Projections
The Interdisciplinary Graduate Journal of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Macau
Number 1 (2012)

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Editorial

Anastasia Aldelina LIJADI and Shen JIN, University of Macau

*Projections* is an annual, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, online graduate journal established in 2012 by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Macau. Run and edited by doctoral students at the University of Macau, *Projections* aims to publish high-quality graduate research, and work-in-progress. Its main purpose is to afford graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences the opportunity to be published in a peer-reviewed, scholarly e-journal.

Calls for papers are issued in September of each year, with a deadline of December of the same year. We welcome articles of 5000 to 7000 words that address issues in the Humanities and Social Sciences from a disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspective. We particularly invite contributors to share their research into communications, cultural studies, history, linguistics, literature, sociology, tourism, translation studies, pedagogy, psychology and related disciplines. The language of the journal is English; however, we welcome articles that address issues relating to different literatures and languages. If you wish to submit an article for consideration, please refer to our guidelines for contributors.

The inaugural issue of *Projections* presents selected proceedings of the Pearl River Delta Graduate Conference, held at the University of Macau on February 23rd - 25th 2012. The conference was on the theme of ‘Culture and Identity in Times of Change’, and over three days, there were over forty presentations by postgraduate students from mainland China, Macau, Hong Kong, and Japan. The conference provided a great opportunity to bring together postgraduate students in the Social Sciences and Humanities in greater China and beyond to share their research findings and work-in-progress. Conference participants were then invited to revise and submit their conference papers as journal articles; all submissions were

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anonymously peer-reviewed, and those that were selected for publication make up most of the contents of this issue of *Projections*.

We were also honoured to have three distinguished, invited plenary speakers at the conference – Professor Elaine Y.L. Ho of Hong Kong University, Associate Dean, Timothy Simpson of the University of Macau, and Professor Richard Xiao of Lancaster University – as well as an equally distinguished guest speaker, Professor Susan Bassnett of Warwick University. Members of the *Projections* Editorial Team and graduate students in Translation Studies took the opportunity to interview Professor Bassnett, one of the founders of Translation Studies as an academic discipline, and ask her how she sees the discipline in the second decade of the 21st century, but also how she as an individual juggles academic work and a personal life. Her experience and insights will be of interest to all novice scholars.

All the contributions to this issue, in their different ways, address the theme of ‘Culture and Identity in Times of Change’. As the world grows closer through globalization, migration, the media and technological advances, how do cultures change, and how do these changes impact upon the individual? How is the identity of a nation negotiated? How does a multicultural organisation negotiate its identity in a world of instant communications between employees from a range of different social backgrounds, beliefs, values and practices? As the electronic media dissolve time and space in the blink of an eye, how do individuals assert cultural boundaries and understand cultural difference? How do particular societies safeguard the future of their disadvantaged young, in a world of increasing pressure and intense competition? What strategies can be adopted in the effective teaching of English, the *de facto* international language that touches everyone’s lives?

These are among the urgent questions that inform the articles in this issue. Xu Xiaying, in his examination of the Chinese reception of a popular American sitcom, *Friends*, argues that a lack of transparency in the translation of the dialogue systematically erases aspects of the source text.

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Wu argues that, in consequence, Chinese audiences suffer a ‘cultural discount’ in their encounter with this television programme.

Another article that addresses intercultural encounters, ‘Interacting in a Pidgin Culture’ by Chen Zheng et al., suggests that in multicultural organisations, individuals create a new, ‘third’ culture in order to manage rapport with their fellow employees. Effectively, individuals construct a new ‘pidgin culture’ that is expressed through behaviour that would not be exhibited in mono-cultural settings.

‘Forging New Selves at the Juncture of Times’ considers the construction of national identity from the perspective of literary studies. In this case, Chow Shun Man Emily focuses on the way that nature is used as a resource in the formulation of Angolan identity in the novel, The Return of the Water Spirit.

Moving from nation to region, Tan Kin-Ling in ‘A Facelift and the Body: The Production of Space in Mui Wo’ focuses on the Hong Kong Government’s plan to develop Mui Wo, on Lantau island, arguing that resistance to the plan offers a challenge to the hegemonic discourse of urban planning.

Hong Kong is also the focus of attention in ‘Lost in Transition’ by Liu Ying, which uses interviews with ‘non-engaged’ youth in the city, and their employability case workers, to highlight structural problems in the way that the Government seeks to respond to the challenge of preparing low-achieving school leavers for the world of work in a globally competitive environment.

English, of course, is one main asset in the armoury of those seeking to survive in the early 21st century, and ways of learning the language more effectively are always high on the educational agenda. Lu Lulu and Dave Towey offer a research report into the use of ‘narrow-intensive reading’ as a means of vocabulary acquisition amongst middle-school students, in an article that also offers an excellent model of action research at graduate level.

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This issue is closed by the interview with Susan Bassnett, and Anastasia Aldelina Lijadi’s review of four books that revisit the core theme of this issue: how do the children of internationally mobile parents, that is, children who are raised in a ‘third culture’, cope with confusion over their identity and the inevitable disruptions to the development of their social relationships.

In today’s globalised environment, we are all, to some degree, ‘third culture kids’, and it is to the present generation of researchers that society will turn when it tries to make sense of the contemporary world. We hope that, as it develops, this new e-journal will continue to support young scholars as they set out on their academic journey.
Chinese Audiences and U.S. Sitcoms: The Case of *Friends*

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Abstract

With changing media consumption patterns, and especially with the rise of internet, many online American TV programmes have found popularity with Chinese audiences, among them *Friends, Desperate House Wives, Prison Break*, etc. Yet few studies have examined how Chinese audience receive these cross-cultural texts, particularly in comparison with audiences from other countries. Based on Scott Robert Olson's Narrative Transparency Theory (1999) and other audience studies models, this article explores Chinese audiences' cross-cultural interpretation of the U.S. sitcom *Friends.*

With 3 focus group interviews and 4 online instant message interviews, this study finds that by applying their own cultural experience and values, Chinese respondents read the text of *Friends* as "transparent" to a considerable extent. The article also addresses the issue of "cultural discount" and other aspects of audience interaction with *Friends.* The integration of theoretical approaches aims to provide a comprehensive picture of how *Friends* is received in China.

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Key words: *Friends*, Chinese audiences, Narrative Transparency Theory, Cultural Discount

Abstract

With media consumption patterns changing, especially with the rise of the internet, many online US TV shows have gained popularity in China, including *Friends*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Prison Break*, etc. However, research on how Chinese audiences accept these cross-cultural texts is still very lacking, especially in comparison to research on how audiences of other countries accept these cross-cultural texts. Building on Scott Robert Olson's theory of narrative transparency, this article attempts to explore how Chinese audiences accept US sitcom *Friends*. Through 3 focus group interviews and 4 online interviews, this article finds that Chinese audiences can accept *Friends* as transparent. In addition, this article also discusses *Friends* in China's "cultural discount". The purpose of using an integrated method is to have a more comprehensive understanding of how Chinese audiences accept *Friends*.

Keywords: *Friends*, Chinese audiences, narrative transparency theory, cultural discount
Introduction

“It’s like seeing your own friends!”

“… I hope in the future, my life can also be as warm and happy as theirs.”

“I have watched it for more than three times, and I am still watching it.”

These were some comments made by Chinese viewers about the U.S. sitcom *Friends* (1994-2004). In the People’s Republic of China (PRC), media audiences have access to *Friends* and other American TV shows such as *Sex and the City* (1998), 24 (2001), and *Prison Break* (2005) via TV, internet download, DVDs, VCDs, or other home entertainment formats—sometimes by means that challenge intellectual property rights. In 2005, the Chinese national television network, China Central Television (CCTV), imported *Desperate Housewives* (2004) from the American Broadcasting Company (*Sina.com* 2005). The previous year, CCTV planned to import *Friends* but decided against it for the network determined that the sitcom contained “too much sex.” As one CCTV official puts it, “not all Chinese audiences could accept the sitcom’s attitude towards sex. If imported, how to translate and edit this matter would really be a problem” (*Nanfang Daily* 2004). Notwithstanding this, media consumers have other means of watching *Friends*. Some have been following the sitcom as early as the mid-1990s, via Hong Kong’s TVB Pearl whose signal reaches Guangdong Province and

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other parts of southern China. Others download it from the internet. Pirated copies are also readily available in Chinese domestic cultural production markets. Finally, *Friends* has been a staple on Star TV, a cable TV channel, which started to broadcast the sitcom in 2006 (*21cn.com* 2006). Indeed, according to a poll conducted by the Sina.com website, the largest Chinese-language infotainment web portal (*Wikipedia* 2007a), *Friends* rated as the most favoured among the popular American TV series, including *24*, *Desperate House Wives*, *Prison Break*, and *Lost* (*Sina.com* 2007).

The global diffusion of Hollywood productions has generated a wide range of cultural studies and audience studies. Some, taking a historical perspective, have discussed the roles American popular culture has played in the (re)construction of other countries’ national identity and in cold war culture (*Liu* 2005, *Dower* 1999, *Perez* 1999, *Poiger* 2000, *Su*, 2004). Others have focused on the reception of contemporary films and TV programs by ethnic groups or global audiences; most noticeable are studies regarding the global reception of the American popular soap opera *Dallas* (*Ang* 1985; *Liebes & Katz* 1990; *Katz et al.* 1991), and the British BBC current events TV series *Nationwide* (*Morley* 1980).

Ketan S. Chitnis, Avinash Thombre, Everett M. Rogers, Arvind Singhal, and Ami Sengupta’s (2006) comparative study on Indian and American audiences’ (dis)similar readings of *Friends* is a relatively recent addition to the many studies on the global reception of American media

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texts. China began importing American movies and TV programs in the late 1970s (Su 2004), but studies on mainland Chinese audiences’ reception of transnational media texts have been scarce. This article, focusing on U.S. sitcoms and Chinese audiences attempts to fill this gap in research. Moreover, it also extends Chitnis et al’s study (2006) of the global audience reception of *Friends*. In particular, this article aims to find out the ways in which Chinese audiences understand and interpret an American media text, a process that arguably involves bringing in their own cultural values and beliefs. As such, this article presents a cross-cultural study of transnational global media text audiences that includes Chinese audiences, and uses this opportunity to draw upon and develop existing scholarship represented by Chitnis et al’s study.

Consistent with Chitnis et al’s study of audience interpretations with regard to *Friends* (Chitnis et al. 2006), a major part of this article is guided by Scott Robert Olson’s narrative transparency theory (Olson 1999). Narrative transparency is “the capability of certain texts to seem familiar regardless of their origin, to seem a part of one's own culture, even though they have been crafted elsewhere” (Olson 1999: 18). Is transparency the only reason for a media text to be popular, are there any other factors that contribute to the popularity of *Friends* among Chinese audiences? This study takes an integrated approach to study Chinese audiences' reception of *Friends*.

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American Media in China

After nearly thirty years of self-imposed isolation from the international community since 1949—the year when the Chinese Communist Party, under the charge of Chairman Mao Zedong, founded the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—China embarked on an open door policy in 1978. In the following year, it established a diplomatic relationship with the United States. Since then, China began to import films from the U.S. The importation was seen as part of China's national project of learning from the capitalist West, as previously China mainly imported films from its socialist allies and Third World countries (Su, 2004). Chinese television stations started to broadcast American TV serials as early on as the late 1970s. Since then and through the 1990s, American TV serials that aired in China included Man from Atlantis (1977), Dynasty (1981), Falcon Crest (1981), Matt Houston (1982), Remington Steel (1982), Hunter (1984), and Growing Pains (1985) (Su, 2004).

Speaking of the global reach of Hollywood films and other American media products, Fredric Jameson contends that this phenomenon “is not merely an economic triumph, it is a formal and also a political one” (Jameson 1998, p62). Hollywood has also been criticized for media imperialism and for creating a globally dispersed western monoculture (Boyd 1984; Chabalay 2003; Herman and McChesney 1997; Jameson 1998). However, in the case
of China, some scholars suggest that the framework of “cultural globalization”, as opposed to “cultural imperialism”, may have more explanatory power (Su 2004; Zhang 1997). Addressing the relationship of cultural imperialism and globalization, British cultural critic John Tomlinson writes:

Globalization may be distinguished from imperialism in that it is a far less coherent or culturally directed process. For all that it is ambiguous between economic and political senses, the idea of imperialism contains, at least, the notion of a purposeful project: the intended spread of a social system from one center of power across the globe. The idea of ‘globalization’ suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas which happens in a far less purposeful way” (Tomlinson 1991: 175, quoted in Su 2004)

Su (2004) observes that in China’s case, the term “cultural globalization” would appear more apt due to different historical reasons. China’s open door policy, which corresponds to the national project of post-Mao modernity, came out of the nation’s desire to learn from the capitalist West after the failures of Mao’s socialist experiments for New China. This opening up of China, or China’s renewed connections with the capitalist world, has been in many ways a voluntary process, rather than one imposed by the outside
world; it has been, as Zhang Xudong calls it, a collective “utopian search for modernity” (Su 2004; Zhang 1997: 72).

How do Chinese audiences receive American media texts, if they are not ideologically and subjectively "imperialized" by their contents? Studies which address this question are scarce. Chitnis et al's (2006) comparative study of American and Indian audiences' dissimilar readings of Friends provides a significant reference point. Building on a set of concepts in relation to the "active audience" theory, such as the encoding/decoding model (Hall, 1980), social positionality (Morley, 1986), and the polysemy of text (Fiske, 1989), Chitnis et al's research adopts Olson's Narrative Transparency Theory (1999) as the theoretical lens. Narrative Transparency Theory suggests that that global media texts have the ability to transcend cultures because of the “mythotpyes” used to create them. It argues that a cross-cultural understanding of the text may take place because the audience interprets a foreign text using their own cultural beliefs and values. According to Olson, there are eight general attributes internal to the media text that allow for its mythotypic reading: (1) virtuality, (2) ellipticality, (3) inclusion, (4) verisimilitude, (5) opendendedness, (6) negentropy, (7) circularity, and (8) archetypal dramatis personae (Olson, 1999).

Chitnis et al's study shows that the different cultural orientation of audience members led them to different mythotypic readings. Overall, the local (American) and global (Indian) audience found many elements in the text of
the Hollywood media product *Friends* as transparent, a finding consistent with Olson’s narrative transparency theory. However, the comparative analysis reveals that audiences from different cultures focus on different mythotypic attributes of the media text. To understand Chinese audiences' reception of American media texts, and to draw a comparison to Chinis et al's study, this article also selects *Friends* as a case, supported by the fact that it was rated the most popular among Chinese audiences compared to other American TV series.

While the transparency of *Friends* to Chinese audiences constitutes a major part of this study, it is not the only objective. Hoskins and Mirus (1988) developed the notion of “cultural discount” which refers to the issue that entertainment programs might be valued less in foreign markets than in the home market, because the program’s appeal is reduced due to dubbing or subtitling; therefore, difficulties “to identify with the style, values, beliefs, history, myths, institutions, physical environment, and behavioral patterns of the material in question” in a cross-cultural way exist (Hoskins & Mirus 1988: 500).

Besides, Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratification theory suggests that media users can take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. They can use the media for a variety of reasons and use them differently at different times (Blumler and Katz’s, 1974).

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Fiske contends that the gossip among television viewers about the content they watch can activate some of its meaning, and become part of the critique of its value (Fiske, 1978). Liebes and Katz (1990) categorize talks about television into two main forms, “referential” and “critical”. Referential talk refers to those interpretations of the behavior of characters in terms of their similarities to someone viewers know in real life, while critical talk is concerned with interpretive evaluations such as how well the program is produced, or whether the acting is good. In addition to these discussions, Liebes and Katz also find that audiences also "play" with the texts, which typically involves “the trying out of characters, i.e., group members imagining how wonderful or awful it would be to be like them”.

Several research questions thus emerge that are addressed in this article. Adopting Olson's Narrative Transparency Theory, with the comparison of the previous study conducted by Chitnis et al, this study first asks whether Chinese audiences find the narrative of Friends to be transparent, and to what extent? Second, as a foreign media text, despite its popularity among Chinese audiences, does Friends encounter "cultural discounts" in China? Last but not least, what other aspects constitute Chinese audiences' reception of Friends?

Methodology

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In order to address these questions, three focus group interviews and four online instant message interviews were conducted from January to April 2006. In total, forty-three respondents were interviewed, six in Macau, twenty in Shenzhen, nine in Zengcheng, and eight online. The three focus group interviews were conducted separately in Macau, Shenzhen, and Zengcheng, all of which are located in the Pearl River Delta. The focus group interview provides a similar chatting environment to the way in which audiences talk about TV shows in their real life, while online interviews, with their feasibility verified by Stefan Stieger and Anjas Göritz (2006) and Richard T.A. Wood, Mark D. Griffiths and Virginal Eatough (2004), not only greatly cuts down the cost of meeting audiences from other parts of China face-to-face, but also reduces embarrassment while exploring sensitive topics. Offline interviews were taped and transcribed.

Respondents were recruited on condition that they must be familiar with Friends. Their ages range from eighteen to thirty-two. There are twenty-three bachelor students, seven master students, nine college teachers of English, one housewife, and three office workers. Some are atheists, others are Buddhists, Taoists, and Christians. The respondents' names that appear in this paper are not their real names, in the interests of privacy.

In China, there are both English and Chinese subtitled versions of Friends, be they pirated or not, but a dubbed version has not been found yet. Consistent with Chitnis et al’s study (2006), Episode 18, Season 2 of

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Friends, “The One Where Dr. Ramoray Dies”, was studied in particular in addition to the general examination of Friends as a whole. Condom use is the main theme of this episode, with condoms mentioned six times (Chitnis et al. 2006). A brief synopsis of this episode is as follows: Monica and her boyfriend Richard return to her apartment, together with Ross and Rachel, who share the apartment with Monica. It happens that both of the couples need condoms so Monica and Rachel, as the owners of the apartment, head to the bathroom to find there is only one condom left. The two women negotiate for it, but come to no solution. In the end, Rachel wins the condom through a game. Back in her room, Monica says to Richard: “It’s not going to happen. They are doing it tonight, we can do it tomorrow.” Richard replies disappointedly: “In the future, can I see the schedule beforehand?”

As a tentative study of Chinese audiences’ reception of popular US media programs, the current research has several limitations. First, a relatively small number of respondents were interviewed, over ninety percent of which were university students. Considering that the six main characters on Friends are all working adults, it might be instructive to interview employed respondents, for they may share more similar experiences with the characters on Friends. Second, this study used interviews as the only research method and did not incorporate internet forums which contain a lot of information about American TV series in a sustained way. Internet forum discussions of foreign TV programs are detailed and in-depth, and may be

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categorized as “investigative”, in addition to Liebes and Katz’ categorization of “referential” and “critical”. Future researchers may choose to incorporate internet forums as a field of study in order to identify more unknown variables about audiences’ receptions of foreign media programs.

Chinese Audiences’ Interpretation of the Transparency of *Friends*

Consistent with Chitnis et al's study, the mythotypic attributes of "virtuality", "ellipticality", "inclusion", and "verisimilitude" were chiefly examined in the current study.

**Virtuality.** Virtuality is the creation of a psychologically convincing and electronically stimulating environment whereby audience members of long-running serials with a continuing cast develop "hyper-real relationships" with the characters (Olson, 1999). After viewing *Friends* repeatedly on DVD or on their personal computers for a long time, Chinese audiences established virtual relationships with the characters on *Friends*. As online respondent Sara put it: “They are like my own friends.” Hurong, another online respondent, said: "I hope in the future, my life can also be as warm and happy as theirs."

Specifically, how the respondents relate to the six characters of *Friends* is elaborated below. Chandler was rated the funniest among the six friends. Many respondents identified Chandler's sense of humor. Sonic said that “he is always telling jokes...I found them really very funny.” Penguin also liked

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Chandler the best because “He is very funny when he speaks. I remember very well in the first episode of the first season, when Ross says ‘I want a marriage’, Rachel, with her wedding dress on, comes in. Immediately Chandler says ‘and I just want a million dollars’. He is very good at putting in something very humorous.”

A lot of the respondents strongly identified with Phoebe. Yingnan thought Phoebe is “very lovely, very genuine, very talkative, and she talks as innocent as a child.” Cathy thought of Phoebe as very kindhearted and honest. Allah z, interviewed online, liked Phoebe’s “frankness” and “sincerity”. Kevin quoted Phoebe’s boyfriend Mike’s description of her, which is “wonderfully weird”. Hurong, interviewed online, thought Phoebe is “simpler in mind and has many thoughts different from ordinary people”.

Quite a few respondents identified with Joey. For example, Rockie from the first group likes Joey because he thought Joey is “very interesting. You can’t find Joey in real life. I think his character is idealized.” Summer commented, “Joey is very handsome and stupid, stupid not in a negative way, but in a very funny way.” Joey’s catchphrase “How’re you doing?” was the most frequently quoted line by the respondents.

Unlike the American respondents in Chitnis et al’s study (2006), where most did not identify with Monica and Ross, this study shows that about eighty percent of the Chinese respondents identified with them, with only a few exceptions. For example, Catherine liked Ross because “I always like a
simple and honest man, and he is one of those. And he is very faithful to the one he loves.” Agreeing with Catherine, Wang said that “I think he is very faithful and very earnest.”

Online respondent Joanna strongly identified with Monica: “I would like to be a woman like Monica, she is very eager to excel, good at cooking and quite rational, considerate, neat, and quite lovely when she gets crazy.” Similarly, Ellen said she would like to be friends with Monica, because “It’s easier to get along with people with principles.” Allah_z would like to have a girlfriend like Monica because “I am a careless and laggard person, so Monica would be suitable for me.” He added, “when you are familiar with the characters, it’s like you have made the acquaintance of them.”

However, some respondents did not identify with Monica. Gary from the first group expressed his dislike of Monica, saying: “I don't like her because she is too critical, and I don’t like her desire for control. It would be very annoying if there was someone like her around.” Rockie from the same group also did not like Monica’s manipulative qualities.

Finally, few Chinese respondents identified Rachel as a successful career woman as the American respondents did in Chitnis et al’s study (2006). Rather, over one quarter of the respondents described her as “a very pretty woman” and appraised her courage to become an independent woman, for Rachel cut all her credit cards which her parents gave her and decided to lead an independent life in New York.

