

On Studying Interethnic Communication between the Hakka and Other Ethnic Groups in Taiwan

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Abstract: It was not until the lifting of the martial law in 1989 that Taiwanese society has begun to recognize the importance of multiculturalism and the existing minority ethnic groups including Hakka, Indigenous Peoples, Waishengen, and Hsinchuming. The Hakka ethnic group, Taiwan's second largest ethnic group, has been "invisible" for many years until the Hakka Language Movement in 1988 (Lee, 2009). Drawing from the theory of a contextual model of interethnic communication proposed by Kim (2005), the current study examines the interethnic relationships between the Hakka and the other ethnic groups in the present Taiwan. Methods of social survey and in-depth interview are employed. Seven hundred and seventy-seven Hakka respondents filled in the survey containing questions about their interethnic interactive behaviors. Twenty Hakka respondents participated in the in-depth interviews. The results verify Kim's contextual theory of interethnic communication. Limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research as well as how to improve interethnic relationships in practice are discussed.

Keywords: Hakka; intercultural communication; contextual theory of interethnic communication

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication has become a prominent field of study within the communication discipline since the 1980s (Chen & Starosta, 1998). Over the years, intercultural communication has become an umbrella term to contain all aspects of communication that involve cultural differences. One of the subfields of intercultural communication is interracial communication or interethnic communication. Past research on interracial communication defined it generally as communication between people of different racial groups within the same nation-state (Blubaugh & Pennington, 1976). Interethnic communication is used interchangeably with interracial communication which refers to communication between two people from different ethnic groups (Orbe & Harris, 2008). The present study intends to examine the interethnic communication patterns and behaviors of the five Taiwanese ethnic groups (Ho Lok, Hakka, Waishengen, Indigenous Peoples, Hsinchuming).

It was not until after the lifting of the martial law in 1989 that Taiwanese society has begun to recognize the importance of multiculturalism of the minority groups including Hakka, Indigenous Peoples, Waishengen, and Hsinchuming, as well as the interactions and relationships among the five ethnic groups. Among the five Taiwanese ethnic groups, the Ho Lok are the majority group with approximately 70% of the total population, the Hakka ethnic group is the second largest group counting approximately 20% of the population, Waishengen

the third, followed by Indigenous Peoples (the fourth), and Hsinchuming (the fifth). Due to political, social and economic situations in Taiwan, the Hakka has been “invisible” for years until the Hakka Language Movement launched in 1988 by the Hakka elites (Lee, 2009).

Methods of survey and in-depth interview are employed to observe and obtain personal experiences and stories told by the respondents living in Taoyuan, Hsinchu, and Miaoli regions based on their daily interactions with people other than their own ethnic group. The main purpose of the present study is to utilize the Western concept of interethnic communication proposed by Kim (2005) and other intercultural communication scholars (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009; Schaafsma, et al., 2010) to interpret the communicative behaviors of the Taiwanese ethnic groups.

2. Theoretical Framework

Guided by Kim’s (2005) theory of interethnic communication, the current study aims to examine the phenomena of interethnic interaction between the Hakka and the other ethnic groups in the regions of Taoyuan, Hsinchu, and Miaoli in Taiwan. Kim (2005) proposed a contextual theory of interethnic communication, focusing on the interethnic behavior of a single communicator, which explains communication behaviors (or activities) of individuals when they encounter a set of societal, situational, and psychological forces that make up the context for particular interethnic behaviors (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009). The theory asserts that the behavior and the context together co-constitute the basic interethnic communication system, operating simultaneously in a dynamic interplay, each affecting the other. Interethnic communication is, thus, treated not as a specific analytic unit (or variable), but as an entire system in which the behavior and the context are taken together into a fusion. The interplay between the behavior and the context is not a unidirectional cause-and-effect, but a back-and-forth, or circular stimulus-and-response (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009).

Kim’s (2005) contextual theory can be summarized in the following assumptions and theorems (Table 1).

