

MONASH University



5TH SYMPOSIUM ON DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND CULTURAL
DIVERSITY: CONVERSATIONS IN THE
MELTING POT**

20TH NOVEMBER 2009
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, CULTURES & LINGUISTICS
MONASH UNIVERSITY, CLAYTON CAMPUS

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SCHEDULE:

20 minute presentations - followed by 10 minutes of questions, comments, feedback

8.30 - 8.50: Registration

8.50- 9.00	Dr Marisa Cordella <i>(Monash University)</i>	Welcoming Address
9.00 - 9.30	Dr Judith Rochecouste <i>(Monash University)</i>	Contested Narratives in the Courtroom
9.30 - 10.00	Dr Helen Tebble <i>(Monash University)</i>	An Interpreted Snippet of Conversation about the Soup Pot
10.00 - 10.30	Dr Peter Cowley <i>(University of Sydney)</i> & Dr Barbara E. Hanna <i>(University of Queensland)</i>	"If you cannot find something on the subject is due because you speak english only": Crosscultural construction of knowledge in Wikipedia

10.30 -11.00: Morning Tea

11.00 - 11.30	Yupaporn Piriya Silpa <i>(Rajamangala University of Technology Isan/Thailand)</i>	Identifying mode in online discussion
11.30 - 12.00	Stephanie Herold <i>(Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena/ Germany)</i>	Marketing research in multicultural societies – Using discourse analysis to investigate the impact of respondents' cultural background on their acceptance of projective techniques in focus group discussions
12.00 - 12.30	Budi Purnomo <i>(Gadjah Mada University / Indonesia and Monash University)</i>	Aspects of Politeness When Serving Tourists in Indonesia

12.30 - 1.30: Lunch

1.30 - 2.00	Dr Nira Rahman <i>(Monash University)</i>	Dominant language, social discourse and identity negotiation
2.00 - 2.30	Ms Beryl Wintrip <i>(Monash University)</i>	Unheard Voices in a Cultural Jungle: A study of the marginalisation of knowledges and discourses in the multicultural classroom.
2.30 – 3.00	Dr Sol Rojas-Lizana <i>(University of Queensland)</i>	Rejecting and accepting the political other in everyday discourse: Letters to the Editor in the Chilean local press.
3.00 – 3.30	Irene Strodthoff <i>(University of Sydney)</i>	Discursive Construction of Bilateral Relations: the Case of Chile and Australia (1990-2010)

3.30 – 4.00: Afternoon Tea

4.00 – 4.30	Dilhara Darshana Premaratne <i>(Australian National University)</i>	Expressing Opinion in Newspapers: An Analysis of Chinese Opinion Texts
4.30 – 5.00	Miss Christine Moon <i>(Monash University)</i>	Harry Potter: Chips or Fries? An examination of cultural linguistic differences

5.00: Symposium closes

Contested Narratives in the Courtroom

Dr Judith Rochecouste

CALT, Caulfield Campus, Monash University

Dr Ellen Grote, Associate Professor Graham McKay, Dr Ann Galloway (Edith Cowan University) Australia

Abstract

This paper draws on data extracted from the transcript of a murder trial conducted in Perth, Western Australia, in 2001. Both the deceased and the accused were Indigenous Australians, as were many of the witnesses. The experiences of Indigenous witnesses in Australian courtrooms have informed numerous studies, however few have specifically addressed the Western Australian context where, as elsewhere, Aboriginal English is widely spoken in urban, rural and remote contexts. Aboriginal English narrative structure and ownership has also attracted attention and in this paper very different perspectives on the ownership and the control of narrative in the courtroom are demonstrated.

