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MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEGOTIATING CULTURAL AND
PERSONAL MEANING IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CHINESE LANGUAGE CLASSES

A Dissertation Presented

by

HAIYAN FU

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 1996

School of Education

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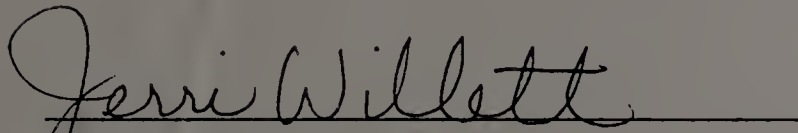
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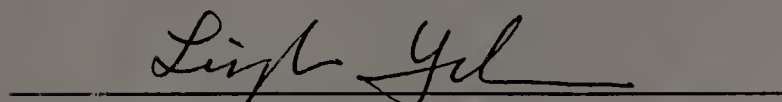
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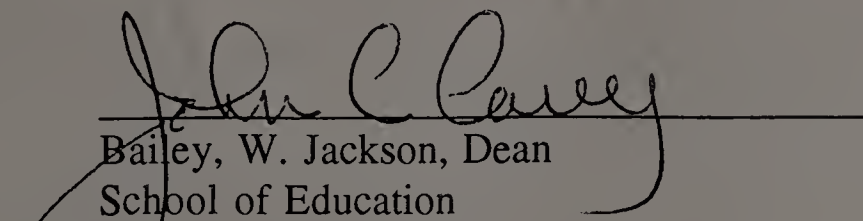
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ABSTRACT

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PERSONAL MEANING IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CHINESE LANGUAGE CLASSES

FEBRUARY 1996

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Directed by: Professor Jerri Willett

There are hidden difficulties in teaching a foreign language in a classroom context that have not been examined. Using ethnographic research methods of participant observation, field notes, audio-taping of classroom conversational exchange, and interviews with participants of the interactions, the hidden issues were identified through data analysis focusing on the discourse between teachers and students of Chinese language. While many classroom interaction studies focus on teaching methods or content that should be taught, this research study examines language classroom interactions from a sociocultural perspective. It provides a description of the cultural and social factors that influence the communicative process in classroom interactions.

The underlying assumption guiding this study is that effective foreign language teaching and learning is a communicative process that involves more than simply instruction about the formal features of language and cultural

knowledge. The purpose of this process is to develop the individual learner's communicative competence. This competence includes not only language competence and cultural competence but also the openness and readiness of the mind and the flexibility of cognition to function in cross-cultural contexts.

The study reveals that a central cause of language classroom miscommunication is the difficulty participants have in creating contextual coherence and meaning. This problem is the direct result of the participants' simplified assumptions of cultural and social stereotypes. The stereotyping of individual and power relationships in the classroom hinders the learning process and can lead to underdeveloped perspectives of cultural images and social roles of individuals. With stereotyped cultural images and the narrowly defined social roles of participants in the classroom, the teaching and learning process limits opportunities to actively develop the learners' communicative competence. The practice of teaching and learning thus may reinforce inflexibility in communicative negotiation and in dealing with the cultural, social, and individual diversities in the cross-cultural interactions outside the classroom. Therefore, cross-cultural openness --- the awareness of sociocultural and individual diversity in cross-cultural interactions --- is significant in language teaching and learning. The significance of cross-cultural openness is that it not only influences the process of language teaching and learning, but also the content of language teaching and learning.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the profession of language education, it is now widely accepted that language and culture are inseparable. Because cultural factors are very important in communication and cross-cultural understanding, cultural knowledge is an indispensable component of the learner's communicative competence. However, researchers have different views on how to define "culture," how to study the cultural factors involved in language learning and teaching, and how to learn cultural knowledge.

The present study focuses its attention on the cultural factors that influence the communicative process of language classroom interactions. The study reveals that a major problem of language classroom communication is that the participants had difficulty in creating coherence and meanings in classroom interactions. This problem was the direct result of participants' assuming sociocultural stereotypes. This study concludes that these assumptions hindered the acquisition of both language and cultural knowledge. If during the learning process itself cultural knowledge and the differences among cultures and individuals are continually stereotyped, then cultural images and the social roles of the individuals remain undeveloped. There, stereotypical perceptions

and interpretations of cultural messages are exemplified by the authoritative figures in the classroom environment. The practice of teaching and learning thus may reinforce inflexibility in communicative negotiation and in dealing with the cultural, social, and individual diversities in cross-cultural interactions outside the classroom as well. More importantly, the goal of language education is to develop the learners' communicative competence. With stereotyped cultural images and the narrowly-defined social roles of participants in the classroom, the teaching and learning process limits the opportunity to actively develop the learners' communicative competence. Not only do the lack of awareness of cultural diversity and the inefficient negotiation of social issues limit the learners' expectations in cross-cultural encounters, but they also restrict the learners' opportunities to creatively and flexibly use language in actual situations. Therefore, cross-cultural openness --- the awareness of sociocultural and individual diversity in cross-cultural interactions --- is significant in language teaching and learning. The significance of cross-cultural openness is that it not only influences the process of language teaching and learning, but also the content of language teaching and learning.

This study explores intercultural communication from a sociocultural perspective. In order to gain a more insightful view of intercultural communication, the study, at theoretical and practical levels, examines and investigates the interrelationships and interactions among culture, context, individual, and the process of communication. From a sociocultural perspective,

this study focuses on identifying, analyzing and interpreting the functions of individuals and interpersonal and intercultural relationships in cross-cultural communicative interactions in a specific setting. The specific setting in this case was a Chinese language classroom on a North American university campus.

The study begins with the premise that the language classroom situation is a concrete communicative context. One could argue that the language classroom situation is an artificially created environment because the content of learning and teaching is controlled by the teacher, the program, and the educational bureaucracy, and the limitations placed on the learners in terms of the usability of the target language, the social role of student, and the "unnatural" language use in the classroom. However, like the game of chess, an artificially-created substitute for war, the language classroom, despite its limitation is nonetheless an actually experienced event. Seen as an artificial situation, a chess game is designed to be used by the players to develop and practise the strategies that are necessary for warfare. However, it is also a real event for the players, who arrive at the game being who they are: social creatures in social relationships with cultural and social experience. Moreover, the game is also the experience of playing the game and from this perspective is one step removed from its original artificiality and is a reality in itself. Likewise, the participants in the language classroom situation arrive there being who they are. They also interact socially, and like the chess players, they play

within the constraints of the "game's" written and unwritten rules. They enrich the "game" with their social and cultural experiences and personalities.

The study was initiated under the following assumptions: 1) Language classroom interactions are cross-cultural interactions. 2) Classroom interactions are related to and constrained by the social functions, specific contexts, and human relationships of language use. 3) Each participant in cross-cultural interactions behaves and is treated as a cultural individual as well as a social individual. 4) Cross-cultural interactions in classroom settings form unique speech communities. 5) Forming a speech community is the process of seeking common ground and negotiating differences. It is the result of the joint effort of all individuals involved. All individual participants share responsibility for the success or failure of effective communication. 6) Even at the beginning stages of the foreign language teaching and learning experience, communicative interaction is necessary and inevitable.

The research questions of the study are based on a sociocultural perspective of the problem of classroom language and cultural teaching and learning. This perspective views language and culture involved in classroom not only as an issue of content of learning --- the cultural knowledge to be learned --- nor simply teaching methodologies and learning strategies --- the problem of how to teach and learn --- but rather a problem of cross-cultural communication. When one views the central problem as cross-cultural communication, classroom interaction looks very different. Thus, the study

assumes and explores **difficulties in constructing coherence and meaning** from a cross-cultural communicative perspective. The set of questions asks how do the individual participants' cultural backgrounds and their cultural views affect the cross-cultural interactions in the classroom setting? Especially, how do their cultural perspectives affect language and culture teaching and learning in the classroom? To be more specific, how do the individual participants view the language classroom context in relation to language and culture teaching and learning? How do they perceive one another and the language messages delivered in this context? What are the patterns and norms of the cross-cultural communicative interactions in the language classroom setting? What are the influential factors of the misunderstanding and misinterpretations of messages communicated in the classroom interactions?

This study investigates how individuals with differences in cultural backgrounds present their previously held cultural experiences and cultural views and why teachers and students sometimes have difficulties creating new coherence in the setting of language classes. The focus of such an investigation is not only on how the participants' own cultural perspectives influence the teaching and learning of a new language and culture, but more importantly, on how interaction among participants affects the reformation of their cultural views and their language behaviors in the classroom setting. How does this reformation, in turn, affect the experience of teaching and learning? The findings of this study will help the teachers and learners of foreign languages

to become more aware of the intercultural communication process in the classroom and to afford ways to improve it.

The major argument of this study is that language and cultural learning in the classroom occurs through cross-cultural interactions. What is often a barrier to effective communication in this setting is the participants' misinterpretation of each other's messages and the social situation itself. This misinterpretation demonstrates the difficulties that participants have in creating coherence and meanings in classroom interaction.

This argument is engendered through the analysis of cross-cultural interactions in the classroom setting and a review of the theoretical literature on cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural interactions in the classroom setting have unique characteristics: First, the language and culture to be learned are the targets of the learning. They are to be learned through discussion from the viewpoints of various individuals. These viewpoints include among others those of textbook compilers, teachers, and learners. They are also to be learned through comparison with the learners' existing knowledge of other languages and cultures. Thus, the content of learning and its various interpretations in the classroom are subject to cross-cultural views on the subject matter and involve cross-cultural understanding of all the related historical and political contexts. There is also a factor of power and social roles that plays a part in addition to the cross-cultural aspect of the language classroom.

Secondly, the language behaviors of individual participants in classroom interactions represent their own cultural views and understanding regarding the content of learning and the contexts of the learning process.

Thirdly, in classroom interactions, conventionally, teachers and learners begin with an unequal partnership. Teachers are conventionally granted authoritative status in interpreting the language and culture to be learned. Learners, on the other hand, are required to be in a subordinate position to receive instructive information and to accommodate to changes and variations imposed by the teachers.

This study was conducted in language classrooms at a Chinese language program in a North American university. The data was collected over the academic year 1991 to 1992 and during the summer of 1992. Data collection techniques included participant observation, field notes, audio-taping, ethnographic interviewing, and students' written commentary on the evaluation forms for the courses.

I held and hold many roles during the course of this research: a researcher and analyst, a faculty member at the institution, a morning class instructor of two of the classes that were observed in the afternoon, a native speaker of the Chinese language, an English as a second language speaker, a participant in all class events, and an observer of 20% to 30% of the afternoon class activities. Accordingly, I will refer to myself in various ways in this study. I am "the researcher" whose function is to observe and analyze

intercultural and social events. I am "a teacher" who participates in many of those events. And I am "I," the sum of my experiences, a person who is continually learning and experiencing even as this research is being produced. Because I hold these various roles, it is inappropriate that I refer to myself in absolute terms, thus, I refer to myself in both first and third person terms.

Data analysis identifies patterns of language behavior among participants in conversational interactions of this speech community, the characteristics of this speech community, and the interrelationships among the two. The description of the analyses consists of two parts: the analysis of the incidents and stories of misunderstanding and misinterpretations of the participants in classroom interactions and the analysis of the conversational discourse that embodies the difficulties in creating coherence and meanings.

The seven chapters that following this introduction consist of Chapter 2 a detailed description of the research project and research methods, presenting the primary research questions, and outlining the ethnographic research perspective that orients this study. Chapter 3 presents a theoretical overview of cross-cultural communication, context and communication, and cultural identity and communication, and the elaboration of the theories that guided this study. Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 present data analyses and interpretations.

The data analyses and interpretation of this study points to the "simple assumption" as an important barrier to effective communication in language classroom interactions. The "simple assumption" manifests itself as "taking for

granted as one's own cultural messages," "stereotyping other's cultures," and "fixed view of the social roles in classroom." Analyses of the "simple assumption" first focuses on the researcher's observation of some incidents of cross-cultural interactions in the classroom, secondly, textual analyses of classroom discourse. Chapter 4 reveals "the simple assumption" of sociocultural stereotypes that the participants shared and the consequences of this assumption. The discussion suggests that "the simple assumption" has played a critical part in creating difficulties in cross-cultural interactions. It begins with the participants' overgeneralized views of one's own and one another's languages and cultures. The consequence of "the simple assumption" is that it leads to unsatisfactory negotiation. The characteristics of this pattern of negotiation are: cultural messages are presumed, cultures are stereotyped and individuals are culturally stereotyped, and cultural differences are oversimplified or exaggerated.

The discussion in both Chapter 5 and 6 further shows that one consequence of "the simple assumption" is incoherence in conversational discourse in classroom interactions. Chapter 5 focuses on negotiated meaning created during conversational interactions in the classroom.

Chapter 6 presents the analyses and interpretations of the structural organization of the discourse. This chapter reveals the impact of power relations in classroom cultures on communicative interaction.

Chapter 7 summarized the study and further discussed the language classroom culture and the significance of understanding the nature of such a culture to language teaching and learning.

Chapter 8 concludes by discussing the educational implications of the study.

The Appendix contains a selection of the transcribed text used for the analyses.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH PROJECT

Research Project

Overview of the Study

The study was conducted in language classrooms at a Chinese language program in a North American university. The program offers intensive Chinese as a foreign language course at four levels from beginning to advanced during the regular semester. It also has a summer program in which first and second level courses are taught. The first and third level classes during the regular semesters and first and second level classes in summer program were observed. Both the instructors of the courses and the students were participants.

The data used was collected during the summer of 1992.¹ Data collection techniques included participant observation, field notes, audio-taping, ethnographic interviewing, and students' written commentary on the course evaluation forms.

¹. Although some data were collected, students were interviewed and those interviews were recorded during the regular semesters of 1991-1992, these were only preliminary steps of the research project. Classes were not recorded during that period. During the summer of 1992, instructors were teaching the same number of hours each day as were the principal instructors. This gave the researcher an opportunity to record their classes.

A proposal of this study was reviewed and supported by the academic committee of the University's Chinese program. Thus, permission was received to use the site and to conduct the study. Then, a one page letter with technical details, which stated the purpose of the study, and detailed its possible use, was presented and explained to each class involved. A consent form was given to each participant along with the letter. 43 people² (5 instructors and 38 students) out of 49 participants signed the slip and agreed to their conversations being recorded, studied, quoted in papers of educational research, and allowed themselves to be interviewed for the same purposes.

The roles of the researcher in this study included those of a faculty member at the institution, an instructor of the morning session of the first level Chinese, an observer of the afternoon sessions of two levels, a native speaker of Chinese, an English as a second language speaker, a participant of all class events, and an observer of class activities.

The researcher attended each class or session sitting in a corner with a tape recorder. The classes in the afternoon³ began at 12:00 am and ended at 2 pm. Because two first level and one second level sessions were held during the same time slot, if one session was attended during the day, two-hours of class

². For the summer course, 5 of 7 (71%) instructors, 28 of 28 (100%) first level students, and 10 of the 14 (71%) second level students signed the forms. The instructor who did not sign the form was the principal instructor of the second level Chinese class. Her class schedule conflicted with the researcher's, therefore her class was not observed.

³. Only those classes in the afternoon during the summer course were observed and recorded because the morning classes, taught by the principal instructors, conflicted with the researcher's schedule.

conversational interaction were recorded. If two sessions were attended, then one hour of each was recorded. Some sketchy field notes and comments were made in class, and detailed notes with general comments and analysis were made afterwards to record the researcher's thoughts. Conceptual memos were also developed to help highlight patterned norms, to narrow down the research focus, and to clarify the arguments. Sections of the recorded conversation were selected and transcribed. (The principles and methods of data section will be discussed in the section that is after the description of the context of this chapter.)

Description of Context: Setting and Participants

University Setting

The university is located in a large city of a multicultural and multilingual region of North America. The Chinese language program of the university has been offering Chinese language courses for more than twenty years. During the regular semester, Chinese language courses are divided into four levels. All the Chinese language courses are of 9-credit, one-year-long courses. Such language classes meet an hour a day, Monday through Friday. The summer program schedule is different from the regular semester. The summer course lasts twelve weeks, the class meets four hours a day, Monday

through Friday. The language taught in class is Mandarin, the common speech that is dominant in Mainland China. Most of the teaching materials are publications from P.R. China, others are from Taiwan, the U.S and Canada.

Student Population⁴

The students who participated in this study in the summer were 28 in number for first level Chinese and 14 in number for second level Chinese. They can be divided generally into two categories which can be further divided into several overlapping subcategories.

From appearance, half of the students were of Asian descent, the majority of whom were of Chinese origin, (the remainder includes Japanese and Filipino,) and the other half were of European descent. However, as far as linguistic and cultural backgrounds are concerned, the division of subcategories was much more complicated. Subcategories overlapped in more complex ways as regards previous linguistic knowledge and cross-cultural experience, and current interests and motivation to learning Chinese was.

Language Backgrounds: With regards to the Chinese language, there were 1) non-Chinese speakers, who had no prior knowledge of Chinese language at all (in first level, there were 14 students.) This groups of students included some students who looked Chinese (who often, unfortunately,

⁴. Due to the fact that only the summer classes were recorded, the description of the constitution of the student body only included the first and second level of the summer course.

intimidated other non-Chinese by their appearance in class, and were often expected to perform like native Chinese speakers by fellow students and teachers.) 2) Chinese-dialect speakers, who spoke or understood some kind of dialect (mostly Cantonese and Fujian dialects). These dialect speakers originally came either from Hong Kong, Taiwan or other Chinese-speaking regions outside of China (4 from first level, 3 from second level), or are second generation immigrants (5 from first level and 3 from second level). 3) Mandarin speakers, who spoke Mandarin with different levels of fluency and had different command⁵ of vocabulary (2, first level, 1, second level). Most of the Mandarin speakers were of Chinese family background. However, there were some Caucasian students who could speak Mandarin with varying levels of fluency prior to joining their classes (2, first level, 4, second level). 4) Chinese readers and writers who could either recognize or write some characters even though they may not speak Mandarin fluently. This included most of the Chinese dialect speakers and some of the Mandarin speakers. Some non-Chinese speakers who had some Japanese background, (either studied Japanese or lived in Japan (1 with advanced level Japanese, first level), or was of Japanese nationality (1, second level)) could write as well (as the written language of Chinese and Japanese are closely related.)

⁵. Literacy levels varied from person to person depending upon where they learned Chinese, how they learned it, for how long they learned it, how well they learned it when they learned it, and how often they were exposed to the use of the language. It is very hard to use one standard to describe their situations in general.

Most of the students were bilingual speakers of English and French. But some were native English and some were native French speakers. Some knew more than two languages.

Cross-Cultural Experience: On the first day of class, an informal survey of the students revealed that 90% of the students who were of Chinese origin had never been to mainland China, but had some connections either with Taiwan, Hong Kong, other Chinese-speaking regions in the world, or with Chinese communities in North America. More than 80% of the other students previously had some contact with Chinese. They had either visited China for a short while, lived in China for a period of time, had Chinese friends, had been involved in some kind of Chinese cultural activities before, or were interested in an area of study which is related to Chinese language or culture.

Interests and Motivation: The students were studying Chinese for various reasons. The interest and motivation of students who attended the Chinese courses can be put into three categories. 1) Course required or academically related: This included students who majored in East Asian Studies or related areas of study in the humanities such as history, philosophy, political science, education, linguistics, art, and economy; and those students who minored in East Asian Studies. Most of those who minored in East Asian studies had majored in management or business studies. It was required for them to take 18 credits of Chinese or Japanese language courses. It happened that most of these students were of Chinese origin. 2) Family background

related: This refers to the students who were science or other majors but took Chinese language courses because of ethnicity based reasons. All the students in this category came from Chinese family backgrounds. 3) Personal interest: This group of students were, for whatever personal reasons, taking Chinese because they were interested in Chinese language and culture.

The Faculty

All the faculty members observed in this study were staff instructors. They shared the responsibility of teaching with the principal instructors. In the regular semester, they collectively taught one of the five hours in the week, and in summer, they taught two of the four hours of the day.

There were five instructors who were observed in this study (actual names are not used):

Xin is a first level Chinese instructor, who is male, over 50 years old, a native Chinese speaker, and speaks English well. He was an exchange teacher of Chinese from P.R. China. He had been engaged in Chinese as a second language teaching field for more than twenty years mostly as an administrator.

Lily is a first level Chinese instructor, who is female, about 30 years old, a native Chinese speaker, and speaks English fluently and French fairly. She was also from P.R. China, and had been studying for her Ph.D in Comparative literature at a North American University for more than seven

years. She had no prior experience in teaching Chinese to other language speakers.

Mei is a first level Chinese instructor during both the regular semester and the summer program. She is female, over 50 years old, a native Chinese speaker, and speaks English but not as fluently as the other teachers. She was from Taiwan with a degree in teaching, and had been teaching Chinese in the North American region for more than ten years at both university level and primary school level.

Hong is a first level instructor in the summer program, and third level Chinese instructor in the regular semester. He is male, about 50 years old, a native Chinese speaker, speaks English at a comprehensible level, and has some knowledge of French. He was from P.R. China. He had a degree in English from China and had been receiving advanced language training and teaching Chinese in this region for more than five years.

Ben is a second level Chinese instructor, who is male, about 25 years old, a native English speaker, and speaks French as well. His Chinese was fluent. He had studied Chinese in China for a few years. He had some experience in teaching Chinese to other language speakers for two summers.

The two principal instructors involved in this study were the researcher, who taught first level Chinese and Cao, who taught the second level.

Cao is female, over 35 years old. She is a native Chinese speaker, speaks English fluently. She has been teaching Chinese as a second language to

other speakers at higher institutions for more than ten years. She is currently a Ph.D candidate in Chinese literature. Due to the fact that her class schedule overlapped with the researcher's, her class was not observed.

Another staff instructor whose second level afternoon classes were not observed due to the conflict in the schedule of class arrangement was Zhao.

Zhao is female, over 50 years old. She is a native Chinese speaker, speaks French well and English fairly. She has been teaching Chinese to children in Sunday schools and adults in continue education programs in North America areas for almost ten years. She had also been an assistant instructor for the university program for almost ten years.

Class Arrangement

During the summer session, for the elementary Chinese course, the principal instructor taught two hours with the whole class from nine to eleven every morning; then the class was divided into two sections. Each section had another two contact hours with one assistant instructor from twelve to two in the afternoon. Each week, the assistant instructors alternated sections so that each section had the same number of contact hours with each instructor. There

were altogether 12 weeks during the summer session. Each assistant instructor had approximately six weeks of contact with the class⁶.

For the intermediate class, there was only one section in the afternoon, but there were two assistant instructors. For the first six weeks, they shared the two contact hours: each taught for one hour. Later, one taught for three weeks alone, and the other assistant instructor taught the following three weeks.

Research Focus

The research questions for this study began to emerge from observations of an event that happened in a Chinese class at another summer school in 1989. One day, a class was interrupted because a student put her feet on the desk top, right under the teacher's nose. The teacher was extremely offended. The class could not continue because of discussion of the incident. The student was surprised that the teacher "made such a fuss" about an "innocent" posture. The teacher was angry because she thought the student was deliberately rude to her. The issues that the incident brings to mind is not classroom discipline, but those of the acceptance and rejection of manners and politics. These present a conflict in a foreign language classroom. The clash was caused by the student and the teacher's different perspectives on the definition of appropriate

⁶. There were occasionally some complications of the assistant instructors' schedules. For example, due to the length of the contract of Xin, he only taught for four weeks instead of the regular six weeks.

behaviors and their individual overgeneralization of acceptable behaviors in class.

What is disturbing is how exactly to describe the incident? Is the incident a cultural conflict, or a social conflict, or simply a personal conflict? What are the cultural, social, and personal factors involved in the language classroom culture? How are these factors involved? What are the relationships among these factors and what are the functions of these factors in cross-cultural interactions in a classroom setting? Especially, since as we know, culture is inseparable from language. In what ways are cultural knowledge and cultural factors included in language teaching and learning? And more importantly, how do they affect language teaching and learning?

With all this in mind, the essential research questions of this study consist of two sets of questions: The first main question is how should we view the language classroom? What is the **central** issue of classroom language and cultural teaching and learning? Is it an issue of the content of learning --- what cultural knowledge is to be learned? Or is it a matter concerning how to teach and learn --- teaching methodologies and learning strategies? Or rather, is it more of a problem of cross-cultural communication?

The second set of questions follows to ask about the individual participants' cultural perspectives on the language teaching and learning experience and that on the result of learning. That is, how do individual participants' cultural backgrounds and their cultural views affect the cross-

cultural interactions in the classroom setting? Especially, how do their cultural perspectives affect language and culture teaching and learning in the classroom? To be more specific, this study addresses the following questions: how do the individual participants view the language classroom context in relation to language and culture teaching and learning? How do they perceive one another and the language messages delivered in this context? The focusing questions of the study ask: What are the patterns and norms of the cross-cultural communicative interactions in the language classroom setting? What are the influential factors?

Research Goals

This author believes that better learning occurs through real communication. What kind of potential communicative environment is a language classroom situation presenting? Studies from sociocultural perspectives of language classroom interactions may provide some insightful knowledge. There are always good and bad examples representing effective and unsuccessful communicative interactions in real-life situations. This author further believes that it is important not to take the everyday happenings for granted but problematize them and understand the reason behind them so as to make language classrooms "open to continual re-vision (Cazden 1988: 199)."

Each social reality develops and constructs its own stories to make the world coherent (Pearce, 1989). However, most of the time, people follow their own stories instinctively and unconsciously without explicit knowledge of the basis by which they perceive the external world and the ways that they behave towards it. One of the tasks of this study is to pay special attention to how participants in this specific social reality --- the foreign language classroom --- develop and construct their own stories to make that given world coherent and to discover the explicit knowledge of this social reality that has been taken for granted.

Research Perspective and Data Analyses

Ethnographic Research Perspective

A goal of this study is to investigate why individual participants in language classes have difficulty in creating meanings and coherence in their conversational interactions in that setting. The focus is on how individual participants' cultural views affect the cultural and language teaching and learning, how their views affect the further development of their communicative competence and cultural views, and how their views are presented in and affect the communicative interactions in the classroom setting.

Ethnography is the research perspective which guides the conduct of the investigation of this study.

Ethnography is "directed toward understanding and explicating how people make sense of their lives (Moerman, 1988: X)." Ethnography studies actual language use with emphasis on the context in which the language is performed, and it studies actual language use. Contextual and individual components of language use are interrelated.

First, an ethnographic perspective views "the objective reality of social facts as an ongoing accomplishment of the concentered activities of 'individual's daily life,'" and it discovers the "formal properties of commonplace ... actions from within actual setting(s), as ongoing accomplishment of those settings (Moerman, 1988)." From this perspective, the meaning of words is always affected by context. The social organization of speech, social roles of speakers, social relationships among speakers and of speakers to social orders is always interpreted in terms of situational constraints. "Concepts such as status and role are thus not permanent qualities of speakers, instead they become abstract symbols... They can be isolated in the analyst's abstract descriptions but they are always perceived in particular contexts (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972:15)."

Secondly, ethnography takes individual speakers as "you and I live lives of talk, experience the social world as motivated talkers and listeners, as toughened creatures of social order; each with our own bursts of pleasure and pain, each with our own proud differences of personal style (Moerman,

1988:9)." The perspective of this study is sensitive to the underlined "purpose" of individual speakers that is displayed through "the apparent purpose of" the discourse among individual speakers (Moerman, 1988:9).

Therefore, individual participants of classroom interactions share knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations in intensity of contact and communication (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). Also they share their individual cultural perspectives by expressing individual differences. Cultural understanding is achieved through the joint effort of individual participants. The success and effectiveness of cross-cultural interactions depends on the degree of the acceptance and accommodation of one another's differences through a moment-by-moment negotiation among individual participants of the speech event in given contexts. The openness of the mind is crucial to cultural understanding and accommodation.

The commitment of educational ethnography is "cultural interpretation (Spindler, 1987:55)." It takes "a board look at the behavior we are observing" and "(examines) that behavior in its social context" so as to "determine" in a particular social setting "just what constitutes the cultural dimensions of behavior creates more difficulty than the also-elusive rightness of the account (Spindler, 1987:54-55)."

Ethnographic research techniques include data collection and interpretation. At a research site, an ethnographer collects data through

fieldwork and then interprets the data. Data, according to Peacock's definition (1986:65-73) "are acts or objects that the ethnographer perceives and describes." Interpretation is "the construction of substance." That is, also according to Peacock's description, ethnography "reveals the general through the particular, the abstract through the concrete." In ethnography, "the message comes not through explicit statement of generalities but as concrete portrayal (Peacock, 1986:23)." Because the data collection and interpretation is based on the researcher's perception, description, and understanding, it has been acknowledged in the field that ethnographic research "can never describe with complete objectivity, producing a set of facts that are completely true; but through its portrayals and interpretations it can communicate human truths (Peacock, 1986:24)." This "distinctive mix of objectivity and subjectivity, other knowledge and self-knowledge", is "illuminating", and they "enhance each other rather than merely compete (Peacock, 1986:87)."

With "detailed descriptive information" and "interpretation" as well as "relating that working to implicit patterns society (or one of its subgroups) hold more or less in common," ethnographic research seeks to achieve an understanding of "how particular social systems work" not a "basis" for evaluations or "judgments" of how well systems work (Wolcott, 1987, in Spindler, 1987: 52).

These are the basic principles that guide the observation and analysis of this study. From this perspective, the individual participant's language behavior

is viewed as the presentation of the attitudes, values, beliefs, and personalities of that individual constituted in social group. Group actions are examined and interpreted as interindividual interactions under social contexts. Cultural differences and cultural conflicts are understood and interpreted from individual perspectives in given contexts. The elaboration of these points can be seen through the clarification of the following concepts.

Language behavior: language behaviors refer to participants' verbal and non-verbal acts and performance in communicative interactions.

Interpretation of participants' language behaviors: In alignment with the above discussion, the collection, description, and categorization of the data, and the analyses and interpretation of the data of this study are based on the researcher's instinct, common sense, knowledge, and experience as an individual, teacher, and ethnographer. Therefore the categorization and definition of contextual phenomena such as "misunderstanding", "misinterpretation", or "inefficient communicative interaction", are based on the interpretation of the communicative events in the context of the researcher. "Misunderstanding", "misinterpretation", and "inefficient communication" refer to situations of conversational interactions in which the researcher detects or observes difficulty or incoherence in meaning negotiation, discomfort or dissatisfaction expressed or implied by the participants, or inadequate explanation or unexpected speech acts occurring in the flow of the conversational discourse. The interpretation is based upon the researcher's

general knowledge and self-reaction at the given moment of the events, and observation of the reactions of the participants in that specific context, with confirmed information from the participants afterwards.

In order to achieve an understanding of the working system of classroom interactions, some illustrative examples or particular incidents were described. These incidents can be an isolated incident that occurred in one individual participant's language behaviors, or incidents that bear resemblance to other's language behaviors.

In keeping with the nature of ethnographic research, the study is by no means intended to evaluate any individual participant's general language behaviors or character, nor is it intended to evaluate teaching methods or classroom activities. This study intended only to understand **certain particular norms** of language behaviors or **certain reoccurring phenomena** that bear cultural and social significance in meaning interpretation in language classroom cross-cultural interactions. It is **not** a **general description** of the observed Chinese classes or teaching behaviors.

Individual language behaviors and group interactions: In this study, the role and function of the individual as a participant in group interaction is emphasized more than as an individual speaker. It is more important for this study to describe who in what role said what for what effect in which context than is it to observe imply which particular person said what. Therefore the

participants are categorized as teachers and students of particular ethnic and social backgrounds rather than specified as individual speakers.

Although this study analyzes and interprets individual language behaviors, it more importantly looks at individual acts as being in the context of group interaction. It only analyzes and interprets the possible reasons that leads to the difficulty and incoherence in meaning negotiation of specific group interactions. There is no intention to blame or criticize any individual speaker or individual's language behaviors, nor is there an implied analysis or criticism of any individual participant's general personality and character. Nonetheless it does critique how we as a profession have overlooked the importance of framing the classroom as a cross-cultural encounter.

Researcher's Participant Role

Communication is difficult to study. The difficulty lies in reflexivity: one cannot study, discuss, or observe communication without engaging in communication (Pearce, 1989: XVIII). Communication in language classrooms is even more difficult to study. The difficulty there is complexity: the language and culture presented are the content of teaching and learning, they are also created as the context of teaching and learning. It is important for the ethnographer to take on the role of being both participant and observer. It is also important and necessary for the researcher to realize the limitation of

his/her cultural view so as to disassociate him/herself from that culturally prejudicial position in order to fulfill the task at hand.

As a participant, the researcher has the insider's privilege of becoming well informed, deeply involved, and correctly connected.

As an observer, the researcher also has an outsider's view of the on-going situation.

As a teacher in this context, I had firsthand knowledge and familiarity with the students that I observed in classes, because I was the principal instructor of the first level class who taught morning sessions. I had the time and opportunity to observe the same group of students when they were having the afternoon sessions taught by the other instructors. (Even for the intermediate level class, where I was not the teacher, more than half of the students were previously my students.)

This researcher's position granted me the opportunity of having easy access to class activities, direct relationships with the students and my colleagues, and some control of class arrangement such as deciding the schedule for each teacher's class and providing a syllabus for the course. However, as a teacher and a cultural individual, I am constrained by my cultural, social, personal experiences and I am subject to certain biases. (This is to be discussed further in the data analysis.)

The researcher's experience at the research site taught me a very important lesson: I began to focus my research attention after I examined my

own thinking and confronted the simple assumptions that I brought with me to the site. When David L. Altheide and John M. Johnson (1994) discuss the "Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research", they state:

The perspective nature of knowledge is an obdurate fact of ethnography. The approach of the ethnographic ethic acknowledges this, and provides the reader with an explicit statement about "where the author is coming from," which is the ethnographic version of truth in advertising, an ethical responsibility for those who elect to exercise the social science power and authorial voice (1994: 490).

In order to do so:

The ethnographic ethic calls for ethnographers to substantiate their interpretations and findings with a reflexive account of themselves and the process of their research (1994: 489).

According to them, this "reflexivity" not only recognizes "the scientific observer" as "part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent", but also "seeks to analyze the intimate relationship between the research process and the findings it produces." Moreover, it provides" a 'text' which in turn is read and interpreted by readers or audiences, who, because of their own interpretive and sense-making capacities, will derive their own unique meanings or 'readings' of the text (1994: 486)."

I decided to begin analyses of the study by examining my own thinking before I read Altheide and Johnson. However, I feel that their statement best describes the importance of a researcher's reflection of his or her own thinking in the process of research. Peacock (1986) also refers to this process as "first-person ethnographies." He asserts that using "autographical insight" that "coupled with ethnographic reporting" is one of the means "to make personal bias explicit, to introspect openly so that the researcher himself becomes part of the subject of research (1986:87)." I feel the need to do so in this analysis because my own experience had already become a critical factor in the research process and had led directly to the probing and understanding of the central issues of this research problem.

I began the study by setting the research goal as investigating the cultural patterns of foreign language classroom interaction. Subsequently, during the process of study, I found that I had some problems. I had an extremely difficult time revising the proposal for this study because I had difficulty in gathering evidence from the data that I had collected to support the preliminary hypotheses of the study. Nor could I form convincing arguments based on the data. Finally, I realized that the cause of this had rested in my own bias. I had two fatal problems: First, during the participant observation, my rational thinking and perspective as an ethnographic researcher had been constantly blocked by and interfered with my preferences and enthusiasm as a teacher. Secondly, I had brought into the research site a simple assumption.

These issues will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Realizing these problems has proven to be crucial to this study. It served as the turning point to the continuation of this research in both theory and in practice; more importantly, it revealed the central theoretical argument that guides and connects the analysis of this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

One purpose of this study is to examine how an intercultural group creates coherence in a classroom setting. How individual participants' views are presented, interpreted, and developed in the classroom. The principal theories that guide the technical analysis are derived from Hymes' theory on models of the interaction of language and social life (1967), Moerman on conversational analysis and ethnographic practice (1988), and Bloome and Willett on the micropolitics of classroom interaction (1991). First, this study analyzed common, reoccurring phenomena to investigate the patterns and norms of behaving and thinking. Then, this study performed a sequential analysis of the organization of the conversational discourses and a semantic analysis of the interactional conversation that the researcher collected through observation of classroom events to show how language behaviors are performed in accordance with the patterned thinking. Before presentation of the analysis, some concepts need first to be clarified. First, is the term "speech event." In order to analyze

social interactional speech descriptively, Hymes (1967) employs the term "speech event" to define certain discourses in functional language use. To Hymes, the term "speech event" is "restricted to activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech. An event may consist of a single speech act, but will often comprise several (Hymes, 1967:56)." In the sequential analysis of the conversation of this study, Hymes' term "speech event" is borrowed to refer to an intended unit of an activity in the language teaching and learning process in class. Secondly, the sequential analysis of the organization of the interactional discourse of this study focuses on the topic change, that is, why one speech event ends and switches to another. According to Moerman, every part of conversational interaction is "culturally---as well as socially, sequentially, and linguistically---constituted (1988:28)." However, every part of conversational interaction is also "a product of all its immediate circumstances (1988:22)." In this view, the emphasis of the analysis is on the individual's cultural views and how they work in the context of cross-cultural interactions in the classroom and how that subsequently affects language and cultural learning and teaching process. Thirdly, due to the nature of the ethnographic study, the discourse analysis of this study is descriptive and interpretive. It focuses on the interpretation of the "meaning potentials" of the conversational interactions. "Meaning potentials" here refer to the interpretive descriptions of "a level of rule-governed" language behavior "which goes beyond the linguists' grammar to relate social and

linguistic constrains on speech (Gumperz, 1972:vii)," and the interpretations of the effects of or reactions to that behavior which goes beyond the apparent purpose of the speaker.

