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The Ferment and Future of Communication Studies in Asia: Chinese and Japanese Perspectives

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Abstract: This article is a dialogue between Chinese and Japanese scholars on the ferment and future of communication studies in Asia. Questions addressed in the dialogue include: What is the fermenting situation of communication studies in Asia? Why haven't Asian communication researchers discontinued the dominance of Eurocentric communication paradigms yet? What should be the purpose and significance of Asian communication studies? What are those indigenous cultural concepts that can contribute to the development of Asian communication theories? And how should communication studies in Asia be evaluated? [China Media Research. 2006;2(1):1-12].

Keywords: Asiaticity, cultural concepts, dialogue, Eurocentrism paradigm theory building

Guo-Ming Chen: "Ferment" is something like a yeast or enzyme that causes change. It also represents a state of agitation which provides an opportunity for development, and this change or development mirrors the future of the situation. When the concept is applied to communication studies in Asia, it must denote that something is happening turbulently. Before we get into the dialogue of this topic, would you please clarify the fermenting situation of communication studies in Asia?

Yoshitaka Miike: Perhaps it is not too much to say that communication studies in Asia has reached a certain level of maturity. Asian pioneers in the field went to U.S. universities to receive graduate training and returned to Asia to establish and diffuse the academic study of communication. Over the past few decades, they have successfully institutionalized communication research and education on the Asian soil.

In recent years, a number of colleges and universities in Asian nations have launched a new department or school of communication, although a traditional emphasis on journalism and mass communication remains pervasive. Today it is not so difficult for us to find communication textbooks in Asian languages (many of which are actually translations and replications of publications in Western countries, notably in the United States). We can also subscribe to quite a few communication journals with an Asian focus.¹ Moreover, we have at least a dozen professional associations and research institutes for Asian communication studies as well.² There are more Asian students in undergraduate and graduate programs, more Asian scholars at conferences, and more Asian authors in books and journals than before.

However, as an increasing number of Asian scholars and students become familiar with Eurocentric communication theory and research, they realize that such Western knowledge is not perfectly compatible

with the Asian context and do not fully resonate with the Asian experience. They are beginning to question the universal applicability of the metatheory and methodology of Eurocentric communication scholarship and to see the limitations of being dependent on the imported communicative knowledge generated by Westerners for the West.

And yet, we do not seem to have a philosophy or a vision for the future of communication studies in Asia. In the words of Mas log (1983), "Communication research in Asia today can perhaps be described in a nutshell as an adolescent, born of a Western father and an Asian mother, now in search of his own identity and direction" (p. 24). The time is ripe for us to reflect on the past achievements and future directions of Asian communication research. You have been in the field longer than I have. How have you been witnessing continuities and discontinuities in Asian communication studies? What has changed? What has stayed the same?

Chen: Before we move on, let us first examine the concept of "communication" as a daily human interaction and as a field of study. I think there is no doubt that we will all agree that, as a symbolic exchange process, communication is a basic means for human beings in all societies used to reach mutual understanding. However, when we are talking about communication as a subject of study, we will see that the existence or emergence of this subject area is completely defined by Western scholars from the perspectives of Western cultures. Thus, it is not surprising to see Western scholars claim that, for example, Chinese culture lacks a rhetorical tradition, such as argumentation and debate (e.g., Becker, 1986; Oliver, 1971).

Following this line of argument, I can share the exciting sentiment embedded in the above description in which you indicated that more students, scholars, books,

journals, and organizations are involved in exploring and establishing a new world of communication study, be it a world of human communication or a world of the so-called "Asian communication," and from this "Asian communication" we began to dream of new expressions such as "Chinese communication," "Japanese communication," "Korean communication," or others. Sounds encouraging, but what is the reality behind this blossoming state of Asian communication studies? In other words, what kind of "(dis)continuity" can we refer to?

"Continuity" brings constancy into the process of movement. Are we talking about the continuity of Asian communication studies toward the acceptance of Western dominance in theory and methodology? Toward the distorted focus of Asian communication studies on Journalism and Mass Communication imported from the West a half century ago? Or about the discontinuity by fusing indigenous cultural traditions in correcting the all-embracing influence of Western communication paradigms?

