Human Communication Research, 2023, **49**, 24–34
https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqac029
Advance access publication 8 November 2022
Original Research

International Communication Association

OXFORD

Public speaking goes to China: cultural discourses of circulation

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Abstract

Cultural discourse theory's (CDT) strength is accounting for cultural differences between historically transmitted expressive systems. In its current form, the theory is not set up to account for the mobility of particular communication practices across cultural boundaries. Relying on CDT's conception of communication practices as discursive resources for social interaction, we extend the theory's explanatory power by investigating how speakers constitute the value and movements of a particular resource: the speech genre of public speaking. We performed a cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) of public speaking's circulation between the United States and China to show that value ascriptions constituted divergent cultural discourses of circulation together with key symbols (such as "localization" and *suzhi*) and explicit metacultural commentary. These cultural discourses have an accelerative function on the dissemination side of circulation, and an integrative function on the replication side. Thus, cultural discourses of circulation communicatively constitute the mobility of particular discursive resources.

Keywords: value, circulation, discourse, mobility, China

The fact that some cultural objects—including discursive resources such as words, languages, linguistic styles and varieties, speech genres, and so on—move across socio-cultural and national boundaries is well established. However, the explanatory power of the "flow" metaphor that Arjun Appadurai (1996), Zygmunt Bauman (2000), Manuel Castells (1996), Ulf Hannerz (1992), and other scholars of globalization had introduced to describe and theorize this process is limited for two reasons. First, it tends to obscure small-scale human action—including communicative action—that renders cultural objects mobile and facilitates their integration into new socio-cultural settings. Second, it loses sight of the individual and community-level experience of globalization (Rockefeller, 2011; Russell & Boromisza-Habashi, 2020).

Due to its research focus on the everyday social lives of individuals and communities, ethnography is particularly well-suited to fill these gaps (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008; Sigismondi, 2018; Slembrouck, 2010). In communication scholarship, ethnographic studies of the movement of cultural objects sought to nuance the macro-level view of global flows. To that end, they showed that hybridity—the creative and often uncontrollable fusion of previously distinct objects, styles, or identities—has been a frequent outcome of cross-cultural contact across human history (García Canclini, 1995; Kraidy, 2005). Typically, ethnographers have focused on the type of hybridity that results from contact between widely circulating cultural objects "from elsewhere" such as popular culture, languages, or discursive resources, and "local" consumers or users of those forms. Studies of the cross-cultural movements of discursive resources recover evidence of hybridity from carefully documented context-bound social interaction. Consider these overlapping examples of widely circulating discursive resources: originating in the United States, hip hop engendered new linguistic and musical forms in France (Darling-Wolf, 2015). The French language mixed with Arabic in the unique lyrics of rai music of Western Algeria and Eastern Morocco (Bentahila & Davies, 2002). In Spain, Moroccan immigrant girls mixed Arabic and Spanish to produce hybrid gender identifications (García-Sánchez, 2010). Cultural mixing and matching, these scholars show, is facilitated by such processes as global commerce, media, and migration.

Although ethnographic insights about hybridity show that change is an inevitable feature of discursive resources' circulation, they tend not to foreground the *communication* processes and practices that facilitate circulation. A related but separate research tradition, the ethnography of communication, provides numerous examples of speakers using communication to facilitate the circulation of discursive resources. For example, Witteborn (2010) described how U.S. managers at the Urumqi office of the international NGO Save the Children cultivated a global communication practice, participatory decision-making, among local Uyghur staff by using a transparent and open management communication style. Hart (2016) reconstructed six communication rules of "native speech" online English language instructors enforced in their interactions with Chinese trainees. Lie and Bailey's (2017) study revealed that members of the Chinese minority in Indonesia often gave their children Western names to express resistance to Suharto's policy of forcing them to adopt Indonesian names. Communication practices as diverse as naming, enforcing communication rules, and using select management communication styles can all facilitate the global circulation of discursive resources such as names, "native (English) speech," and participatory decision-making, respectively.

Ethnographies of hybridity successfully document cultural change at the level of individual social actors' daily

Received: 31 March 2022. **Revised:** 10 October 2022. **Accepted:** 11 October 2022

experiences; ethnographies of communication provide evidence of the communicative facilitation of discursive resources' circulation. What these studies do not foreground is the role of communication *in* cultural change that results from cross-cultural circulation. Research designed to investigate this relationship requires a foundation in theory conceived to identify cultural meanings active in observable communication, and a qualitative case that features communication at two points of cultural movement: a time when a cultural object is rendered mobile, and a time when it interacts with a new cultural context. We rely on Cultural Discourse Theory (CDT; Carbaugh, 2011) to investigate how a particular resource, the speech genre of public speaking, is rendered mobile in the United States and interacts with a Chinese expressive system.

Theoretical framework

This article develops CDT's view of communication practices as resources for participation in social interaction. CDT provides ethnographers of communication with an explanatory framework for the study of "culture [. . .] as an ever-present dimension of discursive practice" (Carbaugh, 2011, p. 99). CDT regards culture as a historically transmitted expressive system meaningful to social actors who make use of it for the purpose of social interaction. In the course of interaction, those actors engage in communication practices understood as complex systems of symbols, symbolic forms, and their meanings. CDT informs the research approach Carbaugh (2007) called cultural discourse analysis, or CuDA, an approach designed to study the significance of communication practices in intercultural encounters. Typically, CuDA analysts shed light on the cultural distinctiveness of *communication practices*—patterns of situated, locally meaningful communicative action which, through symbolic and pragmatic relationships to related practices, constitute cultural discourses. Additionally, they often use CuDA to show how such distinctiveness can occasion episodes of misunderstanding and miscommunication.