Data were selected by the researcher if they were considered representative as cultural incidents or illustrative of phenomenon that occurred frequently or were valued by participants. The selection of items for transcription favored these discourses which displayed interactional conversational negotiation among the participants. The transcripts of each individual instructor's classes were studied to 1) identify the speech events occurring during the classroom interactions, 2) examine the patterns and norms of the language behaviors of each instructor with their students, and 3) compare the patterns and norms of each instructor's language behaviors with one another to identify the common traits.

The data analysis focuses on identifying patterns of language behavior among participants in conversational interactions of this speech community, the characteristics of this speech community, and the interrelationships between the two. The emphasis is on discovering common phenomena and analyzing the patterns of language behavior that reflect the phenomena and the patterned thinking behind them.

It is necessary to emphasize once more that this study focuses on the communicative aspect of language classroom interactions from a sociocultural perspective. In order to do so, some patterned language behaviors, especially

the ones that have been taken for granted, are scrutinized and problematized. It is not a general evaluation of individual instructors' overall performance in class nor a criticism of individual instructors' language behaviors.

This study will begin with an analysis of students' interactions with their teachers but will highlight the teachers' role and behaviors in classroom. The focus is not only on the teachers' role as educator but also on their role as individual communicators in the classroom setting. Precisely because this crucial aspect of the teachers' role as a communicator in classroom has historically been under-emphasized. Thus, this study has chosen it as a focal point.

The first part is the analysis of patterned phenomena employing "simple assumptions" in the classroom interactions. The "simple assumptions" include the assumption of cultural stereotypes, social roles, and language behaviors in classroom setting. This part of the analysis begins with the researcher's introspection of her own way of thinking in the research observation. It is followed by the observed incidents relating to the students and finally, the similar stories about the teachers.

The data analyses in this section consists of two parts: the first part which is the main content of Chapter 4, is an analysis of some incidents noticed during the participant observation and stories obtained during the interviews. This part of the analysis presents the shared assumptions of all participants that are responsible for the difficulty of cultural understanding.

Analysis of the second part, Chapter 5, reveals that during classroom interaction, the teachers' simple assumptions reinforced similar simple assumptions on the part of the learners. These simple assumptions were presented in the teachers' language behaviors. Further analysis of the data indicates that the patterns of applying cultural and social overgeneralization in the cross-cultural interactions in the classroom led to prioritizing cultural information, stereotyping individual participants, cultural information, and social roles of the participants, and led ultimately to oversimplifying or exaggerating cultural differences. The consequence and possible solutions will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The analyses of the conversational discourse is performed line by line through the transcripts in order to 1) see when and how the interaction happened; 2) understand how and to what the teachers responded in the students' utterances or interactions; 3) trace the consequences of the above and interpret the causes. The emphasis of the analysis is on the roles of the participants as well as on the power relationships presented in the conversational interaction and the patterns of language behaviors that characterize this kind of specific language classroom interaction. In other words, the data are analyzed from differing perspectives to reveal the multilateral implications of the classroom interactions. First, an analysis of the conversational texts examines the organization, structures, and patterns of as well as the roles of the participants in the interactions. Secondly, an analysis

and interpretation of the messages conveyed in the conversational interactions investigate the meaning negotiated and the outcomes of the communication. Thirdly, an analysis of the factors that affected meaning-creation reveals the social, cultural, political, and historical aspects of the conversational interactions.

Interpretations of Data Analyses

Participants in this intercultural interaction in language classes had assumptions about the context. And often times these assumptions were based on the overgeneralization or oversimplification of the prior cultural knowledge or experience of these participants and their social relationships in the specific context of language classroom interactions. These overgeneralized or oversimplified views often handicapped the teaching and learning of the language and cultural knowledge, the teaching and learning process, as well as the development of cultural understanding. For example, the study will show that when the students commented on their teachers, they often described who was more typically Chinese. And their definitions of "typically Chinese" depended on their prior experience of dealing with particular Chinese persons or people, or "Chinese" as depicted by popular culture. If the Chinese person they encountered in class did not fit their first image of the typical Chinese, they often denied the authenticity of that person's being truly "Chinese." The

same phenomenon often occurred in the teachers' views of the students. Most of the teachers expected a student with a particular cultural identity to behave in a certain manner.

The analysis of the conversational discourse shows that language behaviors are influenced by, and thus reflect the patterned thinking found in the analysis of the phenomena in class. For example, sometimes, the teachers ineffectively explained language and cultural information or overlooked some linguistic or cultural information or failed to recognize the students' feedback. The data analysis shows that it is not the teachers' lack of cultural or linguistic knowledge that caused the problem, but it was because they either overgeneralized the students' cultures, cultural backgrounds, took for granted their own cultures, cultural knowledge, or stereotyped the participants' social roles in the classroom. The problem was more one of a communicative nature rather than one of inadequate knowledge or usage of incorrect teaching strategies.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEORY OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

In order to explore language classroom interaction as cross-cultural communicative interaction, the author believes that, first of all, we need to be clear about the theoretical concepts of "culture" and "communication" in terms of language teaching and learning, and the relationships among language and cultural messages, communicative process, and classroom language teaching and learning interaction.

Current studies in the field of language teaching and learning have emphasized two important aspects: the significance and relation of culture to language learning (Berns 1990; Byram & Esarte-Sarries 1991; Goodenough 1981; Kramsch & de Bot & Ginsberg 1991) and the relationship between classroom interaction and language learning (Cazden 1988; Allwright & Bailey 1991; Chaudron 1988; Cohen 1990; Wright 1987). Both topic areas of these studies are related to the development of language learners' communicative competence. Culture is inseparable from language. Cultural knowledge and understanding are essential parts of communicative competence. For most learners, the language classroom provides the most popular and practical access to and context for communicating in a foreign language. The patterns of

language used in second and foreign language classroom provide not only the content of teaching and learning but also create the context of teaching and learning, thus the language used in the classroom directly affects the development of learners' communicative competence.

This study argues that discussions of cultural learning and language classroom discourse are not separate issues. Language classroom discourse itself should also be viewed as the outcome of cross-cultural interaction in the classroom setting. This argument is not based on the need to study classroom discourse from different perspectives but on the need to understand the cross-cultural nature of the foreign-language classroom practice.

Some researchers point out that so far, most of the studies of culture are from a single cultural perspective, and culture is mostly viewed as factual knowledge (Zhang & Bi, 1991). They suggest that culture needs to be studied comparatively, and that cultural elements should not be treated simply as knowledge to be learned. They argue that the misunderstanding and conflict which occur in cross-cultural communication are caused by the cultural differences in terms of [the implication of] certain phrases, [the symbolization of] certain objects, or [the interpretation of] certain behaviors and phenomena. Some cultural differences cause cross-cultural misunderstanding, others do not. They call these causal factors "communicative cultural factors," and those which are not, "knowledge cultural factors." According to them, the attention of researchers should be on those cultural factors which directly influence

communication and provoke [cross-cultural] misunderstanding and conflict. They argue that the study of these cultural factors must be based on the insights of the native culture combined with contrastive studies of the target culture. According to Zhang and Bi, first, without comparative study, cultural difference would be hard to find. As a result, there would be no way to reveal the cultural factors that directly affect communication. Secondly, finding communicative cultural factors is a very difficult task. The difficulty exists not only in the task of digging up and selecting the great quantity of differences within real communication, but more importantly, it is in the fact that "those factors are special cultural factors which are hidden in the language system but related to language use and comprehension which reflect values, morals, customs, psychologies, and way of thinking of a nation (Lu: Outlines of Development of Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language) (Quoted by Zhang & Bi, 1991)."⁷

This author agrees with Zhang and Bi to the extent that it is appropriate that the study of culture be in comparative discourse and such studies should not view culture statically. However, she thinks the dynamic drive of cultural factors in cross-cultural communication is generated from the communication process itself and the social relationships of the participants involved in that communicative process. With regards to culture learning and teaching, first, it

⁷ Zhang & Bi (1991: 113-123) (Translated and generalized by the author from Chinese, and the words in the [] are added by the author.)

is not appropriate to discuss cultural differences which affect cross-cultural communication without taking into consideration the specific historical and political contexts of communication. Different cultures may attach different values to the implication of certain phrases, the symbolization of certain objects, and the interpretation of certain behaviors and phenomena. It is true that these phrases, objects, behaviors, and phenomena bear more exotic implications which create difficulties for the people from other cultures in understanding them in the same way as the natives do, therefore, these phenomena can provoke cultural misunderstanding and conflicts. Nevertheless, these phenomena themselves are not the direct causes of the cultural misunderstanding and conflicts. Rather, the individual participants in presentation, perception, and interpretation of the meanings of these or other phenomena and the individuals interpretation of the contexts in which these phenomena are presented and perceived share the responsibility for causing misunderstanding and conflicts in cross-cultural communication. This may be the key to understand misunderstanding and conflicts in cross-cultural communication since in any society individuals both share and deviate from acceptable ways of presenting, perceiving, and interpreting the meanings of these or other phenomena and contexts. The results of the studies of the linguistic and cultural elements that are potentially provocative to other language speakers will certainly equip language learners with useful cultural knowledge. But commanding cultural knowledge alone may not immunize

language learners from cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. In order to explore the fundamental reasons that account for these subtle problems in cross-cultural encounters, we need to study the process and the specific outcomes of cross-cultural interaction in specific contexts from a sociocultural perspective. It is an important step towards revealing the nature of such interactions as well as the causes of misunderstanding and conflict in cross-cultural communication.

Secondly, this author also thinks that for effective communication, it is not appropriate to talk about cultural differences in general without taking into account individual differences and perspectives in communicative interactions. Each individual has his/her own social and cultural identities. The language behaviors of individuals in cross-cultural interactions are tantamount to the presentation of his/her linguistic, cultural, and social personalities (Singer 1987; Kramsch 1993).⁸ This is what makes the interpretation of certain language phenomena and behaviors in cross-cultural interaction complex. Contextual and individual issues are interrelated. Thus how to view these issues is more closely related to the views of the nature of communication, and to the views of how communicative competence is defined. It is also closely connected to the views of how the learners' communicative competence is developed. In other words, it is related to the goal of language education and how to achieve its goals.

⁸ The phrase "linguistic and cultural personality" comes from the notes that the author took of Kramsch's speech when attending her lecture on March 22, 1993 at McGill University. Claire Kramsch's speech was titled "Redrawing the Boundaries of Foreign language Studies --- Within the Context of 'Contemporary German Studies.'"

The Basic Theoretical Concepts

This study takes a sociocultural perspective on communication, the communicative process, and communicative competence to look at meaning-negotiation in classroom settings.

The language teaching profession commonly agrees that the purpose of language learning is to develop the learners' communicative competence, and that cultural learning is inseparable from language learning. In order to see the inter connection among communication, culture, language, and learning, I would like to clarify the basic concepts that guided this study.

Researchers agree that communication is central to the human condition (Pearce, 1989; Kim, 1988; Singer, 1987). Nevertheless, commentators have different opinions on how communication works and use different approaches to study how communication works. A common assumption in this research, however, is that communication is a dynamic process that is entangled with human and social conditions. The following sections outline some basic concepts that lay the foundation for examining the sources of this dynamic drive of the communication process.

Communication and Culture

When discussing language and language acquisition, we must first make clear the nature of language. From the sociolinguistic perspective, as Loveday (1982) has stated: language is "a process of meaning." This means that language is a meaning-making process because of its communicative nature. Communication has been traditionally defined as a series of ways of expressing the activities of individual's internal world *vis-a-vis* the external world. In other words, communication is how an individual expresses his/her own beliefs, feelings, and attitudes and how an individual describes the events and objects he/she perceives. This earlier concept has been challenged by more recent notions. Communication is now being viewed as not just "being about something else, it is constitutive of the experience itself (Pearce, 1989: 18)." The argument is that perceiving the events and objects that constitute the social world is not objective but subjective. What individuals believe that they have perceived in the external world and how they behold that world depends more on individuals' social views rather than the existence of the external world itself. In Pearce's words: "They are the products of social action whose continued existence depends on their reconstruction in patterns of communication (1989: 19)." Pearce (1989) poses a "communication perspective" whose crucial points are, first, communication is not viewed as "a subset of human activity" but "all forms of human activity". Secondly, the

communicative process is seen as "a recurring, reflexive process in the creation and maintenance of social realities." Human beings' physical and psychological development and their social needs condition the dynamicity of the communicative process. And the complexity of this communicative process is that individual human beings' actions are confined to "the contexts of their culture, personal relationships, social roles, and autobiographies." According to Pearce, the way communication works is grounded in three universal aspects of the human condition: "coherence" --- personal interpretation of environment and experience; "coordination" --- interaction among participants of a given event; and "mystery" ---experience of what is beyond the immediate, present moment. Pearce argues that although everyone achieves coherence, coordination, and mystery, not everyone achieves it in the same way (Pearce, 1989:3-31).

However, Pearce (1989) also shares with other authors the view that there are important differences among forms of communication. One difference is categorized as cultural difference. It is recognized that cultures vary in world views and beliefs, social values and attitudes, behavioral norms and other assumptions, as well as in their communication patterns (Pearce, 1989; Kim, 1988; Goodenough, 1981; Kramsch & de Bot & Ginsberg, 1991; Singer, 1987; Lakoff, 1990). The basis of culture is not "shared knowledge", but "shared rules of interpretation"; not "common substantive information, already acquired, but 'common sense' knowledge of what can count as reasonable, factual,

related, and the like (Garfinkel, 1967, in Gumperz & Hymes, 1972:304)."

However, here "culture" is another term that bears controversial conceptual definitions. Researchers don't always agree. One of the important issues concerning the definition of culture is where and how to draw the lines of cultural boundaries. Conventionally, it has been accepted that "each society had a culture of its own." Thus, culture has been studied in the context of societies that have "peculiar linguistic and cultural tradition(s) (Goodenough, 1981:48-49; Lakoff, 1990)." In current studies, some researchers prefer to define "culture" within social groups (Pearce, 1989) or even from the perspective of individuality (Singer, 1987). Although the emphasis is not the same in both cases (namely, an emphasis on the individual or an emphasis on the group), still, both agree that communication includes the relationship building that occurs between individuals and groups. Their theories and analyses of the inter social groups and inter individuals connections and differences orient this author to view the diversities and variations of actual language use in cross-cultural interactions.

Culture and communication have a dynamically intertwined and inseparable relationship. Because individuals of a given culture learn and develop their cultural patterns through social interactions, culture "conditions" individuals to certain patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Kim, 1988: 46). And it is through ways of communication that socialization occurs.

Aligned with the thoughts in the above discussion, this study recognizes that language teaching and learning in classrooms is cross-cultural communicative interaction, because each participant comes to this situation with his/her cultural experience and perspective to teach and learn through communicative socialization.

Contexts and Communication

Social communication activities occur in many different contexts. Features of the context in which social communicative activities take place influence communicative behaviors (Cazden, 1988). Context refers not simply to the physical setting or people, it is defined as the "ongoing interaction between specified agents in a particular site, which is constituted by what people are doing and where and when they are doing it (Erickson & Schultz, 1977:6)."

Both social and cultural attributes simultaneously influence the creation of meaning. Social attributes of the context influence meaning-creation. Communicative interactions are related and constrained as well as complicated by the specific setting and the human relationships of the social groups involved. Meaning is created uniquely in each specific context. The specific context includes the roles which the participants choose to play in that social situation. The social position and the social role of a participant will not only

constrain his/her language behaviors such as the choice of the language to use and ways of performing it, but also the way other participants perceive and interpret the meaning of that individual's language behaviors. Cultural attributes of context influence meaning creation. In a given context and a given moment of the context, meaning is created and interpreted through the presentation, exchange, and negotiation of the cultural values and personal attitudes of all the participants involved in the interaction.

Thus, context and language behavior have some interesting relationships. On the one hand, context constrains language behaviors. As Cazden (1988) says: Context is "the situation antecedent to the moment of speaking;" it is the rules for speaking in "the context to which the speaker's utterances must be appropriate." On the other hand, language behaviors redefine context. Because individual participants are active creators of new contexts. Through their language behaviors, the individual participants are in the constant effort to modify, repair, or change the content of interactions, and thus "redefine the situation itself in the process of performing it. (Erickson, 1975: 484, from Cazden 1988: 198)."

As meaning is created and negotiated through the joint effort of all the participants in communicative interaction, relationships among all participants, relationships between immediate purposes of on-going interactions and historical backgrounds, and decisions made to fulfill specific purposes are critical to meaning creation. These above mentioned factors are subject to

power relationships which represent the political side of communicative interactions. Analyzing the power relations and power agendas in classroom interactions will help us to gain insight into the political nature of such interactions: the "structural," "substantive," and "historical" aspects of the interactions (Bloome & Willett, 1991: 207; in Blase, 1991).

Therefore, this study assumes that classroom interactions are related to and constrained by the social functions, the specific contexts, and human relationships of language use. Cross-cultural interactions in classroom settings form unique speech communities. Forming a speech community is the process of seeking common ground and negotiating differences. It is the result of the joint effort of all individuals involved. All individual participants share responsibility for the success or failure of effective communication. Even at the beginning stages of the foreign language teaching and learning experience, communicative interaction is necessary and inevitable.

Individual and Communication

Face-to-face social communicative activities are achieved through contact and interaction between individuals. Individuals are cultural and social beings. The individual's language behaviors bear indications of his/her cultural, social, and individual identities and personalities (Singer, 1987, Kramsch,

1993).⁹ In communicative interaction, each individual participant is culturally presented, socially bonded, and individually unique. Let me elaborate on these key ideas in the following paragraphs.

Individuals are **cultural beings**. Their patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving are underdetermined by their experience in life. On the one hand, in a given cultural community, individuals are nurtured by the linguistic and cultural traditions of that community. Individuals learn and develop certain patterned ways of thinking and behaving to meet the distinctive standards held by and characterizing that community (Goodenough, 1981; Pearce, 1989; Kim, 1988). This is how a given cultural community passes its culture from one generation to another, and this is also why individuals who grow up in the same cultural community share a certain "common sense" or set of assumptions. On the other hand, in a given cultural environment, individuals' cultural perspectives may not all be the same, depending upon the variations in cultural experiences in life. This is why one can not simply predict a given individual's thoughts, behaviors, and feelings from his/her culture.

Individuals are **social beings**. An individual becomes an individual through social interaction. Through social interactions, the individual defines oneself from "other in group members" and "other out group members." Individualization and socialization is a reciprocal process. First, individuals live

⁹ See footnote 8, page 44.

under social conditions in social systems. Social interaction is vital to the survival of human beings' existence in the external world. It is through socialization that the individual develops language and verbal behaviors and inner thought. As Vygotsky suggests, the development of an individualized inner speech originates from "the originally communicative speech-for-others (Kozulin, 1985)." Socialization provides needs and chances for communication in language. Therefore, socialization and communication are fundamental in developing the individual's language and inner thought. Moreover, according to Vygotsky, the individual's language and reasoning is the realization of his/her cultural forms (Kozulin, 1985). Thus, socialization provides the chance and means for individual human beings to construct their inner selves. Secondly, in social interactions, people act and react to one another. Social interactions are subject to cultural conventions and also social rules. Acceptance and recognition from and of others are very important to the individual's communicative behavior. Through communicative activities, individuals acquire "membership in the social groups on which they depend and find a place in society (Kim, 1988: 46)." Communication therefore becomes a bonding process of individuals in socialization (Kim, 1988; Singer, 1987).

Individuals are **human beings**. Human beings are constructed through open communication systems (Kim, 1988). For physical growth, human beings need to adjust and adapt themselves to environmental changes. For cognitive maturity, individual human beings need to perceive and accept that which is

unknown so as to develop and enrich their internal world to cope with the external world. The cultural and social environment in which individual human beings grow up conditions human beings' internal growth. This openness of human creatures to social and cultural conditions has important implications in regard to the cultural and social conditions which cause human beings' internal change. First, as the social and cultural conditions play an important role in shaping human beings' intraindividual growth, the differences in the conditions of social interaction and the experience of social interaction that each individual human being undergoes will foster the unique individuality of each human being. Secondly, as the social and cultural conditions are ever changing, changes in perceptions, attitudes, values, and identities on the part of individual human beings are inevitable (Kim, 1988). In this sense, the individual's perception and interpretation of the world are not (or potentially should not be) forever fixed but ever changing. Thus, in terms of internal conditions, each person is individually unique.

Communicative interactions, especially cross-cultural interactions among individuals, are complicated by the above-mentioned characteristics of individual communicators. The interactive process is driven dynamically by the battle to balance the two forces. One force derives from the differences. Another force derives from the will and effort to overcome the differences so as to achieve the goal of communication.

In cross-cultural communication, at one level, significant and formidable barriers to cross-cultural understanding and remarkable differences in language use are expected. Culturally, because every culture develops a set of "overarching strategies for communication," people believe that "the more two cultures are isolated from each other by time, space, or politics, the more different and exotic the rhetorical traditions of each may be to the other (Lakoff, 1990:165, 216)." Socially, as Singer points out, each individual in this world is a member of a unique collection of perceptual and identity groups. "No two humans share only and exactly the same group memberships, or exactly the same ranking of the importance, to themselves, of the group membership they do share (1987:2)." Therefore, even within one culture, different individuals share memberships with various social groups. As a result, there are not only cultural differences but also social group differences and individual differences. Each person is individually unique in terms of cognitive development and psychological status, because each individual perceives the social realities and constructed logic of the world in a unique way and each individual has different social and cultural experience. Personal decisions on choice of modes and patterns of communication, and individual judgments on context differ a great deal.

Still, at another level, seeking common ground in order to overcome barriers is the common-sense knowledge and reasoning that underlines the human communicative activities. Intercultural communication is the same. As

Singer has said: "however wide the differences between cultures may be, [intercultural communication] is not impossible (1987:9)." The success of intercultural communication depends not only on the degree of difference between the cultures concerned but also the willingness to negotiate as well as the openness to understand that differences exist. According to Singer's explanation, "no culture is wholly isolated, self-contained, and unique. There are important resemblances between all known cultures-resemblances that stem in part from diffusion (itself an evidence of successful intercultural communication) and in part from the fact that all cultures are built around biological, psychological, and social characteristics common to all mankind (1987:9)." Cultural resemblances enable individuals to seek common ground while preserving difference in cross-cultural communication. More importantly, individuals are social beings. The experience of socialization has taught individuals how to obey social rules. In terms of communication, it is among the basic instincts and tendencies for the individual to trust, to believe, and to avoid conflicts. It is common-sense knowledge that meeting each other on common ground is the necessary social basis for achieving the goal of communication (Wardhaugh, 1985). This common-sense knowledge and reasoning enables the individual to exercise certain powers of judgement and constantly to make decisions according to the situation. Moreover, human beings are open communicative systems, they are not helplessly stuck with what they have already inherited from their culture. Individuals can use their

open minds to work out the needed visions of the variables in life and adjust themselves to varied possibilities. This is the way that the individuals release themselves from cultural controls (Singer, 1987; Pearce, 1988).

Thus, this study emphasizes that each participant in cross-cultural interactions behaves and is treated as a cultural individual as well as a social individual. Thus, the individual participant should be perceived and accepted by one another as a cultural and social individual in inter-cultural communication.

Communicative Competence

Many theoretical papers define and assess communicative competence. The debate has focused on how to define communicative competence and what the components of this competence are. The authors of such works include Campbell and Wales, 1970; Hymes, 1972, 1982; Savignon, 1972, 1983; Widdowson, 1978; Canal and Swain, 1980; Johnson, 1982; and later works of Omaggio, 1986; and Bachman, 1988, 1990. (Omaggio, 1986; Bachman and Savignon, 1986; Bachman, 1988; Raffaldini, 1988). A critical point stressed in this debate is the sociocultural significance of actual use. Another important aspect of this debate is the negotiative nature of the communicative competence.

Chomsky (1965) proposed the theory of transformational grammar in which he defines the language competence and performance. According to

Chomsky, language competence refers to grammatical competence. This competence is a human individual's innate, inner, and abstract capacity which is independent of social and cultural factors (Loveday, 1982:60). Hymes (1971) suggested that Chomsky's definition of language competence is incomplete. Hymes proposes the concept of the communicative competence. Hymes's communicative competence included not only grammatical competence but more importantly, sociolinguistic competence that is functional linguistic knowledge --- the appropriate use of the language in social contexts (Loveday, 1982:60-65).

Competence is the capacity of an individual. Nevertheless, communicative competence has more of an interindividual nature. On the one hand, as Kim (1988) suggests from his studies of cultural adaptation, communicative competence is an "internal capacity based on the acquired communicative patterns of an individual (1988:49)." It includes not only language capacity and cultural knowledge and understanding, but also the psychological readiness and cognitive flexibility to cope with unknown situations. On the other hand, communicative competence is interindividual because in actual language use, meaning is generated through negotiation of the interlocutors from the given context in a specific setting. Communicative behaviors are interactive behaviors. The success of communicative interactions depend on the cooperation of all the negotiative parties, thus, communicative competence is relative.

Communicative interactions are also of a dynamic nature. First, communicative interaction is a meaning-creating process. Meaning negotiation not only involves all participants of the interaction but also takes place in specific contexts and settings. The context changes moment by moment due to the negotiation of the participants (Savignon, 1972, 1983; from Omaggio, 1986). Thus, the nature of communicative competence is an action which requires cooperation. Secondly, meaning creation is a dynamic process. Because common understanding is never simply recognition of shared contents or rules, but it is always open-ended. Variation in performance is brought about in any given case because participants bring it about as their "artful (if unconscious) accomplishment (Garfinkle, 1967; in Gumperz & Hymes, 1972:304)." The outcome of such a communicative activity is subject to individuals' reorganization and redefinition of the external world in its relevant aspects, and is open to individuals' active creation of the meaning of those activities.

Individuals' communicative competence is also open-ended. This openness first comes from the openness of the external world that individuals live in and communicate with --- the relative, dynamic, and creative nature of communicative socialization. This openness also comes from the internal capacity of individuals. Vygotsky develops a theory of higher forms of human psychological activity. In his theory, Vygotsky takes into account individual differences and emphasizes interindividual active socialization in the open

system of the everyday world (Lantolf & Frawley, 1988:188-190). This openness also comes from the needs of individuals' internal adjustment to the nature of the external world. Kim's (1988) research on how the individual works as an open system which interacts with and adapts to a given environment through communication offers reference for and precedes a theoretical framework for examining intraindividual changes in the language educational process. According to Kim, all individuals in a changing and changed cultural environment share a common adaptation experience (1988:6). This adaptive transformation takes place through an internal dynamic stress-adaptation-growth pattern. The dynamic of this stress-adaptation-growth process comes from individuals' cyclic, constant, and continual efforts to "strive to adjust and readjust to changes, challenges, and irritations in an environment (Kim 1988: 45)." Through communicative interaction, individuals develop their internal system to adjust to the external world so as to function in a given environment. This adjustment leads to a change in individual's thought, understanding, and attitude. And the change is the guide to appropriate actions that an individual is to take in specific social encounters in the given environment (Kim 1988).

As far as language-learning is concerned, Allwright and Bailey (1991) employ the term "receptivity" to refer to "openness" --- a state of mind that is crucial in coping with learning other cultures and other ways of life. Their emphasis of this openness is also on the learner. Their point is that in the

process of "becoming a speaker of another language", one needs to be open to all kinds of different experience that "promote" learning (1991: 157, 158). This emphasis points out a direction for the language learners. However, it does not imply that other participants' openness, who are involved in language teaching and learning process, is not crucial. This point is to be discussed further in the following section.

Language Classroom Teaching and Learning

Studies of language classroom teaching and learning have focused on two main aspects: 1) the content of teaching and learning, 2) the teaching and learning process. As far as the content of teaching and learning is concerned, present studies on language teaching and learning overwhelmingly agree upon the importance of cultural knowledge to language learning (Birckbichler, 1989; De Bot & Ginsberg & Kramsch, 1991), and the importance of the developing the sociolinguistic competence in learners (Omaggio, 1986). Many current studies of the language teaching and learning process put the emphasis on teaching methodologies and learning strategies (Cohen, 1990). Some studies, however, have begun to re-examine classroom interactions and teacher-learner relations (Wright, 1987; Chaudron, 1988; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Bloome & Willett, 1992).

To many people, to emphasize the importance of cultural knowledge to language learning means to value the background cultural knowledge in understanding the actual use of a foreign language in communication. This aspect of the studies in terms of language teaching and learning advocated the study of cultural phenomena and social conventions in relation to everyday language use, and encouraged the use of authentic materials. The focus has been on the learners, on what learners should know and study to have the "shared knowledge" in communicating with the native speakers of target language, and what teachers should provide to facilitate this learning. In the context of language teaching and learning, what has not been emphasized enough in terms of cultural elements in language teaching and learning is the importance of teachers' having "shared knowledge" of learners' cultural backgrounds in order to communicate with the learners, and the importance of defining the language classroom culture so the teacher and learner could obtain this "shared cultural knowledge" to achieve better understanding and successful communication in teaching and learning process, especially when both are from separate cultures.

This emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of language teaching and learning challenges the conventional practice of language teaching and learning in several ways. First, it is recognized that "teaching style is a complex amalgam of belief, attitude, strategy, technique, motivation, personality, and control (Wright, 1987: 68)," "teacher training and the

educational system in which teachers conduct their educational practice influence teachers' ideas about teacher and learner roles (Wright, 1987: 76)." In order to achieve the goal of language education, language educators must keep pace with current theoretical development. This means not only revolutionizing teaching strategies but also changing attitudes and beliefs. Secondly, they must become aware of the fact that classroom interaction as group participant activities are involved with relative social positions (Wright, 1987; Bloome & Willett, 1992). However, power relationships affecting communicative interactions in the language classroom have been taken for granted. If the goal of the language education changes, the social functions of participants need to be adjusted to it as well. And thus, the fixed assumptions of the participants' roles need to be redefined and thus identified.

This study emphasizes that awareness of cultural differences and individual diversities and openness of mind of all participants to such differences and diversities is important to the communicative competence that language education is pursuing to advocate and develop. This cultural awareness and openness is the prerequisite to better cultural understanding, appropriate language use, and effective language and cultural teaching and learning. Guided by the theories reviewed here, this study examines the consequences of "not being open" of the participants during interactions in Chinese foreign language classrooms.

The Elaboration of the Theory

The above discussion of "culture", "communication", and "development of communicative competence" leads to a sociocultural perspective of the teaching and learning process in language classroom. This shift of focus recognizes classroom interactions as cross-cultural interactions. And classroom cross-cultural interactions are communicative interactions. The classroom is a specific context for dynamic communication which is subject to interindividual relationships. This study also recognizes that individuals in cross-cultural interactions are individuals with different cultural backgrounds. From this theoretical perspective, this section shows that the classroom can be used to bring about intraindividual changes if classroom communicative activities can bring about the recognition, negotiation, and acceptance of differences among individuals instead of culturally stereotyping individuals. The success of the cross-cultural interactions in classrooms relies not only on the learners' awareness of, openness to, and accommodation to differences but also that of the teachers.

Classroom Interactions as Cross-Cultural Interactions

To define language classroom interactions as "cross-cultural interactions" derived from the fact that at the university level, a large number of foreign-language courses are taught by native speakers of the language concerned, and learners come to language class with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds and experiences. The classroom is generally the first real life-situation for most students of Chinese to engage in conversational interactions in Chinese with native Chinese speakers. Teaching Chinese is also one of the situations in which a native Chinese speaker must interact with non-native speakers of Chinese. As was discussed in earlier section, it is now widely understood that learning a language is inseparable from learning the culture of the language concerned. Cultural understanding is vital to language use not only because language is a component of culture, but also because a language "embodies the attitudes and values of its speakers (Loveday, 1982: 46)." In this sense, culture is not only the knowledge and behaviors of the content of learning, but also the knowledge and behaviors that the individuals involved in learning bring about and perform (Kramsch, 1991). From this sociocultural perspective, the language teaching and learning process is deeply steeped in cross-cultural interactions. Language behaviors that teachers and students perform in class present their cultural, social, and personal values and attitudes. Thus, the classroom situation is where two or more cultures encounter

each other; it is a specific setting for cross-cultural interaction. Therefore, classroom interactive conversation between teacher and student is well served to be viewed as the outcome of cross-cultural communicative interactions. Moreover, the study of foreign language classroom interaction as cross-cultural interaction is also a necessity. As language education puts more and more emphasis on actual language use to develop students' communicative competence, communicative interaction becomes more and more important and thus, inevitable for effective learning experiences in the classroom. The emphasis of the present study on culture in regard to the language teaching and the learning experience is not just on how culture, as knowledge, should be studied, but more importantly, on how culture, as performance, is presented, perceived, and negotiated in the classroom setting.

Classroom Cross-Cultural Interactions as Communicative Interactions

Cross-cultural interaction is a dynamic process of communication: in cross-cultural interaction, understanding is not achieved just through information exchange, but also involves the social relationships of the participants, the individual's perspective on interpreting the world and his/her place in that world, and the individual's attitude and capacity for looking beyond his/her immediate self. In this process, meaning is not delivered but created throughout the interaction of negotiating, interpreting, and exchanging

of cultural messages and differences. In this process, language is not merely used as a tool to convey information but used to create meaning. The process of meaning-creation involves the interpersonal interaction of the participants as well as immediate and intuitive self-reflection on the speaker's cultural context (Lakoff, 1990). On the one hand, for each individual participant, culture is not only "behaviors to be acquired or facts to be learned" but it is "a world-view to be discovered" in the language itself and in the interaction of interlocutors that use that language (Kramsch, 1991: 237). On the other hand, cross-cultural interactions are social events. They are not productions of a single person but accomplished by the collaborative work of two or more people. Thus, meaning of such social events is jointly created by all participants involved in the interaction. The "maximal interlocutor co-operation," better known as "the Cooperative Principle," is posited as underlying all human discourse (Spolsky, 1984: 43; Lakoff, 1990: 167; Singh et al, 1988: 43).

Language Classroom as a Specific Context for Cross-Cultural Communication

The classroom is a specific context for cross-cultural communication. This specific context itself creates complications: context "is never wholly participant making (Cazden, 1988: 198)." At one level, the rules of social behaviors are assumed to be clearly defined and assigned. For example individual participants who come to class are labelled as instructors and

students. Based on the individuals' social knowledge and educational experiences, the assumptions and expectations of the roles and behaviors of instructors and students are present in those individual participants' understandings. Also the target language and culture are assumed to be dominant: because learning the target language is the goal of the class, all the classroom activities are arranged and concentrated on the performance of the target language. Furthermore, the teacher is assumed to be the source of authority in regards to the target language and is assumed to guide the learning process. However, the classroom is a specific context. This context is defined not only by its setting and the participants of the interactional event, but also defined by larger social and cultural contexts. Because the classroom context is "nested (Cazden, 1988)" in broader contexts, it is inseparable from the "context of school, educational system, community, (Cazden, 1988)".

In this study, the characteristic of the context is that foreign language classes are administrated on an English-speaking campus, and the students, who are native English or French speakers, outnumber the instructors in class, and more importantly, the students are the focus of the learning process. Thus, the significance of the students' interactional behaviors can not be overemphasized in this context. In this specific setting, the interactions involved in the language learning process are not simply a matter of students acquiring the knowledge of and adapting themselves to the target language and culture. What students bring into these interactions represent their cultural, social, and individual differences

in personality, experience, and expectation. The students' participation in classroom interactions are the actions they take to communicate with the instructor or fellow learners: to request answers to their needs and questions, to search for cultural boundaries, or to make statements. That which students bring into the classroom interaction from their linguistic and cultural backgrounds affects their expectations and interpretations of the learning environment, the learning process, as well as the teachers' language behaviors. It, to a certain degree, determines the effectiveness of the instructors' interactions.

From this viewpoint, classroom communicative interactions are subject to the negotiation of all parties and involves exchange of and compromise among cultural differences --- both those of the learners and instructors. As we see, cross-cultural interaction involves multilateral exchange, and negotiation refers not only to the fact that students and teachers each have roles in this interaction, that each bring with them their own cultural background knowledge, that each have expectations about one another, and that all are ready to accommodate, but also, that which students and teachers bring into the context of the setting reciprocally affects the teachers' and students' language behaviors, while the participants' adjustments to a situation affect the rest. Thus, teacher behavior and student behavior reciprocally influence each other in complex ways. In the classroom, individuals act on more than general rules, they are required by the situation to improvise spontaneously "on basic patterns

of interaction (Peg Griffin and Mehan 1981, from Cazden 1988: 43)." That is to say both teachers' and students' language behaviors in communicative interactions account for construction and reconstruction of "interpretive contexts that define who they are socially and the cultural norms for how to act, think, feel, believe, and assign meanings (Bloome & Willett, 1991:211; in Blase 1991)." In this sense, in classroom cross-cultural interactions, teachers and students jointly create a cultural context for their speech community.

Teachers share the role and the responsibility of "equal partner" in classroom cross-cultural interactive communication. When teachers do not assume this role and responsibility, they become outsiders in the classroom cultural context. They are unable to effectively communicate their intended messages or miss opportunities to provide learners with adequate chance to participate in communicative interactions. In other words, when the language teacher places more emphasis on his/her role as "director of classroom activity" than on his/her role as "equal partner" in communication, communication suffers. This will be discussed specifically in Chapter 6.

