Management of intercultural input

A case study of two Korean residents of Japan*

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In this paper, I claim that unlike spontaneous discourse, in which language deviations tend to trigger instant evaluations and adjustments, management of intercultural input is relatively free from time restriction and thus allows re-management at each stage of deviations from norms, noting, evaluation, adjustment and implementation.

1. Introduction

This paper applies the language management framework developed by Neustupný (1985) and Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) to intercultural studies.

Intercultural management, as dealt with in the present paper, concerns participants' behavior toward sociolinguistic and sociocultural input in contact interaction. In this paper, I claim that unlike spontaneous discourse, in which language deviations tend to trigger instant evaluations and adjustments, management of intercultural input is relatively free from time restriction and thus allows re-management at each stage of the basic process (i.e., deviations from norms, noting, evaluation, adjustment and implementation). As reported in recent research, re-processing (Fairbrother 2000) and stereotypification (Miller 1986) can be observed in intercultural interaction. On the basis of study of two Korean residents in Japan, this paper also aims to draw attention to how interactants idiomatize their intercultural experience and how adjustments are implemented in contact situations. The paper examines how noted intercultural input was evaluated and adjusted to by two Korean residents in Japan.

2. Previous studies

The language management framework was first developed as a tool for the study of language planning at the macro level. However, the framework has been also widely applied to micro studies of language problems in discourse interaction, especially in contact situations which involve speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Ozaki (1989), for example, focuses on requests for clarification, Miyazaki (1997) studies negotiation of adjustment, Fan (1999) analyses management of participation in third party language contact situation, and Yoshimitsu (1981) and Yamada (1994) look at language learners' acquisition processes of pronunciation. A tenet of language management research on acquisition is that researchers should ask themselves "what language problems actually occurred in a particular discourse situation" and "try to find out their customary solutions by speakers in discourse as the point of departure for the selection of a particular variety or a particular feature of the target language." (Neustupný 1994:51)

While there is little argument that as far as "behavior toward language" (Fishman 1972) is concerned, the basic five-stage management framework is important as it provides us a clue to trace both covert and overt cognitive process of human conduct in discourse. Behavior toward sociolinguistic and sociocultural interaction, however, appears to involve much more complicated management processes.

A recent survey conducted by Marriott (1990) and Miyazaki (1997) suggested that at least in the non-grammatical sphere of interaction, neutral evaluation does exist. In other words, the result of evaluation may not be necessarily two-branched (i.e., negative vs. positive) but rather three-branched (i.e., negative vs. positive vs. neutral). Fairbrother (2000) further developed the observations by Marriott (ibid.) and Miyazaki (ibid.) and suggested that through reprocessing de-evaluation of previous evaluations may occur at a later stage. She also stressed that re-processing is vital to the acquisition of intercultural competence. If reprocessing and multi-level evaluation do exist, it is likely that behavior toward non-grammatical interaction should include not only an interactant's recognition of features of a particular discourse interaction, but also the participant's repeated reflection upon previous experiences of interaction and customary conduct such as personal networks. Interactant's idiomatization of her contact interaction, including stereotyping, may play an important role in intercultural management processes.

Speech accommodation theory (cf. Giles 1980) has provided a wide range

of alternative frameworks in social psychological motivations in second language acquisition and acculturation study. The concepts of convergence and divergence, for instance, are important for our understanding of the diversity of pronunciation among second language learners of different backgrounds. Nevertheless, there are aspects of individual learners' micro processes of acculturation which the dichotomy of convergence and divergence cannot fully explain. For example, there are cases where an interactant in contact situations selects to be a guest in a foreign country, by accepting the host participants' hospitality and support, and by trying to follow the ways of the hosts. At the same time, she maintains her own norms. What is important here is that there is the possibility of an "inter-zone" between convergence and divergence.

3. Data

3.1 Informants

The data are interviews with two Korean residents (abbreviated as K1 and K2 hereafter) in Japan. The interviews with K1 were conducted in November 1999, those with K2 in August 1999. The backgrounds of the two informants are:

K1: Korean female in her late 20s, single, a bar hostess, 3 months stay in Japan K2: Korean female in her late 20s, married to a Korean, housewife, 7 years in Japan

K1 had been going to a Japanese language class in a community center for three months and she had only a basic command of greetings and some formulaic phrases. K2, on the other hand, can be considered an advanced speaker although she seems to lack variation of speaking style.

3.2 Methodology

The researcher arranged three meetings with each informant. The meetings lasted on average 90 minutes. A Korean interpreter was involved in the meetings with K1, while only Japanese was used in meetings with K2.

