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Crossing linguistic and cultural barriers: an analysis of intercultural communication between Chinese traders and South Africans in Cape Town

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Magister Artium in the Department of Linguistics, University of Western Cape.

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Miché Chanelle Thompson

3025516

Supervisor: Prof. Charlyn Dyers

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Declaration

I declare that *Crossing linguistic and cultural barriers: an analysis of intercultural communication between Chinese traders and South Africans in Cape Town* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources that I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Miché Chanelle Thompson

Signed……………………….

Date………………………….

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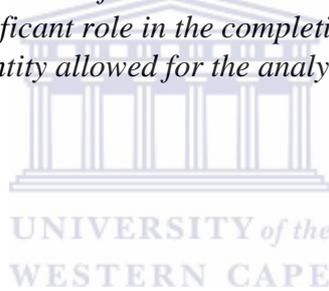
Abstract

In recent years South Africa has seen a significant growth in the number of migrants entering its borders. The country has opened its doors to not only migrants from the African continent, but also to immigrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Indian subcontinent. The increasing number of Chinese businesses in South Africa means that South Africans are now coming into fairly regular contact with Chinese people from mainland China. This study addresses the issue of intercultural communication between Chinese store keepers and South African customers and seeks to investigate the ways in which the two juxtaposed cultures communicate effectively despite linguistic and cultural barriers. As a study on intercultural communication, the theoretical framework for this is globalisation, with a particular focus on concepts like intercultural communication, politeness and face theory.

The study adopts a qualitative research design with an ethnographic methodological approach to examine and describe the linguistic practices of Chinese and South Africans in the city of Cape Town when they interact in the business contexts. The study relies largely on interviews with Chinese business owners and their South African clients, as well as observation of the interaction between these two groups. The research population consists of 8 Chinese interviewees, random interviews with 4 customers and 4 shop assistants, and observation at stores in a local China Town (a collection of Chinese shops and businesses). For research purposes and for the sake of informed consent, a Chinese research assistant and translator assisted the principal researcher. The major tool for analysis is a content analysis of the transcribed interviews. From these transcribed interviews, I describe the strategies used for effective intercultural communication between the two groups, and aim to draw conclusions on how these strategies have enabled Chinese businesses to flourish in Cape Town.

<center>**Key words**</center>

Chinese

South Africa

English

Mandarin

Language

Content Analysis

Globalisation

Intercultural communication

Politeness theory

Ethnographic methods

Chapter One

Introduction and Background

This study focuses on inter- and cross cultural communication, specifically concentrating on the communicative practices of some Chinese traders in Cape Town, South Africa, with English as the main language of interaction. The focal point is the endeavour to determine the strategies used by these traders to communicate effectively with Capetonian customers in the small business sector.

Introduction

In order to provide a context for this study, the following section discusses the phenomenon of migration into South Africa by Chinese people from the People's Republic of China. The Chinese influence in Africa both economically and politically are also touched on here. This section also covers the significance of the research project in the field of linguistics, as well as the aims of the study, the specific questions that the research endeavours to answer, and a brief description of the methodology as well as the outlines of the thesis chapters.

1.1 Global migration

The phenomenon known as globalisation is perhaps the most defining characteristic of the late-modern era. One of its major characteristics is the increased migration of people of various origins to new destinations around the world (Antia, 2000). According to the International Labour Organization (2004) cited in Labour Market Review (2007:7), "cross-border flows have been on the rise in recent decades. Added to traditional movements from South to North is growing immigration within the developing world". Increasing migration patterns around the world appear to be characteristic of globalization, and these are ignited by an increasingly wider income gap between poor and rich parts of the world. This gap is what forces people to seek economic stability in other parts of the world (International Labour Organization, 2004). These factors, in conjunction with the growing populations in many developing countries, means that migration is likely to increase (Labour Market Review,

2007:7). Although the current migration of Chinese to South Africa bears all the hallmarks of modern global migration, Chinese migration to Africa has not always been an easy transition.

1.1.2 The Chinese and the early labour system in South Africa

The first Chinese were said to have arrived in South Africa's Cape Colony in the late seventeenth century. According to Harris (2006) these migrants were usually individual males who came ashore of their own accord from passing ships. They were predominantly merchants or small-scale traders. At the time, the number of Chinese in South Africa was miniscule, up to the mid-nineteenth century when there was a dramatic increase in numbers, which was brought on by the upsurge in Chinese emigration and the indentured labour system (Harris, 2006). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indian and Chinese indentured labour systems were introduced into Colonial South Africa. Between 1860 and 1911, the Colony of Natal imported 152 184 Indians to labour on the sugar plantations, and between 1904 and 1910, 63 695 Chinese were imported by European recruiters to work in the gold mines in the Transvaal Colony. This meant that there was an incline in Asian labourers in South Africa (Harris, 2010). According to Northrup (1995), "coolie" labourers (the derogatory term for Indian and Chinese workers) were motivated to participate in the indentured labour system by "push" and "pull" factors. These "push" factors were detrimental factors from home such as poverty, overpopulation and civil war; where "pull" factors were the positive opportunities that were posed abroad. The most common theme for the success of the indentured labour systems according to Carter (1997:52) was "the establishment of a link between famine and migration which has led to a belief in the predominance of push factors as causal explanations for the recourse of indenture overseas". The indenture system, which was essentially a milder form of slavery in that the colonisers still had power over the labourers, was perceived as an escape from the harsh circumstances that existed in Asian territories for over a hundred years (Harris, 2010).

1.1.3 Early Chinese migration to South Africa

According to Laribee (2008), the Chinese population immigrated to South Africa in three "distinct waves". The *first wave* arrived here from the southern Chinese port of Canton and settled in Johannesburg to work in the mines. They established what is now known as the first

Chinatown in Johannesburg (Laribee, 2008:357). As time progressed, the Chinese appeared to have been side-lined, existing on the fringes of society as South Africa began its struggle for freedom (Harris, 2006:180). The *second wave* arrived from Taiwan in the 1970s, facilitated by the Apartheid regime's strong ties with the Taiwanese. At the time, the Apartheid government was in search of alliances with countries of similar marginal status (Laribee, 2008). Forming the alliance with Taiwan served the interests of both countries, and the population of Taiwanese in South Africa quickly rose from small numbers to approximately 10 000 by 1980 (McNamee, 2012). By 1994 the number of Taiwanese in South Africa began to dwindle as a result of the new political dispensation, while post-Apartheid South Africa welcomed up to 200 000 migrants from mainland China (mainly from Hong Kong). This is the *third wave* of Chinese migrants who arrived post-1994 and settled throughout South Africa.

Following its transition to democratic rule after the end of Apartheid, South Africa has seen a significant growth in the number of migrants entering the country in recent years. The country has opened its borders not only to migrants from the African continent, but also from China and the Indian subcontinent. While some of these migrants have been subjected from time to time to ethnolinguistic intolerance (McNamee, 2012), many have taken up entrepreneurship and, in the case of the Chinese migrants, have been quite successful, particularly in the light of China being South Africa's largest trading partner. Large numbers of Chinese now reside in countries throughout the African continent, but South Africa by far has the highest number of Chinese residents on the African continent, housing over 300 000 people of Chinese descent (Park, 2008).

The presence of Chinese traders has led to competition in the small business sectors and has also caused outbreaks of xenophobic attacks (McNamee, 2012). Regardless of these attacks, they have continued to flourish in their small business enterprises throughout South Africa and some African countries, and the influx of Chinese products and enterprises has led to a new way of life in African towns and cities (McNamee, 2012). Chinese-owned shops are seemingly on the forefront of trading relations, and these shops are rapidly changing Africa's integration into the world economy (Dobler, 2009). Subsequently, South Africans and Africans alike have now been given the opportunity to purchase products and services they have never before been exposed to; most significantly, at a lower cost than many local and other international products. Dobler (2009:158) claims that by providing cheaper products to African consumers, Chinese migrants open up new commodity markets and change African

consumption patterns. Shelton and Kademba (2012:37) suggest that Beijing strategically wants to stimulate the African economy and concomitantly increase the need for Chinese products, which then creates an opportunity for enterprises to establish a base in Africa.

1.2 The engagement between China and Africa

For hundreds of years, Africa's natural resources have inspired external interest in the continent. Dating to the colonial period, European powers had their focus set on mineral exploitation. The same holds true today, as there is a growing demand for Africa's raw materials, with industrialised nations attempting to engage Africa in pursuit of mineral exploitation (Shelton and Kademba, 2012). China is not excluded from this expedition. Over the past 15 years, China has established itself as an influential player across the African continent (Tull, 2007:459).

 On a global scale, China has become a force to be reckoned with. According to Breslin (2009) China's engagement with the global economy has brought about many successes, and China is now also of great significance to the functioning of the global economy, not just that of South Africa. Shelton and Kademba (2012:17) argue that "Chinese investments in Africa clearly boost local economies and create new commercial opportunities in domestic markets". By offering aid to African countries without preconditions, China's involvement poses a far more appealing approach than the prevalent Western aid (Tull, 2006). China is currently significantly invested in six African countries, namely Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Despite China's seemingly unconditional aid in Africa's economy, critics of the Africa-China relationship point out a major flaw in the business and political agreements between these countries. The biggest concern is the issue of human rights and how Chinese engagement disregards the problem of human rights in affected countries. Allegedly, China has been putting its economic development and the acquisition of natural resources ahead of concerns for human rights. But the African countries are not excluded from the blame, and Taylor (2008) argues that "many African states that enjoy Chinese support not only trample on civil and political rights […], but also subvert their citizens' economic and social rights" (2008:63). China has a non-interference principle and a no-strings-attached stance on the issue of human rights and governance in the countries they are engaged in (Taylor, 2008). For China, the paramount human rights consist of the right to food, shelter, security and

economic development, which clashes with the Western notion of human rights and which rights are deemed indispensable. In relation to the non-interference policy, Taylor (2008:63) maintains that "doing no harm, rather than a studied disinterest, needs to be part of China's overall African policy, something that Beijing is bound to recognize.". The criticism of China's policy is thus that they will do business with anyone, regardless of human rights issues

Agreements between South Africa and China appear to be mutually beneficial. South Africa has access to the Chinese markets, and Chinese companies acquire guaranteed affordable supplies from South Africa. According to Shelton and Kademba (2012:21), the steel industry in China has had to meet excessive demands, and they have thus strategically bought mines and smelters in South Africa, to ensure access to affordable raw materials.

Chinese engagement in Africa has raised hopes for China's involvement to be a catalyst for economic development, improvements in infrastructure, and for Africa's global status to increase (Gill, Huang and Morrison, 2007). This hope has clearly been realised in the ensuing years as China has negotiations with the aforementioned African countries. There is also the hope that Chinese influence will somehow create ways to combat Malaria and HIV Aids (Gill, Huang and Morrison, 2007). According to Gill, Huang and Morrison (2007:8)

> "Beijing's approach with Africa fits squarely within China's global foreign policy, including important initiatives in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Africa is seen as integral to Beijing's strategic ambition to advance a "new security concept" that can ensure China's peaceful rise as a global power and strengthen relations with key neighbours and regions".

Despite the economic engagement that China has with Africa, most Chinese traders have forged their own pathways to Africa and remain excluded from the policies and the politics of Africa-China relations (McNamee, 2012). McNamee (2012) also states that Africa is the "bottom-rung destination" for the average Chinese migrant, and they have only chosen to migrate here because of the minimal entry requirements and the fact that their skills seem to be more valuable here than in China. It is in Africa that they can put to use skills that are apparently of less value in the Chinese job market.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Many African cities currently share a common feature that has emerged over the last ten years: in every African town, be it small or major, there is at least one shop owned by a Chinese migrant (Dobler, 2009). In the South African context, the impact of Chinese entrepreneurship is all too obvious as the country now has China Town complexes in nearly every major city and there are at least two Chinese shops in most malls and shopping centres. The increasing number of Chinese businesses in South Africa means that South Africans and Chinese are coming into daily contact and exploring each other's worlds at grassroots level. This then raises questions regarding what Wiseman (2003) terms "intercultural communication competence". This, he argues, "involves the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (2003:192). Intercultural communication not only involves communicating with people of different cultures, but also gaining some knowledge of their languages and of course performing this knowledge. With the constant intercultural contact between Chinese and South Africans it is worth examining whether the groups display a degree of intercultural competence.

It is a common tendency to be in constant close proximity with a different culture and yet to still avoid learning what Shaules (2007) refers to as the "deep culture" of a group. Deep culture refers to "the unconscious meanings, values, norms and hidden assumptions that allow us to interpret our experiences as we interact with other people" (Shaules, 2007:11-12). Living in a country rich in diversity and different cultures, it would then be considered of paramount importance for Chinese traders to attempt to understand the "deep culture" of South Africans as a whole. With this in mind, it is ostensibly worth questioning whether the Chinese have acquainted themselves with the culture of the "average" South African in order to equip them with the skills to survive and run successful enterprises in South Africa. And if this is not the case, how, if at all, do South Africans and Chinese bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps, specifically in business and small enterprise orientated contexts?

The significance of this study is that it reveals some of these intercultural and linguistic strategies employed by Chinese traders in crossing the linguistic and cultural divides between themselves and their South African customers. In a globalised world, an awareness of such strategies can be extremely useful in forging harmonious inter-ethnic relationships.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Despite the daunting challenges the Chinese have had to face and overcome, their presence in South Africa has become part of the landscape of most towns and cities, and despite the myriad socio-economic and political problems of many African countries, doing business here is profitable for Chinese migrants. However, they face many social and intercultural obstacles especially in South Africa with its diversity of cultures, languages and people.

While substantial research has been done on immigrant and migrant traders in Africa (McNamee, 2012, Knight, 2007, Shelton and Kademba, 2012, Rwodzi, 2011) and migration and mobility in Africa (Bakewell and Jonsson, 2011) the infiltration of the Chinese enterprise in South Africa has not been thoroughly explored, especially in the field of Linguistics. According to Gill, Huang and Morrison (2007:10) "China will need to work assiduously to overcome obstacles tied to language, culture, religion and racial bias. Because Chinese is not widely spoken in Africa, Chinese diplomats, businessmen, technicians, doctors, peacekeepers and other "cultural ambassadors" must learn languages widely spoken in Africa– such as English and French – in order to be most effective".

The significance here is the fact that even though the majority of the Chinese traders speak little to no English, their businesses seem to thrive in a country where the vast majority of the population have no proficiency in Cantonese or Mandarin. The question thus arises: what are the strategies used by Chinese traders in order to cross boundaries of language and culture to do business effectively in South Africa?

1.5 Research aims and objectives

The specific aims of the study are:

1. to identify the strategies used by Chinese business owners and shop-keepers in order to communicate and do business with South African customers
2. to explore how Chinese traders in South Africa bridge the cultural and communicative barriers in order to do business effectively;
3. to examine how Chinese communicate and interact with South African customers and
4. to determine the sentiments of Capetonian customers towards Chinese traders and China Town centres

1.6 Research Questions

The major research question of this study is: How do Chinese entrepreneurs cross intercultural and linguistic boundaries to do business effectively in South Africa?

This is supported by the following sub-questions:

1. How is language used and adapted in interactions between Chinese and South Africans (specifically, some Capetonians) in trade settings?
2. How interculturally competent are the traders forming part of this study?
3. How do South African customers view and respond to Chinese businesses and those who staff them?
4. What is the impact of the linguistic landscapes of Chinatowns on customers' perceptions of these spaces?

1.7 Methodology

The methodology for this study is largely quantitative in nature, as the study relies on interviews and ethnographic methods. The research population comprises store owners and shop keepers as well as shop assistants in a major China Town complex in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town, Western Cape. Additionally, customers who shop at this China Town complex are also randomly interviewed in order to determine their stance on the presence of Chinese in South Africa as well as their attitudes towards the products and services rendered.

In terms of the ethnographic observations, customer and shop-keeper interactions are observed, as well as the interactions of (non-Chinese) shop assistants with their Chinese employers/managers. This is done to attempt to reveal the strategies and linguistic tools Chinese make use of to communicate effectively with South African customers. The bulk of the data however, relies on the interviews conducted with Chinese store owners and shop keepers, which seeks to elucidate which tools if any, that they make use of to communicate. The observations and interviews are equally important in this study, as the responses from the participants are compared to what is observed by the researcher. Findings are then drawn from these comparisons.

For ethical purposes, consent forms have been drawn up and explained to the Chinese shop-keepers by a Chinese research assistant (a Chinese student at the University of the Western Cape) to ensure informed consent. The assistant was also present throughout all the interviews and co-conducted the interviews with the primary researcher. Furthermore, an external translator transcribed these interviews and translated them for analysis.

1.8 Chapter Outline of Other Chapters

Chapter 2: *Theoretical and Analytical Framework*. The theoretical framework discusses globalization and intercultural communication as the umbrella concepts under which this study falls. It also introduces Face and Politeness theory, a notion which significantly informs the analysis of the study. Lastly it presents an overview of Content Analysis which is the analytical framework for this study.

Chapter 3: *Literature Review*. This section presents literature on work that is related to this research project. This includes literature on Chinese migration, the history of Chinese in South Africa as well as their established identities. Lastly it presents an overview of research done on Chinese intercultural communication and how they adapt culturally in host countries.

Chapter 4: *Methodology*. The methodology chapter gives a detailed description of how the research is conducted and illustrates the process of data collection. This section includes the description of the research population, the method of analysis and the ethical considerations of the project.

Chapters 5 & 6: *Data Analysis and Discussion*. These chapters firstly discuss and analyse the data and seek to furthermore present findings of the research. They conclude with a discussion of the findings in terms of the research aims and questions.

Chapter 7: *Conclusions*. The final chapter summarises the findings of the study and presents deductions and conclusions to the thesis.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Chapter Two</h1>

<h2 style="text-align:center">Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks</h2>

Introduction

The theoretical framework for this thesis essentially draws on studies on Globalization on the one hand, and Intercultural Communication, with specific focus on Politeness and Face, on the other. This chapter also presents an overview of Content Analysis as the analytical framework for the study.

2.1 Globalization and Transnationalism

As a theory, Globalization appears to have reached its apex in the optimistic 1990s, when it seemed that a 'New World Order' of peace and prosperity was becoming a reality. In Europe, the Berlin Wall had fallen, signalling the end of the 'Cold War' era, and in Africa, the Apartheid regime formally ended with South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. However, the 21st century has seen a marked decline in world peace, and the world now has millions more refugees from troubled states like Syria, Eritrea, South Sudan, Libya, and so on. This has led to scholars like Rosenberg (2005:3) declaring that 'the age of globalisation is over'. Rosenberg concludes that 'globalisation' should rather be replaced by 'interdependence', which perhaps more accurately sums up the current Sino-South African relationship, and the need of China's citizens to come to live and work in South Africa.

 In terms of China's stance in the age of globalization, Bijan (2005:20) claims that the most significant economic choices China made was to embrace globalization rather than exclude the country from it. It is said that Beijing eagerly embraced the notion of globalization (Bijan, 2005, Deng and Moore, 2004). Furthermore, Bijan makes the claim that "China's peaceful rise will further open its economy so that its population can serve as a growing market for the rest of the world, thus providing increased opportunities for - rather than posing a threat to - the international community" (Bijan,2005:24).

The lure of globalization theory and its continued hold on the late-modern imagination can still be seen in descriptions of it as the integration of cultures, politics and economics, worldwide (Cameron, 2001, Antia, 2000). For these scholars, globalization entails the

interaction of people from different cultures, locations and so forth, and (often, but not always) the integration and appropriation of the societal norms of the dominant group by the minority group. Ideals and beliefs become not only known, but shared across the globe, thanks to the affordances of technology allowing people to communicate and interact regardless of space and time constraints. Fairclough (2009:318) claims that "globalization is both a set of changes that are actually happening in the world, and a word — 'globalization' — which has quite recently become prominent in the ways in which such changes are represented".

Kearney (1995:548) captures the optimism of the 1990s when she defines globalization as social, cultural, economic, demographic processes that not only take place within nations, but that also transcends them. This transcendence has been perpetuated in such a way that one can no longer limit identities to one specific place, as there are world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events that occur miles and miles away, and vice versa (Kearney, 1995:548).

Globalization has caused notions of culture and ethnicity to not be exclusive or limited to particular localities. For example, one would no longer expect Chinese notions of culture to be restricted to China, given that globalization has resulted in a dispersal of cultures, languages, ideologies and more importantly, people. Migration, which is the movement from one locality to another, has caused "cultural flows" (Jacquemet, 2005: 259). Peck and Banda (2014:2) state that in South Africa, Cape Town has continuously been transforming owing to trans-localization and transnational cultural flows. They also argue that these cultural flows are being brought about through technological means and migration.

Closely linked to globalization, is the notion of transnationalism. Transnationalism and globalization could be used interchangeably, however transnationalism has a limited purview, in that where globalization refers to the decentralization of processes that moved from one nation to a global space, transnationalism specifically refers to process that transcend one or more nations. A practical example Kearney proposes is that transnationalism is a term used for the migration of nationals across the borders of one or more nations (Kearney, 1995:548).

In essence then, transnational migrants move into and create transnational spaces. One sees this notion in the Chinese specifically, where one does not have to go to China specifically to have access to Chinese products, or be exposed to Chinese culture or eat Chinese cuisine. Their practices transcend localities, however as Kearney argues, things that happen in their

country of origin would still influence and shape local happenings, no matter where in the world Chinese find themselves. These trans-migrants may find themselves in different countries and a part of different nation states, but they are still linked to the essential notion of home that is China.

2.2 Intercultural communication

This section presents an overview of work done on studies on intercultural communication which forms the theoretical core of the research study. The aim of this study is to determine how Chinese and South Africans, both groups being from different cultural backgrounds, with different mother tongues, belief systems and codes for politeness, communicate effectively despite these cultural differences.

2.2.1 Culture and communication

Scollon and Scollon (2001) define culture as "any of the customs, worldviews, language, kinship systems, social organisations, and other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices of a people which set that group apart as a distinctive group" (2001:139). Essentially, culture is the behaviours, beliefs, values and ideals of a group which make them distinctive and different from other groups. *Intercultural communication* is thus the sending and receiving of messages across cultures or interculturally, be it verbal or non-verbal. It can also be understood as the negotiation of meaning between people or groups from different cultures.

Culture is generally understood as common or shared inherent characteristics in a group of people. According to Allwood (1985) we can analytically differentiate between four cultural dimensions: *patterns of thought, patterns of behaviour, patterns of artefacts* and *imprints in nature*. *Patterns of thought* deal with the fact that people in a culture share common ways of thinking which also include their beliefs, norms, values and attitudes. *Patterns of behaviour* involve common ways of behaving, from ways of speaking to ways of conducting commerce and industry (Allwood, 1985:2). *Patterns of artefacts* is the cultural dimension that focuses on the way a culture manufactures or uses particular objects in a way that is unique to them, a practical example being Chinese eating with chopsticks. *Imprints in nature*, according to Allwood (1985:2), is the long-lasting imprints left by a group in its natural surroundings. These imprints could include agriculture, roads and human habitats. All human activities

involve the cultural dimensions of *patterns of thought* and *patterns of behaviour*. Holistically then, "a culture is a collection of beliefs, habits, living patterns, and behaviours which are held more or less in common by people who occupy particular geographic areas" (Zhang & Zhou, 2008:103). For Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse & Savery (2001:5), culture is shared and is a stable construct, "consisting of patterns, values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions and expectations". These characteristics of culture imply that culture is socially constructed. Zhang and Zhou (2008) furthermore claim that culture and communication are inseparable, as culture dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds. The way we speak is therefore dependent on the culture in which we were raised, and culture is thus the foundation for communication. Zhang and Zhou (2008) believe that when a culture varies, communicative practices also vary.

2.2.2 Intercultural communication

Understanding various cultural groups has never been as important as it is in the 21st century. Globalization, coupled with the advance of technological innovation, has been a catalyst for the integration and merging of various cultural groups. As the meeting of people from different cultural societies intensifies, more people agree that culture is an indispensable component in understanding human behaviour, including communication (Kim & Ebesu Hubbard, 2007:224). Culture thus plays an important role not only in predicting, describing and understanding human behaviour, but also in the way we communicate. Therefore, intercultural communication broadly refers to the communication between people or groups of people from different cultures. Allwood (1985:3) defines intercultural communication as

> "the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between
> people with different cultural backgrounds, where different cultural backgrounds
> include both national cultural differences and differences which are connected with
> participation in the different activities that exist within a national unit".

