This study describes and contrasts the communication behavior of Hong Kong Cantonese bilingual speakers as they interacted in comparable first- and second-language strategic formulation and decision-making meetings. Statistical analyses of 11 groups disclosed similarities in terms of volume, context level, and ideas; and differences in areas of turn-taking frequency, length of spoken time per turn, amount of felt information exchange, and degree of felt influence. A detailed analysis of one group revealed that different communication behavior patterns emerged in the domain of topic management for both Cantonese and English speakers.

TOPIC MANAGEMENT AND TURN TAKING IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

First- Versus Second-Language Strategies

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Given the rapid expansion of global business activities, a growing number of individuals throughout the world find that communicating in a bilingual or even a multilingual work environment is a fact of life. These bilinguals attend meetings, exchange information, and make decisions using a second language. The information transfer and decision making taking place in these second-language meetings have a significant and direct impact on global business activities. Consequently, skill in and willingness to use a second language (in particular, English, because of its position as the international business language) as the medium of exchange to conduct business meetings has become increasingly important.

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Widespread anecdotal evidence and a few empirical studies suggest that Hong Kong bilingual Chinese are not as verbally active as Westerners in intercultural meetings (Bilbow, 1992, 1996). One explanation is that these bilinguals do not possess interactive communication skills. Another explanation is culturally based; that is, bilinguals fear a loss of face by speaking improperly or by exposing their weaknesses in unfamiliar topic discussions. Face behavior is the dominant social dynamic in the high-context Chinese culture (Hsu, 1981). Hsu notes that losing face is the ultimate social sanction and that it actually has a more profound effect than physical fear has.

Because of its prominence as an international business center and its pattern of multiple and simultaneous language use, Hong Kong is an ideal research site for a comparison of the first- and second-language business communication of Chinese bilinguals. In Hong Kong, English is one of the major business, governmental, and legal languages in an oral trilingual (English, Cantonese, and Mandarin) working environment. Hong Kong bilingual Chinese engage primarily in Cantonese language conversations, as their fellow colleagues (about 95% or so) are Cantonese-speaking Chinese. However, they also have to communicate in English with local non-Chinese-speaking expatriates, with business travelers visiting Hong Kong, and with overseas customers or suppliers via telephone. Added to these interactions are occasional conversations in Mandarin with Chinese individuals from China or Taiwan. These communication dynamics result in a multilingual environment in which Cantonese bilinguals switch between two languages (Cantonese and English) and possibly a third language (Mandarin) on a daily basis. Cantonese occupies the position as the dominant oral language, but English and, occasionally, Mandarin (as a third language) also have a continuing presence in a firm's oral communication system.

This study examined the business communication behavior of Hong Kong bilingual Chinese as they took part in first- and second-language decision-making meetings. Bilingual Chinese live in a collective culture and speak Cantonese (a high-context language) in general and English (a low-context language) in business conversations with foreigners and non-Cantonese speakers (Hofstede, 1991). One would anticipate that contextual differences would influence microlinguistic elements and interactive patterns, such as turn taking and topic management. Using a quasi-experimental design that made possible the direct comparison between first-language (Cantonese) and second-language (English) communication behavior of Cantonese bilinguals, I focused on business dialogs that approximated communication in on-the-job corporate environments in Hong Kong. I first compared the communication patterns of 11 Hong Kong bilingual Chinese groups as they held comparable first- and second-language meetings. Then I plotted and described the turn-taking behavior of one of these groups. Through these analyses, I comment on whether Hong Kong bilingual Chinese communicate the same or differently in Cantonese- or English-language meetings, how the quantity and quality of the communication are affected by the languages they use, and the effect of multiple language use on communication effectiveness and efficiency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To investigate the communication behavior of Chinese bilinguals, I use communication accommodation theory (CAT) to bridge microscopic (interlocutor's utterances) and macroscopic (reasons for turn-taking and topic management difference) issues. I also discuss second-language proficiency influences in Hong Kong business and cultural determinants to explain bilinguals' language use in Hong Kong.

COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY IN HONG KONG

CAT has integrated language, communication, and social science research to create "an integrated, interdisciplinary statement of relational processes in communicative interaction" (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 2). CAT is based on the premise that interlocutors unconsciously and mutually modify their linguistic and/or paralinguistic behaviors to become more similar to (convergence) or different from (divergence) their respective interlocutors (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987). Convergence strategies signal interactants' positive attitudes toward each other, such as increasing attractiveness and approval or showing solidarity, whereas divergence strategies accentuate differences between interactants (Giles et al., 1987). Besides convergence and divergence, Bourhis (1979) notes that interactants might also continue using their own styles (maintenance) without reference to partners' cues or, perhaps, as a deliberate reaction to partners' strategies.

CAT has been used to investigate ongoing communication encounters in a wide variety of communication settings, including both face-to-face and nonsimultaneous communication. However, recent applications of CAT have also demonstrated its usefulness in studying interviews (Street, Brady, & Lee, 1984), courtroom interactions (Linell, 1991), psychotherapy (Ferrara, 1991), radio newscasting (Bell, 1991), telephone answering machine messages (Buzzanell, Burrell, Stafford, & Berkowitz, 1996), and intercultural communication (Gallois, Franklyn-Strokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988). In this study, CAT is used to explain how and why bilinguals accommodate other speakers in first-language and second-language business. In accommodating other meeting participants, bilinguals mutually modify their communication behaviors. Following the basic premise of CAT, interlocutors become more similar to (convergence) or different from (divergence) their speech interactants by modifying their linguistic (e.g., language choice, vocabulary) and/or paralinguistic (e.g., dialect, use of voice, speech rate) behaviors (Giles et al., 1987). In their language behavior, bilinguals can also become more similar (convergence) or different (divergence) in first-language (Cantonese) and second-language (English) conversations. As a result, the language medium may change meeting dynamics.