The default discourse of the courtroom is the question-answer sequence: a discourse mode which contrasts sharply with the prevalence of narrative or story-telling which forms the basis for knowledge transmission in many Indigenous societies. However, Aboriginal English narrative structures embody very different event and story schemas which result in markedly different narrative structures and, as a consequence, misunderstanding by non-Aboriginal people. Numerous researchers have described the inappropriateness of the direct questioning of Aboriginal witnesses and the need for these witnesses to describe events in their original context. An Indigenous witness's narrative in the courtroom context is therefore vulnerable to continual interruption because it does not necessarily fit with the court's idea of the required discourse. The data presented will show overt contestation of Indigenous witnesses' narrative sequences by the lawyers during the trial.

Bionote

Judith Rochecouste currently teaches within the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching at Monash University. Her responsibilities include teaching within the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education, promoting internal and external teaching award opportunities, and mentoring candidates in applying for teaching awards and grants. Judith's research interests include language variation, creole languages, cross-cultural communication, tertiary literacy, student learning, and language and the law.

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An Interpreted Snippet of Conversation about the Soup Pot

Dr Helen Tebble

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Abstract

Culturally diverse practices can include the use of alternative medicines which may or may not be of benefit to the patient. This paper discusses the necessity for medical interpreters to be able to interpret descriptions of traditional practices of medicine and be able to distinguish them from traditional cooking recipes. An interpreter must be able to interpret not only the spoken words of his clients, but also explain the social meaning of what is said.

The snippet of conversation is an excerpt from an interpreted medical consultation between a consultant physician practising vascular medicine and a Vietnamese speaking patient. The physician attempting to be open minded about traditional medical practices seeks to find out what is in his patient's traditional soup recipe that the patient seemed to claim was better medicine than the prescribed western medication for lowering blood pressure.

The discourse analysis of the snippet using Tebble's (e.g, 1999,) systemic functional linguistics approach, modified from Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Hasan (e.g. 1985) reveals the essence of a short cautionary tale that interpreters should heed about cultural diversity – interpreters have to be bilingual and bicultural – or just good cooks?

Bionote

Dr Helen Tebble, a graduate of Monash and Edinburgh Universities, is currently an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in Interpreting and Translation Studies, Monash University. She was the convener of the Linguistics Program at Deakin University and has supervised linguistics theses at all levels in discourse analysis. Starting with her PhD, "The Systems Analyst's Interview", she has specialised in the discourse analysis of professional interviews. Her main research is in doctor – patient communication. One area is the interpreted medical consultation which entails video- and audio-recording actual interpreted medical consultations, describing their generic structure and other linguistic features and resulting to date in: a new paradigm for teaching interpreters; a video, book and program for training physicians in how to work with interpreters. Her other research area is the discourse of depression. Helen uses systemic functional linguistics, but also conversation analysis and other approaches to discourse analysis. She is an invited speaker at national and international conferences.

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**"If you cannot find something on the subject is due because you speak english only":
Crosscultural construction of knowledge in Wikipedia**

Dr Peter Cowley

School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney

Dr Barbara E. Hanna

School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Queensland

Abstract

While monolingual at its inception, the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia rapidly moved to include other language versions and today is a remarkable example of multilingualism: a common template underpins different language versions and navigation between these is facilitated by a side-menu to each article. Meanwhile, backstage, on the numerous discussion pages and management sites which underpin the surface structure of Wikipedia, frequent reference is made to equivalent entries in other languages and "Translation" projects manage the interlingual translation of entries. At the same time, application of the Wikipedia mantra of "Neutrality of Point of View" impresses on contributors that their audience is multicultural, diverse and that entries should acknowledge this.

This porosity between language versions, the validation of multilingualism but above all the ubiquity of Wikipedia as a research tool amongst university students, compel us to ask how it might be productively exploited by advanced language learners. Using examples from the French and English versions of Wikipedia we show how analysis of the discussion pages behind disputed entries can be used to explore the construction of knowledge. The regulatory role of the discussion pages means a high incidence of generic commentary. Taking the notions of genre, and of genres as cultural practices, as critical, our focus is on ways in which the Wikipedia rules are invoked. What is it to write a collaborative and neutral encyclopaedia, and to what extent can and does talk about this work differ across cultures? What are the culturally different forms that neutrality takes?

