Language Use on Topic Management Patterns in Intercultural and Intracultural Decision-Making Meetings

Bertha Du-Babcock
City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Research on topic management has focused on how individuals manage topics that reflect thought patterns of their cultural orientations. The representation of this line of the theory is Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Kaplan's linear-spiral thinking patterns.

This article reports the development of Du-Babcock's two earlier studies (Studies 1 and 2) and updates this line of the research by examining whether individuals exhibit different topic management strategies when high-context language (Cantonese and Japanese) and low-context language (English) were used in their intracultural and intercultural decision-making meetings (Study 3).

The data consist of 82,000 words of corpora derived from five intercultural and four intracultural meetings. The analysis of topic management pattern focuses on the classification of topic discussion at business meetings. Overall finding reveals that language use affects the topic management patterns in intercultural and intracultural meetings. The results partially confirm Whorf's language and thought pattern hypothesis as well as Du-Babcock's studies.

Introduction

An accepted finding is derived from past research that has been based on the uncontested assumption. People from collectivist cultures that also are thought to prefer high-context communication communicate differently from people from individualist cultures where low-context communication is allegedly preferred (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars, 1993, and GLOBE Studies, 2004). This distinction has been based on the observation of Hall (1976) and has not been subjected to systematic empirical investigation. In the present study, I examine the communication behaviors of two collectivist cultures (Hong Kong, Japan). For the purpose of the present study, the assumption is made that people from collectivist cultures prefer high-context communication.

Research scholars have developed theories and conducted empirical studies on the impact of the languages used by communicators on their communication and thought patterns (see, Du-Babcock, 1999, 2006; Hall, 1976; Ma, 1993; Kaplan, 1987). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis addresses this issue by theorizing about the relationship between the language people speak and the thought pattern of its speakers (see also Hunt & Agnolix, 1991). This principle applies especially to bilinguals when they switch between languages and adjust their perceptual and thinking processes to fit the language they use and to introduce different content into their first- and second-language messages (see also Kay & Kempton, 1984; Matsumoto, 1994).

In addition, cultural theorists (Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1985, 1988; Yum, 1988) have speculated that members from collectivistic cultures view the world in synthetic, spiral-logic terms (a circular pattern); whereas, individuals from individualistic cultures view the world in analytical, linear-logic terms (a linear pattern). Kaplan (1966) contrasted communication strategies of

individuals from individualistic and collectivistic cultures and concluded that East Asians (collectivists) follow a circular communication pattern; whereas, Westerners (individualists) use a linear pattern. In other words, East Asians (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Koreans) think and manage topics in circular or spiral patterns, while Westerners (e.g. Americans, Europeans) think and manage topics in sequential or linear patterns. His research infers that Chinese (and other Asians) may adapt to Western thought and topic management patterns when interacting in a Western language (e.g., English), but retain Chinese thought and topic management patterns when communicating in their native language (e.g., Cantonese). It can be said, therefore, that Kaplan's (1966, 1987) spiral-linear thinking pattern supplement Whorf's (1956) linguistic relativity principle, enabling a claim that culture, through language, affects the way people think.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, I highlight the development of my two earlier studies (see, Du-Babcock, 1999, 2006, 2005). Second, I contrast second-language communication of bilingual Chinese as they engaged with each other and with other second-language speakers from collectivistic cultures (in homogeneous group meetings) and with first-language speakers from individualistic cultures (in heterogeneous group meetings). Third, I update this line of the research by contrasting and examining whether language use affects individuals from collectivistic cultural societies adopt similar or different topic management strategies when participating in decision-making meetings where high-context language (e.g., Cantonese and Japanese) and low-context language (e.g., English) were used in their intracultural and intercultural decision-making meetings.

Review of Related Studies

To facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the present study, I review the previous two studies to set the stage for the discussion of the Study 3.

Study 1

Study 1 compares first-and second-language intracultural meetings. The quantitative aspect of findings show that (1) Hong Kong Chinese bilinguals took more turns in Cantonese meetings as compared to that in English meetings, even though the speaking time in English and Cantonese meetings was almost the same; and (2) Second-language proficiency positively correlated with the amount of English used during the English meetings.

Study 1 (Du-Babcock, 1999, 2006) provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of how and whether Hong Kong bilinguals manage the topics of discussion differently in their first-language and second-language decision making meetings. The analysis of one group (See Du-Babcock, 1999) explained why the communication behaviors of Hong Kong bilingual speakers differed when they interacted in comparable first- and second-language strategic formulation and decision making meetings. However, the results suggested a need for further and broader investigation. Thus, the topic management strategies and turn-taking behavior of 10 additional groups were subsequently analyzed using the same methodology in codifying the data. This extension of the earlier study (Du-Babcock, 2006) not only explores a range of topic management strategies and issues applicable to the Hong Kong bilingual business environment, but also examines factors that are likely to influence groups using strategies that deviated from the previous findings. In other words, the purposes of this extended analysis of Study 1 were (a) to ascertain whether the earlier findings could be applied to all bilingual groups; (b) to explore factors that might have contributed to the differences in the different groups' turn-taking behaviors and topic management strategies; and (c) to provide plausible explanations for the different topic management strategies that the Cantonese bilinguals followed or did not follow in their first- and second-language decision making meetings.

