

Dramatizing Intercultural Communication: Metaphors of City and Identity in Film

Eduardo URIOS-APARISI
University of Connecticut, USA

Abstract: Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* and Isabel Coixet's *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* choose to represent the difficulties of intercultural communication and the consequences of the encounter of the Self and the Other. This paper applies the parameters of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory to identify the underlying metaphors and how those metaphors change throughout the films as both directors intend to redefine concepts such as SELF or SUBJECT, two components of the person according to Lakoff and Johnson (1999). For this purpose, a comparative analysis is conducted of Tokyo and of the characters in both films.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, intercultural communication, identity, cinema, Tokyo, Sofia Coppola, Isabel Coixet

1. Introduction

This paper compares Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation* (2003) and Isabel Coixet's *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* (2009 a) and their dramatization of intercultural communication from the point of view of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. These films narrate the drama of intercultural communication in a distinctively and paradigmatically exotic city: Tokyo. This comparison amounts to a case study of how difficult it is to break the structures defined by "othering," the discourse of a group that excludes others by portraying them with opposite features to those of this group (see Riggins 1997). Partly because of the need of dramatic conflict, the directors struggle to re-create the Self as a construct that goes beyond individual and national boundaries and therefore present a nuanced view of the encounter with the Other. Nonetheless, this attempt to overcome othering is fraught by preconceptions of identity and by the generic conventions these films follow.

The relationship between Self and Others is dialectical according to the dominating view of the individual in the Western world. The Self is conceived as a self-possessed individual with clear boundaries whose identity is determined by the Other sometimes identified with "lascivious sensuality" or "inherent violence" (Kabbani 1986, p. 56). Cinema has taken advantage of the dramatic features of this opposition in many films (van Ginneken 2007, p. 107ff). Such films belong to a variety of genres. Just to name some examples, Self-Other conflict and miscommunication play a dramatic role in thrillers like John Frankenheimer's *French Connection II* (1975) or British dramas based on E.M. Foster like David Lean's *Passage to India* (1984) or James Ivory's *A Room with a View* (1985). These films narrate the conflict or transformations of the Eurocentric view of the world embodied by these characters steaming from the encounter with the Other. European and American travel writing to the East stresses the "qualities that made the East different from the West, exiled into an irretrievable state of

‘otherness’” according to Kabbani (1986, p. 56). This Eurocentric worldview is imperialistic as Said (1978) established, and determines the encounter with the Other in any film that narrates the North-South or East-West encounters.

Cinematic fictions have an impact on how intercultural communication is conceived as they represent and dramatize prototypical stories. Those stories help to verbalize and narrativize the spectators’ own experience. Sophia Coppola and Isabel Coixet also borrow from their own experience in Tokyo and their own views of the culture they encounter as they repeatedly explain in any of the interviews and writings on both films (cf. Coppola in Rose 2003 and Coixet 2009 b). In this paper, I focus on the visual construction of this dramatic plot in order to identify how it is a component of the cinematic discourse directors use to create figurative meanings for its capacity to create emotional impact on the audience as Sontag (2004) shows.

Coppola’s *Lost in Translation* (2003) is about the relationship between a famous Hollywood actor, Bob Harris (Bill Murray) and a young woman Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson). Bob is going through family and economic problems and is working on a commercial for a whisky company. Charlotte accompanies her husband of two years John (Giovanni Ribisi) while he is on a photo shoot for a Japanese rock group. The story of *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* (2009 a) is centered on David (Sergi López), a Catalan man who owns a wine shop in Tokyo and is trying to recover from the recent suicide of his Japanese girlfriend, Midori. He starts a sexual affair with Ryu (Rikko Kikuchi). Ryu works in Tokyo’s fish market at night and is a contract killer in her spare time. In fact, she meets David when she is planning to fulfill her contract with Ishida-san (Hideo Sakaki) to kill David.

Sofia Coppola and Isabel Coixet break away from generic and filmic conventions. Their cinematography and their funding is close to what is considered independent cinema or the hybrid style of cinema between the commercial blockbuster and the low-budget independent film called “indiewood” in the sense of King (2009). Otherwise, they narrate their own experiences of the city and their own globalized world. Sofia Coppola and Isabel Coixet engage in a detailed representation of the film location and a careful connection to the emotional state of the characters. The continuity of both aspects and the recognizable features of the mise-en-scène can be an example of what David Bordwell calls “worldmaking” (2006, p. 58) (although in Bordwell’s case, he includes not only the set, but also additional aspects of the film production and distribution such as marketing devices).

The opposition of Self and Other is connected to important issues: identity, the relationship between individual and society, and space. As Palfreyman (2005, p. 213) says, “the term Othering refers to the ways in which the discourse of a particular group defines other groups in opposition to itself: an Us and Them view that constructs an identity for the Other and, implicitly, for the Self.” Other is parallel to the Self and it is related to the notion of identity and identity formation (cf. Neumann 1996). Othering can be associated to gender, national culture, subcultures and generally implies a negative evaluation of the groups associated to the Other. This negative view is based on stereotypes and prejudices and, as such, it is attached to ways of thinking and of talking that are difficult to overcome.

Even in postmodern perspectives on the intercultural experience, Fox (1997, p. 86) points out how the “untranslatability of experiences from culture to culture” hinders the possibility of creating situations of real understanding between people from different cultures. In order to

understand intercultural differences and create authentic communication, according to Fox, it is necessary to identify the elements of this power imbalance and the cultural filters that determine the speakers' worldviews. Those filters include metaphor and innuendo, classificatory, ethical, political and interpretational filters (Fox 1997, p. 95). They are a combination of semantic, pragmatic and ideological processes.

The application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to these films is meant to identify the metaphors and metonymies that construe their underlying ideological framework. The cognitive processes determine the creation and continuity of stereotypes that fuel those prejudices. As it has been shown (see e.g. Forceville & Urios-Aparisi 2009), those conceptual processes are part of all the aspects of film-making. They include different techniques like the establishing shot, the close-up or extreme close-up, the presence of an item of the *mise-en-scène* in different moments of a film or other modes such as words, sounds, music, gestures, color, and music, among others. Forceville (1999) and Rhodin (2009) have studied the cinematographic techniques of (multimodal) metaphor signaling in cinema, Eggertsson and Forceville (2009) and Urios-Aparisi (2010) have situated such metaphor in cinema as part of cognitive complex narrative structures called "metaphor scenarios" (cf. Lakoff 1987; Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987).

In this article, I focus on two central aspects of a film: firstly, the setting, that is to say, the city and how it is portrayed through the camera shots; and secondly, the characters. The films I analyze show a careful disposition of both aspects within each shot and in the overall film. The use of particular camera shots, the repetition of the same cityscape and the focus on the characters' emotional state, their body, their costume or the repeated action are some of the features that, as Bordwell (2006, p. 45) says, it is usually identified as "motifs" Their repeated use has the additional function as a storytelling or characterization device. In this context, motifs are particularly important resources for creating figurative meanings. Very much like musical or literary motifs, the cinematographer takes advantage of all the objects and technical elements in the film to express emotional states and subtly provoke similar reactions from the audience.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) analysis of Self in the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is here applied to the features of setting and characterization in the storytelling of Self and Other in these films. On the basis of linguistic data, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have identified a distinction between Subject and Self. The inner life of a person is divided into a dual structure of "the Subject and one or more Selves" (1999, p. 268). The Subject would be equivalent to an essence, independent of the Self and of the body and that is "always conceptualized as a person" (p. 269) while the Self or Selves are, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1999, p. 269), metaphorically seen "as either a person, an object, or a location".

Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp. 274-6) find three cases of metaphor that conceptualize the control of the subject over the Self as part of the experience of being in "a normal location" (1999, p. 274). The metaphor SELF CONTROL IS BEING IN ONE'S NORMAL LOCATION is substantiated by the metaphor SELF AS CONTAINER where the Subject is conceived as an entity in control of Self as it is surrounded by the normal or familiar environment. Second, being in control of the Self is being on the ground: SELF CONTROL AS BEING ON THE GROUND (1999, pp. 275-6). Both aspects are central in how the duality works: the Subject is conceived as an essence that controls the Self as long as it is situated in a particular space generally represented by its physical reality:

the container, the ground or the geographical location. representations of both the SELF AS CONTAINER and SELF CONTROL AS BEING ON THE GROUND are expression such as “I am outside or beside myself,” “I am out of it” or “he’s got his feet on the ground” in Lakoff’s and Johnson’s (1999) linguistic corpora.

This metaphor is also connected to another metaphor of Self, the “Scattered Self”. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999:276), the conceptual metaphor ATTENTIONAL SELF CONTROL IS HAVING THE SELF TOGETHER is connected to the reality of having Subject and Self in the same place or being a unified container.

In the first section below, I address how Tokyo is presented as a central element in the dramatic and generic characteristics of both films, and how dislocation is at the center of the emotional conflict embodied by the characters. The analysis of the metaphors of Tokyo via analysis of the images leads to the next section on characterization. As I show, the characters need to be understood within the context of the storyline, their actions, and the film settings. It is necessary to take into account the features associated with the prototypes of the genre of the film or with the actors and their own physical presence.

