

Power Relations Between the Researcher and the Researched: An Analysis of Native and Nonnative Ethnographic Interviews

Shu-Hsin Chen¹

Field Methods
23(2) 119-135

© The Author(s) 2011

Reprints and permission:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1525822X10387575

<http://fm.sagepub.com>



Abstract

Based on an analysis of native and nonnative language interviews, this article argues that being a nonnative interviewer, in a weaker position, makes it easier to elicit information from native interviewees. One reason for this is that the interviewer is obliged to let interviewees define their concepts, deferring to their position as a language authority and recognizing one aspect of the power relationship. Power in ethnographic interviewing is always negotiated, and this article demonstrates how the spoken languages of interviewer and interviewee affects ethnographic interviews and power

¹ Durham University, Leazes Road, Durham, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author:

Shu-Hsin Chen, c/o Prof. Michael Byram, School of Education, Durham University, Leazes Road, Durham, DH1 1TA, United Kingdom

Email: shchen2006@gmail.com

dynamics in dialogs. Some useful discourse strategies for native and nonnative language ethnographic interviewers are also discussed.

Keywords

power relations, ethnographic interviews, native and nonnative language interviews, intercultural communication, research methods

Introduction

This article analyzes the language of communication in ethnographic interviews where the interviewer is sometimes a nonnative speaker and sometimes a native speaker of the interview language. The article is based on interviews in English and Chinese with native and nonnative speakers/teachers of English in Taiwan. In the course of the study, the significance of language choice as a factor in power relationships in the interviewing became evident.

In face-to-face communication, power refers to the act of “powerful participants *controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants*” (Fairclough 2001:39, emphasis in original). An interview is one kind of face-to-face conversation where the notion of power is as important as in any other social situation (Cohen et al. 2004:122). However, although many scholars highlight the importance of recognizing power relations (e.g., Kvale 1996, 2007; Briggs 2002, 2003; Eder and Fingerson 2002, 2003; Shah 2004), they mostly assume that the interviewer and the interviewee speak the same native language, L1, and that the interviewer is more likely to have more power than the interviewee (Scheurich and Kvale, cited in Cohen et al. 2004:122; Kvale 2007:14–5). This is described as power imbalance or power asymmetry. When the interviewer and the interviewee do not speak the same language or when either has to speak a language in which they are less fluent than their native language, there are three possibilities: L1 interviewer and L2 (second language) interviewee, L2 interviewer and L1 interviewee, and L2 interviewer and L2 interviewee. In these cases, would the picture of power asymmetry be the same as the first case?

This study investigates two of these possibilities: L1 interviewer and L1 interviewee and L2 interviewer and L1 interviewee. It is based on ethnographic interview data from a study of native and foreign EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers in Taiwan (Chen 2009). My thinking was stimulated by Winchitz’s (2006) report of her misunderstanding in her field

language (German as her L2), and how this shifted the power dynamics between her and the interviewee. Winchitz says that her confusion during the communication may “ultimately result in the attainment of richer ethnographic data” (p. 83). Her analysis focused on the situation of the L2 interviewer and the L1 interviewee. This made me wonder whether my study, which involves two languages and two interview situations, might offer additional insights into the division of power in ethnographic interviews and whether richer data might emerge from nonnative language interviews as compared to native interviews. This question is closely related to how the researcher asks questions during the interview (Briggs 1984, 1986, 2007).

Methods

The interview corpus comes from data collected in 2005 and 2006 on team teachers of English in Taiwan (Chen 2009). To follow “the idea of ‘native’ ethnography” (Wolcott 1999:147) and to meet the criterion of “trustworthiness” (Lincoln and Guba 1985), I collected the data in the participants’ native languages, either English (my L2) or Mandarin (my L1) before Winchitz’s (2006) article was published.

I first developed a set of semistructured ethnographic interview questions based on Spradley’s (1979) general questions framework. Here are some examples of possible questions with Chinese translation that I put in my interview agenda. These questions might be useful in the field, but I expected that most of my probes would arise directly from the interview (Spradley 1979:84).