Intraindividual Change and Communication

When Cazden discusses the goal of language education, she points out that: "To talk about classroom discourse is to talk about interindividual communication. But the goal of education is intraindividual change and student

learning." We have to consider "how the words spoken in the classroom affect the outcome of education: how observable classroom discourse affects the unobserved thought processes of each of the participants, and thereby the nature of what all students learn (Cazden, 1988: 99)." The questions she asks point out the right direction for language educational research. What are our expectations for intraindividual changes? This is the goal we should have clearly in mind before we take measures to get there. However, what are the necessary intraindividual changes for cross-cultural communication? This is the question that should be answered before we set up our expectations.

The goal of language education is not to change learners into native speakers of the target language, but to develop a higher degree of "interculturalness" in learners' cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies (Kim, 1988:97 & 145). That is to say to develop and to enhance learners' cross-cultural awareness, openness, respect and understanding of a new world of information beyond one's immediate self and moment; and to develop and enhance the learners' capability and flexibility of perception and thought patterns in cross-cultural communication. In short, to broaden individual learners' perspectives and strengthen their capacity to achieve more effective communication. Intraindividual change is expected to occur in and through interindividual communication.

Communication is a necessity in all human learning. Communication affects human learning in the following ways: First, as we know, the

communicative process is a social bonding process. Individual participants seek positive identities and social acceptance in cross-cultural encounters. Thus, individual participants' communication behaviors are influenced by the perception, recognition, and acceptance of the group that membership presents to one's social identity (Kim, 1988:21; Singer, 1987; Wardhaugh, 1985).

Very importantly, in cross-cultural interactions, individuals are very easily stereotyped and individuals have a tendency to stereotype others. Stereotyping is a narrow way of thinking. It leads to rigid ways of behaving. If this happens in cross-cultural interaction, the communication may end superficially and ineffectively. In order to achieve successful communication in cross-cultural interactions, participants of the interaction need to construct their own speech community in which they grant one another membership --- a relationship upon which they can build trust and further negotiate differences. Stereotyping may handicap individuals from seeking what is common between them and thus disables them from developing this kind of membership. Face-to-face communication provides opportunities with dynamic contexts for individuals to deal with one another and to discover individual differences. It can enable individuals internal growth with regards to preventing the overgeneralizing of cultural differences and the need to diminish prejudices and stereotypes regarding individuals from different cultures. Through individual contacts in cross-cultural interaction, an individual's original generalization of a cultural type may lose its "definiteness and rigidity" and the individual may

change his/her "internal attributes and self-identification from being cultural to being increasingly intercultural (Kim, 1988: 69)." Applying this theory to language classroom practice, "individuals" refers to all participants of interactions, both teachers and students. Because of the presently dominant role of teachers in most language classrooms, the teachers' stereotypes of the Chinese culture that they are teaching, their stereotypes of the cultural characteristics of their students, and their expectations of the social roles of teachers and students will have a greater impact on communication than those of the students in terms of the overall handicapping of classroom interactions and the learning process itself.

The reaction and response of the interlocutors serves as feedback to individual participant's language behavior and communication effort. It has been recognized in research on communication and language education that feedback is perhaps the most important method for overcoming the deficiencies of the communication process (Singer, 1987; Wright, 1987; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Chaudron, 1988). However, as this study suggested, when the responsibility to receive feedback is placed primarily on the students because teachers are very much concerned with giving instructions, some opportunities of effective communication were missed precisely due to the teachers' lack of awareness or misinterpretation of the students' feedback. One explanation is that in classroom situations, teachers are empowered to speak without listening to what students are saying to them.

More importantly, teachers' inability to recognize and respond to students' feedback in classroom interactions is more than a matter of causing unsuccessful communication during the learning process, it is also a denial of learners' opportunities to participate in classroom interactions and develop their communicative competence. As has been described previously, communication is a dynamic process. To cope with the dynamics and diversity of every changing situation, one needs flexibility. Because communication is a dynamic process, it offers opportunities for each individual to fully present and develop his/her imagination, creativity, capacity, as well as flexibility in interpersonal interactions. It provides chances for discovering and employing flexible coping styles and strategies, "a repertoire of linguistic and psychomotor behavior patterns peculiar" to "the social and cultural context", and an "understanding of the functionality of behavioral options within each cultural situation (Kim 1988)." Teachers' inability to recognize and to respond to students' feedback in classroom interaction may leave students without such a chance. It is recommended that teachers have the awareness of and flexibility about the fact that they need to perform, to exemplify, as well as to develop their own communicative competence and at the same time to facilitate the learners' process of developing communicative competence.

Theoretical Framework and Ethnographic Study

Using a cross-cultural communicative framework and ethnographic methods, this study interprets my observations of difficulties in communication among the participants in classroom interactions.

The proceeding theoretical framework emphasizes the cultural, social, and individual aspects of cross-cultural communication, the interrelationship of these aspects the dynamic force generated from these relationships in the communicative process. It also emphasizes the need to view language classroom interactions as cross-cultural communication. Examining language classroom interactions from this sociocultural perspective, the study focuses on understanding the difficulties that teachers and learners have in constituting coherence and meaning in the classroom setting. The examination is in contrast to the interpretations that the participants -- teachers and learners -- made based on their acceptance of the narrowly defined social and cultural roles available to teachers and learners in the foreign and second language classroom. In other words this theoretical framework guides the researcher to observe and to interpret these difficulties and directs the researcher to note how the interpretations of the researcher differ from those of the teachers and learners who operated in that specific setting according to a more "traditional"

interperative framework of language teaching and learning (i.e. teacher is the cultural and linguistic authority and students accomodate to that authority), an all too typical framework that is common in the profession of foreign and second language teaching and learning.

The framework helps the researcher to locate the difficulties that the participants had in constituting coherence and meaning in the classroom interactions. It also aids the researcher to discover the participants' interpretations of these difficulties. More importantly, by engaging in this work from an ethnographic perspective, the participant(-observer)'s observation and data analysis led the researcher to locate the difficulties, and to, thus, focus her research attention on the communicative aspect of the language classroom activity. It is the experience of doing ethnography that challenged the researcher to assume a sociocultural perspective in order to examine these difficulties in ways different from these participants or, indeed, other language teachers.

Examining language classroom interactions from a sociocultural perspective reveals some patterns and norms of language class interaction that are often taken for granted. With a clearer picture of what they have been doing and missing every day, teachers may have an opportunity for greater understanding of the classroom as a dynamic cross-cultural communicative environment which consists of and can facilitate language and cultural learning rather than viewing it as sterile and devoid of social context.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIMPLE ASSUMPTION

-- ON CONSTRUCTING CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Overview

A major problem of the interaction in the language classrooms studied consisted of the participants' difficulties in creating coherence and meaning. Analyses in this chapter show that misunderstanding was caused more often by the misinterpretation of context than the misuse of the language actually exchanged during cross-cultural interactions. The difficulty that the participants had was the consequence of simple assumptions --- these assumptions refer to the expectations that the students had regarding their teachers and their fellow classmates, and the presumptions that the teachers had of themselves and of the students. In other words, the participants entered the Chinese language class having brought with them an assumed "standard" of all of the participants' cultural and social behaviors. It is important to restate here that these assumptions were simple assumptions that arose from overgeneralization of their previous knowledge of the cultures, people of given cultures, and communicative language use to be encountered in the classroom. These

assumptions tended to negatively affect language and cultural learning by blocking the participants' perceptions and leading them to misinterpret the language learning experience and language behaviors encountered during classroom interactions.

The main content of this chapter is the analysis of some incidents, stories, and allegations observed and noted during the participant observation and interviews with the participants. These stories are not used to present a general description of the teacher-student interactions of the classes observed. The stories are used to demonstrate that among the participants, including the researcher, students, and teachers, there were shared assumptions about language teaching and learning and the sociocultural identity and roles of oneself and other individual participants. The shared assumptions that were behind all the stories described in this chapter were simple assumptions. They had direct impact on the teaching and learning of the target culture and language use as well as the understanding of the cultural, linguistic, social, and personal differences among individual speakers. These shared assumptions of all participants were responsible for the difficulty in achieving understanding in cultural interactions.

The story telling of this chapter begins with the researcher's own experience and continues with some other incidents observed by the researcher. The interpretation of these stories emphasizes the impact of these simple assumptions. The significance the stories is the surface meaning of the stories:

they were not occurrences to one particular individual at one specific time or occasion. The significance of telling the stories is that it was the observation of these stories that led to the further development of this study.

The researcher of this study had experienced several stages of thinking before focusing her attention on this particular research problem. Some serious lessons had to be learned before the problems of this research were located and connected. These lessons were learned from, first, the experience of being a researcher. Secondly, the lessons were learned from observing and talking to students, and finally observing and talking to teachers. The presentation of the data analysis will begin with the researcher's experiences during participant observation, a description of "simple assumptions," followed by an observation of the students' language behavior in class and finally that of the teachers.

The Researcher's Experience during Participant Observation

The first lesson of research was learned from the researcher's own experience in conducting the research.

The preliminary focus of the study was to "investigate the cultural patterns" during foreign language classroom interaction. However, the researcher realized that her own bias had undermined the research. First, during the participant observation, my rational thinking and perspective as an ethnographic researcher had been constantly blocked and interfered with by my

enthusiasm and preferences as a teacher. Secondly, I had brought into the research site my own simple assumptions.

The Prejudiced Position of the Researcher

Upon reflection, I conclude that it is my personal experience that placed me into a prejudicial position. I am a language teacher. Up to the time of the study, I had been teaching Chinese to other language speakers for twelve years. In my twelve years of teaching experience, I had observed many classes. On the majority of occasions, the purpose of classroom observation was to study language teaching methodologies and to assess the teachers' performances in order to judge the success or failure in reaching their intended teaching objectives. But for this study, the purpose of the observation was not to evaluate but to investigate classroom interactions. As a researcher of ethnographic studies, I knew through theory that in the classroom, teaching and observing others teaching are very different experiences. The purpose of conducting participant observation is to look at the teaching and learning experience from various perspectives so as to obtain information that has been overlooked. And I was also clear that observing the class with different purposes in mind shifts the observer's perspective, and thus, changes the results of the observations. As an experienced language teacher, I had some

advantages in terms of conducting studies of classroom interactions. My teacher's instinct and teaching experience equipped me with an insider's knowledge which helped me to sense tension, detect variations in language use, and spot more subtle problems. However, in the practice of on-site observation, I found that frequently, the apparent advantages also had a tendency to turn into disadvantages. Unconsciously or automatically, the teacher's basic experience took control of my thinking, and interfered with the intended objectives of ethnographic study. For I realized, from time to time, that I had been emotionally involved: I felt uncomfortable at the choice of the language that an instructor used or disliked an inadequate explanation that an instructor offered, or I had been disturbed by gaps in the interaction between teachers and students. I had sometimes felt sorry for what had happened or worried about the progress of the class. I had been opinionated and judgmental about each instructor's method of teaching and the conduct of each during teaching, even though the ethnographer's sensibilities had constantly reminded me to quit judging and evaluating the participants and their behaviors. Still, when I checked the notes that I took at the site, I was disappointed to find that I had made too many comments assessing the quality of specific language behaviors and interactions in the class.

The Simple Assumption

The purpose of this research was to study cross-cultural interactions in a language classroom setting. The fundamental thinking that initiated the study was that, in language class, cultural negotiation and exchange or cultural misunderstanding and conflict are inevitable. But these phenomena are taken for granted in the classroom setting. Understanding classroom cross-cultural interaction from several perspectives will not only present a clearer picture of such interactions, which can lead to better pedagogical principles and methods; but also it can enlighten both teacher and students, and would hopefully lead to more successful communication. The idea, I still think, is a solid one. However, what went wrong was engendered by the simple assumption of "standard cultural types." This simple assumption had been in my mind at the time without my conscious knowledge of it. I had brought it with me to the observation. When I first entered the research site, I had looked for the "cultural differences" and "cultural types" of the participants during the cross-cultural interactions. I believe that, at that time, I brought with me certain expectations of native Chinese and non-native Chinese behaviours. In other words, in my mind, I had some well-established overgeneralization of Chinese-Non-Chinese, teacher-student language behaviors and a readiness to apply these generalizations to the perception and interpretation of real-life happenings. The simplicity of this assumption is one which forms the basis upon which the

concepts of and the relationships among "cultural knowledge," "cultural influence on individuals," and the individual as "cultural being" are ill defined. With this assumption, I was not able to see the participants as individuals, whose language behaviors happened to reflect to certain degrees, their particular cultural, social and personal backgrounds and experience; or as individuals whose language behaviors reflect also their constant decision making in and about this specific context. With this assumption, I overgeneralized and stereotyped the individuals as representatives of their cultures and language and thus conflated the individuals' language behaviors with their cultures and languages. And most dangerously, I had not been aware of it at all.

The lesson is that our prejudice is part of our knowledge. It is at least in part the result of the limitations of our life experience. Sometimes, if its immediate damage is obvious, we are more alert and ready to take actions to overcome it. Unfortunately, more often, we just take it for granted and accept it completely as a representation of reality, and thus keep it alive in practice. And more importantly, the problem is not that we begin with a simple assumption but that the simple assumption remains simple and unelaborated despite information to the contrary.

Furthermore, during this study, I found that I was not alone in this way of thinking. Data analyses and interpretation show that most of the problems during cross-cultural interactions in the Chinese classroom ultimately derived

from the simple assumptions that were similar to those I have described above, which indicate that most of the participants shared these kinds of assumptions. To illustrate this pattern of thinking, the presentation of the data will begin with the input of the students and then go on to the language behavior of the teachers and finally to the teacher-student interactions in class.

Simple Assumption Revealed

Chapter one argued that interactions in the university foreign language classroom are well served to be viewed as cross-cultural interactions. In cross-cultural interactions in the classroom, the participants' perspectives are affected by their different language and cultural backgrounds as well as by their personal experiences. The prior knowledge and experience of the individual participants influence their decision-making during the interactions; they also partly decide the participants' expectations of the contextual language behaviors. One pattern of thinking that analysis reveals is that the participants involved in language classroom interactions organize previous knowledge based on an assumed "native standard." This organization assumes the form of an overgeneralized view of both the target language and culture and one's own language and culture, and it leads to the stereotypical view of members of a given language and culture and of the common usage of language in communication.

The data analysis also reveals some patterns in student-teacher interaction. One pattern of language behavior in classroom interactions that often leads to ineffective communication is that of the teacher's unresponsiveness to the feedback of students. This particular problem on the teacher's behalf during language classroom interaction is associated with the teacher's assumption of a "native standard." It is not discussed here in terms of teaching competence or methodology.

The presentation begins with incidents illustrating some of the students' comments about their teachers, which will be discussed in detail below. Interpretation of these stories reveals two important aspects of the formation of the students' opinions of their class and of their teachers, which were similar to the experiences of myself as researcher. On the one hand, the basis upon which the students formed their opinions about their class and instructors was grounded in their previous background knowledge and assumptions about the target language, the target culture, and the people of that language and culture; their assumptions and expectations of the social roles and the appropriate social behaviors of one another and themselves; and their own language and learning experience. On the other hand, during the classroom interactions, the students perceived and expected the teachers' language behaviors to be a presentation of the standard language behaviors of the target language and culture. In short, previously established assumptions and expectations as well as the assumed and expected native standard worked together to affect the perspective and

interpretation of the participants. The down side of this way of thinking is that it takes a static view of the world and applies it to the perception and interpretation of real-life happenings. When practising this kind of static perception and interpretation during the cross-cultural interactions, the participants failed to deal with cultural, social, and linguistic diversity and variation presented by individual speakers. Misunderstandings were caused more often by the misinterpretation of context than misuse of the language actually exchanged during these cross-cultural interactions in the language classroom. Misinterpretation of the contextual relationship among participants, the social roles of the participants, and the intended meaning was caused by misperception of the cultures and the people involved. Likewise, misperception comes from the misconception of cultural stereotypes and language use that originates from the overgeneralization of cultures and cultural differences. The consequence of the overgeneralization of the cultural differences is that it led to inefficient negotiation during these events.

The characteristics of this pattern of negotiation in cross-cultural interactions in the classroom are: 1) Cultures are stereotyped and individuals are culturally stereotyped. Cultures are stereotyped in classroom situations for two reasons relating to degrees of cultural knowledge. First, a culture may be stereotyped as a result of one's basic ignorance of a given culture or one's lack of long term contact and experience with that culture. However, one must have some knowledge (accurate or not) in order to form one's opinion about that

culture. If one overgeneralizes a given culture based upon inadequate information, one creates one's own personal myth of that culture. Here, cultures are stereotyped due to individual ignorance of one's ignorance of a given culture. Secondly and perhaps more ironically, culture may be stereotyped because one takes for granted the cultural phenomena with which one is overly familiar. (This is to be seen frequently in the cases of the teachers.) Here, one either expects those of other cultures to understand and respond to messages unique to one's own, or disregards regional or individual variations found in one's own culture.

The cultural stereotypes of individuals arise from the misconception of the nature of the language class. In the language classroom, learning objectives and the means of learning are interwoven. Without knowledge and awareness of clarified definitions of the relationships between culture and the individual, and the differences between cultural phenomena and individual behaviors, it is easy to be misled to assume that they are both the same phenomena.

Individuals are overgeneralized as the representatives of a given culture, and individual language behaviors are frequently misinterpreted as patterned cultural behaviors. If one has already stereotyped a culture or cultures, that is created the basic categories in which to place individuals one encounters. An obvious way to form the basis for categorization is to distinguish by physical characteristics. Thus, those with "Chinese" faces are categorized as "Chinese" and those with Caucasian looks are categorized as "Western" regardless of their

actual group affiliation or knowledge of and experience with any given culture. As a result, instead of having expectations of individual behavioral variations due to a combination of cultural, social, and personal differences, people often expect how other individual with certain features should behave and be dealt with in general based on the simple preconceptions of the relationship between facial features and behavior.

2) Cultural differences are oversimplified or exaggerated. In intercultural interactions, individual participants may overgeneralize unfamiliar or unknown phenomena and situations as being cultural differences. Those who do so tend to have more tolerance for more obvious cultural differences but less tolerance for individuals who behave more like them. The less knowledge one has about a given culture and people the easier one stereotypes them and the more different one expects them to be from oneself.

3) Cultural messages are presumed and the sequence of the cultural experience makes a difference: Previously accepted cultural messages become dominant in view, and consequently, variations in cultural phenomena are rejected. In other words, if an individual has certain previous knowledge of or experience in encountering people of the target culture and language, and if that knowledge and experience has been accepted and overgeneralized, this assumed knowledge of the given culture will dominate the decision making process when accepting or rejecting whatever cultural messages come later.

That is, it will serve as a filter, through which only the messages that fit may pass.

The above-mentioned characteristics of the simple assumption 1) category creation and the placing individual into those categories; 2) tolerance and intolerance based upon how well individuals fit into those categories; 3) resistance to new information that counters veracity of those categories. It will be observed in the some of the student-teacher interactions in the Chinese language class examined below.

Stories of Simple Assumptions

"Typical Chinese Teachers?"

The second lesson was learned from the students. I interviewed students individually and in groups. Several incidents attracted my attention, which led me to find that I was not alone in having the problem of thinking with simple assumptions. The same pattern of thinking and the same simple assumption are found in the students' language behaviors.

Stories of the students

The first four stories are related to the students' opinions of "typical Chinese teachers." It should be reemphasized that the students' comments about individual teachers here are not put forth in order to assess any teacher's character or teaching methods, and the incidents selected here are not representative of the entire picture of the teaching and learning practice encountered in those classes. Particular incidents were selected to be described in detail in order to probe the impact of "simple assumptions" in meaning negotiation in these classroom interactions.

Three of the four stories described here are elaborations of the general comments students made during one conversation. The conversation occurred on the last day of the class after evaluation forms for the course were collected. I as the researcher asked the students to discuss the course freely and off the record (as far as grades were concerned.) After the students made comments on what they had learned and the like, several students asked the researcher about the progress of her research and how she felt about the other instructors' classes that she had observed. The researcher asked the students their opinions on the same subject. The students commented on the arrangement of the sessions and what they liked about each class. During the course of the conversation, there were some specific comments about individual instructors that caught the researcher's attention.

Story I: This incident concerns the opinions about two male instructors who are native Chinese speakers, Xin and Hong. Xin taught the first part of the first level course for four weeks. Hong taught the same group of students after him. They are both from the P.R. China and they both speak English well. At the time, Xin was in his late fifties and Hong was in his late forties or early fifties. Xin had been an administrator in the Chinese as a second language teaching profession for many years but had almost no classroom teaching experience. This was also his first visit to the North American region where the university is located. Hong had been in this region for more than five years, and he had been teaching Chinese to other speakers ever since he arrived. From my observation, Xin was a serious teacher and his lessons were well prepared. He was at all times patient with the students. But he had trouble clarifying his instructions, organizing the class activities, and responding to the students. He read the grammatical notes from the textbook, copied the grammatical charts from the book to the blackboard, and asked the class to practise the drills in the book. He used English on most occasions. In contrast, Hong was more organized than Xin in terms of carrying out lesson plans and arranging class activities. He was also patient. He did drills with students, too, and liked to draw as well. He drew pictures for the students to learn vocabulary. He spoke Chinese most of the time.

Upon my first observation, the similarities between these two teachers were that they were both middle aged Chinese males, and to me, they both had a polite attitude when they interacted with the students. The major difference between Xin and Hong was in their experience in teaching. Due to this, Xin was more stiff and Hong was more relaxed when handling class situations. That is Xin was polite, but in a very formal way. He always dressed formally, wearing a suit and tie to class everyday. During class instruction, he spoke formally. He was very courteous, but at the same time somewhat distant from the students. It seemed that he had no intention of becoming personally involved. For instance, he gestured to the students to answer questions instead of using their names. If he asked a student to perform a task and that student failed to follow the instructions for whatever reason, he simply signalled for the next student to continue. If a student insisted on trying once again or wished to be given more time to try, Xin would patiently do whatever he understood that the student had asked.

Hong was formal in many ways, too. However, in comparison to Xin, Hong dressed much more casually. He wore a T-shirt. He did not speak as formally as Xin either in English or Chinese, and Hong seldom spoke English in class. He also made little jokes (in simple Chinese language with an occasional English translation), such as stories relating to the texts or humorous comments during the flow of conversation in order to reinforce listening comprehension. He sometimes organized the class to play games. He also made

comments to students expressing his opinions on what they should and should not have done.

I believe that the differences between these two instructors in this specific context were due to their different views of teaching and different life experiences. However, the students viewed this phenomenon differently. What is interesting about their comments is that when the conversation turned to individual teachers, they singled out Xin and Hong and put them together for comparison. Secondly, they thought Xin was more "typically Chinese" as a teacher and thus a "better" teacher of Chinese.

The conversation on this topic in the last day of the class began with one student's remark. She said that Xin was a good Chinese teacher. The others immediately agreed. The majority of the students pointed out to me that they thought Xin was a good teacher, in that context I interpreted it meant that Xin was a better instructor than Hong. When pressed for more specific explanations, the answers indicated that "Xin was nice to us (the students);" "he was a typical Chinese teacher." When asked to define a "typical Chinese teacher," and a "good language teacher," the students thought I was not being sincere with them, they felt that I must have known what they meant, because the answer should be obvious: "You know, it's like Xin." "serious," "strict," "polite." As for Hong, one student said he spoke too fast, meaning that at times the students had difficulty understanding him. The others all agreed on that point as well. One student said that he thought "Hong doesn't understand us

(the students)." Several students nodded at that comment. One even said that she thought he was being "artificial," "unnatural," and "fake." Though, no one else seemed to share this opinion.

(Several times during the conversation, several students assured the researcher that besides their comments on individual teachers, they thought they both were great teachers. Actually they thought all the teachers were very good. But they appreciated the opportunity to make personal comments about the course and their teachers.)

Story II: Lily, 31, was one of the youngest instructors of all the first level Chinese language faculty. She did not have experience teaching Chinese, though she had taught English to Chinese speakers for a short time. The first day that she introduced herself to the class, she told the students that she was a student also, and asked the students not to call her by the title "*Laoshi*" (teacher) but to use her first name instead. I noticed that she was on very friendly terms with the entire class.

During the breaks between class, I occasionally heard the students complimenting her many times. Some of them socialized with her on the weekends. The students seemed to enjoy her greatly as a person, and they expressed that they liked the way she taught Chinese characters during the conversation. I expected the students to tell me only positive things about Lily.

To my surprise, at the end of the summer program, when I discussed the topic of a "good Chinese teacher" with the entire class of the students, many of them said they liked Lily but at the same time, they felt that they "were lucky to have had only one teacher like her," because they did not feel that she was "very serious" or at least "not strict enough as a teacher." Some complained that she spoke too much English with them in class and gave them no opportunity to practice Chinese. Some of them thought that it was nice to have had a different style of teacher like Lily, but they would "not appreciate it" if all the instructors had taught in her way, for they were afraid that they might not have learned enough.

Story III: Mei has been a highly respected Chinese instructor for many years. She has taught Chinese to university students and at the same time to children at Chinese Sunday schools. During the summer, she taught the first half of the course. She had the reputation among the former students and colleagues in the department of being a good teacher. Whenever her name was mentioned, the students or the teachers who knew something about her told you that she was a good teacher. From my observation, she was a very enthusiastic teacher in class. She seemed to have a lot of fun with the class. She played games, brought cookies or candy to class to serve as rewards, and told jokes.

She was dominant in class but a kind, motherly figure. She was the center of the class and organized the class to do exactly what she wanted.

During the last day's class conversation, the students said that it was fun to do drills with Mei: "You always feel the class time is short." "Time passes fast in her class." "You never know what to expect from her so you have to concentrate all the time." "Get cookies." After all the compliments, one student suddenly admitted he often felt lost in Mei's class. The others started to criticize this student by saying, "[It's] because you are not concentrating. You have to pay attention to what she says." Then some realized that they were actually attacking a very serious student who always paid attention. Another student supported the first one, she felt that the problem was that she was not given a chance to "think" because she did not know "what to expect." Her argument seemed to be convincing. Several students started to reflect and then expressed similar opinions. They all agreed that they were not given enough opportunity to express themselves. The student who raised the question said there was no real communication in the exercises that they performed in the class. One student objected to the criticism. He pointed out that this was a language class, an interesting one, where most other language classes were boring. Another student said she thought it was fun to play but it should not have been the only way for learning. The first one agreed, he thought the students also should have learned to know what to expect in Chinese conversations so as to be able to function in real-life situations.

Story IV

Ben was one of the instructors of the second level class. He was the only non-native Chinese instructor for the summer program. The day I went to sit in his class, there were only four students, all of whom were non-native speakers of Chinese. I must have looked a little surprised when the class began, because the first thing that Ben did was to try to explain to me why he only had four students when there should have been 14 in number. He said that he had told the class that coming to his section for the students of Chinese origin was optional. Upon hearing this I was disturbed. Half of the absent students were from my first level class of the regular semester, another two were sent by me from the first level to this second level class at the beginning of the summer course, and I had interviewed another student before she registered the course. I knew these students' backgrounds and their Chinese proficiency levels were very different. And from my experience in dealing with those students, I also knew that they had been very cooperative with the teachers and complied with the rules. None of them would miss a day of class without a special reason. I sensed that something was going on between the instructor and the students. The next day, the principal instructor of the course called me. She had heard about the situation and began to investigate the incident. After she had spoken to all the students and the teacher, she discussed it with me. (The detailed information provided by the principal instructor prepared me to attend the class again the next afternoon.) She mentioned that

there had been some kind of tension between the instructor and the students of Chinese origin ever since the beginning of the class, which eventually led to this unspoken conflict. After this incident, the second day, I had interviewed several students, two non Chinese and two of Chinese origin. In their conversation, they all agreed on one point: they thought Ben was not being very fair to the students of Chinese origin.

The next story happened during the session of the first level Chinese class. This was in the researcher's session.

Story V: In this class, one of the students was Molly. She is a non-native Chinese student, an English speaker, who had taken a Chinese course at another university for a short period of time. One day, the class was learning the word "Chinese". They came across two expressions: "*Hanyu*" which means the "Chinese spoken language," and "*Zhongguoren*" meaning a "Chinese person." The teacher explained to the students that in English the adjective "Chinese" can be used with other nouns to form phrases to refer to something Chinese, such as the "Chinese people," the "Chinese language," a "Chinese book," "Chinese food," a "Chinese store" or, a "Chinese restaurant," etc.; while in Chinese, there are different expressions for different nouns, especially when the language is being referred to. In Chinese, "*Hanyu*" refers to the spoken

language. "*Zhongwen*" generally refers to the Chinese written language. Therefore, if someone has a "*Hanyu shu*" (Chinese book), it usually means that person has a textbook of the Chinese language; if it is a "*Zhongwen shu*" (Chinese book), it is a book in the Chinese language, written in Chinese or a translation in Chinese. Upon hearing that explanation, Molly immediately said to the teacher: "I don't believe you. My Chinese teacher told me just the opposite." The teacher was a little shocked: besides her rudeness, there was a trust issue involved. Why did she believe her former teacher instead of the present one? The teacher made no comment about it; she simply assured Molly by saying that either her teacher made a mistake or she had remembered incorrectly. Two days later, the class learned the Chinese "r" sound. Molly could not say it well on the first few tries. She continually uttered a sound resembling an English "l." She asked the teacher to pronounce it again for her. After the teacher had done it, Molly said she thought her pronunciation was correct and the teacher's was wrong. This time, the teacher must have felt that she needed to clear things up for Molly's sake. She asked Molly if she knew where her former Chinese teacher was from. Molly answered that he was from Shanghai. The teacher told Molly that this was what she had suspected, because her experience was that some people from Shanghai have difficulties producing that sound. The *Putonghua* (Mandarin) that the class was learning is based on the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect.

Analyses and Interpretation of the Stories

As was discussed previously, the students identified and generalized the target cultural behaviors of their instructors' language performance in class. This identification and generalization was based upon their limited knowledge and personal experiences with the Chinese culture and language and their own cultural views. It was also based upon their assumptions of a standard native behavior of their previous and present teachers. This presumption was a simple assumption. It arose from their overgeneralization of the target culture and their static view of the language teaching and learning process. It lead to an ineffective pattern of negotiation with the following characteristics.

Cultures Were Stereotyped. Individuals Were Culturally

Stereotyped: Cultures were stereotyped in the following ways: cultural images were created; the social roles of individual participants were labeled; thus individuals were culturally and socially stereotyped. The students' experience with one of the instructors, Lily, is a good example to illustrate this.

In the Story II, the students expressed contradictory feelings about the instructor Lily. They liked her as a teacher and they felt she was a good teacher. But when they said they felt lucky for having only one teacher like her they meant that they did not want all their teachers to be like Lily, because they thought "she was not very serious" and "not strict enough to be a teacher," which suggests that they did not trust Lily's way of teaching. The first reason

for this is that Lily did not fit into their simplified cultural image of a Chinese teacher. What was distinctive about Lily is, first, she spoke English with very little accent and that she spoke English more often than not. More importantly was the attitude she expressed in terms of her philosophy that studying a foreign language should be for fun and in fun ways, and her statements expressing her desire to be socially equal with her students. Unlike the other instructors, when the class failed to follow her instructions, Lily preferred to reiterate the course requirements or reestablish classroom discipline by expressing comments which related to her personal feelings and experiences as a learner. For example, several times during in-class character dictation, the students complained about difficulty of memorizing Chinese characters. Lily frequently made statements like: "I don't believe in pressure." "You can learn only when you are relaxed." "Make it fun." "Learning is fun." The degree to which Lily had made the learning process fun in accordance with her philosophy is irrelevant here. The relevance lies in the contrast between her statements and the other Chinese teachers' "study hard and harder" speeches. Thus, Lily was assessed not according to the value of her advice to the class, but according to the difference between her advice and that of the assumed "typical Chinese teacher" as exemplified by the other Chinese instructors.

Another interesting example here is the comparison of Lily with Xin. Both of them spoke English to give instructions in class. The students criticized Lily for speaking "too much English", and for giving them "no opportunity to practice

Chinese." However, they did not use the same expressions to complain about Xin's frequent use of English. This evidence that the students did not really evaluate the effectiveness of teachers' choice of language in terms of the effectiveness of instruction or of their learning own learning. They actually evaluated the teachers' language choice in class as a sign of cultural identity. Xin used English all the time. But he spoke English, though rather fluently, yet not naturally and with a strong Chinese accent. When he used English it was done to read the instructions from the Chinese textbook or to explain the Chinese grammar. To the students, Xin was always a "typical Chinese" teacher even when he was speaking English. Xin chose to speak English in class because he was teaching foreigners as a Chinese. However, Lily was fluent and almost without any accent in English. When she spoke English, she not only discussed various topics, but was also natural in style. Her English did not suggest anything "typical" of a Chinese person. Therefore, even though both Xin and Lily choose to use English during class, their ways of using language fell into different presumed cultural categories, which did not lead to the same conclusion about them as teachers. When the conclusion reached was that Lily was not up to the standard, it was because she did not fit the image, and thus her qualifications were put into question, and her sincerity was doubted. The second reason for her being questioned was that Lily did not fit into the students' social stereotype of a language teacher. Contradictory in the students' opinions about Lily here were their perceptions and acceptance of Lily as a

person and a teacher in real life and their stereotypical views of the teacher's role, behaviors, and relationship with students in general. During the course of the study, several times, I had conversations with some students individually or in small group of two or three on language learning experience. Almost every single time, the students mentioned their past experience of foreign language learning, either Spanish, Japanese, French, or Chinese in Sunday schools, to compare with their present study. I believe that the students felt unsure or insecure about their own appreciation of Lily and her performance in class could also because unconsciously they compared Lily with their images of an idealized teacher, conventional ideal images that they had generalized from their past educational experience. Lily's attempt to be on friendly terms with the students in class did not fit the students' stereotype of a teacher, even though they liked her better in terms of her style. The students were not accustomed to being treated more like friends than students by their teachers in general. As they stereotyped the teacher's role, they also projected into the situation their own roles in relationship to that of the teacher. They may have felt comfortable being with a teacher like Lily but at the same time they were not used to feeling comfortable about with a teacher therefore they did not feel uncomfortable about feeling comfortable with a teacher like Lily. When the presumed role of the teacher changed, it necessitated a transformation of the students' roles. But what should the student role be? In her class, students could not find their accustomed places or roles which they had easily assumed

in other language classes. Even though, or maybe because they could develop a "buddy" relationship, they were reluctant to accept that relationship as a kind of "teacher-student" relationship.

Story III presents an opposite case. Mei is a graceful Chinese lady. She is elegantly dressed and presents herself in class as a motherly figure. During class, she was strict yet polite, dominant yet kind. Her class was well arranged in a mechanically efficient way. She did not speak much English. Mei's language behaviors fit so well with both "the Chinese teacher" and "the language teacher" images that the students felt guilty for criticizing her way of teaching or complaining about their own dissatisfactions with her class. Even though the majority of the students did enjoy her class and the complaints were minor, still the point here is not about the evaluation of Mei and her class. What is important here is the students' attitudes towards her and the class. The irony here is that the students felt comfortable in introspecting about being in her class after the course while often times during class, they were not¹⁰. This is because in hindsight, what was going on in class was in accordance with what they expected. The same psychology is reflected in their comments in the conversation that described the story: they doubted their own criticisms because their opinions were in conflict with the overgeneralization that they had accepted.

¹⁰. This can be examined in the contextual analysis of the discourse in the Chapter 6.

Story IV exemplifies the consequence of these simple sociocultural assumptions from another angle. Ben was one of the instructors of Chinese. He is a Caucasian. Ben had trouble with the class, especially with the students of Chinese origin as was introduced in the story above. One reason partly responsible for this trouble stemmed from, as the students of Chinese origin admitted, first impressions. When interviewed after the first observed class in the researcher's office, one of the two students interviewed, who was of Chinese origin, related that the students of Chinese origin had all gathered after the first class, disappointed by the fact that a "foreigner" was chosen to be their instructor for the course. They gossiped about his errors in Chinese and laughed at his tones. That is to say, when the students of Chinese origin met Ben the first time in class, the only thing they saw was Ben's being a foreigner, a young non-native speaker of the language. Because of that, they immediately did not trust his qualifications or allow for the possibility of his being a fluent and knowledgable Chinese language teacher. They became critical of his pronunciation and were sensitive to his few grammatical mistakes. On the contrary, the non-Chinese students were impressed immediately by this instructor's fluency in speaking Chinese. In the same interview, the non-native Chinese student said the non-Chinese students were surprised to a certain extent but nonetheless encouraged to know that a non-Chinese could speak Chinese that well. The mistrust felt by the students of Chinese origin and the surprise felt by the non-Chinese students, regardless of

the different consequences they brought about, reflect the influence of previously held cultural images on one's judgment in cross-cultural interaction. Moreover, Ben was judged by social standards. Ben was young, Caucasian, 25 to 27, and he dressed not only casually but also quite "punk" on occasions. His hair was braided in an African style, and he either wore a leather jacket covered here and there silver chains or loose overalls which were copiously splattered with paint. In short, he often did not look like a "scholar-type." Both students, one Chinese and one Caucasian, in the same interview admitted that if he had dressed more formally, they might have respected him more as a teacher. They also said even though, later on, Ben did demonstrate that he is quite knowledgeable in Chinese and Chinese cultural issues, it took the students a long time and much effort to accept that. But still the prejudice that the students of Chinese origin had for Ben became the hidden factor for later provocation.

