Four-Character Idioms in Advanced Spoken Chinese: Perception and Reaction of Native Speakers and A Pedagogy of C2 Expectations

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The current study examines native Chinese subjects' reactions towards *chengyu* usage in a variety of social situations from the most formal speech to casual conversations among close friends. Specifically, native perceptions of *chengyu* performances conducted by native and non-native speakers are compared. The results reveal that foreign language learners benefit from employing *chengyu* when engaging in verbal communications with native Chinese counterparts by presenting a desirable C2 persona as perceived by native Chinese speakers. In formal, professional contexts, adequate *chengyu* capacities contribute to non-native speakers' presentation of authority and professionalism. In casual settings they enable a delightful persona who excels in the Chinese language and is knowledgeable in the cultural mores: one that opens doors for the foreigner to establish more intimate social relationships by taking the accommodation burden off the Chinese native speaker. Meanwhile, the unequal response towards native and non-native *chengyu* performance makes explicit the constraints on non-native speakers' sovereignty over *chengyu* usage.

The unequal treatment of native and nonnative *chengyu* performance revealed in the experiment data draw attentions to the existence of the "native speaker effect". Particularly to the point is the native speakers' mentality as the self-perceived, rightful

owner of Chinese, which has substantial consequences in the way foreign language learners anticipate and get ready for participating in, and getting evaluated by, another culture. The construct of a pedagogy of expectations is proposed, which raises our awareness of the receptivity of learners in C2 environment. A pedagogy of expectations aims at enabling foreign language learners to recognize native speakers in C2 as the judges of their C2 performances, to identify what is culturally expected of themselves as "cultural outsiders", and to develop strategies of using that expectations to achieve their own agenda. The end goal is creation of a set of increasingly effective C2 personae that help learners achieve their intentions and remove the anticipation of accommodation burden on the part of the native interlocutors.

Grounded in a practical view of language as a form of human actions, this dissertation proposes a new framework of pedagogically treating *chengyu* and other literary conventional expression as cultural performances. Accordingly, specific pedagogical guidance, including cataloguing *chengyu* items and incorporating *chengyu* instructions in all levels in a CFL curriculum, has been provided that aims to transform the old translation-based treatment of *chengyu* in the current CFL field.

Dedicated to my parents

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Chapter 1 Language as Conventions

1.1 Definition of Conventions

We live lives sustained by conventions. We drive on the same side of the road as our neighbors and abide by local traffic rules; English-speaking customers order coffee at Starbucks using the Starbucks-invented terms "tall," "grande," and "venti" to refer to different cup sizes instead of the usual "small," "medium," and "large"; graduate students write Ph.D. dissertations differently than grant proposals to demonstrate their understanding of the different purposes of each respective genre and in order to succeed in these endeavors; people carry paper money or credit cards instead of chunks of gold in their pockets to purchase goods in stores. These examples illustrate that conventions make social or professional transactions easier and display our membership in specific communities.

Despite its frequent usage, convention is also one of the most ambiguous terms in everyday language usage. Nelson Goodman (1989) observes the contradictory meanings of the word convention:

> The terms "convention" and "conventional" are flagrantly and intricately ambiguous. On the one hand, the conventional is the ordinary, the usual, the traditional, the orthodox as against the novel, the deviant, the unexpected, the

> heterodox. On the other hand, the conventional is the artificial, the invented, the optional, as against the natural, the fundamental, the mandatory. (p.80)

The two seemingly paradoxical uses of "convention" pointed out by Goodman in fact co-exist in many long-established institutions of human society. Convention is *traditional, ordinary, and usual*, because we are discussing something that is established by general consent in a particular community. Stopping a car at a red light is an action that every driver and pedestrian in the U.S. agrees on, acting on the expectation that others will follow suit. It is the default, the habitual, and therefore the common knowledge shared by a given community. Every member of that community "knows" the convention in the sense of "being party to it, knowing how to follow it, expecting others to know how to follow it, and expecting them to expect him to know how to follow it" (Cloud, 2015, p.51).

However, convention is also *artificial and invented*, in the sense that it is a product of human invention and collective assent. Not all behaviors are conventional. For instance, repeating biological activities such as eating, breathing, and sleeping are not considered conventions, although each of these activities is accompanied by a multitude of conventional behaviors. Having a family meal on special occasions to celebrate marriage, graduation, or the birthday of a loved one are each a convention *created* by a community. Conventions are *created* and *chosen*, either explicitly or implicitly, for practical purposes. The reason people conform to conventions is that they are useful in coordinating our behaviors with others' expectations when engaging other members of the society (Cloud, 2015). In explaining the power of conventions, Lewis (1983) wrote "the expectation of conformity to the convention gives everyone a good reason why he himself should

conform" (p. 167). Since the existing conventions are salient within a given community, it is only natural that interlocutors expect each other to accord with them.

Communication of intentions functions on the basis of a shared understanding between communicators about what they intend by means of a certain act and what intentions they take from each other. Without conventions, there are just too many possible ways of communicating and interpreting intended meanings in any give social situation. In this dissertation, I propose that conventions be perceived as established practices shared by a given community, which are central to the coordination of intentions in social interactions among members of that community. Section 1.2 discusses the two core aspects of this definition: First is the central role conventions play in how interlocutors communicate and interpret intentions at individual and institutional levels. Second is the conceptualization of conventions as *performances* that are only meaningful when situated in cultural contexts. Since the social interactions that are the focus of this study are conducted in the medium of language, emphasis will be placed on conventions centering on language use.

1.2 Conventions in Language Use

1.2.1 Why is Language Conventional?

Language is conventional. The relationship between a linguistic element and its social and cultural meaning is created, gradually established, and agreed upon among a particular population — the speakers of a language, or a dialect. Language functions on the basis of a shared understanding between the interlocutors about what they mean and what they take each other to mean through a process of *co-ordination* in language use (Lewis,

1969; Clark, 1996). This co-ordination is primarily based upon conventions, a set of indexical rules for the interpretation of the speakers' intentions established in the language.

The statement "That's what Buckeyes do" elicits drastically different meanings for an American growing up in the state of Ohio who is likely an Ohio State University football fan than it does for someone from out of the Buckeye State. In order for the speaker's intention to be understood by the listener in the desired way, the two of them need to both know, and expect each other to know, and expect each other to expect that they each expect each other to know about the conventional usage of the word "Buckeye" in reference to a resident of the state of Ohio, or an alumnus of The Ohio State University, between two Ohio residents. This shared conventional usage of "Buckeye" is what Schelling (1960) refers to as a "clue for coordinating behavior," or a "focal point for each person's expectation of what the others expect him to expect to be expected to do" (1960, p. 57). This usage is conventional since it has been established within a certain community—English speakers from the State of Ohio or who have attended The Ohio State University. The two interlocutors can be complete strangers who have never talked to each other using the word "Buckeye" in this sense, and still are able to create a common understanding through the usage.

By using a linguistic form with interlocutors who share common knowledge about its conventional usage, the speaker not only avoids possible conversation breakdown—which could have happened if the listener were from New York or did not attend Ohio State University and was confused by the use of "Buckeye." The speaker also invokes what Ochs refers to as "situational dimensions" (1996). A linguistic structure, whether it is a

lexical item, sentential voice, or diminutive affix, becomes conventionally associated with certain sociocultural interpretations about social categories such as identities, social acts and activities taking place, and affective and epistemic stance (Ochs, 1996). These social categories are conventionally associated with categories of people. For instance, the use of the word "Buckeye" to refer to Ohio residents or alumni of The Ohio State University indexes membership to the same community—the State of Ohio or The Ohio State University. Using this term, the speaker establishes common grounds with the listener by adhering to a regional community in this case. "Buckeye" might also index a common interest and certain degree of knowledge of American college football or familiarity with The Ohio State University. We make use of the indexicality of conventions to construct who we are by associating with a variety of communities simultaneously in a given society.

1.2.2 Conventions as Community-specific *Performances*

1.2.2.1 Performing Conventions

Oftentimes in describing particular cases of convention, such as dining etiquette and dress codes, we treat conventions as *declarative* knowledge by making somewhat general claims about the kind of practices we follow. For instance, it is common to read about contrasting cultural conventions in Eastern and Western countries in guidebooks for travelers or in the "cultural section" of language textbooks. Under this model, conventions are gathered and organized as if they are explicit rules in a driver's manual for aspiring motorists to memorize. Yet, just like acing the written driver's license exam does not guarantee a qualifying performance on the road test, knowing all the cultural conventions one can find on paper does not transform into the capacity to conform to them in practice.

Even more to the point, there are numerous conventions that we abide by in all aspects of social interactions which are not documented in any explicit manner.

To qualify as a legitimate participant to a given convention, therefore, one must "know" the conventions in the practical sense of responding to particular cases to which the convention applies. This includes the ability to recognize those cases and follow through with what everyone expects to be done in each specific case. Each case to which a convention applies is conceptualized in this study as a *performance*, defined as the enactment of scripts or behaviors situated at a specific time and place with roles and audiences specified (Walker, 2010, p.8). The type of declarative knowledge about conventions described above is observable and demonstrable through performances of conforming to the conventions in given situations. Chunking social interactions into performances is an effective way to catalogue cases of conventions for future use and retrieval. To make use of conventions in the successful communication of intentions requires performing conventions in the appropriate contexts.

1.2.2.2 Conventions as Communities-wide Practices

Conventions are not universal. Scholars from various disciplines who share a common focus on the role of conventions in the sphere of human communication agree on this (Lewis, 1969; Duranti, Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011; Malinowski, 1923). A convention emerges within a particular group of people who share knowledge, practice, and experiences; therefore, it does not hold for humans in general.

It is helpful to conceptualize a community as defined by a set of shared practices—ways of doing things, ways of talking, maintaining beliefs, enacting values—among its

members. We all simultaneously belong to and participate in joint activities in a variety of these communities. The sizes of such communities vary, from a major demographic category, e.g., Asian or a region e.g., State of Ohio, to a *community of practices* (Wenger, 2000), e.g., a group of graduate students who meet twice a week to work on dissertation research.

Conventions shared by one community do not always apply to others. Inside jokes are funny only to a certain group of persons who share common knowledge. Using a convention in the wrong community could lead to misinterpretation of one's intention. For instance, the use of highly professional medical terms with a group of surgeons conventionally signifies one's intelligence and authority while repeating the same expressions with one's family members who are not in the practice of medicine might be interpreted as arrogant and showing-off. While we are more adept at maneuvering among various communities in the culture in which we are socialized, this problem is especially common in the context of cross-cultural communication. The case for this will be expanded upon in the following section.

1.2.2.3 Conventions in Cross-cultural Communication

What is conventional to members of one culture can be deemed as peculiar or even unethical or inappropriate in another culture. Entering into a foreign culture bearing only one's own cultural conventions is, at the very least, inconvenient, as it complicates the co-ordination of intentions. As a consequence, misunderstandings often occur that lead to unintended consequences. Take the scenario of "passing by strangers on the street" as an example. The convention that has evolved in some American communities is to use "hello,"

"good morning," or phrases of a similar nature to greet people whom you pass on the street to display friendliness and politeness. The person on the receiving end is expected to respond in the same manner. In Chinese culture, on the other hand, people are not compelled by the social etiquette to greet strangers in public areas. Many American learners of Chinese who come to China for the first time often develop the impression that Chinese people are "rude" or "unfriendly" due to ignorance of this difference in cultural conventions. After several attempts at saying "ni hao" (the assumed equivalence of "hello" in Chinese) when walking into an elevator full of Chinese and getting no greetings in reply, these learners of Chinese should eventually (be helped to) recognize that their failed attempts at leaving a friendly impression only come across in the eyes of Chinese people as awkward foreignisms. Performing conventions of one's own culture in a foreign culture is like dribbling the ball with one's hands in a soccer game. Making points is impossible unless the player plays by the right set of conventions.

The same holds for conventions in word meaning. Utterances can only be comprehended relative to the culture and situation in which they are inextricably embedded (Malinowski, 1923; Turner, 2010). We cannot speak of conventional word meaning without explaining in which culture it is conventional, let alone the layers of contexts within each culture. One of the most practical implications from the perspective of cross-cultural communication is to rethink the value of vocabulary-lists in language textbooks. The ideology promoted by vocabulary lists is a simplistic view that word meaning is fixed in a linguistic code and therefore can be mapped from one language to another. However convenient it may seem to help people make sense of how language functions, this view of

the relationship between linguistic code and meaning is fundamentally flawed. The English word "hello" doesn't have the Chinese equivalent known as "ni hao," as is suggested by many Chinese pedagogical materials. Although both linguistic codes become conventionally associated with greetings, the two conventions have evolved separately in American and Chinese cultures and consequently are associated with separate sets of situated meanings. The danger of equating "hello" with "ni hao" manifests itself in the mentality of relying on the translation of linguistic code as the ultimate solution for co-ordination of meaning across cultures. In order to effectively communicate intentions in a foreign culture, non-native speakers or foreign language learners need to become adept at recognizing and participating in the conventions rooted and practiced in the target language, not in their base language.

1.2.3 Conventions as Central to Negotiation of Intention

1.2.3.1 Examining Language Use in Terms of Intentionality

> "The consideration of linguistic uses associated with any practical pursuit, leads us to the conclusion that language…ought to be regarded and studied against the background of human activities and as a mode of human behavior in practical matters…language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behavior. It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection."
>
> Malinowski (1923)

Philosophers of language have been working toward the clarification of "meaning" with all its ramifications. Linguistic meaning is far more complicated and elusive than the object or truth it refers to, since language is primarily and fundamentally a social instrument (Dewey, 1897). Language is a form of human action (Levinson, 1983, p. 226). It is derived

from intentionality and can be, and ought to be, employed as the medium of the explanation of intentionality (Searle, 1985). We make use of language to accomplish practical tasks and construct identities for ourselves. In light of this practical view of language, in this dissertation I propose that the social and cultural meaning involved in language use be conceptualized and examined as emerging from the negotiation of intentions among interlocutors in the moment-by-moment unfolding of communicative events.

Another reason to study language use in terms of intention is that intention is intimately associated with features of human communication that distinguish us from other animal species such as chimpanzees. Shared intentionality, the collaborative interactions in which participants share psychological states, is argued to be the reason that makes human cultural practices and accomplishments unique in the animal kingdom (Tomasello, 2008). It is also the very same complex act of higher-order representation that enables the Gricean construct of communication: "a rational activity in which a [speaker] intends to produce certain results and the [listeners] reason their way to those results via their recognition of the utterer's intention to produce that very result" (Grandy & Warner, 2014). The speaker intends that the listener recognizes that the speaker intends the listener to believe or perform a particular thing, while the listener responds to such intentions via their recognition of the speaker's intention to believe or perform said thing. In the following sections, I explain this process of negotiating intentions in detail.

1.2.3.2 Convention and Negotiation of Intention

At the individual level, the notion of intention is employed in explaining "speaker's meaning," a concept proposed by Grice (1957) in contrast to the "natural meaning" of language. In Gricean and post-Gricean tradition, speaker's meaning is the "actual proposition" the speaker is using the utterance to communicate through inferences (Downes, 1998). It is analyzed in terms of the speaker's intention and the recognition of the speaker's intention by the listener. Grice describes two types of intention: *indicative* and *imperative*. By using an utterance, the speaker either intends to get the listener to *believe something*, or to *perform certain actions* by means of the listener's recognition of that intention. For example, if a student says to his friend who is sitting next to an open window, "Aren't you cold?," what he intends for his friend to do is probably not so much as to answer the question honestly but to stand up and close the window because the student who is asking this question is implying that he, the speaker, feels cold and wishes for the window to be closed.

How is the speakers' intention recognized by the listener in the desired way? How can the student sitting by the window understand that he is in fact being asked to close the window? Schiffer (1972) and Bennett (1976) fills this lacuna by foregrounding the central role played by convention in the co-ordination of intention in communicative events. Both postulates are variants upon the following: "Speaker U intends that *p* by uttering *x* as used by population *G* if and only if there prevails in *G* a convention to use utterances of *x* so as to intend that *p*."

In their accounts, intentions are indicated by the speaker and recognized by the listener through the mediation of conventions. As illustrated in Figure 1 in an average conversation, a speaker uses utterance to refer to a particular intention that is meant to be inferred by the listener in predictable ways. The speaker's intention manifested in utterance meanings is a result of the community-wide convention that certain utterances are used to communicate certain propositions. Such a proposition can be either of indicative nature, in the case of belief, or of imperative nature, in the case of action. The type of pre-existing conventions in the community makes it possible to describe linguistic acts in intentional terms.

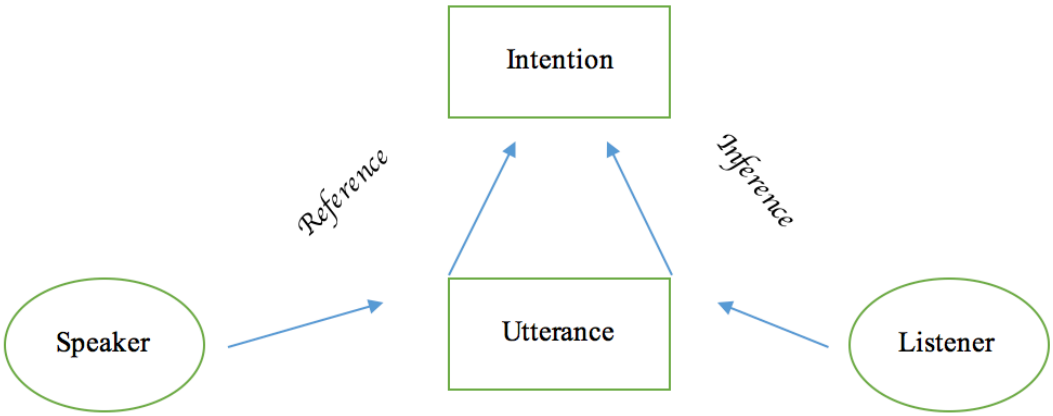

Figure 1 Negotiation of Intention in a Conversational Exchange

1.2.3.3 Intentions as Socially Constructed (and Confined)

It is necessary to clarify at this juncture that both speakers' expression of intentions and listeners' recognition of intentions do not always involve conscious and laborious mental processing. As is informed by cognitive and neurology studies (Turner, 2010; Zull,

2011), our brain can "short-circuit" the retrieval of an intention if it has become conventionalized in particular contexts in a language. A shortcut is created as interlocutors retrieve and recognize the conventions repeatedly in recurrent situations. The use of accent variations to signal authority and the politeness phenomenon in language use are telling examples of such "unconsciously intentional" utterances. Native speakers' automatic employment of polite linguistic forms towards interlocutors of higher social status, for instance, does not seem to always require deliberation or conscious thinking. Very often utterance acts of this type do not involve explicit personal goals; instead, they are socially motivated and unconsciously picked up through a long period of socialization. In fact, the majority of what we say in response to familiar daily routines are "ready-made" and require reduced mental processing.

The unconscious intention described above guides the discussion from individual intentions to interpretation of acts in ways that transcend the conscious intentions of the individual actor. The "intentions" discussed here are, in some sense, collective, socially construed and not completely accessible to, or within the control of, individual speakers per se. Miller (1984) introduces a similar idea by recasting the notion of *exigence* as an objectified social motive. Exigence is different from the speakers' individual intentions, which are not always in coordination with what each social situation conventionally supports; meanwhile, it is not a pure objective need or emergency. It is reasonable to understand Miller's notion of exigence in terms of the collective intention described earlier in this section, or vice versa. Such concepts provide users of language with a socially recognizable way to make private individual intentions known. By recognizing the patterns

of others' acts of utterances and expectations in the community, one develops sensitivity to *exigence*, or the collective intentions, in different occasions and finds ways of engaging one's own intention in a socially interpretable manner.

1.2.3.4 Negotiating Social Intention: Conventions as Acts of Identity

In light of the discussion of intention as socially motivated and constructed, this dissertation conceptualizes social intentions as constructions of identity. Individuals construct identities by using linguistic symbols to index affiliation to a certain community in a given culture (LePage, 1980; Eckert, 2000). In this account, the conventional use of an utterance is an act of claiming certain social identities and values, which aggregately constitute the "social intention" achieved by each variant.

During this process, speakers make use of various conventions to distinguish societal categorizations at various levels. The individual level of categorization is based on character attributes, such as "friendliness," "intelligence," and "politeness," while the institutional level of categorization is based on membership in a community conventionally associated with the personal characteristics, such as a region, e.g., Beijing; a certain occupation, e.g., college professors; or a generation, e.g., the Generation X/Y. Just like there are a certain number of conventions in a given culture, a culture only accepts a finite number of identities.

The acts-of-identity dimension of intentionality behind an utterance in daily communicative exchange are oftentimes "intentional but unconscious," as discussed in section 1.2.3.3. A Cantonese-speaking Beijing University student at a class dinner can intentionally switch between Mandarin Chinese (perhaps with features of the Beijing

dialect) and Cantonese depending on whether it is the Beijing locals or other Cantonese speakers to whom she is talking. She does not necessarily have an explicit goal in her mind to play the identity card each time she smoothly code-switches. Nevertheless, a particular message, whether it reflects the Cantonese girl's deliberate intention or not, is received by her interlocutors, and therefore her degree of affiliation with both communities is reinforced. For example, students who are Beijing locals might associate her accommodating use of the Beijing dialect with certain personality attributes such as "friendly" or "sophisticated." The uniformity of native speakers' attitudes towards variants indicates that the community as a unit is aware of the conventional social meanings attached to the utterances.

Speakers create their own repertoire of utterance acts based on the pre-existing conventions in the community picked up via socialization, thereby indicating their affiliation with different levels of community in a culture. This process can be conscious, but most likely is enacted without premeditation.

1.2.3.5 Audience and the Negotiation of Intentions

The discussion of a socially motivated intention raises awareness of the central role of audience in the coordination of intentions**.** The agentive role of speakers in constructing their own identities in verbal exchanges has been increasingly studied. Studies explore speakers' use of linguistic variations as indexing social objects, such as speech acts and stances (Ochs, 1996), and identity traits, including membership in a certain social group (Podesva, 2006; Podesva, Roberts & Campbell-Kibler, 2001). However, while the speakers seem to take the initiative in choosing the linguistic resources that conveys intended social

meanings, a successful social performance has to be recognized and interpreted by the audience in desired ways. Interpreted in terms of the concept of socially constructed intentions, the audience can be collectively conceptualized as personified social norms. Each individual member of the acceptable audience obtains access to one version of the finite number of conventionalized social intentions, based on which they make situated judgments about the appropriateness of the speakers' performances in relation to community norms.

Understanding how audiences perceive and interpret situated performances is crucial to the function of linguistic conventions and their consequences in the negotiation of intentions. It is especially apparent when it comes to communicating in a second- or non-native-language cultural environment. When engaging with the native speakers of the target language, target-language learners play a vastly different language game than the one they grew up playing in their base culture. Depending on how native speakers perceive the linguistic variations used by the foreign speakers in particular sociocultural contexts, the rules of the C2 (target-language culture) game are sometimes favorable to non-native speakers and other times disadvantageous to them. One example to illustrate this point is the unequal evaluation of native and non-native speakers' creative language play by the native speech community. Prodromou (2003, p. 46) records an interesting anecdote:

> A few weeks ago, I sent an e-mail to a long-lost [native-speaker] friend who humorously replied 'your name does indeed ring a bell.' I replied that I was glad I could still ring bells in his quarters and when I saw him the following week he said he was surprised I didn't know the meaning of 'ring a bell.' I may be over generalizing a bit, but it seems to me that nonnative speakers, even if they have reached a very advanced level, are still considered incapable of playing with the language; if they attempt to do so, they will be regarded with suspicion and,

> consequently, they will fail to communicate their meaning. Native speakers on the other hand appear to be considered by definition incapable of making mistakes – therefore, creative deviations on their part will usually be commented on favorably and their humor will be appreciated much more easily.
>
> – Greek non-native speaker (author's data)

Kramsch (1998) claims that native speakership brings to its speaker authority in evaluating authenticity and legitimacy of language use, as is revealed in Prodromou's anecdote. As non-native language learners engage the target culture, it is imperative that they recognize the central role of native speakers as the judges of their C2 intentions. Furthermore, an accurate understanding of their own roles as non-native "outsiders" in the target culture, as well as the attached constraints, can help non-native language learners avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and unintended consequences.

1.3 Conventional Expressions

1.3.1 Definition of Conventional Expression

In section 1.1, conventions are defined as established practices shared in a given community which are central to the coordination of intentions in social interactions among members of that community. In section 1.2, language is postulated as conventional because the relationship between a linguistic symbol and the type of social intention it achieves is established and agreed upon in a community. In this section, the focus is on conventional expressions which are conceptualized, following Yang's definition, as "any expression with a stable form that is commonly used to navigate routinized social interactions in a given culture" (Yang, 2014, p. 6).

Unlike what some of us prefer to believe—that our every utterance is a new and original creation, a vast portion of human verbal interactions consist of recurrent patterns of linguistic routine, or conventional expressions. Conventional strings of language with stable structures play an important role in the handling of daily tasks, solving co-ordination problems that are fundamental to human verbal communication. They are "frequently used by speakers in certain prescribed situations" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009, p.757) and are tied to certain communicative functions (2009).

Native speakers of a language prefer the use of conventional expressions in conveying communicative intentions (Barron, 2003; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Takahashi & Beebe, 1993). Meanwhile, the employment and interpretation of conventional expressions is culturally specific (Yang, 2014). Therefore, attention should be directed to cultural outsiders' "lack of knowledge about the target culture and to the proclivity of applying the norms of the base culture as if they were valid in the target culture" (Nara, 2003, p. 70) in cross-cultural communication.

1.3.2 Cataloguing Conventional Expressions

Concept-wise, Yang's definition is apt in so far as it highlights the culture-specific communicative orientation of the conventional expressions. Meanwhile, this definition of conventional expression is also rather broad. Further categorization is necessary and beneficial in examining the functionality of particular expressions and their consequences in the negotiation of intentions in any given language and culture. Categorization is the most basic cognitive process with the function of providing cognitive building blocks for guiding our interaction with the environment. From a developmental perspective, a more

thorough classification helps language learners or novices to organize their experiences of conventional expressions, and aids effective management and retrieval. Wray (2002) proposes four basic features of conventional expressions based on which taxonomies are created: form, function, meaning, or provenance, although these features, as pointed by Wray "overlap, causing some muddying of the water" (p. 47). Different languages also have their own conventional taxonomies that vary in accordance with their specific linguistic rules. Therefore, there is no need to unpack the large body of different taxonomies, since instead of a purely theoretically-driven categorization of conventional expression this dissertation takes up a pedagogy-driven approach. In what follows, a review of the existing taxonomies and categorizations of Chinese conventional expression for pedagogical purposes is provided.

1.3.2.1 The Traditional Taxonomy

The traditional taxonomy of Chinese conventional expression foregrounds features of form, which lends itself better to descriptive ends rather than explanatory ones. Table 2 illustrates the four common categories with their defining features, including: (1) the grammatical level of the type (whether they are word, phrase, or sentence level); (2) whether they are used verbatim or allow a finite set of variations; and (3) whether they conform internally to the grammatical rules of the language. As it has been suggested by Wray that any single-parameter categorization is unrealistic and problematic, it should be noted that the traditional taxonomy also cross-associates a few aspects of meaning and function, although these references are only peripheral. Specifically, these categorizations indicate discursive functions (e.g., descriptive or argumentative) and semantic

transparency (whether meaning of the whole unit can be derived from meanings of the components.)

Table 1 Traditional Taxonomy of Chinese Conventional Expressions

Categories	Descriptive Criteria	Example
Guanyongyu 惯用语	• Mostly composed of three characters • Descriptive rather than argumentative • Mostly metaphorical and colloquial • Tolerant of a few variants	***Dài gāomào*** 戴高帽 Literally meaning "to put high hat on somebody else," referring to the act of flattering someone.
Yanyu 谚语	• Mostly long phrases or sentences that can be used independently • Popular and colloquial • Tolerant of a few variants and substitution of component part • Mostly metaphorical	***Hē shuǐ bú wàng wā jǐng rén*** ***喝水不忘挖井人。*** Literally meaning "when you drink the water, don't forget the person who digs the well," referring to the social moral dictum"to remember the forerunners that laid foundation of your happiness."
Xiehouyu 歇后语	• Sentences that are structurally composed of two parts: a metaphorical riddle and an answer • Used verbatim • Mostly metaphorical and colloquial	***Yǎbā chī huánglián ------ yǒu kǔ shuō bù chū.*** 哑巴吃黄连------有苦说不出。 Literary meaning "a deaf-mute person tastes coptis (bitter root)----he can't express the bitterness."
Chengyu 成语	• Predominantly composed of four characters • Used verbatim	***Zhāng guān Lǐ dài*** 张冠李戴 Literally meaning "to put Zhang's hat on Li's head,"

Continued

Table 1: Continued

	• Originate in ancient Chinese records • Inner grammatical structures follow syntactic rules of classical Chinese	metaphorically meaning "to confuse a person with someone else."

1.3.2.2. Genre-based Categorization

Another way of categorization is based on a large-scale typology of rhetorical actions, suggested in Miller's (1984) recasting of the notion of genre. Miller points out that a rhetorically sound definition of genre should be centered on the action it is used to accomplish, not on the substance, or form of discourse. Jamieson and Campbell (1982), along the same line, propose that genre be seen as a complex of formal and substantive features that create a particular effect in a given situation. "Effects" can be understood in terms of the listeners' recognition of and response to the speakers' intentions. In this way, genre is presented as more than a formal construct; it becomes "pragmatic, fully rhetorical, a point of connection between intention and effect, an aspect of social action" (Miller, 1984, p.53). Following Miller's action-oriented definition of genre, I propose that *context* and *intention* in a social sense are the two definitive elements in categorizing conventional expressions into genres, since human actions are able to be interpreted only against a situated context and through the attributing of intentions.

One implication of a genre-based categorization of conventional expression is sequencing traditional subcategories of conventional expressions along the formality spectrum. Again using Chinese as an example, in modern Mandarin Chinese the vast array of conventional expressions, including the form-based categorizations discussed in the

previous section, can be re-organized based on the level of formality of the situational contexts. Ranging from the most casual to the most formal are: (1) colloquial expressions used in colloquial daily routines, such as leave-taking (e.g., 我先走了, "*I am going to head out*") and apologizing (e.g., 真不好意思, "*truly sorry*"), (2) less formal idiomatic expressions such as *suyu* 俗语 (e.g., 打肿脸充胖子, "to slap one's face until it's swollen in order to look fat – to do something beyond one's means in order to be impressive"), and (3) literary language higher on the formality scale such as *chengyu* (e.g,. 锦上添花, "to add flowers to the brocade—to make perfection still more perfect") and classical allusions (e.g., 子曰：有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎 "The Master said, is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters?"), which are employed to negotiate intentions in formal occasions. The formality-oriented categories provide a general framework that centers on register, one of the most salient and substantial aspects in the pragmatics of conventional expressions in Mandarin Chinese.

This genre-based categorization is also along the lines of the Wittgensteinian philosophy of language that emphasizes the pragmatic aspects of utterance, and a body of literature that builds the framework of a performance-centered understanding of human language in use (Cole, 1996; Bruner, 1990; Goffman, 1959; Bauman, 1977; Hymes, 1972; Walker, 2010; Walker and Noda, 2000). Its pedagogical significance will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

1.3.2.3 Conclusion

Both ways of cataloguing conventional expressions contribute to the current discussion that examines the case of Mandarin Chinese. This dissertation utilizes this traditional taxonomy as a point of departure by identifying one of the categories, *chengyu*, which is, as previously described, a type of formal literary language, as the primary target of investigation. However, it is also the aim of this study to problematize the traditional taxonomy in juxtaposition with the genre-based categorization. While the traditional taxonomy is helpful to narrow down the target of the investigation to a more manageable size, it fails to perceive these conventional expressions from both sociocultural and cognitive perspectives. Foregrounding conventional expressions' communicative and social functionality in the co-ordination of intention, this dissertation postulates that not only should particular *chengyu* be regarded in terms of its formal features as definitions provided in previous literature do, but also they should be conceptualized and categorized in terms of genre, context, and intention.

1.4 Summary

Chapter One presents an overview of conventions in language use, its central role in coordinating intentions among interlocutors in communicative events, and the implications of these constructs in cross-cultural communications. This introduction to conventional language lays the foundation for presenting *chengyu* in a comprehensive framework that is accessible to learners and teachers of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL). Specifically, this foundation consists of the followings:

(1) The Conventional Nature of Language

The overarching concept of convention is defined as established practices that are shared among members of a given community and are central to the coordination of intentions in social engagement. As the major medium through which social interactions are conducted and mediated, language usage is primarily conventional: interlocutors from the same speech community are capable of communicating and inferring intended messages because they share a set of conventional indexical rules (Ochs, 1996) that not only explain *what* they want to say, but also *who* they are by associating with a particular community of people within the culture.

(2) Treating Conventions as Culture-specific Performances

Cultural conventions are often treated as *declarative* knowledge in descriptive accounts, such as guidebooks for travelers or the "cultural sections" of language textbooks. This is problematic for foreign language learners who aim higher than superficial engagement with the target culture, since declarative knowledge does not transform into the capacity to practice these conventions. Furthermore, a vast number of cultural conventions we abide by are not explicitly documented for pedagogical purposes. It is proposed in this dissertation that conventions be treated as culture-specific *performances,* defined as the enactment of scripts or behaviors situated at a specific time and place with roles and audiences specified (Walker, 2010, p. 8). Only when learners of a foreign language "know" the conventions in a practical sense of performing in a culturally appropriate manner, will they start to be perceived as legitimate participants in the target culture. Since conventions are shared among members of a culture and do not hold for

humans in general, applying conventions in the wrong community could lead to unintended consequences, especially in cross-cultural communications. Therefore, for the purpose of effective communication, foreign language learners need to recognize and master cultural conventions rooted and practiced in the second culture (C2), not in their base culture.

(3) Examining Language in Terms of Intentions

Grounded in a practical view of language as a form of human action (Malinowski, 1923; Levinson, 1983; Dewey, 1987), this dissertation follows Searle's (1985) assertion that language is derived from intentionality and should be utilized as the medium of the explanation of intentionality. In other words, social and cultural meaning involved in language usage ought to be examined as emerging from the negotiation of intentions among interlocutors in the moment-by-moment unfolding of communicative events. As previously proposed, established language conventions are what makes it possible to describe linguistic acts in intentional terms. Specifically, intention can be examined both at the individual level—which involves immediate, explicit personal goals, and at the social level—which is socially motivated and constructed, and transcends the conscious intentions of individual actors. The negotiation of social intentions involves construction of one's identity using linguistic symbols to index affiliation to certain communities in a culture (LePage, 1980; Eckert, 2000). The implication of this in training foreign language learners to become adept participants in the target culture is two-fold: one is to offer training that helps learners accumulate their own repertoire of second-language (L2) utterance conventions to maneuver through routinized daily interactions in C2; the other encourages us to go beyond achievement of the personal intentions and aim higher at

training foreign learners to create a set of desirable personal traits that constitute who they are in the target language community.

(4) The Central Role of Audience in Negotiation of Intentions

Lastly, it is the intent of this dissertation to raise awareness of the central role of audience in the coordination of intentions in social interactions. While speakers take the initiative in choosing the linguistic resources to convey intended social meaning (Ochs, 1992; Podesva, 2006, Podesva, Roberts & Campbell-Kibler 2001), listeners hold the final say in recognizing and interpreting the intentions in ways that may or may not match the speaker's desire. In the context of engaging in a foreign culture, understanding the way audience (i.e., native speakers of the language) perceive and respond to situated performances is crucial to the success of the communication. Particularly to the point is the native speakers' authority (Kramsch, 1998) in evaluating foreigners' language use, manifested in an unequal treatment of native and non-native speakers' linguistic performances. Foreign language learners should be helped via pedagogical means to realize the role of their native counterparts as judges of their C2 intentions, as well as the limitations on their part as foreign "outsiders" because of their status as non-native speakers.

The following chapters will build these pedagogical applications in a step-by-step fashion. The second chapter presents the roles played by *chengyu* in modern Mandarin Chinese and in Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) contexts. Originating from the well-established cultural significance associated with *chengyu* in historical and modern

contexts, an unsupported assumption has emerged in the field of CFL that treats *chengyu* as an indicator of advanced Chinese language skills. Chapter Two concludes with the need for empirical research on the use of four-character Chinese idioms by non-native speakers, as well as the response by native speakers of Chinese to *chengyu* used by foreign language learners.

