan Botan Dōrō* (*The Strange Tale of Peony Lantern*, 1884-1885), Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo* (*Floating Clouds*, 1887-1889), Mori Ōgai's *Maihime* (*Dancing Girl*, 1890) and Higuchi Ichiyō's *Takekurabe* (*Growing up/Child's Play*, 1895-1896).

**Keywords:** Meiji fiction, San'yūtei Enchō, Futabatei Shimei, Higuchi Ichiyō, Mori Ōgai, presentational mode, dialogue, narration

### 1. Introduction

The new foreign modes and fashions which bombarded Meiji Japan in the mid-nineteenth century were eagerly contrasted with the old domestic traditions. The novelty of manners and expressions was heartily welcomed by some and severely criticised by others, while the majority of the Japanese had to struggle to adjust to the rapid changes of the new era. Although the supporters of the transformation process were far more visible in print (Kornicki, 1982: 1), and their most earnest views on “the enlightened civilisation” or *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 were available in newspapers, opponents tried to ridicule them, frequently by means of satire, presenting them as parrot-like imitators of foreign ideas (Yamamoto, 1983: 86).

The process of modernization, which overlapped intense westernization taking place in Meiji Japan, was also concurrent with changes in the area of

Japanese literature; the voices calling for reforms were as strong among social thinkers as they were among writers. Influenced by Tsubouchi Yūzō 坪内雄蔵 (pseudonym: Shōyō 逍遙)'s *Shōsetsu Shinzui* 小説神髓 (*Essence of the Novel*, 1885–1886), Japanese *shōsetsu* 小説 (the term which embraces all fictional narratives, such as novels, short-stories and novellas), the long-lasting crisis of respectability was overcome after initial criticism and soon became one of the most debated and explored genres in Meiji literature.

The intricacies of Meiji period novels viewed in the context of Japanese modernisation have already been explored by a number of scholars, including Donald Keene (1961), Masao Miyoshi (1974), J. Thomas Rimer (1978), Peter F. Kornicki (1982), James A. Fujii (1993), Dennis Washburn (1995) and John Pierre Mertz (2003). As might be suggested by Shōyō's *Shōsetsu Shinzui*, in which the “sketching or copying” (*mōsha* 模写) of reality was encouraged (Miller, 2009: 103), the questions of verisimilitude and imitation were often addressed by the writers of *shōsetsu*; they were accompanied by numerous appeals to reform Japanese written language, as well as develop realistic methods of expression that would “not simply reflect but embody objective fact” (Washburn, 1995: 79).

The aim of this paper is to reflect upon the changes occurring in the language and methods of Japanese *shōsetsu* from the viewpoint of the dynamics between the written and spoken styles. The influence of foreign fiction and the practice of translating literary texts into Japanese will be considered as important factors in the search of novelistic expression. Then, Hasegawa Tatsunosuke 長谷川辰之助 (Futabatei Shimei 二葉亭四迷)'s *Ukigumo* (*Floating Clouds* 浮雲, 1887–1889), Mori Rintarō 森田太郎 (Ōgai 鷗外)'s *Maihime* 舞姫 (*Dancing Girl*, 1890) and Higuchi Natsu 樋口なつ (Ichiyō 一葉)'s *Takekurabe* たくくらべ (*Growing up/Child's Play*, 1895–96), all written soon after the publication of *Shōsetsu Shinzui*, will be analysed as spaces of negotiation between the oral and the written, the traditional and the novel, and the ambiguous and the direct. The ultimate question will be whether it is possible to trace a “sense of discontinuity” or a “sense of dislocation” in those works, resulting from frantic attempts to grasp meaning and respond to the demands of modernity (Washburn, 1995: 78).

## 2. Defining the *shōsetsu*

Literally translatable as “short account” (Rimer, 1978: 62), *shōsetsu* was first used in opposition to poetry and associated with common gossip (Sonnenberg,



2015: 27). Before the Meiji era, it was on the margins of what was considered proper “content of ‘literature’”, which consisted of poetry and nonfiction prose, the former being “a vehicle of expression” and the latter used “as the moral guideline for the literati class” (Fowler, 1988: 22). The term *shōsetsu* – now commonly used to indicate all kinds of fictional narratives, regardless of their length – gained popularity with the publication of Tsubouchi Shōyō’s acclaimed work, which reviewed the narrative methods used in traditional Japanese fiction within a slightly modernised (and still rather vague) framework of realistic representation. Before the term itself started to circulate among critics, writers and readers, elements of “fiction,” now associated with the *shōsetsu*, could be found in a number of traditional genres popular before the Meiji period. Rimer indicates that “the tale, the diary, the *monogatari*, the essay all seem to possess in varying amounts certain characteristics of Western fiction” (1978: 62), and the boundary between truth and fiction in these genres was rather indeterminate.

The novels, when they first appeared, were not highly valued, and neither were other fictional narratives — presented under various names, depending on the prevailing theme or manner of distribution — which nonetheless flourished before the Meiji era. They were frequently read aloud in families and among friends, a practice which Maeda refers to as “communal reading” (2004: 229). Due to its great popularity, fiction often became a target of criticism. In Tokugawa and the early Meiji era, it was considered harmful as a vehicle of immoral behaviour and idle fancy. In 1876, Nakamura Masanao 中村正直 (1832-1891), a translator of the works by Samuel Smiles and John Stuart Mill into Japanese, openly attacked all popular fictional narratives of the time, most of which were still heavily influenced by the tradition of *ninjōbon* 人情本 (sentimental novels) and *kokkeibon* 滑稽本 (comic novels), and strongly advised “students not to touch them, the wealthy not to buy them, heads of families not to sanction their purchase, publishers not to publish them, circulating libraries not to stock them and artists not to provide illustrations for them” (Rimer, 1978: 12).

The situation began to change gradually after the publication of *Shōsetsu Shinzui*, which postulated the reform of fiction. Soon the novel occupied a dominant position in the literature of the Meiji period (Washburn, 1995: 94).

Shōyō reviewed the prevailing tendencies of the publishing market in most critical terms:

The time indeed seems propitious for the production of novels. Everywhere historical romances and tales are being published, one more unusual than the next. It has reached such a point that even newspapers and magazines are printing reworkings of the hackneyed old novels, and thanks to this trend, the number of novels being produced is now beyond all reckoning. There is a simply staggering production of books, all of them extremely bad (Tsubouchi & Keene, 1960: 55).<sup>1</sup>

Shōyō noticed that low-brow fiction of debatable quality was immensely popular but hardly recommendable and he proposed a new approach to writing novels, influenced to some extent by the European literary tradition but even more strongly rooted in the great fiction of the Tokugawa period. Shōyō's program was far from being either precise or revolutionary but by emphasising the significance of verisimilitude in the description of human passions and social conditions, while discouraging previous didacticism, it defended the importance of fiction; furthermore, it adjusted the existing vocabulary (*ninjō* 人情 – “human passions”, *setai* 世帯 – “social conditions”) and developed a new one, later applied and altered in the debates on modern novel.

*Shōsetsu Shinzui*'s emphasis on the mimetic aspect of fiction is not accompanied by any clear or detailed definition. In fact, Tsubouchi uses a number of expressions with reference to mimesis: “shin o utsusu” (to reproduce reality), “mamono (...) o mogi suru” (to imitate things as they are) (Tsubouchi, 2011: 42), “shin ni semaru” (to approach truth) (p. 65), “mosha suru” (to imitate) (p. 140), or “shashin” (representation) (p. 43), and he insists on the great value of the “artistic novel” which – as the Japanese signs “mosha shōsetsu” (mimetic novel) (p. 65) also suggest – is defined by its mimetic qualities.

The juxtaposition between didacticism and mimesis in fiction is also explored by Tsubouchi Shōyō's close acquaintance, Futabatei Shimei, in *Shōsetsu Sōron* (Theory of the Novel, 1886), where it is stated that “mimesis is the true essence of the novel” but further explained that the aim of the novel is to “draw out the essential Idea” which is manifested in reality (Levy, 2006: 36; cf. Futabatei, 1989: 25).

Although Shōyō may not have been the most zealous reformer of fiction in Japan, his work became emblematic for the changes that later occurred in *shōsetsu*. To him, the noticeable gap between the Japanese rich tradition of fiction writing and the modern novel – which became one of the important themes of *Shōsetsu Shinzui* – did not seem insurmountable, but to other writers

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tsubouchi, 2011: 7-8.

and critics the influx of foreign fashions became a stimulus for more vigorous changes with regard to “the establishment,” or the traditional canon, the language and the modes of expression (Washburn, 1995: 78).

### 3. Translating foreign fiction

Although Tsubouchi Shōyō’s *Shōsetsu Shinzui* was written in response to the challenges of foreign literature, its argumentation was nonetheless rooted mostly in the Japanese tradition, referring only to a limited number of foreign authors, such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Moreover, it may be argued that his own theory of the novel exerted less influence on Tsubouchi than the practice of translating foreign literature, to which he decided to devote most of his life and endeavours, working on the masterpieces of Zola and Thackeray, and – above all – Shakespeare. In 1895, Tsubouchi stated that it was “much more difficult to make a foreign text Japanese than to turn one’s own impressions into text” (Miller, 2001: 111). He left numerous reflections on his attempts to translate Shakespeare into Japanese, choosing free style and complaining that “the text grows too long and turns into paraphrase,” and he postulated the simplicity of expression in translating English proverbs or aphorisms (Morton, 2009: 24). Morton even notices, having compared Tsubouchi’s versions of *Julius Caesar* from 1913 and 1933, that the author of *Shōsetsu Shinzui* “clearly sought to construct a more colloquial version of Shakespeare” (2009: 33).

In fact, the practice of translation influenced the plot and character construction, as well as the language of the Meiji novel in a manner not to be neglected. First, literal translations of foreign novels, “gangly English or French names and the exotic trappings of foreign settings,” also affected the phonetic transcription (Miller, 2001: 3). Many works were treated only as inspirations – the practice is referred to as *hon’an* 翻案 (adaptation) – and any others were translated more faithfully, which usually posed challenges to Japanese grammatical structures. Before focusing on translating Shakespeare, Tsubouchi also tried his hand at adaptations, as illustrated by his *Futagokoro* ふたごころ (*Two Hearts*, 1897) and his use of Walter Scott’s and Bulwer-Lytton’s texts. His intent in these adaptations is identified as that “of improving contemporary literature through demonstrating a higher standard” (Miller, 2001: 115), which strikingly resembles the intention behind writing *Shōsetsu Shinzui*.

Naturally, not all adaptations were intended as a way of enhancing the status of Japanese fiction. San'yūtei Enchō 三遊亭圓朝, for example, who is mentioned later in this paper, used adaptations of various foreign stories in order to enrich his *rakugo* 落語 performances and attract the audience. One of Enchō's famous adaptations, *Seiyō Ninjōbanashi Eikoku Kōshi Jōji Sumisu no Den* 西洋人情話英国孝子ジョージスミス之伝 (A Western Romance: The Tale of George Smith, Dutiful English Son) appeared in 1885 as a stenographic novel (*sokkibon* 速記本) (Miller, 2001: 85).

More faithful translations (*hon'yaku* 翻案) exerted even greater influence on Meiji fiction. Futabatei Shimei, the famous author of *Ukigumo* 浮雲, remains well-known in Japan due to his beautiful translations of Russian literature, especially of Turgenev's *Aibiki* あひゞき (*The Rendezvous* from *A Sportsman's Notebook*), first published in 1888. Ryan quotes the response of Kanbara Ariake 蒲原有明, a poet and a novelist, to the beauty of Futabatei's vernacular language:

Futabatei's *gembun itchi* style with its masterly use of colloquial language – that unique style – sounded so fresh its echoes seemed to go on endlessly whispering in my ears. A nameless joy filled me. (...) When I read the passages describing the forest, I could visualize the scene before my eyes. The changeable sky of late autumn, the light of the sun piercing through the forest, the rain lightly falling – it was as if I were looking at a scene in the country through which I had walked just the day before (...) My reaction to the story filled my whole being; it was like music. Reading *Aibiki* was a completely new experience in my life (Futabatei & Ryan, 1965: 118).

In his spirited reaction to Futabatei's translation, Kanbara associates the use of vernacular language with the effect of immediacy that the described landscape has on him. The revolutionary quality of the language used in *Aibiki* may also be attributed to Futabatei's choice of text: the plot of *The Rendezvous* is not very complex and all its beauty resides in descriptive passages, which could not have been omitted, as was frequently the case with adaptations (Levy, 2006: 43). The practice of *hon'yaku* resulted in unprecedented freedom from the previous stylistic and rhetorical devices of Japanese fiction. Levy brilliantly names the effect: "Futabatei's attempt to translate the original text as an indivisible unit of linguistic form and narrative content necessitated the creation of a new target language" (2006, 37). The influence of foreign literature and the practice of translation deepened the reflection of the Japanese authors with regard to the plot and character construction, as well as the language of the novel.

#### 4. Reflecting on the language

The postulates to reform the role and redefine the significance of the works of fiction in Japan were accompanied by proposals to create a new written language, which may be traced back as early as the last years of the Tokugawa era. In 1866, Maejima Hisoka 前島密, with a view of a widespread compulsory education, went as far as to suggest that the shogunate abolish Chinese characters and use a simpler method of transcription in textbooks, instead (Twine, 1978: 337). Maejima's proposal, though it may seem absurd today (and undoubtedly was to many of his contemporaries), it brought to light the problem of the written Japanese which was incomprehensible to many people, not only due to the great number of complex Chinese characters it used, but also because of the great distance in terms of vocabulary and grammar which divided it from the spoken language (*kōgotai* 口語体).

Twine distinguishes among four major styles used in writing at the beginning of the Meiji era: *kanbun* 漢文 – annotated classical Chinese, which was the “medium of official business, criticism and exposition, history and other serious literature,” *sorōbun* 候文 – epistolary style, “used in both private and official correspondence and in public notices, reports, archives, laws and ordinance,” classical Japanese *wabun* 和文, and *wakankōkōbun* 和漢混交文 – a mixture of classical Japanese and Chinese (1978: 334-336). In the time of rapid social changes, such complexity in written styles started to be viewed as an obstacle in social progress and provoked calls for an “intelligible tool for the acquisition of knowledge and exchange of information” (Tomasi, 1999: 333). In this respect, what is commonly referred to as the movement of *genbun itchi* 言文一致 (unification of the spoken and written styles), may be regarded as an attempt to negotiate a written language capable of transmitting information in as comprehensible (as well as convenient) a manner as possible, which was especially supported by social reformers and educators. It was also an attempt to establish vernacular written language in fiction.

The changes in written Japanese which occurred in the Meiji era were not all consequences of the pragmatic approach to language as a tool for exchanging information. In fact, in the field of literature we should rather speak about numerous ingenious quests for a new language needed to express new ideas, depict new reality and describe new desires. Futabatei Shimei, Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki and many other Meiji writers all searched for their own ways.

The necessity of a new language had been subtly suggested before, in *Shōsetsu Shinzui*, in the passage devoted to colloquial language. Shōyō notices that *zokubuntai* 俗文体, or colloquial style, results in bringing the “plain language as it is,” with its clarity of meaning and vitality (Tsubouchi, 2011: 103). However, he enumerates the problems resulting from the use of *zokubuntai* in Japanese novels:

Despite the numerous advantages of the colloquial style, we cannot profit from it, since there is no unity in Japanese (*genbun ichizu*) and the language used in writing differs conspicuously from the spoken language. As a consequence, if the colloquial language is recorded as it is in writing it either sounds inarticulate or overly coarse. The most refined plot becomes rustic and is often disparaged as boorish. Moreover, contrary to the situation in the West, our language alters immensely in places not so far apart and the differences between particular dialects are such as between French and English (Tsubouchi, 2011: 103-104).

Shōyō proves aware of the inevitable difficulties stemming from adopting colloquial style in writing. The spoken language differed so greatly from what the readers had been accustomed to in writing that once it was recorded, it momentarily lost its natural clarity and vitality, and, instead, sounded coarse. As a consequence, Shōyō allows colloquial language only in the novels of modern life (*tōsei no monogatari* 当世の物語), but even there he insists that it should be used wisely and with care, and sometimes it may be profitable to invent, as some of the writers in the Tokugawa period did, dramatised dialogues instead of recording the real-life conversations (Tsubouchi, 2011: 104).

