

Domain Presentations in CFL: An Audience-oriented Approach

Dissertation

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By

Qingyang Lin

Graduate Program in East Asian Languages and Literatures

The Ohio State University

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Dissertation Committee

Galal Walker, Advisor

Xiao-Bin Jian

Charles Quinn

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Abstract

This study investigates Chinese audience perceptions and reactions to American advanced learners of Chinese delivering domain presentations. Drawing on video recordings of the Chinese Flagship students' Master's thesis defenses, the research focuses on the question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions, where Chinese audience members ask questions and provide feedback, and students respond accordingly. Utilizing discourse analysis, the interactions between students and Chinese audience members are examined to identify common themes across multiple defenses. Observations and conclusions are intended to inform design of a program that trains students to deliver domain presentations to a Chinese audience.

This study underscores the need for learners and educator of CFL to be aware of their target audience's expectations and preferences by emphasizing the role of the audience's interpretation in determining the end product of a communication event and pointing out the lack of consideration of audience in current CFL education.

The analysis of this study provides a thick description of how such a cross-cultural communication event takes place, detailing the background information, time, place, roles of participants and how these elements affect behaviors and perceptions of participants. The analysis also gives abundant examples of audience feedback to American students giving domain presentations in Chinese on China-related topics, as

well as examples of how American students use culturally appropriate strategies and language to respond to feedback from the Chinese audiences.

Informed by observations from analysis of the Flagship Master's thesis defense events and the researcher's practice as a Chinese teacher, suggestions and guidelines for designing a program that trains Chinese learners to give domain presentations are proposed. The guidelines state the program goal, discuss key issues in curriculum design, propose a working curriculum enlightened by the design of the Flagship program, and specify the instructor's roles.

Dedication

Dedicated to my family and friends

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I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Professor Galal Walker, for giving me the opportunity to pursue a Ph.D. in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at OSU. His groundbreaking insights in the field of Chinese as a Foreign Language has reshaped my understanding of this field.

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Vita

August 1991Born, Shanxi, P.R. China

2014B.A. German Studies, Zhejiang University

2014-2016M.A. Teaching Chinese to Speakers of
Other Languages, Zhejiang University

2017-2022Graduate Teaching Associate, Department
of East Asian Languages and Literatures,
The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: East Asian Languages and Literatures

Area of Specialization: Chinese Language Pedagogy

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Chapter 1. Audience as a General Concept

The Performed Culture Approach proposed a framework of understanding performance in foreign language pedagogy. “Performances, in foreign language pedagogy as well as in other venues, are conscious repetitions of situated events that are defined by five specified elements: 1) place of occurrence, 2) time of occurrence, 3) appropriate script/program/rules, 4) roles of participants, and 5) accepting and/or accepted audience.” (Walker, 2010, p.8) This is the first people to recognize audience as an important part of foreign language pedagogy. The audience of a communication event opens or closes a discourse. It also determines how people talk. Among the five elements of a performance, audience is the least discussed factor that can have the most impact on the form and interpretation of a communication event. My study addresses the concept of audience, examines its role in cross-cultural communication, and make proposals to an audience-oriented foreign language pedagogy. In Chapter 1, we will look at the concept of audience as a general concept and how it determines communication.

1.1 Introduction: CFL calls for cultivation of audience awareness

Research in the field of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) has been mostly focused on beginning to intermediate level students and instruction. Advanced level communication in CFL is relatively under-researched. However, there has been an increased need for learning Chinese for professional and academic purposes resulting

from China gaining more influence in the global economic and political environment. The Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) has released three new levels of proficiency on top of the original six levels to serve the increasing need of advanced-level Chinese use in 2022. The new levels (levels 7-9) were developed to provide language proficiency certification for admission to and graduation from graduate level programs, hiring, training and promoting purposes in academic institutions¹. Learners with professional and academic purposes will have to communicate in Chinese in a lively mode, engaging in actual meaningful spontaneous exchanges with people from and in China.

One of the most common communication events that CFL learners who engage in commercial, educational, or NGO activities will find themselves in is making presentations to Chinese audiences. People in China like to hear about foreigners' experience in and opinions about China. Our students often get invited to such talks. This is also an opportunity for learners to meet Chinese people, obtain the access to a community, and start relationships, if managed properly. Therefore, a language program that prepares students for future communication situations in Chinese should include giving speeches to an audience of the target culture as a critical component of the curriculum. The purpose of my study is to argue the need for a speech training curriculum in the CFL context, and propose guidelines and suggestions for implementing one.

The Department of East Asian Language and Literatures at The Ohio State University has a graduate level Chinese language program that is designed to prepare Americans to work in Chinese language and culture environments. The Chinese Flagship

¹ <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/7Kqp84i2Xa17tXFZF0U11Q>.

program trains students to acquire professional capabilities in Chinese that enable them to go on to careers in business and government or on to further professional education. The final means of assessment for the two-year master's program consists of a China-related project researched and presented in Chinese in the students' own chosen domains of interest, as well as public defenses of their projects as the final assessments of their CFL study. The purpose of the defense is to train each student to acquire the ability to present and demonstrate skills in engaging in professional level research and/or work practices in Chinese with Chinese audiences.

The final defense in the Flagship program is a highly mixed-culture environment in that it always involves a speaker from the United States, and an audience composed of Chinese-speaking people from both China and America. The event also takes place at two locations—in China and in the United States-- via videoconferencing. The students and graduate committee members are from the United States, although the whole event is conducted in Chinese. While Chinese culture weighs heavily in the assessment process, neither American culture nor Chinese culture dominates at the event. All participants need to find a way to cooperate with others in order to complete their role in the event according to their own understanding of the expected behavior in such a mixed-culture event. This feature makes the event a great context for researchers to examine how people understand, behave, and cooperate to achieve the intention and meet the expectations of the program and its final event. Understanding such contexts, where people from different cultures interact, is important because they include just those features that characterize most cross-cultural interactions.

Seeking to provide suggestions for training CFL learners to deliver engaging and effective presentations to Chinese audiences, my study therefore focuses on analyzing advanced-level Chinese M.A. theses defenses. There are many perspectives from which one could analyze such an event. I will approach it from the aspect of the audience response. I will now offer a brief explanation for selecting this perspective.

It has been widely argued in different fields of research that in communication, meaning is co-constructed *with* an audience of one or more respondents instead of solely generated by a speaker (Searle, 1969; Bach & Harnish, 1979; Recanati, 1986; Bach, 1990; Clark, 1996; Turner, 2009; Tomasello 2018; among many others). The end product of a communication event is the audience's interpretation, no matter how that might differ, in the end, from the speaker's intention. Differing from daily conversations where a speaker can adjust communicative strategies according to an audience's responses during a back-and-forth interaction, in a presentation style talk or speech, the script is usually premeditated, and the audience can only give very limited responses during the speech. When we speak of the effect of such presentations, we are necessarily concerned with their audiences. Therefore, we begin with the assumption that for a speaker to achieve maximum effect, he needs to engage his audience's interest, emotions, and beliefs. To succeed in this engagement, he needs as much prior knowledge as possible concerning how his audience will perceive his speech as prepares it.

The concept of audience is important in many different fields, such as theatre, mass communication, business, and composition. In theatre, audience refers to the group of people who sit in a theatre house and watch a performance. In mass media, the word

“audience” has long been used as a collective term for the "receivers" in the simple sequential model of the mass communication process (source, channel, message, receiver, effect) that was employed by pioneers in the field of media research (e.g., Schramm, 1954). In business, audience is the target consumer of a product or a marketing strategy. In composition studies, audience is the intended readers a writer has in mind when he composes. In general, the word audience refers to a group of people who receives a message or performance.

In foreign language learning and teaching, audience as a component of communication is rarely taken explicitly into consideration in curriculum design. Most Chinese language programs and the educators who conduct them are much more concerned with the linguistic code, as if the learners will have no difficulty communicating with speakers of the target language if they just put what is on their minds into the words of the target language. The audience in linguistic communication, as such programs appear to regard it, assumes a native speaker whose reception of the learner's communicative moves is so natural and given that it requires no explicit attention. This might prove viable in programs situations where the learners' base language and culture are relatively close to the target language and culture. But in the case of Americans learning Chinese and Chinese culture, it is at best risky to assume that a Chinese audience will perceive and react to the learners' speech as the learner expects, because an American learner's expectations are by no means guaranteed to match her Chinese audience's expectations. Both sides can, and usually do, bring culturally specific assumptions, beliefs, and predispositions to their interaction.

If you walk into a theatre house for an opera in the United States, you expect to see the audience sitting in the dark and quietly enjoying the performance. A well received performance may elicit loud applause and shouts of “Bravo!”—when the performance is done. However, if you go to a local opera in China, you will see the audience sit around tables with all kinds of snacks and tea served constantly. People talk with each other all the time commenting on the performance. They also shout aloud to the performers to show appreciation of the performance. An American performer might feel offended by a Chinese audience’s way of appraising his performance in China, while Chinese performers in America might think the American audience does not have any interest in their performances at all. The descriptions of audiences reveal very different expectations and behaviors in the different cultures. As a performer, one needs to know the intentions behind the audience reactions and what factors inform those reactions.

In this study, the performers are American graduate students who use Chinese to conduct research or projects on China-related topics. The performance is an academic defense, and the audience is composed of both professors from an American university and professors and students from a university in China. This study is based on close observations of 70 video recordings of these defenses. This dissertation will provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of these events, to set the stage for an analysis of the reactions and feedback provided by the audience in the Q&A session that follows presentations by students introducing their research. Based on the reactions and feedback from the audience, as I observed them in the Q&A, I hope to draw conclusions on what

behaviors and characteristics of an American student are appealing to a Chinese audience as well as on what aspects detract from our learners' presentations.

Chapter One discusses the importance of audience in meaning making, identifies audience's interpretation as the end product of a communication event, conceptualizes audience in the current study.

Chapter Two addresses the issue of audience in the CFL field. The chapter examines the reception of Chinese learners' performance among native speakers of Chinese, and the status of this issue in current mainstream teaching practices. The examination points out lack of consideration of audience in current CFL education.

Chapter Three presents the methodology employed in this study, and provides an in-depth analysis of the context of the Flagship Master's defense, serving as a basis for the interpretation of the participants' behaviors in data analysis.

Chapter Four analyzes and discusses instances of interactions in the OSU Flagship M.A. thesis defenses, identifies recurring themes arising from the Q&A sessions of the defenses with detailed analysis of examples for each theme. The discussion identifies aspects that Chinese audiences consider important in students' presentations, such as the students' shared persona as an American student, the representativeness of multiple aspects of their research, students' field experience in China, source of data, and government-related issues. the chapter also identified successful strategies employed by students that have helped them effectively negotiate their communicative intentions, as well as the language expressions that realize their strategies. The examples, analysis and conclusions presented in this chapter are intended to offer practical guidance for

advanced Chinese learners and educators as they prepare for academic research and presentations in the future.

Chapter Five provides suggestions and guidelines for designing a program that trains Chinese learners to give domain presentations by stating the program goal, discussing key issues in curriculum design, and describing an instructor's roles.

In concluding remarks, the researcher suggests future research incorporate audience interviews, paralinguistic analysis, and single case studies. By addressing these directions, scholars could further refine and expand the guidelines for designing CFL educational programs that effectively prepare learners to deliver domain presentations in Chinese. This will ultimately contribute to a more comprehensive and adaptive approach to CFL education that recognizes the importance of audience awareness.

1.2 An audience's interpretation is the end product of a communication event

The process of communication has long been conceptualized as a linear process that consists of the speaker (source, transmitter, sender), the message (content), the medium (channel), the audience (receiver, recipient), and the effect (Lasswell, 1948; Shannon, 1948; Schramm, 1954). This conceptualization of communication pictures the audience as a group of passive information receivers who do not actively contribute to the meaning making of the event, or who do not have a say in what messages can be or is being communicated. It conceptualizes content as sendable in containers, loaded by the sender and unloaded by the receiver, utilizing what Reddy (1979) identified as "the conduit metaphor." What message is being communicated depends only on the how the message is formed and presented by the speaker. This is not the most accurate or

revealing way to conceptualize a public presentation in a foreign language and culture. What is communicated is entirely or largely dependent on the audience.

To better understand meaning-making in a public communication event, we should first look at what has really been communicated by the end in any given interaction. What was the end product of any such interaction? This question has actually been addressed as early as Aristotle. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, he determines that it is the listener who determines the end and object of the speech (Aristotle, 1990). To further elucidate this statement, we can consider the classic model of communication (of Shannon et al.), to look at how, in both models, meaning is produced.

Any given communication starts with the speaker establishing a communicative intention. The extent that a communicative intention is *intended* to be recognized and its fulfillment depends on its recognition (Searle, 1969; Bach & Harnish, 1979; Recanati, 1986; Bach, 1990). A speaker then chooses a form of expression to best convey her intention and presents it to the target audience. The audience receives the message and decodes the expression using their knowledge of the expression form. In this process, meaning is addressed in two phases, the speaker's encoding phase and the audience decoding phase. A communication can contain many rounds of this process, with back-and-forth interactions between the speaker and the audience, but in this sequential model of communication, we can easily see that the result of the decoding phase is the end product of any given interaction in the whole communication.

If we call the result of the audience decoding process the audience's interpretation, the end product of a communication, is the audience's interpretation, no

matter how much the speaker wants their intention to be recognized in his own. A speaker can do everything to improve their presenting skills in order to make sure that the message is well formed when expressed by the speaker. However, the message is out of the speaker's control once it is uttered. It all comes down to the audience to determine what the utterance means and what impact it can have on the audience.

In Duranti's ethnographic research on Samoan society, he recognizes the power of the audience's interpretation over the speaker's original intention: "An audience may respond to what they judge to be contextually relevant conventions, ignoring the issue of the speaker's intentions" (Duranti, 1999, p. 135). In other words, the speakers' meanings depend on what their audiences takes them to mean.

As much as a speaker wants their intention to be fully and correctly recognized, the audience's interpretation is often different from the speaker's intention. It is certainly not an uncommon thing in our lives that we feel our words are being misunderstood. This happens even in face-to-face conversations between people of intimate relationships such as family members and close friends. We often hear realizations like "I thought you said ...", "I didn't mean ...", etc. These are means we use to try to correct a misunderstanding of what was being said earlier in the conversation. These misunderstandings occur because the audience's interpretation of the speaker's utterances does not match what the speaker intended to mean by using those utterances, and they occur even when both parties speak the same language.

Misunderstandings that frequently happen in daily life compel us to ask: what went wrong? It is commonly assumed that speakers have full control of their expressive

choices, but it is also true that slips of the tongue and other ‘performance errors’ do happen. In any of these cases, however, it is the audience’s responsibility to respond with an interpretation. How meanings are made at the audience end of a communication event is the next stage in this discussion that seeks to provide an account for misunderstandings in daily communication.

1.2.1 Expressions are prompts for the audience to make meaning

When we use language to communicate with others, we do not start from the origin of the universe or the beginning of our personal life stories to explain how we have come to a particular situation. We only point out what we think is new to the current interaction. We subconsciously do this because our experience of communicating with others in daily life is sufficient to assume that our audience has the background knowledge needed for completing the whole picture of what the speaker intends to mean. This is acknowledged by many students and theorists of language, from at least Wittgenstein (1953) forward to Grice (1975) and beyond. Tomasello’s study of the development of human communication suggests that “only new situations are communicatively relevant, since currently shared situations need not be pointed out” (2018, p.55). Clark (1996, p.332) calls the shared background knowledge that informs and guides any current interaction the *common ground*.

This feature of the human communication divides the source on which the audience base to interpret the meaning of an utterance into two parts: the explicit language uttered by the speaker, and the unsaid common ground of the current

interaction. I will discuss the two aspects separately to illustrate how meanings are made by the audience.

First, humans derive meanings from utterances they hear in an interaction. It is widely assumed that expressions in language (and other semiotic means used by humans) “carry” or “contain” meanings. We understand language – by accessing the meanings conveyed by the expressions.

Mark Turner argues differently in his study on human cognition in presenting with his colleague Gilles Fauconnier a model called “conceptual blending” to try to provide a unitary account of human thinking and communication. They argue that mental spaces are small conceptual frames used to structure the processes behind human reasoning and communication.

Words do not mean. Words are prompts that human beings use to try to get someone else to construct mental meanings. Words and expressions are tools that human beings use to get someone to use mental operations that they already possess to work on knowledge that they mostly already know to put together a meaning. The words do not mean. The words do not carry meaning. (Turner, 2009, p. 94)

Take the sentence “Newton is the father of physics” as an example. Physics is an academic discipline invented by humans --not a biological animal, the kind of entity that we normally think of having a father. Although this usage is different from the etymological usage of the word *father*, we have no problem understanding this sentence. How do we manage to do that? According to Turner, this statement makes sense to an audience because *father* does not intrinsically bear any meaning. It is just a combination of syllables or letters. But this very combination is a part of the frame for *kinship* that the audience’s collective mind has, formed from past shared experience. Hearing or seeing

the word *father* again prompts the kinship frame and what a father means in the audience's integration network. The relationship between Newton and physics fits the relationship between a father and his child in the audience's kinship frame. Thus, the audience is able to blend the new input (Newton and physics) and their existing kinship frame in a blended space and construct the meaning prompted by the sentence "Newton is the father of physics".

As described in the process of conceptual blending, meaning is generated by the audience, as opposed to being carried by and retrieved from expressions. What meaning the audience puts together depends on what kind of conceptual frame they have already formed, that is evocable by the language they must interpret. No one's life experience is exactly the same as anyone else's, thus different people generate different meanings for the same expressions. No matter how much control the speaker wants to have on their utterances, it is the audience who determines what meaning is generated in any given interaction.

1.2.2 The mismatch of the unsaid common ground is an important factor to misunderstandings

As discussed in the previous section, human communication relies on two sources of information to communicate meaning, i.e., the explicit language and the unspoken common ground available to the current interaction. The common ground of a given communication event is not something visible or explicitly discussed and agreed upon by all parties involved in an act of communication. Instead, it is subjective and reflexive. In Clark's definition, two people's common ground includes "all the knowledge, beliefs, and

assumptions they take to be universally held in the communities to which they mutually believe they both belong." (Clark, 1996, p. 332) The important word here is "believe".

The common ground is what the communicative partners believe that they both know.

How can this feature of a common ground result in miscommunication in the end?

What and how speakers choose to put into explicit language depends on what they

believe to exist in the common ground of the current interaction shared by their

audiences. However, given the subjective and reflexive nature of the common ground,

what the audience takes for granted could be different from what the speaker assumes.

Then a mismatch between the assumptions complementary to the explicit language would

occur leading to an audience's interpretation that deviates from the speaker's original

intention. Jaszczolt's (2005) also recognizes that "the hearer may also be given freedom

to create assumptions rather than recover them" in the interpretation of meaning (p. 76).

Most communication in our daily life goes as expected because we communicate

within the communities we are familiar with. Communicative breakdowns are more

likely to happen in cross-cultural communications where the interactants come from

different communities, where they have had different experiences and developed very

different beliefs and assumptions.

Let me use a personal example to further explain: As I was learning English back

in China, I loved watching American TV shows to improve my listening skills, as well as

familiarize myself with American society and culture. One scene from that show did not

make any sense to me until I moved to the United States a few years ago. It occurred in

an episode of a crime story. FBI agents were attempting to locate a suspect. As they

approached the suspect's house in Los Angeles, one agent saw the suspect's car parked outside the house and shouted, "His car's here. Let's move!" Other agents immediately followed his judgement that the suspect was in the house and made their move. No one bothered to question: How can we be sure that the suspect to be at home just because they saw his car parked there? Apparently, the agents all agreed with the assumption that if one's car is at his house, that person must be home as well. So, no further explanation needed to be said, they made the move.

Their conclusion made no sense to me when I saw this scene for the first time. In China, where I lived, the community affords many other means of travel than driving. In my home environment, a car parked outside one's house does not at all ensure its owner is at home. People in China sometimes prefer to use public transportation to go to places as traffic and parking could be much more time-consuming than taking readily available public transportation.

So, if I were one of the agents at that scene, I would have needed at least one more sentence before rushing into a suspect's house--something that fills the missing link between "the suspect's car is outside his house" and "the suspect must be at home", such as "no one would leave their car at home and use other ways of transport to get around a city like L.A." But apparently, this does not need to be pointed out in the American environment because it is already assumed in the common ground of American communication. All the other agents at the scene were primed to assume that if someone's car is at home, that person must be at home as well. This common-ground

assumption, along with the first agent's stated observation, composed the whole meaning of what was communicated.

The director of the TV show allowed those lines because he was sure his audience too would get the intended meaning. But for an audience such as myself who is not from an U.S. environment, ineffective communication occurred because I did not share the common ground. Even though I understood every word of those lines, I was not convinced by the rationalization behind the characters' actions. As a result, the director's intention behind that scene did not get across to me.

In this section, I have addressed the issue of what the result a communication event is. I argue that the audience's interpretation is the final product of the meaning's communication at any moment of an interaction by discussing how meanings are made by the audience. Meaning is constructed based on two aspects of a human communication, the explicit language and the unsaid common ground of the communicators. Expressions are prompts that evoke relevant conceptual frameworks in the audience's mind, with which they can conceptualize relevant meanings. The conceptual frameworks being evoked are formed by each individual's prior life experience, thus what meanings can be made is to that extent both underwritten and constrained by each individual audience. Complementary to explicit language, the common ground provides all background information communicators rely on in selecting and interpreting expressions. The common ground is assumed instead of explicitly agreed upon among all communicative parties. In cross-cultural communication where people

come from communities with different experiences, the mismatch of the speaker's and audience's common ground is an important factor in misunderstandings.

1.3 People alter how they talk based on their realization of the audience

In a recent and well-known American TV show, *How I Met Your Mother*, there is a scene where the main characters Barney, Robin, Lily, and Ted are talking in a booth at a busy restaurant. Their conversation is about Robin's boyfriend who is not a native speaker of English. Barney has just said "I'm telling you, within three days ..." when Lily sees Robin's boyfriend walking towards them. She interrupts Barney's sentence and says: "Oh here he comes switch to big words." They apparently do not want Robin's boyfriend to know what they were talking about, so Barney restarts the conversation with "within a triad of solar periods, you'll recognize your dearth of compatibility with your paramour, and conclude your association." Their decision to switch to higher register works very well, because Robin's boyfriend, looking happy and innocent, asks them: "What are we talking of? Baseball?"

This is a clear example of the gap between native vs non-native speakers of a language. As depicted in the scene above, native speakers can choose what and how to talk in an interaction based on the realization of the difference between a non-native and a native audience to achieve our communicative goals. This potential for adjusting and adapting one's communicative behavior to the audience has been the subject of inquiry across several disciplines, including sociolinguistics, sociology, social psychology, and communication. Among the manifold theoretical frameworks seeking to understand how

and why we adjust and adapt our communication to our fellow speakers, Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is arguably one of the most fully elaborated.

1.3.1 Adjusting how to speak - Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Developed in the 1970s (Giles, 1973), refined and elaborated by different scholars over decades--e.g., Giles, Willemyns, Gallois, & Anderson, 2007; Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982, CAT has been applied to a wide array of academic fields with a focus on intercultural and inter-/intragenerational communication. CAT "seeks to explain why and how people adjust their communicative behaviors during social interactions, and what social consequences result from those adjustments" (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2015, p. 2). It is well established in CAT research that "perceived accommodation increasingly and cumulatively decreases perceived social distance, enhances interactional satisfaction and positive evaluations of speakers, and facilitates mutual understanding" (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2015, p. 17).

Adjustments and adaptations of communicative behavior are not uncommon in our daily life. Most people are able to use this strategy properly. We use simple words to talk to children or speak louder to someone with hearing problems. However, in cross-cultural communication where we know much less about our communicative partners, there are more things to be taken into deliberate consideration.

1.3.2 Adjusting what to say

When we try to think of a good way to communicate with someone from another culture, a common accommodation we can think of is to speak the audience's language or

dialect. For people who are not experienced in communicating with people from another culture, language seems to be the biggest barrier to communication. People believe if I speak the language of my audience, they should be able to understand what I say and what I do the way I expect. However, this is not always true. To achieve optimal effect in cross-cultural communication, sometimes we need to make adjustments in aspects other than the language.

We can see the strategy of accommodating the audience to achieve better communicative effect can be observed being deployed by large international companies. The world-famous skincare brand SK-II has initiated a media campaign named “#changedestiny”. The purpose of the campaign is to encourage women to take control over their own destiny. SK-II products target mainly affluent women who have economic independence, thus disposable income to pamper themselves with premium skin care products. The company's intention is to identify with these independent and affluent women by advocating women's empowerment so that these women, being the brand's target users, might be willing to spend their money on the products of SK-II. The key to the effectiveness of this marketing move is to make the customers feel connected to a core value that the brand suggest it is advocating. In order to do this, the narratives of the commercials need to appear relatable to the audience. Women around the world face different challenges and fight for different goals. It is impossible for any one single narrative to reach women from different cultures. SK-II had realized this fact and thus used localized commercials to reach its target audience in different parts of the world. To the same end, namely trying to relate to their customers, not only the language of their

commercials, but the narrative itself is also tailored to the unique challenges and desires of women from different parts of the world where they are advertising. Let us consider two examples.

The commercial targeting English-speaking countries, including the United States, is about Anggun Cipta Sasmi², an international singer-songwriter originally from Indonesia. The narrative of the commercial features Anggun telling her own story of chasing her dreams. She left her home and moved all the way from Indonesia to Europe to chase her dreams. She worked very hard on her own and finally achieved her dream of writing and singing her songs to the whole world. The whole video has no other narrators, but her, telling her own story.

The commercial released in China is a short video called *Marriage Market Takeover*³. It tells the story about a group of people labeled “leftover women” (single women over 25). The video includes interviews of several Chinese women expressing their opinions about the life they chose. These women are all in their 30s, single, financially independent, unwilling to compromise on marrying despite pressure from their parents and the society. In the video, these women's parents also expressed concerns about their daughter not being able to get married at such a late age. In the eyes of their generation, that means a big failure of a woman's life. The video ends with the parents understanding and appreciating the choice of their daughters after seeing an exhibition of pictures of their daughters with confident and happy smiles on their faces, in their own

² Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyrfqUTho7g>, accessed on 11/29/2022.

³ Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irfd74z52Cw>, accessed on 11/29/2022.

control over their lives and when or whether they marry. The narrative of this commercial addresses one of the most important dilemmas in which many independent women in China find themselves: the decision between following the traditionally valued behavior of satisfying one's parents by getting married early or achieving self-fulfillment by asserting autonomy in their own life choices.

The commercial featuring Anggun's story features individual heroism and the American dream, which resonates with customers from English-speaking countries. By contrast, *Marriage Market Takeover* presents a narrative that addresses a very up-to-date and heated social issue in terms that a huge part of their target audience relates to. With the same purpose of ostensibly advocating women's empowerment, both the content and the form of each commercial's message are completely different to accommodate the specific audience in the company's target market.

1.3.3 Adjusting the speaker's personality

In cross-cultural communication, not only do people need to change how they form a message, but also the personality they display to their audience. My advisor Dr. Galal Walker shares this story of a friend of his, Dr. Shigeru Miyagawa. He learned that in a public speech context, a confident, charming, and humorous speaker is more appealing to an American audience, while a Japanese audience would be more appreciative of a polite and humble speaker more. As an American giving a public speech to an audience composed of both Americans and Japanese people, his trans-cultural strategy is to say: "Americans speakers start a speech with a joke, while a Japanese speaker is likely to start a speech with an apology. So, today I will start with apologizing

for not having a joke.” By acknowledging the difference between the American culture and the Japanese culture and making a communicative move that incorporates the appropriate behavior in both cultures, he manages to tailor his behavior to the cultural diversity in his audience.

The previous section argued that in cross-cultural communication, people need to adjust their communicative behaviors in order to achieve their communicative goals. These accommodations, we noted, are not limited to the language one speaks. They also include the content of the message and sometimes even the persona of the speaker. depending on what is known about. How a speaker should adjust which of their behaviors depends on how the speaker assesses the audience, so that what they chooses to express in the end depends on the speaker’s understanding of the audience. “Individuals have expectations about what constitutes appropriate and desirable accommodation in context, and these expectations are informed by the socio-historical context of interaction, interpersonal and intergroup histories, and idiosyncratic preferences.” (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2015, p.17) Only with relevant and informed assessment of their audience can a speaker make communicatively effective choices in expression, the kind that accommodates the audience as needed. In most of the situations in our daily communication, we are able to make the right decision because we have relatively accurate understandings about our audiences. However, in cross-cultural communication, we often need to make an extra effort in anticipating how our audience will perceive and react to certain behaviors. This question is taken up again in a later section in this chapter, in the discussion of audience analysis.