1. Grand-tour questions: “Could you describe the inside of the classroom for me?” (Chinese: 能不能請你描述一下教室內的情況?)
2. Mini-tour questions: “Could you describe a typical day in your team teaching?” (Chinese: 能不能請你談一下平常協同教學時的情形?)
3. Example questions: “Could you give me an example of team teaching?” (Chinese: 能不能舉個關於協同教學的例子?)
4. Experience questions: “Could you tell me about your experience of team teaching?” (Chinese: 能不能說說看你的協同教學經驗?)
5. Native-language questions: “How would you refer to _____?” or “How would you call _____?” (Chinese: 你怎麼稱呼 _____? 或 _____ 你會怎麼稱呼它?; based on Spradley 1979)

I recruited eight Taiwanese Mandarin speakers (one male and seven female teachers) and six English speakers (four male and two female teachers)

from Canada, the United States, and South Africa, who were working in Taiwan on a program to introduce English in primary schools. Two of them already knew me because I was involved in the same program prior to the study but most did not. Most of the Taiwanese teachers had taught EFL to fifth or sixth graders in Taiwanese primary schools for at least 3 years, and most of the foreign teachers were either newly arrived or had joined 1 or 2 years previously. The Taiwanese teachers spoke at least three languages (e.g., Mandarin, Taiwanese, English, and perhaps Hakka), and most of the foreign teachers spoke one language in addition to English (e.g., Spanish or French or Afrikaans). The average ages of the two teacher groups were 34.5 and 29.5 years, respectively.

Before entering the field, I changed my hairstyle, makeup, and clothing to look mature and professional (see Coffey 1999:64–8) because I look younger than my real age. I met with the heads of the schools first to obtain their informed consent and identify suitable teachers.

Before each interview, I obtained the individual teacher's informed consent and let them choose their preference languages for the interview sessions. All of them chose to speak in their native languages. A total of 12 interviews were conducted, including 4 individual interviews in Taiwanese Mandarin (my L1), 6 individual interviews in English (my L2), and 2 group interviews in Taiwanese Mandarin. The total recording length was 915 minutes; the average interview length was 76 minutes. The data were transcribed verbatim either in traditional Chinese (the written form of Mandarin) or in English, depending on the participants' choice of languages in the field. Among the 12 transcripts, 6 English-language interviews were monolingual. The other six—the four Chinese interviews and the two group interviews—contained bilingual data (mainly in Chinese with some English). All 12 transcripts constituted my corpus that covered the interview situations of L1 interviewer and L1 interviewee and L2 interviewer and L1 interviewee.

Data Analysis

I followed the discourse analysis approach advocated by Schiffrin (1994:185): “to learn about a speech event (interviews) and posit knowledge of this relationship as part of our communicative competence.” I examined my own interview behaviors, comparing my probing behaviors in the L1 interviews and the L2 interviews. While categorizing my probing questions on the topic of “team teaching,” Schiffrin's (1994) discussion of sociolinguistic interview questions helped identify which of my probing

questions belong to which types of sociolinguistic interview questions. Her model distinguishes three types of such questions (Schiffrin 1994:160–85): information-seeking questions (“when there is a lack of knowledge in the interviewer”), information-checking questions (“when there is a need to check information”), and clarification questions (“when there is a need to clarify information”). Schiffrin further distinguishes information-seeking questions from information-checking questions by saying, “Information-seeking questions can be semantically independent of prior talk, but information-checks and clarification requests cannot. Thus, the degree to which the information in a question is semantically tied to a prior proposition helps to determine its question type” (pp. 184–5).

Moreover, in terms of discourse function, information-seeking questions may come from the interviewer, and information-checking questions may come from both the interviewer and the interviewee to allow the latter to continue the conversation (Schiffrin 1994:176). Clarification questions tend to come from either side, but after things get clarified, the “floor” tends to be taken by the interviewee (Schiffrin 1994:176).

In this study, my corpus included all of the three types of interview questions, each dealing with a number of topics. However, for this study, I focused on my probing questions on the topic of team teaching; identified their function, form, and context; and found out which types of sociolinguistic questions they belonged to.

I analyzed the data in the participant’s language either in English (L2) or Chinese (L1). I started by reading the transcripts and looking for opening dialogs to see how I asked an opening question on the topic of team teaching, how my participants responded to it, and whether and how I probed. In Example 1, the dialog between my participant (P) and me as the researcher (R)—using English, my L2—shows clearly the kind of information-seeking probe that I was looking for from the interview transcripts. To open the conversation, I explained the purpose of the interview and invited the participant to talk about what he or she knew about the term “co-teaching” or “team teaching.”

Example 1

R: This interview is to get to know teachers’ experience in team teaching or co-teaching, whatever you call it. So can you tell me what you understand about co-teaching in the program? Or if I use the term, team teaching, what does that mean to you?

