

Where cultural references and lexical cohesion meet

Toward a multi-layer framing analysis

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This study investigates creative product descriptions (CPDs) in an intercultural context, especially with respect to cultural references (CRs) and lexical cohesion. More specifically, it examines (i) how CRs are utilized in CPDs written in English for intercultural communication, (ii) how lexical cohesion can be described in a culturally meaningful and context-sensitive way, and (iii) what role cultural reference terms play in shaping the lexical cohesion of such CPDs. By proposing a multi-layer framing model of cohesion, this paper shows how lexical cohesion results from interactions of four frames activated in the production and reception of a text: sociocultural, generic, interpersonal and conceptual. The study concludes with some practical implications for the writing of CPDs in English for intercultural communication.

Keywords: creative product description, cultural references, intercultural awareness, lexical cohesion, multi-layer framing

1. Introduction

Creativity in language and discourse has been a significant area of research into discourse studies (e.g., Carter 2004; Jones 2016; Swann, Pope, and Carter 2011; Tseng 2015). Various types of creative use of language have been exemplified in everyday conversation (Maybin and Swann 2006), multimodal advertising metaphor (Forceville 2012), literary discourse (Goodman and O'Halloran 2006), and product discourse (Tseng 2016) amongst others.

This study extends the line of research on product discourse to creative product descriptions (CPDs hereafter). Product discourse takes various forms, e.g. print or radio advertisements, TV commercials, online promotions, and traditional product descriptions (e.g., information about ingredients, materials, and specifications). In

recent years, the so-called creative industries have been booming, i.e., “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”.¹ Such industries include crafts, design, digital and entertainment media, and performing arts. Against the backdrop of the development of such industries, CPDs – descriptions of creative, design-led products – have emerged and distinguished themselves from their traditional counterparts. CPDs are creative in that they concern creative products and the ways such products are described are also creative. While CPDs deliver information about products in ways more interesting than traditional product descriptions, they are not as imaginative as advertisements. In other words, they are not straightforward product descriptions, nor are they as fanciful as some advertisements. So far this discourse type has received little attention (cf. Tseng 2015). This study focuses on CPDs containing cultural information and written in English for intercultural communication.

What complicates the production and reception of CPD is that creativity may draw on a specific culture, as evidenced in the definition of cultural and creative industries: those “that originate from creativity or *accumulation of culture* [and] which through the formation and application of intellectual properties, possess potential capacities to create wealth and job opportunities, enhance the citizens’ capacity for arts, and elevate the citizens’ living environment” (emphasis mine).² The cultural and creative industries cover not merely sectors traditionally associated with creative productions (e.g. visual arts, handicrafts, music and performing arts, films, publishing, and fashion design) but also the creative life industry, which emphasizes aesthetic experience through creative redesign of products and services in daily life whether they be kitchenware, food, or tourist sites (Lin, Lu, and Yeh 2011). A serious implication regarding CPD is that culture-specific information known in the source culture may not be known to people elsewhere. Example (1) is a case in point.³

1. See 2001 Creative Industries Mapping Document, by the UK’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183544/2001part1-foreword2001.pdf. Accessed on 23 November 2017.

2. The definition was cited from the Act for the Development of Cultural and Creative Industries, an official document written by Taiwan’s Ministry of Culture. The English version was retrieved from its official site at <http://law.moc.gov.tw/law/EngLawContent.aspx?Type=E&id=8>. Accessed on 23 November 2017.

3. Retrieved from <http://arthurious.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/toast.pdf>. Accessed on 20 March 2016.

(1) ORIGAMI / Plate

Can you recall, when you were little, the warmth in your heart when gripping a scallion pancake wrapped in paper in your hands? (1.1) The flavor was a mixture of pancakes and the feeling of your mother's love. (1.2) The greasy paper was also a part of those unforgettable childhood memories. (1.3) This plate is inspired by 'origami'. (1.4) The stripes symbolize the creases of folded papers to replicate a three-dimensional origami. (1.5) The contrast of the cold stainless steel and the hot food brings back those warm memories from your childhood. (1.6)

This English description is a semantic translation of one originally written in Chinese. This approach to writing CPDs in English may create problems, not because it fails to communicate the content of the Chinese version but because it cannot recreate a similar bond with people unfamiliar with the culture due to the fact that the childhood memory of gripping a scallion pancake wrapped in paper is probably not shared by readers across cultures. As a result, the association of the product with mother love would appear rather personal and overwhelmingly emotional in intercultural contexts. This may be attributed to the ways the cultural reference 'scallion pancake' is used in (1), e.g. by asking the reader a question that s/he may not have any experience with (see (1.1)) and by using words (e.g. *mother's love*, *childhood memories*) with which those readers unaware of the cultural reference would not associate it. In other words, in intercultural contexts, (1) lacks cultural empathy, i.e., it neither considers the addressee's understanding about the childhood memory nor delivers emotions appropriately (Gao 2003). Two questions arise as to cultural references. First, how are they normally used in CPDs for intercultural communication? Second, in what way can they work effectively with lexical patterning in creating an accessible CPD?

Culture is also an issue in research into cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics. In cross-cultural pragmatics, studies compare different languages and cultures and tend to emphasize their similarities (Scollon and Scollon 1980) or/and differences in language use in contexts, e.g., in rhetoric patterns for structuring information (Kirkpatrick 1991) and in performing a particular speech act (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989). Such studies, though revealing potential differences across languages, might over-emphasize "consistency within a cultural group" (Sarangi 2009: 98). By contrast, in intercultural pragmatics, examples draw on verbal interactions among interlocutors who communicate using a common language despite their differences in country of origin and native language. Earlier studies in this line of research tended to focus on spoken intercultural miscommunication and seek to explain the mismatch in terms of cultural differences (e.g. Thomas 1983) or to apply pragmatic and discourse concepts such as face and power

to intercultural communication (Scollon and Scollon 1983). Later developments in intercultural pragmatics have addressed how cultural, institutional, and individual factors interact instead of taking culture as the only determining element held responsible for miscommunication (Sarangi 1994, 2009) and how pragmatic theory can be enriched by adopting an intercultural perspective.