During each meeting, both interaction interviews and recall interviews were conducted. Interaction interviews are used to investigate informants' actual behavior in interaction (Neustupný 1994). The two informants were asked to report on their actual encounters and activities during the preceding six days which included Sunday. The interaction interviews aimed to reveal informants' consciousness of:

- the kind of domains they are involved in;
- the kind of personal networks they possess in such domains; and
- the kind of events they participate in within such personal networks.

In the interaction interviews, informants' verbal reports included narratives and evaluative comments on typical events and episodes. Data of this kind is of great importance for the study of intercultural management as secondary or even tertiary processes may take place. When the informants began to comment on their behavior, the interaction interviews were temporarily suspended and replaced by recall interviews. Informants were given sufficient time to elaborate their comments and to recall previous, related events.

3.3 Intercultural interaction and the personal networks of the informants

Personal networks are not only the path through which information, affection, ideas, knowledge and goods are transmitted (Tichy and Fombrun 1979) but are also the arena where management processes take place. As Neustupný (1994) points out, a personal network is "one of the first prerequisites for the occurrence of speech". He includes "cases when noting, evaluation and adjustment takes place in the process of the selection of participants as speakers and listeners" (p. 64).

The interviews yielded data on the personal networks of K1 and K2. As shown in Table 1 below, both informants' family and friendship domains involve Koreans only (native networks). It is reasonable to say that compared with other domains, the family and friendship domains are more multi-functional in nature and contain substantial density in interaction. Both informants told that they often share their experience of interacting with the Japanese with other native Korean acquaintances. The recurrence of indirect intercultural input, such as other Korean speakers' interaction episodes and attitudes towards Japanese people, was thus confirmed. On the other hand, they form partner networks with the Japanese in the education, work, hobby/culture, and daily life/service domains, on a temporary but regular basis. Rather than getting secondhand information from fellow Koreans, in these partner networks, the informants experience and observe rules how Japanese communicate.

In the following sections, I shall discuss the intercultural management processes which were found to be significant in my data, namely, management at the evaluation stage and management at the adjustment stage.

Table 1. Personal networks of K1 and K2 in terms of interaction domain

Domain	K1	K2
Family domain	– a female relative (Korean)	spouse (Korean, a doctoral candidate)a child (studying in a local kindergarten)
Friendship domain	- two colleagues (=housemates) (Korean)	two university students (Korean)three female neighbors (Korean)
Education domain	 attending a Japanese language class in a community center 	parents in the kindergarten (Japanese)
Work domain	- male customers (Japanese)	- N/A
Hobby/culture domain	- N/A	an elderly lady (Japanese)classmates in a patchwork class (Japanese)
Daily life/service domain	 Korean food shops regular customers at a sauna (Japanese) a neighbor (Japanese) Japanese TV (dramas and news) supermarket (Japanese) restaurants (Japanese) 	 a Chinese greengrocer- supermarket civil servants in a ward office (Japanese)

4. Evaluation of intercultural input in partner networks

Both informants in the survey reported their evaluation of noted deviations in partner networks formed with local Japanese people.

K1 had resided in Japan for only three months when the survey was conducted. In the interviews she said that she evaluated Japanese people's behavior basically according to her own observations in partner networks. Because of her minimal verbal interaction with the Japanese due to her limited proficiency in the language, her evaluations were made through a relatively simple process. K2, on the other hand, had frequent verbal communication with Japanese during her 7-year stay in Japan. This enables her to re-process recurrent intercultural input in subsequent encounters. In other words, K2's evaluations of intercultural input were the product of more than one management process.

I shall explain the two informants' evaluations based on both simple and complex management processes.

4.1 Evaluation based on simple management processes

My data indicate that some of the intercultural input items the informants experienced in partner networks have gone through only one single management process, through which the informants arrived at a satisfactory evaluation and maintained the same evaluation when confronting the same deviation in later intercultural encounters. These items were simply evaluated on the basis of the informants' native norms. It was quite clear that intercultural input which was close to the informants' native norms tended to receive a positive evaluation. The phenomenon where one is attracted by people who hold similar beliefs, values and attitudes is generally referred to as "similarity attraction" in speech accommodation literature (cf. Bishop 1979; Byrne 1969). If we extend the concept of similarity attraction, it is not difficult to indicate the existence of three other types of evaluation. They may be called "difference estrangement", where intercultural input different from native norms receives negative evaluation; "similarity estrangement", where intercultural input similar to native norms receives negative evaluation; and "difference attraction", where intercultural input different from native norms receives positive evaluation. I will next discuss cases of similarity attraction and difference estrangement.

