Verbal Miscommunication Between English Native Speakers and Chinese Learners of English

Wang Zhenxian
Beijing Institute of Education

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to reach an understanding of the nature and sources of verbal miscommunication – the problematic face-to-face talk – between Chinese learners of English (CLEs) and native speakers of English (NSEs). The following three objectives are to be achieved in this study:
1. to classify the verbal miscommunication between the CLEs and the NSEs;
2. to trace the source of each type of miscommunication;
3. to promote effective teaching and learning of English in China so that the CLEs can successfully communicate with the NSEs.

In order to accomplish these objectives, examples of miscommunication have been collected and analyzed with the two theoretical models proposed in this study: (1) A model of L2 learner’s communicative competence, (2) A model for the categorization of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication.

Recommendations are also provided on how to prevent the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication.

Key words: communicative competence, error analysis, intercultural communication, miscommunication, pragmatic failure.

1. Introduction
All learners of English are worried about grammatical errors. However, learners of English who speak grammatical English can still sound very un-English to the native speakers of English (NSEs). In fact, they often misunderstand the NSEs or get themselves misunderstood. In this study, I want to find out what exactly is going wrong in the face-to-face conversation between the Chinese learners of English (CLEs) and the NSEs.

1.1 Scope of the present study
The purpose of this study is to reach an understanding of the nature and sources of verbal miscommunication between CLEs and NSEs. By ‘verbal miscommunication’, I mean the
problematic face-to-face talk (not including gestures, facial expressions, space, etc.) between a CLE and an NSE. Focused on the CLEs’ production and interpretation of spoken English, the present study employs the term “miscommunication” in its broad sense as an umbrella to cover all the phenomena of (1) misuse and misinterpretation of spoken English due to CLEs’ inadequate linguistic competence (hereafter referred to as M1), (2) misuse and misinterpretation of spoken English due to inadequate pragmatic competence (hereafter referred to as M2), and (3) misuse and misinterpretation of spoken English because of inadequate intercultural competence or sociocultural differences (hereafter referred to as M3). In line with Anolli et al’s (2002) optimistic attitude, miscommunication is viewed not as a problem but rather as a resource and chance for both parties to enhance their interaction with each other, and especially for the CLEs to improve their English.

By NSEs, I mean those whose L1 is English and in this study the majority of the NSEs are foreign teachers of English and foreign college students learning Chinese in China, most of whom are from the United States and Canada. By CLEs, I mean those whose L1 is Chinese but L2 is English. Most of the CLEs studied in the paper are: undergraduate and postgraduate students of English-majors or Non-English-majors.

In order to reveal the nature of miscommunication between NSEs and CLEs, the following three questions have to be answered:

1. How can the miscommunications be classified?
2. What is the source of each type of miscommunication?
3. What can be done to help the CLEs and NSEs to communicate smoothly?

1.2 Methodology

In this study, I first propose two models: (1) *a model of L2 learners’ communicative competence* which can be used to account for the sources of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication; and (2) *a model for the categorization of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication*. Then instances of the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication will be analyzed according to these two models. The data for this analysis come from the following two sources.

Firstly, in order to obtain natural data from the CLEs and NSEs, two observation sheets (see Appendices) are designed and distributed to them, so that they can function as observers or informants to report miscommunication happening on or around them. Follow-up interviews of these observers or informants are also made to obtain more information about the contextual and psychological backgrounds of the miscommunication. The second source of data is from books written by Xia Jimei et al (1995), and Davis (2001).
2. Theoretical framework for the analysis of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication

2.1 A model of L2 learners’ communicative competence for explaining CLE-NSE Verbal miscommunication

Figure 2.1 A model of L2 learners’ communicative competence.

The communicative competence in this model is a combination of the four notions: ‘communicative competence’ (Hymes 1971; Canale and Swain 1980, Canale 1983, & Swain
1984), ‘communicative ability’ (van Ek 1986), ‘language competence’ (Bachman 1990/1999), and ‘intercultural communicative competence’ (Byram 1997). Though various terms are employed by researchers to refer to the competence or ability a language user needs to possess, the term ‘communicative competence’ is preferred in this model. Here ‘communicative’ refers to face-to-face conversation, and ‘competence’ has three aspects: knowledge, ability, and motivation/attitude/awareness.