Yamada Bimyō 山田美妙 in the “Preface” to his *Fūkin Shirabe no Hitofushi* 風琴調一節 (*A Note on the Organ*, 1887) also notices that the colloquial language in books is considered vulgar by some. He does not, however, support Shōyō’s view that it should be restricted to conversations. Here is what Bimyō says on the subject:

Any new and unfamiliar style provokes people preoccupied only with the surface of things and invite their negative comments like “vulgar” and “inelegant.” In the face of these charges, no one dares to try the colloquial style exclusively. Especially as regards the novel of manners, the dialogue is barely “vernacular” enough, and yet the narrative portions retain the “elegant style” characterized by the *-nari*, *-keri*, and *-beshi* suffixes. This inconsistency between dialogue and narrative within the same novel is really unsightly. We must remove it no matter how difficult the task may be (Miyoshi, 1974: 4).

Contrary to Shōyō, who allowed the colloquial language in dialogues but encouraged the “elegant style” in descriptive passages, Bimyō regarded the inconsistency within one work of fiction as “unsightly,” and insisted that only one style should be used. He also defended the gracefulness of the spoken style, emphasising that “in the hands of a skilled writer, colloquialism can offer an indescribable gracefulness with a discipline all its own, which is in no sense inferior to the elegant written style” (Miyoshi, 1974: 5).

The choice of a new written language for writing fiction was difficult not only because of the great discrepancy between written and spoken Japanese, but also due to the diversity of spoken dialects existing at the time. As a consequence, the decision of what should become the prevailing model or the standard for Japanese speech may be seen as an ideological one. Fujii, among others, is well aware of the complication, when he says: “The very formula that defines *genbun itchi* as a written representation of spoken language (as if there were such a monolithic entity) reveals an ideology at work” (Fujii, 1993: 96). A similar complication must have been at work also in the case of *kōdan* 講談 stories or *rakugo* performances, popular in the Meiji era, in which the performer had to choose the language both for himself as a narrator and for the characters he impersonated.

## 5. Recording an oral narrative

The discrepancy between the spoken and the written word was partly (and temporarily) reconciled by the appearance of *sokkibon*, or stenographic books. The method of shorthand writing was introduced to the Japanese public by Takusari Kōki 田鎖綱紀 and soon became popular, as it enabled a rapid transcription of lectures, sermons and *rakugo* performances. The article on stenographic methods published in “Jiji Shinpō” 時事新報 in 1882 was enthusiastic. “Phonography makes possible the direct transcription of even the longest and most complex discourses,” it said, and gave “assemblies, street-corner disquisitions, and parodies of Buddhist scriptures (*ahodarakyō* 阿呆陀羅經)” as examples (Miller, 1994: 473).

The rapid transcription was famously used to record the oral narratives of San'yūtei Enchō, the acclaimed *kōdanshi* 講談師, professional storyteller, also referred to as *rakugoka* 落語家, whose brilliant performances attracted the attention of a large public (Twine, 1978: 343). The *rakugo* performances usually

involved playful dialogues, all executed by one performer, which required lines that would be memorable and distinguishable at the same time. The stories put in writing retained much of the natural vigour and intensity of the spoken language, which must have appealed to the readers.

The stenographic method was used by Sakai Shōzō 酒井昇造 and Wakabayashi Kanzō 若林珮蔵, who recorded the comic spoken narratives of San'yūtei Enchō in what is sometimes referred to as a *sokkibon kōdan shōsetsu* 速記本講談小説 (narrated story in a form of a stenographic book). The effect of such cooperation, inspired by the editors of Tōkyō Haishi Shuppansha 東京稗史出版社, was the publication of *Kaidan Botan Dōrō* 怪談牡丹灯籠 (*The Strange Tale of Peony Lantern*) as a series of fascicles in 1884, and then as a separate book in 1885, which captured the vivid character of spoken narration in print. Naturally, the tension between the oral and the written traditions did not disappear altogether, which is also indicated by the fact that the stenographic transcription was corrected before the publication.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, *sokkibon* gave a sense of immediacy to the written texts and provided a model for colloquial-style writing for some writers.

The oral character of *Kaidan Botan Dōrō*, though also problematic due to the complex process of transcription and correction the text was subjected to, may nonetheless be visible both in the manner of setting the scene and in the language. Here is the opening passage of the book:

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, in the third year of the Kampō era, when Tokyo was still known as Edo, there was a celebration held in the shrine of Yushima in memory of the venerated Prince Shōtoku. On that great number of people gathered in the shrine and the squeeze was dreadful. Close by, in the area of Hongō Sanchōme, there was a shop selling armour, owned by Fujimura Shimbei. The superb articles displayed at the shop caught the eye of a samurai who was passing by. He must have been in his early twenties, his complexion was pale, his eyebrows most beautiful, his eyes were bright and determined, indicating short temper. He had his hair neatly combed, wore a splendid *haori* and a first-class *hakama*. He had leather-soled sandals on his feet and stood in the front. In the back you could see his companion in a pale blue livery coat, with a belt around his waist and a wooden sword covered with brass. The samurai stood there leaning against the post and viewing the displayed items (San'yūtei, 1977: 5).

<sup>2</sup> Some claim that regardless the later intervention into the text, Enchō's wording was kept, while others insist that the text was altered in the process of transcription and revision to the extent that it is difficult to treat it as a record of an oral performance (Nomura, 2002: 38-39).



All the verbs and adjectives in the passage are used in their colloquial forms. Moreover, they are also polite. The narrator, by choosing honorific language (*keigo* 敬語), as exemplified by his choice of verbs *mōshimashita* 申しました (the polite equivalent of “say, be called”) or *gozaimashite* 御座まして (polite equivalent of “be, exist”), indicates his humble position towards his listeners, which is simultaneously transferred onto the relationship between the narrator and the readers.

In fact, the choice between the neutral and the polite forms of Japanese was one of the core problems faced by writers of the Meiji era who were looking for a new language. In *kanbun* and classical Japanese, possibly as a consequence of stylization, the “honorific system has been somewhat neutralized over its long history” (Miyoshi, 1974: 13). Yamada Bimyō, who admits that he was inspired by San’yūtei Enchō, decided to use the honorific language in his novels (Miyoshi, 1974: 5). Futabatei Shimei, who also treated Enchō’s narratives as a model for using colloquial language in literature, chose differently but the decision was not an easy one, as he emphasizes in his essay *Yo ga genbun itchi no yurai* 余が言文一致の由来 (*How I Came to Use Genbun itchi*, 1906):

Should I use the polite form of the first person pronoun, *watakushi*, with sentences ending in *gozaimasu*, or the more familiar masculine personal pronoun *are*, as in “*Ore wa iya da*” (“I don’t like it”)? Professor Tsubouchi was of the opinion that there should be no honorific speech used. I was not entirely happy with this idea, but it was after all the view of the expert whom I had even contemplated asking to revise the manuscript for me. So I went ahead and finished the work without using honorific speech. This is the story of how I began writing in *genbun itchi* (Karatani & de Bary, 1993: 48).

Futabatei’s hesitation reflects the unstable state of language at the time. As Miyoshi indicates, “[i]n the early Meiji years, when the social role of the writer was still unfixed, the choice of the – *desu* suffix system over the – *da*, or vice versa, presented him with an agonizing problem in composition” (Miyoshi, 1974: xiv). Neutral as they may seem, however, plain forms, which are devised for the purpose of the novel, also suggest a specific relationship between the narrator and the readers. Futabatei decided to follow Shōyō’s advice not to use honorific language in his narratives and he referred to himself, not without humour, as “belonging to the ‘*da*’ school,” as opposed to Yamada Bimyō who was “of the ‘*desu*’ school” (Karatani & de Bary, 1993: 48)<sup>3</sup>. Both Futabatei and Bimyō named

<sup>3</sup> In fact, Yamada Bimyō wrote his first *genbun itchi* novel using the copula “*da*,” but he later switched to the polite “*desu*” form. The neutral “*de aru*” – as opposed to polite “*desu*” – was also used by Ozaki Kōyō in *Ninin nyobo* (Levy, 2006: 39).

San'yūtei Enchō as their model but they took two different paths in their quests for the language of the modern novel. “Da” or its slightly more polished version “de aru” was – as Levy notices – “a form from translation”, and “it was able to create a neutrality for the narrative voice in vernacular writing that was not common to the enunciations of spoken Japanese” (Levy, 2006: 39).

Although they contributed to alleviating the tension between the written and the oral traditions, the stenographic books soon disappeared. Their ephemeral popularity indicates that the vernacular language in fiction was not merely a recording of real spoken Japanese (Levy, 2006: 45). They were – as Futabatei's example proves – inspirational but could not compete with the modern novels on which they had exerted influence.

## 6. Towards representation in language

The exactness of language used in dialogues is said to have contributed to the realism of fiction written in the Tokugawa era (Keene, 1987: 112). The attempt to render the vividness of the language in conversations was already noticeable in the works of Tamenaga Shunsui 為永春水 (1790-1844) and Jippensha Ikku 十返舎一九 (1765-1831), and aggravated the discrepancy which the writers of the Meiji era had to face, between the style of descriptive passage and that of dialogues. However, it does not seem that dialogues were appreciated only for their realistic value, before Meiji. The language they were written in was still abundant in literary tropes and puns, whose aim was primarily to entertain the readers. This is what Fowler refers to as the “presentational mode” of Japanese literature:

In the absence of a highly representational mode, the influence of a more self-consciously presentational mode on Japanese fiction has been enormous. The latter mode has played no small role in western literature as well – as the continuing interest in tropes, for example, demonstrates – but it has not had the sweeping impact, especially on prose, that it has had on Japanese literature (Fowler, 1988: 20-21).

Both Shunsui and Ikku were regarded by Shōyō as representatives of realism in Tokugawa fiction, which – as Rimer notices – proves his broad understanding of the term: although the works of those writers were “devoid of any sociological or naturalistic realism,” they nonetheless were characterised by the “descriptive detail and the linguistic realism of the dialogue” (1978: 34).

For a time, the use of direct speech in dialogues eliminated the problem of how to situate the narrator towards the readers. The dialogues naturally focus on dynamics between the speaking characters, rather than on the relationship between the narrator and the audience. In *Kaidan Botan Dōrō* the politeness of descriptive passages disappears in dialogues, in which characters address each other in a variety of manners, depending on their relationship. It is as if the narrator left the stage or became invisible to let the characters speak freely. Here is the conversation between the samurai and the owner of the shop with armour from the first chapter:

Samurai: “Sir, how much is that?”

Owner: “Oh, yes. Thank you, sir, for inquiring. I will not ask for too much, sir. As I just mentioned, were there a signature of a master, it would be of great value. There is no signature, so it is ten golden coins.

Samurai: “Ten golden coins! It is a little too expensive. Won’t you lower the price to seven and a half?”

Owner: What shall I do? Then I will lose on that. It cost me a great deal (San’yūtei, 1977: 6).

The direct narration reflects the relationship between the owner, who uses honorific language, and the customer, whose expressions are rather neutral. The customer attaches a honorific prefix (*go* 御) to the address but the verbs he uses are in the plain form. The moment, however, the narrator reappears on stage or becomes visible again, he comes back with his customary politeness addressed at the audience: “As they fervently bargained over the price, a passing drunkard caught the servant of the samurai. ‘What the hell are you doing?’ he shouted” (San’yūtei, 1977: 6). The narrator in the descriptive passages continues to use the humble language, regardless the character of the events he is narrating. In this manner, he inscribes the direct speech, which in fact is a dramatised dialogue, into his own monologue.

The situation is different in Futabatei Shimei’s *Ukigumo*, in which the narrator adopts a less involved tone, possibly trying to distance himself from the reader. As Karatani notices, “Futabatei sought to abstract conversational speech for purposes of writing” (1993: 49). The opening passage introduces him as a rather detached observer of the narrated events:

It is three o’clock on the afternoon of a late October day. A swirling mass of men stream out of the Kanda gate, marching first in ant-like formation, then scuttling busily off in every direction. Each and every one of the fine gentlemen is primarily interested in getting enough to

eat. Look carefully and you will see what an enormous variety of individual types are represented in the huge crowd. Start by examining the hair bristling on their faces: mustaches, side whiskers, Vandykes, and even extravagant imperial beards, Bismarck beards reminiscent of a Pekinese, bantam beards, badger's beards, meager beards that are barely visible, thick and thin they sprout in every conceivable way (Futabatei & Ryan, 1965: 197).<sup>4</sup>

The verbs used in the passage are not honorific but plain, proving Futabatei to truly belong to the “de aru” school of writing. However, most of the sentences are nominal, which may resemble the narrative style of Tokugawa fiction. In this respect Karatani is right to say that “Futabatei was unable to completely resist the pull of the *ninjobon* and *kokkeibon* styles,” identified with Japanese traditional fiction (1993: 51). It is also possible to argue, as Masao Miyoshi does in reference to Futabatei's translation of Turgenev, that the author of *Ukigumo* was uncomfortable with outdoor scenes and looked for “the security of stereotyped convention” (Miyoshi, 1974: 29). Be that as it may, the brisk nominalisation seems to imitate the hectic atmosphere of the place described. Moreover, the attempt to depict the scenes in *Ukigumo* in a realistic manner is also associated with frequent onomatopoeic expressions, especially in Part One and Part Two (Maeda, 2004: 240-241).

It is worth noticing here that the opening passage of the novel, quoted above, differs significantly from portions of direct narration and other descriptive passages in the novel. The opening of the second chapter may help to illustrate the change:

The man we have been calling “The tall young man” was named Utsumi Bunzō and he was from Shizuoka Prefecture. His father had served in the old feudal government receiving a stipend under it. But then the feudal lord had fallen and the Imperial government was restored. The Meiji era began; there were none who did not yield to the change. Bunzō's father returned to his home in a small village in Shizuoka and simply vegetated for a while. He lived from day to day doing nothing until he had exhausted his resources. At last his savings had all but disappeared, and he became seriously concerned (Futabatei & Ryan, 1965: 203).<sup>5</sup>

The style of the passage may be still called obsolete – the sentence is long and evolving in all directions, and the syntactic relationship between the subject and the predicate is sometimes vague – but it is different from the opening passage,

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Futabatei, 1989: 7.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Futabatei, 1989: 14.

and as the novel develops, the style further evolves. While the first chapter opens with a view of a crowd of people described from a distant perspective by means of nominal phrases – an often named characteristic of Tokugawa-period fiction written for entertainment or *gesaku bungaku* 戯作文学 – which corresponds with the metonymical character of the description, the following chapters focus on individual characters and consist of long verbal sentences. Miyoshi, who refers to the style as “archaic,” sees its paradoxical resemblance to James Joyce’s interior monologue (Miyoshi, 1974: 27). The style further changes when the narrator proceeds to Utsumi Bunzō’s thoughts – its interruptions correspond with the protagonist’s hesitation and internal struggle (Maeda, 2004: 143).

## 7. Modern use of old forms in Meiji novels

The example of Futabatei’s *Ukigumo*, in which long sentences with a flowing perspective were used to describe the floating existence of the protagonist, suggests that the traditional narrative methods could be used to express novel ideas in Meiji fiction. The traditional literary language – *gabuntai* 雅文体 – was also treated as an important area of quest for new expression, among others, by Mori Ōgai and Higuchi Ichiyō. Ōgai used it effectively in *Maihime* 舞姫, which explores the problems of defining oneself in the context of modernity. Ōgai’s contemporaries referred to the style as *wakanyō setchūtai* 和漢洋折衷体 – “mixed style of Japanese, Chinese and Western” due to the frequent use of foreign German names in the story (Miyoshi, 1974: 38).

*Maihime* draws from the tradition of diary writing while attempting to express the inner self in a manner resembling *Ich Roman* (Bowring, 1979: 55). The opening passage explores the beauty and suggestiveness of classical Japanese:

They have finished loading the coal, and the tables here in the second-class saloon stand in silence. Even the bright glare from the electric lights seems wasted, for tonight the group of card players who usually gather here of an evening are staying in a hotel and I am left alone on board (Mori & Bowring, 1975: 151).<sup>6</sup>

The verb forms are in classical (*bungo* 文語) forms but the sentences are short and clearly divided, which situates the passage in sharp contrast with the opening of *Ukigumo*. As a consequence, the works are often juxtaposed with one

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mori, 1965: 3.

another and Karatani's statement that *Maihime* is more "realistic" (and hence more modern) than *Ukigumo* is widely known and commonly quoted. According to Karatani, *Maihime* has "the conceptual and grammatical structure of a work written in a European language and translated into Japanese," which leads him to a conclusion that "it is Ōgai's work which represents an advance, and it is his work, rather than Futabatei's, that brings the issue of *genbun itchi* to light" (1993: 50-51). Obviously, *genbun itchi* is understood here in a broader sense, not merely as a use of spoken Japanese but as a response to the challenges posed by foreign fiction.