By extending intercultural pragmatic inquiries to written product discourse for intercultural communication (cf. Tseng 2016), the present study investigates CPDs in an intercultural context, especially with respect to cultural references and lexical cohesion. Rather than treating the all-encompassing topic of culture and language (cf. Hymes 1972, 1974), this paper restricts discussion to cultural references. Furthermore, it relates cultural references with lexical cohesion because the collected CPDs are relatively short, about two or four sentences in the main description paragraph in most cases, making the ways the lexical items cohere an interesting inquiry. Its objectives are twofold. On the one hand, it proposes a culturally sensitive model of lexical cohesion, on the basis of which an examination of CPDs is conducted. On the other hand, it also aims to shed light on how cultural information may be creatively and effectively represented in CPDs. Three research questions are posed: (i) how cultural references are utilized in CPDs written in English for intercultural communication, (ii) how lexical cohesion can be described in a culturally meaningful and context-sensitive way, and (iii) what role cultural reference terms play in shaping the lexical cohesion of such CPDs.

2. The key concepts and proposed analytical framework

2.1 Cultural reference and intercultural awareness

The notion of cultural reference (CR hereafter) has been discussed in Translation Studies (Pederson 2005) and in Foreign Language Teaching (Risager 1991). CRs are expressions that often indicate “names of people, places, institutions, food, customs” (Pedersen 2008: 102). Because understanding them requires extralinguistic knowledge related to a specific culture, how to translate them and how to help foreign language learners cope with them become important issues.

Pedersen (2005) distinguished extralinguistic culture-bound reference (ECR) from intralinguistic culture-bound reference (ICR). He defines ECR “as reference that is attempted by means of any culture-bound linguistic expression, which refers to an extralinguistic entity or process, and which is assumed to have a discourse referent that is identifiable to a relevant audience as this referent is within the encyclopedic knowledge of this audience” (p. 2). In contrast, ICR concerns proverbs, slangs, and dialects, all of which refer back to language itself although also interpreted and

understood in a specific culture. Since both types involve verbal expression, this study does not adopt the distinction but uses the broad term *cultural reference*. In this study, a CR is defined as a culture-bound linguistic expression, which evokes a cultural image and requires a certain amount of cultural knowledge that makes its interpretation possible. Furthermore, because sometimes in a CPD two or more CRs from different cultures may be used, the referents of the used CRs are not necessarily identifiable to one cultural group only.

Interpreting a discourse requires knowledge of the sociocultural context in which it is used. What complicates this is that CRs in the collected data are not restricted to those from a single culture. Instead, they constitute a diverse mixture. They are not always like CRs used in a translation context where the explanation of a CR usually relies on knowledge derived from the source culture. In CPDs, English is used as a lingua franca and CRs may be derived from various nations and cultures and the target audiences are not merely native English speakers only but speakers of English as a lingua franca. As such, CRs are to be reconceptualized as situated in the multilingual and multicultural world, where the writers and readers of the CPDs interact.

In the collected CPDs, explicit CRs (e.g. *China, Japanese cuisine, Northern light, Full English*) consist of two types: (i) proper nouns involving generalized knowledge, rather than specialized knowledge inaccessible to the general reader; and (ii) code-mixing, i.e. switching between two different codes of languages in one sentence or phrase (cf. Auer 1998). In the latter case, it is accompanied by an equivalent in English, thus causing no problem in comprehension (e.g. (6) below). On the other hand, some CRs may be implicit and do not necessarily look like CRs when translated into English, e.g. when *qing*, a Chinese color term sitting in between blue and green, is translated into English as *blue* without explicitly referring to *qing* (see Example (5) below). Such CRs may be based on certain foreign words or formulaic expressions from another language, and the reader of the English “translations” of such expressions may not be aware of the knowledge required for the cross-cultural transfer from their source cultures (see (3) in Section 4.1 and (5) in 4.2).

Using CRs effectively in an intercultural context – in ways that facilitate communication – is a sign of *intercultural awareness*. Baker (2012: 66) defines it as an awareness of three key components: (1) “culturally based frames of reference, forms, and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication”; (2) “initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generalizations but an ability to move beyond these”; and (3) “a capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent socioculturally grounded communication modes and frames of reference”. Considered in this light, CRs, whether they be culture-inducing words or names of places, countries, or foreign words, can be

understood as culturally based resources that can be combined in a hybrid or emergent form. Although such resources may use cultural stereotypes/generalizations, the writers who use them in CPDs are engaged in negotiating meaning and going beyond the cultural boundaries of the respective CRs.

The question then arises as to how CRs are mediated and negotiated in such a context. Although CRs are associated with specific national cultures or countries, how a hybrid and emergent form of CR is created requires considerations other than national cultures. Holliday's (1999, 2013) distinction between large cultures and small cultures is relevant here. While large cultures point to ethnic, national and international differences, small cultures are common across cultures. Small cultures refer to "small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour, such as families, leisure and work groups" (Holliday 2013: 3). A small culture may or may not be significant to a large culture. The paradigm of *small cultures* is characterized by a non-essentialist view of culture (i.e. cultural residues not coming from merely one single national culture), their being non-subordinate to large cultures (i.e., not an onion-skin type of conception of culture), and their emerging nature (i.e., forming in social interaction). The *small culture* view is particularly suited to the discussion of CRs in relation to intercultural awareness for two closely related reasons. First of all, small cultures help illustrate how commonalities between cultures can be sought. A small culture is both a dynamic process in which one binds oneself to some others and the domain where one imagines a self-other distinction regardless of one's national culture. Secondly, the emergent configuration of using certain CRs in product discourse is mediated through and converges in small cultures. For example, if *Japanese cuisine* is mentioned in a description of a product used to present fine foods across cultures, grouping foods from different cultures into *fine foods* is a formation of a small culture that helps the CR integrate into the description of the product (see (4) below).

2.2 Toward a multi-layer framing analysis of lexical cohesion

Cohesion refers to how sentences are tied together through linguistic means (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Because of its embeddedness within the creation of a text, lexical cohesion is a locus where information builds up and is integrated into a text.