Miike: No one would deny that communication is a symbolic exchange process. After all, as Goonasekera and Kuo (2000) opined, "Human beings are meaning searching, meaning creating, and meaning interpreting creatures. Interpretation and negotiation of meaning is universal and central to human communication" (p. xi). And the impact of this process of meaning interpretation and negotiation on the quality of our life is deeply felt by each and every one of us. Dissanayake (2003) is right in saying that "The inescapable fact is that communication is a central fact of social life anywhere in the planet, and the way in which we conceptualize, examine and understand communication has profound and far-reaching consequences" (p. 18).

Hence, it is indeed imperative for us to continue our sustained scholarly commitment to disentangle the complexities and paradoxes of communication, whether in the West or in the East. Nevertheless, because the priority on a certain channel over others and the dominance of culture-bound models deprive us of our ability to see variety and diversity in humanity and communication, I believe that we should discontinue the distorted focus on media communication and the uncritical and blind acceptance of the Eurocentric metatheory and methodology.

Communication is not simply a matter of speaking and listening. Nothing is more difficult for us to study than communication if we take this subject very seriously. Communication is indissolubly linked with our deeper sense of being human. It shapes, and is shaped by, our self-conceptions in interpersonal relationships, our positions and roles in society, our memories of historical events, our on-going struggles, our aims of life, and what we think of as important and ethical. That is why it is not easy to change our

communication styles and practices. Surface patterns of communication are reflections of deep structures of worldview, and different cultures nurture different structures of worldview. Forms and functions of communication differ from culture to culture. Therefore, we will never gain a rich and profound understanding of the subtleties and pluralities of human communication until we take culture into due consideration.

You mentioned that some Western scholars claimed the lack of a rhetorical tradition in Chinese culture. Morrison (1972) once went so far as to say that Japan was a "rhetorical vacuum." Japanese communication forerunners such as Ishii (1985, 1992) later disputed his claim and argued that an indigenous rhetoric had existed in Japanese society. Although we occasionally responded to such ethnocentric claims on the part of Western scholars, we have not thoroughly appraised even what communication means in the Asian context.³ We can scrutinize Asian words and phrases related to communication to see how Asians have conceptualized the nature of human interaction (Miike, 2003c).

It is evident that our understanding of communication and other related concepts such as communication competence and communication ethics has been Eurocentric in many respects (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Shuter, 2003). There is a real need to seriously reexamine Western paradigms of communication and transform them in light of the Asian worldview. I am sure that I am not alone in sharing Dissanayake's (2003) sentiment: "If communication is to become a more meaningful mode of inquiry in Asia, and indeed in the rest of the world, it has to connect with indigenous intellectual roots, situated knowledges and local modes of thinking" (p. 18).

But this sentiment is not new at all. As a matter of fact, similar opinions have been repeatedly voiced over the last couple of decades (e.g., Chen, 2002; Chen & Starosta, 2003; Dissanayake, 1981, 1989, 2003; Gordon, 1998/1999; Ishii, 1998, 2001a, 2004a, 2004b; Jia, 2000; Kuo & Goonasekera, 2000). Then, before we exchange each other's detailed vision of the future of communication studies in Asia, I feel compelled to ask you the following question: Why do you think Asian communication scholars have not yet discontinued the dominance of Eurocentric communication paradigms?

Chen: Having similar views on the meaning of communication or its related concepts between the East and the West is not a problem at all, because after all communication as a process of symbol exchanging is a universal phenomenon in human societies. The question here is that, in addition to the similarities, could we recognize and appreciate possible differences among human groups?

For example, in a previous study I tried to demonstrate that the concept of "communication" from the Chinese perspective was not perceived identically as

that from the Western perspective (Chen, 2002). In Chinese society, “communication” can refer to multiple activities, including *chuan, bo, yang, liu, bu, xuan, tong*, and *di*.⁴ Moreover, a great variety of channels used for formal and informal communication in Chinese society show differences between Chinese and Western views on communication. How should we treat these differences regarding the core nature of communication in the process of theorizing about it? In other words, what kind of role should these conceptual differences play when Asian scholars “study” human communication?

This question may infer that, unlike the discipline of physics or mathematics, there is the so-called “Chinese communication” or “Japanese communication,” because the difference toward perceiving or practicing communication is always rooted in the historical, cultural, and social influences (Chen, 2004a). However, as you asked, why do scholars in Asia continue to embrace Western paradigms in studying their own communication behaviors? I think, from a Chinese perspective, there are two reasons for this: (1) the lack of knowing one’s own cultural traditions and (2) the lack of a critical mind.