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**Ellipticality.** Chinese respondents' interpretation of the mythotypical element ellipticality was accessed particularly in relation to the episode with the condom scene. According to Olson, ellipticality is the narrative technique of leaving out details, which allows audiences to speculate on what may be going on (Olson, 1999). Many Chinese respondents speculate that it is more culturally appropriate that Monica and Richard would not have sex that night. Michel said: "If the man respects the woman, they would not do it." Allah_z replied: "According to my experience of watching *Friends*, in the sitcom the characters value contraception so much, besides, Monica's boyfriend Richard didn't want a baby at that time." On the contrary, Tiramisu speculated that they would probably "make out and go to sleep.

She explained that: “There are other ways to avoid pregnancy, for example, whether the woman is ovulating.”

A major divergence in the readings of the condom use was unexpectedly discovered between Chinese and American audiences. By analyzing the discourse of the Chinese respondents’ reactions, it can be concluded that Chinese respondents first related to the use of the condom as a measure of contraception while, as revealed in Chitnis et al's study, the American respondents related the condom use as a conduct of "safe sex", which is primarily concerned with the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Different social backgrounds may contribute to such a divergence. In China, under the family planning policy, penalty for the birth

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of a second child stands high, thus the function of a condom as a precaution against pregnancy is highlighted. In the U.S., a country where AIDS has been particularly highlighted, "safe sex" was the major concern. Different social and cultural backgrounds produce different meanings from a text, which supports Olson's Narrative Transparency Theory.

Inclusion. Inclusion is an attribute that gives the viewer a sense that they are participating in the unfolding of the plot rather than simply observing it (Olson, 1999). In this study, the majority of respondents felt strongly included in the plot. There are four identifiable categories of inclusion: emotional engagement, familiar situation, play-acting or mimicry strategy, and addiction.

Emotional Engagement. Respondents felt touched by the Friends plot: they watched the sitcom devotedly. Sometimes they were moved to tears. Tiramisu disclosed that when she saw Monica shouting “I am engaged! I am engaged!” at the balcony of her apartment, “that kind of longing for love has great resonance to me. Immediately I am all in tears.” Similarly, Ellen said, “Every time I listen to the words which Chandler said to Monica when they were getting married, I cry.” Sara, Gary, and Summer expressed the same feeling when they watched the scene in which Chandler proposed to Monica. Aileen, another online respondent, told the interviewer: “when I heard Phoebe asking Ross ‘how many parents have you lost’, I felt very sad”, referring to an episode in which Ross said something mean to a cat which

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Phoebe believed to be the reincarnated spirit of her mom (Season 4, Episode 2).

_Familiar Situations_. Some respondents would relate their own life experience to _Friends_. Online respondent Hurong said her friendship was “very similar” to the friendship the characters have. “I rent my apartment with friends, and we had a lot of interactions. Our apartment is like Monica’s apartment, where we get together after class.” Penguin revealed: “Both my husband and I are _Friends_ fans, so when something similar happens in life, we would talk about it, and it’s very fun.” Tiramisu, interviewed online, recalled a time when she was moving a couch and she “couldn’t help tittering to death” because it reminded her of a scene in the sitcom in which Ross was moving a couch up to the apartment.

_Play-acting or Mimicry Strategy_. After repeated watching, some of our respondents would imitate the characters’ ways of talking or other actions. Joey’s catchphrase “How are YOU doing?” was imitated by many respondents. Tiramisu disclosed that she would subconsciously sing Phoebe’s song “Smelly cat”. Aileen said she liked to play the games that were played on _Friends_. Moreover, during the interview, there was even an occasion when the online interviewees actually used the lines in _Friends_ as their reply. This happened when the interviewees revealed they were often moved to tears when they watch _Friends_, to which the interviewer responded “I seldom cry when I watched _Friends_”. Immediately Sara

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replied: “You are dead inside!” and Tiramisu added: “You robot!” Both of these lines are said by Monica to Chandler when she finds Chandler cannot even cry at her hypothetical death (Season 6, Episode 14).

Addition. Many of our respondents would watch Friends repeatedly and found it hard to stop. After they did stop, some felt a degree of emptiness. Some revealed that they had watched the whole ten seasons of Friends several times. For example, Summer from the second group said: “when I was watching it for the first time, I finished it within one academic semester…first time for the plot, but when you are watching it for the second time, although you know what would happen next, you still want to watch it.” Tiramisu said “I would be anxious to death if I watched it one episode per week…thinking that American guys have to wait for half a year to watch the next episode, I almost feel sympathetic for them.”

In sum, the mythotypic element of inclusion was found highly transparent among Chinese audiences, especially when their viewing experience was facilitated by DVDs and online downloads.

Verisimilitude. Verisimilitude refers to the textual quality that conveys to the viewers that the plot is natural, real and true to life (Olson 1999). With regard to the scene in which Monica and Rachel fight over a condom, most of our Chinese respondents thought it inconsistent with Chinese cultural beliefs and practice, but there were opposite opinions as well. Michel said: “For us we would be too shy to talk about it.” Abu expressed: “In China,
instead of fighting over it, we would first let the other side have it so to
display courtesy.” Plus, some respondents questioned the necessity for the
two girls to fight over it. Baozi from the first group said: “It doesn’t have to
go as far as that, you can go downstairs and buy some.”
However, some held contrary opinions. Joanna did not think the two women
fighting for a condom abnormal. Gazagoal also thought it was normal for
Monica and Rachel to fight over it. However, he did not think the same
would happen in China, because: “When we are growing up, the elders
avoided talking about this kind of topic, subtly influenced by them, we —
now as grown-ups — might at most talk about it in private, but still, we feel
the taboo, considering the topic a private thing.”
The majority of Chinese respondents found open discussion about sex
among opposite sex siblings “unrealistic” or “not quite possible” in China.
Only a few of them disclosed that it was acceptable for them to talk about
sex with their opposite sex siblings.

Too Much Sex on Friends for Chinese Audiences?
Around sixty percent of the respondents did not find the sexual messages on
Friends too much to bear, especially when compared to Sex and the City.
Aileen said: “After watching Sex and the City, I think Friends is totally
pure…at least there is no explicit depiction of sexual activities.” Yet, about
twelve percent of the respondents found there was too much sex on Friends

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and it was inappropriate for them to watch the sitcom with their families or students. Rowena from the third group said: “It’s absolutely not appropriate to watch it with your family, my dad would be critical, and my mom would switch channels. Just think about their reaction, no way...” Mandy from the same group told a story that: “Once my dad and I were watching TV together, suddenly there was a scene of this kind on the screen, I was so embarrassed and then self-jokingly asked my dad: ‘Don’t you think they are developing too fast?’” Tiramisu said: “I am so afraid to see such scenes with my parents.” Aileen said: “I dare hardly breathe when my parents are there.”

Penguin, who loved watching *Friends*, said: “I would like to share it with my students, but there are a lot of those [sexual themes] in there.” Amy added: “There’s too much.” She said earlier in the interview that: “After watching all of them, it gave me an impression that sex was what it was all about.”

The high frequency of sexual topics on *Friends* was specially noted by some respondents. Adam interviewed in Shenzhen commented: “The frequency of talking about sex is too horrible, almost in every episode! I think it’s acceptable for sex topic to appear every five or seven episodes, but not on every episode. That’s why I deleted all of the *Friends* series on my computer. One reason was because there was not enough space in my harddisk, another reason is there was too much sex message, and I could not bear it.”

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It may be observed from the above that the social position of the respondent may play a determinant role towards their acceptance of the sexual messages in *Friends*. As a daughter at home with parents, one would reject *Friends* for its sexual message, but as a college student on campus or an office worker, one may not think *Friends* contains too many sexual messages. This echoes David Morley’s account of the social positionality of audiences which suggests that meanings are socially determined, rather than class-based (Morley 1986).

The Matter of Cultural Discount: “Why are they laughing?”

Our Chinese respondents found that they sometimes could not understand the content, especially the jokes, on *Friends* when they watched it for the first time, despite the fact that there were both English and Chinese subtitles. The respondents accounted for this in terms of cultural difference. Baochail commented: “When they [the characters on *Friends*] talked something about the society, we would find it funny, but if they talked about some plots in some films, we don’t know what they are talking about, this is the difference of cultural backgrounds.”

However, many of them revealed that they would not value *Friends* less as the "cultural discount theory” suggests. On the contrary, those jokes actually stimulated their desire and curiosity to learn about the English language and American culture. Allah_z said: “I would like to know more about why they

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are laughing… I read some materials to help me understand… My desire to study English was greatly stimulated.” Similarly, Summer said she would go to some *Friends* forums online and search the posts for explanations of why a particular episode is funny. “…because I want to learn more about American culture.” In this sense, "cultural value-added" is a more appropriate charge than "cultural discount", for Chinese audiences did not value *Friends* less due to its foreignness. Instead, the American culture shown in *Friends* stimulated many Chinese audiences' interest to study it. The learning process and communication among peer viewers became a unique viewing experience that plain and easy-to-understand domestic media content could not offer to them.

**Other Factors that Contribute to Chinese Audiences’ Reception of *Friends***

In order to better understand the popularity of U.S. sitcoms in China, this study also paid attention to other factors that contributed to Chinese audiences’ reception of *Friends*.

*Uses and Gratifications*. As already revealed above, some Chinese audiences would use the sitcom as study material. Baozi and Yinnan watched *Friends* purposely to improve their English listening skills and to broaden their knowledge about American culture. While Ellen and Tiramisu also agreed their English might have improved by watching *Friends*, they...
considered it a side-benefit. Most of the respondents watch the sitcom for entertainment purposes. Joanna watched *Friends* to release her stress while preparing for her masters degree entrance examinations, which is an even harder task than the college entrance examinations in Mainland China. Still others would watch *Friends* to kill time and to be entertained.

To sum up, Chinese respondents found varied uses and gratifications from watching *Friends*. To improve English is one popular “use” of *Friends*, especially for college students. Others derived entertainment from *Friends*, which helped them to release stress or kill time.

“*Referential*, “*critical*” talks, and "playing" with the text. Consistent with Katz and Liebes’ (1984) categorisation of audience talks about TV programs, “referential” and “critical” talks were also found among the Chinese respondents in relation to *Friends*. As revealed from the interviews, some respondents would generate "referential" talks about *Friends* during their daily interactions, and some comments were "critical": for example Gary criticized the circular opening of every episode as "low budget production", while Gazagoal criticized Chinese domestic teleplay productions when compared to American productions like *Friends*.

In their study of audiences of *Dallas*, Liebes and Katz (1993) found that audiences not only talk about the text, but also play with the text. In this study, some respondents also disclosed that they would imitate Joey’s style of saying “how’re you doing?” and Janice’s (Chandler’s annoying
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ex-girlfriend) way of crying “Oh… my… God! ” Other ways of “acting out of the text” were observed with students performing Friends dramas on stage. Moreover, Star TV station made a “reality TV” program that requires participants to live together in an apartment as the six friends on Friends. To qualify, the participants had to demonstrate knowledge of and familiarity with Friends, as well as acting skills for imitating the characters. In these ways, the talks and plays in relation to Friends generate meanings for Chinese respondents and enrich their viewing experience, making it more enjoyable, challenging, and social oriented.

Conclusion
U.S. TV shows are very popular in China; the current study pays attention to this phenomenon, making inquiries about how Chinese audiences consume these U.S. media products, with the case of Friends used for exemplification. The aims of the study were to find out whether the narratives of Friends were transparent to Chinese audiences. It also examined whether the sitcom encounters “cultural discount” in China, especially since it contains quite a lot of sex messages. Finally, it looked at other factors, such as uses and gratification and audiences' various modes of talk about Friends, which contributed to Chinese audiences’ reception of Friends.

Guided by Olson’s narrative transparency theory, the current study shows that many mythotyptic elements on Friends, such as virtuality and inclusion,
were interpreted as transparent by Chinese audiences. Nevertheless, some mythotypic elements were relatively less transparent, such as verisimilitude and ellipticality.

There exist certain differences when the present results are compared with those of Chitnis et al’s (2006) study. While Chinese audiences identified with all the six characters in *Friends*, not many American viewers identified with Monica and Ross. Pirated DVDs and online downloads allow Chinese audiences to be deeply included in the narrative of *Friends* while weekly airing on NBC kept the American audiences a certain distance away. Also there is a significant divergence among American and Chinese audiences in the interpretation of the ellipticality of the condom scene. Respondents from these two countries both interpreted the text as transparent, but they interpret it according to their own cultural values and beliefs. Living under the one-child policy, Chinese audiences relate the condom scene to contraception, while in a country where AIDS has been a sensitive issue, American audiences relate the condom scene to "safe sex".

Cultural discount exists in Chinese audiences’ reception of *Friends*. However, instead of valuing the show less, Chinese audiences try to understand the cultural difference by means of repeatedly viewing and asking friends or posting questions on relevant internet forums. Sex messages in *Friends* were sometimes rated as “too much”. In the reception

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of sex messages, social positions played a significant role in determining whether they consider the sex messages as “acceptable” or “inappropriate”.

In order to pursue a more comprehensive understanding of the popularity of *Friends*, this study also looked at Chinese audiences’ uses and gratifications, talks and “play” in relation to *Friends*. Guided by relevant theories, this study showed how Chinese audiences “used” *Friends* and revealed the gratifications they got from watching *Friends*. Improving English proficiency was one of the gratifications for some Chinese audiences, while others find relaxation and entertainment from *Friends*. Besides, the referential, critical, and playful talks about *Friends* enrich their viewing experience and help them understand the sitcom in a more critical and comprehensive way. Further studies may compare receptions of Chinese media texts among Chinese and foreign audiences, as China seeks to become a country not only strong in economy but also in cultural influences.

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Interacting in a Pidgin Culture: Managing Rapport in Intercultural Communication

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Abstract

In discussions on workplace culture, research has been largely focused on the mono-cultural workplace, with a lack of empirical studies in intercultural settings. This article explores participants’ behaviour in terms of managing rapport in a multi-cultural workplace in Mainland China, comparing this with the reported conventions of the participants’ home cultures. Initial findings suggest that participants conform to a pidgin culture that is neither their home cultures nor the local culture. The term “pidgin culture” is used to account for such situations where new cultural norms are created and shaped through regular interactions among participants from different cultural backgrounds.

Key words: intercultural communication, pidgin culture, rapport management, workplace culture

中 文 摘 要：工作场所文化的现有研究多缺乏跨文化语境的实证调查。该论文则探索多元文化工作环境中，来自不同国家的同事如何通过交流建立人际关系。研究发现“皮钦文化”在参与者长期相处下产生并不断发展，对跨文化交流具有一定的借鉴意义。

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Introduction

Workplace culture provides a social context where people seek appropriate ways of interacting and cooperating with each other for occupational purposes, with the term itself often being used interchangeably with “corporate culture”, “organizational culture”, or “management culture” (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 1683). Although there is still discussion about the exact nature of workplace culture, there is some agreement that it is shaped in a way that is relatively stable, and may be learned, as the following two quotes suggest:

A culture includes everything that is learned and shared by its members: its social heritage and rules of behaviour, its own customs and traditions, jargon and stories. (Smircich, 1983, p. 339)

Organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed ... and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel... (Schein, 1984, p. 3)

Schein argues that one of the key elements in defining a workplace culture is the process of learning and passing on of the shared, valid behavioural conventions, because in this way the shared norms are stable enough to form a culture (Schein, 1984, p. 7). Ramsey also suggests that the ways in which members of a workplace communicate and get along with each other are determined by the culture in the workplace (Ramsey, 2004, p. 4). In this sense, workplace culture retains in its own shape, is less prone to change, and requires its members to adapt in that culture in order to behave in the appropriate manner. Much of the currently available literature on workplace culture is situated in mono-cultural contexts (e.g. Holmes & Marra, 2002;
Plester, 2009; Pullin, 2011), or focuses on comparative studies of certain characteristics of workplace culture between two or more different national cultures (Schnurr & Chan, 2009). Investigations into the nature of multicultural workplaces are less available, and represent the main concern of this paper.

Workplace culture can include a wide range of aspects relating to work: from cognitive aspects such as shared values, beliefs, and corporate mission, to behavioural aspects such as management style and interactional patterns (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 1684). This article focuses on the latter aspect: how members of a workplace interact with each other. The spoken form of workplace communication has been increasingly studied (e.g. Roberts, 1992; Clyne, 1994), amongst which the complexity of politeness is frequently addressed because of its significance at work: evidence suggests that interactions on the job have been greatly marked by “mutual respect and concern for the feelings or face needs of others” (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p.5).

This article thus explores how people manage rapport with each other through interactions in a multi-cultural workplace, with a focus on the development of the workplace culture. Situated in a multi-cultural university in Mainland China, a new culture is found to have emerged and developed in a dynamic way, which is described as a “pidgin culture”. The article derives the sense of “pidgin” from pidgin languages. Each of its members, along with own personalities as well as cultural backgrounds, contributes to shape and influence the pidgin culture, which is indeed altered by the participants or even newcomers, regardless of status.

The definition and nature of pidgin culture are elaborated on in comparison with workplace culture and pidgin languages in the following section. To illustrate the matter of negotiating relationships among members
in a multi-cultural context, the present article adopts Spencer-Oatey’s “rapport management theory” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) as the major framework. This is followed by an explanation of the research methods used, an analysis of three example interactions, and a detailed discussion to demonstrate the development of pidgin culture in the workplace under examination.

**Pidgin Culture**

Rather than adopting the generic term “workplace culture”, this article uses “pidgin culture” to describe the new culture emerging in the multicultural university workplace. In this workplace, the identified culture that participants conform to is neither their home cultures, in this case, American, English, or Asian cultures, nor the local Chinese culture, within which the workplace is located. The pidgin culture contains unique values and behavioural norms constructed and negotiated by the participants, yet which are prone to variation when the group membership alters.

As an analogy to a pidgin language, which is defined by Holm as “a reduced language that results from extended contact between groups of people with no language in common” (Holm, 2000, p. 5), pidgin culture has several parallel characteristic features. According to Holm (2000), a pidgin language is created and developed when different groups of people have a special need (such as for trade) to communicate in a common language. The groups of people communicate in a pidgin instead of in any of their native languages, but there are no native speakers of any pidgin languages (Holm, 2000). Likewise, a pidgin culture comes into being when people who do not share the same set of cultural values have the need to cooperate with each other in order to create a harmonious working environment. Participants do not completely behave as they do in their own cultures, and there are no equivalents to native speakers, who particularly belong to, or grow up, in the

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pidgin culture. Therefore, a pidgin culture shares similar essential features with pidgin languages.

Although both pidgin culture and workplace culture can be influenced by characteristics of nation, occupation, and key organizational members, pidgin culture is different from the common sense workplace culture in several ways. Firstly, the term workplace culture can be applied to either mono-cultural or multicultural settings. Workplace culture refers to the beliefs and norms, explicit or implicit, that prescribe what is appropriate, expected, accepted, or preferred within a work team (e.g. Fisher, 1997; Maanen & Schein, 1979; Ramsey, 2004) (as cited in Mak, 2010, p. 33). Pidgin culture, on the other hand, represents the culture developed through intercultural communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. It is a result of the merging of participants’ cultural backgrounds, rather than a simple mixture of different cultural norms.

Secondly, according to Smircich (1983) and Schein (1984), workplace culture is stable and thus needs to be understood, learned, and adapted to by newcomers. However, when newcomers join a multicultural workplace, regardless of their rank or position, the pidgin culture is likely to change and become regulated by both the original members and the newcomers. Finally, although workplace culture (aside from pidgin culture) is usually invisible and implicitly observable (Schein, 1984), researchers agree that workplace culture is important in terms of determining how people interact and socialize with each other appropriately (e.g. Perlow & Weeks, 2002; Maanen & Schein, 1979; Ramsey, 2004). In contrast, pidgin culture is to a large extent determined by participants’ cultural and individual traits, which also explains why a pidgin culture exists in a dynamic fashion.

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Rapport Management Theory

For a pidgin culture to be examined in intercultural communication, a multicultural model of politeness is required as an analytical tool. Among the recently proposed models of politeness, Spencer-Oatey’s “rapport management theory” is relatively detailed and developed, and is able to account for data pertaining to a variety of cultures. “Rapport management” refers to the management of interpersonal relations along a harmony-disharmony continuum, concerning how people use language to build, maintain, or jeopardize social relations. “Rapport management” includes three interconnected components (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 13): the management of face; sociality rights and obligations; and interactional goals. The concept of face in Spencer-Oatey’s model is concerned with both the individual and relational needs of the self, as well as the self in relation to social identity and roles (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 15). The management of sociality rights and obligations, on the other hand, refers to the management of “social expectancies”, the anticipated rights of equity, balance of imposition, and appropriate interactional involvement (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.16). The third component is the management of interactional goals such as transactional or interactional purposes. On the basis of these classifications, Spencer-Oatey claims that rapport among people can be threatened in three ways – through face-threatening behaviour, rights-threatening behaviour, and goal-threatening behaviour.

In actual interactions, according to Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 21), people choose from a repertoire of linguistic options to manage the rapport with each other. These options, or “rapport management strategies”, include use of direct and indirect strategies, the use of “upgraders/downgraders” which intensify or weaken the force of certain speech acts, and the use of paralinguistic tactics (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). In short, Spencer-Oatey’s

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framework offers a thorough analytical tool that can be applied to analyzing data pertaining to a variety of cultures such as that collected from the culture under study.

Data and Methods

The present article examines how Chinese and foreign (non-Chinese Asian, European, and American) participants manage rapport through verbal interaction. Data was collected from an EMI (English medium of instruction) university in Mainland China, where English is used as the working language between Chinese staff and native English speakers. The investigated group comprises local Chinese teaching assistants (CTAs), foreign teaching assistants (fTAs, mostly Americans), and two native English-speaking professors.

A multi-method approach (Mullany, 2006) was adopted, which involves the following procedure: audio recording conversations, conducting informal interviews with selected participants, and analyzing transcriptions of intercultural interaction based on an applied conversation analysis approach (ten Have, 2007). Daily work conversations between the Chinese and native English speakers were recorded and selected on the basis of the content: interactions involving the issue of rapport management, power relations and politeness, and cross-cultural differences, were chosen for analysis and are summarized. During the informal interviews, participants were asked how they felt about their face, rights, intentions, and personal relationships with their colleagues. The Chinese language was used in interviews with Chinese participants, and English was used with the foreign TAs. The analysis concentrates on situated, contextual meanings and possible interpretations and examines the underlying “assumptions” and “inferential process” on the basis of contextualization cues (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2001). The analysis is also geared towards an

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ethnomethodological perspective (Atkinson, 1988) in which factors such as power, authority, and relationships are considered.

