Preserving and interpreting intangible cultural heritage in an ethnolinguistic community: The case of Portuguese language, patois and creole in Macau

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Abstract

The research on which this paper is based concerns the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through incorporating cultural knowledge and traditions into formal and non-formal education. A case study of the impact of language policies in the former Portuguese administered territory of Macau SAR, China, is presented. The findings of interdisciplinary research indicate that language-in-education policies may affect education for intangible heritage interpretation through the medium of Portuguese. Despite continuing to be an official language, Portuguese is becoming a non-dominant language with the return of the territory's sovereignty to China. The key impact of these policies is identified as a threat to the authentic intangible heritage and its interpretation for visitors to the World Heritage properties and sites in Macau. Much of the designated tangible heritage of Macau accessible to international visitors is embodied in Portuguese colonial built edifices which require ethnographic as well as ethnolinguistic data for interpretation. This threat applies not only to the intangible heritage associated with the iconic properties and sites designated as World Heritage, but also to those excluded from the list. The authors of this paper, therefore, argue that authorities responsible for promoting cultural tourism give more attention to planning and implementing sustainable language maintenance and language revitalization. Formal and informal education programmes are necessary to ensure the authenticity of cultural interpretation for hosts as well as visitors. In the Macau case, the research data incorporated into educational practice should include the intangible heritage associated with the Macanese, whose Luso-Chinese origins and influence on Macau cultural heritage is manifested in their unique patois and creole – also threatened by the impact of language policies.

Introduction

In his paper on 'Language development and language revitalization: An educational imperative in Asia', Sheldon Shaeffer (2003), Director for UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, emphasized the advantage of language learning to the preservation and optimization of resources:

> "Language is the key to learning. It is woven into the fabric of individual and group identity. Who we are is intimately linked with the language or languages we speak. Research demonstrates many cognitive advantages to those people who speak more than one language. Language diversity, then, is one of the world's great human resources" (Shaeffer, 2003:1).

Shaeffer maintains that to ensure that language remains the "strength" of ethnic minorities, their languages must often be further developed or revitalized – saved from extinction. He cites David

Crystal who emphasizes that languages are repositories of history, because languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge, and because languages are interesting in themselves. Crystal (2000) advocates steps to be taken to protect languages from extinction:

- An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their prestige within the dominant community.
- An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their wealth relative to the dominant community.
- An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their legitimate power in the eyes of the dominant community.
- An endangered language will progress if its speakers can write their language down
- An endangered language will progress it its speakers can make use of electronic technology

Findings from the research cited in this paper suggest that another step may be for speakers to demonstrate to the academic and professional community, both at home and abroad, that the endangered language is the key to preserving and interpreting both the tangible and intangible assets of a cultural legacy. This is especially pertinent when the cultural legacy has been recognized by international organizations such as UNESCO. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, unanimously adopted at the 31st Session of the UNESCO General Conference, October 2001, includes in its action plan that member States, in conjunction with speaker communities: "encourage universal access to information in the public domain through the global network, including promoting linguistic diversity in cyberspace." Access to this information however, does not necessarily facilitate the tourism researcher in engaging with diverse cultures, an engagement which is required to attain the cognitive advantages which Shaeffer says , as cited above, have been demonstrated through research.

The research on the Macau SAR of China cited in this paper encompasses the study of the influence of minority status languages on the formation of a unique cultural identity, recognized for its universal significance, by its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This uniqueness has helped the community position itself as an attractive focal point for cultural and heritage tourism within China, as well as the Asia-Pacific region.

The impact of language policies in Macau

Putonghua, or Standard Mandarin, is the official national spoken language of the People's Republic of China, but other languages and dialects are recognized as comprising the cultural identity of the various peoples of the nation. Yue (Cantonese) is the de facto official Chinese variant spoken in many of the southern provinces, particularly Guangdong which includes the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau. However, because of the historical circumstances which led to the administration of these territories by the colonial governments of Britain and Portugal, English and Portuguese respectively are also recognized as official languages. Adding to the complexity of the demographic and linguistic profile of these territories, the influx of migrants from various provinces in China, as well as from Asia and Europe, has led to a variety of minority languages and dialects, creole and patois, being used for business, social, and intercultural communication. During the colonial period, many business migrants to Hong Kong and Macau for example, originated from Shanghai, speaking Wu (Shanghainese), while today the increasing number of migrants might be found using dialects like

Min, Hakka, Gan, Xiang, or Chinese dialects spoken in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar.

In the context of Macau, the key language-related variables which have affected the ongoing research process on the use of minority languages for interpreting intangible heritage are outlined below:

- Mandarin has become more important as the language medium for academic research and publication in the Macau SAR; researchers cannot merely rely on Cantonese when conducting studies involving translation and interpretation..

