Professional Communication

Collaboration between Academics and Practitioners

Edited by Winnie Cheng and Kenneth C. C. Kong

Hong Kong University Press is honoured that Xu Bing, whose art explores the complex themes of language across cultures, has written the Press's name in his Square Word Calligraphy. This signals our commitment to cross-cultural thinking and the distinctive nature of our English-language books published in China.

"At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed."

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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Intercultural Professional Communication: Approaches and Issues

Kenneth C. C. Kong and Winnie Cheng

As a result of globalization and the internalization of trade and information, intercultural communication has become an increasingly significant topic. This is especially the case in professional communication, because participants in professional communication have to draw on more sophisticated and transdisciplinary frameworks in order to get their jobs done. Even the communication among professional peers themselves is far from smooth and straightforward, and is mediated by participants from different cultural backgrounds with different assumptions. As Gottis (2004, 10) notes in an introduction to a monograph on intercultural professional communication, 'domain-specific languages are prone to the pressures of intercultural variation, as it is not only the sociocultural factors inherent in a text but also the interpretive schemata which deeply affect its realization and interpretation within the host community . . . intercultural communication is often made more complex by the locutors' need to make their texts as adaptable as possible to contextual features and pragmatic purpose'. The use of a 'lingua franca', i.e. English, does not make the issue less complicated; instead, it can even be argued that the use of a language that is not the native language of both the speaker and the hearer can create more problems in the construction, use and interpretation of texts.

Research studies in professional communication

A quick review of professional communication research in the twenty-first century has shown not only the growing importance and value of these studies but also the wide-ranging professions that have been investigated. Examples of professions are business and financial services, construction and engineering, health care,

law, tourism, and trading. In financial accounting, Rutherford (2003) examines the social negotiation of meaning, focusing on the construction of financial statement elements from the schemes developed under the UK government Private Finance Initiative. Heldenberg and Scoubeau (2005) survey the views of company managers in a Belgian financial market regarding the importance of financial communication. Cheng, Li, Love and Irani's (2001) study investigates the communication between different parties in a construction project and proposes a communication mechanism for successful construction alliance. Andersen and Rasmussen (2004) compare how manufacturers from Danish companies and their subsidiaries in France solve language and communication problems. The purpose of Yamaguchi's (2005) study was to discover the interrelationship between effective communications and different work-related variables in Japanese companies, including information-seeking behaviour, perceived procedural justice, and the reduction of job-related uncertainty. Rogerson-Revell (2007) discusses some of the communication difficulties encountered by participants in business meetings in a European professional organization in an English for International Business (EIB) context, and how the participants perceive the use of EIB in international professional communication.

In health care, Peräkylä and Vehviläinen (2003) study different relationships between the research results generated from conversation analysis and other theories and models that describe professional-client interaction in institutional settings: medical care, therapy, counselling and education. Colón-Emeric et al. (2006) compare the medical and nursing staff working in two nursing homes according to the communication patterns and organizational consequences relating to four dimensions: the quality of information flow, cognitive diversity, self-organization, and innovation. Leenerts and Teel (2006) conducted a pilot study which describes the communication skills used by an advanced practice nurse in creating partnerships with caregivers.

In the legal discipline, Candlin et al. (2002) review fifty-six legal writing textbooks which are available on market to discuss how suitable they are for use in English for Academic Legal Purposes (EALP) contexts. By proposing three approaches for designing and developing suitable written EALP materials, Candlin et al. discuss some crucial issues related to EALP theory and practice. Compared to the legal profession, more research has been conducted in the tourism and hotel industry; for example, Gilbert and Terrata (2001), Peters (2005), Moskowitz and Krieger (2003), Russell and Leslie (2004), and Dolnicar (2005).

In Hong Kong, Vijay Bhatia (2004) is well known for his critical genre analysis multidimensional and multi-perspective framework, as well as the international research efforts in the legal genre (e.g. Bhatia 2006). Evans and Green (2003) report on survey results relating to the patterns of English use by Chinese professionals at different levels in five key occupational fields in the public and

private sectors after 1997: business services, community/social services, construction/real estate, engineering and manufacturing. Specifically, their survey examines different text types and situations in which English is used in professional settings. Flowerdew and Wan's study (2006) is a genre analysis of tax computation letters collected from an international accounting firm in Hong Kong. More recently, Cheng and Mok (2008) describe the discourse processes and products that are characteristic of one of the largest surveying consultancy firms in Hong Kong.