Scollon and Scollon (2001:140-141) identify the major factors of intercultural communication in terms of four major categories. The first is *ideology*, which involves the history and worldview of a culture with beliefs, values and religion as its main components. The second factor is *socialization*, which refers to the way people learn the heritage, attitudes, values and actions that are seen as appropriate to their culture. This also has education as a major sub-factor, as education plays a role in how children learn these norms from a young

age. The third major factor has to do with *forms of discourse*, which consists of 2 sub-categories: *functions of language* (information and relationship, negotiation and ratification, group harmony and individual welfare) and *non-verbal communication* which comprises kinesics, proxemics and concepts of time. The fourth and last aspect is *face systems*, and this involves kinship, the concept of self, and in-group and out-group relationships. This is significant as these aspects all differ from culture to culture, thus making intercultural communication so complex.

2.3 Differences in Communicative Behaviour

Intercultural communication is more often than not problematic, not only because of linguistic barriers, but also because of differences in non-verbal behaviour (Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler and Smallwood, 2003). For Andersen *et al* (2003), between any two cultures there are potentially thousands of differences that exist, each with the opportunity for confusion and miscommunication. Communicating interculturally means that speakers have different cultural backgrounds, and therefore there are many differences that could lead to misunderstanding during the communication process. According to Lim (2003) it is not the lack of language, but the lack of knowledge about the other's culture, such as ethnocentricism, socio-political problems and unwarranted beliefs of universality that are said to be the major factors causing intercultural miscommunications. On the other hand, Allwood (1985) attributes the major cause of communication breakdowns in intercultural communication to the difference in *communicative behaviour*. One of the ways of looking at the different types of communicative behaviour is to analyse the communication on an interactional level. Allwood (1985) thus proposes that four aspects make intercultural communication interesting on an interactional level: *interaction sequences, turn taking, feedback and spatial configuration*.

2.3.1 Interaction sequences

Different types of communication have various stages that the interaction follows. An example of this is the framework proposed by Bock (2013) on the generic structure of cyber communicating, which is initiated with a greeting, followed by establishing contact, exchanging news, evaluation and closings. Similarly, Allwood (1985) maintains that

interaction sequence stems from the notion that a specific type of communication often goes through distinct stages. Another simple example, and perhaps more applicable to the study, would be the communicative sequence of purchasing something at a store; one greets the cashier, s/he tells you the amount required to pay for the items, after paying one says 'thank you' and leaves. Needless to say, interaction sequences are dependent on the purpose of the communicative event, and as Allwood (1985:10) suggests "the different purposes of the activity influence the organization of linguistic and other behaviour". Based on the fact that intercultural communication takes place within these different frameworks of communicative events, expectations that people from different cultures have in terms of which stages the communication should follow, is what could possibly cause a breakdown in intercultural communication.

2.3.2 Turn taking

In everyday interactions, the distribution of speech is negotiated in terms of who says what, when they say it, for how long they say it and in which way (Allwood, 1985). Turn taking is thus characterised as a basic set of principles for interaction, comprising overlapping speech, the speed of talking, and the sentiments pertaining to silence in these interactions. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) suggest that conversation is organised in terms of turns, to ensure that one speaker speaks at a time and that each speaker gets a recurring chance to speak. Sacks *et al.* (1974) maintains that those who are interested with the organisation of conversation concern themselves with the distribution of talk between interlocutors, the distribution of silences, the patterns in the way talk shifts from one speaker to another as well as the way the turns are maintained or transferred. In terms of turn-taking, interruption also forms part of the discourse. For some cultures interruptions are avoided and a one-speaker-at-a-time approach is maintained, as in north-western Europe, while in some Mediterranean countries interruptions and overlapping speech is much more frequent (Allwood, 1985). Ulijn and Xiangling (1995) found that Chinese tend to interrupt as a convention of their language and culture. Cultures may have their own structures and conventions when it comes to basic conversation. So when one is communicating with someone from a different culture, how does one know when it is appropriate to hold the floor, when it is acceptable to interrupt or when to give feedback?

2.3.3 Feedback

The third communicative behaviour identified by Allwood (1985) is *feedback*, which deals with the ways in which participants in a conversation signal how they perceive, understand and react to what the speaker has said. Allwood and Ceratto (2003:7) in their study on gestural feedback expressions, assert that "feedback strategies are used as a cooperative way of exchanging information about the successfulness of communication". Allwood, Nivre and Ahlsén (1993:4) claim that linguistic feedback enables four basic communicative functions which are essential in face-to-face interaction: *contact*, which establishes whether speakers are capable and willing to continue the communicative event; *perception* which establishes whether participants are willing and able to perceive the message; *understanding* establishes whether the communicators are willing and able to understand the message and lastly *attitudinal reactions*, which indicates whether the participants are willing and able to react and respond to the message. Although most language and cultures have means of giving and eliciting feedback, there are differences from culture to culture.

2.3.4 Spatial Configurations

When one attempts to communicate interculturally, it is important to note that communication does not only concern the spoken word, but gestures, body language, paralinguistic features and, as Allwood proposes to be the fourth aspect of communicative behaviour, spatial configurations. Spatial configuration can be closely linked to the notion of proxemics, which studies the natural degree of separation that humans usually maintain in an interaction. Zhang and Zhou (2008) state that spatial configuration has to do with territory and the division between public and private space, such as personal distance and how comfortable certain cultures are with touch in an interaction, as well as when it is or is not appropriate. There are also differences across cultures regarding the expectation as to when physical contact is meant to take place. For Allwood (1985) spatial configuration is an area in which there are clear cut differences between cultures regarding the closeness and physical contact between people in a conversation. These differences are however, not always strictly dependent on culture, but often are influenced by factors such as the sex of the people in the conversation, for example it would be acceptable for men in Swedish culture to stand close together during an interaction, whereas in Classical China husband and wife are not allowed to show public displays of affection (Allwood, 1985). Having an understanding of spatial

configurations therefore not only plays a role in how the physical distance is maintained during the interviews conducted with the Chinese participants in the study, but could also inform the analysis of the observations recorded.

2.4 Politeness Theory

Politeness theory is a very salient issue in both inter- and cross-cultural communication, given that we find ourselves in an age of globalization, migration and language contact. As a result of language contact between members of differing cultures, knowing what is considered appropriate and inappropriate within this language contact is vital to maintain inter-group harmony. With this in mind, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness has given scholars worldwide a novel tool for considering the phenomenon of politeness in human interaction.

Politeness theory is essentially concerned with the way that speech acts threaten the face needs of interactants, known as a *face threatening act* (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Generally, two types of face are described: *positive face* and *negative face*. According to Goldsmith (2000) negative face is the claim to respect for autonomy and the rights to not be imposed on, while positive face is the claim to a positive self-image and the desire for approval and appreciation from others (2000:2). Essentially a face threat occurs when a face need is not met. Johnson (2007) asserts that the face threat depends on the context of the interaction, so what may be a face threatening act for one participant might not be seen as a face threatening act for the other. Kasper (1990) cited in Tao (2012: 186) summarises Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness as "a rational, rule-governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human need to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts. By being mutually supportive and avoiding threats to face, according to the standard argument, speakers maintain smooth relations and sustain successful communication". For Goldsmith (2000:1) it is important to understand under what circumstances and in what situations interactants threaten or honour face, as this is essential to pinpointing why some messages in interpersonal communication are more effective than others. Politeness is culture-specific, so what might be polite/impolite in Western cultures, would be different from politeness in Chinese or any other Eastern culture. Tao (2012:186) maintains that linguistic politeness reflects cultural values, and that understanding or identifying politeness in a culture requires insight into the culture's values.

2.5 Face Theory

Face is the socially situated identities people claim or attribute to others (Tracy, 1990:210). Face can simply be understood as a "public self-image" (Goffman, 1955; Brown and Levinson, 1987) and as stated by Bargiela-Chiappini (2003:1463) can also be understood as a cultural conceptualisation of the social self. The notion of face was introduced by Goffman (1955:213) who defined "face" as the positive social image a person wants to claim for him/herself. Brown and Levinson (1987) furthermore extend Goffman's notion by explicating the notion of face in terms of face threats and face threatening acts. They assert that every individual has two faces, a positive face which has a want for approval from others, and a negative face: the want that one's actions be unimpeded by others, i.e. the want for self-determination. Essentially then, face threats occur when behaviour in interactions are not consistent with the interactional wants or the self-public image of individuals (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Haugh and Hinze (2003) simplifies the conception of face in saying that face is the concern for how members of society perceive us in relation to how we perceive ourselves and how we want others to perceive us. Arundale (2006) views the concept of face as an interpersonal construct as it is embedded in interpersonal communication. Face is thus co-constructed in interactions.

Closely related to the notion of face is that of facework. Facework is the actions one takes to deal with someone's face needs. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2003:131) assert that facework "is employed to resolve a conflict, exacerbate a conflict, avoid a conflict, threaten or challenge another person's position, protect a person's image, and so on". For Arundale (2006:202) "face is always potentially relevant in talk simply because human language use always occurs in a situated relationship". According to Chang and Haugh (2011:2948) using facework as an analytical approach is advantageous in the sense that interactions which can be evaluated in terms of face threatening can be explicated in a manner that is grounded in the perspective of the participants, thus whether an act is face-threatening or not depends on the evaluation from the participants in the interaction and relates to their broader sociocultural expectations as well as their individual interaction goals. As this study is grounded in intercultural communication, facework would prove useful in determining how Chinese and South Africans commit, avoid or compensate for face threatening acts.

2.6 Relational Work- A discursive approach to politeness

Arundale (2006:193) suggests that "face is a relational and an interactional, rather than an individual phenomenon, in that the social self is interactionally achieved in relationships with others". Thereupon, relational work is introduced by Locher and Watts (2005) as an extension of face theory, and could be seen as an extension of Brown and Levinson's (1987) and Goffman's (1955/1967) theory of politeness. Locher and Watts (2005) propose that although Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness still holds value in the theory of relational work, their initial theory appears to be more a theory of Face threatening act *mitigation* than that of politeness. Locher and Watts (2005) therefore propose relational work as a concept that sees politeness theory as only a small part of relational work, as said theory fails to see politeness in relation to other types of interpersonal meaning. Relational work according to Locher and Watts is therefore "the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (2005:10). For Locher and Watts relational work can be closely linked to Halliday's (1978) interpersonal level of communication whereby interpersonal meaning is negotiated. They argue that any interpersonal interaction involves the negotiation of face, and therefore the term "facework" (Brown and Levinson, 1987) should typically encompass interpersonal meaning (Locher and Watts, 2005). For Locher and Watts, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness only sees politeness as "a complex system for softening face threatening acts and only [makes] a distinction between impolite and polite behaviour" (Locher and Watts, 2005:13).

The term politeness for Locher and Watts can thus be understood as a "discursive concept arising out of interactants' perceptions and judgements of their own and others' verbal behaviour" (Locher and Watts, 2005:10). This framework provides an alternative to the common conceptualisation of politeness theory and facework, as understanding face as relational provides an alternative conceptualisation of positive and negative face. For Arundale (2006) conceptualising face as a relational phenomenon is dependent on the perception of face as an interactional phenomenon. Within the framework of face as interactional, face can be seen as an interpretation that participants form in verbal communication. Face theory and relational work is seen as integral in this study, as intercultural communication is more often than not a site of relational struggle, and therefore a site of face negotiation.

2.7 Ethnography of speaking

While content analysis is the primary analytical tool for this study, another approach to working with discourse is used in this study, known as the "ethnography of speaking" or "ethnography of communication". As the concept suggests, this is the application of ethnographic methods specifically to the way people use language (Cameron, 2001). The ethnographic approach looks at language use in view of the entire social situation in which it occurs, therefore the language and the social setting is interdependent. For Cameron (2001) this means that the ways of using and understanding language need to be analysed in the broader culture in which it occurs. The ethnographic method approach would thus involve the researcher being immersed in the culture being studied, maintaining regular contact with the group being studied as well as participating in some of the activities. The aim is hence not to gather information about the group, but to understand their way of life (Cameron, 2001). The Ethnography of speaking is therefore the application of ethnographic methods to language use

According to Lim (2003) different cultures have different systems of meaning, which can often lead to misunderstanding between cultures. Thereupon Lim suggests that an ethnography of speaking approach be applied to the analysis of intercultural communication. According to Lim (2003) "the ethnography of speaking assumes that speech is calculated and that speakers are purposefully applying linguistic codes toward social ends in culturally defined situations" (2003:57). The ethnography of speaking hence tries to understand how language is culturally shaped and instituted and furthermore attempts to systematically report such understandings (Lim, 2003, Philipsen, 1992). It is furthermore maintained that the job of an ethnographer of speaking is to observe and identify distinctive ways of language use patterns in a particular speech community (Lim, 2003:57). This approach, according to Lim (2003) encourages ethnographers to focus on one specific aspect of language of one cultural group at a specific point in time. Rather significantly, this approach to the ethnography of speaking has elucidated how languages are closely tied to the values and ideologies of those that speak it (Lim, 2003).

2.8 Content Analytical Approach

Apart from observation as a supplementary tool for analysis, the key analytical framework for this study is provided by Content Analysis. As mentioned in 2.7, content analysis was not

used exclusively in this study, as an *ethnography of speaking* methodological approach was also adopted. This section presents a description of content analysis as the method of analysis for the data in this study.

Content Analysis is an analytical method that could be used for either qualitative or quantitative data and may be used inductively or deductively. As this study seeks to understand and describe the phenomena that is the communicative strategies used by Chinese shopkeepers, the research approach is inductive. This means that even though the data is a small sample of a wider population, the findings made within this research will be extrapolated to the wider population; essentially moving from studying a specific population and moving toward a more general theory based on findings from the sample population. In this study qualitative content analysis will be used, which focuses on the analysis of transcriptions from interviews. As a concept, content analysis as defined by Weber (1990:117) is "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text", which in a broader sense refers to the process of summarising and interpreting written data (Sándorová, 2014). The procedure of content analysis deals predominantly with making inferences based on categories or codes which emanate from the data, which Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) refers to as the four C's: coding, categorizing, comparing and concluding. In qualitative content analysis however, the process goes beyond surface level descriptions, to extracting meanings, themes and patterns from texts, which ultimately provides a broad description of the phenomenon being studied. For Elo and Kyngäs (2008) content analysis is useful as an analytical method owing to it being content-sensitive, flexible in terms of research design, and because it is used to make inferences from texts in terms of meaning, intentions and context. According to Kyngäs and Vanhanen (1999) cited in Elo and Kyngäs (2008) a content analysis is considered successful when the researcher simplifies and analyses the data and forms categories which reflect the phenomena being studied.

The process of qualitative content analysis:

Given the flexibility in research design of a content analysis, the procedure of content analysis varies across disciplines and also depends on the nature of the research. As Elo and Kyngäs (2008) state, with content analysis there are no fixed systematic rules for analysing data. The preferred method of content analysis is adapted from Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and uses a simplified procedure for analysis (see Chapter 4)

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the concepts that inform this study from a theoretical perspective. Intercultural communication, face, politeness theory and content analysis as the analytical framework was discussed. Intercultural communication is the basis of this study, therefore this chapter has defined and subsequently described certain fundamental aspects of intercultural communication as posed by Scollon and Scollon (2001) and Allwood (1985) to name a few. The concept of *Face* has also been discussed in conjunction with *politeness theory.* As these notions are perceived and performed differently for specific cultures, issues of *face* and *politeness* are bound to surface during intercultural communication and thus in the interviews conducted.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of literature done predominantly on the translocation of Chinese to South Africa and within South Africa. It includes aspects like migration, the notion of Chinese South Africans, as well as a brief overview of cultural differences that exist between Africans and Chinese.

3.1 Migration

The concept of migration is significant to this study in that many scholars (Harris, 2006, Huyhn *et al.* 2010, Rwodzi, 2011, Park, 2008, Fan, 2008) seek to research the movement and migration of Chinese around the world. This is particularly relevant in the sense that the majority of Chinese in South Africa came to the country by means of migration, and much research has been done on this transition in terms of the history and conditions of this movement. Globalization is the broader lens through which we view migration owing to the fact that migration is a major characteristic of globalization. One could say that one impacts the other in that both have to do with the integration of people and cultures around the world, so while migration is a result of globalization, globalization could also be seen as a consequence of migration.

3.1.1 Migration as a concept

Nearly all countries are affected by migration either as origin, transit or destination countries (Rwodzi, 2011). Every development or advance in cultures originates with a new period of migration and movement of population, owing to the fact that in migration the "breakdown of social order begins with the impact of an invading population, and is completed by the contact and fusion of indigenous people with foreign people" (Park, 1928). Migration is broadly understood as the movement from one place to another, a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence (Lee, 1966). Park (1928) asserts that migration is not merely identified with movement, but more significantly with the involvement of change of residence and the breaking of home ties. Subsequently, immigrant groups find themselves in

new social and linguistic environments which they have to adjust to in many ways. For Rwodzi (2011) migration usually yields effects such as diffusion and change in cultural markers, as people tend to migrate with their language, music and religion to the destination regions. He ultimately asserts that in the process of migration certain characteristics such as cultural traits, ideas and attitudes embraced in a language are bound to change (Rwodzi, 2011:18). This is particularly relevant to the Chinese in this study, who arrived in South Africa and had to acclimatize to the different cultural, political and social order. In migrating here, even though many prefer to hold on to their identities as essentially Chinese, the diffusion and change in cultural markers, language and so forth, is taking place. For some it already has, in the case of South African born Chinese who assert their hybrid identities as Chinese-South Africans.

According to Park (1928:886) migration has assumed the characteristics of a peaceful penetration, as the migration of people has transmuted into mobility of individuals. Modern migration is, for the most part, an individual concern, as people are usually led to migrate by varied motives. The process of migration is driven by a dominating characteristic: it is everywhere a question of a change of locality by persons seeking more favourable conditions in life. According to Lee (1966:49) regardless of the duration or difficulty, every act of migration involves an origin, a destination and an intervening set of obstacles. Generally there are a number of factors which act to hold people within an area or attract other people to it, and there are also factors which repel them (Lee, 1966).

These factors can be summed up in four categories: *factors associated with the place of origin; factors associated with the destination; intervening obstacles,* and *personal factors* (Lee, 1966:50). There are many *personal factors* which influence the facilitation or retardation of migration, and while the predominant factors for migration are based on *factors of origin area* and *factors of the destination area*, it is personal perceptions of these factors that ultimately influence migration. Lee (1966) maintains that for some individuals there must be compelling reasons to migrate, while for others little provocation or promise suffices (1966:51). Rwodzi (2011:33) propounds that migration could be seen as something positive for the origin country, as it relieves population pressure, reduces unemployment and decreases strain on the national local economies and resources.

Lee (1996) furthermore argues that migrants proceed along well defined routes towards highly specific destinations. "This is true in part because opportunities tend to be highly

localised and in part because migrants must usually follow established routes of transportation" (Lee, 1996:54). This is specifically relevant to Chinese in South Africa, especially since South Africa can be seen as a "highly specific destination" for this particular group. The established route of transportation stems from the fact that in most cases for Chinese, migration is not an individual notion, but rather families or groups of people that migrate together and establish routes for those who follow. Consequently, this typically results in the establishment or the joining of the family business, as is the case in China Town stores.

Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992:1) suggest that a new modern form of migration is emerging; with a migrating population whose lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field. They argue that the term "immigrant" "evokes images of permanent rupture, of the uprooted, the abandonment of old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture" (Schiller *et al.*, 1992:1) and furthermore suggest the use of the term 'transnationalism' to describe a new consciousness of the modern migrant population. Transnationalism is defined as the process by which migrants establish social grounds in their country of settlement that still link them to their country of origin. They maintain a simultaneous presence in two societies- their place of origin and their destination country.

Migration or immigration is therefore no longer a notion that brings to mind the conceptualisation of the "alien" and the unknown venturing into the obscure. We hence refer to these migrants as "transmigrants", as they maintain social ties with their country of origin in terms of familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political relations. These transmigrants arrive in their host country with already deeply ingrained concepts, beliefs and practices, and they already hold certain affiliations. As Schiller *et al.* (1992) found, they then engage in complex activities transnationally that create, shape and transform their identities. This is particularly relevant in the case of Chinese in South Africa, as Chinese migrants are a heterogeneous group who maintain their transnational connections and simultaneously negotiate or maintain their collective identities (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010). This specifically holds true for the participants in my research. While many of them do not shun South African culture or beliefs, they do maintain ties with their country of origin. Many of them came here by means of familial ties, and those who are here temporarily have no desire to be integrated into South African society. Whether this holds true for the migrants in this study is yet to be determined.

3.1.2 Deterritorialization

Deterritorialization extends the essential notion of globalization. It relies on the nature of globalization as the detachment of locality, cultural practices and identities. Deterritorialization as stated by Kearney (1995) is concerned with how communities, products and identities become detached from local places. It thus accounts for the "cultural dynamics of people and practices that no longer inhabit one locale" (Jacquemet, 2005:262). The notion of deterritorialization is also closely linked to transidiomatic practices. The notion of transidiomatic practices, as propounded by Jacquemet (2005:265), describes the communicative practices of displaced groups that interact simultaneously in different languages, using different linguistic codes. Jacquemet (2005:265) elucidates the fundamental principle of transidiomatic practices as:

> "the results of the co-presence of multilingual talk (exercised by de/reterritorialized speakers) and electronic media, in contexts heavily structured by social indexicalities and semiotic codes. Anyone present in transnational environments, whose talk is mediated by deterritorialized technologies, and who interacts with both present and distant people, will find herself producing transidiomatic practices."

Culture in itself has become increasingly deterritorialized; culture in this sense meaning distinctive characteristics that are rooted to specific nations. Kearney reiterates that "not only does deterritorialization obviate any notion of bounded cultures, but so does the increasing volume and velocity of global transmission of information, images, simulacra, and stuff that is a diffusion of cultural traits gone wild" (Kearney, 1995:558). This is specifically relevant to the establishments of China Towns around the world (Africa, America, Europe, Australasia and Asia) where there is a global flow of culture, ethnic art, dance and cuisine. In the African context, Mohan and Kale (2007) argue that while ethnic business communities are not new to Africa, the dynamism of the Chinese communities are likely to shape the economic and social relations on the continent indefinitely.

3.2 Migration in South Africa

Migration in Africa is undoubtedly a common occurrence as Africa has a long history of population movements. Driven by factors such as warfare, political struggles, natural disasters, poverty and unemployment, translocal and transnational movements are a necessity

for most people. Migration patterns generally show that people move from poor countries to rich countries, from rural to urban areas in order to improve their standard of living and in search of better opportunities for themselves and their children (Rwodzi, 2011).

For South Africa, the Apartheid regime put considerable limitations on mobility to and within the country, but as the regime waned in the 1980s, restrictions became less rigid. Following the milestone of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, previously restricted areas became accessible to those in and outside of South Africa (Landau and Segatti, 2009). In recent years South Africa has been seeing a great diversification in its population's migration trajectories, whereas Apartheid-era South African migration policy promoted permanent White immigration and temporary Black migration. The post-apartheid period however, is characterised by a mix of circular, permanent, and transit migration (Landau and Segatti, 2009:17). With specific focus on Chinese migrants in Africa, Mung (2008:94) suggests three categories: *temporary labour migrants, small-time entrepreneurs,* and *transit migrants*. The *temporary migrants,* Mung argues, are sourced from China for labour in Chinese enterprises, and they stay in Africa for the duration of their contracts and return to China. The *small-time entrepreneurs* are those who open small trading or wholesale business of Chinese goods; in addition to these Chinese shops the entrepreneurs also run Chinese restaurants. *Transit migrants* use Africa as a jumping off point before moving on to Western countries. Many of the Chinese in this study fall into the category of small time entrepreneurs, none of whom have overtly expressed the desire to move onto a Western country or to return back to China.

Landau and Segatti (2009) argue that the massive influx of both temporary and permanent African and Asian migrants is a major characteristic of the great post-Apartheid change in South Africa after 1994. For Crush (2000) South Africa was not prepared for its reinsertion into the global circuit of people, commodities and capital after the fall of Apartheid. It is argued that:

> "The variety and volume of migrants and asylum-seekers arriving in the country changed significantly after 1990, certainly not to the "illegal millions" of popular lore, but enough to fuel a popular perception that the country had lost control of its borders" (Crush, 2000:107).

Landau and Segatti (2009:7) similarly assert that as in most destination countries around the world, the total number of foreigners living in South Africa is a mix of documented and undocumented migrants along with refugees and asylum seekers. The major reason for

migration to South Africa is for economic opportunities in the country, as well as what they refer to as the three "Ps": *profit, protection* from political strife or natural disasters*,* and *seeking passage* before moving onto the next or desired destination (Landau and Segatti, 2009:5). According to Bakewell and Jonsson (2011) South Africa has not always been a destination country, but was perceived as a transit place for migrants before migrating to Europe but due to Europe's restrictive immigration regime, South Africa turned into a substitute destination.