Besides accommodation to language use, bilinguals also may modify their language use because of complex cultural norms dictating first- and/or second-language norms in particular settings. In Hong Kong, Cantonese is the dominant mode of oral communication. This dominance is reinforced by a cultural norm dictating that

Cantonese first-language speakers refrain from the use of English in conversations with other Cantonese-speaking individuals (Bond & Young, 1982; Gibbons, 1987). These authors point out that there are strong sanctions against choosing to converse in English when communicating with other Cantonese individuals. By contrast, anecdotal evidence from higher proficiency second-language Chinese societies, such as Singapore and Chinese communities in Vancouver, the San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, and Sydney, suggests that different language patterns have emerged in these societies. For example, suppose that two friends who formerly knew each other in Hong Kong meet in the United States. Both of these individuals have received advanced degrees at U.S. universities and have become accustomed to using English. The language they choose is usually English because they both are comfortable in this medium and there is no inherent pressure to use Cantonese. Upon meeting later in Hong Kong, these same friends communicate in Cantonese because they have been conditioned by the environment surrounding them to use the dominant communication medium.

In societies where Chinese dialects are not the dominant communication medium, Chinese individuals do not have ready access to other Chinese speakers. Consequently, they are forced to develop new communication habits and gradually develop more confidence in English-language messages because they have to interpret these messages by themselves. English is the dominant language in these environments, and overseas Chinese gradually adapt to the use of the low-context language and communication style.

With the Cantonese and English languages being spoken concurrently in the workplace, Hong Kong bilingual Chinese cannot help but monitor and unconsciously compare fist- and and second-language messages as they switch between languages. The messages coded in the high-context language (Cantonese) may contain a higher amount of stored information or content to the receivers, whereas messages received in the low-context language (English) are more likely to rely on transmitted information and be lacking in stored content (Hall, 1983; see also Hall, 1976). In a high-context communication, the primary responsibility lies with the receiver who decodes the message in light of both the context and the verbal content of the message (giving the first priority to the context). In contrast, in low-context English-language communication, the receiver looks to the words in the messages first and only then to the context. Gudykunst and Nishida (1984) suggest that high-context cultural members report greater attributional confidence in their judgments about the meaning of received messages with the use of less overt information seeking than do their low-context U.S. receiver counterparts. Consequently, the verbal message in an English communication can be equivalent to a Cantonese message, but Cantonese bilinguals may still perceive that there is a higher level of content in the Cantonese message.

There is general agreement among communication theorists that culture affects all aspects of communication. Some theorists imply that there is a carryover from general conversation to business communication (Gudykunst, 1983; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984). These theorists argue that people from the same culture develop consistency in all areas of their communication behavior. Consequently, a Cantonese bilingual would use high-context communication behavior in general and in specific contexts such as business meetings.

In sum, bilinguals probably converge to other speakers within the complex cultural norms governing their interactions. As a result, they should exhibit different communication behaviors in meetings dominated by a particular language. My first two-part research question asks whether there are differences in both communication behavior and attitudes toward communication.

Research Question 1A: Do Chinese bilinguals exhibit different communication behaviors in interconnected first-language and second-language decision-making meetings?

Research Question 1B: Do Chinese bilinguals perceive first-language and second-language decision-making meetings differently?

SECOND-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN HONG KONG BUSINESS

Interactive communication is a process by which communicators fully use both listening and speaking skills in ongoing, two-way, and multiple-party communication environments. Bilinguals with fully activated interactive communication skills do not have to validate second-language messages because they have achieved proficiency levels in which first- and second-language messages contain an equivalent amount of communicated information.

In Hong Kong, the norms prescribing language use are complex and contradictory. There are two general language environments. At higher levels, in professional and business fields, English is the preferred medium of exchange. Even Cantonese professionals regularly use English in work-related conversations. There are no sanctions put on these professionals if they choose to communicate in English. Tung Chee-Hwa (chief executive of the Special Administrative Region), Anson Chan (chief secretary for the Administration), Martin Lee (chair of the Democratic Party), and Christine Loh (chair of the Citizens Party) regularly use English in speaking to the press and the local English media (two English-language television channels—*TVB Pearl* and *ATV World*— and two daily English-language newspapers—the South China Morning Post and the Hong Kong Standard). In fact, some Legislative Council members choose to communicate in English in the chamber discussions. The choice of language appears to be the personal option of the speaker.

In other segments of Hong Kong society, sanctions are placed on Cantonese bilinguals who choose English as their medium of communication. Peer pressure in Hong Kong discourages the development of interactive communication competence. Consequently, Hong Kong bilinguals have difficulties in developing interactive communication skills. At Hong Kong universities, bilingual students by and large choose to use Cantonese in their discussions in preparing case study assignments. The operating principle is similar to rate buster sanctioning in the Hawthorne experiments (see Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939/1967) because individuals wanting to practice English are pressured by peers not to show off their English proficiency. Once students graduate and take positions dealing with international business, these sanctions gradually are relaxed. As individuals progress to higher levels of responsibility, they tend to engage in more international communication encounters that require English.

In a business discussion involving Westerners who are unable to speak Cantonese, the social norms of the local Cantonese Chinese allow for code switching from English to Cantonese in either business or social topics, especially when sensitive issues need to be discussed with a Western counterpart. In such situations, the non-Cantonese-speaking Westerners are left out of the conversation and a designated Cantonese (if the Westerners are fortunate) with better English-speaking competency may summarize the conversation or engage in a separate conversation. This language interaction often can be observed in meetings during which a Western supervisor raises an issue in English and then the Cantonese subordinates conduct a Cantonese discussion in front of the Western superior. A designated language linchpin then summarizes the discussion and reports a summary statement back to the Western superior.

Even conscientious Chinese individuals have difficulty maintaining a balanced proficiency between first- and second-langauge communication skills (Pennington, Balla, Detaramani, Poon, & Tam, 1992). Because the societal pressure in the dominant Cantonese language environment restricts the use of English-language communication, Hong Kong bilingual Chinese live in an environment that is not conducive to using and improving second-language (English) competency. Accordingly, many Cantonese speakers do not feel confident enough to use English when Cantonese is an option. The Hong Kong language and cultural context has a direct impact on both the confidence and competency of Hong Kong bilinguals as they engage in English-language conversations.

