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Privacy in Intercultural Communicative Competence for Chinese Language Learners

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Ⅰ. Introduction

Scholars of Chinese and Asian linguistics consider harmony as the foundation of Chinese communication to such an extent that it is the term "used to conceptualize Chinese communication competence," according to Guo-Ming Chen, who has noted that harmony is "the foundation of the paradigmatic assumptions of Chinese communication" and also represents the ultimate purpose of communication.[1] He describes the paradigm of

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Chinese communication in terms of "ontology, axiology, epistemology, and methodology."[2] Chen indicates that since the Chinese world view is holistic, it serves as the basis of Chinese communication, predicated on interconnected human relationships in pursuit of harmony.[3]

This article, however, argues that daily Chinese communication is not consistently oriented toward interpersonal harmony. Rather, the data analyzed herein reveal how the linguistic equilibrium between speaker and listener is destabilized by raising sensitive topics relating to privacy, most of which are presented arbitrarily in Mandarin Chinese textbooks for beginners. In particular, this article examines the ways in which the topics of age, family, hometown, and nationality are introduced and how they critically pertain to social norms and ideals as those who do not meet these norms would be affected and further displeased by the personal questions—an evident sign of communication breakdown. For Chinese people, it is perfectly fine to bring up these topics because they do not consider this information as either personal or private, but view it as a natural part of being acquainted with other people and taking a personal interest in them.[4]

However, with the growth of Chinese language learners who are familiar

1) Guo-Ming Chen, "Harmony as the Foundation of Chinese Communication," in *Chinese Culture in a Cross-Cultural Comparison*, ed. Michael B. Hinner (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 195, 197; Young Yun Kim, "Beyond Cultural Differences: An Integration of Eastern and Western Perspectives," in *Chinese Culture in a Cross-Cultural Comparison*, ed. Michael B. Hinner (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 128; Ge Gao and Stella Tung-Toomey, *Communicating Effectively with the Chinese* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 5-7; Larry Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2013), 167.

2) Chen, "Harmony as the Foundation of Chinese Communication," 191, 196.

3) Ibid., 191-209.

4) Gao and Tung-Toomey, *Communicating Effectively with the Chinese*, 81.

with several languages and cultures, the environment in which students learn Chinese has been re-contextualized; they become more sensitive about answering personal questions. By examining the ways in which sensitive topics are broached in Chinese textbooks, this article explores how intercultural communicative competence can be enhanced in Chinese language teaching and learning by suggesting indirect ways of talking about personal information and linking it with cultural components. To this end, this articles analyzes Chinese textbooks for beginners—particularly those used in South Korea—which include texts translated from Chinese into Korean, and select online resources including some originating in the U.S. with respect to cultural factors. The article shows that some speakers are concerned about protecting their privacy and that these concerns may affect their daily communication.

Intercultural communicative competence (hereafter ICC) has become increasingly significant in Chinese language teaching and learning because Chinese is now spoken globally due to a real-time online and offline information exchange with bilingual or multilingual speakers from many cultural backgrounds.[5] This article, however, does not presuppose cultural essentialism or that there is such a thing as being uniquely authentic Chinese in cultural interaction.[6] Rather, it shows how particular sentence patterns and expressions, including standard, almost idiomatic expressions, spoken

5) According to Lustig, intercultural communication is synonymous with "*cross-cultural communication, international communication,* [and] *intracultural communication*" [italics in original]....., all of which emphasize the intersection of culture and communication. Myron W. Lustig et al., *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication across Cultures*, 8th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2017), 34.

6) Kim incorporates the Eastern-Western principles into ICC, rather than adhering to each mode of communication based on cultural differences. Kim, "Beyond Cultural Differences," 119-138.

through durable cultural practice, make significant assumptions about social ideals and norms that not all members of a society possess. By addressing the cultural implications of sentences about privacy, this article offers a meaningful platform for pondering the conventional practice of speaking Chinese for more effective communication. This understanding will reduce the likelihood of prejudice and discrimination against people from other cultures.

The second part of this article elucidates how the aforementioned violations of privacy could be prevented through critical analyses of sample dialogues. The last part discusses the significance of context in which the addresser and the addressee are designated for culturally appropriate communication in the target culture. By offering the analyses on the subject of privacy, this study shows that intercultural communicative awareness can be raised through mutual understanding of cultural differences and exchange through conversational situations in which age, cultural background, and contexts are treated thoughtfully and sensitively.