Defining culture

The next issue is what we mean by *culture*. Culture has been a very problematic concept and means something completely different to different people. One of the most common interpretations of culture is *high culture*, which refers to the paintings, music and other artistic artifacts of a particular group of people. Taking this notion a bit further, we may talk of the history and development of a place or country. In this sense, culture is equated to civilization. This is why we may have British culture, Chinese culture, German culture, Vietnamese culture, etc. Another common meaning of culture may refer to individuals. If we say one is cultured, we mean the person has a sophisticated level of intellectual ability; in other words, the person is educated. In this chapter, these notions of culture are not as useful as the anthropological notion of culture, which refers to 'any aspect of the ideas, communications, or behaviours of a group of people which gives them a distinctive identity and which is used to organize their internal sense of cohesion and membership' (Scollon and Scollon 2001, 140).

Scollon and Scollon's definition of culture touches on the crux of the current debate on culture. Is culture simply a system of shared symbols (Geertz 1973)? If it is more than a system of symbols, what functions does it have? A pioneer in communication studies, Edward Hall (1959), argues that culture is communication and communication is also culture. This means that culture is not just a template of rules and ideas. We also build our culture through communication (Berger and Luckman 1966). This is underscored by the distinction between large culture and small culture, made by Holliday (1999). Large culture is 'essentialist in that it relates to the essential differences between ethnic, national and international entities' (Holliday 1999, 240). The main goal of large cultures is prescriptive, i.e., to identify what is desirable or acceptable in a certain culture. In contrast, small culture is 'non-essentialist in that it does not relate to the essences of ethnic, national or international entities. Instead it relates to any cohesive social grouping without necessary subordination to large cultures' (Holliday 1999, 240). To Holliday, large cultures are reified small cultures taking up the idea from Berger and Luckman (1966). In other words, small cultures are

everyday constructions regardless of what is prescribed as normal and unmarked values in the mainstream social cultures grouping.

Although the terms *small* and *large cultures* are misleading, they are very useful in understanding how our professional identities cut across different cultures in daily life. When a Swiss engineer gives a presentation to a group of Chinese professional peers, what distorts communication could be more their different corporate identities than their ethnic identities, given the fact that engineering as an international profession has a rather stable set of norms of making presentations for instance. Also, different companies may have their own culture or uniqueness because of their own history, development, etc. What is at stake is the phenomenon that our cultural identities are more than our ethnic identities. The way we speak may be influenced by a composite of factors such as our gender, the company we belong to, the generation in which we were born, or even the area of the country we live in. This is why a more flexible approach to intercultural communication is more useful to researchers in professional communication rather than taking intercultural communication as just interethnic communication or intergender communication.

Sarangi (1994, 414) expounds a 'discourse-centred approach . . . [in which] discourse has to be considered as the concrete expression of the language-culture relationship because it is discourse that "creates, recreates, focuses, modifies, and transmits both culture and language and their interaction"'. Scollon and Scollon (2001, xii) define *interdiscourse communication* as:

> a term we use to include the entire range of communications across boundaries of groups or discourse systems from the most inclusive of those groups, cultural groups, to the communications which take place between men and women or between colleagues who have been born into different generations. In interdisocurse analysis we consider the ways in which discourses are created and interpreted when those discourses cross the boundaries or group membership. We also consider the ways in which we use communication to claim and to display our own complex and multiple identities as communicating professionals.

In brief, replacing intercultural communication with interdiscourse communication can allow us to avoid the ambiguity of the term *culture* in our analysis and to consider more prototypically 'non-cultural' factors such as degree of institutional attachment and language proficiency. In the following, we explain how a discourse approach to intercultural professional communication can be informed by several fields of scholarship: communication studies, interactional sociolinguistics, speech act theory, genre analysis, politeness studies and multimodality.