First, the social and political upheaval caused by modernization movements in Asia in the late 19th and early 20th century deterred people from learning their own cultural heritages, which in turn led them to misunderstand or even reject their own culture or way of life. Without knowing who or what one’s cultural identity is, there is no way for local scholars to study human communication from their own cultural perspective.

Second, the lack of a critical mind is caused by either insufficient academic training or language deficiency. This situation is further complicated by scholars’ indolence in searching for a new or indigenous paradigm of communication because of scarce academic resources or the personal eagerness for fame based on immediate advantages. Thus, due to the lack of discipline, scholars may be unconsciously overwhelmed by those sophisticated Western paradigms, and/or consciously take advantage of Western paradigms for a quick fix of research problems and for illusive personal gains.

This can explain why the works of those well-established Western scholars (e.g., William B. Gudykunst, Edward T. Hall, and Geert Hofstede) are wholeheartedly and uncritically adopted and treated as bibles by Chinese scholars in studying Chinese communication behaviors. I don’t mean that this practice is not acceptable or not valid. What I try to argue is that all the paradigms originated from Western cultures must be rigidly tested before they are fully transplanted to another culture (Chinese culture in this case), especially at this time when more and more

Chinese scholars received solid training in the discipline from the West. I suspect that similar problems may also happen in Japan, right?

Miike: You pinpointed the exact problems in communication studies in Japan as well. What is at issue is not whether we should learn from the West, but how we should learn from the West. When I read Kim’s (1995) article where he depicted the way the intellectual power structure in the discipline of psychology had been perpetuated in training, publications, and funding and research, I felt as if he was talking about the communication discipline. According to him, this structure reproduces the donor-recipient model. Scholars in the “mecca” of psychology (i.e., the United States) are regarded as generators of knowledge (especially, theoretical knowledge), and “It is the role of East Asian students, as recipients of knowledge, to absorb, learn, and adopt this information to the best of ability” (pp. 671-672).⁵

I hasten to add, however, that, when we carefully observe this structure, we notice that we have *not* received knowledge from *all* scholars in the West. In point of fact, we are quite ignorant even of the works of Asian pioneers in the United States and Asian American communication scholars. Their trials and tribulations must be relevant to communication studies in Asia. I am often shocked to know that many Asian scholars and students of communication have not thoroughly read even two groundbreaking books, D. Lawrence Kincaid’s (1987) *Communication Theory: Eastern and Western Perspectives* and Wimal Dissanayake’s (1988) *Communication Theory: The Asian Perspective*.

What have we learned from African or Hispanic communication scholars in the West? We are very quick to translate White (usually male) authors’ Eurocentric books into Asian languages for the Asian audience, but we are not so enthusiastic about non-White authors’ non-Eurocentric works including works of other Asian authors of different ethnicities. I wonder if the racist mentality in the minds of Asians hinders multicultural learning. We know little about, say, African theories of communication.

What makes the status quo more complicated is that English-language learning helps this intellectual power structure remain unchanged. At least in the case of Japan, many communication courses are offered in the Department of English. English majors are, by and large, more fascinated with the lifestyles and worldviews of White people. In the world of *eikaiwa* (literally, English conversation) with White teachers, the racist ideology is often fostered (Lummi, 1977). While some realize that the colonization of mind is taking place in this structured landscape, many continue to familiarize themselves more with the West and less with the East in order to communicate better with “native speakers of English” (i.e., Whites in English-speaking countries).⁶

As for the lack of knowledge of our own cultural traditions, I would like to stretch your point a bit further. To be sure, we need to know our own cultural traditions, but we also ought to use them as essential resources for theory building. We must realize that Asian languages, religious-philosophical traditions, and historical struggles are vast storehouses from which we can develop concepts, principles, propositions, and models for communication studies in Asia (e.g., Ishii, 1998, 2004b; Sitaram, 1995, 2004). I broadly addressed this issue of culture as text and culture as theory in my recent writings (Miike, 2004b, 2005a).

Communication research in Asia is always the study of culture and communication. Asian communication experts have constantly dealt with Asian cultures. It is my contention, however, that many of them have only seen their cultures as texts or peripheral targets of Eurocentric analysis, not theories or central resources of Asiatic insight. They have studied Asian communication not from Asian perspectives but from European perspectives. In other words, they have engaged in Eurocentric studies of Asian communication.