As shown in Figure 2.1, an L2 learner’s communicative competence comprises three components: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and intercultural competence. The two broken lines (separating the elements of the three components) and the arrows between the three components symbolize that the three components together with their elements form an integrative whole, which is inseparable in reality. A brief explanation of the three components of this model is provided as follows.

2.1.1 Linguistic competence

The bottom position of ‘linguistic competence’ in this model shows its foundational status in language communication. The knowledge side of the linguistic competence is composed of phonology, prosody, lexis, and grammar. Corresponding to the four areas of linguistic knowledge are the four types of linguistic ability: (1) pronunciation and perception of speech sounds; (2) using intonation to convey syntactic information and the ability to interpret the information conveyed through intonation; (3) diction—the ability to choose the proper lexis in communication and make sense of the subtle meaning of a particular word or expression; (4) sentence formation and interpretation of sentence meaning. The third aspect of the linguistic competence is ‘motivation/attitude/awareness’, which affects L2 learners’ willingness to acquire the other two aspects (knowledge and ability) of the linguistic competence. Linguistic competence governs language use at the substance level and structure level (see section 2.2).

2.1.2 Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence, lying in the middle of the model, functions like a bridge linking linguistic competence and intercultural competence. The knowledge aspect of pragmatic competence is that of speech act (especially knowledge about politeness), discourse (turn taking, discourse markers and structures), and sociolinguistic knowledge – the Sociolinguistic Competence in Swain’s (1984), van Ek’s (1986) and Bachman’s (1990/1999) sense, which refers to “the sensitivity to, or control of the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context… [It includes] sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety, to differences in register and to naturalness, and the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech” (Bachman 1990/1999: 94-95).

On the other side of the pragmatic competence is the L2 learners’ ability to realize and interpret speech acts and discourse functions. Successful speech act realization means the speaker can precisely and appropriately communicate his/her intended illocutionary, interpersonal, or discourse force (Tzanne 2000: 59-62). Similarly, successful speech act interpretation means the hearer can accurately understand the speaker’s intended force or communicative intent.

To avoid miscommunications caused by discourse differences, at least two types of discourse management abilities are needed: (1) the ability to interpret and fill the discourse slot as L2 conversational norms dictate (e.g. the ability to smoothly enter into and end discourse, and the ability to respond to ritualized speech acts in a contextually appropriate manner), and (2)
the ability to recognize and produce discourse markers correctly in terms of their pragmatic functions.

As the third aspect, motivation/attitude/awareness affects the L2 learners’ willingness to acquire the various elements of the pragmatic competence.

2.1.3 Intercultural competence

The intercultural competence in this model also comprises three aspects: knowledge, skills, and motivation/attitude/awareness. The crux of the knowledge aspect of the intercultural competence is for the L2 learners to know the differences between their own culture and the L2 culture, especially at the ideological level and the social level (He Minzhi 1999: 56): such as ideology, values, beliefs, assumptions, social norms and manners, and communication strategies. The knowledge of communication strategies comprises two aspects: (1) knowing the differences of communication styles, e.g. low context vs. high context, individualistic vs. collectivistic, direct vs. indirect, etc.; and (2) knowing the strategies of how to cope with these different communication styles. Another aspect of the intercultural knowledge is to know the historical background of both the native speakers themselves and their countries.

At the lower level of the ability aspect is the ability to understand, learn, and accommodate to the L2 culture. At the upper level, or the ultimate goal for L2 learning, is for the L2 learners to be able to build desired interpersonal relations with the L2 native speakers. To reach such a goal, the L2 learners must have proper attitudes toward both the L2 culture and the L2 native speakers, and possess all the necessary linguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competences.