Chapter Three lays out the methodology of the language perception experiment, including justification of the particular research methods adopted, description of the subjects, experiment procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter Four identifies and describes the effects of using *chengyu* in formal and casual contexts as perceived by native Chinese subjects. In addition, it presents a discussion of two key factors that influence the native Chinese speaking subjects' perception of *chengyu* performances: the formality level of the context and the "nativeness" of the speaker.

Chapter Five builds on the first four chapters to provide answers to the question why it is worth the hard work to build *chengyu* skills into CFL learners' repertoire as a way to excel at the expectations game of Chinese culture. Knowledge and strategies CFL learners need to develop in order to effectively negotiate more serious intentions using *chengyu* with their Chinese counterparts are also explained.

Chapter Six proposes a performance-based pedagogical framework for the teaching and learning of *chengyu.* Particular pedagogical guidance is also provided for instructors, curriculum designers, and material developers, which entails cataloguing and sequencing

chengyu performances, incorporating *chengyu* in various levels in a CFL curriculum, and the possibility of assessing *chengyu* capacities beyond language programs.

Chapter 2：The Role of *Chengyu* in Modern Chinese Language and Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL)

2.1 The Defining Features of *Chengyu*

Literally meaning "composed fixed-language," *chengyu* is a unique type of conventional expressions in Mandarin Chinese. Originally used interchangeably with *chengyan* 成言 and *chengci* 成辞, the term *chengyu* 成语 itself first appeared in the Song dynasty in reference to preexisting words, expressions, poems, or lyrics (Chen, 2003). Later it continued to be used and gradually became stabilized in Chinese lexicographic works and vernacular fictions during the imperial period (Zhao, 1992; Chen, 2003). In modern Mandarin the term *chengyu* essentially has two readings. In a broad sense, *chengyu* can indicate set phrases that include four-character idioms that originated in literary sources (like poems) and more colloquial ones such as *suyu* 俗语(common-saying) and *yanyu* 谚语(proverb). This dissertation, however, focuses on the narrower definition of *chengyu* as a unique composition of four characters that typically originated in ancient Chinese historical records and literary works. In the following section, I will first define *chengyu* by describing the distinctive features of this unique type of conventional expression.

2.1.1 Literary Origins

Definitions of *chengyu* by Chinese lexicographers and linguists have given rise to a prototypical representation of *chengyu* that originated from ancient stories and can be

traced back through written records. Chen (1995), for instance, notes that *chengyu* is a kind of "cultured" (*ya* 雅) language extracted from classic Chinese literature. Historical records of *chengyu* originating from written language texts include fables, legend stories, historical events, and quotations from famous ancient texts such as Buddhist and Confucian classics. *Sì miàn Chǔ gē* 四面楚歌 (literally meaning "surrounded by *Chu* songs in all four directions"), for example, comes from the famous historical event recorded in *Shiji* 史记 about the Battle of *Gaixia* in 202 BC when *Han* armies led by Liu Bang sang folk songs from the *Chu* region to create the false impression that *Chu* armies led by Xiang Yu were surrounded and isolated by their own people. This *chengyu* item is now used to describe desperate situations in which one is surrounded by enemies and has no chance for help.

This conceptualized literary origin of *chengyu* manifests itself as part of the commonsense knowledge among native speakers of Chinese. Take how *chengyu* are presented in pedagogical settings as an example. A close look at the existing *chengyu* learning resource for Chinese children in their earlier stages of education reveals that storybooks (in print as well as in the multimedia forms of video, animation, and PowerPoint slides) of various *chengyu* origin stories are commonly used. This emphasis on the historical and literary references behind each *chengyu* expression consequently indicates that storybooks are an etymologically-oriented pedagogical approach to the teaching and learning of *chengyu* in China. This in turn reinforces the idea among native Chinese speakers that *chengyu* has literary origins. This commonly-held belief has many consequences in terms of understanding how, when, and to what ends Chinese people employ *chengyu* to negotiate intentions in various discourse.

Despite the common belief that *chengyu* originated in classical Chinese written sources, there is only a small portion of *chengyu* that originated in habitual collocations and gradually became stable and fixed in terms of both meaning and structure. Wen (1989) notes that there are the two distinctive kinds of *chengyu* which derive from written and oral sources respectively. He further proposes that since the *chengyu* items that gradually derived from spoken language possess less literary style, they should be considered part of *suyu* and not treated the same as written *chengyu*. Jiao, Kubler, and Zhang (2011) describe three common origins of Chinese idioms: 1) ancient fables and historical tales; 2) works of ancient Chinese literature, and 3) habitual collocations of terms that came to be stable and used in a fixed way, the exact origin of which is not known today.

While this origin-based categorization is etymologically meaningful, from the pedagogical and developmental perspective, it offers very minimal guidance to children or foreign language learners to master the use of *chengyu*. If the goal of learning *chengyu* is simply to accumulate culturally meaningful moral stories, then the ability to recall the origination type a certain *chengyu* item might be handy. It is less beneficial if the goal of learning *chengyu* is the skillful employment of the *chengyu* items in the effective communication of the speaker's intentions. A more useful categorization therefore should be based on the authentic usage of *chengyu* in modern Chinese rhetoric, rather than its historical origins.

2.1.2 Stabilized Four-Character Structure and Verbatim Usage

As indicated by its English translation "four-character Chinese idioms," the majority of *chengyu* items follow the standard four-character format with a few containing

a different number of characters. Statistics show that among the 5446 *chengyu* items listed in the *Cidian* 辞典, 93.22% of them are four-character *chengyu*, and 96.38% of the 17,977 items listed in *Zhongguo Chengyu Dacidian* 中国成语大词典 are composed of four characters (Zhang, 2012). Due to the predominance of the four-character structure, *chengyu* is prototypically conceptualized as a unit of four characters among native Chinese speakers. The *four-character structure* 四字格 is a unique and typical form in the Chinese language that is not limited to *chengyu*. The aesthetics of the four-character structure stems from the four-character lines of the *Shijing* 诗经. Many modern lexical items also adopt this form, such as 一国两制 ("One country, two systems") and 设备完善，技术一流 ("The facilities are perfect and the techniques are top-class"), which are widely favored in written and formal discourse. This is in accord with the traditional Chinese aesthetics of 以偶为佳 ("the even number is favored over the odd number") and 以四言为正 ("the four-syllable format is considered the standard") (Yang, 2012). With its balanced structure and concise wording, the four-character form manifests the Chinese cultural mentality that values symmetry, parallelism, and antithesis.

The inner grammatical structure of *chengyu* items follows the syntactical rules of classical Chinese, which distinctively differ from that of modern Mandarin. Each of the four characters in a *chengyu* item is a monosyllabic word. For instance, in *shēng dōng jī xī* 声东击西 (literally meaning "to make a feint to the east but to attack from the west," referring to the tactic of pretending to aim at one target while really shooting at another), the word *sheng* 声 ("voice, noise"), a noun in modern Chinese, functions as a verb meaning

"to make noise." The location nouns *dōng* 东("east") and *xī* 西 ("west") following the action verb "serve" as the object, which is grammatical in classical Chinese but not in modern Chinese. Having inherited and preserved both the formality and substance from the classical Chinese tradition, the syntactical structure (e.g., verb+placeword+verb+placeword) of these four-character units gradually became stabilized.

In modern Chinese discourse, *chengyu* is used as a single unit in a sentence. Arbitrarily substituting components of a set *chengyu* item is generally considered in violation of the syntactic rules and therefore deemed unacceptable.

1a) 声东击西 *shēng dōng jī xī*
1b) *声南击北 *shēng nán jī běi*
1c) *声家击公司 *shēng jīa jī gōngsī*

Unlike how native speakers of English in general accept, or even take pride in, the inventive appropriation of set phrases as a form of wit, manipulation of *chengyu* via wordplay is not a common practice among Chinese speakers. Chinese culture places great emphasis on the long-established conventions and the exactness of the ancients' words of wisdom. *Song* 诵 (to recite), is one of the long standing Chinese educational traditions in which children memorize poems, lyrics, prose, and sayings that reflect moral discipline based on the belief that "reciting is a vital learning process to achieve mastery."[1]

[1] The original text goes: "读书须是成诵, 方精熟" *Zhuzi Yulei 朱子语类* [Zhuzi 18]

2.1.2.1 Debate over Inventive Chengyu Wordplay

This tradition of verbatim repetition is observed in modern contexts when creative *chengyu* wordplay receives mixed responses. On the one hand, opponents criticize inventive *chengyu* usage as "disgracing the tradition and purity of the Chinese language" (Mao & Luo, 2013). On the other hand, voices supporting "benign" appropriation of *chengyu* advocate that such creative usages contribute to the vitality of Mandarin Chinese as long as they conform to both the linguistic rules of Chinese language and [the] code of ethics [e.g,. propriety]" (Wang & Wei, 2005).

The inventive *chengyu* wordplay at the heart of the debate include the creation of puns in a *chengyu* item by substituting a single character for one of its homophones. Such inventive use of *chengyu* as shown in 2(a) and 2(b) are sometimes adopted in advertisements for the promotion of tourism or commercial products.

2(a) 尽善尽美 *jìn shàn jìn měi* ("to reach the acme of perfection")
2(a') *晋善晋美 *Jìn shàn Jìn měi* ("Shanxi good, Shanxi beautiful")

2(b) 刻不容缓 *kè bù róng huǎn* ("to brook no delay")
2(b') *咳不容缓 *ké bù róng huǎn* ("a cough must not remain")

Another type of wordplay associated with the creative *chengyu* usage is the so-called 网络新成语 ("new Internet *chengyu*"). Being forged and trending on the Internet since 2010, these Internet memes have become popular among Chinese youth with their "ironic, contemporary and sometimes political themes" (Qin, 2013). These new Internet idioms retain the four-character format of the classic *chengyu*, and are usually

created by contracting several expressions, or a longer sentence into a Chinese-style acronym. For instance, the phrase 喜大普奔 *xǐ dà pǔ bēn* is an amalgamation of four commonly used Chinese idioms made by stringing the first characters together:

Xǐ *wén lè jiàn* **喜**闻乐见 (*lit.* "be delighted to hear and see")
Dà *kuài rén xīn* **大**快人心 (*lit.* "it gladdens people's heart")
Pǔ *tiān tóng qìng* **普**天同庆 (*lit.* "the whole world joins in the jubilation")
Bēn *zǒu xiāng gào* **奔**走相告 (*lit.* "to run around to spread the news")

Although the use of the new Internet "*chengyu*" has begun to appear outside the Internet in more traditional media such as newspaper articles, this type of inventive expressions has not yet been embraced by the highbrow Mandarin speakers in China, especially in formal situations.

In this long-standing debate over the legitimacy of creative *chengyu* usage, the Chinese government takes a firm stand against wordplay of any kind involving *chengyu* in mass media. In November 2014, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT) issued an official announcement prohibiting "non-standard usage of language and script in radio and TV broadcasts and advertising, [particularly] including distorted usages and indiscriminate tampering with [four-character] idioms." (translated by Moser, 2014). This regulation is meant to ban both the puns in *chengyu* and the use of new Internet *chengyu* in the mass media since "such practices are contrary to the spirit of transmitting and promoting outstanding traditional

Chinese culture, and run the risk of misleading the public, especially minors" (translated by Moser, 2014).

While the debate over these *chengyu* inventions brings out two seemingly opposing attitudes held by the government administrators and the "free-willed" users of the Chinese language who claim their right to come up with puns and alter idioms on the Internet, the two mentalities are not mutually exclusive. The formality of the context is key to reconciling the tension between these two parties. As described in the next section, *chengyu* usage in modern Chinese discourse falls along a continuum from formal contexts to informal ones. The official restriction issued by SAPPRFT on puns and irregular *chengyu* usage concerns formal discourses such as press, publication, radio, film, and television, while the creative Internet idioms usage lies at the casual end of the spectrum. From a purely academic perspective, the official regulation is less astonishing than portrayed by some foreign media when considered in light of *chengyu*'s supposed literary origins and the long-established Chinese tradition of learning these *chengyu* verbatim in early educational contexts. The restriction actually is in line with the normal *chengyu* usage: while it is most valued when used verbatim in its standard form in formal situations, in casual interactions more flexibility in its usage is granted.

2.1.3 Distribution of Modern Usage Along the Formality Spectrum

Chengyu is predominantly associated with formal discourse in modern Chinese. In contradiction to the commonly held belief that these special phrases are almost exclusively used in written discourse (书面语 *shūmiàn yǔ*), such as news articles and scholarly essays, the use of *chengyu* can be also observed in a wide range of formal spoken genres including TV interviews, debates, and academic lectures. Even in less formal communicative events like casual conversations, the use of *chengyu* is not as rare as commonly believed.

This dissertation will focus on the use of *chengyu* in Chinese spoken discourse, as opposed to written discourse, because it is often ignored by both scholars and most users of Chinese language. Fully aware of the genre differences, however, this discussion assumes that oral and written forms of *chengyu* follows parallel strategies in communicating intentions and meaning-making. Therefore, by providing a fuller picture about the distribution of colloquial *chengyu* usage along the formality spectrum, I hope to point out directions for future research on written *chengyu* usage in terms of the rhetorical moves used in negotiating intentions.

Generally speaking, the more formal the social situation is, the more *chengyu* items are expected to be employed to achieve various levels of intention. Formal contexts present "exigence" that demand proper employment of *chengyu* while less formal contexts tolerate a range of variants. The following section illustrates cases of *chengyu* usage at three formality levels from the most formal to the most casual, including: (1) public speech, (2) formal conversation, and (3) casual conversation.

2.1.3.1 Use of Chengyu in Public Speech

Chengyu usage in public speech is the most prototypical and can be called the default usage. Public speeches are defined as one-directional speeches delivered on special occasions to a target audience in formal, even ritualized, settings. Public speakers normally follow a prepared written script; depending on the conventional practices, sometimes the script is memorized in advance, while other times it is read from beginning to end by the speaker. Either way, such a usage of *chengyu* is the closest to written texts. This scripted employment of *chengyu* takes advantage of the cultured and formal nature of these expressions in compliance with the expectations of the formal register.

The most common types of formal speech in modern Chinese discourse include: reports on governmental undertaking and achievements, opening remarks at ceremonies, press conferences, academic lectures, and professional presentations. Such occasions predetermine that the speakers are of certain social status and the use of *chengyu* reinforces their social identities as politicians, entrepreneurs, or intellectuals.

A high frequency of *chenygu* usage, along with other types of literary and cultural references and jargon, is generally predictable in public speech. Two speeches at the 100th anniversary of Tsinghua University in 2011 were examined, and the results attest to this claim. The first speech was delivered by the then President of the People's Republic of China Hu Jintao. In his 30-minute-long speech, a total of 31 *chengyu* items were employed with nine used within the first three minutes. The second speech was delivered by the President of Tsinghua University Gu Binglin. A total of 24 *chengyu* items were used in this 13-minute-long speech.

Table 2 Hu's speech at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Tsinghua University

Time of Occurrence	During the celebration ceremony of 100th anniversary of Tsinghua University
Place of Occurrence	Great Hall of the People
Role	Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China
Audience	National leaders, alumnus, faculty and students
Script (excerpt)	100 年前，在中华民族内忧外患、风雨飘摇的历史背景下，清华大学的前身清华学堂建立了。那个时代，外国列强的侵略欺凌，封建统治的腐败黑暗，使我们的祖国和人民蒙受了水深火热的苦难。中国人民和大批仁人志士在苦难中觉醒、在压迫下奋起，决心改变民族积贫积弱的命运和人民苦不聊生的状况。 One hundred years ago, Tsinghua School, the predecessor of Tsinghua University, was founded against a turbulent historical background that the Chinese nation was trapped in domestic strife and foreign aggression. At that time the Chinese nation was grappling with domestic turbulence and foreign invasion, aggression of foreign dominance and corruption and darkness of the feudal rule has brought untold suffering to our country and people. The Chinese people and so many people with lofty ideals awakened, and rose up against the suffering and oppression, determined to change the country's lot as a poor and weakened nation and the destitution of its people.

Table 3 Gu's speech at the celebration of 100th anniversary of Tsinghua University

Time of Occurrence	Celebration ceremony of the100th anniversary of Tsinghua University
Place of Occurrence	Great Hall of the People
Role	Gu Binglin, President of the Tsinghua University
Audience	National leaders, alumnus, faculty and students
Script (excerpt)	从探索学术独立、教育自主的国立清华大学，到刚毅坚卓、弦歌不辍的西南联大；从艰苦奋斗造就“红色工程师的摇篮”，到改革奋进创建世界一流大学——作为中华民族前赴后继、百折不挠走向复兴的一个缩影，清华的百年历程，是清华人致力于兴国安邦的奋斗史，是探索中国科技教育自立自强的开拓史，是向着世界先进水平跨越发展的攀登史！ From the National Tsinghua University which explored the academic independence and autonomous education to the Southwest Associated University which valued resolution and maintained education without interruption; From a university that worked perseveringly to be the "cradle of revolutionary engineers" to a university undergoing reform and endeavoring to become a first-class one worldwide - as an epitome of the Chinese nation that has advanced wave upon wave, undaunted by any setback, in order to achieve the great rejuvenation, the century long history of Tsing Hua University is a history of Tsing Hua people dedicated to rejuvenate and stabilize our country, explore a way to achieve self-reliance in education of science and technology, and close the gap with advanced level in the world with a striding development.

Among the range of public speeches, heavily scripted political speeches conventionally use a greater number of *chengyu* items, compared to the more colloquial presentations in business, or the highly domain-specific speeches, which are more jargon-laden than reliant on *chengyu*. Meanwhile, successful *chengyu* usage is not measured by the quantity of items used, but rather how they are employed to achieve the intended rhetorical effects. A close examination of public speeches reveals that a considerable number of *chengyu* usages are for the purpose of referencing Chinese traditional values and its intellectual legacy. For example, in Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech on China-EU relations in Belgium, he talked about the era of great intellectual accomplishment in China, the period of the Hundred Masters and Hundred Schools of Thought, quoting Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi's ideas of 孝悌忠信 *xiào tì zhōng xìn* ("loyalty and fidelity to one's parents and brothers"), 礼义廉耻 *lǐ yí lián chǐ* ("integrity and honor"), 仁者爱人 *rén zhě ài rén* ("benevolence and kindness toward fellow human beings"), 天人合一 *tiān rén hé yī* ("the belief that man should be in harmony with nature"), among others. Xi's quotation of both Chinese philosophical ideas and *chengyu*, as well as the ideas of European thinkers, in his speech was interpreted by European and Chinese media as a gesture to promote efforts to reach a mutual understanding between China and Europe.

Table 4 Xi's speech at the the College of Europe on the China-Europe Relationship

Time of Occurrence	Xi's first visit to Europe as the President of PRC
Place of Occurrence	Large Media Hall in The College of Europe on China-Europe Relationship, Belgium
Role	Xi Jinping, President of People's Republic of China
Audience	Belgian King and Queen, Belgian President, Prime Minister, President of the College of Europe, school administrators, faculty and students, media, international audience watching the live broadcast
Script (excerpt)	2000 多年前，中国就出现了诸子百家的盛况，老子、孔子、墨子等思想家上究天文、下穷地理，广泛探讨人与人、人与社会、人与自然关系的真谛，提出了博大精深的思想体系。他们提出的很多理念，如孝悌忠信、礼义廉耻、仁者爱人、与人为善、天人合一、道法自然、自强不息等，至今仍然深深影响着中国人的生活。 Over 2,000 years ago, there was an era of great intellectual accomplishment in China, referred to as the period of A Hundred Masters and A Hundred Schools of Thought. Great thinkers such as Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi, to name just a few, explored a wide range of topics from the universe to the earth, and from men's relations with nature, to relations amongst human beings, and to that between the individuals and society. The extensive and profound schools of thoughts they established covered many important ideas, such as the moral injunction of fidelity to one's parents and brothers, and to the monarch and friends. The emphasized: a sense of propriety, justice, integrity and honor; benevolence and kindness towards fellow human beings; and the belief that men should be in harmony with nature, follow nature's course, and constantly pursue self-perfection.

Another example of *chengyu* in speech is at the beginning of a talk by China's most famous entrepreneur, Ma Yun, at the 2015 World Zhejiang Entrepreneurs Convention. He shared some of his experiences and reflected on his business ventures. Quoting Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming's concept of 知行合一 *zhī xíng hé yī* ("unity of knowing and doing"), Ma states that one major obstacle to achieving success is to apply what one knows to create best-selling products. Compared to Xi's speech, Ma's register is relatively colloquial with fewer cases of *chengyu* and other highly stylized conventional language usages. Yet the employment of the *chengyu, zhī xíng hé yī,* in reference to the great Ming Dynasty thinker Wang Yangming indexes Ma's high level of intelligence. Employing a well-balanced discourse, he conveys the persona of a successful entrepreneur who is down-to-earth, but also well read in traditional Chinese classics.

Table 5 Ma's keynote speech at the 2015 World Zhejiang Entrepreneurs Convention

Time of Occurrence	Keynote speech for the 3rd Forum at the 2015 World Zhejiang Entrepreneurs Convention
Place of Occurrence	Zhejiang Great Hall of the People
Role	Yun Ma, founder and executive chairman of Alibaba Group, chairman of the Zhejiang Chamber of Commerce
Audience	Conference participants
Script (Excerpt)	企业家另外一个很难的是"知行合一"。学知识很容易，但是把知道的东西做出来，并且做出来的东西让别人喜欢，是多么的难。 Another challenge for entrepreneurs is the "unity of knowing and doing." Learning knowledge is rather easy, but to put what you know into action, while having the products well-received by the others, is truly difficult.

2.1.3.2 Use of Chengyu in Formal Conversation

Conversation in professional settings, such as job interviews, the question-and-answer session in a press conference, or television talk shows, allows for more colloquial expressions, yet the working environment still requires a certain level of formality in the discourse. The bilateral nature of a conversation presupposes fluidity and improvisation in language use. This is not to claim that contextualized conversations are not composed of patterned usage or do not follow conventionalized routines. Instead, we should note the difficulty of drafting the use of *chengyu* items in a conversation and carrying it out as planned in the same way one can follow the script of a speech. Both the task of instantly responding to a *chengyu*, and the task of using an appropriate *chengyu* in response to an interlocutor requires higher levels of skill and sufficient experience to reach automaticity**.** Sensitivity to timing and accuracy of usage is one of the reasons why people use significantly fewer *chengyu* expressions in oral exchanges. In this sense, smooth and successful use of *chengyu*, a marked form that attracts attention and criticism when used inaccurately, conveys the speaker's intention to be seen as a certain type of person (i.e., knowledgeable and intelligent) more effectively when employed in a conversation than in a set speech. It is recognized that it is a greater challenge to "sound smart" in the flow of a conversation than in a prepared talk.

When Tan Haiyin was interviewed in the television talk show *Dialogue* to discuss her experience as a returned Harvard MBA and entrepreneur in a Chinese company, two *chengyu* items, 成龙成凤 *chéng lóng chéng fèng* (literarily meaning "accomplished dragon,

accomplished phoenixm" referring to excellent and successful individuals), and 兼而有之 *jiān ér yǒu zhī* ("having both at the same time") were employed as she made her entrance to the stage. Although she humbly said that her MBA training at Harvard did not make her an elite, the use of these "cultured" lexical items indicates not only that she is well educated and sophisticated, but also that she is respectful of the Chinese tradition despite her training abroad.

Table 6 Tan's interview on the TV talk show Dialogue on CCTV

Time of Occurrence	At the beginning of the episode when a short video of Tan is shown, followed by the introduction of Tan to the stage.	
Place of Occurrence	On the stage of *Dialogue*, a studio talk show produced by CCTV Economic Section	
Role	Haiyin Tan, Harvard MBA graduate, President and CFO of Enchnet, then the biggest online trading platform in Chinese worldwide.	
	The host of the talk show.	
Audience	Other guests (a local MBA/professional manager, some officials and professional people working in government, business and academic circles), audience on site, TV audience	
Script (excerpt)	Tan (in the video)	哈佛不是那种一定要成龙成凤的人才能进去的，很普通的人，只要你有决心，只要有毅力，只要有自信，都能进。 ……
	Host	有请谭海音女士。你好你好。刚才大屏幕里你说很多普通的人，不一定非常优秀的人，都可以到哈佛去读 MBA，你认为你自己算是普通的人呢还是优秀的人？ Let's welcome Mrs. Haiyin Tan. Hello. Just now you said in the video that many normal people, people who are not among the elites, can pursue an MBA degree in Harvard. Do

Continued

Table 6: Continued

		you think of yourself as a normal person, or an excellent person?
	Tan	呃，兼而有之吧。我想我是个自信的人，所以我会说我是个优秀的人，但其实呢我也是很多普普通通的年轻人当中的一个。 Er, I'd say both. I think I am a confident person, and that's why I would say I am excellent. But actually I am also just one of the many normal young people.
	Host	好，我们听听这个普通人的故事。请坐。 Well, let's hear about the story of this normal person. Please have a seat.

2.1.3.3 Use of Chengyu in Casual Conversation

At the casual end of the continuum is daily conversation among colleagues and friends, which represents a type of casual, colloquial speech. Even in these less formal communicative events, the use of *chengyu* is not as rare as commonly believed. This is especially the case when achievement of a certain intention in a routinized social interaction relies on employing a particular *chengyu* item.

Two examples can help make the point. One cultural theme a non-native Chinese speaker needs to understand in order to establish meaningful networks in China is the obligation of a host to show hospitality in every possible way. When hosting a banquet for out-of-town guests, local Chinese hosts often use the *chengyu* item 地主之谊 *dì zhǔ zhī yí* ("the duty of a host towards guests from afar"). The host might give a toast at the beginning of the banquet by saying 今天就让我尽一尽地主之谊。大家都吃好喝好啊！（"Please allow me the privilege of being the host today to treat you all. Everyone enjoy the food and

drink!) Or it might be in response to a guest's expression of gratitude, 别跟我客气，我尽地主之谊也是应该的嘛（"Don't mention it. It's my honor to serve as a host.")

Another example occurs in the event of seeing someone off. Chinese has quite a variety of expressions for giving good wishes to people who are about to go on a journey, among which are two *chengyu* items: 一路顺风 *yí lù shùn fēng* ("a pleasant journey to you") and 一路平安 *yí lù píng ān* ("a safe journey to you"). The choice of these and other commonly used variations is based on the specific contexts: *When and where is it used? By whom and toward whom? To express what intention?* For example, *yí lù shun fēng*, which literally means "wishing you favorable wind all the way," is avoided by some Chinese for superstitious reasons if the traveler is getting on a plane. However, it is probably acceptable to use it in a humorous tone with a close friend whom you know would appreciate the sarcasm. The use of a *chengyu* item that could be taken as a cultural taboo in one case becomes an indicator of a good relationship and establishes common ground between interlocutors in another, although all that changes based on the context.

The examples described in this section are not just demonstrations of *chengyu* usage in a variety of spoken Chinese discourses from the most formal to the most casual; they also illustrate the performative nature of *chengyu,* the appropriate employment of which is only meaningful when situated in specific contexts. As proposed in Chapter One, this dissertation conceptualizes uses of *chengyu* as culturally specific performances that can be interpreted in terms of intentionality. In the next section, I discuss the role of *chengyu* in the negotiation of intentions and their consequences.

2.2 *Chengyu* in Negotiation of Intentions

In chapter one, I propose that the use of conventions is at the center of the coordination of a socially constructed intention—one that is not completely within the control of individual speakers. At the individual level, speakers, through pre-existing conventions, index their affiliations with different groups in the community (LePage, 1980), and thereby create multiple personas. At the institutional level, large-scale sociolinguistic patterns driven by the regularity of individual speakers' attitudes and intentions in turn reinforce the conventional meanings attached to the linguistic forms. In the cases of *chengyu,* these four-character units are categorically associated with certain attributes and intentions, which might not be consciously expressed by individual speakers, mediated through the institutionalized convention shared among the speakers. Situated in this previous discussion, the following section explores the socially negotiated intentions achieved through the employment of *chengyu.* Emphasis will be placed on explaining the underlying cultural mechanism that leads to the possible achievement of the intentions.

2.2.1 Establishing Authority

> 子曰："述而不作，信而好古，窃比于我老彭"
>
> The Master said, "I transmit but do not create. I am a believer in and an admirer of the ancients. I venture to compare myself with our old Peng."
>
> —*Luyun* 7.1

Making reference to the traditions is a common practice to appeal to authority in communication in Chinese. Young (1994) describes the discrepancies between Chinese

and Western ways of constructing and generating meaning. A significant point she makes is the Chinese strategy of referring to the tradition as a means of generating authority: "Far more than Westerners, Chinese regularly regard tradition as *the* source of legitimate authority. Tradition both grounds and focuses the intent and direction of their formal discourse; for Chinese, tradition offers past examples of reasonable explanation and action and one readily defers to its authority" (1996, p. 126).

Westerners rely on logic and supporting evidence as bases to formulate one's own opinion as ultimate judge. Chinese, on the other hand, appreciate the ability to use well-known phrases that echo famous works of literature and the classics out of veneration for authority. This practice, in direct conflict with the western attitude that values self-expression that is "new," "fresh," or "original" (Hynes, 1981, p.121), is rooted in the centuries of communicative practices in ancient China.

Confucius's claim that 述而不作 *shù ér bú zùo* ("I transmit [ancient wisdom] but do not create myself") is one of the earliest records that advocate borrowing the supposed power of earlier tradition for one's own ends. Other examinations of communicative practices in ancient China yield observations similar to that of Young's. Oliver (1971) reports that authority and analogy were the principle source of proof in ancient the Chinese practices of communicating ideas. Scholars intentionally represent ideas as "being not their own but an authoritative derivation from ancient precepts or practice" (p. 263). The fact that early Chinese scholarly texts such as the *Analects* and *Mozi* were published under the name of the masters when they were in fact transmitted and compiled by later generations of disciples also makes this point. This insistence on

attributing the texts to the masters testifies to the Chinese belief in the role of the sage as the manifestation of the tradition. Similarly, Frederick Mote's observation of Confucius' arguments in the *Analects* provides a profile of the Chinese classics in the flesh: "[Confucius' arguments were constructed as] chains of contingencies, or upon implicit appeals to a self-evident reasonableness, or upon the authority of a manifestly superior ethical system of wide acceptance…" (1971, p. 43).

As a legacy from the ancient Chinese traditions, the use of quotations and canonized expressions from the classics in present-day meaning making in Chinese discourse follows a parallel mechanism**.** By employing *chengyu* and quoting from classic texts such as the *Lunyu*, Chinese people derive authority from the wisdom of the tradition; the tradition in turn derives its authority from the frequent citation and negotiation of meaning in different contexts by contemporary Chinese.

2.2.2 Displaying Intelligence

Conceptualization of intelligence differs from culture to culture. In discussing the relationship between culture and intelligence, Sternberg and Grigorenko (2004) propose that intelligence cannot be fully or even meaningfully understood outside its cultural context: behaviors that are viewed as intelligent in one culture may be considered unintelligent in another, and vice versa. While some indicators of intelligence are agreed upon almost universally, such as demonstrations of better mental capacity that involves abstract reasoning, problem solving, and the capacity to recall knowledge, others are more grounded in the specific culture. Take intellectual accomplishment, one of the most commonly established manifestation of intelligence,

as an example. Nisbett (2009) makes the observation that while Westerners, or European Americans, commonly believe that intellectual accomplishment results from one's innate ability, Asians consider it primarily the result of hard work.

Chinese people place great value on academic achievement. The emphasis on academic excellence that has been present for more than 2000 years in Chinese traditions set the bar higher than the completion of quality education. A "well-educated" individual, while having to complete quality higher education, is expected to demonstrate in speech and in conduct, the attainment of established standards against which he or she is constantly judged. The ability to properly use *chengyu* and other cultural references in discourse is among the indicators of a well-educated Chinese person. Many frequently used *chengyu* items, such as 引经据典 *yǐn jīng jù diǎn* ("to quote from the classics") and 旁征博引 *páng zhēng bó yǐn* ("to quote and cite extensively"), advocate and place great value on one's ability to cite from the classics or ancient works to establish an argument. They provide evidence for the meaningful role of proper employment of quotation from the traditions as an attribute of what is expected of a knowledgeable and scholarly figure in Chinese ideology. Similar to the way in ancient China that one's mastery of poetry became a marker by which members of the literary community identified themselves and each other, the application of *chengyu* and other canonized phrases in modern time Chinese is perceived as an indicator of the membership in well-educated, elite society.

Achievement of true academic excellence that allows one to quote the classics and use well-documented and extensive evidence freely takes years of hard work. Employment of *chengyu* at the right time and the right place under the right circumstance provides a solution, a culturally specific strategy for sounding intelligent in Chinese discourse. It is a useful strategy especially for those who work in domains or positions that value intelligence and knowledge, such as academia and senior positions in almost every public and private sector.

2.2.3 Identifying with One's Culture

Human beings identify, consciously or unconsciously, with groups, and act accordingly. It is embedded in our human nature to form and adhere to groups. Identification with a certain group does not necessarily require face-to-face communication and interaction with every member of it, especially when the size of the group is considerably large. The concept of "imagined communities," a term coined by Benedict Anderson (1983) proves useful. According to Anderson, a nation, for example, is a socially constructed community, imagined by people who believe themselves as members of the group.

The same argument can be made about the culture of a specific society or component of a society. A specific culture includes "the kinds of social interactions the members of society have, the kinds of behaviors they conduct, the kinds of information they value and the kinds of inferences they will draw about the world" (Tomasello, 1999, p.79). It is through the constant reference to this shared knowledge and experience of cultural commonalities that individual members identify with their own

culture. The more culturally specific the shared social interaction, behaviors, information, and inferences about the world, the more likely they are used as credentials that distinguish one culture from another. Proper command of *chengyu* and other cultural references, which are highly culturally specific, indicate shared knowledge and respect of the tradition, and, consequently, signal one's legitimate membership in Chinese culture.

2.2.4 A Case of Failed Communication of Intentions

So far I have described the underlying cultural mechanisms that lead to the possible achievement of the three intentions for using *chengyu*. However, caution is needed not to make claims as if the use of such expressions will guarantee success in achieving the above-mentioned intentions.

Inappropriate employment of *chengyu* may lead to a failed attempt to achieve one's intention. Overuse of *chengyu* in discourse can leave others an impression of being overly bookish, and under certain situations might be interpreted negatively as trying to show off or a sign of an insecure or slippery personality. The character He Shuiyuan in the novel 春草开花 *Spring Grass* by Chinese writer Qiu Shanshan serves as a good example of someone trying to establish himself as knowledgeable and well educated through excessive use of *chengyu*. His attempt at an intelligent self-presentation, although appreciated by his illiterate wife, ultimately betrays the opposite in the eyes of the readers.

Two types of inappropriate *chengyu* usage might have contributed to this failure, which sheds light to our discussion as well. The first is the *piling* of several *chengyu*

examples in his discourse. For example, when Shuiyuan He was encouraged to take the college entrance exam again by his then-girlfriend, he responded using four *chengyu* in one sentence, which is easily interpreted as an indicator of glibness and weakness disguised as arrogance.

> "那我今年就再考一次，背水一战，考上我就书山有路勤为径，学海无涯苦作舟；考不上我就鸣锣收兵、金盆洗手。"
>
> "Then I will take the exam again, *fighting with my back against the river*. If I do get into college, I will live by the saying '*The mountain of books is accessible; assiduous study can find an upward path. The ocean of knowledge stretches out beyond the horizon; painstaking research can sail you somewhere*'; If I fail, I will *hit the gongs and withdraw the troops* and *clear my hands of any wrongdoing*."

The second usage is He's mismatch between the formal and literary register indicated by the *chengyu* items and the often informal contexts in which they are used. For example, while asking for a girl's name with romantic intentions normally works better when done in a casual and effortless manner, He's use of the four-character Chinese idiom 尊姓大名 *zūn xìng dà míng* ("honorable name") burdens the conversation with unnecessary formality. From the readers' perspective, such an act comes across as pretentious.

The two types of improper use of *chengyu* often overlap. Combined with Shuiyuan He's impoverished background and unreliable personality, they portray an unfortunate character who is the opposite of a stereotypical "well educated" Chinese. Such a fictional character suggests real-world implications for raising awareness of when, where, and to whom *chengyu* should be employed to achieve particular intentions. Among the contextual

elements, choosing the proper interlocutor and audience is vital in the effective enactment of *chengyu*. While overuse is commonly associated with an unintended display of arrogance and pretension, in the eyes of He's wife Chuncao, an illiterate young woman from a poverty-stricken village family, they index good qualities that are conventionally associated with a well-educated person. Thus, He's character is doomed to fail to meet his wife's expectations in the daily world.