Ⅱ. Privacy and Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to Steele, The National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) in Washington, D.C. lists four fundamental missions for foreign language education, particularly in higher education. The first task of the ICC is: "The *general education mission* [italics in original] seeks to develop, through the study of another language, cultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, global perspectives, understanding of different modes of apprehending reality, and insights into the workings of language and systems of logic."[7] This mission

could be applicable to other international language centers, given the significance of the ICC and the coeval interconnectivity of global citizens from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Steele divides culture into two categories: 1) "Bic *C*," taught in content-based survey courses on (intellectual) history, literature, and the arts; and 2) "small *c*," factual knowledge of culture that appeared at the end of each chapter in textbooks.[8] Steele notes that this way of teaching culture is problematic; foreign language learners are not allowed to interpret cultural phenomena because they are critically linked with abstract levels of belief systems as well as with daily conversations.[9] As part of practicing a foreign language, language learners' intercultural awareness and sensitivity were heightened by using ethnographic methods to interview members of the community.[10] By taking interpersonal and intercultural skills into account, Steele suggests that the criteria for assessing language fluency should evolve from testing factual knowledge about culture to "the sociocultural pragmatic, and interpretative components of intercultural communicative competence."[11]

Learners' direct contact with people in local communities is a key method of increasing their intercultural awareness and openness. However, this method, in reality, is not always available to every learner because conditions vary from region to region. Thus, rather than adopting a method of direct communication such as interviewing, this article offers a critical review of diverse conversational situations in which intercultural communication,

7) Ross Steele, "Language Learning and Intercultural Competence," in *Language Policy and Pedagogy: Essays in Honor of A. Ronald Walton*, ed. Richard D. Lambert and Elana Shohamy (Philadelphia, PA: J. Benjamins, 2000), 195.
8) Ibid., 199.
9) Ibid., 200.
10) Ibid., 201.
11) Ibid., 193.

awareness, and skills are considered crucial for smoother, more effective communication and consideration of others. This article therefore addresses the issue of privacy in communication in Chinese, and will suggest how culture as small "*c*" and Bic "*C*" can be integrated by adding cultural factors such as age.

In *A New China*, Chou aptly touches on the subject of "private affairs (*sishi*)," which he interprets as follows: "If someone asks you private questions, for instance, 'How much money do you earn a month?,' or 'Do you have a girlfriend?' or 'How old are you?' you could say: 'Sorry, I am not used to talking about personal things with other people. Let's talk about something else.'"[12] This passage reflects listeners' communicative predicament, as well as the cultural difference between China and the West. The textbook is designed for intermediate-level students, but even so, in terms of interpersonal harmony in Chinese communication, the listener's response would sound rude, so the speaker would be equally embarrassed. What kind of communicative options do beginners have when faced with communicative challenges deriving from differences in culture and modes of thinking? This article offers some viable solutions for beginning-level learners of Chinese by reviewing sample sentences from Chinese textbooks, while offering constructive suggestions for future teaching materials, especially in terms of structure and the presentation of conversations and content.

In English, privacy is defined as "the state of being alone, or the right to keep one's personal matters and relationships secret."[13] It also entails "freedom from damaging publicity, public scrutiny, secret surveillance, or

12) Chih-p'ing Chou et al., *A New China: Intermediate Reader of Modern Chinese* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 65.

13) Privacy, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/privacy (accessed July 23, 2019).

unauthorized disclosure of one's personal data or information, as by a government, corporation, or individual."[14] In some countries, it is considered acceptable to ask some kinds of private questions, depending on the circumstances. It is also true that people have the right to decline to answer. This article discusses why certain questions will be problematic for certain speakers and how the pedagogical approach described here could be conducive to more effective communication.

Ⅲ. Age Issues: From Social Positioning to Intercultural Exchange for Mutual Understanding

In East Asian cultural communication, it is acceptable to ask people, even strangers, how old they are. However, in other countries, asking a woman her age is considered rude, even taboo. This obsession with age in East Asia is rooted in the Confucian tradition in which the "Three Cardinal Bonds and Five Relationships" (*sangang wulun*) still remain essential cultural values. In comparing Eastern and Western cultural traditions, Young Yun Kim notes that "the Eastern world view is more holistic, dynamic, and inwardly spiritual."[15] According to Kim, the Eastern idea of self and cultural identity are defined and acquired through affiliation and by accepting the social order in which self is subordinate to a bigger family, society, and state, each of which has more authority over the others. Eastern people are more willing to accept social hierarchies and position themselves under the group. Thus, derived from hierarchical social relationships, their mode of interpersonal communication is largely implicit, relying on the listener's intuition.[16] In this

14) Privacy, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/privacy (accessed July 23, 2019).
15) Kim, "Beyond Cultural Differences," 123.

mode of interpersonal communication, knowing how old other people are is part of the process of defining oneself in relation to them, which inscribes submission to others in accordance with the social hierarchy.

However, as the world has become more equal and egalitarian, asking people their age should be reconsidered as part of enhancing intercultural and interpersonal interaction. More importantly, the topic of age is better addressed in intercultural contexts so that learners will gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and be more careful as they deal with sensitive topics in the target language. In this discussion, I restructure dialogues on age and show how they can be addressed discreetly or in more culturally appropriate contexts, so that learners can broach the topic of age without seeming intrusive. The examples from Chinese textbooks are reorganized to show this change from the simple checking of age to interacting within acceptable cultural parameters.

The first example is simply asking other people's age. As an icebreaker, asking someone's one's age is practically a customary question, illustrating the conventional mode of figuring out how oneself is situated in relation to others.