P: Well, team teaching, I guess, means a different thing. It is based fundamentally means there’s two people teaching together. Uh, in [place name] it means teaching at the same time, uh, but it also means that, in

some cases, the co-teacher, the Chinese teacher, teaches English at a different time. So in the [place name] program, team teaching means that, the foreign teacher will always be with the ... uh the local teacher, the Chinese teacher, but there will also be cases where material be covered by the Chinese teacher, or the native teacher, alone. So, uh, physically there's two teachers in the room at some point, but also co-teaching is teaching the same material, by two different people.

R: You just said that there're differences between team teaching and co-teaching. (Yes.) Can you describe it?

P: Well, team teaching is when the, uh ... my understanding of team teaching is when they are actually physically present in the room. My co-teacher ... even if my co-teacher is not there, if they teach, they have a separate class with the same students but at a different time. So they are not there with me, if they cover the same material and we'd [*sic*] discussing, the students' progress and curriculum, and that's also a team approach.

I opened the conversation with two general questions to gain information (i.e., information-seeking questions). After I did so, I listened to the participant and summarized what he said, then I probed according to what he had said previously. My probing question functioned as a way to obtain more information from him. This kind of question was identified as an "information-seeking probe."

There were other cases when my general question was followed by more than one probing question. For instance, two probing questions are found in Example 2 that served different functions. The first probe "So the 'co' means?" served as an information-seeking probe because the meaning was independent from the previous proposition. The second question, "Does co-teaching, c-o, come from any word?" served as an information-checking probe because the meaning was tied with the previous probing proposition on the phrase "co."

Example 2

R: If I use the term co-teaching or team teaching, do you think they are different?

P: Oh! [laugh] No, I don't think so. Last year we had team teaching in the sense where there is a forty-minute class, we will be a team teaching. [person name] and I will have a relationship of teaching. I will handle something. She will handle something. But we will operate as a team. This year I suppose we will rather call ourselves

co-teachers, because when we are not a team in the class, we are a team outside the class.

R: So the “co” means?

P: The “co” I will rather see as being from outside coming in the team I would see as inside. Yeah.

R: All right. . . . Does co-teaching, c-o, come from any word?

P: Well I suppose it’s “collaborate,” to put together, yeah. I don’t think it necessarily inside the classroom.

The above examples of interview openings present me as the researcher (R), controlling the interview flow and the interview topic, which correspond to the situation of L2 interviewer and L1 interviewee. However, there were cases where my participant attempted to be the one in control. One example is taken from the situation of L1 interviewer and L1 interviewee, as shown below, when I unconsciously used a plural first person pronoun “we” to start with an “experience question” (Spradley 1979) on the topic of team teaching.

Example 3

R: 我們想要請你談一談，你在協同教學的經驗。

P: 那這個問題很廣喔，我不曉得你希望我從哪一個方面開始講？協同教學經驗，你要我講情緒方面，還是說，教學相長方面，或者是說，相處方面？

R: 比如說，協同教學這個名詞，代表什麼意思？對你來說？

P: [停頓五秒] 兩個老師一起執行，一個課堂，在同一個時間，面對同一批學生，面對同一個主題來教學，協同教學。

English translation of Example 3.

R: We would like to invite you to talk about your experience of Sye-Tong Jiao-Syue.

P: This is a very general question. I don’t know which aspect do you want me to begin with? Sye-Tong Jiao-Syue experience. . . . Do you want me to talk about aspects of emotions, pedagogy, or how we get along?

R: For example, what does the term Sye-Tong Jiao-Syue mean to you?

P: [pause 5 sec] Two teachers work together in the same classroom at the same time. They face the same class of students and teach and co-teach the same theme.

Two points are worth mentioning here. First, my choice of the pronoun “we” in the opening sentence might have increased the degree of power, which consequently triggered my participant to ask me a series of information-checking questions (Schiffrin 1994:176) on teaching experience, emotions, teaching and mentoring, and inter-teacher relationships. Her immediate reaction may have been an attempt to narrow down the

topic of my question, but her action could also be interpreted as a way of showing off her knowledge in front of me, checking my knowledge, or hinting to me what kinds of questions I could have asked. To keep a harmonious relationship with my participant, I chose to start with a new information-seeking question all over again. Our interaction demonstrates that the power dynamics and the power negotiation in the dialog were constantly “unfinalized,” fluid, and “multidirectional” (Baxter and Montgomery 1998:8).