- Portuguese, although still an official language in the Macau SAR, is now mainly used in the fields of law and public administration. The use of Portuguese in tourism related fields such as heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and ethnic tourism has declined. The study of Portuguese is increasingly focused on commerce and trade with Portuguese-speaking ex-colonies – for example Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique. The varieties of Portuguese language used in these former colonies presents further linguistic complexities.

- Since the Portuguese handover of the administration of Macau in 1999, many Portuguese and other European scholars of linguistics, anthropology, heritage and cultural tourism have left and no longer contribute to ongoing research on minority language studies from a European perspective in the Macau SAR.

- In the tourism context, the English language is identified as the vehicle for business communication primarily in the gaming industry and casino tourism sector. Those institutions engaged in tourism research in Macau SAR use English mainly as the research medium for tourism and hospitality business management studies in the local context. The emphasis is on quantitative research rather than qualitative research approaches and methodologies.

- The use of Macanese 'creole' or 'patois' as a vehicle for the interpretation of the historical and cultural development of Macau society under the former Portuguese administration has declined. The young Macanese community now prefers to learn Mandarin, Cantonese, or English rather than Portuguese. Few learn, understand, or appreciate the significance of patois or creole.

Portuguese patois and creole as 'minority languages' in Macau

Macau's unique cultural identity as a Special Administrative Region of China (SAR) has been attributed to its historical blending of Chinese and Portuguese descendants and the confluence of the diverse origins of its people. 'Blending' can be defined as: "mixing and mingling"; "to look good together, harmonize"; "a mixture produced by blending." (Bank of English). In terms of the blending of people and cultures, it might be argued that the definition should include the development of a unifying language and culture. In terms of miscegenation, a definition should include the mixing and mingling of different races, languages, customs, and traditions. To apply these definitions to the context of Macau implies that there is evidence that blending has occurred and its diversity of language and culture continue to define its uniqueness. The research on which this paper is based provides evidence that blending has indeed occurred, but reveals that more interdisciplinary research is needed to examine cultural changes which are occurring in Macau

and in the Asian region in order to identify the role that the study of minority languages might play in the preservation and perpetuation of a tourism destination's unique cultural identity.

Research on the demographics of Macau, which includes data on diverse racial groups, is difficult to find. It is known that among the crews on the Portuguese ships bound for Goa, Malacca, and Macau were sailors from other European countries and some of Arabian origin. Missionaries and their entourages represented difference races as well as religions. Others engaged in trade in Asia converged on Macau for the economic opportunities offered by the enclave; transients from the British, Dutch, Spanish, and French expeditions seeking to establish their own settlements in the region. The port cities of Asia, as well as those along the trading routes via the Indian Ocean – Zanzibar, Madagascar, Mauritius, Ceylon, could be characterized as the epitome of mixing, mingling, and blending. While a variety of languages could be heard in these ports, Portuguese, and later English, grew to be the main channel for intercultural communication. Discourse inevitably would have centred around maritime activities: the exchange of information on seafaring, navigation, cartography, commerce, and of crucial importance: the availability of reliable translators and interpreters. Unfortunately, little is known about the latter, although it is axiomatic that missionaries had a significant role to play in developing the parameters of language and intercultural communication.

Interpreting intangible cultural heritage in Macau from a 'Macanese' perspective

Much of the intangible culture of the Portuguese legacy, for example colonial and postcolonial literature, can only be interpreted through an understanding of the identity and role of the minority 'Macanese' culture in the development of colonial Macau. Outsiders might assume that the term 'Macanese' refers to the people of Macau as a whole, which is not the case. The key to interpreting this cultural phenomenon is dependent on understanding the patois and creole language of the 'Macanese' minority. Over time, Portuguese and Macanese researchers have offered confusing interpretations of the origins of the 'Macanese', 'Macaense', 'Macaísta'.