The cultural discourse approach posits that when speakers interact with members of a socio-culturally distinct group in a way that group members regard competent speakers can be assumed to be using locally valued communication practices. Thus, competent participation in a group's social life through social interaction requires access to, and the acquisition of, locally valued communication practices which function as resources for social interaction (Carbaugh, 1988, 2005; see also Boromisza-Habashi & Martinez-Guillem, 2012; Fitch, 2003). This view implies that any discursive resource competently deployed in social interaction already possesses locally distinct value within the group, and that value is already integrated into the group's unique expressive system. Our study seeks to account for the fact that valued discursive resources are sometimes accessible and acquired not only *within* but *across* socio-culturally distinct groups (Russell & Boromisza-Habashi, 2020). As discursive resources circulate, what role their value plays in the process of circulation across culturally distinct expressive systems becomes an empirical question.

In their current version, CDT and CuDA are powerful frameworks for accounting for cultural *difference*, and less so for *mobility*. Our goal in this study is to show that value plays a distinctive role in constituting the mobility of a particular discursive resource, the speech genre recognized in the United States as *public speaking* (Rossette-Crake, 2019) and as *English public speaking* (EPS) in China, and thereby extend CDT to account for mobility. We regard public speaking a speech genre because it consists of a set of relatively stable, locally recognized speech conventions that serve as a means of the production, interpretation, and evaluation of particular performances of public speaking (Boromisza-Habashi & Reinig, 2018).

Our theoretical approach is informed by Boromisza-Habashi and Fang's (2021) view of cultural value according to which discursive resources possess value insofar as a cultural group regards them as objects of desire due to their function as means to other valued ends in the context of relevant social processes. From an ethnographic perspective which emphasizes members' interpretations of communicative conduct, competent use is an important, but not the only, source of value. In addition to use, two other relevant processes produce value. Exchange produces value, often by rendering discursive resources into commodities in the context of trainings and textbook sales. Speakers also derive value from the process of acquisition, as the process of learning unfamiliar discursive resources can lead to the experience of self-transformation. This theoretical approach diverges from recent anthropological approaches to neoliberalism's effects on language use (Heller, 2010; Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2013) which treat commodification as the primary source of discursive resources' value, and from sociolinguistic approaches that attend to desire *in*, rather than desire *for*, language (Kulick, 2014).

Our approach to value is aligned with one of the ethnography of communication tradition's fundamental insights: communication and culture are mutually constitutive (Carbaugh, 2005), as are patterns of communicative action and sociocultural organization (Wilkins, 2005). In this view, culturally variable communal desirables are retrievable from observable language use. Use, exchange, and acquisitive value are available to the cultural analyst in the observable communicative conduct of cultural group members. In our case, these value types can be detected in a type of communication practice we call *explicit value ascriptions*: observable, context-bound statements about how the use, exchange, or acquisition of a discursive resource allow a speaker to attain other valued ends. The CuDA analysis of value ascriptions, we argue here, provides insight into the communicative constitution of public speaking's movement between the cultural contexts of the United States and China.

Drawing on Urban's (2001) theory of cultural circulation in modernity we regarded the United States as a point of public speaking's *dissemination* (where experts make the resource widely available to a public) and China as a point of *replication* (where speakers integrate the resource into a local *expressive system*, that is, a culturally variable and coherent set of communication practices). CuDA's axioms of particularity and actuality (Carbaugh et al., 1997) hold that communication and its technologies "are conceived, valued, and used in locally distinctive ways" (p. 3) and that context-bound, observable communication practices give form and meaning to social life, respectively. Based on these axioms, we posited that public speaking as a discursive resource would be valued and used differently in the United States and China, and that its view as a mobile resource would be constituted through specific communication practices immanent in topically defined (Scollo, 2011) cultural discourses of cross-cultural circulation.

Following the ethnographic principle of "communication is what people make of it" (Carbaugh & Boromisza-Habashi, 2015, p. 539) we chose as our analytic focus the communication practice of speakers explicitly ascribing value to public speaking. We then asked:

> *RQ1: How do value ascriptions constitute the value of public speaking as a discursive resource?*
> *RQ2: How do value ascriptions constitute cultural discourses of circulation?*
> *RQ3: How do these discourses constitute the circulation of public speaking?*

Case: the circulation of public speaking

Tracing cultural circulation, and communication's role in it, requires bounded case studies that can be used to showcase observable communication along the complete trajectory of circulation, that is, from a point of "departure" to a point of "arrival." The present study focuses on a case of cross-cultural circulation where a limited number of participants directly involved in both the dissemination and replication of the same discursive resource, a speech genre, overtly reflected on those processes. Their reflections allowed us to document value ascriptions at the beginning and end points of the circulation process, and to analyze both the role of value in the communicative constitution of public speaking's circulation and the transformation of the genre's value as it achieved mobility.

The case at hand features a cultural entrepreneur (Urban, 2001) strategically disseminating public speaking as a discursive resource on the dissemination side of circulation, and higher education as a site of adult language socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011) on the replication side. On the dissemination side, we identified a cultural entrepreneur, Prof. Stephen E. Lucas, emeritus professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Lucas exemplifies four defining components of cultural entrepreneurs' *metacultural awareness*, that is, their ability to reflect on and shape the circulation of cultural objects (Urban, 2001): the expertise and authority to shape the cultural object's circulation; access to a public; the ability to increase the number of people replicating the object through persuasion; and foresight into the paths of the object's likely circulation.

