Intercultural Communication in Chinese-owned organisations in Tanzania in the Context of New African Discourses
Mayer, Claude-Helene

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

New African Discourses in Intercultural Communication in Chinese-Tanzanian Business Interactions

Neue afrikanische Diskurse in interkultureller Kommunikation in chinesisch-tansanischen Business-Interaktionen

Claude-Hélène Mayer

Dr. habil., PhD, Professor in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management at the University of Johannesburg, Adjunct Professor at the Europa Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany and Senior Research Associate in the Department of Management at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. Her Venia Legendi (Europa Universität Viadrina, Germany) is in Psychology with focus on Work, Organisational, and Cultural Psychology. She has published numerous monographs, edited text books, accredited journal article, and special issues on transcultural mental health, salutogenesis and sense of coherence, shame, transcultural conflict management and mediation, women in leadership, intercultural business interaction and psychobiography.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Der Artikel präsentiert ausgewählte afrikanische Konzepte und Diskurse, so wie African Renaissance und Pan-Afrikanismus, als auch neue Ansätze wie Afrofuturismus, Afrotopia und Afropeanismus. Parallel zu diesen neuen theoretisch-philosophischen Diskursen, sind Organisationen praktischerweise in afrikanischen Kontexten herausgefordert, mit kultureller Diversität und globalisierten Arbeitskontexten umzugehen. Diese organisationale Situation ist zu einem neuen Forschungsfeld geworden, das interkulturelle und internationale Kollaboration und Kommunikation einschließt.

Der Artikel zeigt empirische Ergebnisse zur interkulturellen Kommunikation zwischen chinesischen und tansanischen Arbeitnehmern. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass chinesische und tansanische Angestellte interkulturelle Kommunikation im Blick auf vier differenzierte Themen hin erleben: interkulturelle Kommunikation über kulturelle und hierarchische Grenzen hinweg, in der Online-Kommunikation, im Blick auf Unterstützung und hinsichtlich der Arbeitsbedingungen.

Schlagwörter: Interkulturelle Kommunikation, chinesisch-afrikanische Interaktion, Organisationskontext, qualitativ-hermeneutisches Paradigma, Tansania

Abstract (English)

This article presents selected African concepts and discourses, such as African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism, as well as more recently evolved concepts, such as Afrofuturism, Afrotopia and Afropeanism, thereby taking new theoretical approaches into account. In parallel to these theoretical discourses, organisations in Africa are practically challenged by experiences of cultural diversity and globalised work spaces. This organisational situation is subject to new research on intercultural and international collaboration and communication.

This article focuses on intercultural communication in Chinese-Tanzanian organisational contexts, using a case study approach within the hermeneutical philosophical frame. Findings show that Chinese and Tanzanian employees experience intercultural communication with regard to four topics: within and across cultural and hierarchical boundaries, in online communication, with regard to support and in terms of working conditions.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, Chinese-African Interaction, Organisational Contexts, Qualitative-Hermeneutical Paradigm, Tanzania

1. Introduction

For several decades Sub-Saharan Africa has discussed concepts of African Renaissance or Pan-Africanism until recently new forms of discourses such as Afrofuturism, Afrotopia, and Afropeanism have emerged. These more recent discourses take issues such as post-colonialism, globalisation, cultural pluralism, and diversity into account and aim at creating alternate identities which are rather independent of previous (colonial or imperialistic) concepts (Miano 2008, Banda / Saayman 2010, Womack 2013, Thrasher 2015a,b, Sarr 2016, 2018, Anderson / Jones 2017; Gunst / Kanobana 2017).

During the past years, interactions anchored in cultural diversity and globalised work spaces have entered the empirical discourses in African organisational and research contexts (Mayer 2011). For this study, culture was defined in a broad way, following Bennett (2017): "the coordination of meaning and action within a bounded group." Intercultural communication then refers, based on this definition of culture, to a communication which crosses the boundaries of culture in coordination of meaning and action of a bounded group. Exemplarily, intercultural communication experiences of Chinese employees working in African contexts have been of interest (Mayer et al. 2016, 2017; Mayer et al. 2016) in intercultural communication research.

Business cooperation in African contexts requires a complex and multi-faceted knowledge and intercultural communication in this context needs to take account of employees of different origins (Mayer et al. 2016). Due to the need of improvement of intercultural interaction within Chinese organisations investing in African countries, research in this area has increased (Handley / Louw 2016). Selected experiences of Chinese-Tanzanian intercultural communication will be presented in this article, focusing on themes in intercultural communication.

2. Discourses in Sub-Saharan Africa: From African Renaissance to Afropeanism

During the past decades and in the post-colonialism era, various philosophies have been developed across the African continent which influence cognitive, affective and behavioural approaches to life in theory and practice. These philosophies and discourses include, for example, the concepts of African Renaissance, Pan-Africanism, Afrofuturism, Afrotopia and Afropeanism and will be explained briefly in the following.