Data Analysis

This article argues that pidgin culture is developed as each of its members experiments, challenges, and negotiates their relationships with each other through workplace interaction. In this section, three representative examples are presented to illustrate the evolution of a pidgin culture in instances of workplace communication. These examples contain two of the most salient characteristics of the pidgin culture: (1) a large proportion of humour; and (2) a casual power relations management.

Example 1

The following conversation occurred when Peter, an American English teacher who had previously worked as an fTA in the participants’ office, was talking with the CTAs (whom he used to work with). Brian (a current fTA sharing the same office with the CTAs) was about to leave, putting on his recently purchased turban. Kim (a CTA) and Yiki (a Chinese instructor) noticed his turban, and initiated an exchange.

1 Yiki: can you show us how you. uh…

2 Brian: oh you want to see the turban?

3 Kim: is it a big one or a small one

4 Brian: it’s a (-) big one (0.3) yeah this is ??? wide open.

5 Brian: (producing the sounds of drum via mouth while wrapping the turban around his head, and then posing with his hands on the waist)

6 Yiki and Peter: @@@
7 Kim: @@@ wow @@@ terrorist @@@

8 Peter, Yiki, Kim, and Brian: @@@

9 Peter: wow, oh

10 Kim: (loudly) you are the one who made 911 @@@

11 Yiki, Peter, and Brian: @@@

12 Brian: all right all right

13 Peter: ??? thing in the background

14 Yiki: yeah @@@

15 Peter: like a part of a- @@@

16 Brian: I geili /give strength/?

17 Kim: @@ geili /give strength/

18 Peter and Brian: geilivable

19 Kim: yeah @@

This excerpt shows an exchange of how humour and joking behaviour take place at work and are welcomed in this office. Brian accepted the request from Yiki and put on the turban while producing the sounds of drum (lines 2 and 5), which created an entertaining atmosphere. Kim described Brian as a “terrorist” (line 7) and “the one who made [caused] 911” (line 10), which demonstrated her initiative in joking with Brian. The laughter of the participants (lines 8 and 11) indicates that they approved of the joking behaviour without anyone’s face or rights being threatened. Peter took part in the joking as well (lines 9, 13, and 15), which again received a positive response and laughter (line 14). Participants have implicitly incorporated humour into the pidgin culture by means of engaging each other in

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humorous social communication, such as Brian’s amusing performance of wearing the turban as well as Kim’s and Peter’s joking behaviour, all of which are deemed appropriate by the group.

It is noteworthy that Brian, who had been working in the office for only one semester, employed the Chinese neologism “geili” (line 16), and that he and Peter later said “geilivable” in unison (line 18). The Chinese phrase “geili”, literally meaning “give strength” (Cheng, 2011), is used as a verb carrying the sense of providing something astonishingly great or extremely impressive. “Geilivable”, a blended form of Chinese vocabulary (the pinyin “geili”) and English grammar (the suffix “-able”), is an adjective basically meaning “awesome” (Cheng, 2011). Both of the words are modern “cyber terms” developed by “Chinese netizens” (Cheng, 2011), and have been widely used by all the participants involved in this office, including the professor. The use of such special in-group vocabulary is one of the characteristics of the pidgin culture, which also distinguishes it from the culture of other work groups.

The research has identified from several other interactions that humour has a profound influence on the pidgin culture. It is not only common among TAs in the office, but is also typical of interactions with the English-speaking professor, as the next example indicates.

Example 2

The following interaction took place when Geoffrey (an American professor) asked Kim (one of the CTAs) to install a video download helper.

1 Geoffrey: just find some uh. we can do a Frasier one

2 Kim: find something geilivable?
3 Geoffrey: ye- yes geli- geilivable (0.7) (mumbling) (changing to the topic of the stormy weather while waiting for the website to download) sorry. it’s hitting Hainan right now if you wanna go see the storm, go to Hainan it’ll be

4 Cella: @@@ perfect right (.) @ @ geilivable @@

5 Geoffrey: it’ll be (-) UNgeilivable ??? @@

6 Geoffrey: why wouldn’t it install any more

7 Kim: because the- the network is not geilivable

8 Geoffrey: geilivable huh @@

When Kim first brought up the word “geilivable” (line 2), Geoffrey repeated it with an affirmative tone, indicating that he must have been familiar with the expression, and that he approved of its usage at this point. Then, he digressed by talking about the weather (line 3) which prompted the use of “geilivable” again (line 4) by Cella, another CTA. In lines 5, 7, and 8, the phrase (along with its negative form) appeared three more times. Through the actual practice of negotiating what is accepted and preferred, participants have incorporated their own rapport management strategies into the pidgin culture, and conform to it accordingly.

Example 3

The third excerpt also involves Geoffrey and Kim, who worked together to solve a downloading problem. Geoffrey has learned to speak Chinese very well, so occasionally Kim includes some Chinese words in her speech (such as that in lines 5, 28, and 30).

1 Kim: whi- what do you wanna download

2 Geoffrey: you just choose anything

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3 Kim: ehmmm?

4 Geoffrey: yeah. so open either file

5 Kim: (0.4) tudou de bu xing a /it doesn’t work from tudou/

6 Geoffrey: how can that be you can do it from you- uh youtube
why couldn’t you do it from tudou

7 Kim: uhm they have their own download helper

8 Geoffrey: really, do you know how to use it,

9 Kim: yeah

10 Geoffrey: why don’t you tell me you ??? from tudou before

11 Kim: yeah (high pitch) I- I don’t know what you WANT! you
just ASK me to. install the download helper and I think that that

12 Geoffrey: ok

13 Kim: there must be some [some (-) ] website that you wanna
visit

14 Geoffrey: [what’s this]

15 Kim: well you have to install-

16 Geoffrey: ok install (0.2) oh this is uh ??? or CSI ???

17 Cella: CSI?! @@

18 Geoffrey: CSI ok download this one (0.2) you know CSI?

19 Kim: let’s see if you can use download helper first

20 Geoffrey: ok. see that- download thing that means you can use
it
(about 30s installing the program)

21 Geoffrey: what did you do

22 Kim: ah?

23 Geoffrey: you just closed it you wanna ??? open any more

24 Kim: I- wanna open it. where’s. where did you keep that

25 Geoffrey: huh @@@ that’s why you had to ??? you just clicked on it you can start it

26 Kim: hahuh?

27 Geoffrey: go @@ go

28 Kim: oh dui oh /yeah you’re right/

29 Geoffrey: go t- @@ @

30 Kim: dui oh wo wang le /you’re right, I forgot/ @@@

31 Geoffrey: @ you are

32 Kim: @@ Jes-

33 Geoffrey: too tired today right

34 Kim: @@

Not knowing that Kim could use a download helper from “tudou,” Geoffrey directly commanded Kim to do things (lines 2 and 4) without first telling her the purpose. After he realized that Kim could download videos from “tudou” (line 10), Kim adopted a high pitch and a whining tone to answer him (lines 11-13). Since the CTA is of a lower rank than the professor, it is not expected that she would openly complain to Geoffrey. It is also unexpected for a Chinese person raised in a high power distance
Kim’s use of language can be, to a large extent, both face-threatening and rights-threatening to Geoffrey. People have a fundamental desire to be respected and evaluated positively by others, i.e. the “relational face” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), which is for example displayed when a superior-inferior relationship is involved. However, in this case, Kim did not follow the norm to respect Geoffrey, who is of a higher position, acting in a way that threatens his relational face. Furthermore, people are entitled to “equity rights”, or the fundamental belief that they are not “unduly imposed upon” or “unfairly ordered about”. By this standard, Kim’s refusal to allow the conversation to switch to social talk (line 19) infringed on Geoffrey’s will, thus threatening Geoffrey’s “equity rights”. Her behaviour also threatened Geoffrey’s “association rights”, since she deprived Geoffrey of his right to be engaged in an appropriate amount of conversational interaction and hence created an imbalance between interactional involvement and detachment.

Nevertheless, the conversation went smoothly without any apparent conflict: Geoffrey agreed to move on (from line 20) and solve the downloading problems with Kim. When Kim accidentally closed the downloaded program, Geoffrey pointed out her mistake with laughter (line 25) and attempted to go on seeking a solution (lines 27 and 29) instead of criticizing Kim’s actions. It is after Kim herself realized her mistake (lines 28 and 30) that Geoffrey reiterated the problem, jokingly commenting that Kim did it because of fatigue (lines 31 and 33). Compared with Kim’s previous behaviour, Geoffrey is less direct or face-/rights-threatening. As a
consequence, there is an unbalanced distribution of power relations between Geoffrey and Kim, yet participants seem to be accustomed to this, again indicating that it is part of the pidgin culture. Participants have developed a distinctive way to manage their power relations through implicit negotiation of rapport, which is also part of the process of the evolution of pidgin culture.

Discussion

Humour and the power relations management patterns analyzed from the three examples above are two of the most remarkable elements that make up the pidgin culture in this case, which can be attributed to the influence of American culture that the fTAs bring along (the popularity of humour and sarcasm among the young generation, and a low rank of power distance), as well as the personal attributes of the participants themselves.

In informal interviews with three of the fTAs, it was revealed that people around their age (early twenties), especially among friends, would very often joke with each other and use sarcasm. Even during the interview, one of the fTAs used sarcasm to express his ideas when asked about the frequency of jokes in common speech:

(making a stern face and adopting a flat tone) no, we’re serious, we’re very serious people (0.2) @@ no we like to joke we do that a lot

American culture is also characterized with a low power distance, compared with Chinese culture (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede argues that some eastern
cultures, such as Chinese, have a hierarchical social structure where people of an inferior position should respect those of a higher social rank. American society, on the other hand, values social equity and puts less emphasis on the assigned roles along a power continuum (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Fitzgerald, 2003). In the pidgin culture examined, evidence suggests more of an intimate relationship among people with power disparity. As a matter of fact, the participants’ relationship is strengthened through the interactional patterns. For these reasons the pidgin culture (marked by humour and casual superior-inferior relationships) is partially influenced by the participants’ cultural backgrounds, and has worked well for its members to foster their working collaborations.

The impact of American culture, however, only explains the American participants’ behaviour. Having illustrated that humour and sarcasm are commonly employed by the CTAs and the Chinese instructor, another possible reason underlying the two attributes of the pidgin culture lies in the participants themselves. Given the fact that the Chinese instructor and most of the CTAs have been exposed to western culture for about one year, it is possible that they have already cultivated some cultural diversity. Equally important, it is observed that some of the participants (such as Kim) exhibit habitual behaviour of exaggerating intimacy through talk with others. While many researchers have emphasized the understanding and adaptation of workplace culture (e.g. Schein, 1984; Clyne, 1994; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Ramsey, 2004; Mak 2010), this research suggests that participants do not have to acclimatize or reconcile themselves to the existing culture in the office because, as argued above, it is the participants who determine the development of the pidgin culture. Therefore, a pidgin culture is about how participants choose to communicate and manage rapport between each other, the evolution of which is stimulated by participants’ cultural knowledge, experiential beliefs and individual dispositions.

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Conclusion and Future Work

Considering that previous research on workplace discourse was conducted more in mono-cultural settings, this paper explores how people from different national and cultural backgrounds manage rapport through the use of language at work. As an analogy to pidgin languages, the term “pidgin culture” was used to describe a culture that evolves in a multicultural workplace, and whose members have created, maintained, negotiated, and contributed to its development. Results from the analysis of interactions and interviews indicate that although each participant represents a different culture (some of whom have experienced one or more foreign cultures), they conform to a pidgin culture which they themselves have constructed through interaction. The pidgin culture is developed as its members challenge the interactional patterns and relationships with each other from time to time, and as a result the particular, accepted norms of behaviour come into existence and become outstanding characteristics of the pidgin culture. This pidgin culture, consisting of distinctive behavioural values, beliefs, and rapport management orientations, is influenced by participants’ cultural backgrounds, experiences, as well as individual personalities. Participants’ roles should not be overlooked in the process of pidgin cultural evolution; the recognition of pidgin culture in a workplace is significant in understanding members’ preference with regard to rapport management.

This study of pidgin culture is a key initial step that highlights the need for relevant future research that will further explore the nature of pidgin culture. To test the hypothesis that new participants will change the progression of the pidgin culture, it is suggested that a comparison of two different contexts be employed. The first context would consist of a core multicultural group taken from a certain period of time. The second context

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would be when new members are added to the core group and/or other members leave. Using the same criteria to study both groups, conclusions could be drawn to support the hypothesis. Potential variables (beyond the cultural backgrounds and personalities of participants) that influence a pidgin culture evolution should also be identified in future work.

Notes

1 “tudou” is a video sharing website (www.tudou.com)

2 According to Hofstede (1981), the power distance dimension measures the degree of acceptance of hierarchies and the unequal distribution of power in a society. People in high power distance cultures (such as Chinese) value hierarchies in terms of age, gender or social status, so it is commonly expected that people in lower status respect those in higher positions (Hofstede, 1981).

Transcription Conventions

??? unintelligible text

wo-word false start

(.) brief pause

(0.5) pause of indicated length

word? strongly rising tone

word, slight rising tone

word. slightly falling, final tone

word - continuing tone

word… unfinished speech

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Forging New Selves at the Juncture of Times:  
The Formulation of an Angolan Identity in Pepetela’s  
*The Return of the Water Spirit*  

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Abstract  
Writing of a society that was constantly changing due to the vortex of new social and political vistas that opened up in post-independence Angola, Pepetela recognises the myths of colonial and revolutionary Angola embedded in the nation-building project. This paper argues that, in *The Return of the Water Spirit* (1995), Pepetela asserts the significance of Nature in the constitution of any identity that might claim for itself the name “Angolan” and hints at an autochthonous self which stands in fundamental opposition to the fabricated, mythologized notions of Angolan identity crafted by the state machine.  

Key words: Angola, construction, nature, Pepetela, post-independence, resistance  

摘要  
安哥拉獨立後的社會不斷變遷，Pepetela 認為安哥拉在建設國家的計劃中營造虛假的身份定位。本文認為在《水之靈的歸來》(1995)中，Pepetela 強調任何「安哥拉」的身份定位，必需以「確立自然」為依歸，對抗政府機器塑造的虛假身份建構。  

關鍵詞：安哥拉、建構、自然、Pepetela、獨立後、抵抗  

*It was Kianda’s lament, just as they had previously guessed. He complained that for centuries he had lived in perfect happiness in his lagoon until men decided to drain his lagoon and put cement and sand and tar on top of it, and build a square and buildings all around it. Kianda felt stifled with all that weight on top of him. He*  

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In the essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Stuart Hall (1994: 392) insightfully points out the fluid nature of identity by arguing that “identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think” because it is “never complete, always in process”. Indeed, Hall echoes the sentiments of a young Karl Marx (1859: 8), who recognized that identity is the product of society because “[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness”. In short, a constantly changing society means a constantly changing sense of self. So it is that Angolan writer Pepetela interrogates the nature of the collision between self and society in his novel The Return of the Water Spirit. It is, importantly, a novel that he wrote in 1995, some twenty years after Angola won independence from the Portuguese colonial regime. As Zimbabwean critic Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (1994: 474) proclaims, independence brought little more than “defeats, disappointments, and disasters” to post-colonial African States. Political independence, it seems, could not pacify the essential differences that were enveloped by the State. In the face of such social turmoil, Agostinho Neto (1979: 492), the president of Angola, regarded the forging of a collective Angolan identity as a way of unifying the people. In a speech to a gathering of Angola’s best writers he encouraged an Angolan literature to present a “true context of the Angolan nation or […] the Angolan people” so as to assert the fact that “Angolan culture is African”.

However, as Frantz Fanon (1963: 252) reminds us, such a proclamation can be seen as a means to maintain political power by distracting people from the present conditions of society. A task to examine the cultural roots of a nation is at the same time a task that requires one to delve into the past and therefore away from the present. In his essay “On National Culture” (1963:253), he famously writes that “[a] national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and
praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence”. It is the writer’s task to articulate such collective efforts. But, as Helen Tiffin (1987: 17) warns, the task is sure to be an impossible one if the idea is to retrieve a “pure” or “authentic” image of a pre-colonial time. One thing is for sure, the changes wrought through the colonial encounter are permanent and thus “pre-colonial cultural purity can never be fully recovered”. Writing of a society that was constantly changing about him due to the vortex of new social and political vistas that opened up to the Angolan people following independence – Marxism, socialism, capitalism – Pepetela recognises the traps and myths embedded in the nation-building project that followed Angola’s independence from Portugal. In The Return of the Water Spirit he charts the way in which the socialist ideals of the victorious Marxist revolutionary party slowly wither and are replaced by the immediate personal gains to be had through the embrace of global capitalism. By unveiling the transactions of political powers in Angola, Pepetela announces the fact that a new society produces a new kind of people.

For Pepetela, taking the specific territory of Angola into account is essential to any consideration of what it might mean to be “Angolan”. It is significant that Pepetela writes this new society and the kinds of people it makes possible through the lens of magical realism. In the essay “Magical Realism at World’s End,” Michael Valdez Moses (2001: 105) argues that magical realism “expresses the nostalgia of global modernity for the traditional worlds it has vanquished and subsumed”. Yet, Moses’s implicit critique of the genre of magical realism is that it is an unthinking reactionary impulse against the emergence of modernity. This, it must be emphasised, cannot be said of Pepetela’s novel. Instead, Pepetela’s use of magical realism is a mediated response to Agostinho Neto’s call for Angolan writers to examine the essence of an Angolan identity. In the age of independence, in the search for what it means to be “Angolan” in the wake of colonial oppression, Pepetela apprehends magical realism to highlight the force of traditional worlds on contemporary society. Entering into the debate on indigenous aesthetics which continues to exercise the minds of some of the continent’s most celebrated writers – Abiola Irele (1977), Kwame Anthony

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Appiah (1988), Chinweizu (1973), Wole Soyinka (1975) – Pepetela makes clear that if a truly Angolan identity is to be understood, it must arise from the ground of the Angolan territory. As such, he suggests we must first pay respects to the natural environment of Angola.

David Brookshaw (2000: 112) is right to claim that an important and recurring theme found in Pepetela’s works is “life [as] a struggle which can somehow never truly match its ideal”. Similarly, Ana Martinho (2007: 47) argues persuasively that the majority of Pepetela’s works published in the 1980s and onwards “compl[y] [with] the idea of dystopia” and “disenchantment with the revolutionary process”. Yet, neither of these important critics recognize the significance of Pepetela’s reconsideration of the profound role that Nature must play in the constitution of any identity that might like to claim for itself the term “Angolan”. In this paper, I therefore argue that with the use of magical realism, Pepetela asserts the significance of Nature in the constitution of an essential “Angolan” identity. That is to say, the return of the water spirit allows Pepetela to hint at an organic sense of self, an autochthonous self, which stands in fundamental opposition to the fabricated, mythologized notions of Angolan identity crafted by the state machine. I will examine, first, the changes that issue from the transition from colonial to post-colonial state; second, the failure of class-based identity, which is, in this case, an identity built on Marxism; and Lastly, the re-generation of the prominence of traditional thought with the return of the Water Spirit, Kianda, who is to all intents and purposes the natural world.

The novel is set in post-independence Angola while the country is still in the turmoil of civil war as different political ideologies – anti-colonialism, socialism, capitalism – refuse to compromise with each other. In this context, Pepetela writes of buildings in Kinaxixi Square, in Angola’s capital city Luanda, mysteriously falling gently to the ground. When the first building in Kinaxixi Square falls, João Evangelista, the main protagonist, has just married Carmina, a standout member of the ruling party who later becomes a member of the new Angolan bourgeoisie. In contrast, their friend, Honório, becomes a homeless proletarian soon after the collapse of the building in which he lives. Although they all live in the square, Carmina and Honório
react quite differently to the mystery. It soon transpires that the collapse of these buildings is intimately linked to the failure of the socialist principles of the sitting “revolutionary” government and the subsequent growth of truly egalitarian traditional ideas. By the end of the novel, it is revealed that the buildings were felled by the enigmatic Water Spirit, Kianda, as he reclaims the water used in the construction of the buildings. This revelation is a poetic means of demonstrating the moral and ethical failure of the sitting government. In a moment of quiet reflection, Carmina says, “[t]hose buildings that used to fall, these political and economic changes, it’s all tied up” (Pepetela 11). Here she recognises that just as the buildings fail, so does the machinery of the state.

Pepetela highlights the transition of political doctrines in Angola by offering a vivid portrayal of the clash of anti-colonialism, socialism, and capitalism in post-independence Angola. Both João and Carmina have an explicit sense of colonialism coming to an end. However, its legacy is still strong. When Carmina asks for João’s comment about naming her company “Overseas Import-Export,” João is conscious of the use of the word “overseas” which, he argues, has “a whiff of colonialism” and “is a re-appropriation of the colonial heritage” (23). Similarly, Carmina is also conscious of and fixated on reversing the hierarchy of the black and white population inherited from the colonial period. When she realises that the Portuguese renovator of her apartment is having an affair with her maid, she condemns him and says, “you think because this is a black people’s home that you can do anything” (74). In any case, both João and Carmina consciously depart from colonialism and attempt to proclaim a change in the hierarchical relationship of the black and white population during colonial times. Such a conscious negation of colonialism thereby becomes an “essentialized” rite of passage to create a “new Angolan” identity in the post-independence period. Apart from anti-colonialism, capitalism is also celebrated by the Angolan government and quietly replaces socialism. João is aware of such a change in the society because “[t]his was at the time that people began to talk of political change. People would come to visit and talk about the so-called ‘democratic opening-up’” and make him acknowledge that “[t]he political régime really was going to change” (10-11). With the

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emergence of private capitalism, socialism comes to a stuttering halt in Angola.