Undoubtedly, Mori Ōgai's acquaintance with German literature, as well as his experience as a translator, enabled him to endow *Maihime* with the grammatical structure of a work of foreign literature translated into Japanese, despite the use of *bungo*. Ōgai's dialogues are as elegant in form as the descriptive passages:

'Why are you crying?' I asked. 'Perhaps because I am a stranger here I may be able to help you all the more.' I was astounded by my audacity. Startled, she stared into my sallow face, but she must have seen my sincerity from my expression. 'You look a kind sort of person,' she sobbed. 'Not cruel like him or my mother!' Her tears had stopped for a moment, but now they overflowed again and ran down her lovely cheeks (Mori & Bowring, 1975: 155).<sup>7</sup>

The phrase Ōta Toyotarō addressed at Elise is polite and far from colloquial and his language in dialogues resembles that in narrative passages, which supports the claim that "*gabuntai* made no distinction between the voice of the narrator and that of the characters described" (Nagashima, 2012: 86). The language of Elise, a German dancer, and Ōta, a Japanese foreign student, is not individualised, but rather becomes a subject of elegant stylisation. The dialogue is written down in Japanese *gabuntai* but the setting suggests that both characters are using German and there is no difference in their language ability: Ōta's proficiency in German is identical with that of a native speaker (Takada, 2000: 14).

The clear structure of sentences and passages in *Maihime*, indeed easily translatable into English, is accompanied by a consistent use of one narrative voice belonging to Ōta Toyotarō, the narrator and protagonist of the story. In this early work, Ōgai seems to prove "both his understanding of and control over one of the most fundamental tools of fiction writing as it was then

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mori, 1965: 6.

being practiced in Europe and the U.S.: a consistent narrative voice” (Snyder, 1994: 356). The beginning makes it clear that Ōta is on his way to Japan while recollecting the moments spent in Germany. He recalls what occurred to him during his sojourn outside of his country:

Returning to Japan, I feel a very different person from when I set out. Not only do I still feel dissatisfied with my studies, but I have also learned how sad this transient life can be. I am now aware of the fallibility of human emotions, but in particular I realize what a fickle heart I have myself. To whom could I possibly show a record of fleeting impressions that might well be right one day and wrong the next? Perhaps this is why my diary was never written. No, there is another reason (Mori & Bowring, 1975: 151).<sup>8</sup>

The story has a circular character: the protagonist in the end finds himself in the very same place he was when he started his adventure and narrative. It is possible to say that Ōta’s stay in Germany was “a glorious moment of suspense to be treasured in memory perhaps, but finally irrelevant to his necessary being” (Miyoshi, 1974: 43). However, the opening passage does suggest the possibility of change in the narrator’s perspective and of his inner self. Although throughout the story Ōta refers to himself by means of *yo* 余, a first-person pronoun traditionally used by men, when he speaks of himself going back to Japan, he uses another pronoun (*ware* 吾), which highlights his two statements: “Returning to Japan, I feel a very different person from when I set out,” and “I realise what a fickle heart I have myself.” In this manner, the classical Japanese in *Maihime* may have been used to reveal or emphasise the anxieties of the protagonist.

## 8. The outskirts of modernity

The brilliant use of traditional forms in order to express a modern message was also characteristic of Higuchi Ichiyō’s works. In her *Diaries*, she insisted that the goal of her literary endeavours is to create impeccable beauty (1976: 316) and she looked for the manifestation of this ideal in classical literature. Contrary to the writers previously mentioned, she made no attempts at translating foreign literature, which may have resulted in her even greater indebtedness to the classical Japanese. Nonetheless, she could write in *kōgotai*, as is illustrated by her late short-story *Kono Ko* この子 (My Child, 1896), as well as by the brilliant dialogues in her other works. At the same time, she was a diligent observer of

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mori, 1965: 3.

surrounding reality, which is vividly illustrated by *Takekurabe* たけくらべ, her most often-quoted work of fiction, focusing on the lives of children in the outskirts of the famous quarters of Yoshiwara.

The opening passage of *Takekurabe* is abundant in traditional literary tropes:

It's a long way round to the front of the quarter, where the trailing branches of the willow tree bid farewell to the night time revellers and the bawdyhouse lights flicker in the moat, dark as the dye that blackens the smiles of the Yoshiwara beauties. From the third floor rooms of the lofty houses the all but palpable music and laughter spill down into the side street. Who knows how these great establishments prosper? The rickshaws pull up night and day. They call this part of town beyond the quarter "in front of Daion Temple." The name may sound a little saintly, but those who live in the area will tell you it's a lively place (Higuchi & Danly, 1981: 254).<sup>9</sup>

The forms belong to classical Japanese, as do the stylistic devices: *kakekotoba* 掛詞 or puns, such as the one using the adjective "long" (*nagakeredo* 長けれど), which may refer either to the road or to the branches of the willow, and *engo* 縁語 or words/images related by meaning. Still, the place is depicted most vividly, and the metaphor of enclosure, explored in the passage, may be read as something rather modern (Nakanishi, 2002: 63).

The language of dialogues in *Takekurabe* differs conspicuously, which makes it resemble Futabatei's *Ukigumo*, both texts showing a significant discrepancy between direct narration and descriptive passages. The difference may be illustrated by a conversation included early in the narrative, in chapter 3, depicting the children's preparations for the festival in Senzoku Shrine:

"We'll do something together," said Midori. "Don't worry about money. I've got plenty. Just say what you want."

The friends, quicker than adults to see their opportunity, knew that they were not likely again to have a ruling lady so generous.

"How about a show? We'll use a store where everybody can see us."

"You call that an idea?" The boy already wore his headband in the rakish festival manner. "We'll get a *mikoshi*. A real one. The heavier the better. *Yatchoi, yatchoi*" (Higuchi & Seidensticker, 1960: 76).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Higuchi, 1974: 402.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Higuchi, 1974: 409.



The style of the conversation is colloquial, clearly different from the opening passage, descriptive in character (Hara, 2003: 204-219). The grammatical structure of the sentences reflects the enthusiasm and great expectations the children harbour before the festival. The attitude of the boys willing to show their strength while carrying a portable shrine *mikoshi* is highlighted by the onomatopoeic expression: *Yatchoi, yatchoi*. Still, particular voices are not individualized. Even Midori, the main protagonist, who is introduced in the same chapter as a person from Kiinokuni province with a specific dialect, speaks as all other children brought up in the outskirts of Yoshiwara district in Tokyo.

The language of *Takekurabe*, which employs the poetic tropes of classical Japanese in descriptive passages, as well as colloquial forms in dialogues, is used to depict the ambiguous character of the quarter adjacent to the influential Yoshiwara. As a consequence, *Takekurabe* may be read as a study of social influence and the gradual discovery of one's looming fate, which is reflected both in the theme of the story and the dynamics of the language.

## 9. Conclusion

The tension between the oral and the written styles in Japanese literature of the 1880s and the 1890s, which was highlighted by the influx of European and American novels and discourses, were ingeniously explored by Meiji writers. Stenographic books of San'yūtei Enchō suggested one possible approach to the problem. They turned out to be inspirational to Futabatei Shimei, who attempted to use colloquial speech in dialogues and subsequently alter the language used in descriptive passages. This attempt was to help bridge the gap between dialogues and descriptions, typical of Tokugawa literature. The reflection on Futabatei's influence on the novelistic expression in Meiji literature is, however, incomplete without the context of his translations. Contrary to Futabatei, Mori Ōgai, also a translator of foreign literature, presented a different approach to the challenging gap between the oral and the written. In *Maihime* he used classical language, but changed the structure of sentences and paragraphs in order to focus entirely on the speaking persona. Higuchi Ichiyō, on the other hand, explored classical Japanese, and experimented with stylized colloquialisms in order to suggest the immediacy of the depicted places.

The quests for a new language in fiction, illustrated by the works of Japanese nineteenth-century fiction analysed in this paper, were triggered by a

“sense of dislocation,” or an acute awareness that the new times called for new means of expression. Futabatei, Ōgai and Ichiyō did not begin their search by imitating foreign patterns but instead explored what they had already known and highly valued within the Japanese tradition. This encouraged the process of reevaluation of the old narrative techniques, many of which were discovered to be highly fruitful for expressing new ideas. With the exception of Ichiyō, all the writers had substantial experience in translating foreign works of literature, which also resulted in their experimenting with vernacular language. The tension existing between the oral and written styles in nineteenth-century Japan corresponds in their works to the dynamics between the presentational and representational modes in literature. The writers attempted to explore new paths in writing, and their quests have significantly contributed to the development of the modern novel in Japan.

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## Titles of Mo Yan's books in translation into closer and farther languages: Is nature or culture the main cause of changes?

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### Abstract

Translating titles is one of the most complex problems that translation researchers (primarily those working in a literary field) may encounter. For many reasons, which I outline in the introduction to the present paper, the original meaning of a title often undergoes much greater modifications than in other places of the translated text. The object of my investigation are changes – some radical – that occurred in the translations of 12 titles of novels and short story collections by the Chinese author and Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan, which were rendered into languages both close to us geographically and culturally (European ones: Romanic and Germanic) and farther in this respect (Asian tongues: Japanese and Korean). Based on a combined analysis of the translated titles and interviews with some of their (co-)authors, an extensive taxonomy of various causes of these changes is proposed. A crucial question, which unfortunately cannot be answered fully in this paper, concerns the nature-culture dilemma: do the modifications result mainly from the translator's nature (personality or even simply temperament) or from the culture s/he lives in (i.e. the editorial/translational title-giving custom)?

**Keywords:** title translation, Chinese literature in translation, descriptive translation studies

与其诅咒黑暗，不如燃起蜡烛  
Yǔqǐ zǔzhòu hēi'àn, bùrú ránqǐ làzhú  
Instead of cursing the darkness,  
it's better to light a candle.  
(Chinese proverb)

### 1. Introduction

The translation of the titles of books, especially literary publications, is one of the most complex areas that a translation researcher may examine. After all, hardly

any part of a text is so ingeniously or 'refractively' (cf. Hermans, 1999) rendered as its title. Although titles are extremely short fragments of text in translation, they are very special. Undoubtedly, this results from their function which, above all, consists in offering a kind of a proper name for the text – a name whose role is to distinguish it – in combination with the author's name – from other texts. In addition, it is a meaningful name, since it informs (sometimes intentionally vaguely) about the content of the text. At the same time, that name is to be an attractive label, to bait the attention of a potential reader, which in the case of a translation is probably even more important than in that of the original, as the surname of a foreign author may not say much to the target reader.

Even these three qualities – or functions – of the title may result in a conflict that the translator has to face. Thus, it comes as no surprise that many translation researchers examined closely transcoded – and sometimes unrecognizable – titles (e.g. Nord, 1993 and Hejwowski, 2004b; before them, in a more general way, Genette, 1982), distinguishing various functions of the title, which in the ideal scenario should be preserved in translation. Before I briefly survey three major approaches to the topic, I will present a concise description of the research material, while revealing reasons for interest in it.

Translations of the titles of Mo Yan's books attracted my attention shortly after the author became the Nobel Prize winner in literature, at the end of 2012. When my students and I undertook translating a review of the German version of his famous novel with the local title *Die Schnapsstadt* (Bender, 2002), I was astonished by the extent of changes that translators of this and other novels by Mo made in their renderings into German and – as it shortly turned out – other popular languages, such as English, Spanish or French. After originally limiting myself to 9 titles and 9 languages, I eventually created a larger, symmetrical grid of 12 by 12, adding Russian, Japanese and Korean on the language axis. The two Far-Eastern languages certainly posed the most significant problems, and yet I decided to take them into consideration since they provided me with material that was more diverse and complete, as well as thought-provoking. As for the titles, I have chosen those which were fairly frequently translated (at least into four languages, with one exception), but also caused various translation problems. In three exceptions, I included titles of book parts (usually short stories) which in other languages were titles of whole books (collections of short stories). When choosing languages, I applied two criteria: the existence of an adequate number of translations (again at least four) and a rudimentary comprehension of the selected target languages, supported extensively by printed

and internet resources. In fact, the findings presented in this paper result mainly from research based on internet searches. If it had not been for information about books usually drawn from catalogues of various national libraries and completed with data from publishing house, bookshop, magazine and newspaper websites and occasionally blogs, I would not have been able to assemble my corpus. Even so, the collection is still incomplete due to the lack of some translations (until now, the fewest books by Mo appeared in Russian (4) and Norwegian (5), followed by Swedish, Italian and Polish (6 each)). Altogether, at present (June 2015), I have analysed 100 translation titles (including 3 retranslations). If the corpus were not perforated here and there by gaps, there would be 144 title renditions, i.e. nearly fifty percent more. However, even one hundred examples allow one to draw some conclusions – which, of necessity, often have the tentative status of suppositions. Indisputably, conclusions as to the supposed translational tradition in the area of book titles will be much weaker in the case of languages with very small corpora. Nevertheless, I decided to include these cases in order to get a broader view of the situation. A separate matter is relay translation, almost always via (American) English, which concerns as many as 16 (out of 100) title versions. This phenomenon, which may seem surprising in the times of a rapidly growing popularity of the Chinese language, will be discussed later on, also with regard to its negative consequences.

A decisive answer will not be given to what is admittedly a rather radical question in the title of the paper, even in the case of the 'strong' corpora. Although the scope of the study may seem broad, it is still quite narrow within the scope of each language. It is a pilot study that should merely highlight some tendencies that are somewhat representative (if the examined titles and their translations are typical). In trying to determine how individual the translators' presumed choices were, I also relied on information from (internet) interviews conducted with 12 of them (I was inspired by Kohlmayer (2002), who analysed recordings of interviews with six translators of literary works into German). While translators should generally be judged by the fruits of their work, they should also be given a chance to explain their way of working and thinking – because however detailed and sophisticated a method of observation can be, an observer cannot determine the main reason for some actions without simply asking their performers. Of course, they may not tell (or even know) the truth, or deeper reasons, but they may overtly state something a researcher could have looked for in vain, or for a long time. This information may then be useful for pedagogical purposes – or simply enrich the evaluation of translations.

Although in this shortened version of my paper I cannot extensively discuss my findings stemming from the interviews, I will use some of this information when presenting my conclusions.

The research presented here is, on the one hand, a continuation of my multilingual analyses of translations, carried out on Polish poetry (Zbigniew Herbert's poems: cf. Staszek, 2005; 2008), and on the other hand an extension of my attempts at establishing the impact of the translator's temperament on his or her performance (cf. Staszek, 2014). Of course, in the case of translators of Mo Yan's works I did not have at my disposal tests or questionnaires but merely the translators' statements. I could only rely on the analysis of these statements combined with an examination of the titles in order to speculate on the translators' way of thinking, i.e. their translational strategy or ideology – and, subsequently, their personality, which can be narrowed down to temperament. It is one's temperament that, in my opinion, is a factor which strongly influences behaviour and sometimes causes individuals to break norms (usually left unstated), also in the field of translation. This may complicate the quest for explanations, but can also be seen as a possibility to change the normative system (positively or not, depending partly on individual judgement).

Regarding stumbling blocks, the main problem concerning the research on the translation of titles consists in the difficulty with establishing the authorship of these translations. Since the title exerts a big influence on the sale of a book and its publisher is vitally interested in high sales figures, s/he may try to convince the translator, sometimes via the editor, of the advantages of his/her vision. After all, there are market studies about how particular words or phrases increase the popularity of a book, not to mention an existing body of research on title-giving customs (likely the best examples of which are in findings by Nord (1993, cf. below). Whereas it is difficult to imagine that an editor or a publisher would not want to make a title more attractive, it is even more unimaginable that a translator firstly does not suggest his/her own title and does not defend his/her idea against a market-oriented editor-publisher duo. A primary problem in translation research — due to external factors, such as an editor's intervention, also concerns the rest of a translation (which i.a. Mo Yan's American translator Howard Goldblatt mentions, cf. Goldblatt & Efthimiadou, 2012; Levitt, 2013; also Abrahamsen, 2008, with a very insightful discussion that follows). Of course, in the case of the title, a foreign intervention is much more probable – since, at the first moment, the title is to encourage the reader to get acquainted with the book to a much higher degree than its content, which is



sometimes totally unknown to the reader. Under such circumstances, we should either consider the title as a common work of the translator and his/her 'advisors' (as Nord does) or assume it is the translator's idea by default, unless we find information to the contrary. In this paper, I search for evidence in a fairly large number of interviews with translators, mainly from the Internet – to clear the said dilemma, and speculate on the translators' motivations for departing from a literal rendering of the title (which in most cases is possible, even if such translations may be enigmatic). One technical remark in this context is necessary: due to the variety of languages involved I cite all translators' statements in my English translation, which at times is deliberately not very smooth.