2.3 *Chengyu* Used by Nonnative Speakers of Chinese

2.3.1 The Benefit of Using *Chengyu* by NNS of Chinese

2.3.1.1 Index Advanced Language Proficiency

The learning of idioms has been a frequent subject in second-language (L2) studies. There have been extensive discussions about the learning of idioms in second-language acquisition (SLA) and L2 instruction, the majority of which focus on English, as it is considered a highly idiomatic and figurative language (Adkins, 1968). It has been argued that L2 learners' mastery of idiom is an important indicator of their L2 proficiency levels and communicative ability (Yorio, 1989; Duquette, 1995; Schmitt, 2004; Cooper, 1999; Hussein, Khanji, & Makhzoomy, 2000). Learners' ability to comprehend and then produce idioms in everyday situations is regarded as a crucial skill for mastering an L2 (Cooper, 1999).

From the perspective of assessment, specific rubrics are provided that link the skills of using idioms and cultural references to the highest levels of language proficiency. Sensitivity to and mastery of idioms, literary allusions, and cultural references are

among the characteristics of language learners at the advanced professional level[1] or above, distinguishing them from lower level learners across the skill areas (IRL Language Skill Level Description; ACTFL Proficiency Guideline 2012). According to the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) language skill level descriptions, the ability to understand and display sophisticated control of a wide variety of idioms and pertinent cultural references is one of the features of Level 5 learners who are labeled as "equivalent to that of a highly articulate well-educated native speaker" with functional native proficiency. For Level 4+ learners, the "advanced professional proficiency plus" cohort, strong sensitivity to and understanding of these items are expected, yet the occasional weakness in idioms and cultural references is also allowed in their performance.

2.3.1.2 Display Recognition and Respect for the Target Culture

Meanwhile, previous literature on the role of *chengyu* in the development of Chinese language proficiency postulates that native Chinese speakers value the appropriate use of *chengyu* by L2 learners as evidence of an intelligent, knowledgeable personal trait, since the use of such elements of the language displays one's familiarity with and respect for the past elegance of the Chinese tradition (Bai, 2010; Jiao, Kubler, & Zhang, 2011; Yang, 2014).

Two studies touch upon this specific topic while examining the overall Chinese skills of advanced professional level Chinese language learners who work in target

[1] Level 4+ and above in ILR scale, or Distinguished and above level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guideline

cultural environments. In McAloon's (2008) study, he shadowed five native English speakers who use Chinese at advanced levels at their workplaces in China and examined the effectiveness of Chinese language usage through interviews with these subjects *and* their Chinese colleagues. His findings reveal that both the subjects and native Chinese evaluators believe that advanced Chinese learners can benefit substantially from the ability to use *chengyu* and other cultural references. One subject explicitly mentioned the desire for mastery of *chengyu* and classicisms in speech and writing because "it would improve Chinese people's perception of him" (p.391). Another study capturing professional Chinese language learners' expertise in the workplace in China reveals a similar conclusion from a native Chinese speaker's perspective. Zeng (2015) reported that a foreigner's use of *chengyu* and other cultural references in speech are considered impressive by Chinese and are interpreted as the foreigner's recognition of the richness of the Chinese cultural achievement. A comment from one of her Chinese interviewees makes the point:

> Once at my classmate's exhibition, he was talking to someone there, and I was shocked by his Chinese. So he asked me 'what's your name?', and I said 'Feng Shan,' then he asked me if my 'Shan' is the same 'shan' in shanshanlaichi (a Chinese idiom meaning 'coming late and making people wait'). Then, I was thinking, wow, he even knows Chinese idioms. Also, I have a friend whose name is 'Bu Qi'. Alan asked my friend if his 'Qi' is the same 'Qi' [as] in 'Qi-guo' (Qi State, an ancient state during the Zhou Dynasty). I was so amazed at that time. An American even knows about the Qi State!
>
> 就是有一次同学的一个展览上边，他在那儿讲话，他把我惊到了，就是他问我叫什么名字，然后我说"冯珊"，然后他就问我"是姗姗来迟的姗吗？"然后，然后我当时就想，哇噻，他那个回答得，就是他那个成语什么的都知道。然后我有一个朋友，他叫那布齐嘛，然后他就问说，说"你是那个齐国的齐吗？"，所以我当时顿时就惊呆了，就是一个美国人竟然他还知道齐国！(Zeng, 2015)

2.3.2 Challenges Faced by Non-Native Speakers of Chinese

Non-native speakers (NNS) of Chinese who aim to master the use of *chengyu* often share similar intentions with the natives: to borrow the power and authority of Chinese tradition in making rhetorical points, to demonstrate a good command of Chinese language and culture, and to identify with the Chinese culture for the purpose of a smooth communication. Yet, more than often the reality turns out to be the opposite. While the use of *chengyu* allows native Chinese to achieve various intentions including establishing authority, displaying intelligence, and identifying with one's culture, it poses additional challenges for the learners of Chinese as a foreign language.

2.3.2.1 The Linguistic and Cultural Barrier

Due to the unique linguistic characteristics of *chengyu* and its rich cultural connotations, it takes extra effort and time for learners of Chinese to tackle them and even the best students often make mistakes using idiomatic expressions.

A combination of two factors creates the linguistic barrier for learners to properly employ these canonized expressions. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the majority of *chengyu* originated in the ancient Chinese classics and literary works, and follow the grammatical rules of classical Chinese. The lack of knowledge about and training in classical Chinese especially challenges CFL learners in the processes of both recognition and comprehension of *chengy*u. Especially for CFL learners at lower levels, these expressions can only be learned as a chunk, or lexical item, as they are essentially unanalyzable at this stage. The verbatim tradition in Chinese creates further challenges for

learners in terms of producing these canonized expressions in discourse because the exactness of the wording in the application of quotations and *chengyu* is especially crucial.

As rhetorical devices that originate from thousands of years of Chinese traditions, *chengyu* are culturally and socially loaded. Cultural barriers that hinder a learner's mastery of idioms manifests in the learner's lack of knowledge about the cultural connotations and behavioral culture associated with an expression. These barriers are often results of traditional instruction in which these quotations and *chengyu* are taught through direct translation into the base language independent of contexts. As a result of projecting the use of these "Chinese expressions" on to their base culture rather than the target culture, learners lacking sufficient cultural knowledge and experience are likely to suffer unintended consequences when communicating in Chinese in a Chinese-dominant cultural environment.

2.3.2.2 Native Speaker Authority

Doerr (2009) proposes the notion of "native speaker effects" to describe the common observations that ideologies regarding the NS (native speaker)/NNS (non-native speaker) dichotomy have substantial influence on our perception and practices. Particularly to the point, within the NS /NNS paradigm, emphasis on membership in a culture contributes to what is known as the "native speaker authority"—the commonly-held assumption by native speakers of a language that they are the rightful "owners" of the language. This is manifested in two specific aspects: 1) native speakers are justified in using these idioms and special phrases of their native language in normal and creative

manners, and 2) native speakers are justified in making judgment about the use of these canonized phrases by non-native speakers of the language.

Evidence of the native speaker authority can be founded in native speaker's power to transgress the shared system and bend the rules of idiom in using expressions like *chengyu*. As discussed in section 2.1.2.1, although not a commonly accepted trend in the application of *chengyu*, it is still considered borderline acceptable to substitute one or more words in a *chengyu* with homophone(s) to achieve special rhetorical effect—in commercials or titles of news articles, for example. The Chinese author and cultural icon Wang Shuo, who is well-known for his unique "unconventional" style of writing, also often intentionally breaks the rules of conventional *chengyu* usage for a humorous effect. For instance, in *Stories from the Editorial Board,* he plays with the semantics of *chengyu* by having the self-deprecating protagonist employing the derogatory *dào mào àn rán* 道貌岸然 ("sanctimonious," usually describes hypocrites who pose as gentlemen but behave immorally) to himself: "我不是一直**道貌岸然**地坐在这儿吗！(I have been sitting here sanctimoniously!)." In Wang Shuo's work of literary criticism *The Ignorant Are Fearless*, he provides a case of overuse: piling of *chengyu* items of similar meaning into one sentence:

> 口语，特别是北京话，本来就有**信口开河东拉西扯言不及义**的特点。(Oral language, especially the Beijing dialect, originally is characteristic of a style that goes carelessly, rapidly, voluminously like the outflow of river water when the sluice gates are opened, dragging in all sorts of irrelevant matters, and never anything of substance.")

The freedom of creative *chengyu* usage granted to Wang Shuo, however, is not equally bestowed on every Chinese speaker and is especially off limits to the non-natives. Non-native language learners, often suffer pragmatic failure in the experiment of creative wordplay with idioms which are often perceived by the native speech community as a mistaken or inaccurate use of the language. Especially in a culture like Chinese, which places great emphasis on a verbatim tradition in the use of *chengyu* and cultural references, non-native speakers, even those who have reached the advanced levels, are still considered incapable of playing with the language. Attempts to do so will be scrutinized with suspicion or pity and, consequently, result in the failure to convey the intended messages.

Native speaker authority is sometime manifested in the native speaker's inconsistent criteria against which foreign learners are judged. Learners of CFL who aim at mastering the use of *chengyu* the same way native speakers do often find themselves frustrated by their experience as they are not evaluated by the same criteria as the natives. Facing lower level learners, Chinese seem to be impressed in an exaggerated way if a foreigner is able to throw a *chengyu* into their discourse, even with broken grammar and a slightly far-fetched context. Mark Zuckerberg's public speech in Chinese in 2015 proves to be a telling example. In his 20-minute long speech in front of a Chinese audience, the CEO of Facebook Mark Zuckerberg used one Chinese proverb 只要功夫深，铁杵磨成针 (literarily '*if you work at it hard enough, you can grind an iron bar into a needle'*) which prompted a particularly enthusiastic round of applaud from the Chinese audience. This use of Chinese cultural reference also became the highlight of Zuckerberg's speech and was particularly emphasized in the media coverage of the event.

Yet, when CFL learners reach the level that allows them to truly employ these culture references in the same way natives use them, they often do not get the expected reactions from the natives. This seemingly biased perception and evaluation against non-native speaker's use of the language might be explained by the different expectations of the foreigners from a native perspective. If in certain circumstances native speakers do not expect or appreciate, the use of canonized expressions by foreign learners in the same way natives do, then we should question the practice of using native-speaker performance as the ultimate goal for learning these expressions. Next is a thorough examination of which types of performances by foreigners in which contexts are indeed appreciated by natives.

2.4 *Chengyu* in Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language

2.4.1 A Larger Context: The Challenge of Identifying A "Truly Advanced CFL Capacity"

The past few decades have witnessed an unprecedented increase in terms of both quantity and intensity in intercultural communication among individuals and organizations of different cultural background, practices, beliefs, and value systems. Khanna (2016) presents a description of a new paradigm of global organization that transcends the political borders via connectivity. Boundaries between countries and cultures are becoming increasingly blurred as the ever-growing global economy strengthens the interdependent side of the power restriction among entities in the international marketplace. China, as the fastest emerging political and economic entity on the planet, continues to be recognized by

the rest of the world through corporate relationships forged across a range of individual and societal interactions on an ever-increasing scale.

Take the bilateral Sino-US commercial relationship as an example. According to U.S. trade data, the total trade between the two countries grew from $5 billion in 1980 to $592 billion in 2014. China is currently the U.S.'s second-largest trading partner, third-largest export market, and its largest source of imports (Morrison, 2015).

The effect of this macro-level power shift on the field of Chinese language pedagogy is two-fold: First, the need for sustaining and expanding professional relationships between counterparts in China and the United States requires truly advanced Chinese language capacities that go beyond the "brief instrumental encounters characteristic of tourist or business travel where communicative goals are relatively transparent" (Gumperz, in Young 1994, p.xiv). American people and organizations must engage in extended and sustainable professional relationships in Chinese culture, where interpretations of intentions and actions are negotiated, delicate power relations settled, and conflicting interests reconciled. Second, in order to achieve this capacity for sustained communication, language programs that can routinely produce learners with the highest level of Chinese language capacity are the future of the study of Chinese as a foreign language.

The challenge is to deconstruct and redefine the concept of "truly advanced level Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) capacity" within the 21st century and the current global economic context, as many previous studies have sought to accomplish (Leaver, 2002; Brown and Bown, 2015; McAloon, 2008; Zeng, 2015). Leaver (2002) and Brown

and Bown (2015) focus on building language programs in formal education systems that extend beyond being "content to settle for Advanced (on the ACTFL scale) as a reasonable goal for students in their program" (Leaver, 2002). McAloon (2008) and Zeng (2015) look beyond the limit of formal institutional programs into professional settings where foreign language learners who use Chinese at the highest level are evaluated by native speakers in the target culture.

The need for reliable pedagogical design by which language programs can be built requires further research that is focused on teaching to and learning at these levels. The gradually increasing level of proficiency with which language learners enter language programs over the past decade makes it possible for learners to expect to reach the highest levels of language proficiency by the time they celebrate graduation from college. Given this reasonable expectation of aiming for higher pedagogical goals contrasted with the relative insufficiency of programming experienced at these levels (Leaver, 2002), the call for research attention and pedagogical design at the highest level becomes especially obvious.

2.4.2 Challenges Faced in *Chengyu* Instructions

2.4.2.1 Lack of Research-based Pedagogical Guidance

Some instructors ignore the necessity of teaching idiomatic expressions or consider it the "icing on the cake," out of the belief that the use of these expressions is not fundamental to communication (Xing, 2006). For other language instructors who see the importance of incorporating chengyu in their classroom, they still constantly have doubts about whether it is right to teach them, and what exactly is the right way to teach them,

given the time pressures of most language courses. At which level is it appropriate to start introducing chengyu? How should they be presented in class? How should they be incorporated in the pedagogical material? Is translation the most effective way to teach idiomatic expressions? How many chengyu should be taught in a semester? Which ones should be introduced first? These are just a few of the many issues teaching chengyu present the instructor.

Pedagogical materials currently available also fail to offer pedagogical recommendations for the teaching of *chengyu*. Zhang (2012) reported on a review of both general CFL/CSL pedagogical materials and materials dedicated to the teaching of chengyu. This review reveals a lack of criteria for chengyu selection, and insufficient scaffolding to facilitate learning and classroom instruction. It also reveals that employing chengyu is rendered a relatively peripheral learning goal compared to other stated pedagogical objectives among general CFL materials.

2.4.2.2 Learners' Frustrating Learning Experiences and the Need for Effective Learning Strategies

When Xing (2006) suggests that instructors consider Chinese idiomatic expressions as secondary in pedagogical grammar because it is "not fundamental in communication" (p. 50)—one does not have to use the idiomatic expression when he/she can simply use the nonfigurative language to express the same idea, she is suggesting the existence of a fixed meaning capable of being expressed by two different sets of linguistic forms in communication. This view of words as paired with a fixed meaning is also reflected by her

categorization of idiomatic expressions as part of a pedagogical grammar without discussing the rhetorical intent achieved through the employment of these expressions in context. Her perspective fails to recognize the functionality of using idiomatic expressions in communicating and negotiating one's intentions. This limited view of *chengyu* is not uncommon among Chinese instructors.

Xing's argument is based on the observation that students rarely use idiomatic expressions like *chengyu* no matter how many they have learned from class or their textbooks. Is the student's avoidance of using idiomatic expression really the result of the non-functional role of using these expressions in communication? Or is it simply reflective of the classroom instruction and learning methodology employed, which could have been more effective and motivating, and of the failure to recognize the effect of conventional language in communication? Her argument appears to have used the challenges faced by language learners as a rationale for leaving *chengyu* out of the pedagogical scheme in language programs. Learners' avoidance behaviors and extra efforts needed to employ *chengyu* are not valid reasons to continue to avoid the issue if *chengyu* plays a significant role in achieving legitimate communication goals. If anything it is a crucial reminder of the need for research-based pedagogical guidance to the functionality of employing *chengyu* and the most effective ways to include *chengyu* in instruction. Providing what is missing in the current classroom instruction and pedagogical materials that could truly help learners of Chinese to overcome the difficulties of learning Chinese is the purpose of this study.

The avoidance of using idiomatic expressions is regularly observed among language learners. Cooper (1999) points it out: "Anyone who has tried to learn to speak an L2 sooner or later realizes that idioms are a stumbling block" (p. 258). Experience working with foreign/second language learners indicates that many learners' mastery of idiomatic expressions lags behind that of grammatical patterns and vocabulary, and even the most advanced learners who have studied the language for a long time may frequently fail to use idioms appropriately (McAloon, 2008; Xing, 2006). Due to the unique linguistic characteristics of *chengyu* and its rich cultural values, it takes extra effort and time for learners of Chinese to tackle these idioms and even the best students often make mistakes using idiomatic expressions. These experiences of failure in the learning process accumulate frustration, demotivate the learners, and eventually drive them to the strategic avoidance of these expressions.

Experience tells us that the few learners who manage to reach a truly high-level of Chinese ability that allows them to use *chengyu* in a way that is genuinely appreciated by native speakers, do so mostly on their own, with relatively little programmatic assistance. They usually either are self-motivated and self-disciplined in achieving this goal or experience protracted exposure to an environment that values and encourages the use of such language. The creation of a learning environment and communication mindset involving *chengyu* for learners in or outside of the classroom is key. The reaction to learners' frustrating experiences concerning *chengyu* should not deter us from designing instructional activities for the use of such conventional language. If anything, it gives us more reason to focus attention and pool resources for more in-depth investigations.

Between learners' need to master the use of idiomatic expressions to establish meaningful professional relationships within the target culture, and their fear of trying such use because of negative learning experiences, emerges the task for pedagogues to provide more motivating and effective teaching and learning guidance. One of the purposes of the current study is to demonstrate that the accurate employment of these idiomatic expressions benefits the learner, is attainable, and, at least in the beginning of the journey, is programmable in a formal instructional setting.

2.4.3 The Need for Study: An Unsupported Assumption

Chapter two has examined *chengyu* and its ramifications from the perspectives of native Chinese speakers, non-native Chinese speakers, and CFL educators. In sections 2.1 and 2.2, *chengyu*'s unique features and cultural connotations are discussed, explaining its beneficial role in the establishment of intentions along the formality spectrum of Chinese discourse. Section 2.3 lays out how the use of *chengyu* can be advantageous to foreign learners of Chinese while also explaining how constraints apply. The native paradigm that promotes the significance of teaching and learning *chengyu*, especially at the advanced level, however, has not been sufficiently supported by empirical studies. Although it seems to be unanimously believed that proper *chengyu* usage improves native Chinese speakers' evaluation of the CFL learner, very little empirical evidence is available through in-depth investigation in support of, or against, this claim. Research interest is particularly lacking in the actual use of these four-character Chinese idioms by non-native speakers, as well as how native speakers of Chinese respond to the *chengyu* used by foreign language learners.

This deficiency consequentially challenges learners and educators in the field of CFL, as described in section 2.4.

In light of this need for empirical studies and pedagogical discussions about the teaching and learning of *chengyu* and the challenges faced by teachers, curriculum designers, and language learners, this study will contribute to the discussion about the role of *chengyu* in helping L2 learners establish meaningful relationships and gain credibility in professional Chinese environments, and consequently expand in content and nuance the question about whether *chengyu* skills are desirable in the advanced level language learners' tool kits. It will further provide pedagogical suggestions regarding the teaching of Chinese idiomatic expressions for language instructors, curriculum designers, and material developers in the field of Chinese language pedagogy.

This dissertation also contributes to the current efforts to characterize truly advanced levels of CFL by examining one component of advanced Chinese language capacities, namely, the skill of employing *chengyu*. Utilizing *chengyu* skills as a point of departure, this study aims to discuss the role of learning these and other cultural conventions in Chinese, including literary allusions, quotations, and what Young refers to as "cultural analogy" (1994) in guiding learners to achieve the most effective language capacities.

2.5 Research Questions

This research study aims to understand how native speakers of Chinese perceive and evaluate *chengyu* usage by both native and particularly non-native speakers of Chinese in

a range of social settings and speech genres. Specifically, this study intends to first identify and describe the effects of using *chengyu* in both formal contexts such as public speeches and professional settings, and casual contexts such as conversations between close friends or colleagues, as perceived by the native Chinese subjects. The second goal of the study is to explore the strategies native Chinese speakers adopt in response to these non-native performances of *chengyu.* Specifically, how the availability of various contextual and social information accompanying the use of *chengyu*, including the nativeness of the speaker, the particular dialogical genre, and situational factors such as the formality of the situation, influence participants' perception and evaluation of the speaker's identity. Among these factors, the nativeness of the speaker is a primary focus of the current investigation, given the increasing need in pedagogical research for an accurate understanding of the native speaker expectations of non-native speakers' linguistic and cultural performances using Chinese. Both native and non-native Chinese speakers' *chengyu* usage are evaluated by the Chinese subjects in this study to examine whether the criteria adopted to make a judgment are consistent between the two groups of speakers. Based on these general inquiries, this chapter will address the following research questions.

First, what array of effects do *chengyu* employed by NS and NNS of Chinese serve in various social settings as perceived by native Chinese subjects? This line of investigation examines the indexicality of both appropriate and inappropriate uses of these idiomatic expressions as respectively defined in accordance with the sociocultural context. For examples, employment of *chengyu* in a creative fashion, such as substituting original components of the expression with new words, are in general deemed inappropriate in

formal spoken discourse, but are regarded as acceptable to some Chinese speakers in casual situations to achieve certain rhetorical effects. The effects of special *chengyu* usage such as inventive and humorous use of *chengyu* by NS and NNS of Chinese are also examined.

Second, do these perceptions of *chengyu* usage influence how native Chinese subjects evaluate the speakers' social identities and personal characteristics? If so, how are the evaluations influenced based on the availability of other social and contextual information?

Third, do Chinese subjects have different expectations regarding *chengyu* usage by NS and NNS of Chinese? If so, how do Chinese subjects arrive at a decision about which of the indexed meanings are assigned to a given use of *chengyu* in a specific context by NS and NNS of Chinese respectively? Particularly, I am interested in looking at how the prototypical "foreigner" image affects the way native Chinese evaluates the use of *chengyu* by NNS of Chinese.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

This section first provides a brief overview of the major language attitudes studies that informed the research design and methodology employed to explore Chinese subjects' perception of the use of *chengyu* by NS and NNS of Chinese. I then offer justification for the two methods of inquiry adopted in this study: the Matched Guise Technique and an interpretivist approach to cognitive interview. I review briefly their historical development and adaptation. In sections 3.2 and 3.3, I describe the subjects as well as the procedure adopted for collecting and analyzing the data, including the development and presentation of the stimuli, the collection of the survey and interview data, and the analysis of data.

3.1.1 Language Attitudes Studies

Over the past few decades, a substantial amount of research on listener attitudes to language variations has accumulated (for overviews, see Campbell-Kibler, 2005; Giles & Billings, 2004). The study of language attitudes has provided us with a wealth of knowledge concerning how speakers' language choice affects how others perceive the speakers, consequentially impacting crucial social decision-making processes in various applied contexts. In occupational settings, for example, research has shown that speech characteristics are associated with employment decisions (Hui & Yam, 1987; Hopper &

Williams, 1973; Giles, Wilson & Conway, 1981), disadvantaging candidates who are non-standard language speakers in the given contexts. Within the educational setting, studies (Seligman, Tucker & Lambert, 1972; Choy & Dodd, 1976) investigating the relationship between teachers' evaluation of student performances and the students' language use reveal that teachers' perception of children's "poor" speech style leads to negative inferences and evaluations about them. This study is motivated by the desire to understand how non-native learners' use of a unique type of conventional expression influences native Chinese speakers' perception of them. Given that the aims of non-native Chinese learners are to succeed in communicating intentions and building meaningful relationships in the target culture, such perceptions have crucial consequences in cross-cultural communication contexts.

A more fundamental inquiry that emerged from these language attitude studies is to theorize the general process model of speaker assessment/evaluations, which explores the mechanism underlying the formation of language attitudes. These endeavors are motivated by two types of research interests. First are sociolinguistic inquiries that primarily focus on the relationship between language variations and social constructs and processes. Thomas's (2002) review of sociolinguistic perception study identifies five primary issues these studies investigate:

> (1) the ability of listeners to identify the regional dialect, ethnicity, or socioeconomic level of speakers;
>
> (2) how stereotypes can influence the perception of sounds;
>
> (3) the presence of vowel mergers or splits in perception;
>
> (4) how dialectal differences affect the categorization of phones; and

> (5) stereotypical attitudes, which are investigated by having subjects assess the personality of a speaker, the speaker's suitability for particular jobs, or other personal traits of the speaker. (2002, p. 117)

The second thread of research, carried out by social psychologists, centers on gaining a detailed understanding of the cognitive processes in which listeners engage in forming evaluative opinions and enacting other social behaviors. An example of this line of study is the development of speaker evaluation profiles, which in general is grounded in the argument that listeners store cognitive schemata and implement these mental elements to judge people (Kelley, 1972).

Although these two threads of research come from separate fields of inquiry, efforts have been made to bring them into closer alignment (Campbell-Kibler, 2005). Edwards (1999) remarked that both fields "would benefit, therefore, from efforts to bridge the work of psychology and linguistics in this regard; the effect would be to refine and particularize our knowledge of how specific aspects of speech elicit specific types of evaluative reactions" (p. 105). This trend of bringing together research efforts from both fields also informed and guided the particular methodological tools that I have adopted in the current study. This study investigates the stereotypical attitudes native Chinese listeners have towards non-native Chinese speakers in regard to *chengyu* variants usage by adopting the Matched Guise Technique (MGT). The Cognitive Interview Methods was also employed to look into the process and rationale underlying the stereotypical opinions collected in MGT. In the following sections, I briefly review the two research methods and their methodological evolvements that are relevant to the current study.

3.1.2 The Matched Guise Technique

The study of language attitudes encapsulates an array of research methods (for an overview, see Campbell-Kibler, 2005), among which three basic types can be identified. The first, most direct one is overt questioning. This approach collects subjects' opinions and beliefs regarding a particular language or individual linguistic variables through surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and language diaries. Another approach is content/media analysis, which examines cultural discourses manifested through literature, media, and other public sources to study linguistic beliefs and behaviors. Studies adopting these two approaches offer insights into language beliefs and ideologies articulated by the subjects, either at the individual level or the macro level. However, they cannot capture how linguistic variables affect the moment-by-moment individual interactions.

The Matched Guise Technique developed by Lambert and his colleagues (1960) provides an innovative alternative method to covertly examining language attitudes by having subjects listen to a given linguistic performance and collecting listener responses. Although the technique has been refined and adapted to fulfil a range of research agenda and situations, basically it involves 1) asking a speaker to perform two or more stimuli in different languages or varieties, and 2) having subjects to listen to the recorded stimuli and evaluate the speakers on a set of qualities, such as how friendly, intelligent, or trustworthy they sound, depending on the particular focus of the study. Having the same speaker perform the recordings guarantees that the paralinguistic properties of the speech, such as pitch, speech rate, and other voice features are consistent to the maximum degree. Therefore, it is possible to assume, at least tentatively, that if the subjects give different

evaluations, it is due to their ideologies pertaining to the specific language or linguistic variables being used. In this study, however, both native and non-native speakers of Chinese were recruited to perform sets of recordings. While for each set of recordings having the same speaker perform the *chengyu* variants guarantees consistency in paralinguistic features, when drawing comparisons between the native and non-native sets of stimuli, it is neither possible nor necessary to analyze how other properties of the speech individually affects listeners' perception. Features of pronunciation such as intonations, speech rates and smoothness are essential parts of the (non-) native aspect of the speakers' identity, which in its entirety is the focus of the current study.

3.1.3 The Cognitive Interview Method

Cognitive interview methodology is a qualitative approach that examines the cognitive processes used by respondents as they form answers to survey questions. The underlying assumption is that the respondents' cognitive responses drive the survey responses, and an understanding of cognition is central to understanding the question responses and to justify the validity of the questions (Schwarz, 2007; Willis, 2005; Miller, 2014). A commonly cited question-response model contains four steps: 1) comprehending the question; 2) recalling or retrieving relevant information; 3) processing the information to formulate an answer, and 4) mapping that answer onto the provided response categories (Miller, 2014; also see Willis, 2005 for a detailed discussion). While the method has been carried out in various ways (Forsythe and Lessler, 1991), in general, and as it has been adopted in this dissertation, it consists of respondents first answering a survey question and then describing how and why they answered the question the way they did.

Traditionally, the method of cognitive interviewing has been widely used to detect question-response problems with a small sample population before fielding the survey. In this study, however, the goal is not so much to reduce problematic questions as it is to gather information about how the respondents interpret the questions and formulate their answers in regard to their own lives, experiences, and perceptions.

The cognitive interviewing methods employed in this study are grounded in the interpretivist framework, which aims not only to identify but also to understand the different realities constructed by the social actors. The interpretivist approach emphasizes that individuals' understanding of the social world, in this case both the stimuli and the survey questions, is "filtered through a complex set of interpretations that are variously informed by social experiences and cultural contexts" (Chepp and Gray, 2014, p.8). For instance, in the case of a survey question that asks subjects to rate to what extent they think a speaker, who they just heard using *chengyu* correctly in the stimuli, is cultured and educated, there are numerous potential interpretations of the question, specifically the meaning of "cultured" and "educated" for the respondents. This set of interpretations may be shaped by the social factors, such as age, education level, cultural background, and subjects' prior experience (e.g., experience working with or supervising non-native Chinese speakers). The utility of incorporating interpretivist modes of analysis into this study centers on its potential for representing the complexity of cognitive processes, shaped by broader sociocultural processes and relations. Specifically, two concepts are of importance in understanding an interpretivist approach to cognitive interviewing, as noted by Chepp and Gray (2014): *narrative*, and *thick description*.

Narrative has been used as a methodological tool especially in qualitative research to aid analysis (Richardson, 1990; Franzosi, 1998). Since narrative is one of the cognitive modes by which individuals construct and order meaning (Bruner, 1986), during the cognitive interview, researchers need to document and analyze respondents' narratives as they reveal crucial insights into the ways the respondents makes meaning of the survey questions (Miller, 2014). Besides collecting respondents' narratives, it is also helpful to think of narrative as a "cultural structure" that enables respondents to make sense of their experiences (Alexander & Smith, 2003). Culture is important especially because this study explores issues involving cross-cultural perception and interpretation. Narrative, in this sense, is useful in understanding respondents' cognitive processes since it provides the broad context to interpret meanings.

Thick description, which aims to collect rich, thickly detailed accounts of some aspects of social life, is the other concept that is central to the interpretivist theories and method (Geertz, 1973). It is imperative because, as Geertz (1973) argues, meanings are multilayered, and simply describing the surface of an interaction cannot fully extract the "true" meaning of the situation. At the methodological level, the interviewer should thickly describe a respondent's answers to the questions, as well as the probing process. Through a thickly described account, the cognitive interviewer can capture a comprehensive account of the underlying meaning of what represents the foundation of the question-response process.

3.2 Subjects

Subjects recruited in this study are native Chinese speakers who are employees in several Chinese organizations in Shanghai and Beijing, including local branches of international corporations, foreign-Chinese joint ventures, state-owned businesses, elite Chinese universities, and language training institutes. Subject recruitment was conducted using the "friend of a friend" method (Milroy, 1987), a social network method through which the investigator identified and recruited the subjects using intermediary networks rather than personal ones.[1] Before traveling to the two cities, the investigator made contacts with local friends or sometimes "friends of a friend" who personally know the candidates and introduced the investigator to these subjects. Twenty subjects were recruited in total, including ten from each city. Out of the twenty subjects, six are males and fourteen are females. In terms of age, three subjects are in their early 40s and the rest are between 25 and 40.

Each subject either supervises or works as the colleague of non-native Chinese speakers in a Chinese working or educational environment. Two reasons underlie the selection of this specific group of subjects. One reason is that Chinese supervisors and colleagues are in direct contact with non-native Chinese employees on a daily basis. Non-native learners of Chinese who intend to succeed in communicating in the target culture need to convey such intentions in ways that can be recognized by their Chinese counterparts. With sufficient exposure to and established networks with non-native Chinese speakers at the workplace in Chinese environments, this subject pool represents a

[1] Recruitment materials attached in Appendix A and B.

group of Chinese professionals who serve as the most valid evaluators of the non-native Chinese learners' linguistic, professional, and interpersonal performances in Chinese working environments. The second reason is that the subjects' occupations demand a college degree at the minimum and many of the subjects hold an M.A. or Ph.D. degree in their respective fields. The higher educational background, together with other qualifying experiences, justifies them as capable of making meaningful judgment about native Chinese speakers' *chengyu* usage in a variety of contexts from the extremely formal to the most casual ones. Table 7 offers a brief description of the background of each subject to present a general context for their perceptions and evaluative reactions towards *chengyu* usage.

Table 7 Subject Background

	Pseudonym	City	Employer	Occupation	Occupational relationship with NNS	Overseas experience
1	Shen	SH	US-based private company	Senior Manager	Supervising English-speaking employees, mainly using English	8 yrs studying and working in Australia
2	Gu	SH	US-based private company	Senior Manager	Supervising English-speaking employees mainly using English	N/A
3	Jia	SH	Foreign-Chinese joint company	General office clerk	Working with non-native Chinese speaking co-workers (including English, Spanish and French speakers), mainly using English at work and some Chinese in casual situations if the non-native speaker's Chinese ability is sufficient.	N/A
4	Su	SH	Foreign-Chinese joint company	HR	Working with non-native co-workers (including English, Spanish and French speakers), mainly using English at work and some Chinese in casual settings	N/A
5	Cui	SH	Foreign-Chinese joint company	General office clerk	Working with non-native co-workers (including English, Spanish and French speakers) mainly using English at work and some Chinese in casual settings	N/A
6	Yi	SH	Foreign-Chinese joint company	Reception	Working with foreign co-workers (including English, Spanish and French speakers), mainly using Chinese with non-native speakers with advanced Chinese skills in work-related contexts and with non-native speakers who want to practice their Chinese skills. In casual contexts.	N/A
7	Zhang	SH	Foreign-Chinese joint company	Translator	Working with foreign co-workers (including English, Spanish and French speakers) mainly using English at work and occasionally using Chinese with foreigners in casual contexts	N/A
8	An	SH	US-based global restaurant chain	Senior Manager	Supervising Turkish employees and past experience working with European and Malaysian	N/A

Continued

					colleagues, using mainly Chinese in work-related contexts.	
9	Wang	SH	US-based global restaurant chain	Chief Legal Director	Supervising non-native speaking employees using mainly Chinese in work-related contexts and using both English and Chinese in casual settings, working with a Turkish Legal director using mainly English.	N/A
10	Min	SH	Japanese company	General office clerk	Working with non-native speaking colleagues (including English, Spanish, and French speakers), mainly using English at work; interacting with Japanese supervisor mainly using simple Chinese.	N/A
11	Yao	SH	Beijing-based Private Educational Institute	Chief of the none-English Language Instruction Department	Supervising none-English speaking foreign employees mainly using Chinese and occasionally using German.	Received Ph.D. training in German
12	Rui	BJ	Language Educational Institute	Head of Curriculum Department	Supervising non-native speaking employees who are hired as as English teachers in the company using mainly English.	9 yrs undergraduate and M.A. training and working in UK
13	Wu	BJ	Language Educational Institute	Senior teacher trainer	Both supervising and working with non-native speaking employees who are hired as English teachers, using mainly English.	1.5 yrs M.A. training in the US
14	Yun	BJ	British Fashion brand company	Former general office clerk; Owner of a small start-up enterprise	Past experience working with British co-workers mainly using English.	1.5 yrs M.A.in UK; 3.5 yrs. studying for an MBA and working in US
15	Chu	BJ	US-based English Learning Center	Instructor, Teacher trainer	Supervising two English-speaking foreign employees, mainly using English on work-related issues, but also communicating in Chinese with the one non-native speaker who displays motivation to practice Chinese	3 yrs studying for M.A. and working in UK

16	Fu	BJ	None-profit German Cultural Institute	Chief of the Department of Media and Public Affairs	Supervising non-native speaking employees using both German and Chinese in work-related contexts, using Chinese in casual situations if the foreigners' Chinese skills suffice	2 yrs working in Germany
17	Shi	BJ	Foreign-invested Educational Institute	Head of the Teaching Department; Senior trainer	Supervising non-native speaking employees mainly using English and some Chinese; reports to an English-speaking supervisor using English only.	10 yrs studying in Japan and 8 yrs getting Ph.D. degree in US
18	Zeng	BJ	Top-tier University	Professor of Chinese	20 years of experience teaching advanced level CFL learners using mainly Chinese and very occasionally English; Interacting with American scholars in seminars and workshops using mainly English.	4 yrs teaching and working in the Confucius Institute in Japan, Korea and other Asian countries
19	Qu	BJ	Private-owned consulting firm	General office clerk	Working with non-native speaking supervisors and customers using mainly English.	N/A
20	Hui	BJ	Mandarin Chinese language school	Senior CFL instructor	Teaching CFL learners and coordinating cultural events mainly using Chinese, and occasionally English.	N/A
21	Zhao	BJ	State-owned National Bank	Corporate Risk Manager	Working with non-native speaking colleagues and customers mainly using English.	Short-term (1month)overseas program in English-speaking countries

3.3 Investigator

Three aspects of identity justify the central role played by the investigator in the current study. First, being a native speaker of Chinese who grew up in mainland China and attended college in Shanghai allows the investigator to conduct the experiment using the native language of the subject; it also guarantees a native understanding about the culture-

specific references and implications the subjects made during the interview, which are shared and immediately recognizable among native speakers of Chinese. The investigator's local ties in Shanghai and Beijing is another key contributor to adopting the "friend of a friend" approach to subject recruitment. Besides putting the investigator into direct contact with the subjects, the "friends of a friend" who are insiders in the research sites also vouched for the investigator so that "an entry into the relationship of the [local] network" (Tagliamonte, 2006, p.22) was created. The investigator entered each of the research sites (e.g., a Chinese organization) introducing herself initially to the subjects not in her formal capacity as a researcher but as a "friend of a friend." In this way, the investigator acquired some of the rights and obligations of an "insider" and was warmly welcomed and received by the subjects. Lastly, although the investigator's capacity as a Ph.D. student from a research-oriented university in the U.S. was not elaborately emphasized during self-introduction, this information was passed on by the intermediary in the earlier stage of recruitment. The established authority and formality consequentially kept subjects' seriousness and attention at a high level during the experiment.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Creation of Stimuli

One native Chinese speaker (male) and two non-native Chinese speakers (male and female) were recruited to produce audio stimuli that, during the experiment stage, were played to elicit listener responses. Both of the two non-native speakers, Bob and Rose, have been learning Chinese for over 10 years and have reached Advanced High in the OPI test.