Bryant and Yang (2004), who conducted a content analysis of articles on Asian issues in nine "mainstream" communication journals, disclosed that all the theories adopted by the 65 analyzed articles were of Western origin, and concluded that "One obvious area in which change is sorely needed is in the area of theory construction" (p. 145). While I do not necessarily subscribe to the legitimacy of their scope of investigation and to their suggestions for the future, it is fair to say that "little emphasis [is placed] on sophisticated theory construction, which is heart and soul of the creation and advancement of knowledge in any discipline" (p. 145). Bryant and Yang (2004) noted:

With this seemingly wholesale adoption of theories from the West comes tacit acceptance of the sorts of epistemological and metatheoretical intellectual infrastructure that has been derived from philosophers and theorists with Western mindsets. Implicit within any epistemological perspective are major assumptions that supposedly represent the essential elements of a culture, such as the foundational view of human beings that is represented, the nature of causality that is inherent in the model, the perception of the locus of control of the individual (i.e., determinism, free will, and the like), the essential nature of political reality, the relative importance of individuals versus community, the relationship between thought and action, and manifold other considerations that are part of the foundations of our ways of knowing. These assumptions creep, often unwittingly, into all of our theories.

If you compare and contrast the essential philosophical and theological works, the arts and crafts, and the great literature of the East and the West, a

substantial number of obtrusive differences routinely occur. This would seem to speak against wholesale adoption, without essential modification, of many communication theories... [We should] routinely challenge the adoption of communication theories derived from Western mindsets without reconciliation of any parts of the theory or model that are not concordant with Eastern ways of knowing, thinking, symbol making, and action. We know that this is a "tall order," but this is the true challenge of multiculturalism, and nowhere is such diversity more acutely needed than in our essential theory construction. (pp. 145-146)

Inspired by Molefi Kete Asante's (1998) Afrocentric idea (see Miike, 2005b), I have propounded Asiatic studies of Asian communication, where Asian communication is researched from Asian theoretical perspectives. In order to capture Asians as subjects and agents of their communicative worlds, we must place Asian cultures as theoretical resources at the center of inquiry in describing, deciphering, and discerning the premises and practices of Asian communication. Here, I believe, lies the purpose and significance of Asian communication studies. Once again, however, this assertion does not mean that I totally deny the value of Eurocentric studies of Asian communication.

In contrast to my Asiatic position, Wang and Shen (2000) maintained that Asian communication researchers should not limit themselves to Asia or draw away from the goal of universalized theory formation. Wang and Shen (2000) presumed that generalizations which at least imply the potential for universality are inevitable for theories, and that a theory whose relevance or validity is confined to a certain group of people or to a specific geographical region is, by this criterion, not yet a theory. Accordingly, Asian theories of Asian communication are not theories. The effort to construct them prevents us from searching for solid and sophisticated theories that are universally valid.

I do not agree with Wang and Shen that all theories should be intended to explain universal phenomena. Nor do I see cultural particularity and human universality in such an oppositional way. My response is that by focusing on our cultural locations and generating culturally specific theories, we will be better prepared to enrich the existing *Eurocentric* body of knowledge and to explore the possibility of building universal theories. Cultural particularity leads to human universality. We do not need to walk away from cultural particularity to reach human universality.

What do you think about these contrasting positions? In your view, what should be the purpose and significance of Asian communication studies? What are the consequences and pitfalls of applying Western theories of communication to explain the Asian phenomenal world?

Chen: Your argument raises some provoking issues. Among them, the issue regarding the need of theory development for Asian communication deserves further speculation, and the issue is more or less related to the questions you asked above.

If universal generalization is the main criterion for theory, as indicated by Wang and Shen (2000), then communication theories developed by Western scholars based on Western cultures should be feasible in explaining communication behaviors of people on different continents, including Asians. Is this true?

I think this question touches the level of abstraction of a theory. Most of us are familiar with the differentiation between grand theory and mid-range theory; the former is broad and abstract, and the latter is much more precise and has a restricted focus. A theory of "communication" can be a grand theory, which tends to possess the element of universality and can be applied to all human beings, no matter which culture they belong to. That is why I said previously that communication as a process of symbol exchanging is a universal phenomenon in human societies. Most theories in natural science should belong to this group, thus it would be inconceivable to say that there is "Chinese physics," "Japanese mathematics," or "Asian chemistry."