Table 1. Kim’s (2005) Contextual Theory’s Eight Theorems

Theorem 1	<i>The more inclusive (exclusive) the communicator’s identity orientation, the more associative (dissociative) his or her interethnic communication behavior</i>
Theorem 2	<i>The more secure (insecure) the communicator’s identity orientation, the more associative (dissociative) his or her interethnic communication behavior</i>
Theorem 3	<i>The greater the ethnic proximity (distance) between the communicator and the other(s) involved in interethnic communication, the more associative (dissociative) the communicator’s interethnic behavior</i>
Theorem 4	<i>The greater the shared (separate) goal structure between the communicator and the other(s) involved in interethnic communication, the more associative (dissociative) the communicator’s interethnic behavior</i>

Theorem 5	<i>The more (less) ethnically integrated the communicator's personal network structure, the more associative (dissociative) the communicator's interethnic behavior</i>
Theorem 6	<i>The greater the institutional equity (inequity) across ethnic groups in the environment, the more associative (dissociative) the communicator's interethnic behavior</i>
Theorem 7	<i>The greater the relative strength (weakness) of the communicator's ethnic ingroup in the environment, the more associative (dissociative) the communicator's interethnic behavior</i>
Theorem 8	<i>The greater the competition intensifying environmental stress, the more dissociative the communicator's interethnic behavior</i>

First, the theory assumes that interethnic communication occurs whenever a communicator sees himself or herself and the other involved party in light of the respective ethnicity and/or ethnic identity. Second, interethnic communication is an open system in which its components are functionally interdependent. Third, interethnic communication by a single communicator consists of the behavior (or action) and three layers of the context – the communicator, the situation, and the environment.

The basic structure of interethnic communication according to Kim's (2005) contextual theory places the behavior at the center within three contextual layers: the communicator, the situation, and the environment; it offers a comprehensive account for the nature of the relationship between interethnic behavior and key factors of the surrounding context. The structure of factors can be called an "interethnic communication system" (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009).

The behavioral factor involves observable verbal and nonverbal activities as well as intrapersonal cognitive and affective processes. Kim (2005) explains that communicators in interethnic encounters act "associatively" when they are motivated to engage themselves in meaningful interactions rather than as representatives of an outgroup category. "Communication behaviors are characterized as "dissociative" when they are based on lack of interest, categorical, stereotypical, and depersonalized perceptions" (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009, p.7). Behaviors such as these are placed in Kim's theory on a bipolar continuum of association and dissociation, conceptually integrating various types of communication behaviors according to their underlying functions of facilitating the coming-together (association) or coming-apart (dissociation) of the involved persons.

The theory links associative/dissociative behaviors to two key internal characteristics of the communicator: (1) identity inclusivity/exclusivity, and (2) identity security/insecurity. Identity inclusivity/exclusivity refers to the tendency of individuals to categorize themselves and others as ingroup or outgroup members. Inclusive identity orientation serves as a cognitive and motivational basis of associative behavior, whereas exclusive identity orientation is closely linked to a more rigid differentiation of oneself from ethnically dissimilar others. Identity security/insecurity is reflected in the degree of self-confidence and the sense of self-

efficacy. Identity security is a personal capacity to empathize with others and is a sense of self-assuredness and positive attitudes toward others. In contrast, identity insecurity produces manifested feelings of inferiority or defensiveness when interacting with ethnically dissimilar others (Kim, 2005; Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009).

Kim's contextual theory identifies three key situational factors: (1) ethnic proximity/distance, (2) shared/separate goal structure, and (3) personal network integration/segregation. Ethnic proximity/distance refers to the level of homogeneity or heterogeneity. "Shared/separate goal structure refers to the extent to which the communicators come together with mutuality of interests. Personal network integration is defined in terms of the degree to which a given communicator's existing relationship networks are ethnically diverse" (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009, p.8).

Kim's contextual theory identifies three factors of the environment: (1) institutional equity/inequity; (2) ingroup strength; and (3) environmental stress. Ingroup strength, ethnic group strength, is related to the relative size and economic resources of the ethnic group. Institutional equity/inequity and environmental stress address issues of fairness and justice. According to the theory, "individual communicators are less likely to act associatively if they perceive, correctly or not, some form of unfair rules or practices directed against their own ethnic group" (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009, p.9).

