Tourism and Intercultural Communication: Critical Perspectives

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Travel is shaped by a stereotypical ideology that tourism destinations are sites of intercultural encounters between tourists and locals, and construction of difference often lies at the heart of tourism discourses (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010). Although culture has been a key topic in a sociolinguistics of tourism (Jaworski, Thurlow & Heller, 2014), the scholarship has lacked a focused and systematic attention to the interculturality of tourism communication. Attending to this concern, this proposed panel draws upon critical approaches to intercultural communication (Higgins, 2007; Piller, 2011; Scollon, Scollon and Jones 2012; Zhu Hua, 2014) and asks to what extent are linguistic, ethnic and cultural differences invoked and constructed in tourism discourses, by whom for what purposes. Specifically, we are interested in how culture is made relevant, constructed, promoted, and valorized in tourism discourses, and how culture is explored to (re)produce, maintain or justify relationships of inequality and power in touristic encounters.

Contributors in the panel use a range of discourse analytic and ethnographic approaches to examine the interculturality of tourism communicationa in variety of tourism encounters and destinations in Asia, Europe and North America from both face-to-face and online contexts. Together, we explore questions including, but not limited to:

• How is interculturality addressed in teaching and training discourses for tourists and tourism workers?

• How do tourism promotional materials construct and marketize cultures?

• How can we characterize and explain encounters between tourists, tour guides, and hosts from intercultural perspectives?

• How are tropes of authenticity manipulated in discourses of culture appropriation and commodification?

• How are cultural identities and intercultural competence negotiated in tourism communication?

• How can an intercultural perspective contribute to our understanding of power relations in tourism?

The panel includes seven individual papers accompanied by a short introduction and a discussion session.

 Keywords: tourism, interculturality, discourse, identity, globalization

1. The production of interculturality at a sea turtle ecotourism destination in Hawaiʻi

Dr. Gavin Lamb
University of Hawaii at Manoa

In this ethnographic sociolinguistic study, I examine how a sea turtle tourism destination in Hawaiʻi has become an important site of intercultural negotiation as international tourists, American conservation volunteers, Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners, and other members of the local community converge around these animals for different and often conflicting purposes. Building on a growing body of critical research on the problematic aspects of human interaction with 'charismatic species' in tourism settings, I argue that the posthumanist idea of 'nonhuman charisma' being mobilized in this work offers an important concept for sociolinguistics seeking to investigate the intercultural dimensions shaping tourists' relationships with threatened species and places. Bringing this work into dialogue with sociolinguistic research on stance-taking, I examine how tourists, conservationists and other members of the community enlist sea turtles – a highly charismatic species in Hawaiʻi and worldwide – as intercultural 'boundary objects,' marshaling stances towards these creatures to enact ecocultural identities across boundaries of language, culture, race, and class. Charismatic species are particular animals that have wide public appeal across diverse communities, and are often targeted by an ecotourism industry seeking to commodify proximal tourist encounters with these animals. In addition, charismatic species are also often endangered species that are protected and rehabilitated by conservation campaigns. In Hawaiʻi, this has resulted in both collaboration and conflict between tourism activities and conservation projects centered around sea turtles. This nexus of sea turtle tourism and conservation activity along Hawaiʻi's beaches is in turn generating discourses of intercultural sameness and difference as people strive to make sense of divergent attitudes and behaviors towards sea turtles and their natural habitats. More broadly, I argue that this methodological approach helps bring empirical focus to the dynamic and often problematic entanglements between people and wildlife being produced by a fast growing, global wildlife ecotourism industry.

Keywords: *posthumanism, stance-taking, nexus analysis, human-animal interaction, ecotourism*

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2. Searching for Queen Emma at the International Market Place: The Intercultural Semiotics of Commodified Cultural Heritage Tourism

Ms. Kristen Urada

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Ms. Lin Chen

University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

Ms. Kathleen Griffin

University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

Ms. Michaela Nuesser

University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

Prof. Christina Higgins

University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

This presentation explores the intercultural aspects of a linguistic landscape in a highly touristed location – the International Market Place (IMP), a center for shopping and dining in the heart of Waikīkī, a major tourist destination in Hawaiʻi. While the marketplace is primarily a venue for upmarket retail and expensive restaurants, it is also a site that honors Hawaiian royalty. The IMP is built on land owned by the Queen Emma Land Company (QELC), which was established for Queen Emma Kalanikaumakaʻamano Kaleleonālani Naʻea Rooke, who is highly regarded for establishing The Queen's Hospital at a time when many Hawaiians were suffering from diseases introduced by foreigners. The newly renovated IMP has been designed to honor Queen Emma and her legacy, and its semiotics invite visitors to appreciate not only her contributions to Hawaiʻi, but also to learn more about Hawaiian culture, language, and history.