Communication studies

In the field communication studies, a distinction is often made between cross-cultural communication and intercultural communication, although both refer to communication across cultures. The main purpose of cross-cultural communication is to compare communication patterns across cultures, whereas intercultural communication involves 'communication between people from different cultures' (Gudykunst 2003, 1). When the focus of discourse approach is to examine the actual discourse produced by speakers or writers, most discourse analysts interested in culture are doing what would be regarded as intercultural communication. Most of the intercultural analyses in communication studies are quantitative and have an emphasis on hypothesis testing, examination of macro-categories (Bargiela-Chiappini in this volume; Gudykunst 2002), and a tendency to make predictions (Jensen 2005). Culture in communication studies has usually referred to ethnic, racial or national culture. As Jensen (2005) argues, 'Intercultural communication research has by definition been related to the understanding of national cultures as the fundamental principle'. Despite some recent developments in calling for more attention to other cultures (Gudykunst 2003; Jensen 2005), the mainstream concern is still restricted to communication patterns of different national cultures. In a new edition of a popular reader on intercultural communication consisting of eight sections (Samovar and Porter 2007), only one section concerns itself with 'co-cultures' such as gender culture. Most of the other chapters concern the cultural patterns of different nations, ethnicities or regions.

The best-known and most frequently cited study of culture in communication studies was conducted by the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (2001). About 100,000 questionnaires were sent to employees in about 60 countries. The questions or statements, which subjects had to answer or rank on a five-point scale, included (cited in Renkema 2004): (1) How important is it to you to fully use your skills and abilities on the job? (2) How satisfied are you at present with your fringe benefits? (3) Competition among employees usually does more harm than good, and (4) How important is it to you to work in a department which is run efficiently? Hofstede, based on the findings, argued that there are five basic dimensions which can explain the cultural differences between different national cultures: (1) individualism versus collectivism, (2) power distance, (3) uncertainty avoidance, (4) masculinity versus femininity, and (5) long-term versus short-term orientation. Different countries are given an index according to different dimensions. For example, in the individualistic-collectivistic dimension, the US (having a score of 200) is much more individualistic than Hong Kong (-72), whereas Japan lies somewhere between the two countries/region (12). The higher the score, the more individualistic the country or region.

Hofstede's conceptualization of cultures as different polar dimensions has inspired and fueled a huge number of studies looking for more differences or testing the validity of those dimensions identified by Hofstede. For example, Ting-Toomey et al. (1991, cited in Ting-Toomey and Oetzel 2003, 135) focused on the conflict styles in five cultures and found 'US Americans, mainland Chinese, and Taiwanese Chinese reported using dominating styles more than Japanese and Koreans'. It was also reported in their study that 'Mainland Chinese and Taiwan Chinese reported using obliging styles more than US Americans, Japanese, and Koreans'.

The strength of communication studies to intercultural communication is their etic orientation to cultures. Like many other quantitative researchers, the scholars in communication studies can provide an overview of culture from 'a position outside the system and can also examine many cultures by comparing them using structure created by the analyst' (Berry 1980, 11–12). The most obvious weakness is that fuzzy concepts such as 'culture' cannot be easily pinned down, categorized and classified. This is why the theories and macro-categories should also be examined and verified from an emic perspective. Cheng's (2003) recent intercultural study of English conversations between Hong Kong Chinese and English speakers is a good example of fine-grained emic analysis of culture. Her findings of conversational features — preference organization, compliments and compliment responses, simultaneous talk, discourse topic development, and discourse information structure — refute such cultural stereotypical assumptions as individualistic-collectivistic orientation in English and Chinese cultures, and confirm the need to examine intercultural communication as situated in specific contexts of interaction.

Interactional sociolinguistics

Intercultural sociolinguistics is focused on how context is brought along and brought about in a situated encounter (Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Sarangi and Roberts 1999). The contexts that can be brought along include the setting in which the interaction takes place and the behavioural environment, including body language or the use of social space. The context that can be brought about has two dimensions: the language as context, i.e., how language can create and provide further contexts for interactions, and extra-situational context, which draws on even broader social, political and cultural frameworks. Although culture cannot be equated to context, the participants' set of assumptions and values is definitely one of the most important contextual elements that the participants bring to an interaction. As Gumperz et al. (1982, 12) argue, 'what we perceive and retain in our mind is a function of our culturally determined predisposition to perceive and assimilate'.