Lucas is an internationally recognized rhetoric scholar and author of the public speaking textbook *The Art of Public Speaking*, one of the most widely used public speaking textbooks in the United States (Morreale et al., 2016). Lucas' involvement in promoting EPS in China has been extensive. China began hosting national speech contests in the mid-1990s. The contests sparked acute demand for EPS courses on university campuses across China (Lucas, 2013). The demand was further fueled by the 2000 Chinese National Curriculum for English Majors which "required that a student, upon graduation, be able to 'communicate with foreign guests fluently and appropriately on major social issues at home and abroad; express his/her opinions logically, thoroughly, and coherently'" (Fan et al., 2016, p. 422). Lucas gave his first public lecture on public speaking and globalization in China in 2001, the same year the Chinese delegation's English-language presentation appeared to play a key role in the International Olympic Committee's decision to bring the 2008 Summer Olympics to Beijing (Lucas, 2010; "More Chinese value communication skills," 2001). He served as a judge at the 21st Century Cup National English Speaking Competition and the FLTRP (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press) Cup National English Debating Competition, and as a commentator for the CCTV Cup English Speaking Contest (Lucas, 2010). His textbook, which the publisher, the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, marketed as "the Bible of public speaking," was first published in China in 2005, was adopted for the Chinese market in 2010, followed by a teachers' manual in 2011, a digital course in 2013, and a Chinese translation in 2014 (Contest History, n.d.). Since 2005, Lucas has given keynotes, talks, and workshops on public speaking at some of China's top universities including Tsinghua University, Peking University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and the Harbin Institute of Technology (Lucas, 2010).

In an extensive discussion of the genre's "localization" in Chinese higher education, Lucas acknowledged that as Chinese universities sought to systematically integrate EPS into their curricula "questions naturally arise about the intellectual provenance of public speaking and about the course's localization in China so as to avoid the intellectual imperialism that has often afflicted English-language instruction in countries around the globe" (Lucas, 2013, p. 177). Lucas encouraged Chinese instructors to carefully reflect on the cultural and institutional contexts in which they deliver the EPS course, and to localize every aspect of the course including the syllabus, teaching materials, and pedagogy. "Given the cross-cultural nature of English public speaking and English-language learning in general, localization also entails constant negotiation and renegotiation of cultural boundaries and possibilities," (p. 179) he added. However, while emphasizing the role of cultural difference in the dissemination of the speech genre he maintained that the genre itself, the circulating cultural object, would retain its general characteristics. Thus, Lucas presented public speaking as a *for-anyone-anywhere genre* (Boromisza-Habashi & Reinig, 2018), a mobile genre that moves through and articulates with various socio-cultural and institutional contexts while remaining fundamentally immutable. By doing so, he demonstrated a lack of the fifth defining component of metacultural awareness: the acceptance of the inevitable change to the object brought about by replication. Change is inevitable because circulation necessitates that the circulating cultural object match local cultural patterns to some extent (Urban, 2001).

On the replication side, we collected data from students and an instructor from Yunnan University in China. The two campuses of Yunnan University are both located in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province in Western China. During the second half of the 20th century Kunming gained a reputation as a relatively underdeveloped city isolated from the rest of China. Its leadership and inhabitants saw themselves as playing catch-up with coastal cities and the Western world. The national real estate boom of the early 21st century, however, brought frenzied development to the city. Today, Kunming is widely recognized as a regional hub and a popular destination for Chinese tourists who seek to immerse themselves in "old China," although it continues to hold a peripheral position in the national economy (Zhang, 2010).

Our sources of data were Wewu (pseudonym), an instructor of EPS at Yunnan University in Kunming, China, and undergraduate students who had previously enrolled in an EPS course for English majors, including one who achieved

national attention as an FLTRP Cup contestant. With the exception of one, all students had taken EPS with Wewu. In his courses, Wewu used the Chinese edition of Lucas's *The Art of Public Speaking* as the required textbook. He jokingly referred to it as the "red treasure book," a common nickname in China for the numerous books with red covers used for English language exam preparation. Although the Chinese edition contains significant changes—namely, reduced length, Chinese examples, and a chapter on EPS competitions in China—the book is roughly identical to the U.S. original in terms of structure and content.

Method

Data collection

While the Lucas textbook is the most apparent circulating cultural object in this case, due to our interest in the role of value in the circulation of EPS we decided not to use it as a primary data source. The textbook contained a relatively narrow range of value ascriptions compared to his work on the subject of EPS in China. We used four of Lucas's English-language academic articles (Lucas, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2019) published over a span of ten years as our dissemination-side data, a set of articles written for the specific purpose of disseminating EPS to China. The four articles yielded a total of 92 pages of analyzable text.

On the replication side, the second author collected two sets of data. The first set derived from focus groups with undergraduate English majors in 2016, collected for an earlier study (Boromisza-Habashi & Fang, 2021). The discussion guide (see Appendix A in the Supplementary Materials) contained open-ended questions designed to prompt spontaneous reflection and conversation among participants. The second author conducted 12 focus groups ($n = 65$) in Mandarin. Focus group participants included 54 female and 11 male sophomore students (ages 20–21 years). The gender ratio of the focus groups is a close approximation of the gender ratio of English departments in China. The duration of focus groups ranged from 30 to 134 minutes; the number of participants ranged from 3 to 7. The second data set consisted of in-depth Chinese-language interviews with an EPS instructor who had been teaching EPS for 15 years, and one of his students who won second place at the national FLTRP Cup competition. Both interviews were conducted in 2020 after we developed a specific research interest in the communicative constitution of the circulation of discursive resources. The second author fully transcribed all focus groups and interviews. The focus groups yielded a total of 183 pages of transcripts, the interviews a total of 32.

Data analysis

We performed data analysis separately, the first author working with dissemination-side, English language data, the second author with replication-side, Chinese-language data. The second author analyzed Chinese-language data and translated representative excerpts into English. Throughout the analytic process, we held regular meetings in which we conducted voter adjudication in order to build and maintain consensus about the coding process (Saldaña, 2016). Our analytic procedure was based on cultural discourse analysis (CuDA; Carbaugh, 2007). CuDA aids cultural analysts in reconstructing and comparing indigenous cultural meanings that render expressive systems meaningful and appropriate for speech community members, and that render locally recognized sets of practices, symbols, and symbolic forms cohesive. CuDA analysis starts with identifying a practice culturally meaningful both at the point of dissemination and replication (in our case, value ascriptions). Analysis then moves to interpreting cultural meanings immanent in the practice by reconstructing semantic relations among key symbolic terms (terms which, across different bodies of data, are used in a patterned way and seem to carry special significance for speakers) that cluster around the practice in observable social interaction. These symbolic terms can then be used to develop cultural propositions which capture relationships among those terms. From cultural propositions, the analyst can reconstruct taken-for-granted assumptions, or cultural premises, about personhood, social relations, and communicative action, thus reconstructing metacultural commentary the focal practice cued (Carbaugh, 2005), and can then perform a comparison of beliefs informing the same practice.