3.3 Migration and Language

Language fulfils a number of functions and therefore has a significant role to play in societal and individual integration (Esser, 2006). Rwodzi (2011) specifically takes a panoramic view of the linguistic challenges faced by migrants in South Africa. He states that in Africa, languages are used as vehicles for economic development and technological innovation (Rwodzi, 2011:4). Rwodzi (2011:26) argues that immigrants are faced with challenges which are predominantly linked to language, such as difficulty speaking, reading and writing in the national language as well as the language of business. He maintains that the major challenge for immigrants in South Africa is that businesses do not promote African languages or other external languages, because of the role and position of English (Rwodzi, 2011). Furthermore he argues that the families of these migrants left behind in the home country also benefit from the financial, cultural and linguistic remittances. According to Kerswill (2006:19) "migration and language interact in a complex, yet transparent way. Chiefly, migration leads to language or dialect contact, and is, indeed, the prime cause of such contact". Esser (2006) argues that language and accents can index belonging or foreignness and thus give rise to differentiation and discrimination. In many cases, immigrants are forced to acquire the language of their host country, owing to the fact that inequalities arise in terms of education, societal recognition and integration are often determined by linguistic competence in the national language of the destination or host country. Rwodzi (2011:23) similarly maintains that migrants living in high density suburbs are discriminated against or excluded from mainstream economy based on the languages they speak.

According to Esser (2006) this gives rise to a strong interest among immigrants to acquire the specific national language. There are a range of factors that influence the acquisition of the national language as the immigrants' second language. According to Esser (2006) these

include the conditions of the host and origin country, the presence of an already existing ethnic community, the circumstances of migration, the age at which migration took place, as well as the duration of the migration. Furthermore in the case of immigrant children acquiring a language, the parents' age as well as their language skills influences the acquisition. Significantly, Esser (2006) also claims that a high level of global usability of the language, such as English, is also an important factor, as well as the social distance between the immigrant groups and the majority society. Simply put, if there is social distance between the immigrants and the majority society, there will be no exposure to or immersion in the majority language. If there is a high level of ethnic concentration in a specific area, there is a lesser likelihood of acquiring the national language (Esser, 2006). In the case of Chinese in Africa, Mohan and Kale (2007) state that the Chinese community have remained relatively self-contained, and as a result, language remains a problem for integration and business, as very few recent migrants speak the local languages. This is a significant facet of this study, in that it seeks to examine alternative ways in which Chinese communicate, given that many are possibly not very proficient in the local languages.
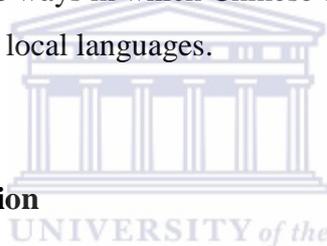
3.4 Chinese Labour and Migration

Chinese labourers have been arriving in South Africa from as early as the late 17th century. Occupied as merchants, small-scale traders, labourers and servants, this distinct group has been active in the South African economy for centuries. During this period, the arrival of the Chinese sparked anti-Sinitic feelings within the European settlers in South Africa, who were concerned with the competition in markets and subsequently passed laws that prohibited the Chinese from selling certain products (Harris, 2006). Harris (2006:177) argues that from the mid-nineteenth century Chinese labour formed an integral part of mass migration of people in the era of industrial capitalism.

 In the late 19th and 20th century, following the discovery of diamonds and gold, over 60 000 Chinese labourers were recruited by the European mining companies to augment the unskilled labour force (Harris, 2006). Only a small percentage of Chinese who arrived during that time were free independent migrants who were self-employed merchants. Rwodzi (2011:39) contends that "the Asians secured a market share that works even today and the Asia-Africa migration has not stopped but increased despite ages. The Chinese to date have secured a market share both at formal and informal level in most Southern African countries".

According to Lee (1966:53) it is a common occurrence for immigrant groups to specialise in particular occupations and become scattered throughout the destination area wherever the specialised work is found. A fitting example her would be China Town stores and Chinese markets.

Kagan, Lo, Mok, Lawthom, Sham, Greenwood and Baines (2011) conducted a study on Chinese migrants in the UK in terms of labour and to what extent these migrants exercise autonomy over their lives. They found that in the UK Chinese migrants find work in Chinese businesses via word of mouth, and end up working long hours in unfavourable conditions and for poor salaries. Kagan *et al.* (2011:5) also posits that the economic and political conditions in China have led to a considerable "labour churn" that subsequently resulted in migration for work, both internally and overseas. Family ties are the basis of transnational Chinese business organization (Ong, 1993, Mohan and Kale, 2007). According to Mohan and Kale (2007:15) Chinese traders rely on family labour, which is typical of chain migration whereby an initial family member emigrates and once a business is established further recruitment is preferred from among the family clan. According to Haugen and Carling (2005) sometimes this recruitment could extend to the lineage and clan level, resulting in entire villages being involved in migratory circles. Mohan and Kale furthermore state that while these firms do use local Africans for menial labour, they naturally choose Chinese labour over African labour owing to a lack of trust in African labour. Bakewell and Jonsson (2011:4) claim that today the local markets in African cities are dominated by Chinese manufactured goods, often of poor quality but always at lower prices compared to other imports. These goods are what dominate in China Town stores and local Chinese markets, and have become so pervasive in not only South Africa, but other significant parts of the world.

More recently, some Asian migrants have been recruited to Central African countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), sometimes forcefully through patrimonial networks (Bakewell and Jonsson, 2011). They are often badly paid, exploited and entirely dependent on the person who recruited them. Similarly Kagan *et al.* (2011) found that Chinese migrants in the UK travelled with the aid of travel facilitators who charged large amounts of money to enable them to reach and enter the UK. Other Asians in DRC work in the commercial sector and run companies, hotels, restaurants or garages (Bakewell and Jonsson, 2011). Chinese are also present in the health sector in the city of Lubumbushi (in DRC) running hospitals, clinics and pharmacies. On a broader scale, according to Breslin (2009) China's engagement with the global economy has brought about many successes, and

China is now also of great significance to the functioning of the global economy, not just that of South Africa.

3.4.1 Chinese Migration into Africa

According to Fan (2008:1) "the rapid surge of migration has been one of the most profound changes in China since it embarked on economic reforms in the late 1970s". Migration from China to Africa has existed for over 500 years, but has undoubtedly accelerated over the past 15 years or so owing to the business opportunities in Africa.For Huyhn *et al.* (2010:289) "the newest, and by far the largest, community of Chinese began arriving in significant numbers from mainland China in the mid- to late- 1990s, at the end of apartheid; estimates of this community have often ranged from 200,000 to over 350,000". The flow of new migrant Chinese began in the latter half of the Apartheid era, when a generously incentivised scheme was drawn up to attract Taiwanese to the country. Huyhn *et al.* (2010:291) states:

> "The South African government offered incentives, including relocation costs, subsidized wages for seven years and subsidized rent for ten years, cheap transport of goods to urban areas, and housing loans, and favourable exchange rates to encourage the immigration of investors and their families from the Republic of China (ROC) as well as Hong Kong"

The Taiwanese firms in South Africa were among the first on the African continent, and they concentrated on textiles, clothing, furniture and some agro-processing (Mohan and Kale, 2007).By 1988 over 2000 Taiwanese immigrants arrived, and by 1992 they had established over 300 factories, creating over 40 000 jobs. Huyhn *et al.* (2010) found that together with this group of Taiwanese, a small group of Chinese from the People's Republic of China (PRC) also arrived to manage the factories established by the Taiwanese, and subsequently they encouraged other Chinese to emigrate. Ultimately this was the catalyst for the new Chinese migration into South Africa, which is unrelated to the earlier migration of Chinese in the 1870s (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010). By 1994 the number of Taiwanese in South Africa began to dwindle, their departure being hastened by South Africa's official relationship with the PRC. Currently the number of Taiwanese have dropped from a high of approximately 30 000 to about 6000, and their numbers allegedly continue to drop (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010). At present, the population estimates for Chinese people on the African continent range between 580 000 to 800 000 (Park, 2009).

Park (2009) believes that today most Chinese in Africa are temporary migrants. Huyhn *et al.* (2010) has focused specifically on Chinese migrants in Johannesburg, South Africa, in order to research the migration patterns as well as the global, socio-political and economic shifts which have influenced the presence of Chinese in the African continent. Essentially they argue that contrary to the wide spread arguments from the media that Chinese are invested in Africa as part of a neo-colonialist agenda, the majority of Chinese migrants in South Africa arrived independently, motivated by the desires to improve their lives (Huyhn, *et al.*, 2010: 286). Fan (2008) similarly argues that the Chinese population is increasingly mobile, as migrants are driven by the need for economic betterment. She furthermore puts forward that two categories which distinguish the migration process, namely *social reasons* and *economic reasons*. Friends/ relatives, retirement and joining the family are considered *social reasons*, while *economic reasons* comprise job transfers, job assignments and industry/business factors (Fan, 2008:55).

South Africa has the largest population of Chinese on the African continent, being home to three distinct Chinese communities, namely the South African born Chinese, Chinese from Taiwan, and newer immigrants from Mainland China (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010:288). These migrants arrived at different times and this variation in temporalities according to Huyhn *et al.* resulted in each community leaving different "Chinas" and entering very different "South Africas" (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010:289). The difference in time spans also shaped the experiences of migration as well as their social and cultural adaptation; these adaptations being specifically relevant to this study. Huyhn *et al.* (2010) furthermore states that these distinct groups of Chinse immigrants brought with them different levels of education, experience and capital, and they followed different global and local trajectories (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010:289).

Mohan and Kale (2007) suggest that when looking at migrant communities, the term *diaspora* should be used to refer to the social groups that have overturned the territorial notion of nation states, but still link their identities and culture to their place of origin. They furthermore argue that as these diasporic communities spread out, their culture changes in such a way that their identities are no longer tied with their homeland or place of origin, but are constructed through complex networks that do not necessarily relate back to the homeland (Mohan and Kale, 2007). They maintain that these diasporas are not homogenous, so while they may hold the same cultural origins, such ties become affected by age and differences in class (Mohan and Kale, 2007:9). While class, gender and age are important factors in how migrants acclimatise to their new locality, Mohan and Kale (2007) argue that political and

economic conditions are equally significant in affecting life choices and shaping identities. They argue that one's citizenship status in the new country of settlement is crucial in determining how migrants engage in local society and also how they relate back to their homeland (Mohan and Kale, 2007). Diasporic identities are therefore relational in that they are shaped in relation to their interaction with other group identities.

Huyhn *et al.* (2010:289) state that during the pre-2000 migration period, most migrants were professionals, with many links to factories in China or the mega-cities in China, hence the majority of the migrants entered into import, retail and wholesale trading. Furthermore, in the post-2000 migration period, the number of Chinese entering South Africa increased dramatically, with newcomers comprising small traders predominantly from the Fujian province, an area which has had historical relations with the West since the 19th century. Another early group of migrants were those from Jiangsu province, one of the most affluent regions in China. This province, according to Huyn *et al.* (2010) is famous for its manufacturing capacity, particularly in textiles, shoes and bags. These entrepreneurs came to South Africa with capital and other business resources, with many of them having extensive connections to Chinese factories which enabled them to participate in import, wholesale and distribution. South Africa's processes of chain migration guarantee that Asians will continue to pour into this country for a long time (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010).

Park (2009) found that the Chinese migration flows are oriented towards countries that typically have lenient immigration regulations. According to Park (2009) and Mohan and Kale (2007) the southern coastal provinces in China particularly Guangdong, Zhejiang and Fujian, have for many centuries been the source regions that have sent migrants out into the world; and most of the world's Chinese population are from these regions. Quite significantly, it has become a rite of passage for men and women in these villages to spend time overseas, while young people are consequently under immense social pressure to go out into the world and return successful (Park, 2009:5). Migration then, as put by Park, "becomes a measure of one's courage, worth and success; it has become culturally valued" (Park, 2009:5). These provinces continue today to be the main origin of Africa's Chinese migrants.

3.5 Chinese South African Identities

The 1970s saw a significant acceleration of Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China, into South Africa. Park (2008:149) states that these movements resulted

in the creation of new identities, causing already existing identities to shift and further emphasise the "multiple, fluid, positional, and layered nature of Chinese South African identities". Many of the new migrants not only entered South Africa in staggering numbers, but many of them also were granted permanent residence and citizenship. Owing to the fact that the Republic of China (Taiwan) permits dual citizenship, many of the Taiwanese exercised the option to become South Africans (Park, 2010:160).

Park asserts that even those Chinese who had permanently left South Africa after immigrating here, still hold on to their South African identities, as many Chinese re-migrants still see themselves as South African (Park, 2008). For Chinese re-migrants who have left South Africa, Park (2008) found that even though they became fully integrated into their adopted countries, their cultural and ethnic identity as Chinese South Africans remains. These migrants can no longer be considered sojourners in South Africa, but at the same time they are not full time Chinese citizens either. The younger group of Chinese have found an alternative to their identities as South African Chinese. As Park (2008) suggests, with perhaps greater freedoms than their foregoers, they can reimagine themselves as global citizens with both Chinese and South African roots. Furthermore she states that while this group keeps strong historical, cultural and social links to both places, they lack strong political ties to either (Park, 2008:142). Park furthermore maintains that during the harsh period of Apartheid, Chinese South Africans found solace in their identity as Chinese, and being able to retain Chinese cultural practices, and being set apart racially by Apartheid laws, they could comfortably assert their identities as Chinese (Park, 2008).

The South African Chinese believe that their identities as essentially Chinese were contested when the new Chinese immigrants entered the country. Here, what the local Chinese believed was what it essentially means to be Chinese, was challenged when for the first time in over forty years; they found their "Chinese-ness" questioned (Park, 2008: 165). The new immigrants placed before them a different view, one that portrays other ways of being Chinese, and these new portrayals challenged their constructed and established notion of their "Chinese-ness" (Park, 2008).

It can therefore ostensibly be argued that Chinese migrants constitute a new global social category of people (Huyhn *et al.* 2010:300). Chinese migrants are thus a heterogeneous group, with cultural practices and activities, marriage alliances and transnational connections opening up a broader way of analysing these migrants in terms of their maintained,

negotiated and collective identities (Huyhn *et al.*, 2010). Huyhn *et al.* (2010) furthermore puts forward that Chinese migrants are social actors who play a significant role in altering South Africa's and China's landscapes as well as challenging racial categories and stereotypes. Additionally they introduce new vocabulary to local languages. This means that as Chinese identities are in the process of being constructed, Chinese people are also contributing to the reconstruction of identities and places in South Africa (Huyhn, *et al.*, 2010:301). Presently, the presence of the new Chinese immigrants demands to be noticed, not only by the local Chinese, but throughout South Africa. They have formed new Chinatowns and other ethnic enclaves; there are Taiwanese and Chinese churches, grocery stores, restaurants and even newspapers to serve the new immigrants (Park, 2008:161).

The attention received by the influx of new Chinese immigrants has not been very positive, which has led to tension among the local South African Chinese and the new migrants. Park (2009) in a report on Chinese migration in Africa states that the little that is written in media reports about Chinese is often negative, inaccurate and confusing. The media's focus on malpractices such as rhino horn poaching, elephant tusk poaching, fraudulent activity and gang warfare has led to a marked "us" and "them" attitude as local Chinese grew frustrated with the notion that most other South Africans could not differentiate between the two (Park, 2008:161). In the same mind, McNamee (2012: 29-30) reports that:

> "The Chinese population in South Africa is marked by various cleavages and tensions, particularly along the divide that separates the latest Chinese immigrants who are often perceived as 'illegal' and the established South African Chinese, especially the middle class from Hong Kong and Taiwan, who have citizenship. This diverse community includes a few prominent Chinese South Africans who sit in the country's parliament, the majority who occupy the factory, merchandise and import–export industries, and a minority of the new arrivals who are allegedly involved in clandestine transnational crime syndicates."

It is explicitly stated that "these new Chinese pose challenges to the carefully constructed identity of Chinese South Africans as a law-abiding, quiet, civilised, apolitical people" (Park,2008:161). For Park (2008, 2009) the group of new immigrants were thus seen as a threat to the existing Chinese community's reputation, their constructed identity and their sense of proper Chinese values and behaviour. One of the benefits of the new Chinese immigrants however, is that they brought with them a greater offering of Chinese restaurants, Mandarin language courses, increased cultural activities and with these, opportunities for the local South Africa Chinese to learn or relearn Chinese customs and traditions (Park, 2008).

The increasing number of Chinese businesses in South Africa means that South Africans and Chinese are coming into daily contact and exploring each other's worlds daily at grassroots level. With this contact, the role and function of language comes into question here; a factor so central to this study. In addition, the differences in culture also arise as a notion to be polemicized.

3.6 Cross-cultural Business Communication

With China's ever growing economic and political engagement in Africa, arguably a very successful engagement at that, one has to wonder that with all the cultural and religious differences between the two, why the Sino-African relationship is thriving. It can only be assumed that businessmen are making effort to learn about African cultures; 'cultures' being in plural form as African society comprises 1.02 billion people, over 3000 ethnic groups, with speakers of over 1000 indigenous languages (Matondo, 2012). It is important for expatriate businessmen to have a basic knowledge of cross-cultural differences between their own, and their host countries, and if there are any inter- or cross-cultural misunderstandings or inappropriate handlings of cross-cultural business affairs, it is needless to say that conflicts could arise. Matondo (2012:38) therefore states that "cross-cultural issues are among the most central and most persistent factors that influence international business activity"

Globalization, internationalization and the infiltration of foreign businesses worldwide has brought attention to the competitiveness and competency of businesses both domestically and internationally (Chaisrakeo & Speece, 2004). Owing to globalization, migration, and an increase in foreign-owned businesses, a need for communicating with customers from different cultures has arisen, therefore leading to a need in intercultural communication competency in businesses. According to Zhang and Zhou (2008:103)

> "As new markets open up for world trade and global competition intensifies, businesses of all sizes and in all sectors are expanding their operations overseas at unprecedented rates, which necessitate an increase in strategic alliances and hence intercultural negotiations"

Because of the culture accumulation, the thinking mode as well as the different cognitive ways, people in the West and China encounter intercultural conflicts, which can cause the failure of international commercial negotiations. For this reason, according to Chaisrakeo and

Speece (2004), most companies or small businesses rely on sales people as the main connectors for implementing relationships, and these relationships are frequently with customers from other cultures. Chaisrakeo and Speece (2004) therefore maintain that companies engaging in cross-national business have to be cognizant of cross-cultural issues, specifically pertaining to business negotiations.

Zhang and Zhou (2008), in focusing on the significance of cross-cultural communication in business negotiation, state that in order to achieve a goal in intercultural negotiation, it is crucial to understand different negotiation styles in different countries. They furthermore maintain that difficulties in intercultural negotiations may arise when there is little or no awareness of divergent cultural values and beliefs (Zhang and Zhou, 2008:103) Chaisrakeo and Speece (2004:108) similarly argue that understanding the different cultural environments that exist among the different nations and considering cultural differences in all facets of business are crucial for international business negotiations.

3.7 Chinese intercultural communication

Research on the topic of intercultural communication between Chinese and host communities is relatively scarce. Studies conducted in this field tend to be pedagogical in nature and tend to problematize the way Chinese learn in the English (or any non-Chinese language based) classroom (Dervin, 2011, Holmes 2005, Carson and Nelson, 1994, Wei and Hua, 2013). According to Dervin (2011:41) Chinese students hold fairly prominent positions within international academic mobility, and more than 100,000 Chinese students have studied abroad since 2002. In reviewing studies focusing on Chinese intercultural communication, the pedagogical findings could be seen as a small glance into the experiences of Chinese migrants. As Dervin (2011:43) suggests, the case of the 'Chinese student' in intercultural studies is "quite emblematic of the current interests in 'otherness' but also of the (over)emphasis on difference and culture in education"

Overseas Chinese populations experience a wide range of diverse relationships with their new place of residence and with their ancestral homeland. Owing to assimilation, hybrid acculturation and cultural conservation, overseas, Wei and Hua (2013) specifically focus on the way Chinese students at UK universities create transnational spaces through innovative and flexible multilingual practices. One of their focus points is how transnational experiences of Chinese students in London may impact their everyday social interaction and identity

development (Wei and Hua, 2013:517). While Wei and Hua (2013) do not specifically examine or describe the intercultural communication practices of Chinese in their host cities to inform this study, they propose the notion of translanguaging to describe the multilingual practices of transnationals. In their article they focus on and extend the notion of 'translanguaging' which is particularly relevant to studying multilingual practices of transnational individual groups as they move across space and time (Wei and Hua, 2013).

For Wei and Hua (2013:518) multilingualism plays an important role in "the interchanges between individuals of different origins and makes it possible for people who may not share cultural assumptions or values to (re)negotiate their relations and identities". They argue that translanguaging enables researchers to show how everyday practices ad identities are "profoundly rooted in the developmental trajectories" of the communities to which they belong and how they constantly shift, develop and transform (Wei and Hua, 2013:520). The focus of their study is particularly on the fact that translanguaging captures both the dynamic nature of Chinese multilingual practices as well as the capacity of the de-/re-territorialised Chinese speaker to mobilise their linguistic resources in order to create new social spaces for themselves (Wei and Hua, 2013:519). Wei and Hua (2013:519) furthermore argue that it is important to recognise the capacity of transnational individuals to mobilise their linguistic resources to construct relations within a specific social context. Additionally, attention should also be given to their creative qualities of language mixing, hybridization and creolization. Dervin (2011) however argues that the research done on intercultural communication is unsatisfactory in the way that it examines the discourse of its participants, especially if they are the "other". He therefore proposes that intercultural discourses be looked at through a "liquid" approach.

Dervin's (2011:38) concept of 'liquid' approach stems from the notion that knowledge, society and subjectivity are all dynamic and contextual phenomena. These phenomena could hence be theorised in terms of dialogues between real and imagined perspectives. He asserts that researchers in the study of intercultural discourse should be able to distinguish themselves from "common sense" contradictory discourses about their subjects and help to transform preconceived ideas about their participants as the "other" (Dervin, 2011:38). In his article he thus proposes that interculturality be understood as the "positioning and negotiation of individuals who come from different space-times" rather than "cultures" (Dervin, 2011:38). Thus, for Dervin, identification and intersubjectivity are central to this field of study.

Ultimately he seeks to use the 'liquid' approach to the study of acculturation of Chinese students.

Holmes (2005) studies the way that ethnic Chinese students communicate with cultural others in a New Zealand university classroom context. Although her research focuses on students specifically, one could arguably relate her findings to the experiences of general Chinese migrant intercultural experiences. She states that ethnic Chinese students often experienced difficulties in intercultural communication, and that in moving from dialectic to dialogic styles of learning, they had to acquire communication strategies that enabled them to ask questions and manage co-operative learning situations (Holmes, 2005:289). She furthermore puts forward that little research has been done on the way Chinese students renegotiate and reconstruct their communication styles. It is also argued that language barriers are not the only problematic factors in intercultural learning environments, but also Chinese students' unfamiliarity with the social environment, new culture, and cultural norms and behaviour (Holmes, 2005). Communication differences between these two groups (Chinese and New Zealanders) could also be attributed to the differences between high context cultures and low context cultures.

Subsequently Holmes' research seeks to answer the question "how do Chinese students (re)construct and (re)negotiate their intercultural communication experiences in light of intercultural communication differences?" She thus found that Chinese students in her study demonstrated considerable reconstruction of their intercultural communication patterns. Holmes thereupon found that the communication patterns that the students had brought with them from their "first culture" were chiefly contested in the "host culture", and that communicating with cultural others was problematic.

While the above mentioned studies do not focus inherently on Chinese migrants in their host communities, the study of Chinese students' intercultural experiences and the way they adapt interculturally is particularly informative to this study. It not only looks at Chinese students through a pedagogical lens, but also provides insight into the ways that these students renegotiate their identities through intercultural interaction. More importantly it informs this study in that it looks at how Chinese students adapt in intercultural situations

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of prior literature on Chinese migration to South Africa. Here the review was divided into seven sections: *Migration, Migration in South Africa, Migration and Language Chinese Labour and Migration, Chinese South African Identities, Differences in cultural identity, Cross-cultural business communication* and *Chinese intercultural communication*

The first section Migration (3.1) introduced the concept of migration and defined it for the purpose of a broader understanding regarding this phenomenon, linking it to globalisation as over-arching framework under which Chinese migration in South Africa is understood. Here the notions of transnationalism, translocal migration, and deterritorialization were discussed, which was later linked to the migration of Chinese.