The language and cultural context also affects communication participation and effectiveness. Prior studies (e.g., Bilbow, 1992, 1996; Du-Babcock, Babcock, Ng, & Lai, 1995; Hamzah-Sendut, Madsen, & Thong, 1989) have established that language proficiency is positively related to communication effectiveness and participation rates in second-language communication environments. Lower proficiency individuals contribute fewer ideas and engage in language simplification and avoidance strategies by adopting a variety of practices that either alter or reduce content and ignore difficult-to-express subjects (Corder & Roulet, 1977).

Competent communicators select and enact communication strategies when adapting to the demands of a situation (O'Keefe & Delia, 1982; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Waldron & Applegate, 1994; Wiemann & Backlund, 1980). High-proficiency second-language speakers, who have more control over their language speech acts, may accommodate their less proficient communication partners through inclusion strategies or may choose to ignore them through exclusion strategies (Du-Babcock et al., 1995). In exclusion strategies, higher proficiency speakers do not adapt their communication styles and vocabulary. Consequently, lower proficiency speakers cannot take an active role in interactive conversations and can only participate on those occasions when they are asked direct questions. In inclusion strategies, higher proficiency speakers make special efforts to draw the "less gifted speakers" into the communication flow. Passive individuals are actively encouraged to talk even though their language skills may be poorer than those of other group members.

To develop and maintain balance and consistency between the first-language and second-language meetings, the pressure is on the higher level proficiency speakers to accommodate the lower proficiency speakers. This accommodation may take the form of higher proficiency speakers assuming group maintenance roles (see Benne & Sheats, 1948) to provide a better structure with which to facilitate the lower proficiency speakers. In other words, their use of maintenance group roles can induce lower proficiency speakers to join into the conversations. For example, lower level speakers can be asked direct questions and then given time to respond without the fear of being interrupted. The higher proficiency second-language speakers can act as gatekeepers to give lower proficiency speakers uninterrupted airtime to think and compose thoughts for group presentation. High-proficiency second-language speakers may also adapt their communication behavior through the use of slower speech speed, clearer enunciation, a choice of simpler words and language patterns, and more attentive listening as displayed through positive body language (e.g., forward leaning as well as head nodding, hand gestures, and expressive facial behavior such as smiling) and the use of minimal encouragers such as "um-hum."

Prior studies have assessed the English-language interactions of native speakers and second-language interlocutors (e.g., Erickson, 1982; Fiksdal, 1990; Hayashi, 1988), whereas the present study examines the communication among Cantonese speakers using their first and second languages. Studies from the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) field have concentrated on language students who were in the early stages of second-language acquisition rather than on bilinguals who represent advanced stages of second-language acquisition (Pennington & So, 1993). The interlocutors in the present study were interacting within a much smaller range of competency differential, that is, at advanced proficiency levels, and without the inherent tendency of deferring to native-language speakers. All of the research participants involved in this study were bilinguals and had sufficient second-language capacity to undertake their business studies in their second language; however, the capacity and confidence to converse in their second language varied among these individuals. These participants (screened by the Hong Kong A-level English proficiency examination) were a select group of bilinguals who were completing their university studies in English.

The second set of research questions addresses whether second-language proficiency affects the way Hong Kong bilingual Chinese participate in first-language and second-language meetings.

Research Question 2A: Does the communication behavior of Hong Kong bilingual Chinese correlate with their second-language proficiency?

Research Question 2B: Do individuals with higher second-language proficiency participate at a higher rate in second-language meetings as compared to their involvement in comparable native-language meetings?

COMMUNICATION CONTEXT: TURN TAKING AND TOPIC MANAGEMENT

Turn taking is the ordering of moves that involve any organized interplay of speech acts. Feldstein and Welkowitz (1987) define a turn as beginning "the instant one participant in a conversation starts talking alone and end[ing] immediately prior to the instant another participant starts talking alone" (p. 454). A turn consists of all of the speech interactant's utterances up to the point another individual takes over the speaking role. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) demonstrate that the allocation of turns at talking among speakers is not only a matter of waiting for a silence but also a complex social organization of rights and responsibilities. There seems to be a tacit rule that when two interlocutors overlap, at least in polite conversation, someone usually sees the need for some kind of "repair." More generally, they point out that turn taking exhibits a recipient design; that is, speakers display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular counterparts who are coparticipants. Potential completion points are projected such that listeners can identify relevant transition points and either self-select or abide by the speaker's nomination of the next speaker. Each turn has a relationship with the turns that precede and follow it.

Some scholars (Kaplan, 1966; Ting-Toomey, 1985; Yum, 1988) have speculated that members of high-context cultures view the world in synthetic, spiral logic terms (a circular pattern), whereas individuals from low-context cultures view the world in analytical, linear logical terms (a linear pattern). Consistent with Ting-Toomey (1985), Ma (1993) noted that the thinking pattern reflected in Taoist discourse is in sharp contrast to what is demonstrated in Aristotelian rhetoric. That is, the circular thinking pattern is a surrogate for the Taoist notion of infinity. Yum (1988) also asserted that in East Asian cultures, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, communication is perceived as an ongoing process of infinite interpretation. This line of thought is consistent with and extends the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956) that established the possibility that language and culture mutually influence each other. Both Kaplan (1966) and Ma (1993) contrasted high- and low-context communication strategies, and both concluded that East Asians follow a circular thinking pattern, whereas Westerners use a linear pattern. To extrapolate a bit, individuals may follow circular or spiral thought and turn-taking patterns when making a complex decision in a high-context language, such as Cantonese, and follow linear turn-taking patterns in a low-context language, such as English.