We now consider the original author in question, and the context of the translations of his works. Writing under the pseudonym Mo Yan (莫言; pinyin: *Mò Yán*, literally 'don't talk') this Chinese writer was born on February 17, 1955 as Guan Moye (Simplified Chinese: 管谟业; Traditional Chinese: 管謨業; pinyin: *Guǎn Mòyè*)<sup>1</sup>; in 2012, he won the Nobel Prize in literature. According to reviewers, Mo Yan is a very popular writer in his homeland, read by people of various background and education, "a writer whom everyone can gather around", as his Swedish translator put it (Gustafsson Chen, 2012d), who sees himself as a 'storyteller' (such was also the title of his Nobel lecture, cf. Mo, 2012a/b). Although he is regarded by some (notably Chinese dissidents living abroad, cf. Link, 2012 and Allen, 2012) as a regime writer (for some time he was the vice-president of the Chinese Writers' Association), such opinions seem to be fairly superficial: he does make some concessions to the authorities, in order to publish while living in China, nevertheless, he is critical of the sociopolitical situation in his country. One of his best-known novels, *Jiǔguó* (Engl. *The Republic of Wine*), a metaphorically sarcastic portrait of his homeland, had its premiere in Taiwan, and only then, in a censored version, appeared in mainland China. In turn, his latest novel, *Wā* (Engl. *Frog*), addresses the issue of large-scale abortions caused by the implementation of the single-child policy. Publishing since 1981, Mo has currently (end of June 2015) produced over 110 works, comprising 11 novels (usually quite long, even in their original versions), over 20 novellas and at least 80 short stories. He is a very prolific writer (his books are 'bricks', as his Norwegian translator, Brit Sæthre, sees them (cf. Sæthre & Lien, 2012)), and an oft-translated one; long before receiving the Nobel Prize. renditions of his books appeared (since 1989) in not fewer than 22 languages — mainly European ones,

<sup>1</sup> Information for non-Sinologists: *pinyin* is the official system of transcription of Chinese characters, introduced in the PRC in 1958; Simplified Chinese is used in mainland China, and Traditional – i.a. in Taiwan and Hongkong.

but with a strong East-Asian addition. Surprisingly, there are very few translations into Slavic languages; even with only six of Mo Yan's works, Polish is the leader in this group.

It is worth noting that nearly one fifth (16 out of 100) of the translations were not done from the original texts. The American (in 15 cases) or Japanese versions (one supposed case) were used, instead. This also applies to most Spanish (6 out of 10), Dutch (5 out of 9) and Norwegian (4 out of 5) versions. Whereas in both latter cases it is not surprising due to the relatively small language groups and book markets – it seems unexpected in the case of Spanish, a world language spanning parts of three continents. However, indirect translations from Chinese remain common in the Spanish book market (cf. the findings of Maialen Marín-Lacarta, 2012a; 2012b, not discussed in detail here).

## 2. Theoretical background

The issue of translating titles certainly could not escape the attention of researchers – after all, probably only wordplays and culture-bound terms are more prone to refractions than book titles. This is the subject of a standard work in functionalist translation studies: Christiane Nord's *Einführung in das funktionale Übersetzen: am Beispiel von Titeln und Überschriften* (1993). The German translation researcher, who analysed a very large, quadrilingual (German, English, Spanish, French) corpus of titles of both literary and non-literary works, comprising approximately 12,500 items (about 3,000 titles per each language), perceives titles in terms of the functions they fulfill (not differently from other researchers in the field, not all partisans?? of the functionalist approach). Nord distinguishes 6 functions, dividing them into three basic (Germ. *Grundfunktionen*) and three supplementary ones (*Zusatzfunktionen*). The former group is made up of the distinctive (*distinktive F.*), metatextual (*metatextuelle F.*) and phatic functions (*phatische F.*). The latter, in turn, comprises the presentative (*Darstellungsf.*), expressive (*Ausdrucksf.*) and appellative functions (*Appellf.*). This model is based on a relabelled division by Bühler (1934), referring to the functions of language signs (called *Organon-Modell* in German), extended to the phatic function, added by Jakobson (1971), and subsequently two functions concerning titles alone: the distinctive and metatextual. Thus, in her model, Nord did not include two other functions distinguished by Jakobson — poetic and metalingual, considering the former as a special case of the appellative function,

and seeing in the latter a variety of the presentative function. And although it is difficult to disagree with Nord globally, it is tempting to claim that some functions in her model could be included within others. While the researcher stresses that the phatic function, which consists in putting the reader in contact with the text (Germ. *Kontaktstiftung*) and retaining its title, differs from the (possible) appellative function — reducible to encouraging the reader to read the text, it seems that every title intends (at least through its content) to spur the reader to get familiar with the text labelled by it (after all, every text was created with an intention that someone will read it), and, on the other hand, not every title has a form that facilitates its retention. And such a form is probably the most concrete symptom of the phatic function, stressed by the researcher; she speaks here of the dilatory (Germ. *dilatorisch*) effect of the title. Similarly, the expressive function may be regarded as a subjectively marked part of the presentative function (the sender presents not only the text, but also his/her attitude towards it) and the latter could also include the metatextual function (one of the obligatory ones), which results from the fact that the title is a text about another text (co-text) and is to be recognizable as such. It is a kind of presentation of the text, even if we assume that at the moment of perceiving the metatextual function of the title (fulfilled by it automatically) we do not have to receive its content (at least fully). The above aggregations — being in essence a return to Bühler's division, enriched with the very desirable uniqueness of the title — would yield only three functions: *distinctive*, *presentative* and *appellative*, of which the first would enable the reader to distinguish a text from others, the second would inform to some extent about its content (and possibly the author's attitude towards it), and the third would encourage (to some degree) the recipient to read the text. Such an approach is more than a return to Bühler, and looks to Genette (1982, cf. below); it also has the advantage that all three functions are not fulfilled automatically.

In Poland, perhaps the most systematic approach to the translation of titles may be found in work by Krzysztof Hejwowski (2004b). Referring to an article by Monika Gagaczowska (2000), who in turn cites the classification by Gérard Genette (1982), the Warsaw-based researcher distinguishes “at least six” functions of titles of literary works: the *identifying* (as in both Genette and Gagaczowska), *presentative* (informative/descriptive in both Genette and Gagaczowska), *evocative* (the connotative aspect in Gagaczowska), *experiential*, *relative* and *commercial function* (the marketing function in Genette), while stressing that “it is the translator's duty to try to preserve as many of the

functions as possible and as much of each function as possible” (Hejwowski 2004b: 167). Perceiving a source of difficulties in a possible conflict of some of the functions, e.g. between identification – informativeness, he enumerates some other problems related to translating titles which may be caused by their status as clichés or well-known sayings, their ambiguity or the existence of polysemy in the original title, evoking undesirable associations by the most obvious equivalent as well as convergence of titles in translation (Hejwowski 2004b: 177-182). As for the functions, the names of three of them need probably some explanation: the *evocative* function refers to associations that a title evokes (also to literary genres, such as detective stories, young adult or women’s literature), the *experiential* one refers to the auctorial background of a title, which – being mostly a private matter – is often unknown to translators and causes translation errors (exemplified by the case of *Winnie-the-Pooh*), and finally the *relative* function, which may be called *allusive* because it consists in evoking associations to concrete titles of works of the source language literature or to citations from the latter. In essence, all these functions may be regarded simply as hidden (or at least less visible, and thus less certain) layers of the title’s meaning. The least accessible to the translator seems to be the experiential layer, since it requires knowledge about the background of the work, even the author’s biography (the description of the function and implies that unlike the other functions, the texts fulfil it, in relation to the author). Hejwowski does not give the hierarchy of the functions he enumerates, hence it may be assumed that he treats them as equally important, especially in the light of his general postulate cited above. Unfortunately, in translators’ (let alone publishers’) eyes, these functions are not equiponderant: we can presume that in translation the presentative function will often be strengthened (examples of explication are given by Hejwowski himself, who sees a general tendency in the technique), to the detriment of the identifying function (in the intercultural perspective). The commercial function, too, is likely to increase (it may be also boosted by the translator’s will to make the title more colourful – as some examples will show), the relative function may disappear (since hardly anyone will decipher an allusion, even if the translator saves it) and the same fate may be met by the experiential function if the translator does not enter deeply enough in the world of the work (the reason being a lack of time, interest or patience). Describing the experiential function, Hejwowski stresses the fact, not appreciated sufficiently by some translators and probably many publishers: “Titles are carefully selected by authors, they represent the author’s choice: giving your book a title is like choosing a name for your

child – the choice represents your preferences, your sentiments and your taste” (2004b: 173). And he concludes:

As books have their authors (despite the death-of-the-author myth), the translator owes loyalty to them. The title is part of the process of artistic creation, a result of the author's thinking process and as such deserves solicitous treatment by the translator. As books come from other cultures, the translator, being a bilingual and bicultural expert, should act as the ambassador of the foreign culture. It is only through respect for another culture that we can get to know and understand other people (Hejwowski, 2004b: 183).

Based on the research presented here, I would put forward the supposition that perhaps too many ‘refractions’ are attributed to cultural differences – whereas an equally important reason for modifications may be natural differences: the fact that many literary translators like to realise their creative ambitions through translation (maybe that is why they translate?), especially in such a high-profile fragment of the text as its title. This wish to show off one's ingenuity has been alluded to by Jerzy Jarniewicz; speaking of the translation of titles, he states:

It is difficult to find a better illustration of the autonomous character of the translator's work. The controversial concept of a transparent or invisible translator does not turn out to be useful, since translators take an active part in the process of translation. It is often in the title of the translated work that they mark their presence: and then the title, apart from various functions it happened to fulfill in the original, becomes a real signature of the translator (Jarniewicz, 2000: 483).

The translator's signature is meant to be a reflection, not a refraction of the author's. Another problem, mentioned above, is that for a translation researcher it is difficult to establish whether that signature was put by the translator, if someone advised/supervised it, or simply paid for the job.

### **3. Presentation of the corpus**

What follows is a discussion of selected titles of Mo Yan's books. As stated at the beginning, I analysed the translations of 12 titles (listed in Table 1); however, I have limited the study to a detailed presentation of one fairly complex, representative case, abounding in translated versions. The remaining 11 titles will be presented in a reduced form directly below and examples of their renditions

(listed in the bibliography) will be used in the analyses that will follow: first arranged according to the applied modifying techniques and then to the language key, pointing to possible individual differences. Semantic similarities often result from relay translation, whereas similar alterations within a language – either come from the same target language (social custom) or the same translators (individual custom). In turn, similarities across languages may suggest a similar way of thinking of translators into different tongues. We must not forget, however, that both translators and publishers usually read – or at least consult – previous translations, mainly into English (and sometimes do not go beyond that). This may result in similar ideas for modifying the titles; translation teachers will know this phenomenon in the unilingual dimension.

Table 1 presents both word-for-word and literal translations of the 12 analysed titles of Mo's works. Colons, used in the word-by-word translation of the original Chinese titles, stand for the number of Chinese characters explained in scare quotes after them (in English). They correspond to entities that may be called words: although these usually are not separated graphically in Chinese, they appear as lexical items in dictionaries. As a rule, they comprise two to three characters although single-character words are possible.

	<b>Title {+Traditional Chinese} with transcription</b>	<b>Word-for-word and literal translation</b>	<b>Year</b>
1	透明的红萝卜 {透明的紅蘿蔔} [Tòumíng de hóng luóbo]	::'transparent/diaphanous' : 'red' ::'radish[es]' ='Transparent red radish[es]'	1985
2	红高粱家族 {紅高粱家族} [Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú]	: 'red' :: 'kaoliang / Chinese sorghum' :: 'clan[s]/family/ies' ='The red kaoliang clan'	1987
3	天堂蒜薹之歌 [Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē]	:: 'paradise/heaven' :: 'garlic shoot[s]' : 's' : 'song[s]' ='Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]'	1988
4	酒国 {酒國} [Jiǔguó]	: 'alcoholic drink/wine' : 'country/ies// nation[s]/state[s]' ='The alcohol country'	1992
5	怀抱鲜花的女人 [Huáibào xiānhuā de nǚrén]	:: 'hug/embrace (v)' :: 'fresh flowers' : 'attr. signal' :: 'woman/en' ='A woman embracing fresh flowers'	1993

6	丰乳肥臀 [Fēngrǔ fēitún]	'abundant/great' : 'breast[s]/milk' : 'fat/ fertile/large' : 'buttock[s]' ='Abundant breasts [and] fat buttocks'	1996
7	师傅越来越幽默 [Shīfu yuèlái yuè yōumò]	::'master' ::: 'more and more' :: 'humour/ humorous' ='The master [is] more and more humorous'	1999
8	檀香刑 [Tánxiāng xíng]	:: '[white] sandalwood' : 'punishment[s]' ='The sandalwood punishment'	2001
9	四十一炮 [Sìshíyī pào]	:: 'forty' : 'one' : 'cannons/guns/firecrackers' ='Forty one cannons'	2003
10	生死疲劳 {生死疲勞} [Shēngsǐ píláo]	:: 'life and death' :: 'tired/weary/fatigue' ='Tired/Fatigue of life and death'	2006
11	蛙 [Wā]	: 'frog[s]' ='Frog[s]'	2009
12	变 {變} [Biàn]	: 'change[s]' ='Change[s]'	2010

**Table 1.** Original titles (also in Traditional Chinese) with transcriptions, followed by their word-for-word and literal translations

#### 4. Example of the analysis: *Songs, ballads, monotonous chant, fantasia or rebellion?*

Table 2, presenting the translations of one title, illustrates the type of analyses performed on the whole corpus of gathered material. The individual languages are marked with the symbol of the internet domain of the country associated with a given language (the non-existing *us* referring to the American version). Underlined words and expressions are places of semantic changes, X symbolises a 'word' that has been omitted, although it could be expressed verbally in a given language. The third column indicates relay translation from an American rendering; the fifth column lists the first edition of a given translation. In the last row of the table, symbols for languages with no translations of this title are listed.

Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]				
Lg.	Title	Source	Translator	Publ. year
cn	天堂蒜薹之歌 [ <i>Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē</i> ] ::‘paradise/heaven’ ::‘garlic shoot’ :‘s’ :‘song[s]’ =‘Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]’			1988
jp	『天堂狂想歌』 [ <i>XX Tendō kyōsōka.</i> ]	cn	吉田富夫 Yoshida Tomio	2013
kr	《티엔탕 마을 마늘종 노래. 1-2》. [ <i>Ti-entang ma-eul maneuljong nolae. 1-2.</i> ]	cn	박명애 Bag Myeong-ae	2007
us	<i>The X Garlic X Ballads.</i>	cn	Howard Goldblatt	1995
de	<i>Die X KnoblauchXrevolte : Roman.</i>	cn	Andreas Donath	1997
nl	<i>De X knoflookXliederen.</i>	us	Peter Abelsen	1995
se	<i>X VitlöksXballaderna.</i>	cn	Anna Gustafsson Chen	2001
no	<i>X HvitløksXballadene.</i>	us?	Brit Sæthre	2014
fr	<i>La mélopée de X l’ail paradisiaque : roman.</i>	cn	Chantal Chen-Andro	1990
es	Las <u>baladas</u> del X ajo X.	us	Carlos Ossés	2008
-:	it, ru, pl			

**Table 2.** Translations of *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*

The third of the most frequently translated books by Mo Yan is a novel that appeared as his second prose book in almost half of the analysed languages (English, German, Dutch and Swedish). This is significant, as in the case of an author’s second work, publishers usually try not to disappoint a reader who may be familiar with the author’s first book; consequently, they avoid risk. The title of this novel, *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*, ‘Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]’ was almost always simplified in some way (with the exception of the Korean version, cf. below). In most translations we have either ‘garlic ballads’ (us, se, no and es) or ‘garlic songs’ (nl). A surprise in this last set is the Swedish version of the title,



which, contrary to the rest, was certainly translated directly from the original. Typical of other languages – and probably resulting from taking the American translation as a model – is the narrowing of ‘songs’ to ‘ballads’, although the latter are more precisely 歌谣 *gēyáo* in Chinese, and not 歌 *gē* alone. In the recent Japanese translation, in turn, ‘fantasia’ appears (lit. ‘thought song’), with the addition of the attribute ‘crazy’ (however, probably in an influx of fantasy the translator deleted the ‘garlic shoots’). The French translator acted in a similar though atypical way, compared to others (which turns out to be typical of titles in her version and generally French titles). She used the word *mélopée* (originally ‘a ritual dancing song in antique Greek poetry’, today informally ‘monotonous chant’) as the equivalent of a very common word *gē* (simply ‘song’), and, in addition, she preserved *tiāntáng* ‘paradise/heaven’, here in the attributive function: ‘paradisiac/heavenly’. The German title is also atypical (though probably following the supra-individual trend in this language) – *Die Knoblauchrevolte* means ‘the garlic rebellion’, a formulation referring to the events depicted in the novel, but at the same time going in the opposite direction than the original: a straightforward message instead of euphemistic irony, which had an irresistible charm, saved perhaps to the greatest extent in the French title (where the word *mélopée* undoubtedly has an ironic overtone). All in all, the original title was preserved most by the Korean translator, who rendered it as ‘A song about garlic shoots from the town of Tiantang’. Although it may seem strange that a part of the original was taken over, in this case it is insofar justified as *Tiāntáng* is a common name and a toponym – moreover, a speaking one (which is not rare either in Mo Yan’s works or generally in Chinese). The plot of the novel – based on real events, a peasant rebellion in the writer’s homeland, Gaomi – is set in a county bearing the ironic name Paradise (or Heaven – Chinese equivalents of Christian terms are a separate issue). Similarly to some other Korean titles, the choice of the borrowing was possible due to the fact that Korean, like Japanese, is still under the influence of Chinese (in South Korea, some Chinese characters may be used even nowadays, though rarely), which results in at least partial comprehension of borrowings from that language. Paradise/Heaven is called in Korean *Cheongug* (from Chinese 天国 {天國} *Tiānguó*, lit. ‘the Sky/Heaven Country’). Based on the same model is, by the way, the standard name of Paradise/Heaven in Japanese: 天国 *tengoku*, which in the title of the novel was replaced with the less popular word *tendō*, written in the same way as the Chinese *Tiāntáng*: 天堂.