2. Metaphors of Tokyo

2.1. Tokyo as Labyrinth in *Lost in Translation*

As Doob (1990) suggests in her historical study on the labyrinth, being in a labyrinth can create two different kinds of reaction: awe and fear. Both emotions follow the contemplation of the complexity of the structure from a distant vantage point or the fear of not finding the way out especially once inside the labyrinth. The visual representation of Tokyo as labyrinth can be mapped in the shots from the hotel room as Tokyo appears as a mesh of streets and high buildings. The views focus on the streets with the walled facades of the skyscrapers. Although in labyrinths the external boundaries are shown, this view focuses on the streets walled by skyscrapers and the sheer magnitude of the whole city. In this case, the hotel works as the center of the labyrinth. The emotions of awe and fear to be lost are especially expressed in long to medium long shots where we see the characters contemplating the landscape or the spaces around them and sometimes clearly not understanding what is happening. The metaphorical mappings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Mappings of Tokyo as Labyrinth in *Lost in Translation*

LABYRINTH	→	TOKYO
Walled hallways	→	Streets surrounded by huge skyscrapers
Complex structures	→	Tall buildings and crowded streets Cityscapes from the hotel room
Fear of being lost	→	Walking around clearly not understanding the people and language
Awe of its complexity	→	Contemplating silently the cityscapes

Center of the labyrinth	→	Hotel where they stay
Inhabitants	→	Charlotte's trendy Japanese friends
People entering the labyrinth	→	Charlotte and Bob

The views from the street, the subway, arcade games, pachinko shops or temples are locations where especially Charlotte walks about as a tourist. These scenes focus on aspects of Japanese culture, architecture and habits that are markedly different and, therefore, insist in different aspects of its exoticism: the technical progress, the importance of packaging and decoration and the religious aspect. Charlotte's experience of the city is that of a tourist voyeur who contemplates nice views. Bob's conflict is identified with linguistic misunderstandings, and his feeling uncomfortable with the attention his Japanese entourage pays to him.

At the same time, both characters are emotionally distant to their significant others. Charlotte's husband is always working and in some encounters, he does not seem to understand her. Bob's wife is only concerned about taking care of the household by being in charge of the children and of the decoration of the house. These personal conflicts set the basis of the topic of the film: a romantic encounter in a foreign city, and also justify how the characters' point of view of the city and of Japanese culture changes as the film advances. When Charlotte's husband leaves, Charlotte and Bob go out at night and meet her Japanese friends. This is the beginning of a long night out that ends up in a designed apartment signing karaoke.

The second night starts in a striptease bar. After sitting uncomfortably for a short time there, they start walking and running in the busy streets until they see a commercial truck carrying a large picture of Bob in his commercial for Santori whisky. In the romantic genre this film is inscribed, the metaphor SELF CONTROL AS (NORMAL) LOCATION is activated and associates the newly formed romantic relationship with Tokyo. Nonetheless, as mentioned before, the film breaks the genre expectations. In the following scene, Charlotte is alone in her room and only as both are unable to sleep they end up meeting again later on in Charlotte's hotel room. In the last conversations, they talk about staying in Tokyo and creating a new life, but she claims that she could not be back to Tokyo because "it would not be so much fun." The touristic Tokyo becomes the honeymoon Tokyo. The place where a strong emotional encounter occurs is metonymically associated with the relationship.

2.2. Tokyo as Water and Air

In *Map of the Sound of Tokyo* the storyline and the relationship with the city tries to break out of the stereotypical view of the Shibuya station or other touristic locations. Nonetheless, Tokyo is divided between the modern apartments and traditional Japanese buildings. The protagonist, Ryu, spends her time between her minimalist apartment in Ueno, overlooking a driving training space, her work, the fish market place at Tsukiji, the traditional eating places where she meets with David and the narrator in Tsukiji and Shimokitazawa, location of the love hotel *La Bastille*. In contrast, Nagara-san's and Ishida-san's scenes are in the upper-class neighborhoods of Roppongi Hills, Aoyama or Omotesando.

Coixet's film starts by taking views from a boat in the Sumida River. The view of the

river does not appear at all until perhaps scene 17 analyzed below. Some transition scenes in later scenes are bird's eye night shots of the skyscrapers and the city streets. These transitions appear on three occasions and it coincides with changes in location, especially when the action moves to the affluent neighborhoods of Midori's, Nagara-san's apartment or to his company headquarters. A couple of scenes are set in a cemetery in Tokyo. In these scenes, she is usually with the engineer performing the ritual washing of the tomb stones of those people she had killed.

Tokyo is represented as a diverse and dynamic city. The changes in location and space follow the characters' professional and interactional contexts and their emotional state. The rather old fashioned gentle sound engineer lives in a low traditional house. Ryu lives in a rather empty and impersonal space while her work is hard and she performs it in a machine like manner. Other situations like the encounter with Ishida-san to hire her to kill David take place in the old fashioned Hanayashiki amusement park in the Asakusa neighborhood.

Two moments are particularly central in how the city evolves to be depicted throughout the film. First of all, scene 17 (DVD scene selection men Coixet 2009 b) is set in a location of the Yokohama harbor where the skyline of the city can be seen. This scene, called "Nobody changes," starts with the word "nobody" spoken off screen by the sound engineer. At that moment Ryu is shown in a long shot standing facing Tokyo's skyline at night. She wears a black outfit and high heels. The lights are flickering and the wind is strong and the boat in the dark water moves agitated by the wind. The hand-held camera moves closer and there are quick cuts of the stormy views of the water, a lonely boat in the middle of the bay and the emotional state of the character. At some point, while Ryu is crying, the camera closes up on the weapon she is holding against her belly. She is supposed to use it to kill David. In her emotional upheaval she has fallen in love with David.

The second moment of this film is in scene 18, the one after the one just analyzed. By a quick cut, the camera focuses on images of spaces separating houses in Tokyo. As the camera shows some of those gaps in quick succession, the voice-over of the narrator utters the following words:

I know there are voices coming from the Edo times trapped in the dark spaces between the Tokyo buildings. Maybe the words are different, but Ryu was right when she said that people never changed.

While he says the last words "people never changed" David is slurping ramen noodles the Japanese way. This apparently minor point is important if we take into account that eating noodles is constant throughout this film, but I will discuss it further below in the following section. These words have a poetic ring to them and contain an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, they mention the ancestral voices of Japanese history and, on the other, the gaps are a break in the apparent unity of the city and also of the cultural tradition it represents.

Coixet's alternative is fluidity represented by air (aerial views of the city or the gaps just mentioned), but mostly by water. The presence of water and water related topics conveys metaphorical meanings that vary from scene to scene. Water appears in the form of pouring rain, paddles in the street or in the market, and the ablutions at a Shinto shrine in Komagone.

It also appears in liquids like wine or sake and the ramen soup they enjoy eating. It is implicit in the fish Ryu cuts and prepares for sushi, or even in Ryu's name that means in Japanese "dragon," a sea-creature in Japanese mythology. In this repetitive presence of water, liquid and water creatures the director endows the reality of Tokyo and the characters with mythical meanings that add another layer to the collagistic world of figures from different genres and different worlds. As the words in scene 18 suggest, the characters' struggle to grasp the sense of fluidity and change. Both fluidity and change are in conflict with the staticity of the city as a physical reality of buildings and streets. This struggle with a fluid world is also a struggle on how identity is conceived.

3. Characters and Characterization

Both films are similar in the choice of leading roles. Bill Murray and Sergi López are well-known actors and play middle-aged men in a critical stage in their lives. The young female characters, Scarlett Johansson and Rikko Kikuchi, are obviously younger and it is this relationship that contributes to the changes in the emotional and personal state of all the characters. Although the male roles are at first sight performed by leading male actors, the female characters have much more impact in the development of the plot as they are a mixture of sensuality and strength.

The individuality of the characters is connected to the physical appearance of the actors. Bob is tall and has a deadpan kind of humor as Bill Murray the stand-up comedian. Bill Murray, the celebrity, intertwines with Bob, the character. In a similar way, Jordi López's body is an important anti-Hollywood representation of the romantic leading man. Viewed against the prototypical characters, Bob and David are non-standard representations of what the leading man is in the tradition of romance in exotic places. Scarlet Johansson, who was nineteen at the time, is a young woman and her body seems to be a major issue for her as much as the character's difficulties to find her career path after having finished her University studies. Rikko Kikuchi's slender body suits her sense of control and the type of the comic contract killer such as Nikita (Anne Parillaud) in Luc Besson *Nikita (La femme Nikita)*, 1990).

3.1. Coppola's Characters in the Labyrinth

Coppola starts by focusing on Bob's pragmatic communication problems while a more relaxed and easygoing Charlotte seems to be able to deal with the uncertainty of the interaction without anxiety. The images of Charlotte walking and staring at Tokyo's cityscapes are parallel to Bob's looks of confusion when he is trying to make sense of the instructions when shooting the commercials. Obviously both Charlotte and Bob are at very different stages in life, but both seem to be equally disoriented, and being lost in Tokyo parallels the fact that both are lost in their relations with their respective partners. Besides, the age difference seems to play an important role as to why Bob and Charlotte's relationship does never become sexual, but he is respectful and caring towards Charlotte. As mentioned above, Coppola contradicts the viewer's expectations of what a romantic film should be when two scenes do not end in an erotic scene. In this scene, Charlotte and Bob talk frankly about their families and themselves.