Carmina represents the embodiment of the moral and ethical failure of the Angolan government. She is an aggressive, testy, vocal member of the ruling party, The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). That is to say, she is a strident Marxist and socialist until she recognizes the fact that everyone in the MPLA is “moving towards the so-called ‘market economy’” (13). With this realization, she quickly refuses the moral and ethical principles of socialism and instead embraces the ethics of capitalism – becoming a “businesswoman” (14-15). She says to her husband, João, “convent morality’s dead and gone. We’re now living under a market economy, and there are three centuries of capitalist ethics to demonstrate how legitimate it all is” (48). It is the kind of statement that affirms the commonly held belief among the Angolan workers that “the government called itself Marxist [but] many suspected that their Marxism never went beyond the level of propaganda” (5). As Angola opens itself up to the machinery of a rampant global capitalism, socialism withers. In this way, Pepetela shows that when socialism gives way to capitalism it is not long until the birth of the “profit capitalist” (Marx, 1848: 10). Carmina is a new Angolan, Pepetela’s “profit capitalist,” who longs for the money and benefits brought by her new identity. The reader is told that she is “an habitué of the luxurious boutiques” without paying any attention to “the indescribable misery of refugees and of children who had been orphaned or abandoned and who filled the streets of the capital, and who slept without shelter” (Pepetela 55). As such, the change in Carmina’s identity – from socialist revolutionary to capitalist – not only exemplifies corruption and selfishness among Angola’s new elite; it also underlines the continuing polarization of society. Even in this age of independence, there are still the excessively rich and, more importantly, there are still the excessively poor – those who thought they were fighting the old colonial regime for a truly egalitarian future.

Karl Marx (1848: 13) called these struggling people the “lumpenproletariat,” those at the bottom of society, “the social scum [and]
the passively rotting mass [who are] thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society”. Nevertheless, these are the people that the revolutionaries called on in the name of the nation to rid Angola of the colonial regime. However, once the revolutionaries achieve the rule of government, the *lumpenproletariat* once again finds itself the residue of political and social thought. They are the forgotten revolutionaries. As the narrator remarks, while the rich are sitting comfortably in cars “with air-conditioned and smoked glass[,] street kids, the war amputees and the old people [are] thrown out on to the street by poverty” (Pepetela 80). One such war veteran begs for alms from Carmina’s equable husband, João, as he takes a walk through the streets of Luanda. When João is unable to offer any money to the beggar, this nameless man who has lost both his legs in the wars of independence shouts:

> When I was in the war, I was a hero because I was with the glorious Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola which was fighting to defend your lives. All the while you were having it good here in the city. Now that I’ve lost my legs, I’m not a hero anymore. I don’t even have the right to live. But you still continue to have it good. (81)

As João remarks earlier, the *lumpenproletariat* are “marginalised by the process, by this political system and the previous one” (62). In post-independence, “the hero” becomes “the beggar,” and the nationalism that united and mobilized a people against colonial rule, that made people offer their lives voluntarily, is revealed to be nothing more than vacuous rhetoric.

In the latter half of the novel, João observes that the city is filled “with people fleeing from war and hunger – at a rate that was as fast as it was suicidal” (84). In this spirit of the failed promises of the revolution, Pepetela shows the masses reclaiming a political voice by embarking on a “naked revolution” (77). Quite literally, the people who have been left in the wake of the radical economic changes to Angola, begin to refuse to wear any clothing. It is Honório, João’s friend and work colleague, who becomes the

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mouthpiece of this civic movement. Having already lost his house, his job, and his wife at this point, Honório says to João that “[i]t’s impossible to build even a room with the salary we get […] this is everyone else’s fate. Ninety-nine per cent of the population. I had to get by” (77). As such, dressing in their “birthday suits” (93) becomes a way of “protesting against the passivity of the authorities which did little to sort out their basic problems” (93). Yet, when João asks whether Honório is seeking tradition as an asylum by “heeding the advice of the poet who said that we shall return to our traditions” (94), Honório stresses that the “naked revolution” has got “nothing to do with traditionalism” (95). The reason is, that, “[n]akedness is the only garb compatible with the poverty into which [they] have sunk” (95). The “naked revolution,” he claims, is not a political movement. Rather,

[…] it is a civic movement. It is a question of civic coherence. […] Every day our currency is devalued, the prices of goods rise, no one can work because salaries are the only things in this country which don’t rise. Isn’t it a shameful luxury to adorn yourself with clothes, even if they are the rags from some filthy cloth? (95)

Thus, wearing clothes simply means that “showing off wealth cannot be tolerated” (95). He then goes on to emphasize that “at this moment [they] belong to the class of the naked” and “[t]here’s now a class struggle in society, and it’s between the naked and the fully-clothed” (96). Honório’s declaration of belonging to “the class of the naked” is indeed a literal allusion of an argument made by Marx (1848: 43) who denounced Free Trade for being an “exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation”. Pepetela makes clear that the exploitation of the Angolan people is by the ruling classes. However, he also makes clear the fact that class struggle, the essence of the Marxist-led revolution, has failed the very people it was meant to relieve. For Pepetela, a revolution based on class struggle fails the
people because political ideology weakens against the power of the dollar. The state and its ideologues abrogate social responsibility in favour of filling their own coffers. The strength of Honório’s revolution is that it is an organic uprising; an uprising of the people rather than the intelligentsia; it is class-less (we are all truly naked) and therefore profoundly egalitarian.

Pepetela links this growth of a truly egalitarian politics with the growing strength of the Water Spirit, Kianda. That is to say, Kianda, who must be read as the embodiment of Nature, is regarded as essential to any truly Angolan sense of self. A foreign scientist who attempts to understand why the buildings in Luanda fall so gently, explains to João that the buildings collapse because the concrete used in their construction “go[es] back to the original state, as though the water had suddenly been removed from it” (Pepetela 29). By the end of the novel, it is revealed that Kianda is lamenting with an inaudible song because

[…] for centuries [Kianda] had lived in perfect happiness in his lagoon until men decided to drain his lagoon and put cement and sand and tar on top of it, and build a square and buildings all around it. Kianda felt stifled with all the weight on top of him. He couldn’t swim. And then, he revolted against it. He sang. He sang until all the buildings fell down, one by one, slowly. (93)

The disintegration of buildings in Kinaxixi Square is indeed another allusion to Marx (1848: 45), who claims that capitalism ultimately makes “all that is solid melt into air […] all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind”. That Pepetela’s buildings fall to the ground rather than evaporate into the air highlights his respect for the land and the faith that a kind of utopian space can be found with a reconsideration of the natural environment which can be read in the light of animism. In African Literature, Animism and Politics, Caroline Rooney (2000: 20) reminds us that the term does not merely denote “superstition or obscure mysticism” but is “the vital or energising spirits of natural entities”. In this respect, Pepetela’s respect for the Angolan natural environment echoes Rooney’s
argument. For Pepetela, if an essential, truly Angolan identity is to be recovered, it must arise from the ground of the natural environment of Angola in spite of the edifice of the built environment.

As Kianda grows in strength, he not only reclaims the land from the built environment but also replaces the machinery buildings of various political forces with a central fundamental essence in the natural environment. The very essence of the buildings in Kinaxixi Square embodies the imposition of political regimes and ideologies by the colonial regime, the MPLA, which soon becomes a “profit capitalist” regime. João’s observation about the apartment blocks at the beginning of the novel also hints at this metaphor. He says, “[t]hese apartments just create conflicts; everyone lives on top of each other like the Europeans do; it doesn’t go well with our African way of being” (Pepetela 34). As the last building in Kinaxixi Square “disintegrates into the sound of musical notes,” Kianda’s “song burst through the thickness of the water and flooded the city” with a “tidal wave” (102). The giant wave then “demolishes the isthmus, and the water from the lagoon was mixed with the salt water and the living colours spread all the way to Corimba now that the Island of Luanda is once again an island” (102). As such, Kianda not only pulls down the buildings that embody the imposition of political regimes and ideologies, he also restores the original landscape of the capital, Luanda. When “Kianda [is] free at long last [and] had earned for himself the high seas” (102), a truly organic revolution that is directly relational to all people is launched. The hordes of naked people, who have essentially returned to their natural condition, applaud the Water Spirit’s latest feat (102). They applaud because the failed revolutionary government is collapsing and with it emerges the necessity, as Marx said, to face with sober senses the real conditions of life, and the ethical responsibility one carries in society.

By way of brief conclusion, Pepetela offers a very valuable critique of the forging of a “new Angolan” identity in post-independence Angola in The Return of the Water Spirit. By unfolding the political complexity to which Angola is exposed in its post-independence period, Pepetela portrays the way in which the transition from colonial to post-colonial state situates Angolans at the juncture of a profound social change. The

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lumpenproletariat are compelled to engage in a class struggle by embarking on a “naked revolution” in face of the moral and ethical failure of the Angolan government, the MPLA. It is in this context that Pepetela suggests that if an essential, truly Angolan identity is to be (re)discovered, it must arise from the ground of the Angolan territory. Put simply, a truly “new Angolan” identity is only possible through communion and respect for the natural environment. With the use of magical realism, Pepetela empowers the Water Spirit, Kianda, to annihilate the edifice of the built environment constructed during the colonial regime. By animating the spirit of Nature, Pepetela reinstates its prominence in political thought. In this way, Pepetela shows that a truly Angolan identity is one that must once again respect and imbibe the significance of the natural environment.
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A Facelift and the Body: The Production of Space in Mui Wo

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Abstract

This article offers a critique of the government’s plan to give a ‘facelift’ to Mui Wo, Lantau Island, bringing forth two ‘moments of space,’ namely the ‘perceived’ and the ‘lived’ which, together with the ‘conceived’, presuppose the body, based on Lefebvre’s (1991) triadic concept of production of space. In modern society, the body no longer plays an important role in our perception of and relations with the world. Refuting body-mind dualism, this article explores how the body weaves our imagination and establishes our subjectivity, possessing the potential to call into question interchangeable, spectacular space. Using Lefebvre’s concept of spatial production, this article argues that bodily practices in the context of Mui Wo constitute a potential challenge to the hegemony of planned space.

Keywords
Body, development, global capitalism, space, subjectivity

摘要

本文審視香港政府「翻新」大嶼山梅窩的計劃，並據空間生產的三元概念（Lefebvre, 1991），帶出構思空間外的兩層要素，即感知與生活。此兩層空間元素強調身體的介入。本文駁拒身心二分論，並探討身體如何編織想像力、確立主體性。基於列斐伏爾的空間理論，本文的論點是，在梅窩的語境中，身體實踐有潛力挑戰規劃空間的霸權。

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The Production of Space

In this article, I discuss the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government’s plan to redevelop Mui Wo, Lantau, into a touristic site. I argue that this is another example of developmentalism, which makes space exchangeable and homogeneous. Using the triadic concept of space by Henri Lefebvre (1991), I show that lived experiences in Mui Wo cannot be taken over by conceived space, and that they have the potential to offer a response to the crisis of urban life, which is governed by boredom and abstraction.

As Lefebvre notes in his seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1991), each mode of production has its own particular space, and the shift from one mode to another results in the production of new space (1991, p.46). Without exception, capitalism and neocapitalism have produced their own space, which includes the ‘world of commodities,’ its ‘logic’ and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state (1991, p.53).

What matters in the present era of global capitalism, or finance capitalism, is the abstraction of money capital, which is a significant factor behind the use of space to extract surplus value and behind land speculation. Frederic Jameson is right to note that globalisation is not the emergence of a ‘globe’ as such, with a new and larger space replacing the older national or imperial ones. It is rather a kind of ‘cyberspace’ in which money capital has reached its ultimate dematerialisation, as messages which pass instantaneously from one nodal point to another across the former globe, the former material world (1998, p.153).

In discussing *The Long Twentieth Century* by Giovanni Arrighi (1994), Jameson notes the originality of Arrighi’s work lies in two moments of deterritorialisation. One is a deterritorialisation in which capital shifts to other and more profitable forms of production, often in new geographical...
regions. Another, which is of particular interest to this study, involves the giving up of commodity production altogether by capital in an entire centre or region in order to seek maximisation in spaces of speculation, the money market, and finance capital (1998, p.153).

One cannot help but think of Hong Kong as an example of this development. In a post-industrial society such as Hong Kong’s where the rural is in peril, the crisis lies not in urbanisation, or ruralisation for that matter, for the urban as well as the rural is destroyed. To answer the hegemonic exigencies of capital in search of maximisation, the city has become homogeneous. This is a common feature of global cities in which abstract space proliferates and makes such cities look increasingly alike.

While the key to globalisation is ‘deteriorialisation’, it is not without irony that the privileged forms of speculation today are those of land and city space. As a result of ultimate deterriorialisation, land and the earth in global cities become abstract; from being the background or context of commodity exchange, they are transformed into a commodity in its own right (Jameson 1998, p.153). In this way, knowing how to build a physical structure is far from enough. Space has to be endowed with exchangeability and the real estate appraisal term of ‘comparables’ is a reflection of this prerequisite: to establish its market value, a property has to be comparable to some other properties in order to compare like with like, not apples with oranges. For space to become homogeneous and hence exchangeable, it has to possess certain traits. Residential spaces nowadays are ‘units,’ or identical cubes of space, but this sameness is precisely what makes them saleable. For many buyers the most important consideration is whether and how well the subject property can be (re)sold on the market, rather than how good it is as a place to live in. Similarly, a holiday resort has to offer a range of facilities (beach, hotels, shopping, etc.), without which it cannot be promoted as such in travel brochures. In the case of a retail mall, it has to have the right size, allocate its floor space to various trades in the optimal way, and have a certain tenant mix.

Moreover, it is not sufficient for space to simply possess certain traits in order to be called a holiday resort, for instance. More importantly, these traits have to be made known and carry a name. Hence, marketing of the [http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections](http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections)
product is more important than the product itself. Signs associated with space are becoming increasingly prominent as capitalists try to maximise the surplus value that can be generated, as illustrated by the extravagant names given to upmarket residential properties in Hong Kong in recent years, like ‘君臨天下,’ which literally means ‘The Monarch Descending onto Heaven and Earth,’ and ‘凱旋門’ or ‘Arc de Triomphe’.

Under government (state) planning, the Hong Kong cityscape is full of footbridges and walkways, which connect building to building, and bus stop to Mass Transit Railway (MTR) station, without the pedestrian ever needing to touch the ground. Many new buildings are mixed-use compounds with a retail podium raised a few floors from the ground, imposing their intimidating presence on people walking by. The flâneur(se) would find it more and more difficult to walk or even stay in the street. In modern space such as this, the organic body is absent. Our experience is fragmentary, without the feeling of being part of the cosmos. We do not even feel we are part of the physical environment—we are trained not to touch or we risk ‘sabotaging’ material things around us, and yet materialism is all around us. The body is alienated in modern space. In a sense, we are all crippled in modern society.

Nevertheless, as Lefebvre has noted, the lived and the body are primordial in space and cannot be reduced to the conceived. Neither can the body be reduced to a geometric or optical abstraction. On the contrary, the understanding of space must begin with the lived and the body, i.e., from a space occupied by an organic, living, and thinking being (2009, p.229).

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) discusses a conceptual triad of space. In brief, spatial practice (*la pratique spatiale*), or the perceived (*perçu*), embraces production and reproduction, and ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In Hong Kong, for example, modern spatial practice can be defined by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidised high-rise housing project. Representations of space (*les représentations de l’espace*), or the conceived (*conçu*), refer to the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers, and social engineers. They are the dominant spaces in any society. Representational
space refers to space directly lived (vécu) through its associated images and symbols. It is the space of users and inhabitants. This is the dominated and passively experienced space that the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.

However, Lefebvre warns against treating this triad as an abstract ‘model,’ as this would eliminate the force that this perceived-conceived-lived trio can have (1991, p.40). Instead, the triad must grasp the concrete (not limited to the immediate), or else its implication would be rather limited, being reduced to merely another ‘ideological mediation.’ This qualification by Lefebvre is important. Instead of a structural model, the triad opens up the way to possibilities that are resistant to permanent constructions.

A ‘Facelift’
In late 2004, the Hong Kong SAR Government proposed a Concept Plan for Lantau to provide an overall planning framework for the future development of Lantau Island. Within the plan, Mui Wo was positioned as a rural, touristic, township for holidaymakers. Subsequently, the Planning Department drew up the Land Use Concept Plans (the LUC Plans) for the ‘facelift’ of Mui Wo in mid-2006. This is in effect a multi-million dollar plan to revamp the infrastructure of the place and to develop it into a touristic town. In view of the above discussions on the production of space, I see this as an example of making a lived space abstract in the name of ‘progress’ and ‘development’. Development in its predominant sense is understood here as the attempt to produce space to endow it with exchangeability, which implies homogeneity throughout. In the process of homogenisation, space is driven empty, cleared of lived experiences, often in the name of (bourgeois) aesthetics and order. The official name given by the government to this redevelopment plan—‘Facelift of Mui Wo’—epitomises the emphasis on the visual and the visual only.

According to Lefebvre, abstract space dissolves and incorporates such former ‘subjects’ as the village and the town (1991, p.51). It also replaces them. Abstract space presents itself as the space of power, which will

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eventually lead to its own dissolution on account of conflicts and contradictions arising within it. An apparent pseudo-subject will arise as a result, i.e., the abstract modern social space; hidden within it and concealed by its illusory transparency will be the real ‘subject,’ namely state power. Within this space, and on the subject of this space, everything is openly declared: everything is said or written. Yet, there is very little to be said and even less to be ‘lived,’ for lived experience is crushed. The ‘conceived’ will prevail. History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret—as a horizon fast disappearing behind us. This is why affectivity, along with the sensory/sensual realm, cannot accede to abstract space. The Mui Wo ‘facelift’ plan is a typical example of how space is conceived and how lived experience is suppressed in the process. Behind town planning and the knowledge of professionals is also state power and its agenda to render space homogeneous, such that Mui Wo is endowed with the signs and symbols of a ‘touristic town.’

In June 2007, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) commissioned Meinhardt Infrastructure and Environment, a consultancy firm, to conduct a feasibility study of the proposed works under the abovementioned LUC Plans. At the time of writing, another engineering consultant, Jacobs, has been commissioned by the CEDD to engage in detailed design of the project. At an estimated cost of over HK$300 million, the works involve the construction of new amenities and redevelopment of existing areas in the coming few years. These include redevelopment of the pier area, addition of signage for tourists, provision of a ‘heritage trail’, and a cycle track network. Works will start in 2013 upon completion of statutory procedures and funding approval (CEDD and Meinhardt 2012).

This facelift plan is part of the government’s larger plans to develop Lantau into a transport nodal point within the Pearl River Delta (PRD), especially with the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, with Lantau Island being one of the future boundary crossing points. Due to the dialectical process of rapid urbanisation and the growing affluence of the PRD at large, natural resources have become scarce and have acquired exchange value. Spaces of ‘nature,’ with the necessary signs and symbols, have to be produced in order to realise the surplus value for capitalists. This...
is where expert knowledge comes into play in order to conceive such space. In this process, such professionals as planners, engineers, consultants from various fields (transport, landscaping, environment), as well as technocrats and bureaucrats from government, have been engaged. Their knowledge informs the conception of space, which is abstract and formal. With the support and authority of this positive knowledge, such conceived space in turn becomes dominant and prevails over the lived.

A prominent example concerns the daily practice of cycling in Mui Wo which is the main mode of transport within the community. According to the facelift plan, an underground bicycle park will be built at some distance away from the pier to replace the current one just beside it. This drew heavy criticism from some residents in the public forums as well as in their written comments, since it would compromise the daily, practical needs of cyclists. This example of the bicycle park illustrates the conflict between abstract space which emphasizes the visual and optical and lived space which is embodied and organic.

When the facelift proposal was still in the planning stage, I joined a small group of residents making a tour of Mui Wo together with the government town planner in charge of this project. I told him I found the bicycle park a prominent characteristic of Mui Wo but the planner did not agree. He did not think that the bicycle park constituted a special feature of Mui Wo, on the grounds that other new towns such as Shatin had similar bicycle parking spaces.

This view of the town planner somewhat surprised me until I realised the town planner and I were in fact speaking on two different planes. I spoke from bodily lived experiences (character), and the planner from the abstract and detached (visual, spectacular). By ‘bicycle park,’ I denoted everyday experiences of residents, myself included, through which many feelings and memories were conjured up. When the planner said the bicycle park had ‘nothing special’, he was adopting the blasé attitude of the metropolitan man (Simmel 1997, p.178) and was speaking from a distance, in search of the spectacle. He had the government agenda in mind: to develop Mui Wo into a touristic town, in which what counts are the associated symbols and signs.

A mundane, everyday cycle park intended for local residents lacks the signs
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and symbols of a tourist town. It has only use value but not exchange value. It is not surprising then that in the eyes of the planner, it has ‘nothing special.’

In fact, the theme of the ‘facelift’ plan is ‘leisure historic rural township.’ As Adorno and Horkheimer have noted, under late capitalism, amusement is simply the prolongation of work. It is an escape from the mechanized work process, but not in the least permanently. On the contrary, the ultimate aim of amusement is to let workers recruit strength in order to be able to cope with work again (2002, p.137). This still has a certain truth in this context—‘recharge’ as a metaphor for holidaymaking is common among workers in Hong Kong. There is an assumption that the purpose of getting away from work is to let oneself be recharged with strength such that s/he can return to work in a better form.

The Body

In the production of space, the state becomes more and more clearly the agent, even the guiding hand (Lefebvre 2009, p.228). In what Lefebvre has qualified as the space of ‘state mode of production’ (SMP), it implies not only that everyday life is programmed and idealised through manipulated consumption but also that spatiality is hierarchized to distinguish noble spaces from vulgar ones, and residential spaces from other spaces. It also implies a bureaucratic centrality, termed ‘civic’ (significantly, the plaza in Mui Wo Old Town is named ‘Civic Square’ in government planning documents) but occupied by the decision-making powers. It is a space organised in such a way that, unless they revolt, ‘users’ are reduced to passivity and silence (235).

Meanwhile, the capacity to lay the plan over the space of the city, to render its vision concrete in the built environment, is taken as a sign of the capacity of the modern state to penetrate and organise life in public (Wells 2007, p.140). In the LUC Plans drawn by government town planners, there is a proposal to ‘beautify’ the old town of Mui Wo: ‘The existing Old Town would be retained and enriched with traditional style streetlights and paving. The improvement of streetscape would cover Mui Wo Rural Committee

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Road, Mui Wo Chung Hau Street and the neighbouring streets’ (SKIDPD 2006, p.1-2).