The concept of African Renaissance was primarily introduced by South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008) and was described as the cornerstone for an "African Century" (Mbeki 1998). In July 2001, the concept was approved by the OAU, the Organisation of African Unity. African Renaissance includes the vision to stabilize, reconstruct and redevelop the entire continent by collaborating with the African leaders who commonly work towards managing newly emerging challenges and crisis (Botha 2000). In terms of the values set in this concept, African Renaissance refers to restoring African self-esteem, promoting economic prosperity, peace and stability. Cossa (2009) emphasizes that African Renaissance needs to focus on language, education and freedom, particularly the freedom from exploitation by oppressors and the characterization of Pan-Africanism, an "attempt to mobilize Africans to unite against the tyranny of colonialism by redefining an African identity and freedom independent of colonial influence." (Cossa 2009:5). In this regard, African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism have common aims. Mbeki (2010), in his speech at the Thabo Mbeki Foundation in Johannesburg on 10 October 2010, called for cooperation across Africa with regard to "the aspirations of the peoples of Africa to rise from the ashes". It goes together with the call for "Africa for the

Africans" within the context of the Pan-African movement (Banda 2010:50). Makgoba (1999) emphasizes that African Renaissance needs to take early African civilisations into account and therefore Africa's contribution to form civilisations in the world. Banda and Saayman (2010), however, point out that African Renaissance does not only need to focus on politics, economics, education and time concepts, but must also focus on religion and ideological beliefs that have been introduced to Africa and influenced self-perception, self-confidence, spirituality and the connection to God strongly. It also impacts on the agency, the contextual understanding, reflexivity and strategic planning and should not be underestimated in its contemporary influence on African societies (Banda / Saayman 2010). The authors criticize strongly that African Renaissance, as a concept, still belongs mainly to the African elites, political and ideological protagonists and should be popularized in a way that it receives a sense of relevance for the ordinary people.

Besides the rather traditional political and ideological concepts of African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism, three discourses have gained importance within (primarily West-) African and partly European contexts: Afrofuturism, Afrotopia and Afropeanism. Afrofuturism deals with the idea of reimagining science and the future from a black perspective, claiming black identity as a primary expression of art, culture and political resistance (Thrasher 2015a). Afrofuturism focuses on politics, aesthetics and cultural aspects of science, science fiction and technology, however, at the same time, its definition seems to be vague, personalized and changeable. For Womack (2013), the concept offers a highly intersectional approach which might even include a new perspective on viewing possible futures, alternate realities and non-linear, fluid and feminist concepts from a black perspective and particularly from a sci-fi and fantasy work perspective. It

integrates past, present and future and considers mysticism, metaphysics, identity and liberation as major concepts of philosophy and states that music and technology, tech love and Afrofuturistic sensibilities can create new homes (such as on Mars) and contribute to healing and recreating identity (Womack 2013). Thereby, Afrofuturism focuses on technology as an important means to live and understand the world through black imagination (Thrasher 2015a). Black, further on, is here understood as a global concept which is not limited to Africans, but rather a concept which unifies blacks on a global level. Afrofuturism plays with the concept and perception of race and defines race "as a technology", as a "performance" (Thrasher 2015b) which seems to be similar to the former construct and therefore not really new within the debate on racial and racialised identities which are predominant in cultural and racial discourses in African social, cultural and business contexts (e.g. Mayer 2005, 2008, 2011). What, however, is rather new to the debate is that Womack (2013:96) emphasizes that Afrofuturism is the subconscious way of exploring present awareness and "infusing those who are receptive with ideas and stories from worlds and times forever lost", combined with the idea to create sustainability, equality and a future imagined to reconstruct the present. Anderson and Jones (2017) invent Afrofuturism 2.0 and highlight that Afrofuturism has already existed for most of the 20th century, particularly in the American African diaspora, describing analysis, criticism and cultural production to address the intersection of race and technology. The authors' concept of Afrofuturism 2.0 expands the idea of the digital divide, music and literature towards religion, architecture, communication, visual art and philosophy and describes the growth of an emerging global Pan African creative phenomenon. This concept refers to the rising instrumentalisation of futurist and sci-fi aesthetics as important cornerstones for

the contemporary Afrodiasporic culture (Anderson / Jones 2017).

The concept of Afrotopia was promoted by the Senegalese economist, writer and singer Felwine Sarr to explore new ways of knowledge and development for Africans to rethink their future (Sarr, 2018), but has already been introduced by Moses (1998). Sarr (2018) critically rethinks the idea to always strive for the new and the future and emphasizes that the traditions need to be explored before the new can be invented. In the concept of Afrotopia, according to Sarr (2018), the "colonial library" needs to be explored which consists of ideas of cultural superiority and racial prejudice and which holds a linear idea of progress and atomic perception of reality. The injustice needs to be addressed and recognized as multifaceted and the sovereignty needs to be reclaimed by creating a scientific, historical and cultural discourse, which is liberated from the past and decolonialised (Sarr 2018). Afrotopia focuses on constructing equality and using an inside (emic) African perspective to understand the culture and thereby create a new mode of understanding reality. It thrives therefore to developing its own strengths through re-evaluating traditions. Ingrid LaFleur (2018) takes the concept further and defines Afrotopia as "Detroit plus Afrofuturism", synthesizing science fiction, Black history, technology, social change and imaginative power to move a world out of orbit. For LaFleur (2018), Afrotopia is based in Detroit, but a global outreach of Black American radical thought and experimentation. Besides the cultural and artistic side of Afrotopia, Sarr (2016) highlights that Afrotopia needs to include a political agenda which aims to achieve complete intellectual independence, needs to provide original responses to universal issues (e.g. health, democracy and education) and to present new social innovations. He explains that Africa should psychologically and mentally decolonialise and provide alternative solutions (Sarr 2016).

Finally, the concept of Afropeanism is described as having been developed in two waves, the first one from 1500 to 2017 and the second one from 2017 onwards (Gunst / Kanobana 2017). In Afropeanism multicultural narratives of genetical and cultural realities are used to reinvent African cultural presence in Europe to particularly encourage the public to read history and future in new ways (Gunst / Kanobana 2017). Afropean research and practice explore the aesthetic interplay of black and European cultures and create new synergies of styles and ideas in literature, as well as in arts and music (Afropean 2019). Afropean cultures explore the juggling of multiple allegiances to forging new Afro-European identities to integrate Afro-European culture (Pitts 2019). Miano (2008) has written on Afropean Soul in her novels, thereby tackling identity formations of individuals with mixed cultural backgrounds and histories of (im)migration.