Cultural Differences Were Oversimplified or Exaggerated: Because cultural images were overgeneralized and individuals were culturally and socially stereotyped, the differences between individual participants were overgeneralized and oversimplified as cultural differences. Simplification or exaggeration of cultural differences in these classroom interactions caused misunderstanding. That is to say whatever was unfamiliar or unknown was often incorrectly explained as cultural difference. An interesting consequence of this phenomenon was that the participants were lenient concerning the language

behaviors of those that they already accepted as being different from them. The boundaries of the cultural differences and consequently the degree of cultural tolerance were drawn by the participants' degree of acceptance of their interlocutors according to the assumed cultural identities of their interlocutors. Conversely, the participants were uncomfortable with those speaking partners whom they had identified as being of other cultures but had behaved somehow differently from their assumed cultural images.

The example here is in the case of Xin and Hong's (Story I). The students had a much more lenient attitude towards Xin and a more critical attitude towards Hong. They all spoke up for Xin: "He seems to be rigid, but he is nice." "The class was not well organized and sometimes pretty boring, but, you know, he was very polite, and he tried." They concluded with an explanation that Xin was "a typical Chinese teacher." Even though in some ways, Hong's way of behaving in class and his attitude towards the students was very much the same as Xin, still there were deviations in his appearance, manners, and language behaviors. These deviations from the assumed and accepted cultural and social images engendered towards Hong the criticisms of being "artificial" and "fake." In other words, in the cross-cultural interactions during this study, the participants tended to accept those identified as being of different cultures as being distant and different; were ambivalent towards those who behaved with more understanding of them; and resented those who showed obvious efforts to be more like them. Moreover, the students' opinions

about Hong very likely stemmed from their type of patterned thinking: they had mistaken Hong's personality as being a deviation from expected cultural phenomena, or its overgeneralized characteristics, and in a sense overgeneralized and exaggerated the cultural influences on individuals and the cultural differences among individuals during these cross-cultural interactions.

Cultural Messages Were Presumed: As we see in Story I, some students considered Xin a better teacher than Hong. One of the reasons is because they felt that Xin was a more "typical" example of a Chinese teacher. What made the students decide that the language behaviors of Xin mark him as a "good Chinese teacher," while the language behaviors of Hong define him as not being of the same quality? It is a complicated issue. However, one possible reason is that Xin taught the class prior to Hong. The students had already generalized from Xin's language behaviors those of a "typical" Chinese teacher. They might have used this overgeneralization as a cultural standard or stereotype to measure Hong's behaviors. The same phenomenon occurred in Story V. Molly did not have any personal reason to be critical of her current teacher when she expressed to the teacher that she did not believe the teacher's explanation of the phrase and later challenged the teacher's pronunciation. It could be that she used previously received and believed cultural messages as a basis to reject that which was not in accordance with those messages. She compared the cultural messages --- the pronunciation and the meaning of the phrase --- of the current teacher with those of her former teacher. What she

found unacceptable might have been the pronunciation or linguistic explanation itself, or it might have been her new teacher's attitude or the way that the new teacher conducted class, or simply the way that she, Molly as a student, was received in class. The problem is that Molly and the other students used their prior knowledge and experience in an unproductive way. They did not use their knowledge and experience as references for further learning. On the contrary, they used them here to solidify their current views using their overgeneralized prior knowledge and experience to block the subsequently received cultural messages.

Lesson Learned from the Stories

What is obvious here is that the students' evaluation of their teachers and their reactions to the differences among their teachers were affected by what they perceived as being "Chinese" and "Western." They reacted positively to what had fitted their images of a "Chinese" and rejected what was different from their preconceptions. In this pattern of thinking, the set images of "Chinese" justified the "standard Chinese language teacher's behaviors" and the observable "standard language behaviors of the Chinese" justified their original assumptions. These incidents and the students' opinions, comments, and discussion were very enlightening. They influenced my thinking. Yet, it is not the students' opinions about individual teachers that was most significant to

me. What I became interested in knowing was why the students had the opinions about each individual instructor, how they formed their opinions, and the decisive factors which affected their opinions. More importantly, I was curious to know if the students' opinions had ever been conveyed during classroom interactions. And furthermore, if the teachers themselves had ever noticed or had knowledge of the students' opinions, and if so, if the teachers had ever taken any actions as a result of the students' opinions. I am also interested in how the teachers interacted with the students and what impact the teachers' language behaviors had on the students; and the causes and rationales behind the actual behaviors during the interactions. These served as preliminary questions to analyze and interpret the collected data.

"Typical Learners?" and "Typical Learning Norms?"

The third lesson was learned from the teachers.

Five instructors were observed in this study. From the previous introductions we saw that they differed in terms of their language experience, teaching experience, and life experience. Moreover, their ways of speaking and teaching in class were very different from one another.

In the language classroom observed in this study, teachers held a dominant role and an authoritative position in the language and cultural

learning process despite Lily's efforts to redefine this role. Problems arose because of the inflexible ways learners viewed teachers' roles.

The foci of this analysis and interpretation are the functions and the impact of the teachers' language behaviors during these classroom interactions and the rationales behind them.

Teachers' Attitudes and Opinions

The following stories of the instructors revealed the patterns of overgeneralized thinking described earlier. The teachers' overgeneralization of the students' cultural and social identities and language performance were revealed in two ways: one was in their attitudes towards the students' academic achievement; the other one was in their attitudes towards and their interpretations of the students' social behaviors in class.

Story VI (On students' academic achievement): Luu (female) and Luc (male) were both real beginners of the Chinese language who had never had any experience in learning Chinese. One obvious difference between them was that Luu is of Philippine-origin and looks similar to a Chinese. Luc is of Italian-origin. Both Luu and Luc were intelligent and hard-working students. According to the academic record and in class demonstrations, Luu's speaking and writing performances were actually better than Luc's. Nevertheless, Luc

received much more of teachers' attention than Luu: when the teachers met, all of them had mentioned (at different times) that they had been impressed by Luc's performance in class. But none of them had mentioned they were impressed by Luu's performance. In class, Luc was asked to introduce his method of learning characters and to demonstrate his writing on the blackboard. It never occurred in the observaton that any of the instructors praised Luu's achievement publicly.

Story VII: Brian was a student of the Chinese origin. He took the first level and the second level Chinese in two consecutive summers. To all the teachers, he was a typical Cantonese looking boy. After the first two days of the first level Chinese class, the teachers all knew that Brian was an American, he could understand some Cantonese because one of his parents was originally from Hong Kong. He spoke English with an accent. Brian studied very earnestly, but he had been having trouble pronouncing some sounds in Mandarin. The teachers who had taught Brian simply assumed that Brian's problems with pronunciation was caused by the interference of his Cantonese accent. Even though they discussed Brian with each other after class on several occasions, noting that his problem seemed obviously different from the other Cantonese speakers, nobody questioned it further. Whenever they mentioned Brian in their conversations, the teachers (both the first and second level

instructors) would say: "Brian is a good kid, but he has a weird Cantonese accent." and "His Cantonese accent is hard to correct."

After the two summer courses, once by chance, Brian called me and left a message in English on my answering machine. My husband, a native English speaker, heard the few words that Brian left. He said that it seemed Brian had an accent when he spoke English, but his first thought was French since we were in a bilingual region of English and French. I explained to him that Brian's accent was Cantonese. Finally Brian came to visit my house. During our conversation, my husband realized that Brian's accent was actually Spanish, and after questioning, Brian confirmed that his mother tongue was Spanish.

Story VIII (On students' social behaviors.): For a class assignment, the students of the first level Chinese class were asked to give oral presentations in turn. The presentations were to be for three to five minutes on any topic. Most students liked to have a chance to express themselves freely in the language they are learning. They tried to be creative in their delivery of the presentations as well as with the content of the presentations. They frequently brought in photos, drawings, toys, musical instruments, and even beer (the legal drinking age in the region is 18 years) to class to share with others. They told old stories, jokes, or made-up stories, and poems, or even short plays and video taped episodes. Three instructors of the class admitted that their reaction to the ways of presenting, and the content of the presentations show that they had

different expectations because of their cultural stereotypes of the students. They felt more comfortable and found it easier to accept the Caucasian students' "bizarre" content such as talking about sex or ridiculing teachers, or "bizarre" presentation style such as using beer bottles in class and passing them around, than they did the Chinese faced students' performance.

Assumptions Revealed

All three of these stories are examples of the teachers' culturally and socially stereotyping the students. As was discussed above, in the stereotyping process, the cultures were stereotyped and individuals were culturally stereotyped; cultural differences had been oversimplified and exaggerated, and cultural information was presumed. In all the stories from VI to VIII, the teachers applied their prior cultural knowledge as simple assumptions guiding their perceptions of their students. They also overgeneralized all the cultures involved and oversimplified and exaggerated the cultural differences. The first kind of stereotyping came from the overgeneralization of "the Western culture" and "the Chinese culture." All the instructors had expressed these overgeneralized viewpoints more than once in daily conversations and interviews. Their assumptions indicated that since the students were studying in

a society dominated by Western culture, they were not expected to study as hard as the stereotypical Chinese. They also assumed that the "Western" students were at a disadvantage in this learning situation because Chinese is much too exotic, thus it was a much too difficult language for them to learn. The second kind of stereotype is the overgeneralization of culturally stereotyped individuals. The students were categorized as "*Zhongguo xuesheng*" (the students of Chinese culture) and "*Xifang xuesheng*" (the students of the Western culture). They were expected to behave as "Chinese" or "Westerners." As a result, on the one hand, because of the teachers' expectations based on cultural overgeneralization, a double standard was employed in viewing and reacting to the students' academic achievements as well as their social behaviors. As in Story VI, Luu and Luc's case, sometimes, the efforts that the Chinese-looking students made and the achievements they earned were taken for granted, while those of the Caucasian-looking students were often favored and received more attention. Some students from the first and second level classes had complained about this in the interviews and in their evaluation of the course. This special attention actually derived from the fundamental doubt on behalf of the teachers, in these examples, in the potential for Caucasian students to become good Chinese speakers. On the other hand, even though the students' academic and cultural backgrounds varied from one another in complicated ways, a single two-part standard of evaluating and interpreting language and social behaviors was applied to a group of culturally categorized

students. These overgeneralized views also blocked the teachers' openness to other possibilities. In Brian's case in Story VII, the teachers' misperception of Brian's pronunciation problem can be argued to have been the result of their lack of knowledge of Spanish and their lack of experience in dealing with Spanish speakers, but definitely, their overgeneralization of the students of the Chinese origin was one of the crucial reasons that they shut themselves off from more reasonable observations and forced them to adhere to their assumptions. This is why after two years, even though all the teachers found it difficult to explain Brian's accent, they still remained with the assumption that it was Cantonese.

Implications of the Stories

These simple assumptions affected the teachers' language behaviors in class, their responses towards their students, and the pedagogical practices. First, some misperceptions, misinterpretations, and misunderstanding of the context, the resulting relationships of the participants in the communicative events, and the subsequent verbal behaviors during the interactions could be the consequences of the teachers' language behaviors, which were directly influenced by their simple assumptions from the beginning of the classroom interaction. Secondly, the teachers' language behaviors that were generated from their simple assumptions served as models for the use of the target

language, and therefore reinforced the students' simple assumptions about the language teaching and learning process, about the target language and culture, and about cross-cultural communication.

The simple assumptions and the impact on participants language behaviors will be further examined in the next two chapters through analyses of the conversational texts of classroom interaction. Besides what has been discussed above, the focus of the further discussion will be on the teachers' language behaviors which were interfered with by their simple assumptions of the cultures, the participants' social roles and functions in terms of classroom language and cultural teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 5

NEGOTIATING MEANING IN THE CLASSROOM

Overview

The purpose of the conversational analysis of this study is to explore several dimensions of these classroom interactions: the patterns of the structural organization of the classroom interactions, the norms of participant interaction and language behavior, and the characteristics of the language classroom culture. It is a descriptive study of oral language from a theoretical perspective that emphasizes sociocultural context, interprets meaning in that context, and examines the difficulties and the limitations that led to unsatisfactory communicative interactions. It regards classroom conversational interaction as one kind of real life situation for the language learners as well as the teachers involved. It argues that the participants' lack of awareness of the sociocultural diversities and contingencies in cross-cultural communicative interactions affects meaning creation as much as lack of specific linguistic and cultural knowledge does.

In Chapter 2, I used the analogy of a chess game in order to make more explicit the classroom experience as a real-life situation despite its having some artificial qualities. I will return to that analogy as it relates to other classroom issues discussed below.

In this analysis, participants are viewed as cultural, social, as well as individual human beings. That is to say, in terms of cultural impact, the interpretation of the language behaviors of the individual participant takes into consideration the individual speaker's cultural background and that individual's knowledge about his/her own culture and those of the other participants. In terms of social influence, we will examine the social bonds and social roles of the individual participants in the immediate context and in association with the larger social system and the social views that the individual participant has formed in his/her social world. In other words, interpretation of the individual participants' language behaviors will take into consideration the influence of their social backgrounds, the social roles, and the social constraints on the immediate context. Moreover, the analysis also emphasizes the individuality of each participant. It recognizes that an individual participant is unique from all others in cross-cultural interaction in the sense that his/her perspective and interpretation are affected not only by his/her cultural background, cultural knowledge, cultural views, and the social positions, the social roles, and the social bonds that he/she has, but also his/her personal experiences in various cultural and social situations as well as his/her personal preferences.

In terms of the concept of time, language classroom interaction as a cross-cultural communicative process should be viewed holistically. First, classroom interaction happens continuously, because viewed as a whole, a

communicative event occurs in an unbroken stream until its one and only interruption: its end. Secondly, this interaction happens transitorily in the sense that meaning is created and interpreted through the moment by moment negotiation of the participants involved. It is subject to constant change, infinite in its potential directions and contingent upon the on-the-spot performance of the individual participants. Thirdly, it happens co-instantaneously, because the moment by moment negotiation occurs through the cooperation of the individual participants - i.e., it requires joint effort and creates a moment experienced not only by a single individual but all participants involved, each in their own way. More importantly, the moment in which an individual interprets the other's language behavior is also the moment that when individual creates impetus for his/her own current and future language behavior. In this sense, this study argues that during classroom interaction there exists issues of communication besides pragmatic issues of teaching and learning strategies. In a chess game, the players' success rely heavily on the strategies that they apply to the game. But players must also implement strategies appropriate to the changing contexts of the game and in accordance with the initiations and reactions of their rivals. The application of teaching methodologies and learning strategies in classroom teaching and learning situations are similar to the application of strategy in a chess game. It is important, but its appropriateness and timeliness contextually is also essential for success. The application of strategy also becomes necessary in terms of

dealing with other individuals socially in classroom interactions, outside of the context of teaching and learning.

Moreover, the continuous, transitory, and co-instantaneous performance during classroom interaction is not an isolated or solitary occurrence. The immediate context of the interaction is associated within a larger social context; the participants' relationships reflect social conventions. Also, the language behaviors presented are influenced by, reflect, and represent the social and cultural background and socialized perspective of the individual participants; and they are constrained by the contextual social relationships. Therefore, cross-cultural interaction in the classroom is comprised of both historical and political facets.

In order to reveal the difficulties and the limitations that the participants had in these classroom interactions, the analysis in this chapter examines, first, the moment by moment conversational discourse observed in this study so as to examine how meaning was interpreted and created in these cases. The interpretation of the meaning negotiation focuses on the social and cultural factors that influenced the language behaviors of the participants. Secondly, in order to represent the historical and political sides of the story, it also examines the structural organization of the discourse to see how these language behaviors and events were constructed by the participants.

Problems Found

Analyses of these cross-cultural interactions during the class uncovered at least three kinds of unsatisfactory negotiation of cultural information in communicative interactions. The first kind was caused by the participants' taking for granted of their own cultures and languages. The second came from the participants' stereotypical views of the others' cultures and languages. The third kind resulted from the participants' viewing their own roles as static in these specific cross-cultural contexts. These overgeneralized or simplified views of the participants provoked two kinds of unsatisfactory communication: the misrepresentation as well as the misinterpretation of cultural messages conveyed through the language behaviors of the participants; and the misinterpretation of the interactional behaviors. Each kind of unsatisfactory negotiation of cultural messages and its particular consequences will be presented sequentially, even though they frequently occurred simultaneously.

There are two levels of analyses of the conversational interactions during the class. This chapter examines the content and context of some of the interactions. Next chapter analyzes the structural organization of some of the episodes of the conversational interactions in class. From the analysis in this chapter we can still see the patterns of negotiation that were demonstrated in the stories in the previous chapter. Here are the highlight points, the examples of the analysis are in the following sections of this chapter.

Cultures and Individuals Were Stereotyped: Individual participants stereotyped both their own cultures and the other participants' cultures. The taking for granted of one's own cultural messages had the following consequences: 1) Cultural phenomena were not explained to their speaking partners who might have trouble understanding them; 2) The individuals took themselves to be authoritative representatives of their own cultures overlooking the possible sociocultural variations and the individual differences within the practice of language use of their own culture.

Stereotypical views of other cultures also resulted from the limitation of the individual's sociocultural experience and knowledge. Participants would attach cultural identities and sociocultural stereotypes to the individuals because of their appearance. As a consequence cultural messages and sociocultural interactions were sometimes misrepresented, misperceived, and misinterpreted.

Cultural Differences Were Oversimplified or Exaggerated: Because the individuals' cultural identities and social roles (an individual's definition in a sociocultural context) were narrowly perceived, their language behaviors were interpreted accordingly, and the sociocultural differences among the individual participants were either oversimplified or exaggerated. Because the cultural messages and the sociocultural interactions (the presentation of an individual socioculturally) were narrowly presented and perceived, the differences among cultures were either oversimplified or exaggerated.

Cultural Messages Were Presumed: In the application of prior cultural knowledge, whatever cultural messages the participants had previously accepted from their past cultural experience were not used as reference to further develop knowledge of the other culture, but were held up as a standard against which messages were evaluated. This can be examined through the above mentioned two categories.

Regarding the "Unsatisfactory Negotiation of Cultural Messages"

Three types of unsatisfactory negotiation occurred during these cross-cultural interactions: Taking for granted of one's own culture, stereotypical views of the others' cultures, and static views social roles. The concept of "unsatisfactory negotiation" refers to a type of interaction in which pre-established views remain fixed rather than becoming modified through negotiation. This type of unreflective behavior in cross-cultural interaction affects perception and interpretation in communication in two closely related ways: One is through the uncompromising application of knowledge in perception and interpretation; the other is insensitivity to certain cultural phenomena in perception and interpretation. In other words, either cultural messages are interpreted inflexibly, or they are taken for granted and/or overlooked. More importantly, this type of interaction creates a circle: the overly simplified knowledge on which interaction is based remains

undeveloped and further interaction must rely on old, unelaborated, and simplified knowledge. This type of interaction is not desirable for a language class which is aiming at developing learners' communicative competence.

This study also emphasizes the influence of taking for granted one's own culture during the cross-cultural interaction in classroom setting because the researcher found that, first, this phenomenon affected the cross-cultural interaction in class. However, because taking for granted one's own cultural is very easily be overlooked, its impact on language teaching in the classroom setting has not been adequately discussed in similar research, and thus, it has not caught the attention of most language educators. Secondly, as knowledge and understanding of one's own culture is very easily taken for granted, its specific characteristics need to be discussed in detail. It is generally assumed that a native speaker of a given language, i.e. a member of a given culture, is, in terms of language use, an expert on that culture. Because it is very easy to confuse the concept of an individual native language speaker within a given culture with the concept of the assumed "native standard," many language proficiency tests that focus on actual language use base their rating scales on these assumed standards. (The establishment of technical standard when it refers to native level of proficiency presumes that at that level, an individual is able to use the language appropriately and effectively in any given situation within that culture. However this assumption doesn't account for the fact that relatively "educated" individuals within a given culture are not able to use that

language appropriately and effectively in all circumstances.¹¹) This study does not intend to test if this assumption of a measurable native standard is true. However, my analysis shows that such a belief that native speakers cannot make mistakes or that native speakers know what is appropriate or not has an impact on the cross-cultural interaction in the context of the language class. It is one of the major causes of misunderstanding and inadequate explanation of cultural messages in language class. This study argues that presumption of one's own culture derives from two extremes of experience: the limitation of one's knowledge of one's own culture and the familiarity with one's own culture. To be more explicit, on the one hand, the knowledge held by an individual of his/her own culture is constrained by his/her specific experiences, and those experiences are shaped by the specific social circles in which he/she participates. Therefore, an individual's perception and interpretation of his/her own culture has limitations: not only is it impossible for an individual from a given culture to know everything about his/her own culture, but also, an individual's perception and interpretation of certain cultural phenomena may vary in degree from an account of the same event given by another member of the same culture. On the other hand, often times, an individual is so accustomed to his/her own culture that he/she loses sight of and sensitivity to it.

¹¹ On the issues of the rating system of oral proficiency testing (ACTFL/ETS Guidelines) and the measurable standard of the proficiency of speakers, Lantolf and Frawley (1985 and 1986), Bachman and Savignon (1986) have more lengthy critical discussion.

Another notion that affected interaction in these classrooms was the assumption that Chinese language proficiency and culture were inseparable. For those students of Chinese origin who were second or third generation immigrants a gap existed between their language proficiency and their cultural knowledge of the Chinese in China. Importantly and tellingly, it is easy to believe, in the cases of second and foreign language and cultural study, that if one knows about a given culture, it does not necessarily mean that one knows the language. But it is often difficult to believe the reverse: that if one knows a language, one does not really know the culture. Under certain circumstances, this overgeneralization might be true to a certain extent, specifically, as in the cases of many descendants of immigrants. In the language classroom, more often at the primary level, if the target language is their "supposed mother tongue," they can often sound quite fluent in that language. But they sometimes lack the knowledge of the target culture, which they are attempting to understand, because their culture is not the target culture. Although, as a matter of fact, their actual proficiency is often handicapped by their lack of the target cultural knowledge, still, their fluency and the native-like pronunciation often leave the assumption that their cultural knowledge is equally proficient. Thus, secondly, rather than conflating language and cultural proficiency this is a well known fact for advanced language learners trying to fit in, and it was also the reason for calling for more sociopragmatic roles learning. Thirdly, there is the added complication of the combination of their language proficiency with their

cultural views and cultural attitudes. They may be fluent using the Chinese language, but their perspective, experience, and the language behaviors conveyed in the Chinese language reflect cultural views and attitudes that may not be in accordance with any form of Chinese culture found in Asia.

Viewing the Teacher's Role as Static

Teachers are often seen as didactic instructors who are given the authority to control the process and the content of teaching and learning. They are not usually seen as participants who share equal duty and responsibility for the success of classroom communicative interactions. It is observed that they are often less prepared than the students to accommodate or to adjust themselves to changing contexts during the classroom interactions depending on their expectations of student/teacher roles.

The analysis in the following sections of this chapter of the teachers' language behaviors in these specific classroom interactions show that teachers generally assumed and were granted an authoritative position in class; they also assumed and were granted the power to control and instruct. However, because teachers viewed their teachers' functions and roles in a static way their actions and reactions in class were often ego-centric and restricted.

To illustrate how the participants' restricted views of their roles affected interaction, the next section examines some examples of the classroom

discourse line by line. In the transcript, Mei is teacher 1, Xin is teacher 2, Hong is teacher 3, Lily is teacher 4, Ben is teacher 5. The phrase "Example 1.1." means the first example of the text of Mei. "Example 3.1.4." refers to the fourth line of the discourse from the first example of Hong. "S" refers to the students.

Taking for Granted One's Own Cultural Messages in Negotiating Meaning

One of the characteristics of cross-cultural interactions in these classroom events was that the participants tended to take for granted cultural messages of their own culture. This phenomenon occurred more frequently in the teachers' language behaviors.

When cultural information (about one's own culture or about the others') was assumed rather than made explicit, two kinds of misinterpretation occurred: the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of cultural messages and the misinterpretation of the interactional behaviors.

Here are two other examples to demonstrate the consequences of not making explicit one's cultural presuppositions.

3.2.9. Hong: *Wo gei nimen duan juzi, nimen shuo "dong" haishi "budong."*
[I'll give you short sentences, you tell me if you understand or not.]

3.2.10. Hong: *Suiran ta meiyou bing, keshi hai changchang qu kan bing.*
Meiyou bing, bu yao qu kan bing.
[Although he is healthy, [but] he often goes to see the doctor.
If you are not sick, don't go to see the doctor.]

- 3.2.11. Hong: *Budong, jiu shuo.*
[If don't understand, tell [me].]
- 3.2.12. All S: (Pause. No answer.)
- 3.2.13. Hong: *Budong yao wen wo, bu yao look like dong le.*
[If don't understand, ask me. Don't look like you understand.]
- 3.2.14. All S: (Understand this sentence, and laugh.)
- 3.2.15. Hong: (Laughs with the students.) *Wo zai shuo yi ge juzi.*
[I will give you another sentence.]
- 3.2.16. Hong: *Suiran ta mei chi guo faguo fan, keshi ta changchang chi zhongguo fan.*
[Although he has never had French food, he often eats Chinese food.]
- 3.2.17. All S: (Laugh.)
- 3.2.18. Hong: *Bu xihuan faguo fan. Haishi zhongguo fan hao chi. Mingbai la ma? OK?*
[[He/she] does not like French food. [He/she] still (thinks) Chinese food is good. Understand now? OK.]
- 3.3.1: Hong: (Explained the words of a folk song about the life and natural beauty of the grassland. In between, he tried to put in some casual conversation. So he asked what city people usually do on weekends) *Xingqi tian... qu ...na?*
[Sunday, go where?]
- 3.3.2. All S: *Gongyuan.*
[The park.]
- 3.3.3. Hong: *Zenme yang?*
[How is it?]
- 3.3.4. All S: (Nobody answered.)
- 3.3.5. Hong: *Gongyuan zenme yang?*
[How is the park?]
- 3.3.6. All S: (No answer.)
- 3.3.7. Hong: *You hen duo ren..., bu cuo, hen hao, you yisi.*
[It has a lot of people,... it's good, it's very good, it's interesting.]
- 3.3.8. S: *Hen duo ren? You yisi?*
[It has a lot of people ? It's interesting?]
- 3.3.9. Hong: *Duo shuo yidianr, bu yao "baby talk."*
[Please say something more. Don't just [give] baby talk.]

In these episodes of conversational interaction participants misrepresented and misinterpreted cultural messages and misinterpreted interactional behaviors. Moreover, the majority of these misinterpretations were

caused by the teacher's taking for granted his own cultural information. Let's examine them one by one.

Misrepresentation and Misinterpretation of the Cultural Messages:

In Example 3.2., the teacher gave the students two sentences (3.2.10) and (3.2.16), to test their listening comprehension. The first one 3.2.10 was meant to be funny, but the second one 3.2.16 did not appear to be so to a native speaker of Chinese like the researcher. (The teacher, in the after class conversation, talked about his efforts of using humor in exercises and complained about the students' having no sense of appreciating them. His example was 3.2.10..) Both sentences are very simple ones that the students should have had no difficulty comprehending. However, the students did not laugh at the intentionally funny sentence but they did laugh at the one that did not seem to be funny. To understand this, we have to first know what was supposed to be funny about the first sentence.

Both sentences were used to practise the sentence pattern "Although..., (but)...." Sentence 3.2.10 means "Although he is healthy, (but) he often goes to see the doctor." The teacher's subsequent comment means "If you are not sick, don't go to see the doctor." The teacher said this with a satirical tone and facial expressions. It was intended to be a joke, because in Mainland Chinese cities, there are loopholes in the health care system: Workers can get paid for sick leave, if they go to see the doctor, no matter if they are truly sick or not. This is common knowledge to the Chinese from Mainland China. The teacher was

mocking this phenomenon with his comment. However, for the students of other cultures, there was no way for them to understand the joke without first knowing the background information that made it a joke. However, since the teacher was so familiar with the background knowledge pertaining to the joke, he took it for granted that his joke was funny without realizing that cultural barriers prevented the students from appreciating it. More important is the fact that because the teacher took this cultural fact for granted effective communication was compromised. Not only was the joke not received as being funny, but the teacher also misinterpreted the students' lack of response to his humor. Because when he received no laughter, he asked twice in 3.2.11. and 3.2.13. if the students had comprehend the sentence, "If [you] don't understand, tell me." Similarly, in sentence 3.2.16, he said "Although he has never had French food, he often eats Chinese food." To the teacher, this was not a joke. The sentence simply implies that a person has a food preference. However, this teacher made this statement of food preference because he personally believes that Chinese food is better than any other cuisine. (At the party for the program, during a free conversation among teachers, Hong told the other colleagues that he still thinks that the Chinese food suits his taste most. After having lived many years in North America, he still did not appreciate other kinds of food.) Because he took for granted his personal preference for Chinese food over other food he did not realize that his sentence could be taken as a cultural preference as opposed to an individual preference for a certain kind of

food or that his statement might be otherwise more elaborately interpreted. The students laughed at this sentence. It is not certain that all the students laughed for the same reason. One of the reasons might be that some students thought that preferring Chinese food over French food was funny. Another explanation might be that they laughed at people who are finicky about food. Or perhaps they laughed because they felt that either the teacher's attitude was presented through this sentence, or his body language was funny. It could also be "nervous laughter" because it did not make sense to some. Or that somehow given the prior joke, this was another one they could not understand but should laugh at.

Again, one thing that is clear is that either the cultural information needed to comprehend these sentences was not adequately presented and the intended meanings were probably not understood. What is more significant is the fact that despite not getting the expected reactions, there was no further attempt to ascertain the students' misinterpretation. The unsatisfactory interaction was ignored or overlooked. Therefore, an opportunity of more effective communication was missed. This also shows that a cross-cultural teaching moment was missed.

Example 3.3. displays the same kind of unsatisfactory negotiation. The topic was a comparison of city life and country life. The task focused on reviewing vocabulary. The teacher was trying to engage the students in talking about their views of visiting a park on the weekend. But unfortunately, the

class had not yet learned the vocabulary for describing scenery. (This is an error in teacher's miscalculating students' ability and knowledge that led to misinterpretation of the interactional behaviors. This will be further discussed in the next section.) The teacher volunteered some views first, in an attempt to initiate the conversation (3.3.7.). But his words confused the class because they represented his view of parks. His description of parks was "having a lot of people." To a person from a big Chinese city like Beijing or Shanghai, this is the most apt comment. Picture artificial parks in densely populated cities on Sundays (people there work six days a week.) Amongst the sea of heads and shoulders, one can hardly see anything else. This image is quite different from that which students raised in North America would have in mind. The teacher's image comes from his own cultural memories. And more importantly, his view was not explicitly presented to the class with further explanations because he did not realize the cultural limitation of that view. Again, the result was a lack of effective communication and led to the misinterpretation of the students' interactional behaviors as demonstrated below.

Misinterpretation of the Interactional Behaviors: In lines 3.2.10 to 3.2.15. we see that, no one laughed at the teacher's joke as he had expected. The teacher thought that this was because the students had not understood the meaning of his sentence. Therefore he asked if the students understood what he had said (3.2.11). However, what the teacher meant in terms of the concept of "understanding" is vague. He must have been asking about meaning at the

grammatical and lexical levels, not the cultural or historical aspect of the meaning. Apparently, it may not have occurred to him that there was a need for cultural understanding. The evidence that supports this claim is found in 3.2.13, the teacher said: "If you don't understand, ask me." If the students had understood the joke, they would have laughed, as in 3.2.14. Because they did not think it was funny, they did not laugh. What was there to ask about? Obviously, to me, he meant they should have asked him about the language: a grammatical pattern or the new vocabulary. Otherwise, he would have tried to further explain the needed background knowledge. But he did not. He had overlooked the fact that cultural background information was crucial to the understanding of his joke. Even though he knew that the students had not understood his joke, he did not realize the need to provide further explanation regarding cultural information. Instead, he misinterpreted the students' silent response during the interaction as their having had problems understanding the surface meaning of the sentence. He only once again warned the students not to pretend to understand (3.2.13). By doing so he was blaming the students for not actively participating in the class discussion. At the break, Hong came up to me as the observer of the class and said he could not understand why the students were so unresponsive in class. The consequences of not paying attention to his own cultural presuppositions were his miscalculating the needs of his students and an unsatisfactory "lesson."

In the Example 3.3., the same pattern of interpretation was repeated. The teacher was to teach a song to the class to prepare for the program party. It was a folk song about the life and natural beauty of the grassland. After he explained some verses of the song, he turned to ask by comparison what city-life was like. He began the conversation by asking where city-people would go on weekends. The students answered "parks." When the teacher asked the class to describe a park scene on the weekend (3.3.3 & 3.3.5), nobody answered (3.3.4. & 3.3.6). Part of the reason was simple: many had not yet learned the vocabulary to describe a park. Others were thinking about how to answer, and some did not know what the teacher expected them to say since the topic change was sudden, the teacher did not give a list the words to use or any indication what he had in mind. Also the questions were vague. (3.3.3., 3.3.5.) It could be interpreted in more than one ways: "How do you feel about parks?" and "What makes a park a park?" The teacher tried once more to move the dialogue by suggesting answers. He said: "It has a lot of people." (3.3.7) He said this with a suggesting tone waiting for the students to continue with his sentence. Still no response. He gave further suggestions: "it's good, it's very good, it's interesting." (3.3.7) The students responded by saying: "There are a lot of people? It's interesting ?" (3.3.8) Immediately, they exchanged glances and laughed at it. One explanation could be that because their views of parks differed from their teacher's, they could not believe that a park would have too many people. Another explanation could be that their appreciation of a park

differed from that of their teacher: they did not see the connection: how could a park be full of people and be interesting and good at the same time? This could have also been a misinterpretation of the teacher's words, because the teacher may have been just listing the words that could possibly describe a park and was not actually attempting to make a connection between possible descriptions. I think at first, the students were repeating what the teacher had said because they were amazed by the fact that there were words that they knew that could be used to describe a park. Whatever the reasons for the response, the teacher assumed that the students were merely following his line of thinking and repeating what he had said. Yet this was not his expectation. He wanted original thoughts. He then said: "Please say something more. Don't just (give) baby talk." (3.3.9) He failed to recognize that the students' feedback was actually demanding further information for comprehension. Instead, he took the students' responses as answers to his request. Once again, what blocked the teacher's perception was his unawareness to cultural difference as well as his general insensitivity stemming from the teacher's authoritative position in classroom. And once more, these insensitivities came from the taking for granted of his own cultural views and his views on the role of the language teacher as one who simply elicits target language utterances or reviews vocabulary.

Stereotypical Views of the Others' Cultural and Linguistic Messages in
Negotiating Meaning

In example 3.1. the task of the lesson was to review the vocabulary of body parts and their functions. The drill pattern was simple and straight forward: the teacher pointed at a part and asked the students to identify it and name its function in Chinese. Even for this simple exercise, something more complex occurred.

3.1.1. Hong: (begins the class by correcting the mistakes the students made in their previous exercises.) *Xianzai fuxi shengci. Zuotian bushi xue le shengci ma?* (Draws a picture of a man on the blackboard.)
Xian kan shenti de bufen.

[Now let's review the new vocabulary. [We] learned new vocabulary yesterday, right? Let's first look at the parts of the body.]

3.1.2. Hong: *ji yi ji, ranhou wo ca diao.*

[Try to remember [the words], afterwards I will erase them.]

3.1.3. S: eh?! (Look at each other; nobody knows what he is saying.)

3.1.4. Michael: (Makes a face to the principal instructor, who is observing the class, indicating he has no idea what is going on.)

3.1.5. Hong: (points at his own head.) *Zhe shi shenma?*

[What is this?]

3.1.6. S: *Tou*

[Head.]

3.1.7. Hong: *Dui, zhe ge ne?* (Pulls his own hair.) *Keshi, bu tai duo.*

[Correct. What about this? But not a lot.]

(Note: He is slightly bald-headed and is making a joke about his hair.)

3.1.8. S: *Toufa.* (Nobody laughs at his joke.)

[Hair.]

3.1.9. Hong: *Dui, toufa. Zhegene? Zhe shi shenma?* (Points at an eye.)

[Correct, hair. What about this? What is this?]

3.1.10. Hong: (Before the students give an answer, he walks to the blackboard to number each part of the body and then points individually to each student to name the part.)(points at the eye, and at the same time points to Irene.)