Li Dahao: 张萍，你今年多大? (Zhang Ping, how old are you?)
Zhang Ping: 二十一岁，是八四年出生的。你是哪年出生的? (21 years old. I was born in 1984. What year were you born?)
Li Dahao: 我比你大，是八二年出生的。(I am older than you. I was born in 1982.)[17]

This dialogue offers a description of the circumstances of the conversation:

16) Ibid., 127-129.
17) Department of Chinese, *Practical Chinese I* (Seoul: Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 2006), 28.

two university students are conversing in a residence hall. They already know each other and are talking about their age and siblings. However, without this background information, the conversation sounds a bit abrupt, since there are no greetings before the discussion of age. Even so, the transition from age to siblings without asking for specific information on them is culturally appropriate.

Rather than directly asking other people how old they are, the following example shows speakers asking about age while talking about their children.

Jin Zhexiu: 您有几个孩子? (How many children do you have?)
Zhang Huajun: 一个。 (I have one child.)
Jin Zhexiu: 是男孩儿还是女孩儿? (Boy or girl?)
Zhang Huajun: 是女孩儿。(Girl.) 您有几个孩子? (How many children do you have?)
Jin Zhexiu: 我有两个。大的是女孩儿, 小的是男孩儿。(I have two children. The eldest is girl and the youngest is boy.)
Zhang Huajun: 他们多大了? (How old are they?)
Jin Zhexiu: 大的今年十五, 小的十岁。您的孩子几岁了? (My daughter is 15 years old and my son is 10 years old. How old is your child?)
Zhang Huajun: 她只有五岁。(She is just 5 years old.)[18]

The context in which this conversation occurs is more appropriate; it is not gender-specific and children's age is mentioned in their absence. Even if they were present, they would be less sensitive about their age than adults. Using this example, students learn to ask about age without invading the other person's privacy. Moreover, they are inclusive of diverse ages, spanning over 10 years and under 10 years in that *duoda* is used for people over 10

18) Beijing Language and Culture University, *New Beijing Chinese* 40 (Seoul: Sisa Chinese Co., 2008), 26-27.

years old, whereas *ji* is used for people under 10 years old. In this light, the above conversation is not only culturally pertinent but also useful in grasping the differences between *duoda* and *ji* in Chinese syntax.

In *Integrated Chinese*, the section "That's How the Chinese Say It," is designed to have students emulate Chinese speech. To practice, *suanle*, meaning "never mind," an exchange asking about a female student's age with an illustration is provided:

A: 你今年多大? (How old are you this year?)
B: 你为什么问我多大? (Why are you asking me how old I am?)
A: 算了，我不问了。 (Never mind. I won't ask any more.)[19]

Although the purpose of this dialogue is to practice *suanle*, it shows how asking a woman her age could be offensive. In the illustration, the student who asks the question has black hair, so he appears to be of Chinese or Asian background. From his perspective, the woman's response would be quite puzzling, because Asian people usually do not think that it is impolite to ask how old someone is. In the illustration, the female has lighter hair, suggesting a non-Asian background. From the perspective of gender and culture, the topic of age does matter to people who are sensitive about it, regardless of whether they are male or female. For instance, if the male speaker is unfamiliar with American ways of speaking about age, the listener's response sounds too blunt, which might confuse him, and possibly result in both of them feeling uncomfortable or upset. This awkward situation stems from both the speaker and the listener's positionality in which the two participants try to interpret the conversation from their own

19) Yuehua Liu et al., *Integrated Chinese: Simplified Characters Textbook, Level 1, Part 1* (Boston, MA: Cheng & Tsui Co., 2008), 145.

perspectives and communicate in their own base or target culture.[20]

Although the conversation is designed to practice functional expression, the speaker could ask the question in a more considerate manner. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee suggest "mindful listening skills" to understand the intercultural partner of a speech event.[21] Participants in intergroup and interpersonal relations "aim to 'struggle with' rather than 'struggle against' our intercultural ally and cultivate common ground and common interest," and must rethink their understanding to derive different interpretations of things from the listener's/speaker's perspective.[22] If the listener listens mindfully, she could say something like, "That is a secret," "If you tell me your age first, then I might tell you mine," or sarcastically, "I am glad you asked; I am 300 years old." By doing so, both might feel less embarrassed and it could allow the conversation to continue.

Another way to deal with the topic of age is to bring it up in a more neutral way by linking one's birthday with the Chinese zodiac.

Li Ming: 你的生日是几月几号? (When is your birthday?)
Han Song: 我的生日是八月二十七号。 (My birthday is August 27th.)
Li Ming: 你属什么? (What's your Chinese zodiac sign?)
Han Song: 我属龙。 (I am a Dragon.)[23]

20) Galal Walker, "Performed Culture: Learning to Participate in Another Culture," in *Language Policy and Pedagogy: Essays in Honor of A. Ronald Walton,* ed. Richard D. Lambert and Elana Shohamy (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2000), 229.