To answer RQ1, we began data analysis by going through the text data sentence-by-sentence, and the focus group and interview data utterance-by-utterance, to identify value ascriptions speakers applied to EPS as a whole, or some element of that speech genre. In the English-language data we identified 161 value ascriptions; the Chinese-language data yielded 1679. Drawing on Boromisza-Habashi and Fang's (2021) cultural theory of the value of discursive resources, we organized these into three categories: ascriptions of use, exchange, and acquisitive value. These categories reflect local interpretations of value.

Use value (USE): EPS is desirable because its use allows the speaker to accomplish a variety of communicative actions such as speaking effectively, persuading others, giving a good presentation, speaking at a wedding, etc.

> Example: "*If I can get, in my hometown, there are more foreign companies, if I can get a job in such a company, or something else, as an English major student, I may need to go in front of people to do things like give a speech. If I took such a course, I might be able to have better training in this ability.*" (from focus group)

Exchange value (EXC): EPS is desirable because the speaker can exchange it for gainful employment or for money, for example by charging students for an EPS course.

> Example: "*Anyway, in the future, when looking for a job, during interviews, I feel [knowing EPS] may have a certain impact.*" (from focus group)

Acquisitive value (ACQ): EPS is desirable because in the process of acquiring—learning—it the speaker becomes a better person.

> Example: "*My thinking ability has been improved. That is to say, I don't view things in an either-or fashion, not either black or white, either this or that. I can look at things more as a whole and from different perspectives.*" (from in-depth interview with the champion public speaker)

We noticed that some value ascriptions fell into two or more value categories. For example, we coded "*With this*

perspective on English public speaking in mind, we can now explore specific ways in which the course strengthens core skills and competencies" (Lucas, 2013, p. 168) as USE (EPS can be used to speak in skillful and competent ways) and ACQ (learning EPS transforms one into a more skilled and competent person). By the time we completed this round of coding we had three "piles" of sentences and utterances coded as USE, EXC, and/or ACQ, with some sentences and utterances sorted into two or three "piles."

In the next round of coding, we examined quotes containing value ascriptions in all three categories and identified the valued objects speakers identified as attainable through (learning) EPS. This meant simplifying the quotes by centering attention to the valued objects speakers described in each coded excerpt. Out of each quote we created entries starting with "EPS [is] needed to," followed by a valued object speakers stated could be achieved, attained, or accomplished by learning public speaking or one of its elements (e.g., topic selection, organization, clarity, etc.).

In the third round of coding, we developed indigenous categories of valued objects from the symbolic key terms that seemed to carry special significance to speakers, as evidenced by the frequency of their appearance or their semantic links to a significant number of other symbolic terms (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981). A principle we followed at this stage of coding was to use speakers' words to capture indigenous categories, which meant that we conducted the coding of the English-language data in English, and the Chinese-language data in Mandarin. Identifying these categories was an iterative process, meaning we continued to revise category labels until we were certain that we identified valid categories of valued objects. We read and re-read our list of valued objects and continued revising (combining, splitting, re-wording, etc.) categories in the light of our increasing understanding of symbolic terms that expressed indigenous typologies of valued objects. We generated dissemination-side and replication-side lists of indigenous categories of valued objects. This allowed us to compare the two lists to identify similarities and overlaps in value ascriptions, and to interpret the data by formulating cultural propositions and premises (Carbaugh, 2007). We report comparative and interpretive results in the following section.

Following the comparison and interpretation of value ascriptions and their meanings we pursued our interest in how value ascriptions communicatively constitute the circulation of public speaking. While familiarizing himself with Lucas's value ascriptions the first author noticed that those ascriptions frequently exhibited metacultural awareness (Urban, 2001) evidenced by explicit statements about the cross-cultural mobility of public speaking as a discursive resource and the cultural differences such mobility may reveal. This observation led us to design interview questions for Wewu and his student that, besides aiding reflection on teaching and learning EPS, would create opportunities for similar displays of metacultural awareness (see Supplementary Appendices B and C). Wewu exhibited such awareness, the student did not. We catalogued Lucas's and Wewu's value ascriptions containing displays of metacultural awareness to answer RQ2 and RQ3. Our answers were partly informed by our prior ethnographic fieldwork, particularly in the interpretation of the Chinese data.

Results

In what follows, we first describe the cultural value of EPS in Lucas' scholarship, then show the divergence between his and Chinese indigenous typologies of valued objects. Then, we reconstruct similarities and differences between cultural discourses informing dissemination and replication.

Comparison of the value of public speaking in the U.S. and Chinese data

U.S. value ascriptions

Lucas' four articles we analyzed represent a sustained, comprehensive persuasive effort to articulate the value of public speaking for the purpose of facilitating its cross-cultural circulation. The articles' publication dates span a decade (2009–2019). The articles themselves were designed to persuade instructors of EPS to "localize" the teaching of the genre in the context of Chinese higher education—but not the genre itself. Finally, they established Lucas' authority as a cultural entrepreneur in two ways: by enumerating his various academic credentials, and by appearing in authoritative outlets targeting Chinese academic audiences specialized in the teaching of English in higher education, namely in the proceedings of the first, second and third National Symposia on English Public Speaking (Lucas, 2009, 2014) and the *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Lucas, 2013, 2019).

Lucas' articles systematically address all three types of value in our analytic framework: use, exchange, and acquisitive value. Below, we identify types and categories of valued objects we collected from value ascriptions. These valued objects are presented as symbolic terms in quotes.[1] Some valued objects formed categories by clustering around symbolic key terms; others did not.