All of the introduced philosophical programmatic concepts and discourses seem to be still emerging. They aim at defining new black, African, black-American and black global and Afropean or even universal identity concepts which provide alternate views and perspectives on past, present and future (see Table 1 for overview). The concepts are primarily promoted through literature, arts, music and creative new wave explorations of identity and its construction. Partly, they claim a scientific approach which is more or less independent of the history of colonialism, imperialism and Western philosophies.

African concept	Key aspects
African Renaissance	- vision to stabilize, reconstruct and redevelop the entire continent by collaborating amongst the African leaders - managing challenges and crisis - restoring African self-esteem, promoting economic prosperity, peace and stability - self-confidence, spirituality and the connection to God - elitist approach to see Africa
Pan Africanism	- attempt to mobilize Africans to unite against the tyranny of colonialism by redefining an African identity and freedom independent from colonial influence - Africa for the Africans
Afrofuturism	- reimagining science and the future from a black perspective - claiming black identity as a primary expression of art, culture and political resistance - science, science fiction and technology perspective - Black is understood as a global concept which is not limited to Africans - perception of race and definition of race "as a technology", as a "performance" - subconscious way of exploring present awareness - creating sustainability, equality and a future imagined to reconstruct the present - intersection of race and technology - global Pan African creative phenomenon
Afrotopia	- critical rethinking of the idea to always strive for the new and the future - overcoming cultural superiority and racial prejudice - constructing equality and using an inside (emic) African perspective - creating its own strengths through re-evaluating traditions - synthesizing science fiction, Black history, technology, social change and imaginative power - achieving complete intellectual independence - providing original responses to universal issues - psychological and mental decolonialisation and provision of alternative solutions
Afropeanism	- using multicultural narratives of genetical and cultural realities to reinvent African cultural presence - exploring the aesthetic interplay of black and European cultures in research and practice - creating new synergies of styles and ideas in literature, as well as in arts and music - tackling identity formations of individuals with mixed cultural backgrounds

Table 1: Overview on African concepts

3. Purpose and aims of this article

Following this brief presentation of new perspectives and discourses on African identity and philosophical discourses, research findings from a qualitative study on intercultural communication in Chinese-owned organisations in Tanzania are provided. The findings of this study will be discussed in the light of the briefly presented, newly established and globalised African discourses.

The purpose of this article is to provide new insights into the discourses presented and their state-of-the-art as well as into intercultural communication experienced by Chinese and African employees within selected Chinese organisations.

Thereby we will establish if and, if yes, how these new African discourses are represented in the intercultural communication narrations experienced by Chinese and African employees working in two Chinese organisations and three Chinese enterprises.

4. Research methodology

The research study is anchored in the phenomenological hermeneutical tradition of research (Gummerson 2000). It uses a research methodology which is explorative and descriptive in nature. As according to Collis and Hussey (2003), a social constructivist perspective is applied which views every social interaction as a construct.

This study includes data collected at two large scale organisations and at three small scale enterprises. One is a Chinese governmental-owned transportation management organisation while the second organisation studied is a Chinese-owned private information technology and telecommunication organisation. Both organisations are large scale organisations, employing over 100 employees each in their branches in Tanzania.

Participants of this study were recruited via convenience and snowball sampling (Denzin / Lincoln 2000,

Woodley / Lockard 2016) within the participating organisations. The same is valid for the enterprises which participated in the study.

4.1 The sample

The sample comprised 16 employees in the private organisation and 8 employees within the governmental organisation. In the three enterprises, six individuals participated in the research (two in each organisation). All interviews were conducted in English, Kiswahili and/or Mandarin and were translated where necessary. Interview questions ranged from "How do you work together?", "How do you define yourself?", "How do you see the organisation?", How do you see the roles within the organisation?", "What do you think about the interaction of employees and group members?", "What kind of intercultural experiences do you gain on the job?", "Please describe situations which you have experienced across cultural/language groups in this work context?" to the exploration of specific questions regarding critical incidents, communication and (intercultural) cooperation. All participants agreed to participate voluntarily in the study.

The research team consisted of four researchers, two German, one Tanzanian and one Chinese-Tanzanian researcher. All researchers were fluent in English, one in Mandarin and three in Kiswahili; three were male, one was female, in the age span of 40 to 67 years.

4.2 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews in face-to-face interview situations. All interviewees were conducted within 30 to 90 minutes according to the interviewees' time frame. Observations made by the researchers in the organisation were captured in field notes and used to interpret the interview data (Graham / Bell 2016, Walsh et al. 2016).

After the interviews, data were transcribed and where necessary translated

verbatim. Data were stored in accordance with the ethical guidelines. Data were analysed through the five-step process of content analysis (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:322–326) – step 1: familiarisation and immersion (reading through the interviews and discussing them within the intercultural team); step 2: inducing themes (defining basic themes across all interview questions); step 3: coding (coding of sub-categories); step 4: elaboration (defining codes and networks of codes); and step 5: interpretation (intercultural interpretation and discourse of interpretation across team members) and checking (checking of findings and interpretations). Throughout the process, intersubjective validation processes were used (Yin 2009). These processes included reflections, discussions about experiences and their interpretations to validate the perceptions and interpretations of the researchers. The data and findings were discussed and interpreted from the researchers' perspectives over a period of several months, which were expected to yield rich, complex and detailed descriptions and interpretations (Chan et al. 2015, Creswell 2015).

4.3 Ethical considerations and limitations

The study refers to defined research ethics which include the voluntary participation of the participants in the study, the provided informed consent, given anonymity, confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw from the research process at any point in time. Ethical clearance was provided by Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.
As each and every study, this study comes with limitations. The limitations refer to the fact that this study only takes two Chinese organisations and three Chinese enterprises operating in Tanzania into account. Within these organisations only a small number of employees agreed to participate in the study. The study therefore rather generates qualitative and in-depth content than to produce results which are gen-

eralisable. However, the study can give guidance to future research studies in this field.