21) Stella Ting-Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee, *Communicating Across Cultures*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2019), 150-151.

22) Ibid., 150.

23) Shin Dongyoon, *Easiest Chinese for Self-Study* (Seoul: Dongyang Books, 2016), 82.

In this exchange, the speakers are friends and it is appropriate to talk about their birthdays or zodiac signs. The Dragon sign also has several meanings in Chinese cultural symbolism, standing for the Emperor, the East, and the fifth creature of the Chinese zodiac.[24] Thus, the dialogue is not limited to asking about ages but extends to cultural components and traditional Chinese culture. As such, the Bic "*C*" and small "*c*" of culture are pertinently integrated, and this is the antithesis of what Steele observed. In this way, the students combine language competence with intercultural communicative competence, both of which involve daily conversation and an abstract cultural thinking, its symbolism, and cultural connotations.

Moreover, students feel free to talk about the differences between the Chinese zodiac system and the Western one and thus improve their understanding of both cultures while sharpening their communication skills. This combination of language and culture can be related to what Walker calls "performed culture," which is "an approach to language study start[ing] with meaning and repeat[ing] the linguistic code—and with it the concept of the sentence—as a medium for accessing and thereby more fully participating in that meaning."[25] Walker notes that unlike a dramatic performance, where a single act is executed, performance in foreign language pedagogy is more procedural and allows for failure. "Staged events" are consciously repeated to correspond to what the target culture set, ranging from greetings to complex conversations.[26] By practicing sentences associated with culture, learners comprehend the meaning of language and its cultural implications, thereby

24) For a more detailed description, see Wolfram Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 83.

25) Walker, "Performed Culture," 226.

26) Walker, "Performed Culture," 227.

rendering culture a living thing that makes meaning for learners. As Walker suggests, it will prompt the acquisition of intercultural competence as well as language proficiency in the target language and culture.

In the final example, one classmate accidently hears another classmate's birthday and then asks his age. The dialogue continues as a discussion of a third classmate's upcoming birthday and ends in proposing a small party for both of them.

After class:
Jiefu: 株泰，一起打球，好吗? (Zhutai, how about playing ball together?)
Jin Zhutai: 真对不起，我得等我妈妈的电话，今天是我的生日。(Oh, sorry, I have to wait for my mom's call, since today is my birthday.)
Jiefu: 是吗? 祝你生日快乐! (Really? Happy birthday to you!)
Jin Zhutai: 谢谢。(Thanks.)
Jiefu: 你今年多大了? (How old are you [this year]?)
Jin Zhutai: 都25岁啦，比你大多了! (25 years old, [I am] older than you by one year!)
Jiefu: 你知道吗? 下周安妮也过生日。(Do you know Annie's birthday is coming up next week.)
Jin Taizhu: 真的? 等安妮过生日的时候，咱们开个小小的生日晚会，怎么样? (Really? How about throwing a small party when her birthday comes?)[27]

In this context, speaking about age is appropriate for all the speakers and does not offend anyone. More significantly, their relationship is not hierarchical as the students are peers. Therefore, there is no need for them to determine their social position in relation to the others. Although some sentences may be challenging for beginners, they could be adjusted with

27) Peking University, *Elementary Colloquial Chinese* (Seoul: Siasa Chinese Co., 2008), 56-57.

other, simpler sentences. Discussing the Chinese zodiac signs is a useful way of asking about age that also teaches students about Chinese culture and allows them to practice real conversations.

Chinese people have traditionally cared about other people's age and the zodiac signs and they use the zodiac signs to determine compatibility. However, this does not mean speakers use the zodiac system and its meanings to express prejudice. Rather, students use them as a reference system to understand the Chinese world view and value system. It is also possible to compare the Chinese and Western zodiac signs, thereby leading students to talk about birthdays, age, and the zodiac signs. Furthermore, if this lesson adds a section on the Chinese zodiac signs or on the kinds of birthday gifts given, then its content would be culturally richer. In short, in Chinese cultural contexts, asking about one's age is acceptable under the right conditions and with the right understanding. In doing so, students' cultural sensitivity, awareness and linguistic competence would be enhanced as they practice Chinese with culturally appropriate examples.

Ⅳ. Privacy over Destinations: From Checking to Context

Among Chinese people, greetings are often replaced with questions asking what the listener is doing. "Where are you going?" or "What are you doing?" are greetings, and "*ni hao*" is used more formally. Christensen notes that "Where are you going?" in Chinese, without a proper noun "*ni*," is a ritualized question and used frequently with one's in-group.[28] Hodge and Louie state

28) Matthew B. Christensen, "你好 and Greeting Strategies in Mandarin Chinese," *Journal of the Chinese Language Association* 41, no. 3 (2006): 31.

that, as a greeting, "*ni hao*" reveals one's identity as a foreigner and has become common in China. [29] If a speaker really wants to know where someone is going, then the proper noun, "you" should be added. Even so, the expression "Where are you going?" is used casually in daily conversation.