The overall pattern of the first language (Cantonese) discussions was the intermixing of topic areas throughout the meeting. In contrast, in the English (second-language) meetings, the pattern consisted of a sequential discussion of topics throughout the meeting and the complete absence of a mixed-topic discussion in the groups with varying second-language proficiencies (see Figure 1). In examining topic management patterns of ten groups, discrepancies were observed (For complete findings, refer to Du-Babcock, 2006). While eight of ten groups follow same topic management patterns, the topic management patterns of the two groups deviated from the norm. The deviation lies in the conditions where the second-language proficiencies of the group members were at uniformly high levels, or the group was disorganized and dysfunctional. In groups with uniformly high levels of second-language proficiency or if a group was disorganized and dysfunctional, a spiral topic management strategies was used in both first-and second-language meetings (see Figure 2). Consequently, these findings suggest that language proficiency is a casual factor that contributes to the use of different topic management strategies.
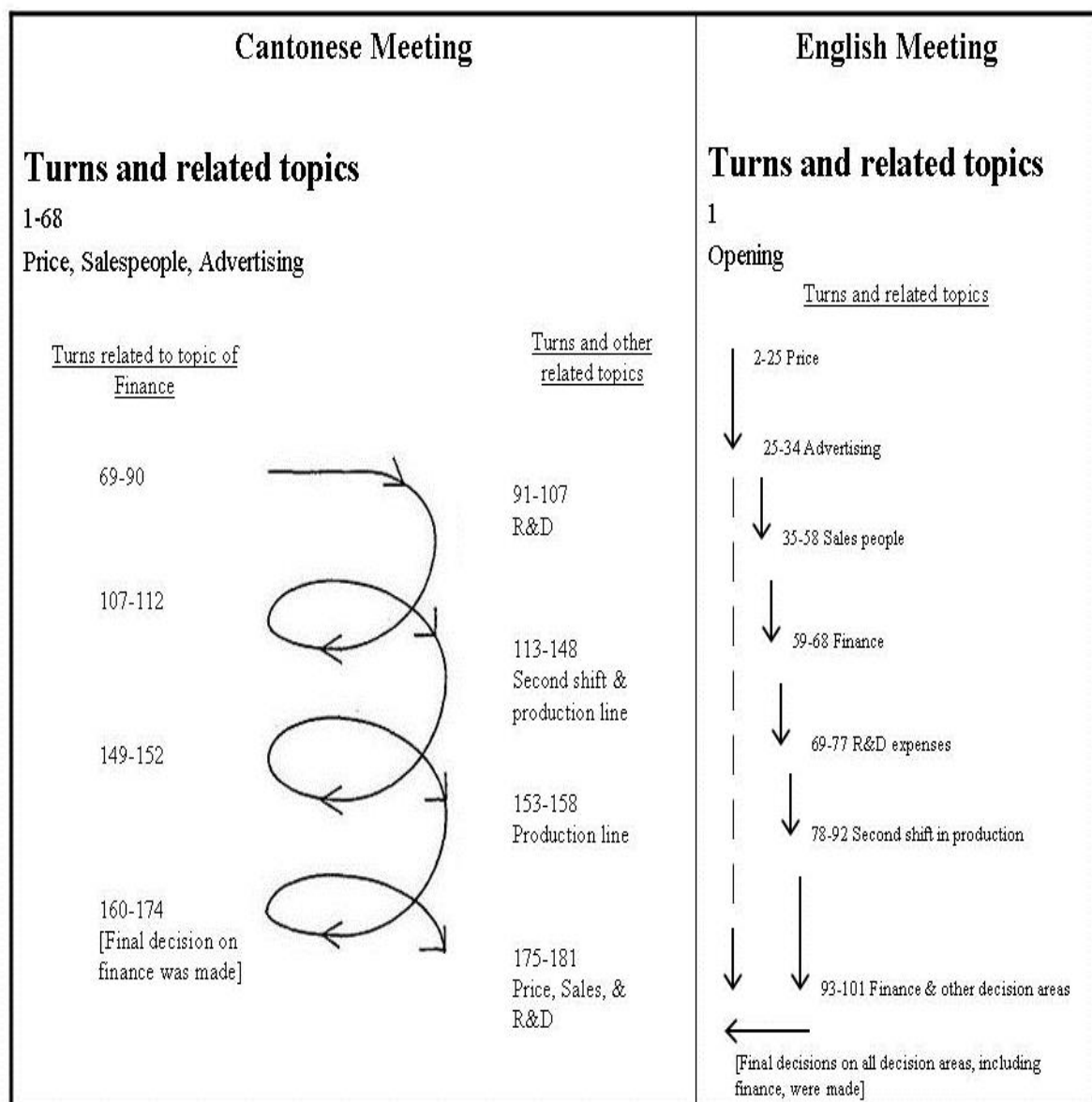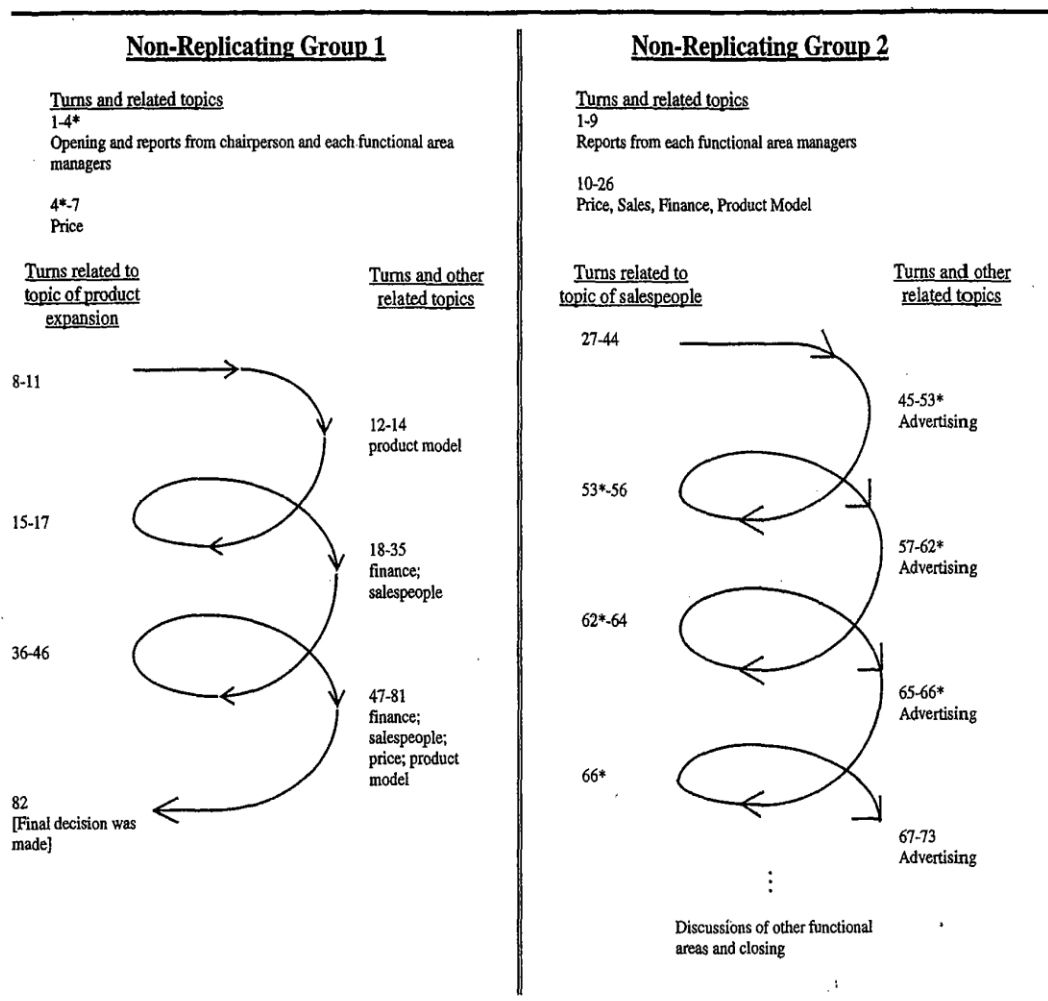