1.4 Conversation audience vs. presentation audience

Since audience is a necessary component of a communication event, the concept of audience is defined by many different fields, to name a few--theatre, mass media, business, academia. The audience is, at one level, simply the people who hear the speaker's utterances (Bell, 1984, p. 161). Since an endless number of situations in our social life fit this simple description of audience, any analysis must first specify what kind of audience is being addressed. Therefore, this section will discuss the categorization of different audiences to establish the profile of the particular audience in this study.

1.4.1 Allan Bell's audience design

The sociolinguist Allan Bell outlined a sociolinguistic model called *audience design* in 1984. In his work, he devised a framework to distinguish different kinds of audience roles from the perspective of the speaker.

“We may distinguish and rank audience roles according to whether or not the persons are known, ratified, or addressed by the speaker. The main character in the audience is the second person, the addressee, who is known, ratified, and addressed. There may also be others, third persons, present but not directly addressed. Known and ratified interlocutors in the group, I term auditors. Third parties whom the speaker knows to be there, but who are not ratified participants, are overhearers. Other parties whose presence is unknown are eavesdroppers, whether intentionally or by chance”. (Bell, p. 159)

To better illustrate and compare the attributes of different audience roles, see the following table.

Table 1 Bell's Audience Design

	Known	Ratified	Addressed
Addressee	+	+	+
Auditor	+	+	-
Overhearer	+	-	-
Eavesdropper	-	-	-

Although Bell has provided a systematic and detailed categorization of audience roles from the speaker's perspective, for the purpose of my study, I propose another way of categorizing an audience from the opposite angle, i.e., from the perspective of the audience.

1.4.2 Categorizing audience in the perspective of the interactive level of a communication event

To distinguish audience based on the mode of speaker-audience relationship, audience can be largely considered in two modes: the conversational audience mode and the presentational audience mode.

A conversation audience refers to a group of people who at some point in the event participates in a conversation with the speaker. When performing in the conversation audience mode, a participant may take on the *addressee* role, which refers to the second person in the conversation, i.e., the person to whom the speaker is directly talking to. A person may also take the role of *auditor*, a person present to the conversation who is silently listening at the moment, but may join the conversation as an interlocutor at another time. The third role is that of overhearer. An overhearer is a person

of whom the speaker is aware but not expecting to hear from. For example, when you are dining with your friends at a restaurant, you are aware that your conversation with friends will be overheard when the waiter who comes to serve you. However, you also know that the waiter is not likely to join your conversation and give their opinions. The waiter is thus an overhearer.

A common characteristic of the above three roles in the conversation audience mode is that regardless of their level of participation in the conversation, a speaker adjusts their way of talking based on their realization of these different audiences as the conversation unfolds. For example, we normally stop talking about personal or private things when a waiter comes to our table, and return the conversation to such matters only after the waiter leaves.

The conversation audience mode features real-time interaction between the speaker and the audience. Those present can interact as audience with the speaker by jumping into an on-going conversation at any moment and giving their reactions to what the speaker has said. The addressee and the speaker play an equally important role in determining where the conversation is going. Auditors and overhearers easily take on the addressee's role by interrupting the conversation and capturing the speaker's attention.

Things are different in the presentation audience mode. The nature of a presentation event raises additional concerns for the speaker-audience relationship. A presentation is a formal talk or speech in which a speaker shows and explains a product, idea, or piece of work to an audience one-directionally. A *presentation audience* is the group of people who listens to this kind of talk or speech. According to Bell's

categorization, if an audience member is addressed, they must be known to the speaker. However, in a presentation in which the speaker may have little knowledge about who is coming to listen to their presentation in advance, it is not likely that the speaker knows those people who show up at the presentation, yet a good speaker is nevertheless obliged to appear to address them all during the presentation.

The speaker-audience relationship in presentation-audience mode presents the speaker with another challenge. A presentation is a one-directional communication event in the sense that there is basically no verbal feedback from the audience that can help the speaker calibrate their talk based on reactions to what is said during the speech (Here I by no means suggest that there is no interaction of any kind between the speaker and the audience at all; I refer only to explicit verbal feedback from the audience). During a presentation, there is no chance for clarification, explanation, or elaboration on the content that tailors to the audience's questions or misunderstandings. There might be a Q&A session that allows the speaker to interact with audience, but this kind of opportunity is not offered in every presentation. Most times, the audience's opinions and attitudes toward the speech and the speaker are already formed during the talk.

In addition to the speaker's uncertainty of an audience's perception of their presentation, another feature of presentation also contributes to the difficulty of achieving optimal desired effects with that presentation, namely, how to best achieve the speaker's intention. As opposed to spontaneous conversations of the sort that can happen any day at any place, a presentation always has a predetermined time, place, and purpose. A presentation can be to sell a product, to inform the predetermined audience, or to defend

an idea. Its speaker intends to persuade the audience to do or believe something, or to view or understand something in a particular way—and so on. The effectiveness of a presentation is always judged by its receptivity among the audience. Regardless of how speakers think their presentations has gone, it is the audience to demonstrate the purpose of a presentation has been fulfilled.

An ineffective presentation has more serious consequences than a casual conversation that goes awry. It can be failing to complete the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the season because the audience does not find the product attractive enough to buy after the speaker's presentation, or it might mean postponing of graduation because the speaker failed to demonstrate their academic competence through the thesis defense.

The purpose-driven yet interaction-lacking nature of presentation requires the speaker to bring to it as much prior knowledge about the audience as possible, which often means more preparation work before the event. That preparation should focus on the speaker's audience if it is to succeed at achieving the speaker's purpose. But what about the audience should the speaker of a presentation know? The next section will talk about current studies on analyzing audience.

1.5 Audience analysis

Given that audiences are essential for constructing meaning in an interaction, an audience's life experience determines what conceptual framework they can access to make meaning when prompted by the language they encounter. It also provides the basis for the assumed common ground of a communication event. Therefore, for a speaker to

prepare for a more effective communication, it is important to take steps to know—sometimes get to know—one's audience.

1.5.1 Traditional background audience analysis in media studies and communication studies

Trying to understand an audience for a communication event has been addressed by research and practices in the fields of mass media and public speaking. Methods of audience analysis are “designed to enable speakers and writers to draw inferences about the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of an audience” (Ede, 1984, p. 140). Studies using audience analysis fall into the following categories: situational analysis, demographic analysis, psychological analysis, multicultural analysis, and interest and knowledge analysis (DeCaro, Adams, Jefferis, 2011).

Situational analysis is concerned with why an audience is assembled in the first place. Demographic analysis gathers such information as the audience's age, gender, major, year in school, race, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. Psychological analysis surveys the audience's attitudes, beliefs and values on certain matters. Multicultural analysis takes into consideration differences in the audience's language, cognition, ethnocentricity, cultural values, and communication styles caused by the backgrounds of the audience. Interest and knowledge analysis asks questions such as how much the audience is interested in a certain topic and how much they know about it.

Although the fore-mentioned angles of audience analysis provide a relatively comprehensive examination of the information about an audience, it does not guarantee an accurate prediction of how the audience would perceive and react to a speech, because

any prediction made from this background knowledge is just speculation, not actual words and behaviors of the actual audience. To some extent predictions can be made to guess how an audience would perceive and react to a speech based on the experience of communicating with people from communities with which we are familiar. However, making predictions of this kind in cross-cultural communication is easily misleading. The common ground we rely on to make predictions about how an audience would interpret a communicative event is culturally specific. To better understand a particular audience, a more direct way is to look at how they actually perceive and react to certain events from their own words and behaviors.

This kind of audience analysis does not consider the speaker, as if whoever delivers the message does not affect how it will be received. However, this is not true. For example, most pharmaceutical commercials tend to use the image of a doctor to endorse their products, because words coming out of a doctor's mouth are much more convincing to most people. The speaker's persona contributes significantly to the credibility of the message. To see how an audience would perceive a communication event, whoever delivers the message is also of critical concern.

1.5.2 Audience reception studies

To address the two limitations of traditional audience analyses mentioned above, the audience reception study offers some insights. Jens E. Kjeldsen compiled a collection of empirical studies that address the question of how audiences react to rhetorical messages in a given communication event or context. This volume showcased examples of central methods of reception study, including "historical approaches such as archival-

historical methodology and historiography, interviews and focus group research, protocol analysis, ethnographic participation and observation, appropriation as reception and finally triangulation, where the researcher applies several methods in unison.” (Kjeldsen, 2018, p. 1) I will only briefly introduce historical approaches and ethnographic observation, since these two methods are the most applicable approaches for this study.

Historical approaches examine existing texts of responses to a historical event, and attempt to correlate the responses and the historical context at the time, in order to demonstrate how the historical event affected the audience. Such a study investigates a specific event with a specific speaker(s) involved. Responses from the audience do not indicate background information or general ideas towards a topic, instead, they are reactions to specific historic communicative moves. The responses reflect an audience’s reception of a specific message delivered by a specific speaker.

Although most audience reception studies (sometimes referred as reader response studies) looked at written texts such as letters, diaries and news reports, responses from an audience do not always take the form of written texts. Technology such as video recordings grants us the opportunity to record a communication event with not only what people said, but also the information on who did what in what manner in a detailed way. Researchers are thus able to revisit the event later and study it as accurately as possible later. Furthermore, audience responses in letters, diaries or interviews conducted by the researcher are not given in a spontaneous way, because the audience is aware that they are observing and responding to something that is meant to be recorded for a purpose, and this awareness affects what they choose to say and how they choose to say it.

However, video recordings can capture the responses in a more natural way. Although it is unlikely to avoid the observer effect, the purpose of the audience responses is not to be recorded, instead, the audience has other communicative goals to achieve by giving responses. In this situation, the audience will focus more on the communicative goals instead of the existence of a camera, and the responses are more likely to be spontaneous and appropriate to the situation, as opposed to more carefully managed with the awareness that the responses are recorded somewhere for other purposes.

My study is based on video recordings of a repeatedly occurring communication event – more than ten years of oral defenses of Master’s Degree theses of graduates of the OSU Chinese Flagship program. The recordings allow me to reexamine entire event repeatedly to conduct detailed analyses of the behaviors of the speakers and their audiences. It also gives me a chance to investigate the spontaneous reactions among Chinese audiences to Americans using Chinese to discuss China-related issues on a professional level. Communication event vs communication event

Given the advantage of video recordings, I have the chance to “relive” the scenes where the communication events happened and attempt ethnographic observations to the extent possible. Ethnographic methods allow researchers to participate in the social environments, gain a more emic perspective, and describe the events in thick detail. Although I did not participate in all defenses for the past decades, I did join the event as a member of the audience for a couple of years. With the recordings, I can describe and analyze the interactions in the event from a more emic perspective.

1.5.3 The speaker's purpose-oriented approach of audience analysis

Background audience analysis aims to make predictions about an audience as a part of the preparation for a speech. But it takes no account of the speaker at all, as if whoever delivers the message does not affect how it will be received at all. It also relies too much on inferences and overlooks the importance of real reactions in specific contexts. The audience reception studies look at how an audience actually interprets and reacts to a specific communication event, but it also stops there. The purpose of a reception study is to understand the audience reception, not to provide suggestions to the speaker's behavior.

Theodore Clevenger, Jr. provides an examination of conventional strategies of audience measurement in his book *Audience Analysis* (1966). Distinguished from traditional Aristotelian demographic methods, he suggests a purpose-oriented analysis. As Clevenger notes, "Instead of initiating the analysis by asking some standard set of questions about audience characteristics, [purpose-oriented analysis] begins by asking what about the audience is most likely to be important in light of the speaker's purposes. The search for information is then governed by what it is that the speaker needs to know about his audience in the context of a given communication situation" (pp. 44-45).

The speaker's purpose-oriented approach of audience analysis facilitates this study. The goal of my research is to help CFL learners as speakers to better prepare speeches they will present to a Chinese audience in the future. The question to be addressed becomes what do CFL learners need to know about Chinese audiences in the

context of the speeches they will give? What do they need to know to better predict reactions from the Chinese audiences?

As I pointed out earlier, it is not wise to draw inferences about how a cross-cultural audience would perceive a speech from past experience of how a speech is perceived by audiences from the speaker's native culture. Given the unpredictability, it is necessary to treat each event as a unique case and look at how the audience perceives and reacts to a speech in that particular context. The practice of assuming observations and conclusions made from the analysis should become a part of a language program to prepare CFL learners to give speeches to Chinese audiences in the future.

To achieve this goal, I will adopt and combine background analyses and reception research approaches. The audience analysis will focus on the following key aspects: analysis on archival video-recorded data, thick description of the context of the investigated event and the audience response from an emic perspective, cross-cultural awareness, and speaker's purpose-oriented reflections.

This chapter provided a discussion of the key aspects of the concept audience concerning my study. I briefly sorted out the basic logic underlying my topic by demonstrating what we can learn as CFL pedagogues from studying advanced-level CFL students giving M.A. theses defenses to Chinese audiences. I discussed the decisive role of the audience in the whole process of the human communication. I identified and described the characteristics of the kind of audience in my research context. Finally, I

reviewed the current methods of doing audience analysis and proposed a speaker's purpose-oriented audience analysis as the approach that I will be taking in my study.

Chapter 2. C2 Reception is the Key to the Audience Issue in CFL

The previous chapter discussed audience as a general concept and aspects of audience that are related to this study. In this chapter, we will focus on the audience in the field of CFL, i.e., native speakers of Chinese in China. As a general concept, *audience* is a person or a group of people who observes and responds to a performance. In the context of CFL, the term *audience* refers to the people who receive and reacts to our learners' Chinese speaking performance. Since Mandarin Chinese is primarily spoken in China, native speakers of Mandarin Chinese make up the primary audience for learners of Chinese as a foreign language.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the end product of any given communication event is the audience's interpretation, the perlocutionary force of what the speaker uttered. The audience's reception of a speech determines whether speakers have successfully achieved their communicative goals. In the context of CFL, this means that how native speakers of Chinese receive our learners' performance determines whether our learners have successfully communicated in Chinese.

This chapter will focus on the reception of Chinese learners' performance among native speakers of Chinese, particularly with regards to non-Chinese American learners. I will address this issue by discussing the current situation in China and the status of this issue in current mainstream CFL teaching practices.

2.1 C2 receptivity versus C2 reception

Xin Zhang's work on Third-Space and Chinese language pedagogy introduced the concept of “C2 receptivity”, which refers to “how well L2 learners’ performance is received by their native-speaking counterparts” (Zhang, 2020, p.26). In the context of CFL, C2 receptivity refers specifically to how well Chinese learners’ performance is received by native speakers of Chinese. Zhang highlights this concept as an important but often overlooked aspect of CFL/CSL research. “Current mainstream practices adopted in most CFL/CSL classrooms are predominately oriented toward linguistic accuracy and, to certain extent, pragmatic competence as defined in a monolingual perspective. Seldom do they equip learners with readily available strategies for handling the native speaker effects on their in-China experience” (Zhang, 2020, pp.26-27).

One could argue that the focus of a foreign language program should be on the language itself and the proficiency of its learners. If the goal of a language program is to teach only the linguistic code and leave real communication situations to learners to figure out on their own, C2 receptivity is apparently not a central concern. However, for a language program that aims to prepare its learners for future interactions with actual people in actual L2/C2 situations, C2 receptivity should be placed at the center of language teaching. Walker and Noda (2000) asserted the necessity of evaluating the C2 receptivity of learners’ performance:

“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 comprehended another person’s intentions successfully. We need to be concerned with how the persons with whom they interact view the success of their 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)

The term “C2 receptivity” and Zhang's definition of it imply the existence of a standard for evaluating the quality of reception. However, it is important to note that reception should not be judged in terms of good or bad, but rather as different. It is not necessary for learners of Chinese to strive for a single, "correct" reception from native speakers. Instead, learners should be informed of the various ways in which their performance may be perceived by native speakers and adjust their behavior accordingly in order to improve mutual understanding and facilitate effective communication in terms of their intentions. Therefore, instead of using the term "C2 receptivity," this study will use C2 reception and define it as "HOW the performances of learners of Chinese as a foreign language are received by native speakers of Chinese."

2.2 Chinese learners in China face very different situations than English learners in the United States

One might question the significance of the case of a foreigner giving a speech to a Chinese audience, as Americans encounter this type of situation regularly in the United States with immigrants, in their daily lives and careers. However, my analysis aims to reveal the unique cultural and social dynamics at play in this situation, which I believe makes it a noteworthy event worth examining in greater detail. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of the social and cultural context that contributes to the uniqueness of this situation.

As a country with a rich history of immigration, the United States is home to millions of individuals from diverse backgrounds with diverse linguistic abilities. The prevalence of individuals who speak English as a non-native language has resulted in a societal acceptance of accented and less proficient English. As such, Americans are accustomed to encountering individuals with a diverse range of physical appearances and levels of proficiency in English and may not always make assumptions about an individual's language abilities before engaging in communication. However, if CFL learners from the United States, accustomed to this dynamic, approach their language learning experience in China with the assumption that the same societal norms apply, they are likely to meet with unexpected challenges.

According to the most recent national census in 2021, there are only 845,697⁴ foreigners living in China, comprising only 0.06% of the country's total population. This is in stark contrast to the United States, where immigrants make up 14%⁵ of the population. Given China's predominantly mono-racial demographics, foreigners, particularly those whose appearance is clearly non-Chinese, are relatively rare and often attract attention among the general public.

Chinese people have mixed feelings about foreigners speaking their language. On the one hand, they are proud of their native language and often welcome foreigners who attempt to learn and use Chinese. Many foreigners who have visited China have experienced the phenomenon of using common Chinese phrases, such as 你好 (*nihao*

⁴ http://www.gov.cn/shuju/2021-05/11/content_5605792.htm, accessed on 12/07/2022.

⁵ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-the-united-states>, accessed on 12/07/2022.

‘hello’), 谢谢 (*xiexie* ‘thanks’) or 多少钱 (*duoshao qian* ‘how much does it cost?’) and immediately being praised by their Chinese interlocutor for their language abilities. On the other hand, Chinese people can be skeptical of foreigners who can speak Chinese at an advanced level. This skepticism may be due to the notion that Chinese is a difficult language for foreigners to learn, and a concomitant disbelief that a foreigner can attain proficiency. This skepticism is supported by research, such as Ilnyckyj (2010)'s study on the positioning of foreigners' identities in China, which found that their racialized identities as white sojourners caused their knowledge of Chinese to be seen as discordant, or knowledge that they were not expected to possess, due to social and cultural reasons. This complex relationship is exemplified in a video posted on the popular online video sharing and social media platform *Bilibili*, in which a foreigner discusses his experiences of how Chinese people react to his ability to speak Chinese⁶. Following are some of his comments on the CFL/CSL and native speakers interface:

“……有的时候就跟中国人，中国朋友们，就跟他们想打招呼或者问他们一些问题，可能他们就觉得你在跟他们说外语或者英语。比如说，跟他们说“你好师傅麻烦你能帮我比如说这个吗？”或者“我问问我问你一个问题”，就这么反应（摇头）就“什么意思，听不懂”，对，我说“我在跟你讲中文”，“嗯？”“我在跟你说中文，我这汉语，你怎么听不懂呢？”“哦哦哦你在说中文，哦哦不好意思不好意思，我以为你在说英语呢。”有时候还会这样，然后也有一些反应，我记得有一次我跟一个朋友帮助他解决个问题，然后他跟我说“你跟前台说，我们已经把这个费用已经交了，比如说一半还有一半，比如”“好的我跟他交流”，我跟那个前台说了，“你好，我的朋友已经交了，”比如说“4000块钱还差4000块钱”，他说，（模仿看人动作）就这样子看我，“no no no no no, wait wait wait a moment,”然后拿了手机，打了一个字，就这样子给我看，我说“这是什么呢？”“no no no, four thousand”我说“我看得懂，我听得懂，你干嘛说跟我说的英语？你给我看词典，谷歌词

⁶ https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1Fx411h75N/?spm_id_from=333.337.search-card.all.click&vd_source=18090fa4c88dec8440d8448d2be97485, accessed on 12/18/2022

典，这是什么呢？”“哦你还会说中文。”我说“我半天在跟你讲西班牙语吗还是什么呢？”有时候他们的反应是很有意思，就是他们以为我在说别的语言，实际上我在跟他们说中文，而且呢，就很多朋友们，很多中国朋友说“你的汉语比其他的外国人可能标准一点点”，但是他们说，“哦听不懂”，我一开始以为他们讲就可能装听不懂，但是后来我发现，他们在想我是一个外国人，然后我跟他们说的不应该是中文，应该是外语或英语。还有一次在我想去坐飞机，然后我在拿登机牌的时候，我跟他说我想坐，紧，那个紧急出口，因为座位比较宽……然后他说“不行”，我说“为什么”，“应该是会说中文才能坐这里”...我说“那我在跟你交流的是什么语言？”，他说“哦你说中文说得确实很不错”，那我说“现在可以吗？”“可以可以”。

[translation: "... sometimes with Chinese people, Chinese friends, I want to say hello or ask them questions, maybe they think you are speaking a foreign language or English with them. For example, I say "hello can you please help me with this?" or "I want to ask you a question", they react like this (imitating the Chinese interlocutor by shaking his head) "what do you mean, I don't understand", yes, I say "I'm speaking Chinese with you", "what?" "I'm speaking Chinese with you. This is Chinese, how come you don't understand?" "oh oh you are speaking Chinese. oh oh I'm sorry I'm sorry. I thought you were speaking English." Sometimes they react like this, and also some reactions like this. I remember there was this one time I helped a friend with a problem, and then he said to me "you go tell the front desk that we have paid this" for example "4000 RMB and there's another 4000 to pay", he said, (imitating the Chinese interlocutor) looking at me like this, (in English) "no no no no no, wait wait wait a moment," then he took out his phone, typed something and showed it to me. I asked "what's this?" "no no no, four thousand", I said "I understand you, why are you speaking English with me? You show me a dictionary, Google dictionary, what's this?" "Oh you can speak Chinese." I said "What was I speaking otherwise for this whole time, Spanish or something else?" Sometimes their reactions are really interesting. They think I was speaking another language while in fact I was speaking Chinese. Also, many friends, Chinese friends say "your Chinese is a little better than other foreigners", but they still say "Oh I don't understand you". At first I thought they pretend to not understand me, but later I found out that they were thinking that I'm a foreigner, and I shouldn't be speaking Chinese with them, it should be another foreign language or English. There was another time I was about to board a flight, and when I was trying to get my boarding pass, I told him that I wanted to sit in the emergency exit area, because there is more space for legs ... then he said "no", I said "why", "only people who speak good Chinese can sit there" ... I said "then what language am I using to communicate with you?" he said "Oh your Chinese is indeed very good", then I said "Can I sit there now?" "Yes yes."

In this interview, the speaker related three instances in which his ability to speak Chinese fluently was called into question due to his appearance as a foreigner. In the first story, the interlocutor was unaware that the speaker was speaking Chinese and thought he was speaking English. In the second story, the staff were also unaware that the speaker was speaking Chinese and went to the trouble of taking out his phone, translating what he wanted to say through a dictionary, just to respond to the speaker in broken English. In the third story, the flight attendant denied the speaker's request to sit in the emergency exit area because the policy states that only individuals who speak good Chinese were allowed to sit there. The attendant communicated this to the speaker in Chinese but was unaware that he was doing so. The speaker initially suspected that the Chinese people were intentionally pretending not to understand him, but later realized that they simply did not expect him to speak Chinese because they could easily tell that he is a foreigner from his appearance. This highlights the role of visual information in determining how people perceive the world, as described by the “McGurk effect”, which demonstrates the powerful impact of visual information on perception. The McGurk effect is a well-known phenomenon that demonstrates how visual information can influence auditory perception.

It may be difficult to believe how someone can hear and speak their native language without being aware of it. However, this phenomenon can occur due to the influence of visual information on an individual's perception. When the visual and auditory information provided by a spoken word are mismatched, the brain perceives a third, different sound that is not present in either the audio or the video. The McGurk effect was first identified by psychologist Harry McGurk and neuropsychologist John

MacDonald in 1976. They observed that when people watched a video of a speaker saying the sound "ba" while the audio of the speaker actually saying the sound "ga" was played, the listeners perceived a third sound, "da." (McGurk & MacDonald, 1976) This finding demonstrated that the brain uses both visual and auditory information to perceive speech, and that these two sources of information can interact in complex ways. The McGurk effect provides compelling evidence that visual information can significantly influence perception and highlights the important role that visual information plays in how we interpret and make sense of the world around us.

It is evident that the physical features of a foreigner often immediately distinguish our learners in front of a Chinese-speaking audience. As a result, given how much impact visual information can have on how we interpret and make sense of the world around us, the words they speak in Chinese to a Chinese audience are not simply perceived as context specific statements, but rather as statements *made by foreigners*. That is, perceptions of our learners' opinions are filtered through the lens of their persona as outsiders of Chinese society and culture, and it is possible that the reactions of the Chinese interlocutors to their utterances are influenced by their obvious status as outsiders commenting on Chinese culture and society. The experiences shared by the foreigner in the video demonstrate that Chinese people may not be prepared for the possibility of foreigners communicating in Chinese. Their non-native speakers reactions in such situations may be unexpected, as they have not encountered this situation before and may not know how to react. It is therefore valuable to examine how a Chinese audience actually responds when faced with the realization that a foreign individual is

expressing their opinions about China in fluent Chinese. This can give our learners as well as educators insights on which behaviors are effective, and which should be avoided in order to effectively reach and engage with a Chinese audience as a foreigner.

2.3 Lack of consideration of the audience in CFL

This section will examine the current state of addressing the audience in CFL. Specifically, it will explore how the issue of the audience is addressed in CFL materials and research.

The first chapter introduced the categorization of the audience used in this study according to the mode of interaction between the speaker and the audience. This involves, as noted there, two categories: conversation audience and presentation audience. In this section, we will address the audience in CFL performances from both perspectives. First, we will focus on the conversation audience and discuss how it is addressed and what its role is in CFL. In the second half of this section, I will examine the treatment of the presentation audience in CFL research and practice.

2.3.1 The treatment in CFL of the conversation audience

To explore the treatment of the conversation audience in CFL, we will analyze Chinese textbooks used in the United States. Textbooks are a crucial component of language learning materials and often the primary guide of instruction for learners to engage in conversation in Chinese. The content and approach of these materials significantly influence learners' initial understanding of the language and culture. Therefore, the representation of the audience in these materials plays a significant role in

shaping learners' perceptions of the Chinese audience and their preparedness for interactions with them. As the *Integrated Chinese* series is the most widely used textbook series in the United States, we will utilize it as an example in this analysis. In the following examples, the Chinese text is extracted from the textbook, and the English is provided by the researcher.

Example 1 Dialogue Excerpt from *Integrated Chinese* Lesson 4

Turn#	Roles	Chinese	English
1	Wang	小高，好久不见，你好吗？	Xiao Gao, long time no see, how are you doing?
2	Gao	我很好。你怎么样？	I'm doing very good. How about you?
3	Wang	我也不错。这个周末你想做什么？想不想去打球？	Not bad. What do you want to do for this weekend? Do you want to play ball games?
4	Gao	打球？我不喜欢打球。	Playing ball games? I don't like playing ball games.
5	Wang	那我们去看球，怎么样？	Then let's go watch a ball game, what do you think?
6	Gao	看球？我觉得看球也没有意思。	Watching a ball game? I think that's boring too.
7	Wang	那你这个周末想做什么？	Then what do you want to do for this weekend?
8	Gao	我只想吃饭、睡觉。	I just want to eat and sleep.
9	Wang	算了，我去找别人。	Forget about it. I'll go find someone else.

This is the first dialogue from Lesson 4 of the *Integrated Chinese* series. This conversation takes place between Gao Wenzhong, a student from Britain, and Wang Peng, a student from China. The exchange begins with Wang greeting Gao with the phrase that acknowledges a previous relationship - 好久不见 (*haojiubujian*), which

translates to "long time no see," indicating that they have not communicated for an extended period.

Rather than engaging in small talk and catching up, Wang immediately extends an invitation to Gao to play a ball game over the weekend. This direct and informal approach to socializing is indicative of a close relationship and a high level of familiarity between the two individuals. However, Gao responds by stating that he does not enjoy playing ball games. Wang then attempts to salvage the situation by suggesting they go watch a ball game together, to which Gao again refuses, stating that he finds watching ball games unenjoyable as well.

Feeling discouraged, Wang asks Gao what he would like to do over the weekend. This question serves as an indication of Wang's desire to spend time with Gao and potentially catch up on what they have missed in their time apart. However, Gao's response, "I only want to eat and sleep," effectively closes the door on the possibility of any further socializing. Disappointed, possibly annoyed, Wang concludes the exchange by saying "forget about it. I'll find someone else."

It should be obvious that social interactions should not be designed to teach beginning level CFL learners how to offend or upset others through the direct rejection of invitations. Given this, it is apparent that the dialogue presented in Lesson 4 of the *Integrated Chinese* has been developed without considering the predictable reactions and perceptions of Chinese interlocutors as the audience. The final statement made by Wang, "forget about it. I'll find someone else," shows that he is offended by Gao's repeatedly and bluntly turning down his invitations without any hint of apologetic language. This

can predictably harm their long-term relationship, as Gao's actions would be perceived as impolite, inconsiderate, and selfish.