2.2 The categorization of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication

Based on James’s (1998/2001) three criteria for error classification: modality – productive or receptive, the spoken medium, the three levels of language – substance, structure (my term for ‘text’ in James’s literature) and discourse, Tzanne (2000)’s two levels of speaker meaning: utterance meaning and force, and the above model of L2 learners’ communicative competence, my model for the categorization of the CLEs-NSEs verbal miscommunication is shown in figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2 A model for the categorization of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utterance meaning</th>
<th>Substance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>1. Mispronunciation when encoding in speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Misperception when decoding in hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>3. Misspeaking when encoding in speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Misunderstanding or nonunderstanding when decoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force</td>
<td>5. Misformulating spoken discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>3. Misspeaking when encoding in speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Misunderstanding or nonunderstanding when decoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Misformulating spoken discourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the one hand, this model shows that the utterance meaning (level 1 speaker meaning, i.e. the possible senses or references of an utterance) can be miscommunicated at both levels: (1) the substance level, in the forms of either the speaker’s mispronunciation or the hearer’s misperception of the utterance due to either the deficiency of their linguistic competence; and (2) the structure level, in the forms of misspeaking, misunderstanding, or nonunderstanding of the utterance due to the deficiency of either the linguistic competence or the intercultural competence. On the other hand, this model indicates that the force (level 2 speaker meaning, i.e. illocutionary, discoursal, or interpersonal force) of an utterance can be miscommunicated at the discourse level in the forms of misformulating, misunderstanding, or nonunderstanding of the spoken discourse due to the deficiency of the CLEs’ pragmatic competence and/or intercultural competence.

3. Demonstration of the explanatory power of the two models

In this section, 10 examples of miscommunication are analyzed at the three levels of language according to the two models proposed in the last section.

3.1 Miscommunication at the substance level

3.1.1 Mispronunciation

Mispronunciation is error in encoding at the productive phonological level, which has three broad types: segmental, combinational, and suprasegmental. Segmental mispronunciation occurs in individual consonants or vowels; combinational mispronunciation refers to the omission of one consonant in a consonant cluster, poor pronunciation of linking sounds and weak forms; and suprasegmental mispronunciation “comprises the phenomena of stress (word stress and sentence stress), rhythm and intonation.” (James 1998/2001: 139-141)

In example 1, the CLE mispronounced the word ‘higher’ like ‘hair’, which caused the male teacher to mistakenly think that she would stay at a “hair place”, that is why he laughed “hysterically”. This is a perfect example of segmental mispronunciation of a vowel sound.

Example 1 (M1) *

In an oral English class, a college female student (20)** of English told her American male teacher (47):

CLE: When I was blue, I would find a higher*** place and spend a few hours thinking about things happened to me lately. (On hearing this, the American teacher laughed ‘hysterically’, which made the CLE feel shocked.)
* If not indicated otherwise, the examples are collected through the observation sheet.
** The number in the parentheses indicates the age of the interlocutors.
*** The transcript of the conversation is in italics, and the source of miscommunication is in blocked letter.

3.1.2 Misperception

Misperception occurs when the CLEs wrongly perceive or fail to recognize the pronunciation of words. As shown in example 2, the CLE failed to identify the short vowel [i] in ‘filling’, thus confused ‘filling’ with ‘feeling’.

**Example 2 (M1)**

Between a Chinese high school male teacher of English (33) and his American male teacher of English. When they were eating Jiaozi (Chinese dumpling), the American teacher asked the CLE about the filling of the dumpling.

NSE: *What's the filling?*
CLE: *Delicious.*
NSE: *(Puzzled)* I mean ‘what is the filling’.
CLE: *I’m feeling very well.*

3.2 Miscommunication at the structure level

3.2.1 Misspeaking

Misspeaking refers to the CLEs’ misuse of English lexis, which often results from their ignorance of the connotation of the lexis. In example 3, the CLE’s unawareness of the association between the phrase “break one’s heart” and loving affairs put both of them in an embarrassing situation.

**Example 3 (M1)**

Between a college female student of English (20) and an American male student of literature (28). They have known each other for some time.

(After talk with each other for a moment.)