Figure 1. A Comparison of Topic Management Patterns in Cantonese and English Meetings

Study 2

Study 2 is a follow-up (Du-Babcock, 2003, 2005) that expanded the geographical location to include individuals from the United States in intercultural information sharing and decision making meetings. It further examined how and whether Hong Kong bilinguals exhibited similar or different communication behaviors (turn-taking and topic management) when they participated in a homogeneous group, as compared with a heterogeneous group. Setting the groups in this way allowed a comparison of how individuals from collectivistic cultures communicated with other individuals from collectivistic cultures (homogeneous), and how they communicated with individuals from individualistic cultures (heterogeneous). These groups had to share information and make decisions within a 45-minute time frame. In total, 276 participants were involved in the study. In Study 2, 99 of them came from an individualistic culture (United States) while 177 were from collectivistic cultures (Taiwan, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Korea). The communication task represented in this study required all of the participants to engage in information sharing and decision making in order to reach optimal decisions. In this connection, the focus of the discussions was on corporate strategy development in five topical areas of the company in its domestic and foreign markets.
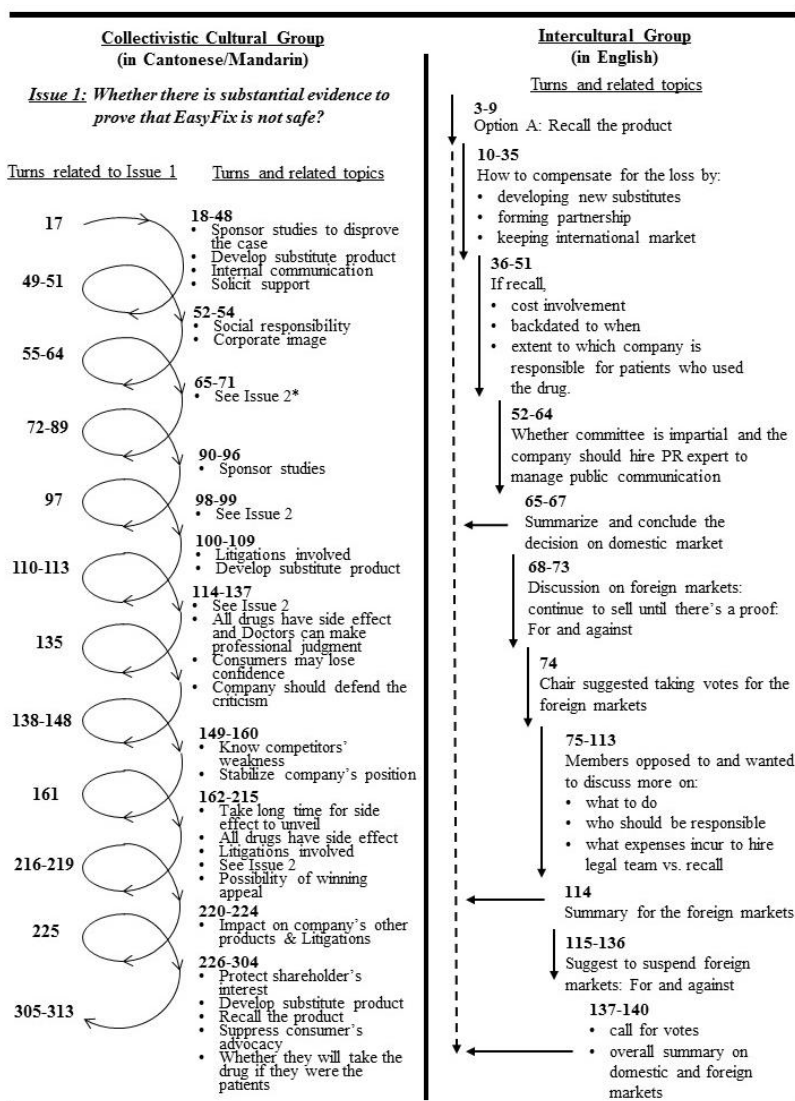