It is acceptable to turn down an invitation for an activity due to lack of interest, but it is important to do so in a culturally appropriate or acceptable for such actions manner to avoid jeopardizing the chance to maintain a long-term relationship with the individual who extended the invitation. To achieve this, it is necessary for learners to possess knowledge of the behavior considered appropriate in the culture of the audience. As a pedagogical tool, an introductory textbook dialogue should provide learners with common strategies for handling situations involving refusal in a culturally appropriate, i.e., acceptable and effective, manner.

In the case of the example presented, if the audience is considered as the final interpreter of the communication event, it can be inferred that not only will Gao not spend time with Wang over the weekend, but also that Gao would be perceived as selfish, as his actions are seen as prioritizing his own preferences without any consideration for Wang's feelings. This does not suggest that learners should compromise their own preferences, but rather, instructional materials should introduce culturally valued strategies for handling such common social situations in a mutually harmonious manner.

An alternative approach to declining an invitation would be to soften the assertive bluntness of declaring no interest in the specific activity, while also offering an alternative choice and expressing a willingness to maintain a good relationship with one's audience. For example, instead of stating "I don't like playing ball games", a culturally appropriate response would be, 我对看球不是特别感兴趣，而且我这周有点累，要不

咱们下周找时间一起出去? ('I'm not particularly interested in playing ball games, and I'm a little tired this week, (so) how about we find some time next week to hang out?')

This approach is an authentic strategy for declining an invitation in Chinese, as it balances the speaker's preference with the interlocutor's feelings and demonstrates the intention to maintain a positive relationship.

Example 2 Dialogue Excerpt from *Integrated Chinese* Lesson 15

Turn#	Roles	Chinese	English
1	Patient	医生, 我肚子疼死了。	Doctor, my stomach hurts like hell.
2	Doctor	你昨天吃什么东西了?	What did you eat yesterday?
3	Patient	我姐姐上个星期过生日, 蛋糕没吃完。昨天晚上我吃了几口, 夜里肚子就疼起来了, 今天早上上了好几次厕所。	We celebrated my sister's birthday last week and there were leftover cakes. I took a couple of bites last night and my stomach started to hurt in the middle of the night. I went to the toilet several times this morning.
4	Doctor	你把蛋糕放在哪儿了?	Where did you keep the cake?
5	Patient	放在冰箱里了。	In the fridge.
6	Doctor	放了几天了?	For how long?
7	Patient	五、六天了。	Five or six days.
8	Doctor	发烧吗?	Do you have a fever?
9	Patient	不发烧。	No.
10	Doctor	你躺下。先检查一下。	Lie down here. Let me take a look.

Presented above is another example from lesson 15 of the *Integrated Chinese* textbook series, which depicts a hospital scene in which a patient is discussing their abdominal pain with a doctor. However, the reactions of an audience consisting of medical professionals depicted in this dialogue may not be authentic. This type of conversation, in which patients are allowed to share trivial detailed information about

their lives, may be a normal practice in a medical setting in the United States or other countries where patients are allotted a longer duration for a visit to a doctor. However, in China, given the high patient volume and limited time available (a doctor is responsible for more than 50 patient visits for half a day), it is not typical for a doctor would not be likely to engage in such conversation. Instead, the typical focus would be on asking direct, to-the-point questions regarding symptoms in order to maximize time efficiency.

If CFL learners were to encounter a medical setting in China expecting to engage in a dialogue like the one presented in the lessons, they would likely be surprised and unprepared for what would happen in real life. Due to the high patient volume and limited time available, doctors in China typically have to conclude appointments quickly, and therefore, their reactions to patients reporting symptoms such as abdominal pain would be direct and to-the-point, asking questions such as 几天了? (*jitian le* ‘For how long?’) and 拉稀吗? 吐吗? (*laxi ma? tu ma?* ‘Do you have diarrhea? Nauseous?’). In order to effectively prepare learners for predictable interactions in the target culture, pedagogical materials should feature authentic contexts and typical expressions. In this case, authentic strategies for communicating symptoms with a doctor in a medical setting should be introduced in a lesson specifically designed for this purpose, rather than in a general conversation about daily topics such as food.

These two dialogues from the widely used textbook series *Integrated Chinese* illustrate a lack of consideration for the predictable audience of a social context in the design of conversation materials. The first example shows that the design did not follow a culturally expected and valued—which is to say appropriate—behavior that would maintain

the personal relationship of the two speakers. The second example also highlights the disregard for audience by depicting reactions that are not culturally authentic for the role of examining doctor in a clinical setting, and do not align with what would occur in a medical situation in China. Learning to communicate in the culture as one learns Chinese is important. Learning to communicate in a language is not a matter learning vocabulary and syntax and then learning how to recognize and communicate intentions. Rather it is to understand the contexts of communicating and then learning the attitudes, elements, and structures needed to achieve the communication.

2.3.2 The treatment in CFL of the presentation audience

2.3.2.1 Presentation as a pedagogical tool in CFL research

There is limited research on the use of presentations as a pedagogical tool for Chinese learners in Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) contexts. This suggests that such practices are not widely implemented or that educators may not fully recognize the value of incorporating them into language training. One study that includes Chinese learners giving presentations in Chinese is Zhang (2016), who conducted a study on the learning experience of a “Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)-Based Tandem Project with Native Speakers”. In this project, learners were required to give a class presentation in Chinese on their learning experience as the final product of the project.

In the study, Zhang reported on the content and format of the class presentations, noting:

“In their presentations, the participants introduced their tandem partners, the culture topic that they had researched, what they had learned during the tandem

exchange, and their thoughts about their tandem partner's culture as compared with their own.” (p.64)

Additionally, Zhang conducted interviews with the learners to gather their perceptions of the experience of the tandem project and the final presentation. One participant described the class presentations as "an excellent culmination of the project" and noted:

“Viewing and listening to other students' presentations gave our class the opportunity to learn some new words, as well as practice overall listening comprehension. I felt that while presenting my project, it was a very relaxed environment where there was not a lot of pressure, allowed me to critically think about formulating sentences. In addition, a decent portion of my presentation was made up on the spot, so I was able to practice thinking and communicating in Chinese on the spot without prior preparation.” (p.69)

This study raises important considerations about including presentation as a class activity in language instruction. Firstly, the topic for the presentations was “cultural topics” such as “What’s the difference between Chinese high school and American high school?” or “What do people wear to funerals in China vs. in the United States?” These cultural comparisons can serve as a valuable tool for learners to gain awareness of the cultural differences and thus avoid potential misunderstandings in future interactions with the target culture. However, it is important to note that these comparisons can also perpetuate an outsider's perspective and exoticize the target culture, rather than fostering an understanding of common ground and cultural cooperation. Additionally, the use of cultural comparisons in presentations may also inadvertently reinforce the notion of the target culture as the *other* and accentuate differences rather than similarities. In order to effectively navigate cross-cultural communication, it is crucial to consider the implications of these comparisons and strive to find common ground for cooperation.

The second issue to consider is the authenticity of the audience for these presentations. In Zhang's report of the activity, the presentations were delivered in Chinese to a class of Chinese-learning peers and instructors, rather than to a Chinese audience. This audience is not the kind of audience these students can expect to present to in China. There are few scenarios where an American would need to present in Chinese to an American audience. This problem raises concerns regarding the relevance and effectiveness of the training for learners. Furthermore, the audience's background and reactions may not accurately reflect those of a Chinese audience, leading to learners being underprepared for interactions with a Chinese audience in China.

2.3.2.2 Presentation as a pedagogical tool in CFL programs

Given the limited research on this topic, it is difficult to make definitive statements about the inclusion of presentation skills as a component in Chinese language programs in the United States. However, through an examination of the curriculum and course offerings outlined on the websites of various Chinese language programs, it appears that presentation is included as an important aspect of language acquisition in some programs. Further research, utilizing data from actual classroom observations and interviews with educators, would be necessary to fully understand the extent to which presentation is integrated into Chinese language instruction in the United States. I will present my preliminary findings and provide a discussion on what can be found online.

In the Chinese program at the University of North Georgia, the inclusion of presentation as a class activity is evident throughout various levels of proficiency, ranging from intermediate to advanced levels, as well as in specialized courses such as

"Chinese in the Workplace" and "Media Chinese." One of the courses specifically lists presentational skill as one of the target skills. "This course is designed to help students who have finished at least two years of Mandarin Chinese language learning to develop interpretive, presentational, and interactive skills that are needed in workplace-related Chinese social contexts."⁷

The Chinese program at Yale University also has a component of in-class presentations in their Advanced Modern Chinese course. As part of this course, students are required to give a five-minute presentation in Chinese on a topic of their choosing, which they share with their classmates. The course's website also outlined the evaluation criteria for this in class presentation activity, which include elements such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, preparation, fluency, and discussion leading/participation. This design of the course and the associated assessment parameters are geared towards developing students' presentational skills from the perspective of the speaker. However, it neglects to consider the native speaker reception as discussed in the first chapter—the audience.

The development of presentation skills is a fundamental aspect of enabling more effective communication, yet it is not the only consideration in the process of presentation training. While many programs focus on honing the presenting skills of the presenter, few consider the reception and perspective of the audience. Here we consider an audience-oriented approach to presentation training as a complementary strategy to traditional methods commonly employed in Chinese language programs. The ultimate

⁷ <https://ung.edu/modern-languages/courses/chinese-courses.php#accordion1-33>, accessed on 1/17/2023.

goal of this research is to provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to presentation training that incorporates the presenter and the audience. After all, the audience will be arbiters of the presentation's success or failure.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a discussion of the concept of audience in CFL. I have identified that the most likely and long-term audience for Chinese learners' performances is composed of native speakers of Chinese, in Chinese settings—and that the key issue to be discussed in this context is C2 reception, defined as "HOW Chinese learners' performances are received by native speakers of Chinese". Additionally, I have highlighted the unique context that Chinese learners in China face, in contrast to English learners in the United States, where foreign learners, particularly those of non-Chinese descent, are visually distinguishable from the local population. This leads to the phenomenon of Chinese people do not perceiving speech from our learners as simply opinions about China from random individuals, but as opinions about China from foreigners who do not share the same cultural background with Chinese people.

Through the analysis of two dialogues from the widely used textbook series *Integrated Chinese*, we can see that the design of this textbook does not consider the Chinese audience in conversations that learners will have in China. Specifically, the dialogues do not provide culturally appropriate communicative strategies, and the reactions from Chinese roles depicted in the dialogs are not authentic. As a result, learners introduced to Chinese behavioral culture with these materials may be underprepared for actual interactions in China.

I also reviewed how a presentation's audience is addressed as a component of CFL programs. While some programs incorporate presentation as an instructional activity, the focus is solely on developing the speaking skills of the learner, with little attention paid to how the audience receives and interprets the message. Here we explore a pedagogical approach to CFL speech training that prioritizes audience engagement, as a goal of a program of study that is focused on training CFL learners to effectively communicate concepts, opinions, and insights on the China experience.

Chapter 3. Methodology and Contextualization of the Study

This chapter, is a detailed explanation of each method employed in this study, including its purpose, rationale, and justification for its usage in the context of this study. The primary methodology is the case study approach, which enables the examination of the specific case of an academic communication event in a cross-cultural context. By means of thick description, which allows the inclusion of rich and detailed information. The main data collection method is inspired by historical approaches used in audience reception studies. For the analysis of the video data, I will utilize discourse analysis tools. The following sections will provide a comprehensive overview of each methodology and explanations of how they are employed in the study to produce the research objectives.

3.1 Case study as the overarching structure

A case study involves an in-depth examination of a particular subject, such as a person, a group, an event, an organization, or a phenomenon. The goal of a case study is to understand the complex relationships and dynamics of the subject being studied, and to gain a detailed and nuanced understanding of the subject. Case studies are often used in the social sciences but can also be used in other fields such as business, healthcare, and education (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Mills et al., 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017).

In regard to the relationship between the case being examined and the research questions, there are two main types of case study method, the "top-down" approach and the "bottom-up" approach. The top-down approach, also known as the "deductive" approach, begins with the development of a research question and hypotheses, which are then tested through the examination of a specific case. The bottom-up approach, also known as the "inductive" approach, begins with the identification of a specific case or cases, and the research question emerges from the examination of the case (Mills et al., 2009).

This study is a bottom-up case study. It focuses on the specific event of a Chinese M.A. thesis defense and the reactions and feedback of the audience in the Q&A session, rather than starting with a general theory or assumption about Chinese-American communication. By analyzing the specific behaviors and characteristics of an American student and an audience's reactions, the study aims to draw conclusions about what is appealing to a Chinese audience and what can be improved in training CFL learners to accommodate the expectations of a Chinese audience. This approach starts with the observations and data collected from the case and works towards identifying patterns and generalizations. This differs from a top-down approach where an assumption is used to guide the research and predictions are made before the data is collected. A bottom-up approach allows for a more in-depth understanding of the specific context and allows for unexpected findings to emerge.

There are several different types of case study research, each with its own unique characteristics and strengths.

Exploratory case study: An exploratory case study is used to generate new insights and understanding about a particular phenomenon or problem. It is typically used when little is known about the topic and is often used as a precursor to more formal research. This type of case study is useful for generating hypotheses, identifying key variables and issues, and for gaining an understanding of the context and background of a problem (Mills et al., 2009).

Descriptive case study: A descriptive case study provides an in-depth detailed account of a specific case or phenomenon. It is typically used to provide a detailed understanding of a specific case or phenomenon and is often used to generate hypotheses for further research. This type of case study is useful for describing phenomena and identifying patterns and themes that emerge from the data (Mills et al., 2009).

Single case study: A single case study focuses on the examination of a single case to understand the unique characteristics and context of the case. This type of case study is useful for gaining an in-depth understanding of a single case and for identifying patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2017).

Comparative case study: Based on one or more cases to understand similarities and differences between the cases. This type of case study is useful for understanding the generalizability of findings across multiple cases and for identifying patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Mills et al., 2009).

Multi-case study/Collective case study: A research approach that involves the examination of multiple cases to identify patterns, themes or commonalities. This type of case study is useful for understanding the generalizability of findings across multiple

cases and for identifying patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2017).

Instrumental case study: An instrumental case study is one where the researcher is primarily interested in using the case to generate new theories or hypotheses. The findings of the study will be generalizable to a broader population and will be used to make generalizations or predictions about other cases (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2017).

These types of case studies are not mutually exclusive and one case study can have characteristics of more than one type. The choice of which type of case study to use depends on the research question, the available resources and the research design. The aforementioned types of case study will all be utilized in my study.

As a descriptive case study, my research aims to conduct an in-depth examination of a unique event - the M.A. thesis defense of the OSU Chinese Flagship program. The purpose of this examination is to provide a detailed description of the event from multiple perspectives, as it represents a unique instance of cross-cultural communication that cannot be found elsewhere. The intended audience for this study includes educators of CFL who specialize in language teaching, material development, and program design, as well as advanced learners of Chinese. These readers may not have had any previous opportunity to observe or participate in advanced-level Chinese learners giving presentations in Chinese to a Chinese audience for serious purposes. Through this research, I aim to provide readers with a vivid understanding of the dynamics and complexities of this type of event, including the challenges and experiences encountered

by participants, and the strategies and behaviors employed in response to those challenges.

As an exploratory case study, the purpose of my study is to gain a deeper understanding of the unique dynamics of an academic communication event within a cross-cultural setting. Due to the limited existing literature on the topic, this study aims to employ an exploratory methodology to identify patterns and themes in behavior within this context, as well as generate hypotheses on how these observations may inform the design of a speech training curriculum. Additionally, this study serves as a foundational precursor for future research in this area.

My study also employs a multi-case/collective case study design, with a focus on the examination of multiple cases of the M.A. thesis defense of the OSU Chinese Flagship program. The program has been ongoing for over ten years, with each year featuring 4-10 candidates. Each defense constitutes a single case, and while they share common features such as committee members, presentation format, evaluation system, and an American student as the presenter and a Chinese audience, the specific Chinese audience present at each defense varies based on the student's research topic. The aim of the study is to understand similarities and differences between the cases, making it a comparative case study as well. The analysis will involve examination of all single cases in order to understand the generalizability of findings across multiple cases and to identify any patterns or themes that emerge from the data.

In addition to the comparative analysis of multiple cases to identify generalizable patterns and themes, I will also include an in-depth examination of two students'

defenses. The use of single case study methodology allows for a detailed examination of the unique characteristics and context of the specific cases, enabling a deeper understanding of the associations between students' behaviors and audience reactions within the specific context. This approach will facilitate the identification of specific factors and connections that may not be revealed through a broader comparative analysis of multiple cases.

This study also serves as an instrumental case study, with the ultimate objective of generating new hypotheses and proposals for a pedagogy of speech training in CFL. The analytical lenses are coming from trying to find patterns that can lead to suggestions for foreign language program design. The findings of the study are expected to have generalizability to a broader population and will be used to make predictions about audience reactions to certain behaviors in similar contexts.

3.2 Historical-archival approach as the data collection method

The ultimate goal is to develop proposals and guidelines for a pedagogy of speech training in CFL. To achieve this goal, the findings from the audience reception case study must be generalizable to some extent. This requires a comprehensive examination of a substantial number of cases to validate the generalization. However, participating in numerous M.A. thesis defense events is not feasible for the researcher since these events usually occur once a year and on different continents. It is unrealistic to expect physical participation in every event. As an alternative, the researcher has elected to adopt a historical-archival approach (Kjeldsen, 2018) as the method of data collection. This methodology allows the researcher to access all available archival video recordings of

M.A. thesis defense events over the course of a decade, providing a rich data pool of over a hundred defense cases to support the generalization of any findings. The recordings allow the researcher to revisit the whole event repeatedly to conduct detailed analyses on the behaviors of the speaker and the audience. It permits investigation on the spontaneous reactions from a Chinese audience in response to young Americans using Chinese to talk about a China-related issue at a professional level.

3.3 Using thick description to contextualize the events

Originated from ethnographic research and popularized by Clifford Geertz, thick description is a concept that seeks to provide rich, nuanced, and detailed information about the context, behaviors, motivations, and interpretations of participants in a particular cultural setting. In his influential chapter *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture* (1973), Geertz argued that cultural anthropologists should aim to provide a rich, detailed, and nuanced account of the cultural practices, beliefs, and symbols of the societies they study, rather than simply reducing these phenomena to abstract concepts or universal laws. The purpose of thick description is to create a comprehensive understanding of a situation or event, taking into account not only the observable actions and behaviors, but also the underlying cultural and historical factors that influence those actions and behaviors. Thick description requires the researcher to provide a detailed account of the context in which the cultural practices under study occur, including the motivations, beliefs, and attitudes of the people involved.

In the context of this study, thick description is particularly suitable because the focus is on a case of cross-cultural communication, which is a complex and multifaceted

phenomenon that requires a rich and nuanced understanding of the context in which it takes place. The examination of the M.A. thesis defense of the OSU Chinese Flagship program requires a detailed description of the event from multiple perspectives, including those of the American students, the Chinese audience, the committee members, and other participants. By using thick description, we are able to provide rich information about the context and the meaning of the event, which is necessary for a complete understanding of the event and its significance.

This event represents a unique opportunity to observe and analyze communication between American students and a Chinese audience- this event is rarely found in other language programs. The intended audience for this study consists of educators who teach Chinese as a foreign language, with a focus on language instruction, material development, and program design, as well as advanced learners of the Chinese language. These readers may have a genuine interest in seeing advanced-level Chinese learners give presentations in Chinese to a Chinese audience for important matters, but they may not have had the opportunity to observe or participate in such an event. According to Geertz (1973), the purpose of thick description is to recreate the texture of particular cultural forms and to enable readers to see the world as the actors saw it so that they can understand how events make sense to those who participate in them. This study aims to showcase what could happen in such a cross-cultural communication event and provide a glimpse into the experience.

The target audience is unfamiliar with this type of event as they may not have seen this kind of event before and cannot predict how the event will unfold. Cross-

cultural communication events of this sort are uncharted territory for all participants, and the unpredictability of the situation can be nerve-wracking for both the advanced-level Chinese learners and the Chinese audience. The Chinese learners do not know how the Chinese audience will perceive and react to their presentation, and similarly, the Chinese audience does not know how they will think of a foreigner talking about issues related to China until they find themselves in that situation.

Educators who want to develop training programs based on authentic interactions can only gain valuable insights and principles for curriculum design by observing real-life events of this type. By providing a rich and detailed description of the M.A. thesis defense event, this study shows the complexities and nuances of these events, providing readers with a vivid understanding of the challenges and experiences encountered by participants, as well as the strategies and behaviors employed in response. By doing this, this study seeks to offer valuable information for anyone looking to create CFL speech training programs that accurately reflect the real-world experience of cross-cultural communication.

3.4 Discourse analysis as the analytical tool

Discourse analysis is a field of study that seeks to understand the ways in which language is used in social and cultural contexts. It is a multidisciplinary approach that draws on a wide range of disciplines including linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and communication studies. The aim of discourse analysis is to examine the structures, processes, and functions of language as it is used in communication.

Discourse analysis is a method for studying the ways in which language is used to accomplish social and cultural goals. This can include examining the ways in which people use language to assert power and control, to build and maintain social relationships, to construct identities, and to convey information (Tannen et al., 2018). Discourse analysts study language in a wide range of contexts, including face-to-face conversations, written texts, broadcast media, and digital communication. In addition, discourse analysis can help us to identify patterns and themes in the data, such as common language practices, typical ways of giving feedback, or frequent topics of discussion.

To adopt the discourse analytical methods, the first step is to transcribe data. Mischler (1991) defines data transcription as the act of representing spoken discourse in written form for analysis. Green, Fanquiz, and Dixon (1997) argue that transcribing is both a representative and interpretative process, meaning that the researcher's perspectives, goals, and assumptions about language are imposed on the transcript. As such, the transcription process is a political act that shapes what can be known about the data being analyzed (Fairclough, 1992; Green et al., 1997).

For this study, the researcher watched 70 video recordings multiple times and selected specific sections for transcription. The selected transcriptions serve as examples to illustrate how participants used language to make their contributions to the event, perform expected roles, and achieve their intentions. Since the M.A. thesis defenses were conducted entirely in Chinese, the data was initially transcribed in Chinese and later

translated into English to enable comprehension by those unfamiliar with the Chinese language.

3.5 Positionality of the researcher

The positionality of the researcher in this study is complex and multifaceted. As a native speaker of Chinese, the researcher has a deep and emic understanding of the Chinese language and culture, as well as the behavioral patterns of Chinese people. The researcher also has extensive experience in cross-cultural communication between Chinese people and American people in daily communication and academic events. This gives the researcher the knowledge to draw on when interpreting the intention behind participants' behaviors, identifying possible cultural biases or assumptions in this particular context. Furthermore, the researcher's position as a graduate student at an American university provides an emic perspective on what the students face, including the process of completing a Master's degree, expectations on a M.A. student, resources and restraints of conducting research. Finally, as a CFL teacher, the researcher understands students' capabilities at different proficiency levels. This gives the researcher the ability to identify the underlying reasons for language errors of the students.

The researcher's position as a graduate student in the same department as the Flagship students and as someone who has participated in these defenses several times allows the researcher to get insider information about the defense, such as the set-up and design of the program, the administrative concerns, background information about the participants, feedback from the Chinese audience that was not recorded in the video.

However, this positionality may lead to preconceptions or assumptions about the event and its participants, which can affect the objectivity and validity of the study.

3.6 Contextualizing the OSU Flagship Master's thesis defense event

As Walker (2010) notes, "The purpose of learning to converse in a foreign language is to gain the ability to establish intentions in the foreign culture" (Walker, 2010, p.9). However, it is important to understand that intentions are not solely generated by the speaker. In fact, the context of the situation greatly determines what intentions can be established in a given communication event. CFL speakers are not free to intend whatever they desire, but instead must choose from the affordances that arise within the specific context of the situation.

For instance, I live in an apartment building in a midwestern city in the United States. Every evening, I take the elevator to reach my apartment floor. Most of the time, there are other individuals in the elevator as well. If someone gets off the elevator before I do, they would quickly say something and leave immediately thereafter. In many cases, as a non-native speaker of English, I may not be able to understand exactly what was said, as the words were spoken quickly and quietly. However, it is not necessary for me to identify the exact words, as the context of the situation only affords one intention for communication: to say goodnight or "have a good one" as a social courtesy before departing from the shared space. This intention is produced almost entirely by the context, rather than by the individual. I can always handle this situation with certainty and confidence by saying "Thanks, you too!" Context shapes communicative intentions and the resulting interactions with others.

Therefore, to establish intentions in another language and culture, our learners need to know what intentions that culture allows and affords communicators in a given context. In my current study, in order to understand the behaviors and intentions of the participants in the defense event, we need to understand the elements of the context of the defense event and how those elements interplay to produce intentions. There are no intentions that can be interpreted without its context. “(T)he contexts of the language are given equal standing to the formal code of the language, if not the priority.” (Walker, 2010, p.12)

As Walker further explains, the context of a situated event, a performance, includes five elements: 1) place of occurrence, 2) time of occurrence, 3) appropriate script/program/rules, 4) roles of participants, and 5) accepting and/or accepted audience⁸ (Walker, 2010, p.8). In the example I mentioned previously, every element contributes to the emergence of the intention in that situation. Any change in an element will result in a change in the intention and the overall performance. For instance, if the scenario were to occur in New York as opposed to a Midwest city, it is unlikely that people would say "have a nice day" to strangers in the elevator. Likewise, if the scenario were to occur when someone is entering the elevator instead of exiting, no one would say "have a nice day". To fully comprehend a communication event, close examination of the five elements of its context is necessary.

⁸ Adopted from Carlson’s idea of “cultural performance”. Carlson, M. (2013). *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge.

One important thing to pay attention to when examining the elements of a context is that a mere listing of facts, such as the location being in China or the time being 9 AM, is insufficient. A deeper understanding of the significance each element holds in shaping the potential intentions that may arise within the context must be gained. In the next section, I will provide an in-depth analysis of the contextual elements of the Flagship Master's defense event, serving as a basis for the interpretation of the participants' behaviors during the event.

3.6.1 Time

The Midwest US-China Flagship at Ohio State University is a unique and challenging two-year Master's program that provides a comprehensive education to individuals seeking careers related to China. The program is designed to equip students with advanced knowledge of the Chinese language, culture, and society, preparing them for successful careers in a range of China-related fields.

The program is divided into two phases, with the first year taking place at Ohio State University. During this time, students will attend a variety of courses conducted in Chinese that will lay the foundation for their future study. A key component of the first year is a year-long course that focuses on a specific area of interest, chosen by each student. In this course, students will work closely with an instructor to develop a *domain* in the form of a research project, conducting a thorough literature review, background search, and methodology search. They will also develop a comprehensive plan for the second year of their studies, which will take place in China.

The second year of the program is spent conducting research in China. Students will be placed in a university or other research institution related to their research topic, usually located in a city away from other classmates in the program, where they will have the opportunity, if not necessity, to immerse themselves in the language and culture. During this time, they will use Chinese to collect data, conduct interviews, and write their theses. This experience provides students with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in their individual domains as well as to develop their language skills.

The Master's program began in 2005, and my data consists of video recordings of these defense events from 2005 to 2012. The typical defense lasts approximately two hours, with the student starting with a 40-minute presentation on their project. This is followed by a Q&A session where members of the committee, fellow American students from the Flagship program, and the Chinese audience in attendance can ask questions and provide feedback on both the project and the presentation. Some members of the audience have been closely involved with the student throughout their research process and thesis writing, so they have a deep understanding of the student's topic, from its inception to their progress and accomplishments. A few had the opportunity to preview the student's thesis prior to the defense and had a general sense of what the presentation would entail. Meanwhile, others were solely invited to the defense and have no prior exposure to the student or their work, so they are unsure of what to expect from the presentation.

The defense welcomes attendees from both the United States and China, meaning there are individuals present in person and online in both countries simultaneously.

There's a significant time difference of around 12 to 13 hours between the United States and China, which varies depending on the time of year the defense is taking place. As a result, the defense can never be scheduled at a time that is convenient for both regions. It either takes place at 8 or 9 AM in the United States and 8 or 9 PM in China, or vice versa. This means that one party will have to attend the defense outside of their regular working hours.

3.6.2 Place

With assistance from a government official in the Economic Development Office in Qingdao, and the expectation that the Flagship students would conduct research to contribute to the city's economy, the Flagship program established a center within the Citizen Center of Qingdao, Shandong, China in 2001. This center included a dedicated office space for the Flagship program and a large classroom/conference room for classes and meetings including exchanges with local citizens. For 15 years, the Flagship program maintained its presence in the Citizen Center of Qingdao. This place has given the Flagship students advantage to access different groups of Chinese audiences (see detailed description at the beginning of Chapter Four).