Second, I had two reasons to ask for a new probe. One reason was that this participant was one of the very experienced teachers of English in the program, and I expected to obtain insightful data from her. For the sake of rapport or harmony in our relationship, her authoritative speech style actually offered me a good opportunity to seek out more information (e.g., her definition of “team teaching”) and get the conversation rolling smoothly. The other reason was that, considering the discourse context, it would normally be odd for me to ask a definition question like that in front of experienced Taiwanese teachers. They could assume that as I knew the language and was once a teacher in the same program, I should already know the definition, or I might appear ignorant or naive to them, or they may think that I had other unspoken intentions. In the above dialog, my participant was told that I had been involved in the same program, and thus I thought it safe to probe for definition of the terminology. This seemed to have put me in a position inferior to her so that I was able to maintain harmonious relationships with her and elicit more data in a culturally accepted way. I will come back to this later.

The above example illustrates how my participant and I negotiated power through a series of information-checking questions and how I managed the relationship by formulating another information-seeking question. In the next example, another participant also questioned my opening information-seeking question, but his response introduced another topic not directly relevant to my original question.

Example 4

R: 那假設喔，比如說你拜訪一個學校，兩堂，一堂是同國籍的老師一起上課，一堂是兩個外師一起上課，一樣是小學五年級，你可以描述一下那會是什麼樣的情形？

P: 怎麼講呢？沒答案！怎麼會有答案？比如我跟我另外一個很maji 的，我們來教就可以教得很好。

R: 你那個maji是什麼意思？

P: 我們無所不談。maji就是什麼都能聊。我們常常打球的，一起去打撞球的，就會教的很好。外師你隨便抓兩個來，像我們學校兩個外師抓來教，一定會有問題。

English translation of Example 4.

R: Now suppose you are visiting a school where you can observe two fifth-grade English lessons, one is team-taught by two local teachers and the other one is team-taught by two foreign teachers. Could you describe the situation?

P: Well, what to say? I have no answer! How can there be an answer? For example, if I can teach with someone with whom I feel *maji* with, we can teach well together.

R: Hold on, what do you mean by *maji*?

P: *Maji* means that we can talk about almost anything. *Maji* means you can chat with a friend about almost anything. We like to play billiards together, so we can co-teach very well. If you put any two of the foreign teachers to teach together, like if you put the two foreign teachers in our school to teach together, there must be problems.

In the dialog, I started with a “mini-tour question” (Spradley 1979) to inquire about my participant’s EFL team teaching experience in the fifth grade classroom. He did not answer my question directly but questioned my question and then switched to another topic. Again, it seemed that he intended to decide which topic he wanted to talk about. But his response introduced a loan word *maji* that puzzled me. To encourage him to explain *maji*, I asked another information-seeking question on *maji* as a probing question, which elicited more explanation from him. As I had been away from Taiwan for some time and was unaware of the loan word, I also thought it acceptable for me to probe on it. Later after leaving the field, I realized that the term *maji* is a new loan word in Taiwan borrowed from Japanese, whose original meaning comes from the word “match” in English. Nowadays in Taiwan, *maji* is not used as a verb, but an adjective.

Next, when a participant produces vague or ambiguous expressions calling for clarification in interview situations, it is natural for a researcher to probe for explanation or clarification where language is not an issue. However, some of my data indicate occasions where I probed in the L2 interviews, but I did not probe in the L1 interviews.

For instance, in the following, I was probing in Chinese for more information from my participant who gave an example to explain what he said earlier. Then he suddenly switched from Chinese to English to talk as if his teaching partner were talking to him, but I did not probe on the English expression.

Example 5

R: 那個反映出來有什麼差異？就是你們...

P: 比如說我今天回去要加班，改作業，對我來說是理所當然的。我加班要寫教案，對我來說也是理所當然的。那對他而言就是：

R: 所以他不用加班？

P: 他對這些東西會排斥，會拒絕。

English translation of Example 5.

R: What kind of difference would that be? You ... ?

P: For example, I would bring my work home to finish what I haven't finished today, say, marking pupils' homework books. For me, it is something that I take for granted. If I have to stay in school to work on my lesson plans after school, to me, it is also something I take for granted. But to him, it's not ... it's not in my contract. It's not in my job description.

R: So he does not need to work after school?

P: He would reject these tasks. He would say no.