In recent cross-cultural studies, researchers have contrasted turn-taking strategies and conversational topics. Fiksdal (1990) compared turn-taking strategies between native speakers and non-native speakers in conversation interactions. His analysis concluded that Japanese speakers use a much greater frequency of "sync talk" than Americans do. Hayashi's (1988) study distinguished between the ways English and Japanese speakers take turns in conversations. Yamada (1990) investigated the turn distribution strategies in business conversational topics between American and Japanese associates. He found that the Japanese take short turns and distribute their turns evenly regardless of who initiates a topic. In contrast, American participants distribute their turns unevenly, and the participants who initiate topics take the highest proportion of turns in discussing that topic. Yamada's study concluded that turn-taking behaviors differ in collectivist societies (such as Japan) and individualist societies (such as the United States). Topic and floor management contribute to the construction of conversational coherence with interactants developing coherence by applying culture-specific strategies (Erickson, 1982).

Conclusions and generalizations about culturally influenced turn-taking patterns must take into account the nature and subject of the topics discussed. In reviewing small-group communication studies, Hirokawa and Gouran (1989) noted that these studies collectively indicate that no network structure is universally superior in facilitating group interaction and performance, although some networks appear to be more facilitative for certain types of topics. When the task is relatively simple and requires only the collation of information, centralized structures are likely to be more facilitative than decentralized ones. These studies, which were conducted in the United States, show that Westerners also engage in interactive communication behavior and consequently suggest that Yamada's (1990) findings are not generalizable to all communication encounters in collectivist and individualist societies.

The communication task represented in the current study necessitated the use of an all-channel pattern. Engaging in strategic management discussions, the interlocutors in 11 groups were required to share information from their respective functional areas in order to reach optimal decisions and to meet the information-processing requirements of the complex task. To avoid suboptimization, or the acceptance of lower-than-optimal performance in an organizational unit (see Simon, 1976), the group members had to interactively integrate functional inputs and make decisions that contributed to the profitability of the entire firm and not just adopt decisions that would improve results in their respective areas of interest.

The third research question focuses on whether bilingual communicators adapt their turn-taking behavior to maintain consistency between the context level of the language and culture when switching between first and second languages.

> *Research Question 3:* Do communicators adopt culture-specific turn-taking strategies and, in the process, use different turn-taking strategies in low-context and high-context languages?

METHOD

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The present data set consists of transcripts of the dialogs of 11 groups (made up of 5 to 6 persons per group) of Hong Kong Chinese bilinguals. These groups competed in a computerized business strategy simulation, and the dialogs capture the strategy development process as it evolved in the group meetings. Sixty-six individuals enrolled in two sessions of a strategic management course at a Hong Kong tertiary institute were chosen to participate in the study. The work experience of the participants varied from part-time summer employment to full-time low-level managerial positions in both government and private firms. Typical employers included the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Hong Kong Housing Authority, American Standard, Hong Kong Bank, and various small- to medium-size Chinese firms. There were 45 male and 21 female participants.

From these 11 groups ($N = 66$), one group composed of 5 working professionals was chosen for topic analysis. The chosen group was selected for the following reasons: (a) Its membership was composed of individuals possessing intermediate to nearly native-like second-language competence and having concurrent full-time business experience, and (b) its members were engaged in daily or frequent intercultural encounters as part of their job functions. In addition, the chosen group achieved high quantitative results in the business game as indicated by their first-place score in an overall index of performance, as well as their first-place finish in return on investment and second-place finish in market share.[1]

PROCEDURES

The simulation used in the study is a computer-based replication of a manufacturing industry that produces and sells consumer durable goods (Cotter & Fritzsche, 1991). The 11 groups competed in a business policy game that used this computer simulation. The teams assumed the role of the top management of individual companies in an industry. Although not formally required by the simulation exercise, the groups designated roles for individual members, such as president and finance, marketing, human resources, and sales managers.

The simulation provided the setting for the development of realistic business dialogs. The competing teams held a series of meetings to develop and execute corporate strategies. Quarterly decisions representing the evolving firm strategies were made in the following eight areas: price and advertising, salespeople, finance, product models, research and development, production scheduling, plant construction and expansion, and sales (Cotter & Fritzsche, 1991, pp. 11-26). Because of the interactive nature of the computer model underlying the simulation, a decision made by one firm influenced not only the financial and competitive position of that company but also that of its competitors.

Four out of 8 group decision-making meetings were held and videotaped in videotaping studios equipped with professional facilities. Large-type nameplates were displayed on the tables in front of the participants for easy identification. To create a comparison of first- and second-language communication, the groups used English (designated as a second language) in two meetings and Cantonese (first language) in two meetings. The meetings held in English were transcribed verbatim in English, and the meetings in

Cantonese were transcribed in colloquial Cantonese (for transcription example, see the appendix). The transcripts for individual decision-making meetings held in English ranged between 25 to 35 pages for each group, whereas for the Cantonese meetings, the transcripts were between 30 to 50 pages for each group.

The mapping of transcripts was supplemented by two research procedures. First, the research participants (60 out of 66 responses) completed a self-report questionnaire asking about their perception of the business game experience. The questionnaire data provided additional texture and insight when comparing first- and second-language communication. Two questions were drawn from the questionnaire. The two questions are related to (a) individuals' perceptions of the degree of influence in first-language and second-language decision making and (b) their perceptions of the amount of information communication during the first-language and second-language meetings. Perceived influence was operationalized through the use of a single Likert-type item (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) requesting participants to self-report how much influence they thought they had on the English and Cantonese decision-making meetings, respectively, with high scores indicating high perceived influence (M = 4.32, 4.86; SD = 1.29, 1.31). Perceived amount of information exchange was operationalized through the use of a Likert-type item (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) requesting participants to self-report how much information was exchanged in the taped meetings (English and Cantonese, respectively) with high scores indicating that participants felt that the amount of information exchange was high (M = 4.13, 5.04; SD = 1.21, 1.37).

The second way in which transcript mapping and interpretation was aided and supplemented by participants was through their discussions of their group interactions. All of the participants of the single group chosen for additional analyses were interviewed both in a focus group discussion as well as in individual interviews. Members from the other 10 groups were informally queried when the researchers noticed patterns in the quantitative data that prompted follow-up questions to aid results interpretations.