In 1897, Bento da França identified the origins of the 'Macaense' from their Portuguese, Malay, and Indian features. However, Eduardo Brazão (1957) argued that it was rare for the 'Macanese' to be of Indian descent. Álvaro de Mello Machado (1913) suggested that the 'Macanese' were the offspring of marriages with women from Malacca as well as Japan and China; claiming that the offspring characteristically show more evidence of Malay ancestry than Chinese. Carlos Estorinho (1962) negates any ideas of miscegenation with the Chinese. Manuel Teixeira (1965) however, citing parish archives and records, refutes Estorinho's argument. Teixeira's definition states that the 'Macaense' were the offspring (born in Macau) of Portuguese men and their interracial marriages with local Chinese. He then makes a distinction between the 'Macanese' and the Chinese in these marriages: the former was born already with a Portuguese name and baptized - the latter converted to Christianity and was taught Portuguese. According to Morbey (1994:200), the first generation-born 'Macanese Eurasian' may have been Luso-Chinese Christians of either Euro-Indian and/or of Euro-Malay origin. More recently, Cabral (2002:39-40) has defined the criteria for the 'Macanese Eurasian': firstly, individuals born in Macau of a biological miscegenation with Portuguese roots; secondly, the conversion to the catholic faith; and finally, the possession of linguistic knowledge of Portuguese or the Portuguese-based Creole evolved from an earlier Malaccan model. According to Cabral, individuals who fit this criteria can be defined as 'Macanese'.

At the turn of the twentieth century, educating the citizens of the territory governed by the Portuguese administration, and improving the qualifications of public officials in Macau, became

an imperative for the Government. The key to progress was identified as learning the Portuguese language. The number of Portuguese language schools began to increase and the knowledge of standard Portuguese was promoted. As a result, 'Lingu Maquista', which was predominately spoken in the domestic domain, had started becoming increasingly decreolized. This led to a diglossic model in which standard Portuguese was the 'High' variant with an amplified social prestige: spoken in the appropriate contexts of the workplace, school and also with the Portuguese. Maquista, on the other hand, was the 'Low' variant spoken among family members and friends during informal social interactions. The decreolization of Maquista was slowly 'remodelled' to bring it parallel to standard Portuguese. Children were punished if they were caught using the creole in the educational domain (Tomás, 1990:62).

The Macanese creole may only continue if there is a large number of speakers in the community. This was the case in the offshoot community in Hong Kong where the absence of the corrective influence of standard Portuguese allowed the creole to survive even until today. It is spoken by a very small number of Macanese Eurasians who can be found in homes for the aged.   Although there are no records regarding the number of creole speakers in Macau, traces of the creole can still be found in different contexts: Macanese Folklore, Music, Poems and Culinary Recipes and other Religious and Traditional Macanese settings. After the sovereignty of Macau was officially returned to the Chinese Government on the 20th of December, 1999, further changes began to occur to the cultural identity of Macau and the composition of languages, and their varieties, that have complicated the nature of discourse and the process of intercultural communication within the territory.

It is not easy to research the Macanese identity in Macau today. The Department of Census and Statistics have not made the information on their numbers available to the public. The census recorded in 2001 estimated the number of Eurasians living in Macau to be in the region of approximately four thousand three hundred (DSEC, 2001:133).

Similarly, it is difficult to find data on other ethnic or mixed race groups who comprise the Macau cultural identity. Although they are in the minority, their contribution to Macau society, its culture, and economy should not be underestimated by the majority of the population, nor overlooked by scholars seeking to correct misconceptions concerning their unique sociocultural influences during four hundred years of settlement. Unfortunately there is a lack of an interdisciplinary perspective on the significance of the origins of the community that constitutes Macau today, and a lack of initiative for making information accessible to the international research community. The linguistic heritage of Macau is a fascinating research area for scholars from diverse fields of inquiry: including the relatively new disciplines of discourse analysis and intercultural communication, in the context of language development and language demise.

Today, in terms of language shift and codes, there may no longer be a Portuguese-speaking environment among the younger generation Macanese Eurasians. Many Macanese teenagers are probably more competent users of Cantonese and may feel reluctant to converse in Portuguese (Yee.2001:137). They may also demonstrate a strong inclination to use Mandarin and English. Marreiros (1994:167) hinted that they may even have a simplified linguistic code within their social-communicative network. This code may contain a 'reduced' grammatical fusion of Portuguese and Cantonese, elements. For example:

> "Eu vâi kai-si comprâ-sông."
> "Amanhã nos vâi Héong Kóng tai Frank Sinatra Show." (cf. Marreiros, 1994:167).

The example shows a variety of Macau Portuguese embedded in a reduced code, possibly influenced by a post-creole variety among the Eurasian speakers, but of a different age-group. It is also evidence of a linguistic shift to Cantonese (Baxter, 1996:325).

Implications for research on the use of minority languages for intangible heritage interpretation

Since the official languages of the Macau Special Administrative Region are Chinese and Portuguese, translations are needed for much of the literature on intangible heritage . Some of the key publications however, have been translated into English, and in some cases other languages. The authors have also consulted the literature available in other destinations - namely Goa, where it was found that much of the data is documented in English. This is perhaps attributable to the status of Goa as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the imperative for information and interpretation to be provided for international tourists. In the Macau case, the majority of tourists come from the PRC and require translation into Mandarin. Some however, like their hosts, prefer communication in their own regional language or dialect.