2.1. Research Questions

Theorems asserted by Kim (2005) in the contextual theory of interethnic communication were used to construct the following research questions.

1. What is the personal network structure of the Hakka respondents in terms of their interethnic interaction with the other ethnic groups in Taiwan?
2. What is the relationship between the personal network structure and associative/dissociative interethnic behaviors for the Hakka respondents?
3. What is the relationship between the associative/dissociative interethnic behaviors and identity inclusivity/exclusivity for the Hakka respondents?
4. What is the relationship between the associative/dissociative interethnic behaviors and identity security/insecurity for the Hakka respondents?
5. How are the environmental factors affecting associative/dissociative interethnic behaviors for the Hakka respondents?

3. Methods

The current study was designed to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches by employing survey methods and in-depth interviews. The use of survey method intends to analyze the quantity of interethnic contact, whereas in-depth interviews are employed to analyze the quality of interethnic contact on individual differences (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009; Schaafsma, et al., 2010).

3.1. Social Survey Participants

A total of 777 Hakka respondents were recruited from the regions of Taoyuan, Hsinchu, and Miaoli of Taiwan through the administration of elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, universities, and community organizations. Taoyuan, Hsinchu, and Miaoli are known to be mostly populated with the Hakka ethnic group.

Out of a total 777 Hakka respondents, 400 were males (51.5%) and 377 were females (48.5%). Most (89.5%) of the 777 respondents who participated in the survey were between 12 and 25 years of age, with the ages of the remaining respondents between 26 and 65. The average age for the respondents is 20 years ($SD=9.54$).

3.2. Apparatus

A survey was designed to collect information about the interpersonal network structure, associative/dissociative behavior, identity inclusivity/exclusivity, and identity security/insecurity of the Hakka respondents. The measurement instruments included 7 items measured on a 5-point Likert type scales based on Kim's (2005) contextual theory of interethnic communication.

The first theoretical construct, known as interpersonal network structure, was examined in terms of the respondents' interethnic interpersonal contacts. The question read: "Except for your family, what is the ethnicity of the person you contact the most in the past one month?"

The second theoretical construct, associative/dissociative behavior, is assessed in terms of the frequency and the degree of intimacy for the interethnic interactions. The questions read: "How do you evaluate the degrees of intimacy of the relationships between you and the person you contact the most?"; "On a weekly basis, how often do you contact that person?"

The third theoretical construct, identity inclusivity/exclusivity, is examined in terms of a cognitive basis of associative behavior. The questions assessing identity inclusivity/exclusivity read: "I will marry a person outside my ethnicity"; "I will use other ethnic languages when the situation is appropriate."

The fourth theoretical construct, identity security/insecurity, is examined in terms of the degree of self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy. The questions read: "I am proud to be a Hakka"; "People call me a Hakka."

3.3. In-depth Interview

An interview protocol was designed based on Kim's (2005) contextual theory of interethnic communication to examine the environmental factors affecting the interethnic communication processes and behaviors (for the interview protocol see Appendix 1). Specifically, the environmental level constructs were assessed in terms of institutional equity/inequity; ingroup strength; and environmental stress for the Hakka respondents.

The data was collected from one-on-one interviews taking place at National Chiao Tung University or the interviewees' residence with a total of 20 local Hakka residents of Hsinchu County's Chudong Township. Chudong Township has a history of ethnic interaction among the

five ethnic groups in Taiwan. About 70% of the population of Chudong Township is Hakka. The interviewees were recruited through community organizations or internet recruitment. The interviewees' ages range from 20-75 years; ten are males and ten are females (Table 2).