Asking someone's plans could also be viewed as an invasion of privacy; in fact, there are times when people do not want to disclose this information. In Chinese, activities are usually verb-object combinations. Thus, in most cases, the string "Where are you going?" is accompanied by the activity to practice verb-object form, which reveals more detailed information on the speaker's side. Moreover, sometimes in small talk, very specific questions are asked about what people had done the night before. To avoid this kind of trouble in communication, it is important for everyone knows they do the same thing, for instance, taking a trip.

Roberts proposes the concept of "contextual felicity," which is "the aptness of an utterance in expressing a proposition that one could take to be reasonable and relevant in light of the context."[30] The next two examples show how plans are discussed, depending on context and content. The first example reveals how the utterance can be contextually inappropriate because the relationship between the addresser and the addressee lacks "the appropriate level of respect."[31]

29) Bob Hodge and Kam Louie. *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture: The Art of Reading Dragons* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 24-31.

30) Craige Roberts, "Context in Dynamic Interpretation," in *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, ed. Laurence Horn and Gregory Ward (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 199; Heather Bowe et al., *Communication Across Culture: Mutual Understanding in a Global World*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 18.

31) Bowe et al., *Communication Across Culture*, 18.

A: 王老师, 您早! (Good morning, Professor Wang.)
B: 你早! 你去哪儿? (Good morning. Where are you going?)
A: 我去教室。(I am going to classroom.)
B: 你迟到了。昨天晚上跳舞了吗? (You are late. Did you dance last night?)
A: 我昨天晚上学习了。(I studied last night.)
B: 真的吗? (Really?)[32]

This exchange is part of daily greetings between a student and an instructor. However, the instructor's first response to the student sounds problematic because he accuses her of being late and then makes a negative and incorrect assumption about her personal life. This dialogue is an example of what Hofstede calls a "power distance relationship" in which the instructor is in a higher social position than the student.[33] This allows him to speak more freely, and this "high power distance" is accepted in Chinese society.[34]

What matters more is his second reaction because he does not seem to believe what the student said, thereby giving readers the impression that he does not trust her. This dialogue problematizes a gender-biased exchange. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorgee, "[t]he word *prejudice* [italics in original] means 'prejudging' something or someone based on biased cognitive and affective concepts. In the literature of intergroup relations, *prejudice* [italics in original] is a mind-set of hostile feelings and negative predispositions directed toward outgroup members."[35] The relationship

32) Beijing Foreign Studies University, *First Step to Chinese* (Paju: See & Talk, 2007), 58-59.
33) Larry A. Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2013), 313.
34) Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 189, 313; Martin and Nakayama, *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, 108-109.
35) Ting-Toomey and Dorjee, *Communicating across Cultures*, 287-288.

between the instructor and the student is hierarchical and his prejudice is based on his authoritative power as an instructor and conventional gender norms, revealing the authoritarian personality approach to prejudice.[36] Moreover, in Bowe's view, in terms of gender and language, the male instructor's way of speaking also illustrates that, for men, talking is a method of maintaining hierarchy, but female ways of speaking are centered on building rapport.[37] By saying "really," he implies that this female student would rather stay out late dancing, so she is late to class the next day. This is an unfair imposition of gender ideology and a stereotyping of female students. In Chinese, as a greeting or part of daily conversation, it is fine to ask other people where they are going. However, it should be asked without giving the impression of being nosy.

The following examples show how dialogue concerning plans and destination are safely addressed, and the context of conversation is the same to all of the participants.

Wang: 谢谢! (Thanks.)
Mark: 你好! (Hi!)
Wang: 你好! (Hi!)
Mark: 我叫Mark。你呢? (I am Mark. What's your name?)
Wang: 我叫王文欣。你是美国人吗? (I am Wang Wenxing. Are you American?)
Mark: 我是加拿大人。你是北京人吗? (I am Canadian. Are you from Beijing?)
Wang: 不是, 我是上海人。(No, I am from Shanghai.)
Mark: 上海很美。我喜欢上海。(Shanghai is very beautiful. I like Shanghai.)
Wang: 你的中文很好呀。(Your Chinese is very good.)
Wang: 你去哪里? (Where are you going?)
Mark: 我去上海出差。(I am going to Shanghai on business.)[38]

36) Ibid., 288.
37) Bowe et al., *Communication across Culture*, 125.

When people are traveling, it is perfectly fine to ask about someone else's destination. Although the questions about people's origin and nationality are also addressed, the dialogue runs smoothly from greetings and self-introduction to small talk, accompanied by an online video clip. The video offers learners a situation and a context for this conversation and helps them see how this dialogue is applicable to a visit to China. Moreover, the topic of hometown and nationality is presented in a multi-national setting, rendering it acceptable. By mentioning the purpose of the visit, occupation is also presented indirectly. In this way, the expression "Where are you going?" is practiced within the right contexts and the listener's response to the question is equally important for maintaining communication with little connotation of gender-specific values in the person's lifestyle.

