

INTERCULTURALITY SERVING MULTIPLE INTERACTIONAL GOALS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND KOREAN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS

Hye-Kyung Ryoo

Abstract

This paper analyzes service encounters between African American customers and Korean immigrant shopkeepers. It is based on ethnographic data of tape-recorded interactions, interviews, and observations made at a Korean immigrant-owned store. The study focuses on analyzing the ways in which the participants constructed various social as well as cultural identities within the situational frames evoked. A close analysis of the talk reveals that the participants' differing cultural backgrounds was not the most dominant interactional factor governing participants' talk in their routinized service encounters. Instead, the majority of service encounters revolved around the various types of situated identities of participants (e.g. shopkeepers and customers) rather than their cultural/ethnic identities as African American or Korean. Based on the view of *interculturality* as a locally managed and situationally bound entity, this study describes the intricate ways in which the participants' cultural (ethnic) identities were made relevant or irrelevant in the course of their interactions. Furthermore, this paper demonstrates the ways that the participants came to achieve practical ends in their interactions. It specifically shows how interculturality was not a debilitating factor that hindered the communication between the participants, but rather, that it played a positive role in helping participants to achieve multiple interactional goals.

Keywords: Interculturality; Interethnic communication; Service encounters; African Americans; Korean immigrants; Rapport building strategies.

1. Introduction

This paper employs an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis in the framework of

interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman 1981; Gumperz 1982). It presents an analysis of service encounters between African American customers and Korean shopkeepers, focusing on the discursive construction of *interculturality* and its various communicative functions in achieving specific goals in interactions. This paper takes a critical view of the prevailing analytical stance of interculturality in many intercultural communication studies which treat cultural difference as a pre-determined and often debilitating factor that causes problems and conflicts (Riley 1980; Knapp & Knapp-Potthoff 1987; Tyler & Davies 1990; Banks, Ge, & Baker 1991; Davis & Tyler 1994; Tyler 1995; House 1996; Bailey 1997; Tzanne 2000; Ducharme & Bernard 2001; Wei, Hua, & Yue 2001; Sharifian 2001; Golato 2002; Taleghani-Nikazm 2002; Nesselhauf 2003).

In most studies of communication between people from different cultural/ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, participants' cultural identities are often determined by analysts. Even though there are many other *situational* and *discourse identities* which participants possess (Zimmerman 1998), only the taken-for-granted cultural (or national/ethnic) identities of participants are primarily viewed as a decisive factor that governs the overall mechanisms of interactions. Therefore, participants are often subjected to certain labels such as 'Japanese,' 'Chinese,' or 'nonnative speaker' and are alleged to act upon those categorizations which serve as a reference to which any communication problems and conflicts among participants are explained.

Studies of interactions between African Americans and Korean immigrants were not an exception to this. In these studies, African American and Korean service encounters in general have mostly been viewed as 'intercultural/interethnic,' putting the blame largely on the cultural differences between these two ethnic groups (Stewart 1989, 1993; Park 1994; Bailey 1997; Shim 2000). Thus, African American and Korean ethnicities in these studies are the inherent identities of participants that are invariably treated as relevant and salient interactional factors. Furthermore, participants' different cultural/ethnic identities are claimed to give them culturally bound ways of conduct and discourse practices, which act as the main culprit for the ethnic conflicts.

This essentialistic view of identity and interculturality has raised a growing concern in various fields of study such as ethnomethodology, critical discourse analysis, applied linguistics, and anthropological linguistics. Questions have been raised about the validity of the studies which have a deterministic view of culture and cultural differences (Singh, Lele, & Martohardjono 1988; Sarangi 1990, 1994a, 1994b; Shea 1993; Kasper 1997, 2004; Wagner 1998; Ylanne-McEwen & Coupland 2000; Koole & ten Thije 2001). In addition, there has been a recognition of the fact that identity should be treated as a dynamic entity that emerges in the course of interactions (Sarangi 1994a,

1994b; Nishizaka 1995; Rampton 1995, 1999; Antaki, Condor, & Levine 1996; Hall 1996; Antaki & Widdicombe 1998; Day 1998; Kramsch 1998; Widdicombe 1998a, 1998b; Kong 2002; Tracy 2002; Mori 2003; Hsieh 2004; Hawkins 2005). These studies emphasize the various ways in which participants construct their multiple identities (not limited to cultural ones), and how these identities are used as interactional “resources through which individuals’ subjectivities and experiences are shaped” (Widdicombe 1998b: 197). From this perspective, one’s cultural/ethnic identity is just one of many identities that he/she possesses and may or may not be the identity in focus that he/she chooses to evoke at a particular moment of interaction.