[Bob and Charlotte are lying on the bed]

Charlotte: I'm stuck. Does it get easier.

Bob: No. Yes. It gets easier.

Charlotte: Oh yeah? Look at you.

Bob: Thanks. The more you know who you are, and what you want, the less you let things upset you.

Charlotte: Yeah. I just don't know what I'm supposed to be, you know. I tried being a writer, but I hate what I write. I tried taking pictures, but they were so mediocre. You know, every girl goes through a photography phase. You know, horses... taking dumb pictures of your feet.

Bob: You'll figure that out. I'm not worried about you. Keep writing.

Charlotte: But I'm so mean.

Bob: Mean's okay.

As we can see, the expression "I'm stuck" summarizes the feeling of being inside the labyrinth. It is a labyrinth of her professional career and her emotional relations. At the same time, she also struggles between the importance of beauty and physical appearance and her self-definition as an intellectual. Several scenes show how Charlotte grapples with her loneliness and self-doubt. In a scene, she is alone trying some make-up or different hairstyle; in another, she is listening to audio books of practical psychology. Overall, she attempts to feel well with herself.

In the dialogue just cited, Bob's words implicate a rationalistic and optimistic attitude towards life and youth and he expresses in mathematical terms: "you will figure it out" as if it was a question of logical deduction. His conflict lies in his relationship with all he has achieved: his family, especially in his relationship with Lydia Harris, his wife, and his acting career. Lydia is a homemaker, busy with children and deciding on the color schemes of the carpet for Bob's new office. In his phone conversations with his wife, he proposes a change in eating habits: "start eating healthier" and eating Japanese food, not "all that pasta." Such a decision reflects the changes in attitude due to the interaction with Japanese food and also the possibility to take charge of one's own life and improve it by changing basic habits like eating or exercising represented in a couple of scenes in this film: the treadmill scene and the swimming-pool scene.

In general, Bob Harris' naked torso (changing in the bathroom or in the swimming pool) appears more often than Charlotte's body. Coppola follows the need to avoid what Mulvey (1993 [1975]) calls the "male gaze" that objectifies the female body. In fact, the objectification of the female body is set in the realm of the Other when Charlotte agrees to meet her friends at a strip-club and invites Bob to come along.

All the Japanese characters in *Lost in Translation* are secondary. They are portrayed as sophisticated fashionistas especially represented by Fumishiro "Charlie Brown" Hayashi who appears as himself and he was a real personage in the Tokyo alternative scene.¹ Bob's entourage treats him in a very deferential and extremely formal way. Otherwise, Mathew Minami, the

¹ About Fumishiro "Charlie Brown" Hayashi and his relationship with Sofia Coppola, see the http://www.papermag.com/arts_and_style/2009/10/fumihiro-charlie-brown-hayashi.php by Carlo Lee published in Oct. 19, 2009; accessed August 15, 2012.

host of the popular television program “Matthew’s Best Hit UV” played by Takashi Fujii is funny, bizarre and unconventional in his outfits, his behaviors, and his way of introducing the celebrities in his show and interacting with them. Other features like the contrast between the height of the Japanese persons and that of Bob Harris or how the lack of distinction between the sounds /l/ and /r/ in Japanese affects the pronunciation of English words are also used for comic relief. This has led to accusations of racism or negative representations of Japanese characters (see King, 2010, p. 131).²

The representation of Self in Coppola’s film is characterized by the following features. First, the conceptual metaphor SELF IS A CONTAINER is at the center of the unity of the self-person duality. Both characters establish their identity in the unity of both dimensions of the person. This metaphor is connected, as mentioned above, to SELF CONTROL IS BEING IN ONE’S NORMAL LOCATION. Especially Charlotte is characterized as a young woman in search for identity and, abiding by these metaphors, she suggests that they should stay in Tokyo and find a new identity. In this connection, a change in identity is a change in location, but the answer Bob gives is consequent with this CONTAINER metaphor of the SELF. The act of knowing oneself requires being able to “see,” to “figure out.” As Charlotte and Bob are in a complicated situation in the personal and professional lives, they look for recipes to solve their own emotional and family stress.

Their encounter with the Other is a learning experience to trust their senses and focus their relationship in communication and listening. Three events are particularly important: the uncomfortable relationship of Bob with his Japanese entourage, the recording scenes and the problems with the translator’s cryptic English, and finally the hospital scene. In this scene both the leading characters (but especially Bob) communicate with local persons without the need to translate or understand each single word. Despite this fact, both Charlotte and Bob’s Self are conceived as CONTAINER whose lack of “self-control” comes from being out of their own “normal location.” The film concludes that both need to be in tune with their essential Subject (in the sense of Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Charlotte is portrayed as still looking for a self that defines her professionally and emotionally. Bob finds out that focusing on physical wellbeing and changing habits may be enough to restore his sense of unity and satisfaction with himself.

3.2. Coixet’s Fluid Selves

Coixet gives a nuanced view of the characters’ internal conflicts and limitations. She presents the topic of Japanese identity in a way that sets up a series of stereotypical features. Those features are related to cinematic genres or Western stereotypes and are meant to create a series of expectations from the audience.

The first stereotype is the conceptualization of the female body as object. As we have seen, although Coppola avoids this objectification of the female body, in the strip-club scene

² Wright (2004) reports how the presence of these stereotypes created a negative reaction among Japanese-Americans and may have hurt *Lost in Translation*’s chances to get other Oscars besides the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay for Sofia Coppola. *Lost in Translation* was nominated for other three Academy Awards (Best Picture, Best Actor for Bill Murray, and Best Director for Sofia Coppola).

she chooses to follow the stereotype of Oriental sensuality. *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* starts with a Nyotaimori, a somewhat obscure activity in which businessmen eat sushi off their bodies of fully naked models. This explicit scene represents the male-centered attitude of the Western and Japanese businessmen at the table. Nonetheless, Nagara-san is unhappy since he has traditional views on how business relations should be conducted. For him, this dinner is an immoral act, while for Ishida-san, his assistant, it is a more practical view to do business. As Nagara-san learns that his daughter has just committed suicide, his uncontrollable pain and anger develops into a “sushi fight.” In the following scene, the same models are shown having a shower washing themselves with lemon rinds.

This scene sets up the stage for Ryu’s and David’s sexual encounters in a room representing a 1930s Paris subway car in the love hotel *La Bastille*. The erotic scenes avoid the voyeuristic tension of the first scene not focusing in a particular body part of the female or male anatomy. Similarly the showering with lemon rinds appears as a common activity in Ryu’s work after she has been working all night in the fish market. Ryu’s sexuality and her working in the fish market are two central elements of this film, but she is also a complex collage of Japanese figures. She is represented with the prototypical features of the “mysterious” Japanese young woman: inexpressive, quiet and very private. She is also related to the action figures of *manga* and *anime* as well as famous hired guns as mentioned above. Ryu’s violence is not directly shown except for the scenes in which she appears sectioning the huge tuna fish or cleaning the blood of the fish, and scene that will be repeated at the end just before she is killed.

Nonetheless, she is compelled by empathy and affection towards David, when he tells her that he is ready to commit suicide and acts towards her with respect and affection. She learns to love when seduced by David, a foreigner who teaches her to enjoy wine and sex. She finally makes the ultimate sacrifice for him. She does not kill him and then, she is killed by the bullet that was aimed at him.

David is torn between Tokyo and his country. We come to learn that he lives in a place he is not able to understand. The characters are identified by the places they work, their profession and by the places they inhabit. These metonymies are functional and social and expand the dichotomy suggested between SUBJECT and SELF. Self is also the roles and functions one has acquired or established due to one’s education and work. This connection is also shown in David’s personal evolution. He is shown to be progressively more dislocated from Tokyo up to the moment when he suddenly realizes that it is not his home. In fact, David never appears in his own house in Tokyo. He is always either in his shop, Tokyo’s streets and restaurants or in the love hotel where he has his relationship with Midori first and in the film with Ryu. Although David appears vulnerable and needy, he is also ruthless when he decides to leave Ryu and by saying “I barely know you” he appeals to the stereotype of her being mysterious and distant.

In scene 18 briefly mentioned beforehand, as the narrator utters “people never change”, David is slurping ramen noodles the Japanese way. This apparently minor image is significant if we take into account that eating noodles is a constant throughout this film. The first time Ryu and David eat together, he makes fun of the fact that he is not able to eat them. The image contradicts the words. David has changed and adjusted to the Japanese way. In fact, when we see him back in Barcelona, he has opened a shop of Japanese products, he interacts with Japanese tourists and is seen watching a Japanese film. The fluidity of David’s identity is

paralleled by how Tokyo is presented as a complex being with androgynous features. On the one hand, Tokyo embodies Ryu's search for identity through memory and self-definition. On the other, the city is the world of high finances and powerful male figures.