To conduct comparative analysis of 11 groups, similarities and differences in the use of Cantonese and English were defined by (a) the length of speaking time by group members and (b) the number of turns taken by individuals possessing varying levels of English proficiency. *Speaking time* was calculated by using a stopwatch to measure the exact length of each conversational turn. Then, all of a speaker's times for these turns were added together to obtain total speaking time for a meeting. A *turn* was operationalized as the unit of conversation in which one speaker begins and ends an utterance (even if there are talk-overs or interruptions). *English proficiency* was determined by self-reports. Based on a 7-point Likert-type scale, individuals ($n = 60$) rated their English proficiency levels, with high scores meaning high proficiency. There were two items on the self-assessment sheet that asked participants to rate their speaking and their writing proficiencies. Pearson product moment correlations were performed to measure whether second-language proficiency was associated with an individual's speaking time and the number of turns taken in the decision-making meetings.

One of the 11 groups consisting of 5 working professionals was chosen for topic analysis. The topic analysis of this chosen group focused on the turn-taking behavior and patterns of communication interaction in the first-language and second-language meetings. The analysis of turn-taking behavior followed the procedure developed by Sacks et al. (1974). The dialogs were first arranged by turns for both the first-language and second-language meetings. Each turn was then related to one of the eight possible decision topic areas that were prescribed in the strategic management discussions (or a ninth category for background or nonrelated conversation). Once the dialogs were categorized by decision areas, the turns were assigned numerical numbers starting at Turn 1 and continuing through to the end of the dialog. Then, each decision area was plotted to show its frequency in the dialogs in both the first-language and second-language meetings. Rather than displaying all eight decision area plots, only one decision area, production scheduling, was selected for presentation in this article.

Numerical decisions in eight designated decision areas that reflected company strategies were the required end product of both the English and Cantonese meetings. The quasi-experimental design allowed for a direct comparison of the processes and interactions of participants as they used either Cantonese or English to make decisions. The design controlled the following: (a) language use, (b) length of meeting, and (c) attendance at meetings. Other variables, such as informal communication before and after meetings, were not controlled. As the decisions taken in the Cantonese and English meetings influenced both short- and long-term firm results, a direct objective comparison of success after each period was not possible. However, this condition realistically approximates real-world enterprise environments.[2]

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this section, I describe findings for the three research questions that focus on whether and how bilingual Cantonese make accommodations in first- and second-language meetings. I also found one unexpected result that is presented at the conclusion of this section.

Research Question 1 asked whether Chinese bilinguals exhibit different communication behaviors in interconnected first- and second-language decision-making meetings (Research Question 1A) and whether Chinese bilinguals perceive first- and second-language decision-making meetings differently (Research Question 1B). To answer these questions, *t* tests and Pearson correlation coefficients were performed to investigate whether there were any significant differences between the English and Cantonese meetings with regard to the four identified variables: (a) amount of speaking time, (b) number of turn takings, (c) perceived influence, and (d) perceived amount of information exchange. The mean score of the speaking time in English and Cantonese was almost the same (348.38 seconds and 318.56 seconds, respectively) (see Table 1). To determine whether the speaking time and the number of turn takings of individuals differed in the Cantonese and English meetings,

TABLE 1: **Mean Scores of the Four Identified Variables in English and Cantonese Meetings**

Variable	English M	English SD	Cantonese M	Cantonese SD	t Value
Amount of speaking time	348.38	260.60	318.46	245.25	.90
Turn taking	19.78	14.73	28.43	35.65	2.04*
Felt degree of influence	4.32	1.29	4.86	1.31	2.91*
Felt degree of information exchange	4.13	1.21	5.04	1.37	5.39*

*$p < .05$.

a paired sample t test was performed. Although the respective speaking times did not show a significant difference, the average number of turn takings in the Cantonese meetings was more than those in the English meetings ($t = 2.40$, $p < .05$). In addition, the length of speaking time per turn was shorter in Cantonese as compared to English (11.2 and 17.6 seconds per turn, respectively). Individuals felt that they were more influential ($t = 2.91$, $p < .05$) and that more information was exchanged ($t = 5.39$, $p < .05$) in the Cantonese meetings than in the English meetings (see Table 1).

Research Question 2 investigated the effect of language proficiency on the bilinguals' communication behavior. Research Question 2A asked whether the communication behavior of Hong Kong bilinguals correlates with their second-language proficiency. Research Question 2B asked whether bilinguals with higher second-language proficiency participate at a higher rate in second-language meetings as compared to their involvement in comparable native-language meetings.

Results indicated that there was a moderate relationship between high second-language proficiency and the amount of English used during meetings ($r = .37$, $p < .05$) and perceptions regarding the amount of information exchanged ($r = .34$, $p < .05$). In contrast, high second-language proficiency was only tangentially related to turns taken and the perceptions of influence over group results ($r = .18$, $p > .05$, and $r = .23$, $p > .05$, respectively). These findings revealed that more turns were taken in the Cantonese meetings and that individuals who took more turns in the English meetings were not necessarily the higher second-language-proficiency individuals. These conflicting findings may be the result of the method used in measuring turn takings. The number of turn takings was based on the turns taken by each individual despite the length of time spent on each turn. It is likely that individuals who had lower second-language proficiency were "followers" and tended to devote their turns to confirming and following the lead of the higher second-language-proficiency participants.

Research Question 3 asked whether bilinguals would adopt culture-specific turn-taking strategies and, in the process, use different turn-taking strategies between high-context Cantonese and low-context English. Figure 1 reveals that the interaction pattern of discussing the identified decision area of production scheduling in the Cantonese and English meetings followed different patterns. To illustrate these contrasting patterns, the analysis looks at the overriding difference and at the dimensions that define this difference. In the Cantonese meeting, production scheduling was discussed 10 times (in Turns 18-22, 30-42, 71, 80, 88, 94-95, 105, 113, 277, and 281). The topic first arose in Turn 18 and ended in Turn 281 (see Figure 1). In the 10th turn (Turn 281), a group decision was made. In contrast, production scheduling was discussed only twice (in Turns 44-49 and 186-189) during the English meeting (see Figure 1). The initial interaction occurred in Turns 44 to 49 with a group decision being announced in Turns 186 through 189.