- 3.1.11. Irene: *Yanjing*
[Eye.]
- 3.1.12. Hong: *Dui ma?*
[Is that right?]
- 3.1.13. All S: *Dui.*
[Right.]
- 3.1.14. Hong: *En, yong yanjing zuo shenma?*
[Right. What do [you] use [your] eyes to do?]
- 3.1.15. Mordy: *Kan.*
[See.]
- 3.1.16. Hong: *Dui, kan. Hai you ne?*
[Right, see. What else?]
- 3.1.17. Serge: *Kan dianying.*
[Watch a movie.]
- 3.1.18. Anna: *Kan shu...*
[Read books.]
- 3.1.19. Hong: *Dui, kan dianying, kan dianshi, kan shu. Hai kan shenme?*
[Right, watch movies, watch TV, read books, and what else do [you] see/watch/look at?]
- 3.1.20. Mike: *Kan guniang.*
[Look at girls. (Or "visit girls.")]
- 3.1.21. Hong: *Kan guniang?* (Knits his brows indicating that the statement was not very appropriate.)
[Look at girls?]
- 3.1.22. Hong: (Points at the ear.) *Shei shuo zhe ge shi shenme?*
[Who can tell what this is?]
- 3.1.23. Jane: *Erduo*
[Ear.]
- 3.1.24. Hong: *Dui, yong erduo zuo shenme?*
[Right, what do [you] use [your] ears to do?]
- 3.1.25. Jack: *Ting, ting dianhua?*
[Listen, listen to the telephone?]
- 3.1.26. Hong: *Dui, keyi ting dianhua.*
[Right, (you) can listen to the telephone.]
- 3.1.27. Mordy: *Ting yinyue.*
[Listen to music.]
- 3.1.28. Hong: *Dui, ting yinyue, ting gudian yinyue...*
[Right, listen to music, listen to classical music...]
- 3.1.29. Jane: *Ting xiandai yinyue.*
[Listen to modern music.]
- 3.1.30. Hong: (Points at the heart.) *Xin, xin zuo shenme?*
[Heart. What does the heart do?]
- 3.1.31. S: (Pause. Nobody knows how to answer.)

- 3.1.32. Mike: *Xihuan*
[Like (love).]
- 3.1.33. Hong: (Pause)
- 3.1.34. Hong: *You hongde...*
[There is/[you] have red...(stuff).]
- 3.1.35. All S: (Pause. No answer.)
- 3.1.36. Hong: *Xue.*
[Blood.]
- 3.1.37. Hong: *Tou bu shufu?*
[[One's] head is not comfortable?]
- 3.1.38. All S: *Touteng*
[Headache.]
Jane: *Fashao.*
[Fever.]
- 3.1.39. Hong: *Lai kan shu. Lai yiqi nian.*
[Now, read (your) books. Read aloud together.]

Lines 3.1.19 to 3.1.21 were elucidating the eyes and seeing/looking.

Misrepresentation and Misinterpretation of the Cultural Messages:

The word "*kan*" in Chinese has several meanings in functional language use. Up to the time of this classroom conversation, the meanings of this word that had been covered were "to look at," "to read," "to watch," "to see," "to think," and "to visit informally." The simple phrase "*kan guniang*" (3.1.21), here, had created some complications and misunderstanding. Contextually speaking, the teacher asked the students to list the usages of the verb "*kan*." When Mike gave the teacher the phrase "*kan*," he meant to offer an example of a different usage of the word "*kan*." Since all other meanings, "to read, to look at, to watch," had been mentioned already, Mike meant to give an example of "to visit informally." If analyzed from this sense of the context, it should not have been too ambiguous for the teacher to expect the next example to be "to visit."

However, it did not even occur to the teacher that Mike meant to "visit" girls, even though he did (He offered this as his intended meaning during our discussion.) Instead, the teacher believed without a doubt that Mike meant "look at girls" and therefore he used his facial expression to tell Mike that it was not culturally acceptable to say that in public. It did not occur to him at that moment that there was another possibility in interpreting this phrase. There are several levels of difficulty. First, it is a problem of the sensitivity to language use. Semantically speaking, the phrase that Mike used is an ambiguous one. Without a context it can mean either "look at girls" or "visit girls." Especially when the word "*kan*" combines with the expression "*guniang*" (young girls), it normally sounds very much like "look at girls" to native Chinese speakers (In contrast to *kan pengyou* (friend) and *kan ba-ma* (parents), "visit friends" and "visit parents" which create no such ambiguity. And, more importantly, socially, there seems to be a distinction between the two meanings of the phrase *kan guniang*. "Visit girls" has an acceptable neutral sense as a social behavior, while "look at girls" is considered improper social behavior. Mike, as a Chinese language learner, was not aware of the subtlety of the language and overgeneralized the rule of using "*kan*" in combination with expressions for people as in referring to "visiting people," and, thus, used this phrase. The teacher, on the other hand, took the meaning of the phrase, based upon his native speaker's instinct and sensitivity to the combination of the two words, to be "look at girls." In other words, the teacher's native speaker's

sensitivity to the phrase had overshadowed, and thus, interfered with his sensitivity to the other possibilities of the usages of the word that the class had discussed previously.

Nevertheless, another explanation of this incident could be that the context of the class conversation where others were using *kan* primarily in the sense of "looking at", when Mike said "*kan guniang*", the functional meaning of the word switched. It was used out of the previous context. If there was misunderstanding, it was due to the inadequate effort of the teacher to follow the fluidity of the context. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Secondly, the teacher's stereotypical views of the student's cultural background and identity also influenced his reaction. The teacher believed that the students who grow up in western cultures are generally overtly sexual. That is to say that the teacher had already been psychologically prepared to accept the intended meaning of the student's statement as being "to look at girls" instead of "to visit girls." Therefore, he raised objections without allowing the student to clarify his message since the practice of forms took precedence over communicating message, low priority was given to negotiating meaning. This allows for the teacher's presumed meaning to go unchallenged. Another possible explanation of the teacher's negative reaction to Mike's answer could be from the fact of Mike's being of Chinese origin. Mike was one of the few Chinese students who was born and raised in North America, and had no previous learning of Chinese before taking the course. Were Mike "Caucasian,"

the teacher may have laughed, as the Caucasian students were expected to be naughty, while the Chinese were not. This is only speculation but given the context presented in the previous chapter, it is a reasonable possibility.

Misinterpretation of the Interactional Behaviors: During the class break, Mike was teased by his classmates for being mischievous in class. Mike refused to accept the criticism. He asked the observer if it was true that there was a word that actually meant "visit." When he was assured that his answer was proper, he said to his classmates: "See, I was right, I knew it." Mike felt wronged because he had been earnestly contributing to the classroom activities, but, unfortunately, he was misunderstood to be naughty. One positive thing that Mike might have learned from his experience is that, for whatever reason, the phrase he gave was not acceptable. But the teacher missed an opportunity of facilitating his learning, thus, the ambiguity in Mike's statement was not adequately explained to him.

In the various ways to interpret the incident, it is clear that the participants used, to a certain extent, overgeneralization. Mike overgeneralized the linguistic pattern to produce a phrase that deviated from what he intended. The teacher overgeneralized the messages produced through his native language as well as his cultural image of the student, and thus, misinterpreted the student's utterance, the student's language behavior, and the contextual meaning of his utterance and behavior. Although in class time being a constraint, worked against allowing for these deviations from the norm of

"form based practice." Nonetheless, the implication of the incident is more of an issue of communication than teaching method. If the sociocultural aspect of the meaning negotiation had been given more consideration in this case, the pedagogical practice might have carried out differently, and the learning objectives would have been achieved more efficiently.

There are several important lessons here. First, the teacher --- usually the authority when interpreting the target language and culture in the classroom --- sometimes takes for granted his\her own cultural and linguistic features. This unintentional behavior may cause misunderstanding and misinterpretation during cross-cultural interaction in the language teaching and learning process. Secondly, when this behavior occurs, the assumed and assigned social roles of the teacher in the classroom and the notions of what interactions should occur make it difficult for the teacher to objectively perceive the consequences of his/her language behaviors.

From Examples 3.1., we can see that one of the reasons that the teacher had misunderstood Mike's response could be because he applied a stereotypical cultural image to the student. If that was the situation, it could explain why other possible interpretations of the student's words did not occur to him.

The following are further examples of the application of the stereotypical views to other participants' cultures which also lead to inefficient communication. These following examples are from one of Ben's classes. The

topic of the class discussion was religion and the Chinese culture. Here are four episodes of discussion.

5.1.1. Ben: *Qishi nimen zai le, Wo jiu gei nimen zuo ye le. You yi xie tongxue zuotian bu zaile, na mei fa gei nimen zuo ye le. Tai kexi le. Wo gaosu nimen a, you xie tongxue haishi bian yong jianti bian yong fanti zi le. Kou ban fen, zhuyao shi Huayi tongxue ah. Zhe shi xiangzheng xing de, ah.*

[Actually, if you were here, I would have given you back your homework. Some students were not here yesterday. That is why I could not give you the homework. Too bad. I'm telling you, some of you are still using simplified characters and the traditional versions at the same time. Deduct half point [for each character.] (I am talking about) mainly, the students of Chinese origin. This (punishment) is symbolic.]

5.1.2. Jane: *Ke women bu hui a!*

[But we don't know how.]

5.1.3. Ben: *Zidian li dou you. Nimen yao xia yi xie gongfu le. Nimen lai shang ernianji, bu mai yi ge hao yi dian de zidian, na zenme cheng le. Wo bu tongyi le. Zhe shi yi ge xiangzheng eryl a.*

(Very loudly and sternly) [They are all in the dictionary. You need to work harder. You (plural) came to the second level and didn't buy a good dictionary. How will that do? This is just symbolic (referring to the deduction of the points.)]

5.2.1. Ben: *Jintian shi yao taolun zongjiao...*

[Today we will discuss religion...]

(The discussion is first on historical events beginning with the Crusades. And then the class discusses the influence of Christianity on China and the differences between the Western culture and Chinese culture.)

5.2.2. Ben: *Chule zhege yiwai, weishenme zongjiao shi hen zhongyao de.*

[Besides this, why is religion so important?]

5.2.3. S: (No answer.)

5.2.4. Ben: *Yiqian ren neng kan shu ma? Hen shao ren neng kan shu le.*

Zhege jiao shenme? Wenhua shuiping hen di.

[In the past, could people read? Very few people could read. What is this called? Low educational level.]

5.2.5. Pat: *Di?*

(Does not understand.) [Low?]

5.2.6. Ben: *Suoyi hen duo ren you mixin. A communist teacher is here.*

Henduo ren you mixin. Zongjiao he mixyou shenme guanxi? Wo wen huayi tongxue ne? You guanxi meiyou? Wo wen Wang Xi.

[Therefore, many people were superstitious. A communist

teacher is here. (Referring to the observer.) Many people were superstitious. What is the connection between religion and superstition? I am asking the students of Chinese origin. Is there any connection? I am asking Wang Xi.]

5.2.7. WX: (No answer.)

5.2.8. Ben: *Wo shi wen ni de, ni yao shuo qilai.*

[I am asking you. You should answer.]

5.2.9. WX: *Wo buzhidao.*

(Very reluctantly.) [I don't know.]

5.2.10. Ben: *Na shei you yijian le?*

[Then, who has an opinion?]

5.2.11. Alex: *Wo xiang you zongjiao cai you mixin.*

[I think (when) there are religions then (you can) have superstitions.]

(Afterwards, the discussion shifts to religious beliefs and moral education.)

5.3.1. Ben: *Meiyou zongjiao you shenme?*

[If there is no religion, what do we have?]

5.3.2. Pat: Humanism.

5.3.3. Ben: *Rendaozhuyi. Shei tingshuo Masochism. Sili xuexiao, genju rendaozhuyi jiao haizi daode, meiyou zongjiao.*

[Humanism. Who has ever heard of "Masochism?" Private schools, teach kids morals according to Humanism, not religions.]

5.3.4. Jane: *Wo juede, bu shi zai sili xuexiao, huo zongjiao. Ni haishi keyi xuedao daode he jiazhi de. Wo jiushi zhe yangde.*

[I think, the point is not going to private or religious schools. You can always learn moral and social values. That is what happened to me.]

5.3.5. Ben: *Na dangran. Women qu xuexiao shi xue zenme guo rizi. Bu zhishi suansuan. Yi ge laoshi de renwu shi jiao haizi jiazhi. Danshi, ruguo ni you qian de hua, nimen song ta dao zongjiao xuexiao haishi sili xuexiao? Nide haizi, Wang Xi?*

[Of course. We go to school to learn how to live our lives. Not just to learn how to count. A teacher's task is to teach kids values. But if you had money, would you send him/her to religious schools or private schools? Your kids, Wang Xi?]

5.3.6. WX: *Wo?...En... Yinwei wo ziji shi tianzhujiao, wo hui song tamen qu tianzhujiao xuexiao ba.*

[Me? ... ummm... Because I am a Catholic, I probably would send them to a Catholic school.]

5.3.7. Ben: *Zhe shi you sili, gonggongde. Zhe shi nide renwei.*

[We are talking about public and private schools. This is your opinion (choice).]

5.3.8. WX: *Nide wenti bushi yao buyao, zongjiao shi shenghuo de yi fangmian.*
[I don't think the problem is making a choice. Religion is a part of life.]

5.3.9. Ben: (Turns to talk to a Japanese student and asks the same question to her.)

(Speaking about Buddhism and the Japanese culture.)

5.4.1. Ben: *Xinyang he wenhua shi liang ge dongxi. Wang Xi, tianzhujiao he zhongguo wenhua you chongtu ma?*

[Belief and culture are two different things. Wang Xi, is there conflict between Catholic and Chinese culture?]

5.4.2. WX: *Wo budong zhongguo wenhua.*

[I don't know anything about Chinese culture.]

5.4.3. Ben: *Ni shi xuexi zhongguo yuyan de. A! Zhongguo de wenhua, zhongguoren chongbai shenme! Tianzhujiao ni dong ma! Chongtu shi shenme?*

[But you are studying Chinese language. Right? Chinese culture, what do Chinese people worship? You know Catholicism! What is the conflict? (You know what 'conflict' is.)]

5.4.4. WX: *Haoliang meiyou chongtu, danshi bu yi yang.*

[There seems to be no conflict. But there are differences.]

5.4.5. Ben: *Haoliang meiyou chongtu, danshi bu yi yang. Ni jieshi yi xia.*

[There seems no conflict. But there are differences. You explain that.]

5.4.6. WX: *Tianzhujiao bu zhuyi laorenjia.*

[Catholicism does not emphasize (respecting) old people.]

As was introduced in the previous chapters, Ben is Caucasian and he had some conflicts with the students of Chinese origin in his class. One of the causes of misunderstanding between the students and this teacher was their mutual overgeneralization of each other's cultural backgrounds and mutual expectations based on each other's physical features. One piece of evidence of the teacher's stereotyping the students' cultural background is the fact that he consistently addressed them as a group. He used the term "*huayti tongxue*" (students of Chinese origin) to distinguish those students from the Caucasians and Japanese. He used the term at the beginning of this episode when he

criticized them as a group (5.1.), later on in the discussion (5.2.) he used it again, when he wished to choose a student to answer his question. The purpose of this study is not to judge if this is strategically intelligent, however, by doing so in class the teacher not only singled out the students as a group, he also put himself in opposition to this group. The point here is that this group of students, even though they all looked Chinese, still, as far as their linguistic and cultural backgrounds are concerned --- not to mention their individual personalities --- were very different from one another. Some of them were born and raised in the West, others came originally from Hong Kong or Taiwan at various ages. Some could speak Mandarin; others could speak other dialects. Some knew the basics of writing in Chinese, others did not. What is even more complicated is that for those who were born in North America, even though some spoke everyday Chinese with some fluency, they still lacked the vocabulary needed to express more complex ideas. The teacher overlooked the complexity of this "group" of students and by overgeneralizing their backgrounds provoked the following misunderstandings or conflicts.

Misinterpretation of the Interactional Behaviors: In examples 5.2., 5.3., and 5.5., Ben had conversations with the student Wang Xi three times. First, in 5.2., the teacher asked WX, as a student of Chinese origin if there was any connection between religion and superstition. In 5.2.6., Ben named WX after he said he was directing the question to the students of Chinese origin. WX did not answer him (5.2.7). After the teacher pressed her to talk (5.2.8.),

WX said she did not know the answer. There are several possible reasons for WX giving an "I don't know" answer. Number one: she really didn't know the answer. Number two: she did not have a ready answer to give at the moment the teacher asked her. Number three: she did not like the way the teacher put the question to her: that is, he picked her out to answer the question because he wanted a student of Chinese origin to answer the question. Or, she was experiencing a combination of the three possibilities. WX was born and raised in North America. Her mother was a Chinese language teacher, and WX learned Chinese at home. Her first and dominant language is English, but her speaking and writing of the Chinese language was above the second level Chinese language class. But for her and the other Chinese descendants, the degree of their knowledge of any aspect of Chinese culture, cannot be generalized on the basis of appearance but depends on each individual's actual experience. And like the second and third generation immigrants from the other cultures, she experienced a certain amount of identity confusion as well. When the teacher singled her out as a *huayi tongxue* (student of Chinese origin), and assumed that she must have known the connection between religion and superstition, it could have been very much out of resentment that she answered: "I don't know." It is also possible that since she spoke Mandarin fluently, she recognized that the teacher assumed she knew about Chinese culture as well, therefore she was embarrassed to admit that she lacked cultural knowledge. In 5.4.2. WX stated that she did not know anything about Chinese culture. And in

5.4.6. when she was cornered to comment on Catholicism (since the teacher pointed out she knew the word "conflict" and Catholicism and admitted she knew there were differences between Catholicism and Chinese culture in 5.4.1., 5.4.3., and 5.4.5.,) she said in 5.4.6. "*Tianzhujiào bù zhùyì lǎorénjiā.*" (Catholicism does not pay attention to old people.) She used the word "*zhùyì*" (pay attention to) instead of the more suitable word "*zhōngshì*" or "*zhūzhōng*" (emphasis, respect), which shows that linguistically her choice of words is not standard. However, the teacher was not convinced that she did not know the answer. He thought she was not being cooperative in class. That is why twice more during the class, he asked her by calling her by name to participate in the discussion. In 5.4.1., he asked WX if there was any connection between Catholic and the Chinese culture. WX answered him directly that she did not know anything about Chinese culture. Still, the teacher criticized her excuses by saying "But you are studying the Chinese language,... you know Catholicism, (you also) know the word 'conflict'." (5.4.3.) The reasoning behind the what the teacher said, once again, followed the lines of some other overgeneralized messages: 1. WX should not have had difficulty understanding Chinese culture because she spoke mandarin fluently; 2. since WX said she believed in Catholicism, she should understand its doctrines; and 3. WX knew the word "conflict," thus she should be able to answer the question.

The teacher, Ben did not realize that his unspoken conflict with WX was partly caused by his overgeneralization of the following messages: First, he

overgeneralized the students. Not all the students of Chinese origin in that class were from the same cultural and linguistic background. They did not have the same level of Chinese language proficiency or equal knowledge about Chinese cultures of various populations. Secondly, he misunderstood the relationship between an individual's linguistic proficiency in a target language and that individual's knowledge of the target culture.

In the cases of the students of Chinese origin in this study, there are some complications with regards to language and culture. First, to some of these students, there exists a gap between their language proficiency and cultural knowledge. Students like WX, are quite fluent in most everyday situations, but when asked to engage in conversation on more abstract cultural topics, they lack both the vocabulary and the knowledge of the cultures that were assumed to be their "native" cultures (assumed to be gained within culture.) Moreover, there is a complication in terms of the relationship or lack of relationship between language proficiency and cultural views and cultural attitudes expressed through that language. Students of Chinese origin may be fluent when using the Chinese language in some situations, but their Chinese language often reflects cultural views and attitudes that may not congruent in accordance with the Chinese cultures found in other countries. Although, their performance in class was handicapped by their lack of cultural knowledge, their fluency and native-like pronunciation fueled the assumption that their cultural knowledge was equally proficient.

Since the teacher stereotyped the students, he expected WX to behave in class like the other Chinese students such as Alex and Jane who are from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Also because he conflated linguistic fluency with dominant cultural knowledge of Chinese, he misinterpreted her language behaviors in class.

The discussion in this class was guided by the teacher and the conversation was dominated by the teacher. Only two students out 14, Alex (from Hong Kong), Jane (from Taiwan) were comparatively active in the discussion; they volunteered answers several times. The rest of the students in the class often felt lost because, on the one hand, the topic of the conversation was beyond most of the students' command of the Chinese language; on the other hand, the topic was too abstract; and as such, was too difficult for many of the students to discuss. However, the reason that the teacher guided the discussion in this way was because he wanted the class discussion to appeal to the students of Chinese origin. Nevertheless, not only the teacher underestimated the difficulty level of interactive discourse, such as rules for interactive discourse he had not taught and yet were consistently unconsciously called upon, but also he overestimated the language proficiency of all the students of Chinese origin as a homogeneous group. As was mentioned above, before this class, the students of Chinese origin had an unspoken conflict with the teacher. They did not show up for his class. This was the first class after reconciliation. According to the principal instructor of the class and some

students, the students' official complaints were: 1) The teacher was not being fair to them. 2) His class was boring. Having this discussion at this time reflected the teacher's effort to improve the class and his relationship with those students. But what the teacher had failed to achieve once more in his class was effective communication with the students. This is because he did not realize that one of the crucial causes of both complaints on part of the students was his lack of awareness of their individual problems and differences, which itself was based on his overgeneralized views of the students and their situations.

Misrepresentation and Misinterpretation of the Cultural Messages:

Since the sociocultural aspect of the language classroom interaction was not emphasized, form based practice predominated. Students had few opportunities to negotiate their messages. Furthermore, teachers had little patience for allowing for other than the idea they were seeking to elicit. There in lies the seeds for potentially greater cross-cultural miscommunication. For example 5.3.. Before example 5.3., the class was discussing moral education and types of schools. Ben, the teacher, made a comment that public schools lack moral education. In the subsequent discussion (5.3.3. and 5.3.5.), twice, he indicated that in terms of moral education, there was the private school on the one side teaching morals from a humanist base without religion, and the religious schools on the other side teaching morals from a religious base. Jane, in 5.3.4., expressed her disagreement by rejecting his assumption about the roles of

schools in moral education by saying that she herself had received good moral education from other sources. WX, in 5.3.6., expressed disagreement of his belief about the relationship between religion and moral education and schools. To WX's understanding, "religion is a part of life," not the domain of schools. The teacher went on to discuss the choice of school to another student. Here rather than engaged in drawing the students into a dialogue, the instructor silenced them and moved to another item on the agenda "choice of schools" to practice the vocabulary of "private" and "public." Because the teacher had assumed that students viewed the relationship between the types of school and moral education, and the concepts of "public school" and "private school" in the same way he did, he corrupted his own original point of the discussion. He overlooked the he fact that some of his students were from Hong Kong, some from Taiwan, and others from Japan, and that these students may have had experienced a variety of different systems of moral education.

Simplification of Social Roles in Classroom Discourse

Traditionally, the concept of "teaching" is interpreted as "giving instruction," while "learning" is viewed as "receiving instruction." "Teachers do the talking and students listen and follow instructions." The almost universally accepted classroom arrangement --- the position of the teacher at the front and center of the room facing the audience --- goes hand in hand with the teacher-

centered teaching and learning environment. In the case of Chinese language teachers at the college level, since they are usually native speakers of the target language, they are not only given the teacher's instructive and disciplinary authority in class, they are also given the authority to explain the language and the culture. As seen from the perspective of the students, the qualities of being instructive, authoritative, and dominant form the image of a serious teacher. The classroom experience relies on the integrity of the balance of these three facets that conventionally defined the teacher's role. The stereotypical "good teacher" maintains the image of the integrity of that balance. The current study does not argue whether or not these qualities are essential to being a good teacher, but describes what happens when these concepts are narrowly defined and acted upon in classroom interactions.

Being both imperceptibly influenced by social assumptions and trained in this kind of educational system, both teachers and learners become accustomed to their respective roles in classroom situations. It is easy for customary phenomena to become habitual and then to be taken for granted. As observed in this study, there are two aspects to this issue: On the one hand, based on their inflexible definitions of classroom social roles, whether or not we agree with this system, teachers and students in this study had certain expectations of themselves and one another in that context. These expectations occasionally interfered with their perceptions and interpretations of the social context and the language behaviors of the other participants. On the other hand,

any deviation from the usual patterns of this context quickly caused discomfort and insecurity in the participants involved in those social events which in turn affected the success or failure of cross-cultural understanding.

Narrow Definitions of Teachers' Roles in Classroom Interaction

Narrow Definitions of Teachers' Role as Academic Authority

A result of the teacher's being perceived as the authority was that the effect of the teacher's language behaviors were enhanced in the classroom context. In the examples that were discussed above, the teacher's (3.1.21.) facial expression would not have mattered very much to the student if it had not occurred in a classroom situation. Moreover, if this event had not occurred in the classroom, where the teacher felt he had the duty to perform as a teacher, he might not have acted so seriously about one casual remark. Both the teacher and the student acted and reacted according to their beliefs about the teacher's academic and disciplinary position of authority, which added weight to the teacher's communicative behaviors.

Another impact was that the teacher tried to preserve his/her authority by maintaining his/her title as a teacher. The title "Professor" had the effect of giving authoritative significance to the position itself. The term "*Huayi tongxue* (the students of Chinese origin) that Ben consistently used, though not in a

derogatory way, functioned to distinguish the teacher from that group of students. It served as a reminder to the students that "You are students, and I am the teacher here." The connotation was: "Even though you are Chinese, and I am not. I still hold linguistic authority and social power over you." In the sense that the teacher felt insecure about his linguistic authority in the class, he used the term as a device to preserve the teacher's solemn tone as an authority figure. The evidence of this claim comes from the analysis of the principal instructor who worked with Ben and who had mediated the conflict between Ben and the students. According to her, Ben, as a young and relatively inexperienced non-native Chinese teacher was psychologically challenged by half a class of Chinese-looking students. She had a series of serious talks with Ben, and in her opinion, Ben was insecure about being accepted as a capable Chinese scholar in class. She found out that Ben worried that he would not be respected by the students of Chinese origin. This was also the reason why Ben continually demonstrated his cultural and linguistic knowledge of Chinese language and Chinese social and cultural issues, even though sometimes it was not related to the lessons. In my interpretation, Ben's sense of insecurity explains why he employed the term "*Huayi tongxue*" (the students of Chinese origin). Nevertheless, these teachers' language behaviors, such as adopting certain term to refer to a group of students, being a disciplinarian (5.1.1., 5.1.3.,) demonstrating irrelevant superior level knowledge in class and so on, which functioned to strengthen their authoritative position in the classroom,

were not only rational under the commonly accepted framework of language teaching and learning but even products of that system. As in Ben's case, for example, if an assumed "native speaker" standard was used by the students, then Ben, as a foreigner, was bound to be evaluated negatively by those students who had assumptions of what "real Chinese" was. This also explains why those Caucasian students, who accepted Ben, did so: Not having substantial experience with the language, they held faith in the system which certified Ben as an authority on Mandarin. Yet, with Ben's authority seemingly eroded by those students who appeared to have a greater degree of experience with the language, it was rational that Ben would take measures to protect his authority, which would normally remain unquestioned in the present system. The decision or instinct to shore up his authority arose from the commonly accepted concept of a teacher's authoritative status in classroom practice. An example of the opposite can be seen in the examples to be discussed later of Lily, whose actions, such as giving up the title "*laoshi*" (teacher) was, in her theory, equivalent to giving up authority.

Narrow Definitions of Teacher's Role as Instructor

Through a composition of interviews with participants and observation of their language behaviors in classroom interactions, it was evident to the researcher that the teachers' responsibilities as instructors were narrowly

defined as simply giving lectures and telling the students what to do, including giving didactic instructions containing philosophical precepts. Some of these implicate definitions was especially evident in Lily's interactions as she tried to follow a different definition. Detailed analysis will be shown subsequently. The direct consequence of the narrow definition were: first, at times the teachers became inefficient communicators, who only gave instructions, who listened selectively and thus did not listen to what the students were trying to convey in their messages. On these occasions, aspects of the conversational interactions were misinterpreted by all of the participants, and consequently carrying out the teachers' instructions became very inefficient, as in the examples of Hong (3.2.13, 3.3.9.) and Ben, (5.3., 5.4.) Secondly and more importantly, by becoming more didactic as a result of ineffective communication, the teachers actually not only imposed their interpretation and understanding of the context to the class, they also shifted the blame to the students. In a sense, on these occasions the teachers pursued "form" goals and created social tensions because they were permitting only limited social interaction, enforcing thusly, their authority to recognize or silence the students. These phenomena will be discussed further in the next chapter, analysis of the structural organization of the discourse.

Narrow Definitions of Teacher's Role as Socially Dominant Figures in Class

This study does not deny a teacher's control of the class. But what should be controlled? How should one control? These are important questions. The consequences of violating this view will be examined in the stories of Lily. There are certain limitations to implementing the overly simplified dominance will also be examined in the structural organization of the discourse in the next chapter.

Fixed Definitions of Teacher's Social Roles

The inflexible image of teacher formed in the traditional framework of language teaching and learning had a strong impact on both the students' and teachers' language behaviors in class. As far as the students were concerned, even though they sometimes resented being subordinate during the classroom interactions and disliked being constantly advised and controlled, still, from their previous educational experience, they were well prepared to experience it in the Chinese language class. And moreover, they expected to have teachers who possessed an integration of all the above mentioned qualities of instructiveness, authority, and dominance. When a teacher shattered the balance, the students felt uncertain of their own roles in the class, and thus felt uncomfortable. As for the teachers, most of their language behaviors followed

the fixed image of a good teacher. Even when one consciously tried to behave contrary to that image, still, his/her language behaviors often reflected the fixed definitions.

The following is an example of a teacher who challenged the usual image of the teacher's authoritative position in class. The following are some episodes of in-class conversations between this teacher and her students.

4.1.1. Lily: My name is Lily. *Jiao wo Lili* [Call me Lily.] Don't call me "teacher." Call me Lily instead of "teacher." Because I don't like that word. I am a student. I study here just like you... In the xxxxx department. Nnnnn... I've been here for... almost eight years. Tell me what tones are my name? "Li?" My name is Lily.

4.1.2. S: Second? Fourth?

4.1.3. Lily: Yea, fourth. "Li?" [e.g. the second "li" in her name.] (pointing at one student.)

4.1.4. S: Fourth?

4.1.5. Lily: No.

4.1.6. S: Second?

4.1.7. Lily: Right. What is your name, please?

4.2.1. Lily: (Writing words on the blackboard.) How do you pronounce this?

4.2.2. S: (Pronouncing the word) *Ni hao*.

4.2.3. Lily: Very good! There is a tricky one. What is this?

4.2.4. S: *ma? ma?*

4.2.5. Lily: Use your ears, your heart, rather than analyzing it.

4.2.6. Mike: Can you tell us the difference?

4.2.7. Lily: Which one?

4.2.8. Mike: Yea, which one?

4.2.9. Lily: Excuse me! (Laugh loudly.)

4.3.1. Lily: (After the break.) Where are all the guys? Better come on time.

Otherwise, the others will have to wait. I know it is much fun to be outside. Learning a new language is very stressful. I know it because I've been there myself. And my husband, too. He sometimes got crazy: Ahhhhhhhh... I told him, you know, the trick is, you have to enjoy it. You'll all pass. Don't let that, the grade? No, don't let that bother you. Nobody is going to tell you how to. You, yourself can find an enjoyable way to learn it.

- 4.3.2. Lily: Look at these words: (Writes on the blackboard.) *Zhe* = this.
Pronounced *zhe*, is light. The sound is much lighter. See this: *na*
= that. *Na* is stronger.
- 4.3.3. Tony: What about *ma*? Isn't it in English that the expressions of inquiry
are pronounced much heavier?
- 4.3.4. Lily: *Ma* has a mouth part. Put a mouth in a horse --- inquiring
information. Actually, in Chinese, all the words at the end of the
sentence, inquiring information, have this mouth thing. I don't
know. I don't know about the English, but I do know that there
is a similarity. Try to feel it. The feeling...
- 4.3.5. Lily: Hopefully learning another language makes us smarter. When you
learn other languages, you are much aware, not only of their
culture but your own, right?
- 4.4.1. Lily: One way to miss less is to practise Chinese characters. Now I
give you the English you tell me in Chinese. How do you say
"college"?
- 4.4.2. S: *Xue*...
- 4.4.3. Lily: Try again, keep trying, we will get there.
- 4.4.4. S: *Daxue*.
- 4.4.5. Lily: Not the one I want. This is for practice. Everybody, relax. I know
you have a problem with it. It is alright. Relax. It's for fun.
- 4.4.6. Sara: (Gets impatient.) Will you just write it on the board so that I can
read it?
- 4.5.1. Lily: *Nimen hao?*
[How are you? [plural]]
- 4.5.2. S: *Ni hao?*
[How are you?]
- 4.5.3. Lily: *Nimen zuotian fuxi gongke fuxi de haobuhao?*
[Did you have a good review of the text yesterday?]
- 4.5.4. Will: *Buhao*
[No.]
- 4.5.5. Lily: *Na* we have a quiz.
[Then, we (are going to) have a quiz.]
- 4.5.6. S: What?
- 4.5.7. Lily: Just kidding. I'd like to know if you grasp what I said. Let's
practise Lesson 25.
- 4.5.8. S: No, we just learned it today.
- 4.5.9. Lily: O.K. No problem. I can do Lesson 24.
- 4.6.1. Lily: When I study English, I just love it. I love the sound. I
memorized it. When I speak, I speak with fluency. I don't

translate. You like to do it and you need to do it every day. If you go to the gym, you exercise and then you quit, what happens?

4.6.2. S: *Buzhidao*.

[Don't know.]

4.6.3. Lily: No more muscles. That is why you have to remember that the heart in Chinese has great significance. (Writes words with the mouth radical on the blackboard.)

4.6.4. Lily: I do this to help you to remember Chinese characters, because you do have problems. Now I have done my part. There is no rule to which how much you should do. Just to the extent that you are happy. A happy person learns well. (Points at the Character exercise book.) Don't waste money. That is a sin, use it.

4.6.5. Lily: (Uses her finger to write a character.) How do you say this?

4.6.6. S: Trace.

4.6.7. Lily: Right, I don't know how to say it. Show it to me in class, bring it to me to have a look. I don't believe in pressure. I am here to help. Not only help, it is enjoyable. When you enjoy it, you do it well. Bring this little book for me. Just Lesson 25, or all the other pages. I don't care about other pages. You can throw it away or burn it. I don't care.

4.6.8. Lily: We can go to 25 now if you want. (Laughs)

4.6.9. S: No....

4.6.10. Lily: Next session, I will dictate. (Laugh.) I will not dictate. We'll have a dictation.

4.6.11. S: (Two students laugh. The others make no response.)

4.6.12. Lily: Open your books and prepare for the dictation. Note down. I'll just give you time to absorb. You can go on forever at home. What did I tell you yesterday?

4.6.13. S: (Look at each other, nod their heads.)

4.6.14. Lily: Eh. Memorize the title. Who can tell me?

4.6.15. Mordy: (Reads from the book.) *Ta zuo fan, zuo de hao bu hao?*
[Does he cook well?]

4.6.16. Lily: Dannielle, tell me again.

4.6.17. Dannielle: (Tries to get her neighbour to show her where it is in the book.) *Ta... zuo? Zuo fan zuo ... de hao? Bu hao?*

4.6.18. Lily: *Kuai shuo*. Do it again.

[Say it faster. Do it again.]

4.6.19. Dannielle: (Shrugs her shoulders to indicate that she can not go faster.)

4.6.20. Lily: Yesterday I told you to tell me the grammar. If you did it at home, by now, you know the grammar, right?

4.6.21. Mark: In what language?

4.6.22. Lily: Most important. That is most important. Whoever wants to explain the grammar? Jeff? want to try?

4.6.23. Jeff: Sure.

4.6.24. Lily: Give a sentence.

4.6.25. Jeff: (Does not know what to say.)

4.6.26. Lily: Yesterday, I want you to mark down, to write down. You did not do it?

4.6.27. Jeff: (Shakes his head.)

4.6.28. Lily: Oh, you don't think I was serious. Do it tomorrow. If you don't want to do it, fine with it.

As was discussed above, the core of the narrow definitions of the teacher's qualities was the integration of being authoritative, instructive, and dominant. Lily was a somewhat controversial figure. She was liked by the students as a person, but she was evaluated unfavorably as a teacher. Some students felt that she was not serious about teaching. In examining her discourse with the class, the "not being serious" impression could have resulted from the student's strongly held view of the teacher's roles in class. Besides the students' expectations, there were two kinds of fundamental incoherence in the teacher's language behaviors. First of all, the thinking behind her language behaviors was not coherent with the context. Second, her own language behaviors were not coherent within contexts. These will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

First, Lily seemed to want to adjust to the sociocultural milieu of or her assumptions about this milieu of a North American college. Her attempts to create solidarity were reflected in her discourse and interaction with the students. The noticeable language behaviors were that she made efforts to minimize the teacher's authority so as to equalize herself with the students. 1) She abandoned the term "professor." On the first day of the class she broke the

ice with the students by suggesting that she wanted to be equal to the rest of the class (4.1.1..) She would like to be called by her first name, because she did not like the word "teacher." Besides, she was a student, too. 2) She adopted an intimate attitude as opposed to being distant. There were at least six types language acts reflected her attempt. The teacher first tried to identify herself with the students. In 4.3.1. she said: "I know it is much fun to be outside. Learning a new language is very stressful. I know it because I've been there myself. And my husband, too." In 4.6.1., she discussed her own experience with learning English. Secondly, she tried to express her understanding of the students' problems, in 4.3.1. Several times in class (4.3.5., 4.4.5., 4.6.4.), she expressed her understanding of the students' feelings with regards to learning a foreign language, their problems, and their concerns. Thirdly, she also repeatedly asserted her philosophy of learning language for fun as opposed to learning seriously for grades. In 4.4.5. when the students had trouble giving phrases, she said: "Everybody, relax. I know you have a problem with it. It is alright. Relax. It's for fun." And in 4.6.4., she said: "Just to the extent that you are happy. A happy person learns well." In 4.3.1., she said: "You'll all pass. Don't let that, the grade? no, don't let that bother you. Nobody is going to tell you how to. You, yourself can find an enjoyable way to learn it." "Use your ears, your heart, rather than analyzing it." (4.2.5.) "I don't believe in pressure." (4.6.7.) "Try to feel it. The feeling..." (4.3.4.) She might realize the need to address the students' affective level but her choice of expression might not

have been adequately understood by the students, and appeared to be easily interpreted as being not "serious" as a teacher. Fourthly, she frequently joked, so as to break the serious image of a teacher. She called the students "guys," (4.3.1.) and bantered with the students, in (4.2.7. to 4.2.9.,) (4.5.3. to 4.5.7.,) and (4.6.8. to 4.6.10..) Fifthly, she sometimes gave up control of activities to the students so as to be more democratic. In 4.5.7., she was to lead the drill for lesson 25, when the students said it was not supposed to be the lesson for that day, she said "O.K. No problem. I can do Lesson 24." (4.5.9) It could be that she wanted to show that she was capable of handling either lesson and responsive to students' feelings or needs. But she said with a tone and gestures that seemed rather casual and lighthearted, and once again these language behaviors could be interpreted differently. And sixthly, she admitted her inadequacy of knowledge to the students. (4.3.4.) All these language acts performed by this teacher reflected her educational beliefs and personal preferences. The direct messages that these language behaviors were intended to send included the teacher's desires to be friends with the students, to express her understanding of the problems of the students, and to extend her offer of help. Looking at the individual incidents without context, none of them should lead to an unfavorable evaluation of this teacher by the students. However, problems emerged during the context of the interactions. First, the messages could be perceived and interpreted in various ways. Secondly, within the context of the class her messages appeared to be inconsistency and incoherent.