Bionote

Peter Cowley is lecturer in French at the University of Sydney. He teaches French language and literature, and the history and theory of translation, in the Department of French Studies and the International and Comparative Literature program. His primary research areas are Translation Studies and intercultural communication. Recent work includes the translation of Michel Serres' *The Five Senses*, with Margaret Sankey (Continuum, 2008).

Barbara E. Hanna is senior lecturer in French in the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. She works on intercultural communication and intercultural narratives. In particular, she is interested in cultural differences in engagement with online genres and what this means for online intercultural communication. She has recently co-authored a book on this topic with Juliana de Nooy: *Learning Language and Culture via Internet Discussion Forums* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

In previous joint projects, they have worked on the location of "culture" both in courses on intercultural communication and in language teaching, allowing themselves to be nagged by the question: what is it, really, to teach language as intercultural communication?

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Identifying Mode in Online Discussion

Yupaporn Piriyasilpa

Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Thailand

Abstract

Online discussion is currently being used in many language classrooms to provide students with an alternative space for the use of the target language outside of class time. However, studies describing language used by students in this social context are still at an exploratory stage. As online discussion is a new way of communication, its application in the language classroom has resulted in texts which contain significantly different characteristics to traditional methods of writing and speaking. It is necessary for language teachers to understand the nature of online communication in order to effectively implement its use in the classroom and assist students in their language learning. This study analyses the use of online discussion as part of a writing course for Thai EFL learners according to the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL - Halliday, 1994, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin, 1992). Mode in online discussion is assessed by examining how spatial / interpersonal distance and experiential distance (Egins, 1994) are applied in this new way of communication. The paper also discusses implications for future research and the application of online discussion in the language classroom.

Bionote

Yupaporn Piriyasilpa teaches English at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand. She completed her PhD in Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Her main research interest is genre and discourse in online communication.

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Marketing research in multicultural societies – Using discourse analysis to investigate the impact of respondents' cultural background on their acceptance of projective techniques in focus group discussions

Stephanie Herold

Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena / Germany

Abstract

Theoretical background: More and more companies around the world understand the benefit of developing a marketing strategy which focuses on multicultural as well as mainstream consumers (Rao 2006; Wilkinson & Cheng 1999). While this shift in approach is a step forward, the part rarely looked at are the methodologies used in the market research process. Therefore, the impact of respondents' cultural background on the acceptance of methodologies needs to be investigated, and this is where this research is positioned.

Methodology and research framework: This research focuses on multicultural focus groups and uses a multi-methodological approach to benefit from the synergy of methodologies for this mainly untapped research topic. Based on results from a discourse analysis of German focus groups and an online survey amongst immigrants in Australia, hypotheses have been formulated to be tested in focus groups with Germans in Australia - the main part of the research (to be conducted in November 2009). This paper focuses on the results/ hypotheses drawn from the discourse analysis of German focus groups to gain feedback before the main study.

The discourse analytical approach used in this research is positioned in the field of ethnomethodological conversation analysis (Bergmann 1981), a micro analytical framework favoured to understand communication around the acceptance of projective techniques in multicultural focus group. This approach originally based on Hymes (1962) and Garfinkel's (1967) work and widely used today in the sciences of intercultural communication.

Results: A total of 12 German focus groups have been analysed covering communication patterns of 60 respondents in relation to more than 10 projective techniques. Thirty sequences have been analysed with ELAN in relation to three levels. The first level captures spontaneous reactions of participants while the moderator is introducing the technique. The second level explores functional characteristics of the sequence (i.e. like volume of discussion or overlappings) while cognitive characteristics (i.e. strategies of argumentation) are evaluated in the third level.

Conclusion: Currently, marketing researchers do not have any knowledge about the application of projective techniques in multicultural focus groups. Our doing is unquestioned and simply based on assumptions, the most common base for miscommunication in intercultural discourse. This research provides first results for discussion and not only raises cultural awareness but also educates researchers and marketers about the possible impact of culture on marketing.