Recognizing EPS as a communal desirable that generates value in the process of use, Lucas points to the following categories of desirable objects Chinese speakers can attain by learning the genre:

1) The competent use of EPS allows Chinese learners to use English as a "working language" for the purpose of "communication" including "effective speaking," "persuasion," "clear communication," and "ethical communication."
2) The competent use of EPS also equips Chinese learners with the ability to engage in "face-to-face communication" in "real-life situations" such as "one-on-one negotiations," "interpersonal exchanges," professional exchanges in the workplace such as "job interviews" and "giving presentations," "speech competitions," "debates," writing "papers," taking "CET [College English Test] examinations," and "any kind of communication situation" in general, in English or Chinese.
3) The competent use of EPS positions Chinese learners to become engaged in a "globalized world" by developing "intercultural communication competence" and "cultural fluency" and communicating with the "outside world," particularly with "Westerners" in contexts such as "foreign trade."

EPS as a communal desirable also generates value in the process of exchange. Lucas identifies "being hired" and "being employed" as two objects learning EPS enables

Chinese learners to accomplish by exchanging their EPS skills for gainful employment.

Finally, EPS also allows Chinese learners to accomplish self-transformation in the process of its acquisition. Lucas' writing highlights the following types of self-transformation:

- becoming a "good," "virtuous" person (with "character")
- achieving "self-confidence"
- acquiring "skills," "competencies," "abilities," "sensibilities," and "proficiency"
- becoming an "effective" speaker, writer, listener, critical thinker
- achieving "personal growth," "development," "empowerment," "cultivation of talents"
- achieving "personal success"
- becoming prepared for life in a "globalized"/"diverse" world

Chinese value ascriptions

We found notable similarities between Lucas' and our Chinese respondents' value ascriptions in terms of the objects of desire they mentioned. Chinese respondents' value ascriptions identified many of the same use and exchange values as Lucas'. In the use value category, Chinese respondents, like Lucas, mentioned "clarity," "interpersonal communication," "communicative ability" "persuasive ability," and the ability to "be interviewed" and "give presentations"; in the exchange value category they mentioned "finding a job," and "being hired (for a teaching position/by a foreign company)." Some notable exceptions included Chinese respondents ascribing value to EPS because it afforded them the possibility of "telling and listening to personal experiences/life stories" (*jiangshu he ting taren jiangshu jingli/gushi*) in the classroom, the ability to display "respectful manners/appearance/clothing" (*limao liyi/zunzhong/yirong yibiao/yizhuo*), and opportunities for "entertainment" (*yule*) by other students' speeches.[2] In the exchange value category, they mentioned that besides gainful employment EPS also empowered them to give presentations that attract "investment" (*touzi*) and "big clients" (*da kehu*). The value Lucas had ascribed to public speaking for being a means of "ethical communication," "face-to-face" communication, and writing "papers" did not appear in the Chinese data, and neither did "CET examinations" which English majors do not have to take.

The most notable difference between cultural value ascriptions appeared with reference to acquisitive value, that is, in the types of desirables Lucas and Chinese respondents identified when they ascribed value to EPS due to its capacity to bring about positive self-transformation in the process of learning the genre. Chinese value ascriptions made mention of the following objects of desire that could result from the process of acquisition:

- attaining "mental toughness" (*xinli suzhi*) and "self-confidence" (*zixin*)[3] as a result of "training" (*duanlian*)
- gaining "inspiration" or "motivation" (*jili*)
- attaining "charisma" (*qichang*) and an "attractive personality" (*xiyinli*)
- developing one's "politeness" (*limao*) and "respect" (*zunzhong*) for others
- developing one's "positivity" (*jiji zhudong*)
- developing one's "all-around qualities" (*suzhi*)

These symbolic terms made no appearance in Lucas' texts, while the categories of becoming a "good"/"virtuous" person did not appear in the Chinese data. Arguably, these results reflect a cultural concern with self-improvement documented across a variety of Chinese educational contexts including workshops for interpersonal skills (Hizi, 2021), public speaking clubs (Hampel, 2017), English language schools (Henry, 2021), and private schools for assembly line workers from rural areas (Chang, 2009).

From the analysis of the semantic relationships among the Chinese terms listed above we learned that, as a symbolic key term, developing one's "all-around quality" (*suzhi*) constituted a category of self-transformation to which all other types of transformation belonged. Formulating cultural propositions and premises allowed us to develop a more fine-grained interpretation of this richly meaningful key symbol which did not have a clear equivalent in Lucas' articles. The cultural propositions we developed from the Chinese data can be stated as follows:

> In their original state, persons lack "quality." "All-around quality" must be attained through a combination of "inspiration" and "motivation" derived from the example of others (including their in-class speeches), and the "toughening" of the self. A "mentally tough" person can meet a demanding, and often hostile, world with "self-confidence" as a result of an incremental process of periodically subjecting themselves to uncomfortable "training" such as of speaking in front of an audience in English. A person in possession of a "quality" self can display "charisma" and an "attractive personality" in institutional or organizational relationships and public settings, and can be "polite" toward others in interpersonal relationships, for example by listening to them "respectfully." Such "respect" breeds "respect" towards the "polite" person. A person with "quality" exudes "positivity." In the context of EPS, this means speaking in hopeful, optimistic ways (and thereby "inspiring" and "motivating" others), keeping criticism of others to a minimum, and generally behaving like the world was either improving, or at least had the potential to improve if everyone does their part to improve it.