The most important goal of interactional sociolinguistics (particularly influenced by the works of Gumperz) is to examine how interactants contextualize or emphasize certain structures differently in real interactions, even though, for example, they may have a shared understanding of a grammatical structure. Gumperz et al. (1982, 28) makes extensive use of examples from Indian English to illustrate his ideas: 'Indian speakers of English frequently, and apparently systematically, differ from native speakers of English, in the devices they use to signal "communicative intent" through lexicalization, syntax, and prosody.' While lexicalization, according to the use of particles (which are absent in English) and the use of different word order to signal special meanings, may sound odd to native speakers of English and cause confusion, the use of different intonation is the most problematic. As Indian speakers have the resource of particles to highlight, emphasize or topicalize in their original language, they may substitute this lack in English by putting stress on words more frequently. For example, when an Indian subordinate in the workplace asks his boss if he could have a day off, he might put prosodic emphasis on the word 'off'. This is certainly odd pragmatically to a native English speaker. Having no intention to be offensive or impolite, the Indian just uses word stress to signal meaning differently from the way English speakers do. The result of this misunderstanding can be serious because of the creation of stereotypes and finally inequality in the workplace.

A further interesting example of different contextualizing work in the workplace context is given in another paper in Gumperz's collection (Young 1982). In business meetings, Chinese speakers of English tend to delay the main point of their arguments by using a lot of prefacing strategies such as giving a number of reasons before the main point. This may sound odd to native speakers of English and cause misunderstanding, giving an impression that Chinese speakers are always indirect and inscrutable. Again, the misunderstanding may be due to the different interpretations of an inductive versus a deductive pattern of languages (Cheng and Mok 2006; Cheng 2007b).

The examples above capture a very useful notion of interactional sociolinguistics, that is, certain devices are very important in contextualizing certain beliefs, identities and cultures. This contextual information would be considered something 'brought about' because the devices are external to the conversation itself. These devices are known as *contextualization cues*, which are highly culturally dependent. Contextualization cues can be defined as 'the speakers' and listeners' use of verbal and non-verbal signs to relate what is said at any one time and in any place to knowledge acquired through past experience, in order to retrieve the presuppositions they must reply on to maintain conversational involvement and assess what is intended' (Gumperz 1992, 230). The concept of contextualization cues highlights the fact that we may have very different interpretations of the same cue or feature although we may seemingly

share the general usage of it. This is particularly important for intercultural professional communication in which English is often used as the lingua franca. People may take it for granted that every word we utter is transparent and unambiguous, since we are using the same language.

Speech act theory

Proposed by John Austin (1962), a philosopher of language, speech act theory examines how we achieve various goals by using language. Language does not simply state or describe but also acts. By using language, we can perform various functions. Speech acts have been classified according to their lexical/syntactic realizations or their specific functions. Austin (1962) developed a classification of speech acts based on illocutionary verbs. This more intuitive attempt was later modified by Searle (1975). He argued that speech acts should be classified according to illocutionary point, speaker's psychological state, and propositional content, resulting in five categories of speech acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

In the professional world, we tend to use some speech acts more often than others. For example, directives — asking someone to get something done — have almost become routine within and across institutions. Commissives are also frequently used in meetings and negotiations. Declarations are more restricted and may only be used in certain personnel situations, such as appointing and resigning. The most obvious strength of speech act theory in professional discourse research is that it provides a feasible unit of analysis. Negotiation is too large as a unit of analysis, but a particular linguistic item is too small. Speech acts have been extensively studied across and within cultures. Blum-Kulka et al.'s CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) (1989) is a good example of research which analyzed the interlanguage and cross-cultural realizations of different speech acts, such as requests and apologies. A large number of research studies along this line have been done since then. For example, Japanese has been regarded as an indirect, modest and non-confrontational culture, and previous studies have identified differences between Japanese and native English speakers who have different preferences when making complaints and responding to them (Murphy and Neu 1996; Rinnert et al. 2006). In Hong Kong, different studies have investigated the speech acts of disagreement (Cheng and Warren 2005a), giving an opinion (Cheng and Warren 2006a), checking understandings (Cheng and Warren 2007) and interrupting (Cheng 2007a) in the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE), and compared the corpus findings with the way in which English school textbooks in Hong Kong present and teach these speech acts.