Bionote

Stephanie is conducting her PhD in the field of ethnic marketing methodologies and explores the application of projective techniques in focus groups with German immigrants in Australia. She is supported in her work by Prof. Dr. Jürgen Bolten, dean of the faculty of intercultural business communication at the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena/ Germany.

Stephanie is working as a project manager for TNS – one of the global players in the marketing research and consulting industry – and she has identified the unawareness of the topic during her work at TNS in Australia. Stephanie has won an individual sponsorship from TNS for her PhD ambitions.

Prior to TNS, Stephanie had several junior positions at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Germany in the departments of Communication Psychology, Media Science and Intercultural Business Communication beside a management position at Berlitz, a global language school.

Stephanie has an excellent Master degree in Media Science, Psychology and Intercultural Business Communication.

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References:

- Bergmann (1981): Ethnomethodologische Konversationsanalyse. In: Schroeder/Steger (Eds.), Dialogforschung. Duesseldorf, 9-52.
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Aspects of Politeness When Serving Tourists in Indonesia

Budi Purnomo

Linguistics, Gadjah Mada University / Indonesia
Language & Society Centre, Monash University (Nov. 2009 – Feb. 2010)

Abstract

Providing the international English speaking tourist with an enjoyable and positively memorable time can be especially accomplished by tourism industry practitioners who are not only skillful at their services, but are also competent in English and know how to communicate well, using appropriate nuances of politeness in English, as well as in Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese for cross-cultural communication. This paper draws upon an ongoing study which focuses on principle, strategy and level of politeness as well as norms of language propriety in tourism-service language used by tourism industry practitioners during their communication with tourists.

The location of the research is in Surakarta City and its surroundings, Central Java, Indonesia. Data include 13 kinds of conversational discourse: (1) receiving reservations, (2) meeting tourists at the airport, (3) providing information upon arrival on the way to the hotel, (4) helping tourists with their registration, (5) handling telephone enquiries, (6) giving directions, (7) giving information about art performances and entertainment, (8) beginning a tour and describing the itinerary, (9) describing points of interest on the tour route, (10) serving meals at restaurants, (11) describing processes used in making art objects (*batik*, leather puppets, *gamelan* instruments, etc.), (12) bargaining for souvenir prices and (13) describing tourist sites. Techniques of collecting data include observation and field notes, recordings, questionnaire, in-depth interviewing and document analysis.

This paper will discuss samples of transcriptions of the conversational discourse. Some of the categories of politeness will be used in the analysis. They are drawn from western-cultural based theories, in particular Leech's politeness principle (1983) and Brown & Levinson's politeness strategy (1987); as well as local-cultural based theory, Poedjosoedarmo's norm of language propriety (2009). The ultimate goal of this research is to provide training materials for Indonesian tourism industry practitioners serving the international tourist who speaks some English.

Bionote

Mr Budi Purnomo graduated in Applied Linguistics (BA) from Tamansiswa University, Yogyakarta and Translation Studies (MA) from Sebelas Maret University, Solo, Indonesia. He teaches EFL and Linguistics at undergraduate level for some universities in Solo, Central Java. He is a visiting academic in the Language and Society Centre under the supervision of Dr Helen Tebble, School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University. He is currently a PhD student enrolled in Linguistics at Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. His visit is sponsored by the Indonesian Directorate of Higher Education.