Born and raised in mainland China, the recruited native Chinese speaker Liao is a CFL instructor who speaks standard Mandarin without any detectable regional accent. For stimuli that are conversational exchanges, the investigator, a native Chinese speaker who also speaks standard Mandarin without a noticeable accent, recorded the role of the Chinese interlocutor.

Each speaker was asked to enact the Chinese scripts involving *chengyu* usage in six sets of social contexts from the most formal (public speech), to less formal (spontaneous conversations in professional settings), to the most casual (spontaneous conversations in casual settings). One important rationale for categorizing the stimuli in this formal/casual dimension, as illustrated in chapter two, is *chengyu*'s significant association with written genres. In Chinese traditions, public speech normally follows a prepared written script, which renders the use of *chengyu* in this setting the closest to those in written texts. Conversation in a professional setting, such as a Q&A during a press conference, allows for more colloquial expressions. Yet the working environment still requires a certain level of formality in terms of discourse. At the casual end of the continuum is daily conversation among friends, which represents a type of casual, colloquial speech.

For each set of audio stimuli of the same message, three variations were created, as shown in Table 8. One stimulus contains the "**ordinary use" o**f *chengyu* (ordinary defined in terms of both accuracy and the quantity of *chengyu* tokens) in a specific context. In the other two stimuli, the use of *chengyu* were replaced, respectively, with "**no use"** (non-literary language expressing the same meaning in the same context" and "**extra-ordinary use**" of *chengyu* (in terms of semantic accuracy, grammatical accuracy, and the number of

chengyu tokens). All the "ordinary" variations were adapted from authentic Chinese discourse, based on which the "extra-ordinary use" and "no use" variations were created by the researcher. Stimuli have been tested in a pilot study for authenticity based on native speakers' judgment of the appropriateness of the *chengyu* usage under given contexts.

Table 8 Example of *Chengyu* Usage Variations in a Casual Context

Casual Context **Context:** Two close colleagues having a casual conversation about Chinese parenting style. 同事小张：现在的家长周末都要孩子上补习班，你说是不是太过分了？ Colleague Xiao Zhang: Parents nowadays send their kids to cram schools even on weekends, don't you think it is too much? Upon hearing Xiao Zhang's comment, Xiao Li responds:	
Ordinary Use	同事小李：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都望子成龙，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。 Colleague Xiao Li: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the child to become a dragon. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.
Extra-ordinary Use	同事小李：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都望子成硕士，望子成博士，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。 Colleague Xiao Li: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the children to get a master's degree, and hope for them to get a Ph.D. degree. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.
No Use	同事小李：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都希望孩子能有出息，成为出色的人才，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。 Colleague Xiao Li: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the children to become successful and talented. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.

Efforts have been made to include five types of "extra-ordinary" usage, which are reflective of common mistakes made by non-native Chinese learners in using *chengyu*. These include (a) improper use of new Internet idioms in formal discourse; (b) overuse, the compiling of more than two *chengyu* items in one sentence or a short speech; (c) semantic misuse, which refers to the violation of the conventionalized indexical relationship of a *chengyu* item's semantic properties and a given semantic context; (d) grammatical misuse; and (d) inventive use, the appropriation of the original expression by substituting components with new words.

3.4.2 Labeling of Stimuli

The recorded stimuli were saved as individual audio files in mp3 format on the investigators' personal laptop. The audio files are named consistently in a manner that references (i) the name of the speaker, (ii) one of the six social contexts, and (iii) the *chengyu* usage variations within each context. Table 9 illustrates the naming convention adopted in cataloguing the audio stimuli in this study. For example, stimulus "L3a" refers to ordinary use of *chengyu* in the government official's responses during a press conference recorded by the native Chinese speaker Liao. Since this labeling system is for the convenience of storage and retrieval of the data, during the experiment subjects were not introduced to the naming convention.

Table 9 Naming Convention of the Audio Stimuli

i. Name of the speaker	
L	Liao
B	Bob
R	Rose
ii. Social contexts	
1	Formal public speech (opening remark for the 100th funding anniversary of university)
2	Formal conversation (journalist inquiry at a press conference)
3	Formal conversation (government official response at a press conference)
4	Formal conversation (recommendation of new film release in radio talk show)
5	Casual conversation (educational issues among friends)
6	Casual conversation (small talk about working overtime among close colleagues)
iii. *Chengyu* usage variations	
a	Ordinary Use
b	No Use
c	Extra-ordinary Use

3.4.3 Collecting Listener Reactions

Subjects' responses were collected during one-on-one interview sessions, first in the format of a semi-controlled interview, followed by a survey. During both procedures, cognitive interviewing grounded in the interpretivist framework was utilized to explore how and why the respondents reached those conclusions. Therefore, in the following

sections the use of cognitive interview strategies is not described separately, but rather illustrated following the same order of its actual application.

3.4.3.1 Semi-controlled interviews

Semi-controlled interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data on listener reactions to the speakers and listener beliefs about the use of *chengyu* in the given stimuli. The goals for the interviews are: (a) to determine the general reactions to the speakers, (b) to collect terms used spontaneously by subjects to describe the speakers, and (c) to determine the intuition and ideologies regarding the use of *chengyu* and its effect on the evaluation of the speakers' social identity and personal characteristics.

At the beginning of the interview session, in order to emphasize the ethnic and linguistic background of the speakers, the subjects were shown a picture of the individual whose voice they were going to hear, with a verbal cue: "This is Xiao Liao/Bob/Rose. She/he is currently working in Beijing/Shanghai. Now you are going to listen to what she/he said." Then, they listened to one recording from each of the six sets of stimuli in a random order. Efforts were made to ensure that the stimuli assigned to each subject covered ordinary use, no use, and extra-ordinary use of *chengyu*. Each subject was also assigned to stimuli produced by both the native Chinese speaker Liao and one of the non-native speaker. After listening to each stimulus, subjects were asked to describe the context to check their understanding of the recorded stimuli, specifically the type and formality of each context.

Without being directed to the *chengyu* usage in each stimulus, subjects were then asked to give as detailed a description of the speaker as possible based on the recordings and to explain how they perceived and evaluated the identity and personal characteristics

of the speaker. This was to investigate whether the subjects were able to establish a link between the use of *chengyu* and their perception of the speaker's identity and personal traits. *Process-oriented probes* such as "你为什么会有这样的印象?" (how do you get this impression?), "为什么这么觉得?" (why do you feel this way?), and "你是根据什么做出判断的?" (on what criteria did you base your judgment?) were employed to elicit the process by which the respondent calculated his or her answer, decided between alternative answer categories, or made a judgment about the answer.

3.4.3.2 Survey

A survey was conducted following the interview session where subjects were asked to listen to the same set of stimuli in the same order again and to rate the speaker in terms of a set of personal traits on a scale of 0 to 4, 0 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. The set of personal traits is illustrated in Table 10. After rating each stimulus, the subjects were asked to describe how and why they answered the question the way they did. During this process, in addition to *process-oriented probes*, I also employed *meaning-oriented probes* that centered on respondents' independent interpretation of the terms used to describe the personal traits, such as "受教育水平" (education level)，"可信度" (trustworthiness)，and "好感度" (likability), as well as the rating scale (0 to 4). The underlying rationale for using *meaning-oriented probes* was to elicit rich, thickly detailed accounts of subjects' interpretations of these terms via narratives. As Geertz (1973) argues, meanings are multilayered, and simply describing the surface of an interaction cannot fully extract the "true" meaning of the situation. At the methodological level, both process-

oriented and meaning-oriented probes were adopted to elicit a more comprehensive and accurate account of the underlying meaning of the question-response process.

The survey instrument utilized, as shown in Appendix C, was designed based on a previous pilot study in which interviews were conducted in a similar way, as described above, but with a smaller subject pool (N=7). Slight adjustment was made to the choice of wording to improve the fit of the survey questions to the specific population in this study.

Table 10 Personal Traits Rated in the Survey

Native Speaker	Non-native Speaker
Education level 受教育水平	Education level 受教育水平
Appropriateness 适当得体性	Appropriateness 适当得体性
Linguistic ability to convey ideas 语言表达能力	Linguistic ability to convey ideas 语言表达能力
Trustworthiness/Pervasiveness 可信度/说服力	Trustworthiness/Pervasiveness 可信度/说服力
Likability 好感度	Likability 好感度
	Chinese language capacity 中文水平
	Knowledge about Chinese culture 对中国文化熟知度

3.5 Method of Analysis

The data analysis of this study follows the concurrent triangulation design in the Mixed Method approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) by integrating both qualitative and quantitative analysis in response to the research questions.

For subject commentaries collected during the interview, the method of analysis adopted in this study is primarily rooted in the qualitative methodology, in particular, within the grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instead of testing a pre-existing hypothesis using a deductive approach, a grounded theory approach relies on inductive reasoning and reflective iteration. That is to say the incremental steps of the analytic process—transcribing, synthesizing interview data, comparing across subjects to identify a pattern, making conclusions—occurred simultaneously. The investigator continuously moved back and forth between interview data, patterns, and emerging conceptual claims.

Specifically, the analytic process contained five individual steps. (1) First, narratives were collected from subjects during the semi-controlled interview session that reveal how they react to each *chengyu* usage; during this process, key events from the approximately 20 hours of interview were identified and transcribed for the next step. (2) Second, interview data was synthesized into brief summaries detailing how each subject perceived and evaluated situated *chengyu* usage and how each formulated their answers. (3) Third, summaries were compared across subjects to identify patterns in listeners' responses towards *chengyu* usage variants in formal and informal contexts. (4) Fourth, the

identified patterns across the native and non-native data sets were compared. (5) Fifth, comparisons were drawn with the patterns revealed by the quantitative data.

Quantitative data collected in this study include the numeric ratings collected through the survey questionnaires. Subjects' ratings of a set of speakers' characteristic attributes were grouped into: (1) formal ordinary use, (2) formal extra-ordinary use, (3) formal no use, (4) informal ordinary use, (5) informal extra-ordinary use, and (6) informal no use, which were further divided into native and non-native data sets. The three factor that affect subjects' perception explored across these subsets of data are: (a) register (formal-informal), (b) speakers' degree of nativeness, and (c) the *chengyu* usage variants (ordinary or extra-ordinary use). Descriptive statistic analysis was adopted to examine patterns that emerged from each subset and across different subsets of rating data.

Patterns discovered in the rating data were then compared with the subjects' narratives collected during the interview to (1) further provide rationales behind the subjects' specific responses to *chengyu* variants and to (2) validate the interpretation of the data through cross verification from different sources.

The following chapters describe the results of the study. Chapter Four presents Chinese listeners' reactions towards native and non-native speakers' *chengyu* usage in formal and informal contexts. A comparison is drawn between the different evaluative strategies adopted toward native Chinese speakers and non-native Chinese speakers (CFL learners). Drawing from the reflexive observations made and empirical findings explored in the first four chapters, Chapter Five describes the uses and consequences of *chengyu* usage, and discusses how non-native speakers of Chinese language can achieve certain

effects by borrowing the "ownership" of *chengyu* in communication with native Chinese speakers. Finally, Chapter Six discusses pedagogical implications of these findings, with specific discussions of the impact of *chengyu* in a CFL learning career.

Chapter 4: The Data and Discussion

4.1 The Data

In this section, I will present data collected from both the survey and interview sessions mentioned in the previous chapter. The qualitative ratings collected from the survey questionnaires are examined to reveal native Chinese subjects' attitudes towards the appropriate and inappropriate use of *chengyu* in accord to given contexts. Introduction to the results of the survey ratings will establish the foundation for the discussion of the rich information revealed by the listener commentary from the interviews. This discussion further explores in more detail the subjects' reactions to the use of *chengyu* by both native and non-native speakers of Chinese in formal and casual social contexts.

Chinese subjects' evaluations of the NS performance will be described and analyzed first, followed by an analysis of the evaluations of the NNS performance. A contrast will be drawn to identify the different evaluative responses and strategies Chinese subjects adopted towards native and non-native speakers of Chinese.

4.1.1 Listener Evaluation on Native Chinese Speaker's *Chengyu* Usage

4.1.1.1 Chengyu usage by Native Speaker in Formal Contexts

The four sets of stimuli containing variations of *chengyu* usage in formal contexts include an excerpt of a formal speech at the 100th anniversary of the founding of a

university, a question asked by a journalist at a press conference, a formal response given at a press conference by a Chinese speaker, and a conversation over a newly released film during a radio/TV talk show. Upon hearing each audio excerpt, most of the subjects were able to pinpoint the contexts of the stimuli, or at least come up with a context of similar type and formality.

(1) Ordinary Use vs. No Use

The most obvious pattern that emerges from this set of survey data is the predominantly favorable ratings of the "ordinary use" of *chengyu*, revealed by its higher ratings across the board, compared to both "no use" and "extra-ordinary use" (Figure 2).

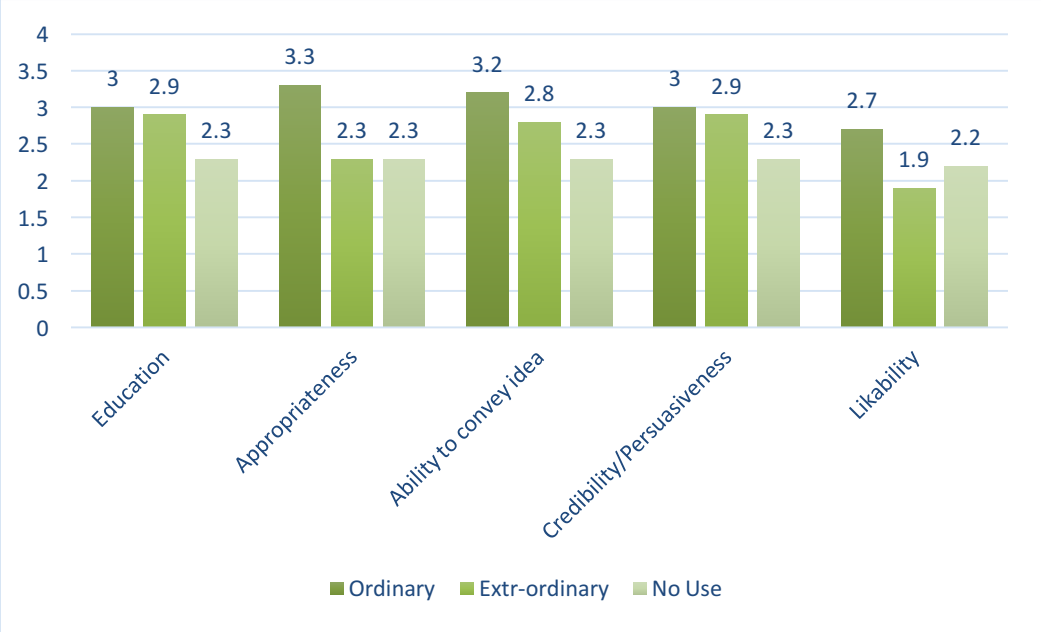

Figure 2 Ratings of NS Usage in Formal Contexts (Means)

Chinese subjects give visibly more positive evaluations to the NS of Chinese who employs *chengyu* properly in formal contexts than the same speaker using plain language without rhetorical flourishes to deliver the same message. Specifically, as shown in Table 11, the proper *chengyu*-using native speaker is rated as 3 ("relatively high") in terms of education background; 3.3 (between "relatively high" and "very high") in terms of how appropriate he sounds in the given situations; 3.2 in his ability to convey ideas; 3 in terms of trustworthiness and persuasiveness; and 2.7 (between "average" and "relatively high") in how likable he sounds.[1] The sets of "no use" stimuli, on the contrary, get an approximate average rating of 2.3 (between "relatively low" and "average") which is consistent across all the evaluative categories.

Table 11 Ratings of Native Speakers' Ordinary Use and No Use in Formal Settings

	NS Ordinary Use	NS No Use
Education level	3	2.3
Appropriateness	3.3	2.3
Linguistic skills to convey ideas	3.2	2.3
Trustworthiness & Persuasiveness	3	2.3
Likability	2.7	2.2

0=Extremely Low Rating ; 1=Relatively Low Rating; 2=Average Rating; 3=Relatively High Rating; 4=Extremely High Rating

[1] The relatively lower likability rating with ordinary *chengyu* usage compared to other categories could be attributed to a stereotypically negative attitude towards the bureaucratic speech style associated with the use of four-character expressions in political discourse.

Close examination of subjects' commentary further reveals the criteria and rationale adopted in forming these evaluations. Contrasting to the high ratings of ordinary *chengyu* usage in formal contexts, subjects in this study didn't give excessively positive evaluations to ordinary *chengyu* usage during the interviews. Majority of the native Chinese subjects described the word choice in the recordings as "normal", "appropriate", "suitable way of speaking in such contexts", and even "nothing special", "not very impressive". One subject, Su, upon hearing the NS ordinary use of *chengyu* in a radio/TV talk show, commented that "I think this is just an error-free, regular conversation between native Chinese. Nothing sounded special to me." Another subject, Wu, also found the same recording to be conforming to the average Chinese standard. She said "as a (native speaker of) Chinese, you don't have to have a higher education degree to be able to speak Chinese like this." Since the ordinary *chengyu* usage are intuitively expected by the native speakers of Chinese in formal contexts, such as in the opening remark at a public ceremony or when delivering diplomatic messages during a press conference, the standard use of such conventional expressions are less perceivable.

The missing of these four-character idiomatic expression, however, obviously stands out to the subjects as deviating from the norm. Subjects overtly expressed their preference for use of *chengyu* over "no use" stimulus that sounded "not formal enough for the situation", "unprofessional", and "inconsistent with the formal discourse." Most of the Chinese subjects, upon hearing the speaker using the no-use variants, were able to pinpoint the *chengyu* items that they intuitively believe to be appropriate in the given contexts. For

example, one subject Fu commented on the no-use variant in the journalist inquiry directed to a government official at a press conference (L2b), and said "his language choice is not up to standard and it makes him sound unqualified for a professional political journalist. He should have used '*ceng chu bu qiong 层出不穷*.'" Another subject, Zeng, addresses the no-use variant in a Chinese spokesman's official response at a press conference (L3b):

> "(Laugher) A spokesman shouldn't use this type of casual, oral phrases, such as '*benlai meiyou de shir yingyao shuo you 本来没有的事儿硬要说有*.' The level of formality in his discourse dropped and the register he adopted doesn't match the situation. Also, his use of '*zou xiang mozhang 走向魔障*' lowered the formality of his speech way too much. Although there's a new trend to use plain language in speech among government officials and corporate leaders, speaking in an overly emotional manner is a taboo in diplomatic discourse. This spokesman sounded very upset, lost his cool when he blurted out casual language. He could have just said '*junzi tan dang dang 君子坦荡荡*' and that would have been sufficient. " (Zeng, comment on L3b, no-use)

(2) Extra-ordinary Use

Before getting down to analyzing the listener reactions to the extra-ordinary *chengyu* usage in formal contexts, a brief introduction to the four types of the extra-ordinary use included in designing the stimuli is necessary (summarized in Table 12).

The first type is the improper use of new Internet idioms in formal discourse. Being forged and trending in the Internet since 2010, these internet memes have become popular among Chinese youth with their "ironic, contemporary and sometimes political themes" (Qin, 2013). These new Internet idioms retain the four-character format of the classic *chengyu,* and are usually created by contracting several expressions, or a longer sentence into a Chinese-style acronym. For instance, the phrase *xǐ dà pǔ bēn* 喜大普奔, illustrated

in (1) in Table 13 is an amalgamation of four commonly used Chinese idioms by stringing the first characters together:

Xi wen le jian 喜闻乐见 (*lit.* be delighted to hear and see)
Da kuai ren xin 大快人心 (*lit.* it gladdens people's heart)
Pu tian tong qing 普天同庆 (*lit.* the whole world joins in the jubilation)
Ben zou xian gao 奔走相告 (*lit.* to run around to spread the news)

Although the use of the new Internet '*chengyu*' has began to extend outside the Internet realm to more traditional media such as news article, this type of inventive expressions has not yet been embraced by the more sophisticated presenters in China, especially in formal situations.

The second type is overuse, the compiling of *chengyu* items in one sentence, or a short speech, exemplified in (2) in Table 13. As discussed in Chapter 3, the character *He Shuiyuan* in the novel *Chuncao* is a unique literary figure who epitomizes the language ideologies around *chengyu* usage, especially their negative side. *He*'s excessive use of these Chinese idiomatic expressions and the reactions triggered by such linguistic choices in the novel, inspired this experiment design to test Chinese native perception of overuse in non-fictional settings.

The third and fourth types of extra-ordinary *chengyu* usage both fall into the category of semantic misuse, which refers to the violation of the conventionalized indexical relationship of a *chengyu* item's semantic properties and a given semantic context. Type three refers to misuses due to misunderstanding of the semantic meaning of the idiom. Take

(3) in Table 13 as an example, *lǚ jiàn bú xiān 屡见不鲜*, which commonly indicates that a phenomena lost its novelty after frequent appearances, means the opposite to the message intended in the context (that a phenomena occurs repeatedly). In the fourth type of misuse, the connotation of the *chengyu* item conflicts with the undertone of the overall context. In some cases, it is the pairing of a derogatory idiom with a supposedly neutral context. For instance, *shǐ kǒu fǒu rèn 矢口否认* oftentimes implies a derogatory/accusatory attitude towards the person denying the accusation. The employment of this idiom in (4) in Table 13, is deemed impolite as it insinuates that the Foreign Ministry is hiding the truth from the press.

Lumped together, extra-ordinary use enjoys a rating of 2.3 in terms of appropriateness in given occasions and a below average rating of 1.9 regarding how likable the speaker sounds. Interestingly, in regard to the likableness of the speaker, extra-ordinary use is scored even lower than none-use (2.3). In formal occasions the subjects favor speakers who value accuracy of their speech over attempts at non-standard idiom usages.

Table 12 Ratings of Native Speakers' *Chengyu* Usage Formal Settings

	NS Ordinary Use	NS No Use	NS Extra-Ordinary Use
Education level	3	2.3	2.9
Appropriateness	3.3	2.3	2.3
Linguistic skills to convey ideas	3.2	2.3	2.8
Trustworthiness & Persuasiveness	3	2.3	2.9
Likability	2.7	2.2	1.9

0=Extremely Low Rating ; 1=Relatively Low Rating; 2=Average Rating; 3=Relatively High Rating; 4=Extremely High Rating

Similar to not using *chengyu*, extra-ordinary uses caught native Chinese speakers' attentions as indicated by the subjects' extensive comments (extracts shown in Table 13). In general, the subjects held negative attitudes towards non-standard usages in these formal contexts, which is consistence with the numerical ratings they provided.

What is interesting is that although the Chinese subjects claim that they "personally prefer otherwise", they also acknowledge these improper *chengyu* usage in naturally occurring formal discourse. Instead of labeling these inappropriate variants as "mistakes" due to the speaker's ignorance or poor command of a sophisticated language style, the subjects in this study recognize the choice of new Internet idioms and excessive *chengyu* usage, for example, as conscious, intentional native speaker social moves, albeit

unfavorable ones. For instance, upon hearing the speaker using the new Internet *chengyu, xi da pu ben,* in the opening remarks for a university's 100th anniversary celebration ceremony, a subject Zeng, who is a professor at an esteemed university in Beijing, in her comments expresses her concern about the choice of utilizing Internet slangs on such an official occasion. Her interpretation of the speaker's motive behind this "minor publicity accident" is to appeal to the younger audience, university students who are bored and often discontent with the notoriously routinized use of cliché language in formal speeches. Another subject, Shen, also interprets the use of derogatory *chengyu* item *yāo yán huò zhòng* 妖言惑众 by a government official from the Foreign Ministry as "inappropriate yet understandable." She comments:

> "(The speaker) sounds impatient, angry and a bit contemptuous… Openly accusing the media using '*yao yan huo zhong'* is improper. As a public figure, you should be careful with the language you choose… However, I can somehow understand. He probably has been harassed by the media on this issue multiple times. Even Jiang Zemin used to openly criticize the media. It's understandable. The media can be unnecessarily aggressive and annoying." (Shen, comment on L3c)

Similarly, overuse in formal contexts is perceived somewhat negatively as "annoying", and "tediously long". Two *chengyu* items employed by the subjects well characterize their attitudes towards the speaker who overdoes it : *yǎo wén jiáo zì* 咬文嚼字 (literally meaning "bite off language, chew words", i.e., overfastidious in wording) and *guò yóu bú jí* 过犹不及 (going too far is as bad as falling short). The Chinese subjects, however, also interpret this excessive *chengyu* usage as a result of speaker's deliberate decision. They acknowledge that it is not uncommon to hear Chinese, especially old-

fashioned government officials or people of higher positions, employ a series of *chengyu* items in formal discourse, although the audience's intuitive reactions towards such overuse is negative.

The only type of "inappropriate use" that qualifies as "mistakes" is the semantic misuse due to misapprehension of the idiom's meaning. Interestingly, whether the subjects immediately judge the use to be improper or not, they are reluctant to overtly label it as an "error" during the interview. Jia's comment in (3), table 13, indicates that she is quite sensitive to the semantic misuse of "*lv jian bu xian*". She started her comment pointing out that this improper idiom usage caught her attention, and then further suggested more suitable alternatives in the given context. Another subject, Rui, in her comment on the same recording, hesitated to decide if the use of "*lv jian bu xian*" is inaccurate, and ended up choosing a vaguer and safer middle ground by saying "there might be a more suitable expression (in lieu of *lv jian bu xian*)."

Table 13 Four Categories of Extra-Ordinary Usage

Categories of Extra-ordinary Use	Examples (extracts)	Subjects' Comments (extracts)
(1) Improper use of new Internet idioms in formal discourse	**1) APP:** *今天对在场每一位都会是一个永生难忘的日子。* It is an unforgettable occasion today for all our lives. **2) *** *今天对在场每一位都会是一个喜大普奔的日子。*	"Personally I don't like the use of '*xi da pu ben 喜大普奔*' very much. The old generation professors in the audience probably don't even know this word…I understand where this student is coming from. Maybe he wants to distinguish his speech from faculty member's

Continued

Table 13: Continued

	*It is such a thrilling occasion today that every one is rejoicing and spreading the word.	style… But it's hard to imagine that a student from (elite schools such as) PKU would use this at the 100th anniversary ceremony. It would become a minor publicity incident." (Zeng, comment on L1d)
(2) Overuse	**1) APP:** *这部片子表面上看挺搞笑的，但是笑过之后背后的主题却又**发人深思*** 。 On the surface this seems to be a comedy, but after the laughter comes a thought-provoking theme. **2)** *****这部片子表面上看挺搞笑的，但是笑过之后背后的主题却又发人深思、耐人寻味、意味深长。 * On the surface this seems to be a comedy, but after the laughter comes a thought-provoking, intriguing theme that expresses volumes.	"He used so many four-character words, which sounded over fastidious in wording (*咬文嚼字*). The truth is I don't remember which ones he used in a sense that I stopped processing the meaning of the expressions." He sounded like a man of letter. This is appropriate for formal occasions, a bit too much, but appropriate. However, I personally prefer more simple and succinct way of expression. (Mo, comment on L1c); "He went too far which is as bad as falling short (*过犹不及*). (Overuse) is too annoying in formal occasions, but it would work better if you are joking with friends" (Hui, comment on L1c)
(3) Semantic misuse: inaccurate word meaning	**1) APP:***虽然中国外交部一再否认，但类似报道还是**层出不穷*，* 您能否确认此事的真实性？ Although China's foreign ministry repeatedly denied it, articles covering similar topics still appear in print one after another. Can you confirm the authenticity of this matter?	"His use of the word '*lv jian bu xian 屡见不鲜*' stood out. It's not quite appropriate. In this context you can say 'news articles *ceng chu bu qiong 层出不穷*,' or simply 'appear ceaselessly.' His use of *lv jian*

Continued

Table 13: Continued

	2) **虽然中国外交部一再矢口否认，但类似报道还是**屡见不鲜**， 您能否确认此事的真实性？* * Although China's foreign ministry flatly denied it, articles covering similar topics have lost their novelty as they appear in print again and again. Can you confirm the authenticity of this matter?	*bu xian* seems a bit unfitting here." (Jia, comment on L2c) "The use of '*lv jian bu xian 屡见不鲜*' seems inaccurate…or maybe not. There might be a more suitable expression." (Rui, comment on L2c)
(4) Semantic misuse: inaccurate connotation	**1) APP:***虽然中国外交部**一再否认**，但类似报道还是**层出不穷**， 您能否确认此事的真实性？* Although China's foreign ministry repeatedly denied it, articles covering similar topics still appear in print one after another. Can you confirm the authenticity of this matter? **2)** **虽然中国外交部一再**矢口否认**，但类似报道还是屡见不鲜， 您能否确认此事的真实性？* * Although China's foreign ministry flatly denied it, articles covering similar topics have lost their novelty as they appear in print again and again. Can you confirm the authenticity of this matter?	

4.1.1.2 Chengyu Usage by Native Speakers in Informal Context: the Cases of Inventive Usage and Humorous Usage

In this section, I focus on analyzing listener responses to the two sets of *chengyu* stimuli in casual contexts in more detail. Theses two sets of stimuli exhibit the two special cases of *chengyu* usage: inventive usage and humorous usage. As the following discussion will demonstrate, depending on the specific social context and other information available,

the criteria employed by native Chinese to determine the appropriateness *chengyu* usage vary.

(1) The Case of Inventive Usage

The set of stimuli involving inventive use of *chengyu* were a conversational exchange between two colleagues, as shown in Table 14. The inventive usage *wàng zǐ chéng shuòshì，wàng zǐ chéng bóshì* 望子成硕士，望子成博士 (*lit.* hope for one's son to become an M.A., hope for one's son to become a Ph.D.) substitutes part of the original idiom *wàng zǐ chéng lóng* 望子成龙 (*lit.* hope for one's son to become a dragon) with new words to address a common educational practices and ideas shared among Chinese parents.

Unlike English-speaking regions such as American culture, which in general value manipulations of idioms or set phrases as a form of wit for intended purposes, Chinese culture places great emphasis on a verbatim tradition in the employment of *chengyu* and cultural reference. Creative wordplay with Chinese idioms is a delicate task that is easily perceived negatively, or at least not commonly appreciated among native Chinese speakers. In extreme cases, inventive *chengyu* usage are criticized as "disgracing the tradition and purity of the Chinese language" (Mao & Luo 2013). Based on this understanding, the inventive use of the idiom was labelled as "extra-ordinary use."

Table 14 Scripts for Stimuli L5a, L5b, L5c

Context: Two close colleagues having a casual conversation about Chinese parenting style. 同事小张：现在的家长周末都要孩子上补习班，你说是不是太过分了？ Colleague Xiao Zhang: Parents nowadays send their kids to cram schools even on weekends, don't you think it is too much? Upon hearing Xiao Zhang's comment, Xiao Li responds:	
Ordinary Use (L5a)	同事小李：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都望子成龙，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。 Colleague Xiao Li: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the child to become a dragon. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.
No Use (L5b)	同事小李：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都希望孩子能有出息，成为出色的人才，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。 Colleague Xiao Li: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the children to become successful and talented. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.
Extra-ordinary Use (L5c)	同事小李：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都望子成硕士，望子成博士，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。 Colleague Xiao Li: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the children to get a master's degree and a Ph.D. degree. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.

Chinese subjects' reactions confirm the legitimacy of using *chengyu wang zi cheng long* in this relatively casual dialogue between two colleagues. Similar to the case of ordinary use in formal contexts, being the expected form of language use, L5a doesn't elicit lengthy analytical statement from the Chinese listeners. Instead the subjects simply point out that such use in the given casual context is typical of a Chinese conversation.

On the contrary, the inventive usage (extra-ordinary use) received an array of remarks from the subjects, ranging from hard-hitting criticism to observations that neither

favor or oppose the creative wordplay. One of the Chinese subjects, Yao, who is a well-established director at a foreign language education institute, states that such inventive usage "fracture the Chinese language and the four-character syntactic structure of *chengyu.*" He continues to add that such inventive usage might be more acceptable if employed in an attempt at producing a humorous effect. Another subject, Su, a manager at a foreign-owned company, doesn't think of it as a terrible choice of language. "It doesn't sound that different to me," she said when asked to compare the original idiom and the seemingly improvised phrase. She continues:

> "*Wang zi cheng long* is a Chinese idiom. *Wang zi cheng shuoshi/boshi* makes use of the original *chengyu* item to foreground the academic degrees (parents want for their children), which is fine. Actually the first word that popped in my mind (upon hearing this dialogue) is *wang zi cheng long.* But this invention of his in fact has similar effect." (Su, comment on L5c)

None of the comments, however, explicitly show preference for the rhetorical effect of this creative appropriation. In general, the Chinese subjects either rather strongly disapprove or hold a neutral attitude towards the inventive use of *chengyu*. This observation seems to challenge the fundamental rationale behind such usage that has a greater risk of being criticized or labeled mediocre at best.

(2) The Case of Humorous Use

The set of stimuli involving humorous use of *chengyu* was also a conversational exchange between two co-workers, as illustrated Table 15. A humorous effect is created by contrasting the formal and written-style *chengyu* with the casual context, usually among

interlocutors who consider each other to be close in-groups. In this case, *jīng jīng yè yè 兢兢业业* and *rèn láo rèn yuàn 任劳任怨,* which are never meant for self-praise when used in a serious sense, were utilized to make a witty, elusive answer to the inquiry why Xiao Wang is working late.

Table 15 Scripts for Stimuli L6a, L6b, L6c

Context: Two close colleagues having a small talk about working overtime. 同事小刘：今天怎么这么用工加班到这么晚啊？ Colleague Xiao Liu: How come you are working overtime and staying this late today? Upon hearing Xiao Liu's question, Xiao Wang responds:	
Ordinary Use (L6a)	同事小王：那可不，我可一直是严格要求自己，对待工作兢兢业业、任劳任怨。 Colleague Xiao Wang: Of course! I am always this strict with myself, and assiduous at work, bearing hardship without complaint.
No Use (L6b)	同事小王：那可不，我可一直是严格要求自己，对待工作认真负责，不怕辛苦不怕累。 Colleague Xiao Wang: Of course! I am always this strict with myself, and assiduous at work, bearing hardship without complaint.
Extra-ordinary Use (L6c)	同事小王：那可不，我可一直是严格要求自己，对待工作兢兢业业、勤勤恳恳、任劳任怨，不辞辛劳。 Colleague Xiao Wang: Of course! I am always this strict with myself, assiduous, diligent and conscientious at work, bear hardship without complaint, and never shrink from toil and hardship.