In summary, the precise meaning of a linguistic item cannot be determined unless the contextual variables are known. Speech act theory (Searle 1975) is a very useful tool in explicating this complex relationship between what is said and what is meant. Speech act theory also contributes to our better understanding of the function of language in shaping our identities in the workplace. Nevertheless, the theory should be applied with caution. Speech acts may be realized not only locally but globally. In other words, a letter of apology may contain other speech acts, such as asserting and promising. Attention should also be paid to the complex interplay of macro- and micro-realizations.

Genre analysis

The distinguishing characteristic of a genre is its communicative purpose(s) (Bhatia 1993). The reason why two texts belong to the same genre might be that they share the same purpose of action although they may come from two different domains. Bhatia (1993), for example, argues that business sales letters and job applications can be regarded as the same genre because both of them have the communicative purpose of promoting something. In the case of business sales letters, it is the product or service that is promoted, and in the case of job application letters, it is the applicant. Promotional genres, including sales letters, job application letters, promotional leaflets, and company introduction on a web page, and even personal advertisements, may draw on similar structural and linguistic resources to perform their acts. In schematic structure, promotional genres usually begin with some means of establishing credentials (highlighting the reputation of the company, for example) before they introduce the offer. They are usually closed by an offer of incentive and use of some pressure tactics (Bhatia 1993). Promotional genres share similar structure because participants tend to use familiar resources they have used in certain recurrent situations. Richards and Schmidt (2002, 224) define genre as 'a type of discourse that occurs in a particular setting, that has distinctive and recognizable patterns and norms of organization and structure and that has particular and distinctive communicative functions'. Martin (1984, 25) defines it as 'a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture'.

The use of the word *culture* in Martin's (1984) definition assumes that there may be cultural differences in using and organizing genres. In fact, the idea of genre variation has been discussed in many studies comparing genres in different cultures (almost predominately referred to as national or ethnic cultures). There is a wide range of genres that have been compared in previous studies, for example, student essays in Arabic and English (El-Sayed 1992), court documents in Swedish and English (Fredericson 1996), business request letters in Chinese and English

(Kong 1998a), research article introductions in Polish and English (Golebiowski 1998), check-out service encounters (Cheng 2004a), grant proposals in Finnish and English (Connor and Mauranen 1999), book reviews in Spanish, French and English (Salager-Meyer and Ariza 2004), letters of CEOs in Italian and English (Garzone 2004), and sales promotional letters in Italian and English (Vergaro 2004). Most of the intercultural studies of genres conclude that there are significant differences in the structure and lexico-grammatical realizations of moves, reflecting the different cultural norms of discourse communities.

Although genre analysis has yielded some very useful findings about how language is structured and realized in professional settings, it is also facing an increasingly common problem of co-occurrence of genres. Bhatia (2005, 220) argues that 'of all the genres which have invaded the territorial integrity of most professional and academic genres, "advertising" clearly stands out to be the most prominent instrument of colonization'. However, there are different views on whether this mixing is consciously done by the writer or not. The impetus for arguing that intertextuality is a conscious activity springs from the view that genre is a 'class of communicative events' (Swales 1990, 45). The embodiment of actions and events in a genre highlights the active agency of language users in employing what is regarded as an ideal and effective choice in a given situation. However, it has also been argued that language users are not conscious of using a particular genre. As Hasan (2000, 43) argues, language users are 'simply to fashion their language according to the ongoing context'. Fairclough (2003, 69) takes a similar view by arguing that genre is not a class of communicative events because 'actual events (texts, interactions) are not "in" a particular genre, they do not instantiate a particular genre — rather they draw upon the socially available resources of genres in potentially quite complex and creative ways'.

Another development in genre analysis is how genres are connected in a network. Instead of treating genres as discreet items for analysis, we have to take into consideration how different genres are used and related. This is what is known as genre chain and network. An example given by Paltridge (2006) is the genre chain of a job application. In order to understand how a job application letter is constructed, we also need to understand what comes before and after it. For example, a job advertisement should appear first. Then the applicant writes an application letter and a resume. A job interview may be arranged afterwards. If the applicant is found suitable, an offer letter of appointment may be issued, followed by some negotiation of the offer. This is why Swales (2004, 22) argues that in order to have a better understanding of genres, we should take into consideration 'the totality of genres available in the particular sector'. In other words, the sequence, hierarchy and connections of different genres in a related setting have to be examined as well.