In almost every single episode, the teacher delivered didactic statements containing philosophical precepts as instructions (4.2.5., 4.3.1., 4.3.5., 4.4.5, 4.6.1.,4.6.4., 4.6.7.). The teacher's advice could have been useful, however, in a classroom context, the statements represented the power position the teacher held over the students, thus the friendly advice became a series of lectures. Moreover, sometimes, the advice sounded condescending in tone, as in 4.6.4., when the teacher told the students that she knew they had problems and that her job was to help them. It was not the admission of a teacher's responsibility that was contradictory in this context, it was the condescending tone that was contradictory to the teacher's attempts and statements of being equal to the students. Apparently, the teacher's behaviors derived from the responsibility and power her position affected her, and were ultimately in contradiction to her expressed intentions. When examining the transcripts carefully, we can see the function of these didactic speeches. Although the teacher had stated that being serious and having control was against her principles of creating an enjoyable learning environment, however, whenever she became serious in class, she relied on didactic statements. In 4.3.1., after the class break, when the teacher found that some of the students had not returned to the classroom on time, she said: "Where are all the guys? Better come on time. Otherwise, the others will have to wait." Immediately afterwards, she expressed how stressful she understood learning a language was and how important it was to have some fun in the process. She used her own and her husband's experiences as

examples to identify herself with the students. In 4.4., The teacher asked the students to translate phrases from English to Chinese. When a student gave a phrase that was not the exact word that the teacher expected, the teacher said: "Not the one I want." (4.4.5.) Then she softened her tone by saying: "This is for practice. Everybody, relax. I know you have a problem with it. It is alright. Relax. It is for fun." In, 4.5., the teacher asked the class if a good review of the text had been done before the new lesson. When the answer was no, she threatened to give a quiz on the spot (4.5.5.). Seeing that the class became alarmed, she expressed that she was only kidding (4.5.6.). Threatening to give a quiz was a joke. But the joke worked as a reminder of a teacher's authoritative position in class. And the joke which implied authority was used in the context and at the moment to the effect of disciplining the class. A few moments later, during the class (4.6.), she discussed the importance of continual exercise and stated that unfortunately the majority of the class did not take character writing seriously. Her criticism and comments are very interesting examples of her own contradictory attitudes:

Strict: 4.6.4.: I do this to help you to remember Chinese characters, because you do have problems. Now I have done my part.

Soft: There is no rule to which how much you should do. Just to the extent that you are happy. A happy person learns well.

Strict: (Pointing at the Character Exercises Book.) Don't waste money. That is a sin, use it.

Soft: 4.6.5.: (Use her finger to write a character in the air.) How to say this?

4.6.6. Students: Trace.

4.6.7.: Right, I don't know how to say it.

- Strict: Show it to me in class, bring it to me to have a look.
- Soft: I don't believe in pressure. I am here to help. Not only help, it is enjoyable. When you enjoy it, you do it well.
- Strict: Bring this little book for me. Just Lesson 25, or all the other pages.
- Soft:(?) I don't care about other pages. You can throw it away or burn it. I don't care.
- Strict: 4.6.26.: Yesterday I wanted you to mark down, to write down.
You did not do it?
(When the answer was that they had not done as asked,)
- 4.6.28.: Oh, you don't think I was serious. Do it tomorrow.
- Soft? If you don't want to do it, fine with it.

The above transcript shows that in almost every other line, the teacher's tone of speech alternated. When the teacher was strict, she was giving instructions or even orders. But after every instructive order, she softened her tone by expressing the opposite of what she had just said. This teacher failed to perceive that her insistence that the students take a casual approach to their studies was actually didactic in nature, and thus, defeated her own purpose, or that if the students did take their studies too casually they clashed with the stricter more authoritative side of her personality that wished for them to do the work. This inconsistency in her speech reflected the contradiction in her own perception of the teacher's roles in class. It could be argued that her lack of control over the language of intimacy in English, her level of how to be persuasive in second language was not fully developed. However, in examining the discourse, my interpretation of these events is that this contradiction was mainly caused by her oversimplified view of being authoritative and having control of the class as a teacher. She unconsciously had desired the authority

and control that she constantly denied herself and subsequently she felt guilty about having both the desire and the authority. She thus immediately and repeatedly backed off. The contradictory attitudes of this teacher in terms of the use of authority that was presented in her language behaviors created confusion in the students: Was the teacher being serious? Was she being sincere or not? This confusion led to feelings of mistrust and discomfort. Because the students were unsure of their teacher's instructions, they could not find their own stable position in the class during this teacher's frequently alternating attitudes.

As stated above, one possible explanation for the language behaviors of this teacher is that they derived from her cultural images of the social roles of students and teachers. Her views of students' motivation for learning, their learning objectives, and the teacher's roles in class were all overgeneralized. What she said in the class indicated her assumption that the students of Western cultures had difficulty learning Chinese, a belief held by many Chinese teachers. They were either not motivated or not culturally trained to undertake the hardships of learning. The students all liked nice teachers.

3) She overgeneralized the educational experience. She conflated her experience as a graduate student with her students' experiences as undergraduates in other courses and in language classes. For graduate study, most of the classes tend to be smaller and it is more convenient for faculty members and graduate students have personal contacts at an individual level. She used her personal experiences to exemplify her solidarity. However, the

contexts were not exactly the same since most of her students may not be familiar with the experience that she had as a graduate student.

This is inseparable from her own educational experience. She was trained by an educational system based on the traditional framework of teaching and learning to believe that the teacher should have authority. She wanted to change that. But unconsciously she still relied on her authority. As a result of these overgeneralized views, her language behaviors were self-contradictory.

Lily's case shows that it is probably a common experience to act in contradictory ways when attempting to use one set of beliefs (learning is fun, we are equal partners, etc.) in a context in which another set of beliefs is so strong and so engrained (ie. teacher is authority, learning a language is hardwork). In fact, the description of this case, from a negative viewpoint, warns us how difficult it will be in attempting to change traditional ways of facilitating the Chinese language classroom. It also proves that without adequate knowledge of the nature of classroom communicative interactions, any attempt to execute change will be a fruitless effort. Comparing classroom communication again to a chess game, it is always wise to know the context, i.e. the players, including oneself, the board, the strategies and so on, in order to insure success. Thus, it is essential to investigate what the participants bring into their classroom communicative interactions before envisioning reform of language teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 6

THE STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE DISCOURSE AND CLASSROOM CULTURE

Overview

This chapter analyzes the structural organization of the discourse of classroom interaction to reveal the impact of power relations in classroom culture which affect of the communicative interaction. The analyses shows that the goals of speech events often were not met because the classroom communicative interactions were not achieved satisfactorily. The difficulties were largely due to the fact that the teachers were actively passive while the students were passively active in class, the commonly accepted roles of the past traditional foreign and second language classroom. The data analysis shows that there were three patterns of structural organization in the teacher-student conversational interactions in class: students accommodating to the teacher; students being misinterpreted; and students not being heard. The data examined in this chapter might be isolated and atypical incidents in each instructor's practice, and they could be explained as unsuccessful teaching and learning practice. However, the significance of the interpretation of these incidents to this author is that these incidents function and have impact as communicative interactions in a classroom cross-cultural context.

This chapter argues that the nature and norms of classroom culture were important to the negotiation of meaning. It has been widely acknowledged in the field of foreign and second language education that the language classroom is supposed to be a learning environment stressing both language and cultural knowledge. If during the learning process itself cultural knowledge and the differences among cultures and individuals are continually stereotyped, then cultural images and the social roles of individuals may not be negotiated efficiently. Stereotypical perceptions and interpretations of cultural messages are exemplified by the authoritative figures in this environment. If classroom interactions are the only learning environment for learners of the target cultural and language, the practice of teaching and learning in that environment can reinforce patterns in communicative negotiation and in dealing with the cultural, social, and individual diversities in cross-cultural interactions outside the classroom as well.

More importantly, the goal of language teaching is to develop the learner's communicative competence. If stereotyped cultural images and the rigid social roles of participants in the classroom are factors which lead to inefficient communicative interactions, then the teaching and learning process limits the opportunity to actively develop the learners' communicative competence. If we assume that the lack of awareness of intra-cultural and individual diversity and the inefficient negotiation of social and other issues that are fostered by the classroom experience limit the learners' expectations in

cross-cultural encounters, they may also restrict the learner's opportunity to creatively and flexibly use language in non-classroom situations.

This section of the study aims to present a sequential analysis of the organization of the discourse in the classroom interactions. As was stated at the beginning of this study, the purpose of the study is to investigate the cultural, social, and personal factors involved in the language classroom culture, the relationships among these factors and the functions these factors fulfill in cross-cultural interactions in classroom setting. The sequential analysis of the organization of speech events in classroom interactions in this study examines two aspects of the issue. One is topic-change. To be more specific, it focuses on how and why one speech event ends and switches to another. The second aspect focused on is the power relationships involved and presented through the social structure and the lexical content of the discourse. That is, who said what in what context, why, how their communication attempts functioned as intended or not intended, and how they were interpreted. The analysis of the organization and structure of the discourse and the content of the conversation that is conducted, along with the assessment of the degree of accomplishment of the task of the speech event, reveals a board picture of classroom language teaching and learning: There are problems with the sociocultural aspect of classroom interactions in addition to problems with the content of cultural learning, and teaching methodologies and learning strategies. In short, there are problems of cross-cultural communication.

The guiding questions of this sequential analysis are: How does a conversation begin? Who initiates the conversation? And what is the topic and task of the speech event? And when does the topic of the conversation change? How does the turn of conversation turn over? Who conducts the change? And what are the intentions and purposes behind the change? When the speech event ends, how does it end? When it ends, were the intended objectives of the speech event accomplished? How successfully has the conversation been carried out? In an effort to answer these questions, the study interprets the meaning potentials that are derived from cross-cultural conversational interactions in the language class. It focuses especially on the meaning potentials¹² that presented the individual participants' views of the language classroom context in relation to language and cultural teaching and learning. It also focuses on the ways they perceived one another in that context, the participants' interpretation of the actual language used, and their perspectives of cultural teaching and learning. The importance here is to probe the individual participants' sociocultural perspectives on the language teaching and learning experience and their sociocultural perspectives on the result of learning.

¹² As explained on Page 34.

Simplification of the Power Relationships and the Structural Organization
of the Interactional Discourse

Patterns of Classroom Interactional Discourse

From the sequential analysis, in the following sections of this chapter, of the teacher-student conversational texts, it is found that the teachers' language behaviors have some common features:

1. The general format and content of the conversational interactions:

Teachers initiated speech events. The most common speech events were to give grammatical explanation and to conduct pattern drills.

2. The basic patterns of the classroom interactions: Teachers initiated and guided speech events. The students were instructed to follow the procedures and tones of the discourse that the teachers set.

3. The reoccurring phenomena: These speech events that the teachers initiated and guided were occasionally unsuccessfully carried out. The goals of the speech events were not reached due to either interruption or termination by the students' interaction, or the messages of the speech events were adequately delivered or interpreted.

Often goals of the speech events were not accomplished because of the ineffective communication among the participants. Furthermore, these kinds of occurrences resulted partially from the overgeneralized views that the

participants brought with them into the classroom context. These views included, as was revealed in the previous section of the analysis, the taking for granted one's own culture, the stereotyping others' cultures, and the static viewing of the social roles of one another specifically to the classroom context. The structural organization of the conversational interactions in the classroom reflected the participants' overgeneralized views of their sociocultural relationships with one another, which reinforced the power relationships of the language class.

Teacher-Student Relationships Revealed

The teachers were given and assumed authority in class, and this authoritative position was seen as having three features: being dominant, expressing control, and giving instructions. The teacher's tasks in class appeared to be to initiate and guide the conversation so as to instruct and direct learning. Consequently, the students' responsibility was to follow the instructions of the teachers. Therefore, in a sense, the teachers were actively passive while the students were passively active in class. To be more explicit, the teacher had the freedom and power to decide and to enact a change in the context but was not expected, and frequently, was unprepared to listen and react to a non-self-initiated change in the context. The students were required to listen and to follow along so as to react and accommodate to a change in the

context but were not expected to initiate the change. A pattern that commonly occurred was that if the students misunderstood the teachers, they were being held accountable. But when it was the other way around, the teachers were not usually the ones to be held accountable. The current study observed and believed that in a teacher dominated class, the norm is that the teachers were in a position to speak and to give instructions while the students allowed to speak in limited ways: to ask questions and to answer questions. The following data analysis shows that there were three patterns of structural organization in the teacher-student conversational interactions in the class: students accommodating the teacher; students being misinterpreted; and students not being heard.

Students' Accommodating to Teachers

The following is an example of a teacher dominating the development of the discourse. Mei was considered a good teacher by most of the students. The majority of students said that she had her own way of making the students concentrate in her class, although very few students complained about the unpredictability involved in following along with her in class. The unpredictability became the content.

(Discussing a word.)

1.2.1. Mei: *Dui, zhege hen xiang.*

[Correct, this is very similar.]

- 1.2.2. Mei: (Holds up another flash card: "*Cha.*" *Zhege zenme nian? Qing nimen nian, wo tingting kan.*
[How is this read? Please read it, I'll listen and see.]
- 1.2.3. S: (A few students read in a low voice.)
- 1.2.4. Mei: *Zenme nian?*
[How is this read?]
- 1.2.5. Kim: *Cha.*
- 1.2.6. Mei: *Zai lai.*
[Again.]
- 1.2.7. S: *Cha.*
- 1.2.8. Mei: Much better. *Zenme nian? Tingting kan. You meiyou chi lunch? Ah? Shi bu shi Ke Laoshi (the researcher) zai zher bu hao yisi ya? Ke laoshi shi bu shi zheyang? Da sheng yidianr! Shenme shi work? Ed.*
[Much better. How is this read? (Let me) hear it. Haven't you had lunch? Or is it because Professor Ke (the researcher) is here that you are too shy? Is that so, Professor Ke? A little louder! How do you say "work," Ed?]
- 1.2.9. Ed: Work? *Gongzuo.*
- 1.2.10. Mei: *Shang ke, shang ban. Women mei xue zhege "ban." Shenme shihou yong zhege "ban?" Yan, zenme shuo?*
[Go to class, go to work. We have not learned "ban" in this sense (That is, when it means work.). When do you use this "ban?" Yan, how do you to say this ? (The meaning that we have learned.)]
- 1.2.11. Yan: *Women ban.*
[Our class.]
- 1.2.12. Mei: *Dui.* Same pattern. *Wo baba jiu dian shangban, si dian xiaban. Wo mei tian shi'er dian... Shenme shi shi'er dian?*
[(Looking at Rebecca.) Right. Same pattern: My father goes to work at nine o'clock, and finishes work at four o'clock. And I, everyday at twelve o'clock... What is "twelve o'clock"?)
- 1.2.13. Rebecca: (Embarrassed. Does not answer.)
- 1.2.14. Mei: *Ni.* (Points at Frances.)
[You.]
- 1.2.15. Frances: Twelve o'clock.
- 1.2.16. Mei: (Still to Frances) *Ji dian shangke?*
[At what time do you start class?]
- 1.2.17. Frances: *Shi'er dian.*
[Twelve o'clock.]
- 1.2.18. Mei: Oh, (Walks towards the door.) *Mei laoshi! Bye! Shi'er dian!*
[Oh, bye, Professor Mei! 12 o'clock!]

- 1.2.19. Frances: (Blushes, not happy about the tease) Oh, I thought you mean *Shangke*.
[I thought you meant start the class.]
- 1.2.20. Mei: (Still in a joking tone) Yea.
- 1.2.21. Frances: I mean *xiake*. I mean I thought you meant ...
[I mean dismiss the class. I mean I thought you meant... [dismiss the class].]
- 1.2.22. S: (Laugh.)
- 1.2.23. Frances: My ears are bit deaf today. Really!
- 1.2.24. Mei: *Mei guanxi*.
[Never mind.]
- 1.2.25. Mei: Kim, could you give me the *shitang* pinyin.
[Kim, could you give me the phonetics for the word "cafeteria."]
- 1.2.26. Kim: (Stands up, to go to the blackboard.)
- 1.2.27. Mei: No, just say it.
- 1.2.28. Kim: s,h,i, second [tone], and t,a,n,g, the fourth [tone].
- 1.2.29. Mei: *Ni qu shitang, ni qu shitang bu xihuan yi ge ren, zenme shuo?*
[You go to the cafeteria... you go to the cafeteria, and you don't like one person [meaning: don't like to go there alone.] How do you say it?]
- 1.2.30. Kim: *Chi fan*.
[Eat.]
- 1.2.31. Mei: *Chi fan, bu xiang yi ge ren, xiang...*
[Eating, don't want one person [i.e. don't want to do it alone], want...]
- 1.2.32. Kim: (Confused)
- 1.2.33. Mei: Together...
- 1.2.34. Kim: Oh, *gen... yiqi*.
[With someone.]
(This discussion was completely terminated.)

This was a drill session. The task of the class was to practice the new words. The pattern of the conversation was question-and-answer. The teacher asked the questions while the students answered them. In this episode of the text, the teacher changed her forms of phrasing the questions three times: from 1.2.1. to 1.2.11., in six rounds of dialogue, the teacher used a "how to" question. She first showed the flash card to the students and asked the students how to read a word aloud in Chinese, and then she asked them how to translate

another word from English to Chinese. From 1.2.12., she changed the pattern of speech by creating a narrative. After one sentence, she stopped in mid-sentence to ask the students the English meaning of a word she had just said in Chinese. When the student finally gave the correct answer, she broke the narrative that she had set up by asking a question that was separate from the narrative and thus directed the real life situation of the students. The student could not follow and confusion was created: the student, Frances in 1.2.15, answered the Teacher's question (1.2.12., 1.2.14.) what 12 o'clock meant in English. Immediately, in 1.2.16., the teacher asked her when the class started. Frances answered (1.2.17.) twelve o'clock in Chinese. In this instant, Frances's reaction was directly related the previous context: since they were previously discussing 12 o'clock, and because the sentence that the teacher set up before the question was an unfinished sentence, to her logic, the following question should have related to that time. Or, her thought was still with that time. Even though she heard the question correctly, she perceived it incorrectly, because she felt the teacher must have said it wrong, because in 1.2.19. and 1.2.20., she tried to explain to the teacher she thought the teacher actually meant "dismiss the class." Even when Frances was explaining in 1.2.19., she made a slip of the tongue: she meant to say "dismiss the class" but she said "start the class." It could be that a similar phrase was just mentioned and it was difficult to switch, especially just to change part of it. Since the student did not expect the sudden change, confusion occurred. After that, the teacher again changed her question

by asking a student to give the phonetics of another word. When it was done, she changed the question to a hypothetical situation that was supposed to be related to the students' life situation. In that drill she expected the student to finish her unfinished sentence. A misunderstanding was created there again: The question in Chinese is very ambiguous, even bordering on being grammatically incorrect. The student thus interpreted that question incorrectly (1.2.30.), believing that the most logical reason for going to a cafeteria was to eat, while the teacher was expected her to express going there with some one else (1.2.29. 1.2.31. 1.2.33.) Thus, when "real" questions were interspersed with "display" questions, students were challenged to make connections that were not easily understood. Schemata clashes caused confusion.

In 34 lines of the text, not only did the forms of questions change several times, but also the target audience varied from the whole class to individual students randomly, immediately changing from one student to another. The content of the questions changed from pronunciation to meaning to phonetic of words, the language used switched from Chinese to English and English to Chinese, the contextual situations changed from non-situation related words to artificial situational sentences to real life situational conversation to hypothetical situations.

Tracing backwards through the text, the logic of the changing context of the teacher's questions was clear: the questions began with the word "work," it related to the time of going to work, and then the time of going to class, and

afterward, going to a school cafeteria for lunch. This way of setting up the questions fulfilled the teaching objectives: it kept the students on their toes --- fully concentrated on the drills, they exercised different linguistic functions of the language. But, moving forward through the text from the students' perspective at the time, the logic of the changing context was utterly unpredictable: there were not only an infinite number of possible next steps that one word might lead to, but there were also many aspects of linguistic functions that the teacher could have called for, there were many kinds of situations to which the conversation might turn, and moreover, what seemed to be more frustrating was that each individual student's turn for speaking was entirely under the control of the teacher. In short, absolute control was in the teacher's hand and the students had to constantly accommodate to the teacher so as to adjust themselves to the logic or perceived illogic of the event. This structural organization of the discourse might well suit the teacher's educational beliefs in context of the language teaching practice, but this was an strenuous mental exercise probably not encountered elsewhere in terms of communication. Moreover, the effect of the drilling exercises --- keeping students on their toes --- could be perceived clearly by all the students and the teacher, nevertheless, the choppy and ineffective communication did not gain the participants' attention, or if it did they simply took it for granted as linguistic barrier. (It took Mei and Frances three exchanges to straighten out the incident (from 1.2.15. to 1.2.21.), and the same amount of effort for Kim to get

her answer right (from 1.2.29. to 1.2.34.)). In either case, linguistic cues were not the real issue, the issue was communicative and contextual. A good opportunity for negotiation had happened. However, the problem here was the tension between carrying out a "true dialogue" and making it a lesson, ie, a pedagogical purpose. Break downs do occur in real life learning and handling them should be taught. Nevertheless, in a teacher centered class, the negative stigma of a break down removes the perceived benefits of negotiation. The situation was created and accepted by all participants involved partly because of their perceptions of teacher and student roles in the language classroom from a more traditional framework of language classroom teaching and learning. It occurred through the participants' recognition and consent of the power relationship between the teacher and the students. From the viewpoit of a more traditional framework of language teaching, Mei's design of the drill was comprehensive: The drill covered the practice of pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence patterns, and translation from English to Chinese and Chinese to English. The language skills concerned were listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The contextual language use included artificial situations as well as real life situations, etc.. It does have the effect of keeping the students concentrating on the drill. As far as the exercises were concerned, the class time seemed to be efficiently spent. However, the one important element that was missing was the principle of communication. What is not missing is a rather "twisted" distorted sense of communication, which is the norm of

traditional class. This is a distinctive type of discourse reserved for language classes whose definition of communicative practice is drilling. Due to the design of the drill, the students were put into the situation of being passively active. More examples of this pattern can be found in the Appendix, and in those events discussed above which highlighted other factors in cross-cultural interactions.

Teachers' not Accommodating to Contexts

The following example contrasts with the example above in that the teachers were unprepared to accommodate to the students' active participation.

3.1.1. Hong: (begins the class by correcting the mistakes the students made in their previous exercises.) *Xianzai fuxi shengci. Zuotian bushi xue le shengci ma?* (Draws a picture of a man on the blackboard.)
Xian kan shenti de bufen.

[Now let's review the new vocabulary. [We] learned new vocabulary yesterday, right? Let's first look at the parts of the body.]

3.1.2. Hong: *ji yi ji, ranhou wo ca diao.*

[Try to remember [the words], afterwards I will erase them.]

3.1.3. S: eh?! (Look at each other; nobody knows what he is saying.)

3.1.4. Michael: (Makes a face to the principal instructor, who is observing the class, indicating he has no idea what is going on.)

3.1.5. Hong: (points at his own head.) *Zhe shi shenma?*

[What is this?]

3.1.6. S: *Tou*

[Head.]

3.1.7. Hong: *Dui, zhe ge ne?* (Pulls his own hair.) *Keshi, bu tai duo.*

[Correct. What about this? But not a lot.]

(Note: He is slightly bald-headed and is making a joke about his hair.)

3.1.8. S: *Toufa.* (Nobody laughs at his joke.)

[Hair.]

- 3.1.9. Hong: *Dui, toufa. Zhegene? Zhe shi shenma?* (Points at an eye.)
[Correct, hair. What about this? What is this?]
- 3.1.10. Hong: (Before the students give an answer, he walks to the blackboard to number each part of the body and then points individually to each student to name the part.)(points at the eye, and at the same time points to Irene.)
- 3.1.11. Irene: *Yanjing*
[Eye.]
- 3.1.12. Hong: *Dui ma?*
[Is that right?]
- 3.1.13. All S: *Dui.*
[Right.]
- 3.1.14. Hong: *En, yong yanjing zuo shenma?*
[Right. What do [you] use [your] eyes to do?]
- 3.1.15. Mordy: *Kan.*
[See.]
- 3.1.16. Hong: *Dui, kan. Hai you ne?*
[Right, see. What else?]
- 3.1.17. Serge: *Kan dianying.*
[Watch a movie.]
- 3.1.18. Anna: *Kan shu...*
[Read books.]
- 3.1.19. Hong: *Dui, kan dianying, kan dianshi, kan shu. Hai kan shenme?*
[Right, watch movies, watch TV, read books, and what else do [you] see/watch/look at?]
- 3.1.20. Mike: *Kan guniang.*
[Look at girls. (Or "visit girls.")]
- 3.1.21. Hong: *Kan guniang?* (Knits his brows indicating that the statement was not very appropriate.)
[Look at girls?]
- 3.1.22. Hong: (Points at the ear.) *Shei shuo zhe ge shi shenme?*
[Who can tell what this is?]
- 3.1.23. Jane: *Erduo*
[Ear.]
- 3.1.24. Hong: *Dui, yong erduo zuo shenme?*
[Right, what do [you] use [your] ears to do?]
- 3.1.25. Jack: *Ting, ting dianhua?*
[Listen, listen to the telephone?]
- 3.1.26. Hong: *Dui, keyi ting dianhua.*
[Right, (you) can listen to the telephone.]
- 3.1.27. Mordy: *Ting yinyue.*
[Listen to music.]
- 3.1.28. Hong: *Dui, ting yinyue, ting gudian yinyue...*
[Right, listen to music, listen to classical music...]

- 3.1.29. Jane: *Ting xiandai yinyue.*
[Listen to modern music.]
- 3.1.30. Hong: (Points at the heart.) *Xin, xin zuo shenme?*
[Heart. What does the heart do?]
- 3.1.31. S: (Pause. Nobody knows how to answer.)
- 3.1.32. Mike: *Xihuan*
[Like (love).]
- 3.1.33. Hong: (Pause)
- 3.1.34. Hong: *You hongde...*
[There is/[you] have red...(stuff).]
- 3.1.35. All S: (Pause. No answer.)
- 3.1.36. Hong: *Xue.*
[Blood.]
- 3.1.37. Hong: *Tou bu shufu?*
[[One's] head is not comfortable?]
- 3.1.38. All S: *Touteng*
[Headache.]
Jane: *Fashao.*
[Fever.]
- 3.1.39. Hong: *Lai kan shu. Lai yiqi nian.*
[Now, read (your) books. Read aloud together.]

As was stated by the teacher in the beginning of 3.1.1., the task of this event was to review new vocabulary. The drill pattern was such that first, the teacher pointed to a body part and the students were to name that body part, after which the teacher required the students to list the functions of the body part in question.

There were five rounds of such patterned questions and answers: from 3.1.5. to 3.1.9. the body part concerned was the head; from 3.1.9. to 3.1.21, the subject changed to the eye and its functions; 3.1.22. to 3.1.29 concerned the ears; and 3.1.30. to 3.1.36. was concerned the heart; 3.1.37. to 3.1.38. returned to the head; finally the speech event ended with a topic change.

Ostensibly, the entire speech event was controlled by the teacher, because he initiated all the questions which guided the development of the conversation. However, examining the text carefully, we can see that there were contextual changes which were caused or influenced by the students' reactions. Each time such a contextual change occurred, either the students took the control of the turn of speaking, or raised questions to initiate a new topic of the conversation, thus, the roles of the participants shifted, the dynamics of the context changed, or the direction of the conversation altered, the teacher was not entirely accommodating to that change, and thus, was inadequate in his further negotiation of the contextual meaning.

As was discussed in Chapter 5, the student, Mike offered an answer to the teacher's question about the functional usages of the word "*kan*," (3.1.20.), which was misunderstood or misinterpreted. One possible interpretation of this incident relates to the issue of contextual change. From 3.1.14. to 3.1.18., the entire class discussed "eye" and the functions of the eye -- "looking" in a physical sense -- because the discussion originated and developed from a discussion of body parts. Mike used "*kan*" (to visit) out of this immediate context. One explanation of the teacher's reaction to Mike's comment, besides that discussed in Chapter 5, is that the teacher did not react to the fluidity of the context. The context shifted from the head, to the eye, to looking, to watching, to reading, and finally to visiting, which is an extended usage of the verb "*kan*" (to see, to read, to watch), much like "to see" can be used for "to

date" in English. However, the teacher may have adhered to the usage "*kan*" that emphasizes the physical use of the eyes. In this context, it would be natural for the teacher to assume that Mike meant "to look at girls." All the previous teacher-student conversational exchanges (from 3.1.1. to 3.1.19.) were initiated and guided by the teacher. 3.1.20. not only changed the context of the discussion, but more importantly, this change was initiated by a student. This change was not accommodated by the teacher. This is an example of students challenging the direction of the discourse. This often happens when creative students use humor in class. It changes the dynamics of the context. If the teacher does not ask the student what is meant, then the student's attempt failed. A similar situation occurred in the discussion of the heart, (3.1.30. to 3.1.36.).

In 3.1.30., the teacher asked about the function of heart. The entire class was silent. It seemed that nobody knew how to formulate an answer. Then, it was Mike again who offered the answer "*xihuan*" (to like/love), (3.1.32.). This answer, although not incorrect, was once again out of the context of the limited sense of "body functions." The teacher did not respond to Mike's answer but waited for a while, (3.1.33.). Then he tried to lead the class to the answer "blood pressure" (which was on the vocabulary list in the textbook) by offering a descriptive clue "*hongde*" (red). When the students' response failed him, he settled for "blood" which was red and dropped the topic, (3.1.34. to 3.1.36.). The negotiation in these two examples is obviously not adequate. The teacher,

again, did not accommodate to the context in either case, both of which were changed by the student. There are a few possible explanations for this situation. Possibly, the teacher had his lesson plan to carry out, and for the sake of time, he had to sacrifice some of the details that he regarded insignificant in that context. But in the "heart" example, he did not accomplish his lesson plan because the word "*xueya*" (blood pressure) was not used. Another explanation could be that, from the viewpoint of a more traditional framework of teaching, the teacher felt obligated to maintain control of the conversational context, because, as teacher in that system, he was to maintain control of the class. However, despite the cause, by not accommodating to the contextual changes of interaction, the opportunity for negotiating meaning more effectively was missed, and thus, efficient teaching and learning was negatively affected.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, neither Mike nor his classmates were given an explanation or adequately informed as to why Mike's answers were not adequate. Although Mike's responses were correct in certain contexts, the students were, to a certain extent, misguided to believe they were not correct under any circumstances. Mike's behavior in class can be characterized as being passively-active while the teacher's can be described as actively passive. Mike followed the teacher's instructions and questions closely in the classroom interaction and actively formulated answers which were, in many senses, related to the teacher's questions. during the in class interaction, ninety nine percent of the time he played a passive role as a participant of the

event in terms of partnership in communicative interactions. However, he was required by the situation and his designated role as a student to be constantly active in terms of meaning negotiation and accommodation. While the teacher took an active role in controlling the class but in fact, passively resisted accommodation to any contextual changes.

A teacher's minimal accommodation to contextual changes during classroom interactions could also be seen through other examples.

- 2.6.1. Xin: Now, open your books. There is a picture on page, page ... Ok, you describe the picture. You. (pointing at Sebina.)
- 2.6.2. Sebina: (Avoids eye-contact.)
- 2.6.3. June: Seb... you.
- 2.6.4. Sebina: Oh, me? What?
- 2.6.5. Xin: Describe the picture here. (Pointing at the book.) This one,... yes. Ok?
- 2.6.6. Sebina: ...*Zhe, zhe shi, zhe wode woshi.*
[This, this is, this [is] my bedroom.]
- 2.6.7. Xin: Oh, *Nide woshi piaoliang bu piaoliang?*
[Oh, is your bedroom pretty (or not)?]
- 2.6.8. Sebina: (Does not understand what the teacher said.) *Wo buzhidao*
[I don't know.]
- 2.6.9. Xin: (Believes that Sebina does not wish to answer, says nothing.)
- 2.6.10. Sebina: (Looks at the teacher, and seeing no further explanation of his utterance, continues her description of the picture.) *Zhege ...*
(Looks for the words in the book.) *fangzi, yes, fangzi shi Xin laoshi fangzi.*
[This, house, house is professor Xin ['s] house.]
- 2.6.11. Xin: Oh, *wode fangzi.*
[Oh, my house.]
- 2.6.12. S: (laugh.)
- 2.6.13. Xin: *Wo zai nali chi fan?*
[Where do I eat?]
- 2.6.14. Sebina: (Again, does not understand his comment. Looks again at him and sees no further explanation) Can I continue?
- 2.6.15. Xin: (Smiles at her. Stops interacting.)
(Then the class activity changed to something else and the event of describing that picture was not completed.)

This was also a teacher initiated and guided discourse. The teacher initiated the speech event and assigned a speaker. The task of the speech event was for the student to describe a picture in the textbook. The teacher tried to interact with the student three times. The first time, when the student described the room, the teacher asked if the room was pretty. (2.6.7.) The apparent purpose of his question was to supply vocabulary to the student but it functioned to direct the student's description that: the teacher offered the student the word *must be* because he wanted her to use it. If the student had used it, then the description would have followed along the lines of what the teacher had expected. The second time, when the student made a grammatical mistake in her sentence (2.6.10) by saying "*Xin laoshi fangzi*" (Professor Xin house) instead of "Xin's house," the teacher's utterance (2.6.11.) actually functioned as a correction of the error. Then further on, he, once again tried to guide the student's description of details by asking where he would be eating in that house (2.6.13). The teacher's three utterances all appeared to be indirect instructions. However, the student, in her nervous moment of presenting a speech in class, did not fully understand the teacher's instructions and was confused. She ignored the hints that the teacher offered. The student gave the teacher hints four times in the discourse. The first time in 2.6.2. the student's non-verbal behavior indicated that she did not have enough confidence to perform the description, and she tried to avoid it. The second time (2.6.8.), the student said: "I don't know." She meant she did not understand the teacher

because the words that the teacher used were not in her Chinese vocabulary. "I don't know" was the only Chinese phrase she was capable of saying for that situation. In 2.6.10. and 2.6.14., twice the student paused and looked at the teacher, waiting for further explanation of his utterance, but twice the teacher made no response. Apparently, the teacher overlooked the hints that the student had given him. Quite likely the teacher did not see his role as a communicative partner in meaning negotiation, thus, was not sufficiently prepared to accommodate to student initiated contingencies. It also showed that the teacher was actively passive during classroom interactions. He was active when he tried to give instructions, but when initiatives originated with the students he appeared to be passive in accommodation. This explains why the teacher stopped interacting with that student in 2.6.15.. Again, an opportunity for effective teaching and learning suffered.

From the standpoint of communication, perhaps blind accommodation is equally destructive to successful communication. It is argued here that this is not a desirable quality for students to adopt, and this is also true for teachers. It can be argued that Xin attempted to accommodate to the student by trying to follow along with what he assumed was her manipulation of the context. Yet, she made several errors which were not effectively communicated to her because he made no attempt to ascertain what exactly concerned her about her presentation. Perhaps this teacher would have accommodated to the extent that he would have answered questions or pointed out errors, however, to what extent

was he willing to accommodate in terms of actively ascertaining what the communicative context was?

Speak and Listen: In the simplified teacher-student relationships in class it was taken for granted that the teacher was to speak and the students were to listen. This pattern is in conflict with the cooperative principle of communication, and as such represents one of the artificial facets of classroom discourse. At the primary stage of language learning experience in class, many conversational interactions were performed in English. It was not really the students' lack of linguistic competence in the target language that caused many of the communicative difficulties that arose. Rather these difficulties were due to an overly simplified perception of the teacher-student relationship in class. This kind of misperception led also to misinterpretation of the classroom interactions. Let's further examine some texts that were discussed in previous chapters.