Mori (2003) is one of the studies conducted in this constructive framework of interculturality. She studied conversations between Japanese and American college students interacting in Japanese in the analytical framework of Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA). She specifically looked at how the participants’ interculturality is constructed and oriented to (or not oriented to) by the participants themselves in on-going interactions. Mori (2003) focuses on the analysis of sequential organization of the participants’ realization of their discourse and social identities in talk-in-interaction. She found that the participants actively engaged in ‘culture talk’, making their interculturality the salient interactional feature and categorized the self and others based on their cultural affiliations. Mori also found that the invocation of interculturality served an interactional function as a “resource for organizing their participation” (2003: 144). At the same time, she examined interactional moments where the supposed interculturality of the participants were not attended to, and thus, treated as irrelevant. Mori’s study is significant in two aspects. First, it provides clear evidence that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds do not always attend to the apparent differences of their cultural identities. In fact, they are indeed able to communicate with each other as social interactants regardless of where they come from. Second, it also shows that interculturality serves a positive interactional function for the participants to achieve their interactional goals.

Day’s work is another attempt at adopting the constructive view of cultural identity as a “situated accomplishment of interlocutors” (1998: 151). He investigated talk at a multi-ethnic workplace. One interesting fact is that Day’s original research purpose was to find the source of misunderstandings among workers from different ethnic groups, which he assumed to be communication problems coming from their cultural differences. However, he found that the workers’ ethnic and cultural identities were often not treated as relevant in their daily activities, and even when they were made salient, they were often contested by the participants. Day’s study is significant in pointing out that ethnic identities of minority workers which were different from the

'local' linguistic ethnic category were contested by the workers themselves who viewed the categorization as a way of "casting doubt on their competence or qualification to be a member of the group pursuing the activity at hand" (1998: 170).

Following this line of thinking in the perspective of identity and interculturality described above, this paper seeks to establish whether 'culture' is specifically realized as a salient interactional factor by looking closely at talk in terms of how culture is locally constructed in immediate context. One of the major findings of this study is that although many claims exist about the cultural contingency of African American and Korean interactions, 'interculturality' between the participants in this study was mostly not the salient interactional factor governing their talk in routinized daily service encounters. Instead, the majority of service encounters revolved around the various types of situated and discourse identities of participants (such as shopkeepers and customers) rather than their identities as African American and Korean. Moreover, when cultural difference was oriented to by the participants, it was constructed and employed as a powerful interactional resource that the participants relied on to achieve multiple interactional goals. This study clearly shows that interculturality is not always a debilitating factor that hinders successful intercultural communication.

2. Approaches to interculturality in African American-Korean interactions

Studies of African American and Korean interethnic relations which hold an essentialistic or monolithic perspective of culture have advanced the negative and confrontational nature of these interactions. Frictions between Korean immigrant shopkeepers and their African American customers have been a well-documented and highly publicized social problem since the early 1980s. The Los Angeles Riot in 1992 and other violent incidents involving killings, arson, and burglary have elevated the tension between the two ethnic groups. A great deal of literature in sociology and anthropology has addressed the ethnic conflict between Korean immigrants and African Americans (Stewart 1989; Chang 1990; Park 1990, 1996; Jo 1992; Jeon 1993; Lee 1993; Koch & Schockman 1994; Norman 1994; Min 1996; Song 1997). These studies are based on an anthropological or sociological approach to the issue to discover various social, economic, and cultural factors responsible for the ethnic conflict between the two minority groups.

In these sociological studies, the shopkeepers and the customers are labeled as Korean immigrants and African Americans, and these labels are pre-given intrinsic analytical references to which the participants' talk and behaviors are attributed

(Stewart 1989, 1993; Park 1994; Bailey 1997; Shim 2000). For example, Stewart's (1989) study, which was based on observation and survey methods, examined the cultural differences in communication styles between the participants interacting over service encounters. She found that differences in culture, communication styles, and preconceived attitudes toward the other party played a significant role in "ineffective communication" between Korean merchants and African American customers (1989: xi). While Stewart's study was pioneering work in terms of its focus on what happens in actual service encounters, it is limited in that the data analysis primarily depends on observation and interviews without any detailed analysis of recorded talk.