Table 2. The Information of the Interviewees

ID	Age	Sex	Job	Education
A	20	Female	Student	Univ. Sophomore
B	20	Female	Student	Univ. Sophomore
C	20	Male	Student	Univ. Sophomore
D	23	Female	Sales	University
E	21	Male	Student	Univ. Junior
F	35	Male	Service	Master
G	39	Female	Homemaker	High school
H	39	Male	Manufacture	College
I	41	Male	Manufacture	University
J	40	Female	Homemaker	University
K	37	Male	R&D	Doctor
L	45	Female	Service	Junior High
M	29	Male	Education	Master
N	43	Male	Education	Master
O	44	Female	Education	University
P	50	Female	Service	High school
Q	51	Female	Manufacture	College
R	59	Male	Retired	University
S	58	Male	Retired	Elementary
T	75	Female	Retired	Junior High

4. Results

The first research question investigating the nature of the Hakka respondents' interethnic relationships was tested using frequencies and their reported means and standard deviations. The second research question examining the relationship between the Hakka respondents' personal network structure and associative/dissociative interethnic behavior was tested employing one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). The third research question examining the relationship between the Hakka respondents' associative/dissociative interethnic behaviors and identity inclusivity/exclusivity was tested applying correlation analysis. The fourth research question investigating the relationship between the Hakka respondents' associative/dissociative

interethnic behaviors and identity security/insecurity was tested using correlation analysis. The fifth research question assessing the environmental factors affecting Hakka respondents' associative/dissociative interethnic behaviors was analyzed employing in-depth interviews.

4.1. Personal Network Structure and Interethnic Interaction

Except for family members, the Hakka respondents' most contacted ethnic groups in order of importance were: (1) "Ho Lok" (46%), (2) the "Hakka" (35%), (3) "Waishengen" (7%), (4) "the Indigenous Peoples" (2.9%), and (5) "Hsinchuming" (2.8%).

4.2. Associative/Dissociative Interethnic Behaviors

In terms of the associative/dissociative behaviors for the Hakka respondents, the average degree of intimacy was 3.79 (SD=.931); the average frequency was 2.81 (SD=1.096). One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were calculated to estimate the effects of the personal network structure on the associative/dissociative behaviors for the Hakka respondents. An ANOVA using the degrees of intimacy as the dependent variable was significant: $F(5,756)=3.243$, $p<.01$. An ANOVA using frequency of interaction as the dependent variable was not significant: $F(5,756)=2.22$, $p=.05$. The finding suggests that the Hakka respondents who have more intimate contacts with ethnically dissimilar others in their daily activities are likely to form more ethnically integrated networks.

4.3. Identity Inclusivity/Exclusivity

The relationships between the associative/dissociative behaviors and identity inclusivity/exclusivity for the Hakka respondents were examined. The relationships are significant between "the degree of intimacy" and "willing to marry to someone from different ethnic background" ($r=.12$, $p<.01$); "the degree of intimacy" and "willing to speak other ethnic languages" ($r=.14$, $p<.01$); "frequency" and "willing to marry someone from different ethnic background" ($r=.16$, $p<.01$); and "frequency" and "willing to speak other ethnic languages" ($r=.14$, $p<.01$). The finding suggests that the Hakka respondents who have more intimate and frequent contacts with ethnically dissimilar others in their daily activities are likely to form identity inclusivity.

4.4. Identity Security/Insecurity

The relationships between the associative/dissociative behaviors and identity security/insecurity for the Hakka respondents were examined. The relationships are significant between "the degree of intimacy" and "proud to be a Hakka" ($r=.19$, $p<.01$); "the degree of intimacy" and "people call me a Hakka" ($r=.10$, $p<.01$); "frequency" and "proud to be a Hakka" ($r=.18$, $p<.01$); and "frequency" and "people call me a Hakka" ($r=.18$, $p<.01$). The finding suggests that the Hakka respondents who have more intimate and frequent contacts with ethnically dissimilar others in their daily activities are likely to form identity security.

4.5. Institutional Equity/Inequity

According to Kim (2005), institutional inequity could be traced to the history of subjugation of one ethnic group by another in various forms. And this environmental factor will influence the associative/dissociative behaviors of the Hakka respondents. In Taiwan, the Ho Lok has always been the major and dominant ethnic group. Some Hakka respondents stated that even though they tend not to associate with the Ho Lok, they are capable of speaking Ho Lok language in order to mingle with Ho Lok co-workers and friends, or for the purpose of doing business with the Ho Lok. The followings are respondents' responses with regards to their experiences about institutional equality/inequality (see Appendix for interview protocol). The capital letters stand for the respondents' identities (see Table 2).