The survey of the Literature in Chinese, Portuguese, and English on the cultural legacy of Macau and its preservation, reveals the range and significance of tangible and intangible assets for historical and contemporary research on colonial built heritage and its significance to tourism development.

Much of the data relating to tangible and intangible heritage is limited to two volumes published by the Macau Cultural Institute in 1998. Volume 1 is titled: *The Heritage of Macau: Four Centuries of Architectural and Urban History* and contains a series of articles covering various fields including: Mythography; Archeology; History; Town Planning; Landscape; Architecture, and Art. Volume 2: *Architecture and Colonialism in Macau,* contains articles on: Architecture; Urban Planning; Law, and a section titled 'Testimonies'. Interviews were conducted with those authors still residing in Macau, while others were approached for further information by correspondence. Further references were accessed through the Editorial Director who provided and facilitated contacts with the Portuguese institution dedicated to research on the Portuguese built heritage in Asia: The Fundação Oriental.

These publications were preceded by an `anthology' of built heritage published in English titled: *Macau: Memorial City on the Estuary of the River of Pearls* authored by Calado, M., Mendes, M.C.,and Toussaint, M. (1985). In this volume, the authors presented an argument for the universal value of the Portuguese patrimony in Macau and its future continuing contribution to the economic and social development of the postcolonial city, with a warning of the consequences of neglecting its patrimony:

> In addition to its importance in the local and regional context, the architectural and urban heritage of Macao has a universal significance derived from the history of the territory and its geo-cultural position. A base on which converged diverse cultures from the Western to the Asiatic and Oriental, including the Mediterranean and African, the `City of the Holy Name of God of Macao' is, today, a living witness of the oldest European presence in China. The historical stages have left their mark on the urban structures and architecture and are manifest in the city. The communion of cultural expressions is clearly visible in the union of the traditional Portuguese city with the Chinese bazaar which forms the most important historical and monumental area. The protection of this patrimony is of interest not only to the population of Macau, as a reaffirmation of its own

cultural identity, but to all humanity as an expression of the encounter of universal cultures. As this patrimony becomes more impoverished, the local community and humanity in general will be poorer.(Calado et al, 1985:150).

This publication was available on the shelves of bookshops up until the 1990s and proved popular with cultural tourists looking for souvenirs of their visit to Macau. Further editions have not been published however, and most of the newer historical accounts of development are of the coffee-table variety replete with photographs already featured in other books.

Two years prior to the Portuguese handover of Macau as a Special Administrative Region of China, an important exhibition was organized by the Cultural Institute of Macau which was described by Luis Antonio Guizado de Gouveia Durão, Head of the Cultural Heritage Department from 1987-1997, in the following preface to the publication of his book *Asserting an Identity*:

> This exhibition seeks to reflect the work that has been pursued by Cultural Heritage Department of the Cultural Institute of Macau over the last fifteen years to 'Assert an Identity'; more specifically, the identity of Macau. The significance of asserting an identity lies in making the population aware of what it is that distinguishes it from all the others, emphasizing the differences and what gives it a unique characteristic within the broader region in which these populations live. Given that in our increasingly small, increasingly uniform world these issues are of vital importance, in Macau, a tiny territory in the huge Southeast Asia region, asserting its identity is of even greater importance, particularly in view of the current historic period and its permanent vocation as a transitional point of passage for a large and significant sector of its society. Due to their intrinsic scale, architecture, urban planning and landscaping constitute, alongside the other cultural expressions of any people, proof of an identity that remains for any citizen or visitor to wonder about a place's history, its inherent culture, and the reasons that lie behind the differences which should be retained. More than any written legislation or officially signed agreement, the soul of a people familiar with its identity will always seek to keep that to which it believes it is entitled in maintaining its lifestyle.
>
> Thus for any people, asserting an identity is an obvious way of highlighting a very unique way of life which should be respected. (Luís António Guizado de Gouveia Durão, Architect, 1997).

This analysis has obvious implications not only for the conservation of colonial built heritage in Macau, but also for other former territories which have retained a unique identity through preservation of the legacy; enhancing their tourism image and identity. It is significant that Durão (1997) should emphasize that conservation legislation in itself is not sufficient to ensure the sustainability of cultural heritage; especially that associated with a colonial period. The exhibition and publication which followed, is a comprehensive survey of the achievements of the cultural heritage department. The publication provides a benchmark for other destinations of the kind of profile which might be presented for tourist consumption. Unfortunately, as is the case with many other potentially enlightening publications for visitors to the territory, it contains information only in Chinese and Portuguese. Translation and interpretation in other languages is thus a task which is an imperative for such organizations as the Cultural Institute of Macau and the Macau Government Tourism Office. Such publications are an integral part of the Portuguese legacy and constitute a medium for education and research as well as helping to realize the potential of attractions and their assets for cultural tourism product development.