The Korean translation of the title is exceptional because it is the only one that renders the meaning of *tái* ‘shoot’. This may be considered marginal – after all, garlic itself seems much more important. Although the covers of many translations of this novel show garlic bulbs, the shoots that appear in the title are there quite on purpose, being one of the basic ingredients of stir fry vegetable mixes, very popular in Chinese cuisine. Not without reason are the Chinese the world’s biggest producers of garlic.

Going back to the reductionist translations of the analysed title: they probably do not only result from the ambiguity of the word *Tiāntáng*, which to translators was comfortable to omit (although the problem returned in the text of the novel). An important reason for omitting both *Tiāntáng* and *tái* was presumably the desire to avoid lengthiness and detail of the title, in accordance with Western market expectations. Since Chinese is a very concise language, it may allow a bigger number of semantic elements in the title. If we wanted to express all the original meanings of this title e.g. in German, we would have to generate the phrase *Das Lied vom paradiesischen (or Paradieser) Knoblauchsprössling*, which to some readers could seem too lengthy. This lengthiness, which becomes apparent in the translation, is mentioned by the German Sinologist and translator Ulrich Kautz when referring to Jin Yong’s books, which are very popular in China: “In German, none of his books exist because his novels are almost untranslatable: each gesture, each jump from the roof is described very metaphorically there. It is possible in Chinese because Chinese characters have such a condensed informative content – four characters are enough to describe such a jump. In German, you get several lines out of that” (Kautz & Magenau, 2009).

Another factor is the fact that in Germany, contemporary Chinese literature has the opinion of being quite ‘diluted’, and thus requiring condensation in translation. The author of a later rendering into German, Karin Betz, asked about the main problems with translating Chinese prose, stated:

[The Chinese] narrative tradition is much more epic than the European one. [...] There are fewer suspenses and many redundancies. It is important to use beautiful characters [...] So, Mo Yan’s translator must [...] shorten, cut and – where necessary – interpret. ‘The reader, says Karin Betz, forgives minute *chinoiseries*. [...] In the confrontation with a one-to-one translation, perhaps every German reader would surrender’ (Teutsch, 2009).

Somewhat contradictory to Betz's statement are the opinions of other translators, who ascribe the weakness for long sentences not so much to entire Chinese literature as to Mo Yan himself (cf. Gustafsson Chen, 2012c; Marijnissen & Van Velzen, 2014; Goldblatt & Efthimiadou, 2012; Duzan, 2010; González, 2012). This may also influence the form of his titles, rendering them atypical.

## 5. Findings

After the presentation of an extract from the corpus, I would like to present my findings, based on all 12 cases. Of the three sets of original conclusions, I will discuss the first two, referring to the techniques and following the language key. The last and most speculative, concerning the people, must be left for another occasion.

The first, quite superficial conclusions refer to presumed causes (or aims/goals) of modifications, illustrated with examples from the corpus. As I signalled at the outset, these causes overlap, are few in number, and are uncertain here and there – therefore a more precise description of the matter is probably not possible. The list below is an attempt, based on the example of the translations of Mo Yan's book titles. It is not typical Chinese research material, but certainly spans a broad range of languages and relatively many cases within some of them.

Instead of assigning various semantic (including formal) changes to functions described in the section on the theoretical background, I will limit myself to my own classification of such changes, combined with their descriptions and examples from the corpus. At the same time, I assume that in the minimalist model of title functions that I adopted here (the trias of functions: identifying – informative – appellative), the creators of titles in the target language try to preserve all three of them, seemingly giving the priority to the informative function which is *de facto* the meaning of the title (which loses some components – cf. the relative and experiential function in Hejwowski (2004b)). The reasons enumerated below do relate to the classification of functions presented above – if I do not refer to them directly it is because of the more pragmatic, basically semantic character of my approach. In fact, most modifications of titles aim at making them more attractive (appellative function) and/or more comprehensible (informative function), the former feature being often attained by the latter (cf. Nord, 1993: 142-186).

If we adopt a literal translation into a given language as a point of reference, we can distinguish the following motivations governing translators' choices, referring often to the renderings of the same original titles into different languages (with changes partly resulting from the nature of these titles):

1. avoiding incomprehensibility (enigmaticity) – be it for natural or cultural reasons (in both cases it is to do with realities). On the one hand, almost all versions of *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú* (cf. below), and, on the other hand, numerous versions of *Shēngsī píláo* (blurring the enigmaticity resulting from the allusion to the *Sutra of Eight Enlightenments*) may serve as examples. In addition to omissions (surely partly in order to avoid lengthiness, as in *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*, where *tái* 'shoots' may also have been deleted due to their strangeness), more 'enlightening' (but rarely used) translation techniques may be included in this group: generalizations (hyperonyms) of potentially incomprehensible names, also as adds-on to exoticisms, and (equally rare) expansions of titles in the form of supplements, usually in the form of subtitles. An example of the former may be the exchange of 'red radish' for 'radish' or (mistakenly?) 'carrot' in some versions of *Tòumíng de hóng luóbo*, the generalisation of *kaoliang* to 'sorghum', 'millet' or even 'cereal' in many translations of *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú* as well as adding the word *ma-eul* (declined form of 'town/city') to the toponym *Ti-entang* in the Korean rendition of *The Garlic Ballads*. Examples of the second type of explicitations are the Japanese version of *Jiǔguó*, in which a subtitle was added to the literally rendered title: 'the adventure[s] of the persecutor for special investigations Ding Gouèr'; the French translation of *Fēngrǔ fěitùn*, enriched with the subtitle 'children of the Shangguan family', and the German version of *Biàn*, where 'change[s]', already extended to 'how the situation changes', was explained as 'a story from my life'.
2. avoiding lengthiness and excessive detail: examples include almost all versions of *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē* (omitting 'paradise' and 'shoots' – the latter probably also for cultural reasons) and – far less radical – transformations of *Huáibào xiānhuā de nǚrén* (where 'with a bouquet of flowers' often replaced 'embracing fresh flowers').
3. avoiding vulgarity or bluntness, perceived as not adequate to the dignity of fine literature: an eloquent and practically the only example are most

versions of *Fēngrǔ fěitún* (conversions of 'fat buttocks' usually to 'wide hips' – perhaps partly due to formal reasons, cf. below).

4. enhancing expressivity (making the title more dramatic or colourful) – probably common but here quite rare: *Tánxiāng xíng* and *Shīfū yuèlái yuè yōumò* in English ('death' instead of 'punishment/torture' and 'you would do anything for a laugh' instead of 'has a bigger and bigger sense of humour') and *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē* in German ('rebellion' in lieu of 'song'); also a couple of French examples: 'monotonous chant' instead of 'song'; 'crystal' and not 'transparent' radish; 'big mess/uproar' that renders the original 'change[s]' (adding an allusion to the title, cf. below); at least two examples from the Japanese set: 'crazy fantasia' as a fantastic equivalent of 'song' and 'sound of frogs' as a strengthened version of 'frogs.' In fact, modifications aimed at avoiding lengthiness and excessive detail could be included in this group, but I consider them as a separate reason.
5. avoiding an undesirable (accidental) allusion to some linguistic element (phrase or saying), also of artistic origin (especially a title of a literary work or another work of art) belonging to the target culture, including domesticated elements of foreign cultures (presumably *Wā* in Japanese – preventing an association with the target literature; and hypothetically *Biàn* 'change[s]' in French – excluding the allusion to the local version of *The Book of Changes* (French: *Le livre des changements*, but also ... *des transformations*, Chin. *Yījīng*)).
6. producing an allusion to a title or phrase from the native (target) language/culture – this time considered as a (controversial in my view) positive effect (again *Biàn* in French).
7. avoiding an undesirable formal effect (usually of phonetic nature, at least in European languages), such as rhyme, alliteration, repetition of word stems, combinations of phonemes causing pronunciation problems. I do not see examples of this technique in the analysed material (although I must admit that I did not check all possibilities); an unwanted rhyme could appear in a potential Swedish version of *Jiǔguó* if it were translated literally: *Spritens rike* (as the Swedish translator speaks about this novel (cf. Gustafsson Chen, 2012a));

8. adding a formal (mainly phonetic) effect, perhaps rare but conceivable above all in Germanic languages: *Jiǔguó* in German (*Die Schnapsstadt*) and possibly *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē* in English (*The Garlic Ballads*) – maybe also in order to render the alliteration present in the first word of the title (then it would be an example of the next motivation).

The last standard reason refers directly to formal effects (other than length) occurring in the original title:

9. reproducing (an important part of) the form of the title – be it for the sake of its sound alone (as in most translations of *Fēngrǔ fěitún*, apart from stylistic-ethical reasons, or in the American renderings of *Shīfu yuèlái yuè yōumò* and *Tánxiāng xíng* – in both cases along with a dramatization) or in order to preserve a supposed allusion produced by a given title (*Jiǔguó* in the American version [*The Republic of Wine*], also in this language *Sishiyī pào* [*Pow!*], here also to render the onomatopoeia in the last word).

Two following reasons are atypical since they stem from an inspiration with a work other than the real original:

10. referring directly to the title of the film based on a given literary work: the original version of the novel *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú* (hence not rendering the word *jiāzú* ‘clan/family’) – in the case of almost all translations; the short story *Shīfu yuèlái yuè yōumò* – only in the case of its Japanese version.
11. reproducing the title of the translation from which the book was translated to the target language through relay translation (in substitution of the original) – in the case of most Dutch, Norwegian and Spanish versions.

In my opinion, these are the main reasons for conscious departure from literalness in the analysed title translations. Let us notice that they form a series of *contradictory* pairs – thus, it turns out that in some cases one technique is considered to produce a good solution, and in others – a bad one. However, since even experienced translators sometimes make unfavourable unconscious modifications, i.e. commit errors, this circumstance must be also mentioned as a cause of changes. The main example is the title of Mo Yan’s debut collection of short stories: *Tòumíng de hóng luóbo* – of course, if we are to believe the journalist

Hanna Sahlberg (cf. Sahlberg, 2013). The red radish appears to have been a stumbling block for two skilled translators-sinologists: the Japanese Fujii Shōzō and, in the first version, the Swede Göran Malmqvist (if rendering 'red radish' as 'carrot' was not a domestication of the somewhat exotic vegetable – cf. below).

After this global summary demonstrating what changes were made to the titles of Mo Yan's books (and probably happen to other – especially Chinese – titles) in translation into selected European and Asian languages, I will look more closely into the semantic transfer in two selected languages: Japanese and Korean (cf. Table 3). Discussing the results for the other languages, I will combine them in pairs or bigger groups, which will highlight sometimes unexpected similarities and differences. Although the material for each of the languages is not very extensive (12 titles at best), some tendencies, both in the case of easy and difficult titles, are thought-provoking and give some grounds for generalizations.

Among the 10 American translations, all by Howard Goldblatt, only two are a result of a literal translation (they are the relatively uncomplicated cases of *Wā* and *Biàn*). In contrast, the titles of three books – including the said novel *Wā* – were translated equally precisely into German, in which there are fewer, namely 8 renditions (the most striking gap concerns the novel *Fēngrú fěitún*), proposed by six different authors. The rest of the titles were translated into both languages by means of sometimes-radical modifications, which seem to go further in German (apart from the first case, which is a literal translation). Although there are fewer changes there (11 in the 8 German titles and 16 in the American ones), the titles in German were more often shortened or transformed and – as a rule – subject to both operations at once (which can be seen in three cases: *Das rote Kornfeld*, *Die Knoblauchrevolte*, *Der Überdruss*; only the title *Die Schnapsstadt* was altered without being shortened). These changes do not seem to depend on the translator, but are characteristic of translations into German. Modifications done by Goldblatt are admittedly more frequent, they are, however, on the one hand less radical (it suffices to compare the depth of changes in the pairs *The Garlic Ballads* and *Die Knoblauchrevolte* as well as *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Der Überdruss*), and on the other hand – more justified (because aimed at either rendering the form itself or saving the allusion that the form evokes: as is the case in *The Republic of Wine*, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Sandalwood Death* and *Pow!*). A common feature of the American and German translations is, nevertheless, an attempt to make the titles more colourful, stronger or even dramatic: cf. Germ. *Die Knoblauchrevolte* and *Der Überdruss* vs.

Engl. *Shifu, You'll Do Anything for a Laugh* and *Sandalwood Death*. On the whole, it seems that translated titles in both languages, or at least these particular examples, have to be concise and strong: at the same time unsentimental and laconic. What is intriguing in this context is only the considerable expansion of the title of the autobiography *Biàn: Wie sich das Blatt wendet : eine Erzählung aus meinem Leben* (which in English has its counterpart in the extension *a Novel of China* added to *Red Sorghum*). However, this inflated German title does share a strategic element with his naturalized 'compatriots': the degree of transformation – which in this case consists in lengthening the title rather than shortening it.

A different picture is presented by the Far Eastern languages (see Table 3), as well as French, which is close to German, at least geographically. Translations into this language, done by seven translators, and sometimes in pairs, are characterised by titles much more frequently rendered literally: out of the 12 analysed, 4 have been translated with maximum literalness, and 6 others more freely, but with greater precision of semantic transfer within modified parts of the titles, as compared to those in other languages. Thus, in *Le radis de cristal* the elsewhere (involuntarily?) modified radish was preserved (however, becoming a 'crystal' one, not simply 'transparent'); in *Le clan du sorgho* the 'clan' was saved, which outside France happened only in the Far East (at the same time, the colour of the cereal disappeared – as was also the fate of the radish a while ago); in *La mélopée de l'ail paradisiaque* exceptionally the 'paradise' was not cut out; in *Beaux seins, belles fesses: les enfants de la famille Shangguan* the 'buttocks' survived, which elsewhere can be seen only in the Japanese, Spanish and Russian translations (in exchange, the adjectives were aestheticised and a subtitle was added); and finally, in *Quarante et un coups de canon* – the 'cannons' have been carried over, strengthened with 'shoots'. Solely in the title *La femme au bouquet de fleurs* the French renditions do not depart from the modificational norm, set here by the Far Eastern translations. Ultimately, significant changes occurred only in two titles: *La dure loi du karma* and *Le Grand Chambard* ('big mess/uproar' instead of 'change'). Both cases are translations done by Chantal Chen-Andro (who, so far, rendered eight books by Mo Yan into French). Meanwhile, in those four title renditions for which the couple Noël and Liliane Dutrait are responsible, we always encounter at least a considerable equivalence: twice a maximum one, and twice partly an above average one (from the set presented here). Generally, even if some titles are translated into French equally freely as into German or English, the French solutions are – in the Dutraits' part – more faithful, more untypical and, as it seems, more individual. We can



assume that the Dutraits would have proposed less free versions of the titles than Chen-Andro did if they had translated 'her' books.

Generally, it seems that the Italians translate titles of Mo Yan's writings with a similar precision as the French – especially the main translator of his work into the language of the *Belpaese*, Patrizia Liberati. Unfortunately, the Italian research material is scarce: it comprises either titles so simple that they were almost always translated literally (as the above mentioned *Wā* and *Biàn*) or so complicated that they were nearly automatically strongly modified in translation (e.g. *Shēngsī píláo* – probably the most complicated case from the whole set). I will return to these translations later when discussing 'weakly-corpused' languages. Now, however, let us move entirely to the Far East.