According to Martin and Nakayama, "[c]ontext typically is created by the physical or social aspects of the situation in which communication occurs," which "consists of the social, political, and historical structures in which communication occurs."[39] Asking about one's destination is not merely meant to ascertain other people's whereabouts, but the conversation context involves sociopolitical environments in which gender-structure and gender-norms are hierarchically and judgmentally embedded.[40] Thus, dialogues on greetings and destinations should consider power distance, prejudice against gender, and social environment in which more equal

38) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxYlb5iIP4Q.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maSAF3C5fvU (accessed July 25, 2019).

39) Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama, *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), 115.

40) According to Bowe, language and gender are generally addressed in terms of different ways of speaking associated with masculinity and femininity, whose traits are different from culture to culture. Power, often equated with masculinity, is also another factor in addressing gender and gender stereotypes. Bowe et al., *Communication across Cultures*, 125-129.

relationships and unbiased information are presented properly, thereby actualizing the semantic-contextual felicity as conceptualized by Roberts.

Ⅴ. Family Matters: From Social Ideals of Family Structure to Intercultural Sensitivity

Most of the Mandarin Chinese textbooks published in China, South Korea, and the U.S. include lessons about family members, which are presented as a must-know item, like the question, "*Nijia you jikou ren?*" (How many family members do you have?).[41] This question is predicated upon the social idea that the family structure is comprised of father, mother, son, and daughter. Given the diversity of family structure, the idea of family is undergoing transformation in terms of gender, adoption, and racial and cultural blending. In this respect, the question about family members presupposes a social norm and thus inscribes a cultural logic of exclusion such that those people who do not have the traditional family structure may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable talking about it. Many people do not meet the quadratic, heterosexual traditional family, and even people who are proud of their nontraditional families could interpret such questions as a form of social repression or even assault. Therefore, the topic of family should be addressed carefully to avoid giving offense and invading people's privacy.

Most textbooks describe family members along with their occupations. The most common are doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, office managers, or

41) However, Yan's textbook does not include a lesson about family members. Margaret Mian Yan and Jennifer Li-chia Liu, *Interactions Ⅰ: A Cognitive Approach to Beginning Chinese* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997).

police officers. Doctors are mentioned the most, which reveals how textbooks represent social ideals about professions. The following example shows how the standard composition of the family members and socially desirable jobs are presented.

Xiao Jin: 你家有几口人? (How many family members do you have?)
Wang Fang: 我家有四口人。(I have four people in my family: father, mother, brother, and me.) ……
Xiao Jin: 你爸爸, 妈妈做什么工作? (What do your father and mother do for a living?)
Wang Fang: 我爸爸是公司职员, 妈妈是医生。(My father works for a company and my mother is a doctor.)[42]

The dialogue reveals the socially conditioned structure of family and the occupations of family members, thereby illustrating an idealized social model of a family household system. Asking people what their parents do for a living sounds more intrusive than simply asking about the size of one's family. Thus, expressions used to inquire about occupation could be addressed in different situations, rendering them less abrasive and less personal.

A: 你家有几口人? (How many family members do you have? / How many people are in your family?)
B: 我家一共有五口人。爷爷, 奶奶, 爸爸, 妈妈和我。(I have five people: grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and me.)[43]

42) Yao Hongyan et al., *Master Chinese Conversation* (Seoul: YBM Sisa, 2007), 88-89.
43) Lee Sang Yong, *Jiayou, First Step to Chinese* (Seoul: J Plus, 2015), 62.

In a way, this example contests the social norm of family structure by adding grandparents as members of an extended family. Given that extended family structure is less common in non-Asian countries, the textbook functions as a distributor of information about different cultures and contributes to the expansion of knowledge, which will lay a foundation for enhanced intercultural communicative competence.

Unlike directly asking about family members, talking about them with family photos maintains some kind of distance and renders it more neutral. Furthermore, asking about siblings is a preferable alternative to asking about parents.

Chen Hong: 正民，你有几个兄弟姐妹? (Zhengmin, do you have any brothers or sisters?)
Li Zhengmin: 我只有一个姐姐。这是我家人的照片。..... (I have only one sister. This is my family photo.)
Chenhong: 你姐姐看起来又聪明又漂亮。(Your sisters looks not only smart but also pretty.)
Li Zhengmin: 你也有姐姐吗? (Do you also have a sister?)
Chen Hong: 没有。我是独生女。(I don't. I am the only daughter, *dushengnǚ*.)[44]

The dialogue mentions the sister's appearance, a gender-specific description, and is spoken by a female character as a compliment, rendering it less judgmental. Moreover, it has three distinctive features in terms of utterance and intercultural interactions: 1) parents are not included, and the composition of the family is not addressed; 2) it contests the social standard of a four-person family structure; and 3) the vocabulary for the only daughter, *dushengnü*, is important as it is directly derived from China's

44) Department of Chinese Language and Literature, *Chinese for College Freshmen* (Seoul: Korea University Press, 2012), 35-36.

one-child policy. It is closely tied to social phenomena such as the little emperor syndrome (*xiaohuangdi*) and *balinghou* and *jiulinghou*, people born in the 1980s and the 1990s and who have emerged as the critical drivers of consumption in the Chinese economy. Thus, the context in which the conversation occurs is culturally relevant and informative, leading students to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and society, all of which will be useful in raising their intercultural sensitivity and ICC.