In both meetings, all eight decision areas were discussed, but the interaction patterns showed striking contrasts between the first- and second-language meetings. The overall pattern of the first-language discussions was the intermixing of topic areas throughout the meeting. In contrast, in the English meeting, the pattern consisted of a sequential discussion of topics throughout the meeting and the complete absence of a mixed-topic discussion.

Table 2 identifies variables that define and possibly contribute to the differing patterns. These variables are role of chairperson, number and length of turns, overall process, sequence of turns, direction of communication, and role of group members. First, the chairperson played a more prominent role in the English-language meeting, and this behavior may have influenced the communication dynamics of the meeting. As the chairperson guided the meeting progress, the chairperson sequentially introduced in a predeter-

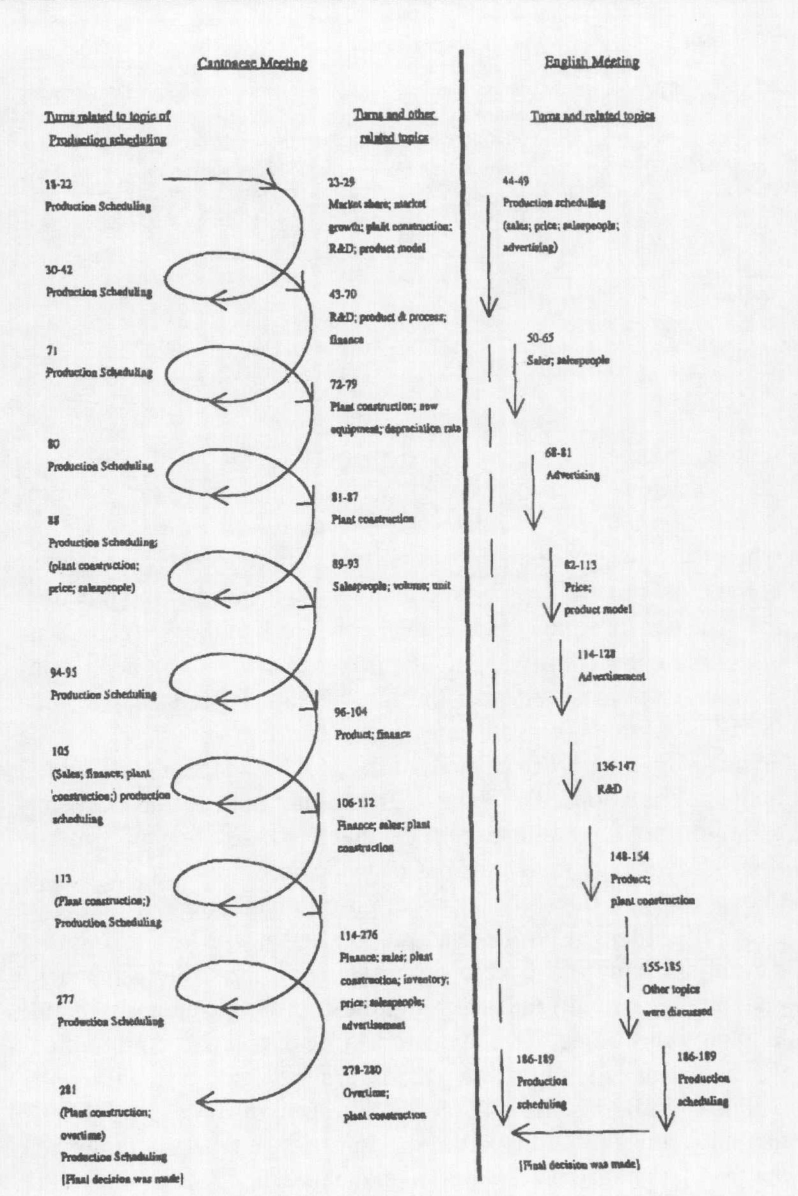

Figure 1: A Comparison of Group Decision-Making Patterns: Cantonese Versus English-language Meetings

TABLE 2: Comparisons of First- and Second-Language Meetings

Dimension	*Second Language (English)*	*First Language (Cantonese)*
Role of chairperson	Prime decision maker Maintenance and task functions	Guided decision-making process Maintenance function
Number and length of turn	Fewer turn takings Longer spoken time per turn	More turn takings Shorter spoken time per turn
Overall process	Linear Distinct	Circular Nondistinct
Sequence of turns	Predetermined	Random
Direction of communication	Chair to individual participant	Individual to individual
Role of group Members	Specialists	Generalists

mined order each speaker who then spoke about a designated decision area. With each designated speaker, the chairperson sequentially interacted in a two-way person-to-person conversation, while the other group members only occasionally interjected their comments into their respective dialogs. At the end of the meeting, the chairperson announced the decisions in all of the designated areas while concurrently asking the group to ratify these decisions.

In the Cantonese meeting, the chairperson played an active but a far different role. This role consisted of facilitating and guiding the decision-making process, as all of the group members participated in the deliberations. The group members did not confine their contributions to their assigned specializations, as they had in the English-language meetings, but instead showed a high propensity to question and interact with other group members.

Finally, there was one unexpected finding. When examining data about situational factors (the Hong Kong cultural and language environment) that surround the first-language and second-language meetings, there appeared to be distinctive communication behavior and interaction patterns among Cantonese bilinguals. Within overall similarities (as defined by speaking time, see Table 1), distinct patterns of information sharing emerged that distinguished the first-language and second-language meetings. Specifically, the bilingual Chinese supplemented the exchanges in the scheduled meeting with informal out-of-meeting first-langauge communication. The emergence of this informal out-of-meeting communication was only discovered in the focus group discussion that took place after the completion of the business game. This unexpected finding is elaborated upon in the next section.