Beauty is an aesthetic judgment that is in turn related to education and social origin. To Pierre Bourdieu, the ‘eye’ is a product of history reproduced by education and tastes function as markers of class (1984, pp.3-7). A popular aesthetic is based on the affirmation of the continuity between art and life, which implies the subordination of form to function. John Berger also notes that the predominant art of any period tends to serve the ideological interests of the ruling class (1972, p.86). To clear objects which form part and parcel of life from social space by saying they are ‘ugly’ (in the case of the bicycle park, because the bicycles there are said to be disorderly and off-putting to tourists), and to allow (or install) objects which are detached from life in public space by saying they are ‘beautiful’ or ‘beautifying,’ is to negate lived, bodily experiences using an eye detached from daily life. As such, building an ‘entrance plaza’ at the pier to serve tourists, replacing the bicycle park intended for residents, will change the everyday life of residents forever.

As John Urry has noted, mere sightseeing can be an embarrassment (2002). Given the emphasis on tourist consumption as visual, and given the universalisation of the tourist gaze, places have come to construct themselves as objects of such gaze. At the same time, the gaze of the tourist will involve an intrusion into people’s lives. In the case of the facelift plan of Mui Wo, such universalisation of the tourist gaze is reflected in the fact that the mere sightseeing tourist is going to pre-empt the daily need of residents. In this way, sight may be viewed as the most superficial of the senses, getting in the way of real experiences that should involve the other senses and necessitate long periods of time in order to achieve proper immersion in the space.

Moreover, to mark its symbols of rule, the government is tempted to construct monuments and memorials in public spaces, but often this is met with a failure to impress the significance of these symbols on the population (Wells 2007, p.139). To this, I would add that pro-establishment agents are often no less eager than the government itself to impress the public with state rule. The proposed installation of a ‘Silver Bauhinia’ statue, and the http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
setting up of an ‘Olympic trail’ are such examples of the introduction of state presence. The suggestion to build a Silver Bauhinia statue, reminiscent of the Golden Bauhinia statue in Wanchai, as a ‘landmark’ in the town square of Mui Wo, is understood to have come from the Rural Committee of Mui Wo. At the consultation forum organised by the government on 18 November 2006, a number of residents voiced their opposition to this installation. In response, planning bureaucrats said this was a proposal raised by the Rural Committee. I understand this as a self-protective response by bureaucrats who did not want to get embroiled in the polemics surrounding a proposal that was not raised by them in the first place.²

The Golden Bauhinia statue is closely associated with the resumption of sovereign power over Hong Kong by the Chinese government. It is a gift from the Central government to Hong Kong to mark the handover. The daily flag-hoisting ceremony is held at the Golden Bauhinia Square. It is also a must-see spot for tour groups from mainland China. The Rural Committee of Mui Wo might have wanted a Silver Bauhinia statue to draw visitors, and/or to show its allegiance to Beijing. Whatever its motives are, such a statue will have the effect of impressing the public with state power. Even without a statue (yet), the name ‘Silver Bauhinia Square’ (which has appeared in some leaflets promoting activities held by the Committee) would achieve the same effect.

Subsequently, in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in August 2008, a series of ‘road signs’—in effect an identical set of structures with the Olympic rings and the words ‘This way to Hong Kong Olympic Trail’—were erected in a number of places across Mui Wo. The Beijing Olympics was an opportunity seized by the Chinese government to demonstrate its position as a rising power on the world stage. In the context of Hong Kong, showing support for the Beijing Olympics was a way to represent one’s allegiance to the Central government. Like the eventual installation of a Silver Bauhinia statue, the Olympic road signs attempt to impress the public with government authority. However, as discussed above, such efforts to erect structures in public spaces often meet with the failure to impress the significance of these symbols on the local population. To local residents, these signs have been parachuted in overnight and are totally

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unrelated to local spaces and lived experiences. Upon seeing one of the Olympic road signs, a friend of mine visiting Mui Wo was bemused and said to me: ‘What has the Olympics got to do with Mui Wo? ... It is not related to the place.’ In fact, the same signs can be placed anywhere—from the bustling streets of Mongkok to upscale malls in Central—but at the same time they point to nowhere. The sign is a representation of the mediated ‘Beijing Olympics 2008,’ and is not related to the history or memory of any place—not even Beijing as a living place for Beijing residents—and fails to generate any emotional or rational sense among local inhabitants.

According to the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, it is through a sort of poetic process that space acquires sense for us. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard argues that it is not enough to consider a house as an ‘object’ on which we can make our judgments and daydreams react (1969, p.6). Through a poetic process, the objective space of a house—its corners, attic, rooms, cellar—harbours our daydreams and imagination. The house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind. If we extend this understanding of dwelling place to the entirety of Mui Wo, any corner of the place can constitute a space of intimacy, housing our dreams and memory—a chair under the tree, a water tank in the field, or a ‘snowman’ in the labyrinth of houses. Between friends and family, many residents have an intimate name for places where they have their proper memories and experiences.

When the *LUC Plans* (SKIDPD, 2006) were presented at consultation forums for residents with their proper scales, graphic representations, curves and lines, some residents found it hard to relate them to the place that they know and live in. In daily life, residents refer to various spots not so much by official names or addresses, but rather by the plants and trees nearby, geographical features, shops, houses of people whom they know (e.g. where Granny Ho lived), or activities (e.g. where Mr Mok sold his tofu dessert). Many visitors to Mui Wo navigate the place through memories or by asking their way from local residents. Even long-time residents can easily get lost in the labyrinth of houses in a neighbouring village if they only know the house number, as the numbering does not appear in chronological order.³ This lack of ‘order’ actually helps to create human contact among
neighbours and strangers alike. Dialectically, it also creates order of some sort in the place—outsiders to the village are obliged to ask their way and residents feel obliged to converse with any stranger in the village, whether to offer help or as a measure of precaution.

The poetics of space also leads to action: ‘Space calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at work. It mows and ploughs’ (Bachelard 1969, p.12). Note that Bachelard’s language here is inspired by farming and gardening activity—a kind of bodily practice and experience in space. As the body mows the grass and ploughs the soil, our dreams and thoughts crisscross and we are engaged in a sort of self-dialogue. We also become critical of ourselves and of what we do. In turn, such dialogue gives rise to further action. Here, body movements in and traversing space are not divorced from thoughts; instead they go together.

Similarly, in his work The Craftsman (2008) discussing the ‘human animal at work,’ Richard Sennett contends that there is an intimate connection between hand and head, contesting the modern notion that hand and head are divided. According to Sennett, every good crafts(wo)man conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking. Modern education avoids repetition as mind-numbing, but the author thinks there is nothing mindlessly mechanical about technique itself (2008). On the contrary, Sennett argues, going over an action again and again enables self-criticism.

The image of mowing and ploughing mentioned in Bachelard’s discussion is also meaningful—cutting grass and preparing the fields are actions in anticipation of new beginnings, as powered by our imagination and daydreaming. The mainstream culture tends to regard this duo of imagination and daydreaming as unproductive, yet here imagination is compared to bodily activities that signify the arrival of new life. As in the case of the sowing of seeds, we never know if anything will ever come out of it, but no truly new beginning is possible without this act.

In my own bodily experience in the garden, working with all the garden tools, ploughing soil and sowing seeds, touching the plants and the soil with my own hands, I find that I am also having a dialogue with my own self. Quite miraculously, this process tells me who I am. I am like the
seeds that I sow on the soil — reaching back to my own inner core, absorbing water and nutrients, and braving the weather, as the preconditions for becoming a being in the world. I become more sensitive to my own body, trying to feel its inner states. Quite amazingly, if you are willing to listen, your body has a lot to tell you about who you are.

In describing my own bodily experience in the garden, I try to reflect on one important epiphany: re-discovery of the body. In modern society, the reign of functionalism and rationalism has led to the division of mind and body. Our body becomes numb, and our sensory organs lose sensitivity. Born and bred in a modern metropolis, I am no exception to this phenomenon. As Simmel has noted, metropolitan life underlies a predominance of intelligence in metropolitan man, who reacts with his head instead of heart, whereas rural and small town life rests more upon deeply felt and emotional relationships (1997, pp.175-76). The reaction to metropolitan phenomena is shifted to the intellect, which is least sensitive and quite remote from the depth of the personality.

Conclusion
In this article, using the case of Mui Wo and taking a cue from the triadic concept of production of space (Lefebvre 1991), I have tried to evoke the body as a site to contest abstract space produced in response to the exigencies of global capitalism. Maurice Merleau-Ponty saw bodies as sites for subjectivity and consciousness, and rejected the idea that they could be seen exclusively as objects. The body constitutes our ‘vehicle of being in’ the world and provides us with a point of view on and situated experience of our environment. Far from being given in advance of our existence, Merleau-Ponty suggested that the structure and meaning of the world and the integrity of objects are ‘achieved through the medium of body experience’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Shilling 2005, p.54-56).

The body has an enormous potential. Putting our discussions in the context of space, in the face of dominated space, the body takes its revenge—or at least calls for revenge. Lefebvre considered the body as a differential field, thanks to its sensory organs, from the sense of smell and

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from sexuality to sight—without any special emphasis being placed on the visual sphere. In other words, it behaves as a total body, breaking out of the temporal and spatial shell developed in response to labour, to the division of labour, to the localizing of work, and the specialization of places (Lefebvre 1991, p.384). The above discussions on the case of Mui Wo show that in a modern, global metropolis where the body is alienated in the midst of abstract space, bodily practices in a rural setting constitute a heterogeneous space that informs our subjectivity. Such space, in turn, can be the site of revolt against interchangeable, spectacular space.

Notes

1. In an e-mail message to the Planning Department on 22 June 2008, Sally Chun, a Mui Wo resident, wrote that she ‘cannot accept the idea’ of an underground parking area. In her opinion, ‘the proposal is based more on the aim of getting the bicycles out of sight instead of respecting cycling as the way of life in Mui Wo. The primary aim (of a bicycle park) should be providing user-friendly parking to the residents.’

2. The consultation report published in June 2007 acknowledged ‘there were mixed views on the landmark feature to be placed in the Square’ (SKIDPD 2008, p.2). There was no further indication of a ‘Possible Silver Bauhinia Statue’ in the Consultation Digest distributed at the public forum on 31 May 2008 (CEDD and Meinhardt 2008). However, when clarification was sought from the planners attending the forum about the status of the statue plan, no definite answer was provided.

3. I had lived in a small village of about twenty houses for three years. Due to exposed wires, internet services broke down at an average rate of about once every two months. The repairmen, who are all local residents themselves, never managed to find my house by looking at the address alone and needed to call to ask for exact location on every visit.
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[http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections](http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections)
[accessed 5 December 2008].

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Lost In Transition: Revisiting Youth Training Policy in Hong Kong

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Abstract

With the rapid economic and social transformation, in addition to the dramatic impact of the financial crises, some young people are systematically excluded from the labour market or in a condition of working poor, and lost in the transition from school to work. In response to the severe youth unemployment problem, the Hong Kong Government has introduced a series of employment training programmes aiming to improve their employability. This article explores the experience of those in the youth training schemes, and tries to understand their struggles within the structural context. Social construction and myths in the transition process are reconsidered. And, policy and service implications are also discussed.

Key words: employability; Hong Kong; identity; youth employment

摘要

经济与社会的急剧转型，加之海啸式金融危机的冲击，一些年青人陷入“待业待学”的困境与身份迷失。为回应严峻的青年失业问题，政府推出了系列就业培训政策与服务，但其中隐而未发的社会建构及其带来的迷思值得反思。

关键词：就业能力 青年就业 身份认同 香港
Introduction

The recent crisis in the global economy has had an enormous impact on welfare provision and the labour market. OECD figures for 2011 show a steep increase in world unemployment, from 5.7% in the first quarter of 2008 to a post-war peak of 8.7% in the fourth quarter of 2009 (OECD, 2011). Although the economy might have recovered slightly, there is still a particular weakness in the area of youth unemployment. It is estimated that as many as 17.2% of those aged 15-24 are presently unemployed in the 30 countries of the OECD (Gurría, 2011; Martin, 2012).

Youth unemployment has become a global concern in the last decade (Bonnal et al., 2002; Inui, 2003; Lassibille et al., 2001; Smyth, 2008; Stavreska, 2006; Yūji, 2007). Statistics show that, among the OECD countries, an average of 53% of 15 to 19 year-olds are ‘non-engaged’ (OECD, 2012), that is they are neither studying at school nor in employment. The so-called ‘scarring effects’ (O’Higgins, 2002) of their unsuccessful early experience could spread to their later career prospects (Gurría, 2011; Smith, 2012). Those suffering long time non-engagement tend to have a higher risk of poverty, problem behaviour (O’Higgins, 2002), psychological distress (Chen, 2011), and health problems (Hammarstrom & Janlert, 2002; Mitchell et al., 2002; O’Higgins, 2002; Reine et al., 2008).

The present article draws on earlier studies of non-engaged youth to consider the distinctive context of Hong Kong. Inspired by the existing studies, we are interested in the situation of the non-engaged youth in Hong Kong for its distinctive context. Youth unemployment is an increasing concern to the Hong Kong government. A series of training programs have been introduced to re-engage unemployed young school-leavers (Ngai & Cheung, 2004; Ngai & Ngai, 2007). Previous studies in Taiwan suggest that training may not have significant benefits in increasing young people’s employment opportunities, but that they do have a supportive effect on their

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social and emotional needs (Chen, 2011). However, little research has explored in this area in Hong Kong. This article contributes to the literature by exploring the experience of the Hong Kong youth in the training schemes, to understand how their experience may influence their identities and perspective on life. In addition, the efficiency and uncertainty of the training schemes is examined, leading to a reconsideration of the social context and policy assumptions in Hong Kong. Further suggestions for policies and services are discussed.

Economic and social transitions
The social, historical, and economic contexts are important in understanding individuals’ suffering (Mills, 1959). In respect of the issue of youth unemployment, the transition of the economy and society need to be considered. Globalisation, work and welfare, and new social divisions are three major dimensions of the ever-changing world, as stated in the post-war political economy theories (O’Brien & Penna, 1998). The period of globalisation is characterized by worldwide production, consumption and communication. The flow of capital, economic restructuring and financial crisis have their influence all around the world (Chan, 2004). The chase for capital across national boundaries leads to ruthless international competition (Mahler, 2004; O’Brien & Penna, 1998; Ramesh, 2004). Consequently, a new form of social division is emerging. Knowledge and information are assuming more significant roles (Bell, 1973, as cited in O’Brien & Penna, 1998). Production is shifting from labour intensive manufacture to diverse service sectors (O’Brien & Penna, 1998, p.140). Those with a low education suffer insecurity in the ‘flexible’ working space (Smithson & Lewis, 2000; Smyth, 2008), as most of them only have the opportunity to obtain part-time, low-paid jobs with little protection (ILO, 2000; O’Brien & Penna, 1998). This new form of social division also
excludes disadvantaged groups and intensifies the polarization between the rich and the poor (Frank & Cook, 1996; O’Brien & Penna, 1998). Under neo-liberal ideology, the states are ‘‘hollowing out’, emphasizing ‘flexibility’, competition, and the family’s responsibility to deal with individuals’ suffering (O’Brien & Penna, 1998; Tulgan, 2000). As a result, the welfare provision becomes fragmented, and social protection is less supportive (Cochrane, 1994; Jessop, 1993), consigning those market-losers and their families into greater poverty (O’Brien & Penna, 1998). The consequences of this process may extend across generations (Smith, 2012; Martin, 2012; Wong, 2006).

The struggle of youth in the Hong Kong Labour Market

The economy of Hong Kong experienced a prosperous period in the 1980s, but with jillions of HK dollars which used to be local capital being transferred to the adjoining Pearl River Delta in the 1990s, it began to suffer from the negative impact of globalisation (Chan, 2004; Feng, 2002; Legislative Council, 1995). These decades were followed by the decline of traditional manufacture and production industries, and a remarkable expansion in the service sector, and managerial and professional occupations (Chan, 2004; OECD, 2000). The open economy makes Hong Kong vulnerable to the fierce competition and cyclical economic changes (Chan, 2004). The coming of the knowledge economy benefits the professional and technical elites, at the expense of unskilled labour and the “grassroots” workers (Chan, 2004; O’Higgins, 2002). Tsang (2006: 99) states, ‘our employment policy aims to develop a well-trained, well-motivated and adaptable workforce’. Those with no particular occupational skill are the ‘primary casualties’, being forced to bear longer working hours and unequal income distribution to keep their livelihood (Chan, 2004; Wong, 2007). Yet the social provision is just a ‘safety net’,

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which cannot result in a positive improvement of the living standard of the working poor (Wong, 2007).

Youth is at a high risk in this transition towards a restructured economy in the context of globalization. Recent statistics have shown that the youth unemployment is deeply influenced by the precarious economic environment. In 1982, the unemployment rate was only 9.2% and 3.9% respectively among the age bands of 15-19 and 20-29; with the impact financial turmoil in Asia, the unemployment rate increased dramatically to 26.8% and 7.5% in 1999; a historic high of 30.2% and 8.7% was reached in 2003, after the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); during the global financial crisis in 2009-2010, youth unemployment rate reached 20.8% among those aged 15-19, and 6.7% among those aged 20-29.

The rate of the former group is almost five times that of the overall (i.e. 15 and over) unemployment rate in Hong Kong (Census & Statistics Department, 2012), which is in turn higher than in other areas (O’Higgins, 2002). Many early school-leavers have experienced a hard blow in their search for a job. As the labour supply largely exceeds the available job opportunities, employers have the privilege to select from those with better education and skills (O’Higgins, 2002), and those with incompatible knowledge and skills required by the labour market are unrelentingly excluded in this competition (Ngai & Ngai, 2007).

Previous studies have explored how the non-engaged youth are ‘being systematically propelled to the edges of conventional pathways to adulthood’ (Ngai & Ngai, 2007). Some have talked about the issues existing in current training programmes, and have formulated policy suggestions to tackle the problem (Ngai & Cheung, 2004). However, little concern has been paid to those unemployed young people who have participated in the training schemes but continue to face great challenges in the labour market,
and how their experiences might impact on their personal identities and future development.

An important stage for establishing identity

Adolescence is an important stage to explore personal identity (Erikson, 1959, as cited in Kidwell et al., 1995). Stepping from childhood to adulthood involves multiple transitions in education, training, employment status, and living environment (Coleman & Roker, 1998). In this stage, narrative identities are formulated, and self is vulnerable as it undergoes the challenges of a ‘...split of self images, a loss of center, and a dispersion’ in this vital developing process (Erikson, 1968, 1975, as cited in Kidwell et al., 1995). Having gone through these challenges, the narrative identity is constructed in time and culture, providing hope and a sense of unity, meaning and purpose in life (McAdams & Olson, 2010). The ‘social and technical skills, effective behavioural repertoires, and links with social and occupational networks’ are accumulated as essential capital in youth identity development (Coleman & Roker, 1998: 594). Thus, employment is the cornerstone in establishing their identity by indicating that young people play active roles in society, which is pivotal in their transition to adulthood (Mitchell et al., 2002).

Existing studies have explored the effect of unemployment on young people’s personal identity. Some indicate that the unemployment situation reflects social constraints that can frame the identity and experience of young people (Ball et al., 2000). However, some indicate that unemployment does not necessarily lead to negative self-esteem and adult identity; instead, the adaptation of the individual’s role as unemployed within his or her overall identity and ‘strength of identity formation’ appears to be more important (Patterson, 1997). Some have reported that identity serves as a mediator between unemployment and psychological wellbeing.
(Meeus et al., 1997). In this perspective, identity is categorized into career identity and relational identity (McArdle et al., 2007; Meeus et al., 1997). Unemployment has more to do with one's work identity, while relational identity can serve as an important ‘buffer against psychological distress’, which means that those with good social support can compensate for unemployment in their youth and their consequent deficiency in work identity, while retaining their psychological wellbeing (Meeus et al., 1997; Wong, 2006). However, as Cote (1996) has shown, after the world entered the 20th century, the social support for youth developing their identity is no longer there, and the establishment of adults’ identities now rely on individuals’ own resources.

Variation in the strength of identity among unemployed youth reminds us to pay more attention to those at high-risk, with low work identity, and living in disadvantaged circumstances and lacking supportive relationship (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Meeus et al., 1997). In addition, studies in this area are mainly focused on the identity differences among the youth with different employment status, but little attention has been paid in the present social and cultural context to identity formation and the confusion that young people may suffer as they move between unemployment and youth training schemes,

Training schemes in tackling youth unemployment

To cope with the problem, the Hong Kong government has launched a series of training schemes for non-engaged youth. Among these various programmes, the core one is YPTP & YWETS (the combined Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme). Launched separately in 1999 and 2002 by the Labour Department, these two schemes were integrated into the single YPTP & YWETS in 2009. Its objectives are to increase the employability of young
people by enhancing their self-understanding, work aptitude, and job skills. It aims to provide ‘a comprehensive platform of job search with one-stop and diversified pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school-leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree or below level’. (Labour Department, 2010)

The YPTP & YWETS programme consists of two main sessions. In the pre-employment training session, there are core courses and elective courses. The former one lasts for 48 hours and aims at equipping the trainees with ‘basic knowledge and application skills on career planning, interpersonal skills, job search methods, etc’. It is mainly for those aged 15 to 19 and those who have not joined the programme before. Those who exceed the basic requirements can also be recommended by their case managers after an initial assessment. The latter session includes many training courses on discipline and motivation (80 hours), computer application (48 to 80 hours), and kinds of job-specific skills (the content varies with courses). Trainees can have $30 per day as allowance if they achieve at least 80% attendance. After that, they can take part in one-month’s work attachment training. That is designed to enable them to ‘acquire work experience, develop potential and explore employment opportunities’. Upon completion of the attachment, an allowance of $2000 is paid to them. Within the 6 to 12 months’ on-the-job training, trainees work under the mentorship with experienced staffs. In this stage they can also apply for some vocational training courses and examination. The financial supports include $2000 subsidy per month and a maximum of $4,000 for additional training and examination. Special employment projects are tailor-made for various industries. A case manager is also assigned to during the two year service programme. (Labour Department, 2010)

According to the statistics, the training schemes have already enjoyed some success (Tsang, 2006). From September 2009 to August 2010, the number
attending pre-employment training was around 6900, and 4600 trainees ‘were placed into training vacancies under the YPTP&YWETS’, in addition, 1100 have obtained jobs in the market with the help of the case managers (Labour Department, 2011). But recent studies, on the other hand, criticize it as a way to keep ‘the young people ‘off the streets’ while keeping unemployment figures down’, and there are doubts about how effectively the training scheme recognises and matches market needs (Ngai & Cheung, 2004; Ngai & Ngai, 2007). In response to such doubts the present study explores the experience of non-engaged youth as they experience the transition from school to work, paying particular attention to the social and economic contexts of their involvement in employment training schemes.