Here my participant used a "direct quotation" in English as "reported speech" (Lucy 1993:18) to bring to life the sentences said by his foreign teaching partner. Interestingly, I was not affected by the code-switching strategy but captured his earlier Chinese proposition to probe with a clarification question. The reason I ignored his use of direct quotation in English, I assume, was to ensure the smooth continuation of our conversation.

So far, in the situations of L2 interviewer and L1 interviewee and L1 interviewer and L1 interviewee, when there were expressions to be explained or clarified, I would probe for further information or explanation or clarification without hesitation, as indicated in Examples 1, 2, 3, and 4. But in the situation of L1 interviewer and L1 interviewee, when my participant suddenly code-switched from L1 to L2 in the direct quotation, as shown in Example 5, I was puzzled for a moment and chose not to probe on the L2 quotation but to carry on our conversation in L1. In comparison, it seems I was able to obtain more information from the L2 interviews than from the L1 interviews.

I followed the same method to examine all 12 transcripts. Some examples of my own probing questions and categories they belong to are listed in Table 1. The abbreviations IS, IC, and C stand for information-seeking, information-checking, and clarification questions, respectively.

Table 2 shows the interview sessions sequentially, the interview language of each session, and the number of specific information-seeking probes on the topic of team teaching. All of the interviews contained information-seeking probes, but specific information-seeking probes on the

Table 1. Examples of the Researcher's Probing Questions and Their Functions

Interview #	Examples of the Researcher's Probing Questions	Category
1	你剛講的個性 flexible 是說...?	IC
	我想問語言能力它代表什麼東西?	IS
	你那個maji是什麼意思?	IS
2	那個介入點是指課堂上介入是嗎?	IC
	你對英語好這個形容, 你認為它有什麼意涵?	IS
3	兩造是什麼意思?[笑]	IS
	你剛剛講聚焦, 是不是專心的意思?	IC
4	那你跟同學就可以直接講是不是?	IC
5	Proactive? Can you give more examples? Proactive?	IS
	Culture issues? Can you explain more about culture issues?	IS
6	個人空間是什麼意思?[笑]	IS
7	英文好是什麼意思?	IS
	誠實是表示說?	IS
8	Which level?	IS
9	Could you define that in your words?	IS
	Animosity?	C
10	So the "co" means?	IS
	Does co-teaching, c-o, come from any word?	IC
	I am curious that you said Chinese students are not afraid of foreigners.	IS
11	Or they are the same to you?	IC
	What does the c-o "co" means to you?	IS
12	To you, "co" means something?	IS

Note: IS = information-seeking; IC = information-checking; C = clarification questions.

topic of team teaching were found in six cases in the English data (i.e., interview # 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12); only one case was found in the Chinese data (i.e., interview # 3).

It is now obvious that each of the interviews in English contained at least one information-seeking probe on the topic of team teaching, but only one case was found in the Chinese data. This pattern of my different use of information-seeking probes on the specific topic seems to suggest that my probing behavior in the L1 and L2 interviews could be language-specific.

Discussion

I draw on theory in pragmatics and intercultural communication to discuss the strategies that I used to keep the interviews going smoothly and

Table 2. Interview #, Field Language, and Number of Specific Information-Seeking Probes on the Topic of “Team Teaching”

Interview #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Field language	C	C	C	C	E	C	C	E	E	E	E	E
S.IS probe	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	2	1

Note: C = Chinese; E = English; S.IS probe = specific information-seeking probe.

explain why the notion of “face” may have played a role in the interviews. Then I analyze the difference in my probing behaviors between the L1 interviews and the L2 interviews.

Tannen (2005) states that human beings develop discourse strategies out of “face wants” that swing between “the need for independence” and “the need for community” (p. 22) that correspond to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notions of “negative face”—“the desire to be unimpeded in one’s actions,” and “positive face”—“the desire (in some respects) to be approved of” (p. 13), and also to Scollon and Scollon’s notions of “deference” and “solidarity” (1994:144), and Tannen’s own “independence” and “involvement” (2005). Moreover, Brown and Levinson suggest that the degree of politeness or indirectness would depend on three contextual factors: power (P) of a hearer (H) over a speaker (S), social distance (D) between S and H, and ranking of imposition (R) involved in a face-threatening act (FTA) in a given culture (1987:15). They also develop five strategies to mark politeness on a scale. However, their universal politeness model and strategies have been criticized as Western-centric (Blum-Kulka 1997:52) and may not be applicable to non-Western cultures.