This study focuses partly on the presence of Chinese in South Africa and their experiences here in terms of how they go about their day-to-day activities and interact with South Africans. For this reason the researcher deemed it fit to give a brief overview of the history and conditions of Migration in South Africa (3.2). Here the focus was on the push and pull factors that apparently attract or repel international migrants to and from this country. With this in mind one can identify with Chinese migrants in terms of their conditions for migration and their position in the influx of migrants to post-Apartheid South Africa.

The third section discussed Migration and language (3.3). In this section, even though the focus was not exclusively on Chinese, the notion of immigrants and their adaptations to the destination language were discussed. The implications for not acculturating were also discussed here. This discussion is crucial as a backdrop to the study, because the language practices of Chinese in South Africa is a central research focus.

The following section focused on Chinese Labour and Migration (3.4), and Chinese migration into South Africa (3.4.1) a central element to this study. Even though this study seeks to research and examine the more recent migrants in terms of their linguistic practices, the history and the phenomenal movement of the Chinese to South Africa is worth noting, as this provides a backdrop for the thousands of migrants that followed their ancestors to South Africa centuries later. In discussing the history of Chinese labour and migration in South Africa, one is provided insight into the long standing history Chinese have with South Africa; from being recruited to working as unskilled labourers centuries earlier, to becoming small-scale entrepreneurs and businessmen in South Africa.

The section on Chinese South African Identities (3.5) is significant to the study in that it explored the way Chinese construct their identities in South Africa. It looked at how Chinese integrate themselves into South African society in terms of culture, politics and the economy. This is particularly relevant to the study, as the research also seeks to look at how Chinese have integrated into South Afican society, and to what extent this has happened. This integration also influences their willingness or unwillingness to acculturate and subsequently whether or not they have a desire to learn English or in some cases, use the English that they have learned in China.

The second-last section briefly discussed Cross-cultural business communication (3.6). This discussion, although brief, provided an overview of the different negotiation styles of the Western and Eastern cultures. Although South Africans are not explicitly Western, they lean more towards Western culture than they do towards Eastern culture. This section therefore looked at the business side of intercultural communication, a concept very central to this study as this paper seeks to examine the ways Chinese and South Africans interact in business settings.

The final section (3.7) presented an overview of research conducted on Chinese students at foreign universities, and how they adapt in these intercultural settings; be it in the classroom, or with their fellow students. Although this section focused on students, it informs the study in terms of its findings. It provides insights into the way Chinese adapt and acculturate to their host communities.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology used for this study. It commences with a description of the research population as well as the Chinese research assistant so central to the success of study. This is followed by the research paradigm, methods, data analysis procedures and the ethical considerations for the study. I also include a short section on the limitations of the study.

4.1 Research population

The specific focus and intended outcomes of the study required that Chinese stores be frequented, and relied predominantly on gathering data from the Chinese shopkeepers and store owners. Initially I wanted to observe Chinese shops in general, in no specified fixed location, but rather those sporadically set up around Cape Town. Ultimately, in view of the research having to take place in a trade setting, I chose to conduct the research in a central location where there are a variety of Chinese shops and businesses in one central location. For this reason, the data was gathered in a major China Town complex in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town, Western Cape.

4.1.1 Shop keepers/ Store owners

The main participants in the study were Chinese business owners/shopkeepers in the China Town complex. The aim was to observe and interview a minimum of 10 participants from a variety of trades, such as clothing, electronics, curios, etc. (see table below). Ultimately only 8 participants were interviewed owing to the fact that many shopkeepers opted to not participate in the study. The shopkeepers interviewed were 2 males and 6 females, from different parts of China, all with varying levels of proficiency in English

Table 1 shows the details of participants and their stores

Interviewees	Duration of stay in SA	Gender	Nature of business	Shop owner/ Keeper
Interviewee 1	+ 7 years	Female	Clothing, bags, accessories	Owner
Interviewee 2	2 Years	Female	Gadgets, clothing	Shop-keeper
Interviewee 3	2 and a half years	Female	toys gadgets and accessories	Owner
Interviewee 4	25 years	Male	toys gadgets and accessories	Owner
interviewee 5	1 year	Female	Underwear, shoes and bags	Shop-keeper
Interviewee 6	1 year	Female	Clothing and accessories	Shop-keeper
Interviewee 7	11 years	Male	Clothing and Shoes	Owner
Interviewee 8	6 and a half years	Female	Underwear, bags, luggage, clothing	Shop-keeper

4.1.2 Customers

Customers in China Town also played a pivotal role in the research population. Their roles were two-fold: the customers were firstly part of the observation as it is their interaction with the Chinese that was observed. The second role of the customer was that they were interviewed in terms of their experiences and attitudes towards China Town in general and their interaction with its tenants. In this study it is not only the interviews with the Chinese that form the basis of the research, but also the customers and how they influence the nature of the interaction in the China Town setting.

4.1.3 Shop Assistants

The third component of the research population is the shop assistants. They played a pivotal role in the Chinese store as they interact and communicate with the customers. During initial observations at China Town, I spoke to the African shop assistants with the purpose of

establishing rapport and also for background information regarding their roles in these Chinese stores. The shop assistants who form part of this study are employed at different stores compared to the shopkeepers who were interviewed. According to Fox and Bayat (2007:67) establishing rapport is necessary in qualitative research as the researchers expect to interact with their participants on a fairly personal level, therefore gaining entry into a research site requires planning and preliminary contact to get the research off on the right foot. The African shop assistants spend every day of the week in the Chinese stores, so their points of view were invaluable. In terms of selecting individual participants in the data collection process, Fox and Bayat (2007:71) argue that "often an individual is identified as a subject by reason of being marginalised or being part of a community distinguished by conflicting cultures". The African store assistants therefore played a role in the research population, as most of their reports would be discussed in the findings of this research project.

4.2 The Research Assistant

The research assistant in this study was a 3rd year linguistics student at the University of the Western Cape. Given her involvement in the undergraduate linguistics curriculum, I saw it fit to include her in a study that is centred on intercultural communication. The research assistant is from Xi'an, China and has been in the country for three years (the duration of her study at the university). Mandarin is her mother tongue which is why she was so significant to the study. Given the fact that China has 23 provinces, each province speaking different dialects, it is important to add that when she explained the study and the ethical considerations to the participants, she did so in standard Mandarin. The participants also used standard Mandarin when they needed her to translate certain phrases for me as the interviewer to understand. Dialectal differences was therefore not an issue in this study.

4.3 The Translator

The data was translated by a Mandarin tutor in the department of Chinese Language and Literature, at the University of Cape Town. The interview recordings were sent to her and subsequently translated directly into English. Owing to the fact that the input from the research assistant was also analysed, bringing an external translator on board to translate the

entire text seemed a necessary measure to maintain reliability of the data, as well as to evaluate the language of both the interviewees and the research assistant.

4.4 Research Design

The research paradigm used for the study was entirely qualitative in nature. Qualitative methodologies are designed to explain events, people and matters associated with them (Fox and Bayat, 2007) and seek to understand the research "subjects" rather than to produce quantifiable results. Such methods focus on "what", "why" and "how", as opposed to "how many" or "how much", which is the central focus of quantitative research methods. Qualitative research comprises interpretive techniques which seek to describe and make meaning of phenomena in the social world. Qualitative research is therefore fundamentally descriptive.

4.4.1 Methods used

Qualitative methods include interviews, focus groups, ethnographies, case studies, grounded theory, etc. This research project sought to employ observation, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic research methods. I firstly focus on interviews, given that the major part of the research was reliant on interviews conducted with the Chinese business owners and shopkeepers by the Chinese research assistant. On-the-spot interviews were also used as a method for interviewing the shop assistants and customers in China Town.

According to Fox and Bayat (2007:73) each step in an interview is aimed at gaining new information and new data and it reveals experiences of the interviewees. They also maintain that by conducting interviews, the researcher gains insight into the participants' worlds, which enables the researcher to reconstruct and experience events in which he/she did not participate (Fox and Bayat, 2007). In this research study semi-structured interview questions were used for the Chinese participants:

1. Can you tell me about yourself? (How old you are; where you grew up?)

2. How long have you been living in South Africa?

3. What motivated you to move to South Africa and open up a
    business/businesses here/ to work here?

4. How did you decide where to set up your shop/business?

5.   What factors play a role in choosing where to establish your business?

6. Did you receive any prior intercultural communication skills before immigrating to South Africa? If so, elaborate…

7. How would you describe the interaction that takes place in your shop between you and the customers?

8. What tools or strategies, if any, do you use to communicate effectively with your customers?

9. Do you do any research regarding the preferences of South African customers as opposed to those in China (e.g. fashion trends, gadgets, décor, etc.)

10. Do you employ any strategies to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?
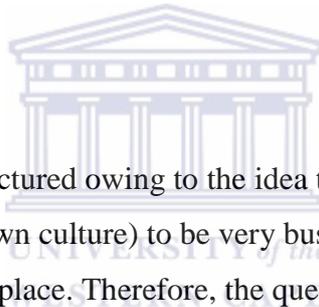
The interview questions were structured owing to the idea that Chinese businessmen are believed (even by those of their own culture) to be very busy and prefer to focus on the tasks at hand while they are at the workplace. Therefore, the questions needed to be succinct, thereby also ensuring that the interviews did not last too long and did not infringe on the time orientations of the participants. The interviews were recorded (with given consent) and later translated to English by a translator from the University of Cape Town. A constraint here however was that most of the interviewees responded in Mandarin, so I was unable to prompt for further responses from them when they answered questions. Unfortunately, the research assistant kept to the set questions and did not really prompt for further information.

Shop assistants were also interviewed, as they are the ones who engage most with both groups (Chinese and South Africans) and can essentially be seen as the mediators between the two. Their opinions on China Town and the customers revealed a lot about what actually happens in the interaction as opposed to what the other participants expressed in the interviews. These interviews were not recorded, however, extensive field notes were made. The questions were as follows:

1. How do you feel about China Town and working here?

2. How did you come to be employed in China Town, and do you enjoy working here?

3. Do you think it is a good place for South Africans?

4. What do you think attracts people to China Town?

5. How would you describe your interaction with your employers?

6. How would you describe the interaction between the customers and the store keepers?

In addition, the opinions of South African customers regarding Chinese enterprises and China Towns in particular were sampled. This required random conversations with customers in China Town. These interviews were unstructured and rather conversational in nature.as with the shop assistants, the interviews with customers were also not recorded as these were on-the-spot interviews and customers were being interviewed during their shopping time. Recording interviews would have required customers to complete consent forms, which is time consuming given the context. This would have posed a risk of customers refusing to participate in the interview based on the time it would take. The main questions asked were:

1. What do you think about China Town, and why do you come here?

2. What do you like about China Town?

3. What are they like when they serve you? Are they nice?

4. What do you think about the way Chinese advertise their products?

As can be noted above, the questions asked were centred on what the customers in China Town thought about having China Towns in South Africa and how they felt about the popularity of Chinese products as well as their shopping experience in terms of interaction with the shopkeepers. The interviews with the customers were not recorded, as field notes were sufficient in summing up the main points made by them.

The second method I used was observation, which required me to be present in the stores and become a part of the environment while observing the interaction between the shop keepers and the customers. In essence then this methodology was not ethnographic, but employed ethnographic methods. In this sense, using the ethnographic methods enabled me to observe and hypothesise the practices of the shopkeepers and customers before the analysis of

interviews and field notes took place. According to Fox and Bayat (2007) in ethnographic studies, interviews are used in combination with observation and documentation. In this study, observation and ethnographic methods were both essential for the success of the data collection. Observation was important as this gave me the opportunity to gain the acceptance of those being observed. Frequenting the China town shops rendered me a familiar face to the African shop assistants, which meant I was not being closely followed around the stores as I browsed through items and observed customer-shopkeeper interactions. During the observations, observational notes were taken to record what was seen and heard and to furthermore formulate ideas around these notes

4.5 Data Analysis

This section describes how the data collected in China Town was analysed.

4.5.1 Transcription

Once the desired number of recordings had been obtained I adopted a content analysis approach to the interpretation and analysis of the data. This required the transcription of the recordings and thereafter using content analysis as a method of analysis. The first step in analysing the data was to transcribe all the recorded interactions between the Chinese and the customers. This part of the analysis is significant as speech is evanescent and cannot be analysed from a discourse analytical standpoint simply by the researcher listening to it. Even recordings, with the functions to stop, pause, rewind or fast forward, could be considerably difficult to analyse. With this in mind, transcription is a permanent record of what the researcher hears, and gives the researcher the ability to deal with writing in ways that one cannot do with speech (Cameron, 2001). According to Cameron (2001:131), "without a transcript - a written/graphic representation - talk is impossible to analyse systematically". By transcribing the recordings of the interactions between the customer and the store owners, I was able to critically analyse the written text in terms of how the participants communicate effectively despite the language barriers.

4.5.2 Content Analysis

The analytical approach in my research was Content Analysis. One of the fundamental features of content analysis is that it deals with large bodies of text and systematically reduces them to smaller, analysable categories of information. Cohen *et al* (2007) put forward that content analysis can be done with any textual material and can be applied to analyse large amounts of textual data. Content analysis as an analytical tool could be used both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, since this study focuses on a sociolinguistic phenomenon that deals with experiential meaning, a qualitative content analysis is used. For Weber (1990) qualitative content analysis is seen as a useful technique which allows us to focus on individual, group, institutional and social phenomena.

According to Krippendorff (1980) cited in (Stemler, 2001:2), six questions must be addressed in every content analysis:

1) Which data are analysed?

2) How is the data defined?

3) What is the population from which the data are drawn?

4) What is the context relative to which the data are analysed?

5) What are the boundaries of the analysis?

6) What is the target of the inferences?

These questions not only guide the content analysis, but allows the researcher to familiarise him/herself with the data, the context surrounding the data, as well what the limitations of the study will be.

In order to effectively do a content analysis of textual data, Elo and Kyngäs (2008) suggest that the procedure follows a prescribed structure. The procedure for content analysis in this study is adapted and modified from Elo and Kyngäs (2008)

1. The first step is to select a unit of analysis, which involves the researcher becoming familiar with the data and deciding on themes. This also involves obtaining a sense of the data, which Elo and Kygnäs (2008) listed as the second step. However, I chose to incorporate this into the first step, as becoming familiar with the research population and the data is necessary before themes can be extracted.

2. The second step involves organising the data, which relates to aspects of the content of the data and the creation of categories from within the data

3. The third step is to describe the contents of the categories and to ultimately make inferences.

4.5.3 Methodological steps in analysis of data

The interviews were drawn up with specific themes already in place (see 5.2). The transcribed interviews were ultimately grouped in terms of these themes, e.g. *introductions* or *living and working in South Africa.* Out of these themes descriptions were formulated and inferences were made. These inferences were supplemented by the theoretical frameworks i.e. intercultural communication, face theory, politeness theory, relational work. Inferences were therefore not based solely on the context within which the data is embedded, but also based on specific theories which inform the study. Additionally, the descriptions and inferences were also supplemented by the observations that were recorded.
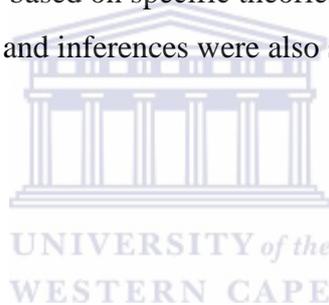
4.6 Ethics Statement

The assistant explained the research project to Chinese participants and conducted the interviews in Mandarin. When the desired number of interviews had been gathered, I acquired a separate translator of Chinese origin, who was a Chinese tutor at the University of Cape Town.

Owing to the fact that interviews were the major component of my research, following the correct ethical procedures was vital. Before conducting the interviews, consent forms were drawn up in English and Mandarin explaining the objectives of the research. Prior to the interviews the translator explained the research project so that the issue of informed consent was ensured. In view of the fact that Chinese migrants have little to no affiliation with the Chinese government and some of their businesses are not registered in terms of the South African Revenue Service, it was helpful to add that this research project is independent of governmental ties and is strictly for academic interest. Participants were also assured that their identities would remain anonymous, and the interview questions also excluded any personal information that could be traced back to them. It was also explained that

participation is entirely voluntary. At the end of each interview, the participants signed a consent form, and were also given a copy for themselves, which states the research objectives, describes the ethical consideration, and assures them that the data obtained during the interviews would only be used for research and not be distributed otherwise.

4.7 Limitations of the study

Although a Chinese research assistant was employed for the purpose of interviewing and translating, the data obtained from the interviews were limited owing to the fact that there was no further probing when participant responses were brief. The research assistant kept to the set questions and, given that the interviews were conducted in Mandarin, I was not able to evaluate responses and instruct her to probe.

Another limitation of the study is the issue of transcription. As mention in 4.3, an external entity from the University of Cape Town translated and transcribed the Mandarin interviews. A risk factor here is that there is no guarantee that the translator did not accidentally omit, simplify or modify some responses from the participants.
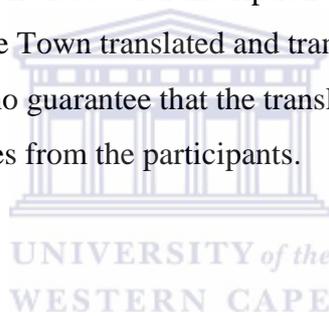
4.8 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the research methods for collecting data. It was stated that the qualitative approach to data collection was used in particular, interviews, ethnographic methods and observation. These approaches were also defined and explained, as well as the reason for using these particular approaches. The ethical considerations have also been illustrated. The analytical tool namely content analysis was discussed in terms of theory and how it was used in this study.

Chapter Five

Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents a content analysis of the interviews I conducted for this study. Here the responses of the interviewees are analysed and discussed in terms of the way my Chinese respondents use language (or do not use language) to communicate effectively with South African customers in the business setting. The chapter commences with an overview of the data collected, followed by a content analysis of four interviews which are reflective of the other interviews I conducted with the aid of the research assistant.

The questions asked were centred around six main themes, namely: *Introductions, Living and working in South Africa, Opening a business in South Africa, Interacting with South African customers, Making South African customers feel welcome in the stores,* and *The product and the customers*. The main trends observed throughout the interviews were mainly that the majority of the participants felt that verbal communication isn't as crucial to the success of their businesses as one would expect. The second trend observed is that the participants expressed that their product is what makes their businesses thrive. A third observation is that participants feel the customers are often to blame for the lack of interaction owing to their preconceived ideas pertaining to their English proficiency. The fourth and rather significant observation is that the participants do not mention the shop assistants in their responses to their strategies for business success, even though it was observed that these assistants play such a major role in China Town stores, as is discussed in Chapter 6.

5.1 Overview of data

As a starting point, the overall communicative and social competence of my respondents needs to be taken into account. Edmondson(1981:7) states that "it is a matter of common experience that proficiency in face-work is something that one learns, and that different people differ markedly in the degree to which they can 'handle' other people". This brings into question whether the interaction that took place between myself as the interviewer and

the shop-keepers as interviewees might have been a situation that they were not accustomed to.

The first observable aspect when looking at the interview data overall was that the answers from the Mandarin respondents were very concise. One word answers, limited phrases and simple sentence answers were common among the responses received from the interviewees, even though they answered in their first language. When they were asked fairly personal questions, none of the participants were keen to reveal too much information. Instead they deflected or simply refused to directly answer the question. This possibly shows that they choose to keep to themselves and not have strangers know anything about them. Even with the Mandarin translator explaining the questions to them and simplifying it, the answers were short and to the point, with hardly any elaboration.

For example, one of the interviewees was asked why she thinks many customers buy cameras in her shop, and her reply was "Because they need it". When asked if she was happy in China Town and why she answered "yes". When further prompted with "Can you tell me why?" she responded in Mandarin and told the interpreter that this was a strange question. One might therefore be tempted to argue that an in-depth analysis would not work with data where responses from the participants are so short. However, Edmondson (1981:14) asserts that even short dialogues, when written out, are successful texts for analysis, as these texts are coherent as discourse. This means that the coherence of the text lies in the interpretability of the behaviour the text represents.. Edmondson furthermore states that "interpretability is a matter of possible contextualisation, and thus the notion of coherence with regard to a text is to be equated with its possible use as a discourse"(Edmondson, 1981:14). This therefore relates to the study in the sense that even though the responses from the interviewees are short and don't leave much to analyse, they still manifest as text. Furthermore, any form of text has the potential for contextualization and therefore, interpretation and analysis. A descriptive qualitative content analysis was therefore possible based on the potential of the data to be contextualised and interpreted.

5.2 Data analysis

For this chapter I have chosen to analyse 4 interviews of the 8 that were conducted (see Appendix 2) Two of these interviews were conducted with the assistance of the Mandarin translations, and two were conducted with English-speaking Chinese participants. Furthermore, a comparison of the responses will be analysed and discussed as this will provide insight as to whether the language barrier also accounted for the hesitancy to divulge information about themselves and their immigration process into South Africa. Another aspect to analyse is also the assistance from the interpreter and whether her interpretations of the questions affected the responses from the respondents. In the interview excerpts to follow, *M* is code for the principle researcher, *I* represents the research assistant and *A* reflects the responses from the participants. *Interview 1, 2, 3* and *4* relates to *Interviewee 1, 2, 3* and *4* in section 4.1.1 (see table on page 53)

5.2.1 Introductions

The first section that will be looked at is the first 3 questions of the interview, when the interviewees are asked to introduce themselves and talk about where they grew up and their entry into South Africa.
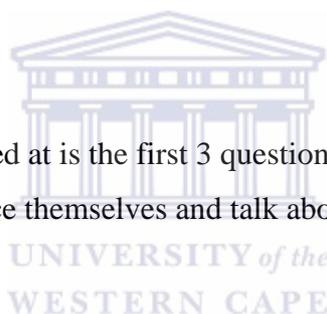
Interview 1 [Mandarin]

M. Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up?

I: Where did you grow up?

A: I grew up in JiLin City, in the JiLin province, in China.

M. Is it a good place to grow up?

I: Is it a nice city?

A: It is a big city.

M: How long have you been in SA and was it easy to come here?

A: It is more than 7 years.

Interview 2 [Mandarin]

M. Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up, maybe in which town?

I: Can you introduce yourself briefly? Like where did you grow up?

A: China, Jiangsu province.

M. Is it a good place for me to visit if I decide to go to China?

A: Yes

M. How long have you been living in South Africa and was it easy to come here?

A: I have been here 2 years. It wasn't easy coming to SA.

Interview 3 [English]

M: Can you tell me about yourself and where you grew up?

A: In China, Fujian province

M: How long have you been living in South Africa?

A: 2 and a half years

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and to open a business here?

 A: Just want to earn more money

Interview 4 [English]

M: So the first question is can you tell me about yourself?

A: I grew up from Taiwan

M: From Taiwan?

A: Hmmm

M: Which Town was that? Is it a good place for me to visit if I want to go there?

A: Uhm.. It's a very poor area

The questions asked here at the beginning all require very subjective responses, which would solicit personal answers and accounts. The response to the question 'Can you tell me about yourself and where you grew up' is notably half answered as the participants only tell me that they grew up in China and in which province. In Interview 1, however, the translator did not translate my question completely but only asked the participant where she grew up. In the second interview, she also doesn't translate directly from my question, so instead of saying "Can you tell me about yourself" she asked the participant: "Can you introduce yourself briefly? Like where you grew up?" Here, even though she asked the participant to introduce herself, she still specified that the participant should tell her where she grew up. This could indicate that, even taking on the stance of an assistant researcher, she meant to save face and not request any personal information from the participant.

According to Pan (1995) Chinese speakers are very conscious about interpersonal relationships. It can therefore be presumed that they would be hesitant to open up to an interviewer. Additionally, Pan (1995) states that Chinese participants in a conversation are conscious of their position in relation to others and employ different strategies to signal this relation recognition. This could therefore arguably account for their irresolution during this interview process.

Gu (1990:240) found that in the Chinese context, "rules for politeness are moral maxims, the breach of which will incur social sanction". In addition to the notion of face in these intercultural interactions, the approach known as an ethnography of speaking could also be applied here. This approach assumes that "speech is calculated and that speakers are purposefully applying linguistic codes toward social ends in culturally defined situations" (Lim, 2003:57). This notion furthermore attempts to understand how language is culturally shaped and instituted, and to systematically report such understandings. With this in mind one could then argue that not only the participants, but the translator as well, have intentionally not answered the questions fully. For them this might have been a "culturally defined situation" which made them see the need to be as concise as possible, while still providing the basic information requested of them.

In the 4th interview I specifically did not ask the participant where he grew up, but asked him only to tell me about himself. Nevertheless, he still answered telling me that he grew up in Taiwan. This clearly indicates that the participants had no desire to disclose any personal

information. This could be seen as the participants' want to save face and preserve their conceptualisation of their social image. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel's (2003) notion of facework can be seen here, as facework, among other actions, is employed to protect a person's image. The negative face of the participants could have been imposed on when they were asked a question that would bridge the social gap they might have wanted to maintain. So instead of blatantly refusing to answer the question altogether, the participants preserved both their own and the interviewer's face by saying where they grew up and also adding the province as additional information, possibly to compensate for the omission of their personal introductions.