Note: ***Turn in which more than one areas are covered.**
Figure 2. Topic Management Patterns of Two Nonreplicating Groups in English Decision Making

Study 2 examines how language and culture affected individuals from collectivist and individualist societies exhibited their communication behaviors and topic management strategies in

homogeneous and heterogeneous group. The findings reveled that Hong Kong Chinese bilinguals exhibited different communication behaviors when participating in decision making meeting in a homogeneous group as compared to a heterogeneous group. The findings of Study 2 (Du-Babcock, 2003, 2005) on turn-taking behaviors show that (a) participants from collectivistic cultures not only spoke less than those from individualist cultures, they also took fewer turns than those from individualistic cultures; (b) participants from collectivistic cultures took more turns and spoke for longer in intracultural than in intercultural information sharing and decision making meetings; and (c) no significant difference occurred in the number of turns or in the amount of speaking time among individuals from individualistic cultures when they participated in either intracultural or intercultural information sharing and decision making meetings.

With regard to topic management, the overall pattern of discussion of the collectivistic cultural groups and the intercultural groups show consistent differences (see Figure 3). The pattern of the collectivistic cultural group meeting discussions was the intermixing of topic areas throughout the meetings (spiral pattern); whereas, in intercultural meetings, the pattern consisted of a sequential discussion of topics through the meetings (linear pattern).

Figure 3. A Comparison of Topic Management Patterns in Collectivistic Group Meetings and Intercultural Group Meetings

Study 3

Study 3 further extends Du-Babcock's studies (1999, 2005, 2006) that used student samples to the use of real- world business dialogues of Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers. Specifically, the study examined the topic management strategies and turn-taking behaviors of bilingual Chinese and Japanese managers. It confirmed prior research findings as well as extending the research to a comparison of Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers by comparing the communication behaviors (i.e., turn-taking behaviors and topic management strategies) of business professionals and managers from two different high-context cultures. The findings show that while culture affects the topic management patterns of both Hong Kong and Japanese business professionals in their decision makings, differences of the topic management patterns are observed when the decision-making meeting was conducted in high-context language (i.e., Cantonese, Japanese) as compared to when the meeting was conducted in low-context language (English).

The data for Study 3 were the transcripts of four recorded intracultural and five intercultural decision-making meetings where participants discussed and made decisions about similar topics. Study 3 builds on a Hong Kong Government funded General Research Fund (GRF) to refine generally accepted conclusions about communication between collectivist cultures that were presumed to prefer high-context and individualist cultures that were presumed to prefer low-context behavior. For consistency, procedures of the data analysis follow those of the previous two studies.

Research Method

In this section, I first describe the research method of the present study in terms of data collection and analysis. I will then report the findings of the Study 3 and make comparisons to the first and second studies where applicable. Study 3 examines the topic management patterns that arise in intracultural and intercultural decision-making meetings by Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese business professionals. In the next, I describe the data collection and the procedure of data analysis

Data Collection

The data set for the current research consists of the transcripts of five intercultural and four intra-cultural decision-making meetings between Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese business professionals. Table 1 describes the nature of the meetings.

These meeting dialogs were transcribed and then subjected to interaction analysis in terms of the number of turns, the distribution of speaking time, and total number of words. In the intracultural meetings where the native languages of the meeting participants were used, the meeting dialogs were first transcribed to respective native languages and then translated into English for analysis. As for intercultural decision-making meetings where English was used, the meeting dialogs were transcribed verbatim into English except at the beginning of the meeting during which participants greeted each other in Japanese and Mandarin in addition to English. Mandarin was used because the Japanese spoke a little Mandarin but did not speak any Cantonese. In total, the corpus of the data set contains approximately 82,000 words of meeting dialogs employed for the analyses of topic management patterns and strategies.

Table 1.
A Description of Intercultural and Intracultural Meetings

Meeting Type	Meeting No.	Language	Meeting Duration	Words
Intercultural Meeting (HK & Japanese)	1	English	0:35:48	10411
	2	English	1:17:20	12469
	3	English	0:57:15	7586
	4	English	0:43:23	5045
	5	English	0:57:51	8038
HK Intracultural Meeting	6	Cantonese	0:40:03	11445
	7	English	0:56:10	8746
Japanese intracultural Meeting	8	English	0:20:36	2095
	9	Japanese	0:46:33	16673

In the following, I describe how topic management is examined. The qualitative analysis of the topic management pattern focuses on the classification of communication interaction based on topics of discussion at the business meetings. The dialogs were first arranged by turns taken by each interlocutor, and then classified into various topics. The mapping of meeting transcripts was derived from a systematic analysis of the participants' discussion topics during their business meetings. The topic analyses of the various groups focus on the turn-taking behaviors and topic management strategies in intracultural and intercultural business meetings. The analyses of turn taking behavior and topic management follows the specific technique developed by Du-Babcock (1999, 2006) and Du-Babcock and Tanaka (2013). In this procedure, the communication behaviors were initially arranged by turns for all of the intracultural and intercultural meetings. The utterances of each turn were then related to possible topic areas in the discussions. Once the dialogs are categorized by topic area, the turns were assigned numerical numbers starting at Turn 1 and continuing through to the end of the dialog. Then, each topic area is plotted to show its frequency and how the meetings were preceded (see Appendix 1 for example).