Lexical cohesion is more than a means of linking clauses or sentences as a text. Cohesive devices are strategies not only for textual unity but also for various purposes: generic considerations (Myers 1991), stylistic devices (Simpson 1992) and ideological motivations (Li 2010). For example, Myers (1991) compared lexical cohesion in scientific journal articles with that in popular science texts. In the former, lexical cohesion is implicit and requires a specialized knowledge of lexical

relations to identify it. By contrast, in the latter, cohesive relations are explicitly marked, linking the knowledge of the specialized field to that of everyday life. Meyer's study suggests that lexical cohesion is motivated by considerations of audiences and their knowledge.

Although cohesion is widely recognized as a textual phenomenon, what role it plays in text production and processing has been the subject of some debate. Halliday and Hasan (1976) saw it as a linguistic phenomenon that makes text a linguistic unit. In their view, cohesive ties are inherent properties of a text and therefore are identifiable based on linguistic forms. This view has been criticized by some scholars who see cohesion not as the 'cause' for the making of a text but as the consequence of a coherent text (e.g. Carrell 1982; Steffensen 1986). The criticism has contributed to understanding the complex relationship between texture and textuality, between cohesion and coherence. More importantly, the challenges to see cohesion as more than relations of linguistic forms stimulate us to situate cohesion in the web of meaning making. It is meaning making created by lexical connections that makes lexical cohesion worth exploring, whether it be identified merely based on the meanings of words or it be newly created in somewhat unconventional ways.

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 282–292) identified two types of lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation. The former covers the repetition of a word, the use of a general word to refer back to an item already mentioned, and the use of a synonym, near-synonym or superordinate (p. 278). Collocation refers to the "co-occurrence of lexical terms" often associated with each other (p. 287). Halliday and Hasan (1976: 287–288) mentioned by passing that "the specific kinds of co-occurrence relations are variable and complex" and that identifying collocational cohesion in English would rely on "a general semantic description of the English language". Although useful for the analysis of lexical cohesion, the two types of lexical cohesion might not be specific enough to explain how words cohere to each other beyond the lexical semantic system of a particular language, e.g., in an intercultural context. Building on Halliday and Hasan's work and departing from it, I will allude to the device of reiteration where appropriate, especially in cases of reiteration that involve CRs, and, at the same time, I characterize how certain words cohere as a *lexical chain* motivated by a frame, i.e., a way of organizing experience and constructing reality (Goffman 1974). A frame-based lexical chain can be regarded as pertaining to collocational cohesion; however, the words in the chain are associated or connected with one another not necessarily because of an inherent lexical semantic system, but owing to a contextual consideration. In other words, lexical cohesion is identified based on not only semantic knowledge of words but also a knowledge structure of the world (i.e., framing or schema) and the conceptual structure used in producing and interpreting the text (cf. Tanskanen 2006). The choice of lexical

items in a CPD relates to the product being featured and may involve one or more knowledge domains, and this is a point of entry into the conceptualization and delivery of cultural information in light of lexical cohesion.

In order to attend to subtle layers of contextualization taking place in intercultural written communication, rather than treating knowledge merely in terms of schema, I apply and adapt Coupland's (2007) model of identity contextualization process, which is based on Goffman's frame theory. According to Goffman (1974: 10–11), frames are "principles of organization which govern [social] events... and our subjective involvement in them". A frame is a context within which to understand a social interaction. Writing CPDs for international readers involves using certain frames that facilitate mutual orientation and understanding. At the same time, such writing also requires identity contextualization process in intercultural contexts, and communication problems could occur in the process. For example, in (1) the main problem results from the ill-founded assumption of a natural 'transfer' of identity role assumed by the Chinese text to that by its English translation. But readers of Chinese and those of English are not identical. Furthermore, intercultural communication takes place beyond one's cultural setting; therefore, it involves (re) contextualization. According to Coupland (2007: 111–114), identity contextualization process, i.e. performing acts of identity in society, involves three layers of framing: sociocultural, generic, and interpersonal. In addition to the three layers of framing, I add one more: conceptual framing which directs discourse toward a way of thinking about the product. Each of the frames is illustrated next.⁴

Sociocultural framing refers to macro-level social frames in which acts of identity are projected by speakers or writers "positioning themselves, or others, in relation to a pre-understood social ecology" (Coupland 2007: 113). In Coupland's model, this framing allows for meaning-making in relation to social variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and profession. In CPDs for consumers of diverse cultures, CRs also operate at this level of framing. Sociocultural framing selects what cultural background knowledge is used and affects what shape the overall lexical cohesion takes. It is not restricted to a national culture but can be an evocation of two or more cultures whether they be large or small cultures, local or global considerations, existing social structures or emerging cultural realities. For example, a product may be designed as an Olympic souvenir; as such, the sociocultural framing operationalized in its description may be a cultural *mélange* incorporating the culture of the host country, consumerism and international sports (e.g. (2) below).

Generic framing points to meso-level social frames in which discourse takes shape and is understood by participants to be relevant in terms of contextual type

4. Framing indicates the dynamic shaping of an activated frame. Framing and frames are used interchangeably in this study.

or discursual type. Generic framing makes possible and constrains what words are used in the CPD: those explicitly related to the product (e.g. its look, function, and features) and to the purpose of the genre, i.e. describing the item for sale with a view to arousing a buying desire in the target reader. CPDs are a promotional sales genre providing needed information and often charged with positive evaluations.

Interpersonal framing operates as micro-level social frames. It refers to the ways in which participants structure their talk and position themselves in relation to each other. In CPDs written in English for intercultural communication, this framing shifts from a local practice of creative community to an international community of creative practice. Although intercultural communication assumes greater physical distance between the writer and the addressee, it also allows for the writer to style herself as projecting an intercultural or global identity.

More than simply providing information, conceptual framing provides a lens through which a product description gains its focus, its particular outlook on itself. This frame operates when a writer articulates his/her design concept (e.g. *This product is inspired by...*), uses humor, creates a feeling or scenario coterminous with the design of the product, blends two or more concepts into one (cf. Fauconnier and Turner 2002) or deploys metaphor. This frame is the locus where creativity is at play. The creative nature of CPDs is often manifested in the use of verbal and/or pictorial metaphors. A CR may be a metaphor in origin (see (3) below) or be used in relation to a metaphor (see (4)). The analysis of CRs below is partly organized around the use of metaphor.