This cultural view of a person's "quality" points to a cultural difference between Lucas' work and replication-side conceptions of EPS's value. The cultural logic of "quality" we recovered from our Chinese respondent's talk brings into view a process of self-transformation that cannot occur without the participation of others. The person seeking "quality" is "toughened" when presenting in English in front of others. They are "inspired" and "motivated" by others, and "motivates" and "inspires" them in return. Communicative conduct marked by "quality" breeds "quality" in others. "Positivity" is described as a general attitude that keeps the hope of the mutual attainment of "quality" meaningful and reasonable, despite the harshness of the world in which the quest for "quality" takes place. A cultural premise informing this logic can be stated as follows: Personhood can only be moved into a state of higher "quality" in interaction with others. Interaction can take various forms, including collaboration and the evaluation of one's conduct. These insights

from Kunming reflect a broader cultural discourse about the relational construction of personhood: "Chinese personhood and personal identity are not given in the abstract as something intrinsic to and fixed in human nature, but are constantly being created, altered, and dismantled in particular social relationships" (Yang, 1994, p. 192). This model of personhood, Chang (2010) argues, is often misconstrued in Western scholarship as an expression of a cultural preoccupation with social harmony in China and attendant restrictions placed on the individual's free will, expression, and creativity. "If it is true that Chinese have made 'social harmony' a guiding principle [for interaction], the effect lies not so much in suppressing what can be said, but in how words can be used to create or constitute a pleasant social encounter that will benefit self and other" (p. 21). Far from unreflective submission to group norms and the will of the collective, creating such encounters requires considerable individual creativity and effort.

Comparison of U.S. and Chinese value ascriptions.

The closest Lucas came to ascribing acquisitive value similar to comprehensive "quality" to EPS was in his discussion of becoming a "good" and "virtuous" person with "character." In an essay on the ethical dimension of public speaking (Lucas, 2019) he drew on Quintillian's *Institutes of oratory* to make a case for viewing learning EPS as moral education in China. Updating Quintillian's famous description of oratory as "the good man speaking well" to "the good person speaking well" (p. 420), Lucas argued that the speaker's ethics and speaking abilities were inseparable characteristics of public speaking: "As Quintilian understood, educating the public speaker (and writer) is about more than skills, more than techniques, more than knowledge divorced from consideration of social, ethical, or moral consequences—it is about character. As we help our students become more effective speakers and writers, we play a role in molding their character and shaping their values" (p. 423). In Quintillian's time, Lucas added, "[t]he teacher's job was to mold public speakers who communicated with power, precision, and eloquence, but also with a firm sense of moral responsibility" (p. 420). Lucas exhorts today's public speaking instructors to continue Quintillian's legacy by making sure that students will use the power of rhetoric for virtuous ends in civic life.

The scope of transformation described here is individual and moral. Relationships among key symbolic terms in Lucas' text can be formulated in this way:

> A person acquiring the "power" of (English) public speaking needs to be taught the "social, ethical, and moral consequence" of using that "power." This is how a speaker builds "character" and how their "values" are shaped. Understanding the "consequences" of (English) public speaking is an important part of learning to use it "virtuously," that is, with a "firm sense of moral responsibility" and with the goal of seeking the "truth" rather than deception.

In Lucas' work, in the process of acquisition the speaker seeks to attain the status of "good person" under the tutelage of a teacher who instills in them a sense of "moral responsibility" in conjunction with teaching them the requisite "skills" of public speaking. After the individual speaker's moral transformation takes place in interaction with a teacher the student steps in front of an audience as a fully formed "good person" ready to harness the power of public speaking for the purpose of seeking the "truth." By contrast, the Chinese model speaker's audience plays an active role in the speaker's efforts to accomplish positive self-transformation and "all-around quality." This requires high moral standing on the part of the speaker, in addition to mental toughness and self-confidence to face the challenge of speaking English in front of and audience, and positivity and charisma which allow speakers to collaboratively raise their own and their audience's *suzhi*. While being a "good person" is a prerequisite of speaking, *suzhi* is its prerequisite *and* outcome. Thus, the cultural premise informing the U.S. model of educating the speaker to be a "good person" can be stated as: Moral virtue is taught to the individual.

Cultural discourses of circulation

We now turn our attention to results that inform our responses to RQ2 and RQ3, namely how value ascriptions constitute cultural discourses of circulation, and how these discourses constitute the circulation of public speaking.

U.S. cultural discourse of circulation.

Lucas' efforts to disseminate public speaking in China provides evidence of extensive metacultural awareness (Urban, 2001). In our data, value ascriptions addressing all three types of public speaking's value (use, exchange, and acquisitive) lent persuasive force to Lucas' articles where he made the case for the integration of EPS pedagogy into Chinese higher education. However, value ascriptions did not stand on their own, but were rather combined with two additional elements: the use of the key term "localization" and explicit metacultural commentary on the cross-cultural mobility of EPS as a discursive resource. We saw that such metacultural commentary in Lucas' case cast EPS as a for-anyone-anywhere genre (Boromisza-Habashi & Reinig, 2018) with cross-culturally relevant, immutable characteristics. EPS's integration into a Chinese expressive system, Lucas argued, could be managed by leveraging the localizing function of culturally sensitive pedagogy. As a culturally unique configuration of communication practices, value ascriptions, the patterned use of a key symbol, and explicit metacultural commentary constitute a cultural discourse of circulation.

Chinese cultural discourse of circulation.

We have also found evidence of metacultural awareness on the replication side, particularly in Wewu's reflections on the cross-cultural mobility of EPS. In the below excerpt from an in-depth ethnographic interview, Wewu is explaining why Chinese students are often better at EPS than their "native speaker" or "Western" counterparts.