(After the whole class read the text)

3.2.1. Hong: *Xianzai women yiqi fuxi shengci. Wo shuo juzi, nimen ting. Kan dong bu dong. A.*

[Now let's review the new words together. I say the sentences, you listen. See [if you can] understand or not. Ah.]

(Goes through the vocabulary list in the textbook one by one making sentences using the new vocabulary.)

Yiwusuo shi shenme difang? Kan bing de difang. You are sick, qu

kan bing, daifu gaosu ni zuo shenme.

[What is the place called "clinic"? The place you go to see the doctor. When you are sick, you go to see the doctor. The doctor tells you what to do.]

- 3.2.2. Hong: (Read aloud to emphasize the next word on the list.) *Zuijin, zuijin women meiyou kaoshi.*
[**Recently**, recently we have not had an exam.]
- 3.2.3. All S: (Confused, because they have quizzes daily.)
- 3.2.4. Hong: Don't agree with me, just try to understand what I said.
- 3.2.5. Hong: *Ta qu guo zhongguo.*
[He has **been** to China.]
- 3.2.6. Jay: Doesn't it matter? with or without *guo*?
- 3.2.7. Hong: *Guo*, stresses physical being. You have **been** to a place before.
- 3.2.8. Mike: (To Serge who often skips classes and happens to be in class today.) He has **been** here.
- 3.2.9. Hong: *Wo gei nimen duan juzi, nimen shuo "dong" haishi "budong."*
[I'll give you short sentences, you tell me if you understand or not.]
- 3.2.10. Hong: *Suiran ta meiyou bing, keshi hai changchang qu kan bing. Meiyou bing, bu yao qu kan bing.*
[Although he is healthy, [but] he often goes to see the doctor. If you are not sick, don't go to see the doctor.]
- 3.2.11. Hong: *Budong, jiu shuo.*
[If don't understand, tell [me].]
- 3.2.12. All S: (Pause. No answer.)
- 3.2.13. Hong: *Budong yao wen wo, bu yao look like dong le.*
[If don't understand, ask me. Don't look like you understand.]
- 3.2.14. All S: (Understand this sentence, and laugh.)
- 3.2.15. Hong: (Laughs with the students.) *Wo zai shuo yi ge juzi.*
[I will give you another sentence.]
- 3.2.16. Hong: *Suiran ta mei chi guo faguo fan, keshi ta changchang chi zhongguo fan.*
[Although he has never had French food, he often eats Chinese food.]
- 3.2.17. All S: (Laugh.)
- 3.2.18. Hong: *Bu xihuan faguo fan. Haishi zhongguo fan hao chi. Mingbai la ma? OK?*
[[He/she] does not like French food. [He/she] still (thinks) Chinese food is good. Understand now? OK.]
- 3.2.19. Hong: *You yi ge ren, shenti bu hao, pengyou changchang qu kan ta. Shi shenme?*
[There is a person who is not in good health. [His/her] friends often go to visit him/her. What is (the word for) this (situation)?]
- 3.2.20. S: (nobody responds.)
- 3.2.21. Hong: *Dui ta guanxin.*
[[They are] concerned about him.]

- 3.3.1: Hong: (Explained the words of a folk song about the life and natural beauty of the grassland. In between, he tried to put in some casual conversation. So he asked what city people usually do on weekends) *Xingqi tian... qu ...na?*
[Sunday, go where?]
- 3.3.2. All S: *Gongyuan.*
[The park.]
- 3.3.3. Hong: *Zenme yang?*
[How is it?]
- 3.3.4. All S: (Nobody answered.)
- 3.3.5. Hong: *Gongyuan zenme yang?*
[How is the park?]
- 3.3.6. All S: (No answer.)
- 3.3.7. Hong: *You hen duo ren..., bu cuo, hen hao, you yisi.*
[It has a lot of people,... it's good, it's very good, it's interesting.]
- 3.3.8. S: *Hen duo ren? You yisi?*
[It has a lot of people ? It's interesting?]
- 3.3.9. Hong: *Duo shuo yidianr, bu yao "baby talk."*
[Please say something more. Don't just [give] baby talk.]

For the most part, in 3.2., the teacher was soliloquizing. One reason for that was because the task of the exercise was listening comprehension of some sentence patterns. However, there were interactions. The first time, in 3.2.3., the students exchanged whispered comments because what they understood the teacher as saying did not conform to their reality. The teacher stopped them from asserting their opinions on the issue, because that was not in the lesson plan. The teacher explicitly explained to the class before he began this listening comprehension drill (3.3.1) that the task was to go through the vocabulary by making sentences with the words. The students were asked to listen, and they could ask questions if there were comprehension problems.

The second interaction was initiated by the student as well. One student wanted further explanation of the sentence pattern in use (3.2.6.), and another

student made a joke using that pattern (3.2.8.). Once again the teacher silenced the class in order to carry on his plan by asking them explicitly to give yes or no answers.

The occurrences of failed communication, here, revealed the narrowness of the teacher's language behaviors: First the teacher did not recognize the students' spontaneous interactions as indicative of their degrees of comprehension and willingness to participate in the conversation. Secondly, the teacher actually suppressed the students' spontaneous interactions by requesting of them to follow his instructions. It can be argued that the dictatorial power of the teacher's authority suffocated the natural responses of the students. This inefficiency of the teacher's pattern of negotiation was further illustrated in the misinterpretation of the students from 3.2.10. to 3.2.17. as well as in example 3.3., which also further explained his missed opportunity of dealing with the cultural messages of the content in the specific contexts of these two examples, as was discussed in the previous chapters. In both cases, the speech events were interrupted and ended as a result of student reaction. In 3.2., after three rounds of efforts to present sentences (from 3.2.10. to 3.2.20.), because the students did not respond to the two jokes within the time that would normally be expected of a native speaker, the teacher ended the exercises. And in 3.3., the similar situation occurred.

The consequences of the simplified power relationship that contributed to the inability of the teacher to accommodate to the context can also be seen

through the analysis of the structural organization of text 5.3.

(Afterwards, the discussion shifts to religious beliefs and moral education.)

5.3.1. Ben: *Meiyou zongjiao you shenme?*

[If there is no religion, what do we have?]

5.3.2. Pat: Humanism.

5.3.3. Ben: *Rendaozhuyi. Shei tingshuo Masochism. Sili xuexiao, genju rendaozhuyi jiao haizi daode, meiyou zongjiao.*

[Humanism. Who has ever heard of "Masochism?" Private schools, teach kids morals according to Humanism, not religions.]

5.3.4. Jane: *Wo juede, bu shi zai sili xuexiao, huo zongjiao. Ni haishi keyi xuedao daode he jiazhi de. Wo jiushi zhe yangde.*

[I think, the point is not going to private or religious schools. You can always learn moral and social values. That is what happened to me.]

5.3.5. Ben: *Na dangran. Women qu xuexiao shi xue zenme guo rizi. Bu zhishi suansuan. Yi ge laoshi de renwu shi jiao haizi jiazhi. Danshi, ruguo ni you qian de hua, nimen song ta dao zongjiao xuexiao haishi sili xuexiao? Nide haizi, Wang Xi?*

[Of course. We go to school to learn how to live our lives. Not just to learn how to count. A teacher's task is to teach kids values. But if you had money, would you send him/her to religious schools or private schools? Your kids, Wang Xi?]

5.3.6. WX: *Wo?...En... Yinwei wo ziji shi tianzhujiao, wo hui song tamen qu tianzhujiao xuexiao ba.*

[Me? ... ummm... Because I am a Catholic, I probably would send them to a Catholic school.]

5.3.7. Ben: *Zhe shi you sili, gonggongde. Zhe shi nide renwei.*

[We are talking about public and private schools. This is your opinion (choice).]

5.3.8. WX: *Nide wenti bushi yao buyao, zongjiao shi shenghuo de yi fangmian.*

[I don't think the problem is making a choice. Religion is a part of life.]

5.3.9. Ben: (Turns to talk to a Japanese student and asks the same question to her.)

Twice, in 5.3.4. and 5.3.8., the students directly indicated to the teacher that they questioned the logic of his questions. The teacher ignored the challenge and stuck to his line of thinking. It was not a matter of different opinions. It reflected the inflexibility of the teacher to adjust himself according

to contextual cues. The teacher did not recognize differences between what was on his mind and the changes in context initiated by the students at that given moment. Or, even if he did recognize the differences, he did not react accordingly because either he was not prepared to accommodate to the changing context, perhaps because he perceived his role as drill master rather than conversation partner, or he was simply not willing to accommodate to the students and used his position of authority to force the students to bend. Whatever the case, the result was that the meaning negotiation in these communicative interactions were not effective, and consequently the speech event was not successful.

Ask and Answer: Because the assumed and accepted pattern of teacher-student language behaviors was "the teacher spoke and the students listened," the structure of the discourse was often "the teacher asked and the students answered." When the situation was changed to one where the students initiated questions, the chances were that the students were not answered because they were not heard or were heard incorrectly. Moreover, frequently, the speech events were, thus, ended unsuccessfully. More examples follow.

2.3.1. Xin: *Qing dakai shu, liushiyi ye*

[Please open your books to page 61.]

2.3.2. S: (Do not know what is happening, look at one another and follow those who have taken action.)

2.3.3. Xin: (Points at a book he is holding) *Zhe shi nide shu ma?*

[Is this your book?]

2.3.4. S: *Zhe bushi wode shu.*

[This is not my book.]

2.3.5. Steven: (Answering at the same time as the others.) *Na bushi wode shu.*

[That is not my book.]

(When he hears that his answer is different from the others, he looks back at the principal instructor, who is sitting behind him.)

2.3.6. Xin: *Na shi shenma? Na shi nide bi ma?*

[What is that? Is that your pen?]

2.3.7. S: *Na shi (bushi) wode bi.*

[That is (is not) my pen.]

2.3.8. Steven: (Waiting, when others are finished) Is this correct? Suppose that I ask "*Zhe shi...?*" Should you answer "*Na shi...*" instead of "*Zhe shi?*"

2.3.9. Xin: ...(Looks at Steven, pauses, and says nothing.)

2.3.10. (The drill continues, but Steven stops participating. He asks the principal instructor about it during the class break.)

2.5.1. Xin: (Explains some grammar. Drawing charts on the board.) You can see from this..., and then..., Ok, "*shi*" [a sentence pattern] the word order is the same, but there is a slight difference...

2.5.2. June: (interrupting) Can I say "*tushuguan duimian*" other than "*tushuguande duimian*"?

2.5.3. Xin: Yea, yea, yea..., you can say that, it's, it's the same.

2.5.4. S1: What?

2.5.5. S2: (Makes a face indicating that she doesn't know what was just discussed.)

2.5.6. S1: (To June) What was the question? What did you ask him?

2.5.7. June: (Tries to explain to her in a low voice, but continues to looking at the teacher to see if he is offended by her action.)

2.5.8. S: (All the students sitting around June join in their discussion.)

2.5.9. Xin: (Continues his explanation of grammar, ignoring the students' small group discussion.)

2.5.10: June: (feels uneasy, quickly discontinues her explanation to her fellow classmates.)

In both episodes, the speech events were interrupted by the students' requests, and the interruptions were actually diverted to other discussions either into another speech event in the class or outside of the class. In 2.3., the student seemed to be requesting further grammatical explanation for usages of "this" and "that." But on one level, he was politely and cautiously giving the teacher a chance to clarify himself. Steven explained to the principal instructor

during the class break that he had no problem understanding the grammatical usages. However, because he had studied Japanese before he took this Chinese course, and in Japanese the usages of the terms "this" and "that" are both complex and strict, depending specifically on the distance between the speaker and the object, he wondered if Chinese had the same kind of peculiarity. He thought the teacher overlooked the significance of emphasizing this grammatical point. He was trying to remind the teacher of it. But the teacher did not connect with what he was trying to say. The same thing happened in 2.5.. June asked a question about the grammatical usage of a word. She was one of the students in the class whose Chinese proficiency was above the first level course. She always tried to cooperate with the teacher and be helpful to her fellow classmates. During the class break, when the principal instructor was talking to Steven, June joined in the conversation admitting that she was also asking that question not because she did not understand but because she thought it was important and therefore, deserved more emphasis from the teacher. Her thinking, in fact, was correct, because the other students indeed had problems with it. That is why in 2.5., from 2.5.4. to 2.5.10., the students were having a discussion among themselves. The teacher misunderstood or ignored the students' hints. It could be because he was inexperienced, and thus was unable to see and explain the problems. However, the point here is that the end result was decided because the overall perceptions of the teacher-student relationship was that the teacher did not have to accommodate the context,

while the students had no choice but to accommodate: the teacher could choose to not ask for clarification if he did not understand the students' requests or to dismiss the students' requests by simply ignoring them, while at the same time, the students feel it necessary to choose tentative and polite ways to question the teacher. That strategy having failed, they followed along with whatever answer the teacher offered or resigned themselves to not having their questions answered. The consequence is that the opportunities for further communicative negotiation of learning were missed.

This chapter has shown that the goals of the speech events observed often ended inefficiently because classroom communication was not achieved satisfactorily. The inefficient negotiation of meaning in the context of classroom interaction was one of the factors that caused inefficient teaching and learning. The difficulties in meaning negotiation were partially the result of the power relationships that were and are commonly accepted in the present system of language classroom practice. In the present system, as exemplified by this study, teachers are actively passive in terms of communication, due to their established status as authoritative figures both academically and socially. Students become actively passive due to their assigned status of academic and social subordination. This also occurred among the participants of this study. In the cases discussed here, because of these commonly accepted, narrowly defined, relationships and roles, effective meaning negotiation in the language classroom context became secondary to protection of the assumed social and

cultural roles of the participants, leading to some missed opportunities for effective teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The Impact of Unsatisfactory Negotiation in Classroom

Interactional Discourse

When the participants narrowly viewed their sociopolitical relationships in the cross-cultural interactions in the classroom, effective communication became at risk. The participants were perceived according to assumed cultural and social stereotypes because of their overgeneralized cultural and social definition of other individuals, and thus often misjudged one another's language behaviors. Due to inefficient negotiation, the cultural differences were exaggerated or oversimplified, thus cultural messages were misrepresented or misinterpreted. Because of a narrow view of the teacher-student relationship, the teachers were granted and assumed an authoritative position to give instruction, which made it difficult to avoid teacher insensitivity to the students' feedback and cause inefficient teacher accommodation to changing contexts. Or to be more accurate, in the language classroom, because of narrow role expectations, free conversational negotiation was not possible. All this led to episodes of unsuccessful communication in these language classes. However, there were further consequences of inefficient negotiation.

The participants' application of overgeneralized views in these cross-cultural interactions not only caused ineffective communication, but the practice itself also reinforced their previously held stereotypical views and allowed a continuation of inefficient negotiation.

Functionally, effective communication was thus made secondary to the reinforcement of the narrowly defined social and cultural roles of the individual participants as well as the system which produced those definitions. The language classroom is generally hoped to be a learning environment stressing both language and cultural knowledge. If during the learning process itself cultural knowledge and the differences among cultures and individuals are continually stereotyped, then cultural images and the social roles of the individuals may never develop. As is exemplified by this study, the practice of teaching and learning can reinforce a rigidity in communicative negotiation and in dealing with the cultural, social, and individual diversities in the cross-cultural interactions in the classroom. Acceptance of a narrowly defined system of cross-cultural negotiation as found in the classroom may lead to difficulties outside the classroom as well.

However, the goal of language teaching is to develop the learner's communicative competence. Yet, this study shows that with stereotyped cultural images and the narrowly defined social roles of participants in the classroom, the teaching and learning process limits the opportunity to actively develop the learners' communicative competence. Not only did the lack of

awareness of cultural diversity and the narrow negotiation of social and other issues limit the learners' expectations in cross-cultural encounters in the classroom observed, they also potentially restricted the learners' opportunities to creatively and flexibly use language in actual situations.

Classroom Culture

Misrepresentation and misinterpretation of cultural messages as well as misinterpretation of interactive language behaviors occurred in these language classes. Teacher-initiated interactions were often terminated or unsuccessfully ended by the students' interruptions or other interactions. Further analysis indicates that in most cases of communicative failure, the speech acts were unsuccessful due to the teachers' inability to recognize the nature of students' feedback in the contexts of the interactions. A common pattern of thinking, "overgeneralization," interfered with interactions in these classrooms. Participants overgeneralized their own culture, the other participants' cultures, and sociocultural roles and relationships involved in the interactions in the classroom setting.

One important finding of this research is that participants in these language classrooms had cultural similarities as well as cultural differences which enabled them to create a classroom culture and to form a specific speech community. The features in common seemed to derive more from social values

and similar social experiences. From the researcher's observation, the cause of unsuccessful or inefficient communication in classroom interactions was a pattern of thinking shared by both teachers and learners. Teachers and students had come to the classroom with some common assumptions. These assumptions derived from shared values: shared tendencies to culturally stereotype the individual participants. That is a shared likelihood to stereotype both the participants' own and the cultures of the others as well as the cultural images of individuals of the given cultures on the basis of their assumed cultures. There also existed shared assumptions of the education process and the participants social roles in that process. That is the participants shared perceptions of the language teaching and learning process and the assumed social roles of teachers and students and their language behaviors in the foreign and second language classroom context.

Functionally, these shared values helped the participants to establish common ground for the further exploration and identification of themselves in socially bonding relationships. However, often times, these fixed ideas were too readily applied, and as a result, instead of the participants viewing the other participants of the classroom cross-cultural interactions as individuals with different cultural, social, and personal backgrounds, they at times perceived one another with culturally and socially stereotyped rigidity.

The existence of differences among the individual participants was a fact. The differences were of cultural and individual values and experiences. In

the cross-cultural interactions in the Chinese language classroom setting, the students came to that setting with certain prior knowledge and experience of the cultures as well as the language to be learned. They also came with some fixed expectations of the context and the content of the new learning experience. Based on their differences in past individual experiences and the differences in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the students' needs, motivations, and expectations were naturally not completely alike as well. Nevertheless, often times, the previous assumptions of the students interfered with their perception and interpretation of classroom communicative interactions as well as cultural and language learning.

In these language classroom interactions, the teachers' performances were also influenced by their degrees of cultural awareness, which derived from their personal cultural knowledge and experiences. This cultural awareness included their knowledge and awareness of their own cultural backgrounds as well as those of the students, their beliefs and awareness as to the function of communication in the language classroom, their perceptions and awareness of the social roles of and the social relationships between teachers and students in the classroom setting, and their opinions as to the nature of the language teaching and learning process.

Viewing the formation of the classroom culture encountered in the study from a cross-cultural perspective, we see its development of cultural, social, and political components.

First, like the chess game, which, though an artificially created event, takes on a life of its own, these language classes formed its own speech communities in which the communicative interactions bore unique cultural characteristics. On the one hand, the individual participants' language behaviors reflected their cultural, social, and individual perspectives and experiences as the chess players' previous life experiences affect their game. As was discussed in previous chapters, these classroom interactions can be defined as cross-cultural communicative interactions. They are defined as such because the participants all came to the classroom from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and arrived with personal, cultural, and language experience. On the other hand, the individual participants' language behaviors represented their cultural, social, and individual perspectives and experiences, just as the chess player's moves represents something of his or herself to both opponent and observer. This representation offers the basis for the next move. Based on their cultural, social, and individual experiences and views, the participants formed different individual cultural and social perspectives of their own cultures and the culture to be learned. The learners and teachers both contributed to the forming of this culturally unique speech community. From the sociocultural perspective, the task of learners was to explore and interpret the target culture and language from their own cultural and individual perspectives and understanding, through the contexts of the interactions in the class with their teachers and the teachers' language behaviors and the content of the study

materials presented to them. The task of teachers was to interpret the culture and language to be taught from their own cultural and individual perspectives and understanding, and to pass on these interpretations and understandings to the class from the angle of their interpretations and understanding of the students' cultural and language backgrounds and needs. The content of teaching and learning through cross-cultural interactions in the classroom was not simply cultural and linguistic knowledge but the interpretations and understanding of the culture and language by individuals. The cross-cultural interactions in classroom were not between one culture and others but among cultural and social individuals. These individuals were not the representative of one specific culture but individuals whose language behaviors reflected their cultural, social and personal characteristics, experiences, and preferences.

Secondly, the classroom culture had its social characteristics. The classroom cross-cultural interactions were communicative interactions. The communicative nature of the classroom interactions decided that 1) the interactions were aimed at conveying cultural and linguistic messages. 2) The means of the communicative interactions were communicative as well. The cultural and linguistic messages were produced and comprehended through language behaviors. 3) And the meaning of the language behavior was created jointly through the cooperation of all the individual participants in the language classroom context. In the language classroom, not only were the assumed roles of the participants assigned by the context with the recognition of all the

participants, but also the power that was given to the speakers and attached to their language behaviors was assumed by the speaker as well as the listeners involved.

Lastly, politically, from a standard perspective, that which these participants operated under, the teachers in the classroom interactions were assumed to have and thus, were granted and accepted an authoritative position in explaining the target culture and language, and were also granted control of the teaching and learning procedures. They were also assumed to have and thus were treated as having the expertise in knowing how to communicate within all the given cultures and languages involved as well as politically in the classroom. The exception is in the case of Ben, who by virtue of not being of Chinese origin, found it difficult to gain the acceptance of some students. Also Lily who attempted to get rid of her authority but had to rely heavily on the authoritative power and manner to convey her ideas. However, Ben's efforts to regain and reinforce his authority and Lily's subconscious dependency on authority indicated that this political aspect of classroom culture was operating.

Missed Opportunities in the Classroom Interactions

As had been observed above, one of the important factors that affected the cross-cultural interactions in the classroom setting was the communicative aspect of language use. To be more specific, the key barriers of the cross-

cultural communication were not only those of language proficiency and degree of cultural knowledge, but also overgeneralization about the languages and cultures: both the teachers' and learners' perceptions and interpretations of the languages and cultures concerned. The crucial issues were not merely those of teaching methodologies and learning strategies, but rather of the sensitivity and awareness of and openness to cultural, social, and personal diversities and variations among the individuals in the intercultural communications. At least, such an awareness would affect teachers' educational beliefs and preference of teaching methods.

In the classroom conversations analyzed, the students sometimes misperceived and misinterpreted new cultural messages which they did not expect to see or hear. And sometimes, the students' feedback was unheard or ignored because the teachers were not accustomed to listening and noticing the unexpected, or requesting clarification from students. The lack of openness to the unexpected was related to expectations of the teacher-student relationship and sociopolitical in the language class. The simplification of the teacher-student roles was derived from individuals' educational experiences, related to the present existing education system and training within the profession. The conventional practice of language teaching and learning in the classroom overlooks the importance of intercultural communicative interaction, and thus the participants overlooked the significance of efficient negotiation of cultural messages. This kind of practice contributes to the overgeneralization of the

individual's life experience in the world. In the language classes studied, the inefficient negotiation was partly due to the participants' stereotypes of cultural and social roles; the stereotypes of the participants' own cultures, other participants' cultures, and the classroom culture; and the preferences for certain educational beliefs and perspectives. This kind of inefficient negotiation at times blocked communication in class and misshaped the learning process. The language behaviors of the teachers, guided by these kinds of communication strategies, had subtle effects on the students' cultural and language learning. This occurred because the teachers' language behaviors seemingly exemplified and thus reinforced the overgeneralization of the cultures and languages concerned through the practice of inefficient negotiation. In this kind of situation, a possible result could be that the students, whose learning strategies based on this kind of undeveloped schemata and educational experience, would have difficulty elaborating their simplified knowledge and developing their communicative competence.

Cross-Cultural Openness in Cross-Cultural Interactions

Cross-cultural openness refers to the readiness of mind to cope with cultural, social, and individual diversity in cross-cultural interactions and the flexibility to function in cross-cultural contexts. Cross-cultural openness in language classroom is essential to creating effective teaching and learning

languages and cultures. Because cultural, social, and individual diversity and variation naturally come with cross-cultural communication, awareness and openness of mind to such diversity and variation is important to successful cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, the language learning process is a communicative process that requires the pragmatic use of such openness.

The course of communicative interaction is a process of production and comprehension of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. This whole process is a decision making process --- in order to interpret what has been said in a way that more closely resembles the speakers' original intention so as to achieve better understanding. In order to produce a more coherent conversational context in appropriate ways, the participants in the speech event need to not only adjust themselves constantly to a changing context but must also predict the possible consequences their actions may have on the coming speech events. These predictions are expectations based on one's world view, linguistic and cultural knowledge, past experience in communicative interactions as well as the judgment and the constant evaluation of the situation moment by moment and that of their interlocutors. These expectations are subject to the limitations of one's perspectives. One limitation that derives from one's way of thinking is that of overgeneralization.

Overgeneralizations are the result of the restrictions imposed by one's own cultural perspective when viewing other cultures and the rigid perception or misinterpretation of the differences. They derive from certain stereotypical

life views. Generalization is one of the ways the mind works to find and derive rules for cognition. Overgeneralization is a tendency whereby one relies completely on one's limited parameter of knowledge. When children learn a new language, many of the mistakes they make derive from their overgeneralization of language rules. The sociocultural and strategic rules of using a language are much more complicated than the grammatical rules involved in using that language, because they involve a great deal of decision making and depend on contexts, situations, and individual interlocutors. It is easier to perceive things at only the superficial level and to accept only the most obvious. It is also simpler to establish one's expectations simply on one's pre-assumptions alone.

Learning other languages and cultures is a way to broaden one's knowledge and mind. But knowledge itself can not guarantee successful communication because it is impossible for an individual to possess all knowledge of all cultures or even of one's own culture. The application of knowledge poses further complications. One way to overcome one's limitation is to be aware that there is something beyond the one's immediate self and to prepare oneself to be open to the unforeseen and the unexpected.

In the language classroom, through communicative interaction, both teachers and students can recognize the importance of overcoming their individual limitations. However, teachers, because of their position of authority within the classroom, are in the best position to be aware of and overcome

their own prejudices and can thus avoid stereotyping. They are also in a position to help the class to overcome stereotyping as well.

CHAPTER 8
IMPLICATIONS FOR
LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Overview

The importance of cultural knowledge and learning to language study has been stressed before in the foreign language teaching profession. This study emphasizes that the cultural knowledge is not enough. Interactants must also be ready to accept infinite unknowns and to negotiate new understandings. This study shows that lack of satisfactory negotiation affected the perception and interpretation of the language behaviors in language classroom interactions and hindered the acquisition of cultural knowledge. It is important to consider not only cultural knowledge and methodologies for teaching cultural knowledge, but also the norms of cross-cultural communicative interaction itself. Drawing on the sociocultural perspective outlined in Chapter 2, we need to reexamine three aspects of language teaching and learning: cross-cultural communicative competence, classroom interaction and the development of communicative competence, and the roles and functions of the participants in classroom interactions.

Cross-Cultural Openness in Cross-Cultural Interaction

--- Rethinking Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence

This study stresses that cross-cultural openness should be an essential component of cross-cultural communicative competence. It argues that merely having broad knowledge of the target culture does not necessarily result in effective communication; cultural awareness and openness activate the functional use of cultural knowledge. Knowing the detailed rules of the sociocultural use of the target language may still be inadequate for an individual to function in various and ever-changing social contexts. Being open to and be able to identify cultural diversities, social variations, and individual differences would not only enable an individual to be prepared to face the infinite unknowns in cross-cultural encounters, but also would stimulate the individual to conquer his/her limitations with an aim towards further development of communicative competence.

Classroom Interaction and the Development of Communicative Competence

The language classroom setting has the potential to create an environment that develops not only cultural and linguistic knowledge, but also the pragmatic use of the target language and culture through the evolving norms of cross-cultural communicative interactions. These two aspects of

learning inevitably occur at the same time and are shaped by the nature of classroom interaction. While these two aspects of learning are explicit learning objectives, cross-cultural interaction, the engine that drives language and cultural learning and use, is generally not stressed. However, its existence and its importance and impact can not be ignored simply because it is not explicit.

The impact of classroom interaction on language learning has at least two levels of meaning. First, cross-cultural interactions in the language classroom form a unique classroom culture. This culture, created by the participants, shapes the situations where language use occur, its content, and its communicative norms and structures. On the one hand, this culture is contingent because it depends upon the individual participants. The individual participants' cultural backgrounds, their sociocultural views, their personal preferences and attitudes affect the characteristics of the context. On the other hand, this culture is partially predetermined, because the social and educational systems as well as conventional educational practice, regulate the roles of the participants and determine the power relationships in the classroom context. Therefore, the specific context of the classroom culture influences the language used, the cultural messages presented and interpreted, and the sociocultural views negotiated, and thus influence language and cultural learning.

Secondly, the classroom culture itself forms a limited sociocultural context for language use. The social bonds among the participants are narrowly defined. At the university level, the participants all come from at least similar

educational backgrounds. And because of the nature of classroom culture, the social roles of the participants are clearly determined, the relationships between the participants are comparatively uncomplicated. Therefore, the classroom context for language learning has limitations, for by its nature it can not genuinely expose students to other, or even more common, sociocultural experiences of daily life situations within the target culture. Due to the nature of the classroom culture, in the language classroom context, the development of awareness of and openness to the sociocultural diversities and variations is a necessity. It is possible to do so.

It is necessary to develop the sociocultural awareness and openness of the participants, because this awareness and openness enables the participants in classroom communicative interactions --- the teachers and the students --- to correctly assess the context and properly adjust themselves to situations so as to present, perceive, and interpret cultural messages with appropriateness and efficiency. It must be done because sociocultural awareness and openness is an essential component of one's communicative competence. The language classroom as a learning environment grants students the opportunities to test their assumptions, to search for cultural boundaries, and to form new generalizations about the target language and culture. It also provides opportunities for the students to communicate with people of the given language and culture as well as in the given language and with cultural knowledge. But it is impossible for an individual to command all the

knowledge required for every sociocultural situation, especially through a classroom learning environment. The awareness of sociocultural diversity opens one's mind to possible unknowns, and activates one to function beyond the immediate self so as to cope with unfamiliar situations. Moreover, the development of this awareness and openness does more than equip the learners with competence and knowledge but empowers them with readiness and flexibility of mind.

The ultimate goal of language education needs to be more than to develop the learner's communicative competence. It is necessary to engender the preparedness and empowerment of students to engage in more successful cross-cultural communication. It is possible to develop this awareness and openness in classroom interactions if the language teaching profession develops and advocates this awareness and openness in classroom cross-cultural negotiation. Not only does this author believe that awareness and openness is teachable, but she also believes that if the nature of the classroom culture is thoroughly revealed, if the importance of this awareness and openness is made clear and is accepted by both teachers and students, if teachers exemplify the practice of awareness and openness in their language behaviors and reinforce it in their students, some missed opportunities in the language teaching and learning practice can be repaired, and the disadvantages of the present classroom situation can be turned around and become advantages. The formation of stereotypes is influenced by the views of the societies in which an

individual lives and encounters. Interactions in the classroom reflect and represent an individual's sociocultural attitudes and awareness. This author believes that through classroom communicative interactions, awareness and attitudes can be changed and minds can be opened because the language classroom has its advantages in carrying out this mission. First, cultural behaviors and cultural knowledge are passed on through teaching and learning experiences (Peacock, 1986: 7). Part of the goal of the language class is generally direct: to teach and learn the target culture and language. The social bonds between the participants are relatively uniplex: they are teachers and learners. The learners come to learn about the target culture and language, the attitudes and beliefs expressed through the target culture, and proper language behaviors in the target language. The teacher is given and accepts the authority to lead the exploration of new social and cultural views. The communicative interaction between the participants offers a unique opportunity for casual and personal contact since the content of their conversation is for the most part associated with topics of their own personal lives and interests. In this sense, it can be easier for participants in a language class than in many other types of academic courses to identify with one another, to share feelings and experiences, and ultimately to build trust and friendships.

The social ties that participants of a language class form can generate a certain closeness of association. This closeness offers them the opportunity to nurture innovation that leads potentially to more effective communication.

More importantly, hopefully, the enlightenment of the individual participants through cross-cultural interaction in the language classroom could eventually bring about changes to the educational system and the views of as a whole society.

Roles and Functions of Participants in Classroom Interactions

Teachers in Class

This study identifies some of the opportunities that the teachers missed in the language classroom. But the purpose of the study is not to criticise the teachers nor is it to blame them personally for unsuccessful communication or teaching methodology in these classroom interactions. Its purposes are to reveal an important element in general picture of the language teaching and learning process --- the communicative aspect of the issue --- which has either been overlooked or taken for granted in previous studies and to advocate the awareness of sociocultural diversity among individuals in cross-cultural interactions. Cultural knowledge is important for language learning. Teaching methodologies are important in the language classroom teaching. Though these topics are not the central concerns of this study, their value to language education are by no means underestimated. But what this study stresses is also crucial to language teaching and learning. That is, the process of

communication in the classroom should also be studied from a sociocultural perspective. Unsuccessful or ineffective language teaching and learning occurs not merely due to the lack of cultural or linguistic knowledge nor to poor teaching methods, but is actually due to inadequate attention to the negotiation of meaning during the classroom interaction --- thus, communication fails.

If, as this study suggests, communicative failure in language classrooms --- specifically that which results from the insensitivity to and inflexibility in dealing with the sociocultural diversity of the individuals in cross-cultural interactions --- is one of the key factors that negatively affects the teaching and learning process, then in order to improve teaching and learning we need to take this problem into serious consideration.

From the view point of this study, the roles of language teachers include not only those of educators and instructors of the target language and culture but also as participants in classroom communicative interactions. They are communicators who share partnership in and responsibility for the process of meaning-creation in the specific context of classroom interactions. Their language behaviors represent not only their sociocultural views and knowledge of the target language and culture but also their personal views of the other participants as well as their personal perception and interpretation of and accommodation to the immediate context. It is crucial that teachers realize the importance of this often overlooked role and take an active part in the process of language teaching and learning as communicators.

According to this view, the functions of teachers in the language class need to be re-evaluated. This discussion emphasizes that it is important not to narrowly define the functions of teachers in class. The following is a re-examination of the concept behind a few words that are commonly assumed to describe the functions of teachers.

First is the word "authoritative." As this study observed, the teachers are granted and assumed authoritative positions in the classroom. The impact of this authority has two potential aspects. It can have a positive effect, for teachers are in a favourable position to be naturally respected and trusted. The teacher's influence on the students can be positive if this authority is used properly. However, it can also be negative, for the students are put into an inferior status and a social gap is thus created. The downside of this social gap is that an area of equality within the partnership in communicative interaction is lost; the misuse and misperception of this authoritative power can cause communicative barriers.

However, since it is not realistic to expect a dramatic and immediate change in social values and the education system that create this assumed authority status, one strategy would be to recognize this power relationship and analyze it, make the best use of the situation, and attempt to achieve effective communication.

The second word to be discussed is "instructive." How one defines being instructive depends on the nature and goal of the instruction. This leads

back to the discussion of the goal of language education and the process of teaching and learning as well as the roles of individuals in cross-cultural communication. The definition of being "instructive" and the instructive actions that a teacher take relate to his/her educational beliefs and personal preferences. This is the area where pragmatic research comes in. Being "instructive" does not necessarily mean giving lectures all the time. This author believes that the instructive function of a language teacher includes the responsibility of facilitating and scaffolding the learning. In this sense, in order to achieve efficient communication and cross-cultural understanding, in classroom interactions, the role of the teacher's being a communicator to negotiate meaning needs to be emphasized and given priority.

The third word is "dominant." It refers to that the teacher in classroom interactions does all the active work or that the teacher's interpretation is the one that counts. The tendency to be dominant comes from the authoritative power that the teacher has and the sense of duty that the teacher holds to control the class for instruction. It is also one of the consequences of the misconception of the language teaching and learning process and the roles of the participants. Like authority, the dominant role is granted to the teacher historically by society and almost any given group of students.

In order to redefine the teacher's roles and functions in classroom interaction, the teacher's limitations in the classroom as individual communicators need to be clarified. First, the assumption that an individual

through the accident of having a native's fluency and knowledge is thereby the authoritative representative of the given culture and language, need to be questioned. Only when teachers recognize their own limitations of experience and knowledge can they be aware of the possibility of the existence of the sociocultural diversities and variations concerned. Secondly, we must also question whether it is appropriate for teachers to assume that they are natural experts of communication in the classroom context simply because they are assumed to have the qualifications to teach how to communicate in another language. It is believed that teachers are facilitators of the development of the students' communicative competence. However, they are communicators first. Their language behaviors directly affect the degree of success of communication in class. It is necessary for teachers to recognize that students and teachers have joint responsibility for effective communication. Teachers traditional roles as dominant authorities have masked the need for teachers to be good listeners. Thirdly, classroom instruction consist not only of the course lessons, but also of the language behaviors of the teachers. The teacher's language behaviors represent not only that part of the communicative context that creates and provides communicative situations, but they also present examples of communicative interactions for the students to follow. It is recommended that the aim of the teacher's instruction --- both aspects --- function to facilitate the process of developing students' communicative competence. It is important for teachers to develop an awareness and openness

to sociocultural diversities and variations themselves and then exemplify this to the class.

Students in Class

It is important for students to strengthen a sense of their own responsibility in classroom cultural interactions. First, the students need to be aware of their important roles, functions, and responsibilities as communicators besides their more obvious roles as learners. Secondly, it is equally important for the students to be aware of their own possible, prejudicial views and thinking that might interfere with learning. They can play a more active role in the learning process. It is also important for learners to be clear about their goals in terms of language learning. It is crucial that students are aware of the importance of being open and flexible to sociocultural diversities for the attainment of language and cultural learning and the development of their communicative competence. Moreover, it is also crucial for students to be aware of a basic truth of language and cultural learning so as to make the best use of the classroom interactions: the functions of classroom interaction and classroom learning have their limitations.