To discuss lexical cohesion in relation to the four frames has some advantages. Firstly, it posits a view of lexical cohesion beyond lexico-grammar. Secondly, multi-layer framing enables one to see how certain chains of lexical patterning interact in a text, i.e., cohesion across lexical chains. Thirdly, it allows us to attend to the subtle use of sociocultural knowledge. More specifically, the sociocultural framing, from which a CR is selected, activated or constructed, motivates the use of certain words indicating such cultural knowledge. Analyzing how such words relate to other lexical items reveals how cultural information is constructed through interactions with participants' relations, with the genre of CDPs, and with the ways the product is featured or designed.

Although relating certain words to sociocultural and conceptual framing is relatively straightforward, the distinction between words associated with interpersonal framing and those with generic framing may not be clear-cut because interpersonal framing may be constrained and affected by generic framing. A CPD is a commercial genre that describes and promotes a product, a task that assumes an interpersonal relationship between the selling party (e.g. the designer, manufacturer, and copywriter) and the target consumer.

Apart from lexical cohesion, one more sense of cohesion is to be added: cohesion between the verbal and the visual. A CPD exemplifies multimodal discourse due to its verbal and visual representations of product information. The pictorial information about the product is also crucial. Both the verbal and the visual describe and explain the product. As such, they cohere with each other (van Leeuwen 2004). For example, the picture in (2) clearly showcases a Full English breakfast (see Section 3), thus making the CR relatively accessible to the reader.

The proposed multi-layer framing model of lexical cohesion sheds light on how words cohere in contextually sensitive ways. It does not merely address lexical cohesion between clauses/sentences. More importantly, it also shows how words may cohere when contextualized in a frame and how they may remain connected between and across the frames. The model attends to the subtlety of lexical meaning in context. If we treat a semantic view of lexical cohesion as being first-order, then the proposed model is aimed at second-order lexical cohesion, where words may cohere in multiple meaningful ways beyond a semantic system and across languages/cultures. This approach to lexical cohesion contributes to a rich understanding of lexical cohesion in intercultural discourse.

In this model, in addition to first-order cohesion, second-order lexical cohesion exists on three levels: (1) among words belonging to one or more lexical chains associated with a frame, (2) among lexical chains that interact in the text and between and across frames, and (3) between verbal and visual connections. Although CRs derive from sociocultural framing, the discourse is not shaped by it alone. Both the interactions of the frames and the various layers of cohesion contribute to the emergent intercultural communication. Two CRs from different sociocultural backgrounds may be used in a text to generate an emergent, hybrid cultural meaning beyond their cultural sources.

3. Method

For the purpose of this study, ten CPDs were initially collected from Shop Tent between December 2014 and May 2015, a British online retail platform for creative products from around the world that have been featured in the London Design Festival.⁵ Another 10 CPDs were later collected from the exhibition venue of the London Design Fair in 2016 – from the country pavilions showcased there. Data were collected both online and offline in order to ensure some degree of cultural diversity.

5. See <http://www.shoptent.co.uk/>. However, when this paper was completed, the site was under rebranding. As a result, it was not accessible.

Example (2) is an example collected online. Like all the other examples, it contains the name of the product (2.1) and a short description (2.2–2.4). Each of the online examples also contains a feature list (2.5) while the offline ones incorporate product features into paragraphs, not as a separate list.⁶



‘EAT FOR GB’ TOWEL (2.1)

All the ingredients for the perfect Full English! (2.2) Created as part of the ‘Alternative Athlete’ range of products to commemorate the 2012 Olympics – a fantastic piece of LONDON 2012 memorabilia which many customers have framed and hung on their walls! (2.3) Featured in the Stylist magazine under the headline ‘Olympic souvenirs that don’t suck!’ (2.4)

FEATURES (2.5)

100% cotton with screen-printed image

Limited edition

Made in Britain

In order to examine how CRs are used in CPDs for intercultural communication, only the examples that fit the following criteria were collected. Firstly, the word *culture*, including its derivatives, or words naming or associated with specific countries, languages, regions or (small) cultures (see Section 2.1) are explicitly used in them, e.g. “*Full English*”, “*Kremlin* is a Pepper & Salt set combining *Russian* architecture with *Chinese* patterns”, “*Japanese* cuisine”, “a clue of *Persian culture*”, “*masculine culture*”. Secondly, in order to examine cohesive devices that link clauses or sentences, the main description paragraph should contain at least two sentences (e.g. 2.2–2.4). Thirdly, the named cultures or countries comprise a diverse mixture.

This study examines how CRs combine and fit into lexical cohesion and how they are intertwined with socio-cultural, generic, interpersonal, and conceptual framing. The analysis is organized around two themes concerning CRs: (i) CR couched in metaphor, and (ii) culture-inducing words (cf. Poppi 2012) and code-mixing. To illustrate each theme, I use two contrastive examples, one with a relatively implicit CR and the other with one or more explicit CRs. More attention is paid to the former type of example as it involves culture-specific knowledge which could be unknown to readers of English.

6. Information about the designer’s name or the brand name is also included in each example though not cited for use in this study.

4. Analyses of CRs and lexical cohesion in CPDs

4.1 CR couched in metaphor

Example (3) is cited from a brochure collected from the London Design Fair in 2016. The brochure is called “East”, which features selected products made and designed in China. The original example contained grammatical errors and lacked fluency. Nevertheless, it alludes to the Chinese conception of jade and uses a jade metaphor for a wooden chair, thus providing an interesting example for an illustration of how CRs and metaphor are used in CPDs. In order to make it more readable, the author, together with a native English speaker, slightly edited it without altering its meaning. The revised text is for increased readability only, not attempting to make it perfect. My analysis of lexical cohesion of the example is still based on the words that appear in the original text (see Appendix).

A metaphor involves understanding or experiencing one thing (a target domain) in terms of another (a source domain) (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Metaphors structure our understandings of many concepts in our lives and shape our perceptions of them. This CPD uses two metaphors. One is *warm jade* as a metaphor for the warm feeling evoked by hardwood, and the other is the *red bus* as a metaphor for the red chair.