Through the tools of geosemiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), we explore how the physical linguistic landscape of the IMP juxtaposes invitations to learn about Hawaiian people, history, language and culture alongside invitations to consume. To better understand how visitors experience the site, we also examine how the IMP is interpreted and projected anew in social media, where its identity is recontextualized for future visitors to see. Our analysis shows that the semiotics of history, culture, and consumerism are quite separated in the space, and the semiotics honoring Queen Emma position the relevance of Hawaiian culture in the past. On social media, commercialized tourist activities are foregrounded. Even when cultural semiotics are featured, the hashtags used indicate a stance of "I AM/WE ARE IN HAWAII!," and the usage of the word in parallel with others, such as "Waikiki" and "vacationmode" reveals visitors' ideologies about Hawaiʻi and Hawaiian spaces.

Keywords: *geosemiotics, tourism, Hawaiʻi, commodification, linguistic landscape*

3. Ethnonational stereotypes in intercultural communication training for tourism workers in the Himalayas

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Changes in the work environment have both valorized discursive practices in the workplace and encouraged the teaching and learning of specific intercultural communicative resources to help workers meet the demands of the global economic market. Scholarship on the sociolinguistics of tourism in particular has shown that tourist-host interaction largely reproduces and reinforces the market-oriented communicative practices in order to effectively sell tourism as an object of material exchange (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010). Against this backdrop, this study adopts a critical perspective on intercultural communication (Piller, 2011) and aims to investigate how power differences are instantiated by training tourism workers for communication with the cultural Other in the margins of globalization (Wang et al. 2014). Using tools from linguistic ethnography (Rampton, 2007), the study focuses on an analysis of tour guide training discourse in Nepal in order to investigate the type of communicative repertoires the guides are socialized into as part of the development of their professional competence. The analysis shows that the tour guides learn to strategically essentialize international tourists by constructing and reproducing their dominant ethnonational stereotypes. The diversity of foreign tourists is simplified into a set of tidy, concise, and knowable categories. By learning to paint a monolithic picture of diverse tourists, the tour guides learn strategies of communicative accommodation and tactics of self-representation that prepare them for fleeting encounters with tourists. While seemingly helpful, these stereotypes create a hierarchy between the "first world" tourist and the "third world" worker. The intercultural communication training perpetuates asymmetrical power relations that are channeled through the discourse and manifest as good service and interpersonal rapport between the tourist and the guide. Overall, the findings show that the training produces a culture of servitude that is inexorably intertwined with the availability of low-paid, loyal, multilingual tourism workers in a "third world" context.

Keywords: *interculturality, linguistic ethnography, stereotypes, tourism*

4. Branding authenticity: intercultural communication discourses in marketing a "picturesque" Myanmar

Mr. Sean Smith
University of Hong Kong

In globalized fields of commerce such as tourism, discourses of intercultural communication often play a crucial role in constructing objects of consumption. Myanmar, for instance, is narrated as a redoubt of cultural authenticity amid the global economy's onslaught; in the words of the national Ministry of Hotels & Tourism, Myanmar preserves "a way of life and depth of society that has been lost in many other parts of the world" (Ministry, n.d.). Even as the global tourism industry rapidly gains traction in the country, Myanmar's comparative lack of development is upheld as an emblem of a bygone, "picturesque" Asia, with a unique plurality of cultures that are so far uncorrupted by the modernizing influences of the global market economy. Built around notions of the distant past, rurality, and indigenous cultures, this brand is a valuable commodity: interviews with tourism operators and tourists themselves demonstrate how "authentic" intercultural experiences are utilized to sell services and, by tourists, to mediate a cosmopolitan identity online. Myanmar's branding, however, relies on the embellishment of an "ethno-cultural stereotype" (Piller 2017) that imagines Myanmar as an unparalleled sanctuary where the non-globalized, undeveloped and decidedly "other" world can still be experienced. In reviewing ethnographic work among local tourism operators and foreign tourists, an intercultural communication perspective demonstrates how branding the country as a "picturesque" visage of Asia's past serves to reify global hierarchies of development, while in the process Myanmar's non-linear cultural makeup and emergent global identity are eclipsed by discourses of the pre-modern.