G&S: The old Ho Lok people (especially males from the southern Taiwan) used to look down at us (Hakka), and they don't care to learn our Hakka language. We (Hakka) learn to speak Ho Lok language so we don't have to reveal our Hakka identity.

H: I tend not to make friends with Ho Lok people in my job because many Ho Lok co-workers like to bully Hakka co-workers. And many Waishengens are just fence-sitters.

Q: The older generation of the Hakka doesn't like to associate with the Ho Lok because they don't like Ho Lok's sense of superiority.

I: In my view, the Hakka are willing to accept and embrace the other ethnic groups by learning their languages (especially Ho Lok language). We want to mingle with the other ethnic groups in the working environment and living environment.

F: In order to do business with the Ho Lok, many Hakka speak fluent Ho Lok language.

C: Waishengens are enemies to my grandparents while they were Taiwan's dominant ruling party.

A: I just don't think it is fair that the Indigenous students can have the privilege to enter better universities by adding 30% of their original points on the entrance examination according to the laws.

4.6. Ingroup Strength

The interethnic contextual theory asserts that individuals whose ethnic group is larger in size, or otherwise more dominant (Ho Lok, Hakka), tend to be less associative toward members of smaller, or otherwise less dominant groups. In the current study, the Hakka seldom interact with smaller ethnic groups such as "Indigenous Peoples" (2.9%) and "Hsinchuming" (2.8%). Individuals of a relatively large, or otherwise dominant, ethnic group such as Ho Lok and Hakka in a given environment tend to have fewer daily interethnic contacts, and develop fewer casual friends or close friends outside their ingroups. The followings are the respondents' responses regarding their experiences on ingroup strength.

K: I do not know any Hsinchuming personally. I only have vague impressions of them from the mass media.

M: I have a couple of casual friends who are Indigenous Peoples. They impressed me

with their straightforward and carefree characteristics, but in the negative side.

A: Ho Lok is a very strong ethnic group. Sometimes I wonder why the Ho Lok doesn't have to learn to speak the Hakka language to communicate with us.

L: The Hakka should learn from the Ho Lok to be a strong dominant ethnic group carrying forward the spirit of solidarity and militancy.

4.7. Environmental Stress

Environmental stress tends to rise due to events that are linked to a particular ethnic group or certain challenging circumstances caused by economic hardship, shortage of resources, and crisis (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2009). The in-depth interviews suggest that the challenging circumstances for interethnic communication in Taiwan are mostly caused by heated struggles between the political parties, as well as problems and obstacles for interethnic marriages.

P: My son's Ho Lok girl friend couldn't go out with my son because her parents didn't like my son's Hakka ethnic background.

O: My Ho Lok friend once said that she will never accept a Hakka girl like me to be his brother's wife even though we are good friends.

M: Getting married with an indigenous person is not possible for me.

N: Interethnic marriage for a Hakka and a Ho Lok may cause many problems. I once dated and proposed to a Ho Lok girl, but was turned down by her parents.

J, R & T: There is no problem for interethnic relationships in Taiwan, except for the times during the political elections, or due to conflict of interests between the political parties.

B: My parents have fought over politics many times since my mother (a Ho Lok) is pro DPP (Democratic Progressive Party, pan green political party), my father (a Hakka) is pro KMT (Kuomintang, pan blue political party).

D: The saying that "Do not marry Hakka men in that they are all very stingy" is believed by many.

5. Discussion

The present study was an initial attempt to gain an understanding of the nature of interethnic relations between the Hakka and other ethnic groups in Taiwan. The theoretical purpose for the current study was to employ Kim's (2005) contextual model to analyze the way the Hakka engage in interethnic communication activities as well as to analyze the factors that influence the interethnic interactions.

The results of the current study provide empirical support for Theorems proposed by Kim's contextual theory that link associative/dissociative behavior with the (1) internal factors of the communicator including identity inclusivity/exclusivity and identity security/insecurity; (2) situational factor, personal network integration; and (3) the environmental factor including institutional equity/inequity, ingroup strength, and environmental stress.