Methodology

**Theoretical Framework**

In order to better understand the experience of the young people in transition, and how it impacts on their identity formation, the theoretical framework should combine ‘political economic analysis with recent theorizations of subjectivity formation and fluid identities’ (Jeffrey, 2008; see also Figure 1 on p. 86).

The present study aims to demonstrate how young people’s training experiences influence their personal choices, and the restructuring of their personal identity and future development. The research focus includes both the benefits that the schemes bring to them, and the various outcomes that result from their different conditions and personal choices. The study also addresses how they cope with the difficulties and uncertainties they face.
Data collection

In order to accurately understand the young people’s difficulties and their experience in the training schemes, triangulation is used in this study. Data was collected via individual interviews, and both the young people and the frontline social workers associated were invited to participate in the research.

As the YPTP & YWETS is the core training scheme for non-engaged youth, aged 15-24, with low-education attainment, we took this as our criteria to select our sample. This part of our data was jointly collected by a group for a class assignment in a course taken in September-December 2011. One of our group members had served as a case manager in the YPTP and YWETS training schemes for more than eight years, and he took an active role in choosing three typical cases that he had previously worked with as research participants.

We also interviewed three frontline social workers who had worked with the youth participating in the YPTP & YWETS programmes. These interviews
were conducted in January-February 2012. Each interview lasted for around one hour, and some were interviewed a second time for clarification. To check whether our understanding of the interview fitted their interpretations, we provided interviewees with transcripts used in the research and a summary of our main findings. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, and we have translated the data into English in this article. The names of the interviewees mentioned are pseudonyms.

Results

*From an unknown to a positive development*

The interviews reveal that most participants in the YPTP & YWETS training schemes may not have clear goals at the beginning. Some of them are introduced by their friends, some join the programmes to kill time and get extra allowances, and some wish to make friends, while still others are asked to do so by their parents. They engage in the programmes with little knowledge and little expectation.

One of our interviewees is called ‘Jim’. He had no interest in traditional studies, and was perceived as a trouble-maker in school. He dropped out, and now had no goals in his life or any plan to find a job. After isolating himself for a year, he was asked to participate in YPTP & YWETS involuntarily. According to his case manager, ‘Noam’, ‘At that time, he was with low education attainment, lack of work experience, lack of confidence, and low working motivation. His situation, in fact, is very common among the young people in the training schemes’.

Most jobs in the labour market require a minimum education to Form 5 of high school, with five passing grades in the final examinations, namely Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). However, in many case the young people on the programmes do not fulfil that requirement. Those with Form 5 education level, has already been treated as

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“special case” as mentioned by Noam. But even for them, the failure in the HKCEE could also be a strike to strive from school to work. Noam shared with us a ‘special case’ who spoke of her despair and uncertainty:

Due to her unsatisfactory result in HKCEE, Florence failed to get the chance to apply for the social work course in the university. She felt that her hope for the future had been lost. She was introduced by her friend to participate in the YPTP & YWETS. We asked her why she was in this training scheme. She said: ‘At the time when I graduated from Form 5, I felt that my world was filled with desperation. I originally wanted to take the social work course; however, my HKCEE result was poor. Later, I found out about the YPTP, which does not require tuition and even provides allowances and a certificate, so I registered in a blind rush.’

According to Florence’s description, the purpose and the benefits of the course is unclear at the outset, she seems to be just attracted by the low entry barrier and the materially benefits, which are more conspicuous at the beginning.

In spite of this initial lack of a clear aim, we found some positive outcomes that have been brought about by the training schemes in the interviews.

Jim: I have learnt communication skills! For example, I didn’t know how to talk with others before I entered the scheme, but now I have better skills to communicate with others. The training provided various courses and it did help me find a job. I also learnt the right working attitude.

Florence: Sometimes, the course may just be around one month, and we have to adapt to another new environment and to a different group of students. I was not used to it at the beginning; however, the training improved my interpersonal skills, and allowed me to meet friends from different sectors.

Social workers also comment on the positive help:

Karla: The courses provide the youth with what seems to be basic pre-employment training sessions, but it could really meet the basic need for

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those young people. Take typing for example, some of the young people who join the scheme could not type at the beginning of the course. So I don't agree that the content of the courses is too basic to benefit the youth.

Noam: The training helps improve young people’s confidence and skills. There are a wide range of courses, and they really provide them with more opportunity to participate and practice. In addition, the training is free. It is not affordable for every family to take on the expensive cost of, as the economy of Hong Kong continues to be in a weak state.

Some interviewees also claimed that the training schemes can help the participants find jobs or see their future in a positive way.

Rain: I dropped out in Form 3. After I finished the communication course, I took the training course in Korean-Japanese-style cuisine for twenty days. I found apprentice work in a Japanese restaurant quickly.

Florence: To me, it is like a dream to be a student pursuing a first-year associate degree in social work. If I did not join the YPTP & YWETS, recover my confidence, or have the chance provided by my mentor to be a programme worker, I would not have been able to succeed in life today. The YPTP & YWETS definitely gave me clear goals and direction.

Uncertainty within the schemes

Despite these positive outcomes, there are areas of uncertainty about how well the schemes address the challenges of youth unemployment. The training schemes are provided over a very short period, and so cannot fully prepare the non-engaged youth for their future work. The low acceptance of the schemes and lack of confidence amongst employers is still a main concern of the trainees and their case workers:

Noam: The YPTP & YWETS is too short. Young people fail to grasp the necessary knowledge and skills. Take the hair-styling design assistant
training and hotel operation and customer service training courses, for example, the twenty-day training includes a wide range of content, thus, it does not allow the young people to master the basic knowledge and skills. The training, unfortunately, hinders their competence in looking for work in the open job market after their completion of the course. Moreover, it reduces the acceptance and confidence of the outside agencies in the training schemes.

The YPTP & YWETS is helpless to assist those non-engaged youth to deal with the social barriers to upward social mobility. Most YPTP & YWETS graduates recognize this reality and find jobs as cheap labour without future career development. They realize that the scheme just aims at helping them to find a job but does not prepare them to improve their career prospects in the long run. Long-term support is also absent.

Noam: Most of the courses provided by YPTP & YWETS are low-education and low-skilled jobs. Young people can learn some vocational skills in the curriculum, but these vocational skills can only let them find a job in the lower strata of the labour market, and hinder upward mobility for young people there. The follow up period is only approximately one year, thus, it is hard for the social workers to provide long-term support after the trainees have entered to the labour market.

What’s more, the interviewees report that the organization of the programme is in need of better coordination, and it is not delivered in accordance with the trainees’ aptitude, a fact which also causes confusion and reduces its effectiveness.

Kiki is a social worker serving for the youth at a counseling center. He reported, ‘One of my clients who is now participating in YPTP & YWETS told me, sometimes the special employment projects have few participants, and he was asked to join the project provided by the same company twice. It
may increase his chance being employed. But I think the centers holding the projects should have better coordination, and allow more young people in need to have the chance. And also, reduce duplication and confusion.’

Noam: Enrolment of the trainees in YPTP & YWETS follows the principle of first-come-first-served. So the same class may have different ability levels participating in them. The effectiveness of the activities is greatly reduced.

*Getting lost in the transition and dropping out*

For the interviewees, what the training schemes could bring to them is various. Some find it little help. Facing an uncertain and confusing situation, some of them feel lost, and some drop out of the scheme. Among those drop-outs, some may have assistance from their family and friends, and find jobs, however, some still cannot find jobs, but despondently give up trying.

Kiki: Some of them just want to pass the time, the training schemes may not help them find jobs, and they may drop out halfway through. And even though they want to find a job, it is still hard to evaluate how many people the YPTP & YWETS have helped to find the jobs, since some trainees sometimes cannot finish the course or they have been introduced by their friends for new jobs before the training is finished, then they quit.

Susan (a social worker): Some of the young people do not know what they want. In that case, what YPTP & YWETS can bring to them is very limited.

Noam: The training experience is not always pleasant. The training allowance is too low to satisfy their living costs in Hong Kong. It seems like they are being treated as cheap labour. Long-term development is not taken into consideration.

Although some of them did find their jobs through the training schemes, their situation in the labour market remains precarious. It is still easy for them to drop out and return to being non-engaged.

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After taking the YPTP & YWETS training schemes, Rain has changed several jobs. The longest job he has taken lasted for half a year, while the shortest one was just one week. In his words, the work is too toilsome, and the working-hours are too long. He could not adapt to the working environment, and he could not get along with his colleagues. Eventually, he resigned.

Overall, the young people may have obtained some basic job-searching skills, and the elective courses may provide them an opportunity to improve specific knowledge and skills helpful for them to find jobs. However, the main function of YPTP & YWETS is just basic skill training, and the needs for their long term career development have not been met. Work identity and relational identity are two main items constructing youth self-understanding and well-being. If young people spend a long time in training schemes without finding a stable job, thereby forming a positive work identity, and if no further support is available, then the fact that they are still at high risk cannot be overlooked.

Discussion

*Rethinking the ‘disease’ concept and social barriers in transition*

The YPTP & YWETS aims to serve non-engaged young people with low education and skills; the very concept of ‘non-engagement’ categorizes those not at work, education or training as a special groups who are in some way abnormal or ‘diseased’. Services based on this assumption aim at modifying their behaviour to social norms, and so reducing the unemployment rate (Ngai & Ngai, 2007). It is believed that unemployed youth lack of job-searching skills, communication skills, and vocational skills, and that by improving their employability through these schemes, they can make differences in their lives (Labour Department, 2010, 2012).

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This social construction in one way can have advantages in making more services available for them, but it can also lead to lowering expectations and indicating that their situation is hopeless (Benard, 1997). We find that the training schemes can just serve as ‘a kind of lubricant’ (Ngai & Ngai, 2007) to smooth them in finding jobs in short-term, but that they are unable to equip them to cope with their career in the long run. The jobs they could find through the schemes are still those with low-education and low-skilled requirements, which means that they can be replaced by other competitors easily. They remain in the same market, and the condition of working poor is still one of their embarrassments (Wong, 2007). Consistent with previous studies, it is also observed that, although completing the training, young people still need to compete with the non-trainees in seeking jobs, and since working experience is an important form of social capital, the training experience alone is not recognized to have sufficient qualification to lift the young people to a higher level (Ngai & Cheung, 2004). Feeling that the schemes are ‘a waste of time’ (Ngai & Cheung, 2004), many trainees are lost.

In addition, in a period of great economic and social transition, the problem of youth unemployment is embedded in a broader social and economic context (Fergusson et al., 2001). The ‘knowledge economy’ crudely excludes those who leave the school early and have not achieved what the labour market expected. Our findings indicate that the unsatisfactory education background sets up social barriers to obtaining work. However, the ‘fire-fighting’ route in training schemes hides the socioeconomic context contributing to the problem (Sugarman, 1986; Ngai & Ngai, 2007), and neglects various difficulties among young people, by merely focusing on improving their employability (Yates & Payne, 2006). What the training schemes can provide is no more than basic skills, which is surely not enough in fierce competition. The failures in the previous education
experience make them feel powerless. And even though they may recognize the need to pursue further study, there is a lack of real opportunities. This situation leaves many feeling hopeless and disempowered.

The ‘strengths perspective’ and long-term development

The ‘strengths perspective’ reminds us to see individuals’ ‘capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions and hopes’ (Saleebey, 1996). Personal resilience in difficulties is valuable internal assets that should be treasured (Benard, 2004; Saleebey, 2009). Our findings suggest that some of the non-engaged youth are willing to learn specific vocational skills, and that they have their own longings for their future, but cannot reach their desires due to inadequate education. However, they find jobs from the bottom of the ladder in related vocations, and keep working hard despite the harsh working conditions. They eventually obtain success. Although the labour market is unequal to the working-poor with harsh conditions, but the young people’s hard-working, courage and perseverance should also be recognized as valuable assets.

At the same time, the insufficiency of long-term planning for the development of young people in the schemes should also be noticed. Making the vocational training schemes accessible to young people is not enough to guarantee their future working life (Ngai & Ngai, 2007). At the macro level, matching is not necessary to access to the broad base of low-skill jobs in today’s restructured and post-industrial economy (Ngai & Cheung, 2004). At the individual level, the schemes should aim at empowering the youth to overcome wider constraints that they may encounter in the labour market (Ngai & Ngai, 2007). Without continued follow-up and care, they might remain on the edge of the labour market. The effect of social support and family support is significant in helping the youth in transition (Kieselbach, 2003). We suggest that social resources should be

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relocated to those disadvantaged families so that they can provide emotional support to their children (Ngai et al., 2008). We also propose that government should provide a kind of ‘social guarantee’ to support young people in their early transition from school to work (Kieselbach, 2003). Mentorship is attracting increasing attention, and it has been shown that the adult models can have the influence of socializing young people, and provide education and training which could facilitate their transition (Bonnal et al., 2002; Ngai et al., 2008; Chen, 2011). Last but not least, diversity should also be appreciated (Ngai & Cheung, 2004).

**Issues within the schemes**

Our findings also suggest that, the coordination among sectors is not operating effectively in the training schemes. Better cooperation and communication is advocated to facilitate more young people to have relevant and equal opportunities to pursue their careers.

The training should be more accessible and user-friendly, especially in information provision. Making the information of the training schemes accessible is necessary in order to better match opportunities to young people’s needs. Further guidance in job searching and adapting to changing circumstances is also suggested so as to help the youth to have better understanding of the labour market and formulate a positive working identity.

Taking into consideration the fact that trainees have different reasons for attending the schemes and that there is generally insufficient guidance given to them for longer-term career planning and personal development, the benefits that the trainees could get from the schemes are extremely limited. In fact, the training schemes work better for those who already have the motivation to find jobs. However, there are still lots of non-engaged young people who have no expectation for their future, in which case the scheme

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seems to be of little help. Attention should be drawn to issues and to ways of tackling this challenge.

Conclusion

This article has explored the experience of young people in employment training schemes. It suggests that the youth training schemes do offer young people specific opportunities to obtain vocational skills that are useful in searching for jobs. However, owing to the limitation of time spent on the training schemes, the programme can only be considered as an opportunity to gain access to certain kinds of work, and it offers little help in adapting to the working environment, or in making participants more competitive if they wish to move upward towards a more advanced labour market. The lack of coordination of the training schemes also calls for a better arrangement to optimize the allocation of resources. The efforts and courage of young people who face an unfavourable situation should be appreciated. Equally, we should be develop means of empowering young people to formulate a positive identity and develop the personal resources to cope with the fierce competition in a fast-changing world where powerful social and economic factors put pressure on how members of society construct themselves. Supportive care and guidance to facilitate youth long-term whole-development is an issue that requires the collaboration of government, NGOs, employers, and families.

There are limitations to this study. First of all, the interviews with the young people were originally conducted for a course assignment, which covered a small group of people, although with follow-up interviews with social workers to enrich the data. Secondly, only partial, transcripts are given, as some of the interviews were conducted via telephone instead of face-to-face interview, which limited our ability to record the detail of the interactions.

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Further study might include a broader range of different young people, and face-to-face in-depth interviews.

Despite these shortcomings, the study serves as a work-in-progress that investigates the varied experiences and myths that arise from young people’s transition from school to work via the training schemes. We hope that it provides some insight into the issues, and helps us better to understand the challenges of addressing youth unemployment in the region.
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A Research Report on English Vocabulary Learning and Acquisition among Middle School Students Using Narrow-Intensive Reading

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Abstract
A Narrow-Intensive Reading (NIR) strategy combines both Narrow Reading and Intensive Reading strategies, and is motivated by the advantages of both. The purpose of this research is to study the effects of adopting a NIR strategy in language learning and acquisition by analyzing its influence on the process of memorization, particularly from the Short-term Memory (STM) to the Long-term Memory (LTM). The study is based on two main theories: firstly, a slower reading speed can generate more possibilities for rehearsal when encoding information to the LTM; secondly, a deeper analysis of texts contributes to keeping information in the memory.

Key words: Information storage and processing, Long-term Memory (LTM), Narrow-Intensive Reading (NIR), Repetition, Short-term Memory (STM), Working Memory

较慢的阅读速度，对材料的理解程度及信息的重复能帮助人们更好地将信息储存在长时记忆中。专题精读法结合了专题阅读与精读的优点。本文研究了其对语言学习的影响，尤其是信息由短时记忆转移并储存在长时记忆的过程。
Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to report the findings of an investigation into the effects of adopting a Narrow-Intensive Reading (NIR) strategy for the acquisition of new vocabulary that can be taken in and processed by learners through the reading activity. According to Peng and Zhang (2004), the acquisition process has a close relationship with memory and can be regarded as a process of storing information.

New information is first stored in the Short-term Memory (STM), where it is briefly stored for current use and further processing (Field, 2004). Then, with repeated activation, part of the information can be moved to the Long-term Memory (LTM) for permanent storage. LTM includes world knowledge, glossary and general linguistic competence (Field, 2004). It is the place where the information is finally stored.

In this article, a brief introduction about three kinds of reading strategies, Intensive Reading, Narrow Reading and Narrow-Intensive Reading, is presented in Section 2. Also, in the same section, advantages of using the Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy and other relevant research and theories are illustrated. Section 3 is about the research methodology (Interview, Questionnaire, and Experiment) that was adopted in this project together with detailed information of the data analysis. In addition, the result of the study and other related information are also presented. Section 4 outlines some limitations and difficulties of the research and finally, in Section 5, a conclusion is given, and also some applications of the Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy in the field of language teaching and acquisition.

Literature Review

_Narrow-Intensive, Intensive, and Narrow Reading_

Narrow-Intensive Reading (NIR) is a reading strategy that combines both Intensive Reading and Narrow Reading strategies together. An Intensive
Reading strategy requires a higher degree of understanding of a text, so readers usually read the texts at a lower reading speed. When conducting Intensive Reading, readers need to read in detail for specific aims and information (Richards & Schmidt, 2009). Douglas (1989) calls Intensive Reading a "zoom lens" strategy, and this reading strategy focuses on making learners read and analyze the reading materials in detail. According to Long and Richards (1987), materials for Intensive Reading are usually very short.

A Narrow Reading strategy is said to be a reading method that can contribute to a learner's understanding of the texts (Krashen, 2004) and this is because material for Narrow Reading usually focuses either on the same topic or the same author. With more research conducted on Second Language Teaching and Learning, the Narrow Reading strategy, from the author's point of view, will draw the attention of educators and play a larger role in language learning and acquisition.

Based on the characteristics of both Narrow Reading (material for which usually focuses on particular topics or authors) and Intensive Reading (which requires a higher degree of understanding of the reading texts), the typical characteristics of the Narrow-Intensive Reading can be simply identified as deep analysis and repetition of the relevant information (Richards & Schmidt, 2009; Krashen, 2004).

Texts and reading materials for Narrow-Intensive Reading are always related to each other; they either have the same topic, or are written by the same author. The target vocabulary is illustrated repeatedly in the material, and learnt and acquired by learners through the reading process. The method adopted for reading emphasizes individual words or phrases and requires learners to achieve a deep understanding of the language used in the texts (Richards & Schmidt, 2009).

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Reasons for Adopting Narrow-Intensive Reading

The Intensive Reading strategy requires learners to conduct a deep analysis of the text with a relatively lower reading speed. From Terry's point of view (2009), a slower reading pace can generate more possibilities for rehearsal and more time for learners in order to transfer the information to the LTM. Based on Koler and Brison's research (1984), the extent to which the text is analyzed contributes to keeping the information in the memory; usually "the deeper, the longer". In other words, deep analysis of the reading text can help learners to achieve a higher degree of understanding of the text. It can also provide learners with more time to store the information in their memory for the later transfer of this information. In addition, analyses of the text can lead to a deep understanding from the semantic aspect, which is necessary for the Long-term Memory encoding (Wickens, 1972). Secondly, because all the reading materials are based on the same topic, a Narrow Reading strategy can help a learner activate the target vocabulary repeatedly. For Narrow Reading, the material used in reading activities either has the same topic or is written by the same author with the same writing style and vocabulary preference of this specific author. In this kind of reading material, a lot of the terminology related to the topic, or a certain set of vocabulary items preferred by the particular author is used repeatedly. These repetitions of particular words can activate learners’ memory when they are reading the material. After several repetitions of these target words, learners can process them and move them to their Long-term Memory and acquire them (Peterson & Peterson, 1959). According to the study of Peterson and Peterson in 1959, repetition can keep the information in the STM for a longer time for further processing in the LTM. Furthermore, it is the way to move the target information from the STM to the LTM (Peng & Zhang, 2004).

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To sum up, a Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy combines the traits of both of the Narrow Reading and Intensive Reading together when learning and acquiring a new language, and it can be a useful reading strategy to promote vocabulary acquisition.

**Related Literature and Research**

According to Baddleley (1974), the STM can only store the information for a short time period, and after a certain time span, this information will either be transferred to the LTM or just be forgotten by the learner. In addition, Terry (2009) also argues that the STM has a limit and its main role is to transfer information to the LTM.

Figure 1, below, shows how information is acquired by learners.

![Figure 1: The process of storing information](http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections)
Firstly, the information is selected as intake by the learner and is stored in the STM, and then part of the information can be moved to the LTM for permanent storage (Shi, 2008). Other information would be forgotten by the learner. In Peterson and Peterson's words (1959), the transfer of information from the STM to the LTM needs frequent activation and repetition of the information so that it can be transferred. In other words, learners can acquire certain information if the information is repeated in the material. Every appearance of the target information will be received by learners during their reading, but the time this information can stay in the STM is extremely limited, namely about 18 to 20 seconds (Peterson & Peterson, 1959). However, frequent appearance of the target items can provide learners with more chances to be exposed to the items so that they have enough time to process them. This means that repeated appearances of the target information contributes to the process of transference. Like Peterson and Peterson, Terry (2009) uses Rehearsal to replace the phrase Frequent Activation and Repetition in his work. In other words, frequent activation and repetition or rehearsal of new items can lead to the transfer from the STM to the LTM, and are important conditions for the acquisition.