However, when we are dealing with the mid-range theory, e.g., motivation theories in management process, we begin to see that the impact of culture demands theoretical particularity, so that behaviors of a specific group of people can be more accurately explained. It is from this level that we do see the problem of applying Western communication theories to another cultural context. A good example to demonstrate this problem is Maslow's classic theory of motivation. Based on the study of American employees, Maslow (1943, 1954) suggested that physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs are the five basic, hierarchical human needs that motivate behavior after the needs are satisfied one by one from the physiological level. For half a century, Maslow's theory has been uncritically accepted as a universally applicable one, but, according to Adler (2002), more and more recent studies have shown that the emphasis of these hierarchical human needs varies in different cultures.

The variation of communication behaviors due to cultural differences provides a foundation for justifying the potential validity of using concepts such as *bao* [reciprocity] (Holt & Chang, 2004), *mientze* [face] (Huang, 2004), *guanxi* [interrelation] (Ma, 2004), *he xie* [harmony] (Chen, 2001), *li* [rites] (Xiao, 2004), *keqi* [politeness] (Fang, 2004), *feng shui* [the art of space arrangement] (Chen, 2004b), *qi* [vital energy] (Chung, 2004), *yuan* [destined relations] (Chang, Holt, & Lin, 2004), and *zhang bu* [divination] (Chuang, 2004) to develop mid-range theories to particularize and

illustrate the characteristics of Chinese communication behaviors that are distinct from others. Using *enryosasshi* and silence to theorize the way of Japanese communication reveals another possibility and necessity of cultural particularization (Ishii, 1984; Ishii & Bruneau, 1994).

Hence, I don't see why Asian or Chinese communication theories are not theories. However, the dilemma is that, paradoxically, "theory building" itself is a Eurocentric concept which aims to explain and predict the phenomena by specifying relations among variables on the basis of the linear reasoning process. While applying Western theories of communication to explain Asian behaviors may run the risk of oversimplifying or misinterpreting the phenomena, employing the linear reasoning method in theorizing Asian communication may as well face the problem of infeasibility. For the purpose of discussion, let me set aside this method issue and pursue the next question: Who are the qualified persons for developing Chinese, Japanese, or Asian communication theories? Should they be scholars in situ of the local cultures or Asian scholars in Western academic institutions?

The question looks trivial and unrelated to the discussion, but it actually is essential in talking about building Asian communication theories. The task by nature is a movement in decentering the Eurocentric dominance or in de-marginalizing the study of Asian communication. Ideally, the local scholars should be the most qualified group for this task of developing Asian communication theories, because they are rooted in, and tend to better understand, the local cultures where their more tenacious cultural identity is fostered. Unfortunately, the lack of ability in Western languages, very often referring to English, and less familiarity with Western cultures often lead to the difficulty of sharing their thoughts with Western scholars, and that together with the problem of their uncritical mind, as previously mentioned, makes it quite difficult for scholars to accomplish this task.

On the other hand, Asian scholars trained and teaching or doing research in the West seem to represent the other qualified group for developing Asian communication theories to challenge Eurocentric paradigms. Ironically, while this group of scholars may be well equipped with their own and Western cultural knowledge, they need to rely on English in the argument when they construct Asian communication theories in order to persuade and be recognized by their Western colleagues. Moreover, to be effective in the process of sharing thoughts with their Western colleagues, they often cultivate a more intricate or even peculiar political attitude or a swinging cultural identity. Thus, confined by these conditions, it is extremely difficult to find or produce influential non-Western scholars, such as Edward W. Said or Gayatri C. Spivak,

in this category. Therefore, how to bridge the gap between the two groups of scholars through dialogue and collaboration should be the key to the success of building Asian communication theories.

I am wondering, if the plausibility of building Japanese communication theories is warranted, what will be those culturally bound concepts that can contribute to the development of, say, Japanese communication theories?

Miike: There are many cultural concepts that can be pressed into service for developing Japanese theories of communication. In addition to *enryo* and *sasshi* (see also Hasegawa, 1997) that you mentioned, scholars and students of Japanese culture and communication can explore *amae* (Miike, 2003b), *awase* and *sunao* (Tezuka, 1992), *giri* and *ninjo* (Minami, 1971), *kotodama* (Hara, 2000, 2001), *marebito/ijin/gaijin* (Ishii, 2001b), *(ne)mawashi* (Nishiyama, 2000; Kume, 1996; Saito, 1982), *on* (Lebra, 1976), and *uchi, soto, omote, and ura* (Lebra, 2004). Religious-philosophical ideas such as the Buddhist concept of *en* (Ishii, 1998) and the Shinto concept of *musubi* (Hara, 2003) are also useful lenses through which to look at cultural aspects of Japanese communication.