(3)



The Red Bus[...]⁷ (3.1)

Hardwood furniture has a long history in China. (3.2) According to the [h]ardwood furniture design [it embodies] a kind of specific aesthetic gradually formed from the Ming Dynasty. (3.3) [Chinese] [p]eople often use warm jade to describe the feeling of hardwood furniture from [a] visual [delight] to [a warm] heart [feeling]. (3.4) In addition, warm jade is [seen] as a “gentleman” philosophy in traditional Chinese culture. (3.5) My design base[d] on the conception of Chinese wooden aesthetic – “[as] gentle [...] as jade” [–] tries to combine the Chinese traditional aesthetic of hardwood with elements of the British temperament [...]. (3.6)

7. The original title of (3) is *The Red Buss*. *Buss* should be a misspelling of *Bus*. It is unknown whether the misspelling is intended to mean a transformed red bus as the product is a wooden chair, not a bus.

The red [bus] from England[...] can convey a feeling [...that is] retro and stylish. (3.7) The chair use[s] orthodox vegetable tanned leather and is also sewed [in] the traditional [manner]. (3.8) The design attempts to bring a sense of [an] aesthetic [...] through time and space. (3.9)

What may be unknown to some readers of English is the conception of jade in traditional Chinese culture. The expression such as *warm jade* (3.4) probably sounds odd and puzzling because for many people jade feels cold, not warm at all, and, in many cultures, it is not normally associated with *gentleman* (3.5). It requires some particular knowledge to understand how these words could cohere with lexical terms relating to the product (e.g., *hardwood*, *furniture*).

To understand this CR, we need to know the Chinese formulaic expression *wenrun ruyu* (溫潤如玉), a quadrisyllabic Chinese idiom meaning “as warm and gentle as jade” (cf. 3.4–3.6). The first two characters *wenrun* can be used in Chinese to describe the weather which is pleasant, e.g., warm or mild with an appropriate amount of rain. It is also used to describe someone or something that has a gentle nature and gives people a warm feeling. The second half of the expression, *ryuyu*, literally means “(be) like jade”. *Wenren ruyu* is often used as a metaphor in Chinese for a gentle person with a pleasant personality. The fact that the feature of jade – with a gentle, not strong, color and with a natural luster – could explain why jade is conceptualized as a person with a gentle disposition. However, to understand why jade is particularly associated with the gentleman requires some knowledge about traditional Chinese culture. Jade has played a significant role in Chinese culture (Yu 2011). Confucianism emphasizes the virtues of jade. As Confucius put it, “Jade is mild and gentle, just like a gentleman’s benevolence. Jade has a fine texture yet it is solid, just like a gentleman’s wisdom, his careful, meticulous and thorough way of handling things. Though jade has edges and corners, it is not sharp and will not hurt others, resembling a gentleman’s sense of justice and uprightness. When the jade is hung, it symbolizes a gentleman’s polite restraint and prudence.”⁸ According to *Liji*, also known as *The Book of Rites*, a Chinese classic on the etiquette and ceremonial rites in the Confucian tradition, “A man of rank was never without this pendant, excepting for some sufficient reason; he regarded the pieces of jade as emblematic of the virtues (which he should cultivate)”⁹ Jade has been a symbol of a noble trait in traditional Chinese culture, as suggested by the Chinese expression *ning wei yu sue, bu wei wa quan* (寧為玉碎，不為瓦全), which literally means “Rather be

8. The English translation is cited from <http://en.minghui.org/emh/articles/2008/7/4/98647p.html>. Accessed on 7 December 2017.

9. The English translation is cited from the digital archive based on James Legge’s translation. See Legge, James (Trans.) (1885). *Sacred Books of the East*, 28, Volume 28, Part 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://ctext.org/liji/yu-zao> on 17 November 2017.

broken jade than intact pottery” and is used metaphorically to mean “Better to die in glory than live in dishonor”.

In other words, Chinese language and culture characterizes jade as *warm* and *gentle* and associates it with the virtues of a gentleman. Although general CR terms such as *China*, *Chinese*, *Ming Dynasty* are used in (3), to understand the expressions such as *warm jade* and *gentle as jade* requires specialized knowledge regarding the Chinese conception of jade. Without such knowledge, the reader would find the CPD somewhat opaque.

The sociocultural framing is derived from two sources: Chinese and British cultures. Therefore, this framing shapes words associated with them, including *warm jade* and *red bus*, both of which are repeated. The design concept of this product draws on the blending of cultural references to a Chinese view of jade and to the red bus seen in the UK, especially in London. The conceptual frame integrates the Chinese conception of jade into the production of a wooden chair and also blends the color and image of the English red bus into the design of a wooden chair (e.g. the quasi-rectangular spaces over and under the red seat). Furthermore, the thought of a moving bus may enhance the conceptual integration of the two cultures as if they travelled through time and space and met in the design of the product (cf. 3.9). The words or phrases associated with the metaphors, including their cultural origins, are influenced by the conceptual framing. The blending of the two national cultures also makes it possible to associate *gentleman* with *England*, *red* and *bus*; that is, a flexible, emergent chain of collocational cohesion may form. Although a *gentleman* in England and that in China may exhibit different traits, a group of people called *gentlemen* can be identified across cultures, forming a small culture, which enables one to identify with some other people because of some shared activities they all engage in. The generic framing motivates the use of words that describe the materials (*hardwood*, *wooden*, *leather*), function (*furniture*), style (*red*, *retro*, *stylish*, *aesthetic*, *design*), and the way it is made (*vegetable tanned*, *sewed*, *traditional*). The interpersonal framing characterizes a designer-consumer relationship and a Chinese designer in relation to readers of English or people living in the UK, thus giving rise to the chain of words associated with the writer’s identity (*Chinese*, *warm*, *jade*) and with the target audience (*British*, *red*, *bus*).

The reiteration of *warm jade* (3.4–3.5) and *red bus* (3.1, 3.7) in (3) exemplifies a point of contact between first-order lexical cohesion and CR. Each of the two CRs arguably can also be reinterpreted using the four frames. While *red bus* signifies England/London and serves to identify the main intended audience (Britons), *warm jade* is a Chinese conception and a marker of the designer’s identity. Each of the phrases also highlights an intended feature of the commercial product (e.g. its color and an evoked warm feeling) and a concept that gives rise to the design.