In contrast to the introduction of one child with specific socio-historical connotations, talking about one's siblings should be introduced in a more objective fashion, and it is better not to make any judgmental or personal statements. The following dialogue directly asks if his sister has a boyfriend.

Jiajia: 这是谁? (Who is this person?)
Zaimin: 是我姐姐。(My sister.)
Jiajia: 哇, 真漂亮! 她今年多大? (Wow, really pretty! How old is she?)
Zaimin: 二十三岁。(23 years old.)
Jiajia: 她有男朋友吗? (Does she have a boyfriend?)
Zaimin: 还没有。(Not yet.)[45]

In some cases, describing one's appearance, even as a compliment, could be sensitive. In this light, the situation sounds too gender-specific and checking whether his sister has a boyfriend seems presumptuous. If she was present, this question might make her feel embarrassed and self-conscious. Rather than automatically treating the subject of family using the standard Chinese expression, it should be taught with intercultural sensitivity because not all people form a traditional family and have "decent jobs." In this light, the expression for "how many members do you have in your family?" could

45) Mao Haiyan et al., *The Chinese 1* (Seoul: Dongyang Books, 2014), 114.

be replaced with "Do you have any brothers or sisters?" to avoid the case of a single-parent or other types of family. Many people do not meet the social norms of family structure and occupations. By indirectly asking about family members or talking about siblings, students will acquire a deeper understanding of the transformation of the family system and policies for childbirth and childcare, thereby raising their intercultural sensitivity.

Ⅵ. Hometown and Nationality: From Social and National Differentiations to Being Global

"Where are you from?" or "*Ni shi narli ren*" in Chinese is used to ask about one's hometown, but at a deeper level, it can connote spatial perceptions, which are often operated hierarchically and judgmentally and deeply rooted in their value system of space. In the hierarchical configuration of space, disproportionate emphasis is placed on the city compared to the countryside. Thus, asking one's hometown is used to find out one's birthplace or native town, but it is also crucially tied to one's background, class, and regional identity. In China, the subject of hometown is associated with social issues of *hukou* (family registration or registered permanent residence), which restricts one's physical and social mobility. By the same token, the question "Where are you from" to ask a person's nationality is not just used to see one's national background but also to check one's national characteristics or national and cultural identity. If speakers are not open- minded, this line of inquiry comes across as an interrogation. Furthermore, there are people without citizenship, such as refugees or the displaced. Refugees are especially vulnerable and are objects of abhorrence and rejection by "us," the familiar. On the whole, the topics of hometown and nationality should be addressed

with more care.

Above all, hometown is primarily represented by either Beijing or Shanghai, as seen the video clip. The following lesson on family members, which is from the excerpt on family members, starts with questions about their hometown.

Jin Zhexiu: 张先生, 您是哪里人? (Mr. Zhang, where are you from?)
Zhang Huajun: 我是上海人。(I am from Shanghai.)
Jin Zhexiu: 您夫人也是上海人吗? (Is your wife also from Shanghai?)
Zhang Huajun: 不是, 她是北京人。(No, she is from Beijing.)[46]

The conversation is between a Korean man and a Chinese man. The whole Chinese people are represented by Shanghai and Beijing citizens, so it is easy to study China's best-known cities. However, the ways people and their backgrounds are introduced imparts city-centered, spatial values. To compensate for this asymmetrical division of space, it would be possible to add an example, an exercise, or an in-class activity that includes smaller cities, showing the diversity of hometowns and regional backgrounds. In doing so, students would expand their knowledge of Chinese geography and regional culture, thereby deviating from city-centered spatial perceptions as well as customary mappings of people and place.

In Chinese, there is nothing wrong with asking politely about one's nationality. The following example reveals how a speaker awkwardly asks one's nationality.

Chen Hong: 你好! 你是中国人吗? (Hello! Are you Chinese?)

46) Beijing Language and Culture University, *New Beijing Chinese* (Seoul: Sisa Chinese Co., 2008), 40, 26.

Li Zhengmin: 我不是中国人，是韩国人。(I am not Chinese but Korean.)
Chen Hong: 你叫什么名字? (What's your name?)[47]

The speaker inquires into the person's nationality before asking for the name. Furthermore, rather than directly asking "What's your nationality?" it is more appropriate to ask "Where are you from?". Because certain nationalities have been negatively stereotyped, a direct question about one's nationality could sound hostile and judgmental. For these reasons, rather than directly asking about other people's nationality, students of Chinese should wait for a conversation partner to share information about their origin and national background voluntarily.

The following conversation stands in contrast to the above example, in which greetings and name exchanges are done prior to asking about one's nationality.