Concepts are vital to theories. In order to construct distinct Asiatic theories of communication, it is necessary to establish Asian concepts in Asian languages. In undertaking this immeasurably valuable task, however, I think that Asiaticists must keep three things in mind. First, Asiaticists should pay well-balanced attention both to formal concepts based on religious-philosophical foundations and to informal concepts rooted in folk cultures. Whether good or bad, Asian religious-philosophical traditions such as Confucianism have impacted the way Asian societies are structured. It is important to understand classical concepts in such “elite” discourse in order to observe how communication systems operate in Asia. At the same time, it is also important to grasp current concepts in Asian “everyday” discourse so as to capture the complex and conflicting views on Asian cultures and communication.

Second, Asiaticists should consider connections among various concepts so that they can holistically reveal the deep structure of Asian cultural worldviews and values. As you once pointed out at a conference, Asian communication professionals have thus far focused exclusively on *one* Asian concept and detailed it in depth as it relates to communicative interactions, but they have often failed to locate it in a larger picture of the culture and communication landscape. Your harmony theory of communication (Chen, 2001, 2004c) is a good model for emulation for this next step.

Third, Asiaticists should make Asiatic comparisons of cultural concepts and their communicative implications. Asian communication

specialists have been so eager to compare Asian concepts with Western concepts but have directed little attention to how Asian concepts in different Asian languages converge and diverge (Miike, 2003c). Japanese communication scholars, for instance, can open up innovative and productive lines of inquiry by comparing and contrasting the Thai concept of *kreng jai* (Chaidaroon, 2003) and the Japanese concept of *enryo*, the Filipino concept of *pahiwatig* (Mendoza, 2004, Mendoza & Perkinson, 2004) and the Japanese concept of *sasshi*, the Chinese concept of *wairen* (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998) and the Japanese concept of *gaijin*, and the Korean concept of *cheong* (Choi & Choi, 2001) and the Japanese concept of *ninjo* (see Miike, 2003a, for other possible Asiatic comparisons).

I foresee that communication research in Asia has incredible possibilities in this direction. And yet, with reference to such a promising project, I would like to raise one more issue. That is, how should we evaluate our theory building activities? I concur with you that theory building itself is Eurocentric. If we do not formulate theorems and axioms that can be empirically tested within the social scientific paradigm, our ideas are often labeled “atheoretical.” That is probably a reason why Eurocentric researchers “cannot find” any Asian theory of communication.

Is there *the* universal definition of theory? Is there *the* right way to do research? Are there definite steps to follow for theory building? Are there absolute standards to evaluate theory? Asian scholars often problematize Western particular concepts or theories, but do not confront these metatheoretical and methodological questions. The time seems to be long overdue for Asiaticists to tackle such fundamental issues of metatheory and methodology.

In my opinion, “it is not so meaningful to seek to construct Asiatic theories of communication if they need to be ultimately tested against the Eurocentric research worldview in order to become legitimate theories” (Miike, 2003c, p. 51). It is frustrating for me to see that Eurocentric researchers can claim the objectivity and universality of their communication theories without taking non-Western cultures into account. Western intellectual hegemony makes it easier for them to aver that their theories are universal or universally tested. They are rarely accused of their ignorance of non-Western knowledge. If Asiatic scholars neglect the Western knowledge, however, they are blamed for negligence, even when their focus of study is Asian communication. They are likely to be criticized for not touching on Eurocentric theories of communication.

According to Asante (1998), objectivity is, more often than not, “a kind of collective subjectivity of European culture” (p. 1). He contends that non-Western scholars are under a rhetorical condition in hierarchical

discourse where “the status quo is never called upon to prove its objectivity, only the challengers to the status quo are asked to explain their objectivity” (Asante, 1999, p. 5). In order to challenge this intellectual power structure, Asian communication researchers ought to create and follow Asian rules for Asian games. We should not feel inferior when we cannot play well in a field where “the rules of the game are different for different players” (Asante, 1998, p. 27). Even if our initial attempts look immature or less sophisticated on a different playground, are they still our endeavors for our indigenous and independent knowledge? Aren’t they our ideas in our own right?