5. Findings

Findings show reflections on communication, intercultural communication, questions of identity and meaning. Interviewees are strongly aware of experiences of miscommunication and difficulties to communicate effectively and harmoniously with the members of a different cultural and language background. Parts of the findings have been published previously (Mayer et al. 2016, 2017), but have not been interpreted in the context from an intercultural communication perspective based on the recent African philosophical contexts. Data will be interpreted with regards to the presented African concepts and will refer to aspects of intercultural communication and different subthemes.

Findings refer to intercultural communication within Chinese-Tanzanian business interaction with regard to four explicitly mentioned contexts within the organisations and enterprises:
• Intercultural communication across and within hierarchies and cultural boundaries
• Intercultural communication in online communication
• Intercultural communication and support
• Intercultural communication and working conditions

The following will present the findings according to those four contexts of intercultural communication experiences.

5.1 Communication across and within hierarchies and cultural boundaries

Findings show the experiences of intercultural communication from Chinese and Tanzanian perspectives which have been experienced within the organisations and enterprises. (The coding for the interviews means, for example: 5h-e - interview number 5, e - employer

12h-m - interview number 12, m - manager).

A Tanzanian employee (5h-e) emphasises that the intercultural communication between the Chinese managers and the Tanzanian employees is problematic. He comments:

"Sometimes the Chinese inform us about what is going on, but sometimes they do not do it and they just make their own decisions. They will just inform you and one day you find out that the decisions have already been made and so I just have to obey, without being able to communicate about it."

The Tanzanian employee experiences an authoritative, top-down communication between Chinese (who inform or not inform) and Tanzanian employees. Decision-making is not balanced and the Tanzanian employee feels that he has to obey and that the communication in general is preconditioned within the organisation. He believes that he does not have a say in the communication.

A Chinese manager (12h-m) explains that the communication channels within the organisation is strictly defined. Often, the mother organisation in China makes decisions and provides the information which can then be channeled down to the other employees:

"However, we have our principles and some projects for maybe senior level should obey our mother organisation from China. The Managing Director has a certain level of authority, but some communication is just for some individuals and not necessarily for the Tanzanian employees."

Here, the data show that Tanzanian employees would enjoy a more open intercultural communication in which they were taking into the decision-making processes in an equal level. However, the Chinese participants highlight that communication within their organisation follows very clear in-group-related principles and does usually not go below the managerial and authoritative levels. The important communication takes place between the mother organisation and the top managers. Accordingly, the communication is not supposed to become intercultural since there are only Chinese managers in managerial positions communicating with the mother organisation, while Tanzanian employees only work in lower ranks. In terms of decision-making and communication, intercultural communication should not take place from a Chinese perspective, due to the fact that social and organisational hierarchies prevent it.

However, a Tanzanian employee (16h-e) states that intercultural communication does take place, describing a communication act which refers to hierarchies within the organisation and negative experiences of the Tanzanian employee.

"If a Chinese comes to you, and ask for something and you tell that person then I'm not supposed to give you this … because you have to get an approval from my supervisor if you can get this thing or this item that you want. There are some stuff that you just don't give away. You have to get an approval first and then he or she shouts at you or like, 'who do you think you are?' Who do you think you are in this organisation?' Something like that … Yah! It happens."

The Tanzanian employee feels mistreated by the Chinese employees when not complying with their communicated expectations and when acting according to the hierarchical levels and structures.

A Chinese manager points out that communication behaviour across hierarchies and cultures differs within the group of Chinese and between Chinese and Tanzanian employees (12h-m):

"We Chinese, if I didn't do my work, the managing director can shout at me, but we seldom shout at the local staff. For me, the shouting is okay, but not for the local staff. Communication between the supervisor and the management, he might be using a more straight and tough way and press me to do better, but with local staff we think more about their culture and language and which local staff we accept."

According to the Chinese manager, the Chinese employees have two communication strategies: one is to communicate within their own cultural group and the other one is to communicate with local employees. The communication within the Chinese group is described as tough and shouting, the intercultural communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees is described as adjusted to culture and language sensitivity.

He (12h-m) explains further:

"The first thing in communication is that you should obey the laws, second you need to make suggestions to the local staff and our headquarter tells us we should make a balance between the suggestions of the local staff and regulation of the headquarters."

From the perspective of the interviewee, the politics of the organisation work according to three principles in intercultural communication, such as: 1.) obeying the laws, 2.) taking in suggestions by locals, and 3.) balancing Chinese and local views. Based on the politics of the organisation, a mix of intercultural perspectives should be communicated and valued.

5.2 Online communication

A large amount of communication within the organisation takes place online, particularly the communication which is related to further education, training and qualification, but also to the exchange between employees. A Tanzanian employee (13h-e) explains that he takes part in online communication training and that he had been scored for his training, but that the qualification gaps between Chinese and Tanzanian employees are huge and Tanzanian employees usually feel that the online communication platform is "helpful" in a way, but the skills and expertise which they gain through this communication platform are limited and that the Tanzanian employee prefers face-to-face communication:

"The online communication is helpful, but limited. To increase skills and expertise, we would need to learn in face-to-

face communication."

A Chinese employee (6h-m) explains that through online communication he feels strongly supported, because he can do his research and get the resources he needs online while communicating with his counterparts who support him and who teach him how to do business.

"Online communication is good since my colleagues support me and teach me how to do business."