Successful performance of such humorous use is also accompanied by an exaggerated tone, a crucial paralinguistic marker of the humorous intention of the speaker. This can be evidenced by a subject's commentary about the humorous use of *chengyu* :

> "He (the native Chinese speaker) sounds like an earnest white collar-worker to me……. He employs a humorous tone here. Had he used a serious tone in this situation, it would read as overly confident, even arrogant." (Su, comment on L6a)

In this case, the employment of a humorous tone serves as a crucial indicator which helps the listener assign attributes such as "earnest", instead of "overly confident" and "arrogant" to the native Chinese speaker.

Overall, delivered in an appropriate tone, native Chinese speakers' humorous intentions of applying *chengyu* to joke with friends are easily recognizable and perceived in general with an approving attitude. Subjects find the native Chinese speaker to be "witty", "funny", yet "nothing unusual" in a sense that "an average Chinese can possibly say things like this." One subject, Wu, gives her two interpretations of this performance:

> "One possibility is that he (the native speaker) is the type of guy who is not reserved nor modest. He likes to joke around and wants to make sure others know that he is working extra hours. An alternative is that he is very close to the female colleague, so he was just making a joke..... Since he is a native speaker of Chinese, I won't think of him as skilled in language, especially because these *chengyu* are so common that any Chinese is able to use them this way……I myself might make a joke in exactly these words, too." (Wu, comment on L6a)

Interestingly, though overuse of *chengyu* in this casual context is originally labeled as "extra-ordinary use", subjects in general approve such excessive use and recognize it as a more exaggerated attempt at a humorous effect. "Normally in a serious conversation we won't use this much of *chengyu* in a row," said subject Cui, "only when one is joking or teasing someone for fun will we use a few more with friends."

4.1.1.3 Summary

The Chinese subjects' responses to native speakers' *chengyu* usage in formal and casual settings should be separately as the formality of the context is a key factor in the perception and interpretation of social meaning of *chengyu* usage.

In formal contexts, it is shown that ordinary *chengyu* usage is the default expectation and contributes to the speakers' perceived professionalism and general authority. The missing of these four-character Chinese idioms in formal discourses immediately alerts the subjects and is evaluated unfavorably as a sign of lacking in profession-related capacities. Extra-ordinary use of *chengyu* in formal contexts is considered less favored than "no use" variants, especially in terms of the "appropriateness in given social situations" and the "likability" of the speaker. Specifically, among native speakers, improper employment of new Internet "*chengyu*" in public speech and semantic mismatch of a derogatory *chengyu* item in a public, professional occasion are perceived as inappropriate, in violation of the supposedly formal register; Overuse of *chengyu* items is considered as "tedious and annoying," and in general not appreciated by the native Chinese subjects. However, as illustrated by their commentary, the subjects recognize such "extra-ordinary" usages as native speakers' stylistic choices, albeit rather undesirable ones, and show reluctance to label these non-standard usage as mistakes.

In informal contexts, two special cases of inventive usage and humorous usage are investigated in regard to listeners' reactions. In both cases, the ordinary *chengyu* usage (uninventive use and humorous use) are recognized as the unmarked and favored variant in given contexts. The native speaker's inventive (extra-ordinary) manipulation of *chengyu*

is either strongly criticized or given a neutral evaluation by the subjects, which refutes such creative usage. The native speakers' over (extra-ordinary) use of *chengyu* items of similar meaning in casual conversations, on the other hand, is acknowledged as a more exaggerated attempt at a humorous effect, and therefore granted higher tolerance.

This investigation of native performances serves as the baseline in the examination of native Chinese speakers' attitudes towards non-native speakers' *chengyu* usage, which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1.2 Listener Evaluation on Non-native Chinese Speaker's *Chengyu* Usage

4.1.2.1 Chengyu Usage by Non-native Speakers in Formal Contexts

(1) Ordinary Use vs. No Use

Similar to the evaluation of native Chinese speakers' *chengyu* usage, the most obvious pattern that emerges from this non-native set of survey data is also the predominantly favorable ratings of the "ordinary use" of *chengyu*. Except for the rating of "education", appropriate use of *chengyu* are evaluated more positively across the board by native Chinese subjects, compared to "no use" (see Figure 3). This indicates that in formal situations, the Chinese subjects favor the use of *chengyu* by non-native Chinese speaker that follows the "norms" constructed and adhered to by native Chinese.

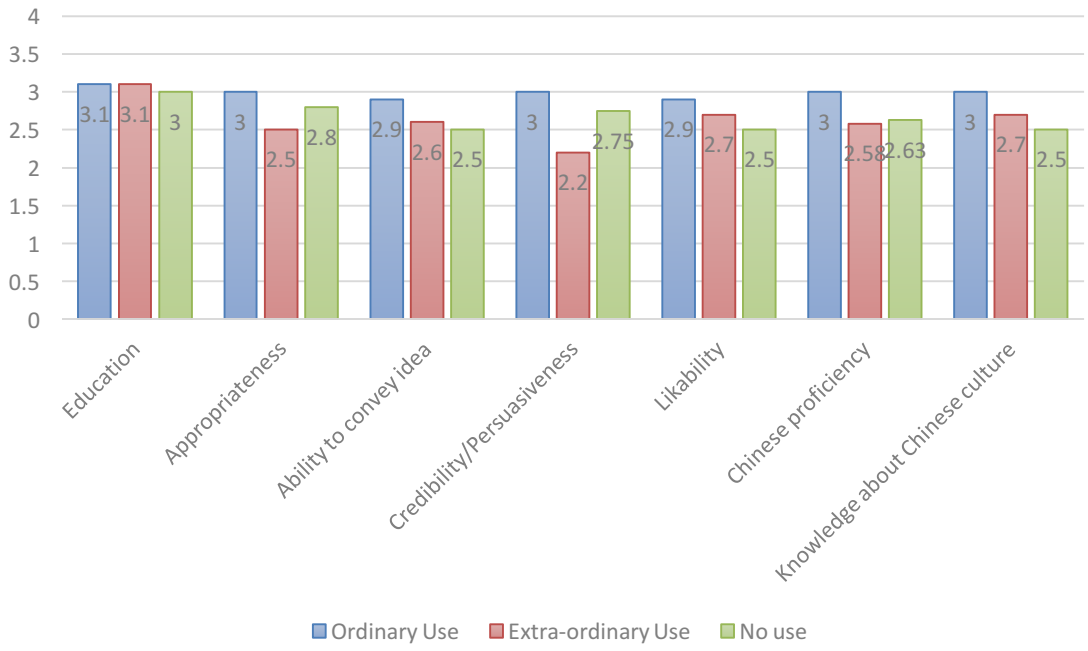

Figure 3 Ratings of Non-native Speakers' *Chengyu* Usage in Formal Contexts (Means)

The subjects' commentary in the interview provided further support for the findings of the survey. In response to stimuli categorized as ordinary use, the subjects perceived the non-native speaker positively and described the speaker as "well-educated", "knowledgeable about Chinese language", "very appropriate in terms of language choice in formal situations/able to tailor one's language to the formal situation", and "with the perfect choice of words." Many of the subjects explicitly commented on the speaker's use of *chengyu* without being prompted to discuss any aspect of the speakers' language. For example, upon hearing the foreign speaker using *chengyu* in a public speech at the school anniversary, the first thing subject Su commented on was the speaker's impressive use of a few *chengyu* items, which to her is an indicator of this foreigner's familiarity with

Chinese language and culture, especially given the required level of formality of the context. Non-native speakers' mastery of formal register via the use of *chengyu* also contribute to a perception of an apt professional figure. As commented by a participant Cui, the non-native speakers' displays good command of Chinese by "add[ing] rhetoric to his speech using '*yī zài fǒu rèn 一再否认*' and '*céng chū bú qióng 层出不穷*'" which makes hem sound "very official" and fit the role of a very capable diplomatic correspondent (Cui, comment on B2a).

Non-native speakers' no-use, however, received much less attention compared to ordinary use. In similar ways as how native Chinese speakers are expected to properly employ *chengyu* in formal discourses, the Chinese subjects intuitively accept no *chengyu* usage as the default non-native speakers' performance in formal situations. The subjects commented that non-native speaker's lack of *chengyu* usage is "an average way of speaking in a formal situation" --for a foreigner. It was explicitly stated by Sam (comment on B2b) that he thinks a native Chinese speaker would use more advanced vocabularies as opposed to the no-use variants of *céng chū bú qióng*. The subjects' lower expectation of the non-native Chinese speakers' mastery of *chengyu* in formal contexts reveals a "community of foreigners with limited membership to other elite communities within China" that native speakers imagined for non-native speakers of Chinese.

(2) Extra-ordinary Use

Extra-ordinary use of four-character Chinese idioms in formal settings seem to have received mixed evaluations. In terms of the speaker's "appropriateness", "credibility and persuasiveness", and "Chinese proficiency", these non-standard use of *chengyu* are rated

lower than no-use (see Table 16). When asked how trustworthy or convincing the foreign speakers' extra-ordinary *chengyu* usage sounded, subjects gave a 2.2 (compared with 3 for "ordinary use" and 2.75 for "no use"), which is the lowest rating among all non-native stimuli in formal contexts. This indicates that under formal situations, if non-native speakers can't employ *chengyu* expressions in an appropriate way, using them incorrectly or inappropriately will likely do more damage to the aspects of their identities related to "appropriateness", "credibility and persuasiveness", and "Chinese proficiency." In this case, avoiding using these idiomatic expressions completely would be a better strategy for non-native speakers of Chinese who do not want to take a risk of being viewed negatively in the eyes of the natives.

Table 16 Mean Ratings of Non-native Speakers' *Chengyu* Usage in Formal Contexts

	NNS Ordinary Use	NNS No Use	NNS Extra-ordinary Use
Education level	3.1	3	3.1
Appropriateness	3	2.8	2.5
Linguistic skills to convey ideas	2.9	2.5	2.6
Trustworthiness & Persuasiveness	3	2.75	2.2
Likability	2.9	2.5	2.7
Chinese Proficiency	3	2.63	2.58
Cultural Knowledge about China	3	2.5	2.7

0=Extremely Low Rating; 1=Relatively Low Rating; 2=Average Rating; 3=Relatively High Rating; 4=Extremely High Rating

In the interview, another negative attribute of the foreign speaker associated with the extra-ordinary *chengyu* usage emerged from the subject responses. Some subjects interpreted the failed attempts to use *chengyu* items correctly as "showing off his Chinese skills" and "trying too hard to impress." Subject Yun, for example, gave the following commentary in response to the non-native speakers' overuse of *chengyu* when delivering a speech at the funding anniversary of a university:

> "(Laughter) Foreigners using these literary language sounds so interesting, especially when they use several in a row. It shows that he has a good enough knowledge of Chinese literature to use them accurately. But I think he is kind of showing off, trying too hard to demonstrate his Chinese skills. The reason he needs to use this many *chengyu* is that he is not confident about his command of Chinese. If this were performed by a native speaker of Chinese, I would definitely categorize it as overuse. Considering that he is a foreigner, it is probably because he hasn't reached the proficiency level to use Chinese autonomously under this (formal) situation. As a result, he tried too hard." (Yun, comment on B1c, extra-ordinary use, public speech)

Yun's comment further reveals another common ideology native Chinese speakers hold in regard to foreigners' *chengyu* usage. While as data from section 4.1.1.1 suggests that extra-ordianry use of the *chengyu* performed by native Chinese speakers are recognized as intentional, reflecting certain types of unfavorable personality, similar non-standard use of *chengyu* performed by non-native speakers of Chinese are ultimately attributed to foreigners' insufficient Chinese capacity, rather than other personal characteristics. Many remarks from the subject interview also attest to this observation. This supports the more general observation that non-native speakers are being judged and perceived differently from the way Chinese interpret intentions associated in social moves

shared among native speakers. Instead, a different set of rules is at work, which centers on the foreigners' Chinese proficiency and knowledge about Chinese culture as perceived by native Chinese. This set of rules subjects foreigners to a stereotypical image, shaped and defined by the many individual foreigners speaking Chinese in a native speakers' daily encounters.

The other subject, Yao, who also perceived the extra-ordinary use of *chengyu* as "showing off", continued to state that "Chinese people normally wouldn't dislike foreigners who show off their Chinese. We would just think they are not using it in the most appropriately way at most" (Yao, comment on B2c, extra-ordinary use-professional setting). In fact, in most of the cases non-native speakers' non-standard use of *chengyu* does not stop the native subjects from appreciating the foreigners for at least making attempts to use *chengyu*. Subjects generally recognizes non-native speakers' effort to learn and employ *chengyu* in formal contexts, in spite of the mistakes they made, as "it is already very rare and not easy for a foreigner to be able to use (*chengyu*)."

This finding is also evidenced by the survey data. In particular, in response to formal situations, subjects gave higher rating for extra-ordinary use of *chengyu* than no use in terms of the speakers' "ability to convey idea", "likability", and "knowledge about Chinese culture" (See Table 16). That is to say, the Chinese subjects recruited in this study are generally willing to overlook the inappropriate usage and link these attempts to use *chengyu* to the high ratings on speakers' likability, language ability to convey ideas clearly, and familiarity with Chinese culture.

4.1.2.2 Chengyu Usage by Non-native Speakers in Casual Contexts

Following a similar sequence of presenting the native speakers' data set, in this section listener response to the two sets of non-native *chengyu* stimuli in casual contexts are presented: the cases of inventive usage and humorous usage.

(1) The Case of Inventive Usage

The scripts of this set of non-native stimuli is identical to the ones produced by the native speaker (see Table 14 for the scripts): the "ordinary use" involves the use of *wàng zǐ chéng lóng* 望子成龙 (*lit.* "hope for one's son to become a dragon") while in the "extra-ordinary use" stimuli the original *chengyu* was manipulated into *wàng zï chéng shuòshi, wàng zï chéng bòshi* 望子成硕士，望子成博士 (*lit.* "hope for one's son to become an M.A., hope for one's son to become a Ph.D.").

Comparing the subjects' ratings of the "ordinary use" and the "no use" reveals a general preference towards *chengyu* usage in this conversational exchange among colleagues (see Table 17), except for the subjects' perception of the non-native speakers' education level. Yet, the overall high scores of the "no use" variable (on average greater than "3", i.e., "relatively high rating") and the "ordinary use" variant (on average approximately "3.28") suggests that the Chinese subjects did not have specific expectation for non-native Chinese speakers to be able to use the *chengyu wàng zï chéng lóng* in this context. The subjects' commentary also suggests that they are delightedly surprised upon hearing a non-native speaker employing the *chengyu* item accurately, which suggests a

higher level of Chinese capacity to engage in deeper socialization with members of the local community. One subject An's comment well illustrates this point.

> "First of all, he uses *chengyu* quite properly……If in reality a foreign coworker of mine uses *chengyu* this well, I will tell him that you speak really good Chinese. You have gone beyond the "talk about work-related stuff" stage, and can actually have deep, meaningful conversation with us... By that I mean we can hangout as friends after work, and I don't have to worry about the level of difficulty of my language because I know that he can understand where I come from when we talk (An, comment on B5a)

An examination of the extra-ordinary use of *wàng zï chéng lóng* displays a slightly different listener reaction pattern compared to the NS data. Although native speaker's inventive use of *wàng zǐ chéng lóng* 望子成龙 was perceived as inappropriate and unfavorable by the listeners in a rather consistent manner as discussed in section 4.1.1.2, the Chinese subjects' reactions from the survey and interview suggest, however, that the inventive use of *wàng zï chéng lóng* by non-native speaker of Chinese was not unanimously taken as negative by the listeners. In the survey, the inventive use of the idiom, which is the supposedly "extra-ordinary" variable, was even rated higher than the "ordinary use" in regard to the speakers' "education" and "likability" (See Table 17).

Table 17 Mean Ratings for NNS *Chengyu* Usage in Informal Context (The Inventive Case of *Wàng Zǐ Chéng Lóng*)

	Ordinary Use	No Use	Extra-ordinary Use (Inventive)
Education level	2.75	3	3.25
Appropriateness	3.5	3	3.25
Linguistic skills to convey ideas	3.5	3	3
Trustworthiness & Persuasiveness	3.25	3	3.25
Likability	3.25	3	3.5
Chinese Proficiency	3.5	3.3	3.25
Cultural Knowledge about China	3.25	3	3

0=Extremely Low Rating; 1=Relatively Low Rating; 2=Average Rating; 3=Relatively High Rating; 4=Extremely High Rating

Interview data with the subjects provide a window into the reasoning behind the numbers, showing that Chinese subjects in this study developed divergent interpretations over creative use of *wàng zǐ chéng lóng*. Some subjects are less tolerant with the inventive use of *chengyu* and stand by the legitimacy of the original *wàng zǐ chéng lóng*. Jia, for example, gave the following comments:

> "His use of '望子成硕士, 望子成博士'(*lit.* hope for the children to become a master degree holder, hoping for them to become a Ph.D. degree holder) left me a deep impression. Chinese *chengyu* are 'fixed language' after all and have its own set of rules. If you use it like this, it would bother people who are strict, or the older generation…….I feel, or anyone who is relatively particular and strict about Chinese language will feel (the speakers' creative use) is not a good use of language. This gives me the impression that he (the speaker) lacks sufficient understanding of Chinese culture." (Jia, comments on B5c)

Yet, this negative evaluation of the inventive *chengyu* usage as misappropriation of Chinese linguistic conventions again did not reflect negatively on the non-native speakers, especially how likable they are to Chinese subjects. The subjects' commentary during interviews revealed the reason behind the high likability rating of the inventive use, showing that subjects have stereotypically low expectation towards a foreigner's ability to employ *chengyu* in spoken discourse. Even Jia, who clearly perceives the creative use of *chengyu* as wrong and inappropriate, gave a "3" on both "likability" and "Chinese proficiency" because "it is already very rare for a foreigner to be able to use the "*wàng zï chéng*+ *X* 望子成+X" structure in Chinese."

Among the subjects, there are also native speakers who accept the wordplay with *wàng zǐ chéng long* completely. Rui, for example, heard the same cue as Jia did and reacted drastically differently. She smiled upon hearing the non-native speaker using *wàng zï chéng shuòshi, wàng zï chéng bòshi* and continued to explain that she thought it was "very creative", "making a lot of sense", and "definitely a plus." Another subject Hui also said the creative use of *chengyu* demonstrates the foreign speakers' flexibility in using language. It also increased Hui's rating for the speaker's language proficiency because it sounded

"humorous." Hui ended up giving 4s across the broad for this inventive stimuli, which is the highest ratings she gave for non-native speaker stimuli.

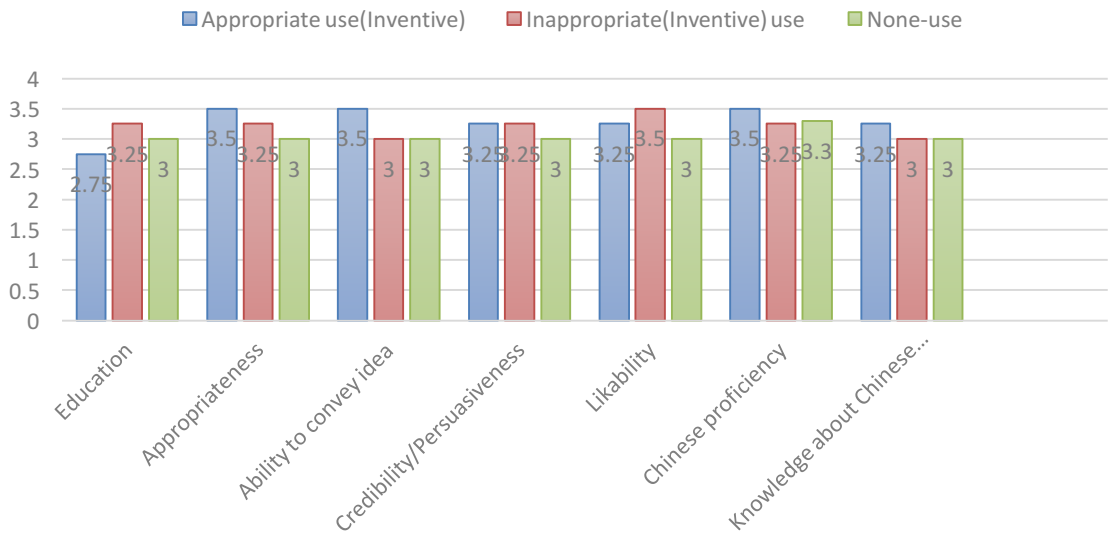

Figure 4 Ratings for NNS Inventive Use in Casual Contexts (Means)

The previous discussion suggests that native Chinese listeners react differently even when hearing the same non-native speaker using the same cue. The inventive use of *chengyu* were interpreted by some subjects as appropriate and desirable, and by others as inappropriate and evident of insufficiency of mastery over the appropriate use of *chengyu*. This pattern is consistent with the polarized national debate over the legitimacy of creative *chengyu* usage reviewed in section 2.1.2.

(2) The Case of Humorous Usage

The scripts of the stimuli involving humorous use of *chengyu* was identical to the native speakers' stimuli (See Table 15 for the scripts). A humorous effect is created by contrasting the formal and written-style *chengyu* with the casual context: in this case, *jīng jīng yè yè 兢兢业业* and *rèn láo rèn yuàn 任劳任怨,* which are never meant for self-praise when used in a serious sense, were utilized to make a witty, elusive small talk.

The ratings for non-native speakers' humorous use of *chengyu* in casual contexts, deviate from the general pattern found in the previous sets of stimuli. By far in both formal contexts and the inventive use in casual contexts, the variables labeled as "ordinary use" of *chengyu* are rated higher and in general more positive, compared to "extra-ordinary use" and "no use." The overall low scores of the humorous use (on average "2.3", i.e. slightly higher than an "average rating") rated by the Chinese subjects indicate a negative attitude towards non-native speakers, compared to the ratings of native humorous use (on average "2.6"). More specifically, in terms of the foreign speakers' "education", "credibility/persuasiveness", "Chinese proficiency", and "knowledge about Chinese culture", this supposedly appropriate variant of *chengyu* is rated lower than "extra-ordinary use" and "no use".

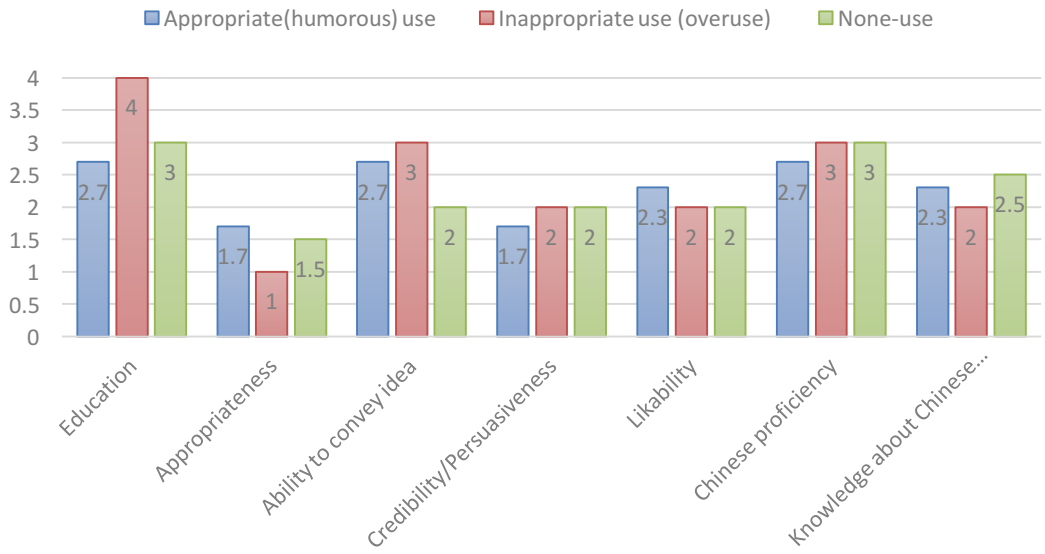

Figure 5 Ratings for NNS Humorous Use in Casual Contexts (Means)

Table 18 Mean Ratings for NNS *Chengyu* Usage in Informal Context (The Humorous Case of Jīng jīng yè yè and Rèn láo rèn yuàn)

	Ordinary Use (Humorous)	No Use	Extra-ordinary Use (Overuse)
Education level	2.7	3	4
Appropriateness	1.7	1.5	1
Linguistic skills to convey ideas	2.7	2	3
Trustworthiness & Persuasiveness	1.7	2	2
Likability	2.3	2	2
Chinese Proficiency	2.7	3	3
Cultural Knowledge about China	2.3	2.5	2

0=Extremely Low Rating; 1=Relatively Low Rating; 2=Average Rating; 3=Relatively High Rating; 4=Extremely High Rating

Close examination of the interview data reveals the reason behind this unusually low rating. All of the subjects, who listened to what was intended to be the non-native "humorous use" in stimulus 6, failed to recognize its humorous nature. Instead, subjects described the use of *chengyu jīng jīng yè yè* (*lit. "*assiduous about work") and *rèn láo rèn yuàn* (*lit.* "to bear hardship without complaint") in the given casual context as "way too formal", "overly written-style", and "excessively textbook-ish." Chinese subjects again attribute this perceive "inappropriate use" of *chengyu* to the limit of foreigners' Chinese capacity. Fu, for example, gave the following comments on the non-native speaker's failed attempt at the humorous *chengyu* usage:

> "(Laughter) This must have come from a textbook because it is overly written-style. He (the foreign speaker) would never encounter these words in his daily communication……He strikes me as a hardworking Chinese language learner, who, unfortunately, learned a list of Chinese vocabulary items that is useless. This foreigner lacks real experience talking directly to Chinese people. If this were a native Chinese, he would have used more spoken language." (Fu, comment on B6a)

Another subject, Gu, also pointed out during the interview that the given use of *jīng jīng yè yè* and *rèn láo rèn yuàn* by the foreign speaker deviates from the Chinese way of talking:

> "If a Chinese says it this way, it comes across as a little bit pretentious. So Chinese people normally won't say it like this, unless you want to make a joke. If a foreigner uses the idioms this way, as a listener I think it is acceptable because (I know) there's a limit to his Chinese capacity." (Gu, comment on B6a)

Gu's comment validates the humorous use of *chengyu* in casual context, however, it seems that only native speakers were given the authority to be funny using Chinese idioms. When explicitly asked if he think the foreign speaker is trying to use humor in this case, Gu didn't hesitate to deny the possibility. In contrast to the well-recognized humorous use of stimulus 6 by the native Chinese speaker, the intended humorous use of stimulus by a non-native speaker indexed the stereotypical image of an unfortunate Chinese learner with insufficient Chinese ability and knowledge who mistakenly uses overly formal *chengyu* items in casual conversations.

4.1.2.3 Summary

As revealed by the data, in formal contexts the Chinese subjects favor the ordinary use of *chengyu* by non-native Chinese speaker that follows the "norms" constructed and adhered by native Chinese. Non-native speakers' mastery of standard *chengyu* usage is extremely noticeable to the Chinese subjects and was positively evaluated as characteristic of an educated professional who is adept at Chinese language and knowledgeable about Chinese culture. By contrast, "no-use" is considered as the default performance of a non-native speaker.

Non-native speakers' extra-ordinary *chengyu* usage in formal settings, seems to be noticed negatively in terms of "appropriateness in given social situation", "trustworthiness and persuasiveness", and over all Chinese proficiency; however, the non-standard usage are positively recognized in terms their "knowledge about Chinese culture," "ability to convey one's ideas", and the general likability. As indicated in the interviews, non-native speakers' extra-ordinary usage are identified by the Chinese subjects as mistakes made due

to the presumed insufficiency in Chinese capacities as recognized members of the "non-native" categorization. It is due to this native speakers' ideology of a native/non-native dichotomy, the lacking in non-native speakers' linguistic performance is not associated with unfavorable personal attributes. Instead, quite interestingly, the "mistakes" are interpreted as attempts at showing genuine interest in the cultural conventions of the target community and at becoming liked among their Chinese counterparts. On the one hand, the implication of this finding lends itself to offering a psychological "safe net" to non-native Chinese learners who are hesitant to use *chengyu* due to the risk of expulsion from the target culture if they fail to deliver. On the other hand, cautions need to be exercised in empowering this idea since presenting oneself a just a pleasant foreigner should not be the ultimate goal for every foreign learners of Chinese. The construction of an accepted and functional self-presentation, a persona that enables effective negotiation of one's intentions in the local community, requires putting in time and efforts to aim for mastery of *chengyu* in ways that is most appreciated in the target culture.

In informal contexts, compared to formal contexts, ordinary *chengyu* usage are favored, and contribute to the building of interpersonal relationships in the local community via a perceived Chinese language and cultural capacity, rather than establishment of professionalism.

The inventive (extra-ordinary) usage is interpreted by some subjects as appropriate and desirable, and by others as inappropriate and evident of insufficiency of mastery over the appropriate use of *chengyu*. It is imperative to be alert about the temptation to generalize this finding into pedagogical implication that encourages Chinese language learners to

practice inventive use of *chengyu*. The native Chinese subjects' bifurcated responses towards non-native speakers' creative *chengyu* usage deserve further examination that should take into account the formality of the context and level of the non-native speakers' Chinese skills. Granted that the novelty of hearing a foreigner using *chengyu* is a strong factor in the partially favored evaluation of non-native speakers' creative *chengyu* usage, it is a risky move that could easily be interpreted negatively depending on the idiosyncratic preference of the Chinese interlocutors. Performing the same inventive usage in a formal context, such as in a professional conversation, would potentially yield serious repercussion given the lower tolerance to non-standard *chengyu* usage shown in previous discussion. In addition, given that the non-native speakers that produced the stimuli in this study both have reached advanced level and have learned Chinese for over 10 years, it is risky to generalize the finding to non-native speakers with insufficient language capacities.

The humorous *chengyu* usage proves to be an interesting case. None of the subjects is able to recognize the humorous intentions and described such usage as "way too formal", "overly written-style", and "excessively textbook-ish." This supposedly "ordinary usage" is labeled as mistakes and attributed to the limit of foreigners' Chinese capacity.

4.2 Discussion

The description and analysis of data in the previous sections reveal the context-dependent nature of listeners' perceptions of the social meanings of *chengyu*. Specifically, the formal/casual dimension, and the nativeness of the speaker, are the two crucial factors to listeners in deciding the legitimacy of a certain *chengyu* usage.

4.2.1 The Formal vs. Informal Context

Data collected in this study indicates that appropriate employment of *chengyu* is expected in formal occasions as the norm: Chinese subjects in general commented less on native Chinese speakers' use of these conventional expressions during public speech and formal, professional conversations; it is the missing of these idiomatic expressions in such formal contexts that stands out as inappropriate deviations from the norm. Chinese subjects recognize the use of *chengyu* in formal contexts as an important discourse marker indexing a 'professional and authoritative' persona of the Chinese speaker -- a point directly related to the intentions achieved through *chengyu* usage discussed in Chapter One. Particularly, a perception of expertise manifested in the proper employment of domain-related *chengyu* items in professional discourse, or rather a recognition of lacking in fundamental qualifying training or skills for the professional role due to the absence of such expressions, is foregrounded in the subjects' commentary.

On the other hand, proper *chengyu* usage by native speakers of Chinese under informal contexts, while easily recognized and accepted by Chinese listeners, are less expected compared to usage in formal contexts. They are interpreted as conveying completely different types of intention as well. A humorous intention, for instance, when delivered in an appropriate tone, is achieved via contrasting the supposedly formal register manifested by the use of *chengyu* with the casual contexts that normally invite oral-style language forms.

Subjects' interpretations of the improper *chengyu* usage present another case that illustrate how register elements play a huge role in how listeners make judgment about the

speakers' intention. Native Chinese speakers' excessive *chengyu* usage in formal public speech, while in general criticized by the audience, is not uncommon especially when associated with bureaucratese by government officials of high status. However, when delivered with an exaggerated tone, overuse in casual contexts are recognized and accepted by Chinese subjects as another form of attempt at a humorous effect.

4.2.2 Comparing Evaluative Strategies Employed by Native Chinese towards NS and NNS's *Chengyu* Usage

Kramsch (1998), in discussing the distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers that the teaching and learning of foreign language is traditionally predicated on, points out a certain authority that comes with the native speakership in defining the authenticity and legitimacy of language use. This perception of "native speaker" as "the authentic embodiment of the standard language" (Kramsch 1998, p.16) is commonly adopted, and manifests in the observations of unequal reactions towards native and non-native executions of the same linguistic move. In the following section, a comparison is drawn to underscore the different evaluative strategies native Chinese speakers display towards members of their own native culture, and non-native speakers, the cultural outsiders. These layers of reaction patterns contribute to the current discussion of distinction between native and non-native speakers by examining native speakers' expectations, ideologies, as well as the cognitive processes behind the forming of evaluative responses. Such a discussion is helpful to prepare L2 learners for successful negotiation of intentions in C2 by first gaining an accurate understanding of the native

speakers' expectations. The pedagogical orientation of the issues mentioned will be addressed in details in the next chapter.