Indeed, the notions of “face” and “facework” can be conceptualized differently from culture to culture. For instance, Western researchers tend to regard facework as “impression management” (Chang and Holt 1994:126), whereas “Asians virtually always assume relationships are hierarchical” (Scollon and Scollon 1994:146). For example, the Chinese concept of *mien-tzu* (face) emphasizes more “the nature of the relationship” (Chang and Holt 1994:127), rather than just the individual’s impression. Ting Toomey (1988) also points out that to understand face in the West and in the East, the key to cross-cultural research is that “a distinction must be made between *individualistic* and *collectivistic* concepts of the self” (Scollon and Scollon 1994:149, emphasis in original).

As my data indicate, I used my probing strategies to negotiate power with my participants in English (my L2) differently from that used in Chinese (my

L1). In the L2 interviews, my participants and I spoke in English, thus it was natural for us to perform facework or politeness strategies in ways to maintain a balance between “negative face” and “positive face” (Brown and Levinson 1987). The fact that my English was not as fluent as that of my foreign interviewees seemed to put me at an advantageous position because I could, in a seemingly natural way, probe for more information from my foreign participants who spoke English as a native language.

In the L1 interviews, my Taiwanese participants and I spoke in Chinese, thus it was natural for us to consider each other’s hierarchical positions and what would be appropriate face-saving and face-giving acts to maintain a harmonious relationship with one another (Chang and Holt 1994). Yet, although there were no language differences between us, things seemed more complicated. For instance, my participant’s sudden use of a “loan word” could easily put me in a weaker position as shown in Example 4. The unequal power relations between my participant and me somehow created a favorable situation in which I could probe for more information, so that my “positive face” (Brown and Levinson 1987) or my need for “involvement” (Tannen 2005) was protected. However, in another situation, as shown in Example 5, I did not probe, which might have something to do with the culture.

Indeed, in multilingual Taiwan, native languages are marked with high to low statuses (e.g., Mandarin in an American accent [high status], standard Mandarin [high status], Taiwanese, Hakka, and indigenous languages [medium status], and finally to Mandarin in a Taiwanese accent [low status]; Huang 1993:16). If someone code-switches from Taiwanese Mandarin to English, the switcher may be doing so to be “expressive” and “arresting” (Chen 2004), rather than out of a genuine lack of competence (Poplack, cited in Chen 2003:19). As Example 5 shows, as my participant suddenly code-switched from Chinese (our L1) to English (our L2), one interpretation could be that he was showing disapproval of the teaching partner he was talking about; an alternative interpretation could be that my participant was attempting to upgrade himself to a superior status through code-switching, which intensified the power imbalance between us. In this case, my deliberate choice of not probing his English quotation could be interpreted as a means to protect my “negative face” (Brown and Levinson 1987) or my need for “independence” (Tannen 2005) from potentially revealing a lack of English proficiency.

The power relations between my participants and me, field language, and whether my use of information-seeking probes was preferred in the

Table 3. Language Choice, Power Relations, and Probing Strategies in Ethnographic Interviews

Types of Interviews	Presumed Power Relations	Discourse Context		Specific Information-Seeking Probe
		P's Situational Stimulus	R's Situational Response	
L2 to L1 (Nonnative language or L2 interviews)	R < P (R is weaker) unequal power	R < P P's expression that is unclear to R	R < P	Favorable
L1 to L1 (Native language or L1 interviews)	R = P equal power	R < P P's use of expressions or loan word that is unfamiliar or unclear to R	R < P	Favorable
	R = P equal power	R < P P's code-switching from L1 to L2 that is unclear to R	R = P	Unfavorable

Note: R = researcher; P = participant.

Taiwanese context or not is summarized in Table 3, where language, in addition to power, may be a significant variable in ethnographic interviews.

Implications and Conclusion

The findings presented here confirm Winchatz's (2006) argument about the potential advantage of being a nonnative language interviewer in cross-cultural research and reveal additional complexities in native language interviews and nonnative language interviews. Most importantly, in my view, including the various combinations of L1 and L2 as a variable in ethnographic interviewing can extend our knowledge of how ethnographic data are produced.