Bailey (1996, 1997) studied Korean immigrant shopkeepers and African American customers interacting in liquor stores. He found that the highly publicized ethnic tension and conflict was largely attributed to differing communication styles in service encounters between the two ethnic groups. Bailey makes a distinction between "socially expanded service encounters" and "socially minimal service encounters" (1997: 5). Socially expanded service encounters include talk that is not directly tied to the business transaction at hand while socially minimal service encounters mostly consist of talk focusing only on the business transactions. He claims that interethnic tension and conflicts between the two groups are caused by the participants' differing expectations with regard to the frame of service encounters. While Koreans show a preference for the socially minimal type, African Americans demonstrate a preference for the socially expanded type. That is, while African American customers tend to initiate topics of personal conversation such as jokes and story telling, Korean immigrant workers show strictly business-oriented attitudes toward their interactions, which is perceived as disrespect and rudeness to their customers.

There seems to be a fundamental analytical pitfall in the majority of intercultural communication studies including African American/Korean interactional studies that are based on a deterministic concept of culture. For example, an instance of a customer-shopkeeper dispute is labeled as 'intercultural/interethnic conflict' when it involves Koreans and African Americans, but when it happens between people from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds it is viewed as merely 'customer-shopkeeper' dispute. Therefore, to call any interaction 'intercultural' from the outset should be avoided because it prematurely outlines the analytical frame of interaction within the 'intercultural' framework.

By rejecting predetermined assumptions about the salience of cultural and linguistic differences, this study adopts the constructive view of interculturality as being situated within a specific context as a dynamic on-going process. Rather than assuming that interculturality will always operate as a negative factor to foster different ways of

communication and results in problems, we should pay more attention to the ways in which interculturality is realized and the interactional roles they play. It should be kept in mind that 'culture' can be very much an unimportant element for participants themselves in their routinized daily activities, such as the service encounters analyzed in this study.

3. Method

This study employs an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis in the framework of interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman 1981; Gumperz 1982). Furthermore, the study draws on the analytical premises of interactional sociolinguistics in that the analysis relied on extra-textual factors such as the participants' personal relationships, prior experiences, and personal opinions made available from the interviews and observations in order to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of the talk.

This study is based on the analysis of data gathered during nine months of fieldwork in a Korean immigrant owned beauty supply store selling mostly wigs, cosmetics, and some general goods. The store was located in a mid-western city in the United States. A video camera and an audio recorder were set up around the cash register area and the over the counter interactions between the shopkeepers and customers were recorded. Video and audiotapes were reviewed immediately after they were collected and transcribed. A total of 15 visits to the store were made from May 2001 to January 2002, and each visit to the store lasted about 4 hours. The data comprised over 200 pages of transcriptions.

In addition to the video and audio recordings of interactions, ethnographic methods of observation and interviews at the site were employed as a secondary data source to complement the primary data of tape-recorded interactions. Field notes from the site and transcriptions from taped interviews provided additional supplementary information and guided the interpretation of tape-recorded conversations whenever they were relevant.

4. Results and discussion

Before going into detail on the analysis of the construction of interculturality in this study, the relative insignificance of interculturality throughout the data should be pointed out from the outset. The data show that the participants did not seem to

explicitly reflect on the intercultural aspect of their encounters (e.g., their ethnicity, nationality, language, and race).

Like any other discourse situation, participants in service encounters have a number of different discourse and situational identities (e.g., shop-owners/customers, experts/novices, neighbors, and friends) other than their cultural/ethnic identities. It was found that Korean immigrants and African Americans, most of the time, enacted their roles as shopkeeper and customer where one party provides a service and the other party receives it. However, there were often cases in which participants evoked roles and identities other than shopkeeper/customer. Many regular customers to the beauty supply store were themselves business owners of beauty salons in the neighborhood. When the shop owner and the customer shared the same social role of business owner, it frequently acted as an interactional resource to build up solidarity between them. In the data of this study, the Korean shop owner frequently asked how a regular customer's business was doing. In this way, participants got to talk about something that was not exactly related to the business transaction between a shopkeeper and a customer. They seemed to evoke a rather different relational frame on a more personal level rather than a strict buyer-seller relationship. Other times, the role relationship of a customer and a server was reversed when, for example, the shop owner jokingly asked the customer, who was a hairdresser, for a haircut.