NSE: *Bye!*
CLE: *Wait a moment, please. Have you seen my letter?*
NSE:…..
CLE: *The letter?*
NSE: *What?*
CLE: *letter?*
NSE: *I think I’ve lost it.*
CLE: *Oh, you break my heart!*
NSE: *(embarrassed) What?*
Both felt embarrassed.
When asked why she chose the phrase at that moment, the CLE made the following comment:

“I was just joking, thinking that ‘break one’s heart’ meant ‘make somebody feel sad and disappointed’. However, I learnt later that this phrase is often used when someone is deserted by his/her lover.”

3.2.2 Misunderstanding

As ignorance of the English word’s connotation can lead to misspeaking, so it can also bring about misunderstanding. In example 4, the CLE confused the idiom ‘pull somebody’s leg’ with ‘tuo houtui’ in Chinese. However, the English equivalent to ‘tuo houtui’ is ‘be a drag on somebody or hold somebody back’.

Example 4 (M1)

Between a Chinese female postgraduate student (31) of TEFL and an American friend. The comment made by the CLE: “Two native speakers made fun of each other and then one of them, Jack, asked me if I understood the phrase: ‘pull somebody’s leg’. I told him: ‘That means to keep somebody from doing something.’ But he said: ‘No, that means to make joke of somebody.’

3.2.3 Nonunderstanding

While misunderstandings involve retrieving non-intended references or failing to pick up intended ones from the utterance, ‘nonunderstanding’ designates the phenomena that the hearer fails to make any sense of the utterance addressed to him/her.

The sources and types of nonunderstandings are as various as that of misunderstandings. Example 5 illustrates the CLE’s nonunderstanding of an English idiom—“If I was in your shoes”. In Examples 6, the NSE cannot understand the CLE because of cultural differences.

Example 5 (M1)

Between an American female teacher (28) and a Chinese postgraduate student of English (23). The teacher made a comment on the student’s paper after class:

NSE: If I was in your shoes, I wouldn’t write the paper in this way.
CLE: (not understand) Oh, really?

In example 6, the NSE feels perplexed when the CLE tries to find from him the nonexistent English equivalents for the Chinese terms of address—‘dajiu (one’s mother’s oldest brother) and ‘erjiu (one’s mother’s second oldest brother)’.
Between a Chinese female student of English and her American male teacher. The CLE asked her teacher how to say ‘first uncle (daju)’ and ‘second uncle (erjiu)’ in English. Her teacher could not understand what she was saying.

As is shown in the above examples, communication breakdown is in most cases the consequences of nonunderstanding.

3.3 Miscommunication at discourse level

At the discourse level, it is the pragmatic force of an utterance that is miscommunicated in the form of misformulating, misunderstanding, or nonunderstanding.

3.3.1 Misformulating illocutionary force

In example 7, by sticking to the pragmatic rule of Chinese and replying ‘No’ to the English friend’s offer of drink, the Chinese did not get anything to drink. In China, when the host offers anything to drink or eat, the guest, whether likes to take it or not, will usually give a ritual “no” as the first reply. Then the host must insist on the guest taking the offer until the guest saying ‘ok’. However, in the same situation, the NSEs generally do not serve drink or food against the spoken wishes of the guest. Consequently, the Chinese guest’s inappropriate reply leaves him thirsty even though there is ‘tea or coffee’ in his sight.

Example 7 (M2)
Situation: A Chinese was at an English friend’s home.
English: What would you like to drink? Tea or coffee?
Chinese: No, no, no. No trouble, please.
The host didn’t serve him anything to drink then.
(From Xia/Xian/Dai, 1995: 152)

Example 7 also shows that when communicating in an L2, a speaker often tends to use the conventionalized L1 communication strategies. When these strategies are not appropriate according to the L2 communication norms, misunderstandings or nonunderstandings arise. What is misunderstood is not the propositional content, but the force of the utterance.

3.3.2 Misformulating interpersonal force

The CLE in example 8 transfers the Chinese pragmatic rule to the communication in English. To the NSE, the CLE seems to be too imposing. Since the CLE’s communicative intention is to establish or maintain a friendly interpersonal relationship with the NSE, his inappropriate verbal behavior is misformulating interpersonal force.