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Dr Nira Rahman

Learning Skills Unit, Monash University

Abstract

Language is ambiguous as a general category – it is both a bonding and an alienating medium. While the dominant language in the host society is perceived and described as one of the biggest barriers in forming social networks with the host nationals, the sense of belonging, bonding and familiarity provided by the co-nationals is enhanced by a common language. Students from all over the world come to Australia with aspirations to undertake academic studies in order to earn higher degrees, bringing with them their own culture, language, experiences and expectations. During transition, these linguistic minority international students consider their limited capabilities in English the biggest barrier in participating in mainstream discourses and socio-cultural practices of the host society. Therefore, they all invest in mastering English hoping that it would ensure them recognition from host nationals; enrich their cultural capital with an aspiration of gaining access to material resources and social power. This singular failure to converse with the host national in Australian 'melting pot' despite improvements in English did cause the students to upgrade the category of 'cultural differences' above language as the target of their attentions. However, in this process towards future goals, both English and cultural interactions provoke identity negotiation and reform across time and space.

By adopting a socio-culturally framed view of dominant language learning in addressing covert and overt representation of identity, this paper reports on a three year investigation with a specific focus on how communications take place in cultural diversity. Through three different case studies, this paper examines how international students negotiate their identity and form multiple identities through conversations in the 'melting pot'.

Bionote

Dr. Nira Rahman is working as a Learning Skills Adviser at the Learning Skills Unit. Her research interests include representation of self through language, language teaching and learning, role of culture in identity construction, cross-cultural teaching and learning styles. For her outstanding academic performance, she received Sir John Monash Deans Award in 2003. Nira's extensive teaching experience in dealing with students from different cultural, educational and professional backgrounds has helped her to develop a good understanding of cross-cultural teaching and learning styles; and acceptance of the varying language and learning needs and goals of diverse students.

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Unheard Voices in a Cultural Jungle: A study of the marginalisation of knowledges and discourses in the multicultural classroom.

Ms Beryl Wintrip

M.Ed.Research, Faculty of Education, Monash University.

Abstract

This paper reports on a study, the purpose of which is to analyse the impact of a diverse cultural background on the language learning experience within the framework of a grade 6 Class in a primary school in the Northern suburbs of Melbourne. The aim of the study is to understand the position of the learner in this situation, as an active social actor, discursively constructing a new position of identity, contrasting the institutional impact with the individual identity of the student.

The research reported is part of an ethnographic study conducted over two Terms of the Academic Year. Qualitative research methods were used to explore how discourse practices, and the development, maintenance and change of the same, impact on the opportunity available to students to access appropriate "academic/vernacular" language.

It reports how the participants, a group of six students from Vietnamese, Arabic, and Indian backgrounds, both perceive themselves and evaluate their difficulties within the general school community and more specifically, within the literacy program of the school throughout the curriculum.

A variety of data collection methods were used including classroom observation, videotaping, group discussions, semi-structured interviews and samples of student writing. Data analysis began with on-going reflective, journal observation, combined with the highlighting and colour-coding of patterns from transcripts, indicative of practices within the classroom community, influencing opportunity for learning.

Other factors, defining the parameters within which individuals can choose to represent themselves, can unwittingly produce a structure of power relations. This social aspect of literacy learning is the cornerstone of New Literacy Studies, which expounds a theory of literacy as a social practice and cross cultural in nature. Street 1995, "Social Literacies" emphasises two aspects

1. The social nature of literacy
2. The multiple nature of literacy.

This makes it necessary to consider the consequences for social groups within the concept of acquisition of literacy. Should teaching literacy be considered a mediating role in supporting and challenging learners identities and facilitating the exploration by the learners of the hybrid nature of their identity? Bridges need to be built and voices need to be heard.

Bionote

Born in UK, BA Dunelm (French,German,Spanish), Dip.Ed University of Newcastle upon Tyne. 20 Years as Teacher of Modern Languages from Grade Pep Primary, Secondary and Adult Education. Italian marriage UK; 14 Years in,Italy with family. Employment 1986-1997 included Office Manager/Translator/Interpreter for International Tourist Rental Company. Freelance Translator/Interpreter (French/Italian) for Medicina Legale, University of Siena, Department of Psychiatry. 1992-1999 registered with Chamber of Commerce, Siena as Italian Real Estate Broker on foreign market, own business until 1999. Migration to Australia 1999; 2001-2008 teacher of VCE Italian, French, and German. Vice President of VATI (Victorian s Association of Teachers of Italian), 2004-2005.