Keywords: *intercultural communication, authenticity, picturesque, tourism, branding*

5 Imaging Chinese in touristic intercultural communication

Dr. Xiaoxiao Chen

Renmin University of China

This study aims to contribute to sociolinguistic studies of tourism (Heller, Jaworski and Thurlow 2014) by examining the host-tourist encounters in *China Daily*'s travelogues about China since 2000 from the critical perspective of intercultural communication (Piller 2017). It explores how cultural identities of different groups of Chinese people are negotiated and realized in tourism communication, and how certain images of Chinese people are utilized to (re)produce, maintain or justify asymmetrical relationships of power in touristic encounters. The research findings include that Chinese locals are hardly engaged in reciprocal communication with tourists; they may function as information sources, tour guides, hosts, servers, and community representatives in touristic intercultural encounters. In any case, Chinese locals are never represented as equals of travel writers. By contrast, the multiracial travel writers (Chinese and foreign) often remain detached and silent in their depictions of Chinese locals, thus making them sound like objective observers, or they may appear as cosmopolitan and mobile in face-to-face tourist-local interactions. This analysis reveals *China Daily*'s attempt to maneuver between catering to the touristic fantasies about China and asserting its uniqueness of culture and identity.

Keywords: *touristic intercultural communication, Chinese cultures, Chinese people, identity*

6. The Other food: Discursive representation of Chinese food and foodways at tourist cooking schools

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Food is an important part of tourism, not just out of physiological needs, but also as an experience of destination culture. Food can also be the main driving factor of travel, indeed the third most important motivation in destination choice (Park, Kim and Yeoman 2019). To the extent that food represents local culture and place identity, various forms of touristic engagement with food can be understood as discourses of intercultural communication (Long 2004, Walter 2017). This paper looks at one type of culinary tourism, tourist cooking classes wherein tourists explore and participate in the foodways of the Other through shopping, cooking, eating as well as talking about food. Data are collected from two cooking schools in Yangshuo, China, a place originally known for its Karst geography but has recently been gaining fame also for its various food events and festivals. Focusing on tourist reviews online, I examine their representation of Chinese food and footways during culinary tourism. Three themes are identified in the representation of Chinese food and foodways: the unsightly and smelly Other; the English-speaking Other; the in(authentic) Other. I suggest that these discourses show the ambivalent and binary nature of Other representation wherein Chinese food and foodways are both desirable and despicable. Yet, such representations are ideologically constant in their reproduction of tourist privilege and cultural superiority.

Keywords: *food, tourism, culture, cooking, China*

7. Touring Linguistic Borderland: Communicating the 'Cultural Divide' in a Bilingual Guided Tour

Dr. Larissa Schedel
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The Swiss German term 'Röstigraben' (roasted potato ditch) humorously denotes the intranational language border between the French- and the Swiss German-speaking parts of Switzerland and refers to cultural differences between the two linguistic communities. In the border town of Murten, which brands itself as a bridge across this cultural divide, the language border has become increasingly touristified (Schedel, 2018); for instance, in bilingual guided tours in which many locals participate. Critical studies on intercultural communication have predominantly focused on international tourism settings to explore how language(s) are used to produce and stylize cultural differences. Yet, the interculturality in domestic tour guiding situations has been overlooked so far. Adopting a critical perspective on intercultural communication (Piller, 2011; Halualani & Nakayama, 2010), this paper therefore proposes to view these tours as discursive space of identification and resistance (Cook, 2010), and explores how linguistic resources are deployed to invoke, negotiate, or challenge cultural and other intersecting identities in tour guide participant interactions. The analysis reveals that the popular imagination of the border as delineating two linguistic territories with different cultures is reinforced in the narratives and linguistic performances during the tour. This leads to an ethnicization and culturalization of speaker categories and erases any diversity that goes beyond the French-German dichotomy. It turns out that essentialist ideologies of the interrelation of space, language, culture, and ethnicity (Auer, 2004) are celebrated to build and to consume a sense of group identity and belonging among the guide and the tour participants, but they are at times also contested. By shedding light on how languages and their boundaries "are called into being" (Pennycook, 2004, 17) and are used in this touristic activity, I aim at unpacking the role of language in the (re)production of culturalized differences, power relations, and inequalities (Thurlow, 2010).

Keywords: *Critical Perspective on Intercultural Communication, Tour Guiding, Linguistic and Cultural Boundary Making, Domestic Tourism;*