The Flagship M.A. thesis defense is set up as a shared event with attendees in both the United States and China. The defense can occur at either location, depending on where the student is when they defend. If the student defends in China, the audience in the United States will join the defense through video conferencing, and vice versa. This means that the student being tested had to engage with both in-person and virtual audiences from different locations.

The committee is divided into two components, with members situated in both the United States and China, to facilitate coordination between the two locations and ensure the successful execution of the event. The native speaking Chinese audience is divided into two groups based on their physical location. One group is located in China and includes university professors, college students, and professionals who have formed relationships with Chinese learners during their time at the college, and experts in the field of the student's research. The other group is made up of visiting Chinese scholars from OSU who are joining the event from the United States.

The location of the defense can have a profound impact on a student's mental state and overall performance. Similar to how a sports team has a home and away game, a student defending in the United States is playing a home game. The familiar surroundings create a sense of comfort and security that can positively impact the student's confidence and focus during the defense.

In the familiar environment of the United States, the student is able to fully engage with the material and audience without distractions. They have a clear understanding of the norms and rules of their surroundings, which allows them to operate with greater ease. They know how technology works, the traffic system, where to get food and drink, and how to stay safe. This familiarity and comfort allow the student to be more relaxed and confident during the defense, as they do not have to allocate mental resources to process unfamiliar surroundings. Although the defense is in Chinese, they know that once they get out of the classroom, it's their "home field", the "real world"

operates under the social rules and norms of the United States They will return to a familiar and comfortable environment, which further reduces stress and anxiety.

On the other hand, if the defense takes place in China, the student is playing an away game. There is typically a larger Chinese audience, and the student does not have a familiar or comfortable environment to retreat to after the defense. Even after the event, they still have to operate in a cultural environment that follows the norms of Chinese culture. This can lead to increased stress and anxiety, which can possibly have a negative impact the student's performance during the defense.

In my video data, students defending in the United States tend to be more relaxed, with more unconscious movements that match what they are saying. Their body language is more open and confident, and they tend to be more animated and expressive. Meanwhile, students defending in China tend to be more reserved and restrained, often standing with their hands crossed in front of their bodies and without much movement throughout the event. Their body language is more closed and reserved, which may reflect the influence of how they are responding to Chinese culture or to increased stress and anxiety levels they are experiencing in an unfamiliar environment.

3.6.3 Roles

There are three groups of participants in this M.A. thesis defense event: the student, the committee, and the guest audience. Each group of participants takes on multiple roles in this event. it is important to understand the expectations and perspectives of each one in order to understand their behaviors in the event.

3.6.3.1 The Student

An Expert on the Domain of the Research Topic

The students who are presenting their theses are regarded as experts in the subject matter, having undergone extensive graduate-level research and successfully completed a Master's thesis on the topic. The outcome of the defense-whether the student passes-is ultimately determined by their committee, which is comprised of professors from an American university. Therefore, the student must exhibit the necessary qualifications and meet the expectations set for graduate students in the American education system, which requires them to present themselves as knowledgeable, confident, and demonstrating expertise on their research topic during the thesis defense.

A Student in Chinese Language

In the American education system, a graduate student is perceived as an individual who is ready to become an independent researcher. During their thesis defense, they are expected to demonstrate expertise in their chosen domain. Conversely, in China, a Master's student is still considered a student who is in the process of acquiring knowledge, rather than forming well-supported claims or establishing any sort of authority on a given topic. During the defense, they are expected to exhibit a certain level of understanding of the topic, and when faced with questions and feedback, they are encouraged to be modest and receptive, taking into account advice from the audience in order to make revisions to their thesis.

Additionally, the student also holds the role of a Chinese language student, as the audience is aware that even though they are using Chinese as a tool for their research, the

Chinese language is still the subject of their studies. The student is consistently perceived as a Chinese language learner, whose perspective and ideas might be limited due to lack of understanding or competence in Chinese language and culture.

An Insider of the Research Topic:

The student can be considered an insider of the research topic as a result of their extensive graduate-level research on the subject. This research has included the study of the relevant literature, conducting interviews, and engaging in extended thinking and discussion. Some students have even had the opportunity to work or live within the community of their research subject, affording them an emic perspective on the topic they are studying. This in-depth understanding and close relationship with the community allows the student to bring a unique and valuable perspective to their research and thesis defense.

An Outsider of the Chinese Society

Despite the student's close relationship with the community of the research topic and their deep understanding of the subject, they are still considered an outsider of Chinese culture and society as they did not grow up or socialize in China. The understanding they gained through their research, while insightful, is still limited by their outsider's perspective on the larger social and cultural background. There will always be aspects of the culture and society that are inaccessible to an outsider, which are better understood by those who have grown up within the community.

However, there are instances where members of the Chinese audience acknowledge that the student has a greater understanding of the topic and is more of an

insider than they are. This transition in perception raises the question of what the student did to make this happen. These instances will be explored in the next chapter, where the data will be analyzed and discussed in detail to better understand the reasons for this shift in perception. It is important that our students are perceived as competent and taken seriously, rather than being viewed as inexperienced foreigners by their Chinese colleagues in the workplace. Examining instances of this shift in perception and exploring the reasons for it can provide insights into the design of training programs that can facilitate this shift. By understanding the factors that contribute to a change in perception, we can create effective training programs that empower our students to establish themselves as competent insiders in their fields.

3.6.3.2 Committee Members

The graduation committee for this Master's program is typically composed of three individuals who are all tenured professors in the Chinese program at OSU. One member of the committee was born in the United States, while the other two are originally from China and have lived and worked in the United States for many years, specializing in the field of Chinese pedagogy and cross-cultural communication. Having grown up in China and spent significant time in the United States, they bring a unique and valuable perspective to the graduation committee, with a deep understanding of both cultures and their impact on education and communication.

The Coordinator and Decision-maker

In the thesis defense event, the graduate committee acts as the host and coordinator. They are responsible for overseeing the event and ensuring that it runs

smoothly. This includes coordinating guests from both the United States and China, moderating the progression of the event, posing questions, and providing feedback to the student's presentation, and making the final decision on whether the student has passed the defense. As the primary decision-makers and facilitators of the defense, their role is critical to ensuring the success of the event and the fair assessment of the student's research and presentation.

Bystanders

While the members of the graduation committee hold a significant role in the execution of the event, they may also act as bystanders at times. Their familiarity with both the student and the guests, as well as their knowledge of both American and Chinese language and culture, makes them valuable mediators in cases of confusion or misunderstandings. However, in order to effectively assess the student's ability to communicate with a Chinese audience in various communicative situations, the committee members must take a step back and allow the student to take the lead, utilizing their own strategies and techniques to effectively communicate their research and ideas. This allows the committee to accurately evaluate the student's ability to navigate cultural and linguistic challenges and effectively communicate their ideas.

3.6.3.3 The Chinese Audience

The Chinese audience in the thesis defense event is comprised of several distinct groups, including those in China and those physically present in the United States. The Chinese audience in China includes: 1) University professors with extensive knowledge and expertise in the student's research field. 2) University professors who do not

specialize in the student's research field but have some related knowledge. 3)

Practitioners or domain experts who bring practical experience and insights to the event.

4) College students who have formed relationships with the Chinese learners during their time at the institution.

The Chinese audience in the United States includes visiting scholars from OSU who are currently pursuing studies or conducting research in the United States. These scholars bring a unique cross-cultural perspective to the defense, having had the opportunity to study and work in both China and the United States. Not every group of the audience is present in every defense, as attendance depends on what the topic is and who is invited and available at the time. All Chinese audience attendance is voluntary and not compensated.

Guests to the Event, Hosts of the Culture

All members of the Chinese audience are invited to the thesis defense, either by the graduation committee or the student. They participate in the thesis defense event as guests, but at the same time, they serve as hosts of the location where the defense takes place (in most cases, the defense is held in China). As such, they possess an attitude and expectation of a host. Additionally, they consider themselves the "owners" of Chinese culture and society (Zhang, 2020). While many of them may possess limited knowledge or experience in the student's research topic, they are still considered qualified to provide the student with insights raised from their experiences and understanding of China-related topics gained from being socialized within the Chinese community.

Examiners and Commentators

In addition to their roles as guests and hosts, the Chinese audience also serves as examiners and commentators. Prior to the defense, they are informed that an American student is learning Chinese and conducting research in China and will be presenting their research to an audience to which they are invited. They are welcome to come listen to his presentation and ask questions and give feedback. The Chinese audience is aware that they are expected to use their knowledge and expertise to assess the student's grasp on the topic and give their critique and suggestions for how to improve. One of the criteria used to evaluate the student's success in the thesis defense is their ability to handle questions and feedback from the Chinese audience effectively in a culturally appropriate manner. The ability to effectively interact with and respond to the Chinese audience is a key indicator of the student's competence in their research topic, as well as communicating their ideas in a professional, effective, and culturally appropriate manner, which is what they are trained for in the Flagship program. As such, although the Chinese audience does not take a part in the final decision of whether the student can pass the defense, their feedback and interaction with the student is highly anticipated and plays a crucial role in the defense.

3.6.4 The Program

While there may be slight variations in the procedure of a defense due to local conditions, such as having only committee members present without a Chinese audience or not connecting participants from another location, the overall process remains largely consistent across defenses. The event generally unfolds as follows:

Step 1: Arrival of the Participants

- The student, committee members, audience, and technician arrive at the venues in both China and America.

Step 2: Setting up the Equipment

- The technician and the student set up the required equipment, including video-conferencing, video recording, and PowerPoint.

Step 3: Beginning of the Defense

- The committee member who is physically present with the student serves as the moderator and initiates the process.
- The moderator greets and introduces the audience.

Step 4: Presentation by the Student

- The student begins the presentation of their research which lasts around 40 minutes.

Step 5: Question and Answer Session

- The committee members who are not physically present ask questions and provide feedback remotely.
- The audience who are not physically present ask questions and provide feedback remotely.
- The committee members who are present also ask questions and provide feedback.
- The audience who are present also ask questions and provide feedback.
- If needed, some free discussion can take place.

Step 6: Conclusion of the Discussion Session

- The moderator concludes the discussion session and asks the audience who are present to leave the room.

Step 7: Final Decision by the Committee Members

- The committee members discuss the student's performance and make the final decision on whether the student passes.

Step 8: Notification to the Student

- The student is informed to return to the room for the final result and critique.

3.7 Conceptualizing the MA event as a Third Space

In the previous section, I provided detailed information on the time, place, participants' roles, and program of the OSU Chinese Flagship M.A. thesis defense, and discussed the potential significance these elements have on the behaviors of the participants. From this discussion, we can see that this event takes place in a complex space due to the participation and interplay of multiple elements and factors. In this section, I will further discuss the complexity of this space, with a focus on the emerging features resulting from the factors and undercurrents working together in the event.

To better understand this dynamic space where “cooperation among people speaking different languages in different cultures is not only inevitable but desirable.” Xiaobin Jian explored the conceptualization of Third Space in the field of foreign language education and pointed out the features and possibilities such a space affords for communication:

“Focusing on the possibilities of and paths to a constructive and productive Third Space, cross-lingual and cross-cultural interactions should and can open up a new field, where different cultures converge, contest and cooperate; where

expectations for the actors and interpretations of their actions do not entirely or constantly conform to the assumptions and norms of one culture but dynamic and fluid, motivated by specific goals of the interaction in question and negotiated among involved actors; and where the cooperative interactions of the actors' emerging multilingual and transcultural personae are made possible by, and in turn, continue to co-construct the multilingual and transcultural Third Space that is continuously becoming.” (Jian, 2021, p.8)

The Chinese Flagship M.A. thesis defense event fits right into the realm of Third Space in that the event involves participants coming from different cultures and speaking different languages. As explained in detail below, no one culture dominates the course of the event, making it neither a space of American culture nor a space of Chinese culture. It is a third space that emerges from the combination and interplay of two background cultures and the unique contextual factors of this specific event. In light of the features of such Third Space described by Jian, this section will provide a discussion on how the Chinese Flagship M.A. thesis defense event is a multi-lingual, goal-based, transcultural and an emergent space.

3.7.1 A Multilingual Space

The Flagship M.A. thesis defense event is a multilingual space with the majority of participants being bilingual in Chinese and English, although their proficiency in these two languages may vary significantly.

The entire Flagship M.A. thesis defense event is conducted in Chinese, and all participants are expected to communicate in Chinese regardless of their linguistic repertoire or preference. This is because, in addition to presenting research on a topic, the event is also a test of the student's ability to communicate effectively in Chinese. The Chinese language is not only the means for conducting research and exchanging ideas,

but also the subject of evaluation. The student is both a researcher who conducts research in Chinese and a Chinese language learner. As a result, comments on the student's Chinese proficiency are a common occurrence in almost every defense. We will examine specific examples of these comments to better understand which aspects of the student's language competence are valued by the Chinese audience in this context.

As the students are advanced-level Chinese learners, their language ability is still limited compared to the Chinese audience. Therefore, there will inevitably be ineffective communication caused by deficiencies in the student's language ability. This can result in either the student not understanding or misunderstanding words from the Chinese audience, or the student's misuse of expressions which may misrepresent their ideas and intentions. As Jian noted, "the higher foreign language proficiency level the learners have, unfortunately, the more likely "communication breakdowns" and misconceptions about each other will occur as language and/or behavioral mistakes, inevitable in non-native environments, will likely be interpreted as intended offenses." To further illustrate this observation, in Chapter four, I will give concrete examples and provide detailed analysis of such situations to demonstrate what could happen in these situations, how the Chinese audience reacts when ineffective communication occurs and how the students handle such situations.

3.7.2 A Multi-cultural Space

We have to admit that in this event, the cultural differences and cultural boundaries are very real and salient. All participants are very aware of them. For the students, they are aware that the biggest challenge for them in this defense is to try to

convey an idea to a Chinese audience and handle challenges, questions, critiques in Chinese from the Chinese audience in Chinese. For the Chinese audience, the most noticeable feature of this event they are invited to is that there is a foreigner who will talk about and try to establish expertise on a China-related topic. Due to the nature of this gathering, boundaries and differences are inevitably there.

This awareness can also be demonstrated by reactions from the Chinese audience during the Q&A session after the presentation. When they want to appraise a student, often times they would take the perspective that as a foreigner/American, the student has done a good job. When they want to ask for the student's opinion on how to better solve the problem raised in the research, they would ask what the student would suggest, as a foreigner/American. When they critique, they would attribute the flaw in the student's idea to being a 典型的美国年轻学子 (*dianxingde meiguo xuezi* 'typical American young student'). It is undeniable that our students' persona of being a young foreign student is the most salient thing in this event. the Chinese audience has the assumption that "you must think differently than we do as a foreigner". This might play to the students' advantage that their opinions might be more valued as they bring a fresh foreign perspective, but it also can make their opinions less sound because an American may be biased on China-related topics as they grow up in a society that is very different from China.

The Chinese Flagship M.A. thesis defense event is a multi-cultural space also in that there is more than one behavioral culture that governs the norm and customs of how people do things. Here let me briefly elaborate on the term "behavioral culture". Hector

Hammerly developed a way of talking about culture that divides the instructional discourses into three parts: 1) Achievement culture: the hallmarks of a civilization. 2) Informational culture: the kinds of information a society values. 3) Behavioral culture: the knowledge that enables a person to navigate daily life. Although achievement culture and informational culture can provide useful and sometimes necessary knowledge of different aspects of a society, it is behavioral culture that guides the sequence of daily social actions. It is what and how people do to make small talk and how they do it, as well as how they perform in school, attend weddings, or do business. In the M.A. thesis defense event, participants are socialized in Chinese culture OR American culture, or in Chinese culture AND American culture. So different behavioral cultures are at play. They are different norms and customs for participants to choose from. We will look at an example here:

Yu is a student who defended in 2006. The setup of her defense is that one committee member who grew up in China was the moderator at the China site, one committee member who grew up in America was the moderator at the U.S. site. The former speaks Chinese as his native language, the latter speaks Chinese as an additional language. The defense begins with introduction of the audiences at both sites. The China site went first, and the U.S. site followed. In such a context where university professors are invited to participate in an academic talk, the Chinese way to introduce guests is to have the moderator do the introduction, and the professors are addressed by XX 教授 (XX *jiaoshou* ‘XX professor’), or a more important title such as 院长 (*yuanzhang* ‘Dean’) or 主任 (*zhuren* ‘director’). The purpose to use titles instead of full names is to

show respect to the guests by acknowledging their social status, as well as to provide information about addressing terms to other people. In the United States, this kind of context can go two ways. The guests can be introduced by the moderator, or they can introduce themselves. Terms of address is the same in both ways, i.e., one can introduce oneself using “I’m a professor from XX university”, or the moderator can introduce a guest using “XX is a professor from XX university”. However, in Chinese culture, it is regarded as arrogant and impolite to introduce oneself with a title that indicates a high social status, such as ‘professor’, ‘Dean’. As a result, there is no conventional script for a socially and culturally appropriate way to introduce oneself in Chinese. The interesting thing is, at the China site, the moderator introduced all guests, while at the U.S. site, the moderator used Chinese to ask the Chinese audience to introduce themselves. At that moment, two cultures were at play. The Chinese audience was requested to use Chinese to introduce themselves in an American manner, and in the meantime their Chinese needed to be appropriate to the current situation. Because there is no conventional way to handle this situation, the Chinese audience at the U.S. site needed to quickly take into account their knowledge about both cultures and decide what and how to say at that moment. In Chapter Four, we will elaborate on this example and see what new behaviors and strategies have emerged under such a situation.

3.7.3 A Contesting and Cooperating Space

The multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of the Chinese Flagship M.A. thesis defense event makes the space inevitably a contested space between different undercurrents. What language to use, whose cultural norms to follow, what to be held

true or good, when participants need to make a decision on those choices, they need to choose from contesting options.

However, as participants in the same event, they have a shared goal of delivering a fair M.A. thesis defense. To achieve this goal, they have to cooperate in the event to proceed, play their roles, consider and balance different factors to make choices, negotiate differences to reach a result that is acceptable for everyone. Both parties making contributions to the same event to achieve the same goal makes it a cooperative space by nature and necessity.

Chapter 4. Chinese audiences' Feedback and Flagship Students' Response Strategies

In this chapter, we will examine recurring themes arising from the Q&A sessions of OSU Flagship M.A. thesis defenses (oral examinations involving a thesis and presentation with Q&A), focusing on typical feedback given by Chinese audiences and the strategies employed by students to address such feedback while negotiating their intentions. We will provide specific examples illustrating how Chinese audiences and CFL students use language to convey their intentions for each identified theme and strategy. The examples, analysis and conclusions presented in this chapter are intended to offer practical guidance for advanced Chinese learners and educators as they prepare for academic research and presentations in the future.

Before delving into the actual analysis and discussion, we will first present the transcription conventions and some background information for all the defenses used in this chapter's data analysis. The following two tables provide the relevant information.

Table 2 Transcription Conventions

Symbols	Representation
...../...	Abbreviated
XXX	Undecipherable
(a), (b), (c)	Analytical unit number
(non-verbal behaviors)	Extralinguistic features

Table 3 Background Information on Defenses Quoted in Chapter Four

Student	Time	Place	Title*
Sha	2007	China	The education problem of children of Chinese migrant workers
Gu	2007	U.S.	How can Chinese residential real estate companies better attract foreign customers?
Sita	2007	U.S.	The impact of globalization on Chinese people's perception and protection of traditional culture - A case study of rural tourism development in Guizhou
Zhu	2008	U.S.	The Self-Understanding, Self-Evaluation and Analysis of China's New Social Stratum
Su	2008	U.S.	Conflict and Integration - An in-depth Analysis of Multicultural Exchange in Harbin
Long	2008	U.S.	Pros and Cons of Intellectual Property Rights Impact on the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Areas - An Exploration Into one of Sino-American Relation's Greatest Conflicts
Qiao	2008	China	A Discussion of the Role of Chinese Medicine in the Modern Health Care System
Ke	2009	China	A Research on the Implementation of China's Labor Contract Law and its Effects on Qingdao's Migrant Workers: Focusing on the Emergence of Social Service Issues
Xiao	2010	U.S.	Chinese Travel Agencies & The Internet Age: An Analysis of the Adoption of Internet Tourism in Chengdu, China
Li	2010	U.S.	Hunan's "TV Soldiers" Go Global: Understanding the Cultural Roots and Implications Behind Hunan TV World
Wu	2010	China	China's Wind Energy Development and Prediction
Peng	2010	China	How to Stimulate Domestic Demand in China
Rou	2010	U.S.	Post-WTO Chinese Foreign Policy: The Balance Between Idealism and Realism
Luo	2011	U.S.	Contemporary Chinese Religious Scholars' Views and Opinions of Religion
Ming	2011	China	An Analysis of the Present State of Sino-American Mergers and Acquisitions and Their Reasons for Success and Failure
Mo	2011	China	The Privatization and Nationalization of Government-Owned Industries in China

Qi	2011	China	Research of China's Private Enterprises and Brands on a Global Background
Lu	2011	U.S.	The Role of Chinese New Media, Specifically Weibo, in Broadcasting Information Concerning Incidents that Reflect Social Issues, and its Influence on the Consolidation of National Public Attention
Ma	2011	China	The Contradictions Created by China's Middle East Policies and Role, and Future Development Opportunities
Heming	2012	China	The Effect of Public Organizations in Developing the Ethnic Minority Folk Song of Guizhou, China
Shi	2012	China	Obscure Terrain: The Rights Defense of Qingdao Internal Migrant Workers
Yang	2012	China	Chinese-American Transnational Marriage: Cultural Differences and Marital Satisfaction
Tang	2012	China	Corruption in China: Theory, Status Quo and Countermeasures
Xia	2013	U.S.	Internet Slang and China's Social Culture: A Case Study of Internet Users in Guiyang
Ka	2015	China	Examining the Obstacles Facing Beijing's Urban Integration Plan
Fan	2016	China	Freemium Profit Structure in the Development of the Chinese Market
Bai	2018	China	Sichuan Liangshan Yi minority "Degu" Mediation Principles and Practice - - Traditional "Conflict Resolution" In Modern Society
Lei	2018	China	Cross-Cultural Humor Through Comedy Films?
Zeng	2019	China	Coffee House Culture and the 3rd Space; Analysis of Shanghai Coffee House Customer Behaviors

*All defense titles were originally in Chinese. The topics presented in this table are either translated into English by the researcher, or taken from the English titles in students' published Master's theses for the convenience of readers of this study.

To better understand what kind of audience the students had in these defenses, we will provide a more detailed description of how the audience was gathered and engaged in the process.

From 2001 to 2006, the Flagship program hired graduate students and teachers from Qingdao University in related fields and paid them at a rate of \$20 per hour for tutoring Flagship students and assisting with their research in Qingdao. The tutoring sessions were conducted individually as students collected data, formulated ideas, and wrote their theses. These tutors also took part in the defense sessions, but rather than raising questions during the defense, they focused on taking notes, which they would later discuss with the students.

Many Flagship students not only conducted research in China, but they were also working as employees in companies or institutions in China, through connections the program had with these companies or institutions. For instance, there was a student who specialized in media and worked at Hunan TV for six months, a student focused on education who taught children of migrant workers in an underdeveloped area in China, and a student interested in social issues who worked as the assistant to the mayor of a small Chinese village. This student developed an intimate relationship with the mayor, akin to a godfather and godson. Some of the professionals who collaborated with the students, such as their coworkers, mentors, or supervisors, were also invited to the final defense. They witnessed the final product of the students' work and life experiences in China and provided feedback on their performance.

Another group of the Chinese audience in these events who participated from China was comprised of teachers and professors from Chinese universities specializing in fields related to the students' domain. These people may not be as familiar with the students and the students' work as their paid tutors or coworkers. Members of this group

may have experience living in another country, but most of them lack experience in interacting with foreigners. Additionally, there were Chinese audience members who attended the defense in the United States. These people were visiting scholars or professionals from Chinese universities who were visiting the United States for a short period of time. They might have had the opportunity to review the students' theses a day or two prior to the oral defenses. Or in some cases, the oral defense was the first time they met the students and listened to the students' talking about their domain research.

There were also Qingdao citizens who visited the Citizen Center for other purposes and noticed announcements inviting the public to attend a presentation by an American student using Chinese to discuss a China-related topic at the Citizen Center. These people were genuinely interested in hearing a foreigner's perspective on China, so they decided to attend the presentation.

Two audience members who participated in most of the defenses were male professors in their 40s or 50s, specializing in humanities fields. While they did not guide the students' research step by step, they had gained considerable experience in listening to and commenting on American students' domain presentations after attending dozens of Flagship program M.A. thesis defenses. Many examples provided in this chapter were derived from their feedback.

4.1 Chinese audiences place a significant emphasis on the students' American personae

As pointed out in Chapter Three, the primary significance of these events are its multi-cultural nature. All participants are aware of this feature. The Chinese audience is informed before coming to the event that they are invited to a Master's thesis defense

delivered by an American student who did research in China and is going to present the research in Chinese. For those invited, this is not a common situation. For most members of the Chinese audience, the OSU Chinese Flagship MA program is the only interaction they have with an advanced Chinese learner on a serious topic in their whole life. They have few assumptions and expectations to what happens in the event. Although we do not have access to the audiences to interview and ask what their assumptions and expectations are, we can have reasonable speculations through observing their reactions in the event.

4.1.1 Framing evaluations of students' performances in terms of their personae of 外国人 (*waiguoren* 'foreigner')

A frequently occurring word used by the Chinese audience uses to describe how they feel about a foreigner doing in-depth research about China is 感动 (*gandong* 'be impressed and moved').

Excerpt 1 Sha's impressed audience member

其实我挺受感动的，我觉得作为一个外国女孩到中国去，你们没有看到那个她教孩子的情况，我是，她给我看了一些，那个关系非常非常好……其实在中国教农民工子女很困难很困难……她教的过程中孩子们都很喜欢她，可是等她教完后，再去的老师呢，好像又有问题，就是感觉上就是说在中国教这些农民工子女也不是很容易的一个事情，但是小沙可以在那坚持 5 个月，而且她是教 2 个班，一个班级上 65 个孩子，多乱的一个教室，然后还那个班她还要教英文歌，还要教英文，然后孩子们还都很喜欢她，而且我觉得她能够关注这样的中国，因为这个问题刚才这个老师也讲了，真的在中国我想真正重视这份就是从今年春节晚会……

To be honest I feel moved. I think as a foreign girl going to China, you don't know about her teaching situation, she showed me some, that relationship is very very good ... in fact teaching children of migrant workers in China is really really difficult ... during her teaching, the children all liked her very much, but after she left, the successor teacher seemed to have problems again. It feels that teaching these children of migrant workers in China is not an easy thing, but little Sha could last there for 5 months, and she taught 2 classes, each class has 65 kids, it was such a chaotic space, then she had to teach English songs, and also English, and kids all liked her, and I think she could pay attention to China in this way, because this issue, as this teacher mentioned just now, really in China, I think it started to be paid attention was since the Spring Festival Gala this year ...

In excerpt 1, the audience member starts her comment expressing her feeling of being impressed and moved by what Sha did in China. She feels that as a foreign girl, Sha achieved something that is very hard even for a Chinese person. She tells the audience that there were teachers before and after Sha, who both ran into problems teaching the group of kids that Sha taught. In addition to accomplishing the teaching task, Sha also did a great job in that she took care of many children, was responsible for

multiple subjects, and all the kids loved her. Furthermore, Sha paid attention to something in China that even Chinese people did not start to care about until that year. This teacher is both impressed both by Sha's ability to accomplish the task, and Sha's passion and will to overcome many obstacles and give love and care to an overlooked group of people in China-as a foreigner.

Excerpt 2 Xiao's impressed audience member

……但是整个的我想用，用汉语来写用汉语来说这么流利真的，我们(using hand gestures to include another member from the Chinese audience)是非常，我是对俄亥俄州立大学旗舰工程的，这个成果感到非常地感动，震撼(patting her chest)，谢谢！

... but for the whole thesis I think using, using Chinese to write using Chinese to speak this fluently really, we (addressing another member from the Chinese audience) are very, I feel by The Ohio State University Flagship program, this achievement, very moved, impressed (patting her chest), thank you.

In excerpt 2, the audience member first provides her suggestions and points out aspects for improvement. To end her comment, she gives her praise not only to the student, but to the Ohio State University Flagship program. In her opinion, students using Chinese to write and give a presentation in such a fluent way is an achievement of the Ohio State University Flagship program, and she feels very emotionally moved as well as intellectually impressed. She multiplies the effect of her statement by including another member from the Chinese audience into her opinion motioning toward that person with her hand, and then putting her hand over her heart while saying the words 感动，震撼 (*gandong, zhenhan* 'moved, impressed'). The thing that moves this audience member is a

foreigner being able to use the audience member's mother tongue in such a fluent way, which indicates a huge amount of time and resource investment from the student as well as the program that trained the student.