Ongoing Committee Member of MLTAV(Modern Languages Teachers Association of Victoria) since 2003. Research interests include, linguistics, socio-linguistics, bilingualism and pedagogy for the teaching of second languages. Currently undertaking M.Ed with Research, Monash University on the Construction of Cultural Identity in a Multicultural Classroom.

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Rejecting and accepting the political other in everyday discourse: Letters to the Editor in the Chilean local press.

Dr Sol Rojas-Lizana

School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies, The University of Queensland

Abstract

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) is a relatively formalised everyday genre in which readers' opinions appear in a publication (Hall et al., 1978). This genre, particularly in the local press (Rojas-Lizana, 2009), is one of the few instances in which the non-elite has some limited access to public discourse otherwise dominated by the powerful elite (van Dijk, 1996, 2003). Although the genre is mediated by the Editor and by its own constraints, as a form of language in use it contains and produces an inexhaustible source of elements that give testimony to the diversity of people's worlds and identities, as well as their linguistic power for constructing and understanding themselves as individuals and as members of a community.

The emergence of LTEs about General Pinochet, his regime, and human rights violations has occurred at several moments in Chilean history in the last 20 years. Applying the general framework of discursive psychology and cognitive linguistics, this paper analyses the discursive organisation of a set of LTEs that defend and oppose Pinochet and his regime. Two levels are examined: at the discursive level, the strategies used and their connection with commonsense arguments enunciated in Wetherell and Potter (1992), and, at the lexical level, the use of keywords and their relevance in the construction of particular versions of reality in relation to the concepts of frame and profiling (Lee 2003). The analysis of these two sets of letters reveals that they contrast noticeably in their enunciations. Pinochet supporting letters do not concede a space for admitting mistakes or for offering an intersectional domain of communication with the political-other. These addressers accepted the explanations of the military regime as an absolute truth; therefore, the attempts at reconciliation offered by their ideological opponents are treated with suspicion and contempt as they are not believed to be sincere or even possible. On their part, letters that oppose Pinochet, in general, seek not only to reconcile with their opponents but also to establish that certain conditions should be observed if national healing is to be achieved.

Bionote

Sol Rojas-Lizana's studies have covered the areas of Education, Linguistics and Literature at universities in Chile, South Africa and Australia. She holds a MA (linguistics) and a PhD (Discourse Analysis) from the University of Queensland. Sol is currently Associate Lecturer at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies, UQ. She has recently published the book *Discourse and Genre in Everyday Texts: Letters to the Editor in the Local Press of Australia and Chile*. Her research interests include: (critical) discourse analysis, autopoiesis theory, (applied) cognitive linguistics, and politeness studies.

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Discursive Construction of Bilateral Relations: the Case of Chile and Australia (1990-2010)

Irene Strodthoff

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Abstract

In the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) extensive work has been done on the relationship between gender (Walsh 1998), 'race' (Van Dijk 1987, 1991, 1997; Wodak & Van Dijk, 2000) and institutional or elite discourse. Less research, however, has centred on how dominant discourse creates and shapes the dynamics of power in bilateral relationships constructing and making use of perceptual categories of identity (national, cultural and regional, among others) in trade and diplomatic dealings with each other.

Combining elements of socio-historical analysis, discourse and power (Van Dijk 2008), and political discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1998; Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Wodak 1989) I will give an overview of the central analytical tools I am using in a project that examines the interplay of discursive elements and notions of identity and how they are shaping Australian-Chilean relations, within the context of the Free Trade Agreement signed by both countries in 2008.

By analysing selected Australian and Chilean press sources and also official speeches of governmental figures using techniques from CDA, my research aims to illuminate the hegemonic construction of collective notions of identity in different cultural, regional and national settings within a 'south-south', 'semi-peripheral' and 'visibility/invisibility' context. Moreover, it takes into account the issue of significant presences and absences in how respective national actors construct the roles and representations of each other in a globalised environment.