As a text for analysis, (3) is interesting. However, as a CPD in English, apart from some minor grammatical errors, it also has two problems. Its interpretation requires some knowledge of Chinese language and culture, which may be beyond most readers of English who are unfamiliar with Chinese culture. Furthermore, the CR regarding jade is not visually accessible in the picture, hence somehow weakening the verbal-visual cohesion. These problems could have been amended by making a smooth transition to the CR regarding *warm jade*, e.g., through a code-mixed sentence which explains in English the Chinese formulaic expression. It may go like this: In Chinese, *wenrun ruyu*, which literally means “warm and gentle as jade”, signals a feeling that something is not purely a visual treat but also affects the heart of the person looking, and jade has been praised as a trait associated with the gentleman in traditional Chinese culture. This would give the reader a better orientation to a different sociocultural frame in which jade is perceived and characterized. More importantly, *wenrun ruyu* would serve as a better CR than *warm jade* because the former is more explicit in signaling a shift to a different cultural frame than the latter, which is likely to puzzle the reader.

Example (4), which describes a marble platter called HAMMOCK, uses several lexical items evoking the culture of fine food: *Japanese cuisine, fine foods, cheese* and *fruits* (4.5).¹⁰ Like (3), Example (4) uses metaphor, a platter to be viewed as a hammock. However, it differs from (3) in that the hammock metaphor is visually accessible and that the knowledge required to understand (4) is quite generalized.

(4)



HAMMOCK (4.1)

This platter was designed and carved as a homogeneous volume, portraying the natural plasticity of marble. (4.2) At the same time it is the strength of the material that allows for such a deep curve to develop. (4.3) It has a fine and mat finish to reveal the uniqueness of each piece, with rough finished side handles for a comfortable grip. (4.4) It can be used as to present Japanese cuisine, as well as other fine foods like cheese and fruits. (4.5)

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Rough finished side handles for a comfortable grip (4.6)

Curvature of marble (4.7)

Hellenic marble (4.8)

10. This example was retrieved from <http://www.shoptent.co.uk/products/hammock>. Accessed on 15 January 2015.

Cohesive devices relating to reiteration are used intensively: repetition, e.g. *marble* (4.2, 4.7, 4.8), *rough finished side handles*, *comfortable grips* (4.4, 4.6); synonym, e.g. *curve* (4.3) and *curvature* (4.7); and general word, e.g. *material* (4.3) for *marble* (4.2). Collocation centers around the product and its function of carrying foods: *platter* (4.2), *cuisine*, *foods*, *cheese*, and *fruits* (4.5).

Considering the generic frame shaping the discourse type and the interpersonal frame involving the seller and international consumers, we find collocational cohesion among a list of words concerning aspects of the product. Among them are *platter*, *homogeneous volume*, *natural plasticity* (4.2), *marble* (4.2, 4.7, 4.8), *strength*, *material*, *deep curve* (4.3), *fine*, *mat finish*, *rough*, *finished side handles*, *comfortable grip* (4.4 and 4.6). The interpersonal and generic frames also make it possible to add *Japanese* to the list of collocation about the functional description of the product – *platter*, *Japanese cuisine*, *fine foods*, *cheese*. The purpose of the general CR *Japanese cuisine* is neither to promote Japanese culture nor to attach a Japanese identity to the product.¹¹ Instead, by using the CR, together with the mention of other foods, the range of potential interested parties is increased to include different nationalities and cultures, thus broadening the target audience. The CR is also linked to other fine foods beyond a cultural boundary. It evokes a sociocultural frame concerning food culture, compatible with this product, which carries and presents food in an interesting way. By covering *Japanese cuisine* and *cheese*, this frame mainly encourages the formation of a small culture about fine foods. As such, the CR *Japanese cuisine* is not obtrusive as it is firmly situated in the chains of lexical cohesion underpinned and mutually connected by the multiple layers of framing. This is evidenced in the multiple frames with which *Japanese cuisine* is associated: sociocultural, interpersonal, and generic.

The name of the product *HAMMOCK* (4.1) does not appear to semantically cohere to the chain about food or the one about a platter, nevertheless in (4) it is connected to the chain concerning the product because the picture of the product shows that, with its curvy shape, it looks like a hammock. More importantly, the name itself is a metaphor that conceptualizes the platter as a hammock, a metaphor which naturalizes the CR and adds creativity to the description. The metaphor might evoke each individual's experience of using a hammock, thus enriching their understanding of the product and adding more meaning potential. For example, they could sense an added feeling of relaxation, associate a food placed on the product with someone special, or regard a dining experience as a fun experience. This metaphor relates to conceptual framing.

11. The designer is a Greek descendent based in the UK.

In short, as the analysis of (3) and (4) shows, when CR and metaphor are woven into textual fabric, reiteration and collocation based on the semantic system of a language cannot fully describe how words cohere because neither of them can fully explain the connection among the seemingly disparate words that indicate the source and target domains of the used metaphor(s) (e.g. *jade*, *red bus*, *chair* in (3)). How these words cohere can be better explained through a multi-layer framing analysis. Although generalized knowledge is usually sufficient to understand metaphor, particularized cultural knowledge is sometimes required. The knowledge also affects the identification of lexical cohesion.

4.2 Culture-inducing words and/or code-mixing

Example (5) alludes to the Chinese conception of *blue*.