Excerpt 3 Bai's impressed audience member

你好，呃，就是，我听了你整个东西我还是觉得，很感动的因为，这个东西对于我们就是，一个中国人来讲，就做这件事情也是，其实是要花很多时间精力也是有点困难。然后我就是说，你，首先第一个问题你是，怎么样，去找到，就是那个中间人的？

Hello, uh, well, I listened to your whole thing I feel, very impressed because, this thing for us it's, for a Chinese person, doing this is also, in fact is taking a lot of time and energy and pretty difficult. Then I'm saying, you, first of all the first question is you, how, did you find, that mediator (who was the focus of her study)?

In excerpt 3, the audience member feels moved by Bai's research because what Bai has accomplished was very hard even for Chinese people. The first question she has for Bai is how Bai managed to find her research subject, which indicates that in her opinion, it must be a lot of trouble and work for a foreigner to try to find such a person to study. She is thus moved by Bai, being a foreigner in China, overcoming obstacles in language and persona, achieving such great things.

In the three above-mentioned cases, members of the Chinese audience feel it necessary to express their emotional takeaway from a student's accomplishments at such an intellectual event. This indicates that they find it important to let the students know, in addition to any intellectual discussion on the research topic, how much they personally appreciated the student's effort and commitment in what they are doing.

This kind of venue is, not surprisingly, a good opportunity to establish personal connections for both parties. During most of the oral defense, participants (presenters and audience) take on the role of intellectuals who contribute to the discussion of a topic from a purely intellectual, rational, even impersonal perspective. But in the interactions that took place, Chinese audience members jumped out of this role and went out of their way to express their personal feelings to the students. The students can then take this opportunity to engage in interactions to share personal stories and life experiences and establish possible future connections.

None of the three student presenters just cited gave a response to this expression of feelings from the Chinese audience. So I will suggest several strategies for responding to comments like this in a culturally effective and appropriate way. As a presenting student in this oral-defense context, you can:

1). Express appreciation for the audience's recognition of your hard work: “谢谢，谢谢您的肯定。(Thank you, thank you for your recognition)”;

2). Acknowledge that you have benefited from the experience: “我在这个过程中也收获了很多。(I have also learned a lot from this experience)”;

3). Suggest further interaction after the event: “我有一些故事和感悟可以分享，如果您感兴趣的话，我们可以结束以后聊一聊。(I have some stories and thoughts to share. If you are interested, we can talk after the event.)”.

Many members of the Chinese audience also emphasized the student presenters' personae as a 'foreigner', or to be more specifically as 美国人 (*meiguoren* 'American') when they evaluated the accomplishments of the students' research project. We will look at an example in which the student's American persona was repeatedly brought up by more than one member from the Chinese audience. Excerpts 4,5, and 6 are taken from Zhu's defense. There were seven people in the Chinese audience who participated in the defense and provided feedback to Zhu. Three of them emphasized Zhu's American persona in their feedback.

Excerpt 4 Zhu's audience member praising him with 'for an American'-1

……作为一个美国学生，对这问题了解，对这个问题认识，我的评价应该还是比较挺深入，也比较全面……

... For an American student, his understanding of this issue, my comment is that it is fairly in depth, as well as comprehensive ...

Excerpt 5 Zhu's audience member praising him with 'for an American'-2

……听了这个简老师的介绍，在看的感觉这个内容是很丰富的，而且也有一定的深度，作为一个美国的学生，研究到这个程度就很不错……

... After Professor Jian's introduction, and from what I have seen, the content is very rich, and has a certain depth. For an American student, research at this level is already pretty good ...

Excerpt 6 Zhu's audience member praising him with 'for an American'-3

……我很荣幸，因为我之前没有看过论文，是今天来听大家的发言，然后我觉得今天这个论文的这个设计，我个人认为它非常的好，因为从一个美国的学中文的学生的角度，一下子抓住了中国经济社会发展中的新阶层这个很敏感的群体，我觉得这是一个独特的视域，带来的一个独特的研究视角，所以它可能会在中国的经济社会发展，尤其是对特殊群体研究中间会带来一个很好的一个眼光……

... I'm very honored, because I didn't read the thesis, I only came to listen to the speech from everyone, and I think today's thesis's design, I personally think it's very good, because from the perspective of an American learner of Chinese, he immediately caught this sensitive group of people, the new class in China's economic and social development. I think this is a unique research perspective brought by a unique view, so it may bring a very good view to the special group studies in China's economic and social development ...

In excerpt 4, the audience member voices her thought that Zhu's understanding of the research topic was fairly in-depth and comprehensive in terms of what an American student can achieve. In excerpt 5, the audience member says that Zhu's research was rich and had a certain depth. He also suggests that for an American student, what Zhu has accomplished could be perceived as good, which indicates a compromise on the standard of the quality of the research, and an assumption that it is very hard for someone who is not from China to do in-depth research on China as someone who is not from China. In excerpt 6, the audience member praises the unique perspective and insights Zhu has brought to the research field, attributing the uniqueness of that perspective to Zhu's persona as an American learner of Chinese.

4.1.2 Expecting students to give opinions and suggestions from the perspective of a 外国人 (*waiguoren* ‘foreigner’)

In addition to assuming the student’s persona being that of a foreigner as the reason for deeming their performance to be good or bad, the Chinese audience at these events also frequently expected and invited the students to give suggestions from the perspective of a foreigner/American/western, for China or the Chinese government on the issues the students study.

Excerpt 7 Gu’s audience member requesting suggestions from an ‘American’

对我也在想因为这个美国的房地产就是从法律还是从操作这方面的话可能这个更健全一些，而且搞的时间也比较长一些，那么能不能就是这两方面啊中国和这个西方或者特别是美国这方面房地产做一个比较然后把这方面好一，美国这方面稍微好一点的这个，这个东西介绍过去，这个可能对你以后发展也会，会有帮助。

Yes I’m also thinking because America’s real estate might be more well-established in terms of laws and practices, and it has a longer history. Then can you compare these two, China and the Western world especially America and then bring in the good things America does, this might be helpful to your future.

Before this audience member gave her comment as shown in excerpt 7, another teacher had mentioned that if Gu could offer some practical suggestions for China’s real estate market, the thesis would be better supported. This audience member in excerpt 7 then expresses her agreement with that previous comment, and adds her thoughts on what kind of suggestions would be good. She specifies that it would be good for Gu to introduce the experience of the real estate industry in America for China to learn from,

assuming that Gu must have the knowledge of how people handle this issue in America because Gu is an American.

Excerpt 8 Su's audience member requesting suggestions from an 'American'

……最后一点呢就是关于这个，建议，我认为呀，你可以作为专门的一个题目，给中国政府的建议，你这个建议，你文章将来可以发到网上嘛，是吧？中国的人大代表政协委员，关于如何进行这个，多文化交流的问题，把你的文章吸收到咱们的提案当中去，最后甚至美国，中国政府采纳了你的建议，那么你这篇文章价值不就更大？

... The last thing is about suggestions. In my opinion, you can do a special topic, offering suggestions to China's government. Your suggestions, your article can be posted online, right? China's NPC deputies and CPPCC members, on the issue of how to do multi-cultural communication, bring your article to their proposals, ultimately if China's government take in your suggestions, then isn't your article more valuable?

In excerpt 8, the audience member, a professor, gives a relatively long comment, in which he not only talked about his opinions about Su's thesis, but he also expands the discussion and provided his own experience and ideas on Su's topic. At the end of his comment, he gives his suggestions for enlarging the value of Su's thesis. He suggests that Su could write a separate article out of her thesis, focusing on providing suggestions for the Chinese government on the issue of multi-cultural communication. He does not explicitly use expressions that include "foreign/American" in his language, but every time he referred to the government, he says "the Chinese government", instead of just "the government". This specification would not happen if this professor was to talk to a Chinese student, since it is basically not possible that "the government" does not refer to the Chinese government. The professor used "the Chinese government" to speak to Su in

this context, indicating that he viewed Su's opinions and possible suggestions to the Chinese government as from an outsider's perspective, which in his opinion might be more valuable in that it is a fresh perspective that no Chinese people can bring.

Excerpt 9 is taken from Li's oral defense. Li worked for Hunan TV for half a year as a foreign employee. This was a very rare opportunity and an interesting experience for him. Thus, in his oral defense, many of the questions were about his experience working for Hunan TV as a foreigner, such as the following comment from a female member of the Chinese audience.

Excerpt 9 Li's audience member requesting suggestions from a 'foreigner'

(a)知道你在这个湖南卫视做得很好，那么通过这篇文章也感觉到你确实是非常热爱湖南卫视，(b)但是呢，我觉得，你这个文章如果在再能够客观一些，真正地以一个外国人的角度，用更客观的写法把它叙述，我觉得可能你这个论文的质量可以更高一层。(c)我想问的问题就是，你在湖南卫视工作了有半年的时间，在这半年里你可能经常会拿这个湖南卫视和你们美国电视台，类似的电台做一个对比。我想问一下对比 XXX 湖南卫视还有哪些不足之处，哪些问题？再一个就是，你觉得湖南卫视可以从你们美国类似的电视台可以借鉴的，东西是什么？

(a)I know you were doing very well at Hunan TV. Then through this article I also feel that you indeed love Hunan TV very much, (b)but, I think, if your thesis can be more objective, really from the perspective of a foreigner, using more objective ways to illustrate it, I think your thesis can be better. (c)The question I want to ask is that you have worked for Hunan TV for half a year, in this half a year you might often compare Hunan TV with similar TV station in America. I want to ask that if you compare it to XXX, what are the weakness and problems of Hunan TV? What's more is that what do you think Hunan TV can learn from similar TV stations of your America?

This audience member first acknowledges Li's passion and love for Hunan TV in 9(a) Then she points out that she thought Li's thesis could benefit from taking an objective perspective *as a foreigner*. She uses multiple linguistic and discourse means to emphasize this point. In 9(b), she uses the word 客观 (*keguan* 'objective') two times to indicate that Li could take a step back and keep a distance from the topic, rather than showing too much affection for his research subject. She also points out how to achieve this objectivity: through 真正地以一个外国人的角度 (*zhenzheng yi yige waiguoren de jiaodu* 'truly taking the perspective of a foreigner'). That, in her opinion, the word 'foreigner' is not enough to express the level of foreignness she expected and wanted to

see in Li's narrative is evident in her adding the modifier 'truly' to accentuate the point. In 9(c), she explicitly expresses her assumption that Li had compared Hunan TV with TV stations in America during the time Li worked for Hunan TV even though Li did not mention this, so she asks Li's opinions on the differences between these two and what can Hunan TV learn from American TV stations. For the two times she mentions American TV stations, she added 你们 (*nimen* 'you') as the modifier to distinguish Li and his background from her and other members of the Chinese audience. She also asks Li to offer opinions and suggestions that are derived from a comparison of Hunan TV and TV stations in America, requesting Li to look at Hunan TV from the perspective of an American.

Excerpt 10 Ke's audience member requesting suggestions from an 'American'

……因为一个调查报告，特别是给政府提一个决策的提议的话，应该再多考虑一下，特别是我想政府也好，学者也好，希望听到你从一个美国学生的角度来，多谈一点建议，我想至少给政府部门，给农民工，给这个媒体，各个方面提一些建议……

... Because as a report, especially to offer the government suggestion, should consider more, especially I think the government, or the scholars, would want to hear you from the perspective of an American talk about more suggestions. I think at least give suggestions to the government, to migrant workers, to media ...

Ke did his Master's research on "rights of the migrant workers in China". This is a social issue that calls for solutions, so much of the discussion in the Q&A session focused on suggestions to the government. As shown in excerpt 10, an audience member

stresses that the government and scholars would particularly want to hear his suggestions as the perspective of an American student:

Excerpt 11 Heming's audience member requesting suggestions from 'an westerner'

……那么第二个我就觉得，你要把这个公益机构的内涵外延，还有中西方的不同观念。你提了一点我觉得非常好，就是提到你说，呃中国的这个公益机构非常地特别，但是你没有作任何的解释就是它怎么个特别法，从西方人的眼光来说，它这个公益机构应该是什么样的，但实际上你在贵州看到的这个公益机构又是怎么样的……

... Then the second thing I think, you should expand the meaning of this charity institution, and different concepts of the Chinese and Western traditions. One thing you mentioned I think is very good. It's that you said China's charity institutions are very special, but you didn't give any explanation on how it is special, from the perspective of a Westerner, how should a charity institution look like, but what have you seen in reality in the charity institutions in Guizhou ...

In excerpt 11, the audience member makes a point that she deemed to need further clarification in Heming's thesis, namely that Heming should elaborate on how charity institutions were special. She suggests Heming compare what he thought a charity should look like and what he had actually seen in Guizhou, and when giving his own understanding, Heming should be 从西方人的眼光来说 (*cong xifangren de yanguan laishuo* 'talking from the view of a westerner').

From the analysis of the examples given above, we can learn the following things about the Chinese audiences' assumptions and expectations for this thesis oral defense event.

1. Chinese audiences tend to think that the greatest value of the students' research lies in providing practical suggestions that help Chinese society. This can be found in the comments offered for almost every defense. In terms of future directions of research or what the student can do to improve the study, there were always members of the Chinese audience who suggested the student give practical advice to the government in order to solve or improve the current issue constituting the student's study.
2. Chinese audiences assume the students have knowledge of the situation of their research topics in the United States or how their research topics are handled in the United States, even though the students did not express that they had such knowledge. Being an American seems to qualify the students as spokespersons for Americans, Westerners, and foreigners. In addition to their ideas as a researcher of the specific topic, the students' opinions were often taken as the ideas of an *American* student.
3. Combining the first two observations, Chinese audiences often expect the students to give suggestions from the perspective of an American on how to solve or improve the issue in their research. The students were often asked to talk about how the issue is handled in the United States, what China can learn from it, what they can bring to this issue in China, as a foreigner who must have different and fresh perspectives than Chinese people. These views can be unexpected for the students reporting on their research, in that most students'

research tries to understand Chinese people and Chinese culture from an emic perspective, i.e. as how Chinese people understand it from *their* perspective.

There are benefits for American learners when Chinese audiences place a significant emphasis on their American identity during communication. Since being a foreigner in Chinese culture comes with various obstacles and difficulties, the challenges that learners encounter and the effort they put into overcome them can be more easily recognized and appreciated when that foreign status is acknowledged by Chinese people. Impressing and exceeding the expectations of Chinese audiences is not a daunting task, and the research efforts, deep interest, and respect shown by learners towards China and its culture have laid a solid foundation for establishing a sincere and friendly relationship with Chinese people.

4.2 What Chinese audiences commonly pay attention to in such an academic event

The M.A. thesis defense, as a communication event, is primarily academic in nature. Although different cultural norms may come into play, participants generally operate under the premise that individuals should behave according to the expectations and standards of the academic world. However, academia in different countries and cultures may emphasize varying aspects and pay attention to different things. The students in this event are relatively well-versed in American academic traditions, having conducted graduate-level research at an American university. Nonetheless, the feedback they received from the Chinese audience was based on academic traditions in China. To

effectively communicate with a Chinese audience, it is important for students to understand which aspects of a Master's research defense are important in the context of Chinese academic practices. Fortunately, through the Chinese Flagship program at OSU, teachers and professors from Chinese universities were able to provide detailed feedback on the research and thesis writing of American students, providing a wealth of information on what Chinese academics consider essential. In this section, we will examine common themes that emerged from the video data, accompanied by specific examples.

4.2.1 代表性 (*daibiaoxing* ‘representativeness’)

The term ‘representativeness’ is often brought up by Chinese audiences in their feedback to the students, particularly when identifying areas for improvement and providing suggestions on how to revise students' theses. However, what it refers to can vary depending on the context in which it is used. Given the importance placed on representativeness by Chinese audiences, it is essential for students to develop a clear understanding of the concept, its uses, and their relevant implications. By doing so, students can ensure that their research and presentational efforts align with the expectations of their audience and address any potential concerns effectively. In this section, we will look at several specific examples to see where and how Chinese audiences use the term and what students can learn from it.

Excerpt 12 Su's audience member commenting on 'representativeness'

……然后你引用了一个黑龙江大学学生的谈话来作为依据，作为你的论据，我觉得你还要推敲。因为，这个，黑龙江大学这位学生叫全威是吧？全威啊，全威这个学生的这个，我们讲引用某一个人的谈话，最好是引用有代表性的，在我们学术研究上称作是理据，不可击破的理据，就是名人讲的话呀或者怎么样，那么全，这个全威呢这是一个大学生，那么他自己到俄罗斯去了一次是个人的体会，那么有些话就，他本身就不对了，你再引他的话呢，就有点问题了……

... Then you quoted words from a student at Heilongjiang University as evidence, as your supporting evidence, I think you still need more scrutiny. Because this, this student at Heilongjiang University his name is Quan Wei right? Quan Wei, this student's, we say quoting someone, it's better quoting someone with representativeness, in our academia it's called argument, undisputable argument, it's words from famous people or something. Then Quan Wei is a college student, then he has been to Russia once, it's personal experience, then some words are not correct. If you quote him, there is a problem ...

In excerpt 12, the audience member comments on Su using a conversation with a college student as supporting evidence in her thesis. He brings up the word 'representativeness' while talking about using quotes as supporting evidence and suggesting that it is better to choose quotes that have, through their source, 'representativeness'. He then explains that quotes from famous people are considered to have 'representativeness', as opposed to a college student's one-time personal experience on that subject matter. From this comment we can see that in terms of using quotes in academic research, 'representativeness' indicates that the person or people being cited is or are likely to be well-known and thus seen by the public as having authority. By

contrast, it is not obvious to American students that fame can give ‘representativeness’ in this context.

Excerpt 13 Ke’s audience member commenting on ‘representativeness’

……就最大的问题来讲，我想是就是这个研究样本的代表性的问题。那么当然柯若思实际上他自己也意识到了，就是在他的说今后进一步需要探讨的或者说准备探讨的问题当中，那么讲了就是它的代表性问题，这一点这个确实就是说 40 来个样本，41 个是吧？那么能不能代表青岛市的农民工的情况，那么正如他自己也意识到的那样，那到小陈律师这里来寻求帮助的，都是已经发生了面临着很大的困难，或者说有比较强的维权意识的。那么他这一部分人是比较突出的一个群体，它显然严格的讲，它是不能够从定量的角度来代表青岛市的农民工的整体情况的……

... The biggest problem I think is the representativeness of this research sample. Of course Ke himself also has realized this problem. In the section where he said issues that need further discussion or he plans to discuss, he talked about the issue of representativeness. This issue is indeed, 40-ish samples, 41 right? Then can they represent the situation of migrant workers in Qingdao? Then just like what he has realized, migrant workers who came to lawyer Chen’s place for help, are people who were already facing huge difficulties, or who have relatively strong awareness of their rights. Then this group of people is a particular group, strictly speaking, it cannot represent the situation of the entire migrant workers group quantitatively ...

In excerpt 13, the audience member is talking about the biggest problem, in his opinion, of Ke’s research, which is the ‘representativeness’ of his research sample. He elaborates on how this is a problem, by pointing out that the amount of migrant workers Ke studies was 41, which raises doubts on whether such a small number of samples could represent the full demographic of migrant workers in Qingdao. In addition to the total number of workers, the audience member also points out that this was a special group of

migrant workers in that they were in big trouble and had relatively strong awareness of their rights. Apparently, this is not a feature shared by all migrant workers in Qingdao. These two reasons lead to his conclusion of Ke's sample lacking 'representativeness'. In this case, we can see that 'representativeness' refers to two things in term of the sample of research: 1) the sample size should be big enough to represent the subjects under investigation. 2) the selected sample should not have special characteristics related to the research focus that distinguish them from the rest of the population of the researched topic.

Excerpt 14 Zhu's audience member commenting on 'representativeness'

……下面谈一个，就是谈几点，就是说这个问题吧，也是。第一点就是说，这个，是采用了一个，就是，调研的方法，一对一的采访的方法……因为就是，单独的一个采访么人数比较少，所以对这个代表性上，感觉好像就是，差一些……他在对这个结论论证上，就是采用了就是一个人的一个采访，这恐怕就比较难说。许多学术论文你可以引……先进的论文比较全面，不是一个论点，只用一个访谈，因为你有许多学者的研究……这个方面你利用好了，对你论文的整个的学术性了，整个的代表性了，提升层次性，提升为一个非常好的作用……

... Now let me talk about some, some problems. The first thing is that, this, employs the method of survey, one-on-one interview method ... because that, a single interview, sample is very small, so in terms of representativeness, it feels like, weak ... in arguing this conclusion, he used only one person's interview, which is difficult to justify. Many academic papers can be cited ... Advanced papers are comprehensive, not just one point of view or using only one interview, because you have the research of many scholars ... In this aspect, if you make good use of it, it will improve the overall academic level of your thesis, the overall representativeness, enhance the level, and it has a very good effect on elevating it ...

In excerpt 14, the audience member is providing his opinions on areas for improvement for Zhu's thesis. The first thing he points out was that when Zhu was arguing a conclusion, the supporting evidence used was an interview with one person, and this caused the argument to lack 'representativeness'. One reason he gives is that the sample was too small. Another reason he cites is that the interview offered as supporting evidence lacks 'representativeness' in comparison to academic papers. This is indicated in the audience member's suggestion following the comment of the use of an interview. He suggests that if Zhu can make good use of academic papers, that will be beneficial for

Zhu's thesis in terms of academic merit and representativeness. From this example we can see that different types of evidence used to support an argument can vary in their perceived level of 'representativeness'. In this audience member's view, academic papers have a higher level of 'representativeness' than interviews.

Excerpt 15 Lei's audience member commenting on 'representativeness'

……第一个是你在选择你的样本的时候，你说一般是在北电的同学，或者说你在脸书上的同学嘛。然后但是我觉得就是第一个，地域，你刚才说在北电里面可能会有不同的城市的人，但是你有没有考虑到他们的年龄结构，还有他们的性别比例，还有他们的背景，背景就刚才老师有提到过，就是他们可能是 ABC 或者说他们，呃，的文化已经受到了其他文化影响，所以我想说你在选择这个被试，他的样本的这个代表性，你是怎么看这个？

... The first thing is that when you chose your samples, you said they were normally your peers in Beijing Film Academy, or your peers on Facebook. And but I think firstly, region, you just said there might be people from different regions in Beijing Film Academy, but have you considered their age distribution, and gender ratio, and their backgrounds. For backgrounds just like what other teachers have mentioned just now, that they could be ABC or their culture has been influenced by other cultures. So I want to ask when you chose participants, the representativeness of samples, what do you think of this?

In excerpt 15, the audience member raises a question about the 'representativeness' of Lei's sample. She acknowledges that Lei had taken into consideration the regional differences among participants. She further asks if Lei had also thought about the age, sex, and background differences, indicating that these aspects also had influence on the 'representativeness' of Lei's sample. In this case, the audience uses

the term ‘representativeness’ to refer to whether a sample represents a bigger population from multiple aspects that may have influence on the answer.

Excerpt 16 Shi’s audience member commenting on ‘uniqueness’

……但是我想讲的是，你在你的论文里边儿应该，至少提一提，在中国现在的民这个，民间组织里边，像 LMN，像主任创始人这么有智慧，跟政府各方面关系协调的这么好的少之又少……我想你在你的论文里面，对于他这种特殊性的智慧应该有所体现，这绝对不是一个普遍的现象。

... But what I want to say is that, in your thesis you should, at least mention, among civil society organizations in China, organizations like LMN, whose founder has great wisdom, who has such a good relationship with the government, are very few ... I think in your thesis, you should reflect his special wisdom. This is definitely not a common thing.

Excerpt 17 Shi's audience member commenting on 'universality'

……对于司老师说的不具有，具不具有普遍性的一个问题，青岛在中国来说属于一个中型的城市或者中大型的城市，青岛的政府和青岛的大中型企业的关系相对来说要比较好，和中小企业的关系相对来说我们不能说不好了，但至少没有那些大企业紧密。那你刚才我注意到一个很有意思的一点，就是在南方为什么它的一些地方政府会抑制像 LMN 这种民间团体维权的团体……

... In terms of what Professor Si has mentioned, the universality of your case, Qingdao is a medium-sized city or medium-to-large-sized city, Qingdao's government has a relatively good relationship with Qingdao's large and medium-sized enterprises, but its relationship with small and medium-sized enterprises, we can't say it's not good, but at least not that close with those large and medium-sized enterprises. Then I noticed an interesting point, which is why some government in the south would suppress such civil society organizations as LMN ...

In excerpts 16 and 17, two of the audience members in Shi's defense mention a word that has meanings like 'representativeness', namely 普遍性 (*pubianxing* 'universality'). In excerpt 16, the audience member points out that the case studied by Shi was a very special one in that the leader of the organization was known for exceptional wisdom and relationship in dealing with the government. This is by no means a universal thing. In excerpt 17, another audience member adds to the previous comment on 'universality' saying that the city in which Shi chose to study is also a special one in terms of its size and relationships with the government and large and medium-sized enterprises in the city. We should note that what Shi did in the part commented on by this audience member was a case study, whose very purpose leaves it open to describing something that may turn out to be unique, instead of finding that the case has

‘universality’. Regardless, whether an individual case can represent or apply to the majority of China is still a crucial concern for the Chinese audience.

From the examples and discussions above, we can see that Chinese audiences in these defenses frequently employ the terms ‘representativeness’ / ‘universality’), which have various meanings and can be used in many contexts:

1. ‘Representativeness’ can be applied to describe samples, arguments, evidence, and quotes.
2. When referring to quotes from an individual, a famous person typically holds more ‘representativeness’ than a random person.
3. In the context of the sample that a study reports on, ‘representativeness’ demands a substantial sample size, i.e. one that is sufficiently representative of a larger population. The samples should not have overly unique characteristics and must consider various aspects such as age, sex, and cultural backgrounds.
4. For evidence cited in arguments, academic papers exhibit greater ‘representativeness’ than individual interviews.
5. ‘Representativeness’ / ‘universality’ hold significant importance for Chinese audiences. They are concerned with the applicability of research findings to a broader population, even within the context of case studies. Therefore, to better communicate with a Chinese audience in academia, our learners should be prepared to address the questions and concerns of the ‘representativeness’ / ‘universality’ issue of a study, in conducting the study, as well as in

discussing it. We will look at an example of how one of the students handled this question in his oral M.A. thesis defense in 4.4.4.

4.2.2 实地 (*shidi* ‘field experience’)

Field experience is another issue that concerned Chinese audiences in these defenses. This concern in fact arises in discussions of many aspects of the students’ research. We will look at several examples of how Chinese audiences talked about this issue.

Excerpt 18 Sita's audience commenting on 'field experience'

……我提一个问题，我觉得王老师和赵老师提的那些问题都挺重要的，关键有一个什么问题，就是你那个，要做的那个，就是要去采访人啊，你那个，IRB，那个东西没得到，这个是一个最大的致命的影响的东西，因为因为如果说你能采访当地的，比如说一个是当地的汉族，还有一个就是当地的少数民族，如果能够得到他们的观点的话，那么刚才你们提的这些问题可能就容易解答，当然还是有还是有局限，因为什么呢？因为中国太大了，凡是说到中国人怎么看的时候，往往一个省一个地区的人很难代表整个中国的观念，但是如果要是 IRB 能够解决的话，如果说能够问到一些汉族和当地少数的一些想法，可能你说的这个问题就能够有一点点答案，现在真是很难有一个答案。

... I want to ask a question. I think the questions Professor Wang and Professor Zhao raised were pretty important. What's the key issue here, it's your, it's interviewing people, your IRB, that thing you didn't have. This is the biggest and most fatal thing, because if you can interview local, for example local Han people and local ethnic minority people, if you can get their opinions, then the questions you raised are very easy to answer. Of course there is still limitation, why? Because China is too big, once you talk about how Chinese people think of something, usually people from one region can barely represent opinions of the entire Chinese people. But if you can take care of the IRB thing, if you can get access to opinions of local Han people and local ethnic minority people, you may get some answers to your questions. Now it's really hard to have an answer.

In excerpt 18, the audience member suggests that Sita's research has a fatal problem, which was its not being able to interview local people due to IRB restrictions. Even if Sita obtained IRB approval, there would still be limitations on the research, since China's vast size and diversity make it difficult for individuals from a single location to accurately represent the entire nation. This audience member identifies the most

significant issue with Sita's study as the inability to conduct interviews in the field, highlighting the importance of fieldwork and data collection in her research. He suggests that if Sita could obtain IRB approval for conducting fieldwork, she might be able to address her current research questions more effectively.

Excerpt 19 Sha's audience commenting on 'field experience'

……然后你说是你那个在网上是否找到这些这个数据是你然后你找不到。因为为什么不在这个，实地去找呢？

... Then you said you were looking for these data then you couldn't find them. Why didn't look in the field?