There are limitations. This study was based on one small sample size in Taiwan. Variables besides language difference—factors like gender, age, or social class—might account for code-switching and other features of the interviews. My personal conversational style (Tannen 2005), my interpretation of the data, and my cultural and linguistic background, might

explain the features I saw in those interviews. There is, then, a need to replicate the work presented here to test my findings under other conditions.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this study was possible because I played a double role during the course of my research—as an interviewer who was involved in the actual fieldwork and as an analyst who tried to scrutinize the interview transcripts as objectively as possible. One key to accomplishing this task was to leave adequate break time between the two roles. This allowed me to switch between them with a refreshed view and to practice the kind of reflexivity required in close analysis of discourse (Chen 2009:88–9).

Acknowledgments

I thank four anonymous reviewers for critical and constructive comments and careful reading of previous versions of this article. I also thank my colleagues in the Durham School of Education Thursday seminar group and Dr. Susanne Tietze, who I met at the *DiCoEn* 2007. I am particularly indebted to Professor Michael Byram for his invaluable guidance and constant encouragement beyond my PhD journey.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

References

- Baxter, L. A., and B. M. Montgomery. 1998. A guide to dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships. In *Dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships*, eds. B. M. Montgomery and L. A. Baxter, 1–16. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1997. Discourse pragmatics. In *Discourse as social interaction*, ed. T. A. van Dijk, 38–63. London: SAGE.
- Briggs, C. L. 1984. Learning how to ask: Native metacommunicative competence and incompetence of fieldworkers. *Language in Society* 13:1–28.
- Briggs, C. L. 1986. *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Briggs, C. L. 2002. Interviewing, power/knowledge, and social inequality. In *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*, eds. J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein, 911–22. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Briggs, C. L. 2003. Interviewing, power/knowledge, and social inequality. In *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*, eds. J. A. Holstein and J. F. Gubrium, 495–506. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Briggs, C. L. 2007. Anthropology, interviewing, and communicability in contemporary society. *Current Anthropology* 48:551–80.
- Brown, P., and S. C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chang, H.-C., and G. R. Holt. 1994. A Chinese perspective on face as inter-relational concern. In *The challenge of facework: Cross-cultural and interpersonal issues*, ed. S. Ting-Toomey, 95–132. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Chen, C.-M. 2004. Two types of code-switching in Taiwan. Paper presented at the 15th Sociolinguistic Symposium, University of Newcastle, April 1–4, UK.
- Chen, S.-C. 2003. *The spread of English in Taiwan: Changing uses and shifting attitudes*. Taipei: Crane Publishing.
- Chen, S.-H. 2009. Intercultural team teaching: A study of local and foreign EFL teachers in Taiwan. Unpublished PhD thesis. Durham, UK: Durham University.
- Coffey, A. 1999. *The ethnographic self*. London: SAGE.
- Cohen, L., L. Manion, and K. Morrison. 2004. *Research methods in education*. 5th ed. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Eder, D., and L. Fingerson. 2002. Interviewing children and adolescents. In *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*, eds. J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein, 181–201. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Eder, D., and L. Fingerson. 2003. Interviewing children and adolescents. In *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*, eds. J. A. Holstein and J. F. Gubrium, 33–53. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Fairclough, N. 2001. *Language and power*. 2nd ed. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Huang, S. F. 1993. *Language, society, and ethnic awareness: A study of Taiwanese sociolinguistics*. Taipei: Crane Publisher.
- Kvale, S. 1996. *InterView*. London: SAGE.
- Kvale, S. 2007. Doing interviews. *The SAGE Qualitative Research Kit Series, Uwe Flick*. London: SAGE.
- Lincoln, Y. S., and E. G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Lucy, J. A., ed. 1993. *Reflexive language: Reported speech and metapragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schiffrin, D. 1994. *Approaches to discourse*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

- Scollon, R., and S. W. Scollon. 1994. Face parameters in East-West discourse. In *The challenge of facework: Cross-cultural and interpersonal issues*, ed. S. Ting-Toomey, 133–58. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Shah, S. 2004. The researcher/interviewer in intercultural context: A social intruder! *British Educational Research Journal* 30:549–75.
- Spradley, J. P. 1979. *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Tannen, D. 2005. *Conversational style: Analyzing talk among friends*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ting-Toomey, S. 1988. Intercultural conflicts: A face-negotiation theory. In *Theories in intercultural communication*, eds. Y. Kim and W. Gudykunst, 213–35. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Winchitz, M. R. 2006. Fieldworker or foreigner? Ethnographic interviewing in nonnative languages. *Field Methods* 18:83–97.
- Wolcott, H. F. 1999. *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.