Table 19 Comparing Evaluative Comments on NS and NNS's *Chengyu* Usage in Formal Contexts

	Formal **Ex.** At a press release, a journalist challenging the Chinese spokesman of the Foreign Ministry over North Korean leader's visit to China.	**NS** Comments	**NNS** Comments
Ordinary	*虽然中国外交部**一再否认**，但类似报道还是**层出不穷**，您能否确认此事的真实性？* Although China's foreign ministry repeatedly denied it, articles covering similar topics still appear in print one after another. Can you confirm the authenticity	Described as "normal", "suitable way of speaking in such contexts", "diplomatic word choice", and even "nothing special", "not very impressive".(comment on L2a)	"His Chinese is good. He added rhetoric to his speech using '*yi zai fouren 一再否认'* and '*ceng chu bu qiong 层出不穷'...*very appropriate. These words make him sounded very official, like a diplomatic correspondent, which is proper to the official situation."(Cui, comment on B2a)
Extra-Ordinary	**虽然中国外交部一再矢口否认，但类似报道还是**__屡见不鲜__**，您能否确认此事的真实性？* * Although China's foreign ministry flatly denied it, articles covering similar topics have lost its novelty as they appear in print again and again. Can you confirm the authenticity of this matter?	"His use of the word '*lv jian bu xian 屡见不鲜*' stood out. It's not quite appropriate. In this context you can say 'news articles *ceng chu bu qiong 层出不穷',* or simply 'appear ceaselessly.' His use of *lv jian bu xian* seems a bit unfitting here." (Jia, comment on L2c) "The use of '*lv jian bu xian 屡见不鲜*' seems inaccurate…or maybe it is okay. There might be a more suitable word." (Rui, comment on L2c)	"Chinese would say *yi zai fou ren 一再否认*, not the double negative he used here. The use of the *chengyu* word '*lv jian bu xian 屡见不鲜 '* is not very appropriate, either……His rating of likability dropped because I feel that he wants to show off his language skills by forcing a lot of *chengyu* items in his speech…… Chinese people normally won't dislike foreigners who show off their Chinese. We would just think they are not using it in the most appropriately way at most "(Yao, comment on B2c)
None	*虽然中国外交部**一次又一次否认此事**，但类似报道还是**一个接着一个不断地出现**，您能否确认此事的真实性？* Although China's foreign ministry repeatedly denied it, articles covering similar topics still appear in print one after another. Can you confirm the authenticity	Described as "not formal enough for the situation", "unprofessional", and "inconsistent with the formal discourse." "His language choice is not up to standard and it makes him sound unqualified for a professional political journalist. He should have used '*ceng chu bu qiong 层出不穷*.'"(Fu, comment on L2b)	"In terms of wording, it's an average way of speaking in a formal situation. Nothing special, interesting or things like that……If it were a Chinese, instead of '*yi ge jiezhe yyige ..*', he might use more advanced vocabularies." (Sam, comment on B2b)

Table 20 Comparing Evaluative Comments on NS and NNS's *Chengyu* Usage in Informal Context (Inventive use)

	Informal (Inventive Use) **Ex.** Two colleagues discussing a social phenomenon regarding common Chinese education ideology.	NS Comments	NNS Comments
Extra-Ordinary (Inventive)	*同事 A：现在的家长周末都要孩子上补习班，你说是不是太过分了？* Colleague A: Parents nowadays send their kids to cram schools even on weekends, don't you think it is too much? *同事 B：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都望子成硕士，望子成博士，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。* Colleague B: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the children to get a masters degree, and hope for them to get a Ph.D. degree. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.	"It (the inventive use) is an abuse of our four-character *chengyu*. It fractures the Chinese language and the four-character syntactic structure of *chengyu*……This is probably more acceptable if he was attempting to make a joke." (Yao, comment on L5c) "It doesn't sound that different to me……*Wang zi cheng long* is a Chinese idiom. *Wang zi cheng shuoshi/boshi* makes use of the original *chengyu* item to foreground the academic degrees (parents want for their children), which is fine. Actually the first word that popped in my mind (upon hearing this dialogue) is *wang zi cheng long.* But this invention of his in fact has similar effect." (Sam, comment on L5c)	"His (inventive) use left me a deep impression. Chinese *chengyu* are 'fixed language' after all and have its own set of rules. If you use it like this, it would bother people who are strict, or the older generation…….I feel, or anyone who are relatively particular and strict about Chinese language will feel that (the creative use) is not a good use of language. This gives me the impression that he lacks sufficient understanding of Chinese culture...It is already very rare for a foreigner to be able to use the 望子成 X structure in Chinese… But because *chengyu* are special lexical items, I still feel that he used it wrong." (Jia, comment on B5c) "I find it very creative, and making a lot of sense. '*Wang zi cheng shuoshi, boshi'* is truly what the Chinese parents wish for… It's definitely a plus." (Rui, comment on B5c) "This creative use of Chinese idiom demonstrates her flexibility in using Chinese language. It's a sign of advanced language proficiency." (Hui, comment on B5c)

Continued

Table 20: Continued

Ordinary	同事 A：…? Colleague A: …? *同事 B：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都望子成龙，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。* Colleague B: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the child to become a dragon. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.	Described as "a normal casual conversation between two friends," "a typical Chinese way of conversing," and "sounded appropriate."	"First of all, he uses *chengyu* quite properly……If in reality a foreign coworker of mine uses *chengyu* this well, I will tell him that you speak really good Chinese. You have gone beyond the "talk about work-related stuff" stage, and can actually have deep, meaningful conversation with us... By that I mean we can hangout as friends after work, and I don't have to worry about the level of difficulty of my language because I know that he can understand where I come from when we talk (An, comment on B5a)
None	同事 A：…? Colleague A: …? *同事 B：是有点儿过分。不过现在的家长都希望孩子有出息、成为出色的人才，周末让孩子上补习班也可以理解。* Colleague B: It is a bit too much for the kid. But these days parents all hope for the child to become successful, brilliant talent. It's understandable that they would send their children to cram schools on weekends.	"His tone is a bit serious for a casual conversation. In terms of wording, it's nothing special." (Cui, comment on L5b) "In terms of appropriateness, (I gave a 4 because) I noticed this hearing it the second time. He first uses an oral style '*you chuxi 有出息'* and then a more formal way of saying the same thing…….Oh yes, right, '*chengwei chuse de rencai 成为出色的人才*'， which is not a big word, not a *chengyu*, but a very standard word choice (for this topic)." (Yun, comment on L5b)	"How can his answer be this accurate and perfect? He didn't even pause, or use any filler, like '*zhege', 'neige'*…Chinese speakers would not say it this way. He sounded very official… Here, words like '*xiwang haizi you chuxi, chengwei chuse de rencai 希望孩子有出息，成为出色的人才*' sounded pretty official. I don't think anyone (native Chinese speaker) would use the expression '*chengwei youxiu de rencai.*' It sounded very textbook-ish."(Fu, comment on B5b)

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Table 21 Comparing Evaluative Comments on NS and NNS's *Chengyu* Usage in Informal Contexts (humorous use)

	Informal：Humorous Use **Ex.** Someone responding to a coworker's question about why he is working late today.	NS Comments	NNS Comments
Ordinary (Humorous use)	*同事 A：今天怎么这么用工加班到这么晚啊？* Colleague A: How come you are working overtime and staying until this late today? *同事 B：那可不，我可一直是严格要求自己，对待工作兢兢业业、任劳任怨。* Colleague B: You noticed it! I am always this strict to myself, and assiduous at work, bearing hardship without complaint.	Described as "witty", "funny", yet "nothing unusual" in a sense that "an average Chinese can possibly say things like this." "He (the native Chinese speaker) sounds like an earnest white collar-worker to me……. He employs a humorous tone here. Had he used a serious tone in this situation, it would read as overly confident, even arrogant." (Sam, comment on L6a) "One possibility is that he (the native speaker) is the type of guy who is not reserved nor modest. He likes to joke around and wants to make sure others know that he is working extra hours. An alternative is that he is very close to the female colleague, so he was just making a joke..... Since he is a native speaker of Chinese, I won't think of him as skilled in language, especially because these *chengyu* are so common that any Chinese is able to use them this way……I myself might make a joke in exactly these words, too." (Wu, comment on L6a)	Described as "way too formal," "overly written-style," and "excessively textbook-ish." "(Laughter) This must have come from a textbook because it is overly written-style. ……He strikes me as an earnest Chinese language learner, who, unfortunately, learned a list of Chinese vocabulary items that is useless. This foreigner lacks real experience talking directly to Chinese people. If this were a native Chinese, he would have used more spoken language... However, being able to use these *chengyu* means that he is a pretty advanced learner. Four-character *chengyu* are advanced lexicons which are not easy to learn." (Fu, comment on B6a) "If a Chinese says it this way, it would come across as a little bit pretentious. So Chinese people normally won't say it like this, unless you want to make a joke. If a foreigner uses the idioms this way, as a listener I think it is acceptable because (I know) there's a limit to his Chinese capacity." (Gu, comment on B6a)
Extra-Ordinary	同事 A：…? Colleague A:…? *同事 B：那可不，我可一直是严格要求自己，对待工作兢兢业业、勤勤恳恳、任劳任怨，不辞辛劳。* Colleague B: You noticed it! I am always this strict to myself, assiduous, diligent and conscientious at work, bear hardship without complaint, and never shrink from toil and hardship.	"Normally in everyday conversation we won't use this much of *chengyu* in a roll. Only when one is joking or teasing someone for fun will we use a few more with friends (like he did here)." (Cui, comment on L6c)	"(Laughter) His problem is that he made a casual occasion sound like a formal one by using an excessive amount of *chengyu*…It sounds like he is learning *chengyu* and is doing all he can to practice using the idioms. He wants to put all these *chengyu* items together, which is not uncommon (for language learners)… This is not proper Chinese usage, but he must keep trying to apply them in order to acquire the idioms."(Fin, comment on B6c)

4.2.2.1 Ordinary Chengyu Usage：Lower Expectations and Higher Tolerance on Non-native Speakers

Patterns that emerged from the data reveal that native Chinese have lower expectations towards non-native speakers in regard to employing four-character Chinese idioms in formal, professional contexts. As elaborated in more details in previous sections, native Chinese consider the proper *chengyu* usage in formal occasions as the most adequate and expected, while failure to employ these idiomatic expressions properly, or failure to use them at all, stands out to the native speakers as falling short of their expectations.

By contrast, the Chinese subjects consciously or subconsciously lower the standard for non-native speakers. This is both implied in Chinese subjects' acceptance of none-use of *chengyu* as the most adequate performance for a foreigner, and explicitly indicated in their comments that they would adopt a higher and stricter standard when evaluating native Chinese speakers' performance. When non-native speakers exceed this lowered expectation by pulling off a *chengyu* usage in formal contexts, native speaker are pleasantly surprised and more likely to perceive the non-native speaker as a competent communicator who demonstrates a decent command of Chinese language and culture knowledge. *Chengyu* is perceived as a special marker that qualifies the nonnative user to be taken seriously enough to participate in higher-level conversations in the target culture.

4.2.2.2 Extra-Ordinary Chengyu Usage: Stylistic Variation vs. Insufficient Language Capacity

Native Chinese speakers also demonstrate vastly different reactions towards improper *chengyu* usage by native and nonnative speakers of Chinese. Native speakers'

improper *chengyu* usage are recognized in general as stylistic variations among native Chinese speakers, which, despite the criticism over the unfavorable stylistic effects, are still accepted as within the native speaker's side of the linguistic territory. By contrast, nonnative speakers' improper usage always index, and are attributed to, the non-nativeness of the speakers. The non-native speakership manifests as a very particular level of expected Chinese capacity and cultural knowledge between "above-the-average" and "native-like," although the majority of the Chinese subjects do not have a concrete idea about what the latter encompasses. On the one hand, being able to even elude to the *chengyu* items itself indexes a higher level of engagement with Chinese language and culture. On the other hand, the failure to employ these rhetorical elements to the natives' satisfaction reinforces the "apparently commonsense linguistic boundaries" between the native and nonnative speakers (Gill, 2012).

However, while the linguistic aspect of the attempt is not flawless, the performance itself is not entirely a fiasco after all. The perception of improper *chengyu* usage by non-native speakers as mistakes, which are "bond to happen as one learns to use another language", doesn't reflect negatively on the nonnatives especially in terms how affable they sound to native Chinese. As evident by the data, in formal situations while a nonnative speaker who misuses a *chengyu* are perceived as less appropriate, less professional, and less skillful at Chinese language, emotion-wise native Chinese still respond to the good-natured intention conveyed by the efforts put in trying to appeal to the Chinese conventions. In less formal, low-stake situations, such improper usage brings out the teacher inside of the Chinese who they never know exists. Instead of fixated on the mistakes, native Chinese

subjects are willing, many even feel obligated, to help their foreign colleagues out and teach them the "correct" way of using the *chengyu.*

4.2.2.3 Casual Chengyu Usage：Unrecognized Humorous Intentions of the Non-native Speakers

One common manifestation of the native speakers' authority to claim or assign authenticity and legitimacy to language use (Kramsch, 1998) is the assumption that native speakers of a language are privileged to employ certain linguistic transgressions. Learners (non-native speakers) of the language, even those whose linguistic performance can pass as native-like, are considered incapable of bending the shared rules of a language censored by grammar and semantics. In so far as one is seen as a language learner, positioned and judged in relation to the native speaker baseline, one's linguistic transgressions "count as deviations from the shared system...not contributions to or influence on it" (Prabhu, 1995, p.288).

Similar pattern is observed in the data collected regarding the humorous use of *chengyu* when conversing casually with friends. Humorous *chengyu* usage are predominantly employed by native speakers under casual circumstances with interlocutors to whom they feel close enough. A humorous effect is achieved by employing these idioms that conventionally indexing high level of formality, in casual, lower-risk, occasions. While Chinese native speakers' humorous intention behind this irregular *chengyu* usage is easily recognizable, data shows that the same rhetorical move performed by non-natives were not accepted as attempt at a humorous effect. Non-native speakers' humorous *chengyu* usage

are interpreted as mistakes language learners make which are "unavoidable in the process of learning to use the language."

In examining the underlying reasons behind the divergent responses towards humorous usage by native and non-native speakers, two key factors need to be taken into consideration. One is the intonation adopted by the speakers, which is a crucial paralinguistic indicator of the humorous intention. The second is the native Chinese subjects' level of expectation for non-native performances. During the recording of the stimuli, the speakers were instructed to use a humorous intonation. Both native and nonnative speakers employed an exaggerated tone they see fit to conduct the casual and light-hearted conversation. It should be noted that the phonetic properties of the stimuli produced by non-native speakers are by no means comparable to that of a stimulus pronounced by a native Chinese speaker. Therefore, without further examination of the phonetic details of the two groups of stimuli, the evidence is inclusive on the degree of influence a humorous intonation had on subjects' failed recognition of the non-native humorous intention. Further inquiries remain to be made about to what extend the subjects' awareness of the speaker's nativeness could have contributed, or led, to this perception. However, in this study, non-native-like intonation is part of the foreignness on which native Chinese subjects' based their judgment. While they don't pass as native-like, the stimuli capture these two advanced-level non-native speakers' best attempt at imitating the intonation. Therefore, it is valid to draw conclusions based on the current data so long as the limitation is clearly described.

Chapter 5: *Chengyu* and a Pedagogy of Expectations

5.1 The CFL Learning Career as a Succession of Meeting Sets of Expectation

Expectation is a powerful element in human communication. As described in Chapter One, communication functions on the basis of a shared understanding between interlocutors about what one intends and what one takes the other to intend. What we *take* each other to intend most of the time is influenced by what we *expect* each other to intend. We enter a social interaction with other interlocutors, having a pre-existing judgment about who they are, which aspects of their identity are relevant in the immediate context, and consequentially what courses of action they are likely to take to manifest the underlying intentions that make the most sense given the information available. This expectation of others' intentions is emergent as it continues to be shaped throughout the interaction, yet at the same time it is predominantly rooted in our prior knowledge gained through socialization with particular individuals in a particular culture. To a certain extent, we react to what we expect of our interlocutors based on an existing idea that we have formulated about these individuals. Such a claim is especially helpful since humans share psychological states of mind in collaborative communicative events, the achievement of

intersubjectivity,[1] or how "separate individuals are able to know or act within a common world, [how] members of a society negotiate or achieve a common context" (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992, p. 27) via conventions such as conversational expressions of intentions and interpretative strategies. One aspect of intersubjectivity that pertains to the discussion here is that we are capable of recognizing what is expected of us by the others and taking advantage of that expectation to achieve our own agendas.

5.1.1 A Game Analogy

A game is a useful metaphor for understanding the role of expectation in human communication. Suits (1978) provides a neat description of a game: "To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by rules, where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means, and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity" (p. 41). Suits argues that the notion of a game contains a few defining elements including a clearly defined goal and a set of rules agreed upon among participants. To claim that one plays a game, e.g., chess, it is minimally assumed that he or she knows what is allowed and what is prohibited, what is the purpose of playing, and what indicates winning. Applying the concept of a game to the analysis of cultural activity, Jian and Shepherd (2010) conceptualize the action of playing a game as "participation in the activities in a role recognized by the other participants in the events where scoring (winning and losing) is possible" (p. 104). This definition

[1] See Wells (1981); Duranti and Goodwin (1992); Gumperz (1996); Ochs (1996); and Schutz (1967, 1970).

foregrounds a vital element that is implicit in Suits' description of game: a scoring system, an agreed-upon mechanism for determining successful and unsuccessful performances.

Following the vein of studies that conceptualize games as primary means by which members of a culture construct shared social reality (Goffman, 1974; Walker & Noda, 2000; Shepherd, 2005; Jian & Shepherd, 2010), I borrow the notion of an *expectations game* in the analysis of social engagements. Expectations held by participants in a social event dominate the criteria for the evaluation of individual performances. Those who hold the power to evaluate the effectiveness of the performances are referred to as *judges*, while those being judged are *players*. The game of expectations is not new. Political campaigns and product launches try to anticipate the expectations of voters or customers to gain votes or profits. In these cases, winning the game does not just hinge upon how well the political candidate performs or how advanced the functions of the product are, but how well the players' performances measure up to the expectations of the judges. Unlike assessments that are based on objective rubrics, expectations bestow authority on a target population to decide what is correct, appropriate, and desired.

5.1.2 A Pedagogy of Expectations

Pedagogy of a foreign language can also benefit from utilizing the construct of expectations games. Walker and Noda (2010) assert the importance of assessing foreign language learners' performance against the expectations of the target culture:

> We can't be content to observe the understanding and performance of our learners, even if they seem to reflect the assumptions of the target culture. We must also evaluate the receptivity of their performance in the target culture. It should not be enough that they have conveyed their intentions or comprehend another person's intentions successfully. We need to be concerned with how the persons with whom they interact view the success of the communication. Only when our students are made aware of the reactions of their interlocutors in the classroom and beyond will their memory of the future serve them well. (pp. 47-48)

Only when learners develop an accurate understanding of target culture expectations, do they begin to possess the capacity to interpret native speakers' responses towards their speech and behaviors. Guided by Walker and Noda's view of native speakers' receptivity of foreign language learners' performances as the primary determinant of language learners' successes, this dissertation proposes a pedagogy of expectations[1], which conceptualizes a life-long foreign language learning career as a succession of playing the game of expectations of the target culture. The judges who hold the power to assess learners' performances are the native speakers of that language with whom foreign language learners routinely interact. Recognizing what their expectations are in given social situations and knowing how to take advantage of those expectations to negotiate one's own intentions in the target culture are the two crucial steps of winning the expectations games. The following sections discusses key elements in the expectations game of foreign language and culture, including the judges and players, the ultimate goal of participating in the expectations game, a scoring systems, and recognition and identification of context-dependent expectations.

[1] The concept of "pedagogy of expectations" was first coined by Walker and Jian in the public talk "A Chinese Language Pedagogy for the 21th Century: Basic Assumptions" delivered at (continued next page)

5.1.3 The Judges and Players: Who Owns Chinese Language?

One observation made by Gumperz (quoted in Young, 1994) about cross-cultural communication is that one cannot assume communication between a competent foreigner and a native is the same as that between two native speakers. In aiming at success in playing the expectations games of the target culture, a foreign language learner needs to be aware of the "native speaker effects," as discussed in Chapter Two: how language ideologies regarding the native/non-native speaker dichotomy affect people's practices and perceptions (Doerr, 2009). Particularly, how the mentality of the native speakers as the self-perceived rightful owner of their language influences their perception and evaluation of the non-native learners' language usage.

A premise underlying the ideology that native speakers who grow up socialized in Chinese culture are the rightful owners of Mandarin Chinese is the idea that the "native speaker" status automatically bestows one with (1) a high level of competence in using the language, and (2) the authority to make a judgment about the legitimacy of the language usage. The reverse view is the stereotypical profiling of "non-native speakers" as deficient speakers with underdeveloped Chinese language skills in relation to "native speakers." This asymmetrical power relation between native and non-native speakers has been captured in various manifestations, including testimonies of non-native language learners themselves describing the pleasure derived from successfully "passing for a native," as well as the frustrating *Schadenfreude* of native speakers who are "eager to detect the

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The Ohio State University on Feb. 19th 2016. Walker and Jian propose to direct pedagogical attention and efforts to native (C2) expectations in contrast to non-native intentions.

slightest trace of a [foreign] accent, real or imagined" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 93). The native speakers' expectation that non-native speakers will perform incompetence and use foreignisms derives from the native and non-native speaker dichotomy.

The comparison described in Chapter Four of Chinese subjects' responses to native and non-native *chengyu* usage also revealed the consequences of native speakers' claim of ownership over Mandarin Chinese. Not only did the recruited native Chinese subjects assume the role of an authoritative "gatekeeper" of the Chinese language, they showed a tendency toward being more critical of non-native speakers' use of non-standard *chengyu* than when native speakers did the same thing. While native Chinese speakers' non-standard usages, such as the overuse of *chengyu* in public speech and humorous usages of *chengyu* in casual conversations, were recognized as stylistic variations that "must have been used for a valid reason," non-native speakers' variant usages always were attributed to their non-nativeness. In other words, native Chinese subjects tend to justify a non-standard Chinese usage as legitimate when it was conducted by a fellow native speaker of Chinese, yet they perceive the non-native execution of the same linguistic move as a mistake made by the non-native speakers who "don't speak Chinese as their mother tongue after all" (comment by a subject). The native Chinese speakers' mentality of being owners of the Chinese language is also revealed by their lower expectation for non-native speakers to employ *chengyu* items in higher-risk, formal contexts such as TV interviews or public speech on governmental issues. This was revealed by the Chinese subjects' acceptance of "no use" of *chengyu* in such situations for a foreigner, and their explicit commentaries that a higher standard would have been adopted if the speaker being rated were a native Chinese.

As players in the expectations game of the target culture, non-native language learners need to recognize the role of native speakers as judges who possess ownership of the target language. Regardless of whether ownership is real or simply imagined, it has actual, concrete influences on people's practice and perception. An accurate understanding of this general power difference between the native judges and non-native players is crucial to identifying the emergent expectations in any given C2 contexts.

Meanwhile, foreign language learners, especially those whose physical features stand out in the target-culture environment, must also be prepared to be automatically perceived as representatives of the "foreigner" stereotype. Each culture collectively constructs perceptions of people from other cultures (Shepherd, 2005), and there is no exception to this rule. These "foreigner" stereotypes are activated each time individual non-native speakers enter the presence of target culture members. Therefore, it is helpful if non-native speakers equip themselves with knowledge about how they are perceived, and the expectations of them when dealing with a particular foreign culture. Additionally, developing psychological and behavioral strategies in response to potentially frustrating treatment in the target culture reduces the chances of misunderstandings and embarrassment.

5.1.4 The End Goal: Creating Desirable C2 Personas

If the main goal of learning to converse in a foreign language is to gain the capacity to negotiate intentions in the target culture, then winning the expectations game of the target culture helps fulfill that goal by accumulating points that establish oneself in the target culture as someone native speakers take seriously enough to make the effort to

interpret his or her intentions. In fact, a learner's goal should be becoming a recognized player of the target culture games rather than attempting to achieve nativeness.

Depending on how well learners fulfills the expectations in given social events, as players of the expectations game, they gain points that allow them to be "who they are" in the culture. That is, non-native speakers create personas by consciously choosing what to share with others when socializing in the target culture. I follow Walker's (2000) definition of persona as "what an individual allows an audience to know about him or her" (Walker, quoted in Shepard, 2005, p. 262). Not only can one's personas vary considerably from one situation to another, but also the personas can change in a relatively short period of time (Walker, 2000). Therefore, compared to *identity*, persona is a more suitable notion to employ in describing the consequences of learning a foreign language.

Walker (2000) makes the observation that American foreign language learners often are unaware that they are only who the target culture allows them to be. Shepard (2005) echoes that a given culture only has and accepts a finite number of personas by quoting Goffman (1959):

> When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both. Further, if the individual takes on a task that is not only new to him but also unestablished in the society, or if he attempts to change the light in which his task is viewed, he is likely to find that there are already several well-established fronts among which he must choose. Thus, when a task is given a new front we seldom find that the front it is given is itself new. (Goffman, 1959, pp. 17-18, quoted in Shepherd 2005, p. 226)

By participating and scoring points in the expectations games of the target culture, foreign language learners simultaneously figure out the particular attributes of the personas that are favored by the native-speaking judges. As a result, a set of C2 personas emerge as each foreign language learner engages in a spectrum of expectations games in the target language environment. Finally, creating an array of personas that are desirable in corresponding target cultural contexts in turn benefits learners in negotiating intentions with Chinese counterparts. After all, successful negotiation of intentions at the social level involves conscious manipulation of one's behavior as an act of identity.

5.1.5 The Scoring System: Evaluating How Expectations are Met

A scoring system is the established mechanism for keeping scores, and determining the winning/losing state of each player in a game. Since winning the expectations game is defined by the creation of an increasingly effective set of C2 personas, the scorekeeping should calculate how well that goal is achieved through performances that meet, or fail to meet, the C2 expectations.

5.1.5.1 Zone of Tolerance

Expectations games are distinct from the construct of cultural games in that the expectations of our interlocutors create the vital criteria for judgment. The construct of a "zone of tolerance" that originally emerged in service management and consumer behavior literature (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Kennedy & Thirkell, 1988; Oliver, 1980; Swan, 1988) can be employed as the unifying construct among expectations, performances, and

outcomes. A zone of tolerance has three main applications: as a description of a satisfactory range of customer pre-performance expectations, service performances, and outcome states (Johnston, 1995). In the model proposed by Poiesz and Bloemer (1991), these three interlinked zones of tolerance (Figure 7) illustrate how pre-performance expectations are involved in formulating evaluations of performances and performers. Their general assumption is that customer satisfaction is based on customers' comparison of their pre-service expectations to their actual perception of the service experience afterwards. If the experience measures up to the expectation, then the customer is satisfied; if the service experience goes beyond the customer's expectations, then the customer is delighted; and if the experience fails to meet the expectations, the customer is dissatisfied and evaluates the service quality as poor.

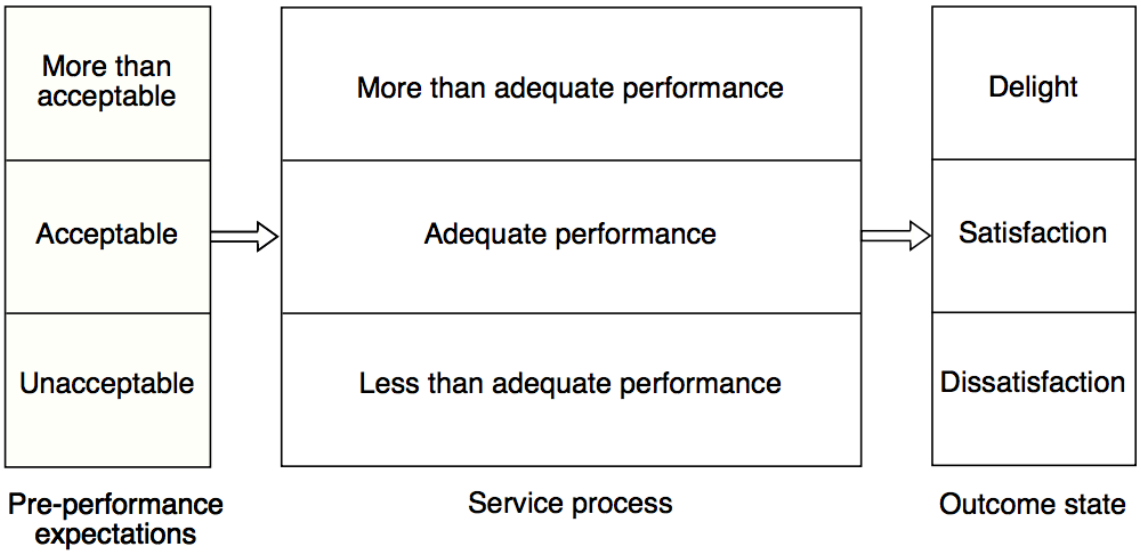

Figure 6 Poiesz and Bloemer's "Three Zones of Tolerance" (in Johnston 1995)

5.1.5.2 Evaluating How Expectations are Met

Borrowing Poiesz and Bloemer's model measuring customer satisfaction and service quality, I extend it to the analysis of how judges formulate perception and evaluative opinions in expectations games (see Figure 8) with a few subtle tweaks. The following sections give a step-by-step illustration of this process of evaluating how expectations are met in communicative encounters.

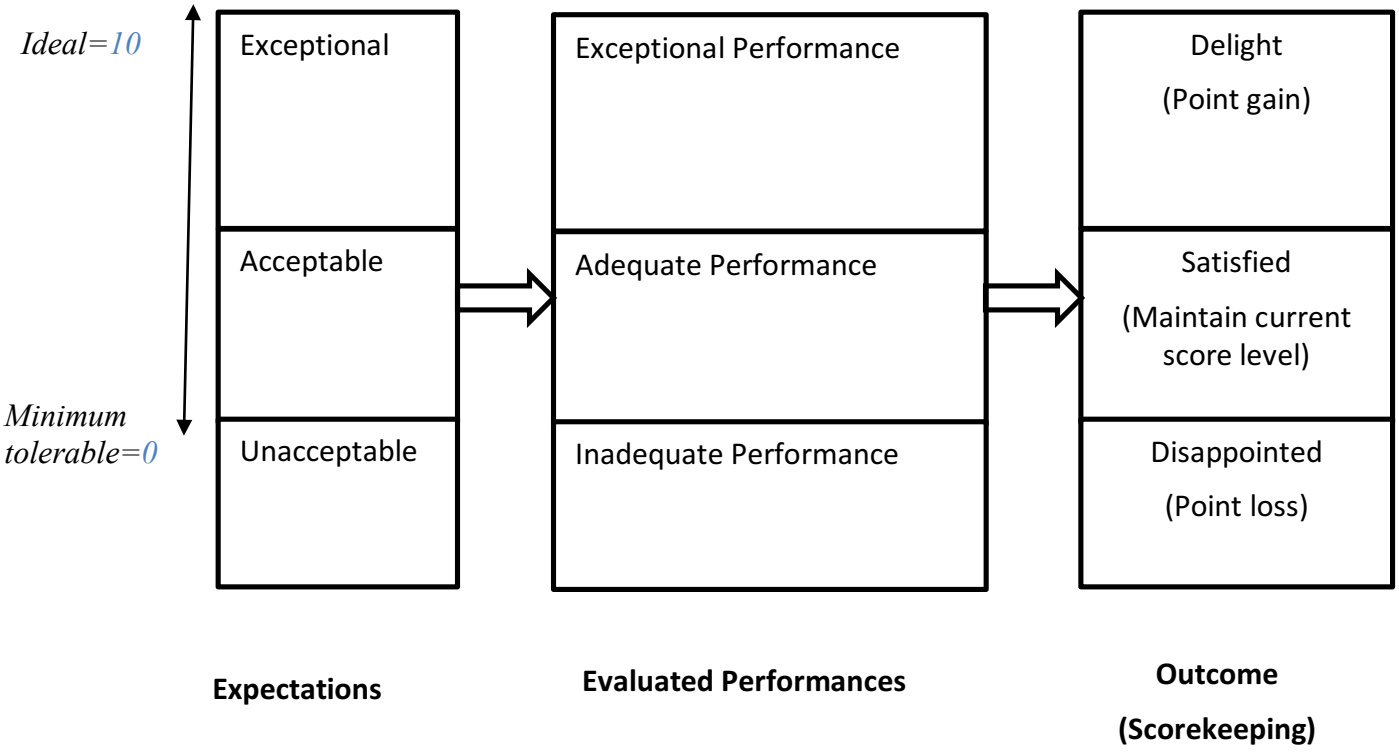

Figure 7 A Process of Evaluating How Expectations are Met

(1) Pre-performance Expectations of the Speaker

Observe how a native speaking judge engages in a communicative event with a foreign language learner for the first time. It is assumed that prior to interacting with the foreigner, the native speaker holds opinions about what constitutes an acceptable, less than acceptable, or more than acceptable performance. These are labeled as "acceptable," "unacceptable," and "exceptional" in Figure 8. The two thresholds of acceptability are dynamic and adjustable.

The native speaking judge also consciously or subconsciously anticipates where the specific foreigner's performance would fall along the scale. If a foreigner's performance is expected to be "acceptable" or "exceptional," this means that the judge accepts variation within a range of performance ranging from "minimum tolerable" to "ideal." For the purpose of creating a scoring system for the expectations game, we code expectation of minimum tolerable performance as 0 and the highest expectation as 10.

Unacceptable performances are seen as minus 0 and there is little value to assign definite numerical value to them, since the expectation of an "unacceptable performance" indicates the non-native player is not considered to be a serious participant or that the judge expects him or her to fail. If such pre-existing prejudice against the player is strong enough, a performance which would have passed as "adequate" might be instead perceived as "inadequate" if, for instance, there is ample evidence that non-native language usage is perceived as less acceptable in comparison to a native execution of the same performance. In Chapter Four, I described how the humorous intention in the

chengyu usage by non-native speakers of Chinese was misinterpreted by the native Chinese subjects as "language learners' mistakes," even when those same native Chinese subjects had no difficulty recognizing the humorous intention in the same *chengyu* usage performed by the native Chinese speaker. In this case, the native speakers' expectation of the foreigners as "incapable of making jokes using *chengyu*" results in their negative judgment about the performance itself.

(2) In-process Evaluation of the Performance

As a judge engages in multiple conversational exchanges with the foreigner, chunks of performances are judged consciously or subconsciously to be *adequate*, *exceptional*, or *inadequate* according to the judge's pre-existing ideas about what constitutes an acceptable or unacceptable performance. Accordingly, for the convenience of discussion, these performances are conceptualized as distributed on a scale of 0 to 10, 0 being the minimally adequate performance and 10 being the most ideal performance.

This is a complex psychological process that is comprised of several "simultaneous interactions that may involve more than one comparison standard—a process of multiple comparisons (which might occur either simultaneously or sequentially)" (Tse & Wilton, 1998). For example, as illustrated in Chapter Four, cognitive interview results reveal that native speakers of Chinese assess foreigners' *chengyu* usage at two levels: (1) the linguistic level, including phonological, lexical, and syntactical elements, and (2) the intentional level, such as sociocultural appropriateness and likability. Like the Chinese subjects recruited in the study, at this stage native-

speaking judges often formulate an assessment of the performance per se, without arriving at an evaluative opinion about the speaker yet.

During this evaluative process, the judges may not consciously notice the performance that matches up to their expectations. As the judges progress through the social interaction, if there is nothing that happens during the process that either negates or exceeds their expectations, they would emerge in "a state of neutrality" at the end of the interaction. This same phenomenon is also captured by the native Chinese speaking subjects' commentaries during the cognitive interview sessions. Since only performances outside of expected behaviors elicit positive or negative responses towards the performance, when asked to comment on *chengyu* usages the Chinese subjects tended to remain indifferent to the usage that is close to their expectation while being more elaborative about usages that were unexpected. Therefore, it was possible to identify and further compare the native Chinese speaking judges' expectations of native and non-native speakers' *chengyu* usage.

(3) Three Outcome States

While in Poiesz and Bloemer's original model the final outcome measures customers' level of satisfaction about the overall service experience, the evaluations of player performance in expectations games lead to foreign language learners' gaining or losing points in the construction of an effective C2 persona. Scores can be calculated by measuring the actual performances against the expectations using the numerical values (1-10) assigned to them. The result of this scorekeeping process is manifested in three outcome states of *satisfied, disappointed* and *delight*.

A state of *satisfied* is reached when learners' performance neither fall short of nor exceed the pre-performance expectations, whichever level of the expectation one starts from. For example, if a non-native speaker who is expected to give a 5-point performance is able to deliver a 5-point performance, he/she maintains the level of performances that sustained his/her C2 persona without gaining or losing extra points. A state of *disappointed* results from the foreign players' failure to live up to what is expected of them while a state of *delight* is the consequence if the actual performances go beyond the expectations. If another foreigner who has consistently performed at the 8-point level delivers a 5-point performance, he/she loses points in proportion to the 3-point expectation-performance difference. Similarly, a 5-point performer earns a proportional amount of scores if he or she impresses the judges with an 8-point performance. Although in reality we seldom evaluate other people's performance by subtracting scores, this quantification of performances is meaningful both in an analogical sense, and in its ability to signify the proportional relationship between the expectation-performance

difference and the learners' gain in how well they impress and therefore are accepted by members of the target culture.

It is imperative to point out that maintaining the current recognized level of performance is not the default; rather it requires constant and continuous efforts in each and every performance in which a L2 learner participates, especially for those that operate at higher levels. The higher level of performance one masters, the higher the level of expectations that one encounters and thus the greater the effort required to live up to the expectations. Maintaining the C2 persona is also a challenging task for foreign leaners since native speakers, especially those who are not well acquainted with foreigners, often misjudge the range of performances a non-native speaker is capable of and form unrealistic expectations that are beyond the learners' actual capacity. As a result, learners either have to keep expanding the current skill inventory, or else they face the consequences of disappointing their counterparts in the target culture.

5.1.6 An Expectation-driven Model of Constructing C2 Personas

As foreign language learners commit themselves as players of the C2 expectations games, they start from their default first culture (C1) persona which only contains a single "foreigner" front. As illustrated in Figure 8, they go through a process of constructing a set of increasingly effective C2 personae, which helps them achieve intentions in the target culture and remove the anticipation of an accommodation burden on the part of the L2 native speakers.

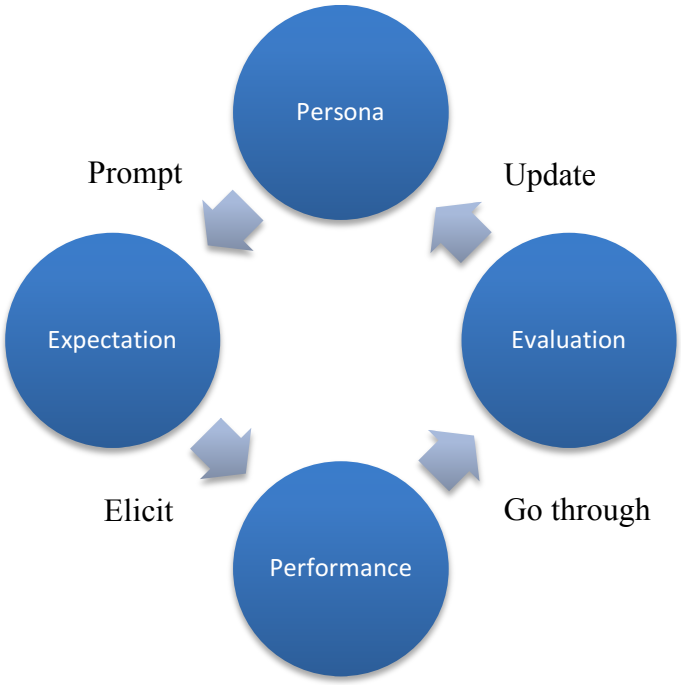

Figure 8 A Procedure for Constructing a C2 Persona

The player starts with a given set of personas, which prompts particular C2 expectations. The judges develop these expectations of the player under a specific interactional context based on prior experiences and knowledge about who the player is and how he or she conducts him- or herself. Even when the native speakers previously have never talked with the particular foreigner to create an accurate baseline, from information learned via verbal instructions or past experience observing how other foreigners behave in similar situations, the judge can formulate a stereotypical anticipation about possible levels of acceptable and unacceptable performances. What constitutes each of these levels can be very specific, containing a set of behaviors, or it can be composed of implicit, vague beliefs.