Among the male Japanese characters, the narrator does not have a name and is a sound engineer. His presence gives meaning to the "*Map of the Sounds of Tokyo*" in the film's title since at the beginning he is with Ryu in her silent moments or very short conversations and to start recording her. He falls in love with her, but cannot understand her. His main problem is that he does not try to understand Ryu, but to control her mind and motivations by appropriating sounds and voices. To some extent, he could be qualified as a sound-voyeur, someone who tries to capture someone else's personality by capturing this person's noises or words.

In contrast with the narrator, anger and possessiveness are the main emotions that control both Nagara-san and Ishida-san's behaviors. Their search for revenge for Midori's suicide is motivated both because the former was her father and because, as we learn through the film, Ishida-san was in love with her. Both characters show different sides of anger. Nagara-san decides to mourn his daughter by going back to the past and immersing himself in those memories. He expresses his utter desolation crying, holding a picture of his daughter or acting as if he was out of himself. Ishida-san is a pragmatic person who is repressing his feelings and whose priorities are the loyalty to the company and its financial success and his boss.

The violent behaviors seem very similar to those traditionally associated with the warrior class, i.e., the samurai or by extension, the new class of city dwellers generally working in professional careers or for big corporations, and it can be distributed in different spatial dimensions in Coixet's film. Nagara-san and Ishida-san appear in the world of high finances and high income. They represent the xenophobia and the Yazuka style of behavior (e.g., Kurosawa 1948, *Drunken Angel*). I have summarized the main features of the characters of *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* in Table 2.

Table 2. Features of the Characters in *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo*

Character	Self and Location	Profession for Self	Intertextual Features	Changes in Those Features
Ryu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish Market • Modern apartment overlooking a driving school • Cemetery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish market worker • Contract Killer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mysterious Japanese woman • Contract killer (Nikita) • Ozu style contemplative character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She falls in love and sacrifices for her victim
David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop and other locations in Tokyo • Barcelona: shop and house in a traditional flat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop owner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romantic and prone to fall in love • Sensual and pragmatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-centered and naïve

Nagara-san and Ishida-san	• Skyscrapers	• Businessmen	• Samurai and Yakuza style characters	• Both appear vulnerable and cry
Narrator	• Traditional houses and restaurants • Cemetery	• Middle class	• Ozu style contemplative character	• He is a controlling “sound-voyeur”

3. Conclusions: Self and the City

Tokyo as the setting of both films is transformed in different ways. In *Lost in Translation* the city is a tourist destination and place of work. Especially, it is a spectacle for the senses that the characters contemplate in awe. At the same time it is a labyrinth. This metaphor emerges throughout the film as it is shown with views from above and also at the street level. Then, it is a space of fulfillment of an emotional experience. The film seems to be heading towards the reality of the transient world of the tourist that is going to find closure, but it finishes in an open-ended way after Bob and Charlotte meet for the last time in a busy street. In contrast with other romantic films, the encounter in a foreign country does not end in marriage, but as an unfinished story where the characters are still in search for their essential self.

In the case of Coixet's film *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo*, Tokyo is a living space with a layered reality for the main characters with two unavoidable walls: for Ryu it is a male-centered society and for David, it is a world of foreigners. The relationship between the city, the past represented by the narrator and the present represented by Ryu and David is complex. As shown, the drama of this film is also a drama of how fluidity and change conflict with the static dimensions of the city and the need to control the self by identifying a location.

Both films deal with the transformation of the characters in contact with the Other. Bob and Charlotte experience the “dislocation” of a foreign city like Tokyo and the disruption of their self-control. Part of their drama is dealing with a situation that challenges established conceptualizations of SELF. Coppola adheres to the established conceptualization of SELF AS CONTAINER and dramatizes how the Self in this case, the Western characters, feels in an unfamiliar location. The meanings associated to SELF AS LOCATION reflect the importance of the unity between the Self and the essential Subject (in the sense of Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). A location is identified with features such as immobility, stability and non-changeability through time. It underlies the concepts of persistence and continuity of one singular SELF. Coixet opposes the SELF AS LOCATION at the beginning of the film with the SELF AS FLUID ENTITY at the end. According to this metaphor, SELF is not only a series of “selves” but a continuously changeable reality that is transformed by emotional and interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, the representation of Tokyo and Japan in general in *Lost in Translation* is constrained by generic conventions of the American-abroad genre, as intercultural conflict plays a part in its dramatic plot and characterization. The Japanese characters are sophisticated but they are well located within the realm of the Other. Even if this was not intentional, Coppola depicts them as eccentric and colorful, incomprehensible, irrational and at the same time, technologically sophisticated, spiritual and traditionalist, thus stereotyping the orient (in the

sense of Said, 1978).

The possibility of authentic intercultural communication is challenged by the incapacity to communicate because of the spatial connection of the Self's prejudices and stereotypes. Coixet's film represents how David's attempt at moving his view to the Self of the East, to transform his Eurocentric reality, fails. Both the Coixet and Coppola films represent intercultural communication conflicts from the point of view of the individual over the generalizations brought about by societal or cultural traditions. Although they break away from those generalizations, the generic and filmic tradition adopted by the creators incorporate some of those stereotypes that are unintentionally reproduced. This is particularly clear in some of the comic sections of Coppola's film, but also in the silent female protagonist or the Japanese male figures in *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo*.

The reality in both films is segmented as the camera and the montage determines the parts we have to perceive and the order of perception. For this reason, experiences of reality interact with metaphorical meanings. Different elements of the cityscape or the mise-en-scène in general are especially relevant for the characterization, psychological and diegetic motivation, and the general subject of both films.

Coixet and Coppola choose to go beyond the limitations of local identity in search of creative freedom either as a way to transcend their local traditions or to explore the expression of emotional states and cinematic storylines. *Lost in Translation* established Coppola's status as a creator who transcends national borders and identities, something found in her next feature (2006) *Marie Antoinette*. Coixet's choice of recording and producing films in English defines her identity beyond Spanish national cinema. This is connected to the search for alternative means of expression to the "male gaze" that dominates Spanish, to go beyond national boundaries of identity and "internationalize" Spanish cinema (see Camí-Vela 2008, p. 179). Both the directors' exploration of the limits and conflicts of intercultural relationships in a foreign place is parallel to the developments in terms of world cinema or global cinema.

In the global reality of filmmaking in English, the directors go beyond the limitations of local Self in search of creative freedom as a way to explore the expression of emotional states and cinematic storylines, but overcoming prejudices is complicated even for cosmopolitan directors with ample experience in foreign countries. Characters like Bob, Charlotte and David come to terms with the changes the encounter with a foreign culture has caused. Sofia Coppola's humor scenes and Isabel Coixet's choice of intertextual features and depiction of the female character show how the directors struggle to go beyond the standard views of Japan and Japanese culture.

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Author Note

Eduardo Urios-Aparisi is Associate Professor in the Department of Literatures, Cultures and Languages at the University of Connecticut. Main publications include *Puro Teatro: Metáfora y espacio en el cine de Pedro Almodóvar* [*Pure Theater: Metaphor and Space in Pedro Almodóvar's Cinema*] (Editorial Libertarias, Madrid, 2010), and *Multimodal Metaphor* (co-edited with Ch. Forceville, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, 2009). His research fields are applications of cognitive linguistics to film, advertising and art and humor in the media and in the foreign language classroom.

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A Pragmatic Approach to Communication Styles in Radio Advice Talk Programmes in China and Britain

Qiufen YU

The University of Chester, UK

Abstract: This article proposes a pragmatic approach to addressing speakers with different cultural backgrounds and their use of communication style. It applies this approach to data collected in radio advice talk shows broadcast in China and Britain. This research indicates that the distinction between direct and indirect communication style, the term which was used to characterise cultures by early studies of culture and communication, is being redefined from a pragmatic perspective. The aim of this article is to demonstrate how Relevance Theory, a cognitive pragmatic model of communication proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995/1986), offers significant insights into the processes involved in the production and comprehension of utterances, which may help explain the socio-cultural phenomenon. The findings from this study indicate that, in the context of radio advice talk shows, speakers from China and Britain – two cultures that have been characterised as using direct and indirect styles-both fall into the same category of using indirect communication.

Keywords: Communication style, cultural differences, China, Britain, Relevance Theory

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, research in the area of intercultural communication has mainly focused on cultural differences in communication (e.g. Brew and Cairns, 2004; Chan and Goto, 2003; Fujishin, 2007; Ladegaard, 2011; Ting-Toomey and Cheung, 2005). One major dimension of cultural variability used to explain differences in communication is Hall's (1976) model of high- and low-context cultures. A key claim in Hall's account is that people in high-context (HC) cultures tend to rely on "indirect" messages and "the listener or interpreter of the message is expected to read between the lines" (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005, p. 172). In contrast, people in low-context (LC) cultures tend to use "direct style" (e.g. Samovar *et al.*, 2009; Fujishin, 2007). Hall explained that cultures could be arranged on a continuum from LC to HC cultures. According to this continuum, China is located towards the high-context end of the continuum, whereas Britain is located towards the low-context end. They are therefore regarded as high and low context cultures, using indirect and direct styles respectively (e.g. Ting-Toomey, 1999; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). This indicates that what Hall meant by culture has been interpreted as national groups. In this study, like Hall and his followers, I employ culture to refer to a country where a large social group of people share a set of norms, values and beliefs.