Findings and Interpretations

In this section, I report and interpret the topic management patterns adopted by Japanese and Hong Kong business professionals as they took part in intercultural and intracultural business meetings.

The focus of the Study 3 examines whether Hong Kong and Japanese business professionals adopted culture-specific turn-taking strategies; and, in the process, used different topic management patterns when using low-context English as compared to when using high-context Cantonese or Japanese. In so doing, I first compare the topic management patterns of intercultural and intracultural meetings where English was the medium of discussion (see Figure 4). I then examine whether Hong Kong and Japanese business professionals adopted cultural specific topic management strategies when using English and their respective native languages to conduct meetings.

Figure 4 compares the interaction patterns of discussing an identified topic where English was used in intercultural and intracultural meetings comparing topic management patterns of Hong Kong Chinese. The discussion topic was the possibility of continuing or discontinuing a product (EasyFix). There were five decision options (a, b, c, d, and e)._In comparing the topic management patterns of Hong Kong Chinese, a spiral topic management strategy emerged in intercultural meeting with Japanese, but a linear topic management pattern was formed in an intracultural meeting.

To illustrate, in the intercultural meeting where English was the medium of communication, the topic of stop selling of EasyFix was discussed five times (in Turns 104-118, 136-140, 164-201, 234-236, and 249-258). The topic first arose in Turn 104 and ended in Turn 258 (see Figure 4). At Turn 258, a group decision was made.

In comparing to the topic management patterns of an intracultural meeting conducted by Hong Kong business professionals in English, it is obvious that the focus of the topic discussion centered around the Options C and A (see also Figure 4). Consequently, a linear topic management pattern continuing emerged. For example, the initial interaction occurred in Turns 177 to 187 suggesting that the Company should allow the doctor to continue to prescribe this drug (Option C); whereas, in Turns 188 to 201 participants opted for Option A indicating that the Company should recall the product. Subsequently, from Turns 204 to 392, the discussions were centered on these two identified Options, and a group decision was announced in Turn 392. The participants decided to recall the product (Option A) but not destroy it, allowing doctors to continue to prescribe it (Option C).
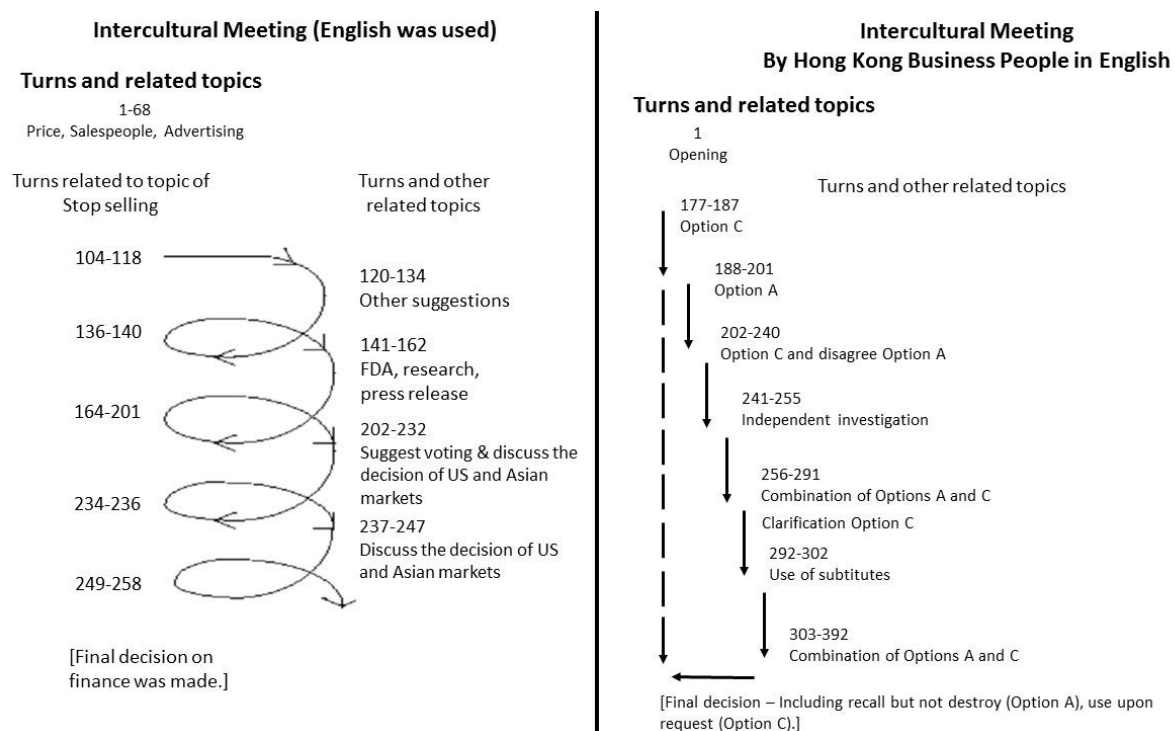