Another Chinese employee (11h-m) discusses communication issues in terms of using the in-house e-database which is accessible to everyone:

"We have a very open e-learning platform... and you can find any information you want… is related to your work. This is what we did with all the information from different countries and project experience or specific technology training material: everything we share in one database and one platform. Any staff can use their ID and just log in the office platform: Chinese and local staff are very open in communication and they work together very closely."

In this case, intercultural communication is viewed as being positively mediated by technology and an e-learning and data-sharing platform which contributes to, according to this participant, an open and close intercultural communication, because all employees have access worldwide and can communicate across all boundaries.

Finally, a Chinese employee (19c-e) emphasizes that it is extremely difficult to communicate with Tanzanians interculturally. He highlights (19c-e):

"It is hard to work with African colleagues (…) their language is much better than ours, but the technical skills - the Chinese people will do better than the locals."

In terms of the English language use as such, the Tanzanian employees are viewed as more educated, but in terms of tasks and skills Chinese are more educated. These gaps lead to difficulties in intercultural communication on the one or the other hand.

5.3 Intercultural communication and support

A Tanzanian employee (15h-m) comments that in the communication across members of cultural groups, support is hardly given and knowledge is hardly shared interculturally:

"You can be given a job, someone can come and tell you: 'do this' - but I have never done it. I tell him, 'I don't know; no - just learn from others, ask your friends'. My supervisors don't have time to teach me and they say 'here nobody can teach you, you have to teach yourself. If you don't know then find the one who can'. So, we find that we don't have much support from the Chinese."

In this case, the Tanzanian employee does not feel supported in the intercultural communication processes. He describes Tanzanians getting instructions from Chinese employees, but they are not guided or supported, but are told to find someone to help them. The communication set therefore includes an instruction, but no explanations.

According to the Chinese participants, Tanzanians do not participate within the organisation and they do not comply with the rules. However, other Chinese employees state that there is a *"good intercultural communication structure"* within the organisation, because information transparency, knowledge sharing and support is encouraged through weekly meetings. Chinese employees are convinced that they strive to help local entrepreneurs to gain experience and knowledge through exchange of ideas and they are also highlighting that they support the Tanzanian employees within the organisation which the Tanzanian employees do not experience.

5.4 Intercultural communication and working conditions

A majority of participants emphasise that the working conditions are influenced by the intercultural communication situation in the organisations. A Tanzanian employee (5h-m) highlights

language barriers which he experiences in intercultural communication and which lead to panic on the one hand and patience on the other:

"You need to be patient, because Chinese people, they panic. It is because sometimes, they have to understand English, and they understand Chinese only. So if you are speaking and they don't know what you are speaking about, just be patient. (laughter)."

This Tanzanian employee shows that the language barrier impacts on the communication situation, since Chinese employees do not understand English well and then start to panic, while this is a situation in which Tanzanian employees need to be patient. The working conditions are very much influenced by the language barrier and define to a certain degree the quality of the work conditions and the intercultural communication situation. Further on, another Tanzanian employee (16h-m) describes the intercultural communication as rather difficult, particularly when it comes to the work contracts which the Chinese organisation hands-out in Chinese language. Since no translators are used, intercultural communication becomes a problem with regard to language:

"... we all understand each other. But sometimes (sigh) ... sometimes you might be given a document to sign, which is written in Chinese. So, you don't know what is there but you're just told, 'Sign!'"

The working conditions are influenced by the language barrier and Tanzanians are expected to sign Chinese contracts without knowing about the content. These work conditions, which are based on an unbalanced and unequal relationship in terms of power, define the intercultural communication strongly.

Finally, a Chinese employee (2h-m) explains how he stays mainly within his own cultural group:

"I stay most of the time with Chinese people. Work time, I spend my work time with the locals and Chinese people. And

in my spare time, I stay with my Chinese colleagues, because we are new in this area. Most of us are single even though we are married, but our families are in China, but we stay together."

This Chinese employee describes the fact that he prefers to stay within his own cultural group during his spare time and avoid intercultural communication. He feels most comfortable within his own group and experiences support by being within his Chinese ingroup whose members are new to the environment and without their families. Intercultural communication rather seems to be stressful for this employee and he therefore prefers to spend his time within his Chinese group, although he says that he spends his work time with both, Chinese and Tanzanian employees.

The following Table 2 provides an overview on the themes of Chinese and Tanzanian perspectives.

Themes	Tanzanian perspective	Chinese perspective
1. Intercultural communication across and within hierarchies and cultural boundaries	- Authoritarian top-down communication - Obeying - Closed and preconditioned intercultural communication - Intercultural communication should be open and inclusive - Act within your hierarchical levels and have communication approved - Disrespectful intercultural communication (shouting)	- Strictly defined communication - Channeled down from Chinese mother organisation - Obeying - Exclusive communication on top levels - No intercultural communication in decision-making - Ingroup Chinese communication is tough, harsh and pushy using shouting, while intercultural communication with Tanzanians is adjusted to culture and language (softer) - Intercultural communication is based on 3 principles: 1. Obey the laws, 2. Take in suggestions by locals, 3. Balance Chinese and local views
2. Intercultural communication in online communication	- Online communication for learning and exchange, but skills should be acquired through face-to-face communication	- Amongst Chinese employees, online communication is experienced as supportive - Difficult intercultural communication through language gaps on Chinese side and technical gaps on Tanzanian side - Online-mediated intercultural communication and data exchange (worldwide) - Open and close intercultural communication
3. Intercultural communication and support	- Intercultural communication is based on instructions - Information and support are not given in intercultural communication	- Tanzanians do not comply with the given rules in the organisation
4. Intercultural communication and working conditions	- Intercultural communication is impacted by language barriers which makes Chinese panic and Tanzanians having to be patient - Mutual understanding through communication - Contracts in Chinese only - Instructive language "sign without understanding"	- Spend work time with Chinese and Tanzanian employees - Spend leisure time with Chinese ingroup only

Table 2: Themes and perspectives in intercultural communication

The following subchapter discusses the African discourses described above with regard to the intercultural communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees.