16 Japanese :12		8 Korean :12		
1	<i>Tōmei-na <u>ninjin</u>.</i>	Fujii Shōzō	2 <i>Tomyeonghan <u>X salm</u>.</i>	I Gyeong-deon
	<i>Aka-i kōryan.</i>	Inokuchi Akira	<i>Beulg-eun susubat.</i> <i>Beulg-eun susubat.</i> <i>Hongkka-olyang gajog.</i>	Hong Hui Sim Hye-yeong Bag Myeong-ae
3	<i><u>XX Tendō kyōsōka</u>.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	1 <i>Ti-entang <u>ma-eul maneul-jong nolae</u>.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
1	<i><u>Shukoku : tokusō kenji Jakku-no bōken</u>.</i>	Fujii Shōzō	<i>Sul-ui nala.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
1	<i><u>Hanataba-o daku onna</u>.</i>	Fujii Shōzō	1 <i><u>Kkochdabal-eul an-eun yeoja</u>.</i>	I Gyeong-deon
	<i>Hōnyū hiden.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	2 <i><u>Pung-yubidun</u>.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
5	<i><u>Shifuku-no toki</u>.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Sabunim-eun galsulog yumeoleo seuhaejinda.</i>	Im Hong-bin
	<i>Byakudan-no kei.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Tansyangsing.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
	<i>Shijūippō.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Sasib-il po.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
3	<i><u>Tensei muge</u>n.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	1 <i><u>Insaeng-eun X godalpa</u>.</i>	I Yeon-ug

<i>I</i>	<u><i>Amei.</i></u>	Yoshida Tomio		<i>Gaeguli.</i>	Sim Gyu-ho, Yu So-yeong
	<i>Hen.</i>	Nagahori Jūzō	<i>I</i>	<u><i>Modu byeonhwahanda.</i></u>	Mun Hyeon-seon

**Table 3.** Comparison of the Japanese and Korean title versions

Table 3 presents a detailed analysis of the title translations in two Far Eastern languages: Japanese and Korean. The numbers in the left columns refer to ‘refractions’, i.e. disequivalencies, counted on the basis of semantic units in the original. The ‘refractions’ are underlined in the cited titles, also in the bibliography – so as to give the reader an idea of the extent of changes. These translations, almost as numerous as the French (all cases included), are often more precisely (or faithfully) rendered than in almost all other languages, apart from the Italian as well as Polish and Russian renditions. It may result above all from cultural and even linguistic proximity between Japanese or Korean and Chinese. Although both languages do not belong to the family that Mo Yan’s native tongue (Mandarin Chinese) belongs to, they remained for centuries under the influence of their mighty neighbour, which is more visible in Japanese due to the adoption of many Chinese characters (Jap. *kanji*), whereas in Korean it is manifested by the existence of many borrowings and the possibility of using selected characters (usually complementarily to the native writing). Proof of the former in the analysed titles is the fact that in as many as four of them, borrowings from Chinese appear: *Hongkka-olyang gajog* (Chin. *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú*), *Pung-yubidun* (Chin. *Fēngrǔ féitún*) and *Tansyangsing* (Chin. *Tánxiāng xíng*), partly also *Ti-entang ma-eul maneuljong nolae* (Chin. *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*). Not only because of these adoptions are the Korean translations of the titles of Mo Yan’s works more precise than the Japanese ones, as far as the ‘normal’ meaning is concerned. And although the number of the modified titles is only slightly lower (6 in kr vs. 7 in jp), the changes themselves are half as numerous and far less radical (or fancy) in Korean than in Japanese. Apart from a big change in *Tomyeonghan salm* (‘life’ instead of ‘red radish’) and a fairly substantial one in *Insaeng-eun godalpa* (again ‘life’, but this time for ‘life and death’), we encounter only minor alterations: *Pung-yubidun* (being a borrowing with a slightly different meaning) and *Modu byeonhwahanda* (‘everything changes’, and not ‘change[s]’), to which some still smaller interventions must be added – in *Kkochdabal-eul an-eun yeoja* and *Ti-entang ma-eul maneuljong nolae*. At the same time in the Japanese titles (which also contain some borrowings from Chinese)

we come across bigger alterations, introduced above all by the main translator, Yoshida Tomio. The major ones appear in *Tensei mugen* and *Amei*, a significant modification is also the extension of *Shukoku* with *tokusō kenji Jakku-no bōken* (which was another translator's initiative), a reduction combined with an addition in *Tendō kyō sōka* as well as sweeping changes (unnecessary and maybe even unfavourable) in *Shifuku-no toki*, for which the translators of the film are responsible. To this a minor change in *Hanataba-o daku onna* must be added (analogous with that in the Japanese rendition) and the seemingly small modification in *Tōmei-na ninjin*, resulting probably from the misunderstanding of the original, strange as it may seem. Arguably, the translator was deeply convinced it was a carrot that appeared in the title: the translation was reprinted 21 years later with the same title (it is because of the polysemy of the word meaning mainly 'carrot' that 'ginseng' appeared in the Korean title).

There is much less material (4 to 6 titles) in the case of direct renditions from other languages, which makes conclusions concerning the translators' strategies in the area of title translation less solid – especially when they are to be drawn on the basis of unproblematic cases. A separate issue is, moreover, the evaluation of titles based on the American translations, which in turn may be quite well-represented (up to 10 titles). We will leave these for the end, in order to look first at those less numerous translations, in search of similarities and differences.

Among the six Italian titles, invented by three translators, but mainly by Patrizia Liberati, very literal translations dominate, although they reflect cases that were not generally subject to modifications in other languages. The only refractions occur in the titles *Grande seno*, *fianchi larghi* and *Le sei reincarnazioni di Ximen Nao*, the former containing a typical attenuation, and the latter (which no doubt served as a model for the Swedish translator) being one big change in a title that was always altered in translation. On the whole, after reading an interview with said translator (cf. Liberati, 2012) it appears that even more problematic titles would be only exceptionally modified by her when rendering them in Italian.

Among the six Swedish translations, all but the last two (the simple *Wā* and *Biàn*) contain distinct changes, including the title of the novel based on the film – here with the radical removal of not only kaoliang but cereal. Then we have a modification likely modelled on the American *Vitlöksballaderna* (although the translation was done from the original), and subsequently a transformation

presumably based on the Italian invention: *Ximen Nao och hans sju liv*, followed by – employed by another translator – omission of the colour in *Den genomskinliga rättikan* (after correcting ‘carrot’ to ‘radish’). It does not seem accidental that each title contains modifications, as they stem from problematic cases. Basing on the interviews with the main Swedish translator, Anna Gustafsson Chen (cf. Gustafsson Chen 2012a-d), I am inclined to think that she would change every title as long as the result sounded good in Swedish.

A next group of titles translated directly from the original are the Polish ones – also six to date. The situation is similar to that of Italian: little material, titles which do not pose serious problems to the translator and their renditions are not unnecessarily made bizarre. The only refractions appear in three cases: *Kraina wódki* and *Obfite piersi, pełne biodra*, both translated by Katarzyna Kulpa, and *Bum!*, rendered by Agnieszka Walulik (Religa et al., 2014). It should be counted as a merit of the former translator that she broadly preserved ‘alcohol’ (rendering it as ‘whiskey’) and only slightly – but noticeably – shifted the neutral ‘land’ to the poetically marked *kraina* ‘realm, fairyland’ as well, she saved the adjective ‘abundant’ in the first half of the ‘anatomical’ title, despite the standard change of ‘fat buttocks’ into ‘full hips’. Here she used Goldblatt’s idea, creating a catchy and highly dynamic title. I think that the strategy of the first Polish translator does not differ considerably from that adopted by the main Italian translator – one could assume that other titles would be rendered by her without extravagance (though a bit atypically, as in both given cases).

The least numerous cases always translated from the original are the Russian editions – here, similarly as in Polish, the titles are rendered without extravagant refractions, though with a moving preservation of the word meaning ‘butt’ in the usually ‘culturalized’ title *Fēngrǔ fēitún* (modified for ethical-phraseological-phonetic reasons). In this respect the Russian translators seem similar to the Polish, Italian and certain French ones. It is worth noticing that all the translators into these languages are sinologists, which no doubt results in some sort of old-fashioned conservatism – and respect for the author’s vision, ultimately.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> What should follow as a logical continuation – a discussion of results for relay translations – cannot appear in this article because of space limits. An inquisitive reader may compare the results in the bibliography.

## 6. Final remarks

What influences stronger the way of translating: nature or culture? What constitutes the frame, and what fills it? It could seem that it is culture that marks out the superordinate range, onto which the translator has to map his/her own range so that the fruits of his/her work be regarded as aligned with cultural norms. However, since those norms are not very restrictive (in practice reducible to obeying the rules of phraseological and stylistic correctness in the target language), the spectrum of the translator's activity is mainly determined by his/her nature: personality, psychophysical constitution or (in a narrower approach) temperament. Thus, what probably makes the biggest difference is innate or natural, though formed by culture. But since translation is, at least to some extent, a creative activity, it creates circumstances in which one's personality can be demonstrated – and perceived, if the act of interpersonal communication succeeds. Still, the translator should remember that his/her creative 'added value' should not overshadow the creative intention of the author, and the recipient should be able – at least in some cases – to compare the translation with the original or other translations. Apart from presenting a fascinating task for the translator, the title gives the most insight into an author's inner world.

Unfortunately – or simply naturally – the material presented above does not allow one to draw definite conclusions as to the cause (and authorship) of changes that have been introduced in existing Chinese titles. However, in spite of many riddles, some regularities are apparent. The largest and simultaneously first-hand collections, namely those in English, German, French, Japanese and Korean, as well as – albeit to a lesser extent – the Italian, Swedish and Polish corpora, offer certain insights. Most of them suggest the existence of a domestic 'modification norm' consenting to fairly substantial interferences in the titles (as is the case of English, German, Japanese and Swedish translations) or only small changes, as in Korean, Italian and Polish. However, the somewhat peculiar French corpus undermines the victory of culture (as represented by the norm) and stresses the importance of either preserving the author's vision of the title (as generally shown by the Dutraits team) or imposing the translator's vision, leaving an imprint on the title (as displayed by Chantal Chen-Andro). It is, therefore, *l'exception française* that perhaps does not confirm the rule but suggests that the individual (i.e. predominantly natural) factor in translation can strongly oppose the social (thus mainly cultural) one. Such 'extravagance' of the translator may often be the only way to defend the author's work.

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## Students' reflections on communication in Polish-Chinese tandems

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### Abstract

The study presents an analysis of Polish students' written commentaries on their oral interactions with their Chinese project partners. Students from two universities, in Poland and in China, communicated online, mainly in English, for a period of 10 weeks. In their weekly reports they commented on what they learnt and on the communication acts themselves. The analysis of their reports and the final evaluation provides insights into their perception of linguistic and intercultural exchanges. The corpora built from the students' commentaries made it possible to observe their awareness of discourse phenomena such as knowledge management. Other analysed qualities of student discourse such as coherence, novum versus datum, mode, tenor, level of formality of the language used, demonstrate the ways in which the students constructed meaning in the discourse and to what extent it influenced their understanding of the world. Through the participation in the course task aimed at developing intercultural, pedagogical, linguistic and technical competences, the Polish students had an opportunity to either verify or confirm their perception of China and the Chinese.

**Keywords:** tandem work, online communication, discourse, corpus

### 1. Introduction

Student distance interactions have had a long tradition in foreign language learning. Tandem work originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a technique of learning two languages by two native speakers who take changing roles of a teacher and a learner in each of the languages. When Information and Communication Technologies, and especially the Internet, were introduced into education, student exchanges via email under the scheme of tandem work were immediately applied (Ayoun, 1996; Levy, 1997: 170-172). With the development of speech

transmission, oral communication in tandems with a focus on intercultural aspects was emphasized (O'Dowd, 2006).

This paper presents a project in which Polish and Chinese students communicated in tandems online and the outcomes of this collaboration. These outcomes can be analysed from various perspectives, such as content-oriented – illustrating what students learned about their cultures; pedagogical – presenting the role of international student exchanges online in teaching at tertiary level; educational – which means either providing students with hands-on experience in participating in international projects in order to prepare them as future language teachers for such tasks or implementing constructivist approaches in teaching; technical – using information and communication technologies for purposeful professional communication in foreign languages; linguistic – communicating online in a foreign language with foreigners; and intercultural – developing intercultural competence in an online contact (Gajek, 2013; 2014). This study, however, focuses on the characteristics of the discourse produced in the students' commentaries as Polish and Chinese students participated in intercultural discourse online. Guided by the academic teachers, who were the initiators of the exchange, and building on their linguistic knowledge and intercultural experience, the students created meaning of the world and constructed a new vision of the world within the discourse. The original student dialogues were not available for the analysis because recording of students' oral communication for further linguistic investigation may strongly influence their spoken performance and behaviour. This may be counterproductive to the expected pedagogical, motivational and linguistic outcomes. Nevertheless, student work always requires some form of monitoring. In this case they wrote weekly reports, which are the focus of this study. Thus, only some aspects of the discourse emerging from the project are examined, with special emphasis put on knowledge management and awareness of social factors presented in the reports. An analysis of the corpora made out of the students' reports and evaluation files illustrates the ways students participating in the discourse infer meaning and how they react to new meaning created.

Norman Fairclough (1992: 64) defines discourse as “a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning”. Following Fairclough's definition, Locke (2004: 7) observes: “Discourse(s) make the world meaningful.” By talking with their interlocutors the students participating in the project had a chance to notice and better understand people from a distant region and their cultural phenomena.

Selected elements of discourse are taken into consideration in this study. Firstly, the contextual factors such as roles, reasons, time, etc. that influence the students' language use are analysed. In the project described in this paper they were predetermined by the teachers. Secondly, the organization of knowledge is investigated, that is:

- Rhetorical management – participants know the aims and intentions of communication
- Referential management – participants address common references and opinions
- Thematic management – participants consider central elements of discourse development
- Focus management – participants observe the objects of communication and make sure they refer to the same things. (Chafe, 1979; 1980; 1987; 1994; Tomlin et al., 2001: 49 )

Thirdly, the levels of coherence of the interactions are examined, that is:

- Global coherence – participants know what is the narration or conversation about
- Episodic coherence – participants focus on lower level units to work out the global coherence, but they have their own autonomous sense
- Local coherence – participants infer sense from single sentences or utterance (Tomlin et al., 2001: 49).

Fourthly, the following qualities of discourse are investigated based on Halliday and Hassan's (1985) taxonomy:

- the relation between the new and old information. That is, new information is not known (*novum*) information opposed to known, old (*datum*) information (Halliday, 1967a; 1976b, Tomlin et al., 2001: 63).
- the level of formality, both formality of the text and formality of the language
- the role of contexts perceived as the social context that is the situation and field in which the social character of the participants' activity is revealed
- tenor, which describes the social roles of the participants and their relations (temporary or long-term) in the dialogue and beyond it.
- mode, which involves the communication channel (oral or written). (Halliday & Hassan 1985: 12).

## 2. The context of students' communication

The 97 participants of the study came from two institutions: Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw (48 students) and School of English and International Studies, University of International Business and Economics in Beijing (49 students). The project aimed at enhancing linguistic, cultural, intercultural, pedagogical and technical skills among students. The participants' task was to talk in Chinese-Polish tandems for one hour per week. They got 10 topics for a start, prepared by the Chinese partner and accepted by the Polish teacher. The themes for discussion covered selected cultural issues and they are presented below. On the one hand, such topics are discussed in typical language courses, thus it was assumed that the students were familiar with them. On the other hand, the topics reflected the basic areas of student life and experience, which was supposed to enhance the sense of learning and increase motivation. At the initial intercultural training session, the Polish students were instructed to search for universal human values and to identify similarities rather than differences. The following topics were suggested:

1. Hobbies: Story reading, mountain climbing, bar drinking, movie watching, majiang playing, sight-seeing, paper cutting, gardening, or whatever;
2. Campus life: Location, size of the university, college rankings, fields of study, courses taken each semester, students' workloads, student organizations, student activities, and parties;
3. Holidays: Major Chinese/Polish holidays, what people do during the holidays, and special or historical meanings of some of the traditional holidays, such as the Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Halloween, Independence Day, Valentine's Day, Qixi Day (or the Chinese Valentine's Day), Qingming Day (Ching Ming Day), etc.;
4. Cuisine: Major cuisines in China and Poland, well-known local snacks in your hometown and in the place where you go to college, your favourite snacks in the local area, and advantages and disadvantages of the local snacks;
5. Education: Compulsory education, costs of K-12 education (e.g., fees for luncheons, textbooks, school uniforms, activities, etc.), competitiveness for college admission (e.g., college entrance exams, high school grade point average (GPA), high school students' workload, extra hours for evening or weekend cram classes, etc.), higher education and

- employment prospects, relationship between what is specialised at college and choice of jobs, and level of education and job-seeking success;
6. Travel: Places of historical interest in your country/region, places you want to visit most (reasons, etc.), and your preferred transportation vehicle for travel (e.g., reasons, etc.);
  7. Leisure activities: Going window-shopping, visiting museums, playing Taiji in parks, workouts by going to fitness clubs, going to the movies, singing in a chorus, and others;
  8. Foreign language learning: Purposes of learning a foreign language, importance of learning a foreign language, foreign language courses offered by the university, ways of learning in language classes, ways of learning outside of classes, successful experiences of learning a foreign language;
  9. Business: Business etiquette (attire, dining, meeting, etc.), business travel (e.g., do you like a job involving lots of business travelling? etc.), business gifts, corporate bribes, business success (e.g., what are some of the crucial things that can help achieve business success when communicating with Chinese and Polish?), and other topics that may interest you;
  10. Employment: Your ideal profession (e.g., what and why?), your education and profession (e.g., how has your education built a strong foundation for your ideal profession?), current employment situations in your country, preparedness (e.g., what will you do if you fail to get a job in your ideal profession? Will you rely on social welfare? Why or why not?) (Zhang, 2011).