Figure 4. Topic Management Patterns of Intercultural and Intracultural Meetings in English

In analyzing both intercultural and intracultural meetings, topic areas of the five Options were discussed, but the interaction patterns showed striking contrasts. The overall pattern of the intercultural meeting discussions was the intermixing of topic areas throughout the meeting. In contrast, in intracultural meeting by Hong Kong business professionals in English, the topic management patterns consisted of a sequential discussion of two Options which were chosen by the majority of the meeting participants. It is interesting to note that, although both intercultural and intra-cultural meetings were conducted in English, the topic management patterns were different. While the topic management patterns reveals a spiral pattern in intercultural meeting, the topic management pattern of intra-cultural meeting in English by Hong Kong business professionals was linear. The results partially confirmed Du-Babcock's (1999, 2006) studies and were partially in line with the Whorf's (1956) Hypothesis in that Hong Kong business professionals adopted Western thought patterns when interacting in a Western language (English) while retaining Chinese thought

patterns when communicating in their native languages (Cantonese). Consequently, in the process of transferring Chinese holistic thinking into English for communicating to the group, a linear process may be introduced and it may become more natural to present topics and issues sequentially.

To further examine whether similar topic management patterns were adopted, the same procedures were applied to all nine meetings. This analysis compared whether the similar topic management patterns emerged between intercultural meetings where English was used as compared to the topic management patterns of intra-cultural meetings by Hong Kong and by Japanese business professionals in using English and their respective native language (see Table 2).

The results were partially consistent with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956) and confirm Du-Babcock's (1999, 2006) studies. While Hong Kong and Japanese business professionals adopted different topic management patterns in intracultural meetings where English and their respective native languages were used, the results of the topic management patterns remain inconclusive in intercultural meetings where English was used.

These findings suggest that both Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese may adopt Western thought patterns when interacting in a Western language (English) while retaining Chinese or Japanese thought patterns when communicating in their native languages. Thus, in the process of transferring Asian holistic thinking into English for communicating to the group, a linear process may be introduced, and it may become more natural to present topics and issues sequentially.

Table 2.
List of Topic Management Patterns in Intercultural and Intracultural Meetings

Meeting Types	Topic Management Patterns
Intercultural meeting 1	Spiral
Intercultural meeting 2	Spiral
Intercultural meeting 3	Linear
Intercultural meeting 4	Linear
Intercultural meeting 5	Spiral
Intracultural meeting by Hong Kong participants in Cantonese	Spiral
Intercultural meeting by Hong Kong participants in English	Linear
Intercultural meeting by Japanese participants in Japanese	Spiral
Intercultural meeting by Japanese participants in English	Linear

Conclusion

The studies reported in this paper examined the first- and second- language information-sharing and decision-making meetings of individuals from collectivistic cultures (Studies 1 and 3), and meetings in which individuals from collectivistic cultures participated with participants from individualistic cultures (Study 2). These studies provide data to help determine the relative importance of

language proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and group composition in explaining the communication behaviors in intracultural and intercultural communication meetings.

These studies conclude that both language proficiency and cultural background (collectivistic or individualistic) can be determining factors affecting an individual's interaction in first-language and second-language information sharing and decision making meetings, but group composition (homogeneous and heterogeneous) also can have an important effect on communication behaviors in these meetings.

Study 3 is the first comprehensive empirical study that investigates the topic management patterns of Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese business professionals. As such, the study contrasts the topic management patterns by two cultural groups previously categorized as collectivistic, high-context communicators. The present study also updates the research on the L1 and L2 communication practices of Hong Kong Chinese (Du-Babcock, 1999, 2005, 2006) by adding Japanese communication to these research findings (see also Du-Babcock, 2013; Du-Babcock & Tanaka, 2013). The study lays out the fundamental elements of Japanese and Hong Kong Chinese communication and, in doing so, establishes a framework for follow-up empirical investigations and theoretical development

Future Research Direction

With globalization, a large and rapidly growing segment of nonnative English speakers exchange information in intercultural business communication settings, yet there is little systematic evaluation that compares communication behaviors of nonnative English speakers in intracultural and intercultural communication situations. The dominance of English has led to its identification as a lingua franca in international business contexts. Studies by Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002), Nickerson (2000), Bilbow (2002), and Du-Babcock (1999, 2003, 2005, 2006) conducted on different continents have confirmed that English is an intrinsic part of communication in global corporate settings and a fact of life for many international businesspeople.

To better understand how individuals interact and accommodate intercultural business communication, a future research direction in this line of the research should focus on two areas. The first area is to investigate the turn-taking strategies on how to improve the interaction among people with diverse backgrounds and varying second-language proficiency when they professionally communicate in an intercultural business environment. Specifically, the research should more precisely define how Chinese (as well as individuals from other high-context cultural societies) with varying second-language competencies communicate in a language environment where English dominates. These studies could better define how to structure a communication environment to solicit the involvement of second-language speakers in intercultural group meetings, especially intermediate level second-language proficiency,. As such, these studies could be structured to investigate how bilinguals from collective cultural societies (e.g., Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong) communicate in a language environment where English is the dominant mode of communication (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007) and where they do not have ready access to other native speakers. In sum, the future research should focus on examining (a) the differences in turn-taking behaviors and strategies of individuals from individualistic and collectivistic societies, (b) the level of language proficiency that is required to participate successfully in tasks that take place in intercultural business meetings, and (c) the relationships of culture and language interactively influencing turn-taking behavior in intercultural decision making meetings. For example, research could be structured to investigate how Hong Kong bilinguals interact with lower second-language proficiency bilinguals coming from other collective cultural societies (e.g., Japan, Taiwan) as compared with their interaction with individualistic cultures (e.g., United States, northern European countries).