> To be honest, I don't think students in English-speaking countries are necessarily better than us. Because I am a Chinese, to my ears our Chinese students, the excellent contestants, the excellent Chinese *English speakers*, what they can say actually sounds much better than *native speakers* from English-speaking countries. [. . .] It's not necessarily good to use that so-called "words that are outrageously sensational" [yu bu jingren si buxiu] style. It's not necessarily good if you don't suggest any constructive ideas. Like what I said, to go back to that little girl, the little environmentalist [Greta Thunberg], is that speech of

> hers [to the UN] a good speech? No, it's not. [. . .] Yet people say it has been really influential even though she is still a child. Therefore, this is hard to [judge], as there are different criteria. [. . .] At least as a Chinese listener, I as a Chinese, a Chinese listener, *Chinese listener*, I feel, many times, that we can actually speak better than they. Maybe this is because we are immersed in Chinese culture, and we don't want something that's so harsh on the ear. Don't be so harsh on the ear, even if you are talking about a [difficult] issue, don't be so harsh on the ear. However, in the West, [the speaker] wouldn't care. [The speaker] would say, isn't this the truth? [They] just give you the truth. (Interview of April 19, 2020; italicized words spoken in English, the rest spoken in Mandarin)

This excerpt illustrates how explicit metacultural commentary combines with the ascription of value to EPS in China. Here, Wewu moves from contrasting native speakers of English with Chinese English speakers to drawing a contrast between Western and Chinese public speaking. In both cases, he argues that Chinese speakers practicing EPS could outperform others. The reason he offers coheres around the cultural concept of *suzhi* even though he does not use the term in this particular excerpt. Chinese speakers, he argues, avoid the "words that are outrageously sensational" style of public speaking. This style of speaking is not desirable because it is "harsh on the ears" of "Chinese listeners" and thus lacks the kind of "positivity" that "suggests constructive ideas" and thereby paints a hopeful image of the world. As such, it cannot "inspire" and "motivate" others to be "positive" as well and to improve themselves and the world they share with the speaker. In addition, because it does not allow the speaker to appear "positive," it also diminishes their "all-around quality" as a person, and it robs members of the audience to attain a higher degree of *suzhi* as well. While the kind of confrontational, angry, and critical public speaking Greta Thunberg embodies may be well-suited and persuasive for Western audiences, Chinese EPS calls for dispensing with some traditional forms of emotional appeal in order to avoid diminishing the *suzhi* of the speaker, along with audience members' prospects of attaining higher "quality" through "inspiration" and "motivation. This interpretation is in line with a broader cultural principle of communication: "Aggressive, direct confrontation, while seemingly strong, is in fact weak. In practical terms, such language accomplishes little more than to offend and hurt others" (Chang, 2010, p. 29)." Native speakers who fail to appreciate these local preferences, Wewu argues, will also fail to measure up to Chinese speakers in the Chinese context.

We see Wewu invoke the Chinese cultural discourse of circulation which combines value ascriptions and metacultural commentary on a small but significant distinction between Western *public speaking* and Chinese *EPS*. Avoiding "being harsh on the ear" requires removing some types of emotional appeal from the *public speaking* genre in order to bring about its integration into a local expressive system. This requirement is justified by semantic links in Wewu's talk to the cultural key term *suzhi*. The cultural discourse of circulation in the above excerpt lends coherence and legitimacy to the replication of public speaking in the Chinese context as EPS, a partially local, partially mobile speech genre, thus integrating it into the local expressive system. This is a marked difference from the effort to accelerate its circulation, which implies that although EPS *pedagogy* will need to be localized EPS as a for-anyone-anywhere genre will remain fundamentally unchanged.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to develop an account of the cross-cultural circulation of discursive resources using CuDA and thereby extend the scope of CDT from cultural difference to cultural mobility. From an ethnographic perspective, accounting for the circulation of discursive resources necessitates the reconstruction of members' conceptions of their value and their movements; that is, how they communicatively constitute them as communal desirables. To that end, we adopted a distinction between dissemination and replication as two key processes of circulation from Urban's (2001) theory of cultural circulation. We also drew on Boromisza-Habashi and Fang's (2021) theory of cultural value according to which discursive resources possess value insofar as a cultural group regards them as objects of desire due to their function as means to other valued ends in the context of relevant social processes. Our analysis of explicit value ascriptions revealed similarities and differences between the conception of public speaking's value as a discursive resource on the dissemination (United States) and replication (Chinese) side. We have shown that the most notable difference existed between ascriptions of acquisitive value, that is, speakers' statements that public speaking had value because learning the genre occasioned positive self-transformation. While the dissemination-side data highlighted the transformation of learners into virtuous persons with character, the replication-side data focused on the attainment of all around quality (*suzhi*). The cultural discourse analysis of these value ascriptions showed that dissemination- and replication-side ascriptions cohered around discourses of individual and relational self-transformation, respectively.

Value ascriptions constituted elements of cultural discourses of circulation in combination with explicit metacultural commentary on cultural differences between the United States or the West and China and how those differences shaped the circulation of public speaking as a discursive resource, and with key terms such as "localization" and *suzhi*. We have described the function of that cultural discourse of circulation on the dissemination side as the acceleration of dissemination accomplished by casting public speaking as a for-anyone-anywhere genre with cross-culturally relevant, immutable characteristics that could be inserted into any expressive system through the careful localization of pedagogy. On the replication-side, we showed that a cultural discourse of circulation facilitated the integration of EPS as a mobile discursive resource into a local expressive system by justifying modifications to some of its features—in our case, the removal of a type of emotional appeal.

The application of CuDA to the study of cross-cultural circulation leads us to suggest two theoretical extensions of CDT. First, while the cultural value of local discursive resources is typically taken for granted by participants and cultural analysts alike, the cultural value and desirability of mobile discursive resources needs to be communicatively constituted and re-constituted in the process of their circulation. Such constitution occurs through the use of dissemination- and replication-side cultural discourses of circulation, discourses that may not have identical elements even when they pertain

to the circulation of the same discursive resource. Second, the circulation of discursive resources is made possible by the different functions cultural discourses of circulation fulfill on the dissemination and replication side. On the dissemination side, cultural discourses of circulation have an *accelerative* function in that they communicatively constitute the mobility of discursive resources. In the case of public speaking, constituting mobility included persuasive statements about the cross-culturally relevant value and immutability of the genre along with suggestions for a culturally sensitive pedagogy as a vehicle of dissemination. Cultural discourses of circulation on the replication side have an *integrative* function that facilitate the adaptation of mobile resources into the local expressive system. In our case, a replication-side cultural discourse provided a cultural basis for justifying a partial replication of the resource for the purpose of rendering it valuable for local speakers. We surmise that the ways cultural discourses of circulation fulfill these functions will vary with circulating resources and points of dissemination and replication.