Rast (2008) demonstrates in an experiment that frequent repetition of the target items is needed for learners' learning and acquisition. Rast also provides some data to show the relationship between the frequency of the information in the material, and learners' learning and acquisition. The data shows that learners tend to better remember those "frequent" words and phrases and they can acquire new words better if they see them often.

Narrow Reading is characterized by the recurrence of certain fixed phrases or terminology that can be used in the interpretation of a set of related texts (Krashen, 2004). Learners can encounter these target items frequently in different texts so that they can encode them to the LTM. The

http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
same author usually has his or her preference for choosing a word (Krashen, 2004). Learners reading the works written by the same author can better understand the works and become familiar with the language used by that author. Frequent reading of the same written style and familiar word usage also help learners' acquisition of certain target items.

We propose a model (Figure 2, p.111) that shows the process of acquiring vocabulary in a second language. In this proposed model, reading materials can be regarded as input, and part of the information can be accepted and stored in the Short-term Memory. Only part of the vocabulary that is stored in the Short-term Memory can be directly transferred to the Long-term Memory for permanent storage. The rest of the vocabulary can then be moved to the Working Memory by repeated activation. For learners, the vocabulary that is stored in the Long-term Memory, which is related to the topic, can be also activated and can provide background information for learners to process the new information. Finally, the target vocabulary can be then transferred to the Long-term Memory and stored permanently.

Definitions of the Short-term Memory and Working Memory are still controversial. Some people hold the opinion that there is no difference between these two, and that they refer to the same kind of memory (Field, 2004). However, from the author's point of view, Short-term Memory is different from Working Memory and the proposed model above is constructed on the basis of this distinction.
Information stored in the STM could come from the outside environment, for instance, the reading material (Field, 2004). However, Working Memory differs from Short-term Memory in terms of the function. If the STM just stores the information that is for current use, Working Memory also processes that information (Field, 2004). Working Memory is not just for storing information; it also focuses on the processing of the information to the Long-term Memory. In addition, Working Memory can also retrieve the knowledge that already exists in the LTM (Field, 2004).

To illustrate the model proposed here, we can consider the topic of ‘disaster’, which is usually associated with new words like ‘earthquake’, and so on. By using Narrow-Intensive Reading, these words are firstly accepted and transferred to the STM from the outside; however, other Intensive Reading texts also contain the same new words. The memories then are activated by the repetition of those new words. Next, some of these words are selected and are transferred to the LTM directly. Other information is first transferred to the Working Memory, in which the information is processed by learners. Information that is already in the LTM can also provide associations with those new words within the same topic.
and this also helps their transfer from the STM to the LTM (Shi, 2008).

Methodology and Data Collection

*Interviews with teachers*

Two teachers from Year 2 at a Junior high school in Henan were interviewed individually during the project time period. An English translation of the questions is attached in the appendix (see Appendix B) with the detailed transcripts (which have been translated from Chinese into English) of their answers (see Appendix C). Instead of using structured interviews, the interviews in this project were semi-structured, and some of the questions in the interview required interviewees to present their own opinions. Question 2 and Question 3 focus on the teaching methods used by the teachers and the last question is used mainly to explore the attitude of the teachers toward the use of Intensive Reading and Narrow Reading strategies in teaching and learning.

The interviews were conducted in Chinese, and all the data was recorded by notes. Before conducting the interviews, the teachers were informed of the purpose of the research and given information about the project. The data collected from the interviews was kept confidential and its use in publication is with the kind permission of the interviewees.

*Student Questionnaire*

150 Year 2 students who attended the same junior high school responded to the questionnaire. Instead of using a single format, the formats of the questions in the project were both dichotomous (yes/no) questions and one open-ended response question (Outsource, 1999). Dichotomous questions were efficient and easy to analyze, and the open-ended response question allowed respondents to present their opinions. Usually, by including open-ended response questions, some insightful and unexpected information could be discovered after analyzing the data (Outsource, 1999). The
questionnaire used in the research consisted of four dichotomous questions and one open-ended response question. The dichotomous questions were intended to assess the students' reading habits during the process of learning English. The final open-ended response question focused on their attitudes toward the use of the Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy (see the Questionnaire, Appendix A).

The following table (Figure 3, p. 114) presents the data collected from the questionnaire. It shows the number of students who hold different opinions toward each question in the questionnaire. The total number of the students is 150. More than 80% of them (122 students) hold the opinion that repetition helps them to learn and acquire the target vocabulary.

The questionnaire was conducted in Chinese because of the low level of English of the students, and also for the purpose of keeping a reliable record of data. However, an English translation is also provided in Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words of the question</th>
<th>Yes (no. of students)</th>
<th>No (no. of students)</th>
<th>Not necessary (no. of students)</th>
<th>Do not know (no. of students)</th>
<th>Total no. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read word by word?</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep analysis of texts?</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is analyzing the text helpful?</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
Figure 3: Summary of Questionnaire Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use dictionary for new vocabulary?</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is repetition helpful?</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is NIR helpful?</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Experiment

An experiment was conducted among Year 1 students in a junior high school in Henan. The purpose of the experiment was to test the effects of the Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy by organizing reading workshops. The single group design model was adopted for the experiment (Sliger & Shohamy, 1989). In this design, the respondents were also used as their own controls, and a pre-test provided a baseline for later comparison (Sliger & Shohamy, 1989). After four-day reading exercises, the post-test was conducted. In this experiment, there was also a delayed post-test that was conducted three days after the post-test. It was used to investigate the effects of using NIR, by comparing the results with the post-test. During these three days, the students were not given any reading material for Narrow-Intensive Reading. The results of the delayed-post test could show whether they could remember the target vocabulary items after a time interval.

Thirty-seven students attended the workshop. In the workshop, the students were provided with material on the same topic, a puppet, for the Intensive Reading activities. The reading material was specially designed and each piece repeated the target vocabulary within the texts, and students were required to read the reading material intensively.

http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
On the first day, all students were first informed of some information about the experiment and of the schedule of the workshop, and they were asked to take a pre-test on the target vocabulary before the normal teaching began that day (for the test questions, see Appendix D). Each day, from the next day, students were given different reading texts on the same topic for Intensive reading. On the fourth day, a post test (see also Appendix D) was conducted. A delayed-post test (see also Appendix D) about the target words was conducted three days later. The results of these tests were analyzed and compared.

The table below (Figure 4) shows the data that was collected from the experiment. The numbers in the last three columns are the number of correct answers that students got in individual tests. In each test, there were five questions in total.
Most of the students were at Beginners level, and although some may have had the opportunity to attend extra English classes, all remained at a basic level. None of the students answer the questions in the pre-test.

Data Analysis
Considering the responses of the two interviewees, both teachers affirmed that they would adopt Narrow Reading and Intensive Reading strategies occasionally in their daily teaching. From their point of view, providing an extra reading activity is helpful for students to improve their language skills. One of the interviewees said that Narrow Reading and Intensive Reading could extend students’ knowledge and understanding of certain aspects of the target language, and as a result, they were essential for learning a new language. Since using Narrow Reading and Intensive Reading strategies in daily teaching would cost a large amount of time for both students and teachers, however, the teachers would not have much time to prepare the

http://www.umac.mo/fs/h/projections
material and so they could not conduct the reading exercise often. However, the other interviewee said that for some students who have low motivation to learn the language, it is a waste of time to provide them with extra reading material and these students would not do the reading exercise at all. There might be various explanations for this; for instance, students do not have an active attitude toward language learning, or the teachers themselves do not have confidence in their students.

In terms of the Questionnaire and the students' responses, 84 students (56%) reported reading the English materials word by word. However, 88 students (58.7%) among the 150 students do not like to analyze the sentence structure in the materials even though they know that this would be very helpful for their language learning. Eighty students (53.3%) do not like to use dictionaries when encountering new vocabulary. Concerning the question of whether the repetition of the target words in the reading material is helpful or not, among 150 students, 129 students (86%) held the opinion that it was useful and they would read the materials if the target words were included in the reading texts. There were only 12 students (8%) that disagreed with this opinion. Among those 150 students, 8 (5.3%) of them held the opinion that it was not necessary to put the target words in reading materials and 1 student had no opinion regarding this question. The table below (Figure 6) shows the detailed numbers and percentages for the data analysis of the Questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not necessary</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read word by word</td>
<td>84/150 (56%)</td>
<td>66/150 (44%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze sentence structure</td>
<td>62/150 (41.3%)</td>
<td>88/150 (58.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use dictionary</td>
<td>70/150 (46.7%)</td>
<td>80/150 (53.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
Eighty-six percent (129 students) of the students held the opinion that repetition is a useful strategy for their English learning. Some teachers said that repetition was the main method they used to teach English. They would adopt various kinds of exercise for students to practise the target language patterns and vocabulary. However, from the table, 12 students (8%) think repetition is not that useful and they prefer to focus more on the meaning of the sentences and vocabulary. Comprehension, for them, is more important than repetition in English learning.

In terms of the experiment, the following table (Figure 7) shows the detailed data of the pre-test and the post-test experimental results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct Answer</th>
<th>Pre-test (student)</th>
<th>Post-test (student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Number of Students Giving Correct Answers

The first column indicates the number of correct answers that students gave in these two tests. There were 5 questions in total in each test. The second
and third columns show the number of students getting that number of questions correct.

From this table, by comparing the results of these two tests, there were 12 students who answered two questions correctly in the post-test. 10 out of the total of 37 students answered one correctly. 5 students got three correct answers and 4 students got four correct answers. However, also from the table, there were 6 students out of 37 who still got no correct answers by comparing their answers with the pre-test.

One important reason for the lack of difference in some students’ scores might be that those students had no interest in the workshop and they were unwilling to attend it. Since it was the summer holiday, students were supposed to have their vacation and they did not need to attend class at school. But because of pressure from their teachers and parents, they were encouraged to attend. It seems that the attitudes of some students were not wholly positive and they did not have high motivation to learn English.

In terms of the results of the delayed-post test, the bar chart (Figure 8, p.121) shows the number of the students in relation to the number of correct answers they got in the tests.

From the bar chart, among the 37 students who attended the tests, in the post-test, 6 students (16.2%) got no correct answer. 10 students (27.0%) got one correct answer and 12 students (32.4%) got two correct answers. 5 students (13.5%) got three correct answers and 4 (10.8%) got four correct.

In the delayed post-test, 1 student (2.7%) achieved full marks (5 correct answers). 17 students (45.9%) got two correct answers and only 2 students (5.4%) got one correct answer. 9 students (24.3%) got three correct answers and 8 students (21.6%) got four answers correct.
The table on p.122 (Figure 9) shows the students in terms of the number of correct answers they achieved in the post-test and the delayed post-test respectively. In the delayed post-test, 18 students got more than three correct answers (9 students got 3 correct answers, 8 students got 4 correct answers and 1 student got 5 correct answers) while there were only 9 students in the post-test (5 students got three correct answers and 4 students got four). By comparing the data of the two tests, 10 students (1+6+1+2) showed no progress in the delayed post-test, but this did not mean they failed the tests. For most of them, the lack of progress was an indication that they got the same scores in both the post test and the delayed-post test. However, the data collected from the delayed post-test to some extent shows that most students performed better after practising Narrow-Intensive Reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delayed-post test</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
The results of the delayed post-test raise an interesting question: after three days, their results of the delayed-post tests are better than the ones in their post-test, which means that students performed better in the delayed post-test. In addition, during those three days, they were not given any materials for Narrow-Intensive Reading.

We propose three main possible reasons for this. First, during those three days, the target vocabulary had been transferred to the Long-term Memory. It means that the time gap provides the condition for learners to transfer the vocabulary from the Short-term Memory to the Long-term Memory.

A second possible reason is that the students did not want to perform well in the post-test, but they achieved better scores in their delayed post-test. The causes of this could be they were distracted by the external forces or their mood that day.

The last reason that may cause this is the degree of difficulty of the questions, which were designed by the investigator and used in the tests. The questions in delayed post-test were perhaps easier than the questions in the post test and so the students performed better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post test</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: The Number of Correct Answers Students Achieved in the Post-Test and the Delayed Post-Test
Results

The analysis of teachers' responses to the interview questions suggests that the teachers held the opinion that Narrow Reading and Intensive Reading were helpful and these two reading strategies were important for language learning and acquisition. They also responded that they would adopt the Narrow-Intensive Reading occasionally in their teaching, especially for those students who have better learning abilities and want to improve their performance. This reading method would extend their vocabulary and improve their reading abilities.

The majority of the students supported the idea of adopting the Narrow-Intensive Reading in their learning and considered it useful and necessary. By analyzing their responses to the questionnaire, they said they could learn new vocabulary and know more about the topic that they are interested in. Some students agreed that it could help them to improve their reading and comprehension skills by using Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy. However, some students held the opinion that although Narrow-Intensive Reading is helpful, it is not necessary to adopt it in their learning. The most important reason is that they have no time to spend on reading activities. This is also the reason that the teacher would not conduct a lot of reading activities in class. Some teachers would only give more reading exercises to students who have already achieved better scores than others in the class, that is, the so-called 'top students'.

The test results indicate that the students achieved better scores in the delayed post-test than in the post-test. This suggests that the Narrow-Intensive Reading (NIR) helps students to acquire the target vocabulary to some extent. NIR provides students with more time to transfer the target vocabulary for further processing by repetition and finally store it in the Long-term Memory. Narrow-Intensive Reading can be an option for
learners to choose when they are learning a second or foreign language. The results of the experiment indicated the advantages of adopting the Narrow-Intensive Reading strategy in English vocabulary learning, and it would also help learners in other aspects. As mentioned above, it would be difficult for teachers to conduct the Narrow-Intensive Reading exercise often in daily teaching situation.

Since the experiment was a quasi-experiment in a real life situation, there were various factors that might have influenced the results. However, the results of the experiment, to some extent, support the hypothesis that Narrow-Intensive Reading can help learners' English vocabulary learning. In the concluding section, some limitations and difficulties of the research are discussed.

Conclusion
The limitations and difficulties of this project mainly came from two aspects: one is the project design, and the other is the people who were involved in the project.

In terms of the project itself, firstly, the sample used in the research was small and this led to a limited collection of data. The project was conducted in one school, only two teachers were interviewed, and there were 37 students attending the workshop. Because of these restrictions, a single group design model was adopted in the experiment. The data collected from the research could not be universal and representative and the results of the research cannot be completely convincing.

Secondly, the whole experiment lasted for 7 days and the time was too limited. It can be assumed that during the experiment, there existed some phenomena which would have been worth considering, but were not observed by the investigator. The information that was missed by the observer might also influence the results of the research. In other words, http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections
there needs to be a larger project with more time spent on the research.

Other reasons may have played a part; for instance, some students did not want to attend the workshop. Because they still had to attend their normal classes every day, the workshop could be only conducted in the evening. Some students were unwilling to have class at that time. However, they were required by their teachers and parents. As a result, their attitudes toward this workshop and their motivations for learning might also influence the data that was collected from the experiment and in turn this could influence the final results of the study. For the investigator, it was difficult to organize those students because they would not cooperate and attend the reading activity during the research.

Another reason that may influence the results of the research could be the time when the tests were conducted, and how many questions were in the tests. In addition, the choice of the topic, whether the students had any knowledge about the topic before the reading activity, and whether the material used in the research was especially designed or authentic may also have influenced the results.

However, within the limitations of the resources and time available for this research, the results suggest that Narrow-Intensive Reading (NIR) is worth pursuing further, particularly in relation to the teaching of vocabulary. In addition, NIR could also help learners to acquire other language aspects, and more research into this aspect can be expected in the future. This present project is designed to arouse educators’ interest in Narrow-Intensive Reading in both language teaching and language acquisition studies and to stimulate further projects in the future.

References


Douglas, B. H. (1989). *A practical guide to language learning: a fifteen-week program of strategies for success.* qtd. in MacLeod, M. *Types of Reading*


qtd. in MacLeod, M. *Types of Reading.*


Appendices

Appendix A  Questionnaire for Students

1. When doing reading, do you read word by word?
   YES                 NO

2. Will you analyze the sentences when reading the text?
   YES                 NO

3. Do you think it would be helpful if you analyze the sentence when reading?
   YES                 NO

4. Will you look up in dictionary when encountering new vocabulary?
   YES                 NO

5. Do you think the repetition of a new word can help you remember it?
   YES                 NO

6. Based on your experience, if the teacher provides you with texts which contain the target items for intensive reading, do you think it is helpful and necessary? Why?
Appendix B  Interview for Teachers

1. Have you ever heard of INTENSIVE READING and NARROW READING?
2. When conducting teaching, will you analyze the sentence structure or translate new vocabulary of the texts?
3. In term of the same topic, do you usually provide extra texts for your students in order to help their learning?
4. What do you think of using INTENSIVE READING and NARROW READING in teaching? Do you think it is helpful?

Appendix C  Transcripts of the Interviews

Transcript ONE

1. Have you ever heard of INTENSIVE READING or NARROW READING?
   YES

2. When conducting teaching, will you analyze the sentence structure or translate new vocabulary of the texts?
   OF COURSE! SOMETIMES, I WILL LET THE STUDENTS LOOK FOR THE DICTIONARY THEMSELVES.

3. In term of the same topic, do you usually provide extra texts for your students in order to help their learning?
   SOMETIMES. IT WILL DEPEND ON THE TARGET. ONLY IF THE TARGET ITEMS ARE IMPORTANT AND DIFFICULT, I WILL.

4. What do you think of using INTENSIVE READING in teaching? Do you
think it is helpful?

IT DEPENDS. IT WILL HELP A LOT IF THE STUDENT IS GOOD AT ENGLISH AND THIS WILL HELP HE/SHE ACHIEVE A HIGHER MARK IN THE EXAM LATER. FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT GOOD AT ENGLISH, IT IS NO USE. THEY HAVE ALREADY GIVEN UP.

Transcript TWO

1. Have you ever heard of INTENSIVE READING or NARROW READING?
   OF COURSE.

2. When conducting teaching, will you analyze the sentence structure or translate new vocabulary of the texts?
   OF COURSE. MOST OF THE SITUATION, I WILL ANALYZE FOR THE STUDENTS. SOMETIMES, I WILL LET STUDENTS LOOK UP THE NEW VOCABULARY.

3. In term of the same topic, do you usually provide extra texts for your students in order to help their learning?
   YES. I THINK THIS WILL HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND BETTER AND I WILL PROVIDE EXTRA TEXTS.

4. What do you think of using INTENSIVE READING in teaching? Do you think it is helpful?
   I THINK THIS IS A GOOD IDEA AND THIS COULD HELP THE STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE TEXTS DEEPLY. THIS METHOD IS ESSENTIAL FOR STUDENTS TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WHOLE TEXT.
Appendix D  Tests

Pre-test

1. There ______ (有) puppeteers in Japan.
2. Marinettees______ ______ ______(被广泛应用在...) in the west.
3. Nancy has a lot of ________(木偶).
4. Grace is _____(大约) 1.7 meters.
5. I ______ ______(站在...下面) the stage.

Post-test

1. Many people _____(是，在) standing on the ground.
2. Water _____ _____ _____(被广泛应用在...) in producing electricity(发电).
3. Liu Ying has a ______(木偶).
4. They are ______ ______ (站在...下面)the stage.
5. My arm is _____(大约) 60cm.

Delayed-post test

1. My pen ____(是， 在) in the pencil-box.
2. I got a ______(木偶) on my birthday.
3. The building is _____(大约) 3m.
5. My brother is _____ ______(站在...下面) the stage and yelling.
Translate, Explore and Live: An Interview with Susan Bassnett

Tina Hanting PAN, Carl Guangrong DAI, Alice Xiaoping WU, Aaron Zhichao ZHANG and Bess Che Wun CHENG, University of Macau

Susan Bassnett (SB) is one of the founding figures of the discipline known as Translation Studies. With André Lefevere, she is credited with promoting the cultural turn that has changed attitudes to translation across the world. The author of many books, her most recent volumes are *The Translator as Writer* (2006), *Translation in Global News* (2009) and a collection of essays entitled *Reflections on Translation* (2011). She is currently preparing a 4th edition of her best-selling book, *Translation Studies*, which has been translated into over a dozen languages, and finishing a volume on translation for Routledge’s New Critical Idiom series. She is also well-known as a journalist and poet, and holds a Chair in Comparative Literature at the University of Warwick. On 25th February 2012 she was invited to be a guest speaker at the Greater Pearl River Delta Graduate Conference ‘Culture and Identity in Times of Change’ held at the University of Macau. Her talk ‘The Translator as Writer’ considered the role of the translator as the rewriter of a text and highlighted the importance of acknowledging the creative aspect of literary translation more generally. Using a range of examples from different sources, she explored some of the ways in which translators reconstruct texts, at times challenging, at other times conforming to dominant norms of a particular historical time. The following interview with graduate students from *Projections* is an edited version of a conversation that took place following Professor Bassnett’s talk, in the library of University of Macau. The conversation first began with her view on ‘translation’ and ‘translation studies’, and her advice to students who want to begin a career as translation scholars and then extended to her

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personal life, including her recipe for balancing life and work, and being a successful scholar.

**Projections:** You have argued for a wide definition of ‘translation’, for example that a sonnet written in English in response to Homer’s Odyssey can be considered a translation. We wondered how wide a definition you would allow. What do you think of a situation in which a group of poets were asked to write about the same thing, for example, something devastating like World War I – and all the poets wrote about the same theme? Could the works they produced be considered translations of each other?

**SB:** That’s a fascinating question. They are certainly all versions of the same experience. This goes back to the fundamental question of what is original. Is the original, the experience? Now the problem with that is that then we end up saying everything is a translation. Nothing is not a translation.

So I think that if you actually consciously said to a group of people, like in this room, “Here is your theme, each of you write something about it,” then we could say that the original is this theme, this story, whatever. But if people were just to converge because they happen to be writing about the same thing then I wouldn’t call it a translation, because that would be more a shared experience. There would be no consistent and specific attempt to create versions. Readers might say, “Oh, look, these five poets are all writing about the same thing”, but their writings would then be, to use a musical image, variations on a theme rather than translations. I am arguing for a greater freedom in defining translation but I am also arguing for the existence of translation. I’m saying translation is rewriting. Otherwise we wouldn’t use the word. But it’s a very good question.