With regard to the analysis of topic management strategies, Du-Babcock (2003, 2005) provides findings that show how participants from collectivistic cultures with high second-language proficiency participated in intercultural meetings; that is, they accommodated individualistic individuals, which resulting in a linear topic management strategy in their meetings. All of these meetings took place in the United States, so it is possible that the linguistic and cultural environment influenced the communication behaviors of the participants from collectivistic cultures. It is also feasible to argue that there would have been a different result if the meetings had been held in Asia, or if the participants from individualistic cultures had comprised a minority in the group composition (e.g., one American with five or six Asians in a group).

Another direction for future research would be examining the accommodation by native English speakers to their counterparts who possess varying second-language proficiencies and diverse cultural backgrounds. Communication accommodation theory (Bourhis, 1979; Buzzanell, Burrell, Stafford, & Berkowitz, 1996; Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988; Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987), suggests the following: to enhance communication efficacy, interlocutors will need unconsciously and mutually to modify their linguistic and/or paralinguistic behaviors in order to become more similar to (convergence) or different from (divergence) their respective interlocutors (Giles, et al, 1987). Du-Babcock (1999) used CAT to explain how and why Hong Kong bilinguals accommodated to other speakers in first-language and second-language business decision makings. In accommodating other meeting participants, Hong Kong bilinguals mutually modified their communication behaviors in that they exhibited different communication behavior and thereby, changed dynamics in the meetings.

References

Bilbow, G. (2002). Communicative speech act use in intercultural business meeting. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in language Teaching,* 40(4), 287-303

Bourhis, R. (1979). Language in ethnic interaction: A social psychological approach. In H. Giles & B. Saint-Jacques (Eds.), *Language and ethnic relations* (pp. 117-141). Ox- ford, UK: Pergamon.

Buzzanell, P., Burrell, N., Stafford, R., & Berkowitz, S. (1996). When I call you up and you're not there: Application of communication accommodation theory to telephone answering machine messages. *Western Journal of Communication*, 60, 310-336.

Charles, M., & Marschan-Piekkari, R. (2002). Language training for enhanced horizontal communication: A challenge for MNCs'. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65, 9-29.

Coupland, J., Coupland, N., & Robinson, J. (1992). How are you? Negotiating phatic Communion, *Language and Society*, 21, 207-230.

Du-Babcock, B. (2013). English as Business Lingua Franca: A comparative analysis of communication behavior and strategies in Asian and European contexts. *Iberica*, 26, 99-130.

Du-Babcock, B., & Tanaka, H. (2013). A Comparison of the Communication Behaviors of Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese Business Professionals In Intracultural and Intercultural Decision-Making Meetings. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 27, 263-287. DOI: 10.1177/1050651913479918

Du-Babcock, B., & Varner, I. (2008). Intercultural Business Communication in Action: Analysis of an International Videoconference. In D. Starke-Meyerring, & Melanie Wilson (Eds). Designing

globally networked learning environment: Visionary partnerships, policies, and pedagogies, pp. 156 – 169. Sense Publishers.

Du-Babcock, B., & Babcock, R. (2007) Genre patterns in language-based communication zones. *Journal of Business Communication*, 44, 340-373.

Du-Babcock, B. (2006). An analysis of topic management strategies and turn-taking behavior in Hong Kong bilingual environment: The impact of culture and language use. *Journal of Business Communication*, 43, 21-42.

Du-Babcock, B. (2005). An analysis of communication behaviors between intra-and inter-cultural decision-making meetings. *Journal of Asian-Pacific Communication* (edited by F. Bargiela-Chiappini & M. Gotti), 147-168.

Du-Babcock, B. (2003). *A comparative analysis of individual communication processes in small group behavior between homogeneous and heterogeneous groups*. Proceedings of the 68th Association of Business Communication Convention, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA, 1-16.

Du-Babcock, B. (1999). Topic management and turn taking in professional communication: First versus second- language strategies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 12(4), 544-574.

Gallois, C., Franklyn-Stokes, A., Giles, H., & Coupland, N. (1988). Communication accom- modation in intercultural encounters. In Y. Kim & W. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Theories in intercultural communication* (pp. 157-185). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Giles, H., Mulac, A., Bradac, J., & Johnson, P. (1987). Speech accommodation theory: The first decade and beyond. In M. McLaughlin (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 10* (pp. 13- 48). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gudykunst, W, Matsumoto, Y., Ting-Toomey, S., Nishida, T., Kim, K., & Heyman, S. (1996). The Influence of Cultural Individualism-Collectivism, Self Construals, and Individual Values on Communication Styles across Cultures. *Human Communication Research*, 22, 510-543.

Hall, E. (1976). Beyond culture. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). *Leadership, culture, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hunt, E., & Agnoli, F. (1991). The Whorfian hypothesis: A cognitive psychology perspective. *Psychological Review*, 98, 377-389.

Kaplan, P. (1987). Cultural thought pattern revisited. In U. Connor, & R. Kaplan (eds.). *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2 text* (9-21). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Kaplan, R. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. Language Learning, 16(1/2), 1-20.