4.1. Interculturality treated as irrelevant

Upon analyzing the data, compelling evidence was found to show that the ethnic difference between participants was just one of the many features constituting a service encounter. Not only was interculturality rarely invoked as a relevant interactional factor throughout the data, but also it was sometimes being treated as irrelevant by the participants. This was particularly true for the shop owner when he was enacting his identity as a 'hair expert.' Hairstyles and hair care methods are as different as the ethnic groups that prefer them. Hair for African Americans has been closely associated with their racial and ethnic identity, and the unique hairstyles and texture of African American hair have long been considered an expression of their culture and heritage (Jacobs-Huey 2004). Sacks (1974) claims that one can choose from a number of features of a person to identify him/herself with a certain membership category, which he calls a "membership categorization device" (1974: 219). Therefore, talking about hair texture and hair care products can be considered as such a membership

categorization device since certain hair textures and ways to groom hair are associated with the ethnic characteristics of African Americans.

In the following extract, there are mentions of particular hair texture types for African Americans such as ‘silky’ and ‘yaki’, which are the terms representing unique hair texture for African Americans.¹ Talking about hair textures using those specified terms is a category-bound activity for the ethnic identity of African Americans. Of particular interest here is that, due to the context of the beauty supply store, the Korean shop owner and the shopkeeper in the store played the role of experts who knew more about hair texture types and hair care products for African Americans than the African American customers did. Especially, the owner has acquired knowledge and expertise of hair products specialized for African Americans from his ten year experience in the business. It was observed at the site that the customers often sought specific advice with regard to how to take care of the hairpieces and wigs they purchased. Extract 1 shows how the Korean shop owner and the shopkeeper projected their identities of ‘hair experts’ and the customer called on their expertise as an ‘advice seeker.’ These discourse identities were demonstrated through question-answer sequences of talk.

(1) Extract 1

Beauty supply store 080701T

V1:0:37:06 AA1:395

The Korean shopkeeper (SK), the Korean employee at the store, is helping a customer at the register and another female African American customer (C) asks her about a braiding hair she is looking for. The shop owner (SO) approaches to help the customer.

- 30 C: do you have like- you got like- (-) two (.) uh (-) you got like two
 31 different colors in a blond and uh (-) darker brown,
 32 like a- a- blond, (listed?) with brown,
 33 SO: ((stepping into the register area)) you can the- no have two tone
 34 color;(.) only solid color.
 35 C: only solid [color,
 36 SO: [yea.
 37 (2.0)
 38 C: what color is my hair.
 39 SO: your color is number two sandy brown.
 40 C: oh goo:::d; let me see.

¹ ‘Yaki’ and ‘silky’ refer to the types of hairpiece based on its texture. Yaki is a hairpiece type that is coarse and rough. On the other hand, a silky hairpiece type is a smooth and shiny texture of hair.

- 41 SO: ((finds a hair looking under the counter))
42 (here we go?) baby? ((hands over the hairpiece to SK))
43 C: ((looks at the hair)) yea.
44 two of 'em please.
45 SK: two of 'em?
46 C: yea.
47 as it yaki,
48 SK: yea yaki.

Here the customer was looking for a specific kind of hairpiece that had two different colors blended in one bond. In lines 30-32, the customer described the hair type to the shop owner. The shop owner in line 33, however, immediately recognized the type of hairpiece the customer was looking for and told the customer that he did not have it. The shop owner's use of technical terms 'two tone color' in line 33 and 'solid color' in line 34 displayed his identity as a hair expert, which contrasts with the customer's non-technical description of the type of hair in line 30-32. The customer, in line 38, explicitly asked for advice from the shop owner by asking what her own hair color was, which indexed her stance toward the shop owner as a hair expert who knew her hair color better than herself. The shop owner's answer to this customer's question clearly showed his expert knowledge about hair as shown in his use of the technical name of the color and the number in line 39. He answered clearly without any hesitation or pause. In line 40, the customer seemed to be pleased with the shop owner's clear answer and knowledge when she says 'oh good', which also showed her positive stance toward the shop owner's expertise, which ensured his identity as a hair expert. The customer was satisfied with the hair color offered by the shop owner and decided to buy it in lines 43 and 44.

In line 47, the customer put forth the second question to the Korean shopkeeper this time about the type of the texture of wig. Then the shopkeeper answered the question giving positive confirmation of the customer's information. In line 47, the customer seems to have an idea about the texture of the wig, which was 'yaki', however, she wanted to make sure of it by asking someone who she thought would know better. Therefore, the customer's question in line 47 again categorized the Korean shopkeeper as a 'knower' of African American hair texture. Here in Extract 1, the discourse identities of the customer as a questioner or advice seeker, and the shop owner and the shopkeeper as respondents or advice providers emerged in the question-answer sequences of talk in lines 38 and 39 and again in lines 47 and 48.