Hall's model has been applied extensively to a wide variety of contexts by numerous scholars to differentiate one cultural group from another (e.g. Adair and Brett, 2004; Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998; Samovar *et al.* 2009). However, while claiming that cultures can be

characterised by using styles, these studies do not provide any account of how they come to categorise one style as being direct and another style as being indirect, but give an explanation that Asians communicate indirectly because they are from high-context cultures or that Westerners communicate directly because they are from low-context cultures (see Gudykunst, 2004, p. 44 for a critical discussion). This does not explain why there are differences in the way people from diverse cultures communicate. I argue that the limitations imposed by cultural frameworks, such as Hall's distinction of high- and low-context communication, could be avoided if intercultural communication research was to draw on an alternative approach to communication: Sperber and Wilson's (1986/1995) Relevance Theory. This paper is an attempt to explore speakers' communication style in the context of radio advice talk shows in high context (HC) and low context (LC) cultures, by focusing on China and Britain, within the framework of Relevance Theory.

The remainder of this article is as follows. I begin in Section 2 by outlining the arguments postulated by Sperber and Wilson, focusing on the points central to the issue of communication style. In Section 3, I apply the insights from Relevance Theory to a variety of examples collected in the context of radio advice programmes and look at whether or not there are similarities or differences in speakers' communication style in host-caller interactions. This is followed by a discussion in Section 4. I conclude in Section 5 with suggestions for further research.

2. Relevance Theory and Communication Style

Relevance Theory is an inferential approach to pragmatics developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995). The central claim of the theory is that communication is an inferential-ostensive process based on the transmission and recognition of intentions. What this amounts to is that a speaker produces an ostensive stimulus (e.g. an utterance) as evidence of her intention to convey a certain meaning, which is inferred by a hearer on the basis of evidence provided. If the hearer is able to infer the intentions made manifest by the speaker, then communication is considered to have been successful. This suggests that human communication involves a mixed process of both coding and inference. Applying the above insights from Relevance Theory into my early discussion of culture and communication, we may reach a conclusion that an utterance produced by a speaker from any culture is a piece of linguistic evidence of the speaker's intention, and a hearer from any culture needs to infer the meaning intended by a speaker.

For Sperber and Wilson (1995), an utterance conveys many assumptions, but the hearer attends to only those assumptions that seem most relevant to him. If a communicator intends her utterance to be understood, then she must produce her utterance to meet the criteria on which every act of ostensive communication creates in the audience a presumption that (a) the utterance is relevant enough to be worth processing, and (b) it is the most relevant utterance which is compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. From the perspective of a hearer, to find an interpretation of the speaker's meaning that satisfies the presumption of optimal relevance, he has to follow a path of least effort in constructing an interpretation of the utterance and stop at the first overall interpretation that satisfies his expectations of relevance: he must enrich the decoded sentence meaning at the explicit level, and complement it at the

implicit level by supplying contextual assumptions which will combine with it to yield enough conclusions to make the utterance relevant in the expected way.

Specifically, Sperber and Wilson have argued that what is inferred is not restricted to the assumptions that are implicitly communicated (i.e. implicature), but is attributed to the assumptions that are explicitly communicated (i.e. explicatures). This is because, according to relevance theorists (e.g. Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Carston, 2009), what is explicitly communicated has never reached its full explicitness. An assumption is an explicature if and only if it is derived by going through pragmatic processes such as “disambiguation, reference assignment and enrichment” (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 185). Given that an explicature can only be constructed by developing the logical form of an utterance, Sperber and Wilson (1995, p. 182) conclude that “an explicature is explicit to a greater or lesser degree”. At this point of argument, therefore, the significance of Sperber and Wilson’s notion of explicature should become more apparent, and it suggests that even if the recovery of explicature needs some inferential work, then there is no such thing as explicit communication at all in any communication. What Sperber and Wilson’s argument indicates is that, the distinction between direct and indirect communication (on which previous studies on culture and communication are based to address cultural differences) does not exist in Relevance Theory.

While rejecting this distinction, Relevance Theory offers an alternative account which allows me to address the issue of communication style from a new perspective. Sperber and Wilson (1995) conceive that every utterance has a variety of possible interpretations, all compatible with the information that is linguistically encoded. However, a hearer does not need to consider an infinite number of possible interpretations and then decide on the right one. This is because in order to help hearers to recognise the intended interpretation, a speaker aiming at relevance may use linguistic devices to provide procedural information to guide a hearer. Relevance theorists (e.g. Blakemore, 1987; Wilson and Sperber, 1993) maintain that what procedural information does is to encode instructions, rather than to encode concepts in utterance interpretation, by providing hearers with the optimally relevant information to facilitate their interpretation process.

As indicated early in this section, within the framework of Relevance Theory, an explicature is conceived as being a matter of degree. A proposition (or a thought) may be more or less strongly communicated, with indeterminate cases between them, and consequently, implicatures are more or less determinate, with a varying degree of strength. If such views are accepted, this would predict that in the situation where an assumption is made strongly manifest to both the speaker and hearers, the frequency of occurrence of markers of procedural meaning will be low. Conversely, in a situation where an assumption is made weakly manifest, the frequency of occurrence of markers of procedural meaning will be high. It follows that in the latter situation, if a speaker does not succeed in indicating, by means of markers of procedural meaning, that what she has to impart is relevant to her hearers, then according to Relevance Theory, the hearers will not interpret what the speaker means by what she says. In other words, the hearers’ inferential process will not be triggered. However, on the relevance theoretic approach, a speaker’s communicative intention is to have her intention fulfilled or recognised. To that extent, as Sperber and Wilson argue (1995), a speaker actively helps hearers, based on her estimation of the hearer’s cognitive abilities and contextual resources, by formulating her

utterances in such a way that the first acceptable line of interpretation to occur to the hearer is the one intended by the speaker. Specifically, Relevance Theory stresses that the style of a speaker is the consequence of the speaker's aim of producing an utterance consistent with the principle of relevance. The implication is that a speaker must use markers of procedural meaning to guide hearers to identify her intended meaning because no communication is explicit. With these insights from Relevance Theory in mind, I argue that if there is evidence that native speakers of Mandarin Chinese (henceforth MC) and British English (henceforth BE) use markers of procedural meaning to guide the interpretation process, this would indicate that their styles are indirect. Therefore, if we aim to examine the issue under discussion, we need to look for evidence to indicate whether or not the two sets of speakers use markers of procedural meaning in their utterances.

In this paper, I restrict my analysis of markers of procedural meaning to prosody and discourse connectives only, because they are considered to be particularly effective in imposing procedural constraints on implicatures (e.g. Wilson and Wharton, 2006; House, 2006). My focus on these two markers is motivated by two reasons. Firstly, there is already evidence that prosodic features, sentence stress and intonation in particular, are used to encode procedural meaning in English (e.g. Baltazani, 2006; Blakemore, 1987, 2002; Clark, 2007; Escandell Vidal, 1996). On one hand, sentence stress is used to mark information focus of a sentence (e.g. Erteschik-Shir, 1997; Lambrecht, 1994; Selkirk, 1995; Szendrői, 2004). By doing so, it draws hearers' "attention to one particular constituent in an utterance" (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 203). On the other hand, intonation can function to "facilitate the identification of the speaker's meaning by narrowing the search space for inferential comprehension, increasing the salience of some hypotheses and eliminating others" (Wilson & Wharton, 2006, p. 1571). In contrast, however, the changes in pitch in MC do not perform the same function as that of English because they serve to distinguish meanings. Despite this, evidence suggests that MC shares the property of having sentence stress with English, in that sentence stress is the primary strategy to distinguish sentence focus (e.g. Xu, 2004; Cheung, 2009; Kuo and Romsay, 2008; Schwarz, 2009). Therefore, it seems clear that both native speakers of MC and BE use prosody to encode procedural meaning.

The second reason is related to discourse connectives. Blakemore (1989, p. 21) argues that the sole function of discourse connectives "is to guide the interpretation process by specifying certain properties of context and contextual effects...to minimise processing cost". She classifies discourse connectives on the basis of the cognitive effects in the following three ways:

- (a) It may allow the derivation of a contextual implication (e.g. *so, therefore*);
- (b) It may strengthen an existing assumption (by providing better evidence for it) (e.g. *after all, moreover, furthermore*);
- (c) It may contradict an existing assumption (e.g. *however, but, nevertheless*).

It has also been argued (e.g. Unger, 1996; Feng, 2008) that all languages have a certain set of connectives that correspond in function to encode procedural meaning. For example, Feng (2008, p. 1687) writes:

In English and perhaps all other languages, there is a class of expressions which has been generally characterized as semantically non-truth-conditional and syntactically peripheral...A multiple array of terms have been used...However, recently it seems to be narrowing down to ‘pragmatic marker’ or ‘discourse markers’.