In excerpt 19, the audience member questions Sha's data collection method. Sha attempted to look for data on the Internet but could not find any. The audience member asks why Sha did not go into the field to obtain data. From this excerpt we can see that the audience member has a preference for looking for data in the field as opposed to not finding any online and then giving up. In her later comment, she also expresses distrust in online database in China. She apparently gives more credibility to data that is collected in the field by the researcher.

Excerpt 20 Zhu's audience commenting on 'field experience'

……所以这一些像这一些观点都是很新颖的，它也是因为从第一手资料得来的，所以这种，这个论文的，这种，方式应该说是很新颖很有价值的……

... So these ideas are very innovative, and it's acquired from first-hand experience, so this approach should be considered very innovative and valuable ...

In excerpt 20, the audience member is giving her general comment on Zhu's research. In her opinion, Zhu's research is deemed innovative and valuable because Zhu's

conclusions were drawn from first-hand experience. In this comment, the audience member recognizes the value of ideas that have emerged directly from first-hand field research.

Excerpt 21 Su's audience commenting on 'field experience'

……作为文化来讲，毫无疑问它是有载体的，具体的表现在宗教上生活上，你在宗教上应该说是有所涉及，在建筑风格上以及美术等等都涉及，其中生活还不够。为什么呢？很简单，就是因为你，是住在公寓里，假如果你要住到，这个，可以说就是哈尔滨老百姓家，你这篇论文又大不一样了……

... As a culture, it undoubtedly has a carrier, it's reflected in religion and daily life. You have mentioned religion, architecture style and art etc., but not enough about daily life. Why? Very easy, it's because you, stayed in an apartment, if you stayed in a home of the locals, your thesis would be much different ...

In excerpt 21, the audience member points out a weakness of Su's study, which is lack of field life experience in the field, among local people in Harbin. He believes that if Su had stayed in the home of a local family, her research would have been much different. In this example, the audience member places great value on field experience of living with local people by suggesting that it would bring big improvements to Su's study.

Excerpt 22 Wu's audience commenting on 'field experience'

……至于说这个，就是，意见吧，我想，就是，你在青岛吧，多看看，多走走……

... As for suggestions, I think, it's, when you are in Qingdao, go to more places to see more ...

Before the remark cited as excerpt 22, the audience member has already provided much feedback on Wu's study. At the end of Wu's defense, she gives her final suggestions on what he could do to improve his study. She suggests that Wu should still go to the field, observe, and explore the city more.

There may be many reasons why Chinese audiences care so much about students' field experience. One of the audience members at Luo's M.A. defense gives the rationale shown in excerpt 23:

Excerpt 23 Luo's audience commenting on 'field experience'

……为什么我一再强调，我们的学者应该到教堂到庙宇，和这个真正的信众，去了解他们呢，我，就是说，在中国，你表面看到的，和你当面儿问到的，和实际情况，往往有个很大的差距。这也是我们的美国同学们啊，在中国进行研究的时候，我觉得应该注意的一个问题。

... Why do I repeatedly stress that our scholars should go to the field to churches and temples, talk with the real followers, get to know them. I'm saying that in China, what you see on the surface and what you learn from asking questions face-to-face, usually has a big difference from the actual situation. This is also what our American students should pay attention to while they are doing research in China.

In excerpt 23, the audience member points out why he always stresses on the importance of scholars going to the field to get to know people and their practices. This

reflects the widely held belief in China that there is often a difference between what is reported and what is really happening. This comment also indicates that for foreigners who have not been socialized in China, it is assumed, it is even harder to see the “truth” under the surface. Therefore, it is particularly important for our students to have field experience when they do research in China.

4.2.3 数据来源 (*shuju lai yuan* ‘data source’)

Data are one of the most important components in doing research if not the most decisive one, regardless of where the research is conducted. However, people from different cultures may have different beliefs about what constitutes good data because how data is produced depends heavily on people’s daily practices, which can vary from culture to culture. In this section, we will look at examples of comments from Chinese audiences that indicate what constitutes good data in their opinions.

Excerpt 24 Sha’s audience commenting on ‘data source’

……但是网上如果找到的数据的话，这种可信度有多少？如果光依靠网上就是数据的话，这种可信度有多多大？假如说你要是找什么搞研究是吧，找数据，光去这个只去网上去找，我觉得这种可信度不是特别大。

... But if you found data online, how reliable is it? If you only rely on data online, how much can you believe it? Say that you are doing some research right? Looking for data, only looking on the Internet, I think the reliability is not very good.

In excerpt 24, the audience member raises her doubts about Sha using data found on the Internet. She questions the reliability of data found on the Internet with two questions in a row. Immediately after, she states her opinion of looking for data on the Internet in conducting research, which is that she finds it to lack reliability.

Excerpt 25 Long's audience commenting on 'data source'

……同时呢，我也提出，一些意见。呃，第一个呢，我认为呢，龙蟠同学有些数据，引用的不是太准确，这可能是就是相关数据本身就比较少，而且中美之间对这个问题认识差距非常大，双方所采用的数据就比较大。据我所知呢，比如说在软件盗版这个数据方面，呃这个这个，是美国方面的数据是 92%，去年是 83%，而中国，中国报道的呢是 26%，呃，这个前年是 26%，去年是 23%。这个本身就差距非常大，呃这个，但是，你引用的一些数据我认为还是有有，这个，有些，过于，有些偏激的……您引用了这个，国际唱片业协会的这个数据，是音乐的盗版率是 99%，呃这个比率，我没有看到你是引用是哪一年的，因为，这个这个，以前我知道我了解最高的这种报道比率是 95%，那么中国对外报送的比率是 50%，呃，这个，等我想了解一下……

... In the meantime, I also want to provide some suggestions. First of all, in my opinion, some of student Long Pan's data he cited is not very accurate. It could be because that relevant data is very few, and there is a huge difference between how this issue is perceived in China and in the United States, so the data used in the two countries is very different. As far as what I know, for example in terms of data on software piracy, this, data from the United States is 92%, last year was 83%, but in China, China's report is 26%, the year before last was 26%, last year was 23%. This itself is very different. But, some data you quoted I think is a little too biased ... you quoted this, data from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, that the rate of piracy in music is 99%, this rate, I didn't see which year you quoted, because, this, the highest rate I knew before was 95%, and what China reports is 50%, this, I want to know more ...

In excerpt 25, the audience member is providing suggestions for Long's study. He points out several data points that he believes are inaccurate. He also offers a possible explanation for the discrepancy between Long's data and the information from his source. He speculates that this might be due to Long using a source based in the United States,

which could present different data than what is reported in China. He emphasizes the importance of being cautious about the country of origin for data sources, as different countries may report data in distinct ways due to varying perceptions and understandings of the same subject.

Excerpt 26 Lei's audience commenting on 'data source'

……然后第三个建议就是很多时候用数据，尤其是数据，一定要注明来源，比方说后面刚刚我们追问你的那个票房数据的时候，你做了解释，事实上票房统计有很多数据，然后票房里面统计的时候，每年基本上都会以把喜剧片单独作为一个类型片拿出来做票房统计数据。这个数据的来源很多方面都需要详细的注明，这个也很重要，尽量引用一些，这个中国的官方媒体，和美国的官方媒体的一些数据，同时还得注明，还得注明这个数据的来源……

... Then the third suggestion is that often when we use data, especially data, we have to give the source. For example when we kept asking you about your box-office figures, you have given explanations, in fact box-office statistics have all kinds of data, and when counting box-office figures, basically for every year comedy is singled out as a separate kind of movie in box-office statistics. The source of data should be noted in detail in many aspects. This is also very important. We should do our best to quote data from official media in China and in America. In the meantime we should specify, should specify the source of this data ...

In excerpt 26, the audience member is discussing Lei's use of box-office data, and initially emphasizes the importance of providing the source when citing data. He further specifies the preferred type of data source, which is data reported by 官方媒体 (*guanfang meiti* 'official media') in China and the United States. However, American students should be aware that the term 'official media' has a different meaning in Chinese compared to its English translation, "official media". In China, 'official media' refers

specifically to media outlets operated by the Chinese government, ranging from the central to local governments. The closer the data source is to the central government, the more reliable and accurate it is considered. People believe that ‘official media’ imposes an authoritative accuracy check on the data, making it more reliable.

In the United States, however, "official media" is not a commonly used word and has a fuzzier meaning range than ‘official media’ in Chinese. It can refer to media that are recognized and regulated by the government, but there is no "official media" that is controlled by the government. While there is no single media that can speak with absolute authority about information in the United States, ‘official media’ does possess that authority among Chinese people. Therefore, it is crucial for our students to understand that, in order to better communicate an idea to a Chinese audience, they should prioritize ‘official media’ in China as the preferred source for data to support their arguments.

In the examples provided in this section, we have shown that some Chinese audience members express their preference for data collected in field work over data found on the Internet; one audience member suggests the American student recognize the differences in how China and the United States report data; in another audience member’s comment, he expects American students to provide the source of the cited data, and cite data from Chinese official media when conducting research on a China-related topic.

However, there is also big variety and difference among Chinese audience. Chinese audience is not a homogeneous group. For example, in excerpt 23, the audience

member points out that there is often a difference between what is reported and what is really happening in China. Different from the audience member in excerpt 26, the audience in excerpt 23 exhibits a distrust in data reported by official media.

4.2.4 两会 (*lianghui* ‘the annual plenary sessions’) and government related issues

The Chinese audiences at these events had a wide range of areas of interest in and evaluation criteria on students’ presentations, but when it comes to information or statements about the Chinese government, they paid close attention to how these were delivered in the students’ theses and presentations. They also helped students understand the importance of the role of the government in social life in China by providing background information for government-related issues, correcting students’ inaccurate use of information, and reminding students to give more attention to these issues.

Excerpt 27 Sha's audience member reminding student of the impact of government policy

……真的在中国我想真正重视这份就是从今年春节晚会，胡锦涛提出和谐社会以后，然后这个，这个大家开始重视这个东西，那不是有一些小孩子上，春节晚会去演讲吗，才开始重视这个问题，真正中国政府和这个学者开始研究这个问题……

... Really in China I think it was since the Spring Festival Gala this year that this issue started to be given serious attention, after Hu Jintao proposed the idea of harmonious society. Then this, people started to pay serious attention to this issue. Weren't there a bunch of kids who did a speech in the Spring Festival Gala? Since then the issue started to be given serious attention, and the Chinese government and scholars started to investigate this issue ...

In excerpt 27, the audience member is trying to contextualize Sha's study within a broader political and social backdrop. She highlights that Sha's research holds value because it addresses an issue that had been neglected by Chinese society. As she says, it was only after Hu Jintao proposed the concept of a harmonious society that Chinese scholars began to focus on this matter. In China, the trajectories of academic research are largely influenced by government actions and priorities.

Excerpt 28 Peng's audience member reminding student of the impact of government policy

……这里有个问题，我觉得，温爷爷吧，又做了两次报告，因为两会又开了两次了，有些材料有些我觉得有的旧了，你可以再找一些人来听听老师们的意见，你找最新的材料来补充与修改你的论文，因为温爷爷确实又做了两次报告，你是09年初的呢当时那个论文，现在是01年了，所以有很多的新的政策，尤其是那个，医疗制度方面的改革，尽管还不完善，还不是非常成功，又是农村的新农合，医疗改革，它出台了很多政策法规，你再研究一下，就包括你那两座大山也解决了很多问题，就是最新的材料你补充上。

... Here is a problem, I think, grandpa Wen, did another two reports, because we had another two annual plenary sessions, some material in your thesis I think is outdated. You can ask around and listen to advises from your teachers. You can find latest materials to revise your thesis, because grandpa Wen indeed has given another two reports. Your original version was written at the beginning of 2009, now it is already 2010, so there have been many new policies, especially that, reform on health care system, although not perfect, not yet very successful, also the New Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme, health care reform, there have been many new policies, you can study a little more, including that “two mountains” you mentioned, also solves many problems. It's that you should add the latest materials.

As demonstrated in excerpt 28, the audience member comments on Peng's use of government-related materials. She recommends that Peng update his work with the latest information, as circumstances have changed since Prime Minister Wen's two reports from two consecutive annual plenary sessions. After making this suggestion, she reiterates that Prime Minister Wen had indeed presented two additional reports since Peng's original paper was drafted in 2009, implying that it would be unjustifiable not to mention this point in the paper. She further gives specific examples of the new policies that had been

introduced, indicating the importance of incorporating these updates in Peng's thesis revisions. This is the only comment she made during Peng's defense. Throughout her feedback, she repeatedly referred to the Prime Minister and the annual plenary sessions, highlighting her belief in the importance for students to understand the impact of government actions on research.

Excerpt 29 Luo's audience member reminding student of the impact of government policy

……还有一个稍微敏感的呢就是说，谈到这个宗教信仰呢，因为今年这个两会上那个，人大常委会委员长吴邦国，在五个不搞里边儿谈了不搞思想多元化，不搞思想多元化是不是，就，不要宗教信仰了，这样我觉得我们也可以研究和讨论一下。

... Another thing that's a little sensitive is that, when talking about religious beliefs, because in this year's annual plenary sessions, Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress, mentioned "no pluralism of ideas" in his proposal of "five NOs". Does "no pluralism of ideas" indicate no religious beliefs at all? This I think we could study and discuss a bit.

In excerpt 29, the audience member carefully reminds Luo to consider the Chinese government's attitude towards religious beliefs when conducting her research. He points out that during that year's annual plenary sessions, a proposal advocating for no pluralism of ideas was presented. He explicitly noted that this is a sensitive topic, particularly regarding the Chinese government's stance on religious beliefs. The audience member's cautious approach is evident in his lowered voice when providing this particular comment, as compared to other feedback he offered. He also chooses his words carefully; when addressing the question of whether "no pluralism of ideas" implies a

rejection of all religious beliefs, he refrains from expressing his own opinions and instead suggested further discussion on the topic.

The audience member is subtly and implicitly conveying to Luo that the Chinese government might not support the development of religious beliefs in the country, and that this government stance can impact her research. As a result, Luo should approach her research topic with greater deliberation. This excerpt indicates that when discussing subjects like religious beliefs, which may not align with the Chinese government's advocacy, American students should exercise extra caution.

In the examples provided in this section, Chinese audiences emphasize the significant impact government actions can have on research. They suggest that students should approach these topics with great accuracy and caution. One critical aspect to consider is the central government's annual plenary sessions, during which all crucial decisions are made, and the country's future directions are established. These should, it is advised, serve as an essential source of reference for students conducting research in China. It is crucial for students to consider the information and policies introduced during these political events, since they may directly influence the development and outcomes of their studies.

4.3 Chinese audiences' opinions on students' language use

The Chinese audience was informed that the speaker of the presentation is an American student learning Chinese and conducting research using the language they are studying. Our students' personae as Chinese learners is quite evident to all participants. Due to our students' limited language abilities, instances of ineffective communication

caused by language problems were not uncommon. Chinese audiences have provided feedback on the students' language use, highlighting both impressive aspects and areas that require improvement.

Improving one's foreign language abilities involves working on many aspects of verbal communication. However, given the constraints of time and resources, it is more effective for learners to focus on aspects that are important to the end users, i.e., native speakers of Chinese, of their Chinese language skills. By identifying what Chinese audiences might prioritize in this kind of context, we can provide learners with clear directions for improving their efficiency of acquiring skills that meet the needs for this kind of communication.

4.3.1 Overall structure

Excerpt 30 Long's audience commenting on language use

……第二呢，从这篇文从这篇论文来看，我认为在这个行文方面，文笔非常流畅，而写得非常，这个，很中国，很中国化，你看如果不说是，这个美国同学写的，那几乎看不出来，就像一个中国人写了一个论文，呃并且呢，在一些经常容易出错的概念方面，就是中美之间容易出错的概念方面，那么这个龙蟠同学也表达得准，非常准确，你比如说，这个在美国是没有著作权这个概念，美国就称为版权，在中国是著作权大陆法系是用著作权这个概念，我看到龙蟠同学在整个行文过程当中全部都是用的是这个，著作权……

... Secondly, from this article, from this paper, I think in this writing aspect, the writing is very smooth, and written very, this, very Chinese, very Chinese people, you see if not saying it's, this American student's writing, then it's almost unrecognizable, just like a Chinese person wrote a paper, and also, in some concepts that are often prone to errors, that is, concepts that are easily mistaken between China and the United States, then this Long Pan student also expresses them accurately, very precisely, you, for example, this, in the United States there is no such concept of "author's rights", the United States just calls it copyright, in China, it's "author's rights", the continental law system uses the "author's rights" concept, I see that Long Pan student, in the entire writing process, all used this, author's rights ...

In excerpt 30, the audience member highlights several positive aspects of Long's language use. Firstly, the audience member praises his work for 行文流畅 (*xingwen liuchang* 'writing smoothly'), which refers to the overall structure and writing style of the thesis, noting that it reads smoothly and is well-organized. Secondly, the term 中国化 (*zhongguohua* 'Sinified') is used to describe how Long employed expressions that are commonly used by native speakers of Chinese, avoiding any awkward or foreign

phrasings within the context of the thesis. Lastly, the audience member commends Long for his 概念准确 (*gainian zhunque* ‘terms are accurate’), or accurate use of concepts. Specifically, Long carefully researched concept-terms that are easily confused between China and the United States, ensuring that he used the correct words as understood by the Chinese community within his research domain, rather than simply translating terms directly.

4.3.2 Words with similar forms and meanings

Excerpt 31 Ke’s audience commenting on language use

……那么但是呢我就发现他有些词用得非常的地道和准确，比如说他在同一行里面，他用了披露和揭露不同的其实是也差不多一个意思，但很精准的用到了披露和揭露。另外还有比方说他用的这个表述方式很地道，他说他在说一个什么现象不好的时候，他没有用不好，他说不完善，我觉得他的这种表述方式就是很准确很地道，让，让中国的这个，中国人看来吧也觉得是很有分寸的哈……

... Then, however, I found that he used some words very authentically and accurately. For example, in the same line, he used the words ‘disclose’ and ‘expose’, which are actually quite similar in meaning, but he used them very precisely. Additionally, for instance, his way of expression is very authentic. When talking about a not-so-good phenomenon, he didn't use ‘not good’, he said ‘imperfect’. I think his way of expression is very accurate and authentic, making, making this Chinese, Chinese people feel he has a good sense of propriety ...

In excerpt 31, the audience member praises Ke for his use of authentic and accurate expressions in his writing. An example of accuracy is Ke's ability to differentiate between two similar words: 披露 (*pilu* ‘disclose’) and 揭露 (*jielu* ‘expose’), both in meaning and spelling. As for authenticity, instead of using the simple term 不好 (*buhao*

‘not good’), Ke employed the word 不完善 (*buwanshan* ‘imperfect’) when commenting on something less than ideal. ‘Imperfect’ is a more formal and less absolute term, characteristic of registers that feature more refined language use. The audience member is particularly impressed by Ke's choice of words, as it suggests that he ‘has a good sense of propriety’ within Chinese language and culture. This trait is typically found in well-socialized individuals in Chinese society, further demonstrating Ke's proficiency in the language.

Distinguishing and accurately using similar-looking and similar-meaning words is highly valued by Chinese audiences at these events. In excerpt 31, the audience member specifically praised Ke for his ability to differentiate and accurately use two words that are similar in both form and meaning. When students do not make these distinctions well, Chinese audiences will also point it out, as shown in excerpt 32.

Excerpt 32 Zhu's audience commenting on language use

……那么第五点就是有些概念上的运用，应该需要，要注意，那么这一点呢，这可能是和你所用的语言有关系，因为毕竟是用中文写作，对于中国的一些词确的含义还不是把握得很到位，或者说中国的这个用语是微妙的，有的时候你可能混用了两个概念，比如说像这个第五页关于阶级和阶层，你在这里头就没有明显的区分，你比如说第五页你把中产阶级和新阶层比较，这个呢就是说阶级和阶层能不能放在一起比较……

... So, the fifth point is that some concept application should need, need paying attention to. This point, this might be related to the language you used, because after all, it is written in Chinese, and the precise meaning of some Chinese words is not fully grasped, or the Chinese expressions are subtle. Sometimes you may have mixed two concepts, such as like on this fifth page about 'class' and 'stratum', you didn't make a clear distinction here, you, for example, on the fifth page, you compared the 'middle class' and the 'new stratum'. This, this is to say, you need to consider whether they can be compared together ...

In excerpt 32, the audience member points out that 阶级 (*jieji* 'class') and 阶层 (*jieceng* 'stratum'), two words that are similar in both form and meaning, should not be mixed as they do have nuanced differences in meaning. The audience member gives a description of this kind of difference in Chinese, 微妙 (*weimiao* 'subtle'). To 把握到位 (*bawo daowei* 'fully grasp') Chinese expressions, students need to learn these subtle and nuanced differences in the usage of expressions.

4.3.3 错别字 (*cuobiezi* ‘incorrectly written or typed characters’)

Excerpt 33 Ka’s audience commenting on language use

……我看了这么多篇论文里面，我觉得你的论文呢，呃那个行文最流畅，错别字最少……

... I looked at so many theses, I feel your thesis, um, that writing is most smooth, typos are fewest ...

In excerpt 33, an audience member who has participated in every defense and read nearly all Flagship students' theses, remarks that Ka's thesis is the most ‘smoothly written’ and has the fewest ‘incorrectly written or typed characters’. As explained in the analysis of excerpt 30, ‘smoothly written’ refers to the overall structure and writing style of the thesis, indicating that it is well-organized and reads smoothly. The term ‘incorrectly written or typed characters’ in Chinese refers to characters or words that are written or typed incorrectly. As all Flagship students' theses are typed, ‘incorrectly written or typed characters’ in their writing likely results from selecting the wrong character among several options offered by the computer with the same pronunciation. The mis-selected character introduces a meaning that does not make sense in the context of the sentence. This can cause confusion for readers trying to understand the text, which is why Chinese people attach such importance to ‘incorrectly written or typed characters’. Considering the audience member's extensive experience in reading theses, his emphasis on this point underscores its importance in evaluating the quality of a thesis.

4.3.4 Clarity

Excerpt 34 Rou's audience commenting on language use

……有一些可能是小问题，就是在语言上，语言的使用上，还有这个，在刚才他们几位说到的这个结构啊框架啊论述啊，可能还有一些地方让人不是一下子就能看得很清楚，你得去迅速的仔细的去看，不是很清晰，就是一下子能够很明白，一看就明白，如果能够再做一些梳理，再让他更清晰一下，可能会更好一些……结果出来，就让人更能够一目了然，更看得清楚一些就更好。

... There are some possible minor issues, which are in language, language usage, and this, in the structure, framework, and argument mentioned by them just now, there might still be some places that don't let people see very clearly at once. You have to look quickly and carefully, not very clear, that is, being able to understand at once, understand at a glance. If you can do some more sorting, make it clearer, it might be better ... When the result comes out, it would let people see it more clearly at a glance, see more clearly, which would be better.

In excerpt 34, the audience member identifies an area for improvement regarding the language used by the student. The issue mentioned was related to the clarity of the writing in terms of 'structure', 'framework', and 'argumentation'. The audience member find that the text could not be easily understood without closely reading the material, suggesting that the student should work on making their writing more comprehensible at first glance.

4.3.5 Emotional overtones/indexical meanings of expressions

Excerpt 35 Ming's audience commenting on language use

……你谈到美国在中国并购的时候，你谈到一个，美国的经营手段，是哇，呃，我觉着手段这个词吧在中国多少带点儿贬义，哎你改成经营方式，好一些，或者经营模式，都可以，是吧，哎，好。

... When you were talking about the United States mergers and acquisitions in China, you mentioned one, the American business means, right, I think the term 'means' in Chinese somewhat carries a derogatory meaning. You can change it to business 'approach', which is better, or business 'model', either one is fine, right, ok, good.

In excerpt 35, the audience member addresses a word choice issue related to the negative affect associated with the term used by the student. While the basic ideational meaning of the chosen word is correct, its derogatory emotional overtone is inappropriate for the context. The audience member recommends replacing the term with an affectively neutral word. Emotional overtones can pose significant challenges for language learners, as they are not explicitly defined in dictionaries but greatly influence the expression of opinions and attitudes.

Emotional overtones of expressions are part of a larger kind and way of meaning - indexical meaning. Ochs (1996) gives a discussion of indexical meaning of language expressions. She points out that language is a function of how members engage it in the course of their social conduct. Language “socialization is in part a process of assigning situational, i.e., indexical, meanings (e.g. temporal, spatial, social identity, social act, social activity, affective or epistemic meanings) to particular forms” (Ochs, 1996, p.410). Emotional overtones fall into the aspect of affective meanings of expressions. As foreign

language learners who are trying to socialize in another language, learning how the community of the target language use such indexical meanings is a core part of the learning and socializing process.

4.3.6 Academic jargon

Some Flagship students demonstrated a weakness in their grasp of academic jargon, despite being well-versed in their specific domains. They were comfortable with terms and expressions related to their fields of study, but struggled with general academic jargon. The value of academic jargon lies in its potential for improving communication effectiveness and efficiency. A single term can encapsulate a set of practices and standards that can otherwise be difficult to explain. We will look at two examples of how lack of knowledge of academic jargon can affect the effectiveness and efficiency of communication.

The first example is from Lei's defense and his study of laughter points in movies. As shown in excerpt 36, a female audience member raises a question regarding Lei's study, asking if the participants were different in each of the 10 laughter point surveys, as the number of participants varied for each survey.

Excerpt 36 Lei's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-1

……我的问题就是你在你的 10 个笑点的研究当中，每一个笑点你选取的样本的量是不一样的。就是说实际上我是不是可以这样认为，就你 10 个样本 10 个点的研究当中，每一个取的样本的，这个人群是不一样的，因为你的数量是不一样的。

... My question is, in your study of the 10 laughter points, the sample size you chose for each laughter point is different. That is to say, can I actually think this way, in your study of these 10 samples, 10 points, the sample, this group of people you take for each one is different, because your quantity is different.

Initially, Lei seems to have misunderstood the question and responded by stating that the segments shown in each survey are from different comedies, as shown in excerpt 37.

Excerpt 37 Lei's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-2

谢谢你的问题，我，我，呃说我的，呃我说这个，我，我这个报告是我忘了说，对，所以每一个片段是从，呃所以在这个，在每个调查里所有的人都要去从不同的喜剧片，因为，呃，观众他们是是比较枯燥的，所以人们都很喜欢导演的一部电影，但是第一个导演的几部电影，但是不太喜欢另外一个导演，或者不太喜欢这个演员或者这样的笑点，所以，呃每一个片段是从，呃不同的喜剧片。我每一个调查里的片段是从不同的喜剧片。

Thank you for your question. I, I, um, said my, um, I said this, I, my report is that I forgot to say, right. So, each segment is from, um, so in this, in each survey, everyone has to from different comedy films, because, um, the audience, they are quite monotonous. So, people all like one director's film, but several films of the first director, but don't like another director, or don't like this actor or such laughter points. So, um, each segment is from, um, different comedy films. The segments in each of my surveys are from different comedy films.

Realizing the misunderstanding, the audience member clarifies her question with a concrete example from Lei's presentation and rephrases it to inquire about the reason behind differing numbers of participants in each laughter point survey, as shown in excerpt 38.

Excerpt 38 Lei's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-3

可能，可能，你理解的我的问题可能有点，不一样，我的意思是比如说你生，呃那个尴尬笑点，你选取的是 32 个被试的人，然后你的率直笑点你选取的是 22 个人。这个我就想问一下为什么这个人数每一个笑点里选取的被试的人数是不一样的？

Maybe, maybe, your understanding of my question might be a bit, different. What I mean is, for example, you, um, that awkwardness laughter point, you chose 32 participants, and then for your straightforwardness laughter point, you chose 22 people. I just want to ask why the number of participants chosen for each laughter point is different?

As shown in excerpt 39, Lei then has a sudden realization (indicated by a sound “oh” after hearing the question) and thinks the audience member is asking why some participants did not provide reasons for their choices in some survey segments. He admits that he does not know why this is the case.

Excerpt 39 Lei's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-4

哦为什么这个人没，说，呃没回答？呃我不知道。我几次问为什么选择这个片段但是，这个人没说为什么。

Oh, why didn't this person, say, um, answer? Um, I don't know. I asked several times why they chose this segment, but this person didn't say why.

At this point, Lei's advisor steps in to help clarify the response in Chinese, explaining that the variation in the number of answers for each laughter point survey is due to participants selectively completing the surveys and some not answering all the questions. The audience member accepts this answer, and the conversation concludes, as shown in excerpt 40.

Excerpt 40 Lei's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-5

导师：也就是说有的，有的被试就，不，没有，回应你的其中的一些 XXX 是吗？

Committee member: That is to say, some, some participants just, didn't, didn't, respond to some of XXX right?

雷：对的。大部分的被试没回答大部分的为什么的问题……

Lei: Right. Most of the participants didn't answer most of the "why" questions ...