A review of relevant concepts from CDA scholarship as well as social constructionist accounts of identity provides a fruitful theoretical framework in which I situate my research.

Bionote

Irene Strodthoff is a Chilean journalist from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. She is currently undertaking her PhD in Latin American Studies at the Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the Faculty of Arts in the University of Sydney, supported by the Bicentennial Scholarship Program, launched by the Chilean government in 2008. After finishing her Master of Arts in International Communication at Macquarie University in 2006, Irene Strodthoff published the bilingual book "*The trace of a leap: A year in Australia*" (2007) to bridge the uncertainty gap for those Chilean students who want to come to Australia. She has also published in the *Global Media Journal* (Australia) about Bolivia and political economy of communication (2006). During her professional career, she has worked in public relations, press releases and media relations. She tutored in the School of Journalism at the University Gabriela Mistral, a private university in Santiago, Chile.

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Expressing Opinion in Newspapers: An Analysis of Chinese Opinion Texts

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Abstract

Research shows that reading comprehension is determined not only by the local effects of sentences or paragraphs but also by the rhetorical structure (overall supra-sentential organisational structure) of a text. Knowledge of these conventions aids readers in comprehending the text as well as in recalling it later (Carrell 1984). Regular confrontation with a particular text type determines reader assumptions of the rhetorical structure of that text type.

From the above perspective, it can be assumed that readers in a second language may expect to find in target language texts, the conventional text structures they have learnt from their first language reading experience. This raises the pertinent question whether rhetorical structures used in a certain text type in one language would be the same as those used in the same text type in another language. According to past studies, rhetorical conventions could vary from culture to culture. Oliver (1971) which is an enlightening study of ancient Asian rhetoric shows that the standards of rhetoric in the West are not universals but are merely expressions of Western culture applicable within the context of Western cultural values.

The aim of the current study was to find out whether the rhetorical structures in Chinese opinion texts are culture-specific. To this end, ten opinion texts from a newspaper were examined within the theoretical framework of contrastive rhetoric. Data was analysed using a schematic framework proposed by van Dijk (1995) for western news discourse, consisting of several schematic categories. The study revealed that culture-specific rhetorical structures are used in Chinese news texts.

Bionote

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Abstract

Children's literature has always been important in terms of shaping children's understanding of the world. Since *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* arrived in bookstores in 1997 it has sold millions of copies worldwide. It is arguably one of the most widely read children's book of all time. Consequently it has been the subject of a number of critical works. Its popularity places it in a unique position in terms of its ability to shape and create our language and our world. And yet, despite this few of these critical works consider the way that the language of the text itself operates discursively in relation to culture. Philip Nel in *You say jelly, I say jell-o* briefly considered this issue. This work examined the reasons behind the change, noting that it is part of the homogenisation of culture that appears to be taking place as America dominates the world. However, few other publications appear to have considered the relationship between language and culture, generally focusing on the difficulty of translating 'cultural specific items' (Oittinen, Stoit, *et al*). However, this paper argues that culture itself is created by language, which this paper argues is evidenced by the fact that separate editions were believed to be required for English and American audiences. This paper will be drawing on the work of discourse theorists such as Foucault, Fairclough, Fowler and Gee, as well as theories of language acquisition, such as those proposed by Saussure, and theories of translation discussed by Lathey and Davies *et al* to examine *how* language operates to create a cultural barrier, and the consequences of this in a globalised world.

Bionote

Christine Moon is currently employed as a solicitor. She has previously completed her BA and LLB in 2005, and went on to complete her BA(Hons) in 2008 where she examined the relationship between language and power in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in her dissertation "Harry Potter and the Power of Words". She will be enrolled at Monash University, Clayton in 2009 to undertake her PhD. This PhD will continue this examination across the entire *Harry Potter* series, and will consider the way that language and education operate discursively and the effect this has on power relationships and authority.

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