Now that almost all languages have a range of lexical expressions that encode procedural constraints on utterance comprehension, Mandarin Chinese is no exception. Although few systematic attempts have been made to investigate Chinese discourse connectives from a relevance theoretical perspective, recent work by Feng (2008) offered a detailed description of pragmatic markers in MC. Among those markers Feng (2008) outlined, I take three types of them as a class of linguistic expressions that can encode procedural meaning, because they “suggest a relation between messages” (Feng, 2008, p. 1707), and they “do not affect the truth conditions of a sentence that host them” (Feng, 2008, p. 1600). As a result, they fit well with the categories classified by Blakemore. For ease of comparison, I list discourse connectives in English and their Chinese counterparts in Table 1, according to the categories classified by Blakemore (2002, p. 95).

Table 1. Discourse Connectives in the Two Languages

	English Discourse Connectives	Chinese Equivalents
Introducing a contextual implication	So, therefore	因此 (<i>yinci</i>), 所以 (<i>suoyi</i>)
Strengthening an existing assumption	After all, moreover, furthermore	並且 (<i>bingqie</i>), 再說 (<i>zaishuo</i>)
Contradicting or eliminating an existing assumption	But, however	但 (<i>dan</i>), 但是 (<i>danshi</i>), 然而 (<i>raner</i>)

Although evidence suggests that speakers of MC and BE rely on prosody and discourse connectives to guide a hearer’s interpretation process, there has been no evidence from empirical studies that they use the two types of markers in the context of radio advice talk shows, and my current paper is therefore an attempt to fill the gap.

3. Data Analysis

In order to present evidence found in this article, I analyse numerous examples of host-caller interactions from two sets of comparable radio advice talk programmes broadcast in China and Britain. In these programmes, callers phone in to the show for advice on issues related to family arguments, love relationships, personal dilemmas and everyday ups and downs. Because of the limited scope of this article, my analysis focuses only on those key utterances that lead me to identify the problem a caller is constructing – the intended meaning of a caller’s utterances.

Following Sperber and Wilson (1995, p. 46), I use the term “contextual assumption” to

refer to the assumptions which are brought to bear on the interpretation of an utterance. I use the term “contextual implication” (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 109) to refer to the inferred conclusion drawn from the combination of the new information (i.e. an utterance) with old information (i.e. contextual assumptions) accessed by the hearer, which would give the new information some relevance for the hearer. Since “the idea that an expression may encode procedural constraints on the inferential phase of comprehension was first put forward by Diane Blakemore” (Wilson & Sperber, 1993, p. 11), I also draw on Blakemore’s (1992, 2002) account of procedural information in my analysis.

In what follows, I analyse some of the examples of utterances made by callers, with utterances made by English callers first, followed by those produced by Chinese callers.

Example 1

(1) Caller: *Yeah we’ve ALWAYS spent family er family Christmas together ALWAYS.*

(2) Host: *Um-hum.*

(3) Caller: *Erm **but** as I say they’ve just recently moved away.*

The context of the above exchange is that the caller explains that her niece has invited the caller’s family to spend Christmas at her niece’s home. In order to infer the problem the caller was intending to solve, I resolve the ambiguities in the language used and assign referents to deictic words. For example, I assume that the pronoun *we* in (1) refers to the caller’s own family. Eventually, the explicatures that have been recovered from utterances (1) and (3) by decoding and reference assignment are:

- (a) The caller’s family and the caller’s niece’s family have always spent Christmas at her niece’s home;
- (b) The caller’s niece has moved away and she is now living somewhere else.
The fact that the caller uttered the word *always* with a raised pitch leads me to assume that the proposition (a) may strongly implicate (c) as a contextual assumption and (d) as a contextual implication:
- (c) If a sort of celebration is repeated for a number of years, then it has become a tradition.
- (d) The caller has the expectation that what happened in the past will happen in the future, that is, the caller’s family and the niece’s family will celebrate Christmas together in the niece’s home as what they did in the past.

However, the caller’s use of *but* in (3) draws my attention. According to Relevance Theory, the presence of *but* indicates that the *but* segment is intended to achieve relevance “by virtue of contradicting and eliminating a (possibly mistaken) assumption deducible from the first segment of the caller’s utterance” (Blakemore, 1992, p. 102), which in this case appears to be the assumption in (d). This connective leads me to activate the contextual assumption (e) in order to process (b):

- (e) If the niece had not moved away, then the caller’s family and the niece’s family

would have been able to spend Christmas as they normally do.

I combine (b) with (e) and draw the contextual implication (f):

- (f) There is some impediment to the caller's being able to celebrate Christmas as she normally does.

It is only when we come to this stage I can infer that the caller's problem is related to the factors that impede her normal Christmas celebration, although it is not made entirely explicit.

What can be seen from my above analysis is that the identification of the problem the caller was expressing is guided by the caller's use of prosody assigned to the word *always* and the connective *but*. In other words, the existence of these markers made my inference relatively easier.

I cannot find any more information relevant to the caller's problem until I go on listening to the latter half of the caller's story, where I encounter the following utterances:

Example 2

(4) C: *He is refusing to go.*

(5) H: *Right.*

(6) C: *Which now causes the problem we just ... because I can't get to my niece otherwise I would have GONE.*

This is a situation in which the caller explains that the caller's husband is refusing to go to the caller's niece's home for Christmas, because the caller's children are unable to go. This fact has brought a problem to the caller, in that she is not able to get to the niece's home as the niece no longer lives locally.

After resolving the ambiguities in the language used and assigning referents to deictic words such as *he*, I identify the explicatures made manifest by the utterances (4) and (6) as something like (g) and (h) and (i):

- (g) The caller's husband refuses to go to the niece's home for Christmas;
- (h) This is the problem for the caller, because she is not able to get to the niece's home;
- (i) If it were not for this problem, the caller would have gone to the niece's home.

Note that the caller used an accented falling tone when she uttered the word *gone*. This directs me specifically to this constituent. I assume that by uttering *gone* in such a way, the caller is indicating that the preceding phrase (i.e. *I can't get to my niece*) is to be interpreted "as part of a larger piece of structure, thereby...indicating a wider context" (House, 2006, p. 1554). This leads me to process the propositions (g-i) at least in the following context:

- (j) Going to the caller's niece's home may involve travelling;
- (k) If an individual travels to somewhere, necessary transport is needed;
- (l) The caller's husband usually drives wherever the caller travels;
- (m) If the caller's husband does not drive, then the caller cannot travel.

- I combine the assumptions in (g-i) and (j-m) and draw the contextual implication (n):
- (n) There are some factors that impede the caller's being able to spend Christmas in the way she wants.

In the light of the assumption (n), I infer that the caller's problem is related to her being unable to spend Christmas in a way she wants.

The above examples show that the problem the caller was constructing is not literally communicated, but pragmatically inferred. It is the caller's use of prosody assigned to the word *gone* in a sudden loudness that constrained my interpretation, in that it guided me to activate the contextual assumptions (j-m), and finally reached the conclusion that being unable to spend Christmas in a way she wants may be the caller's problem.

The use of markers of procedural meaning is not limited to the utterances made by this English caller alone. There is a huge body of evidence on the guiding role that markers of procedural meaning play in the utterances produced by all the other English callers. Let us now consider Example 3, which consists of some of the utterances made by another English caller.

Example 3

- (7) Caller: *My partner Mark (.) he is ok. I love him to pieces and all that **but** he is just ... he's not very happy with like all the stretch marks and all that.*
- (8) Host: *Right so he < > he thinks that you've kind of changed physically.*
- (9) Caller: *Yeah he is not happy with the figure and everything, he thinks I've put on a lot of weight during pregnancy.*
- (10) Host: *Have you spoken to him about it... have you actually talked to him about it?*

The context of the above exchange is that the caller has just had a baby. Building on my existing knowledge about British culture, I assume that the term *partner* refers to someone with whom the caller is in a long-term stable sexual relationship. I then identify the resulted explicatures made manifest by the utterance (7) as something like (a) and (b):

- (a) The caller loves her partner Mark very much;
- (b) Mark is not happy with the stretch marks the caller has.
The assumption in (a) makes me activate the contextual assumption (c) and draw the contextual implication (d):
- (c) In UK, if two people are love partners, then they will have a sexual relationship.
- (d) The caller and Mark must have had a sexual relationship.
However, the caller's use of *but* makes the proposition (b) immediately manifest in the context of (e) which then leads me to draw the contextual implication (f):
- (e) The sexual relationship between the caller and Mark has suffered because she has stretch marks, and Mark does not find her sexually attractive.
- (f) It is the caller's physical change that has impeded Mark from having a sexual relationship with her.

The assumption (f) leads me to assume that the caller's problem is that her physical change

makes her sexual relationship with her partner suffer, and therefore she asks advice on this. My above interpretation is supported by the host's question in (10), which indicates that the host believes that the caller's problem has been expressed, and now comes to the stage of offering advice to the caller on how to solve her problem – by talking to her partner.