Blue (5.1)

This is a series of poetry illustrations [...on] the theme of “blue”. (5.2) In China, Blue means youth [or] eternal life. (5.3) In order to review the dream of youth and to express the miss[ing] of home, the designer painted the children[’s] poems and the beauty of hometown. (5.4)

This CPD evokes certain small cultures associated with what children or youngsters do (e.g., reading illustrated poems) or how they feel about their homes (e.g., missing home). By so doing, this CPD does not cause any cultural gap. However, blue meaning youth, though stated succinctly (5.3), packages rich cultural information, which may be unfamiliar to readers of English. Here “blue” is an English translation of *qing* (青), a Chinese color term. In Chinese culture, *qing* is a color sitting in between blue and green; it can be more greenish or bluish or a blend of both. This is manifested in the common Chinese expressions such as *qingtian* (青天 “blue sky”), *qinghuaci* (青花瓷 “blue flower porcelain” or “blue and white porcelain”), *qingshan* (青山 “green mountains”), and *qingcai* (青菜 “green vegetables”). In traditional Taoist philosophy, a pattern of expression in nature was identified and named as *wuxing* (五行) or the Five Elements, i.e., Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water, which are believed to constitute the foundation of everything in the universe, including natural phenomena. Each of the elements is associated with a specific

color (white, black, red, yellow, or *qing*), a spatial direction (e.g. east, west, south, north, or center), and a season or a change of seasons (late summer) (Chen 1986; May and Tomoda 1999). For example, *qing* is used to characterize wood, which represents the direction of east and symbolizes *chuen* (春), the season of spring. The Chinese expression *qingchuen* (青春), which combines *qing* with *chuen*, originally described spring full of the color of new leaves and grass and now refers to youth just like spring brings the natural world back to life. Therefore, in Chinese, *qingnian* (青年), whose literal meaning is “green or blue year/age”, refers to youngsters, and *wenqing* (文青), literally meaning “letters blue/green”, refers to youngsters enthusiastic about literature and arts.

In (5), blue is the dominant color in painting the showcased products. Although this is visible from the picture, it requires some cultural knowledge to fill the gap between blue, or rather *qing*, and youth or eternal life (cf. 5.3). The gap exists because the cultural meaning of *blue* may vary from culture to culture. In English, apart from describing the color of the natural world (e.g. *the blue ocean*), blue is associated with cold (e.g. *His hands were blue with cold*), sexual content (e.g., *a blue movie*), and the feeling of sadness (e.g., *She’s been a bit blue since she failed in the exam*). The associative meaning of youth with blue is therefore culture-specific. The word *China* provides a cultural frame in which *blue* is interpreted. Although *blue* in and by itself does not look like a CR, in (5) it is because it is to be understood using the cultural knowledge of Chinese speakers. That is, *blue* in the context of Chinese culture is a culture-inducing word. I believe it would be even better to use *qing* in this product description, together with an explanation of the color range it represents, because mixing a foreign word indicates a CR being in place, thus signaling a shift of a cultural frame.

The first-order lexical cohesion of (5) is mainly achieved by reiteration – use of synonyms (e.g., *home* and *hometown*; *poetry* and *poem*; *youth* and *children*) and repetition (e.g., *blue*, *youth*). When we regard *blue* as a reference to the Chinese conception of the color term *qing*, with the meaning of *youth*, the two repeated words (5.1–5.3) exemplify a point of contact between lexical cohesion and CR. An analysis of lexical cohesion based on the proposed multi-layer framing model demonstrates how words cohere in ways more sensitive to culture. More importantly, it shows how words may cohere across and between frames. For example, the two words *blue* and *youth* may also be treated as being covered by other lexical chains shaped by the generic and conceptual frames. That is, *blue* can be viewed as a color used to paint the products and *youth* as pertaining to the meaning of the depicted scenes in them (e.g., riding bicycles and exploring landscapes), thus relating to generic framing. The two words can also be regarded as located in or deriving from conceptual framing because the series of products is based on the Chinese

concept of *qing*. Furthermore, *blue* meaning *youth* is a cultural meaning generated by sociocultural framing. These layers of framing enrich our understanding of the first-order lexical cohesion because the repetition of *blue* as a cohesive device can be reinterpreted in different frames and we also gain a culture-sensitive sense of collocation, e.g. *blue*, *youth*, and *eternal life*, which is not normally associated with each other in the semantic system of English.

Example (6) features a light made of cypress, called ‘Hinoki’ in Japanese (see 6.7), a case of code-mixing combined with the general CR term *Japanese*. However, this does affect comprehension because it is glossed in English, nor does it require a rich cultural knowledge like *qing* or *blue* in (5).

(6)



AURO WOOD PENDANT (6.1)

Auro was inspired by the Northern lights, the play of light in the night sky. (6.2)

The mysterious light creates the shadow of fantasy. (6.3)

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Bulb: E27 Max100w GLS (not included) (6.4)

Can be assembled/ taken back to parts – easy to clean, easy for transport. (6.5)

It comes in a flat pack. (6.6)

Shade: made from 0.12mm laminated veneer of ‘Hinoki’, a Japanese native species of cypress, [whose] aroma is well known for soothing and healing. (6.7)

Used in the apparent first-order lexical cohesion here is reiteration, e.g. the same word repeated (*light*) and a superordinate term (*wood*) that refers to some other words (*cypress*, *hinoki*). Collocation may be described through several lexical chains regarding different aspects of the product, e.g. its function and parts (*light*, *bulb*, *veneer*, *shade*), material (*wood*, *cypress*, *species*, *hinoki*), features and effects (*mysterious*, *fantasy*, *shadow*, *healing*, *soothing* etc.). These lexical chains are shaped both by lexical representations of the generic framing because this frame concerns a sales genre and by the interpersonal framing because they are associated with the identity of a seller keen to inform and persuade the buyer to take action.

The conceptual frame focuses on the natural phenomenon of light (*Northern lights*, *night sky*, *shadow*) (6.2–6.3), filling the description of an indoor light with a natural aspect due to the conceptual blending of the natural polar light and the electrical light. The name of this product – AURO WOOD PENDANT – also reinforces this conceptual blending because wood also comes from nature. Two lexical chains connect with sociocultural framing operating in (6). One consists of *Northern lights*

and *Auro*. Those familiar with the polar lights know that the natural phenomenon is also referred to as an aurora. As such, the name *Auro* can be associated with *aurora* and *northern lights*. More importantly, *northern lights* can be associated with northern countries where a polar light display in the sky can be seen, e.g. Norway, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, and Canada. Also operating in the sociocultural framing is another lexical chain that comprises the Japanese expression *hinoki* (6.7) and its explanation, i.e., *a Japanese native species of cypress*. Those who know Japanese may echo the writer's enthusiasm for the named tree. The sociocultural framing relates to the interpersonal frame in that the CRs allow the writer-designer to position himself in relation to those readers who have been fascinated with Japanese cypress and/or polar lights. Example (6) engages a wide range of readership.