Two years after the Portuguese handover of the territory, under the auspices of the new Macau Special Administrative Region Government, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) established a task force to study past and future tourism strategic planning in the territory, culminating in the publication: 'A PATA Task Force Report on Macau, China: Learning from the Past, Re-Engineering for Future Success' (2002). Two key recommendations emerged from this publication relating specifically to the Portuguese built legacy:

1) "Given Macau's population dynamics, it is a very big challenge to retain its identity as a Portuguese enclave in China (its USP in the long term). While the heritage conservation efforts in Macau are commendable there is very little involvement of the wide population in these efforts. In order for Macau's heritage to become a living heritage, the people of Macau need to own its characteristics and features. This can only be achieved through a concerted effort to involve the community in mainstream cultural and heritage activities, not merely as observers or audience, but as active participants" (Task Force Recommendation A4: PATA Task Force Report, 2002:25).

2) "MGTO (The Macau Government Tourism Office) (should) take a leading role partnering with other community development and heritage conservation organizations to prepare a comprehensive programme of activities for community awareness creation on Macau's heritage and turn them into public community participatory events that will also be attractive to tourists and bring revenue earning opportunities to the community at large." (Task Force Recommendation A5: PATA Task Force Report, 2002:25)

Both recommendations focus on the need for cooperation and collaboration at the industry, community, and regional level which PATA sought to foster through its Task Force Studies and publications on trends and forecasts for tourism professionals and academics in the Asia/Pacific Region. The lack of progress in collaboration is perhaps due to the lack of coordination in the research process – especially on deciding which languages should be used for collaboration.

Conclusions

The authors of this paper acknowledge that their academic research on language development and language demise is contingent on the use of Chinese, Portuguese, and English as research tools for the complex but rich research field that comprises the cultural identity of Macau. The field of inquiry however should include studies of factors such as migration, immigration, returnees, and the impact of dominant languages on cultures – especially minority cultures. Although English is the primary medium for discourse among the academic community, with a range of publications representing its various disciplines, the growing importance of other Asian languages for intercultural communication in the 'non-English-speaking world' of the Asia-Pacific Region must not be overlooked.

Academic discourse in most disciplines today is characterized by its focus on communicating theory and practice through applied research. The explosion of information technology encourages centres of learning and individuals to share knowledge and skills facilitating intercultural communication at unprecedented levels. Access to research data and opportunities for the discussion of research findings enables academics and professionals to translate theories into practice in disparate economic, political, and cultural environments.

The academic community in Macau of course consists of not only culturally diverse teachers and researchers, but their students; many of whom also come from a wide range of social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. An interdisciplinary approach to studies of cultural identity and

intercultural communication should include the identification and analysis of those factors which impinge on students' capacity for getting the best out of their academic environment. Young people embarking on studies encompassing a variety of disciplines not only need tutorials and counselling in their encounters with the academic environment, but support and encouragement from their peers whom they will encounter and interact with in an increasingly intercultural environment.

The next generation of Macau has an advantage over many who come from outside the Special Administrative Region. They are the inheritors of a legacy of intercultural communication dating back more than four centuries. Their culture is distinct from those of their peers who, on coming to Macau, lack the knowledge and skills essential for optimizing diverse social, cultural as well as academic opportunities. However, those who come from similar cross-cultural communication environments that value their minority cultures will quickly find an affinity with Macau people.

This paper illustrates the importance of research on the use of minority and endangered languages for intangible heritage interpretation in cultural environments characterized by their uniqueness and difference. An interdisciplinary research approach has implications not only for the study of discourse and intercultural communication in the multidisciplinary academic context of university education, but for the social and cultural environments of centres of higher learning.

In the first part of the paper, an analysis of the historical and sociolinguistic factors that led to the formation of Macau's unique cultural identity is provided. It should be mentioned in conclusion, that Macau was historically the first, and only centre in Asia for interdisciplinary study in a Luso-Chinese cultural environment. The impact of European philosophy, science, and culture is evident to this day.

The authors of this paper advocate the continuation of this interdisciplinary, intercultural legacy, focusing on discourse and communication studies that will facilitate the creation of a knowledge based society in Macau. Lessons learned from four hundred years of cultural encounter, interaction, dispute and compromise, are valuable assets for the achievement of this objective.

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