1. Similarity attraction

"Similarity attraction" was significant in my data. K1 noted that some Japanese husbands help their wives carry shopping bags and hold babies when shopping in supermarkets. K1 emphasized that her positive evaluation was not based on her native norms concerning what Korean husbands normally do, but rather on her personal attitude towards husbands in general. Apparently similarity attraction may occur when certain cultural features are favorably regarded by participants even though these features may be absent in their native interactions. Both informants in the survey indicated that Japanese attendants in service encounters were very kind, compared with those in their home country. This was evaluated positively.

2. Difference estrangement

If we accept similarity attraction, it seems reasonable to assume the existence of a counter type. For instance, K1 noted a different custom of smoking in Japan as a deviation from her native norm. While smoking in Korea is admitted only in restricted places such as in a house, she believes that people can smoke in almost any places in Japan. Her evaluation of the different smoking habits in Japan is more or less negative. This type of evaluation process can be named "difference estrangement" and is opposite to similarity attraction.

4.2 Evaluation based on complex management processes

In the reprocessing stage, which refers to stages after the initial management process, my data reveal three types of evaluations, namely, familiarization, cumulative evaluation, and de-evaluation.

1. Familiarization

Familiarization is a covert evaluation phenomenon in the reprocessing stage of intercultural management. A negatively evaluated deviation in the initial management process is re-evaluated in a mostly upward direction. Takeda (1999) reported that one of her Japanese informants got accustomed to the way her foreign counterpart behaved in conversation, and re-evaluated this positively. She re-evaluated partly because she found it more interesting to know the different opinions of her counterpart and could thus disregard the deviations in his conversational behavior. At the beginning of her stay in Japan K1 noted and evaluated negatively the smell of Japanese food which was quite different from Korean food. However, she became familiar with it and later enjoyed going to Japanese restaurants. These cases suggest that familiarization is one of the important factors in maintaining partner networks in contact situations. Apart from familiarizing with sensory noted deviations as in K1's case, selecting the target of evaluations from among many noted deviations, while disregarding others, might play an important role in this process. However, these data are far from sufficient to provide a complete explanation of the mechanism of familiarization.

2. Cumulative evaluation

By encountering similar contact deviations from time to time, interactants come to be consistent in their evaluations, and become confident in their interpretations of others' actions toward them. Fairbrother (2000) calls this cumulative evaluation in the reprocessing stage of intercultural management. In my data, K2 claimed that she used to have a stereotyped image of Japanese people being kind-hearted. Attending a patchwork class in a community center, she experienced Japanese classmates' kindness toward her several times, such as when they re-explained to her the lecturer's explanation. K2 noted the classmates'

actions repeatedly as unexpected deviations, and evaluated them positively. These actions might be one type of host support strategies in contact situations. Her positive cumulative evaluation in the end strengthened her stereotype of the kind-hearted Japanese. However, cumulative evaluation does not necessarily develop a positive image of the interactant's partner networks in contact situations. Muraoka (1999) reports another case in which a negative image of the Japanese was formed. A Filipino mother who had resided in Japan for nine years formed a negative image of the Japanese as being discriminatory after experiencing uneasy events several times.

3. De-evaluation

Another phenomenon that Fairbrother (2000) found is the de-evaluation of previous negative evaluations in the reprocessing stage of intercultural management. De-evaluation is likely to occur when the interactant has opportunities to consult another's different opinions, when she has contradictory experiences by herself, or when negatively evaluated deviations no longer offend her identity and existence. Informant K2 noted two deviations in the education domain. There was no initiative to communicate with her from the parents of her daughter's classmates when she began to take her daughter to the kindergarten. Another noted deviation concerned the lack of greetings between parents in the same kindergarten. The lack of phatic verbal interactions in unfamiliar relationships among the Japanese has been reported elsewhere in studies of intercultural communication (Mizutani and Mizutani 1977). In the initial management process, K2 evaluated these cases negatively, both of which were different from her native norms. However, in the reprocessing stage, she de-evaluated her first negative evaluation, on account that there might be Japanese people who were either interested or not interested in foreigners in the first case, and in the second case she just ignored the deviations. It seems that K2's re-evaluations can be explained by her stable and secured position in Japan, developing Korean native networks both in family and friendship domains, which defended her effectively against Japanese partner groups. Also, taking account of the fact that one day she verbalized her wish to return to her native country as soon as possible, her de-evaluation should be interpreted not as a convergent attitude toward the ways of Japanese interactions, but as an attitude of successfully keeping her distance from them.