I asked 3 of the participants if their place of origin is a good place should I decide to visit. Their responses ranged from "yes" to "it is a big city" to "it's a poor area". Yet again the answers to this simple question were short and seemed to be a question the participants didn't care to elaborate on. It is possible that, based on my research of Chinese migration, the places of origin are often affected by poor living conditions, hence the push to migrate. However, the responses were rather blunt, with simple adjectives like "poor" or "big" used to describe the conditions. In the first interview when the translator was meant to ask if LiJin was a good place to grow up, she resorted instead to changing the nature of the question by asking "is it a nice city?" This alteration of the question changes the nature of the inquiry to something that solicits a less personal answer. It can also be assumed that speaking about their place of origin could be seen as a personal construct for the participants, something that, if spoken about, could reveal something about themselves, and perhaps their conditions growing up. This once again, would threaten the face of the participants, and in changing the question, the translator saved the face of the participants.

5.2.2 Living and working in South Africa

The next set of questions revolved around how the interviewees felt about being in South Africa and their motivations for migrating to the country. These questions were asked with the intention to evaluate their level of response, in terms of how much they would reveal in the interview. The first set of questions were met with short responses, so the second set was meant to established whether the participants would open up and ease in to the interaction.

Here are extracts from four of the interviews conducted:

Interview 1

M. Do you feel welcome in South Africa?

I: Do you feel welcome in South Africa?

A: I think it is okay… because I do not have any impacts, especially negative impacts on South Africa… I think it is okay.

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and open a business here?

I: what motives you to move to South Africa and open a business here?

A: my friend has a business here and he/she says it is nice doing business in South Africa.

Interview 2

M. Do you feel welcomed in South Africa, and why? If you do, why, and if you don't, why not?

I: do you feel welcome in South Africa?

A: Yes, because we do business here.

M. What motivated you to come to South Africa and open a business here?

I: what motives you to move to South Africa? And why did you choose to do your business here?

A: My father owns the shop here.

Interview 3

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and to open a business here?

A: Just want to earn more money

M: Okay and it's better here than in China?

A: Uhm because we got a basic. My sister in law was here and uh.. she already had a shop so we had a basic foundation here

Interview 4

M: Okay. Uhm, how long have you been living in South Africa and was it easy to come here?

A: Nineteen-eighty-eight

M: Nineteen-eighty-eight? Wow. And was it easy to come here though?

A: Not that easy

M: Not that easy? And do you feel welcomed in South Africa though?

A: Yes I feel welcome

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and open up a business here?

A: Uhm I not automatic come to South Africa, it's a relocate

M: Oh, you relocated?

A: Yeah, it's a government recruit the Taiwanese business person=

M: Okay?

A: Eh to invest in South Africa. So that's why we came here

M: So besides that, what else did you do to prepare yourself for coming to South Africa? Besides knowing about the landmarks

A: Uh you know sometime it's a business opportunity uh you have to change and see the the the far view from the future. So you must change your environment. You know sometime in that time I was very young, so I wanted to see how is South Africa, because South Africa is Africa main country. You know? If you come to South Africa probably you can do the African market as well. So that's why I had that vision

I asked the interviewees whether they felt welcome in South Africa and all the participants expressed that they do. One participant specifically said she felt welcome simply because they did business here. The following question asked the participants what motivated them to open a business in South Africa. Of all the interviews I conducted and transcribed, I found

that none of these business owners/shop keepers came to South Africa on their own, or of their own accord. 37.5% of the interviewees came here because a friend had already established a business and invited them to either help or set up roots as well. 50% of the interviewees came here because they had family here and were invited to join in the family business. And only one participant came here as part of the *Apartheid* government's recruitment regime 27 years ago. The fact that the majority of the interviewees came here based on relational ties, brings to light the relevance of what is known in Mandarin as *guanxi*. *Guanxi* (personal connections) closely ties in with that of *mianzi* (face). *Guanxi* and *mianzi*, according to Buckley, Clegg and Tan (2006) are inseparable from the Chinese business environment: "It is a fundamental web of interpersonal relations permeating Chinese societies" (Buckley, Clegg and Tan, 2006:276). Furthermore, business practices that are based on *guanxi* are said to reduce uncertainty, reduce search and other transaction costs, provide usable resources and promote a sense of connectedness (Buckley, Clegg and Tan, 2006:276). With this in mind, the China Town where this research was carried out could be seen as a business complex that is based on the notion of *guanxi*.

The next question asked the participants if they had received any formal instruction in preparation for coming to South Africa. This question was meant to establish whether Chinese came to South Africa with any background knowledge of its people or cultures. It serves to inform the research in terms of the level of preparedness of Chinese when they migrate to South Africa.

In this section a comparison could be drawn between the answers given from the Mandarin speakers and the participants who answered in English. The first interviewee answered "yes I have heard of something". This possibly indicates that the interviewee did not want to elaborate on what she had heard or what she had been taught about South Africa. The second interviewee said "no one taught me" [anything about South Africa]. However, as can be inferred from the text, she only fully understood the question once it was explained in Mandarin. She then hesitated to answer, saying that it was a strange question, and eventually asked that the question be skipped. After phrasing it differently, she hesitated and answered that "[her] father told [her] about this" The fact that the interviewee said that it was a strange question and asked that the question be skipped, could have been a face saving strategy to conceal the fact that she did not fully understand what was being asked. One could surmise, from the responses of the two participants that this might also have been an intimate question as it would require them to recount what they had learnt and possibly the conditions in which

they had been taught. It is also possible that they did not fully understand the question and how they were meant to answer it. According to Lim (2003) different cultures have different systems of meaning, which can often lead to intercultural misunderstanding. Even though the questions were asked in Mandarin, the nature of the question could have solicited a different response in Chinese culture as opposed to what was expected by the interviewer. This intercultural communicative division is not unheard of, as Zhang and Zhou (2008) states that when a culture varies, communicative practices also vary. The knowledge of people's culture thus plays an important role not only in predicting, describing and understanding human behaviour, but also in the way we communicate.

In the 3rd and 4th interview, participants were more open about whether they were in any way informed about South Africa and what they had learned. The 3rd participant clearly and elaborately stated that having already learned English in China meant that she was equipped to come to South Africa, and as for having additional assistance, no one had helped her. She however, stated that she used all her knowledge and what she knew of the language to learn more. This is a detailed description of her experience, compared to the first two interviews. It also signals that the participant feels that perhaps the only knowledge one needs to succeed in South Africa is knowledge of the language, in other words being able to communicate. The 4th interviewee also explained that he was given a book to read on the monuments and landmarks in South Africa and Cape Town, specifically, as preparation for the recruitment. However, no formal instruction was given to prepare him for the cultural aspects of South Africa.

There is a vast difference that can be observed between the Mandarin speaking participants and the English speaking participants. Their accounts are more detailed, which could indicate that the language difference might have hindered the first 2 participants from answering fully. The English speaking participants understood and, even though phrased differently, responded with notably more complex answers. It can thus be said that the language barrier played a significant role in how these questions were answered. And regardless of the translations, these were questions that arguably, the participants were not accustomed to, therefore the answers were simple. The translator in this instance did not probe for any elaborations when short answers were given, which also accounts for the concise responses from the Mandarin speaking participants.

Allwood's (1985) theory of difference in *patterns of behaviour* could also account for the marked differences in the responses from the participants. Patterns of behaviour has to do with the shared ways of speaking in a culture as well as the ways of performing certain activities. This being said, it might be a culturally shared characteristic for Mandarin speakers to only say as much as is needed. As Pan (1995) argues that Chinese speakers are very conscious of interpersonal relationships, it could be argued here that by not being conversational in their responses, they were maintaining social distance and preserving their negative face. Interviewee 4, being more aware and more in tune to South African culture, was more conversational and his responses were more detailed and elaborate than all the participants in this study. It could be surmised that his nationality as a South African Chinese accounts for the commonality in our shared *pattern of behaviour* (ways of speaking). The *interaction sequence* (Allwood, 1985) is also markedly different with the Mandarin participants in comparison to the English participants. With the Mandarin speakers the interaction sequence followed a clear sequence of question and answer. With the English speakers however the tone was more conversational, with overlapping speech, interruptions and longer speaking turns.
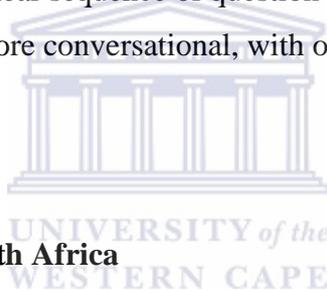
5.2.3 Opening a business in South Africa

As the extracts below reveal, the question "what motivated you to move to South Africa and open up a business here" was met with very interesting responses. The Mandarin speaking respondents claimed that they were only here because they had family members in China Town who invited them to open a business in the area. The first interviewee stated that her motivation for coming to South Africa was that a friend had a shop here and said it would be "nice doing business in South Africa" Interviewee 2 for example, simply said "My father owns the shop here". She was therefore not the shop owner, but ran the shop for her father. What was interesting to note was that the interviewees who did not have much mastery over English, came here knowing they already had allies here who could assist with the transition from China to South Africa.

The participants who spoke English, however, had very different reasons. Interviewee 3 specifically said that her motivation for coming to South Africa was because she wanted to earn more money, however having her sister in law already present in South Africa made the transition smoother. Interviewee 4 had a peculiar response. He said he saw the migration to

South Africa as a business opportunity. He furthermore stated: "So you must change your environment. You know sometime in that time I was very young, so I wanted to see how is South Africa, because South Africa is Africa main country. You know? If you come to South Africa probably you can do the African market as well. So that's why I had that vision". While it was not established whether interviewee 4 had some degree of proficiency in English before living in South Africa, it can be surmised that owing to their proficiency in English, the English speaking participants were a lot more confident migrating to South Africa than the Mandarin speaking interviewees. It could also be said that the responses from the English speaking participants were a lot more personal. Stating that she wanted to earn more money, Interviewee 3 made it known that there could possibly have been a need for her to seek better financial opportunities. The same could be said for Interviewee 4 who claimed that he saw migration to South Africa as a business opportunity. While they do not say it outright, both participants subtly suggest that there was a financial need to be met, thus the migration to South Africa. This relates to Fan's (2008) two categories that drive Chinese migration: *social reasons* as seen in the first two interviews; and *economic reasons* as with the Interviewee 3 and 4.
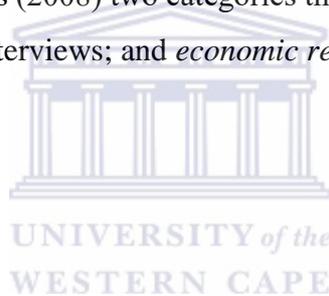
Interview 1

M. Did anyone teach you about South Africa and South Africans before you came here, and what did you learn?

I: Did anyone told you anything about SA or South African before you came to SA?

A: yes, I have heard of something.

Interview 2

M. Did anyone teach you about South Africa and about South Africans and what they like, before you came here?

A: No. no one taught me.

M. So if no one taught you anything, what did you do to prepare yourself for coming to South Africa?

I: how did you prepare to come to South Africa? About SA culture and people here.

A: It is also a strange question. [__]☺ Next questions.

I: do you want her to explain the question to you again or just skip over this one?

A: well, just skip over.

M. Maybe I'll ask it differently. Did anyone teach you about what South Africans like in terms of, you know in China they may like different types of clothes to what they like in South Africa. How did you know what types of things to stock in your shop?

I: How did you know about SA trend and preferences? And is there any differences between China and SA?

A: My father told me about this ☺☺

Interview 3

M. Did you receive any intercultural communication skills before you came here? So was there any training that would help you communicate with people from different cultures in South Africans?

A: No, you see because we learn English in China already when we were starting ya and come here maybe just Uh.. use Uhh.. all the language, all the knowledge, ya and to sometimes learn some, ya nobody help us.. yeah

Interview 4

M: Did anyone teach you about South Africa and Africans before you came here?

A: No

M: Not at all?

A: I just read fro# uuuh from the book

M: There's a book on South Africans?

A: Yes they introduce us especially like uuuuh what Table Mountain uuuuh whats that uuuuh Cape Point

M: Hmmm

A: Ya

5.2.4 Interacting with South African customers

The crux of this research seeks information on the success of the interaction that takes place between the customer and the Chinese shopkeeper/trader. Here the question "How would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers?" was asked to find out how the Chinese shop-keepers and owners bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between themselves and South African customers. To fully answer this question, I also did observations in China Town and frequented the stores as a customer, not a researcher. I browsed through items, often asking questions and picking up on the general behaviour of the Chinese towards and in relation to South African customers. This section thus analyses the interviews, but also compares it to what was observed and how these two sets of data correlate.

The first interviewee describes her interaction in saying that she greets her customers by either saying "morning" or "*NiHao*" ('hello' in Mandarin). This was interesting as she not only accommodated the language of her customers, but also exposed them to hers by saying "*NiHao*". So here she was bridging the gap between Chinese and South Africans by allowing a blending of language in a given situation. She furthermore stated that she was able to ask "Can I help you?" These seemed to be the only English phrases she acquired and needed to use in her interaction with her customers. Introducing the products would possibly not have required much communication, as the product and prices speak for themselves. The second interviewee clearly showed no interest in initiating interaction with her customers, as she stated that she only responded to them when she was asked a question: "When they ask me I will answer". This, as has been observed, was the case in the majority of these Chinese stores.

In most Chinese stores there is barely interaction with customers, as the shop-keepers are more often than not, occupied when customers enter the stores. There is no greeting, no acknowledgement of the customer's presence, unless the customer asks a question. Even this, in some cases doesn't warrant a response from these shop-keepers, as this is where South African shop-assistants step in. They are the ones who primarily have contact with the customers, not the owners/shop-keepers. The 3rd interviewee recounted a similar experience,

although her view was that often the customers did not look at her as the shop owner. She however, also stated that she greeted them as initial interaction, and furthermore said "how are you". The fourth interviewee, when asked how he communicated with his customers, simply stated "Your product". He admitted that most customers had a preconceived idea that all Chinese cannot communicate, so he generally wait to see what attitude the customers have when coming into his store. Furthermore, he said that he would often ask "how can I help you", although the customers approached the South African shop assistants more often than they do the Chinese.

What is significant here is that even though the 3rd and 4th interviewees were completely fluent in English, they still employed the African shop assistants. One could assume then, that the employment of the shop assistants is not merely as mediators for communication, but perhaps a means of making South Africans feel a sense of familiarity when entering the stores. The shop assistants could be seen as proxies in the stores, as they were the ones responsible for interacting with the customers, to inform the customers about the product and to answer any questions that the customers might have. One of the interviewees (see interview 8) when asked about the tools or strategies she used to communicate, said "If they don't understand we can call the lady to help", the 'lady' referring to the Congolese shop assistant.

Based on the fact that Chinese who are fluent in English still employ the shop assistants, it is worth considering the idea that Chinese shop-keepers may not want to be too involved in interactions with South Africans as a way of not blending cultures or behaviours. According to Park (2008) most Chinese South Africans wish to maintain their separate ethnic identity as Chinese. Many Chinese send their children to China to have a Chinese education, because it is believed that "without it, one can never be truly Chinese" (Park, 2008:108). The principle goal of sending their children to China was to instil the Chinese language, which is argued to be the central component of ethnicity (Park, 2008, Min, 2002). As for the older migrants, such as Interviewee 4, their families have already acculturated into South African society. When asked if he was planning on leaving South Africa, he said that he would retire here. In addition, during the interview he mentioned that his children study at the University of Cape Town and at Stellenbosch University. With this in mind it is obvious that the Chinese who maintain their ties to home are the temporary migrants, while those who have been in the country longer have made South Africa their home. Based on this one could argue that some of the Chinese in China Town might have had no inclination to communicate with customers

or learn the language, in order to preserve and safeguard their conception of what essentially made them Chinese. It is important to note here that South Africa has three distinct Chinese communities: South African born Chinese, Chinese from Taiwan, and newer immigrant Chinese (Huyhn *et al*, 2010). While most South African born Chinese are comfortable being identified as South African, newer migrants are often only temporary migrants who see South Africa as a starting point before migrating elsewhere. It is thereupon suggested that it is the newer temporary migrants who still have the strong ties to their homeland and who wish to maintain their separate ethnic identity.

One can however, not only blame Chinese for the lack of interaction. As the third and fourth interviewee stated, the customers enter the store with the idea that the shopkeepers don't know how to speak English. Interviewee 3 also stated that customers are impatient. They would ask her a question and while she was thinking of a proper response, they would say "It's fine" and leave the store. It was observed that customers also did not make an effort to communicate with the Chinese: they would enter the stores, maybe in rare cases nod in acknowledgment, and proceed to browse through the store in search of what they wanted. Perhaps the fact that the shops are not very spacious makes shopping in these stores easier, as one does not have to wander through aisles looking for a specific product. This being said, Chinese stores are essentially self-service in nature, customers come in, look for what they want and if they don't find it, walk out and go to the next shop. As interviewee 3 stated "Maybe we don't have any interaction, and then they just check the stuff themselves" This process one would therefore assume renders communication unnecessary.

Interview 1

M. How would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers?

I: How do you interact or communicate with your customers?

A: I greet them in the morning by saying "NiHao" or "morning". Customer come. And I am able to ask "can I help you" and introduce stuff. And I have a good manager

Interview 2

M. how would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers?

I: how do you interact with your customers?

A: When they ask me, I will answer.

I: only like that?

A: yah

Interview 3

M: How would you describe the interaction that takes place in your shop? So when the customer comes in here, do you have an interaction? How would you explain or describe it?

 A: Ya when they come in maybe we just say hello or uh how you, sometimes they come in and they don't look at you. Maybe we don't have any interaction, and then they just check the stuff themselves

 M: Okay do they then maybe interact with the shop assistants instead?

A: Sometimes ya

Interview 4

M: How would you describe the interaction that takes place in your shop between you and your customers?

A: How?

M: How would you describe the interaction, so from the moment they come in through the doors, how would you interact with them?

A: Uh.. Uhhh, your product.

M: Okay? So you don't do much communication with your customers?

A: Uh we do a lot of communication but the once you ask them, say how how how can I help you. But we see from his attitude. You know sometimes customer is quiet, he think Chinese can't communicate. So that's why they don't automatically come to ask you

M: Do they go to the shop assistant more often than=

A: =yeees yes

M: That's quite bad though, they shouldn't just assume these things?

A: They they have to try to, but not everyone can speak you know.. ya so there is someone that can speak

The following section stems from the question "what tools or strategies do you use to communicate effectively with your customers? It is important to note that this question was asked with the intention to identify what alternative methods to verbal communication are employed in interactions. This specific question sought to answer the central research question; how do Chinese bridge the cultural and linguistic gap when doing business in South Africa. The question was not really answered as expected, as the responses were peculiar, although all participants basically presented with the same answer: the product speaks for itself.

Interview 1

M. What tools or strategies if any do you use to communicate effectively with your customers? So how do you communicate effectively with the customers?

I: what strategies do you use to communicate with your customers effectively and make them feel welcome?

A: there is no special strategies. You just keep smiling while you introduce your products to them.

Interview 2

M. What tools or strategies, if any do you use to communicate effectively with your customers?

I: what strategies do you use to communicate with your customers as you cannot speak English?

A: I will show them the stuff, and the quality. And introduce the products to them.

Interview 3

M: What tools or strategies if you use any, do you use to communicate with your customers? So if you don't speak to them, or if maybe you find it difficult to communicate, what other strategies would you use to communicate with them?

A: Normally they have a [misfunctation?] uh uh they have a [misuration?] sometimes they just buy something ya and pay for it, money. You see maybe just calculate ya. And uh second, sometimes they ask for something we don't have. We don't know we got a lot. And sometimes customer don't wait for you, they just ask do you have one, maybe we just think about it and they say 'oh its fine fine' they just go

M: So they're very impatient?

A: Yeees sometimes=

M: =they don't wait for you to process it=

A: =yeah and some customer they say 'ooh it's fine I can check myself'

Interview 4

What strategies if any, do you use to communicate effectively with your customers? Although I don't think you would need any since you speak English so well, but if there are any, what would they be?

A: You know, uh... The shop if you can attract the customer that come to the shop it's the main reason, not only the product, your service, your display… And your price. There's too many reasons all get together. Not only one reason… soooo... What can I say...

M: So it's not only about communication it's about attracting=

A: No no no.. Your product very bad, and your price very high, customers can't afford you know... Customer first of all compare the price, second he compare the quality. But I can tell you the majority of the customer in South Africa because they didn't see many product, like me I go Korea I go Japan I go Hong Kong I go Singapore I see so many product. Lots of product I already see maybe ten years ago. But today only appear in South Africa. You know, so it's a too many reasons. Ya, but at the moment today South Africa, the basic income is low. So that's why the price is low because the people can't afford it. The government must be having some strategy, how to increase the employment, that's important. Today you have to understand 29 percent of unemployment rate has caused people too much violence, and steal and that's main reason. And as well, you know because uh the labour department is so strong that's the other reason. And that of course of the political reason as well

The first interviewee stated that she did not use any special strategies to communicate with the customers, but just smiled while introducing the product to them. The second interviewee also said she relied on her product; she "shows them the stuff, and the quality" and subsequently introduces the product to the customers. Interviewee 3 expressed the view that customers did not want to communicate, they just took what they wanted and paid for it. Based on these three responses one can already see that the focus is solely on the product when it comes to Chinese-South African interaction. Both interviewee 1 and 2 did not recount any instances of speaking to the customers; just smiling and introducing the product and the said quality of the product.

The 4th interviewee mentioned that effective communication has to do with attracting the customers to the shop via your product, your price and your display. When I asked him how he would describe the interaction with his customers, he said "Your product". This is significant since one wouldn't expect someone who has been South African Chinese for as long as he as, to also rely on the product as means of interaction. Having been in the country for so long and having established roots here, one would assume that interviewee 4 would feel a lot more at ease communicating with the customers. The responses from the interviewees were interesting, as the question did not even mention the product. It specifically asked what tools they made use of to *communicate* with their customers. It is therefore evident that to the Chinese shopkeeper, the product is what counts and is what the

customers come for, so the focus is on the product, introducing it to them and selling it. It would appear that their sole interest is in selling their products and making a profit; interacting with South Africans is not a priority here. This is evident in interviewee 2's words: "When they ask me I will answer". Two of the other interviewees (see interview 7 in Appendix 2) when asked to describe their interaction with their customers stated "Well, I price all the products in the shop. If customers like it, they will buy". Here again there is a clear indication that the shop owners do not see communication with their customers as paramount to the success of their business.

Another interviewee (see interview 6) said that she did not use tools or strategies to communicate, but specifically stated "I will just let them try on the clothes". This tendency strongly relates to the notion of *Face* once again.. Throughout the interviews, the majority of the interviewees kept to their negative face, especially interviewee 2, who was not very keen on elaborating on certain questions. Brown and Levinson (1978:77) argue that face threats arise through impositions in regards to either "services (including the provision of time)" and "goods (including non-material goods like information, as well as the expression of regard and other face payments)". It is more than likely that being interviewed by a stranger during a workday threatened the interviewees' negative face.

This being said, the fact that these shop owners and keepers felt that their product was sufficient as a means of interaction, clearly showed that they felt the need to not be imposed on or even spoken to, save for the English speaking interviewees who actually greeted the customers and initiated contact. Even so, interviewee 4 who has been in the country for 27 years and spoke English fluently, still felt that his product was the best way to interact with customers, thereby saving face and reducing the risk of his face being threatened by customers who might have had a preconception that Chinese cannot speak English. According to Brown and Levinson (1978:77) face threats are a consequence of behaviours in interactions that are not consistent with the claimed interactional wants and thus public self-image of individuals. The third interviewee expressed the view that the customers come into the store and do not generally communicate, but only take the product and pay for it. She put emphasis on the fact however that money speaks for itself in this context: "they just buy something, ya and pay for it, *money*." Her answer could be related to the responses of interviewee 2 and 3: it is all about the product and the price. Customers don't really come into China Town looking for a conversation or to communicate with the Chinese. They come for the product.