Kay, P., & Kempton, W. (1984). What Is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis? *American Anthropological Association*, 65-79. http://www1.icsi.berkeley.edu/~kay/Kay&Kempton.1984.pdf

Ma, R. (1993). Taoist thinking pattern as reflected in communication. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western States Communication Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Matsumoto, D. (1994). *People: Psychology from a cultural perspective*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Nickerson, C. (2000). Playing the corporate language game: An investigation of the genres and discourse strategies in English used by Dutch writers working in multinational corporations. (Vol. 15). *Rodopi*.

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematic for the organizational of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50(4), 696-735.

Tanaka, H. (2008). Communication strategies and cultural assumptions: An analysis of French-Japanese business meetings. In S. Tietze, (Ed.), *International Management and Language* (pp. 154-170). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ting-Toomey, Stella. (1988). Intercultural Conflicts: A Face-Negotiation Theory. In Theories in Intercultural Communication, eds. Young Yun Kim and William B. Gudykunst. pp. 213–235. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1985). Toward a theory of conflict and culture. In W. Gudykunst, L. Stewart, & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), Communication, culture, and organizational processes (pp. 71-86). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Trompenaars, F. (1993). Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business. New York, NY: Irwin.

Whorf, B. L. (1956). Language, Thought and Reality (ed. J. B. Carroll). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Yum, J. (1988). The impact of Confucianism on interpersonal relationships and communication patterns in East Asia. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 374-388.

Special Acknowledgements

BERTHA DU-BABCOCK is Associate Professor at City University of Hong Kong where she teaches Intercultural Business Communication. She received the Distinguished Member Award in 2010, the Kitty O Locker Outstanding Researcher Award in 2008 and the Meada Gibbs Outstanding Teaching Award in 2004. She also received Outstanding Article Awards in the Journal of Business Communication (2007) and Business Communication Quarterly (2001).

Topic Management Patterns ©
EasyFix Japanese Video Conference 24 Feb 2010
Turns and related topics

Meeting Duration: 57 minutes 15 seconds
Participants:

Japan	Hong Kong
A. A. Kohei	D. Rebecca Y.
B. Y.Nakamura	E. Angela C.
C. K. Shimada	F. Nicole N.

Key:

Turns

Topic

Turn 40-42: Meeting background
(E, B, G&H)

Participants' turn sequence:
Highlighted with underline – turn with major content
No highlight and underline – backchannels/minor response

Clarified the purpose of this meeting: to discuss their individual decision about EasyFix

Brief summary

P.S. Topic highlighted in the same color shows the spiral pattern

Meeting Flow:
Section 1: All participants stated their chosen option
Turn 60-70: Initiated by HK participant: Introduced meeting background and suggested discussion flow
(F, C, F, C, F, B)
Participant F briefly introduced the case background, then suggested the discussion flow:
1. discuss US market first; 2. raise their opinion one by one before discussion
Participant C disagreed to have different decision in both markets because of lacking information from Asia
Participant B agreed with Participant F and the discussion started, while Participant C was being ignored.

Turn 71: **Participant F** stated her chosen option with suggestion- **option C**
(F)
Stop all advertising and promotion → stop public noise
The drug might not have problem → allow dr to continue prescribing the drug
Suggestion: conduct some research

. . .

Turn 80-83: **Participant C** stated his chosen option - **option D**
(C, f, C, f)
He chose option D but Option C was his 2nd choice. He thought most of the Americans overdose drugs.

Turn 86-87: **Participant B** stated her chosen option - **option E**
(B, f)
Participant B chose option E but both option C and D were her 2nd choice.
She pointed that surviving in the market is important for pharmaceutical company. Also, conducting the research is essential, both clinical and non-clinical research.

Turn 89-91: **Participant A** stated his chosen option - **option E**

1

(A, f, A)
Participant A did not have confidence to state his opinion. He said Option E doesn't mean was his first choice. He agreed with Participant B to negotiate with FDA, so he chose option E.

Section 2: Participants discuss issues and tried to persuade each other
Turn 93-96: Participants C, F, and, E stated their disagreement on Option E
(C, F, E)
Participant C: For legal action, he concerned about the cost, time and reaction
Participant F: Option E would be her 2nd choice; Support option C based on the priority.
She explained legal action was not the immediate action by evaluating FDA process on banning drugs
Participant E: Suggest to conduct research; Maintain public faith is important, so should stop advertisement and promotion (Option C) and not to have legal action.

Turn 97-98: Participant F support Option C
(F, C)
Participant F: Research can work with FDA, but option C is the immediate action.
Suggested to educate doctors and re-educate public

Section 3: After Participant changed to Option C, the group tried to reach conclusion via compromise
Turn 119-131: Discussed to have 2 options (Option C and E)
(C, F, B, F, B, E, b, F, B, E, D)
Participant B: hard to pick 1 from option C and E
Participant F: Suggested to have 2 options
Participant D: Agreed to have 2 options; Suggested to have sponsorship so as to rise company image

Turn 132-136: Participants C, and E stated their disagreement on Option E
(C, E, C, F, E)
Participant C: concern about the outcome of intervening the legal actions and unsure about the system
Participant E: no experience with pharmaceutical industry, so concern about legal action. Asked for modification.

Turn 137-144: Clarified about option E - the meaning of legal action
(B, F, B, f, E)
Participant B: Legal action not necessary negative → support company's attitude and social position
Participant F: Use example to show legal action had positive effects

Turn 145-148: Participant C still disagree with Option E
(C, F, C)
Legal action is against FDA, in which US consumers always make noise on everything. Option E would be his last resort.

Turn 150: Participant E changed to support option E
(E)
Agree with Participant B and understand the positive effect of legal action

Discussion continued

2