Of particular significance in Extract 1 is the fact that it was the customer who

asked for the advice for the African American wig styles, and even in regard her own hair color, which instantiated the shop owner's identity as an expert. Therefore, the participants' cultural/ethnic identities as African American and Korean were made irrelevant in that the Korean shop owner enacted his identity as a person with better knowledge of the African American cultural items, and the customer acted upon that role by calling on his expertise. It can be claimed that the cultural and ethnic identities of the participants as a Korean and an African American were overruled by the role enactment of 'expert' and 'novice'.² In fact, there have been findings to show the effect of the expert knowledge of nonnative speakers interacting with native speakers in certain subject areas or domains. The findings reveal that the nonnative speakers' expert knowledge may well override other contextual factors such as their linguistic incompetence or cultural differences (Zuengler 1989; Zuengler & Bent 1991; Cameron & Williams 1997). In these studies, the nonnative speakers' relative professional or academic knowledge on the specific subject area of discourse plays a crucial role in determining the overall mechanisms of the interactions with the native speakers. In Extract 1, it was the shop owner's expertise of African American cultural items upon which the African American customer depended.

Extract 2 also illustrates a case where interculturality based on ethnicity between the participants goes unnoticed.

(2) Extract 2

Beauty supply store 121101T

V2:0:11:50

A young female African American customer comes into the store and looks for eyeliner. She is looking through the stack where eyeliners of different colors are displayed. The conversation starts with the shop owner attending to the customer.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | SO: what color, |
| 2 | C: um I think is black; |
| 3 | SO: black; top is black. |
| 4 | ((picks out a bottle of eye liner from the shelf next to the counter)) |
| 5 | I got it. (.) uh huh, |

² The shop owner's experience in the hair product business for African Americans provided him with considerable knowledge and expertise of hair treatment and products he deals with. It has been observed that many customers relied on his advice on the types of products they purchased and specific directions on how to take care of hairpieces or wigs.

- 6 C: is that the liquid kind,
7 SO: uh huh,
8 C: oh yea that's it.
9 SO: ((punches the keys on the register))
10 five, (.) twenty six,
11 ((bags the purchase)) beautiful day,
12 C: huh,
13 SO: beautiful day.
14 C: oh yes; (-) pretty fair hihi.
15 is that five something because of the tax?
16 (3.2)
17 SO: Wisconsin tax is [five point six is cheap.
18 C: [yea I know hihihi.
19 I know.
20 SO: Illinois is almost nine point.
21 ((C pays))
22 twenty six; twenty five is fine; (-) that's okay.
23 C: (?)
24 SO: okay thank you so much beautiful lady.
25 C: oh hihi you're welcome.
26 SO: San Diego maybe eleven point.
27 C: yea.
28 SO: San Diego is very expense.

Here in Extract 2, the participants concentrate on their routine business transaction in lines 1-10. In line 15, the customer asks the shop owner about the total price in order to confirm that the total amount included tax. The shop owner did not give an immediate answer to the customer's question as shown in the pause in line 16. Instead of directly answering the question, the shop owner initiated a new conversational topic involving state tax rates. In line 17, the shop owner made a statement about Wisconsin tax being lower than other states. Then the customer immediately agreed with the shop owner's statement in her following turn in line 18. The shop owner did not stop the 'tax talk' there and went on to mention the tax rate in the state of Illinois in line 20 as a reference to compare the rate of Wisconsin tax and expanded his tax talk to the tax rate in San Diego in lines 26 and 28.

It is interesting to note that, although the customer first brought up the 'tax' talk relevant to the interaction, it was the shop owner who elaborated on the topic. Here, the

shop owner was enacting his identity as a Wisconsin resident or rather, someone who knew the tax rates of several different states in the US. The fact that one knows the specific tax rates can be one of the attributions of one's national identity (de Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak 1999; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart 1999). By agreeing with the shop owner's assessment of the Wisconsin tax rate in line 19, the customer also took part in the tax talk as a co-participant living in America. The tax talk between the shop owner and the customer demonstrated that they belonged to the same national collectivity, which made irrelevant the fact that they had different national/cultural origins. The most significant fact was that the topic of 'tax' was shared and co-constructed by the participants across the cultural/ethnic boundary without their cultural or ethnic identities coming into play at all.