Example 8 (M3)
Situation: An American colleague caught a cold and his Chinese associate wanted to show his concern.
CLE: You look pale. What’s the matter?
NSE: I’m feeling sick. A cold, maybe.
CLE: Go and see the doctor. Drink more water. Did you take any pills? Chinese medicine works wonderful, would you like to try? Put on more clothes. Have a good rest.

NSE: You’re not my mother, are you?

(From Xia/Xian/Dai, 1995: 96)

In example 8, the NSE feels a bit annoyed by the CLE’s ‘pushy advice’. However, instead of intending any serious advice, the CLE is just showing his concern about the NSE’s health. He will not care whether his advice is taken or not. What he really cares is the relationship between them. Or to put it linguistically, he conveys not illocutionary force but interpersonal force through his advice. When the NSE assigns the illocutionary force to the CLE’s advice, misunderstanding occurs. The NSE feels annoyed because the CLE’s ‘pushy advice’ threatens his negative face (Brown & Levinson 1987)—his freedom of action (he knows what he needs to do, and does not need others to tell him).

3.3.3 Miscommunication of discoursal force

The CLEs’ miscommunication of discourse force is due to their lack of one or both of the discourse management abilities mentioned in section 2.1.2. Two kinds of miscommunication of discoursal force are found in this study: misformulating and nonunderstanding of discoursal force.

3.3.3.1 Misformulating discoursal force

In example 9, the CLEs know only one way of responding to the ritualized question ‘How are you?’, which makes the NSE feel that the CLEs are like robots.

Example 9 (M2)

Reported by an American college student: “I’ve been frustrated with an automatic response to the question ‘How are you’. Every Chinese always says ‘Fine, thank you. And you?’ Like they are robots. There are several ways to answer that question but no one ever says anything different.”

Similarly, Davis (2001: 78) complains that many Chinese ask me the same friendly questions when they first meet me. Where am I from? How long have I been in China? Even when I tell someone how many years I have been in China, the person may still ask me if I know how to use chopsticks! It is as if they have learned a ritual that must be followed regardless of how appropriate it is to the specific situation.

In Davis’s example, many CLEs enter into and engage in the discourse by asking the same set of questions, which makes the NSEs feel very awkward. The lesson from the above two examples is that the discoursal force should be realized with various linguistic means.

3.3.3.2 Nonunderstanding of discoursal force

Nonunderstanding of discourse force is often a result of failure to recognize discourse markers. In example 10, the discoursal force of the sentence “Nice meeting you” is to end the conversation; however, the CLE does not understand this. As a result, she continues talking to the NSE who finally has to end the conversation by saying “Sorry, we have to go”.

10
Example 10 (M2)
Between a Chinese high school female teacher of English (33) and a female visitor from America. They met at the Tian’anmen Square for the first time.

Visitor: Nice to meet you.
Chinese: Nice to meet you too.
……(After chatting for a while).
Visitor: Nice meeting you.
(Chinese teacher continued talking, without realizing this as a signal of wanting to close the conversation).
Visitor: Sorry, we have to go.

4. Conclusion and recommendations
4.1 The categorization and source of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication

In order to reveal the nature and sources of verbal miscommunication between CLEs and NSEs, two models have been proposed, which are then illustrated with 10 examples of miscommunication.

To categorize the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication, a model has been proposed in section 2.2, according to which the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication is analyzed at the three levels of language (i.e. the substance level, the structure level, and the discourse level). Two types of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication are identified at the substance level of language, namely, mispronunciation and misperception. At the structure level, the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication has three forms: misspeaking, misunderstanding, and nonunderstanding of utterance meaning of English lexis. Finally at the discourse level, what can be miscommunicated are the three kinds of pragmatic force: misformulating illocutionary force, misformulating interpersonal force, and miscommunication of discoursal force.

To trace the source of each type of the miscommunication, a model of L2 learner’s communicative competence has been proposed. This model suggests that the miscommunication between the CLEs and the NSEs results, ultimately, from one of, or a combination of the following factors: wrong attitudes toward each other or each other’s culture, lack of awareness, ignorance of the linguistic, pragmatic, or cultural knowledge, and inability to perform correct or appropriate linguistic and/or pragmatic actions.