Studying Language Classroom Interactions for University Language
Programs

If, as this study emphasizes, cross-cultural communicative interaction in the language classroom is important to language and cultural learning, then this communicative aspect of language teaching and learning needs to be studied further. The present situation in the field of second and foreign language teaching is that there are not enough studies that have been done on interaction in university-level language classrooms. Most of the studies that have been done on the language classroom are in regard to the primary and secondary level. Most university language programs, especially Chinese language programs, focus their research attention on linguistics and literature. Recently special attention has been paid to the cultural element in language learning. However, most of this research has been on either culture as knowledge to be learned, or on how to teach culture as knowledge,¹³ or in regards to culture and cultural encounters outside of the classroom.¹⁴ Classroom cross-cultural

¹³. From 1992 to 1993 in the Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, only one article which was on how the culture knowledge affects the language learning. The article is called: Bridging Language and Culture: A Cognitive Approach to the study of Chinese Compounds. Journal of CLTA, V. XXVIII: N.1. Feb. 1993 and N.3. Oct. 1992.

¹⁴. On the topic about the culture and the cultural encounters outside of the class, there was one article in Journal of CLTA: Americans in China: The individualists Meet the Collective. Journal of CLTA V. XXVII: N. 1/2. Feb./May 1992.

interaction is not a concerned topic.¹⁵ Cultural issues in terms of Chinese language teaching are dealt with as they are related to teaching methodologies. This study argues that these efforts are moving in the right direction but do not go far enough. Cultural issues as they relate to language teaching and learning are not only connected with the content of teaching and learning or the methods of teaching and learning, but the form and context of teaching and learning. Cross-cultural communication is an important element of the general picture of language teaching and learning but has not been paid enough attention.

University language programs have their specific characteristics as well as special needs which are in many ways different from the language programs for younger students or for adults who study languages for specialized purposes. At the university level, the participants in the classroom interaction -- the students and the teachers -- are often of much more complex cultural backgrounds and have more complex sociocultural experiences than do the participants at lower level educational institutions. Their social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge is also incomparable with people of other educational

¹⁵. See the proposed topics on Chinese Language Teachers' Association Annual Conference 1992 and 1993. In 1992, there was one paper An Approach to Bridging the language and Culture Gap presented at the panel "Chinese Discourse Strategies and Contextual Cues" talking about how the cultural knowledge should be taught in terms of the language learning. And in the panel: "Method or Madness? Does Pedagogical Method Matter in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language?", cultural issues in Chinese language teaching were dealt with as teaching methodologies. In 1993, the panel "Language and Culture" is concentrated on culture as knowledge to be learned. Three papers to be presented are: Mandarin Chinese Discourse Analysis: Taiwan and the Mainland, Cross-cultural Communication and Miscommunication: Cases of Taboo, Introduction to a Textbook for Advanced Beginners of Chinese. Once again, classroom cross-cultural interaction is not a concerned topic.

backgrounds, especially since the university language classroom exists in a social environment where the educational forum exposes them to many points of view, where the communicative mass media are immediate and omnipresent, and where the forum is interactively multilingual and multicultural. Studies of cross-cultural communicative interaction in the classroom must reflect these characteristics.

If the nature of the communicative aspect of cross-cultural interaction in the language class is revealed, the perspective can not only lead to effective communicative interactions in class but can also be incorporated into the considerations of cultural knowledge learning and the teaching methodology.

APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPTS OF THE CLASSROOM CONVERSATION

Teacher One: Mei

- 1.1.1. Mei: *Ni hao*. Sue, *ni hao*. Jeff, *ni hao*... (Uses her hand to indicate the tones when speaking.)
[How do you do?] (to all the students, then greets each student individually.)
- 1.1.2. All S: *Ni hao*.
[How do you do?]
- 1.1.3. Mei: How nice, eh? eh (Uses her hand to help explain how to pronounce the second tone.)
- 1.1.4. All S: eh eh ... (repeats after the teacher.)
- 1.1.5. Mei: (Presents some large flash cards, holding one card in one hand and uses a piece of paper in another hand to block the view of the card and then slowly takes the paper away to present the words on the card.) Like sesame street, eh?
- 1.1.6. All S: (laugh, and then pronounce the sounds.)
- 1.1.7. Mei: (A forth tone that the students have trouble producing occurs.)
Heavy, go, go! (indicating the falling tone.)
- 1.1.8. Mei: (Turns to an individual student.) Shaun, (shows Shaun the card.)
- 1.1.9. Shaun and other students: *ba, ba*.
- 1.1.10. Mei: (looking at the other students) *Ni shi* Shaun? (Goes back to Shaun) Shaun!
[Are you Shaun? Shaun!]
- 1.1.11. Other students: (Become startled and stop speaking.)
- 1.1.12. Shaun: (repeats) *Ba, ba*.
- 1.1.13. Mei: *Xiexie*.
[Thank you.]
- 1.1.14. Mei: (Expects the student to respond to her.)
- 1.1.15. Shaun: ...(Has no idea what to say in Chinese.)
- 1.1.16. Mei: *Shuo "Bu keqi," bu keqi. Xiexie. Bu keqi*.
[Say "You are welcome." You are welcome. Thank you! You are welcome.]
- 1.1.17. Shaun: *Xiexie?*
- 1.1.18. Mei: (Waving her hands to all the students.)
- 1.1.19. All S: *Xiexie*.
- 1.1.20. Mei: (Raising her eyebrow, waiving her head.) *Nimen shuo "Bu keqi."*
[You should answer "You are welcome."]

- 1.1.21. All S: *Bu keqi.*
 [You are welcome.]
 (Discussing a word.)
- 1.2.1. Mei: *Dui, zhege hen xiang.*
 [Correct, this is very similar.]
- 1.2.2. Mei: (Holds up another flash card: "*Cha.*" *Zhege zenme nian? Qing nimen nian, wo tingting kan.*
 [How is this read? Please read it, I'll listen and see.]
- 1.2.3. S: (A few students read in a low voice.)
- 1.2.4. Mei: *Zenme nian?*
 [How is this read?]
- 1.2.5. Kim: *Cha.*
- 1.2.6. Mei: *Zai lai.*
 [Again.]
- 1.2.7. S: *Cha.*
- 1.2.8. Mei: Much better. *Zenme nian? Tingting kan. You meiyou chi lunch? Ah? Shi bu shi Ke Laoshi (the researcher) zai zher bu hao yisi ya? Ke laoshi shi bu shi zheyang? Da sheng yidianr! Shenme shi work? Ed.*
 [Much better. How is this read? (Let me) hear it. Haven't you had lunch? Or is it because Professor Ke (the researcher) is here that you are too shy? Is that so, Professor Ke? A little louder! How do you say "work," Ed?]
- 1.2.9. Ed: Work? *Gongzuo.*
- 1.2.10. Mei: *Shang ke, shang ban. Women mei xue zhege "ban." Shenme shihou yong zhege "ban?" Yan, zenme shuo?*
 [Go to class, go to work. We have not learned "ban" in this sense [That is, when it means work.]. When do you use this "ban?" Yan, how do you to say this ? [The meaning that we have learned.]]
- 1.2.11. Yan: *Women ban.*
 [Our class.]
- 1.2.12. Mei: *Dui. Same pattern. Wo baba jiu dian shangban, si dian xiaban. Wo mei tian shi'er dian... Shenme shi shi'er dian?*
 [(Looking at Rebecca.) Right. Same pattern: My father goes to work at nine o'clock, and finishes work at four o'clock. And I, everyday at twelve o'clock... What is "twelve o'clock"?)
- 1.2.13. Rebecca: (Embarrassed. Does not answer.)
- 1.2.14. Mei: *Ni.* (Points at Frances.)
 [You.]
- 1.2.15. Frances: Twelve o'clock.
- 1.2.16. Mei: (Still to Frances) *Ji dian shangke?*
 [At what time do you start class?]
- 1.2.17. Frances: *Shi'er dian.*

- [Twelve o'clock.]
- 1.2.18. Mei: Oh, (Walks towards the door.) *Mei laoshi! Bye! Shi'er dian!*
[Oh, bye, Professor Mei! 12 o'clock!]
- 1.2.19. Frances: (Blushes, not happy about the tease) Oh, I thought you mean
Shangke.
[I thought you meant start the class.]
- 1.2.20. Mei: (Still in a joking tone) Yea.
- 1.2.21. Frances: I mean *xiake*. I mean I thought you meant ...
[I mean dismiss the class. I mean I thought you meant... [dismiss
the class].]
- 1.2.22. S: (Laugh.)
- 1.2.23. Frances: My ears are bit deaf today. Really!
- 1.2.24. Mei: *Mei guanxi.*
[Never mind.]
- 1.2.25. Mei: Kim, could you give me the *shitang* pinyin.
[Kim, could you give me the phonetics for the word "cafeteria."]
- 1.2.26. Kim: (Stands up, to go to the blackboard.)
- 1.2.27. Mei: No, just say it.
- 1.2.28. Kim: s,h,i, second [tone], and t,a,n,g, the fourth [tone].
- 1.2.29. Mei: *Ni qu shitang, ni qu shitang bu xihuan yi ge ren, zenme shuo?*
[You go to the cafeteria... you go to the cafeteria, and you don't
like one person [meaning: don't like to go there alone.] How do
you say it?]
- 1.2.30. Kim: *Chi fan.*
[Eat.]
- 1.2.31. Mei: *Chi fan, bu xiang yi ge ren, xiang...*
[Eating, don't want one person [i.e. don't want to do it alone],
want...]
- 1.2.32. Kim: (Confused)
- 1.2.33. Mei: Together...
- 1.2.34. Kim: Oh, *gen... yiqi.*
[With someone.]
(This discussion was completely terminated.)
- 1.3.1. Mei: (To Regi) *Mafan ni, gaosu wo, zhege zi zenme nian?*
[May I bother you to tell me how this word is read?]
- 1.3.2. Frances: (Her Chinese name sounds very much like "*mafan ni*." [may I
bother you]) *Cha.*
[Tea.]
- 1.3.3. Mei: *Wo wen ta.*
[I am asking her.]
- 1.3.4. Frances: But...

- 1.3.5. Mei: (To Regi) *Mafan ni, Xiao Rong, zhege zi zenme nian?*
[May I bother, Xiao Rong, how do you read this word?]
- 1.3.6. Frances: Did you just said my name?
- 1.3.7. Mei: Oh, (laughs). *Wo shuo "mafan ni," bu shi "X XX"*
[I said "*Mafan ni*" not "*X XX*"])
- 1.3.8. Frances: (Laughs) My ears are blocked today. I told you.

Teacher Two: Xin

- 2.1.1. When he explains grammar, the students look back at me.
- 2.2.1. Xing: *Tingxie, xianzai tingxie*. Dictation, now, we are going to have dictation.
- 2.2.2. Xin: *Liang ge ren shang heiban*. I want two people to go to the blackboard. If I say "wo," you write "wo" and the initial and the final. Understand? (writing the example on the blackboard.)
- 2.2.3. Xin: *Ni*, you. (invites politely one student to come forward.)
- 2.2.4. S1: (turns away immediately) I am not ready.
- 2.2.5. Xin: ...not, not ready? All right. (points at another student.)
- 2.2.6. S2: O.K.
- 2.2.7. Xin: "*Ge*." *Ni gege de "ge"*
["Elder brother," as in "your elder brother".]
- 2.2.8. S: (Writes the character on the board.)
- 2.2.9. Xin: Thank you, another two.
- 2.2.10. S: (Laugh and look at one another) What? (Then follow the instructions.)
- 2.2.11. (After the dictation, the teacher begins to write all the new phonetics on the blackboard and then leads the reading. Then comes another activity.)
- 2.3.1. Xin: *Qing dakai shu, liushiyi ye*
[Please open your books to page 61.]
- 2.3.1. S: (Do not know what is happening, look at one another and follow those who have taken action.)
- 2.3.3. Xin: (Points at a book he is holding) *Zhe shi nide shu ma?*
[Is this your book?]
- 2.3.4. S: *Zhe bushi wode shu*.
[This is not my book.]
- 2.3.5. Steven: (Answering at the same time as the others.) *Na bushi wode shu*.
[That is not my book.]
(When he hears that his answer is different from the others, he looks back at the principal instructor, who is sitting behind him.)
- 2.3.6. Xin: *Na shi shenma? Na shi nide bi ma?*
[What is that? Is that your pen?]
- 2.3.7. S: *Na shi (bushi) wode bi*.
[That is (is not) my pen.]
- 2.3.8. Steven: (Waiting, when others are finished) Is this correct? Suppose that I ask "*Zhe shi...?*" Should you answer "*Na shi...*" instead of "*Zhe shi?*"
- 2.3.9. Xin: ...(Looks at Steven, pauses, and says nothing.)

- 2.3.10. (The drill continues, but Steven stops participating. He asks the principal instructor about it during the class break.)
- 2.4.1. Xin: O.K. Let's do some listening comprehension. There, there is ... a passage in your book, actually two, I read to you, you listen, right? Write down note in English, yea, English then to say it in Chinese.
- 2.4.2. Xin: (Reads the text:) *Palanka jin nian ershiyi sui. Xia xinqi ri shi tade shengri. Ta jia you yige wuhui. Ta qing yingwenxide zhongguo tongxue dou lai canjia wuhui...*
[Palanka is 21 this year. Next Saturday is her birthday. There will be a party at her house. She invites all the Chinese students from the English department to come to the party...]
- 2.4.3. Mordy: (In a low voice) What is "*canjia wuhui*?"
[Participate in the party?]
(The teacher does not hear his question. Mordy raises his hand several times, still the teacher does not respond to him.)
- 2.4.4. Mordy: (He turns to Michael who sits next to him.)
- 2.4.5. Michael: (Shrugs his shoulder.) Beats me.
- 2.4.6. Mordy: (Becomes frustrated, gives up listening and turns to the principal instructor, who is observing the class, for an explanation.)
- 2.4.7. PT: Go to the party.
- 2.4.8. Mordy: (Nods his head, goes back to listening to the teacher's reading.)
- 2.5.1. Xin: (Explains some grammar. Drawing charts on the board.) You can see from this..., and then..., Ok, "*shi*" [a sentence pattern] the word order is the same, but there is a slight difference...
- 2.5.2. June: (interrupting) Can I say "*tushuguan duimian*" other than "*tushuguande duimian*"?
- 2.5.3. Xin: Yea, yea, yea..., you can say that, it's, it's the same.
- 2.5.4. S1: What?
- 2.5.5. S2: (Makes a face indicating that she doesn't know what was just discussed.)
- 2.5.6. S1: (To June) What was the question? What did you ask him?
- 2.5.7. June: (Tries to explain to her in a low voice, but continues to looking at the teacher to see if he is offended by her action.)
- 2.5.8. S: (All the students sitting around June join in their discussion.)
- 2.5.9. Xin: (Continues his explanation of grammar, ignoring the students' small group discussion.)
- 2.5.10: June: (feels uneasy, quickly discontinues her explanation to her fellow classmates.)
- 2.6.1. Xin: Now, open your books. There is a picture on page, page ... Ok, you describe the picture. You. (pointing at Sebina.)
- 2.6.2. Sebina: (Avoids eye-contact.)

- 2.6.3. June: Seb... you.
- 2.6.4. Sebina: Oh, me? What?
- 2.6.5. Xin: Describe the picture here. (Pointing at the book.) This one,... yes.
Ok?
- 2.6.6. Sebina: ...*Zhe, zhe shi, zhe wode woshi.*
[This, this is, this [is] my bedroom.]
- 2.6.7. Xin: Oh, *Nide woshi piaoliang bu piaoliang?*
[Oh, is your bedroom pretty (or not)?]
- 2.6.8. Sebina: (Does not understand what the teacher said.) *Wo buzhidao*
[I don't know.]
- 2.6.9. Xin: (Believes that Sebina does not wish to answer, says nothing.)
- 2.6.10. Sebina: (Looks at the teacher, and seeing no further explanation of his utterance, continues her description of the picture.) *Zhege ...* (Looks for the words in the book.) *fangzi, yes, fangzi shi Xin laoshi fangzi.*
[This, house, house is professor Xin ['s] house.]
- 2.6.11. Xin: Oh, *wode fangzi.*
[Oh, my house.]
- 2.6.12. S: (laugh.)
- 2.6.13. Xin: *Wo zai nali chi fan?*
[Where do I eat?]
- 2.6.14. Sebina: (Again, does not understand his comment. Looks again at him and sees no further explanation) Can I continue?
- 2.6.15. Xin: (Smiles at her. Stops interacting.)
(Then the class activity changed to something else and the event of describing that picture was not completed.)

Teacher Three: Hong

- 3.1.1. Hong: (begins the class by correcting the mistakes the students made in their previous exercises.) *Xianzai fuxi shengci. Zuotian bushi xue le shengci ma?* (Draws a picture of a man on the blackboard.) *Xian kan shenti de bifen.*
[Now let's review the new vocabulary. [We] learned new vocabulary yesterday, right? Let's first look at the parts of the body.]
- 3.1.2. Hong: *ji yi ji, ranhou wo ca diao.*
[Try to remember [the words], afterwards I will erase them.]
- 3.1.3. S: eh?! (Look at each other; nobody knows what he is saying.)
- 3.1.4. Michael: (Makes a face to the principal instructor, who is observing the class, indicating he has no idea what is going on.)
- 3.1.5. Hong: (points at his own head.) *Zhe shi shenma?*
[What is this?]
- 3.1.6. S: *Tou*
[Head.]
- 3.1.7. Hong: *Dui, zhe ge ne?* (Pulls his own hair.) *Keshi, bu tai duo.*
[Correct. What about this? But not a lot.]
(Note: He is slightly bald-headed and is making a joke about his hair.)
- 3.1.8. S: *Toufa.* (Nobody laughs at his joke.)
[Hair.]
- 3.1.9. Hong: *Dui, toufa. Zhegene? Zhe shi shenma?* (Points at an eye.)
[Correct, hair. What about this? What is this?]
- 3.1.10. Hong: (Before the students give an answer, he walks to the blackboard to number each part of the body and then points individually to each student to name the part.)(points at the eye, and at the same time points to Irene.)
- 3.1.11. Irene: *Yanjing*
[Eye.]
- 3.1.12. Hong: *Dui ma?*
[Is that right?]
- 3.1.13. All S: *Dui.*
[Right.]
- 3.1.14. Hong: *En, yong yanjing zuo shenma?*
[Right. What do [you] use [your] eyes to do?]
- 3.1.15. Mordy: *Kan.*
[See.]
- 3.1.16. Hong: *Dui, kan. Hai you ne?*
[Right, see. What else?]
- 3.1.17. Serge: *Kan dianying.*
[Watch a movie.]

- 3.1.18. Anna: *Kan shu...*
[Read books.]
- 3.1.19. Hong: *Dui, kan dianying, kan dianshi, kan shu. Hai kan shenme?*
[Right, watch movies, watch TV, read books, and what else do
[you] see/watch/look at?]
- 3.1.20. Mike: *Kan guniang.*
[Look at girls. (Or "visit girls.")]
- 3.1.21. Hong: *Kan guniang?* (Knits his brows indicating that the statement was not
very appropriate.)
[Look at girls?]
- 3.1.22. Hong: (Points at the ear.) *Shei shuo zhe ge shi shenme?*
[Who can tell what this is?]
- 3.1.23. Jane: *Erduo*
[Ear.]
- 3.1.24. Hong: *Dui, yong erduo zuo shenme?*
[Right, what do [you] use [your] ears to do?]
- 3.1.25. Jack: *Ting, ting dianhua?*
[Listen, listen to the telephone?]
- 3.1.26. Hong: *Dui, keyi ting dianhua.*
[Right, (you) can listen to the telephone.]
- 3.1.27. Mordy: *Ting yinyue.*
[Listen to music.]
- 3.1.28. Hong: *Dui, ting yinyue, ting gudian yinyue...*
[Right, listen to music, listen to classical music...]
- 3.1.29. Jane: *Ting xiandai yinyue.*
[Listen to modern music.]
- 3.1.30. Hong: (Points at the heart.) *Xin, xin zuo shenme?*
[Heart. What does the heart do?]
- 3.1.31. S: (Pause. Nobody knows how to answer.)
- 3.1.32. Mike: *Xihuan*
[Like (love).]
- 3.1.33. Hong: (Pause)
- 3.1.34. Hong: *You hongde...*
[There is/[you] have red...(stuff).]
- 3.1.35. All S: (Pause. No answer.)
- 3.1.36. Hong: *Xue.*
[Blood.]
- 3.1.37. Hong: *Tou bu shufu?*
[[One's] head is not comfortable?]
- 3.1.38. All S: *Touteng*
[Headache.]
- Jane: *Fashao.*
[Fever.]

- 3.1.39. Hong: *Lai kan shu. Lai yiqi nian.*
 [Now, read (your) books. Read aloud together.]
 (After the whole class read the text)
- 3.2.1. Hong: *Xianzai women yiqi fuxi shengci. Wo shuo juzi, nimen ting. Kan dong bu dong. A.*
 [Now let's review the new words together. I say the sentences, you listen. See [if you can] understand or not. Ah.]
 (Goes through the vocabulary list in the textbook one by one making sentences using the new vocabulary.)
Yiwusuo shi shenme difang? Kan bing de difang. You are sick, qu kan bing, daifu gaosu ni zuo shenme.
 [What is the place called "clinic"? The place you go to see the doctor. When you are sick, you go to see the doctor. The doctor tells you what to do.]
- 3.2.2. Hong: (Read aloud to emphasize the next word on the list.) **Zuijin**, *zuijin women meiyou kaoshi.*
 [**Recently**, recently we have not had an exam.]
- 3.2.3. All S: (Confused, because they have quizzes daily.)
- 3.2.4. Hong: Don't agree with me, just try to understand what I said.
- 3.2.5. Hong: *Ta qu guo zhongguo.*
 [He has **been** to China.]
- 3.2.6. Jay: Doesn't it matter? with or without *guo*?
- 3.2.7. Hong: *Guo*, stresses physical being. You have **been** to a place before.
- 3.2.8. Mike: (To Serge who often skips classes and happens to be in class today.) He has **been** here.
- 3.2.9. Hong: *Wo gei nimen duan juzi, nimen shuo "dong" haishi "budong."*
 [I'll give you short sentences, you tell me if you understand or not.]
- 3.2.10. Hong: *Suiran ta meiyou bing, keshi hai changchang qu kan bing. Meiyou bing, bu yao qu kan bing.*
 [Although he is healthy, [but] he often goes to see the doctor. If you are not sick, don't go to see the doctor.]
- 3.2.11. Hong: *Budong, jiu shuo.*
 [If don't understand, tell [me].]
- 3.2.12. All S: (Pause. No answer.)
- 3.2.13. Hong: *Budong yao wen wo, bu yao look like dong le.*
 [If don't understand, ask me. Don't look like you understand.]
- 3.2.14. All S: (Understand this sentence, and laugh.)
- 3.2.15. Hong: (Laughs with the students.) *Wo zai shuo yi ge juzi.*
 [I will give you another sentence.]
- 3.2.16. Hong: *Suiran ta mei chi guo faguo fan, keshi ta changchang chi zhongguo fan.*

[Although he has never had French food, he often eats Chinese food.]

3.2.17. All S: (Laugh.)

3.2.18. Hong: *Bu xihuan faguo fan. Haishi zhongguo fan hao chi. Mingbai la ma?*
OK?

[[He/she] does not like French food. [He/she] still (thinks) Chinese food is good. Understand now? OK.]

3.2.19. Hong: *You yi ge ren, shenti bu hao, pengyou changchang qu kan ta. Shi shenme?*

[There is a person who is not in good health. [His/her] friends often go to visit him/her. What is (the word for) this (situation)?]

3.2.20. S: (nobody responds.)

3.2.21. Hong: *Dui ta guanxin.*

[[They are] concerned about him.]

3.3.1: Hong: (Explained the words of a folk song about the life and natural beauty of the grassland. In between, he tried to put in some casual conversation. So he asked what city people usually do on weekends) *Xingqi tian... qu ...na?*

[Sunday, go where?]

3.3.2. All S: *Gongyuan.*

[The park.]

3.3.3. Hong: *Zenme yang?*

[How is it?]

3.3.4. All S: (Nobody answered.)

3.3.5. Hong: *Gongyuan zenme yang?*

[How is the park?]

3.3.6. All S: (No answer.)

3.3.7. Hong: *You hen duo ren..., bu cuo, hen hao, you yisi.*

[It has a lot of people,... it's good, it's very good, it's interesting.]

3.3.8. S: *Hen duo ren? You yisi?*

[It has a lot of people ? It's interesting?]

3.3.9. Hong: *Duo shuo yidianr, bu yao "baby talk."*

[Please say something more. Don't just [give] baby talk.]

Teacher Four: Lily

- 4.1.1. Lily: My name is Lily. *Jiao wo Lili* [Call me Lily.] Don't call me "teacher." Call me Lily instead of "teacher." Because I don't like that word. I am a student. I study here just like you... In the xxxxx department. Nnnnn... I've been here for... almost eight years. Tell me what tones are my name? "*Li*?" My name is Lily.
- 4.1.2. S: Second? Fourth?
- 4.1.3. Lily: Yea, fourth. "*Li*?" [e.g. the second "li" in her name.] (pointing at one student.)
- 4.1.4. S: Fourth?
- 4.1.5. Lily: No.
- 4.1.6. S: Second?
- 4.1.7. Lily: Right. What is your name, please?
- 4.2.1. Lily: (Writing words on the blackboard.) How do you pronounce this?
- 4.2.2. S: (Pronouncing the word) *Ni hao*.
- 4.2.3. Lily: Very good! There is a tricky one. What is this?
- 4.2.4. S: *ma? ma?*
- 4.2.5. Lily: Use your ears, your heart, rather than analyzing it.
- 4.2.6. Mike: Can you tell us the difference?
- 4.2.7. Lily: Which one?
- 4.2.8. Mike: Yea, which one?
- 4.2.9. Lily: Excuse me! (Laugh loudly.)
- 4.3.1. Lily: (After the break.) Where are all the guys? Better come on time. Otherwise, the others will have to wait. I know it is much fun to be outside. Learning a new language is very stressful. I know it because I've been there myself. And my husband, too. He sometimes got crazy: Ahhhhhhhh... I told him, you know, the trick is, you have to enjoy it. You'll all pass. Don't let that, the grade? No, don't let that bother you. Nobody is going to tell you how to. You, yourself can find an enjoyable way to learn it.
- 4.3.2. Lily: Look at these words: (Writes on the blackboard.) *Zhe* = this. Pronounced *zhe*, is light. The sound is much lighter. See this: *na* = that. *Na* is stronger.
- 4.3.3. Tony: What about *ma*? Isn't it in English that the expressions of inquiry are pronounced much heavier?
- 4.3.4. Lily: *Ma* has a mouth part. Put a mouth in a horse --- inquiring information. Actually, in Chinese, all the words at the end of the sentence, inquiring information, have this mouth thing. I don't know. I don't know about the English, but I do know that there is a similarity. Try to feel it. The feeling...

- 4.3.5. Lily: Hopefully learning another language makes us smarter. When you learn other languages, you are much aware, not only of their culture but your own, right?
- 4.4.1. Lily: One way to miss less is to practise Chinese characters. Now I give you the English you tell me in Chinese. How do you say "college"?
- 4.4.2. S: *Xue...*
- 4.4.3. Lily: Try again, keep trying, we will get there.
- 4.4.4. S: *Daxue.*
- 4.4.5. Lily: Not the one I want. This is for practice. Everybody, relax. I know you have a problem with it. It is alright. Relax. It's for fun.
- 4.4.6. Sara: (Gets impatient.) Will you just write it on the board so that I can read it?
- 4.5.1. Lily: *Nimen hao?*
[How are you? [plural]]
- 4.5.2. S: *Ni hao?*
[How are you?]
- 4.5.3. Lily: *Nimen zuotian fuxi gongke fuxi de haobuhao?*
[Did you have a good review of the text yesterday?]
- 4.5.4. Will: *Buhao*
[No.]
- 4.5.5. Lily: *Na* we have a quiz.
[Then, we (are going to) have a quiz.]
- 4.5.6. S: What?
- 4.5.7. Lily: Just kidding. I'd like to know if you grasp what I said. Let's practise Lesson 25.
- 4.5.8. S: No, we just learned it today.
- 4.5.9. Lily: O.K. No problem. I can do Lesson 24.
- 4.6.1. Lily: When I study English, I just love it. I love the sound. I memorized it. When I speak, I speak with fluency. I don't translate. You like to do it and you need to do it every day. If you go to the gym, you exercise and then you quit, what happens?
- 4.6.2. S: *Buzhidao.*
[Don't know.]
- 4.6.3. Lily: No more muscles. That is why you have to remember that the heart in Chinese has great significance. (Writes words with the mouth radical on the blackboard.)
- 4.6.4. Lily: I do this to help you to remember Chinese characters, because you do have problems. Now I have done my part. There is no rule to which how much you should do. Just to the extent that you are happy. A

happy person learns well. (Points at the Character exercise book.)
Don't waste money. That is a sin, use it.

4.6.5. Lily: (Uses her finger to write a character.) How do you say this?

4.6.6. S: Trace.

4.6.7. Lily: Right, I don't know how to say it. Show it to me in class, bring it to me to have a look. I don't believe in pressure. I am here to help. Not only help, it is enjoyable. When you enjoy it, you do it well. Bring this little book for me. Just Lesson 25, or all the other pages. I don't care about other pages. You can throw it away or burn it. I don't care.

4.6.8. Lily: We can go to 25 now if you want. (Laughs)

4.6.9. S: No....

4.6.10. Lily: Next session, I will dictate. (Laugh.) I will not dictate. We'll have a dictation.

4.6.11. S: (Two students laugh. The others make no response.)

4.6.12. Lily: Open your books and prepare for the dictation. Note down. I'll just give you time to absorb. You can go on forever at home. What did I tell you yesterday?

4.6.13. S: (Look at each other, nod their heads.)

4.6.14. Lily: Eh. Memorize the title. Who can tell me?

4.6.15. Mordy: (Reads from the book.) *Ta zuo fan, zuo de hao bu hao?*
[Does he cook well?]

4.6.16. Lily: Dannielle, tell me again.

4.6.17. Dannielle: (Tries to get her neighbour to show her where it is in the book.) *Ta... zuo? Zuo fan zuo ... de hao? Bu hao?*

4.6.18. Lily: *Kuai shuo.* Do it again.
[Say it faster. Do it again.]

4.6.19. Dannielle: (Shrugs her shoulders to indicate that she can not go faster.)

4.6.20. Lily: Yesterday I told you to tell me the grammar. If you did it at home, by now, you know the grammar, right?

4.6.21. Mark: In what language?

4.6.22. Lily: Most important. That is most important. Whoever wants to explain the grammar? Jeff? want to try?

4.6.23. Jeff: Sure.

4.6.24. Lily: Give a sentence.

4.6.25. Jeff: (Does not know what to say.)

4.6.26. Lily: Yesterday, I want you to mark down, to write down. You did not do it?

4.6.27. Jeff: (Shakes his head.)

4.6.28. Lily: Oh, you don't think I was serious. Do it tomorrow. If you don't want to do it, fine with it.

Teacher Five: Ben

5.1.1. Ben: *Qishi nimen zai le, Wo jiu gei nimen zuo ye le. You yi xie tongxue zuotian bu zaile, na mei fa gei nimen zuo ye le. Tai kexi le. Wo gaosu nimen a, you xie tongxue haishi bian yong jianti bian yong fanti zi le. Kou ban fen, zhuyao shi Huayi tongxue ah. Zhe shi xiangzheng xing de, ah.*

[Actually, if you were here, I would have given you back your homework. Some students were not here yesterday. That is why I could not give you the homework. Too bad. I'm telling you, some of you are still using simplified characters and the traditional versions at the same time. Deduct half point [for each character.] [I am talking about] mainly, the students of Chinese origin. This [punishment] is symbolic.]

5.1.2. Jane: *Ke women bu hui a!*

[But we don't know how.]

5.1.3. Ben: *Zidian li dou you. Nimen yao xia yi xie gongfu le. Nimen lai shang ernianji, bu mai yi ge hao yi dian de zidian, na zenme cheng le. Wo bu tongyi le. Zhe shi yi ge xiangzheng eryl a.*

(Very loudly and sternly) [They are all in the dictionary. You need to work harder. You (plural) came to the second level and didn't buy a good dictionary. How will that do? This is just symbolic (referring to the deduction of the points.)]

5.2.1. Ben: *Jintian shi yao taolun zongjiao...*

[Today we will discuss religion...]

(The discussion is first on historical events beginning with the Crusades. And then the class discusses the influence of Christianity on China and the differences between the Western culture and Chinese culture.)

5.2.2. Ben: *Chule zhege yiwai, weishenme zongjiao shi hen zhongyao de.*

[Besides this, why is religion so important?]

5.2.3. S: (No answer.)

5.2.4. Ben: *Yiqian ren neng kan shu ma? Hen shao ren neng kan shu le. Zhege jiao shenme? Wenhua shuiping hen di.*

[In the past, could people read? Very few people could read. What is this called? Low educational level.]

5.2.5. Pat: *Di?*

(Does not understand.) [Low?]

5.2.6. Ben: *Suoyi hen duo ren you mixin. A communist teacher is here.*

Henduo ren you mixin. Zongjiao he mixyou shenme guanxi? Wo wen huayi tongxue ne? You guanxi meiyou? Wo wen Wang Xi.

[Therefore, many people were superstitious. A communist teacher is here. (Referring to the observer.) Many people were superstitious. What is the connection between religion and

superstition? I am asking the students of Chinese origin. Is there any connection? I am asking Wang Xi.]

5.2.7. WX: (No answer.)

5.2.8. Ben: *Wo shi wen ni de, ni yao shuo qilai.*

[I am asking you. You should answer.]

5.2.9. WX: *Wo buzhidao.*

(Very reluctantly.) [I don't know.]

5.2.10. Ben: *Na shei you yijian le?*

[Then, who has an opinion?]

5.2.11. Alex: *Wo xiang you zongjiao cai you mixin.*

[I think (when) there are religions then (you can) have superstitions.]

(Afterwards, the discussion shifts to religious beliefs and moral education.)

5.3.1. Ben: *Meiyou zongjiao you shenme?*

[If there is no religion, what do we have?]

5.3.2. Pat: Humanism.

5.3.3. Ben: *Rendaozhuyi. Shei tingshuo Masochism. Sili xuexiao, genju rendaozhuyi jiao haizi daode, meiyou zongjiao.*

[Humanism. Who has ever heard of "Masochism?" Private schools, teach kids morals according to Humanism, not religions.]

5.3.4. Jane: *Wo juede, bu shi zai sili xuexiao, huo zongjiao. Ni haishi keyi xuedao daode he jiazhi de. Wo jiushi zhe yangde.*

[I think, the point is not going to private or religious schools. You can always learn moral and social values. That is what happened to me.]

5.3.5. Ben: *Na dangran. Women qu xuexiao shi xue zenme guo rizi. Bu zhishi suansuan. Yi ge laoshi de renwu shi jiao haizi jiazhi. Danshi, ruguo ni you qian de hua, nimen song ta dao zongjiao xuexiao haishi sili xuexiao? Nide haizi, Wang Xi?*

[Of course. We go to school to learn how to live our lives. Not just to learn how to count. A teacher's task is to teach kids values. But if you had money, would you send him/her to religious schools or private schools? Your kids, Wang Xi?]

5.3.6. WX: *Wo?...En... Yinwei wo ziji shi tianzhujiao, wo hui song tamen qu tianzhujiao xuexiao ba.*

[Me? ... ummm... Because I am a Catholic, I probably would send them to a Catholic school.]

5.3.7. Ben: *Zhe shi you sili, gonggongde. Zhe shi nide renwei.*

[We are talking about public and private schools. This is your opinion (choice).]

5.3.8. WX: *Nide wenti bushi yao buyao, zongjiao shi shenghuo de yi fangmian.*

[I don't think the problem is making a choice. Religion is a part of life.]

5.3.9. Ben: (Turns to talk to a Japanese student and asks the same question to her.)

(Speaking about Buddhism and the Japanese culture.)

5.4.1. Ben: *Xinyang he wenhua shi liang ge dongxi. Wang Xi, tianzhujiao he zhongguo wenhua you chongtu ma?*

[Belief and culture are two different things. Wang Xi, is there conflict between Catholic and Chinese culture?]

5.4.2. WX: *Wo budong zhongguo wenhua.*

[I don't know anything about Chinese culture.]

5.4.3. Ben: *Ni shi xuexi zhongguo yuyan de. A! Zhongguo de wenhua, zhongguoren chongbai shenme! Tianzhujiao ni dong ma! Chongtu shi shenme?*

[But you are studying Chinese language. Right? Chinese culture, what do Chinese people worship? You know Catholicism! What is the conflict? (You know what 'conflict' is.)]

5.4.4. WX: *Haoxiang meiyou chongtu, danshi bu yi yang.*

[There seems to be no conflict. But there are differences.]

5.4.5. Ben: *Haoxiang meiyou chongtu, danshi bu yi yang. Ni jieshi yi xia.*

[There seems no conflict. But there are differences. You explain that.]

5.4.6. WX: *Tianzhujiao bu zhuyi laorenjia.*

[Catholicism does not emphasize (respecting) old people.]

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