The conversations in Extracts 1 and 2 show that interculturality coming from the participants' different cultural and ethnic backgrounds was not manifested as relevant in their routine service encounters. By displaying his expertise of African American hair texture and products and providing information on state tax rates, the shop owner made his cultural identity as a Korean irrelevant. Rather he shared his expertise and knowledge with his customers, thereby enacting his identity as the 'knower' of African American culture and custom. The customers also did not treat the shop owner's expertise and knowledge of African American cultural items as something extraordinary, which effectively made the shop owner's Korean background irrelevant.

4.2. The construction of interculturality and its interactional roles

In the previous section, I have claimed that interculturality was not a primary reference to which the participants alluded to in order to communicate with each other. Instead, they were able to enact other discourse and social identities that were appropriate to the local situational contexts. This section focuses on analyzing incidents where interculturality was oriented to and shared by the participants and thus, made a salient interactional feature. Although such cases were relatively uncommon, there were incidents of 'culture talk' between the participants wherein their cultural identities were implicitly or explicitly evoked in the course of interactions. It was also observed that the participants did 'identity work' to achieve specific interactional goals (Tracy 2002: 7). Extract 3 shows how interculturality was rather implicitly constructed by the shop owner and intentionally used as a strategy to achieve a practical goal.

(3) Extract 3

Beauty supply store 070201M

A female African American woman (C) in her mid 20s comes into the store and approaches the counter. The shop owner (SO) is standing at the checkout counter. As it turns out, the woman is not a customer who wants to shop in the store, but someone who wants to solicit clients to advertise on her radio station.

V1:0:42:13

- 1 SO: yea baby?
2 C: I'm dropping off a card sweetie;
3 I'm Katrina Johnson from twelve ninety's radio station; can I
4 have a business card of yours?
5 ((SO takes a card from the counter and gives it to (C))
6 we sell radio advertise; (?);
7 African American's twenty five fifty four; mind power;
8 SO: okay,
9 I – let me talk to my brother,
10 C: okay.
11 SO: owner is I call; I – let me talk to you,
12 C: uh huh,
13 SO: I my brother call you.
14 C: thank [you.
15 SO: [your name is Katrina,
16 C: yes sir.
17 SO: that's-
18 C: okay your name is,
19 SO: my name is Jackie Chan.
20 C: okay Jackie Chan,
21 SO: uh huh,
22 C: ((looks at the name card))
23 that's a Young;
24 SO: no- this my brother name.
25 C: oh.
26 SO: my name is Jackie Chan.
27 C: can you fight like Jackie Chan,
28 SO: uh huh,
29 C: okay. Thank you..

- 30 SO: my son is Bruce Lee.
 31 C: huh, [(?)
 32 SO: [my son is Bruce Lee.
 33 C: ((looks to be a little puzzled)) that mean like real higher,
 34 SO: uh huh,
 35 C: in martial arts?
 36 SO: uh huh,
 37 C: o:h that's fresh.
 38 SO: thank you beautiful baby,
 39 C: thank you sir.

The conversation starts with the shop owner acknowledging the woman entering the store in line 1. The woman introduced herself by stating her name and affiliation in line 3, making her worker identity relevant, rather than a customer identity. Then, she immediately specified her reason to be in the store in lines 4-7, i.e., to sell advertising for her radio station. In response to the woman's candid confession about her reason for dropping by the store, the shop owner employed intentional and purposefully witty strategies to avoid the hassle of dealing with this salesperson by concealing his identity as the shop owner throughout the interaction. In lines 11 and 13, the shop owner stated that he would talk to his brother and have him call the woman about the matter, which implied that he was not the owner. First in line 10, the shop owner provided minimal acknowledgement of the woman's previous turn and in lines 9, 11, and 13, he introduced a fictional character, his brother (he does not have a brother).

Of particular interest in this interaction is how the shop owner brought in a 'cultural item' to the interaction, starting in line 19. Here, in response to the woman's request for his name, the shop owner identified himself as Jackie Chan instead of providing the woman his real name. Jackie Chan is a famous Hong Kong movie star in martial arts films who is one of a handful of Asian movie stars well known to westerners, especially in the US. The character 'Jackie Chan' here can be considered a membership categorization device to evoke one's identity as an 'Asian.' That is, the shop owner categorized himself as an Asian by an inference drawn from the 'Asianness' of Jackie Chan and the fact that most Americans know this famous Asian actor.