Evaluation of intercultural input in native networks

5.1 Reproduction

As already mentioned, episodes and experiences of contacts with partner Japanese networks are often circulated and reproduced within native networks. Novice interactants note the deviations already noted and evaluated by participants in native networks second hand; or they incorporate the evaluative wordings of others into their evaluations of noted deviations in contact interactions. K1 had repeatedly heard from her relative and Korean colleagues in her native networks that what Japanese people said was different from what they were thinking. When she began to work as a hostess in a Japanese bar, she was not able to understand what the Japanese said, since she had very limited competence of Japanese. Instead, she tried to read what Japanese customers were thinking by looking at their faces, but failed to do so. She evaluated this negatively and verbalized it as "I don't know what the Japanese are thinking", borrowed from her Korean relative and colleagues. Two things should be pointed out in this case. Although we cannot calculate the truth value of her report, it is possible that K1's noted deviation is different from what her relative and colleagues suggest. While K1's Korean senior acquaintance claims that the Japanese conceal their intentions, K1 simply failed to read what the Japanese customers wanted by looking at their faces. Secondly, if the first mentioned point is correct, in the process of reproduction, her expression of evaluation borrowed from her senior acquaintance was likely to screen her first noted deviation. Screening in the reproduction process could prepare unexperienced interactants to possess preconceived notions. My informant K2 said that Japanese people might change their relationships with Korean acquaintances once a problem occurred between them. Her negative evaluation and comment, however, lacked noted deviations experienced by herself. This was a reproduction of what her Korean neighbor who had more Japanese partner networks than K2 once said.

5.2 Idiomatization

The evaluative phrases of noted deviations circulated and reproduced within native networks sometimes become rigid expressions, a process that can be called "idiomatization". The informant K2 expressed two different idioms about the attitude and behavior of the Japanese which were adopted from her family network, especially from her husband who was involved in more partner Japanese networks. K2's husband told her repeatedly episodes such as that Japanese conversationalists laugh even if they have different opinions from each other. She generalized his opinion concerning the concept of tatemae and honne which means that the Japanese utilize social intention (tatemae), differently from their real intention (honne). In another case, K2's husband sometimes noted that the Japanese were good at behaving in a group even if they personally were too busy to participate in it, and he evaluated it positively, phrasing it as the Japanese being group conscious. K2 learned these idioms from her family networks, though she had never experienced them herself.

Reproduction and idiomatization in the evaluation stage, which are formed in native networks, may constrain interactants' application of pre-adjustment in the adjustment stage. In the next section, I will examine what principles my informants form to adjust their contact behavior in partner Japanese networks.

6. Adjustment of intercultural input in partner networks

Intercultural input that was noted and evaluated by the informants was also adjusted to in some cases. Three types of adjustment have been identified in the partner network data. They are avoidance strategies, contact strategies, and maintenance of native norms of interaction, respectively.

6.1 Avoidance strategies

Avoidance is a principle of keeping away from anticipated deviations and even from interaction itself as a possible source of deviations. Avoidance strategies are one of the representative strategies in contact discourse interactions, studied elsewhere, especially in the realm of communication strategies (cf. Faerch and Kasper 1983; Muraoka 1992). Avoidance has also been indicated in the study of intercultural interaction, as one type of pre-adjustment occurring prior to a noted deviation, such as avoidance of participation (Asaoka 1987) and avoidance of developing personal networks (Bolitho 1975).

In my data, the informant K1 noted her poor ability in Japanese and evaluated it negatively, because she had been told before by her native networks that she could be misunderstood by the Japanese customers in her work domain. As a result, she reported that she had decided not to talk in Japanese very much. Furthermore, on the basis of her negative evaluation with regard to

the failure of reading the intentions of Japanese male customers, K1 reported that she was cautious when they talked to her, especially concerning their wishes to develop networks with her in her work domain.

These data may represent the significant influence of evaluations made in native networks upon the adoption of avoidance strategies in the adjustment stage.

6.2 Contact strategies

Contact strategies are principles of action which are different both from native and partner norms, but are formed only for interactions in contact situations.

In the area of speech variation, Beebe (1987) pointed out that "speech accommodation of all types was a psychological phenomenon, but has a linguistic reflex", and further suggested that students "may speak of psychological convergence, a situation where the speaker intends to converge, but in reality diverges (i.e., on the linguistic level)."