6. Discussion

All the five discourses referring to African cultural and philosophical concepts deal with vision, explorations, new-definitions and reconstructions of socio-cultural meaning for African culture, African identity and African societal aspects, as described above. In the following, the empirical data with regard to Chinese-Tanzanian intercultural communication will be discussed in the context of the five African conceptual discourses to evaluate their impact in the daily life intercultural communication interactions with regard to hierarchies and cultural boundaries, online communication, support and working conditions.

African Renaissance relates to a vision to stabilize, reconstruct and redevelop the African continent, managing challenges and crisis, restoring self-esteem and promoting economic prosperity, peace and stability, as well as self-confidence, spirituality and the connection to God. The findings show that within the intercultural communication situations between Chinese and Tanzanian employees, intercultural communication is connected to hierarchies and cultural boundary definitions, as well as to online communication, support and working conditions within the organisation. Findings show that Tanzanians feel treated "top down" by Chinese managers. They are in preconditioned communication situations which often leave them in a disrespectful situation in which Chinese employees shout at them. The Chinese employees feel that employees have to behave and that only top management should be involved in communication structures so that Tanzanians do not have a say in communication. To them it is important that employees obey laws, take on suggestions by Tanzanians and weight them

with regard to their decisions. While Tanzanians do not feel as if they are treated on the same level and rather feel left without support and enough information, as well as impacted by language barriers and a limited mutual cultural understanding, Chinese employees find that Tanzanians get a possibility to contribute and have a say, although they do not comply with given rules and instructions. Further, Chinese employees feel that Tanzanians are treated in a culture-specific way and with respect and cultural sensitivity. With regard to African Renaissance and Pan Africanism, it can be highlighted that Tanzanians do not feel that they stabilise, reconstruct or redevelop the African continent. The Chinese employees do not see a high self-confidence and self-esteem in Tanzanians and only see these attributes when it comes to language competency.

Further, the concept of Pan-Africanism does hardly play a role in intercultural communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees. It is only involved in so far that Chinese employees usually do not refer to Tanzanian employees, but rather to African (or local) employees and thereby do not differentiate between Africans of different countries. From a Tanzanian perspective, the Tanzanian employees do not seem to attempt to mobilize against the tyranny of colonialism by redefining their African identity and become free of colonial (or here maybe even neo-colonial or imperialist) powers. Since Tanzanians in the described contexts are not promoted within the organisations, are seen as rather unskilled and are instructed to sign contracts which they cannot understand in terms of the conditions involved, it might be highlighted that these experiences might remind Tanzanians of neo-colonial power relations and structures. The situations seem to be far away from the concept "Africa for the Africans" since Chinese and Tanzanian employees do work together, but Chinese investors

obviously hold the power over their Tanzanian employees, as expressed in the intercultural communication situations presented. Therefore, Tanzanians are not redefining their African identity anew, but rather seem to surrender to the Chinese employees and treat them with patience. While the Chinese employees describes that Tanzanians are treated in a culture sensitive way, Tanzanians still seem to experience the Chinese employees as instructive, using a top-down approach, and disrespectful. Tanzanian employees, however, would expect to be treated equally and to be part of the decision-making processes.

None of the aspects highlighted in Afrofuturism (reimagining science and the future from a black perspective, seeing black identity as an expression of art, culture and political resistance, science fiction-based etc.), can be viewed or experienced in the intercultural communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees. It rather seems that previous concepts of race and colonial powers are recreated in the intercultural communication than new concepts being introduced. However, the data show that Tanzanians strive to have an equal relationship with the Chinese employees and strive for quality and sustainability. Data do not refer to any kind of creativity which is used by Chinese or Tanzanian employees to re-create themselves anew. An aspect that is visible within the intercultural communication is the idea that there are intersections of race and technology. Chinese employees emphasise that Africans are not good with technical skills and technological skills are ascribed to the Chinese employees' abilities only - by members of both groups, Chinese and Tanzanian interviewees. Therefore, the data show an intersection of race and technology, but are not relating to Tanzanians (Africans) and technology as a positive intersection and as a positive recreation of African (racial) identity through technology. Further, race is not defined as "a technology" or "a performance" in

this intercultural communication, but is rather a fixed concept of classification.

In the data, further critical thoughts are not given with regard to rethinking the ideas for the African future, as highlighted in Afrotopia. Obviously, in Chinese-Tanzanian intercultural communication, cultural superiority and racial prejudices are not yet overcome as emphasised in Afrotopia; traditions are hardly re-evaluated while known communication patterns are rather taken on without deeper reflection. Although Tanzanians aim for equality, they do not manage to being treated equally, as, for example, in decision-making, hierarchies, guidance etc. None of the ideas of synthesizing science fiction, Black history, technology, social change and imaginative power are present in the intercultural communication. Further, Tanzanians do not at all achieve complete intellectual independence, but rather show their dependence on the Chinese organisation, the concepts and power relations created by Chinese employees. Further, the organisation also does not foster original responses to universal issues, but is strongly focused on their priority areas of the business than to taking more complex universal issues into account, such as sustainability, peace and harmony. With regard to Afrotopia, the data finally show that the ideas of psychologically and mentally decolonisation and the provision alternative solutions have not found their ways into thoughts and practice yet. The communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees is rather based on power, hierarchies and culture (race) with the Chinese employees holding the power and using a top-down communication with split decision-making processes. Further, language barriers are not overcome and Mandarin is used in the organisations as a means of instruction, which leads to unequal power and strict hierarchical structures in which Chinese employees are at the top and Tanzanian employees are placed at the bottom of the decision-making pyramid.