Implications for critical approaches to language and globalization

Although our research approach falls principally within an interpretivist paradigm, the results carry implications for critically oriented studies of the global circulation of discursive resources. First, ethnographic inquiry into language ideologies (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Woolard, 1998) has shown that social relations are constituted in the medium of language and its use, while culturally variable ideologies render the identity-language use nexus locally meaningful, appropriate, and taken-for-granted. Often, these connections produce and sustain social hierarchies which, in turn lead to the unequal distribution of social, linguistic, and material resources within social groups (Heller & Duchêne, 2016). Language ideologies tend to be durable and to benefit dominant groups (Morgan, 2014; Rosa, 2019). They exert their influence through a variety of communication practices including the use of indigenous evaluative vocabularies applied to linguistic varieties and their speakers. A linguistic ethnography of Taiwanese women's speech, for example, has shown that by labeling women who speak Taiwanese-accented Mandarin as lacking *qizhi* (a "refined disposition") speakers stigmatize both the women and the linguistic variety they are using (Su, 2008). Our findings about the meanings of possessing *suzhi* ("all-around quality") imply that local evaluative vocabularies can also be used to valorize local discourse varieties such as English Public Speaking. In the context of the global hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon version of public speaking (Rossette-Crake, 2019), Chinese speakers invoke *suzhi* to ascribe value to EPS, a version which may appear substandard from the perspective of those who maintain the Anglo-Saxon version's hegemonic position. By preventing stigmatization of both EPS and of speakers who use it, the Chinese cultural discourse of EPS's circulation becomes a small but significant political act of wresting control over taste (Bourdieu, 1984) from those who practice and promote Anglo-Saxon public speaking. Arguably, this move is an element of ongoing efforts to discursively define the new, modern Chinese citizen (Henry, 2021).

In addition, from the perspective of critical intercultural communication scholarship Lucas' dissemination of public speaking exemplifies Anglocentricity (treating English as the linguistic standard by which all linguistic activity needs to be evaluated) and positions him as a proponent of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2022). Despite his statements criticizing intellectual imperialism in English-language instruction around the world, from a critical perspective Lucas' discussion of Anglo-Saxon public speaking as a for-anyone-anywhere genre takes on two meanings: it feeds into "[t]he assumption that English is 'global,' universally relevant and needed" (p. 425), and lends legitimacy to regarding the genre as a standard by which Chinese performances of EPS ought to be evaluated. Our discussion of language ideology and EPS above, however, leads us to side with scholars of language, culture, and globalization who argue for a more nuanced view of the influence of the English language and discourse genres. Such a view acknowledges that local language ideologies shape local English usage and serve as warrants for resisting the ideologies and practices of linguistic imperialism (Aneesh, 2015; Pennycook, 2009; Jacquemet, 2005). As our study has shown, the Chinese discourse of circulation marshals the ideology of *suzhi* to ascribe value to positivity in EPS and describes angry public speech as inappropriate for the Chinese cultural context. These warrant the selective integration of public speaking as a discursive resource into the local expressive system, and resistance to some elements of the cultural discourse of circulation Lucas invokes.

Limitations

The study of cross-cultural circulation we present here can be expanded in a number of ways. First, our study focused on members' formulations of (English) public speaking's value and how those value ascriptions support arguments for the cross-cultural immutability or transformation of the genre's features. Future research on the genre's circulation could expand our findings by studying the observable features of the genre as it is put into situated practice by speakers on the dissemination and replication side of circulation. Second, while our study foregrounded explicit value ascriptions as a focal practice, future studies could account for less explicit or implicit evaluations enacted through, for example, various practices of stance-taking (Jaffe, 2009). Third, as is typical of small-n ethnographically informed case studies (Chen & Pearce, 1995), our study draws insights from findings related to a limited sample, namely the value ascriptions by one U.S. American cultural entrepreneur, and a relatively small number of Chinese research participants ($n = 67$). In addition, our study focuses on a limited range of communication practices that constitute cultural discourses of circulation. Studies of cultural circulation can investigate the work of other agents of dissemination and replication with access to different, larger publics (e.g., celebrities, the mass media, or makers of educational policy), and other types of communication practices that ostensibly function as elements of cultural discourses of circulation (e.g., advertising, or mediated interactions about EPS competitions). Fourth, our study did not include the investigation of direct interactions between speakers on the dissemination and replication side. The ethnographic investigation of such contact could provide insights into how the value of discursive resources is not only expressed and transformed but actively negotiated in the process of circulation.

In closing, we wish to reiterate that cultural discourses of circulation communicatively constitute the mobility of particular discursive resources. Approaching mobility in this way

enables cultural analysts of communication to capture the cross-cultural movements of discursive resources in observable communicative conduct itself.

Data availability statement

The data underlying this article cannot be shared publicly to protect the privacy of individuals that participated in the study. The data will be shared on reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Supplementary material

Supplementary material is available at *Human Communication Research* online.

Notes

1. Labels for valued objects are verbatim phrases taken from one or more of Lucas's articles. We decided not to include an in-text citation after each one in order not to visually distract the reader from our findings. All phrases appeared at least three times in our data.
2. As we are presenting a large number of very short verbatim phrases from our focus group data, we have decided not to link each one of them to the pseudonyms of focus group participants. Our purpose, again, is to avoid visual distraction from our results. All phrases appeared at least three times in our data.
3. A key semantic difference between the concept of "self-confidence" (*zixin*) and "self-esteem" (*zi zun xin*, see Miller et al., 2002) is that while the latter refers to self-worth and self-respect related one's intrinsic value the former refers to confidence in oneself when conducting specific tasks such as speaking in public.

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