4.2 Recommendations on the prevention of the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication

To prevent the verbal miscommunication at the substance level, both the CLEs and the English teachers in China should pay close attention to their pronunciation. For the teaching of
pronunciation, the book written by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996/2002) is an invaluable reference.

To prevent the verbal miscommunication at the structure level, besides helping the CLEs master the basic grammar of English, strategies for acquisition and instruction of lexical meaning should also be optimized, so that the CLEs know the connotation and culture-specific meaning of the English lexis.

Finally, three things must be done to prevent the verbal miscommunication at the discourse level.

(1) Teach the CLEs a variety of linguistic forms of the same language function, so that they can choose the most appropriate one and speak naturally to the NSEs.

For example, a variety of responses (i.e. Very well, Not too bad, I'm all right, etc.) to the greeting “How are you?” should be taught in addition to the automatic response “Fine, thank you. And you?”

(2) Raise the CLEs’ cultural awareness in the use of English.

Ronowicz & Yallop (1999) point out the fact that most ELT courses all over the world teach only first level (i.e. literal) meanings and correct grammar, and only a limited amount of what the authors call ‘second level meanings’ (i.e. culture specific meanings essential for effective intercultural communication) is taught. The same is true in the current teaching of English in China. Therefore, great importance should be attached to the raising of the CLEs’ cultural awareness in their use of English.

(3) The NSEs also need to raise their awareness of Chinese culture so that they can better understand the English used by the CLEs.

Smith contends that "English is the property of its users native and non-native, and all English speakers need training for effective international communication" (1987: xi). Therefore, the NSEs should also learn some Chinese culture and the Chinese communication styles, so that they can better understand the CLEs’ English.
Bibliography


Appendix 1: 调查表

作为一名中国的英语学习者，您在用英语与外国人进行交往中可能会有误解他人的经历，或者知道这样的例子。本人目前正在做这方面的研究，以促进中外人士之间更成功的交流。为获得第一手的研究素材，本人特请您仔细观察并如实记录下您或您身边的人在与外国人交往中产生的误解。本调查仅供语言研究参考，您无须署名。多谢您的合作与支持。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native speakers(国 族 )</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age _____ M ( ) F ( )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ College □ Postgraduate □ other □</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>交谈内容，即造成误解的英语句子</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>交谈双方的关系</td>
<td>同学</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>外国人的汉语水平</td>
<td>□ 不会说汉语</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>交谈的时间、天气和地点</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>交谈的目的</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>误解产生的原因</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>误解的结果</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>是否双方都意识到了误解？如不是，谁没有意识到？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>如果是，是谁先意识到的？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>误解是如何弥补的？如未弥补，为什么？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>双方对误解的反应</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>如何避免这次误解</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Observation Sheet for Recording Verbal Miscommunication

As a native speaker of English, you may have the experience of misunderstanding a Chinese learner’s English, or being misunderstood by him/her, or you may know examples of this kind of miscommunication. My name is Andy Wang, and I am doing a research on the nature of miscommunication between native speakers and Chinese learners of English. In order to obtain the natural data, your help is needed to fill in the sheet with detailed information about the two or more speakers involved in the miscommunication and your own analysis of it. **Thank you for your help!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Native Speaker(Ns)’s Nationality:</th>
<th>Chinese learners of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age, sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age____ M ( ) F □ □</td>
<td>Age____ M ( ) F □ □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□College</td>
<td>□College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□Postgraduate/</td>
<td>□Postgraduate/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□other : BA, MA, Dr.</td>
<td>□other : BA, MA, Dr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialty/Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Profession</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content of conversation: the exact words. You may use the back of this sheet if necessary</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td>The two parties are Schoolmates? Teacher—student? Co-worker? Strangers? Or:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NS' Chinese level</strong></td>
<td>□stranger to Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□beginner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□intermediate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□advanced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time, weather, place</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of Conversation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason for miscommunication</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result of miscommunication</strong></td>
<td>Are both speakers aware of the miscommunication? If not, who?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who first sensed it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has the miscommunication been repaired? How? If not, Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Both parties' reaction to the miscommunication</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How can this miscommunication be prevented</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>