The students were informed that they could make use of these topics in their communication sessions, but they were not restricted to them. They could also choose other themes for their weekly conversations depending on mutual interest.

The students used Tencent Instant Messenger (Tencent QQ) with the interface in English to talk with their partners. It serves for video and audio communication and it has an English-Chinese and Chinese-English dictionary. At the outset of the project the teachers exchanged the QQ id numbers of their students and they distributed the numbers randomly among the members of the other group. Due to the time difference, the students had to negotiate the time schedule for their online meetings. After each session, Polish students reported

what they have learned. Their reports could include their personal impressions on the interactions. Thus, each student wrote 10 short reports, one for each topic. All of them were uploaded into a Moodle forum accessible to all participants. At the end of the project the Polish students filled in two evaluation questionnaires, one in English, one in Polish. As one topic was assigned per week the project lasted 14 weeks, including the initial period of matching pairs and the evaluation session. As the linguistic, intercultural and pedagogical results of the project are presented in other publications (Gajek, 2013; 2014) this paper focuses on the discourse investigated on the basis of the reports written by the Polish participants only.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Materials

Four corpora of students' reports and comments were analysed in the study. As students wrote their reports either in Polish or in English (depending on their choice), two monolingual subcorpora were analysed separately. The Polish corpus (PLCD) consists of 7709 words (2487 types). The English corpus (ECD) consists of 63768 words (5137 types). The texts were examined to identify various discourse phenomena. The analysis involved both the entire corpus of reports as well as 10 separate subcorpora including reports from each week. To complement the analysis and interpretation of the results two other corpora were built. They consist of the evaluation opinions written by the students in English (ECE, 10236 words, 1310 types) and in Polish (PLCE, 5362 words, 1822 types).

#### 3.2 Methods of analysis

There are two approaches to the use of corpora in discourse analysis – *corpus-based* and *corpus-driven* (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 65). In *corpus-based* research, the data are used to expound, test or exemplify theories and descriptions. The selection of examples helps to support arguments or to validate statements. This approach is to confirm the researcher's hypotheses. *Corpus-driven* research starts by investigation of the evidence and it generates theoretical and descriptive statements which – as Sinclair (1991: 4) puts it – clearly “reflect the evidence”. This analysis proceeds in a more inductive way, i.e. “the corpus itself is the data” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 65). What is more, “a corpus is the main or

only source of the data" (Baker, 2006: 16). Both approaches were used for the examination of students' reports and evaluations.

### 3.3 Findings: Students' reports

48 Polish students communicated with 49 Chinese students mainly in English with the use of various digital tools. They also tried to communicate in Chinese, as some Polish students knew basic Chinese, and some Chinese students wanted to learn some phrases in Polish. They worked in tandems for ten weeks. They were aware of the context of the discourse: they knew WHO they were – students of either Polish or Chinese University; they knew HOW they were expected to communicate – preferably synchronously via QQ, Skype, chat or asynchronously via any other means of communication only if spoken communication was hindered, as it was set in the task requirements; they knew WHY they decided to communicate – to fulfil a course task, to practice spoken English in a natural interaction, to get more intercultural experience, to get hands-on experience in educational projects, etc. (they had a choice, either to participate in the intercultural project or to do other tasks in the course); finally, they knew WHEN the communication took place – online – upon agreement of the tandem partners. In spoken interactions, the students exchanged information on the topics prescribed.

An analysis of each set of reports shows that the students were able to organise information gained in the online sessions. The knowledge management features based on Chafe' taxonomy, presented earlier in the text, refer to various qualities of the discourse. They are presented in the list below.

- Rhetorical management – At the beginning of the project participants focused strictly on the topics given. Then, as the topics overlapped and the interlocutors gained more confidence in interaction they were able to define their own aims and intentions of communication.
- Referential management – The participants were able to address common references and opinions as the topics covered universal human activities and values.
- Thematic management – The participants considered central elements of the discourse development. They were able to make its flow natural.

- Focus management – Participants used various means of communication such as pictures, Chinese – English dictionary entries available in QQ to make sure they referred to the same things.

In order to present the evidence for the claims made above, examples were drawn from the 10 subcorpora. Selected concordance lines drawn from the reports on the respective topics illustrate the Polish students' management of new knowledge gained from online conversations with their Chinese partners.

The selected examples of concordance lines for the keywords *like*\* and *love*\* drawn from the subcorpus on Hobbies illustrate the information the students got about their interlocutors' individual preferences, hobbies, and ways of spending their free time.

1. ... ng in a dormitory. In her free time she [likes] watching American movies and going swim ...
2. ... ier for me. That's nice of him. Mike [likes] doing sport. Actually, talking about hi ...
3. ... hobbies he told me only about sport. He [likes] practising three sports, i.e. basketbal ...
5. ... (so now he's in my good books :) and he [liked] watching volleyball matches although he ...
6. ... her hobby she told me that she doesn't [like] to go out in the evenings, but she love ...
7. ... hat she loves to buy, she said that she [likes] buying everything. Whenever she's sad o ...
9. ... o near the sea. In her free time she [likes] shopping, Jenny's also very outgoing pe ...
11. ... ther a stay-at-home type of person. She [likes] watching TV shows, reading – especially ...
14. ... ai, who studies finance in Beijing. She [likes] jogging and Chinese music and she sent ...
16. ... ly childhood. What's more, Wenjun, just [like] me, loves watching The Big Bang Theory ...
17. ... y often and she misses them a lot. Yang [likes] relaxing music and watching movies, espe ...
21. ... , Harry Potter and Titanic. She doesn't [like] reading books though. I found out that ...
22. ... essie is a great fan of American series [like] "The Vampire Diaries" as "vampires a ...
25. ... ut everything, hobbies included. Shawna [likes] playing badminton and tennis in his fre ...
27. ... and poker. She can't play majjang. She [likes] travelling and next week she will see t ...
30. ... rs to spend time on his own although he [likes] interacting with others. Shi is also ve ...
31. ... orld championships. Chinese people also [like] badminton, football and basketball. The ...

1. ... like to go out in the evenings, but she [loves] to go shopping. When asked if the cloth ...
2. ... When asked if the clothes are what she [loves] to buy, she said that she likes buying ...
3. ... relationship. She added that she would [love] to travel to Europe for her honeymoon. ...
4. ... shows, reading – especially novels and [love] stories by various Chinese authors, but ...
5. ... not popular among Chinese students. She [loves] cinema and watches a couple of films ev ...
6. ... a couple of films every week. She also [loves] running: she runs for 20-25 minutes eve ...
7. ... ways when it comes to hobbies: we both [love] listening to some good music (here she ...



9. ... is very similar to me. First of all she [loves] swimming, especially in the sea. WenJun ...
11. ... she really enjoys Majiang playing. She [loves] flowers but unfortunately only very we ...
12. ... ory” :) The thing we have in common is [love] for animals, especially dogs. In case ...
14. ... Trade. We talked about our hobbies. She [loves] table-tennis, and she sometimes takes p ...
15. ... ects in China”. As for her hobbies, she [loves] playing basketball (she is in a basketb ...
16. ... ountain climbing and reading books. She [loves] climbing and her favourite montain is t ...

In the Campus Life subcorpus, the keyword selected for examination was *student*\*. The examples of concordance lines provide the Polish students' insights into campus life in Beijing.

2. ... mes to business and economics colleges. [Students] choose their courses themselves. The ...
3. ... r courses themselves. There are many [student] organizations, for example, humanities, ...
12. ... that although there is a lot of foreign [students] who like going to bars and sitting ther ...
13. Na Zhao is a very good [student]. She studies hard for her exams and alw ...
42. ... ics and investment bank. Chester is in a [student] union as it provides several opportunit ...
43. ... there are no courses. During this year [students] can get an internship. In their free ti ...
48. ... ng. She lives in a dormitory with other [students]. During our conversation I discovered t ...

The keywords examined in the Holiday subcorpus were *holiday*, *festival* and *celebrate*. The selected examples listed below demonstrate the Polish students' perceptions of the meaning of the Chinese festivals and of the way they are celebrated in their interlocutors' country.

1. ... also called Moon Festival. During this [holiday] people eat mooncakes and also spent thi ...
2. ... Dragon Boat Festival (3 days), National [Holiday] (7 days), Mid Autumn Festival (3 days), ...
3. ... e calendar year, but that their biggest [holiday] is the Spring Festival, the Chinese New ...
5. ... Eric told me that the most important [holiday] for them is Chinese New Year called Spr ...
6. ... What is more, they have a quite similar [holiday] to our All Saints' Day called the Tomb - ...
7. ... graves of their relatives. An important [holiday] is the Dragon Boat Festival, which is c ...
9. ... e students do not even go home for this [holiday]. However, the New Year's Eve (which acc ...
12. ... d me, i.a. about the Qingming Day: this [holiday] commemorates those who passed away and ...

1. ... I learnt quite a lot about the Spring [Festival]. As my firend said, almost everyone is ...
2. ... event, he is also very busy. The Spring [Festival] marks the end of the winter season and ...
3. ... also learnt new things about Mid-Autumn [Festival], which is also called Moon Festival. Du ...
4. ... umn Festival, which is also called Moon [Festival]. During this holiday people eat mooncak ...

6. ... med The spring festival, the Mid-Autumn [Festival] and the Lantern Festival. Asked about h ...  
 9. ... my brief description of it). During the [Festival] people reunite, spend a lot of time wit ...  
 11. ... e on Jan22th. She's very happy that the [festival] is coming. Report 3 Agnieszka Bukows ...  
 16. ... Mid Autumn Festival (3 days), Qingming [Festival] (3 days), Labour Day (3 days). During t ...

1. ... of the winter season and Chinese people [celebrate] new year. The event is spent with famil ...  
 3. ... al in China is Spring Festival which is [celebrated] on the 1st of January of the lunar cale ...  
 4. ... oximately 23rd of our January) when day [celebrate] the day, decorate their houses, make a ...  
 5. ... urprising for me was the fact that they [celebrate] the Saint Valentine's Day in the summer ...  
 8. ... and set off firecrackers. They also [celebrate] Christmas, but I was surprised to learn ...  
 9. ... e comparing to our culture is that they [celebrate] Valentine's Day in July. Raport 3 (n ...  
 12. ... tmas very seriously – only some of them [celebrate] it as we do. Most of the students do no ...  
 14. ... ms vary regionally. The Chinese also [celebrate] their own Valentine's Day in July. They ...  
 15. ... morates those who passed away and it is [celebrated] in the first 10 days of April (accordin ...  
 23. ... a, who do celebrate Christmas. The most [celebrated] event in China is the Spring Festival. ...  
 24. ... 's Eve. It takes place in spring and is [celebrated] among family members, who meet on diffe ...  
 26. ... so known as the Chinese New Year. It is [celebrated] by the entire nation. Chinese people ma ...  
 34. ... a far more important than Christams, is [celebrated] in a similar way to the one in Poland. ...  
 45. ... All Saint's Day I described the way we [celebrate] this day in Poland. The Chinese equival ...  
 46. ... equivalent – Qing Ming Day – is not as [celebrated] as it is in Poland. Chinese people also ...  
 51. ... er day, Qixi. On Ching Ming Day people [celebrate] the day of their beloved dead ones and ...  
 52. ... to graveyards. Generally, people do not [celebrate] holidays in a religious way, although s ...  
 57. ... that the young people living in cities [celebrate] Christmas. For them, Christmas is still ...  
 58. ... ther traditional festivals. The Chinese [celebrate] the National Day on 1st October to comm ...  
 60. ... nment spends a lot of time and money to [celebrate] it, but for common people it is the lon ...

The most productive keywords in the Food and Cuisine subcorpus were *cuisine*, and *dish*. The selected examples demonstrate what the Polish and Chinese students learned about each other's food culture.

2. ... varies regionally. There are 8 types of [cuisine] in China. Chuan cuisine is famous in Si ...  
 3. ... are 8 types of cuisine in China. Chuan [cuisine] is famous in Sichuan province in the no ...  
 4. ... China, in Shandong province there is Lu [cuisine]. Zhe cuisine is mild and is famous for ...  
 7. ... aro braised meat. A famous meal from Su [cuisine] is Lions head, which is made from pork. ...  
 8. ... ns head, which is made from pork. Xiang [cuisine], on the other hand, is spicy, as for ex ...  
 11. ... was a pleasure to talk with Eric about [cuisine] because, as I already mentioned, he lov ...  
 12. ... of passion. He told me that the type of [cuisine] depends on the region and caan be very ...  
 13. ... ed information about Chinese and Polish [cuisine] as well as our opinions on concrete dis ...

14. ... is not very fond of traditional Chinese [cuisine]. She said that her favourite Chinese di ...  
 19. ... tc. According to Season the most famous [cuisine] specialty in Beijing is roasted duck, w ...  
 28. ... re are eight different types of Chinese [cuisine] characteristic for different regions in ...  
 29. ... comes to vegetables used in the Chinese [cuisine] the “bok choy” (a kind of Chinese cabba ...  
 32. ... t introduction into the world of Polish [cuisine]: it is diverse and people with differen ...  
 34. ... l, cream and eggs. So traditionally our [cuisine] is quite hearty. We have many kinds of ...  
 37. ... told me a little bit about the Chinese [cuisine], which main component is rice. Yang lov ...  
 40. ... for their sweet taste, whereas Sechuan [cuisine] is very spicy. There're some specific s ...  
 42. ... , himself, asked a lot about the Polish [cuisine], my eating habits, eating habits of Pol ...

1. ... The most popular [dish] in China, at least in Beijing, is a rost ...  
 2. ... eijing that specializes in serving this [dish], and, understandably, it's crowded. ...  
 3. ... most traditional and well known Chinese [dish] is Beijing Roast Duck which is broadly ...  
 4. ... ne. She said that her favourite Chinese [dish] was her mom's dumplings filled with por ...  
 5. ... mes fast food. Her ultimately favourite [dish] is scrambled eggs with tomatoes. I was ...  
 6. ... umplings are said to be the traditional [dish]. Chinese cuisine is very varied ...  
 7. ... shes. I asked him, what is the typical [dish] from Hubei province (a place that he co ...  
 8. ... itional dishes and it's Mike's mother's [dish] number one. The Chinese dumplings have ...  
 9. ... for Shi to name one traditional Chinese [dish]. Shi and his family prefer to cook w ...  
 10. ... uy bread and milk. Yampi's favourite [dish] is dumplings. She can even make it hers ...  
 11. ... so attaching a picture of “nian gao”, a [dish] they eat during the Spring Festival and ...  
 12. ... sts. Of course rice is the most popular [dish], eaten by Chinese people every day, and ...  
 13. ... rd used in Polish to describe a one-pot [dish]), and then we eat it for 2 or 3 days. ...

In the fifth subcorpus on Education, the examined keywords were *education*, *student\** and *school\**. The examples listed below illustrate the students' new knowledge in this area and mutual interest in the education systems in their partners' country.

2. ... ams, because they count most. Higher [education] is paid, and many students are supporte ...  
 3. ... China, I was the first one to describe [education] system in my homecountry and then it wa ...  
 4. ... while it turned out that the stages of [education] are quite similar in our two countries. ...  
 6. ... n China there are 5 years of compulsory [education]: 6 years of primary school and three ye ...  
 8. ... ed. As it comes to fees, now compulsory [education] os free of charge. On higher education ...  
 9. ... education os free of charge. On higher [education] level, however, students are obliged to ...  
 10. ... ish students work during their academic [education] as it is not popular at all in China. F ...  
 13. ... mpressed by the fact, how important the [education] is for Chinese students – although it m ...  
 14. ... at for Chinese students in general good [education] is a guarantee for career and professio ...