This is something I observed while browsing the stores; customers enter the shop and look for what they want. They only really communicate when perhaps there is a problem with product pricing or they want a size or variety of the product that is not on display or on the shelves. One could say that South African customers do have a preconceived notion that Chinese are unable to communicate, since when they enquire about anything regarding the product, it would be to the African shop assistants. Therefore, knowing that verbal communication is not much of a necessity in the China Town context, the Chinese shopkeepers choose to let the product and pricing speak for itself. The shop owners/keepers are highly aware that it is their product and the low prices that attract the customers, as stated by interviewee 4: "the majority of customers come here and they want the price, that's why they come to China Town". Another interviewee was asked what strategies he uses to make South Africans feel welcome, and his response was: "That depends on the products, such as the quality and price of the products. If the quality is terrible, then customers would not buy no matter how cheap the stuff is" (see Interview 7 p.136 in Appendix 2). Once again it is evident that Chinese rely on their product for the success of their relationship with South African customers. It can be presumed that the principle here is that as long as the product is cheap and the quality is acceptable, customers will be happy and the relationship between businessman and client will remain intact.

The fourth interviewee, having lived in South Africa for over 25 years, has a lot more experience with South African customers. His answer therefore, not only focuses on his product as the means of effective communication with the customers, but also pricing and display. He even spoke about the South African economy and how his prices have to accommodate the common South African on a low income. Evidently, his knowledge of the economic status in South Africa as well as governmental strategies seems to play a huge role in his business and how he keeps it running. Unlike the other respondents, he does not rely solely on his product as he knows that this isn't always what attracts the customers. He iterated "[If] your product [is] very bad, and your prices very high, customers can't afford..." He also knows that customers compare both the price and the quality of the products. He added that the majority of the customers go to China Town because of the price of the products, and "if they want the quality, they go to shopping centre". He prides himself on knowing the customers, so he actually does try to communicate with them now and then. He mentioned further on in the interview "we can see, because we have more than 25 years in

South Africa and we also know about their customs you know and what colour they like, their background, their environment, especially my children, all study in school here".

From the above extracts, one could almost say that the central research question has been answered. Chinese do not consciously use any communicative tools or strategies to communicate with South African customers because, in essence, they have no desire or see the need to verbally interact with their customers. They do however, use other methods such as playing South African radio stations and in some cases employing local shop assistants. Ultimately though, for these shopkeepers the product is what matters and the product is what they pride themselves on. From the data gathered, one would have assumed that the Chinese who have been here for the shortest period would be the ones least interested in communication with their customers but this is not the case. 50% of the interviewees have been in South Africa for longer than 5 years while the other 50% has been here between 1 year and 3 years. Even so, there appears to be no visible pattern relating to the duration in South Africa and the willingness or unwillingness to communicate. For example, the respondent in Interview 7 had been in the country for 11 years and he used his product to communicate: "I price the product, and if the customers want it they will buy it". It is interesting to note that Interview 7 was conducted in Mandarin, but during the conversation he mentioned that he knew some basic English, which he learned after coming to South Africa. Even so, he didn't speak a word of English to me when I asked the questions. He replied solely in Mandarin, whereas other interviewees, even those who had only been here for 2 years, incorporated some English into their responses. This being said, there is no obvious relationship between the time period that Chinese have been in South Africa and their tendency to communicate with South African customers (see table – Appendix3). Once again this relates to Park's (2008) theory of Chinese wanting to maintain their separate identity and to not risk a blending of cultures with South Africans.

5.2.5 Making South Africans feel welcome in their stores

In the final question I asked the participants what they did to make South Africans feel welcome in their store. This was also another way of exploring the strategies they make use of the bridge any distance, social or cultural, between the two groups.

Interview 1

M. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?

I: this is kind of the same as one of the previous questions. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcome?

A: I serve good quality of stuff, and nice clothes. And smiling for them as well.

Interview 2

M. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?

I: what do you do to make south Africans feel welcome in the shop?

A: Smiling ☺

Interview 3

M: Do you employ any strategies; what do you do to make South African customers feel welcome in your shop?

A: Feel welcome?

M: Hmmm, how do you make them feel welcome?

 A: I think uh… the attitude is very important. Yeah sometimes, yea, if they want to ask something or what, ya you smiling to them, ya because customers always say ya, in the other shop or maybe everyday just a face without any uuuuuh […] how do you say….

=smile?

A: Ya appearance on uh face, ya?

M: So you're saying the attitude=

A: Attitude ya

M: =and being friendly

A: =friendly yeah

Interview 4

M: The last question is what do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?

[__]

M: _Easy peasy

A: You know actually South African people is very simple uuh because there is no competition, you know like lots of Chinese people like Hong Kong or Japan our even our Taiwanese the people is very complicated. Because they see too much, of uh condition and the competition if it is too much then people are more complicated. But South Africans actually is not complicated because not too much competition. But now we've become more competition. So you say what reason?=

M: =How do you make them feel welcome in the shop…

A: In the shop? Only thing is service. And communicate. That is uh, you can make them feel more than welcome, that is the only way.

M: Just the good service?

A: Ya like you must keep a smile, talk, you know, humorous and you know, and good talking. That's the only reason

Before analysing the above extracts, it should be mentioned that as a way of making customers feel welcome in the stores, 3 of the 8 participants relied on their product, 4 of the 8 suggested that smiling is the best way to make the customers feel welcome, 2 of the 8 said that they make customers feel welcome by speaking to them, and two participants said that the service is most important. In some cases participants would say that both smiling and the product are ways of making the customers feel welcome, so the strategies overlap (see table – Appendix 3)

Interviewee 1 makes her customers feel welcome by selling good quality products and smiling at the customers. The extent to which these shop owners rely on their product to substitute for actual communication is fascinating. The fact that she smiles also shows that while she acknowledges the customers, she still doesn't verbally interact with them. Once

again the observations come into focus here, as it is quite common for the Chinese shop owner/assistant to sit at the pay point on an elevated platform so that they can monitor every inch of the shop. Not once though, have I observed them sitting with smiles on their faces. During the period of my ethnographic observations, while browsing stores as a customer, I felt that the elevated platforms creates an uneasy distance between me as a customer and the Chinese shop keeper. For the shop-keepers however, this might be a perfectly normal way of organizing their space. This is where Allwood (1985) and Zhang and Zhou's (2005) arguments on spatial configurations are relevant. It is argued that *spatial configurations* much like the notion of proxemics, deals with the distance participants maintain during an interaction and accounts for the division between personal and public space that people of different cultures find comfortable. The cultural differences in spatial configuration is therefore another factor to be taken into consideration when there are discussions of interaction between customer and shopkeeper in the China Town setting. For South Africans this organization of space could arguably be seen as a barrier for communication, where the elevated shopkeeper could signal a difference in power, hence a space that makes him appear unapproachable. For Chinese this might be normative way of organizing space. Allwood (1985) furthermore express that it is these differences in communicative behaviour that could possibly cause breakdowns in intercultural communication.

Non-verbal communication seems to be the preferred method of interaction with the shopkeepers. As the participants express, smiling could be an acknowledgment on their part, as opposed to speaking. This assumption is perpetuated in interviewee 2s response, where she says that she makes her customers feel welcome by smiling. It should be noted that this particular interviewee was very shy when she was being interviewed and was constantly giggling nervously with every response. I would therefore believe that her smiling is definitely a substitution for verbal interaction with her customers. That is why she says she doesn't really interact; she only speaks to the customers if they ask her a question. Interviewee 3 surprisingly also mentioned that smiling and the appropriate facial expressions are important, as well as being friendly. Friendliness constitutes politeness and polite verbal interaction. Interviewee 3, being fluent in English, therefore does not rely merely on a facial expression to make her customers feel welcome. The same applies to interviewee 4, who states that "you must keep a smile, **talk**, you know, humorous you know, and good **talking**". Here he specifically states that while smiling is important, it is important to talk to the customers, thus he mentions "talking" twice. Interviewee 4 furthermore states "actually you

know we **talk** a lot with customer. We can see, because we have more than 25 years in South Africa and we also know about their customs you know and what colour they like, their background, their environment, especially my children, all study in school here".

The above statement made by Interviewee 4 may indicate that the reluctance to speak to customers stems from two factors:

1: As most Chinese are not proficient enough in English to converse with customers effectively to make them feel welcome in their stores, they tend to smile instead.

2: Several of the respondents appear to lack intercultural communication competence which "involves the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (Wiseman, 2003:192).

While interviewee 4 can confidently say that he knows the customs, background and environments of South Africans owing to the duration of his time in South Africa, the other interviewees cannot say the same. One has to therefore presume that even though all of the interviewees speak a certain degree of English, it is not just language that makes people comfortable in a foreign place. The shop owners and assistants have yet to learn the customs and the cultures of South Africans, therefore it can be assumed that their reluctance to interact stems from their awareness of their own intercultural incompetence. This is not to say that they are not to some extent trying to bridge the cultural gap. In many of the stores it was observed that mainstream music and in some instances, South African house music, was provided as background music instead of Chinese music. They would also play South African radio stations, which helped to create a sense of familiarity for the clients. As mentioned before, the presence of the South African assistants could also be seen as a way of making South Africans feel welcome, thus creating a sense of familiarity. While many customers might be drawn to the decorations, signs and orientalism in China Towns, the aforementioned could possibly be ways that Chinese feel they want customers to feel at ease in their stores

5.2.6 The product and the customers

In some of the interviews, I asked the participants which kinds of customers tend to buy in their stores the most, who the nicest customers are and which items are most successfully

sold. This section of the interview thus also explores how Chinese view South African customers.

Interview 1

M. Which kinds of customers tend to buy here the most and what are your most successful items that are sold?

I: What are the best sold items in your shop?

A: well, usually suits and clothing things, which are upstairs. Like party dresses and wedding dresses.

M. Why do you think people like these items?

I: Why do you think people like these?

A: for example, the suits in my shop, are cheap and beautiful. Is low price and is beautiful

M. Who are your nicest customers and what makes them nice? Like in terms of all the South Africans or Capetonians that come here, who are the nicest?

I: what type of people are the nicest customers?

A: most of them are nice, like white people, coloured, and black people. There are nice and bad customers among all races.

Interview 2

M. What kinds of customers tend to buy here the most? Like you know, of all the Capetonians here and all the different cultures and colours, what type of people come here the most and who buys here the most?

A: like, uh […] black people ☺

M. what are your most successful items that are sold in your shop and why do you think people like buying it?

A: Cameras.

M. Why do you think people like buying your cameras here?

A. Because they need it ☺

M. And who are your nicest customers? And what makes them nice?

I: what type of people are the nicest? And what make them nice?

A. Eh, if they serious want to buy they will be very nice ☺

M. So there is no specific type of customer that's the nicest, like what about coloureds, black, what, like who are the nicest of the races?

A: If they serious want buy something, they will be nice. It is not about race

Interview 4

M: Okay so just about two more questions. Which kinds of customers tend to buy here the most, and which items are the most=

A: =I think the major

M: =successfully sold

A: =the majority of customers come here and they want the price, that's why they come to china town. If they want the quality, they go to shopping centre.

M: Hmmm

A: That's the most of them they analyse, you know because they want to find out something, but the china town also the other thing is is not the price only.. They can find something else that they couldn't find from the shopping centre. Because you know the most of the shopping centre they sell the same product. But if you come to china town you can find something you want. Ya. And China product is become quite interesting of the whole world. Uh, because they can create a new product, and you know the most of the manufacturer, the most of the product, they supply from America and Europe designed, they send to China to make. You know, and once of uh of a America and Europe wants, they [[outphasing?]] and they will come to the countries like Brazil or South Africa, this kind of area

In these extracts it is evident that even though Chinese have, since the 1970s, been socially, educationally and occupationally classified as white (Park, 2008), they seem to be neutral when it comes to South African classifications of race. Park (2008) argues that over the

course of three generations, Chinese in South Africa gradually moved from their origins as migrants and became a highly educated, largely professional, solidly middle-class group, increasingly accepted by white society as equals (2008:77). She furthermore states that post-1994 they gradually came to be regarded by whites and non-whites alike as 'honorary whites' (Park, 2008:77).

In the first interview I asked the interviewee which kinds of customers tend to buy the most and what her most successfully sold items are. In this instance the interpreter did not fully translate the question, she chose to only ask which items are best sold in the shop. I did however, ask her who her nicest customers are, and she responded with "white people, coloured and black people. There are nice and bad customers among all races". Interviewee 2 when asked which customers buy the most, she hesitated and said "like, uh […] black people" and laughed nervously. I furthermore probed and asked her if there was no specific customer in terms of race that she felt was the nicest. Her response was interesting as she stated "If they serious want buy something, they will be nice. It's not about race". Interviewee 4 did not even mention a specific type of customer, but also referred to the customers simply wanting the products for a good price. This could possibly be attributed to the assumption that these participants (except in Interviewee 4) are temporary migrants who have not been in the country for more than 11 years, and therefore have not been socialised into the South African notion of racial classification. It is therefore plausible that this particular group of Chinese have no particular stance on the South African history of racial segregation and the classification of race based on these segregations.

During the *Apartheid* era Chinese were faced with conflicting and changing legal and social messages about who they were and where they fitted in South African society, which subsequently led to various forms of local Chinese identity (Park, 2008:77). The group Park categorises as the 'bananas' were born in the 1960s and 1970s and different experiences of *Apartheid* era discrimination in comparison to the experiences of other groups (Park, 2008). This could thus account for the race neutrality of the interviewees, even interviewee 4 who had been in the country for 27 years. A significant issue here is that even though Chinese were socially and professionally classified as white, during the late 1970s and 1980s, the Chinese South African community rejected a number of offers by the National Party to give them equal rights and include them on the white electoral roll (Park, 2008:107). This cements earlier statements that Chinese in South Africa, even those living here permanently, maintain the desire to have 'their 'own box' (Park, 2008) - to be acknowledged as Chinese South

Africans and preserve their cultural and ethnic identity as Chinese. The desire to retain a separate identity relates to Kearney's (1995) theory of transmigration, where migrants do not necessarily adopt the culture of their host city, but create their own transnational space. Migrants may find themselves in different nations, but are still linked to their homeland. This, one could argue, accounts for their reluctance to discuss race or classify types of customers according to race. They do not share the ideologies of South Africans in terms of race, as this is something that they have not been socialised into.

Allwood's (1985) theory of differences in intercultural communication also comes into play here. Differences in *patterns of thought* could arguably account for the way I expected them to answer the questions regarding the customers, and how the participants chose to answer it. Patterns of thought has to do with the shared ways of thinking within a culture, so while I expected an answer that was based on a racial classification, the participants' *pattern of thought* might have interpreted the question differently.

5.3 Conclusion

The interviews conducted show that even though Chinese retail shops and other businesses are flourishing in South Africa, verbal communication between Chinese and South Africans is not crucial to this success. However, a range of non-verbal communicative forms do play a significant role here. Smiling, body language, colourful displays in shops, the appeal of the exotic, the employment of South African and Central African shop assistants as well as the mainstream music played in the stores all account for the obvious success of the Chinese enterprise.

Even though most interviewees in this study have basic competence in English, they did not make use of it in the interviews. They responded in Mandarin, save for those who were fluent in English and Interviewee 3 who in some instances responded in English. The same holds true for their interaction with their customers.

It has been observed that communication between Chinese shopkeepers and customers are not deemed a priority in China Town, as it would appear that both parties are solely concerned with the product. It can therefore be argued that while there are very few verbal or communicative strategies used to bridge the social and cultural gap between Chinese and

South Africans, their success could be attributed to the product and the low prices of these products.

The language barrier seems to be a defining factor in the customer-Chinese interactions, however it does not appear to bother either of the role players here. Shop-keepers give customers their space to browse the stores and seek no interactions; and customers tend to seek no interaction from the shop-keepers. While most of the interviewees (including those not analysed here, see Appendix 2) said that the best way to interact with customers is through their product, the same number said that smiling is another effective way of communication. It is interesting that neither of these strategies require verbal interaction, as smiling with showing customers the products appear to be the sure-fire guarantee to their business success. Non-verbal forms of communication are thus seen as the preferred method of communication for both parties.

The following chapter is an analysis of on the spot interviews I conducted with customers and shop assistants in China Town. The chapter seeks to look at the way customers respond to China Town and its tenants and explores what attracts customers to these stores. The second section looks at the shop assistants and provides a discussion of their position in China Town.
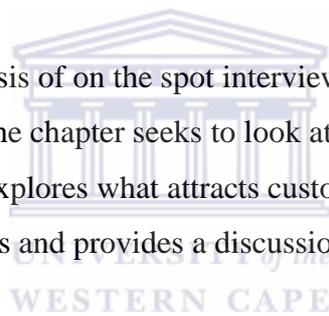
Chapter Six

Data Analysis II

Shop Assistants and Customers: An analysis of 'on-the-spot' interviews and observations.

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of my observations and 'on-the-spot' interviews with the two other main groups of respondents in my study: shop assistants and customers in the China Town stores. The interviews were fairly structured and adopted a conversational approach. Here the interviewees were asked questions on a predetermined topic, but most of the conversation that took place was unstructured and flowed from the responses of the participants. Customers were also interviewed to elicit their views about the China Town complex and the presence of the Chinese in South Africa.

6.1 Shop Assistants

The shop assistants are a central component to this study. Their roles in the Chinese stores are arguably undervalued and go unnoticed by most shoppers. It should be mentioned that while conducting the interviews, I was limited with regards to how much information could be gathered from the participants, owing to the fact that the interviews took place during their working hours, under the often suspicious surveillance of their Chinese employers. This also explains why the interviews were not recorded, and the data here was captured in my fieldwork diary.

6.1.1 Observations

My observations showed that the shop assistants did the majority of the labour, which included maintenance of the stores, replenishing of the stock, setting up the store display (mannequins and display layout) and more significantly, assisting the customers that come into the store. The in-store design was also fairly informal, with shop assistants often having their meals in full view of the customers in the store. This could be attributed to a lack of

space in these stores, with possibly no staff facilities. In many of the stores, the owners' small children could also be observed being cared for or playing around the entrances of the stores.

During the time of this research period, the interaction between store owners and assistants was also observed. In one of the stores I observed an employer saying to the assistant "Meagan. Please…" an interaction followed by gestures. At this point the assistant knew exactly what to do based on two words and an elaborate gesture. On the other hand, in one store a Chinese employer was yelling at the store assistant that she wanted something done to the way the products were being displayed. At that moment the assistant did not understand the employer's instruction, which subsequently lead to the employer yelling "You not understand!" and adjusting the display herself. This particular employee appeared very awkward and uncomfortable at this stage, especially as the incident happened in full view of the customers.

One significant observation to be recorded here is the interaction that the shop assistants have with customers. Upon entering the stores, the shop assistants would greet the customers, the greeting is reciprocated, and the assistant keeps his/her distance to allow the customer to browse. While maintaining their distance from the customers, the shop assistants are vigilant of customer activities and often make comments on products the customers are interested in. In this way one can therefore also argue that the shop assistants act as the sales people for the Chinese, except that they do not process the transaction. The interaction between shop assistant and customers are thus very different from that of the shopkeeper-customer interactions.

6.1.2 Interviews

The questions I used to get the conversations with the shop assistants started can be found in Chapter 4, p 57. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, these were used not only to get answers to the questions, but also to try to elicit further responses from this group. The participants whose responses are captured here in four case studies were a young Xhosa female about 19 years old (SA1); a female Congolese migrant estimated age early 30s (SA2), a male coloured Afrikaans teenager aged 16 (SA3) and a coloured Afrikaans-speaking young female, 20 years old (SA4). Obviously, their different backgrounds and ideological orientations influenced the nature of their individual responses.

SA1

The first shop assistant I interviewed was a Xhosa female from Tableview. When asked how she felt about China Town she said that China Town was "not a good place". She did not like China Town and she also did not shop at the stores. When I asked her why she worked there if she had such negative feelings towards it she stated that "the Chinese just use people" and that she was only working there "for fun". She added that she did not complete her matric year at high school, so lacked the necessary qualifications for a better job, leaving her with not much choice but to work there. When I asked her how she got the job, she said that she got it via a friend who was a previous employee at that store. I asked SA1 about the nature of her relationship with her employer and whether they had good interaction. She replied that her employer "doesn't speak proper English" and often did not understand the customers' questions. The employer was also described as being "difficult to work with". I asked SA1 how she managed to communicate with her employer despite the language barrier, and she said that some form of paralinguistic communication (gestures, facial expressions) was used in addition to the little bit of English the employer could use. SA1 did not believe that China Towns used particular advertising to attract customers, which may indicate that she did not listen to those radio stations that carry Chinatown advertising or just had a low level of interest in her place of work.

This case study provides evidence that China Towns are prepared to employ people with relatively low qualifications as long as they are perceived as being effective as communicators with South African customers. Undoubtedly SA1 was extremely useful in communicating with other speakers of isiXhosa, who might be drawn to the shop precisely because of her presence there. In addition, people relied on informal networks with friends to find employment in China Town, thereby saving the owners the cost of advertising. Undoubtedly this employees' negativity towards China Towns as well as her current employer was likely to impact on how effectively she carried out her tasks, particularly as she said that she was working there "for fun". It was also interesting to note that her description of the Chinese fitted in with two of Van Dijk's topic classes in racist discourse (Van Dijk, 2004:352-353): *deviance* ('doesn't speak proper English'; 'difficult to work with') and *threat* ('the Chinese just use people').

SA2:

The second shop assistant was a female migrant from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). When I asked her how she felt about China Town she said that she had no choice but to work there because she was a foreigner. Her fear was that working in a local franchise would put her at a disadvantage because she could be let go easily so that a local South African could get the job. For this reason she got the job at China Town through a friend who also worked there. SA2 claimed to have a good relationship with her employers. Although her employers did not speak English, their daughter was proficient in English and attended an English medium school. She furthermore said that her employer "knows everything, he knows money, he can calculate", so having a little command of English wasn't very problematic for them. I asked SA2 how she felt about working in a Chinese shop and she expressed pride in working there: "It's like my shop. I clean, I take care of my store" – jobs she did in addition to helping the customers.

There is quite a strong contrast between the case study of SA2 and SA1, with SA2 being very grateful to have found employment, once again through her network of friends. She appears to have no negative attitude towards her employers, despite saying that she 'had no choice' but to work there because of her status as a foreigner in South Africa. It is obvious that this employee was prepared to do more than simply wait on customers in order to maintain the good relationships she had with her employers, like cleaning the shop. It is possible that this employee, as a migrant to South Africa herself, could identify with the Chinese who were in a similar, if less disadvantaged, position. SA2 also pointed out the positive role of her employer's daughter (being schooled in South Africa) who was proficient in English and could therefore help to interpret between the staff, customers and her employer, which definitely contributed towards her having a far more positive attitude to her employer than SA1.

SA3

The third participant was a coloured Afrikaans teenage boy from one of the surrounding areas close to China Town. His sentiments were that the Chinese were "nice" and that China Town is a "good place". He also states that China Town "helps people" by being cheaper

than other stores and therefore their products are more affordable for working class people. When asked how he got the job he said that he got it through his cousin. The participant did not complete his secondary school education and thus acquired the job as an assistant. He admits that working in China Town is "just a starting job" and that he does not intend to work here for long.

As with the previous respondents, SA3 also found work in China Town through his own networks. Like SA1, he did not complete his secondary education, but like SA2, he was very positive about his experiences here, particularly as he only saw this work as temporary. SA3 was the first shop assistant to point out the financial benefit to working class people of shopping at China Towns, given the relatively low prices of their goods.

SA4

This participant was a coloured female from Cape Town working as store assistant. When asked how she feels about China Town she described it as an "okay place". The participant also got the job via a friend, like the previous participants. She explained the process, saying that the Chinese store owners simply wanted her details and cell phone number, and sent her a text message to say that she would commence working the next day. She expressed the view that she enjoyed working for the Chinese because their culture is "different" and "you learn new things about them every day". When I asked her how the interaction between her and her employers were in terms of communication, she described their communication as "okay". SA4 was asked what she thought attracted people to China Town and she stated that the allure of China Town was "the cheap stuff [which] attracts the customers" as well as the variety of products that can be found in China Town. When asked whether her employers were nice, she said that the Chinese in general are very friendly, and that it was usually the customers who were rude and "come with an attitude" into the stores.

While this case study was largely in line with the more positive responses from SA2 and SA3, SA4 provided more detail on how she was employed, how she related to the Chinese and what attracted customers to the shops – "the cheap stuff" and the variety of products. What was different here was SA4's defence of her 'very friendly' employers and her

argument that some customers' behaviour and attitudes often caused problems. This contrasts strongly with the views held by SA1.

6.1.3 Discussion of Observations and Interviews with the Shop Assistants

Despite the obvious limitations of interviewing the assistants while they were working, a lot can be said by examining what was said and observed. The first point that should be mentioned is the fact that all the participants became China Town employees through a very informal process. All of them were told about vacancies through friends or a relative, and there did not appear to be any formal interview process. For example, SA4 said that she received a text message informing her that she would start working the next day. Another trend observed in these conversations is that these participants are employed here arguably as a last resort. Most felt that they were at a disadvantage to find jobs in the formal sectors, so they worked here. SA1 and SA3 did not complete high school so China Towns are possibly places where a chance of employment is relatively higher than in the formal sector. In this way, despite the criticisms levelled at them, the Chinese contribute to lowering the unemployment rates in South Africa.

