CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the aim of the study and data collection procedure used in the present study. The framework for culture analysis used in this study is also forwarded.

4.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to compare and contrast the world views of two groups of Chinese students. One group uses English as their first language while the other uses Mandarin. It also attempts to find out if, and in what ways, world views are reflected in the communicative efforts of these two groups with differing first language.

The main focus of the study is on the world views of selected upper secondary school students. The researcher would like to investigate to what extent the students' first languages determine their world views as this may have implications for classroom practice in learning English.

This study is predicated upon two hypotheses:

1) the environment in which subjects live affect the way they perceive the world.

2) the first language of a group of subjects has a greater determining effect on the way they perceive the world than their primary ethnic and cultural roots.

4.2 Subjects

Ten subjects were selected at random for this study. Five were from Sekinchan and had Mandarin as their first language while the other five were from Kuala Lumpur and had Malaysian English as their first language. From the informal interview with the students, the researcher discovered that students from Sekinchan spoke Mandarin at home while the Malay Language and English language were acquired later at school. Generally, English was only spoken at school during English lessons. On the other hand, students from Kuala Lumpur spoke the Malaysian variety of English at home and acquired a Chinese dialect or dialects later through their contact with child minders, friends, neighbours or relatives.

All of them were upper secondary schools students (forms 4 and 5) at the time of the interview. The first group of Chinese students (hereafter referred

to as subjects C1-C5) with Mandarin as their first language came from Sekinchan. They were from Yoke Kuan Secondary School in Sekinchan which is a Chinese National Type Secondary School. The first group of students had Mandarin as a subject in their school curriculum and Mandarin is offered as one of the subjects for S.P.M.(Malaysian Certificate of Education) exam. The second group of Chinese students (hereafter referred to as subjects C6-C10) with Malaysian English as their first language, attended National Type Secondary Schools in Kuala Lumpur. Mandarin was not offered as a subject in their school curriculum.

4.2.1 Sampling Procedure

The following criteria were used in the selection of subjects:

1. Subjects must be Chinese by ethnicity as the aim of the study is to verify whether environment and first languages of subjects affect their world views.

2. Subjects need to be students from upper secondary schools as they would:
   i) have enough cultural exposure in life for the input of their culture to be palpable.
   ii) be matured enough to respond as individuals with specific identities and are able to present distinctive views.

iii) have enough language and discousal skills to understand the situation specified and articulate their stand on the issues presented.

3. They have different first languages and in this case, Mandarin and English were selected. [This is to verify if differences exist in world views as a result of different primary languages.]

4) They come from environments that reinforced the culture embedded in their first language. In this particular study, Group 1 subjects were from Sekinchan and Group 2 subjects were from Kuala Lumpur.

Subjects from these two areas were chosen because Sekinchan is almost wholly a Chinese town so the researcher felt that the influence of the Chinese background would be reinforced by living in a Chinese community. Subjects in this sense would be culturally "pure." Since it is considered a semi-rural area, it is hoped that the influence and admixture of Western culture and thought would be less. Kuala Lumpur on the other hand, was chosen as it is a city and most residents in Kuala Lumpur could speak English. With the exception of the Malay language, English, namely the Malaysian variety, is spoken by a sizable amount of its multicultural population. This is confirmed by the findings of Thiaga Rajah (1990). With these two places to represent the two different cultural groupings, the researcher feels that there might exist

a contrast in world views between Chinese respondents from Kuala Lumpur with Malaysian English as their L1 and Chinese respondents from Sekinchan with Mandarin as their L1:

4.2.2. Data Collection Procedure

The chief instrument for data collection for this study was the interview. Each subject was given six literary extracts and two pictures as stimulus and their response was audio taped, transcribed and analyzed. The interviews were conducted by the researcher herself. Subjects were required to read the excerpts reflecting cultural beliefs, practices and values and then respond to the questions pertaining to the text.

The interview was conducted in English and was audio taped. The interviewer paid attention to the interviewee's tone and volume of voice as well as fluency of delivery. Subjects had to make immediate responses which were usually spontaneous in nature to ensure that responses were a reflection of the subjects' views. The length of each interview was between twenty to thirty minutes and was conducted on a one-to-one basis at the home of the subjects. The researcher acted as response facilitator throughout the interview.