The concept of Afropeanism does not play a role in the data due to the fact that Chinese and Tanzanian employees do not create multicultural narrations of genetical and cultural realities, but rather continue to re-present narratives of cultural segregation, monoculturalism and inequality of power. Only to a very small degree do Chinese and Tanzanian employees highlight the intercultural synergies and intercultural potential of synergising their cultures. None of the described intercultural communication experiences refer to reinventing African cultural presence in society or organisation and or to the potential of mixed African-European cultures or, in this case, mixed Chinese-Tanzanian culture, and their synergetic potential or positive impact on the organisational context.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this article was to reflect on new perspectives and discourses of African identity and philosophy construction. It further aimed at presenting findings on intercultural communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees in Chinese organisations investing in Tanzania. The research findings were discussed with regard to the theoretical discourses presented to explore if and how the theoretical discourses are reflected in intercultural communication situations.

The new discourses on African concepts of values and identities, such as in Afrofuturism, Afrotopia and Afropeanism, are seen as being in the development process. The concepts are in a theoretical phase of creation and development and only provide a few aspects which can be applied in the analysis of empirical data. It rather seems that concepts based on colonial experiences and imperialism are re-invented and re-created, re-invented and re-created in the organisations studied.

Reflecting on the African cultural and philosophical discourses in the context of explored intercultural communica-

tion, it can be concluded that all five discourses are hardly reflected within the daily life interactions of Tanzanian and Chinese employees. It rather seems that the discourses remain in the field of African educational (artists, writers and musicians) elites and stay within theoretical concepts which are non-explored on practical levels of intercultural daily (business) interactions. If, however, these concepts could be practically applied in the reconstruction of intercultural business communication, this could help to redefine African identities through theoretical discourses on a practical level and contribute to an increased understanding of the synergies of intercultural business communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees. This article thereby agrees to the criticism used in the discourse on African Renaissance, which highlights that the theoretical African discourses usually belong to the African elites, and political and ideological protagonists. They should be popularised in a way that they receive a sense of relevance for the ordinary people, for example in intercultural business communication.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations for future research can be provided:

Particularly the concepts of Afrofuturism, Afrotopia and Afropeanism should be researched in terms of their reflection and reimagination within different sub-cultural groups (artists, musicians, writers, teachers, business people etc.) across the African continent, taking samples from different countries into account. Most aspects of these concepts could not be found within the organisation and business data presented with regard to Chinese and Tanzanian interaction. Neither Chinese nor Tanzanian employees seem to explore new concepts of reinventing African culture within their intercultural communication interactions. They rather seem both to reconstruct previous African identities, based on colonial, post-colonial or imperialistic structures. Research must find out which conditions in cultural or

47

intercultural spaces lead to redefinition of identity on theoretical and practical levels. Studies should also research the application of new philosophical concepts and their impact on intercultural communication situations in different cultural contexts within African countries.

In terms of future practice, the following recommendations are given:
In intercultural communication between Chinese and Tanzanian employees, awareness needs to be created about concepts of culture and identity and philosophical discourses (past, present and futurist) to see the potentials which mindful, cultural and intercultural communication could hold for the communication processes. The discourses could be actively used to create discussions and training sessions on intercultural communication. This, then, would not only need to include African, but also Chinese identity and philosophy discourses to create a deeper mutual understanding of the cultural background as well as on how to create intercultural communication in a culture-specific, culture-sensitive way to minimize irritations and the repetition of previously unsuccessful and unsustainable concepts. Discourses could be broken down into practical applications in intercultural communication and become a point of discussion in terms of ethical and respectful intercultural cooperation of Chinese organisations, entrepreneurs and investors in African contexts.

8. Bibliography

Afropean (2019): *Afropean. Adventures in Black Europe*. URL: http://afropean.com/about/ [accessed 14 January 2019].

Anderson, R. / Jones, C.E. (2017): *Afrofuturism 2.0. The rise of Astro-Blackness*. Minneapolis, MN: Lexington Books.

Banda, Z. (2010): *African Renaissance and missiology: a perspective from mission praxis.* Unpublished D Th thesis, UNISA. Pretoria, South Africa: UNISA.

Banda, Z. / Saayman, W. (2010): Renaissance and rebirth: A perspective on the African Renaissance from Christian mission praxis. *Missionalia* 43(2): p. 131-152.

Bennett, M. (2017): Culture. Online debate – has multiculturalism in the West has reached its limits? *Email communication*. 30 April 2017.

Brinkmann, U. / Zee, K. van der (1999): Benchmarking Intercultural Training. Is Experience Its Biggest Competitor? *Language and Intercultural Training* 17(1), S. 9-11.

Botha, P. du T. (2000): An African Renaissance in the 21st Century? *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, XXII(1). URL: https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-82011526/an-african-renaissance-in-the-21st-century [accessed 14 January 2019].

Brislin, R. W. / Yoshida, T. (1994): *Intercultural Communication Training. An Introduction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Chan, N.N. / Walker, C. / Gleaves, A. (2015): An exploration of students' lived experiences of using smartphones in diverse learning contexts using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. *Computers and Education* 82, p. 96–106.

Cifa Crossculture (2004): Rollenspiele. *Infoletter*, First Quarter. URL: http://www.cifa-crossculture.de/img/dokumente/InfoletterQ12004.pdf [accessed

14 January 2019].

Collis, J. / Hussey, R. (2003): *Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students.* (2nd edn.). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian.

Cossa, J.A. (2009): African Renaissance and Globalisation: A conceptual analysis. Ufahamu: *A journal of African Studies*, 36(1). URL: https://escholarship.org/content/qt8k7472tg/qt8k7472tg.pdf [accessed 14 January 2019].