The shop owner's invocation of this fake identity is at first revoked by the woman in line 23 where she looks at the card she got from the shop owner earlier on, and iterates the name on the card. Here in lines 22 and 23, the woman is trying to hold on to her business-oriented situational frame for her practical interest of talking to the shop owner in order to sell the advertising, instead of participating in the joking frame

evoked by the shop owner. Therefore, she does not take up the shop owner's attempt to shift the situational gear into a more joking mood. However, the woman's endeavors to carry out her business task fails in lines 24 and 26, when the shop owner evades identifying himself as the person on the card by sticking to his original claim to be known as Jackie Chan. The woman gives in and conforms to the joking situational frame by showing her interest and elaborating on the topic in line 27. The shop owner then initiates another joke in line 30, stating that his son is Bruce Lee, another famous Kung Fu actor. However, the woman apparently does not recognize the name as shown in line 31, possibly due to the strong Korean accent of the shop owner. The shop owner repeats the exact phrase in line 32 but the woman does not recognize his utterance. In the end, the woman simply lets it pass and cooperates by asking additional questions to the shop owner in lines 33 and 35.

At the end of the conversation, the shop owner successfully achieves his interactional goals of not giving out his real name and identity as a shop owner through invoking his racial identity. This invocation performed the additional interactional function of creating a playful situational frame as well, which proved to be a very effective strategy for the shop owner to avoid the potentially unpleasant interactional moment of having to directly reject her request to buy any radio advertisement.

4.3. More positive roles of interculturality as a rapport building strategy

Goffman (1963: 89) claims that a service encounter is a 'face engagement' in which participants with specific goals conduct a mutual activity through the use of various communicative means. A service encounter is by its nature a goal-oriented speech event; however, many studies of service encounters have shown that the goals are not simply limited to achieving business transactions (Aston 1988; Kalaja 1989; James 1992; Kidwell 2000). These studies have claimed that talk in service encounters is indeed complex and strategic with opportunities for interactants to participate in interpersonal and interactional relationships during their encounters. One such relationship is building up solidarity and rapport. In this study, it seemed to be the shop owner's main interest to promote sales and recruit more regular customers as a result of establishing personal and friendly relations.

Although the majority of studies on Korean and African American interactions have emphasized the negative and conflictual effect of interculturality between the two groups on the general outcome of the interactions, this study shows ample evidence of interculturality playing a positive interactional role through comity. Aston (1993)

presents the concept of 'comity strategies' which participants in native and nonnative speaker interactions employ to achieve affective connections in a positive way. Aston's research showed how nonnative speaker participants use their status as a foreigner and second language learner as a positive powerful interactional resource.

Similarly, it was observed that interculturality became an interactional resource that provided the participants with the opportunity to establish a joint interest and a way to compensate for their lack of shared experience or history in their first encounters at the store. In Extract 4, the shop owner evokes the ethnic identity of himself and his friend (the manufacturer of the wig) through which he simultaneously achieves multiple interactional goals: To claim the high quality of the product he is selling, and to make small talk out of the business-oriented interaction.

(4) Extract 4

Beauty supply store 050801T

V:0:48:33 (VHS2:0:20:40): only sound can be heard in the video

A female African American customer (C) is looking for a wig in the store. She is standing on the ground level and the shop owner (SO) is helping her choose and try on a wig. The customer finally picks out a wig she likes and the shop owner initiates a conversation by talking about the manufacturer of the wig.

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 1 | SO: this owner is best friend. |
| 2 | C: really, |
| 3 | SO: he's good (.) hair designer. |
| 4 | C: really, (where in-) in Japan? |
| 5 | SO: Korea. |
| 6 | C: Korea. |
| 7 | SO: uh huh, |
| 8 | C: oh I love Korea. |
| 9 | SO: I'm too. |
| 10 | I like my country. |
| 11 | C: yes. |