The recognition of these C2 expectations elicits a set C2 performances, which are in turn evaluated against those expectations, following the procedure discussed in section 5.1.5. The outcomes of the evaluation process further affect the judges' attitudes and impression of the inferiority/superiority of the foreign speakers' performance in C2 contexts. By compiling these memories of interacting with the speakers to form a larger knowledge domain, the judges update their existing ideology of these players. If the players deliver what was expected, it is expected that they will maintain the same level of performance in succeeding games. If the speakers' performances fall short of the expectation, it is likely that they will lose some control in who they want to be in the C2, and therefore the judges will lower their future expectations of the speakers in similar social interactions. If the speakers are able to pleasantly surprise the judges with extraordinary performances in a fairly consistent manner, they earn points that allow the creation of a richer, more effective set of C2 personas.

5.1.7 Identifying Context-dependent Expectations in the C2

Similar to how a political candidate has to appeal to different demographic groups of voters, different C2 contexts correspond to different levels of expectations for foreign language learners. A cashier at a convenient store probably will not expect a non-native speaker who walks in to get a snack to do more than engage in friendly small talk while the supervisor of that same non-native speaker might expect an elaborate presentation of the department's monthly sales report during the staff meeting. For learners of a foreign language, figuring out what they are expected to do in a given C2 context is the critical first step in winning the favor of the native speaking judges, especially for more

advanced learners who have accumulated a repertoire of cultural behaviors from which to choose. Here are a few suggestions for learners who aim to become competent players in the foreign culture expectations game:

(1) Avoid relying on base-culture interpretations and explanations of events.

Learning a foreign language and engaging a foreign culture is a daunting challenge in that one must give up at least some aspects of control about how their words and behaviors are interpreted and assessed. Turner (1991) describes the insecurity learners of a foreign language feel about their tendency to fall back on the base-cultural framework:

> Some of us are afraid of changing the language we speak, which is to say, of learning a foreign language…. At the deepest level, we feel that we will lose ourselves if we change our default concepts. We feel that we were lucky to have become competent once. We do not want to be faced with it again. Professionally and personally, we feel that a change in our default concepts will suddenly make us incompetent. As a defense, we tell ourselves that we do not have to pay attention to whatever would make us revise our default concepts. (Turner, 1991, p. 27)

Accurate identification of situated expectations of the foreign culture requires the learners to be willing to overcome the discomfort of stepping outside the base-culture safety net. This means opening up to building new schema for interpreting and evaluating interactions that happen in the C2 and adjusting the "default concepts," in Turner's term. This also means humbling oneself to be able to notice the contradictory expectations of American culture and Chinese culture in the most common cultural conventions, such as exchanging greetings with strangers, or hosting a dinner party. The earlier foreign language learners begin to develop a new interpretive framework for participating in the foreign culture, the

better chance they have at recognizing the sometimes extremely nuanced expectations of the various target culture contexts.

(2) Be mindful of the gap between expectations of native speakers and non-native speakers.

Suggesting that foreigner language learners embrace the construction of a target cultural worldview is by no means encouraging them to aim at becoming native speakers of the target language. In fact, such a goal of speaking like a native speaker is neither possible nor necessary. Agar (1994) asserts that the nature of the interactions non-native speakers face is fundamentally different from those of natives since they are consciously or subconsciously treated differently in C2 environments. What the findings of this study have revealed is that native-speaking judges are not consistent in the criteria they employ in judging the performances of native and non-native speakers. The native Chinese speakers' self-conceptualized superiority as owners of the Chinese language results in lower expectations of foreign language learners in employing Chinese. This offers further evidence for the "foreigner" stereotype, discussed in section 5.1.3, which can "hinder or facilitate one's movement in a culture" (Shepherd, 2005, p. 225). The findings of this study reveals that on the one hand, when evaluating the linguistic aspect of the performance, native-speaking judges are more alert to non-native speakers' non-standard language usage. As shown in Figure 9, some of what is regarded as an adequate native-speaking performance might be judged as linguistically or culturally inadequate when performed by a foreign speaker. The various types of extra-ordinary use of *chengyu* examined in this study are evidence for this stereotypically different expectations of the non-natives. This

suggests that at least a portion of culture conventions is only accessible to native language speakers due to the native speaker effect. Similarly, at the highest level of non-native speakers' performance the so-called "native-like" performance seems to be also reserved for the natives and off limit to the non-native speakers of Chinese. On the other hand, data suggests that with the lower expectation of the foreigner language learners, the native speaking judges are also likely to show more tolerance and understanding to non-native speakers when they produce some inadequate performance. Foreign learners' successful execution of what is deemed common to native speakers is also more likely to considered as exceptional.

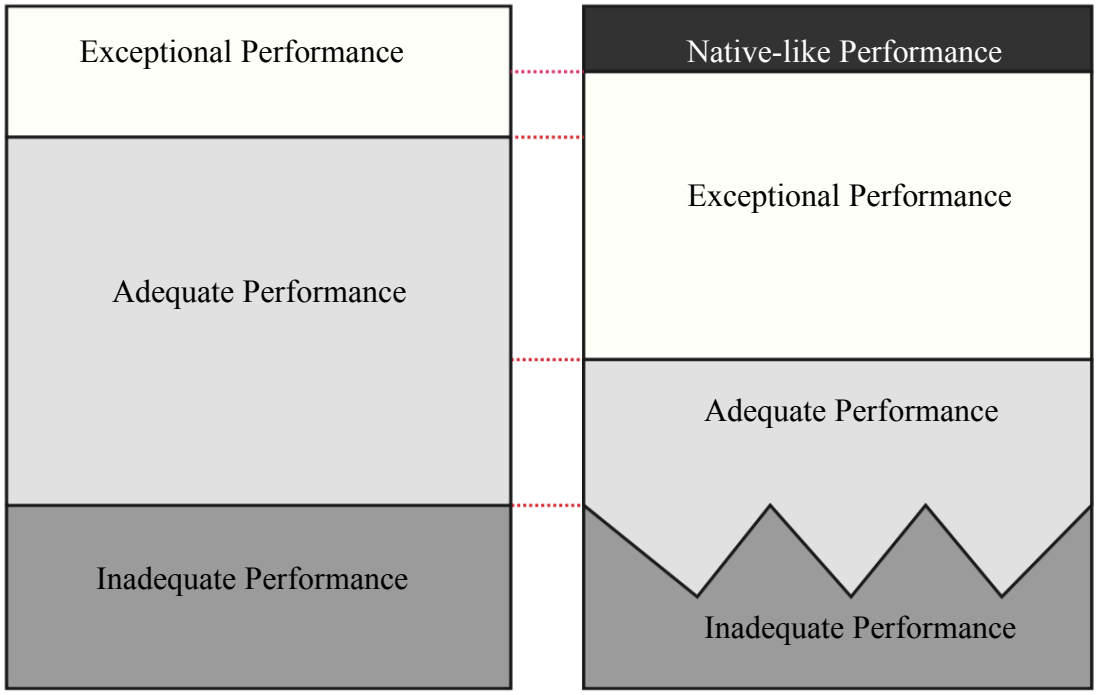

Figure 9 Evaluation of Native and Non-native Speakers' Performances

(3) Taking advantages of the expertise of those familiar with both cultures

It It is true that novice members of a cultural community learn to fulfill the expectations of the community through close observation and imitation of acceptable conventions (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Tomasello, 1999). However, certain portions of cultural conventions remain obscure to even native speakers if we are not explicitly taught the way to do things. Walker and Noda (2000) point out that native speakers of a language often

are unaware of the specific rules of their own cultural games, although they have no difficulty acting properly, until they observe an outsider making a mistake. For learners who are serious about taking on learning foreign languages as a life-long endeavor, this means that they need to become more than acute observers of the target culture, since we have established that the rules for non-native speakers are different. Learning to use all available resources, especially learning from the expertise of those who have sufficient experience engaging in both the base and target cultures, is a vital strategy that separates the good language learners from the average. While it seems to be mainly the duty of language instructors and pedagogical material developers to identify context-specific expectations, especially the ones different from that of native speakers, an autonomous learner should also take advantage of the target community by actively consulting with natives and non-natives who have had the target culture experience. Shepherd (2005) identified several strategies learners of foreign languages can employ, including: (1) learning to absorb constructive feedback from native speakers' overt criticism in the event of improper cultural performance, (2) developing the ability to discern implicit native attitudes and responses to their performances, and (3) establishing long-term peer and mentor relationships with native speakers in the target community. Active consultation with native speakers about their expectations in each context is itself a form of engaging in the expectations game by fulfilling the desirable role of an "earnest non-native language learner" (comment from a subject). By doing so, learners demonstrate a willingness to play by the expectations of the target culture, which in turn scores more points for them in the expectations game.

5.1.8 Winning the Expectations Game

Being able to identify the C2 expectations means that nonnative learners have a good grasp on the rules and scoring system of the game they are playing. Nevertheless, it is only the first step involved in winning the expectations game. Such knowledge is only demonstrated via observable actions on the basis of which evaluations are made. Since the expectations games of a target culture allow for variations in acceptable performances in any given situation, this leaves room to negotiate intentions in a way that maximizes the foreign learners' gain while still conforming to the target culture's expectations. Knowing how to perform in relation to the target culture's expectations in a manner that best negotiates one's own intentions is what distinguishes a good player from an average one.

The question then is: how can foreign language learners establish individual intentions while fulfilling target culture expectations? In order to answer this question, we should first recognize that a culture has only a specific range of conventional intentions. Ochs and Schieffelin note that "the capacity of expressing intentions is human but which intentions can be expressed by whom, when and how is subject to local expectations concerning the social behavior of [participants of the culture]" (1984, p. 306). This is why when engaging with a target culture, language learners need to be familiar with the C2 expectations, so that they have a good idea about the set of available C2 conventional intentions.

We established in Chapter One that speakers establish intentions that are recognizable by listeners via pre-existing conventions shared in their community. In order

to become adept at using the finite number of intentions of the target culture as building blocks for their own purposes, foreign language learners should accumulate in their repertoire conventions of the target community. Given that a culture has restraints about what is achievable, one needs to know what behavior to avoid conventionally, which involves cultural taboos and the symbolic conventions that are perhaps only accessible to native speakers.

5.2 The Expectations Game of *Chengyu* in CFL

5.2.1 The Rationale for Playing the Expectations Game of *Chengyu* in Chinese Culture

5.2.1.1 The Skeptical View of Learning Chengyu

One of the fundamental issues this dissertation sets about to investigate is whether or not *chengyu* is a crucial skill in CFL learners' language repertoire. This is as much a vital question for CFL pedagogues as for Chinese language learners, since they both have a decision to make about to the amount of time and effort to invest in perfecting learners' *chengyu* skills, which could well be spent on other aspects of Chinese language capacity, such as intonations or syntactical structures. Playing the expectations game of *chengyu* seems a rather daunting task to non-native speakers of Chinese, given the challenging linguistic and cultural barriers, and the power difference between native speakers and themselves.

Such a game might seem unnecessary to the skeptic, who may argue that many ordinary Chinese language speakers who do not have a clue about how to use *chengyu* can still function well in China. There is certain truth to this observation if CFL learners are content with a rudimentary and superficial level of engagement in the target community. Any target culture has multiple levels within the expectations game. While the priority for most beginning learners should be fulfilling expectations in common interactions that do not involve *chengyu* performances, at a certain point, as CFL learners make progress from novice to higher levels, it becomes necessary to make specific impressions on Chinese people, which requires proper application of these rhetorical devices. This is when adequate knowledge about how to employ *chengyu* in Chinese-dominant environments becomes a key factor that distinguishes good learners and average ones. For advanced CFL learners in certain domains that require them to routinely interact with Chinese individuals who value and appreciate the use of literary rhetorical devices, the success of their career could depend on it.

5.2.1.2 Levels of Participation in Expectations game of Chengyu

There is another reason that goes against the myth of *chengyu* as a peripheral tool in a CFL learner's tool kit. It might be true that some CFL learners are still well-received in Chinese communities without needing to use a single *chengyu* item, but they could not have maintained a high level of functionality if they were completely ignorant of *chengyu* or similar strategies used by others in the culture.

A foreign Chinese learner does not just go directly from having absolutely zero knowledge about *chengyu* to becoming an adept user of these expressions. There are

varying levels of participation that correspond to different degrees of competence in the expectations game of *chengyu*. Inspired by Walker's (2000) categorization of the six levels of participation in a foreign culture game, I propose three basic levels of participation[1] in the expectations game of *chengyu*. I describe these increasingly complex levels in terms of the specific capacities players are able to achieve:

(a) Recognition

The first stage of participation is the stage at which CFL learners are aware of the existence of *chengyu*. Having the most basic knowledge about *chengyu,* learners at this level of competence are capable of recognizing four-character expressions as *chengyu* from a passage or in others' speech. However, they do not necessarily understanding the origin or meaning of the specific items. For example, after seeing a news announcement in Chinese, a CFL learner can identify the four-character *chengyu* items and therefore is able to ask native Chinese speakers about the specific usages. If learners develop a habit of collecting *chengyu* usages and inquiring about the underlying native intentions whenever they encounter one, they have a better chance at progressing to the next level. The recognition stage is the level most post-beginners operate at in the expectations game of *chengyu*, and, unfortunately. a majority of them never surpass this elementary stage even after two, three, or even more years of language training.

[1] These three levels of participation also correspond to the three *chengyu* learning phases, which will be revisited in Chapter 6 to provide concrete pedagogical suggestions.

(b) Comprehension and Response

At the stage of comprehension, learners have accumulated *chengyu* performances to a certain point that enables them to grasp the *chengyu* usage they have witnessed, which translates into an ability to comprehend the speakers' underlying intentions. What also comes at this level of competence are strategies in response to certain *chengyu* usages based on the contextualized understanding they have reached. In cases when they are engaged in interactions that involve employment of certain *chengyu* items, one should know how to make a context-based judgment about what response is expected. For instance, when listening to politically oriented public speeches that conventionally are loaded with *chengyu* items, smart CFL learners know to grasp the general idea of the speech instead of trying to apprehend every single one of the items.

(c) Production

Active production is the most sophisticated level of participation, which requires CFL learners to be willing to put themselves in stressful situations and to take the risks associated with playing. If in the recognition and comprehension stages a learner can still manage to hide their actual *chengyu* skills with a reaction good enough to draw attention away from their lack of *chengyu* knowledge, in this stage their *chengyu* performances are constantly evaluated and especially noticeable to native Chinese. The production stage also requires that CFL learners to have attained a sufficient degree of knowledge and a sufficient number of skills necessary to navigate the *chengyu* game in at least one context. The production of *chengyu* in a culturally expected manner is not a simple task for non-native

speakers of Chinese. The linguistic and cultural barriers posed by *chengyu* demand learners invest in knowledge and skills acquisition over a longer period in order for their *chengyu* production to be recognized by native-speaking judges. Additionally, the CFL learners need to display a corresponding level in other Chinese skill areas in order to be perceived as a qualified player, who can use *chengyu* items successfully. Native Chinese speakers are less likely to expect *chengyu* usage from a non-native speaker who cannot even produce a clearly pronounced, syntactically accurate sentence, let alone to accommodate that performance.

For learners who are brave and determined enough to be invested emotionally and physically in playing the game of *chengyu*, the reward is also greater. The following section illustrates the prize of winning the expectations game of *chengyu*.

5.2.1.3 The Prize for Successful Chengyu Play

In the previous sections, it has been established that one key for the foreign learners to be successful and adept at maneuvering in a nonnative culture is to become "welcomed outsiders." This requires constant demonstration of knowledge and behaviors that are conventionally desirable in the target community on the part of the CFL learners. As a rhetorical device that derives from thousands of years of Chinese literary traditions and that are characteristic of an intelligent and educated way of speech, *chengyu* carries special cultural meanings in the Chinese community. Therefore, when used properly, *chengyu* elicits positive reactions in Chinese communities by indexing affiliation with certain social groups that displays certain attributes. Findings of the perception experiment reveal that Chinese natives associate non-natives speakers of Chinese who uses *chengyu* following the

Chinese norms with favorable personality attributes such as "earnest Chinese learners," "extremely knowledgeable about Chinese language and culture," and "very likable" in formal and informal contexts. In professional contexts, proper employment of *chengyu* is recognized as an indicator of the non-native speaker's "professional and authoritative" persona. Even when the learner's execution of a *chengyu* performance is not entirely up to the Chinese standard, as is shown in the Chinese subjects' commentary, Chinese natives in general are willing to disregard insignificant linguistic mistakes and still recognize and appreciate the underlying intention. Non-native speakers' attempt at play demonstrates to native Chinese speakers that the non-native speakers are willing to play by the rules.

Proper *chengyu* usage is also a way of demonstrating common ground with native Chinese interlocutors. While as highly Chinese-specific cultural references *chengyu* usage serves as a marker of shared membership in the same community among native speakers of Chinese, when used by foreign language learners, it signals their intention to take on the values and conventions of Chinese culture, and to eventually be accepted as "welcomed outsiders" in the Chinese community. The "shared intentionality" described by Tomasello, or the "intersubjectivity" described by ethno-methodologists, is what underlies this indexicality of the varying status of group membership. By employing *chengyu* in their speech, foreign language learners not only signal their knowledge of Chinese cultural conventions, but also their awareness that the native interlocutors also share the same *chengyu* knowledge. It is the non-native speakers' intention to establish common ground with the Chinese natives, not just the fact that the foreigners can use a complex Chinese

lexical item, that win the native speakers over. This is why even improper *chengyu* performance still yields high likability ratings from the foreign speaker.

Lastly, native Chinese speakers interpret proper *chengyu* performances as marks of advanced language and cultural competence, which present the non-native speakers as serious game players, rather than clueless foreign outsiders. An's comment on the non-native speaker's proper use of *chengyu* 望子成龙 in discussing traditional Chinese education ideology is quite telling:

> If in reality a foreign coworker of mine uses *chengyu* this well. I will tell him that…you have gone beyond the 'talk about work-related stuff' stage, and can actually have deep, meaningful conversation with us…. By that I mean that we can hang out as friends after work, and I don't have to worry about the level of difficulty of my language because I know that he can understand where I come from when we talk. (An, comments on B5a, see Table 13)

What is revealed in this short comment is that mastery of *chengyu* usage is not just an indicator of foreigners' language proficiency, as suggested by previous literature. It serves a much more vital role by indexing a higher level of competency in operating in Chinese culture, which removes the burden of accommodation placed on the native speakers. Employing *chengyu* in one's discourse sends signals to the native Chinese interlocutors that these foreigners are capable of operating at a higher and more sophisticated level of participation in the Chinese cultural game—one that does not require the natives to "take care of" the non-native speakers. By reducing the weight of accommodation placed on the native Chinese speakers in the target community, non-native

speakers have a better chance of being included in other cultural interactions that are accessible only to such individuals.

5.2.2 Winning Strategies: Borrowing the Ownership from Native Speakers of Chinese

It has been established that it is critical that foreign Chinese learners know how their speech and behaviors are perceived by their counterparts in the Chinese community, if they are serious about playing and aiming at winning the expectations game of *chengyu*. Toward this goal, foreign players need to keep in mind two general guidelines: one is to follow the cultural convention of the target communities as opposed to that of the base community; and the other is to mind the gap between Chinese expectations of native speakers and that of non-native speakers, since the self-perceived role of the native Chinese speakers as owners of the Chinese language have concrete, identifiable effects on the perception and evaluation of the non-native speakers. In light of these two guidelines, the best solution for non-native speakers, I would propose, is borrowing the ownership of *chengyu* from native Chinese speakers, if the ultimate goal is successful negotiation of intentions in C2. This requires the non-native speakers to practice the art of humility by acknowledging the native speakers' ownership in every performance, and to strategically make use of the portion of ownership native speakers are willing to lend to achieve one's own intentions. Specifically, in the expectations game of *chengyu* this can be achieved using the following four strategies.

First of all, one must meet the minimum expectation of linguistic capacity that qualifies CFL learners as serious players in the *chengyu* expectations game. Chinese native

judges must have faith in that a non0native speaker is capable of conducting meaningful *chengyu* performances in at least one C2 context to be willing to make an effort to comprehend the underlying intention. This generally means that in previous interactions the foreign language learner has established a certain level of Chinese linguistic capacity, including accuracy of pronunciation, size of lexicon, grammatical complexity, and genre knowledge, which renders the *chengyu* performance intelligible to the judges. The learner does not have to have perfect command of Chinese, since the perception experiment shows that despite non-native speakers' foreign accent and in some stimuli grammatical mistakes, the native Chinese subjects did not experience major difficulty in comprehending the non-native speakers' *chengyu* performance. Meanwhile, it makes little sense for novice learners to attempt at *chengyu* play if producing an accurate sentence in terms of pronunciation or syntax is already challenging enough to them. While learners with lower Chinese language capacities can participate in the recognition and comprehension level of *chengyu* game, it is recommended that CFL learners enter the production stage with a sufficient level of Chinese language capacity. A rule of thumb is to make sure that one's overall linguistic skills can support the contextualized *chengyu* performances in a way that does not put too much accommodation burden on native interlocutors.

The second strategy to acknowledge native speakers' ownership of *chengyu* is by avoiding a violation of conventional *chengyu* usage. The five common mistakes made by non-native Chinese speakers in using *chengyu* identified in the perception experiment all received lower ratings in terms of the acceptability of the performance. The five common mistakes described in Chapter Three include: (a) improper use of new Internet idioms in

formal discourse; (b) overuse, the compiling of more than two *chengyu* items in one sentence or a short speech; (c) semantic misuse, which refers to the violation of the conventionalized indexical relationship of a *chengyu* item's semantic properties and a given semantic context; (d) grammatical misuse; and (e) inventive use, the appropriation of the original expression by substituting components with new words.

These improper *chengyu* usages, especially semantic and grammatical misuses, index "Chinese language learner" status as opposed to other accepted roles in given Chinese cultural contexts, such as a journalist in a professional setting. Shepherd (2005) makes the observation that non-native Chinese learners who play the role of "students" rather than "employees" in a Chinese organization in Qingdao ended up being ignored after the "novelty of having foreigner in the office" wore off, and had a harder time engaging in more sophisticated social interactions in the workplace. Additionally, non-native speakers' violation of conventional rules of using *chengyu* might also be seen by native Chinese speakers as being associated with undesirable personal attributes. Inventive use and overuse are two especially risky cases. Based on the findings of this study, while piling of several *chengyu* items was interpreted as "showing off" their Chinese proficiency, creative use of *chengyu* items has a certain chance of being seen as misappropriating the Chinese culture.

Third, instead of aiming at achieving nativeness, CFL learners should focus on utilizing the portion of nativeness that is accessible to non-native speakers to their own advantage. By recognizing areas where non-native speakers are rarely allowed to step in, they can reduce the risk of being rude to the members of the Chinese community in which

they socialize. Humorous *chengyu* usage in casual settings, as evident by the Chinese subjects' reaction, is one case of *chengyu* performance that is mainly reserved for native speakers of Chinese. Another similar case is nonnative speaker's use of *chengyu* items that are obscure to average Chinese people. It was excluded from the experimental design due to its uncommonness compared to other improper usage, but it still could happen to non-native speakers who are either experts in Chinese literary references or CFL learners who study *chengyu* by memorizing uncommon *chengyu* items from dictionaries. Employing obscure *chengyu* items is an act that is only acceptable when conducted by certain roles under certain circumstance even among native Chinese speakers. Such a performance by a foreigner will most likely come across as arrogant and appropriative, and thus should remain off limits to the vast majority of nonnative CFL learners.

Last but not the least, it is recommended that CFL learners develop competence in strategically manipulating Chinese interlocutors' level of expectations in the Chinese community. Ideally, a foreign language learner would want to retain native Chinese judges' expectations slightly above the minimum tolerable *chengyu* performance that admit the learner into the game. In this way their chances of outperforming the expectations is much higher than when native Chinese judges' held high expectations to begin with. Kramsch (2009) proposes that language learners are multilinguals who do not merely abide by the order of the target culture; they should retain an "outsideness that enables [them] to play with various objective and subjective meanings" (p. 189). Shepherd (2005) also asserts that as a result of increases in learners' linguistic effectiveness, native Chinese interlocutors might develop higher expectation of foreign language learners' cultural understanding that

they do not necessarily have. Therefore, Shepherd suggests, "As a result, the person who learns how to interact with the target culture on its terms while maintaining some semblance of his or her individual identity with a trace of 'foreign-ness', or who is able to forge an accepted identity within the new culture, seems less likely to be rejected by the group." (p. 197).

To retain the right amount of "foreignness" in Shepherd's terminology is such a delicate task that it might take a significant period of socialization in a foreign culture to prepare for it. Fortunately, in the case of the expectations game of *chengyu*, empirical data in this study revealed that Chinese native speakers in general have minimal expectations for foreigners to be able to master production skills. Non-native learners of Chinese should be made aware of, and make good use of this advantage in creating personas that are welcomed and desirable in the Chinese community. By borrowing the ownership of *chengyu* from the natives, CFL learners assume the role of skillful and sincere participants in the target culture, as opposed to clueless "foreign" outsiders.

Chapter 6: A Functional Approach to *Chengyu* Instruction

Drawing from empirical data, the previous chapter provides answers to the question why it is worth the hard work to build the gaining of *chengyu* skills into CFL learners' repertoire en route to excelling at the expectations games of Chinese culture. I also explicate the knowledge and strategies that CFL learners, especially those who are not content with just being the pleasant foreign stereotypes, need to develop in order to effectively achieve their intentions using *chengyu* with their Chinese counterparts in Chinese culture environments. Chapter Six presents the issues at a more concrete level and proposes a performance-based pedagogical framework for the teaching and learning of *chengyu* and other literarily-originated cultural references. Sections 6.1 lays out the theoretical framework upon which concrete suggestions for pedagogical material developers, curriculum designers, and instructors are made in sections 6.2, and 6.3.

6.1 A Performance-based *Chengyu* Pedagogical Framework

6.1.1 The Traditional Treatment of *Chengyu* and its Pedagogical Consequences

The current field of CFL gives prominence to a restricted conceptualization of *chengyu* that ignores the functional and rhetorical impact of these four-character Chinese idioms. In this traditional framework, *chengyu* are presented as lexical units associated with

a fixed "meaning" (in English or Mandarin) that does not refer to the situational or cultural context. Here "meaning" is close to utterance meaning, or what Grice describes as the "natural meaning" of language, as opposed to "speaker's meaning" that is analyzed in terms of intentionality. Zhang (2012)'s review of CFL *chengyu* learning materials suggests that storybooks of *chengyu* origins and *chengyu* dictionaries are the two most common types of *chengyu* learning resources. These treat *chengyu* as informational and achievement culture using mainly direct English explanations and translations. Pedagogical *chengyu* materials that "provide an alignment of a set of ordered pedagogical activities [to] facilitate learners' understanding, memorizing, and application of *chengyu* items" (2012, p. 50), on the contrary, are greatly lacking. Zhang concludes that in existing materials, even including the few pedagogical materials, *chengyu* items are treated and presented in a decontextualized manner. Such an isolated treatment promotes a translation-based, base-culture understanding of these conventional expressions by both learners and instructors. Under this framework, CFL learners' primary learning goals are achieving formal/structural accuracy and the mapping of a predetermined "meaning" based in C1 experience that is not subject to change.

A review of the current body of literature on the teaching and learning of *chengyu* in CFL contexts also testifies to a form-focused, C1 meaning-based pedagogical practice that fails to show CFL learners how these *chengyu* items can be employed to achieve *situated* intentions. The majority of the studies are SLA error-analytical research on CFL learners' *chengyu* written production that use CFL learners' writings as the only source of data. These studies predominantly center on the syntactical, structural and semantic

mistakes (Zhang, 1999; Wang, 2001; Shi, 2008; Yang, 2011). Based on analysis of the learners' error types, scholars propose instructional solutions that emphasize the teaching of *chengyu*'s unique linguistic and cultural features, including its literary origin and etymology (Zhang W, 2006; Wang, 2004), inner and sentential structure (Zhang Y, 2006; Guo, 2011), varied degrees of gap between literary meaning and implied non-literal meaning (Pan, 2006), and underlying C2 cultural elements and knowledge (Cao, 2008; Chen, 2008). A very few studies briefly mention the appropriateness of learners' *chengyu* usage in relation to social contexts (Guo, 2011) as a pedagogical suggestion.

The most damaging consequence of such a form-focused, meaning-based treatment of *chengyu* is its influence on CFL learners' mindset about the existence of a single psychological reality. Psychological reality, according to Wallace (2003), is the world as an individual perceives and knows it in one's own terms: it is one's own world of meaning. This leads to the creation of a learning habit that relies greatly on translation and mapping from learners' base cultural frameworks. The following excerpt from an advanced Chinese class discussion in the United States illustrates how CFL learners' inclination to approach these four-character Chinese idioms by English translation leads to miscomprehension.

Table 22 An Except of Classroom Discussion over *Zhì shì rén rén*[1]

Roles	Original Chinese Scripts	English Translation	Movements
S1	我还不太明白为什么	I still don't quite understand why	
	我们，我们讨论时说了,	We, while discussing, said	(S1 looking around)
	志士仁人，	"*Zhì shì rén rén*,"	
	是，不是一个好的事情。	is, is not a good thing.	
T	不是一个好的？	Is not a good thing?	(Instructor looking surprised)
	嗯？你们就？	Huh? You just?	(Instructor point to the other side of the classroom)
S1	就是太, 太想得到一个成功，	Just want to obtain a success too, too much	
	嗯，就是一个不好的。	um, just not a good.	(S1 lowering voice)
T	志士仁人不是好::词语？	"*Zhì shì rén rén*" is not a good::term?	
	是一个贬义词啊？	It's a derogatory term?	(Instructor looking surprised)
	是不是？	Is it?	
	是个褒义词还是个贬义词？	Is it a commendatory or derogatory term?	

Continued

[1] Transcript from Bing Mu, Construction of and Response to "Rich Points": Social Languages and Cultural Models in the Advanced Chinese Language Classroom. Course project at The Ohio State University.

Table 22: continued

S2	我觉得翻译到英文的话可以，好像贬义词，	I think translated to English, it could, it seems to be derogatory,	
T	好像贬义词？翻译到英文里面？	Seems derogatory? Translated to English?	
S2	可能是。	It might be.	
Ss			(Students nodding)
T	真的？	Really?	
S3	一定是。	It must be.	
T	啊？一定是？	Huh? It must be?	
S3	一定是。	It must be.	
T	志士仁人是？	"*Zhì shì rén rén*" means?	
S1	我觉得就是，人，	striving for lofty goals? I think it means…people *striving for lofty goals?*	

This excerpt was followed by a long discussion of whether in English "people with lofty goals" is a commendatory phrase, which does not contribute to advancing students' understanding of the Chinese *chengyu zhì shì rén rén* and how it is used in contemporary Chinese contexts. As a result of relying on the English translation "people with lofty goals", these students developed a sarcastic C1-based interpretation of *zhì shì rén rén* associated with individuals who are unpractical or unrealistic, instead of individuals who feel benevolence to other people and are determined to put the great good before oneself. This unnecessary confusion would have been avoided if translation to English were not the learning strategy adopted by CFL learners.

6.1.2 A Performed Culture Approach: *Chengyu* as Cultural Performances

In light of the previous critique of the traditional treatment of *chengyu* in CFL field, there exists a need for a new framework that addresses the pedagogical issues from a functional perspective. Such a framework is grounded in the line of study detailed in Chapter One that conceptualize and examines language in terms of intentions communicated and interpreted among interlocutors in sociocultural interactions (Malinowski, 1923; Dewey, 1987; Levinson, 1983; Searle, 1985). A specific type of linguistic convention in Chinese culture, *chengyu* needs to be viewed and learned not just as declarative knowledge, but also in a procedural, or performative sense. Following a body of literature that built the framework of a performance-centered understanding of human language use (Cole, 1996; Carlson, 1996; Bruner, 1990; Goffman, 1959; Bauman, 1977; Hymes, 1972; Walker, 2010; Walker and Noda, 2000), I conceptualize uses of *chengyu* as culture-specific performances instead of as words paired with a fixed meaning.

The performance theory provides a framework to examine human social interactions as *staged actions* that involves distinct roles, a specified space and audiences (Goffman, 1959; Carson, 1996; Bauman, 1977). Applying this notion to the field of foreign language pedagogy, Walker (2000) defines performances as "enactments of scripts or behaviors situated at a specific time and place with roles and audiences specified" (2010, p. 8). Serving as the basic unit of analysis, performances vary in length. A performance can be as simple as welcoming guests or as complex as the entire procedure of hosting a dinner banquet. However long or short, each performance shouldn't be treated as merely a single, isolated act, but rather understood as part of a series of actions to achieve a general goal.

Viewing *chengyu* uses as cultural performances interconnected in a succession of events is to see it as a means to connect learners' intentions at both individual and social level. Hence, a CFL learner's use of *wàng zǐ chéng lóng* 望子成龙 when discussing the issue of parenting with a Chinese counterpart is more than simply stating "what the learner means" -- that some Chinese parents wish their kids to become successful human beings. It conveys "who the learner is" in front of that Chinese colleague under that specific situation, for instance, by indexing his or her epistemic stance about Chinese language and culture. Furthermore, it influences the Chinese counterpart's interpretive and evaluative opinion about the foreign learner, which in turn contributes to the formulation of future expectations.

In addition to enabling learners in establishing and interpreting intentions in the target culture, the performed culture framework further provides CFL learners with an effective and heuristic way of presenting and analyzing *chengyu* items in context. Because a performance presumes a set of contextual elements with specified place, time, roles, scripts and audience (Carlson, 1996), it offers learners an interpretive frame within which *chengyu* usage can be understood and analyzed on a case-by-case basis against these contextual elements. For instance, the Chinese students engaging in the class discussion of 志士仁人 *zhì shì rén rén* illustrated in the last section are unlikely to arrive at the miscomprehension if they were aware that this *chengyu* item was employed during an important public speech by a Chinese government official in reference to the communist revolutionaries in the founding of PRC. Training our students to develop strategies of recognizing and utilizing such specific contextual information in interpreting and

communicating intentions is one of the ultimate objectives in the performed culture pedagogy of *chengyu*.

Finally, in the performed culture approach performance is adopted as the basic unit of analysis, instead of linguistic units such as sentence or lexical items. This offers a possibility of cataloguing *chengyu* for the purpose of effective storage, management and retrieval. Learning, according to Bruner (1990, p. 99), is the process of "internalizing events into a storage system" and memory is what allows individuals to "go beyond one encounter by providing the tools that allow us to make predictions and extrapolations from our stored model of the world." Schank (1990) foregrounds the vital role *stories* play in learning by stating that "knowledge, then, is experiences and stories, and intelligence is the apt use of experience and the creation and telling of stories. Memory is memory for stories, and the major processes of memory are the creation, storage, and retrieval of stories" (p. 16). According to Schank, intelligence is defined by one's ability to retrieve and make use of the right memory at the right moment, and is ascribed to individuals with a large inventory of stories. If successful learning is demonstrated by effective retrieval of stories that facilitate CFL learners in playing the expectations game of *chengyu*, they should collect the right type of personal memory of *chengyu*: a memory that is constructed around participating in a particular *chengyu* performance in C2, instead of one based on English translation and explanation of the *chengyu* items. Such memories of having experienced a *chengyu* performance are rich in details (Bybee, 2010). This potentially includes all the information one perceives in a verbal interaction: the situated contexts, the mental status and attitudes of the interlocutors, pitch accent perceived, facial expressions and gestures

discerned, and inferences and implicature intended. The more perceptional labels of a story learners are consciously aware of the more ways they have to associate the story with in the future. The next sections propose several such labels in cataloguing inventory of *chengyu* memories that best facilitate CFL learners' future retrieval.

Adopting the performance-based framework doesn't necessarily negate everything proposed by the traditional framework. Instead, the emphasis on forms, structures, literary and implied meanings, and origin stories serve as crucial scaffoldings that build up to the ultimate goals. What is suggested here is making the extra step towards the higher level of negotiating one's intentions and positions in the target culture: to help learners create a mindset that recognized themselves as serious players of the expectations game of the target culture, and behave appropriately; to help learners recognize that there are multiple versions of interpreting the culture, and that each piece of language they employ creates a new version of reconstructing the world –one that is distinct from their base culture, and also distinct from the one shared by native speakers of the target culture. This transform the teaching and learning of *chengyu* from acquisition of linguistic codes to acquisition of a second worldview.