You posed an important question in the previous exchange: Who are qualified theorists of Asian communication? Although I do not underestimate the impact of our physical location on our scholarship, I would say that our Asiatic consciousness and commitment are key to qualification. Whether we are in the East or in the West, qualified theorists of Asian communication must remain committed to the study of Asian communication from Asian perspectives. They must stay focused on drawing and detailing many maps of the past, present, and future of Asia with our own pen and ink. Some maps can be used by non-Asians. Others can be used by other Asians. Then, we can fulfill our roles in world maps. This is how I see Asian contributions to communication studies in the global society.

What do you think about the issue of evaluation? In your view, what are Asian contributions to communication studies in the global society?

Chen: It is confusing when, on the one hand, you said that Asian communication scholars should avoid being labeled by Western scholars as “atheoretical” by formulating theorems and axioms for being empirically tested with the social scientific paradigm, and on the other hand, should create Asian rules for Asian games by studying Asian communication from Asian perspectives. What kind of these Asian rules will be employed if the game must follow the Eurocentric thinking paradigm? It is never wise to impose one’s paradigm on others. For example, the impact of Taoism and Buddhism on Asian (especially Chinese) communication behaviors is enormous, but using the social scientific paradigm to harness these two schools of thoughts is simply unfit and inappropriate (Chuang & Chen, 2003; Ge, 1986; Herrigel, 1971; Liu, 1991; Zhou, 2002).

I guess what you tried to say is that in the process of developing Asian communication studies, Asian scholars should be rooted deeply in their cultural soil and at the same time understand the Western practice. This is the right direction. As Sun Zi said, “Better the devil you know than the devil you don’t,” to achieve one’s goal. It is critical for one to know oneself and

one’s counterparts. However, the rule for this knowing game should be a negotiating process, rather than one imposed by each side of the players.

It is here that I see the importance of dialogue between Eurocentric and Asiatic paradigms (and Afrocentric paradigm, of course) in this globalizing society. The spirit of dialogue is embedded in the practice of tolerance, which leads to a state of active balance between the two parties. Only through dialogue can different centers dissolve the opposition to one another and possibly reach a state of cultural hybridization, while each individual cultural identity is still valued and sustained. This kind of dialogue is similar to the Taoist idea of “realty dialogue,” which indicates that the polarization of the two parties is transformed into a state of creativity and harmony through mutuality. It is as well reflected in *I Ching*’s discourse of “The successive movement of *yin* and *yang* constitutes what is called the Tao.” The continued interaction between the two polar forces on the basis of equality leads to creativity.

Regarding the question of evaluation, I am not sure if I am able to answer it. Evaluation requires criteria. When we are talking about the evaluation of Asian communication studies, what criteria should we apply? Validity, scope, consistency, adequacy, utility? As mentioned previously, Asian communication studies is still in its adolescent stage and greatly shadowed by the Eurocentric paradigm, it is not the harvest time yet and therefore is deficient in every aspect of evaluation. Thus, to keep working and endeavor to create a stage of dialoging with different paradigms is what Asian communication scholars should pursue.

Finally, as a closing remark, a caution is necessary for using terms such as “Asiatic,” “Afrocentric,” or “Eurocentric.” These concepts reflect the inherent problem of overgeneralization and stereotyping in thinking. Although many similarities exist, the remarkable variety within each center cannot be ignored (Chen & Starosta, 2003). While pursuing the ideal of establishing a sound and systematic study of Asian communication, how to balance the internal dynamic diversity remains another austere task that Asian communication scholars need to face.

Miike: I apologize for the lack of clarity on my part. I did not mean that Asian communication scholars should avoid being labeled by Eurocentric researchers as “atheoretical” by conforming to their way of formulating theorems and axioms. I was simply describing a kind of predicament that Asiaticists face in the Eurocentric world of communication studies.

Maybe, as you said, it is too premature to come up with Asiatic evaluation criteria. The use of Asian symbols as analytical tools, the rootedness in Asian historical trajectories and religious-philosophical principles, the resonance with Asian communicative

experiences, the critique of the domination of Western theory and practice in light of the Asian worldview, the existence of detailed contextual information, the in-depth review of indigenous literature in Asian languages, and practical suggestions for social change in Asian societies that help solve their local problems. These are random thoughts that came to my mind.