DISCUSSION

The current study explores language choices during and attitudes about first- and second-language use in Hong Kong business communication. In this section, I discuss my research findings and the limitations and implications of my study.

FINDINGS

In general, the bilingual Chinese interlocutors maintained equivalent amounts of speaking time, context level, and complexity in comparable first- and second-language decision-making meetings. The length of speaking time among individuals was almost the same in the English and Cantonese meetings, but differences existed in the number and length of turn takings. That is, given an equivalent length of meeting time, group members took more and shorter turns in the Cantonese meetings and fewer and longer turns in the English meetings. The findings indicate that the Cantonese discussions were more interactive and that the speaking time per turn was about one third shorter in the Cantonese meetings. In addition, by directly comparing a Cantonese with an English meeting (see Figure 1), the differences in overall communication patterns become clear. The overall pattern of the meetings differed with a cyclical/spiral pattern in the high-context language (Cantonese) meeting and a linear/sequential pattern in the low-context language (English) meeting.

Within these linear and circular patterns, the role of the participants (the chairperson and group members) varied. Differences were observed in the number of turns, the length of turns, the sequence of turns, and the direction of communication. The differences resulted in meetings with distinct phases and predetermined turns (linear pattern) in the English meeting and nondistinct and random turns (circular pattern) in the Cantonese meeting. Given that the spoken time of the interlocutors was approximately the same in the first- and second-language meetings about a decision area, the question arises as to why the communication dynamics differed in these comparable communication environments and whether the differences were attributable to language proficiency influences or other cultural determinants.

With regard to language proficiency, results showed that individuals possessing high second-language proficiency had a tendency to speak more often in the English meetings. There was a significant difference in the length of speaking time between high-proficiency second-language speakers and those of low proficiency. The low-level proficiency speakers exhibited low participation in both the Cantonese and the English meetings. Perhaps the need for uncertainty reduction (Gudykunst, 1983) contributes to the understanding of why differing patterns of communication developed in the bilingual first- and second-language meetings. The unexpected finding of out-of-meeting first-language communication maximized the success of the second-language meetings. In the second-language meetings, only the extremely low-proficiency second-language speakers were excluded from participating equally; these individuals were confined to presenting their prepared information according to their designated roles and did so at low but equivalent participation rates in both languages. In other words, differentials in second-language proficiency altered the nature, but not the amount, of talk participation.

Uncertainty reduction theory has established that interlocutors pursue interaction strategies that reduce the ambiguities contained in prior messages (Gudykunst, 1983). Cantonese bilinguals can verify second-language messages by having follow-up confirming or amplifying conversations in the first language with trusted colleagues. In the process, these Cantonese bilinguals may be reducing their uncertainty about what is contained in the second-language messages. There is always the possibility of a perceived gap between the content of first- and second-language messages because low-context English messages do not contain as much stored information as high-context messages do (Hall, 1983). In addition, Cantonese bilinguals may carry over high-context communication behavior to second-language communication because they are accustomed to high-context communication behavior. Even if an English message is understood, confirming the message in Cantonese reduces uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1983) and affirms the accuracy of the English message. For all but fully bilingual individuals, this uncertainty reduction behavior is clearly a component of the Hong Kong language environment where English and Cantonese exist side by side.

Moreover, the Cantonese bilingual interlocutors used different topic management strategies in first- and second-language meetings. In the Cantonese meetings, the participants engaged in a spiral/circular and interactive communication behavior pattern, whereas a linear discussion pattern was observed when English was the medium of communication. The following argues for a culturally based explanation of the Hong Kong bilinguals' turn-taking behavior. Consistent with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956) and Ma's (1993) Taoist thinking pattern, these findings suggest that Chinese may adopt Western thought patterns when interacting in a Western language (English) while retaining Chinese thought patterns when communicating in their native language, Cantonese. Thus, in the process of transferring Chinese holistic thinking into English for communicating to the group, a linear process may be introduced, and it may become more natural to present topics and issues sequentially. Being afraid of looking foolish and losing face, the collectivist Chinese may have been reluctant to communicate spontaneously in second-language meetings. This reluctance to engage in spontaneous public interactive discourse is consistent with Chinese cultural behavior as described by Hsu (1981). It follows that the Hong Kong bilinguals were more comfortable in giving prepared reports than acting spontaneously and interactively in formally scheduled meetings.

The comparable success of the second-language meetings lies in the accommodation of the high-proficiency second-language speakers to the intermediate-proficiency second-langauge speakers. In the second-language meeting, the chairperson acted as the surrogate of a native English-speaking individual. After arriving at a group consensus to elevate the high-proficiency English-speaking individual to chairperson, the natural cultural tendency was to unconsciously appoint this person to a higher relational position and to defer to his or her authority based on Confucian-based hierarchy (Hsu, 1981; Westwood, 1992). Within the first-language group, the communication was among peers (friends or equals in the Confucian sense), and this configuration resulted in a correspondingly interactive flow of messages among all individuals, whereas the communication in the second-language group was among unequals and was associated with deference to and respect for the authority of a central figure who possessed high second-language communication skills.

LIMITATIONS

The research design of the present study did not anticipate that out-of-meeting discussions would become a major part of the communication system of the bilinguals. The research design was set up to measure comparable meetings in the first and second languages. The first-language meetings were relatively complete in themselves, as the bilinguals started from scratch and used the allocated meeting time to interact among themselves and finalize the quarterly decisions. In the second language, it is possible that the bilinguals simply went through the motions and confirmed the decisions made in their native language. Because the research design only measured in-meeting communication, it did not capture all of the relevant bilingual communication; it was only through the focus group discussion that bilinguals disclosed the importance that they attached to their first-language communication whether it took place in or out of the scheduled meetings.

Another limitation is the use of a business game to generate dialog. Even though research has shown that the study of business students has yielded valid data (Abdel-Khalik, 1974; Alpert, 1967; Ashton & Kramer, 1980), the use of actual dialogs from bilingual managers in business firms are preferable. This limitation was mitigated in the present study by the quasi-experimental design that made possible the direct comparison of bilinguals' first- and second-language communication behavior.