Many of the participants stated that even if their employers did not have full command of English, they found ways of working together. As SA1 argued, her employer was difficult to work with because she does not speak "proper English", while SA4 described the communication between her and her employer as "okay". This shows that it was only in some instances that the Chinese employer and employees could come to a workable understanding.

The dominant themes that emerged from the conversations with the shop assistants were:

- Working in China Town is a means to an end: none of them expressed a particular desire for a life-long position as a store assistant. This occupation is simply a stepping stone or a gateway while they look for something better, or until a more promising prospective appears.

- The informality of finding employment in a Chinese store: all the participants got word of the vacancies through word of mouth from a friend or relative.

- Communication between staff and employers rely predominantly on paralinguistic and non-verbal behaviour

### 6.1.4 A summary of the main trends observed with the shop assistants

The main trends observed during my research in China Town with regards to shop assistants were that at face value one is tempted to say that shop assistants are the main strategy for success in this enterprise. I have come to the conclusion that arguably, the shop assistants are not only the life force of the stores, but they are the ones who maintain interpersonal communication with customers. Even though some shop assistants are foreigners themselves (from other African countries) they do not seem to maintain the same distance between themselves and South Africans as the Chinese do. Ostensibly, their English proficiency is a little more developed than that of their employers, so their interaction with customers has more of a conversational register. They are the ones who assist the customers, assist with the fitting of garments and even deliver opinions on which products to buy. Their interaction ends at the point where the customer makes the decision to make the purchase, which is where the Chinese shopkeeper's main role is performed at the sales transaction point.

As mentioned, communication between the Chinese and their shop assistants rely heavily on non-verbal communication. As SA1 stated, some form of paralinguistic features was used together with the little bit of English her employer knew. Similarly, the observations showed that when SA4 was given an instruction from her employer ("Meagan… Please") she responded by nodding and followed through with the task. Conversely, the other shop assistant who was given a task by her employer and failed to do what was required, was silent throughout the interaction and gave no response either to understanding the instruction or when she was admonished. Here Allwood's (1985) theory of differences in communicative behaviour, specifically with regards to *feedback*, comes into focus. This concept deals with the ways in which participants in a conversation signal how they perceive, understand and react to what the speaker has said. Allwood, Nivre and Ahlsén (1993) claim that linguistic feedback enables four basic communicative functions which are essential in face-to-face interaction: *contact*, which establishes whether speakers are capable and willing to continue the communicative event; *perception* which establishes whether participants are willing and able to perceive the message; *understanding* establishes whether the communicators are willing and able to understand the message and lastly *attitudinal reactions*, which indicates

whether the participants are willing and able to react and respond to the message. Clearly the success of the first observation was owing to the gestural communication as well as the attitudinal reaction from "Meagan" which signalled to her employer that she understood what she had to do. Perhaps the absence of feedback in terms of perception, understanding and most importantly the attitudinal reaction could account for the breakdown in communication between the second shop assistant and her employer. It could also be assumed that the participants have varying levels of intercultural communication competence (Wiseman, 2003) which could account for either the success or failure of the communication between shop keeper and shop assistants.

6.2 The Customers

The interviews with the customers all took place in China Town, where I casually started conversation with them during their shopping time. Needless to say the main limitation of the customer interviews was that I was impinging on their shopping time. However, most of the customers were very keen to open up and gave detailed accounts of their experience in China Town.
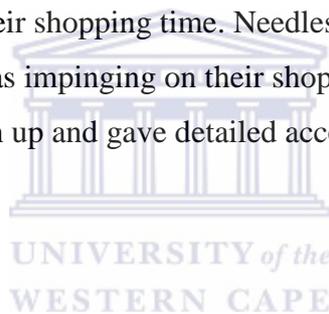
6.2.1 Observations

The observations relating to the customers are not very different from that of the shop assistant observations, as the two sets of role players were observed in one context or social setting. It is however worth mentioning that the main observation here was that customers showed no desire to interact with the shop keepers. Their entrance into the stores followed more or less the same sequence: they entered the shops; looked around, and if they did not find something they liked they would leave, or ask assistance from the shop assistants if they needed it. No interaction took place between the customers and the shopkeepers, unless the shop assistants were absent. In most cases however, interaction in these stores were minimal. Not once did I walk into a store where conversation was taking place between customers and staff, although this could be owing to the self-service layout of the store.

6.2.3 Interviews

As mentioned, the interviews with the customers took place in China Town stores. The questions asked were meant to explore the feelings of customers around China Town as well as their experiences with the service in these stores. I interviewed four customers in three different stores. The participants included a young coloured female estimated at around 30 years old (C1), an elderly coloured female (C2) and the final participants were two middle aged coloured females who were shopping together (C3 and C4). The questions used for customers were fairly structured and flowed with the responses from the interviewees. The interview questions for the customers can be found in Chapter 4 p.58. Responses from the customers were also not recorded, but field notes were taken.

C1

The first interview took place in a clothing shop with a coloured female participant. The first question asked was what she likes about China Town. Her response was that they have "a nice variety of stuff" and there are different stores to be found in the complex. The second question was about how she felt about the Chinese. She stated that "they are a part of us already, obviously they are here to stay. They are everywhere". The follow up question centred on what they are like when they serve her as a customer. To this she answered that they can't serve customers because "they can't speak English" but that they are "nice". When asked why she goes to China Town she said that she doesn't go there often, but rather as a last resort for when she cannot find what she has been looking for in other stores. The final question asked her what she thinks about the way they advertise their products. The customer responded: "Do they really advertise?" and furthermore stated that she feels the Chinese don't really put effort into advertising, but that she found the mannequins are dressed fashionably.

The interviews with the customers provided a great insight into their sentiments around China Town and their experiences with the store keepers. In the above interview with C1, as many of the interviewees expressed, the attraction to China Town is the variety of products to be found here. As C1 states, she likes China Town for their "nice variety of stuff". From clothing (C3 and C4) to "many stuff" (C2) it is obvious that China Town attracts customers who come for variety. C1 also significantly expresses that the Chinese are "a part of us already… they are here to stay". This was not expressed negatively but rather stated matter-

of-factly in a way that shows her acceptance and tolerance. She did however adopt a fairly negative tone when she stated that the store keepers "cannot serve customers because they cannot speak English". This possibly indicates that while C1 is accepting and open to the presence of Chinese, the language factor is essentially linked to Esser's (2006) argument that language and accents can index belonging or foreignness and thus give rise to differentiation and some degree of discrimination. She furthermore states that they are "nice", but the preconceived idea that the Chinese cannot speak English is arguably one of the most significant reasons for the communicative gap between customer and store keeper.

C2

The second interview also took place in a clothing store with an elderly coloured female. The first question asked was what she thinks about China Town. She responded that there "is many stuff here" and that "our people" meaning coloured people, are fond of it. When asked why she goes there, she said that she goes for the price and that you would pay a cheaper price in China Town for the same product that you would find at a franchise store. When asked if the store owners/keepers were nice, she said that as far as she knows they are, and that it is the customers that are usually rude because they become aggressive and often tell Chinese that "it is not their land". She added that they "give friendly service" when they serve her, and that "the other foreigners are friendly" referring to the store assistants. Her sentiment regarding the way the products are advertised is that "they advertise themselves very well".

Once again it is noted that the variety of products as well as the cheap price of the products are what attracts people to the stores. With China Town's vibrant decorations, the presence of the oriental and even the fact that China Town presents a different space where one feels one has walked into a different country, one would think that the allure of China Town would be the attraction and interest in the "other". However South Africans seem to be goal orientated when they enter China Town, and their focus is to purchase what they came for, possibly with no engagement with China Town staff. While C2 does not specifically say that she does not engage with the store keepers, her statement that they are nice "as far as [she] knows" indicates that there possibly has not been much contact between them. Another significant observation here is her account of the attitudes of other customers, who appear to be portraying xenophobic attitudes towards the Chinese. This is in contrast to C1's statement

that "they are a part of us already". C2 does however portray a very positive attitude towards the store keepers, saying that they are friendly and "the other foreigners" (i.e. shop assistants) are friendly as well. Even though she expresses that they are friendly, she still seems to see the staff of China Town as foreigners, with the Chinese as one group of foreigners and the shop assistants as "the other foreigners".

C3 & 4

The last interview was a conversation I had with two females who were shopping together. When asked what they liked about China Town, they said that they were not very fond of it because the Chinese store owners/keepers follow the customers around the shops. They see it as "a big problem" because it makes them feel like thieves. When asked why they came to China Town the customers expressed that they like their clothing. Their sentiments regarding the service is that Chinese are "okay", they aren't "nice" or friendly, and that their service is "okay". The participants expressed that they have no communication with the Chinese except that they follow them around the store. When asked about the effectiveness of their advertising, they said that the advertising is good and that the mannequins are dressed fashionably, however the products are expensive.

These participants expressed a rather negative view of China Town. One thing that particularly stood out was their argument that the Chinese store owners follow them around the shops, which makes them feel uneasy. My observations however were that the store keepers do not follow customers around, as they are not usually present on the floor, but seated at the cash register. It would most likely be the shop assistants that would do the monitoring of customers. The fact that C3 and C4 did not distinguish between who it is that actually follows them around the stores possibly indicates that their negativity is not limited to Chinese but rather the entire enterprise, including the shop assistants. Even though C3 and C4 express no liking for China Town, they are still drawn by the products, specifically the clothing. This is particularly significant because it shows that even when customers do not support the Chinese enterprise or do not have positive attitudes towards the Chinese, they cannot deny the allure of the products, even when they claim that the products are expensive. These two customers felt that the display of the products specifically on the mannequins appeals to the customers and appears to be a very good advertising method; one which doesn't involve the use of language, but rather of visual semiotics.

6.2.4 A summary of the main trends observed with the customers

The major attraction to China Town based on the conversations with the customers appeared predominantly to be the variety of the products, contrary to the popular saying "Once you've seen one Chinese store you've seen them all". The sentiment here is that China Town has a variety not easily found at local franchise stores. Even the customers who expressed that they did not like China Town owing to the "expensiveness" admitted to liking the clothing sold there.

Overall the customers admitted that they did not engage in interaction with the shop owners and shop keepers, and this is arguably owing to the preconceived idea that "the Chinese cannot serve because they cannot speak English"- C1. The second participant stated that "as far as [she] knows, the store owners and keepers are friendly". This may show that even though she was positively disposed towards the Chinese, she was unlikely to initiate communication with them. "As far as I know" suggests that she most likely does not have a lot of experience interacting with Chinese, but asserts a view of positivity towards them as business people. The last participants also stated that they did not communicate with the store keepers, and that it bothered them that they were being followed around the stores. Even so, regardless the lack of interaction, it was the products sold at China Town that attracted the customers.

Many similarities can be drawn between what was said by the shop assistants and the customers respectively. The first comparison is that of SA4 and C2, who expressed the view that Chinese are generally friendly, but the customers are the ones who are generally rude when they interact with the store keepers. In this view it is evident that the store keepers are not solely to blame for the lack of interaction in the stores, as customers arguably do not make interaction easy. Esser (2006) argues that if there is social distance between the immigrants and the majority society, there will be no exposure to or immersion in the majority language. This could also account for the reason the customers and store keepers do not interact. Esser (2006) furthermore states that if there is a high level of ethnic concentration in a specific area, there is a lesser likelihood of acquiring the national language in an area. Therefore, with China Town being a complex with a high density of Chinese, they might feel no obligation to acquire a certain degree of English or any South African language for that matter. Observably they remain self-contained, and as a result, language remains a problem as very few recent migrants speak English or any of the local languages.

The second major trend in terms of this study is the significance of the product and the pricing in the stores. In Chapter 5 it was found that Chinese feel they do not really need to talk to the customers, just smile and introduce the product to them. Or in some cases they feel that they don't need to speak at all, they price the product for the customer and that is enough. For the shop assistants, China Town is successful because of the variety of products and the cheap prices. The customers all appear to share these sentiments, save for C3 and C4 who say that even though they are attracted to China Town's clothing, the prices are relatively expensive.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the interviews conducted with the shop assistants and the customers in China Town regarding their interaction with the Chinese store keepers and the enterprise as a whole. This chapter has shown that the major attraction to China Town for the customers is the product and the pricing, and a similar trend was expressed by the shop assistants. The most observable trend here is that even though the customers I interviewed generally are accepting of the store keepers, interaction between the groups is minimal.

While one customer expressed that she has witnessed xenophobic tendencies of customers toward Chinese, those accounts were not expressed by the shop assistants and the Chinese. The only participants who seems to exhibit a degree of xenophobic ideology is SA1, who feels that China Town is "not a good place" and that Chinese "use people". Regardless of SA1's concern that the China Town enterprise is a negative element in South Africa, this chapter has shown that the relationship between Chinese and South Africans is arguably an overall harmonious relationship.

<center>**Chapter Seven**</center>

<center>**Conclusions and Recommendations**</center>

Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion of the main findings of the study in relation to the research objectives. The chapter also includes a discussion of the limitations of this study, as well as suggestions for future studies on this topic.

7.1 Initial Expectations

My initial aim in terms of observation was to become a regular customer at China Town and observe how business is conducted. The activity of all role-players (store keepers, shop assistants, customers) was observed with the aim to identify the strategies these role players make use of to interact and conduct business effectively. While my initial hypothesis was that Chinese made use of Google Translator or actively used the shop assistants to translate and act as mediator between themselves and customers, my initial research showed that there appears to be very little verbal interaction between them. While this might have limited the research in some way, the interviews revealed a great deal about the way these three groups view each other and the ideologies underlying their responses in the interviews.

7.2 Research objectives

The observations showed that owing to the layout of the stores, customers can more often than not do their purchases without the assistance of the shop assistants or store keepers. This therefore renders communication optional, but not a necessity for customers in China Town. With this in mind, the central research questions have been answered.

The first aim of the study was to identify the strategies used by Chinese store owners and store keepers to communicate and do business in South Africa. This aim was addressed with the observations and the interviews. While they do not necessarily use strategies to communicate verbally, their focus on the product is their key strategy for doing successful business in South Africa. This being said, the second aim was to identify how the cultural and communicative gap is bridged by Chinese. The research shows that Chinese are quite aware

of the stereotypes that South Africans have regarding their language use: "they cannot speak English". This was evident in the responses of customers and a South African shop assistant. It was found that the store owners do not seek to engage in communication with the customers, but choose to put their best efforts into pricing the products and making their displays attractive for the customers, as my observations showed. The focus on the display of the products (a multi-semiotic form of communication) is effective to a great extent as customers expressed that they were attracted to the clothing stores based on how fashionably the mannequins were dressed.

The third research aim was to examine how the Chinese interact with the customers. As mentioned, this question was rendered difficult by the observation of there being no observable communication between customers and the Chinese. Instead, the communication that took place was between the shop assistants and the customers. It can therefore be argued that the employment of the shop assistants is a strategy the Chinese use to conduct their business effectively without having to actively cross any linguistic or cultural gaps. The interviews with the store owners revealed similar findings when the majority of the interviewees stated that the way they communicate with customers is through the product. The interviews also revealed that Chinese received no instruction regarding South African culture before leaving China, which shows that the focus of the Chinese enterprise might be centred solely on the product and not on bridging any intercultural gaps.

The final research aim was to determine how the customers feel about China Town as well as the on-going Chinese integration into South Africa. Responses from customers were rather positive and none of the participants expressed any negative attitudes towards Chinese. Some may have displayed some stereotypical notions when they made reference to the Chinese not being able to speak English, nevertheless it appears that China Town attracts customers whether there is communication or not. The situation in China Town seems to be win-win. The Chinese display their products in such a way that customers can walk in and look for what they want owing to the simplistic layout of the stores; a "what you see is what you get" principle seemingly dominating these stores. In return customers get to walk in, browse the shop without being impeded, often resulting in a successful transaction. As Interviewee 3 said:

"Ya when they come in maybe we just say hello or uh how you, sometimes they come in and they don't look at you. Maybe we don't have any interaction, and then they just check the stuff themselves"

7.3 Answers to the Research Questions

The major research question of this study was: how do Chinese entrepreneurs cross intercultural and linguistic boundaries to do business effectively in South Africa? This research question was addressed in 3 ways. One would be tempted to conclude that Chinese do not cross intercultural or linguistic boundaries; however, the fact that they don't actively perform the crossing of boundaries does not imply that it does not take place. For instance, many Chinese stores play South African radio stations or mainstream pop music in their stores. Others employ South African shop assistants, which one could argue is the most effective strategy. One other strategy is that they have written notices around the stores which set rules for customers (see attachment2). In this way they avoid having to verbally admonish customers when they unknowingly transgress a rule in the store, thereby saving face.

The main theme to emerge from the data analysis was the importance of the Chinese product. Significantly, the importance of the product is expressed throughout the interviews with the Chinese as well as the main observation for this study. This particular extract from Interview 4 seems to resonate throughout the study:

M: How would you describe the interaction, so from the moment they come in through the doors, how would you interact with them?

A: Uh.. Uhhh, your product.

Similarly, another participant (Appendix 2 Interview 7) expressed the same idea surrounding communication:

M. So how would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers? Is it friendly, is it business-like?

I: how do you communicate with your customers since you do not speak English?

A: Well, I price all the products in the shop. If customers like it, they will buy.

The study endeavoured to answer the following sub-questions:

1. How is language used and adapted in interactions between Chinese and South Africans (specifically Capetonians) in trade settings?

The answer here is simple. It can be said that Chinese evidently do not significantly adapt their language.. They use whatever proficiency they have in English and do not appear to take extra measures to adapt their language for customer interaction. As Interviewee 2 stated: "When they ask me, I will answer".

This shows that language use is already minimal in this context; therefore, language does not have to consciously be adapted. If the store keepers experience difficulties in interacting with customers, they call the shop assistants to help, as one participant stated: "If they don't understand we can call the lady to help" (Appendix 2, Interview 8).

2. How interculturally competent are the traders forming part of this study?

The store keepers all said that they did not receive any intercultural communication instruction prior to their migration to South Africa. Even so, they appear to have an idea of how to handle South African customers. Those participants who have been in the country for long (as with Interviewee 4) are ostensibly integrated into South African culture and are aware of the cultural differences. As interviewee 4 said "South Africans are simple". While intercultural competence according to Wiseman (2003:192) is the "knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures", it does not mean that verbal communication is the only method of communication. The Chinese participants in my study appear to pay more attention to non-verbal communication with customers; smiling, being friendly, giving good service and positive facial expressions. One could however, argue that these are universal and not limited to Chinese or South Africans. Ultimately the fact that majority of the store keepers claim that smiling and selling good products to the customers are effective ways of maintaining good interpersonal relationships, shows that they not only have knowledge of the wants of the customers, but also that they perform this knowledge.

3. How do South African customers view and respond to Chinese businesses and those who staff them?

The customer interviews as well as the observations revealed that customers are quite accepting of the Chinese enterprise. While one customer recounted that she has seen other customers showing intolerance towards the Chinese, her personal sentiment is that they are generally friendly. The prejudice that all Chinese are incapable of communicating with South Africans still seems to loom to a great extent, as all customers in the interviews believed that they did not communicate with their customers.C1 said they cannot serve because "they can't speak English". Nevertheless, the presence of Chinese goods is said to be beneficial to customers as they can choose from a variety of products often not sold in commercial franchise stores. The variety, along with the relatively low price of the products, serves as a benefit for low to middle income group customers.

4. What impact does the linguistic landscape have on how customers react to Chinese stores in terms of advertising?

The interviews with customers revealed that even though Chinese do not necessarily make use of commercial advertising, their existing methods of decorating their stores and displaying their products are effective. The decorations, the bright colours that attract the customers from outside (see attachment 1). The displays and mannequins also appear to be an effective attraction for the customers. Even those customers who said that they are not too fond of China Town stated that they like the clothing and are attracted to the stores by the mannequins and how they have been styled. The overall linguistic landscape of China Town seems to generally be an attraction for customers.

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has looked at all the role players in China Town in order to determine how the Chinese conduct business effectively despite the language and cultural differences. The major conclusion of this study is that communication does not appear to be problematic in this enterprise as verbal interaction between store keepers and customers is minimal. The employment of South African shop assistants, as well as assistants from other parts of Africa is argued to be a strategy the Chinese make use of to avoid any intercultural or

linguistic conflict, and it is ostensibly successful. The intercultural communication that takes place between customers and store keepers can be summed up in two scenarios: (i) non-verbal communication such a nod in acknowledgement of the customer's presence or a way of greeting and smiling as a way of showing friendliness; and (ii) the monetary transaction that takes place when the purchase is being made. The latter is when a little verbal communication occurs, where the store keeper will ring up the items and tell the customer the amount due. The interaction ends when the customer says "thank you" and leaves the store.

It can therefore be concluded that China Town may be a space where diverse cultures are found and where intercultural contact takes place. But here business is concerned mainly with the product, and the price speaks a universal language.

7.5 Recommendation for further study

This study focused specifically on one China Town complex in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. A suggestion for further study is that several China Town complexes be observed and comparisons be drawn between these centres. Furthermore, in this study 8 Chinese participants, 4 shop assistants and 4 customers were interviewed, which leaves room for more participants to be incorporated into future research. Additionally, Critical Discourse Analysis could be used to determine issues of power and ideology in the customer-store keeper interactions, which could elicit interesting data.

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APPENDIX 1

Consent Form

[Participant's Copy]

Interviews for research on how Chinese cross linguistic and cultural barriers in trade

面試在貿易中國如何跨語言和文化障礙的研究

Letter of Consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research.

This interview serves to gather basic information about your residence in South Africa, the duration of your business here and seeks to answer questions regarding the communicative practices between you and South African customers. Kindly be assured that this is strictly for research purposes and that the researcher has no affiliation with any external institutions (government, political, etc.) or parties other than the University of the Western Cape. The research assistant will explain the basis of the research to you, and will conduct the interviews in your mother tongue. The section below requests consent to use the interviews in my research.

感谢您同意参与我的研究

这次采访旨在收集有关你的居住的基本信息在南非，你的企业的持续时间在这里和试图回答关于您与南非客户之间的沟通实践的问题。敬请放心，这是严格的研究目的和研究人员也没有隶属关系与任何外部机构（政府，政治等）或政党比西开普大学等。研究助理会解释的研究，以你的基础，并会进行面试中你的母语。下面的部分请求同意使用在我的研究中采访。您的身份将保持匿名，并在接受采访时所做的任何录音是唯一的翻译目的，不会被复制或分发。请随时提问，如果您需要的任何其他信息。

Please note the following:

请注意以下几点

The interviews will be recorded for translation purposes only

The interviews will not be reproduced or distributed other than for the purpose of this study

Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the study

You may withdraw consent at any time during the study

面试将被记录翻译，仅供参考

访谈将不会被复制或分发除对本研究的目的

你的身份将整个研究保持匿名

您可以在任何时间在研究过程中撤回同意

I……………………………………………………………………………… (name of participant) hereby grant Miché Thompson, student in Linguistics Department- University of the Western Cape, permission to record the interview and use it towards completing her research for her intended degree.

I have been informed about the research and its aims and have been made aware of the fact that I can retract my contribution to this study at any time if I feel the need to do so.

The ethical considerations have been explained to me and my anonymity has been assured. Additionally, my contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and I have under no circumstances been forced into participating.

我在此授予米凱•湯普森，學生在西開普省的語言學系，大學，同意錄製採訪，並用它完成對她的研究，她打算程度。

我已被告知有關研究及其目標和已知道的事實，我可以在任何時候收回我這個研究的貢獻，如果我覺得有必要這麼做。

在倫理方面的考慮已經向我解釋，我的匿名性得到保證。此外，我對這項研究的貢獻是完全自願的，我已經在任何情況下被迫參與。

Signed 簽署 :……………………………………………

Date日 :…………………………………………………..

Place 位置:……………………………………………

Interviews

Transcription Key

=   Overlapping speech

[?]   Indecipherable word

\#   False start

[…]   short pause

[__]   long pause

☺   Laughing

☺☺   Nervous giggling

M: Miché (principle researcher)

I: Interpreter (research assistant)

A: Answer (participants' response)

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Interview 1

M. Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up?

I: Where did you grow up?

A: I grew up in JiLin City, in the JiLin province, in China.

M. Is it a good place to grow up?

I: Is it a nice city?

A: It is a big city.

M: How long have you been in SA and was it easy to come here?

A: It is more than 7 years.

M. Do you feel welcomed in South Africa?

I: Do you feel welcome in SA?