Creswell, J.W. (2015): *Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher.* New York: Sage.

Deal, T. E. (i. p*.): Corporate Cultures. The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. Mass: Addison-Wesley.

Denzin, N. K. / Lincoln, Y.S. (2000): *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Graham, C. / Bell, A. (2016): *The Career Advancement Experiences of Female Faculty of Color in Athletic Training Education Programs*. Kansas State University Libraries. New Prairie Press. Adult Education Research Consortium. Conference Proceedings, Charlotte, NC. URL: http://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=aerc.   [accessed 12 January 2019].

Gummesson, D.E. (2000): *Qualitative methods in management research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gunst, R. / Kanobana, R. (2017): *The reign of Afropeanism*. URL: https://www.bozar.be/en/activities/123647-the-reign-of-afropeanism---roland-gunst-sibo-kanobana [accessed 14 January 2019].

Handley, R. (2016): *Impact of Organisational Culture and Leadership Styles on the Quality of Work Life: An Exploratory Study of Chinese Organisations in South Africa*. Unpublished Maters Dissertation. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.

Kohls, L. R. (1995): Training as a Twentieth Century Discipline. In: Kohls, L. R. / Brussow, H. L (Eds.): *Training Know-How for Cross-Cultural and Diversity Trainers*. Duncaville: Adult Learning System Inc., p. 3-8.

LaFleur, I. (2018): *Afrotopia*. URL: http://ingridlafleur.com/afrotopia/ [accessed 14 January 2019].

Makoba, M. W. (1999): *African Renaissance: the new struggle*. Sandton: Mafube Publications.

Mayer, C.-H. (2005): *Artificial Walls. South African Narratives on Conflict, Difference and Identity. An Exploratory Study in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag.

Mayer, C.-H. (2008): *Managing conflict across cultures, values and identities. A case study in the South African automotive industry*. Marburg: Tectum Verlag.

Mayer, C.-H. (2011). *The meaning of Sense of Coherence in Transcultural Management.* Internationale Hochschulschriften Series. Münster: Waxmann.

Mayer, C.-H. / Boness, C.M. / Louw, L. (2017): Perceptions of Chinese and Tanzanian employees regarding intercultural colloboration. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management,* 15, 11 pages. doi:10.4102/sajhrm.v15i0.921.

Mayer, C.-H. / Boness, C.M. / Louw, L. (2016): *Perspectives of Chinese and Tanzanian employees on intercultural cooperation in a private Chinese organisation in Tanzania*. 10th China goes global Conference, University of Macerata, Italy, 26.7.-28.7.2016.

Mayer, C.-H. / Boness, C.M. / Louw, L. / Louw, T. (2016): *Intra- and inter-group perceptions of Chinese and Tanzanian employees in intercultural cooperation*. SAIMS conference, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, 4.-7-9.2016. Proceedings of the 28th Annual Confernece of the Southern African Institute of Management Scientists. URL: http://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/643/ZP_Files/2016/Papers/hrl18_full.zp97856.pdf, S. 119-137. [accessed 14 January 2019].

Mbeki, M. (1998): *The African Renaissance. South African Yearbook of International Affairs*, 9. Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs.

Mbeki, T. (2010): Launch of Thabo Mbeki foundation gives hope. *Pretoria News*, 11 October 2010, S. 2.

Miano, L. (2008): *Afropean Soul: et autres Nouvelles*. Paris: Flammarion.

Moses, W.J. (1998): *Afrotopia. The roots of African American Popular History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pickel, S. (1998): *German and Polish Students in Frankfurt (Oder). Their contacts, communication, attitudes.* Speech during the transformation colloquiums, working paper from 30th June 1998, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany.

Pitts, J. (2019): *Afropean: Documenting Black Europe*. London, UK: Penguin.

Sarr, F. (2016): 'Afrotopia' – Rethinking Africa. An interview with Felwine Saar. *International Politics. Africa and the world,* 6. Rosa Luxenburg Stiftung. URL: http://www.rosalux.sn/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Final_International-Politics_The-world-and-Africa-06-1.pdf [accessed 14 January 2019].

Sarr, F. (2018): *Afrotopia.* Lecture by Senegalese economist and writer Felwine Sarr. URL: https://www.ru.nl/radboudreflects/terugblik/terugblik-2018/terugblik-2018/18-05-29-afrotopia-lecture-by-senegalese-economist/ [accessed 14 January 2019].

Sturm, D. (1990): *Visualizing textbooks for German as a foreign language*. Unpublished dissertation of the University of Kassel. Kassel, Germany.

Thrasher, S.W. (2015a): Afrofuturism: reimagining science and the future from a black perspective. *The Guardian*. 7. December 2015. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/dec/07/afrofuturism-black-identity-future-science-technology [accessed 14 January 2019].

Thrasher, S.W. (2015b): Rachel Dolezal exposes our delusional constructions and perceptions of race. *The Guardian*, 12 June 2015. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/12/rachel-dolezal-delusional-construction-perception-of-race [accessed am 14 January 2019].

Terre Blanche, M. / Durrheim, K. / Kelly, K. (2006): First steps in qualitative data analysis. In: Terre Blanche, M. / Durrheim, K. / Painter, D. (Eds.): *Research in practice. Applied methods for the social sciences.* Cape Town, SA: University of Cape Town Press, p. 321-344.

Walsh, K. / Fleming, S.S. / Enz, C.A. (2016): Give and you shall receive: Investing in the careers of women professionals. *Career Development International*, 21(2), p. 117-143.

Womack, Y.L. (2013): *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Woodley, X. M. / Lockard, M. (2016): Womanism and Snowball Sampling: Engaging Marginalized Populations in Holistic Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(2), p. 321-329.

Yin, R. K. (2009): *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). London; UK: Sage.