Questions for the interview were preset. However, additional questions could be asked by the interviewer to clarify statements made by subjects. To

encourage spontaneous and genuine responses, respondents were guaranteed of personal and institutional anonymity. On account of the above, subjects were given the liberty to talk as much as they liked in response to the questions asked. They were given as much time as possible to ask questions to clarify any issue that may seem unclear prior to the interview before the researcher audio-taped their responses.

The data collection procedure is as follows: selected students were given the stimulus material and asked to respond to the stimulus. Subjects' responses were then taped. Only subjects' responses which were rather vague or did not address the questions asked were interviewed again to verify their answers.

4.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out prior to the actual interview. Five subjects were chosen at random, two from Kuala Lumpur and three from Sekinchan. Results were then shown to the supervisor for discussion. The purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain if the research questions and stimulus were appropriate. The researcher also hoped to weed out any weaknesses in the stimulus as well as research questions. Preliminary results from the study were favourable. However, some research questions were removed while others were added to compile the final research questions.

4.4 Framework

The model for culture analysis used in this study is a modified version of the Nostrand Emergent Model. Nostrand (1974) proposes that the essentials of the target cultural system which he calls the "emergent model" consists of four levels of societal organization: the human organism (personality), social relations, culture patterns and ecology. The three cultural elements stressed in this model are values, traits and world view. According to Nostrand and Imberton-Hunt (1996), all elements of the value system interact and at times limit one another and this is observable in the opposition between the theme of romantic love and realism. Nostrand suggests that the four component systems may be taught by organizing it under its main theme which is made up of underlying assumptions and applications in human relations, personality structure, and interaction with the physical and subhuman environment.

In a recent communication between the researcher and Nostrand (1998), Nostrand informed the researcher that secondary sources are also a valuable contribution for culture analysis. These include themes that are stated or implicit in literature, film or other arts, conversation among members of the culture or even observations of behaviour as a check on the self-delusion in "professed values." Finally, the criterion towards the construction of the cultural themes is the repeated mention of such themes in different sources.

Five aspects of Chinese culture were chosen as key areas for culture analysis as these areas have been discussed at length by authors writing on Chinese culture (Rattenbury 1949; Hsu 1949; Smith 1986; Lee 1986; Ross 1990 and Lip 1993). Since this is an exploratory study, this researcher intends to look into these selected areas as a result of the literature reviewed and also as a consequence of personal experience of "conversation among members of the culture."

According to Nostrand (1974), each culture possesses its own central theme and cultures in general tend to have no more than twelve themes. The five themes of Chinese culture selected for this study are as follows:

    i) Love

    ii) Food

    iii) Family

    iv) Education and Knowledge

    v) Chinese Etiquette

As this is an exploratory study, only a total of five themes have been chosen. The above themes have been selected as they are implicit and repeated themes in literature and are deemed as important facets of Chinese culture by various authors.

Different cultures have different views and expectation with regard to love and marriage. Since love and marriage is a universally celebrated event in many cultures, it is deemed a necessary component in culture analysis. On the other hand, It is difficult to disregard food in any discussion on Chinese culture as food has been regarded by the Chinese as one of the most important aspect in a man's life. According to Lee (1986), every event of importance in life has been observed with the inclusion of food. Chinese cuisine, in fact, has a 3,000-year-old history. The theme on family has been chosen as the family has been considered by most Chinese philosophers and thinkers such as Confucius (551-479 B.C.) as the basis of Chinese society. Tung (1961) refers to an ancient text, the *Lichi* which states that the family is the greatest concern in opposition to the individual because the family is considered as the basic unit which knits together all other relationship between individuals.

Education and knowledge were also included as one of the themes as Chinese view education as a means for individuals to perform their responsibilities and duties. Therefore, both are highly priced by the Chinese. Chinese Etiquette was also selected because it plays a central part in the lives of the Chinese people. Codes of behaviour were written to ensure that people from all walks of life behave in a civilized manner.

From the data collected through the modified version of Nostrand Emergent model, the researcher compared and contrasted the views of the two groups of students to verify if differences exist in their world views.

4.4.1 Stimulus for Interview

The stimulus for the interview were of two types:

  i) Excerpts from literary texts
  ii) Pictorial stimuli

Six excerpts from literary texts, a children's song and two pictorial stimulus were selected to provide a contextual background for the various themes and aspects of Chinese culture. Research has demonstrated the importance of contextual background in understanding input (Nunan, 1985; Lee, 1986). These excerpts were selected to elicit students' reactions to various situations and events which will reflect their expectations and world views.