At the end of our dialogue, I would like to note that I am envisioning the “transformative” Asiatic project—a project that is always taking new ideas and different perspectives from as many Asian cultures and peoples as possible and constantly changing the conceptual base of knowledge (Miike, 2005a). While current Asiatic theoretical assumptions and propositions (Miike, 2004a, 2004b) do not project the dynamic and diverse nature of Asia (Chen, 2004d), they are points of departure, not points of arrival.

It is my intention to advance Asiaticity as a way of understanding the commonality and complexity of the Asian experience through Asian languages, religious-philosophical traditions, and historical struggles as vital resources for theory building (Miike, 2003a, 2003c). We must expand our communicative knowledge beyond the traditional geographical focus of study (i.e., Cultural China, India, Japan, and South Korea). No doubt, our portraits of Asian communication are very much elite, male-centered, heterosexual-oriented, and nationalistic. Hence, there is a great deal of room for transformation in our extant knowledge of Asian cultures and communication (see Miike & Chen, 2003).

I have so many things that I wish to discuss with you. I hope we will have another dialogue in the not-too-distant future. I feel our dialogue is more Asiatic than Eurocentric. It has not been very common for a Chinese scholar and a Japanese scholar to engage in a metatheoretical conversation about the future of communication studies in Asia. Thank you for taking the lead in this important project.

Chen: “*Zhi duan qing chang*” [The pen is unable to fully express the thought in such a limited space], we shall continue the dialogue in the near future.

Notes:

1. A partial list of such journals includes *Asian Communication Research* (South Korea), *Asian Journal of Communication* (Singapore), *Communicator* (India), *Human Communication: A Journal of the Pacific and Asian Communication* (USA), *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* (UK), *Journal of Development Communication* (Malaysia), and *Keio Communication Review* (Japan).

2. For example, we can join or contact the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) in the Philippines, the Association for Chinese

Communication Studies (ACCS), the Chinese Association of Communication (CAC), the Chinese Communication Association (CCA), the Chinese Communication Society (CCS), the Communication Association of Japan (CAJ), the Communication Association of Korea (CAK), the Asian Media Information and Communication Center (AMIC) in Singapore, and the Institute for Media and Communication Research (IMCR) at Keio University in Japan.

3. Miike (2004b) formulated five propositions on human communication from an Asiatic perspective: (1) Communication is a process in which we remind ourselves of the interdependence and interrelatedness of the universe; (2) Communication is a process in which we reduce our selfishness and egocentrism; (3) Communication is a process in which we feel the joy and suffering of all sentient beings; (4) Communication is a process in which we receive and return our debts to all sentient beings; and (5) Communication is a process in which we moralize and harmonize the universe.

4. According to Chen (2002), the meaning of communication in traditional China refers to:

(1) *Chuan* - means “to turn, to revolve,” referring to delivering or forwarding a message, teaching knowledge and skills, recording a person’s life, and orally distributing information.

(2) *Bo* - means “to sow seed,” referring to spreading or disseminating messages.

(3) *Yang* - means “to rise up and flutter (as a flag), to flourish, to manifest,” referring to consciously making a message or person flourishing or manifesting in public.

(4) *Liu* - means “to flow (like water),” referring to a process in which one’s reputation or virtuous message is disseminated naturally and unintentionally.

(5) *Bu* - means “the woven cloth,” referring to the downward process of announcing or disseminating organized information or government order to the public.

(6) *Xuan* - means “the emperor’s room or the imperial decree or edict,” referring to the dignified declaration or proclamation of emperor’s order.

(7) *Tong* - means “unobstructed,” referring to the free flow of oral communication.

(8) *Di* - means “to deliver or exchange,” referring to the exchange or delivery of materials via, for example, the courier system. (pp. 256-257)

5. We may find debates and discussions over the need for Asian indigenous psychologies highly relevant to the ferment and future of communication studies in Asia. See, for example, Enriquez (1992), Ho (1988, 1998), Misra and Gergen (1993), and Sinha (1986, 1996).

6. See, for instance, Befu (2000) and Tsuda (1986) who discussed implications of the dominant use of English for our professional and personal exchanges

across countries and cultures. Lauf (2005), who content-analyzed "major international journals" in the field of communication, speculated that scholars from non-English-speaking countries are disadvantaged in publishing research because U.S. editors and reviewers are not prepared to make a fair decision about international manuscripts written by non-native speakers of English. In passing, his analysis demonstrated that "National diversity of ['major international'] communication journals is very low due to a dominance of authors from English-speaking countries and U.S. authors in particular" (p. 139).

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