As mentioned, most intercultural studies of genres focus on the national or ethnic cultures without paying enough attention to other cultures. This is surprising given the fact that the genre analysis is interested in studying the conventions and constraints that shape a particular instance of discourse, and these conventions and constraints are by no means restricted to a nation or a region. In a recent article by Tse and Hyland (forthcoming), an attempt is made to compare the use of metadiscourse used by male and female scholars in academic book reviews in philosophy and biology. They also examine how scholars reviewed scholars of the same and different sex. It was found that males and females tend to use interactive (such as use of conjunctions) and interactional (such as use of boosters) metadiscourse. Nevertheless, there are more similarities within disciplines than across disciplines; as they argue, 'The ways men and women use a language, in other words, are not determined by their gender but constructed, negotiated, and transformed through social practices informed by particular social settings, relations of power, and participation in disciplinary discourses' (Tse and Hyland, 15).

Politeness studies

The publication of the *Journal of Politeness Research* in 2005 heralded a landmark in the study of politeness behaviour, which is mature enough to develop into a field of enquiry on its own. No account of politeness research is complete without referring to the seminal work on politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987). Based on Goffman's (1967) notion of positive face (the need to be accepted and even liked by others) and negative face (the need to make our own decision without the influence of others), Brown and Levinson's framework proposes two related politeness strategies in dealing with the two needs: positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness includes the use of solidarity markers such as the use of first name and inclusive *we*, emphasis on seeking agreement, use of jokes, etc. Negative politeness refers to the strategies through which someone's independence is emphasized. It may include the use of formal titles, use of apologizing act, giving of options to the hearer, etc. In addition to positive and negative politeness strategies, there are bald-on-record strategies (without any face-redressing strategies), off-record strategies (a meaning that can only be inferred, for example) and the option of not performing the face-threatening act at all. The strategies can be measured by their directness level. According to the level of directness, bald-on-record is considered the most direct, followed by positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record strategy, and lastly the option of not making an act at all. The choice of which strategy to use depends on three factors: social distance, power difference and size of imposition. Basically, the

greater the social distance, power difference and size of imposition, the more indirect the strategy will be.

Brown and Levinson's idea of politeness is so influential that no work on politeness would be considered complete without some mention of it. However, the model has been criticized for its several weaknesses. First, the notion of face is problematic. Negative face in Brown and Levinson's model may not be a face-want at all (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, see below). Face also has multiple dimensions. For example, a professional may have at least two dimensions of face: his or her own face as an individual, and the face of a professional representing his or her institution (Charles 1996; Kong 2003). Second, the factors which are argued to be important in determining the use of strategies can be manipulated by interlocutors (Kong 1998b). Lastly, speech act theory focuses on realizations of politeness at speech act level, ignoring the fact that politeness can be realized at a level higher than single speech act. For example, a person can use more negative politeness at the beginning and more positive politeness at the end of a discourse to give a more balanced handling of positive and negative face.

There are two major developments in politeness research. The first is what Watts calls the politeness as a politic behaviour (Watts 2003). According to Locher and Watts (2005), politeness is a subjective issue which cannot be determined linguistically, because the judgement of what is polite or not rests on the interpretation of the recipients of a message, not on the linguistic realizations. Politeness is only part of the larger picture of relational work, which is a 'discursive struggle in which interactants engage' (2005, 9).

Spencer-Oatey (2000) is another recent model which broadens the notion of politeness by incorporating elements other than face needs into relationship negotiation. In fact, Spencer-Oatey argues that politeness or face work is not the most appropriate term; rather, she argues, *rapport management* should be the framework to understand politeness. Face is subdivided into personal level and social level. Face at personal level is very similar to the positive face-want in Brown and Levinson's model, and face at social level is more closely related to one's profession, job, role and institutional affiliation. The most important modification to Brown and Levinson's (1987) model is the introduction of sociality rights, and division of face needs and sociality rights into personal and social perspectives. What is considered to be negative face in Brown and Levinson's model is regarded as sociality rights in the new framework proposed by Spencer-Oatey. At personal level, equity rights refer to a 'fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly' (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 14). At social level, sociality rights are considered to be association rights, and we have a 'fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is keeping with the type of relationship we have with them' (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 14).