导师：被试，被试本身是有选择地做了。

Committee member: The participants themselves selectively did.

雷：对。

Lei: Correct.

观众：好，谢谢。

Audience member: Okay, thank you.

Later, when a male audience member gives his feedback, he points out what he thinks went wrong with the previous interaction Lei had with the female audience member, which resulted in multiple exchanges and required help from Lei's advisor to clarify Lei's meaning, as shown in excerpt 41.

Excerpt 41 Lei's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-6

……比方说你刚刚只要告诉我们你的回收有效率或者每一个题的有效率是多少，我们刚刚张老师就不会问你，追问你这个问题……

... For example, if you just told us what the response rate or the efficiency of each question was, we, just now, Teacher Zhang wouldn't ask you, and wouldn't repeatedly ask this question ...

In excerpt 41, the male audience member suggests that if Lei has simply provided the 回收有效率 (*huishou youxiaolv* 'response rate') for his surveys, the female audience

member wouldn't have needed to repeatedly ask the same question. His comment implies the importance of using precise academic jargon used by Chinese scholars, as the term 'response rate' could have encapsulated everything Lei and his advisor had explained during the exchange. If Lei could have said that the response rate was less than 100%, the audience would have understood that not every participant completed every laughter point survey, and that this led to varying numbers of answers for each survey. This single technical term could have answered the audience member's question effectively and efficiently.

Let us look at another example that illustrates how a student's inability to use proper academic jargon can significantly reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of communication.

During Yang's defense, an audience member raised a question about the basis of her research design's provisions to ensure its reliability and validity, including the design of surveys, interviews, and questionnaires on core variables, as shown in excerpt 42.

Excerpt 42 Yang's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-1

……我想有一个问题我想问你一下，因为对于社会，发生的社会问题呢，做一个测量做一个研究的话，它的这个测量工具，的信度和效度是很难把握的，那么你的三个研究方法，一个是研究问卷，一个设计问卷，还有访谈及预访谈和核心变量的这个测量的这个手段。我想知道你在设计这个问卷也好，访谈也好，还有核心变量的这个测量问卷也好，你设计的依据是什么？你怎么能够确保它的这个信用和效率？它能在一个合理的范围之内，也就是说你，你的被试也就你的样本，它提供的这个信息能够是供你参考，做一个分析的，合理的这个数据。

... I have a question I want to ask you because for society, the social issues that occur, conducting a measurement and a study, it's difficult to grasp the reliability and validity of the measurement tool. So, for your three research methods, one is a research questionnaire, one is a designed questionnaire, and there's also interviews and pre-interviews, and the means of measuring the core variables. I want to know what basis you used in designing the questionnaire, the interviews, and the core variable measurement questionnaire? How can you ensure its reliability and validity? It can be within a reasonable range, that is to say, your participants, or your sample, the information they provide can be used as a reference, to conduct an analysis with reasonable data.

In Yang's first attempt to address the question, she explains that two of the scales used to survey marriage status are widely used in psychology, which is why she adopted them in her study, as shown in excerpt 43.

Excerpt 43 Yang's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-2

我认为可以的，如果你看，呃这个量表其实，呃很清楚的能看到，呃这个亚洲价值观和欧美价值观这两个量表，呃能正确的测查到，呃中国人和，中国被试和美国被试的这个文化价值观上的差异。呃然后在这个，其实我是，我采用了那两个婚姻关系的量表，婚姻满意度量表，婚姻冲突量表，已经在心理学方面的是，呃，用得比较多的两个量表，呃所以我选出这两个，呃采用在我的论文里。

I think it is possible, if you look, this scale actually can clearly see, these two scales of Asian values and Western values can accurately measure the cultural value differences between Chinese participants and American participants. And then, in fact, I used two marriage relationship scales, the marital satisfaction scale, and the marital conflict scale, which are already widely used in the field of psychology, so I chose these two to use in my thesis.

After Yang's response, the audience member asks follow-up questions, as shown in excerpt 44. This time, she seems to think that Yang didn't understand her question very well, so she adds more details to help Yang grasp her inquiry. She focuses on Yang's survey question design, asking again about the basis for her survey design. To help Yang understand, she provides Yang with a couple of options as possible answers to her question, then uses a metaphor to help Yang better comprehend what she is asking, followed by a specific example of a common practice in doing this kind of research. Lastly, she restates her question, asking for Yang's explanation of the basis for her survey question design.

Excerpt 44 Yang's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-3

那么你设计的这些问题，它是依据什么来设计的？是你自己想到这些问题，你观察你的这些被试，他可能会出现的问题，你猜想它会发生的问题，还是你依据某一个这种测量工具提供这些问题来设计的？它这个，因为我们知道要测量一些，呃社会学的一些现象的话，这个标尺是很重要的，尺子不准，测量的结果自然也不准。那么这些作为你设计这个的问卷，它的依据是什么？XXX 我们测量学习者的这个学习方法的话，我们可以用比较，现在国际通用的一个，学者学习方法的量表，比如说提供他一些，这个问题，那么你的这个设计的这些问题它怎么去，比如说有一些，XXX 来源是什么？有没有作以解释？

So, the questions you designed, what are they based on? Did you come up with these questions yourself, observing the potential problems of your participants, guessing the issues they might encounter, or did you design them based on a certain measurement tool? Because we know that to measure some sociological phenomena, the scale is very important. If the ruler is not accurate, the measurement results will naturally be inaccurate. So, what is the basis for designing your questionnaire? XXX when we measure learners' learning methods, we can compare, use a widely accepted international scale of learning methods, such as providing them with some questions. So, how did your questions, for example, what is the source of XXX? Is there any explanation?

As shown in excerpt 45, in trying to answer the audience member's questions again, Yang says the four scales she used were created by other people, and she is the first to combine them into one survey. She believes this survey she created is also useful for measuring other things.

Excerpt 45 Yang's ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-4

呃对，呃在我的论文里我也解释了这些，呃这4个亚洲价值观、欧美价值观、婚姻满意度、婚姻冲突这4个量表是已经有别人编制的量表，呃其实只有我呃把他们4个集合在一起，呃编制的这个整个的问卷，呃但是我觉得，这个问卷还对这些呃，亚洲，东，东西方跨国婚姻还是有很大的作用。呃，另外还可以测查其他，呃，其他的人口，呃以前这些，呃欧美价值观、亚洲价值观量表也用于，呃测查呃，测查学生，呃，嗯，亚裔呃美国学生，和欧裔美国学生，呃之间的价值观差异，呃然后跟他们的这个，呃沟通方式交流方式，呃做了一些比较，呃所以我觉得其实对社会呃是有，呃很大，很大的作用。

Yes, in my thesis, I also explained that these four scales, Asian values, Western values, marital satisfaction, and marital conflict, are scales that others have already developed. In fact, I am the only one who combined these four scales into a single questionnaire. However, I think this questionnaire is also useful for these Asian, cross-national marriages between the East and West. In addition, it can also be used to measure other populations. Previously, these Western values and Asian values scales were also used to measure the value differences between Asian-American students and European-American students, and then compare it to their communication styles. So, I think it actually is very useful for society.

As shown in excerpt 45, Yang provides a relatively long answer. However, she does not directly address the academic terms the audience member is expecting to hear, which are 信度 (*xindu* 'reliability') and 效度 (*xiaodu* 'validity'), but without these terms, it is unclear if Yang truly understands the question. Consequently, no matter how much Yang explains, the audience member cannot be sure if Yang's understanding matches hers until she rephrases Yang's response using 'reliability' and 'validity' and confirms with Yang whether her interpretation is correct, as shown in excerpt 46. If Yang has used

the jargon ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ in her response, the audience member's question could have been addressed far more effectively and efficiently.

Excerpt 46 Yang’s ineffective communication due to lack of academic jargon knowledge-5

观众：就说这是有人用过，它的信度和这个效度是，已经有人测量过的，XXX 拿来用，是吧。

Audience member: So, you're saying that it has been used by others, and its reliability and validity have already been measured, XXX adopted for your own use it, right?

杨：对，对对对，是，是是。

Yang: Right, right right right, yes, yes yes.

观众：好的，谢谢啊。

Audience member: Okay, thank you.

In summary, when evaluating the language use of the advanced Chinese learners in this program, the invited Chinese audiences placed importance on the following aspects:

1. Utilizing expressions commonly used by native Chinese speakers, while avoiding awkward or foreign phrasings within the context of the thesis and defense presentation.
2. Ensuring a smooth and well-organized overall structure and writing style for the thesis.
3. Accurately using and distinguishing among words with close but different forms and meanings.
4. Avoiding mistyped and mis-selected characters.

5. Writing with immediate clarity and easy comprehension.
6. Selecting words with appropriate emotional overtones.
7. Employing relevant academic jargon to improve communication effectiveness and efficiency.

4.4 Students' strategies for negotiating intention

In this section, we will examine several students' responses to audience feedback. We will present transcriptions of the students' responses and analyze the strategies they employed, as well as identify key expressions used.

4.4.1 Asking for clarification

Excerpt 47 is taken from Xiao's defense, where he is requesting clarification on something an audience member said that he did not understand. Asking for clarification is a common practice in these defenses, and there are various ways to express this. Xiao's choice of language is a good example to look at because it is culturally appropriate.

Excerpt 47 Xiao asking for clarification

呃，不好意思您能不能，我还是不太明白您的……

Uh, excuse me, could you, I still don't quite understand your ...

In excerpt 47, Xiao begins with 不好意思 (*buhayisi* 'excuse me') to express his apologies for not understanding and requesting clarification. 'Excuse me' is not as strong as strongly apologetic as 对不起 (*duibuqi* 'I'm sorry'), which is another word often used by students in this context. 'excuse me' conveys a lower, thus more appropriate, level of

apology because Xiao's request is neither unreasonable nor an acknowledgement of wrongdoing or causing significant inconvenience to the audience member.

Next, Xiao uses 您 (*nin* 'you in honorific form') instead of 你 (*ni* 'you') to address the audience member respectfully. He then uses 能不能 (*nengbuneng* 'can ...?') to ask if the audience member could clarify their meaning, which further softens the tone of the request as opposed to directly asking the audience member to do something for him.

Lastly, he explains why he is requesting clarification. When stating that he did not understand the audience member's meaning, he uses 不太明白 (*butai mingbai* 'not very understand') instead of simply 不明白 (*bu mingbai* 'not understand') to reduce the bluntness of the expression and to be more polite.

4.4.2 Responding to out-of-scope questions

Excerpt 48 is taken from Mo's defense. Prior to this excerpt, an audience member inquired about Mo's opinion on a metaphor related to China's economy: 煎焦的冻鱼 (*jianjiao de dongyu* 'pan-fried frozen fish'). This metaphor is not widely known even among native Chinese speakers, let alone by a Chinese learner. Additionally, the metaphor pertains to China's economy in general, which falls outside Mo's area of expertise, so understandably, Mo did not grasp its meaning. Excerpt 48 illustrates Mo's approach in responding to a question for which he lacks knowledge or understanding.

Excerpt 48 Mo responding to out-of-scope questions

(a)这个也很难说，因为，对，这个很难说。(b)我对这个问题没有，我对这种问题没有一个很深的一个，一个看法。

(a)This is also hard to say, because, right, this is hard to say. (b) I don't have for this question, I don't have a very deep, an opinion on this kind of question.

In the later conversation between Mo and the audience, it becomes clear that Mo did not understand the metaphor mentioned by the audience member. However, in excerpt 48, Mo employs a strategy that in a culturally appropriately way conveys his inability to answer the question without explicitly admitting a lack of knowledge or skill. In 48(a), instead of directly saying 我不懂 (*wo budong* 'I don't understand') or 我不知道 (*wo buzhidao* 'I don't know'), which might lead to a dead end in the conversation, he begins his response with 这个很难说 (*zhege hen nanshuo* 'this is hard to say'), leaving some room for clarification or further discussion. Then in 48(b), Mo tactfully expresses that the audience member's question is outside his area of expertise without being impolite. Rather than bluntly stating 这不是我的专业 (*zhe bushi wode zhuanaye* 'this is not my specialty'), which could imply disinterest in the audience member's question or accuse them of asking something irrelevant to his topic, Mo opts for 我对这种问题没有一个很深的看法 (*wo dui zhezhong wenti meiyou yige henshen de kanfa* 'I don't have a deep view on this kind of questions'), stating that he doesn't have a deep understanding of the question posed by the audience member, thus avoiding an outright refusal.

4.4.3 Responding to the request of ‘speak as an American’

Excerpt 49 is taken from Li's defense. Prior to this excerpt, an audience member suggested that he felt Li's thesis displayed a too strong affection for Hunan TV, thus lacking the objective perspective expected of a foreign employee. The audience member wanted Li to discuss the topic from an American's perspective. As discussed in section 4.1, Chinese audiences often ask students to provide opinions and suggestions from the perspective of a foreigner or an American. Excerpt 49 serves as an example of how students respond to this type of feedback from Chinese audiences.

Excerpt 49 Li responding to the request of ‘speak as an American’

(a)从一个美国人的角度，说这个事情。(b)呃，当然，一般的美国人会希望无论是中国的媒体或者，经济啊，无论是什么中国的什么，美国人一般会希望他越来越开放。呃，呃，不希望呃，政府，不希望政府就是说，不希望有那么多事情都需要政府的什么批准或者政府的什么部门，要考察了以后，再，再，再为他们决定这个行不行。所以我觉得从一个美国人的角度看这个问题的话呢当然，呃，改名字这个事情应该无所谓，对政府来说应该无所谓。(c)但是我可以，我可以明白他们为什么拒绝，因为他们就怕这个如果改名了，他，他就这个，他，他在海外这个影响力就会受到，啊，受到负面的影响。也也怕其他电视台也会想要这么做，但是其他电视台所有的中国电视台起一个非常奇怪的名字也无所谓我觉得，要，一个电视台的成功是取之于他的节目内容，也取决于他的，他的这个，频道包装啊什么问题，而不是它，它的名称也并不是那么那么的重要。如果所有的电视台要改名，那也没关系吧，如果你的节目好，那你就会继续发展，继续赚钱继续，继续发展的。呃，可能，这这个，不知道，会，会，是不是回答了你的问题？

.....

(d)但是我相信中国这个电视行业会越来越开放。

(a)Take the perspective of an American to talk about this. (b)Of course, ordinary Americans would hope no matter it's China's media, or economy, whatever it is about China, Americans normally would hope it's more and more open, don't want the government, don't want so many things to require permission from the government, or the government decides whether something can work after reviewing their thing. So I think from the perspective of an American, of course, this name changing thing shouldn't be a big deal, it doesn't matter to the government. (c)But I can, I can understand why they turned down the proposal, because they worried that if they changed name, its overseas reputation would be affected, negatively affected. They also worried that other TV stations would want to do the same thing, but other TV stations, all China's TV stations having a weird name is not a big deal I think, the success of a TV station depends on its programs, as well as its packaging these kinds of things, not it, its name is not that important. If all TV stations want to change their names, that's not a big deal, if your programs are good, you will keep going, keep making money, keep, keep going forward. This might, I don't know, does this answer your question?

...

(d)But I believe China's TV industry will be more and more open.

In 49(a), Li restates the audience member's question, demonstrating his understanding and giving himself time to think and organize his response. In 49(b), he discusses the perspective of ordinary American people, which is apparently very different from the Chinese government's view. Instead of saying "as an American, I think ...", he uses the term 一般的美国人 (*yibande meiguoren* 'ordinary Americans'), which distances himself from Americans who are unfamiliar with China or Hunan TV, avoiding any opinions that may offend the Chinese audience. In 49(c), after providing his perspective on how ordinary Americans might think about the issue, Li immediately reiterates his stance, stating that he can understand the actions taken by the Chinese government.

Li and the audience member then engage in another exchange, which is not transcribable due to the audio quality. Then in 49(d), Li reiterates his positive attitude towards the Chinese TV industry, expressing his belief that it will become more and more open. His response received very positive feedback from the audience member, who said "I very much agree with you" in the end.

4.4.4 Responding to critical suggestions

Excerpts 50, 51, and 52 are taken from Zhu's defense. His strategies during the Q&A session were highly effective, skillful, and culturally appropriate. This is evidenced by an incident during the session: after several rounds of interactions, the online connection was temporarily lost. While people were waiting, an audience member in China mentioned to a committee member that, in his opinion, Zhu was truly 不简单 (*bujiandan* 'remarkable'). The Chinese term 'remarkable' indicates an exceptional evaluation of Zhu's abilities. Since the connection was down, Zhu couldn't hear this comment, which suggests that the audience member wasn't just being polite or trying to encourage or flatter Zhu. This audience member genuinely held Zhu's ability to interact in Chinese with Chinese people in high regard. As such, Zhu's responses are well worth examining.

Excerpt 50 Zhu responding to critical suggestions-1

(a)首先非常感谢老师给我提一些建议和意见。(b)您看的这是草稿，所以有一些尤其是语言方面的一些问题是修改过或者正还在修改，(c)刚才,呃提到的这些建议和需要，呃改进的地方，呃我都会都记下来，然后会一个一个去改进的……

(a) First of all, thank you very much, teacher, for giving me some suggestions and opinions. (b) What you see is a draft, so some issues, especially regarding language, have been revised or are still being revised. (c) Just now, uh, the suggestions and areas for improvement, I will write them all down and then improve them one by one ...

In excerpt 50, Zhu responds to an audience member's extensive feedback, which covers a range of suggestions from content to language use. In 50(a), Zhu expresses his gratitude for the advice given. Useful expressions include: 非常感谢 (*feichang ganxie* 'thank you very much'), demonstrating the sincerity of his appreciation, and addressing the audience member as 老师 (*laoshi* 'teacher') rather than using the direct second-person pronoun 你 (*ni* 'you'), to convey respect. In Chinese, using third-person pronoun, particularly including one's title or position, to directly address someone is a way to show respect. This has a similar effect with using 您 (*nin* 'you in honorific form'). He also used an authentic phrase 建议和意见 (*jianyi he yijian* 'suggestions and opinions') which is a conventional expression in Chinese to generally refer to comments and suggestions.

In 50(b), Zhu explains the current status of his thesis, stating that he is already working on improvements. Notably, he addresses the audience member with the honorific form of the second-person pronoun 'you in honorific form', showing respect.

In 50(c), Zhu commits to revising his thesis based on each suggestion provided by the audience member, showing immense respect for their opinions and contributions to

his study. Essential expressions include 改进 (*gaijin* ‘correct and improve’) instead of 改正 (*gaizheng* ‘correct’), 修改 (*xiugai* ‘revise’), or 改 (*gai* ‘correct’), encompassing both corrections and improvements.

Excerpt 51 Zhu responding to critical suggestions-2

(a)首先非常感谢老师给我，给我论文做的评价，(b)在那个，首先在这个，研究方式方法就是指出了一些，我也认识到了缺陷，比如说这个，代表性，(c)我这个论文呢会加上一个您所说的这个介绍，就是说人数啊，这个采访的这些人的情况，(d)原来呢我发现把这些我所做的采访统计一下，比如说，多少人，男女比例，平均年龄，平均收入，诸如此类的一些统计，不过呢发那个问卷的时候，他们，我们这边学校有要求，就是说有一个，研究委员会，保护这些采访对象的权益，他们出发发问卷的时候，按照他们的规则就必须得告诉他们他们有权利，任何一个问题可以选择就不要回答。所以说呢我收回来的问卷，所有的女性，这个年龄是空白，然后很多人，这个收入，也不说，所以我后来，这这这就是一个缺陷，没有，办法做一个，采访对象他们这个，人群的一个统计。我觉得很多人不，不填这个收入的这个问题就是说，尤其是这些企业主，他们的收入有很多不同的来源，可能他们就不愿意公布。(e)不过呢我会加上一个大概的讲述，有关于这个，这个采访对象的人群呢，的一些特点。(f)不过呢代代表性，的确是一个，缺陷……

(a)First of all, thank you very much, teacher, for the evaluation of my thesis. (b)In that, first of all, in this research method, I also recognized some flaws, such as this representativeness. (c)My thesis will include an introduction as you mentioned, that is, the number of people, the background of these interviewees. (d)I originally found that if I make a statistic of these interviews I conducted, such as how many people, male-to-female ratio, average age, average income, and other similar statistics. However, when sending out the questionnaires, our school has a requirement, that is, IRB to protect the rights and interests of the interviewees. When sending out the questionnaires, according to their rules, I must tell the interviewees that they have the right to choose not to answer any question. So, the questionnaires I collected, all the female, the age is blank, and then many people, this income, also not mentioned. So later, this is a flaw, unable to create a statistic profile of the interviewees. I think many people do not fill in the income question, especially these business owners, their income has many different sources, maybe they just don't want to disclose it. (e)However, I will add a general description of some characteristics of the interviewees population. (f)However, representativeness is indeed a flaw ...

In excerpt 51, Zhu addresses feedback from another audience member. In 51(a), Zhu expresses his gratitude using an alternative way to refer to the feedback, 给我论文做的评价 (*gei wo lunwen zuo de pingjia* ‘comments made on my thesis’).

In 51(b), Zhu acknowledges the audience member's observations, admitting that he agrees with and recognizes the weakness in his study. Key expressions include 指出 (*zhichu* ‘point out’), describing the action of the audience pointing out issues, and 认识到缺陷 (*renshidao quexian* ‘recognize defect’), acknowledging the thesis's shortcomings.

In 51(c), Zhu states his intention to revise his thesis based on the audience member's suggestions, employing the phrase 我会加上您所说的 (*wo hui jiashang nin suoshuode* 'I will add what you said') to commit to incorporating the audience's input.

In 51(d), Zhu explains why he does not include the aspect mentioned by the audience member, attributing it to IRB restrictions that allow participants to withhold demographic information. As a result, Zhu could not provide a detailed demographic description. The IRB issue often arises in defenses, as Chinese audiences are unfamiliar with it. Instead of using "IRB" in English, like other students did in their defenses, Zhu uses the proper Chinese term 研究委员会 (*yanjiu weiyuanhui* lit. 'research committee').

In 51(e), Zhu offers a solution by providing a general description of the participants' demographic features without revealing detailed information.

In 51(f), Zhu once again acknowledges the weakness in his study using the term 的确, which conveys another level of agreement with the audience member's opinions.

Excerpt 52 Zhu responding to critical suggestions-3

……(a)对中国经济体制的研究，还在学习的过程中，(b)所以我希望可以逐渐就进一步熟悉这个，用语，概念，而且中国经济的整个的情况，我觉得中国的经济十分复杂，个人的学习近期我会进一步掌握这些概念，(c)而且掌握以后就用的更贴切，所以那么在论文里面就要非常注意怎么用。要不然就会，就不清楚……

... (a) for China's economic system, I am still in the learning process, (b) so I hope to gradually become more familiar with the terminology, concepts, and the overall situation of China's economy. I think China's economy is very complex. In the near future, I will further grasp these concepts in my personal learning, (c) and after grasping them, I will use them more appropriately. Therefore, in the thesis, I need to pay close attention to how to use them. Otherwise, it will be unclear ...

In excerpt 52, Zhu addresses feedback pointing out his misuse of terms. In 52(a), he demonstrates modesty by stating he is still in the process of learning, acknowledging that there are aspects of the topic he does not yet fully understand. He uses the pattern 对……的研究，还在学习的过程中 (*dui ... de yanjiu, haizai xuexizhong* 'research on ... , still in the process of learning') to convey this idea.

In 52(b), Zhu commits to continuing his learning of concepts and terms, which is expressed by 逐渐进一步熟悉用语、概念 (*zhujian jinyibu shuxi yongyu, gainian* 'gradually further familiarize myself with terms, concepts'). In 52(c), Zhu envisions the outcomes of learning these concepts and terms, stating that he will be able to use them in a more 贴切 (*tieqie* 'apt') way. The term 'apt' specifically pertains to language use, describing language that is appropriate, accurate, and apt.

Excerpts 53 and 54 are taken from Xia's defense. Xia demonstrated highly effective, skillful, and culturally appropriate communicative strategies in her use of Chinese. This is evident in the audience's interaction with her. One teacher, who has participated in many Flagship defenses over the years, rarely offers explicit praise to students in his feedback. However, during Xia's defense, he mentioned that Xia had clarified many things he previously did not understand. Furthermore, Xia's response to another audience member's feedback led to additional discussion, even after the audience member had concluded his feedback. This suggests that Xia's response, in both content and manner, created opportunities for further and deeper engagement with Chinese people.

Excerpt 53 Xia responding to critical suggestions-1

(a)谢谢谢谢。(b)关于第一个建议我觉得很有意思，就是研究这个现象的历史，(c)对，其实我研究网络语言的时候，我发现可以从非常多的学科背景去研究，所以刚到北京的时候，我觉得我社会学方面的知识很少，所以我尽量多多查一些跟社会学有关系的资料，后来我发现跟传播学有关系，后来还跟政治学有关系，这是跟社会各个方面都有关系，(d)但我觉得我还没有想过这个历史。

(a) Thank you, thank you. (b) Regarding the first suggestion, I find it very interesting, which is to study the history of this phenomenon. (c) Yes, actually, when I study internet language, I find that it can be researched from many disciplinary backgrounds. So when I first arrived in Beijing, I felt that I had very little knowledge in sociology, so I tried my best to look up more information related to sociology. Later, I found out that it was related to communication studies, and later it was also related to political science. This is related to all aspects of society. (d) But I don't think I have considered this historical perspective yet.

In excerpt 53, Xia responds to an audience member's suggestion that she incorporate a historical perspective into her discussion. In 53(a), Xia expresses gratitude by using a repeated 谢谢 (*xiexie* 'thank you'). In 53(b), she praises the audience member's suggestion, saying it is 很有意思 (*hen youyisi* 'very interesting'), and then restates the suggestion using her own words, demonstrating her understanding. In 53(c), Xia explains that while she did consider multiple perspectives when discussing the topic, she had not taken into account the specific perspective mentioned by the audience member, indicating that the suggestion provided by the audience member is indeed valuable for her.

Excerpt 54 Xia responding to critical suggestions-2

(a)然后至于您的第二个建议，我觉得，就从语言学角度来看，规范不是一个问题，语言是一个不断发生变化的一个语言变体。但是我在论文还是提到了规范问题，因为这个是个社会，就是在中国社会经常提到的一个问题。所以我想就是经过研究讨论对这个问题的看法，(b)但是我觉得强调这个网络语言的创新和规范的关系，我觉得很有意义。

(a) As for your second suggestion, I think, from a linguistic perspective, standardization is not an issue, as language is a constantly changing language variant. However, I still mentioned the issue of standardization in my thesis because it is a problem often raised in Chinese society. So I wanted to present my views on this issue through research and discussion, (b) but I think emphasizing the relationship between innovation and standardization of internet language, I think it is very meaningful.

In excerpt 54, Xia responds to the second suggestion from the same audience member. In this suggestion, the audience member recommends that Xia add a discussion about language innovation to her analysis of language norms. In 54(a), Xia explains why she focused on language norms. In 54(b), she acknowledges the value of the audience member's suggestion by using the expression 很有意义 (*hen youyiyi* 'very meaningful'), which conveys that she finds the suggestion very meaningful.

4.4.5 Negotiating disagreements

Excerpt 55 is taken from Qi's defense and demonstrates an interaction between Qi and an audience member concerning one of Qi's arguments about other countries harboring prejudice against Chinese brands. The audience member disagrees with this argument, expressing the belief that negative reactions from other countries towards China's products are not prejudiced, but rather justified due to the quality of China's

products. However, by the end of their conversation, the audience member concedes and agrees with Qi's opinion. Excerpt 55 shows how Qi's effectively negotiate her meaning through interaction with the audience member.

Excerpt 55 Qi negotiating disagreements

Turn	Speaker	Chinese	English
1	AM	我觉得这是我不认为这是一个偏见，我认为这是市场消费者的正常反应。作为一个企业家来讲，你产品必须接受市场的检验，而中国产品质量问题，当然应该说最近这些年比前些年要好了很多，但仍然相对跟别的国家比的话还是有很多问题。所以如果你的产品要想继续在国外扎住根，而且想继续发展的话，就必须克服这些问题。	I don't think this is a prejudice, I think this is a normal response from consumers. As an entrepreneur, your product must be tested by the market, and the quality problem of China's products, of course, it should be said that it has improved a lot in recent years compared to previous years, but there are still many problems compared to other countries. So if you want your product to take root and continue to develop overseas, you must overcome these problems.
2	Qi	嗯嗯。	Yes, yes.
3	AM	所以有句话叫知耻而近乎，近乎勇，	So there is a saying called "knowing shame is akin to courage",
4	Qi	对。	Right.
5	AM	必须有勇气承认这是一个耻辱，	must have the courage to admit this is a shame,
6	Qi	对。	Right.
7	AM	然后去改正它，	and then to correct it,
8	Qi	对。	Right.
9	AM	只有这样中国品牌才能发展。	only in this way can Chinese brands develop.
10	Qi	嗯，对，我觉得保护民族企业的根本就是在于提高他们的产品质量，这是第一个部分。对。	Yes, right. I think the fundamental of protecting national enterprises lies in improving their product quality, this is the first part. Right.
11	AM	所以我说你刚才说的这个算外国偏见，我认为这不应该算外国偏见，这是在外国市场的正常反应。	So I said you just mentioned this is foreign prejudice, I think this shouldn't be considered foreign prejudice, this is the normal reaction in the foreign market.