IMPLICATIONS

Against the background of the findings and limitations of my study, I suggest that additional research be conducted on bilinguals' communication behavior in different language environments. These studies would ideally contrast bilinguals' second-language accommodation in a Cantonese-dominant environment as opposed to an English-language-dominant environment. Additional studies could be conducted to find ways of encouraging Chinese bilinguals to take a more active role in intercultural communication encounters. These studies could be conducted within the framework of CAT to measure and assess the accommodation between high-context and low-context languages, namely Cantonese and English. The research could also determine in which direction bilinguals accommodate—do they accommodate toward a high-context communication style or toward a low-context communication style, and does the communication used vary across language environments?

When given the communication task of presenting a topic that is prepared in advance and in a structure that facilitates communication, the bilingual Chinese have the ability and are willing to take an active role in second-language meetings. Second-language communication differs from native-language communication for tasks that mandate spontaneous and interactive communication behavior. When faced with a communication task requiring spontaneous interactive and analytical communication behavior, the Hong Kong Chinese may fall silent in intercultural meetings and significant input may be lost.

These findings have important pragmatic implications for the first-language English-speaking interlocutors and for Cantonese bilinguals. Specifically, native English speakers should not expect Cantonese bilinguals to actively participate in interactive, analytical English-language meetings, nor should they interpret lack of participation as indicating that the bilingual Cantonese do not have ideas to express or that they lack analytical ability or creativity. As organizational and managerial communication researchers work increasingly in a global environment, workplace interactions in different languages and cultures will require additional attention from theorists and researchers.

NOTES

1. As a result of initially developing and subsequently implementing a workable and consistent strategy, the team adopted an industry leader perspective in both the English and Cantonese decision-making meetings. This group modified a sound overall corporate strategy in each successive meeting over a period of eight quarterly meetings. This group represented both a realistic and successful example of first- and second-language communication behavior, and the communication behavior displayed was deemed to be most like that of real-world professional communication.

The nature of the communication process from the firm environments in which these individuals were employed paralleled the communication environments described in "Patterns of Expatriate-Local Personnel Communication in Multinational Corporations" (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 1996). That is, expatriates who have limited host country language proficiency (labeled *Zone One* by these authors) and occupy higher hierarchical positions, interacted with local personnel who necessarily were required to use their second-language (English) when communicating with these expatriates. The local personnel who possess high second-language proficiency experienced and practiced this second-language communication pattern in their daily work environments. All members of the studied group had expatriate superiors and interacted in English conversations with superiors on a continuing basis.

2. The quasi-experimental communication tasks both accurately reflected and concurrently simplified real-world business communication. From a realistic standpoint, the decision-making environment was structured to allow the groups to receive feedback on the results of their decisions; the groups were motivated by the stimulus of being in a competitive environment. From a simplifying perspective, the omission of staffing and leading decisions in the strategy simulation and the absence of native English-speaking expatriates in the experimental groups represented deviations from the real-world business environment.

APPENDIX

Sample Texts in Discussing Issues of Sales Forecast and Inventory in English and Cantonese Meetings

<table>
<tr><th>Deliberations in Cantonese Meeting</th><th>Deliberations in English Meeting</th></tr>
<tr><td>唔, Ok, 我明白嘅，就而家我地 worries 係 quarter four 果度嘛, quarter three 就算計個 projection 咁樣去呢, 我地 merely cover 到果個 sales volume, 有個 excessive stock 係 8 個 thousand, what if 我地個 forecast projection 係錯呢? 即係如果係個 variant 係 positive, 即係話我地賣多過我地 projection 393 呢, 我地有 run into the risk of losing the opportunity, in view of 咁呢, 如果我地而家加果個 OT 呢, 亦都係貴,加 second shift 係貴, 喱個 term 呢, 我...我果家跟加呢個 quarter 就應該唔使加, 跟住黎果個 quarter 呢, 我地就睇下黎緊... 即係 coming 個 quarter 個 result and 去 determine, 但係 line 呢, 而家我... 覺得係要加喇, 因爲我地睇好第 4 個 quarter, 好唔好呀?

即係而家我地加... 加果條 line, 一定要我地決定架喇, project last quarter, 關於 shift 果度呢, 我地可唔可以等多個 quarter, 係 maybe next quarter 我地決定, 因爲加 shift 我地即刻可以投產.

Translation provided below:

OK, I understand. According to our worries now, 'quarter four' is the issue. From the projection of 'quarter three', we merely cover the sales volume with an 'excessive stock' of 8,000 [units]. 'What if' our 'forecast projection' is wrong? That is, if this 'variant' is positive, in other words, we sold more than our 'projection' - 393 [units], we will 'run into the risk of losing the opportunity'. In view of this, if we add in an 'OT', it is also expensive. Adding the 'second shift' is expensive, for this 'term', I... I eh this quarter will not have any increase, but the coming... that is the result of the 'coming' 'quarter' to 'determine', but regarding the line, I... think [the line] has to be increased now, because we think that the 4th 'quarter' is looking good, is that O.K.?

That is, we add that 'line' now; we surely should make a decision. 'Project last quarter' - about the 'shift', we can't wait for another 'quarter'. During 'maybe the next quarter' because if we add [another] 'shift', we can start our business right away.</td><td>Well, em... at the beginning of the year, we have kept a, quite a, a low, I mean a safe inventory level.

However, we have to remind you that last time when we did the sales forecast, and then we project the sales to be $392 thousand or $394 thousand something like that.

But in the end, how come, eh, the sales were not what we had forecasted or estimated, so that's why we have a big inventory stored.

Em, fortunately, our plants, the storeroom can hold this inventory at 10 cents per unit because we have a three hundred thousand, eh, unit storage area in our plant.

If you want to, eh, let's say, our objective or our strategy to, eh, develop our sales in the area requires us to explore opportunities regarding the storage of the, em, of the finished goods.</td></tr>
</table>

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