6.2 Cataloguing Desirable (and Undesirable) *Chengyu* Performances

Pedagogical presentations of *chengyu* are attempts at modeling, deconstructing, and re-constructing expected performances in C2. To best facilitate learners in developing *chengyu* capacities that allow them to participate in the Chinese community, especially at the more advanced-level Chinese capacities, pedagogical materials should serve the

function to help learners identify and organize experiences of *chengyu* performances. Meanwhile, it should also identify and promote awareness of undesirable performances for CFL learners. In the following section, several constructs (sagas, genres, themes) are proposed to serve this purpose, in accordance to which pedagogical materials and curriculum can be ordered and organized.

It is vital to explicitly re-state the heuristic nature of these constructs to spare the native Chinese readers confusion about how different the proposed categories are from the traditional form-based categorization of *chengyu.* Intended here is a pedagogical description for non-native speakers of Chinese, not an exhaustive investigation of *chengyu* from a theoretical linguistic perspective. Compared to the natives, CFL learners possess barely enough linguistic, cultural and rhetorical schemata in Chinese to study *chengyu* effectively using the traditional approach that heavily relies on the translation-based deconstruction of the form-meaning pairs. Facilitating quicker and more accurate retrieval, and thus application, of the intended piece of *chengyu* knowledge, a performance-based compilation of *chengyu* offers a heuristic alternative that better meet the needs of non-native learners of the Chinese language.

6.2.1 Sagas

Sagas are series of stories organized around a specific group of people, or a specific location (Walker and Noda, 2000). Categorizing *chengyu* in terms of saga establishes CFL learners' C2 knowledge frames around locality and relationship—what learners need to know to handle *chengyu* performances with particular individuals or at particular places in the target culture. Saga is a useful construct especially for cataloguing *chengyu*

performances that are commonly used in routinized social interactions in Chinese culture. An example of such location can be airport or train station, where Chinese travelers will be seen off by friends, family or colleagues with a wish of fine journey (the cases of *yí lù shùn fēng* 一路顺风 or *yí lù píng ān* 一路平安). Memories of the same *chengyu* item may also be associated with the staff working at the toll collection station who always ends a transaction by wishing the driver a smooth drive: "*Zhù nín yí lù shùn fēng* 祝您一路顺风 ". Similarly, usage of *(jìn) dì zhü zhī yí* (尽)地主之谊 in making a Chinese toast indexes a host-guest relationship between the speaker and the other interlocutors in a banquet setting. Such phrases are seldom used among family and close friends, or with a change of location, unless one is attempting to be humorous.

Less explicit social categories such as hierarchies and power relations between the speakers, audience, and the person *chengyu* items are used in reference to may also be inferred from the choice of certain *chengyu* items. *Chengyu* items with derogatory meanings, for instance, are seldom used to describe someone of higher social status, especially if the audience includes their presence or the presence of those involved with him/her. Applying derogatory *chengyu* items to oneself, on the other hand, epitomizes modesty in Chinese culture. For instance, *bān mén nòng fǔ* 班门弄斧 (literarily meaning "to wield an axe at the front door of expert Lu Ban's house") is used to criticize people who, unaware of one's limitations, show off one's meager skills before an expert. It is a common politeness strategy to place oneself in a humble position before performing certain skills in front of more senior people in the field by saying "今天在各位专家面前班门弄

斧了，不对的地方请指正” (*I shall show off my meager skills in front of you experts (at Ban's gate wield an axe); please do correct my mistakes*). This performance adds to CFL learners' existing inventory of cultural performances interacting with the particular group of senior experts.

Locality and relationship are the two oftentimes intertwined coordinates for learners to triangulate the relative positions of themselves and others in the target community. By accumulating sagas in the course of foreign language learning, especially the ones that CFL learners encounter on a daily basis in the target community, they develop a sense of consistency and ownership in their studied language.

6.2.2 Genres

Miller (1984) defines genre as typified actions based in recurrent situations. Bitzer (1968) proposes a definition of such situations as a "complex of persons, events, objects, and relations" that presents an "exigence", a social motive, that can be diminished through the mediation of discourse. Genre evolves as comparable situations recur, promoting comparable responses. In this sense, genre is a category of communicative situations that share certain purposes. As CFL learners become gradually socialized in the Chinese communities, they benefit from developing a variety of genres that constitutes a class of related *chengyu* performances. For instance, a genre can be comforting a friend who just suffered a financial lost with the *chengyu* items *sài wēng shī mǎ* "塞翁失马" or *pò cái miǎn zāi*"破财免灾." For foreign Chinese learners' whose Chinese names contain characters that allude to complementary *chengyu* items, another common genre of *chengyu*

performance can be self-introduction: “大家好，我叫史彬。史无前例的‘史’，彬彬有礼的‘彬’。”(*Hi everyone, my name is Shi Bin. Shi as in shi wu qian li, Bin as in bin bin you li).* To some extent, genre as a cataloguing construct is an extension of saga, combining a complex of situational elements that is not constrained by particular roles or locations, but by a certain socially motived intention.

6.2.3 Themes

Each culture has a number of values that are transmitted from generations to generations via processes of socialization and enculturation. Themes are ranges of actions carrying certain culturally significant values and beliefs shared among people in the same community, such as hospitality, hierarchy, family, and integrity. Such values and beliefs underlie *chengyu* performances in a variety of sagas and genres. The two examples of “*bān mén nòng fǔ* 班门弄斧” and “*(jìn) dì zhǔ zhī yí*（尽）地主之谊” previously discussed can also be catalogued in terms of common Chinese cultural themes. While making self-criticism with *bān mén nòng fǔ* is a theme of modesty, the performance constructed around “*(jìn) dì zhǔ zhī yí* is an act of hospitality in Chinese culture. Recognition of the cultural themes helps foreign language learners create an additional storage dimension in their inventory of *chengyu* performances.

Themes serve as an effective cataloguing construct for *chengyu* performances also since a vast number of *chengyu* items, especially the ones alluding to ancient Chinese literary and philosophical canons, are themselves carriers of the cultural wisdom. Table 23

offers a list of *chengyu* items which are descriptive of some desirable characteristics or principles valued in the indoctrinated Chinese traditions.

Table 23 A List of *Chengyu* and Corresponding Cultural Themes

***Chengyu* Items**	**Translation**	**Cultural Themes/Values**
言行一致 yán xíng yí zhì 言出必行 yán chū bì xíng	"Match words to deed" "Always do what one say"	One's act should match with words
勤能补拙 qí néng bǔ zhuó	"Diligence can compensate for lack of intelligence"	Emphasis on diligence
业精于勤 yì jīng yú qín	"Efficiency comes from diligence"	
长幼尊卑 zhǎng yòu zūn bēi	"(Pecking order of) the elderly, the young, the esteemed and the humbled"	Acknowledgement of hierarchy
门当户对 mén dāng hù duì	"(Amarriage between families of) equal social rank	
一日为师、终身为父 yí rì wéi shī, zhōng shēn wéi fù	"He who teaches me for one day is my father for life. "	
旁征博引 páng zhī bó yǐn 引经据典 yǐn jīng jù diǎn	"Cite authorities extensively" "Cite from the classics and ancient works "	Emphasis on the ability to quote classics/words of authority

For foreign language learners to be able to fully understand the cultural expectations of the community with whom they are communicating, it is vital to understand the underlying values that makes a particular behavior appealing. Furthermore, once they grasp why these attributes become established in the culture, they need to seek out

opportunities to practice displaying that understanding for recognition by native members of the community. For instance, "中国有句成语叫'——'" ("*There's a Chinese chengyu____ ")* is one typical *chengyu* collocation that treats whichever item quoted as supporting evidence in making an argument. On one level, this is a manifestation of the Chinese cultural emphasis on the ability to quote words of authority; on another level, it displays one's understanding of the valued attributes conveyed by the particular quoted *chengyu* item, as well as expectation for that understanding to be recognized by the Chinese counterparts.

6.2.4 Common Notions

Atichison (2003) in an attempt to account for the structure of human mental lexicon, points out that words are stored in semantic fields—"clusters of words relating to the same topic are stored together" (2003:85). According to Atichison, we can envision each semantic field as a nucleus of associated words, with some items closely linked and others attached somewhat loosely around the edges. In particular, among the varied types of word associations, words that cluster together on the same level of details, such as color terms and place names, are the most strongly connected. A more recent neuroscientist project (Huth et al, 2016) resonates with Atichison by presenting a "semantic atlas" which identifies different regions of cerebral cortex responding to words of similar meanings. This detailed semantic representation shows that the words of the same domains, such as visual, tactile, numeric, locational, emotional, social, etc., are grouped together.

Therefore, organizing *chengyu* items in terms of *common notions* that are cognitively intuitive to learners can add an additional dimension of structure to learners' mental *chengyu* lexica. Figure 10 illustrates how clusters of *chengyu* items are potentially linked together in our minds. It is imperative to note that the links between words are multifarious. Depending on the specific context with which learners associate a particular *chengyu*, the item might be linked to multiple clusters. For instance, the *chengyu, jīe èr lián sān* 接二连三 can be grouped under "Continuity" with *yuán yuán bú duàn* 源源不断 and *céng chū bù qióng* 层出不穷, while also categorized with *lǚ cì sān fān* 屡次三番 and *rì fù yí rì* 日复一日 under the notion of "Repetitiousness." Given that these mental pathways that connects groups of words are not fixed, but rather context-dependent, it is recommended that the notion-based categorization of *chengyu* is utilized in conjunction with the other cataloguing constructs proposed in the previous sections.

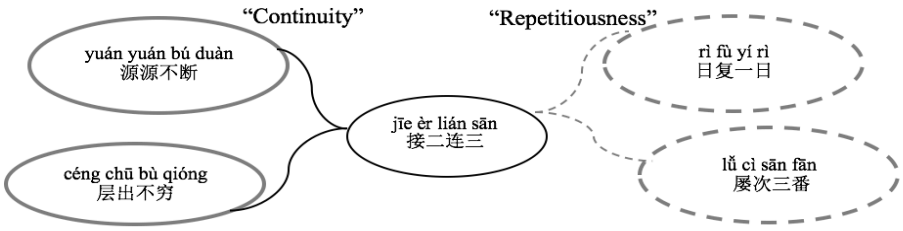

Figure 10 Clusters of *Chengyu*

Table 24 provides a list of common notions that can be employed for compilation of *chengyu* targeting CFL learners. Instead of trying to present an exhaustive list of cataloguing notions, it is the intention of this discussion to propose the model for research projects to build upon.

Table 24 A List of Common Notions and Corresponding *Chengyu* Items

Notions	*Chengyu* Items
Intellectual Attitudes:	
Belief or opinion	Jiàn rén jiàn zhì 见仁见智, zhòng shuō fēn yún 众说纷纭
Agreement	Yīng xióng suǒ jiàn lué tóng 英雄所见略同
Disagreement	Gè zhí yì cí 各执一词, bù yǐ wéi rán 不以为然
Emotional Attitudes:	
Pleasure	Huān tiān xǐ dì 欢天喜地, xǐ qì yáng yáng 喜气洋洋
Worry	chóu méi kǔ liǎn 愁眉苦脸, xīn jí rú fén 心急如焚
Surprise	chēng mù jié shé 瞠目结舌
Properties	
Temporariness	bái jū guò xì 白驹过隙, tán huā yí xiàn 昙花一现
Continuities	jīe èr lián sān 接二连三, céng chū bù qióng 层出不穷
Repetitiousness	rì fù yí rì 日复一日, lǚ cì sān fān 屡次三番
Logic Relations:	
Transition	Chéng qián qǐ hòu 承前启后，jì wǎng kāi lái 继往开来
Inclusion	Jiān shōu bìng xù 兼收并蓄, jiān ér yǒu zhī 兼而有之
Reason	shùn lǐ chéng zhāng 顺理成章, zì rán ér rán 自然而然

6.3 Incorporating *Chengyu* in a Performed-Culture CFL Curriculum

6.3.1 Learning Model Instruction(LMI) and Acquisition Model Instruction (AMI)

Walker (2010) proposes two types of instruction in a foreign language learning environment: LMI (Learning Model Instruction) that mainly concerns teaching items—lexicon items, grammatical structures, and cultural conventions, and AMI (Acquisition Model Instruction) that emphasizes advancing students' foreign language learning strategies using the target language as medium[1]. As displayed in figure 11, in this model of instructional environment, lower level instruction consists of mainly LMI, the item-based instruction, while advanced level is marked by more strategy acquisition (AMI). Walker further suggests the establishment of a spectrum of courses in a foreign language curriculum with two types of courses at the two ends, which correspond with the shift from LMI to AMI as learners progress from lower to higher levels of ability: *language courses* that focus strictly on skill-getting at lower levels, and *content courses* that are characterized by skill using in the target culture at the higher end. Language courses contain linear arrangement of items and strategies, as sequenced and aligned according to a particular pedagogical design, usually from simple to complex, and from frequent to less frequent events in the target culture. Pedagogically designed materials following the same principle work the most effectively for skill building in language courses. Conversely, organized

[1] LMI and AMI define the "levels of instruction," which correspond to learners' Chinese skill levels in the four skill areas (spoken development, spoken application, reading and composition), as opposed to the commonly known "years of instruction" in college language programs.

around certain topics or themes, the intent of content course is to help learners to gain a body of knowledge using linguistic artifacts from the target culture—a film, a book, a series of news programs, just to name a few possibilities.

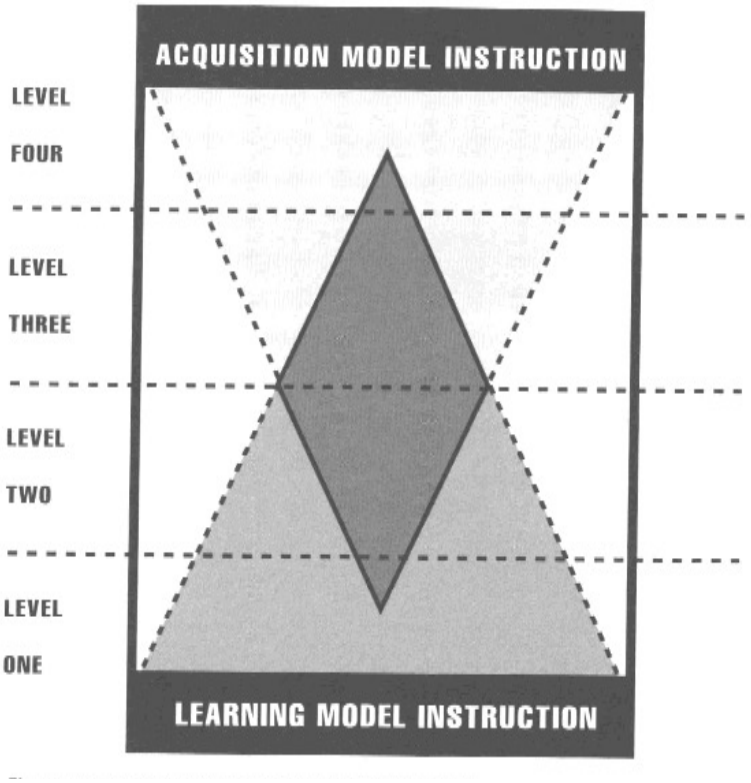

Figure 11 The LMI and AMI in a Foreign Language Learning Environment (Walker, 2010, p. 61)

6.3.2 Three *Chengyu* Learning Phases

Foreign learners of Chinese who aim at mastery of four-character Chinese idioms usually go through three learning phases, which also marks the three general levels of command of Chinese canonized phrases. Chapter five briefly introduced these three stages in terms of levels of participation in the expectations game of *chengyu.* In this section, the aim shifts to presenting a description of the target skills CFL learners can or cannot master at each of these learning phases. Since this account is also applicable to developmental stages of other types of canonized expresses including quotations from ancient Chinese classics and literary works (e.g., 子曰：有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎, *"The Master said: is it not delightful to have friends coming from a distance"*), examples illustrated in this section are not limited to four-character *chengyu* when applicable.

(a) Recognition

The very first phase focuses on training learners' ability to recognize *chengyu* items in a written text or in speech. To be able to identify a word or syllable string as a canonized expression, CFL learners at this level must have the basic grammatical knowledge for structural analysis at the sentence level. They also need basic knowledge about the generic features of different types of conventional expressions. The following two examples illustrate the type of knowledge about the structural features of canonized expressions that can help learners identify and recognize them in the discourse:

(1) *Chengyu* usually is composed of four characters; its inner structure DOES NOT follow syntactic rules of modern Mandarin;

(2) A quote that begins with 子曰 (*the Master says*) originates from the *Analects;* however a quote from the *Analects* doesn't necessary begins with 子曰 (*the Master says*) as it can also be omitted.

Nevertheless, Nevertheless, CFL learners at the recognition stage lack the knowledge to support an accurate interpretation of the intended messages from a *chengyu* performance. Lacking knowledge about grammatical rules of classic Chinese, intermixed with rules of modern Novice learners might fail to derive literary meaning from the sum of the parts. Lacking knowledge about the special semantics and cultural connotations of these canonical expressions, learners face the challenge of misunderstanding the use of canonized expressions in a given context because their attempts to do so are based on direct translation from Chinese to English. All these challenges facing CFL learners require careful pedagogical design in the next learning phrase.

(b) Comprehension and Reaction

This learning phase concentrates on developing learners' ability to 1) comprehend the intentions behind the use of particular *chengyu* items, and to 2) make appropriate responses to the perceived intentions. Notice that descriptions like "…ability to comprehend the *meaning* of the canonized expressions" are avoided because such descriptions might be misinterpreted given that the meanings of many conventional phrases are not completely derivable from the sum of the parts. This is also because learners are encouraged to conceptualize the use of canonized expressions as culture- specific rhetorical devices employed to navigate through social routines in Chinese culture through the co-

ordination of intentions between interlocutors, instead of merely as vocabulary items paired with a fixed meanings that are mirrored in English.

Comprehending the intentions of one's interlocutors alone is not sufficient in a communicative event. CFL learners at this command level of canonized phrases also need to be able to respond by acknowledging the intentions from the other side. Sometimes this co-ordination process takes several turns before both sides of the communication reach a consensus that what the speaker intends matches what is taken up by the addressee. CFL learners' ability to react to such expressions in a written text is also crucial as reading is also a socially motivated activity (Noda 2003). Take reading a column article with the title *"见义勇为"精神可嘉但须"量力而行"（Courageous spirit is commendable but one must act according to one's capacity）* as an assignment in a course as an example. Although not prompted to make an immediate response as required in conversations, learners often have to either write a written response to the article or orally contribute to a class discussion. They might even exchange ideas and their own opinions about the article with Chinese friends after classes, which is an authentic task that native readers commonly perform in reaction to *chengyu* usage in writings.

(c) Production

CFL learners at this phase develop skills to employ *chengyu* in various types of communicative genres ranging from prepared speech/written genres, to spontaneous use as prompted by exigence (see a fuller discussion of this issue in Miller 1984). Prepared speech and written genres are less challenging in a sense that the speaker gets the chance to practice

ahead of time. These tasks are also less timing-sensitive. Spontaneous use in conversations, however, requires higher level of command of these expressions that allows learners to make immediate responses at the right time using the right tone. When and how a clever use of canonized phrases is carried out are especially vital in achieving the expected rhetorical effects.

Learners and instructors should both recognize the fact that appropriate production is only realistic when based on massive input accumulated in previous phases. It takes repeated encounters with one item in an array of contexts for a learner to even begin to derive a sense of using it appropriately in communications. Given the limited amount of instructional time in a formal language learning setting, it is reasonable to suggest that while both comprehension and production of canonized expressions should be focused on in class, a greater amount of time should be allocated to developing learners' skill in comprehending and responding for the purpose of creating a solid foundation for production.

6.3.3 *Chengyu* Instruction in a Performed-Culture CFL Curriculum: Levels and Goals

In light of the discussion in section 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, what follows proposes a detailed pedagogical treatment of *chengyu* at different levels of instruction in a CFL curriculum based on Walker's instructional model (2010). In juxtaposition with the LMI and AMI, Walker (2010) divides the range of instruction in a foreign language curriculum into four

levels from elementary to advanced. The current discussion follows Walker's level-based conceptualization of a foreign language curriculum. The division into levels of instruction, instead of "years of instructions," is a more adequate and reliable measure that corresponds to learners' skill levels. In various implementations, depending on the local resources and administrative conditions, the boundaries between these levels are fluid and flexible. For instance, the four levels of instruction could possibly correspond to three to five "years" of courses.

Table 25 presents a list of goals that focuses on particular *chengyu*-related knowledge and skills that CFL learners are expected to master by the end of each instructional level. This description of learning goals gradually progresses from focusing on expanding learners' inventories of *chengyu* items and performances in routinized conversational exchanges, to strategy-based training that aims at development of learning skills that allows students to raise their capacities for learning Chinese independent of the pedagogical supports from the learning environment.

Beginning levels (Level One and Two)

At the very initial stage, since beginning learners are assumed to have a very limited inventory of cultural knowledge and linguistic items based on which grammatical analysis can be conducted, new *chengyu* items are first learned as idioms. That is to say, at this point learners simply memorize the sound-meaning or script-meaning pair solely by associating the linguistic chunk with a certain context without necessarily understanding its inner structure. Therefore, on level one and level two we recommend introducing only a restricted number of ritualized *chengyu* performances, with the length of performance

chunks gradually expanding from formulaic exchanges to longer conversational exchanges. Examples include daily routines such as seeing someone off (一路平安) as previously illustrated. At the beginning level, another well-recommended routinized task is employing common *chengyu* items to clarify the characters in one's name during self-introduction. It is important that the instructor not to eliminate the possibility of introducing such ritualized *chengyu* performances. As long as the context in which these expressions are used are specified and their cultural connotations explained, beginning learners should be able handle a small number of *chengyu* items in well-defined performances. Besides introducing *chengyu* in situated context, it is also encouraged to introduce a controllable number of *chengyu* items whenever applicable, such as using *chengyu* items in reference to certain curricular elements (e.g., use *chengyu* to name a section in the pedagogical material, a drill or exercise, or a type of classroom activity) to start building a repertoire the learners in a given class hold in common. In addition, once learners become familiarized with the basic features of *chengyu,* emphasis at earlier stages (e.g., level two in Table 25) should be placed on recognition of particular items in writing and speech, together with basic strategy training on making inquires about unfamiliar *chengyu* encountered in Chinese discourse that are not pedagogically controlled.

Intermediate level (Level Three)

As CFL learners move beyond beginning levels, they continue building their inventory of *chengyu* items and skills to a certain point when they become ready to conduct structural analysis on chunks of language previously learned as an unanalyzed unit. Unlike children growing up in L1 environment who depend on the vast amount of input and

feedback from the environment, when trying to master a grammatical construct, adult foreign language learners benefit from formal instruction on structural analysis. Only at this point can the learners be regarded as minimally equipped for a systematic introduction of idiomatic expressions. At the intermediate level, learners need to spend large amount of time on expanding the size of their *chengyu* inventory via exposure to a wide range of authentic Chinese materials such as novels, news articles, TV shows, and movies. The instructional focus at this phase is on comprehension, and training appropriately response to *chengyu* in writing and speech, including strategies of handling unknown *chengyu* items in Chinese texts that are not pedagogically controlled. During this process, learners develop an awareness of register (informal and formal) in interpreting the effects of *chengyu* performances in spoken and written discourse. Additionally, given that the skill of sustained narration is central to the spoken Chinese curriculum at level three, it is recommended that students be encouraged to practice using descriptive *chengyu* items in narrating event, entities and roles involved.

Advanced level (Level Four)

At the advanced level, *chengyu* instruction serves the more general purpose of training foreign language learners participating in Chinese culture to build a rich and attractive C2 persona that assists learners in satisfying their objectives and fulfilling their obligations in professional settings. Therefore, training should be focused equally on both interpreting and employing *chengyu* in ways that fulfill the rhetorical expectations of the C2 environments. Particularly, this encompasses (1) a social-cultural and linguistic awareness of the implied strategies of using *chengyu* and other literary language in speech

and writing; (2) an adequate understanding of native speakers' reception of non-native *chengyu* performances, and consequently the benefits and limitations for foreign language learners to employ *chengyu*; and (3) a set of learning strategies and resources allow learners to explore various Chinese discourses containing *chengyu* and other literary references independent of the instructional environment.

At lower levels, *chengyu* instruction can be incorporated into language-skill courses, while at the advanced level *chengyu* instruction can be framed in content courses devised to help higher-level learners to gain a body of *chengyu* items and skills using Chinese linguistic artifacts. It is at this stage that we recommend a designated course with an explicit goal to prepare the students to participate in oral and written discourses that deploy literary references commonly recognized by native Chinese speakers.

Table 25 Goals and Sample Tasks of *Chengyu* Instruction in a Performed Culture CFL Curriculum

Level One	Goals Students will be able to: • Participate in a restricted number of formulaic exchanges involving *chengyu* items, including classroom business • Specify the time, place, roles of participants, and audience of a formulaic *chengyu* exchange
	Sample tasks • Introducing one's Chinese name in reference to particular *chengyu* items. • Recognizing and refering to certain types of curricular elements with *chengyu* titles, e.g., a section in the pedagogical material, a type of classroom activity, etc.

Continued

Table 25: continued

Level Two	Goals Students will be able to: • Use *chengyu* in longer conversational exchanges to achieve communicative intentions in a restricted set of daily contexts • Know the basic features of *chengyu* to recognize four-character *chengyu* items in short spoken and written Chinese discourse • Gain strateties of making inquires about unfamiliar *chengyu* items encourtered in spoken Chinese that is not pedagogically controlled
	Sample tasks • Asking the meaning of a *chengyu* item used by a Chinese interlocutor in a casual conversation. • Making educated guess about an unfamiliar *chengyu* meaning and confirming one's hypothesis with a Chinese interlocutor.
Level Three	Goals Students will be able to: • Use *chengyu* in narratives to describe entities, personality, actions, etc. • Expand the size of *chengyu* inventory via authentic Chinese materials such as news articles, TV shows, novels, etc. • Develop an awareness of register (informal/formal) in interpreting *chengyu* performances in spoken and written discourse. • Develop strategies of comprehending *chengyu* usage in authentic Chinese texts that is not pedagogically controlled
	Sample tasks • Succintly restating *chengyu* items encountered in authentic Chinese. • Finding three usage of a particular *chengyu* item in news articles online and identifying the sociolinguistic functions of the item
Level Four	Goals Students will be able to: • Interpreting and employing *chengyu* in speech

Continued

Table 25: continued

	and writing to fulfill the rhetorical expectations in Chinese professional settings • Develop a socio-cultural and linguistic awareness of the implied strategies of using literary language in speech and writing • Have a systematic understanding of *chengyu* that enables metalinguistic discussion of situated *chengyu* performances using an authentic Chinese discourse • Develop an awareness of native speaker reception, and the benefits and limitations of employing *chengyu* as a non-native speaker • Develop learning strategies and gain access to resources that support future study of Chinese discourses containing literary references
	Sample tasks • Using *chengyu* and other cultural references in persuasive or argumentative writing and oral presentation. • Discussing the communicative strategies and rhetorical effects achieved through the use of *chengyu* in authentic readings and video materials.

6.4 Conclusion and Future Studies

The experiment conducted in Chapter Four examines native Chinese subjects' reactions towards *chengyu* usage in a variety of social situations from the casual conversations among close friends to the most formal speech. Specifically, native perceptions of *chengyu* performances conducted by native and non-native speakers are compared. The results reveal that foreign language learners benefit from employing *chengyu* when engaging in verbal communications with native Chinese counterparts by

presenting an attractive C2 persona to native Chinese speakers. In formal, professional contexts, adequate *chengyu* capacities contribute to the perception of non-native speakers' authority and professionalism. In casual settings they enable a delightful persona who excels in the Chinese language and is knowledgeable of the cultural mores. A persona that opens doors for the foreigner to establish more trusted social relationships by relieving the accommodation burden from the Chinese native speaker.

Meanwhile, the unequal response towards native and non-native *chengyu* performance makes explicit the non-native speakers' limited sovereignty over *chengyu* usage. Specifically, the data suggests that foreign language learners are not expected to apply humorous *chengyu* play in casual conversations and, if they do so, are deemed to have misunderstood that particular *chengyu*. Additionally, nonnative extra-ordinary *chengyu* usage such as inventive use and overuse were perceived as signs of insufficient Chinese competency in evaluations by native Chinese, although the native executions of the same non-standard usage were justified as legitimate stylistic variations.

While this seems to be a narrow topic, focusing on a single aspect in an assortment of significant CFL capacities, in this dissertation I have shown that it has a broad implication beyond the scope of this study. These implications invite future studies to build upon the models proposed, and to fill in the gaps in the areas identified in this dissertation.

First, the impact of employing *chengyu* in C2 contexts illustrated in the experiment provides empirical evidence in support of incorporating *chengyu* instruction in CFL curriculum, especially as CFL learners move to higher levels of Chinese capacities and become increasingly engaged in Chinese environments with native speakers among whom

they wish to establish specific intentions. Data suggests that the effects of *chengyu* usage is best achieved if the non-native speaker also displays advanced Chinese capacities in other skill areas, e.g., pronunciation accuracy and grammatical complexity. This high demand on learners' overall language and culture capacity implies that consistent production of *chengyu* in a variety of genres is a pedagogical goal for advanced level instruction. However, this does not justify delaying introduction of *chengyu* in lower level instructions, since successful learners go through three general learning stages including recognition, comprehension and reaction, and finally production. It is recommended that recognition can start as early as elementary level when applicable. A restricted number of *chengyu* performances that involve active production in routinized contexts can also be introduced at early stages as long as the contexts are clearly identified and pedagogically controlled.

Given that learners' varied levels of command of *chengyu* have great impact on the final evaluation, it is recommended that future research expand the scope of the study from the production stage to recognition, comprehension, or cross-examination of these phases. A more diversified speaker cohort can be recruited to produce the stimuli, which will better inform us about native speakers' perceptions and evaluations of a wider range of *chengyu* performance variants. The more data we are able to collect, the more accurate pedagogical guidance we can provide to our learners.

Second, the unequal treatment of native and nonnative *chengyu* performance revealed in the experiment data draw attention to the existence of the "native speaker effect". Particularly to the point is the native speakers' self-perceive themselves to be the

rightful owners of Chinese, which has substantial consequences in the way foreign language learners anticipate and prepare for participating in, and getting evaluated by, the other culture. The construct of a pedagogy of expectations is proposed, which raises our awareness of the receptivity of learners in C2 environment. A pedagogy of expectations aims at enabling foreign language learners to recognize native speakers in C2 as the judges of their C2 performances, to identify what is culturally expected of themselves as "cultural outsiders", and to develop strategies for using those expectations to their own advantage. The end goal is creation of a set of increasingly effective C2 personae that help learners to achieve their intentions and to remove the anticipation of accommodation burden on the part of the native interlocutors. In this regard, it is meaningful to launch research studies to identify target-culture expectations for foreigners. Such empirical studies will inform us of the rules of the "game"—not just what helps CFL learners to score, but more importantly, what parts of the language are off-limit to them. Given that a vast number of cultural conventions we intuitively abide by have not been explicated as declarative knowledge, the responsibilities to explore hidden cultural expectations falls on the shoulders of us pedagogues.

Third, this new model presents the need for assessment that transcends the levels of instruction within a formal educational language program into C2 communities. The challenge to redefine "truly advanced level CFL capacities" given the pressing needs against the current global economic context calls for assessment that incorporates C2 expectations. Recruiting native Chinese speakers who are not trained to be Chinese language instructors as evaluators has shown promise (McAloon, 2008; Zeng, 2015) for

this purpose. Besides building a platform that enables easy and effective access to native Chinese evaluators, time and effort need to be invested in creating assessment rubrics that are transparent to the Chinese counterparts, who hold the ultimate power in evaluating learners' performance in specific C2 communities.

Finally, grounded in a practical view of language as a form of human actions, this dissertation proposes a new framework of pedagogically treating *chengyu* and other conventional literary expressions as cultural performances. Accordingly, specific pedagogical guidance, including cataloguing *chengyu* items and incorporating *chengyu* instruction at all levels in a CFL curriculum, has been provided. These aim to transform the old translation-based treatment of *chengyu* in the current CFL field to a functional activity with functional goals. One area for future studies is the development of a set of instructional *chengyu* items situated in and defined by authentic C2 contexts following the cataloguing constructs proposed in Chapter Five. It would be extremely helpful to build an online database designed for CFL learners and instructors who can search for specific Chinese conventional expressions using different criteria that meet their respective needs.

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Appendix A: Subject Recruitment Email (English Version)

Mr./Ms. XX,

Hi! I am a PhD student majoring in Chinese language pedagogy at the Ohio State University, US. I am looking for participants in my research about the Chinese language teaching and learning. Upon initial contact it is my understanding that you are an eligible candidate and have expressed interest in participating in the research. Allow me to briefly introduce you to the details and procedures of this study.

1. The experiment will take 45 minutes to 1 hour, which includes two parts. First you will listen to several recordings. Based on your impressions on the recording you will be asked to fill out a survey questionnaire. The second step is a short interview on your impressions on the recordings.
2. This study is approved by IRB and your personal information will be securely protected.
3. There's an incentive of 100 RMB or gift of the same value for every participant of the study to show our gratitude for your time and effort.
4. If you agree to participate, please reply to this email with your available time and place to meet of your choice.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email (zhang.1385@osu.edu) or other means that are convenient to you.

Thank you.

Xin Zhang

Appendix B: Subject Recruitment Email (Chinese Version)

XX 先生 / 女士：

您好！我是美国俄亥俄州立大学东亚语言文化系中文教学法的一名博士生，正在进行一项关于中文语言和教学的研究，现正寻找参与研究的志愿者。通过初步接触有幸得知您符合此次研究的条件，并且有参与意向。特此简单介绍一下此次实验的过程和一些细节。

1. 实验时间约 45 分钟－1 小时，包括两部分：首先请您听几段录音，并根据对录音的印象填写一份问卷；第二步是一个关于您对录音印象的简短采访。
2. 本研究通过美国研究审查委员会的申请，您的一切个人信息会受到严密的保护，不会对外公布。
3. 本次为所有参与者准备了 100 元人民币或同等价值的小礼品，答谢甚微薄，仅望表达对您参与本次研究的谢意。
4. 烦请回复有空见面的时间，及方便的地点。

如果有任何关于本次实验的问题，请通过邮件(zhang.1385@osu.edu) 或询问其他您更方便的方式与我联系！

感谢！

张欣

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Excerpt 1[10]

This is Bob：

You can listen to the recording as many times as you like. Based on what you hear in the recording and your impression of the individual, rate his performance by the following categories on a scale of 0-4, 0 being the lowest and 4 highest. You will be asked to justify your evaluation.

这是 Bob 的一段录音。如果需要可以反复多次重听这段录音。根据你刚听到的，请根据你对说话者的印象，就以下方面对他进行评分（0－4），并简单解释原因。

	0＝很低	1＝较低	2＝平均水平	3＝较高	4＝很高
☐ 受教育水平 (Education level)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 适当得体性 (Appropriateness)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 语言表达能力 (Linguistic skills to convey ideas)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 可信度 / 说服力 (Trustworthiness/ Persuasiveness)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 好感度 (Likability)	○	○	○	○	○
*☐ 中文水平 (Chinese proficiency)	○	○	○	○	○
*☐ 对中国文化熟知度 (Knowledge about Chinese culture)	○	○	○	○	○

[10] During data collection, only the Chinese version of the survey was provided to the participants. English translations are provided here for the readers of this dissertation.

Excerpt 2

This is Xiao Ming：
You can listen to the recording as many times as you like. Based on what you hear in the recording and your impression of the individual, rate his performance by the following categories on a scale of 0-4, 0 being the lowest and 4 highest. You will be asked to justify your evaluation.

这是小明的一段录音。如果需要可以反复多次重听这段录音。根据你刚听到的，请根据你对说话者的印象，就以下方面对他进行评分（0－4），并简单解释原因。

	0＝很低	1＝较低	2＝平均水平	3＝较高	4＝很高
☐ 受教育水平 (Education level)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 适当得体性 (Appropriateness)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 语言表达能力 (Linguistic skills to convey ideas)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 可信度／说服力 (Trustworthiness/ Persuasiveness)	○	○	○	○	○
☐ 好感度 (Likability)	○	○	○	○	○