12	Qi	对。	Right.
13	AM	因为在中国同样的东西，可能中国人这个容忍度太高，哎呀觉得无所谓，不好不好吧，可是在国外这是不行的。	Because in China, the same thing, maybe Chinese people have too high a tolerance, they think it doesn't matter, not good is fine, but in this is not acceptable overseas.
14	Qi	对。就是我觉得那个偏见也是，我觉得外国的偏见也是来自于那个可能他们的传有媒体，传统媒体来形成的，比如说 CNN，对中国有很大很大的偏见，而且他们把这些，这些产品的质量问題，通过这个他们就，让中国，就那个形象被妖魔，妖魔化，所以不仅是中国产品，他们就不说，就对这些质量问题不好，他们就说，哦，中国不好，中国品牌不好，因为在一方面他们其实他们不懂中国，不懂中国文化或者中国品牌，或者即使不懂可能商业的东西，但是他在另一方面他们就觉得，他们也是，就是，有这样的不懂的地方，出现的是一个，有点害怕的感觉。	Right. That is, I think that prejudice is also, I think foreign prejudice is also formed by their traditional media, such as CNN, which has a great prejudice against China, and they put these, these product quality problems, through this they let China, that image be demonized, so not only Chinese products, they don't say, these quality problems not good, they say, oh, China is not good, Chinese brands are not good, because on the one hand they actually don't understand China, don't understand Chinese culture or Chinese brands, or even if they don't understand maybe business things, but on the other hand they feel, they are also, that is, there is something they don't understand, there is a bit of a scared feeling.
15	AM	同意，同意同意你的看法。	Agree, agree with you.

In turns 1-9, the audience member expresses his opinion that Chinese brands should acknowledge the quality issues they face in order to truly progress.

Simultaneously, Qi provides affirmative responses such as 嗯嗯 (*en en* 'yes yes') or 对

(*dui* ‘right’) at every pause during the audience member's comment. At turn 10, using her own words, she further expresses her agreement by emphasizing the importance of improving product quality for Chinese brands.

In turns 11-13, the audience member expresses his opinion that the negative reputation of Chinese brands in other countries is not due to prejudice but rather legitimate concerns arising from the quality issues of their products. In turn 14, Qi first uses 对 to express her agreement with the audience member's opinion. She then elaborates on why she believed Chinese brands face prejudice. She speculates that the prejudice from other countries towards Chinese brands may be shaped by their media. Qi provides an example of CNN, which she argues, demonizes the image of China and Chinese brands rather than focusing on product quality. Finally, she explains that this might be because such media lacks knowledge about China, and this unfamiliarity leads to fear. After Qi's elaboration in turn 14, the audience member explicitly agrees with her opinions in turn 15.

In this excerpt, Qi demonstrates a high level of responsiveness during the audience member's comment. She provides affirmative reactions, such as ‘yes yes’ or ‘right’, at every pause during the audience member's remarks, which conveys understanding and agreement with the opinions presented. Additionally, she rephrases the audience member's opinion in her own words, further illustrating comprehension and concurrence. Upon the completion of the audience member's comment, Qi's responses have already established a sense of receptiveness, attentiveness, and agreement, preparing the audience member for deeper discussion. At this point, Qi elaborates on the topic by

providing an example and her speculation on the underlying reasons for her belief. These strategies effectively help Qi negotiate her opinions, leading the audience member to transition from disagreement to agreement with her perspective.

4.4.6 Responding to praise

In Chinese culture, handling compliments differs significantly from the way compliments are handled in American culture. If not managed properly, it is quite easy to come across as arrogant and impolite. Responding to a compliment involves not only the choice of words but also a comprehensive set of performances, including body gestures and facial expressions.

As students often receive praise in this kind of event, it is essential to understand the appropriate way to handle compliments from Chinese audiences. In this context, we will examine two examples that demonstrate how to handle compliments in a culturally appropriate way.

An audience member in Lu's defense gave her praise on how well she writes. This is how Lu responded:

Hearing the praise, Lu simultaneously smiled and looked away, downward toward the floor, accepting his words with a 'Thank you'. Her hands clasped together in front of her, interlacing her fingers, as she shifted her weight backward onto her rear foot moving slightly away from the audience member, suggesting humility while accepting his praise. All these gestures happened in one fluid motion.

A similar response was given by Yang during her defense after a compliment on her Chinese skills from an audience member:

Yang heard the compliment and immediately and simultaneously smiled and shook her head slightly but briskly from side to side in polite rejection of the compliment. As she shook her head, she issued the slightest puff of air from her mouth as she stifled a small self-deprecating laugh. As this happened, her hands came together in front of her, folding at belt-level, and she shifted her weight onto her rear foot stepping backward slightly and bending 10 degrees forward indicating that she felt humbled by the praise.

As demonstrated by these two examples, responding to compliments in a culturally appropriate manner in this context requires a harmonious coordination of the entire body. The aim of this performance is to exhibit a humble acceptance or a gentle decline of the compliment through facial expressions, eye gaze change, and subtle weight shifts.

Chapter Five. Designing a Training Program for CFL Domain Presentation

In this chapter, we will discuss pedagogical considerations and suggestions for designing a program that trains Chinese learners to give domain presentations. We will also propose future directions for study.

5.1 Program goal

For any program to succeed, there must be a clearly defined and stated goals. Every decision on the design and execution of the program should refer to the goal. Evaluation must be designed based on the goals. Program events are designed based on the goals. The program goals determine course objectives, which in turn define the goals of each hour of instruction and learning.

As demonstrated in many ways in Chapter One, audience it is the most impactful element of consequence in communication, as the audience's interpretation is the end product of a communication event. The purpose-driven yet interaction-lacking nature of presentation requires the speaker to have as much prior knowledge about the audience as possible, which demands more preparation work before the event.

Given the above-mentioned reasons, for a program aiming at training non-Chinese learners of Chinese for domain presentations, the goal should be to train them to communicate their ideas effectively to a Chinese audience, with a focus on the Chinese audience reception of learners' presentations. This requires a shift in focus from merely

concentrating on abilities in terms of linguistic features, such as vocabulary and grammar, to considering audience reception.

When we emphasize the importance of audience reception in our training program, it does not mean that we are asking our students to limit themselves to only discussing topics that the audience likes or blindly agreeing with everything the audience believes. Rather, it means training our students to be observant and respectful of their audience's expectations and reactions while still delivering their own ideas and perspectives in their chosen domain topics. Achieving optimal effect in communication involves striking a balance between accommodating the Chinese audiences and expressing the students' opinions. The best result from such a balance is to reach mutual understanding, which fosters cooperation and future conversation opportunities between the learners and their potential Chinese audiences, and the most direct route way to achieving this is through interactions, where each side engages with the other.

5.2 Overall curriculum design

5.2.1 Content-language mixed form course focusing on domain expertise

We have come a long way since decades ago when learning Chinese was just reading Chinese texts and explaining the meanings in English decades ago. Nowadays, Chinese learners expect to engage in practical communication with the Chinese world (Walker, 2010, p.53). From conversations we had with our students about their purpose of learning Chinese, we learned that a big number of our students enroll in Chinese classes either because their future career is related to Chinese in some way, or because

being able to function in Chinese can give them advantages in the job market because nowadays in a wide range of occupations it seems reasonable to expect to deal with Chinese economic organizations. With this kind of purpose in mind, learners need to be prepared to engage in serious communication, establish their intentions in ways that are easily comprehended, and ultimately build mutually engaged relationships with people from the Chinese world.

In that kind of larger context, the presentations that learners give always fall into a specific domain or even a specific topic with a specific purpose. In such a presentation, learners need to demonstrate to their Chinese audiences that they have both knowledge in their domains and the ability to use Chinese language to communicate those ideas. So for a curriculum that trains students for such presentations, “the intent to increase language skills is given equal weight with the intent to convey a selected body of knowledge. Instead of dividing the focus of courses by skill area, content courses are developed around topics. Skills are integrated into a course of study that requires the participants to read, write, and discuss the course topic over an extended period of time.” (Walker, 2010, p.64) Students develop their understanding of a topic while further strengthening their skills in communicating in Chinese.

The instruction can take the form of classroom teaching, independent study, asynchronized instruction, or some combination of all three. The curriculum features content and language mix form courses. For the content side, each student develops a project in his own domain of interest. There is no single book or set of pre-determined materials that can work for every student. The course materials are customized to each

individual student's domain of interest, and are compiled by the joint work of the students and the teachers as they delve into the selected topic. "The materials used in these courses may be a discrete linguistic artifact—a film, a book, or an anthology—a dramatic television series or a month of news programs, or a multimedia mix around a specific topic" (Walker, 2010, p.64). They may also include academic papers, surveys and interview data collected by the student during the research process. There is no pre-set content to learn. The student is set to explore the topic and develop the process of using Chinese to study the topic, just as what they will need to do after graduating from instructional programs, when they move on to working in the real Chinese world. The only difference is that in the program, they do it with help and guidance from teachers. The program gives students the educational space to make mistakes with no serious consequences and many opportunities to correct and improve.

In addition to accumulating domain-specific knowledge and ideas, language in-use in social context also demands careful, nuanced and extended attention in instruction. As demonstrated in the data presented in Chapter Four, Chinese audiences in these domain presentations place significant importance on a student's persona as a Chinese language learner. They pay close attention to language usage; therefore, the curriculum must not only concentrate on developing domain knowledge, but also prioritize language skill development. Within this curriculum, alongside standard language skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, teachers should give particular attention to the aspects of language use that are of concern to Chinese audiences. As illustrated in Section 4.3, these aspects are:

1. Utilizing expressions commonly used by native Chinese speakers, while avoiding awkward or foreign phrasings within the context of the thesis.
2. Ensuring a smooth and well-organized overall structure and writing.
3. Accurately distinguishing and using words with similar forms and meanings.
4. Avoiding mistyped characters.
5. Writing with immediate clarity and easy comprehension.
6. Selecting words with appropriate emotional overtones.
7. Employing relevant academic jargon to improve communication effectiveness and efficiency.

5.2.2 Adopting Acquisition model instruction (AMI) to develop communication strategies

As advanced level instruction, the curriculum should adopt *Acquisition model instruction* (AMI) (Walker, 2010, p.58). Rather than *Learning model instruction* (LMI), commonly used in lower levels, which focuses on increasing students' inventories of vocabulary, grammar patterns, and simple social functions, AMI focuses on imparting effective strategies for using Chinese in various social events, and the language expressions that can realize their desired strategies. In the context of this study, the social event is giving domain presentations to Chinese audiences. Adopting AMI means training students with strategies to effectively communicate their ideas and negotiate intentions with Chinese audiences.

In the analysis and discussion of data in Chapter Four, we have identified recurring themes arising from the Q&A sessions of OSU Flagship M.A. thesis defenses.

The findings emphasize aspects that Chinese audiences consider important in students' presentations, such as the students' personae as American students, the representativeness of multiple aspects of their research, students' field experiences in China, sources of data, and government-related issues. Being aware of these concerns held by Chinese audiences, students can either thoroughly address these aspects in their research beforehand to effectively showcase their research abilities, or develop strategies to adeptly handle these issues if raised by Chinese audiences during their presentations.

In Chapter Four, we have also identified successful strategies employed by students that have helped them effectively negotiated their communicative intentions, as well as the language expressions that realize their strategies. These communicative intentions include: asking for clarification, responding to out-of-scope questions, responding to the request of “speak as an American”, responding to critical suggestions, responding to praise, and negotiating disagreements. The communicative intentions, strategies, and expressions identified in Chapter Four do not provide an exhaustive list of what may occur in such events. However, they serve as examples to demonstrate effective strategies that can be gleaned from the analysis of interactions between students and Chinese audiences during this type of events, which can then be used as learning materials.

5.2.3 Recording presentations and analyzing audience reactions

As mentioned in Section 1.5, the most effective way to understand how a specific audience would react to a speaker's presentation on a particular topic is to actually deliver the presentation and observe the audience's reactions. The student can then record and

analyze these reactions, identifying effective communication strategies and potential pitfalls with assistance from the teacher. Therefore, if resources permit, the program should invite native Chinese speakers to attend the presentations and offer feedback. Ideally, these native speakers should represent the target audience or end-users of the students' Chinese language skills, such as scholars or practitioners in the students' chosen domain.

Recording the students' presentations, along with the audience's reactions, can serve as a powerful tool for self-evaluation and improvement. Teachers and students can analyze these recordings together to identify areas of strength and weakness in the presentation. By examining audience reactions, students can also gain insights into how their ideas, language use and presentation style resonated with native Chinese speakers. This analysis will help students refine their presentation skills and better tailor their content and delivery to their target audience.

5.2.4 Proposing a curriculum

A key point in the transition from lower-level instruction to higher levels is the target audience. In lower-level classes, students practice linguistic features of Chinese with classmates who are also Chinese learners. The instructor might be the only native Chinese speaker in a course, but the interactions students have with the instructor is not to achieve real social actions, but to complete a set of definite tasks evaluated by the course rubric. To bring students to the level of performance as shown in the Flagship M.A. defenses, the focus is to adapt students to a Chinese audience.

It is not an easy journey from being able to produce sentences in Chinese to being able to present a research topic that engages a Chinese audience for serious conversations and idea exchanges. It takes incremental efforts and progress to build up to the level of performance as shown in the Flagship M.A. defenses. We will use the Flagship program as an example to propose a curriculum schedule aiming at adapting students to a Chinese audience.

Cultures do not talk to each other, individuals do (Scollon & Scollon, 2000, p.138). Any cross-cultural communication is in fact interpersonal communication. Students in the Flagship program have also benefited much from developing good personal relationship with Chinese people. One student interested in social issues had worked as the assistant to the mayor of a small Chinese village. This student developed an intimate relationship with the mayor, akin to a godfather and godson. He was able to live with the mayor, participate in various activities, engage in in-depth interactions with people in the village and finally produce an insightful thesis with his observations. Therefore, instruction that help students get access to their target audience should focus on training students' interpersonal communication skills in Chinese.

The first thing of interpersonal communication is probably self-introduction. But self-introduction should be different depending on the context and specific goals of the communication. Introducing oneself to a group of new friends at a party is quite different from doing so with coworkers or supervisors at work. In a casual, informal setting like a party, introductions typically include information about where one is from, how they became acquainted with other people at the event, and their hobbies or interests. On the

other hand, introducing oneself in a professional context generally involves sharing less personal information, focusing more on one's work experience and expertise. Therefore, creating and practicing different versions of self-introductions that adapt to different situations is a necessary start of such a curriculum.

There are many communication events like self-introduction through which people socialize in a culture and build relationships. A curriculum that prepares students to engage in activities with Chinese people should devote a course to train students to behave in a culturally appropriate ways in these social communication events. The Flagship program offers a course specifically designed to develop students' interpersonal communication abilities in Chinese. The course addresses various topics such as self-introduction, making small talks, saying goodbye, keeping in touch with different methods, inviting/responding to an invitation, complimenting and responding to compliment, requesting/offering assistance, dealing with criticism, apologizing. Being able to perform these social actions in culturally appropriate ways opens the opportunity for students to engage in more interactions and social activities with Chinese people.

In addition to social communication events, the Flagship program also offers courses that lay foundations for students to adapt to a Chinese audience, such as Chinese Perspectives on China's Civilization, Negotiating in Chinese Culture, etc.

Alongside these skill-building courses, a domain study course should serve as the central component throughout the duration of the program. This course helps students to build up the ability to deliver a 40 min presentation in a specific domain in Chinese. in the Flagship program, at the beginning, students can only produce words or maybe

sentences explaining why they are interested in certain topics. They lack both the content knowledge and the linguistic means to talk about a topic in-depth in Chinese. The domain study course requires students to present their learnings on a weekly basis, summarizing what they have gained on the topic each week, building up the discourse layer by layer to the extent that they are sick of the content so that they can focus on things other than your topic, such as how to adjust what and how they talk to better adapt to a Chinese audience.

In addition to taking courses in the United States during the first year, students in Flagship are matched to a university in China to work on their research in Chinese settings. If the student's domain is more practice-oriented than research-oriented, the Flagship program also provides connections and resources for working positions in Chinese companies and institutions. In working with Chinese people for serious purposes in real settings, students practice knowledge and strategies learned in the course they take during the first year, and gain new knowledge and experience in interacting with Chinese people, as well as knowledge of their domain.

As a result, such training gives the students a pathway to interact and collaborate with experts and professionals in their domains in China.

5.3 The instructor's role

As the topics and materials are customized to cater to each student's area of interest, it is unrealistic to expect a single teacher to be an expert in every domain. Therefore, the instructor's primary role is not to be a knowledge source in every domain, but to support students in developing the skills and resources needed to study and present a project in Chinese, to Chinese audiences.

The instructor assists student in various ways, including: assessing the feasibility of a project based on the program's resources, locating Chinese materials related to students' chosen topics, providing opportunities for students to present to Chinese audiences, organizing and structuring the course and student assignments to facilitate incremental progress, and analyzing presentation videos to pinpoint effective communication strategies and potential pitfalls.

One aspect that requires the instructor's expertise in cross-cultural communication is identifying what students may have missed in their interactions with Chinese audiences. In some cases, ineffective communication is not a result of misunderstandings or the misuse of explicit language, but rather a misalignment in *common ground*.

When we use language to communicate with others, we do not start from the origin of the universe or the beginning of our personal life stories to explain how we have come to a particular situation. We only point out what we think is new to the current interaction. We subconsciously do this because our experience of communicating with others in daily life is sufficient to assume that our communicative partners have all the background knowledge needed for completing the whole picture of what is being communicated. The sum of all that background information is called *common ground*.

The basic idea of common ground proposed by Clark (1996) refers to the “sum of their mutual, common or joint knowledge, beliefs and suppositions” (p.121) of two participants of an interaction. One major kind of common ground is *Communal common ground*, which represents “all the knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions they take to be universally held in the communities to which they mutually believe they both belong”

(Clark, 1996, p.332). Tomasello also wrote about his idea and calls it *cultural common ground* (Tomasello, 2018, p.85). However, in cross-cultural communication, people from different cultures do not share cultural common grounds as they might assume they do. This mismatch in cultural common grounds leads to ineffective communication. As the experienced participant in both Chinese and American cultures, the instructor has a better understanding of the unsaid cultural common grounds, thus can point out factors leading to ineffective communication that the students do not know that they do not know. We will present an example of ineffective communication between a student and an audience member due to lack of cultural common grounds.

Excerpt 56 Gu's ineffective communication due to lack of cultural common grounds			
Turn	Speaker	Chinese	English
1	AM1	第一个问题呢我想问你，那么你经过学习咱们这个人际关系课哈，你在，我相信呢你在你的日常工作当中呢肯定会有很大的帮助。那么我想问一下你在和客户交谈的时候，你的坐姿是什么样的？	First question I want to ask you, so after studying our interpersonal relationship course, in, I believe that in your daily work, it must be very helpful. So I want to ask what is your sitting posture when you are talking to clients?
2	Gu	坐姿？	Sitting posture?
3	AM1	坐的姿势，你坐的那个姿势	Sitting posture, the posture you sit in.
4	AM2	我现在这样坐，哈	Now I'm sitting like this
5	AM1	嗯，对	Yes
6	Gu	跟一个？跟一	With a? with a
7	AM1	跟你的客户。	With your clients.
8	Gu	要看是什么客户，我有好几个就是西方客户，有好几个外国客户，然后也要要看是在什么情况，比如说是在吃饭的，还是在我自己的办公室，	Depends on what kind of clients, I have several Western clients, have several foreign clients, and then also need to see what situation, for example, is at a meal, or in my own office.
9	AM1	在会议室里面	In a meeting room.

10	Gu	会议室	Meeting room.
11	AM1	嗯在会议室里面	Yes in a meeting room.
12	Gu	就是在这样	Like this
13	AM1	那如果要是是在自己的办公室呢	Well, if it's in your own office?
14	Gu	嗯，这样坐	Yes sit like this.
15	AM1	这样坐啊，嗯，ok	Sit like this, ok
16	AM1	好，那你觉得要是，ok 我明白了。	Okay, then you think if, ok I understood
17	AM1	那么我觉得你还是能够区分不同的场合，这个，采取不同的坐姿，是吧？我觉得这个是很重要的，是吧？很重要。比如说在答辩这个呐或者什么时候都应该采取一种不同的坐姿是吧？Ok	Well, I think you can still distinguish different situations, this, adopting different sitting postures, right? I think this is very important, right? Very important. For example, in a defense like this or at any time, you should adopt a different sitting posture, right? Ok.
18	Gu	很重要	Very important.
19	AM1	很重要，好，这是一个问题。	Very important, good, this is one question.

In excerpt 56, the audience member attempts to point out that Gu's sitting posture was not appropriate in that context, and he should change how he sat. He does not explicitly say that because that would be too direct, thus harsh, and impolite. The audience member thus gives multiple attempts using various ways to hint his intention, but unfortunately Gu does not understand his intention in the end.

In turn 1, the audience member starts his comment with a course he knows that Gu took before in which he was trained for appropriate behaviors in Chinese culture. He mentions this course implying that his following comment would concern how certain behaviors are regarded in Chinese culture. Then he asks Gu what his sitting posture is when talking to his client. Talking to clients is a serious business setting that requires

serious and appropriate behaviors. The audience member wants to remind Gu of sitting postures in formal settings, hoping Gu could realize the sitting posture he uses at that moment was not appropriate for a formal setting.

However, as shown in turn 2-16, instead of realizing the audience member's intention of giving suggestions, Gu takes this question as a genuine question that he needs to answer. So he continues this conversation discussing and showing different sitting postures he used for different settings. At the beginning of this conversation, he was sitting upright in his chair, one hand resting on the table, seated in the middle of the chair. As he demonstrates the sitting posture in a meeting room, he leans forward slightly, sitting closer to the edge of the seat, hands clasped together with fingers interlaced, both resting on the table in front of him with feet a little closer together, head leaning slightly forward as if listening more intently. As he demonstrates how he sat in his own office, he sits toward the back of the chair, right leg crossed over the left at the knee, hands folded in his lap, considerably more relaxed. At the end of turn 16, he keeps the last posture which was the most relaxed one.

Having failed to make Gu understand his intention to correct his sitting posture, in turn 17, the audience member gives another try, emphasizing the importance of using different sitting postures in different situations. This time, he explicitly points out that in a defense such as this one, a student should take a different sitting posture than if he were in his own office.

In response to this attempt, Gu still thinks this is just a discussion on sitting postures, agreeing with the audience member that this is an important issue.

In turn 19, the audience member repeats “very important”, while shifted his eye towards Gu’s crossed legs, hinting that be the wrong thing. With Gu not understanding his intention and no change in Gu’s posture, the audience member suddenly bursts into laughs and looks at the committee members, indicating he tried his best but failed in the end.

In this example, from Gu’s behavior in the video, we can see that Gu does show respect to the Chinese audience by answering the audience member’s question seriously. It is unlikely that he understands the audience member’s intention to suggest him change sitting posture but refuses to do that. It is rather obvious that he understands the question as a real question for discussion instead of a suggestion taking the form of a question. Gu cannot understand the audience member’s intention even after so many rounds of interactions because Gu did not have the knowledge about appropriate sitting postures in the cultural common grounds of Chinese people. The assumptions Gu did not know are: Master’s thesis defense is a formal communication setting; this kind of setting requires the student to show respect, seriousness and modesty to the audience; to show these characteristics, one should take a serious sitting posture; it is a common way for Chinese people to give suggestions using a question to be more polite.

This is a perfect example for situations where students do not know that they do not know. This is when the instructor should step in and point out for students the ineffective communication when reviewing audience’s reactions during the training course.

5.4 Negotiated persona

Though the purpose of a domain presentation is to communicate ideas with other people, ideas do not talk to each other, individuals do (Scollon & Scollon, 2000, p.138).

As Panikkar describes the relationship between ideas and the person who conveys the ideas from experience of communicating in/between different cultures:

In the dialogical dialogue the partner is not an object of a subject merely putting forth some objective thoughts to be discussed, but a you, a real you and not an it. I must deal with you and not merely with your thoughts, and of course, vice versa, You yourself are a source of understanding ... We never have an encounter of pure ideas. We always have an encounter of two (or more) persons. (Panikkar, 1999, p. 30)

Xiaobin Jian also suggests that the message being conveyed is interdependent, tied in with the *perception* of “who you are” (Jian, 2021, p.19). This “who you are” is not the self-reflected identity of an individual, but a persona of an individual, which is “a public perception of who one is based on, what one does in interaction” (Jian, 2021, p.20). Discussions on the audience reactions in the Flagship M.A. thesis defenses in Section 4.1 have demonstrated how much emphasis Chinese audiences place on the student’s persona as foreigners/Americans and how this emphasis influences their perception on students’ achievements.

However, although Chinese audiences have certain pre-conceptions about the students’ personae in such a communication event, a particular persona is not a fixed conception that cannot be changed. In fact, through interactions with Chinese audiences, students can continuously negotiate their particular persona as displayed to Chinese audiences.

In Section 4.1.1, excerpts 4-6 have demonstrated how much audience members in Zhu's defense emphasized his persona as an American student. However, after several rounds of interactions, this perception changed. While participants took a break due to a technological connection loss, an audience member in China commented Zhu's performance in the defense, using the expression “这小伙子不简单” . The Chinese term 不简单 (remarkable) implies an exceptional evaluation of Zhu's abilities. This audience member referred to Zhu as 这小伙子 (this young man) instead of 这个美国学生 (this American student) in this comment. He removed his previous imposition on Zhu's persona as an American student. This removal of Zhu's nationality indicates a successfully negotiated persona change. Since the technological connection was interrupted, Zhu couldn't hear this comment, which suggests that the audience member wasn't just being polite or trying to encourage or flatter Zhu. This audience member genuinely held Zhu's ability to interact in Chinese with Chinese people in high regard. In Section 4.4.4, we analyzed strategies employed by Zhu in interacting and responding to critical suggestions from the audience members. His culturally effective and appropriate strategies and performance have helped him change the pre-conception of his persona, which increases the possibility of being regarded as a member of Chinese world.

Each student will experience how their persona impacts communication with Chinese audiences. Thus, in instruction, it is important to have student be aware of this phenomenon, and equip students with strategies that help them negotiate and construct a desired persona when communicating with Chinese audiences.

5.5 Directions for future research

The current study has used previously unstudied materials to make several accomplishments and contributions to the field of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) education, including:

1. *Highlighting the importance of audience in meaning-making*: By emphasizing the role of the audience's interpretation in determining the end product of a communication event, this study underscores the need for learners to be aware of their target audience's expectations and preferences.
2. *Addressing the lack of consideration of audience as co-construction partner in current CFL education*: This research points out the lack of consideration of audience in current CFL education to advocate for a shift of instructional focus.
3. *Conducting a case study on how Chinese audiences perceive American advanced learners of Chinese during domain presentations*: this study analyzed video recordings of the Chinese Flagship M.A. thesis defenses at OSU through thick description and discourse analysis; investigated audience feedback in the Q&A session and identified recurring themes; recognized effective strategies employed by students that facilitated their communication of intentions.
4. *Providing suggestions and guidelines for designing a program that trains Chinese learners to give domain presentations*: the guidelines stated the program goal, discussed key issues in curriculum design, proposed a curriculum, and stated instructor's roles.

There are several future research directions that could further enrich our understanding of this issue:

1. **Incorporating audience interviews:** Conducting interviews with audience members could provide richer and more nuanced insights into their opinions about students' performance. This additional layer of data would help triangulate findings and offer a more comprehensive view of audience perceptions.
2. **Expanding paralinguistic analysis:** While the current study primarily focuses on linguistic features, future research should consider the impact of non-verbal communication on audience perceptions. This includes facial expressions, body gestures, and discourse features like silence and laughter, which play a crucial role in conveying intentions and emotions. A more in-depth analysis of these elements could reveal subtle cues that influence audience reactions.
3. **Conducting single case studies:** The present research offers a generalized analysis of Chinese audience perceptions by identifying common themes across multiple defenses. However, by conducting single case studies, researchers could delve deeper into the unique behaviors and interactions between individual students and their audiences. Such detailed examination could lead to a better understanding of the specific student behaviors that elicit certain reactions from Chinese audiences.

By exploring into these future research directions, scholars can further refine and expand the guidelines for designing CFL educational programs that effectively prepare learners to deliver domain presentations in Chinese. This will ultimately contribute to a

more comprehensive and adaptive approach to CFL education, one that recognizes the importance of audience awareness.

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