Pictorial stimuli were selected as the second type of stimulus as it was aimed to provide cultural context unmediated by language. These pictorial stimuli were custom-made in the sense that the researcher identified certain cultural aspects which she perceived likely variance in response and then described these to a graphics artist who drew two pictures depicting situations in which the salient cultural features were present. For Pictorial Stimulus 2, the

researcher adapted the ideas from a description of an experiment carried out by Ervin-Tripp (1964). Pictorial Stimuli 1 and 2 are given in Appendix 2 and 3 respectively. Students were required to look at the pictures and talk about what they see and feel about the picture. Experiments by Nunan (1985), Lee (1986) and Long (1990), to name a few, have demonstrated that when language users were presented with prior contextual assistance, such as pictures or scripts, they were able to comprehend more accurately as such contextual assistance aids understanding by limiting the number of text interpretations. Moreover, it is hoped that the events and people depicted in the literary extracts and pictorial stimulus would trigger expectations about similar events and people in the real world as well as their interrelationships.

A total of 15 items based on the five mentioned themes were used to analyze students' world views. From the five themes selected, questions pertaining to the themes were asked. Although the themes are repeated, different aspects of the themes are covered. Repetition of the themes was deemed necessary because they concern important aspects of Chinese culture and practice. The items for the study are shown in Table 1 on page 96 and Table 2 on page 97 while the full text for the interview is given in Appendix 1.

According to Tannen (1979), a speech event involves the overlapping and the intertwining of many relations such as the context as well as the content of communication. In this study, the larger context is the subject's world view and culture and the context in which the experiment is being conducted is an

interview mode where the speaker is aware that his or her responses are being recorded.

In terms of linguistic theory, this field is informed by discourse analysis (Tannen 1979, Chafe 1977, Yule and Brown 1983). The content of the interview is the verbalization of the subjects' opinions and expectations of events and society at large.

The aim of the study is to elicit answers from subjects which reveal their expectations of how and what constitute acceptable or unacceptable, normal or abnormal, preferable or dispreferred practices. The events and people depicted in the literary extracts will trigger expectations about similar events, and people in the real world as well as their interrelationships.

The theory that underpins the use of the data and data collection procedure is the schema theory which has convincingly demonstrated the importance of context and background knowledge in understanding input. Minsky (1982) states that the ability of the reader or listener to merge input with previously acquired knowledge structure or schemata will determine how successful he or she will be in comprehending input.

This study is based on the notion of frames as defined by Minsky (1974) or "structures of expectations" as discussed by Ross (1975). According to these

Description of Excerpt	Source	Themes and Issues	Text for Interview
A letter to an agony aunt column	Text 1: "Everything's Arranged" by Siew Yue Killingley	Love and Marriage - Parental authority over the choice of a marriage partner -keeping secrets from one's elders	Text 1: Literary Text
A Children's song	Text 2: Author Unknown	Food -Acceptability of the particular song to children -Cultural views pertaining to food	Text 2: A Children's Song
An excerpt from "The Warrior Woman" about a mother encouraging her children to eat food during meal times.	Text 3 : "The Warrior Woman" by Maxine Hong-Kingston	Food -Acceptability of consuming wild life in the manner described	Text 3: Literary Text
An excerpt from " The Woman Warrior" about an old mother's idea of a happy home	Text 4 : " The Warrior Woman" by Maxine Hong-Kingston	Family - home life	Text 4 : Literary Text
An excerpt from "The Woman Warrior" about an aunt who thought her nieces were proud when they accepted her praise.	Text 5:"The Woman Warrior" by Maxine Hong-Kingston	Chinese Etiquette -humility	Text 5 : Literary Text
An excerpt from "The Woman Warrior " is about a mother commenting on her daughter's attitude of not greeting elders	Text 6: "The Woman Warrior" by Maxine Hong-Kingston	Chinese Etiquette -politeness	Text 6: Literary Text
same as above	same as above	Chinese Etiquette - respect	Text 6: Literary Text
same as above	same as above	Chinese Etiquette -humility and "face"	Text 6: Literary Text
An excerpt from "The Woman Warrior" is about a grandmother upbraiding her granddaughter in public	Text 7: "The Woman Warrior" by Maxine Hong-Kingston	Family -public upbraiding	Text 7: Literary Text