As the analysis of (6) has shown, the lexical cohesion surrounding *light* and aspects of this product connects with all the frames. Furthermore, viewed in this light, the reiteration of the CR terms, i.e., the repetition of (*Northern lights*) (6.2–6.3) and the use of *hinoki* (6.7) is meaningful in several ways. Recontextualized through the interactions of multi-layer framing, they become part of an interconnected web of lexical chains and enrich the overall shape of the lexical cohesion, and this is a sign of intercultural awareness.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Based on the analyses of the above CPDs, there appear to be two patterns of utilizing CRs or delivering cultural information, which can be termed *inward-looking* and *outward-looking*. An inward-looking pattern is characterized by a tendency to be culture-specific and only accessible to people informed or knowing about the culture, e.g., the references to a childhood experience of eating *scallion pancake* in (1), to *blue* in (5), or to *warm jade* in (3). By contrast, an outward-looking pattern seeks to expand from one culture to another, integrate CRs from two or more countries or cultures, and resort to small culture and requires only generalized knowledge about the referenced culture(s) (e.g., (4) and (6)). The outward-looking pattern usually brings about a hybrid of the names of certain places, countries, cultures, and/or culture-inducing words. Both of the two patterns might be adopted in one CPD, e.g., (3), which uses an inward-looking pattern (*warm jade* in relation to the traditional Chinese gentleman) and an outward pattern that integrates generalized British culture (*red bus*) into the Chinese CR. Table 1 shows the distribution of the two patterns in the collected CPDs.

Fifteen out of the 20 CPDs use an outward-looking pattern whether they contain only this pattern or a mixture of both patterns. All of the ten online CPDs are outward-looking. This can be attributed to the same source of the data, i.e., a British

Table 1. Distribution of the two patterns in the data

Patterns	Numbers of CPDs collected online	Numbers of CPDs collected offline
inward-looking	0	5
outward-looking	10	3
inward- & outward-looking	0	2

online platform whose purpose is to sell its featured products, not to promote or make known a particular culture. By contrast, more than half of the offline CPDs have an inward-looking pattern. This is probably due to the fact that the data were from the country pavilions showcased in the venue of the London Design Fair. In that setting, emphasis could be placed on making the cultures of specific countries stand out or better known. Therefore, the used information in that context is not always generalized but more culture-specific.

When an outward-looking pattern is employed, reliance on culture-specific knowledge would be less heavy. By contrast, when an inward-looking pattern is used without any proper indication of a CR being in place plus an explanation, the text using it could constitute high-risk communication. The former pattern demonstrates more intercultural awareness than the latter one does (cf. Section 2.1). The two patterns and their interactions answer the first research question.

In response to the second research question, this study proposes an alternative approach to lexical cohesion – one that treats second-order cohesion as resulting from interactions of multi-layer frames activated in the production and reception of a text. Based on this approach, we gain a glimpse into how the layers of framing enrich our understanding of first-order lexical cohesion and how the reiteration of a CR item intersects with different chains of collocational cohesion associated with various frames. In an intercultural context where English is used as a *lingua franca*, identifying lexical cohesion merely based on the semantic system of English is insufficient. The multi-layer framing model is particularly suited to analyzing lexical patterns in intercultural communication because it posits a slippery view of lexical items beyond cultural boundaries.

Regarding the third research question, some points can be made about what CRs and lexical cohesion may shed light on each other. Firstly, how certain lexical items may be viewed as forming lexical collocation sometimes may require culture-specific knowledge (e.g. *qing/blue* and *youth* in Chinese culture). This explains the role a CR plays in identifying the type of lexical cohesion. Secondly, when a lexical item serving as a CR is reiterated (e.g. *warm jade* in (3) and *blue* in (5)), this is another point of contact where CRs and lexical cohesion meet. This study shows that such reiterations in CPDs can be reinterpreted in a new light, from which to

view lexical cohesion in a higher-order perspective that renders cohesion even more meaningful than would otherwise be the case. The reiterated CRs, when considered in the multiple frames, may be viewed as contributing to shaping the creativity of CPDs, enhancing the meaning-making process, e.g. the partially overlapping yet somewhat different meanings of *blue* in (5). Thirdly, lexical cohesion is a site where cultural information can be constructed, negotiated and creatively combined. It can be realized without giving the reader a sense of exclusion in intercultural communication if the information is recognizably compatible with and closely connected to the web of lexical cohesion.

This study also has practical implications for intercultural communication in general and the writing of CPDs in such contexts in particular. Delivering cultural information in an outward-looking way, e.g., by employing well-known CRs, would be a safe procedure to follow. Should an inward-looking pattern of cultural delivery be used, an overt indication of the used CR followed by an explanation would be helpful. Furthermore, in an intercultural context, of significance are appropriate uses of CRs. For example, general CRs in combination with accessible metaphor guide the reader toward the anticipated interpretations. Should a CR be derived from a formulaic expression in a foreign language unfamiliar to the reader, to employ code-mixing in its romanized form plus an explanation would be useful. When used appropriately, CRs contribute to providing sociocultural contexts, connecting to multiple framing, generating meaning negotiation, and strengthening the relatedness of lexical chains.

The examples of this study are restricted to CPDs. Further research into a wide range of longer, more complicated intercultural discourse is called for in order to further validate the proposed model and to shed more light on the intricate relationships between CRs, lexical cohesion, and intercultural communication in diverse contexts.

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Appendix. The original English version of Examples (3) and (5)

(3) The Red Buss

Hardwood furniture has a long history in China. And according to the Hardwood furniture design, a kind of specific aesthetic gradually formed from the Ming Dynasty. People often use warm jade to describe the feeling of hardwood furniture from visual to the heart. In addition, warm jade is praised as "gentleman" philosophy in traditional Chinese culture. My design base on the conception of Chinese wooden aesthetic – "gentle such as jade", try to combine the Chinese traditional aesthetic of hardwood with British temperament elements.

The red from England's bus can convey a feeling of retro and stylish. The chair use orthodox vegetable tanned leather, also sewed by the traditional manual. The design brings a sense of aesthetic attempt through time and space.

(5) Blue

This is a series of poetry illustrations as the theme of "blue". In China, Blue means youth, eternal life. In order to review the dream of youth and to express the miss of home, the designer painted the children poems and the beauty of hometown.