**Projections:** As a scholar of Translation Studies, as well as a practising translator, what is your view of the balance between theory and practice in the discipline?

**SB:** Back in the 1970s, when a small group of us –André Lefevere, José Lambert, Itamar Evan-Zohar and Gideon Toury – first met, we tried to make a manifesto for Translation Studies and we stated our belief that theory and

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practice are interconnected. You can’t have a theory that doesn’t come out of practice and practice should also be informed by theory, so the two are connected. I think a balanced programme would have both – it would have some training and workshops, but it would also have some theoretical input. There are clearly different theoretical approaches, not all of which in my view are equally valid – for example, I think that the foreignisation - domestication distinction collapses when you are talking about technical and legal translation. It is foolish to argue that you need to foreignise a menu or a guidebook – why would you do that? You have to domesticate in certain text types depending on the function of the text.

**Projections:** What advice would you give to graduate students here, who are working in Translation Studies – particularly to those studying towards a PhD?

**SB:** My advice for anyone here in Macao would be to look also not just what Western theorists are doing but what is happening from the Chinese context. How relevant are some of these Western theories and how irrelevant are they? What about the history of translation in Chinese? You know I have some students who say, “Can we apply post-colonial theories to China?” Well, I don’t think so – I don’t see how it fits – so that not all models are equally useful. And I think you are in a unique position in this part of the world, in somewhere like Macao, to be able to look at both. You know, what are the traditional Chinese views of translation and how do those fit alongside Western views, so in a way you have possibility like the trains of going along parallel tracks.

For a PhD student, I still believe it is very important not to just have vague idea but have something that you definitely want to follow. Before starting you should ask yourself: is it the right time to begin it? Because sometimes it is not a right time to begin a PhD. Someone needs to do one or two years of working and thinking, and then come back again if that is possible. Sometimes it is a good thing that you come out and then go back in when you know exactly what you are going to do. If you don’t know, you are not ready to do it. The PhD students who are most successful are the ones that spend time thinking and then say, “That’s what I want to do, and I want to work on that.”

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And it evolves; the PhD is organic. Students start with one set of questions and – it happens all the time – they come to me after a year and say “I’m so confused; I don’t know what I’m doing”. And I say, “Good, because if you are still doing the same thing one year later, there is something wrong, because you haven’t learnt anything”. You know, your PhD must be different in the end from where you started, inevitably, because it grows. Think of yourself; think of what you knew, what you were like when you began your studies, and how different you are now. Learning changes you. But my advice for anyone beginning a PhD is to really work hard to establish a clear topic and a clear set of questions, because otherwise you waste a lot of time.

**Projections:** Speaking of advice on beginning a PhD, do you think postgraduate students working with an interdisciplinary subject like translation need to seek more opportunities for interdisciplinary cooperation?

**SB:** My view is that you can’t study anything without also broadening. I think that it is important to have deep knowledge but it is also very important to look broadly. So for example, if you are studying a language you need also to know something about the history of that language, the culture in which the language is used. If you study literature, you need to know something about the history of literature as well as strategies for publishing it.. So it is always getting wider. It is like when you drop a stone into a pool and the ripples start. And then in a way you have to follow the ripples because it is not possible to study anything in isolation: everything is connected. Interdisciplinarity is fundamental to any person who pursues any kind of learning. It is just the same in the sciences. If you study medicine you also have to study a huge range of other things. I met a lady once who is a Western-trained doctor, who runs a pain clinic. And she said, ‘In my clinic I use everything. I use Chinese medicine, I use faith healing, I use Western medicine, because whatever helps people deal with pain is okay by me.” So I think the answer to your question is: yes.

**Projections:** As you have mentioned, broadening is vital to our study. In order to broaden our horizons, we also need to share what we learn with others, most of the time, through seminars and conferences. We know the [http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections](http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections)
translation program in Warwick had a very good tradition of holding symposiums for students regularly. We are interested in how these symposiums were organized. Were they organized by the postgraduate students themselves? What advice can you give those who want to start a similar symposium series?

SB: That’s a very good question. The symposium was usually organized by a little committee of students but always with me assisting. So for example, I would suggest who would be invited as the visiting speakers or the students would come to me and give suggestions. Sometimes I would ask the speaker informally, “Would you be willing to come?” Then for the publication, the system we always had was the students would do the collecting of papers and then put all together. They were supposed to make the final version, but if they gave the draft to me I would give a complete proofreading and correct it like I was correcting a PhD. If there had to be rewriting, they would do rewrite, so it was always collaborative. It was a combination in terms of the organizing and then in terms of whatever came out of it later.

What we also did some years ago was to find a way of publishing students’ papers online, which we called Warwick Working Papers, because if you publish online as ‘working papers’ it means they don't have to be completely finished. It also means that students could give a paper at the graduate conference and publish it as a working paper, then revise it later, expand it and change it and give it at an international conference. So you could have two bites of the cherry, in other words, you could do it twice. That worked very well and I would see graduate conference as a training area.

Every year before the conference I ran a workshop on how to deliver a conference paper, which included such simple things as make sure that if you are doing PowerPoint or you are handing out copies of your drafts or anything you put your name and your email address on all, because very often people forget and it is fundamental to give your name so as to follow up. I used to do breathing exercises with my students as well, for example, how not to get into a panic. My training session used to be along the lines of “What will you do if something goes wrong?” If your PowerPoint doesn’t

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work then you need to have a paper back-up. What do you do if you have lost a page of your work? Well, be honest. Just tell the audience. The thing to remember is that when you present a paper the audience wants you to succeed. When you stand there and give a talk, you think, “Oh, they will hate me” but actually the opposite is the case. Everybody wants somebody who gives a paper to do well. Nobody wants you to do badly. So that’s an important psychological thing. They want you to do well. And another thing is, what would you do if you got a hostile question? Well, Rule No. 1, never lose your temper. Say something like “That’s an interesting question”. And if you possibly can, (this is useful for the PhD viva as well!) you turn it around so that you are defending yourself. So always be polite. But if someone is hostile, turn it around by being polite and saying something different.

The other rule is: always take water with you. And if you possibly can, always take something for your throat with you in your bag, because when you give a paper you get anxious, and when you get anxious you speak more from the throat and so the throat can be bad. I do think training is very important, because it is really frightening to go to an international conference. The other thing I suppose that is really important is: do not overrun your time. If you are on a panel with three peers and you have 20 minutes, do 20 minutes because I am sure you will see occasions when somebody talks so long that the other people on the panel can’t give their papers with enough time. Then this is difficult for them.

**Projections:** The training session for postgraduate students in Warwick sounds really fascinating. We would also like to know how PhD programmes work in your university. Do PhD students need to take courses?

**SB:** No, the British system is different. It has always been that the course work is at Master’s level. PhD students are usually required to take a compulsory academic writing thesis skills programme, and that is generally organized by the faculty. In most universities you will have a faculty-wide course, but otherwise PhD students are not, in most universities, required to take any courses.

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In America it’s different. In the States you have to take courses and then you have to pass those before you go on to the thesis. The UK system is that you begin working on the thesis immediately. What I would always like to suggest to PhD students is that they audit MA courses to make the best use of the time. But writing skills for thesis writing is a compulsory component in British universities generally.

**Projections:** Thank you for sharing your point of view of translation itself, of how to do research in the field as well as of the PhD training. They are very helpful. Would you mind further sharing your personal experience with us? For example, what do you think makes you a successful scholar today?

**SB:** Yes, I think I can answer that very clearly. I never had any ambition to be a successful scholar. I think because I never had any ambition, I have a sense of not having very deep roots anywhere. Also because I grew up in different countries and went to different schools I could see very early that people did things very differently. So when I went to university I didn’t want to do just one subject, I did two degrees in parallel. I did a degree in English literature which also included Anglo-Saxon and ancient literature, and I did a degree in Italian at the same time. Then when I left, I was sure what I wanted to do: I always thought that I wanted to be a writer. But to earn enough money to survive through writing, you have to win the Nobel Prize or something. And so three times I left the academic world, and three times I went back because they were paying me, but I always wanted to be a writer so I still sought to write as well. The other thing is, as I said, I didn’t want to be an expert in any one field. I wanted to explore, and when you explore, you take risks. You take risks, challenge things and argue. So I was amazed and delighted when it became clear that my book Translation Studies was beginning to sell. People were reading it. But before that, in the early years of translation studies, nobody wanted to know. Translation was not considered a serious academic subject. In the early 1980s, there were very few students, and colleagues didn’t think it was of any value. Nobody was really interested in it. And then the world changed. In 1988, I came for the first time to Hong Kong and to the Chinese mainland. At that time China had already opened up. In 1989, the Berlin wall collapsed and the Soviet Union collapsed. The world was completely different and everybody wanted...
to know about translation because people were moving around. So, all of a sudden, my work became very fashionable. Also by then, Lefevere and I had said, “Translation is very important; it is fundamental; it involves negotiation; it involves intercultural negotiation.” And suddenly, people began to listen. As simple as that, people started listening. I started to get more and more invitations and I got a chair professorship and so on. But it was not expected.

**Projections:** I guess for you this unexpected success is not difficult to deal with. We know you have been successful as a mother and an academic for 30 years. Can you tell us how do you achieve a balance between your career and family?

**SB:** That is an interesting question. Again, I think it goes back to the question you asked me before. Because I did not have a very specific ambition, I have always tried to balance career and family. When my two elder daughters were small, I had very little money, so my holidays were often going back to Italy to give lectures for friends and I would get paid, and then we would stay with the friends. I would be doing lectures and my children would be staying with my friends' children. They absolutely loved the trips because they got to see things and so on. It was always important that they did not see my work as being more important than them.

Another thing was, I never had a separate study in the house. I always had my desk in the sitting-room. Only when my son was born twenty years ago did I have my own study. To make that study, I used the pantry next to the kitchen. What this meant was, psychologically, my children knew that I was not shutting them out. So when they were little, they used to bring a little wooden desk and said, “Mum, if you are writing, we will write”. I tried to make it not a threat. They accepted that.

Also, I think I have been very lucky in one thing and I don’t know how to teach this. I can concentrate, break and then come back. So if I am writing and a child says, “I am hungry. Can I have a sandwich? ” I can stop, I can make a sandwich and go and start again. I was always able to do that and I think it is kind of God-given thing. I did not learn it and I did not know I had it until I began to realize some people were not able to do it. My husband could not do it. An interruption was the end for him. I can write, I [http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections](http://www.umac.mo/fsh/projections)
can stop and I can go back to write. That was very useful with children. I am also curious about it. When you come to my age, you understand how it works.

There were some days when I could never write. It was completely a waste of time to sit there trying. I would be better off walking with my dog or digging in the garden, Then when the writing felt right, I would go back to it. When I was about 15 or 16 at school, I realized that if I could get the beginning of an essay, it would be okay. But if I could not get the beginning, I could not do it. I find, as I get older, that this still happens. I need to write an article, and I start to think it through while I am out walking, for example, then once I have the opening in my head, it all falls into place. Sometimes I stop after only three lines, then I walk again and think. After that I go home, have a rest, come back and start writing again. It has been like this for years and years. You need to find out how you work best. Some people must sit down and revise draft after draft. Some people think and write in their head. For me, I have to have a beginning. When I get the beginning, I am okay. I am bad at ending. I often have a real problem at ending. I do not know how to conclude. I talk too much! Some people are good at ending. They write beautiful endings but I don’t. I am good at beginnings but bad at ending. I did not know that 30 years ago. I know it now so I always know I have to work on my endings.

I think it is important for everyone, every writer, every scholar to have their own way of working. Often, it is very private. But I have discovered that in teaching creative writing and teaching translation everyone needs to understand their writing process. My colleague in Warwick, David Dabydeen, a very distinguished writer who has won The Commonwealth Prize for fiction and so on, only learnt to use a computer 5 or 6 years ago. He still writes all his novels by hand. He got a computer but he did not like using it and he still does not use it. Now some people write on certain kinds of paper. One English newspaper has done a series for over a number of months, just asking different writers every week, “Tell us your writing and study practice”. It is fascinating. I am amazed how many writers, quite well known writers, do not use computers. Many use an old typewriter. Many write by hand. So I think it is what you feel that makes you creative. A lot of

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people say they do different things. I do my academic writing directly on a computer. But I do my poetry by hand. I have always done my translations by hand and then put them on the computer. I don’t know why but I think everybody needs to develop an understanding of what they do and how best they do it. Some people, for example, work at different times. Some people work very well in the early morning. Some people work well very late at night. You know, it is really very personal. But there is no right way and there is no wrong way. It is just how you do it. You all know people have different rhythms. There is some time when your concentration is better and you probably all know that. Sometimes, you are more receptive and sometimes not. It is sometimes about your body rhythm or the weather or your mood. This is very important. Every writer and scholar has ritual behavior around writing.

**Projections:** Thank you for sharing these insights with us. Just as translation involves a lot of language choices, life itself also involves many choices. You have already told us how you chose a career as an academic. But if you were not a scholar or writer what would you want to do? Have you ever thought about that?

**SB:** Yes! When I was a student doing my Bachelor’s degree, I had a job lined up. I was going to go to America, to be trained as an air-hostess, because I thought in this way I could travel the world. I was going to TWA, Trans-World Airlines. I think in Arizona there was a training school. I could have met a millionaire or something on the plane. But in another universe, if I had another existence then I think I would very, very much like to have been a singer. I would like to have been trained in music if I had been born again at another time.

**References**


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Book Reviews: ‘Third Culture Kids’

Anastasia Aldelina LIJADI, University of Macao

_The Rise of the Global Nomad_
*How to manage the new professional in order to gain recovery and maximize future growth*
Jim Matthewman
216 pages, paperback US$30.21
London: Kogan Page, 2011

_The Global Nomad’s Guide to University Transition_
Tina L. Quick
300 pages, paperback US$18
Great Britain: Summertime Publishing, 2010

_Home Keeps Moving – A Glimpse into the Extraordinary Life of a Third Culture Kid_
Heidi Sand-Hart
160 pages, paperback US$11.99
Hagerstown: McDougal Publishing, 13 July 2010

_The Illusive Home – Through the Eyes of a Third Culture Kid, All Grown Up_
James R. Mitchener
Amazon Digital Service, 2011

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are young people who follow their internationally mobile parents. They have uniquely rich childhoods spanning many countries and cultures. TCKs experience a number of changes and adjustment in location, cultural norms and values, language and education systems. Their distinctiveness becomes more obvious as they enter adulthood, with issues in relationships and commitment and an on-going search for belonging.

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Four recently published books are testament to the rapid surge of scholarly and general interest in TCKs: *The Rise of the Global Nomad* by Jim Matthewman, *The Global Nomad’s Guide to University Transition* by Tina L. Quick, *Home Keeps Moving* by Heidi Sand-Hart and *The Illusive Home* by James R. Mitchener. Each one attempts to embrace the unique character of TCKs by highlighting their voices (as adults) reflecting on their life experiences, positive and negative encounters, survival skills, tips and advice, as well as indicating forthcoming career opportunities. Three of the writers, Mitchener, Sand-Hart, and Quick, give an emic perspective, that is, an insider’s understanding of growing up as Third Culture Kids themselves. They testify to the necessity for future TCKs to understand what to expect as they go through the various stages of transition. TCKs move from the first country where they were born, to numerous countries while tailing their parents. From the moment TCKs receive the news about moving to another country, TCKs experience a turmoil of emotions; including excitement about the next move, uncertainty about the new place, grief in saying goodbye, anxiety in entering a new place, over and over again. Intending to validate their own experiences, the authors illustrate the frequent ups and downs in detail, including the means of survival and coping skills as well as availability of various social supports. Matthewman, the only non TCK among the four authors, proclaims the essential characteristic for upcoming workforce in the future, are exactly the characteristics of TCKs, which positions TCKs as having the most desired personal profiles in this globalized world.

In *The Illusive Home*, Mitchener narrates his own journey, relocating repeatedly from the west to the east side of the world. He writes in the form of light humorous short stories, almost in the form of a blog. Because TCKs often have difficulty in sustaining long-term friendships, their relationships with siblings can become very important, a fact Mitchener’s experience illustrates. He acknowledges the value to him of the presence of his brother, his first companion, being the only one that shared and understood the roller coaster ride together, a ride that not even his parents could comprehend. Any future study of TCKs, focusing on role of siblings as the closest person who share and understand TCKs’ experience, might benefit from this book.

The most profound narratives of this book are to do with the author acknowledging the agonizing emotions in dealing with relationships: “I have blocked so many people entering in to my life”. In relation to intimacy, he observes:

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I will gradually push my partner away, someone I love unconditionally, just to defend myself against losing her… My greatest fear is that one day I will wake up and everyone I love and hold close to my heart has left.

In this brief autobiographical narrative, Mitchener writes about his realities, illustrated with witty childhood memoirs, his reactions to his surroundings and the survival skills he learned growing up as a TCK. He expresses a genuine voice, which may serve as valuable case study of TCKs’ relationships.

A compilation of several narratives by TCKs who were the children of missionaries is the substance of Home Keeps Moving. Ruth Van Reken, one of the most prominent scholars to have studied TCKs, contributes a foreword to this book, praising it for adding a layer of cultural nuances to traditional model of TCKs. The author’s parents come from two different countries and cultures, thus increasing the cultural complexity. Van Reken coins the expressions ‘Cross Culture Kids’ (CCKs) and ‘Fourth Culture Kids’ to describe the offspring of these mixed parents. The author describes the dynamics of her childhood conflicts, in addition to having endless negotiation between two different cultures at home; one culture from each parent; she was in the same time exposed to international mobility, moved across three continents, never staying in one house for more than four years. Sand-Hart’s book focuses on the tears and grief that accompanies each move.

An excerpt from the book, showing one particular side of coming from missionary families, TCKs opt to adopting religious phrases to describe their experiences,

My parents would sing an old hymn sometimes … “This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through.”

More on loss and grief can be found in Chapter 6. In long and exhaustive detail, Sand-Hart stresses her frustration at the loss of physical possessions, houses, pets, friends, but admits that it is the emotional aspects challenged her the most:

Throughout my teenage years, I didn’t cry much. I could probably count on one hand, and they had nothing to do with transitions or farewells. I had developed a foolproof method of suppression and clothed myself in an excitement for the next destination.
The author also includes letters and other means of correspondences from other missionary TCKs in addressing their angst and misery to deepen the reader’s understanding of the emotional mayhem experienced by many TCKs throughout their developmental years. In one arresting statement, Sand-Hart admits that her traditional adulthood has not been as exciting as her unconventional childhood.

Over twenty-five years working with TCKs, including a period as an international school counsellor, Tina L. Quick, now a cross-cultural trainer, seeks to address in *The Global Nomad’s Guide to University Transition* the ‘re-entry issue’ a term used to describe TCKs who go back to their passport country after a life as an expatriate. So-called ‘re-entry’ can be the most difficult transition for TCKs who have not lived in their ‘home’ country for much or all of their childhood. TCKs who finished high school overseas face a double transition, firstly to a new stage of life as an adult, and secondly to a new culture in college or university. Endeavouring to provide insights for the forthcoming TCKs who might desire a smooth transition to college or university in United States, Quick offers detailed, substantial and reassuring aspects to be expected during stages in transition, completed with tips and various coping skills, based on her own life stories, scholarly findings and the original stories from other TCKs. The book provides an extensive survey of the development of support that addresses TCKs’ issues in the United States, which can be a useful point of reference for other countries world-wide. Numerous forms of support from community and organization websites are listed, as well as practical issues of college or university life. Quick dedicates Chapter 11 to parental issues and concerns for families repatriating with secondary school-aged children. School guidance counsellors and educators will definitely benefit from this well-structured book in preparing TCKs to blend in, in their tertiary education. Research in developing psychological interventions to assist future TCKs may gain from the recommendations outlined in each chapter of the book, as Quick provides her own wisdom from the experience of having to raise three TCKs herself.

Matthewman used his entire professional network in composing his exhaustive study of Adult TCKs, that is, former TCKs who have reached maturity. *The Rise of The Global Nomad* focuses on the future characteristics of the required workforce worldwide. Using recent narratives of 50 well-off former TCKs, now adults working and residing in Dubai, this book gives a voice to mature TCKs on their workplace experience. The
The significance of the book lies in its extensive and comprehensive view of 12 multinational corporate perspectives in predicting the characteristics demanded of future global professionals, and expressing greater anticipation and appreciation of diversity, global sustainability and multiculturalism. The book aims to provide insight for the human resources sector, in multinational companies. On the rising profile of TCKs, Matthewman manages to compile various schools of thought, from key players in multinational companies, sociologists, economics, the humanities and international relations as well as incorporating reports from worldwide organizations.

The book begins by presenting the emerging issues of globalization for economic recovery. Matthewman claims that the digital world of the Internet and mobile telephony has opened up communications and opportunities even to the most remote regions of the world. He incorporates extensive statistical figures and tables from worldwide organizations including ILO, the IMF, the UN, the US Census Bureau and the WTO to demonstrate that organizations worldwide are focused on stabilization and ‘right-sizing’ the workforce. He states the need for savvy professionals in the digital era, employees with divergent thinking and sensitivity in multicultural settings and with multilingual proficiencies (English is a must, along with an additional Asian or European language) – all of which exactly fits the characteristics of TCKs. In Part II, Matthewman includes many self-profiles of TCKs, in which they describe their distinctive characteristics especially with regard to workplace attitude:

“My key skill is to think differently and bring more than one perspective to bear on a topic, I work well with others and forge compromise.”

“I like the fact that we are rotating through the different business offerings – I like being exposed to all these different lines. I also like working with lots of different backgrounds who give different perspective and ideas.”

Although this book is different from a traditional scholarly volume, the author presents facts and his own perspectives in abundance. He makes the argument that the professionals needed in the upcoming multinational workplace match the typical characteristics of TCKs. International corporations could leverage the potential of TCKs by providing an environment that welcomes and promotes their engagement by providing opportunities to exercise their international skills.

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TCKs as new promising multicultural, global professionals grow up with many agendas that need to be addressed to ensure their well-being. *The Illusive Home* and *Home Keeps Moving* give a good balance of perspectives as a start to understanding TCKs. *The Global Nomad’s Guide to University Transition* validates TCKs experiences and advises TCKs in pursuing their education. *The Rise of the Global Nomad* confirms the positive future of TCKs, who are privileged with international lived experiences and evidently possess the desired characteristics for the future workforce.