In line 1 the shop owner claims a personal connection with the manufacturer of the wig that the customer picked out in order to prove that he could personally guarantee the good quality of the product. So, he identifies himself as the 'best friend' of the wig's manufacturer. He continues to provide evidence of his claim about the quality of the product by providing additional information about his friend, the manufacturer, in line 3,

where he states the friend's occupation as a hair designer, implying the manufacturer's expertise in hair products. In response to the shop owner's accounts, the customer showed her interest in line 4 by asking the specific country of origin of the manufacturer. Here, the customer made relevant the ethnic (national) identity of the manufacturer and the shop owner. The customer's invocation of the national identity in line 4 served to function as a contextualization cue to initiate the topic of discourse, the shop owner's country of origin, and it framed the interaction in terms of nationality. The customer's initiation of 'nationality talk' was negotiated in a mutually constructed manner throughout the rest of the interaction by the participants. In line 5, the shop owner specified his and the manufacturer's cultural/national identity, Korean. In line 8, the customer oriented to the shop owner's identity as Korean by providing positive and friendly uptake to the shop owner's revelation of his cultural/national identity. Here, the customer showed her positive personal feeling about the shop owner's country of origin as an interactional move to build a positive and friendly atmosphere. The positive orientation toward the nationality talk was elaborated more in lines 9 and 10 where the shop owner took on the customer's positive uptake and provided a token of agreement in line 9. Specifically, in line 10, the shop owner explicitly identified himself as a Korean by referring to Korea as "my country" and claimed his patriotic feeling about his native country.

The nationality talk in Extract 4 acted as an interactional resource for solidarity between these two interactants as shown in their positive uptake and supportive moves toward each other in lines 8-11. It can be suggested, from Extract 4, that the shop owner's status as a Korean immigrant offered an interactional resource for the participants to orient themselves to and build a friendly mode of interaction. Furthermore, the shop owner achieved multiple interactional goals through evoking his ethnic identity both to strengthen the credibility of the product quality and to build up solidarity with the customer by exchanging personal small talk.

5. Conclusion

This study has described the ways in which interculturality was made relevant and jointly constructed by the participants in terms of how they ascribed cultural identities to themselves and others. Unlike what many Korean and African American interaction studies have claimed, the data from this study show that the participants did not often act upon their intrinsic ethnic and cultural identities. There were many cases where the different cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the participants were not treated as salient

interactional factors. By being an expert or knower of the cultural items of the African American customers, the shop owner was able to blot out his identity as a Korean who might not be familiar with African Americans' hair care system or tax rates in the US. His identity as a Korean was usually irrelevant in the talk, and it was often completely overruled by his status as a shop owner who is well informed about the products he is selling.

Rather than relying on one single identity consistently throughout the interaction, the participants in the present study were able to tactfully mobilize various situational identities for different interactional purposes. The first case presented was the shop owner's tactful move to present his fake and joking identity as 'Jackie Chan,' employing implicit cultural reference to his identity as an Asian. The shop owner's invocation of his identity as 'Jackie Chan', although jokingly done, achieved dual interactional goals to conceal his real identity and avoid serious business-oriented conversation with the salesperson. Another case of interculturality being made relevant showed its positive role in initiating small talk between the participants, which led to a friendly service encounter. Therefore, interculturality was not simply a contextual factor that the participants oriented to, but it was employed by participants as a resource used for a variety of practical reasons in interactions.

This study started out by questioning the validity of the studies that treat interculturality (the participants' different cultural/ethnic and linguistic backgrounds) as the one and only independent variable in explaining miscommunication and ethnic conflicts. The findings emphasize that interculturality is not something real that is always present and hence, always relevant for interpreting participants' talk and behaviors. Instead, interculturality remains to be seen as it unfolds in face-to-face interaction.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

Transcription conventions are adapted from Jefferson (1979) and Spencer-Oatey (2000).

Identity of speakers

C:	Customer
SO:	Shop owner
SK:	Shopkeeper (employee)

Simultaneous utterances

[Simultaneous, overlapping talk by two speakers

Contiguous utterances

= No interval between the end of one speaker's turn and the beginning or the next speaker's turn.

Intervals within and between utterances

(0.0) Intervals in the stream of talk timed in tenths of a second either within an utterance or between utterances.

(.) Micro pause

(-) Brief pause

Characteristics of speech delivery

- A halting, abrupt cutoff

◦ ◦ Lower amplitude: sound that is quieter than surrounding talk

hihihi Laughter tokens

Underline Underlined type indicates marked stress

Capital letters Capitals indicate increased volume

, Low rising intonation

; Slightly falling or a continuing intonation

. Low falling intonation

? High rising intonation, not necessarily a question

:: Lengthened syllable

Commentary in the transcript

(()) Non-verbal behaviors and descriptive comments

(?) Unintelligible text

{ } English translation of utterances in Korean

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