1. ... t very big. They have nearly 8 thousand [students] and 400 faculties. As to college rankin ...  
 2. ... mes to business and economics colleges. [Students] choose their courses themselves. The ...  
 3. ... r courses themselves. There are many [student] organizations, for example, humanities, ...  
 4. ... ties,sports,languages,bicycle and so on.[Students] have much fun in their organizations. ...  
 5. ... mics. The total of about 20-30 thousand [students] study there, including many internation ...  
 6. ... udy there, including many international [students]. The campus is located in the North Fou ...  
 7. ... s she had not much time to take part in [student] life, now she has more time for it. She ...  
 8. ... pular in China; clubs are expensive and [students] normally just get together, hava a dinn ...  
 9. ... ijing by bus. But she said that most of [students] study far away from their hometown. Unf ...  
 10. ... lives in the dormitory as most Chinese [students] do. She lives in 4 people room which sh ...  
 11. ... eats the sense of integrity with other [students]. Sometimes she goes out with her friend ...  
 12. ... that although there is a lot of foreign [students] who like going to bars and sitting ther ...

1. ... the university and final exams in high [school]. The students focus more on the entry e ...  
 2. ... ince, she also went there to her middle [school] and to her high school (it is her homet ...  
 6. ... l and three years of junior middle high [school]. Later there are optional high school a ...  
 7. ... h school. Later there are optional high [school] and college. The education starts at th ...  
 8. ... In China there is a lot of pressure at [school]. Teachers are pushing pupils to study, ...  
 9. ... ng the pupils is also very fierce. High [school] is really important, so students try re ...  
 10. ... hard in order to be admitted to a good [school]. There are interviews, schools ask for ...  
 19. ... me). Chinese students can go to public [schools] (which are more socially accepted) or p ...  
 20. ... nted. Chinese students should go to the [school] of the province they come from. If they ...

Two keywords were examined in the Travel subcorpus: *travel*\* and *place*\*. The selected examples the Polish participants' perceptions of the importance of travelling and visiting places of cultural value for both Chinese and Polish nationals.

1. Zi told me that she likes [travelling], but unfortunately she has never been t ...  
 2. ... hat it's common for Chinese students to [travel] together. They usually dream of visitin ...  
 3. ... riented, students are not encouraged to [travel] or do other things that are irrelevant ...  
 4. ... When Yunqi was young, she often used to [travel] with her parents, but when she went to ...  
 5. ... went to university, she also started to [travel] with her friends. She told me that alo ...  
 6. . Gillian likes [travelling] but she doesn't travel a lot because sh ...  
 7. ... illian likes travelling but she doesn't [travel] a lot because she can't afford that. Sh ...  
 8. ... e has never been abroad. So far she has [travelled] only to other parts of China. Last summ ...  
 10. ... broad one day. Chinese people – if ever – [travel] generally round the Asia. Popular touri ...  
 11. ... absolutely amazing to find any Chinese [travelling] so extensively. Nevertheless she admitt ...  
 12. ... e admitted that nowadays her countrymen [travel] more and more and even farther than the ...

14. ... an has never been abroad yet. When she [travels], she chooses some places near her homet ...  
 16. ... ound the world share similar interests, [travelling] for example. Eric is very curious of ...  
 22. ... the seaside. She says she would like to [travel] to Europe, especially to France. Her bi ...  
 23. ... extremely surprised to discover that I [travelled] to China this summer. R ...  
 24. ... in the report on holidays, Gao has not [travelled] abroad a lot in her life. However, when ...

3. ... trip at the end of the semester, find a [place] that they are interested in (e.g. the y ...  
 4. ... diverse and there are many interesting [places] to see there. As the first and the most ...  
 5. ... emperature there is lower than in other [places] because of the water. Among other touri ...  
 6. ... planes are preferred to get to distant [places]. For example, it takes two days to go f ...  
 7. ... et. When she travels, she chooses some [places] near her hometown. She mentioned a mou ...  
 9. ... never been abroad. She has been to many [places] in China though. She told me that becau ...  
 10. ... , and you can find many interesting new [places] and traditions. It is not very common t ...  
 11. ... ture, so she enjoys visiting historical [places] in China. The Chinese historical archit ...  
 12. ... mportant sites for tourists. The second [place] is of course Tiananmen Square (also in ...  
 13. ... mportant events in Chinese history took [place] there. Huqiawen would like to visit Ja ...  
 14. ... to study a lot. She visited some famous [places] in China, but she hasn't been abroad ye ...  
 15. ... her here and show her some interesting [places] in Warsaw :-). Below you can see th ...  
 16. Erica told me about some [places] of interest in China that she likes to ...

In the subcorpus on Leisure Activities, the keyword chosen for scrutiny was *time*. The selected examples listed below illustrate how the students identify the role of free time or lack of it in their lives, but also their views on the importance of leisure activities.

1. ... ves travelling but now she doesn't have [time] and money to go for a journey. When sh ...  
 2. ... to go for a journey. When she has free [time], she always goes somewhere with her bes ...  
 3. ... eradyn mentioned, ways of spending free [time] in China and Poland seem to be pretty m ...  
 4. ... hinese partner prefer to spend his free [time] in an active way. He enjoys sports very ...  
 5. ... tennis. However, he also likes to spend [time] with his friends. Often he visits karao ...  
 6. ... one. Unfortunately, he didn't have much [time] for leisure lately as the exam session ...  
 7. ... sitting on a comfortable sofa. At that [time] she feels very relaxed. If there is a c ...  
 8. ... t(a) Gao does not have a lot of free [time] because of the amount of work at school ...

The most productive keyword in the Foreign Language subcorpus was *language*\*. The selected examples illustrate the students' approach this issue from various perspectives: educational, cultural, and personal.

1. ... ction than of her not comprehending the [language]. She practices her English skills every ...  
 2. ... and she is very determined to speak the [language] fluently. I'm very impressed, for I do ...  
 3. ... ly. English is the most popular foreign [language] in China, students seem to understand t ...  
 7. ... in the country, where people speak the [language] you learn. Now she has a great opportun ...  
 8. ... proper accent when they speak European [languages], and that makes them shy in front of fo ...  
 9. ... ey are very determined to learn foreign [languages], as they believe this guarantees them a ...  
 11. ... Zhao speaks good English and she likes [languages] very much. She was learning Korean some ...  
 12. ... n told me that the most popular foreign [language] learned in China is English. People the ...  
 13. ... le there rarely learn a second european [language], they prefer to choose other Asian lang ...  
 14. ... uage, they prefer to choose other Asian [languages] like Japanese or Korean. Similarly like ...  
 15. ... ly like in Europe, knowledge of foreign [languages] offers better career prospects. Gillian ...  
 16. ... w she is quite proficient in using this [language]. She tries to learn it not only during ...  
 17. ... na, there is a great demand for foreign [language] skills, especially in specific fields. ...  
 19. ... ges. Ruan added that knowing foreign [language] is also important because it helps in a ...  
 20. ... hem. As to academic teaching foreign [languages], it differs from university to universi ...  
 21. ... ioned that the weakest point of Chinese [language] abilities is the speaking part – they'v ...  
 22. ... could exchange our opinions about this [language]. She would like to speak French as well ...  
 23. ... nch as well, but she is aware that this [language] is really difficult to learn, even for ...  
 24. ... because I know how different these two [language] systems are), she is pretty good at it. ...  
 26. ... is absolutely the most popular foreign [language], that quite many people know Russian, b ...  
 28. ... China always have to choose two foreign [languages] to study (English is a must!). Her choi ...  
 29. ... h is a must!). Her choice of the second [language] was French, but her French is still not ...  
 30. ... he told me that the most popular second [languages] to be chosen by Chinese students are Ja ...

In the Business subcorpus, the keyword chosen for analysis was the word *business* itself. The selected examples indicate that the students perceive business as constant meetings, gifts and travelling.

1. ... versation with my Chinese friend about [business] matters, but she did not seem to be int ...  
 4. ... commercial sector. Since China conducts [business] affairs mostly with the USA, businessme ...  
 5. ... s business affairs mostly with the USA, [businessmen] from both countries need to know the ru ...  
 6. ... e to globalisation some elements of the [business] etiquette became similar. This concerns ...  
 7. ... should wear rather modest, conservative [business] suits and flat shoes. What is more, Chi ...  
 10. ... racteristic in China. If you want to do [business] successfully with a Chinese company, yo ...  
 11. ... ner. This is a special point in Chinese [business] etiquette. It is normal in china to sen ...  
 12. ... tiquette. It is normal in china to send [business] gifts to partners to show your friendsh ...  
 14. ... s it is more and more difficult to make [business] in China. She can see clearly the effec ...  
 20. ... business ceremony. They prefer formal [business] attire and etiquette. I found it intere ...

21. ... resting when Ruan told me that southern [businessmen] prefer to travel a lot more than those ...
22. ... tion of people have already got used to [business] travel. As to corporate bribes, Ruan ...
24. ... t it:) She said she thinks a successful [businessman] in China should be "diligent, wise and ...
25. ... "order", which is an important part of [business] meeting in China. To my suprise, she sa ...

The keywords chosen for analysis in the Employment subcorpus were *China* and *situation*. The selected examples below illustrate the students' perception of the job market in China. They also demonstrate how the participants relate the situation in their partners' country to that in Poland.

1. ... ork. He just told me that employment in [China] is a difficult problem to tackle since ...
2. ... s a high level of sex discrimination in [China]. It is a lot easier for men to find a g ...
3. ... – reason why a lot more boys are born in [China] – families think boys are more valuable ...
5. In [China] employers are more eager to hire a man ...
6. ... lian would like to work in Beijing. In [China] there are millions of uneducated, poor ...
7. ... a lot about employment possibilities in [China]. As we both didn't have much to say in ...
8. ... opment and rather positive situation of [China] economy, the downturn has also taken it ...
9. ... to sucess in finding a well-paid job in [China] is to have a reach CV and finish many i ...
11. Yunqi told me that [China] has been implementing socialist market ...

1. ... onomic development and rather positive [situation] of China economy, the downturn has also ...
2. ... Zhangwei told me that the [situation] on the job market is pretty serious as ...
3. ... est, so it's another advantage. Current [situation] on the market is not too good because o ...
4. ... nt rate in China is significant and the [situation] is getting worse. It results from the f ...
5. ... asures to enhance domestic demands, the [situation] is more or less stable. Besides, Chinese ...
6. ... lso contribute to an improvement of the [situation] as, according to my partner, they prefe ...
7. Today I found out that the [situation] of young Chinese is similar to the one ...
8. ... difficult to find a good post since the [situation] on the market is tough. The global down ...
9. ... y are banking, economy and the law. The [situation] in Poland is similar – it is almost imp ...
10. ... i Jiaotong Universities. The employment [situation] is not satisfactory at present, as coll ...
11. ... welfare is low. Most problematic is the [situation] of small farms. They trade less and con ...
12. ... hobbies and interests. The employment [situation] in China looks quite bright but obvious ...
13. ... When it comes to the current employment [situation] in China, it is very difficult. There ...

The concordance lines selected from the ten subcorpora demonstrate the organization of knowledge management in each report. Rhetorical management was appropriate as the students always knew the aims and intentions of communication. The concordance lines confirm that the participants indeed talked

about the topic assigned to them. What is more, they were able to identify common opinions and references. The data indicate that they succeeded in finding shared views, so referential management was properly applied. The participants managed to develop the main themes properly (thematic management). Both the Polish and Chinese students seem to have focused on the same issues in their conversations and the Polish participants did not report any breakdowns in communication.

### **3.4 Findings: Students' evaluations**

The corpora containing the Polish students' evaluations of the project provide an insight into the meaning they assigned to the experience of participating in the project and interacting with their Chinese peers. The analyses of the texts in the Polish and English subcorpora indicate that in many cases, the Polish participants changed their opinions on China, perceived thus far mainly as a supplier of popular goods. The Polish students admitted that they rethought many stereotypes. For some of them meeting a Chinese person for the first time and being able to learn about the Chinese culture was an experience of a lifetime. They recognised this opportunity as influencing positively their future contacts with the Chinese. They also observed increased openness to another culture in themselves and more confidence in intercultural contacts. Finally, they perceived this task more as a life experience than as a class activity.

For some of the Polish participants, the weekly conversations with their Chinese peers also provided an opportunity to reflect on their own culture. For example, the discovery that the Chinese do not drink alcohol at parties triggered a comment on the role of alcohol during social occasions in Poland.

In the course of the project the participants also became aware of the need for various strategies for explaining cultural phenomena. They described them verbally, but they also sent links to relevant websites or photographs or used English-Chinese dictionary inbuilt in the QQ messenger. The majority of the Polish students were satisfied with the successful communication and found it beneficial.

The analysis of the levels of coherence within the framework presented in section 1, and based on the students' topic reports and evaluations, demonstrates that they knew what the narration or conversation was about, which



points to global coherence in discourse. Some of them commented positively about the assigned topics as they provided the ground for interactions. However, a few students reported feeling limited by the topics, as they found them too basic. They also focused on lower level units of conversations to work out the global coherence of interaction, but they also used their own autonomous sense in interpreting new information (cf. section 1, episodic coherence). When the need to infer sense from single sentences or utterances became important (cf. section 1, local coherence) the students made an effort to fulfil their cognitive needs. In the case of linguistic problems they either switched to writing or they sent pictures of the objects they talked about. In the case of technical problems they changed the channel of communication by using email, Skype, other chat programmes etc.

The students' reports focused on recounting new information (*novum* – not known). They rarely reported on old information (*datum*) because of the task requirements, but also because of little prior knowledge about China. Indeed, very few students were familiar with aspects of the Chinese culture. Thus, much of the content of the weekly conversations with the Chinese peers was new to the Polish participants, which was assessed positively in the evaluations, as novelty raised curiosity and interest.

In terms of formality of the texts and language, the analysis of the reports demonstrates the qualities of academic prose, which does not allow for assessment of the style of their interactions.

As the social context of the situation in which the interactions took place was clear to both interlocutors, it is worth mentioning specific contexts described by the students. The aims of the exchange were different for Polish and Chinese participants. Students in both groups were assessed in a different way and consequently they used different strategies to approach the topic. They either followed the prescribed topics or felt free to extend them according to their interests.

Referring to the social character of the activities (cf. section 1, *field*), the students demonstrated an ability to identify individual opinions. They also noticed the importance of politeness in the language and interactions.

The last part of the analysis covers the social roles of the participants (cf. section 1, *tenor*). The students knew that their interaction was temporary, however, not limited to the course requirements. Some of them expected the

end of the interactions with the end of the project. However, some declared a wish to continue communication with their partners. A follow up study, one year later<sup>1</sup>, confirmed strong bonds between some interlocutors. They perceived their online discourse as a valid experience even if their personal contact was unlikely.

As far as the means of communication is concerned (cf. section 1, mode), the students easily switched between various communication channels. Depending on the interaction at a particular moment they adopted a text type which was either expository – while presenting opinions or describing cultural phenomena, or pedagogical – while teaching the interlocutor phrases in Chinese or Polish, or persuasive – while justifying choices and plans.

Referring to Fairclough's concept of "constituting and constructing the world in meaning," the analysis of students' evaluations demonstrated that they were able to make meaning of the world. They verified stereotypes, changed attitudes or confirmed their prior knowledge. They changed the perception of China mainly as a mass producer of goods. In spite of different conditions and social practices in both countries, the participants found similarities in their social roles as students, their dreams and their expectations.

To both groups, English was a foreign language, which was a common asset enabling communication. To the Chinese students, learning the language was the main benefit, as some of them were very proficient, while a few had problems in oral communication. Among the Polish students the main benefit was the cultural knowledge, development of intercultural competence and a chance to overcome psychological barriers in communication.

In the reports the students also mentioned drawbacks of the project. A few complained about their partners' level of proficiency in English. The reported problems, however, did not concern the discourse or social relations. The most disappointing social fact was that one person on each side withdrew from the project. In addition, the students complained about technical problems, such as the low quality of voice transmission online and about time differences.

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<sup>1</sup> Application for the European Commission's award *European Language Label*, 2013.

#### 4. Conclusions

The outcomes of the analysis give insights into the characteristics of students' discourse in intercultural oral communication between Polish and Chinese students. Although there is no access to recordings of what was actually said, the examination of the students' reports shows that they could construct meaning of the world in communication with their foreign peers. The students were also able to control the essential features of the discourse, despite the geographical and cultural distance, in order to make the participation in the project a valid life and educational experience. The analysis emphasizes the role of the exchange in the development of students' confidence in maintaining satisfactory communication in intercultural contacts through practising solving problems they face in interaction. It was an added value to the project, which aimed at enhancing linguistic, cultural, intercultural, pedagogical and technical skills in students. It shows that European-Asian intercultural online projects may provide opportunities to build knowledge and manage discourse phenomena at the tertiary level.

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