Again, this example shows that the caller's utterance does not explicitly encode her problem, and her problem is derived as a result of inference. The interpretation process is guided by the caller's use of the connective *but*.

In all the examples we have looked at so far, I have shown that I was apparently guided by callers' use of markers of procedural meaning in working out the problems the callers were intending to solve. However, what has been found is not merely a typical British phenomenon. As will be shown below, this also occurs in Chinese communication.

Example 4

- (11) Caller: *wo faxian ta you jia wo jiu tui chu lai le.*
 I find he have family I **so** withdrew come (sentence final particle)
 'I found he's married, so I withdrew.'
- (12) Caller: *wo bu li ta ke ta xian zai zong lai zhe wo.*
 I ignore him **but** he now always cling to me
 'I ignore him **but** he now always clings to me.'
- (13) Host: *na buxing ni bixude gaoshu ta ni you jia ni benshen jiushi qipianle wo*
 That no you must tell he you have home you itself be cheat me
 'Oh, no, you must tell him. Since he's married, he's cheated on you.'

The caller provided a context that she found that her boyfriend is married. In order to work out the proposition expressed by the utterances, I assume, in the context of discussing the caller's romantic relationship with her boyfriend (i.e. *he*), the possible meaning of the term *tuichulai* (i.e. *withdraw*) is that it refers to splitting up with her boyfriend. I then derive the explicatures (a) and (b):

- (a) The caller's boyfriend who would potentially be her husband is married;
- (b) The caller would prefer to split up with her boyfriend.

Hearers may notice that the caller uses a connective *so* to introduce her second segment of her utterances in (11). The presence of *so* implies that a causal relationship holds between (a) and (b). It leads me to assume that the caller is indicating that the *so* segment is relevant by virtue of being a contextual implication derived from the segment that precedes *so* (Blakemore, 2002), which in this case appears to be the assumption (a). Based on my understanding about the issue raised by the caller, I assume that the presence of '*so*' makes the contextual assumption (c) immediately accessible:

- (c) In Chinese society, if one knows that the person one is going to marry is already married, then the individual would not allow the romantic relationship between them to continue.

- The consequence of my combining (a) with (c) is the contextual implication (d):
 (d) The caller wanted to break ties with the man she has been seeing romantically.

The assumption (d) leads me to infer that the caller's problem is related to the caller's action of not allowing her romantic relationship with the man to continue, although I am not entirely sure whether this is the problem the caller intends to solve.

The phrase *buli* (i.e. *ignore*) may have a number of possibilities. It could either refer to taking no notice to whatever happens to somebody, or to the situation in which one person does not talk to another. In the situation where the caller has decided not to allow her relationship with the man to continue, I assume that the latter function is more appropriate for this context. Moreover, the phrase *laizhe* (i.e. *cling to*) in this context refers to harassing the caller. The resultant explicatures that have been recovered from the utterances (11) and (12) are (e) and (f):

- (e) The caller does not talk with her boyfriend;
 - (f) The caller's boyfriend keeps harassing her.
- The recovery of explicature (e) leads me to activate the contextual assumption (g) and draw the contextual implication (h):
- (g) If one does not talk with the other, then one treats the other as a stranger.
 - (h) The caller treats her boyfriend as a stranger.
- However, the caller's use of *but*, when she introduces her second segment of utterances in (12), makes the explicature (f) immediately manifest in the context of (i):
- (i) The caller cannot treat her boyfriend as a stranger because he persistently harasses her.
- By combining (f) with (i), I draw the contextual implication (j):
- (j) The caller feels that it is difficult to end the relationship with the man.

My interpretation (j) is supported by the host's utterances in (13), which indicate that the host believes that the caller's problem has been expressed, and is trying to offer advice on how to stop the man's harassing.

As we have seen, the caller's utterances require a lot of inferential work on the part of a hearer, and it is the caller's use of the connectives *so* and *but* that has led me as a hearer to draw the conclusion (j).

As there is no evidence that the caller's problem has been expressed, it is quite natural for us to continue listening in order to find out what the caller's problem would be.

Example 5

- (14) Host: *ruguo ni yao zai lai jiuchan wo wo jiu keyi [baojing le.*
 If you want again cling to I I then will call police final particle
 'If he keeps harassing you, then you can call the police.'
- (15) Caller: [*keshi ta xian zai geng wo zai yige wu li zhu ya!*
 But he now and I in one room in live (!)
 'But now, he is living in the SAME ROOM with me.'

- (16) Host: *na buxing ni yinggai rang ta chuqu.*
 That no you should let him out
 'Oh, no, you should let him move out.'

Here, the caller uses a *but* in (15). The presence of *but* gives me a clue that the *but* segment is intended to achieve relevance by contradicting and eliminating an assumption which has been made manifest in her preceding utterance. However,

In many cases the assumption which the speaker intends the hearer to eliminate is not derived from the interpretation of the first segment of the *but* utterance at all, but is simply an assumption which the speaker has reason to believe is manifest to the hearer (Blakemore, 2002, p. 109, emphasis original).

The point that Blakemore makes appears to be true in this case. I am aware that when the caller utters *keshi* (i.e. *but*), it is in overlap with the utterance *baojing* (i.e. *call the police*) made by the host in (14), as indicated by the symbol “[” in the transcript. Such an overlap seems to indicate that this may well be what the caller was indicating at this point. I then assume that the eliminated assumption manifest to the hearer (i.e. host) is “provided by the utterance made by the hearer herself” (Blakemore, 2002, p. 109). Given the overlap function, I accept that the given assumption made manifest by the host refers to the second segment of her utterance in (14), where the host was giving advice on how to persuade her boyfriend to leave the caller alone in a way that the caller can call the police.

The phrase *baojing* (i.e. *call the police*) in (14), based on my own understanding of Chinese culture, may have a number of possibilities: it could refer to the assumption that in an emergency, people can call the police to report a crime; it could also refer to the assumption that people can call the police to help them deal urgently with something that they are unable to cope with. In this particular context, my understanding of the caller’s issue assumes the latter: to call the police to stop the caller’s boyfriend’s harassing. After developing the logical form expressed by (14), I derive the resultant explicature (k):

- (k) The caller can call the police to help her get rid of her boyfriend if he keeps harassing her.
 The recovery of (k) makes the contextual assumption (l) immediately accessible:
 (l) The caller is living together with the man in the same room.

In producing the utterance (15), the caller uttered the phrase *zaiyigewulizhu* (i.e. *live in the same room*) with a lengthened duration. I am led to assume that this phrase carries the main point of the caller’s utterance and it makes me activate the contextual assumptions (m), (n) and (o) and draw the contextual implication (p):

- (m) When two people in a romantic relationship live in one room, they normally live together consensually;
 (n) If they live together consensually, it would be difficult for one of them to get rid of

the other;

- (o) As long as they do not break the law, even the police have no right to set them apart.
- (p) The caller feels unable to get rid of her boyfriend.

In the light of the above inferential work, I assume (p) is the problem the caller intends to solve. If we compare the implicature (j) with the implicature (p), we can find that (p) remains unaltered. However, with the evidence provided in (l), the contextual implication (j) is obviously strengthened. This indicates that the man's living in the same room with the caller makes her feel even more difficult to get rid of him. This further confirms that how to get rid of her boyfriend is the problem the caller is intending to solve. My interpretation is supported by the host's utterances in (16), which indicate that the host confirms that the caller's problem has been made explicit, and which also indicates that she is coming to the stage of offering the advice by telling the woman to let her man out of her room.

As with examples in English, this example demonstrates that the caller's problem is not explicitly communicated. It is the caller's use of discourse connective and prosody that led me to identify the problem she was constructing.

There are many examples of Chinese callers demonstrating the use of markers of procedural meaning, as Examples 6 and 7 illustrate.

Example 6

- (17) Caller: *wo xihuan shang le yige bi wo da yi lun de yige nude.*
 I like up (particle) a than I big a round of a lady
 'I'm in a relationship with a lady who is A ROUND OLDER than me.'
- (18) Host: *Ah (hahaha).*
Ah (hahaha)
 'Ah' (hahaha).

The caller uses a term *yilun* (i.e. *one round*) in (1). My knowledge about Chinese culture leads me to assume that *yilun* refers to Chinese traditional twelve year lunar circle which in this case means 12 years. The recovery of the utterances in (17) leads me to derive the explicature (a):

- (a) The caller is in a romantic relationship with a lady twelve years older than the caller himself.
 The caller assigned stress to the phrase *dayilun* (i.e. *twelve years older*) by uttering it with a lengthened duration. This led me to assume that (a) may implicate (b) and (c) as a set of contextual assumptions and (d) as a contextual implication:
- (b) If there is a large age difference between two lovers, then their romantic relationship is not seen as appropriate in Chinese society because it appears to be unnatural;
- (c) If a woman is a lot older (say, 5 years or more) than a man in a romantic relationship, then this relationship is even more inappropriate.
- (d) The romantic relationship between the caller and his lady is seen as inappropriate in Chinese society.