Multimodality

Although it is important to examine the discourse variations in different cultures, linguistic realizations of discourse are only part of the picture. Genre should not be restricted to words alone. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of visuals as a meaning-making system (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). There are many visual elements such as typographical and pictorial representations which are as meaningful as their verbal counterparts. This revolutionary shift from the prime focus on written language to the mixed mode of written and visual language cannot assume that the complex phenomenon can be understood according to the existing theories of language or visuals alone. Kress (1998) succinctly argues that visuals have taken up some of the functions that written language used to perform, whereas written language is mainly used for reporting and narrating. Yet the 'display' function of visuals needs to be explored, especially in relation to the narrating and reporting function of words. As Kaltenbacher (2004) argues, the most important issue in the research of multimodal documents is whether they can communicate meanings that traditional documents cannot. In other words, we need a more systematic and sophisticated network that can allow practitioners and analysts to understand the increasingly complicated verbal-visual connections. In studying multimodality interculturally, a recent study comparing the use of visuals in manual instructions in English and Japanese (Bateman and Delin 2004) argues that many typographical and pictorial elements have meaning-bearing functions and are used more frequently in Japanese culture. Nevertheless, more empirical research is needed to understand the different use of multimodal resources in different cultures. Kong (2006) provides a taxonomy of relations between visuals and words, which can be applied to compare the intercultural realizations of visual-verbal relations in quantitative terms.

Another important meaning-making system is discourse intonation (Brazil 1997) which has been extensively studied in recent years, especially in intercultural professional communication in Hong Kong (Cheng 2004a, 2004b; Cheng and Warren 2005a, 2005b, 2006b; Lam 2006). In Brazil's (1997) discourse intonation, speakers can select from four independent systems: prominence, tone, key and termination within a tone unit. Each of the independent systems is a source of 'local meaning' (Brazil 1997, xi), by which Brazil seeks to underline that these are moment-by-moment judgements made by speakers based on their assessment of the current state of understanding that operates between the participants. In other words, Brazil's system eschews the notions that intonation conveys fixed attitudinal meanings or is associated with particular grammatical structures.

Issues in intercultural professional communication

Intercultural professional communication studies have been guided by a wide range of concepts, taxonomies, theories, models and frameworks generated from and expounded by different communication and linguistic approaches. A range of interest groups and stakeholders, including governments, professionals, organizations, learners and teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), and researchers, stand to benefit from these studies. As remarked by Cheng (in press):

> Many of these studies thus beg the question: would the contribution to knowledge and the impact on the business world have been much greater if the business discourse and communication projects had formed alliances with the industries concerned from the outset? Would these studies of business discourse have been broader in scope and much more comprehensive if they had incorporated as many methodologies and had examined as many features and phenomena as possible?

Some of the major issues for the consideration of researchers, academics, educators, and professionals alike include how and to what extent intercultural professional communication studies have succeeded in making their way into the different levels of communication and language use in professional settings; to what extent these studies have impacted the professional policies and practices in the respective organizations; and last but not least, the mechanism by means of which the research findings could most effectively be explored with respect to the practical implications for curriculum design and materials writing for ESP or LSP, and for informing professional communicative practices, locally and internationally.

Acknowledgements

Notes

Chapter 2

1. The choice of joined rather than hyphenated terms throughout is motivated by stylistic consistency.
2. These are only some of the issues discussed at www.interdisciplines.org/.
3. I am indebted to Sandra Harris for this cautionary note on the challenges of attempting true cross-disciplinary research.
4. A process ontology can strongly inhibit empirical research since, if the individual is no longer the focus of analysis, the researcher is trapped in the dilemma of interpreting the incommensurable context that I discuss earlier.
5. Roberts and Sarangi (1999) also propose that research paradigms should be jointly negotiated between researchers and the 'researched'.

Chapter 4

1. Sources are from the US Department of Education: http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/index.html?src=gu.

