

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: Variational Pragmatics Of Mandarin Chinese: A Comparative Study Of Gossip In China And Taiwan Sitcoms With Implications For The CSL Classroom.

Hui Chih Huang, PhD, 2015

Directed By: Dr. Thomas Field
Professor
Department of Modern Languages, Linguistics & Intercultural Communication
Affiliate Professor
Language, Literacy & Culture Doctoral Program
Dr. Ana Oskoz
Associate Professor
Department of Modern Languages, Linguistics & Intercultural Communication
Affiliate Associate Professor
Language, Literacy & Culture Doctoral Program

Conceptualizing Mandarin Chinese as a homogeneous linguistic system is both inaccurate and misleading for students of the language. This study compares and contrasts how one form of small talk, gossip, is conducted differently to establish rapport in two Mandarin Chinese speaking regions, China and Taiwan. Based on Schneider and Barron's (2008) variational pragmatics and Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2005, 2008) rapport management, this research not only studies pragmatic variation resulting from the impact of age, gender, region, and socio-economic class, but also looks into how social relationships among family members, friends, and neighbors

are constructed, maintained, or threatened through small talk. The higher-level focus of this study is the impact of regional differences on intra-lingual pragmatic variation in Mandarin Chinese. Following Ishihara (2010), who argues that the design of a language curriculum should not merely rely on fluent L2 speakers' intuitions but should present explicit pragmatic information and draw on research-based insights, this study goes on to develop a variational pragmatics-focused Mandarin teaching unit with a focus on small talk.