A: I think it is okay… because I do not have any impacts, especially negative impacts on SA… I think it is okay.

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and open a business here?

I: what motives you to move to SA and open a business here?

A: my friend has a business here and he/she says it is nice doing business in SA.

M: So how did you decide where in South Africa you would set up your business? How did you know where in South Africa, like how did you decide on China Town?

I: how did you know about this China Town? And what made you decide to open a shop here?

A: I was hired by one of the shops in China town and I started my own business after working there for a year.

I: Are you happy working here?

A: Its fine

M. Did anyone teach you about South Africa and South Africans before you came here, and what did you learn?

I: Did anyone told you anything about SA or South African before you came to SA?

A: yes, I have heard of something.

M. Did anyone teach you in China about what South Africans like to buy? When you think about what stock to buy for South Africans, how do you come up with that? What stuff to buy here compared to what to buy in China.

I: Did anyone tell you about South African preferences and trend before you came to SA? And is there any difference compared to the fashion in China?

A: I like shopping. And Cape Town is the same as China. And I have worked for a shop before so I know which is nice to buy.

M. How would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers?

I: How do you interact or communicate with your customers?

A: I greet them in the morning by saying "NiHao" or "morning". Customer come. And I am able to ask "can I help you" and introduce stuff. And I have a good manager.

M. Which kinds of customers tend to buy here the most and what are your most successful items that are sold?

I: What are the best sold items in your shop?

A: well, usually suits and clothing things, which are upstairs. Like party dresses and wedding dresses.

M. Why do you think people like these items?

I: Why do you think people like these?

A: for example, the suits in my shop, are cheap and beautiful. Is low price and is beautiful

M. What tools or strategies if any do you use to communicate effectively with your customers? So how do you communicate effectively with the customers?

I: what strategies do you use to communicate with your customers effectively and make them feel welcome?

A: there is no special strategies. You just keep smiling while you introduce your products to them.

M. Who are your nicest customers and what makes them nice? Like in trms of all the South Africans or Capetonians that come here, who are the nicest?

I: what type of people are the nicest customers?

A: most of them are nice, like white people, coloured, and black people. There are nice and bad customers among all races.

M. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?

I: this is kind of the same as one of the previous questions. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcome?

A: I serve good quality of stuff, and nice clothes. And smiling for them as well.

Interview 2

M. Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up, maybe in which town?

I: can you introduce yourself briefly? Like where did you grow up?

A: China, Jiangsu province.

M. Is it a good place for me to visit if I decide to go to China?

A: Yes

M. How long have you been living in South Africa and was it easy to come here?

A: I have been here 2 years. It wasn't easy coming to SA.

M. Do you feel welcomed in South Africa, and why? If you do, why, and if you don't, why not?

I: do you feel welcome in SA?

A: Yes, because we do business here.

M. What motivated you to come to South Africa and open a business here?

I: what motives you to move to SA? And why did you choose to do your business here?

A: My father owns the shop here.

M. Okay so was he here and you were back in china? Is this your shop or is it yours?

A. My father's shop

M. okay so was he here and you were back in China?

A. yes

M. So are you happy being here in China town and why?

A. ☺yes

M. Are you happy?

A. yes

M. Can you tell me why?

A: Yes. It is a strange question, ☺. Because we have a lot of customers here.

M. Did anyone teach you about South Africa and about South Africans and what they like, before you came here?

A: No. no one taught me.

M. So if no one taught you anything, what did you do to prepare yourself for coming to South Africa?

I: how did you prepare to come to South Africa? About SA culture and people here.

A: It is also a strange question. [____] ☺Next questions.

I: do you want her to explain the question to you again or just skip over this one?

A: well, just skip over.

M. Maybe I'll ask it differently. Did anyone teach you about what south Africans like in terms of, you know in china they may like different types of clothes to what they like in south Africa. How did you know what types of things to stock in your shop?

I: how did you know about SA trend and preferences? And is there any differences between china and SA?

A: My father told me about this 😐☺

M. how would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers?

I: how do you interact with your customers?

A: When they ask me, I will answer.

I: only like that?

A: yah.

M. What kinds of customers tend to buy here the most? Like you know, of all the Capetonians here and all the different cultures and colours, what type of people come here the most and who buys here the most?

A: like, uh.. black people ☺

M. what are your most successful items that are sold in your shop and why do you think people like buying it?

A: Cameras.

M. Why do you think people like buying your cameras here?

A. Because they need it☺

M. What tools or strategies, if any do you use to communicate effectively with your customers?

I: what strategies do you use to communicate with your customers as you cannot speak English?

A: I will show them the stuff, and the quality. And introduce the products to them.

M. Are people usually friendly when they see that you don't know a lot of English? Are they friendly when they see that you dot speak English as fluently as South Africans do?

I: if you do not know English, then how do customers display their friendliness to you?

A: well…

I: are they rude to you if you do not speak English?

A: Well, not really. Sometimes though. But most of the time, they are friendly.

M. And who are your nicest customers? And what makes them nice?

I: what type of people are the nicest? And what make them nice?

A. Eh, if they serious want to buy they will be very nice ☺

M. So there is no specific type of customer that's the nicest, like what about coloureds, black, what, like who are the nicest of the races?

A: If they serious want buy something, they will be nice. It is not about race.

M. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop

I: what do you do to make south Africans feel welcome in the shop?

A: Smiling ☺

Interview 3 [English only]

M: Can you tell me about yourself and where you grew up?

A: In China, Fujian province

M: How long have you been living in South Africa?

A: 2 and a half years

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and to open a business here?

A: Just want to earn more money

M: Okay and it's better here than in China?

A: Uhm because we got a basic. My sister in law was here and uh.. she already had a shop so we had a basic foundation here

M: What factors play a role when you decide where to put up your shop? Like in terms of the area? Do you think about how safe it is, do you think about the type of people that will come here=

M: What do you=

A: =Ya the first thing is safe, the second thing is people, is the quality of the people

M: Okay. Did you receive any intercultural communication skills before you came here? So was there any training that would help you communicate with people from different cultures in South Africans?

A: No, you see because we learn English in china already when we were starting ya and come here maybe just Uh.. use Uhh.. all the language, all the knowledge, ya and to sometimes learn some, ya nobody help us.. yeah

M: How would you describe the interaction that takes place in your shop? So when the customer comes in here, do you have an interaction? How would you explain or describe it?

A: Ya when they come in maybe we just say hello or uh how you, sometimes they come in and they don't look at you. Maybe we don't have any interaction, and then they just check the stuff themselves

M: Okay do they then maybe interact with the shop assistants instead?

A: SometImes ya

M: Okay, just 3 more questions.

A: Okay

M: What tools or strategies if you use any, do you use to communicate with your customers? So if you don't speak to them, or if maybe you find it difficult to communicate, what other strategies would you use to communicate with them?

A: Normally they have a [misfunctation?] uh uh they have a [misuration?] sometimes they just buy something ya and pay for it, money. You see maybe just calculate ya. And uh

second, sometimes they ask for something we don't have. We don't know we got a lot. And sometimes customer don't wait for you, they just ask do you have one, maybe we just think about it and they say 'oh its fine fine' they just go

M: So they're very impatient?

A: Yeees sometimes=

M: =they don't wait for you to process it=

A: =yeah and some customer they say 'ooh it's fine I can check myself'

M: In terms of the things that you buy for the customers, do you do any research to think about what people actually like before you buy things? So do you do any research on what South African customers want?

A: No ☺

M: No so you just buy anything and hope=

they buy it?

A: =Yes just buy the stock from the suppliers. We buy stock from different suppliers. And we just check the stuff we like, maybe we think maybe this one customer will like it and we get it in. Maybe first time we just try a few, three or five. And if its popular, go quick, ya we will get more in

M: Okay that's very interesting. Last question

A: Okay

M: Do you employ any strategies; what do you do to make South African customers feel welcome in your shop?

A: Feel welcome?

M: Hmmm, how do you make them feel welcome?

A: I think uh… the attitude is very important. Yeah sometimes, yea, if they want to ask something or what, ya you smiling to them, ya because customers always say ya, in the other shop or maybe everyday just a face without any uuuuuh […] how do you say….

=smile?

A: Ya appearance on uh face, ya?

M: So you're saying the attitude=

A: Attitude ya

M: =and being friendly

A: =friendly yeah

M: =helps a lot

Okay thank you so muchA: No problem

Interview 4 [English Only]

M: So the first question is can you tell me about yourself and where you grew up?

A: I grew up from Taiwan

M: From Taiwan?

A: Hmmm

M: Which Town was that? Is it a good place for me to visit if I want to go there?

A: Uhm.. It's a very poor area

M: Very poor area?

A: Yes

M: Okay. Uhm, how long have you been living in South Africa and was it easy to come here?

A: Nineteen-eighty-eight

M: Nineteen-eighty-eight? Wow. And was it easy to come here though?

A: Not that easy

M: Not that easy? And do you feel welcomed in South Africa though?

A: Yes I feel welcome

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and open up a business here?

A: Uhm I not automatic come to South Africa, it's a relocate

M: Oh, you relocated?

A: Yeah, it's a government recruit the Taiwanese business person_

M: _Okay..?

A: Eh to invest in South Africa. So that's why we came here

M: That's very interesting, and do you plan on staying here?

A: Uh we stay here..

M: Like stay, stay, like never going back?

A: Oh, no no no we going to retire

M: Okay

A: Yes

M: Uh, How did you decide where to set up your shop or business, so aside from the fact that the government recruited you, how did you decide on China Town, or Parow, for that matter?

A: Uhh.. How we deciiiide… is because China Town can uh can uuuh attract, you know, the people of china town. They feel china product is cheap. That is uhm what motivated

M: Okay, so are you happy with being in this area and why?

A: Uuuh, its okay because uh the china only few china town in the western cape so I don't have a choice ya, but its okay

M: Did anyone teach you about South Africa and Africans before you came here?

A: No

M: Not at all?

A: I just read fro uuuh from the book

M: There's a book on South Africans?

A: Yes they introduce us especially like uuuuh what Table Mountain uuuuh whats that uuuuh Cape Point

M: Hmmm

A: Ya

M: I've never even been to Cape Point and I'm South African (laughs)

A: Okay…. You no geography?

M: No I=

A: =You read the geography

M: =never did geography

A: Ah it's a foreign history

M: So you read up on the geography of South Africa=

A: =yes

M: =you know about table mountain and cape point=

A: =yes

M: So besides that, what else did you do to prepare yourself for coming to South Africa? Besides knowing about the landmarks

A: Uh you know sometime it's a business opportunity uh you have to change and see the the the far view from the future. So you must change your environment. You know sometime in that time I was very young, so I wanted to see how is south africa, because south africa is africa main country. You know? If you come to south africa probably you can do the african market as well. So that's why I had that vision

M: Did anyone teach you about what south africans like to buy? As opposed to Taiwan? Like, the market=

A: =No body=

M: =is it the same?=

A: =nobody

M: So you just assumed?

A: Ya you must study yourself you know

M: Okay?

A: Only know from the geography you you you study

M: How would you describe the interaction that takes place in your shop between you and your customers?

A: How?

M: How would you describe the interaction, so from the moment they come in through the doors, how would you interact with them?

A: Uh.. Uhhh, your product.

M: Okay? So you don't do much communication with your customers?

A: Uh we do a lot of communication but the once you ask them, say how how how can I help you. But we see from his attitude. You know sometimes customer is quiet, he think Chinese can't communicate. So that's why they don't automatically come to ask you

M: Do they go to the shop assistant more often than=

A: =yeees yes

M:That's quite bad though, they shouldn't just assume these things?

A: They they have to try to, but not everyone can speak you know.. ya so there is someone that can speak

M: Well I must say your English is very well, you speak beautifully

A:Oh thank you

M: Okay so just about two more questions. Which kinds of customers tend to buy here the most, and which items are the most=

A: =I think the major

M: =successfully sold

A: =the majority of customers come here and they want the price, that's why they come to china town. If they want the quality, they go to shopping centre.

M: Hmmm

A: That's the most of them they analyse, you know because they want to find out something, but the china town also the other thing is is not the price only.. They can find something else that they couldn't find from the shopping centre. Because you know the most of the shopping centre they sell the same product. But if you come to china town you can find something you want. Ya. And China product is become quite interesting of the whole world. Uh, because they can create a new product, and you know the most of the manufacturer, the most of the product, they supply from America and Europe designed, they send to China to make. You know, and once of uh of a America and Europe wants, they [[outphasing]] and they will come to the countries like brazil or south africa, this kind of area

M: Why do you think that they have everything made in China though? Is the labour better? Is it cheaper?

A: Not the labour better, what you gotta understand is that today the china manufacturer, they have a chain. The supply chain. That is very important. You can manufacture in South Africa, but your material you must get from Korea or Vietnam or whatever. And that is far away from that area to supply the material then you assemble it here. But they got everything. Even like transport. You know transport is very important. Like a website. You sell something on the web, but the thing you wanna give to your customer your transportation is not improved enough, then its very difficult because they must add transport. Today you must understand transport is the most expensive cost in this country because of long distance. That is the major thing, ya. So do you catch my point?

M: Yes yes I do. I did some research on the Chinese engagement on the world before I did this research=

A:=so that's why China we call it the world manufacturer. The main country. Other country they cant reach him because why first the have labour, but labour today is a problem now because chinese labour has increased a lot and also their currency also is stronger also than other country. You can understand, say like four years ago, south african currency and china currency is the same. But now today china currency is near six rand. Or one U.S. dollar is near six RMB now, but now you can see the rand is one U.S dollar equal eleven fifty now. So nearly double. So today if you take the south african currency and spend the money onto the china, you have to take double money. Ya that's why you know you not only the labour problem, of course labour cost is also part of our other reason.

M: Okay just two more questions, I know I said that before ☺

A: Ten minutes already ☺

M: Its nooot…Uhm, what strategies if any, do you use to communicate effectively with your customers? Although I don't think you would need any since you speak English so well, but if there are any, what would they be?

A: You know, uh.. The shop if you can attract the customer that come to the shop it's the main reason, not only the product, your service, your display.. And your price. There's too many reasons all get together. Not only one reason… soooo.. What can I say..

M: So its not only about communication its about attracting=

A: No no no.. Your product very bad, and your price very high, customers cant afford you know.. customer first of all compare the price, second he compare the quality. But I can tell you the majority of the customer in south Africa because they didn't see many product, like me I go Korea I go Japan I go Hong Kong I go Singapore I see so many product. Lots of product I already see maybe ten years ago. But today only appear in South Africa. You know, so it's a too many reasons. Ya, but at the moment today South Africa, the basic income is low. So that's why the price is low because the people can't afford it. The government must be having some strategy, how to increase the employment, that's important. Today you have to understand 29 percent of unemployment rate has caused people too much violence, and steal and that's main reason. And as well, you know because uh the labour department is so strong that's the other reason. And that of course of the political reason as well

M: Just one more question.

A: Okay

M: The last question is what do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?

[___]

M: _Easy peasy

A: You know actually South African people is very simple uuh because there is no competition, you know like lots of Chinese people like Hong Kong or japan our even our Taiwanese the people is very complicated. Because they see too much, of uh condition and the competition if it is too much then people are more complicated. But South Africans actually is not complicated because not too much competition. But now we've become more competition. So you say what reason?=

M: =How do you make them feel welcome in the shop..

A: In the shop? Only thing is service. And communicate. That is uh, you can make them feel more than welcome, that is the only way.

M: Just the good service?

A: Ya like you must keep a smile, talk, you know, humorous and you know, and good talking. That's the only reason

M: find it so interesting that you say you should talk to them, I mean I interviewed other people=

A: =no actually=

M: =say they all they do is smile

A: =actually you know we talk a lot with customer. We can see, because we have more than 25 years in South Africa and we also know about their customs you know and what colour they like, their background, their environment, especially my children, all study in school here

M: Okay?

A: Yeah.

M: Any of them at UWC?

A: No, one is at Stellenbosch, the other one UCT.

M: Ooh okay. Ivy league ☺

A: And uh Stellenbosch is the same like you, they study language. They study German, France, other two languages.

[Interview ended abruptly because the shop was getting busy and the interviewee had to attend to a customer]

Interview 5

M. can you tell me about yourself maybe where you grew up?

I: Where did you grow up?

A: China.

M. How long have you been living in South Africa?

A: 1 year.

M. What made you move to South Africa and open a business here?

I: what motivated you?

A: I am just helping here temporarily.

M. What factors play a role in choosing where to establish your business? So do you think about how safe the area is and the people that will come here when you choose where to put up your business?

I: what made you choose to open the shop here? For example, the level of safety and whether it is busy in the area?

A: I am not really sure about this. I am only helping.

M. Did you receive any intercultural communication skill before you came to South Africa?

I: did you learn English here or in china? And who taught you English?

A: I had learnt a little English from school in china. Like the basic greetings.

M. how would you describe the interaction between you and your customers? So when the customer comes in here, how do you interact?

I: how do you interact with customers when they come in?

A: I greet them.

M. What tools or strategies do you use to communicate effectively with your customers?

I: what methods and strategies do you use to communicate effectively with customers? Like do you use gestures?

A: There is nothing special. Just talk normally.

I: do you ask your staff for help?

A: Like I ask them, "do you need help?"

M. When you look at the things that are going to b sold in the shop, do you do first look at what the customers like so do you do research on what the customers would like? Or do you just buy things?

I: how do you know about the SA preferences or fashion trend? Do you ever do any researches?

A: I didn't do any research. I just buy what I feel like buying.

M. How do you make your customers feel welcome in the shop?

I: the last questions is how do you make customers feel welcome?

A: I talk to the customers.

I: do you give customers discounts or anything like that?

A: I can give them discounts if they come here really often or they buy a lot of stuff. And I usually give the maximum discount to them.

M. That is all, thank you so much.

Interview 6

M: Can you tell me about yourself, maybe where you grew up, and what town?

I: can you introduce yourself? Like where you grew up?

A: I was born in China, Hebei province

M: Is that a good place for me to go if I decide to move to China one day? What do you think?

I: is it a good place to visit for her?

A: Yes, it is a nice country.

M: How long have you been living in South Africa?

A: 1 year.

M: Was it easy to come here?

A: Ya…It was easy.

M: Do you feel welcome in South Africa? Do you feel welcome here?

A: Yes.

M: What motivated you to move to South Africa and open up a business here?

I: what motives you to move to SA and open a business here?

A: It is a good environment to live. It is better than china.

M: How did you decide where to set up your business, so in terms of the area, how did you decide to set up a business in China town? And are you happy with being here?

A. ya my family here?

M: Is your family here? Do they also have business in China Town?

A: Yes. My uncle and aunt have businesses here.

M: Did anyone teach you about South Africa and South Africans before you came here?

A: Yes. My uncle, my aunty

M: Okay so were they here before you were?

A: ya

M: Okay, so what did you learn? What did they teach you about South Africans?

I: you can answer in Chinese.

A: it is really difficult to answer, even in Chinese.

I: what did you know about SA?

A: I heard that SA was not safe.

M: Did anyone teach you about what South Africans like to buy? When you think of the products you buy in South Africa and the ones they sell in China. Did anyone teach you about what South Africans like

A: Yah, my aunty told me

M: Okay, so she gave you some tips on what to put in your shop?

A. Yeah, But this is not my shop.

M: Oh it's not your shop? You're just the shopkeeper?

A:Its my aunty's shop.

I: how do you interact with your customers when they come to your shop?

A: Just speak English and greet them. Like asking them "how is your day" or "how are you".

M: Which kinds of customers come in here the most?

A: Most Coloured. Coloured people

M: Coloured people? Okay and what are the most successful items that are sold here? Like if you take into account all the products, which sell the best?

A: Dresses. Long dress

M: Why do you think that people buy long dresses?

A: Because there is no winter and summer is warm.

M: What tools or strategies, if any, do you use to communicate effectively with your customers

I: what strategies do you use to communicate with customers as you don't speak English?

A: I will just let them try the clothes

M: Are people usually friendly if they see that you don't speak much English?

A: no

M: So you don't get any rude customers?

I: is there rude customers?

A: No.

I: what type of customers is nice?

A: Black people.

M: Last question; what do you do to make your South African customers feel welcome in your shop?

I: what do you do to make south Africans feel welcome in your shop?

A: Just be friendly to them.

M: Okay thank you so much for participating in my interview

Interview 7

M. Can you tell me about yourself and where you grew up?

I: the first question, may you please introduce yourself, like whether you were born in SA?

A: I wasn't born in SA.

M. how long have you been living in South Africa?

I: how long have you been living in SA?

A: I came here in 2003.

M. what motivated you to move to South Africa and open up a business here?

I: what motives you to move to SA and why did you choose to open a business here?

A: My friend asked me to come here.

M. How did you decide where to put up your business, like the area?

I: this is kind of the same as the last question. Why did you choose to open the shop in this specific china town?

A: A lot of people opening their businesses here and I think here is a lot of opportunities.

M. So what factors play a role in choosing where to establish your business. Like what made you decide, what factors do you take into consideration, like do you look at the area, the people?

I: he has answered this question in the previous one.

A: The same as the last one.

M. So how would you describe the interaction that takes place between you and your customers? Is it friendly, is it business-like?

I: how do you communicate with your customers since you do not speak English?

A: Well, I price all the products in the shop. If customers like it, they will buy.

I: So you know some basic English about pricing.

A: Yes.

M. did you receive any prior intercultural communication skills before emigration to South Africa? So any communication skills you learnt that made you capable of speaking to South Africans?

I: Where did you learn English, including the simple, and basic part of English?

A: I only learnt English after I came to SA.

M. What tools or strategies, if any, do you use to communicate effectively with your customers?

I: what strategies or methods do you use to communicate with customers effectively? Do you use body language and gestures or do you ask your staff (here specifically means the black people working in the shop) for help?

A: Sometimes I ask my staff to help me. Sometimes I have to do it on my own.

M. Did you do any research regarding the preferences of South African customers as opposed to those in China such as fashion and jewellery and stuff? So how do you know what type of clothing they like?

I: how did you know about South African preferences and trend?

A: First the manufacturer provides me some options of what the current trend is. Then I have to pick things on my own based on my knowledge about the market preference, e.g. colour, size, price, etc.

M. Do you employ any strategies to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop? How do you make them feel welcome?

I: this is the last question. What strategies do you use to make customers feel welcome?

A: That depends on the products, such as the quality and price of the products. If the quality is terrible, then customers would not buy no matter how cheap the stuff is.

I: do you give discounts to those who shop here really often?

A: yes, we do that. If the price is R150, then we can negotiate how much discounts the customer want, like R10 or R5.

 [interview ended when customers walked in]

Interview 8

M. Can you tell me about yourself and where you grew up?

I: where did you grow up?

A: In china.

M. How long have you been living in South Africa?

A: 6 year and half.

M. What motivated you to come to South Africa and open a business here?

I: what motives you to come to SA and open a business here?

A: My friend had a shop here and called me to come over.

M. What factors play a role in choosing where to establish a business? Do you think about the area and how safe it is and the types of people that will be shopping here

I: Why did you choose to open a shop here? Because it is safe or busy?

A: It was busy in this area before.

I: you can answer in mandarin. Is it safe here? Or what attracts you to do your business here?

A: The level of safety is around average.

M. So you thought about safety?

A. Little safe, little not safe.

I: And what about the rents?

A: The rent is actually quite expensive.

I: what made you to open the shop here? You need to provide a proper reason.

A: My family chose the place.

M. Did you receive any prior intercultural communication skills before coming to South Africa?

I: Did you learn English before or after you came to SA? And who taught you English?

A: Before come. People talk English. My family speaks English. And I was listening to him when he was practicing at home.

M. what tools or strategies do you use to communicate effectively with your customers. So if you can't communicate with words, what else would you use to communicate effectively?

I: how do you communicate with customers if you cannot speak English properly?

A: If they don't understand we can call the lady to help.

M. Did you do any research about what type of clothing south Africans like? Like how do you know what type of clothing and jewellery and products they like?

I: did you do any research about SA preferences and fashion trend?

A: No. I did not do any research.

M. What do you do to make South Africans feel welcomed in your shop?

I: what do you do to make customers feel welcome?

A: Smiling. I will help the customers with the products in the shop.

M. Thank you

Appendix 3

	Product	Smiling	Speaking	Service
Interviewee 1	✓			
Interviewee 2		✓		
Interviewee 3		✓		
Interviewee 4		✓	✓	✓
Interviewee 5				✓
Interviewee 6			✓	
Interviewee 7	✓			
Interviewee 8	✓	✓		

Table 2Store keepers' strategies for effective interaction

Attachment 1

Figure 1China Town exterior

Figure 2China Town entrance

Figure 3Written notices for customers in stores

Figure 4China Town display