However, as far as intercultural management is concerned, the opposite may also be possible. Interactants could act as partner participants do, without internalizing the partner's native norms of interactions. Gibson (1988) summarizes this type of acculturation as accommodation without assimilation, based on his research of a group of Iranian immigrants in the U.S.A.

K1 was fond of going to the sauna everyday as many Koreans are, and she was told not to wash off the dirt from her body in the sauna by the Japanese users one day. She noted her deviation and was simply surprised at the different custom (neutral evaluation) in the use of saunas between the two countries. Although she adjusted in accordance with the advice of the Japanese, she reported that her adjustment was not a result of internalization of the Japanese norm, but only that of following the custom in her host country, which could be possibly internalized in the future.

Another type of contact strategy is found in the data of the informant K2. As already introduced, her Japanese classmates re-explained to K2 what the teacher had said in the patchwork class. K2 evaluated the kindness of the Japanese classmates positively and accepted their support even though she understood most of what her teacher said. It is possible to say that K2 herself adopted one of guest strategy as a guest in Japan, while the Japanese classmates employed a supporting strategy as a host in the contact situation with K2.

A type of guest strategy which K2 employs is playing a passive role in interaction, more concretely, taking no initiative to switch on interaction with partner interactants. As already introduced, K2 noted a lack of initiation of communication from the Japanese parents in the kindergarten, and evaluated it negatively once. Then she re-evaluated it, reporting that there are Japanese people who are interested in foreigners and also those who are not. In the end, she adopted a principle not to take the initiative to switch on interactions, but to leave channels open whenever the Japanese might initiate talking to her. Because she still leaves her communication channel to her partner interactants open, this type of guest strategy should be distinguished from avoidance strategies, which try to limit communication channels. Further research is obviously required.

Contact strategies seem to be neither convergent nor divergent in the management of intercultural input. I suggest that participants could maintain contact with partner networks without any significant deviations, while defending interactants from challenges toward their native norms of interaction.

6.3 Maintenance of native norms of interaction

The last principle for the adjustment of intercultural input to be discussed here is to maintain one's own native norms of interaction even in contact situations. This principle does not mean there will be no adjustment towards noted deviations, but that adjustment will occur after positively evaluating one's actions based on one's original native norms in comparison with the noted deviations.

For example, the informant K1 negatively evaluated the Japanese custom of smoking in almost any settings, then positively evaluated her own smoking custom. She reportedly maintained her norm of smoking since her arrival in Japan.

The other informant K2 also negatively evaluated the lack of greetings among the Japanese parents in the kindergarten. She reaffirmed her native norm of greetings, and adjusted by not converging to the norm of the greetings among Japanese parents. She continued to try to greet in the morning when she brought her daughter to the kindergarten.

Interestingly, the maintenance of native norms was found in such situations where the native norms of foreign interactants do not confront partner norms. Norms of interactions vary among the members of a speech community in post-modern societies. There can exist more than one norm for a particular communicative event. If one of those norms of a speech community coincides with a foreign interactant's original norm, it is likely that the conduct of the foreign interactant will be accepted by partner interactants. Also, it is possible to think that our informants might discover partner norms through the actions of their partners which are different from the partners' overt norms of interaction

(Neustupný 1989). For instance, Japanese parents in the kindergarten may also think it is good to greet each other, even though they fail to do so. If this is the case, K2's greeting would be accepted by the Japanese parents. Further investigation is needed to determine whether the coincidence of norms between different interactants is one of the necessary conditions of the maintenance of norms of interaction.

7. Concluding remarks

The analysis above suggests that complex processes of management of intercultural input not only take place within discourse, but also in reprocessing at later stages. In spite of the small corpus of data, this study has revealed intercultural processes which are distinguished from those in native situations. Familiarization, cumulative evaluation and de-evaluation in the reprocessing evaluation stage, and contact strategies, particularly guest strategies in the adjustment stage, represent the existence of various "inter-processes" of intercultural management, apart from convergent and divergent acculturation.

Both reproduction and idiomatization in the evaluation stage and avoidance strategies in the adjustment stage show a clear connection with interaction in native networks. Native networks provide members with idioms and episodes with regard to contact experiences, which may often become norms of interpretation and interaction.

The findings in the present paper also show that the management of intercultural input includes both acquisition and acculturation of the second culture. However, many management processes are yet to be revealed. It is expected that the language management framework will provide new perspectives on the study of intercultural management of intercultural interactions.

Note

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