EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL MISCOMMUNICATION
LANGUAGE CONTACT AND CONFLICT
IN A HONG KONG OFFICE

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Abstract

It is commonly assumed that successful intercultural communication depends on a good mastery of a foreign language, or that a lingua franca can alternatively be used for the sake of all participants. However, this view seems to have neglected the relation between language and culture. People of different sociocultural backgrounds have different ways of speaking. These differences reflect culture-specific norms of communication and values. Their role should therefore be stressed so as to understand and explain why intercultural communication sometimes fails.

The present study intends to explore the role of cultural differences in discourse and verbal communication routines in cross-cultural interactions. The focus is on the differences in communication patterns audio-recorded between Cantonese-English bilingual speakers, and native English speakers, who were mostly monolingual, in an editors' office in Hong Kong. These differences, as the present study shows, may not be merely grammatical but can also be found at sociocultural and pragmatic levels. The data analysis attempts to reveal various types of miscommunication and their possible sources. How these communication problems were noted and the participants' subsequent strategies to manage them are also explored.
探索跨文化沟通产生的问题
一个香港工作间语言传达的分析

论文提要

有一个普遍的假设：成功的跨文化沟通要依赖良好的外语能力，或者利用一种共同语言作为沟通的工具，可是，这种看法似乎忽略了语言与文化之间的微妙关系。不同文化背景的人皆有其独特的说话方式，这反映出他们自成一格的沟通模式和特有的价值观念，因此这些说话方式提供了很重要的线索，让我们了解，甚至解释跨文化沟通时呈现的种种问题。

本论文旨在发掘文化差异在跨文化对话中所扮演的角色。笔者以一群双语（广东话、英语）及以英语为母语的编辑为研究对象，探索他们以英语为主导的对话中，由文化差异产生的沟通难题，本论文亦尝试分析各种不同类型的沟通难题及其因由，而有关讲者如何意识到这些问题以及他们所用的解决方法，亦是本论文一项重要课题。
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