My conclusion (d) is supported by the host's surprising tone when she uttered *ah* (i.e. *ah*) in (18), followed by her laughter, and I take this to indicate that she confirms my interpretation.

The above example shows that in inferring the problem the caller was constructing, I am again guided by markers of procedural meaning, which is in the form of prosody in this case.

After a few more exchanges, we hear the following continuation of this conversation:

Example 7

- (19) Caller: *women shijian chang le women jiu xihuan shang duifang le.*
 We time long (particle) we **so** like up opposite (particle)
 'We meet each other frequently due to our geographical proximity, **so** we've gradually fallen in love with each other.'
- (20) Caller: *ni shuo zhe jian shier wo yinggai zenme chuli ne?*
 You say this issue I should how deal with ?
 'Do you think I should maintain the relationship and become closer to her?'
- (21) Host: *ni bi xu de tuichulai zhe shi cuo ai.*
 You must withdraw this be wrong love
 'You must end the relationship and this is wrong love.'

Previously, the caller indicated that the lady the caller is in a relationship with has a shop next door to the caller's workplace, which gives them opportunities to frequently meet each other. Based on my knowledge about Chinese culture, I assume it is morally impermissible if one has a romantic relationship with someone who is married, and also it is not seen as appropriate for an older woman to have a romantic relationship with a younger man. Therefore, the expression *zhejiانشier* (i.e. *this issue*) in (20) refers to the fact that the man has a morally impermissible romantic relationship with an older woman. By inferentially enriching the incomplete logical form of the caller's utterances, we have obtained explicatures (e), (f) and (g):

- (e) The caller and his lady met each other frequently due to close geographical proximity;
- (f) The caller and his lady have developed a romantic relationship;
- (g) The caller is asking whether he should maintain his morally impermissible relationship with the older lady.

I am aware that the caller uses a connective *so* to introduce his second segment of utterances. I assume the presence of *so* implies that there is a causal relationship that holds between (e) and (f). It indicates that the proposition introduced by *so* is relevant, by virtue of being a contextual implication of the assumption which has been made accessible by the interpretation of the preceding utterance (Blakemore 2002), which in this case appears to be the assumption in (e). The presence of *so* makes the contextual assumption (h) immediately accessible:

- (h) If one is geographically closer to the other, then it is relatively easier for this one

to develop a romantic relationship with the other.

By combining the assumptions in (e-f) with the assumption (h), we can derive the contextual implication (i):

- (i) The caller and his lady are geographically closer to each other. As a consequence, they have developed a romantic relationship.

The assumption (i) makes me infer that the caller's problem is related to the geographical proximity between the caller and his lady.

The recovery of explicature (c) makes me activate the contextual assumption (j) and draw the contextual implication (k):

- (j) The caller is trying to find out whether he should maintain his morally impermissible relationship with the older lady.
- (k) The caller wants advice on whether he should maintain his morally impermissible relationship with the older lady.

From (k), I can infer that the caller's problem is that he does not know whether he should maintain his morally impermissible relationship with the older lady. This interpretation is supported by the host's response in (21), which indicates that she believes that the caller's problem has been made explicit and comes to the stage of giving advice to the caller, in that she is telling the caller to end the relationship straightaway.

This example shows that the identification of the caller's problem was guided by the caller's use of discourse connective.

So far I have analysed examples of host-caller interactions in the context of radio advice talk programmes in China and Britain. In the next section, the markers of procedural meaning used by the callers and their relationship with the callers' communication styles are discussed in greater detail.

4. Discussion

My analysis reveals a clear picture of utterance production and interpretation in the context of radio advice talk programmes. It has shown that the markers of procedural meaning are found in the utterances made by both sets of callers. This evidence suggests that both Chinese and English speakers actively help hearers to work out with the least processing effort the problems they were attempting to articulate. Now, I would like to turn to Examples 1 and 4 for a detailed discussion, one from each set of data. For ease of illustration, I repeat the examples below:

Example 1

(1) Caller: *Yeah we've ALWAYS spent family er family Christmas together ALWAYS.*

(2) Host: *Um-hum.*

(3) Caller *Erm but as I say they've just recently moved away.*

Example 4

(4) Caller: *wo faxian ta you jia,*

- I find he have family
 'I found he's married',
 (5) Caller: *wo jiu tuichu lai le*
 I *so* withdrew come (particle)
 'So I withdrew.'

In each case, the caller's utterances may generate different interpretations according to context. However, in both cases, the callers use markers of procedural meaning to limit my possible interpretations. When I interpret these utterances, I am aware that the contribution of markers of procedural meaning does not add anything new to the proposition expressed in the utterances that contain them, but they provide a clue of how to select the contextual assumptions. As a result of this process, I am able to draw the contextual implications. For example, in Example 1, I was led by the prosody assigned to *always* to activate the contextual assumption that it has become a tradition that the caller's family and her niece's family spend Christmas together at her niece's home. It is only when I perceived the word '*always*' that I would be encouraged to derive the contextual implication that the caller would spend Christmas as she normally does. Thus, as I showed, my interpretation of the caller's utterances is under the guidance of prosody which led me to succeed in selecting the contextual assumption that it has become a tradition that the caller's family and her niece's family spend Christmas together at her niece's home and finally draw the contextual implication that the caller would spend Christmas as she normally does and finally draw the contextual implication that the caller would spend Christmas as she normally does.

Moreover, the propositions in (1) and (3) are not self-evident. If *but* were not there, it would have been hard to identify the logical connections between them, and thus it would be difficult to infer the caller's intention. I may possibly see (1) as a premise leading to the conclusion (3), or I may see (3) as a premise and (1) as a conclusion. However,

[F]or an utterance to be understood, it must have one and only one interpretation consistent with the principle – one and only one interpretation, that is, on which a rational speaker might have thought it would have enough effect to be worth the hearer's attention, and put the hearer to no gratuitous effort in obtaining the intended effect (Wilson and Sperber, 1992, p. 69).

It is the presence of *but* that gives me a clue that the *but* segment is intended to achieve relevance by contradicting or eliminating the assumption, that the caller would spend Christmas as she normally does, which finally leads me to successfully draw the contextual implication (iii) that there is some impediment to the caller's being able to celebrate Christmas as she normally does. It can be argued that, without the guidance of *but*, the assumption in (iii) would not be made so strongly manifest.

Similarly, the caller in Example 4 formulates her utterances by means of her markers of procedural meaning in the way that certain contextual assumptions are triggered before others. For example, the caller adds *so* in (5). The presence of *so* gives me a clue that the relationship between (4) and (5) the caller is envisaging is that the former is a premise for the deduction

of the proposition expressed by the latter. Under the guidance of *so*, I successfully reached the contextual implication that the caller feels that it is difficult to end the relationship with the man. Again, there is nothing in the linguistically encoded information that expresses the assumption indicated in the assumption that the caller feels that it is difficult to end the relationship with the man. It could be derived only by drawing the inference, guided by the connective *so*.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that Relevance Theory provides a useful framework which allows me to account for the processes involved in utterance production and meaning generation. As such, it allows me to explain what makes an utterance more or less direct in a way that other approaches do not. As my analysis has shown, markers of procedural meaning contribute to understanding all forms of utterances produced by speakers from cultures that have been characterised as HC and LC. These results are significant, in that they indicate that the direct and indirect communication identified by early studies of culture and communication both fall into indirect communication. In other words, in the context of radio advice programmes, there is no difference in the use of communication styles between speakers of Mandarin Chinese and speakers of British English. On the basis of my empirical findings, I argue that if communication styles of the two cultures are indirect, this may indicate that communication styles in radio advice talk programmes in China and Britain are both high-context. This also indicates that the distinction between direct and indirect communication on which studies of culture and communication are based to theorise cultural difference needs to be rethought.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the issue of communication style in the context of radio advice talk programmes broadcast in China and Britain and questioned the privilege of the distinction between directness and indirectness identified by studies of culture and communication. Drawing on Relevance Theory, I have shown that in this particular context, there is no difference in the use of communication style between speakers in cultures that have been characterised as using direct style and speakers in cultures that have been characterised as using indirect style, because they both use markers of procedural meaning to guide hearers' interpretation process. In this sense, the communication styles of both sets of speakers are both indirect. The findings are significant, and they indicate that communication styles in radio advice talk programmes in China and Britain are both high-context. This is in opposition to the view held by previous studies in the field. Therefore, a methodology based on Sperber and Wilson's inferential model can help explain the relation between speakers as a social entity and their use of communication style in a way that the approaches adopted by previous studies of culture and communication preclude. From this point of view, what emerges as important from this study is not just the existence of markers of procedural meaning which indicates the use of indirect style in radio advice talk programmes in high and low context cultures, but the way in which cultural differences in communication should be addressed. Clearly, the scope of this study means that it indicates a direction for further research in that it raises questions of how cultural differences in communication are actually realised in real life situations, rather than provides any conclusive evidence of the differences. What I hope it does provide is an indication of

how a pragmatic approach allows questions to be asked that can be of use to intercultural communication scholarship.

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Author Note

Qiufen Yu (PhD) is Lecturer at the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Chester, UK, where she is programme leader for Chinese Studies.

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