Table 1: Texts used as stimulus during interview

Description of Pictorial Stimulus	Source	Themes and Issues	Text for interview
A picture showing a husband cooking and keeping an eye on the children in the kitchen while his wife is entertaining some clients.	Researcher's own	Family -The family unit -Position and role of husband	Pictorial Stimulus 1
A picture depicting a girl in school uniform with an old woman resting below a tree. A farmer could be seen ploughing the fields in the background.	Adapted from an experiment carried out by Ervin-Tripp 1964	Education and Knowledge	Pictorial Stimulus 2

Table 2: Pictorial texts used during the interviews

researchers, culture creates expectations. This study is also related to Chafe's (1977a) project that is repeated in Tannen's study involving frames.

Language is also used as a medium to understand the cultural influence on students' world views therefore the researcher will look at linguistic evidence in the choices of words used since language will reflect our ideology.

4.5 Data Transcription

The corpus consists of audiotapes of students' responses to selected extracts of literary texts. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed using regular English orthography. Transcription conventions of the study were adapted from Dubois et. al. (1991), Jefferson (1979) and Schriffrin (1987). The transcribed data was analyzed according to question and answer sequences.

Subjects' discourse was chunked according to Chafe's (1977b) project studying the recall of events. An example of chunking taken from Chafe is as follows:

> In talking about my trip to Boston, I might break it into (1) getting there (2) what happened while I was there (3) returning home.

He suggested that it is not the only way or even the most common way to organize an account of a trip as it is not the only possible way.   He may even have broken it into the following:

(1) going to the airport

(2) the plane trip

(3) being met at the other end

(Chafe 1977: 215 - 246)

4.5.1 Transcription Conventions Used in the Study

1. Short forms used in the transcription

L1: First language

C1:Chinese student number 1 with Chinese as first language

E6: Chinese student number 6 with English as first language

C1-C5: Chinese subjects 1 to 5 with Chinese as their first language

represent Group 1

E6-E10: Chinese subjects 6 to 10 with English as their first language represent Group 2

2. In analyzing the data, C refers to Chinese subject with Chinese as first language, E for Chinese subject with English as first language.

3. The number in parenthesis refers to a "chunk" number in accordance with the process of chunking utterances developed in the Chafe project. Thus, subject number 3 with Chinese as first language, chunk 33 is written as C3:(33).

4. "I" refers to the interviewer and the number in parenthesis refers to a chunk. Thus, Interviewer, chunk 7 is written as 1:(7)

5. The following are symbols used and what they signify:

    a. -   is a short untimed pause

    b. .   indicates sentence final intonation

    c. =   when there is no interval between adjacent utterances, the second being latched immediately to the first (but without overlapping it), the utterances are linked with equal signs.

e.g. Tom : I used to smoke a lot =

Bob : =He thinks he's real tough

d. : :   A colon indicates an extension of the sound syllable it follows. The number of colons indicate the length of the extension.

e.g. : : is longer than : and : : : is longer than : : etc

e. ▬ Emphasis indicated by underlining

e.g. Anne: It happens to be <u>mine</u>

f. (( )) A double parenthesis is used to enclose a description of some phenomenon with which the transcriptionist does not want to wrestle.

e.g. Tom: I use to ((cough)) smoke a lot

g. ( ) A single parenthesis where no hearing can be achieved from the string of talk or item in question.

e.g. Todd: My (   ) catching

h. Capital letters is used to indicate an utterance spoken much louder than the surrounding talk.

e.g. Announcer: an the winner: izs (1.4) RACHEL

ROBERTS

-

I.   Bold letters highlight the statements for discussion

e.g. From the **view of the Chinese community**, the man

is the leader.

j. [   ]   The researcher's insertion

4.6 Summary

Favourable results from a pilot study conducted prior to the study proper enabled the researcher to compile and test research questions as well as the feasibility of the study proper. The subsequent study that was conducted enabled the researcher to test her hypothesis.

The model for culture analysis used in the study was a modified version of the Nostrand Emergent Model (1974). While the discourse of subjects were chunked according to Chafe's (1977a,b) project. The researcher used the notion of frames in the sense discussed by Minsky (1975), Ross (1975) as well as Tannen (1979) as an interpretation apparatus to interpret the discourse of subjects. The heuristic for this exploratory study was the use of discourse as an index of the world view of its producers.