How ethnic identification shapes ethnic minority members' interactions with majority group

members has long been a debatable subject (Schaafsma, et al., 2010). For example, a research finding shows that involvement with the ethnic minority culture was negatively related to the quantity of contact with majority group members (Schaafsma, et al., 2010). The results of the current study show that individuals of relatively small, minority groups (Hakka) are likely to form more of their daily interactions and friendships with individuals who are ethnically different from them. In the current study, it is the Ho Lok ethnic group, the largest, most dominant group that the Hakka interact with the most. Moreover, regardless of ethnic backgrounds, the Hakka are generally associative toward ethnically dissimilar others with the effects caused by the communicator's internal, situational, and environmental factors.

With respect to the associative/dissociative behavior, the results support that individuals whose ethnic group is larger in size (Ho Lok), or otherwise more dominant (Hakka), tend to be less intimate toward members of smaller, or otherwise less dominant, ethnic groups (Indigenous Peoples, Hsinchuming). Moreover, the effects of situational factors indicate that the more the identity security and identity inclusivity the Hakka respondents encompass, the more associative the interethnic behaviors would be. Furthermore, the challenging circumstances for interethnic communication in Taiwan are mostly caused by environmental factors such as politics and interethnic marriages.

Limitations of the current study and suggestions for future studies in this line of research are provided as follows. First, the age range of the social survey respondents is quite wide, with most (89.5%) of the 777 respondents who participated in the survey being between 12 and 25 years of age, with the ages of the remaining respondents between 26 and 65. Since social experiences vary with age groups, the findings of the current research about the interethnic interactions between the Hakka and the other ethnic groups await verifications in different settings and with different respondents. Second, future research should investigate intercultural communication competence, intercultural communication adaptation, and the cultural identification of the five ethnic groups in Taiwan, to evaluate different interethnic situations critically and understand ethnic identities derived from the intercultural communication processes.

Third, when studying interethnic contact, it is important to distinguish different dimensions and sources of ethnic identification (Schaafsma, et al., 2010). In the current study, one dimension of ethnic identification is studied by measuring the respondents' ingroup identification defined in terms of "I am proud to be a Hakka" and "People call me Hakka". Different dimensions and sources of ethnic identification such as "how involved I am in the cultural practices of the Hakka" and "how emotionally attached I feel to the Hakka" should also be studied and measured in the future.

Fourth, the current study suggests not only a linkage between the collective strength of the communicator's ethnic group and her or his interethnic communication behaviors, but a linkage between the relative ingroup strength and dissociative interethnic behavior of an individual communicator (Brewer, 1984). To further investigate the relationship between relative ingroup strength and interethnic behavior in Taiwan, it might be worth verifying whether interethnic conflict tends to increase in large groups such as Ho Lok and Hakka with several equal size ethnic subgroups including Waishengen, Indigenous Peoples, and Hsinchuming.

Last but not least, the findings of the present study serve as a framework for pragmatic actions and provide preliminary understanding of interethnic communication in Taiwan.

“Individuals from different ethnic backgrounds should practice associative behaviors, enlarge personal network structure, help to create situations and environment around them, and [act] by changing certain existing conditions in the environment in order to help facilitate associative communication behaviors” (Kim, 1997, p.281) in interethnic encounters and to bring about better interethnic relationships in Taiwan.

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Appendix 1

Interview Protocol

1. How do you perceive the interethnic relations among the five Taiwanese ethnic groups?
2. How do you look at Hakka ethnic group? To what degree do you identify with the Hakka culture?
3. How do you look at Ho Lok, Waishengen, Indigenous Peoples, and Hsinchuming? Please specify your perceptions about each of the ethnic groups.
4. Have you had any "bad experiences" or "good experiences" while interacting with Ho Lok, Waishengen, Indigenous Peoples, and Hsinchuming in the past? Please elaborate on your experiences by trying to recall the 5W (who, where, when, what, why) and 1H (How) about the experiences.
5. Have your past (good or bad) experiences had an impact on your perceptions of the other ethnic groups? Why or why not?