Bide: 早上好! (Good morning!)
Anni: 早! (Good morning)
Bide: 你叫什么名字? (What's your name?)
Anni: 我叫安妮。你呢? (I am Annie, what about you?)
Bide: 我叫彼得。你是哪国人? (I am Peter. Where are you from?)
Anni: 我是美国人。你也是美国人吗? (I am American. Are you also American?)
Bide: 不，我是法国人。(I am not; I am French.)[48]

This dialogue sounds very natural, except for the question about nationality. Peter should have told Annie what his nationality was before asking about hers. Although the sentence "are you also American?" is

47) Department of Chinese Language and Literature, *Chinese for College Freshmen*, 21.
48) Peking University, *Colloquial Chinese 1* (Seoul: Dongyang Books, 2014), 52.

introduced to practice the adverb "*ye*" (also), assuming someone else's nationality is problematic because it carries the speaker's presupposition, impression, and value judgment about that nationality.

The next dialogue shows how a speaker and a listener find their interconnectivity based on a place for studying abroad, thus showing the possibility of creating global consciousness.

A: 请问，你是哪国人? (Hello, where are you from?)
B: 我是美国人，你呢? (I am from the U.S., what about you?)
A: 我是韩国人。你的汉语很好。(I am from South Korea. Your Chinese is very good.)
B: 我在北京学过汉语。(I have studied Chinese in Beijing.)
A: 我也在北京学过汉语。(I have also studied Chinese in Beijing.)
B: 哦，这世界真小。(Oh, it is indeed a small world! / What a small world!)[49]

The point of this dialogue is to learn the expression of asking one's nationality. The speaker first offers a greeting, so it does not sound too intrusive. By giving a compliment to the listener, the tone of speech sounds friendly. The speaker establishes common ground, rendering the conversation more congenial and emphasizing interconnectedness in exposure to Chinese language and culture. Learning Chinese in Beijing is a meaningful, sharable experience for both and allows them to realize possible, personal inter-connectivity. The idea of being interconnected can germinate in their minds, which might foster a future friendship. With this interconnectivity, students from different societies and regions can live locally and globally, so that they can think about the interrelationships and interactions and cultures on the personal and global levels. This communicative sensitivity will prepare them

49) Beijing Foreign Studies University, *First Step to Chinese* (Paju: See & Talk, 2007), 54.

to raise their global consciousness from being a national citizen to being a global citizen. People from different national and cultural backgrounds will be able to cooperate on national and international issues.

Ⅶ. Conclusion

In Chinese communication, interpersonal harmony is perceived as a communicative norm and as a goal, which is derived from the Chinese cultural tradition that emphasizes interrelationships within a prescribed social hierarchy. However, with specific examples touching upon the issue of privacy from Mandarin Chinese textbooks, interpersonal harmony can be violated when sensitive topics are addressed in customary manner as part of a lesson in Chinese language teaching. Through critical analyses of exemplary didactic materials, this article shows how speakers and listeners can talk about personal matters without violating anyone's privacy, while offering constructive suggestions for teaching and future textbook design.

Age, occupation, family composition, and nationality should be addressed indirectly in textbooks, rather than using situations in which they are addressed directly in face-to-face conversational situations. In addition, privacy issues can be problematic when they are introduced without the right context, so asking about one's plans and destinations should be presented only in situations in which people are traveling. Finally, to enhance intercultural communicative sensitivity, diverse situations without stereotypical images of people, place, and culture, are to be introduced, along with cultural components that emphasize the interconnectivity of people and the world. In doing so, learning and practicing Chinese becomes meaningful for students in acquiring intercultural communicative competence, as well as global

consciousness as open-minded, global citizens who could act in the shared interests of the world. Chinese language teaching and learning, in this respect, can be enriched by adopting teaching materials composed of dialogues with appropriate context and culture, thereby enhancing intercultural awareness and sensitivity for successful communication in the target language and culture.

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<Abstract>

Harmony, especially interpersonal harmony, is a fundamental principle and the goal of communication in Chinese. However, communicative discord is

an inevitable part of communication in the target language, especially when communication involves multilingual and multicultural settings and people with diverse expectations. Contesting the prevailing thesis of harmony, this article shows how linguistic equilibrium can be destabilized by inquiring into personal matters. Topics such as age, family composition, occupation, hometown, and nationality are presented in a manner that presupposes and reinforces traditional Chinese norms. Centering on the concept of privacy, this article analyzes the ways in which these topics are addressed in introductory Mandarin Chinese textbooks, so as to enhance their intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communicative competence, while offering constructive suggestions for future textbook design. Through critical analyses of lessons on the subject of privacy, this study presents how both speakers and listeners can address personal and private matters without violating privacy by using indirect questions, the use of correct context, and cultural nuance. By practicing intercultural awareness and the interconnectivity of people, Chinese language learners will acquire both language proficiency and intercultural communicative competence with enhanced global consciousness.

Key Words : privacy(프라이버시), interpersonal harmony(대인관계 조화), intercultural sensitivity(문화 간 감수성), intercultural communicative competence(문화 간 의사소통 능력), Chinese language teaching(중국어 교육)