Chapter 5

1. One of the most popular tests of general Japanese linguistic proficiency levels administered by Japan Educational Exchange and Services (in Japan) and Japan Foundation (outside Japan). There are four levels, Grade 1 being the most advanced.
2. JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation) Japanese language proficiency test is more oriented towards assessing skills in business communication. It is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, financial circles, and other organizations.
3. *Joseigo* refers to 'women's language'.

Chapter 6

1. Grammatical abbreviations used in the present study are as follows: AC-accusative particle; AH-addressee honorific; DC-declarative sentence-type suffix; HON-subject honorific suffix; IM-imperative sentence-type suffix; IN-indicative mood suffix; INT-intimate speech level or suffi; NM-nominative case particle; NOM-nominalizer suffix; POL-polite speech level, suffix, or particle; PRS-Prospective modal suffix; PST-past tense and perfect aspect suffix; Q-question marker; RL-relativizer suffix; SUP-suppositive mood suffix; TOP-topic-contrast particle.

Chapter 8

1. The following notations are used in this chapter:

Symbol	*Meaning*
(C, xx)	Canadian report — Renewal of Public Health in Canada
(HK, xx)	Hong Kong report — SARS in Hong Kong: From Experience to Action
xx	Page number in the report
Italicized quotes	The key wording of textual evidence quoted from the reports

Chapter 9

1. According to Halliday (1994), congruent often contrasts with metaphorical or incongruent concerning meaning expression, and it can be glossed as closer to the state of affairs in the external world. In other words, congruent realization or congruency is the typical or default form, whereas incongruent or metaphorical realization is atypical. Comparatively speaking, *a large number of tourists* is congruent and *a flood of tourists* is incongruent or metaphorical. Congruently, question is realized by interrogative mood, command by imperative mood, and statement by declarative mood.
2. Questions can also be incongruently realized by modulated declaratives with rising tone, for example, *You did it already?*
3. It has to be pointed out that there are occasional cases of evading or prevaricating by defendants or witnesses in courtroom cross-examination, by suspects in police interrogation and by interviewees in news interview. On such occasions, power between the two parties is negotiated and shifts in the course of the interaction.
4. Sometimes questions go unanswered due to the addressee's unwillingness to respond, or the addressee using body language like nodding or shaking the head to respond.
5. Question is congruently realized by interrogative mood, command by imperative mood, statement by declarative and offer by modulated interrogative mood.
6. Generally speaking, questions act as an initiating speech function on most occasions. Sometimes a question can be used to respond to a question. For example,

> George: Did you want an ice lolly or not?
> Zee: What kind have they got?
> George: How about orange?
> Zee: Don't they have Bazookas?
> George: Well here's twenty pence + you ask him. (Brown and Yule 1983, 230)

7. Reciprocity in talk and conversation, according to Luckmann (1990, 47), refers to 'the systemic interdependence of behavior in which one organism's action is a response to the action of another, and vice versa. This continuous alternation of feedback from one organism to another presupposes that the ability of an individual organism to observe (and to interpret consciously or automatically) the behavior of other individuals is imputed by that individual to others, and that, in consequence, its own behavior is adjusted to anticipated observation (and interpretation) by them.' Martin (1992, 528) explains reciprocity in a much clearer way; that is, 'a number of choices have to be examined from the perspective of different participants for tenor to be realized at all'.

8. Except for the data on parent/adult and child talk, data and data sources are identical with those in Wang (2006, 541, 546).

9. Apart from the interrogative figures on parent/adult and child talk, figures on the five genres appear in the same from question ratios in Wang (2006, 541).

Chapter 11

1. The project *Global Communication in Danish Business Organizations* is supported by a grant from the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, the University of Southern Denmark, and two multinational business corporations. The research reported in this chapter is supported by a Faculty Grant from the Arts Faculty at Hong Kong Baptist University, grant number FRG/06-07/I-36.

2. All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

3. Transcription Conventions:

   // indicates an interruption
   (0.8) indicates pauses in seconds
   [laughter] after a respondent's turn means that only the respondent is laughing
   [general laughter] means that everybody is laughing
   (xxx) part of the utterance is inaudible
   UMS: unidentified male speaker
   UFS: unidentified female speaker
   : indicates the vowel sound is long (as in ah:)
   Underlining indicates the word is pronounced with stress

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